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Sport, Empire, and Diplomacy: “Ireland” at the 1930 British Empire Games

Katie Liston^a and Joseph Maguire^b

^aSchool of Sport, University of Ulster, Jordanstown Campus; ^bSchool of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, Loughborough University

ABSTRACT

International sport, as Geoffrey Pigman has correctly observed, emerged “as a quintessential case study demonstrating the part that public diplomacy plays in contemporary diplomacy.” The British Empire Games/Commonwealth Games [BEG/CG] are one such example, being the second largest multi-national multi-sport event today. Their origins lie in the interwar era when members of sporting organisations, many of whom were active in other formal aspects of public life, considered the organisation of specific Imperial events through international networking. Described as lacking a “thoroughly analytical and interpretive account of their history,” questions of identity politics, public diplomacy and statecraft are at their core because the BEG, inaugurated in 1930, represented qualities and values that appealed to governments, civil society, and sportspeople alike. In the waning of the British Empire, the BEG was one attempt to maintain Imperial prestige and cement cultural bonds. Yet, not only is there an absence of analytical accounts of their history, but the inter-relationships between the BEG and diplomacy, and among global sport and diplomacy more broadly, have been similarly under-investigated. This absence is striking, representing a missed opportunity in understanding the development of global sport and international relations more generally.

Examining the participation of a team from “Ireland” in the inaugural 1930 British Empire Games [BEG], this analysis represents part of the effort required to address both the under-investigation of the BEG *per se* and the link between them and diplomacy.¹ This is to say, investigating their deployment by governments of the time as instruments of state and/or Empire policy and in their use, particularly by non-state actors, as a form of “representation, communication and negotiation.”² The initial idea for and the formation of the BEG were also examples of how “sports diplomacy can be instigated by non-governmental organisations or competitors and then embraced by government officials for their potential value as a

CONTACT Katie Liston  k.liston@ulster.ac.uk  School of Sport, University of Ulster, Jordanstown Campus, Shore Road, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim BT37 0QB, Northern Ireland.

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diplomatic mission.”³ The impetus for the inaugural BEG stemmed from the actions of the Canadian, Melville Marks (Bobby) Robinson. A reporter for the *Hamilton Spectator*, he attended the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics in his role as national track and field team manager. This experience provided him with the opportunity to establish, if not enhance, his sports credibility in international athletics and communicate the idea of holding a Canadian-led Empire Games in a spirit of so-called friendly competition. Robinson and the organising committee were active non-state diplomats who also sought to place brand “the spirit of Canada—the spirit of the New World which can be so well summed up in the word ‘boost.’”⁴ The president of the Canadian Pacific Railway acted as chairman of the General Committee and the national Empire Games Committee [EGC]. A third committee, representing Hamilton city residents, was responsible for the welfare of visiting officials and athletes. The Canadian EGC overcame the initial suspicions of both British Olympic Association [BOA] officials and British elite circles, particularly any concerns that the Empire Games might usurp the Olympics, and succeeded in attracting ten other dominion/Empire teams including from Ireland where Robinson visited on “his mission.”⁵ The high commissioner for the Irish Free State was present at a London luncheon in support of the establishment of a British-based national committee to ensure that Britain—including “Ireland”—had adequate representation.⁶ The suggested membership of this committee included peers, the upper classes, and Army officials,⁷ many of whom were already active in Amateur Athletic Association [AAA] and BOA circles and who shared common class, cultural, and/or institutional allegiances. The committee issued a subsequent appeal for funds espousing

another link in the chain that binds the great Dominions to the Mother Country... if they [the Games] do something to encourage amongst the young men and women of the British Empire the true Imperial spirit—then they will have been worth all trouble and expense, both in money and energy, that they will have entailed.⁸

The Imperial ethos was paramount in this entreaty to the hearts, minds, and wallets of the public as was the role of athletics in bolstering a waning Empire.

Murray and Pigman provide an insightful analytical distinction between the use of “sport as diplomacy,” on the one hand, and “sport as an instrument of diplomacy,” on the other. In their view, non-state actors such as the International Olympic Committee [IOC] and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association [FIFA] practice a “distinct type of diplomacy” in the contemporary period—engaging in “representation to and negotiation with governments, the regional and national organizing bodies of sport, large global firms that sponsor competition, global media firms and global civil society organizations.”⁹ Unlike these non-state actors, however, national

Commonwealth Federations [CF] are involved in both “sport as diplomacy” and “sport as an instrument of diplomacy”; these two missions remain tightly interwoven for the national CFs, not least because the Commonwealth Games Federation [CGF] is one of nine or ten quasi-governmental associated organisations of the Commonwealth. The CGF itself is formally constituted to promote “a unique friendly, world class Commonwealth Games and to develop sport for the benefit of the people, the nations and the territories of the Commonwealth, and thereby strengthen the Commonwealth.”¹⁰ It also has representation on the Commonwealth Advisory Body on Sport and provides direction and advice to governments across the Commonwealth on how to employ sport as a means of social and educational development.¹¹ Today, the CGF is active in sport-for-development, including diplomacy, but this was not the original focus. Thus, two additional *caveats* to Murray and Pigman’s analytical distinction exist.

First, such practices—whether sport as diplomacy or an instrument of it—are not only from the contemporary period or applicable to what might be termed first order sports or events such as the Olympics or FIFA World Cup. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, these processes were at work intra- and internationally in what became nascent second order sports and events. In “Irish” sport, there was an ongoing struggle for jurisdiction over sport on the island, civil society, and nation-state boundaries. In the case study that follows, these competing representations and negotiations surfaced in the early years of the BEG that were proposed as a means of communicating and maintaining unity amongst the dominion states of the then Empire. Nevertheless, both before and after the BEG, there were also diplomatic manoeuvrings by Irish and British officials with their counterparts in the International Amateur Athletics Federation [IAAF] and IOC.¹² The key negotiating issue was the question of eligibility regulations and the constitution of a 26- or 32-county national team—six counties comprised Northern Ireland—the outcome of which led to the Olympic Council of Ireland’s boycott of the 1936 Olympics. Many athletes also faced subsequent exclusion from taking part in the 1948 Olympic Games in London.

Second, whilst Murray and Pigman refer astutely to “the modern, plural diplomatic environment” to describe the “vertical and horizontal networks that characterize modern diplomacy”¹³ in which, as noted, non-state actors such as the IOC and FIFA practice a distinct type of diplomacy, some caution needs to be exercised in how these networks are understood theoretically. The same remains true of international relations more generally.¹⁴ Of central concern is the question of power, particularly “soft power”:¹⁵ how the power to persuade and attract was/is represented, communicated, and negotiated? By whom and for what purposes?

In the diffusion of sport throughout the Empire, the “British” acted as the established group dealing with a range of outsider groups. The degree to which they viewed the local culture as “barbarian” varied, but they were convinced of their civilised status. Their sports confirmed they were “gentlemen”—for men comprised the established group within the Imperial elite. The clubs and playing fields acted as zones of prestige, which helped to stratify relations, not only amongst the British themselves, but also in their dealings with the “natives.” These zones of prestige thus conferred distinction and allowed “gentlemen” to embody the qualities of honour, chivalry, and fair play. Access to prestigious clubs and playing fields could be regulated—only chosen outsiders would be allowed to emulate their Imperial masters and become, through the adoption of their sports, more “British” than the British themselves. Such individuals, acting as players, teachers, and administrators, could thus spread British sports and, via this means, British influence more widely and deeply within a colony or throughout the Empire.

Such established-outsider relations were always contested, even though the manner and form of resistance would vary from “white” to “non-white” colonies.¹⁶ The British themselves were to experience a double bind traceable to the processes associated with functional democratisation. Try as they might to maintain their own civilised status, the cultural markers of power and prestige seeped gradually out from beneath their exclusive control and, in sport’s case, the Imperial masters began to be beaten at their own games. Questions of power, culture, and identity are thus at the heart of global sport processes, and examination of these zones of prestige, emulation, and resistance prompts questions concerning civilisational analysis more generally.¹⁷

The relative hegemony of the West has ensured the globalisation of its civilisational wares over the past two centuries and more. Because of the colonisation strategies of the established—designed to impose their culture or co-opt that of the other—and the emulation and imitation of actions by outsiders—seeking to close the status gap—there has been a tendency towards civilisations overlapping. That is, the contrasts between them have emerged more muted. Such processes are at work between Western and non-Western civilisations; they are also present in relations between or amongst outsider civilisations. Inter-civilisational encounters are, therefore, multi-dimensional: a global mosaic of power struggles within and between established-outsider groups at local, regional and global levels is at work. These crossovers and fusions involve the co-adoption of similar skills and techniques, the development of ever-denser communication networks and structures of consciousness at practical and discursive levels.¹⁸ The diffusion of Western ludic body culture and the sporting habitus can also appear in such terms.

This diminishing of contrasts is only one side of the coin. There has also occurred an increase in the varieties of identities, styles, products, and practices. A complex power geometry involving established-outsider relations again underpins such a process. The representatives of more powerful civilisations wish to not only colonise other cultures, but also ensure that their own styles and practices are distinctive enough to reaffirm their group charisma and sense of civilised high status and taste. Power struggles within established groups also prompt the incorporation of aspects of other cultures and civilisations into the established civilisational form. By contrast, the representatives of less powerful civilisations seek to resist colonisation and the civilisational assumptions, styles, and practices of others. In doing so, they, too, restyle their own behaviour, customs, and ideas, and reaffirm outsider civilisational traditions in a more intense way.¹⁹ Processes of cross-over, fusion, and creolisation of cultures and civilisations also take place. But to return to established-outsider relations specifically, established groups were and are thus able to develop both a collective “we-image,” based on a sense of civilisational superiority and group charisma, as well as a “they-image” in which outsiders—and their play and games—were and are viewed with disdain and mistrust. Outsiders and their civilisation were stigmatised as inferior, and their practices as childlike and unsophisticated—colonial views of Africans and African ludic culture is a case in point. Yet, with the shift towards greater inter-dependence and the decrease of contrasts, a functional democratisation process occurs as with the “British” in their relations with former colonies. High status civilised behaviour seeped out from the zones of prestige. Despite refining their own behaviour in response, they found it more difficult to control outsiders—either those who successfully emulated their former masters or those who chose to resist. The making of modern sport, and the role that the British and their Empire played in the global diffusion of sports, resides in these terms.

Being mindful of the ways in which relatively less powerful groups tend to emulate the more powerful, to adopt and imitate their ways—often semi-consciously—this analysis was particularly sensitive to the personal, group, and national differences that flourished in the inter-connections between Ireland and the British Empire. These differences were reflected, empirically, in and through what was recorded in various “national” histories—by whom, when, how, and why—and in an abundance of material demonstrating the construction of a “we-image” of virtuous superiority throughout the Empire’s history and its institutions. Sport was embroiled in this process because it lay close to the heart of British Imperial culture.

The involvement of “Ireland” in the 1930 BEG constitutes an historical lacuna. Some official sports histories and state records offer contrary claims that a team represented Northern Ireland or the Irish Free State at these Games. It was not the case: such a portrayal may reflect elements of either

wilful amnesia, retrospective application of current Commonwealth entrants to early games, and/or skilful diplomatic moves. The importance of the BEG and the participation of a team from Ireland lies less with any of the athletic achievements and more with their wider diplomatic meaning. Nation branding was to the forefront in the course of which sport was both a means and an instrument of diplomacy. Three themes are inter-linked. First, the biographical, personal, and sporting histories of the athletes and officials capture something of the varied and contested notions of what it was to be “Irish,” “British,” and a member of the Empire. Second, this athletics festival reveals something of how sport became adopted, represented, communicated, and negotiated in the Empire, including its role in the maintenance of power relations between the colonies and the mother country. Finally, there were various forms of resistance, however soft, both to the diplomatic craft of the Imperial elite and attempts from above to impose identity.

“Irish” sportsmen at the 1930 BEG—there were five—were associated with the swearing of an oath of allegiance to the crown and the singing of “God Save the King,” saluting the same Union Flag, and honouring the Empire. It was in the shadows of the renunciation of the Union Flag by Irish Olympians some twenty years previously, and of a war fought between the “British” and “Irish” for the latter’s independence. In examining this case, four key contextual features stand out and permeate the discussion that follows. The local backdrop to the BEG was, first, one of disapproval from the Gaelic Athletics Association [GAA], the most prominent *indigenous* sports association for whom the protection and re-enforcement of a particular brand of national difference was a key objective, and whose support stretched to the political elite in Irish society. Second, these acts occurred in the political context of the “Irish Question”—the contestations concerning the constitutional and diplomatic status of the island within the Empire and in international sport.²⁰ Next, this sportive ritual solidified the emergence of the BEG and the subsequent formation of the British Empire Sports Federation—allowing for the re-enforcement of the Imperial ethos through administrative cooperation and associated sporting rituals around citizenship and pageantry. Last, but no less important, these events occurred at the waning of the Empire, when key diplomatic and sportive figures expressed growing anxiety about its health and future strength. The inaugural BEG thus provided an arena for identity politics on many inter-connected levels: a malleable and vibrant space where competitors, spectators, politicians, and diplomats alike could portray their varied national and Empire ideals and aspirations.

Whilst today’s Commonwealth Games [CG] are a thoroughly multinational affair the inaugural Games were held at a time when the British Empire was “dismantled and the Commonwealth was undergoing considerable growing pains.”²¹ Although not formally adopted, proposals came in the late nineteenth century for a pan-Britannic sports festival.²² Subsequently, an

Inter-Empire athletics championship ensued in 1911 as part of a Festival of Empire commemorating the coronation of King George V. As noted above, Robinson, an established athletics official from the most senior dominion of the Empire at the time, played a key negotiator's role in generating impetus for the inaugural BEG in the late 1920s. Lord Rochdale, the BOA chairman, noted, too, what he termed "the good relations which existed between competitors from all parts of the Empire" at the Amsterdam Olympics.²³ Following Robinson's diplomatic representations, according to *The Times*, a British national committee for the proposed games then formed, led by Lord Desborough, a successful British athlete in his own right, a founding member of the BOA, IOC member, politician, and president of the AAA. This committee claimed "the same willing co-operation ... it is confidently expected, will be forthcoming from every part of the Empire."²⁴ Two years previously, "England and Ireland [had] also considered the matter in a favourable light," and Scottish AAA officials were prepared to recommend that they also send an Empire Games team "on the principle that England, Ireland, and Scotland should be represented independently."²⁵

Six months prior to the hosting of the inaugural Games in Canada, Robinson and others had successfully sowed the diplomatic seeds for British support and the involvement of a British-led team from the "mother country." Driven by English Canada's Imperial connexion, this support, if not approval, is noteworthy given the specific context of the waning of the Empire. By the late nineteenth century, sport lay at the heart of British Imperial culture, and "it had certainly become a means of propagating Imperial sentiments."²⁶ However, there was also the tension between sport as an instrument for Imperial domination and a means of colonial/dominion resistance. In the diffusion of sport throughout the Empire, the British acted as the established group dealing with a range of outsiders. The degree to which they viewed local cultures as barbarian may well have varied, but they were convinced nonetheless of their own so-called civilised status. Their sports confirmed they were "gentlemen," the clubs and playing fields throughout the Empire acting as those zones of prestige,²⁷ which helped stratify relations, not only amongst the British themselves but also in their dealings with so-called natives. Access to regulated prestigious clubs and playing fields saw only chosen outsiders—such as English-Canadians in this case—permitted to emulate their Imperial masters through the adoption and promotion of their sports.

Such sentiments fed directly into the formation of the BEG that, like other forms of modern sport, was also embedded in centrifugal and centripetal forces of nationalism and the stimulation of emotions. The forces of nationalism were certainly evident in this time in Ireland where Irish constitutional law in 1936 removed references to the British Crown, Éire being a dominion of the Empire/Commonwealth until 18 April 1949—Easter Day—after the

passing of the *Republic of Ireland Act* in December 1948. The date for bringing the *Act* “had long been set” according to Ireland’s minister for External Affairs, Sean MacBride,²⁸ who “wanted no reason to arise that might encourage second thoughts.” The symbolism of the crown and the perceived incompatibility between Commonwealth membership and republican status were at the crux of this withdrawal. Just over one week later, India became the first republic to become a member of the Commonwealth. It followed the removal of the bar on a republic’s membership, the term “British” in its title, and the replacement of allegiance to the crown by acceptance of the British monarch as the symbolic head of a free association of independent Commonwealth countries. Some 60 years on, 32 member states are republics and a precedent exists for the re-entry of the Republic of Ireland should this be agreed in that South Africa joined in 1931, left in 1961, and returned to full membership in 1994. For the Commonwealth Reform Group established in Dublin in 2009, “too many Irish nationalists fail to appreciate that radical changes have taken place in the Commonwealth and few can see the potential in Ireland’s return” for both Ireland and the Commonwealth.²⁹ Suffice to say that an anomalous position still exists today in which the same athletes from the Ireland may represent different national groupings in various sporting competitions including the CG.³⁰ The recent roots of this incongruity lay in the early 1900s when Ireland’s former position in the Empire was ambiguous, complex, and, in many ways, unique.

From the late 1800s, Ireland was both Imperial and colonial in its relationship with the Empire,³¹ and Irish men reaped some economic rewards of Imperial expansion, for example, in the ways in which some members of a declining ascendancy class found employment in the military-civil administration and in soldiers’ service of the Empire. This complexity also reflected the codification of modern sport on the island. Some sportspeople held themselves, without difficulty, to be simultaneously British and Irish because they were less embroiled in a narrow nationalist view of identity politics. In this regard, “sport played a part in holding the Empire together and, also, paradoxically, in emancipating the subject nations from tutelage.”³² For others, however, co-Anglo-Irish identification was more uncomfortable, not least because of the creation of an artificial Protestant majority in Northern Ireland in 1922—the six counties remained within Great Britain. A deeply divided society resulted in which this majority, created primarily for stabilising purposes, had the opposite effect over time. Ethno-religious and political distinctions were reproduced in athletics on the island, “perhaps more than any other sport in any other country” according to one Irish sports writer.³³

In the modern era, athletics provided an opportunity for branding the emerging “Irish” state—diplomatically and in sportive terms—on “a stage far larger than either internal native sport or relatively restricted international

team sports had to offer.”³⁴ It was because the standard of “athletic sports in Ireland ... was phenomenal ... by any yardstick one chooses—depth of sporting talent, records, consistency, prize winning, etc..”³⁵ “Irish” athletes, many Irish-Americans, or those listed as competing for Britain were then world-renowned, winning 25 Olympic titles—39 medals in total—between 1896 and 1920. Nonetheless, an anti-English/British ideology was also clearly present in the consciousness of athletics in which there was a “palpable reluctance to see Irish athletes represent an English [sic] team” and prominent objections to the Union flag by Irish athletes like Peter O’Connor and Con Leahy in 1906.³⁶ In the decade preceding the inaugural BEG, the complexities of nation branding, and the associated use of sport as an instrument of diplomacy, was already in process in a number of ways. Irish Olympic teams selected for 1924 and 1928 included competitors from Northern Ireland,³⁷ whilst the 1932 team included none. At their annual meeting on 31 March 1924, BOA officials—General Reginald Kentish and Reverend Robert de Courcy-Laffan—sought unsuccessfully to confine Irish Olympic team selection to the Irish Free State. Likewise, the National Cyclists’ Union of Great Britain claimed jurisdiction over cyclists in Northern Ireland;³⁸ and in March 1928, an all-Ireland cross-country team competed in Ayr, Scotland that included one Ulsterman and had the Tricolour as its flag. In that same year, one field athlete represented the British Empire against the United States before competing for Ireland at the BEG two years later.³⁹ This complexity was present because the “Irish question” was closely interwoven with sport and various forms of cultural diplomacy, including the symbols of the anthem and flag.

During the 1920s and 1930s in particular, issues of national, political, and cultural identities on the island intertwined with questions concerning the organisation of sport on a pan-Ireland basis and allegiance in international competition. Although not without tension, unity continued in some sports federations on the island like hockey and rugby union after significant compromise around political symbols such as flags and anthems. Beyond the island, decisions by international federations about how to manage the eligibility of athletes following partition were inconsistent and had a different impact. In athletics, changes occurred in its governance that shaped the landscape of this sport indelibly. For around 40 years previously, at least three associations laid claim to the governance of athletics. The Irish Amateur Athletics Association [IAAA] was a “conservative-dominated” body with a predominantly Dublin power-base and, to a lesser extent, Belfast, which proscribed Sunday sport. Shunning “the modernization and internationalization of sporting competition” at the time “in part because it did not distinguish such modernization from anglicization,”⁴⁰ the GAA’s Athletics Council was founded in 1906, led by J. J. Keane and included Con Leahy (of the 1906 Olympic flag protest), promoted Sunday sport and

focused especially on field events. The Irish Cross Country Association established in 1881, three years before the others, focused on cross-country running; its membership overlapped with the IAAA.

None received recognition when the IAAF admitted the “United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland” to its membership in their inaugural meeting of 1913, giving the AAA “official” authority over athletics on the island. In 1923, the National Athletic and Cycling Association [NACA] emerged from a merger of the three Irish bodies. Despite retaining athletics in their title, the GAA ceded its governing role in this sport, a result of the efforts of J. J. Keane, president of the Irish Olympic Council, who persuaded them to “abandon their nominal interest”⁴¹ and sink “life-old differences.”⁴² The IAAF officially recognised the NACA in 1924, at which point the AAA appeared not to register any objections. Ulster athletics split in 1925, following simmering tensions between former IAAA branches based in Dublin and Belfast about the exclusion rule for crown forces. The Ulster branch had fragmented in May 1923 when the NACA voted to withdraw this rule and no Ulster delegates were present at the first annual NACA congress in May 1924. A dispute later emerged over the payment of cash prizes and the lenience of gambling at meetings held by certain clubs in Ulster. Led by ten clubs that eventually broke away from the NACA, the Northern Ireland Amateur Athletic Cycling and Cross Country Association [NIAACCA] established itself separately under the presidency of Thomas Moles MP.⁴³ The NACA council remained but without the majority of its Belfast clubs. This course gave fuel to deliberate lobbying by Unionists and some politicians in Northern Ireland—for instance, Sir Richard Dawson Bates, minister for Home Affairs in Stormont, and Lord Craigavon, the prime minister—who pursued an agenda of separate recognition and sought to use athletics as an instrument in this process.⁴⁴

Attempts arose in the late 1920s to re-integrate these organisations that led to the formation of a northern branch of the AAA in 1929, approved by the AAA in February 1930 and formally established on September 3, 1930, weeks after the conclusion of the inaugural BEG. Thus, by 1930 the position of the AAA on “the Irish question” was now clear: its jurisdiction extended to the six counties in Northern Ireland whilst the NACA was limited to the Irish Free State. Yet, for sportive reasons, the AAA observed that:

If, at some future date the two athletic associations of Ireland should express a unified wish that Ireland participate in all international competitions as a unified whole, the AAA would use every endeavour to secure that the IAAF and the IOC should recognise such a unity for the purposes of international competition.⁴⁵

In this same period of bifurcation, the Irish Free State gave £1,000 towards Ireland’s participation in the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics; the Stormont government declined. The informally adopted and yet contested Free State national anthem and flag—the *Soldier’s Song* [*Amhrán na bhFiann*] and the

Tricolour—accompanied Pat O’Callaghan’s victory ceremony for the hammer gold medal.⁴⁶ As noted, this was not the first case of “Irish” disaffection on the international athletics stage nor was it the only ideological claim to a particular brand of sportive nationalism and diplomacy in athletics.

In 1928, for instance, the Irish Olympic Council’s emphasis was on sending “a really Irish team” to Amsterdam “under an all-Ireland banner”⁴⁷ that had been proposed by a Northern representative as a more inclusive symbol. It was the “old Irish flag—a golden harp on a blue background.”⁴⁸ The ensuing discussion reflected competing sportive, diplomatic, and pragmatic ideals: for some the “question of a national flag will not interfere”; others from the Free State “contended that the flag should be the green, white and yellow flag.”⁴⁹ Keane, the Irish Olympic Council president, sought to maintain the autonomy of sport from politics:

we ... will use every means in our power to retain Ireland as an independent unit ... and if the politicians will only take a back seat, I have the greatest confidence that the flag question will not cause any difficulties... . It is my intention, after these games, to see if it is possible that the old Irish flag would be acceptable to the Olympic Council. We see no reason why, in the existing circumstances, a flag should make any difference to a man [sic] who wins for his country.⁵⁰

It appears that these discussions of the “old Irish flag” paved the way for its adoption two years later at the 1930 BEG, organised under the banner of the Empire but separate from the official auspices of the IOC.

Set in this context, there was a Janus-faced presence about the “Irish question” at the 1930 Games. Analysis of the associated primary and secondary data revealed many voices: those who lauded the Games and saw it as a key component of Imperial solidarity; some who denounced the event and the Empire; and others who sought to appropriate the Games for cultural, diplomatic, social, and sportive sentiment. In short, there were multiple, partial, and conflicting meanings attended to the Games and “Ireland’s” participation in them. This discussion of the Games draws on data generated primarily through extensive archival and historical research in present and former Commonwealth locations as well the IOC archives in Switzerland.⁵¹ As befits representations of “the nation” and of “others,” there was both emulation of and resistance to the “British” Empire sports project. Here, the focus is on the ways in which the diplomatic and sportive dimensions through the three elements of anthem, emblem, and flag came to life in the Empire and “Irish” nation.

That a team from Ireland participated in the BEG at all reflected the deployment of athletics by governments of the time as instruments of state and/or Empire policy; and in their use, particularly by non-state actors, as a form of multiple representation, communication, and negotiation. Also of relevance in this regard were the varied acceptance of the ideals of Imperialism, amateurism,

and internationalism within the broader confines of international sport. The Canadian organisers, led by Robinson, extended invitations to the AAA and some dominion members of the Empire, including Ireland. Robinson told the *Irish Independent*, when on a representative mission in Dublin, that he hoped to ensure that “Ireland” would be involved in the Games. The *Irish Independent* noted:

As far as the British team is concerned it is hoped to arrange that, though they will travel as one party, they will compete in the games under their several nationalities, and with England, Scotland, and Wales represented individually, it would indeed be a pity if Ireland were to fall behind.⁵²

By February 1930, the AAA had decided to enter a team and try to prevent associated costs from debarring “many notable athletes of the home countries,”⁵³ some of whom had already competed for the Empire against the United States. The same *Irish Times* correspondent downplayed the Empire connotation by noting, “we may hope that the reputation of Irish athletics will be extended by participation in the *Canadian Games*.”⁵⁴ With agreement that the cost for “British” and “Irish” competitors would be lower than from other dominions,⁵⁵ clear conditions for eligibility were set out in that athletes had to be amateur and *British subjects* with residency for at least six months of the country they wished to represent.⁵⁶

The inaugural Games were replete with Imperial pageantry. Teams paraded into the stadium and each dipped their national flag as they passed dignitaries.⁵⁷ Canadian Percy Williams swore an oath of allegiance to the crown on behalf of all athletes,⁵⁸ and medal presentation ceremonies included a raised arm salute by winning athletes.

Eleven nations competed at the first Games held in Hamilton, Ontario, including Ireland, whose team wore green blazers and competition singlets

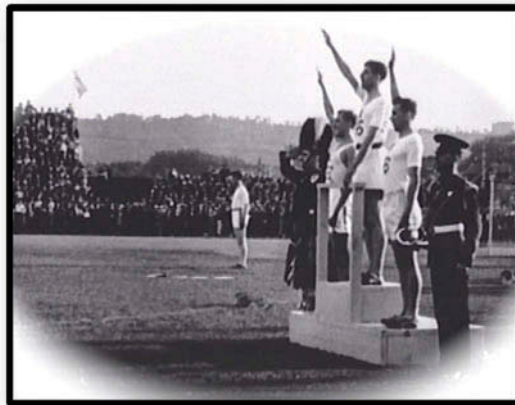


Figure 1. Podium Salute (still taken from Canadian National Archives, Film Footage).⁵⁹



Figure 2. Joe Eustace (still taken from film footage of 100 yards).⁶⁰



Figure 3. Athletics crests in Britton family collection.⁶⁴

displaying the shamrock, the same shirt, it appears, as that worn at the 1928 and 1932 Olympics.

In Hamilton, the Irish flag was a golden harp on a blue (or possibly green) background, the “old Irish flag” proposed in 1928—not the Tricolour used in prior and subsequent Olympics or the more “neutral” flag of the four



Figure 4. Ireland at the Opening Ceremony (still of film footage).

provinces already adopted by the Irish Rugby Football Union and Hockey and Golfing Unions.⁶¹

Five athletes—not three claimed by one writer⁶²—represented Ireland in track and field events;⁶³ Britton from Cavan, O'Malley from Mayo, Dickson from Belfast, Eustace from Dublin, and O'Reilly from Galway/Canada. Britton won silver in the hammer event. In an interview, Bill Britton, Junior, described his father's dislike of the GAA and his "burning desire to compete and to win . . . and there was nothing political in this." The claim is that Britton Senior was an athlete first and foremost, not a nationalist; he previously represented the British Empire in 1928.

O'Malley and Dickson missed their events due to the fog-delayed arrival of the team. Eustace, too, was late and competed in one of his two sprint events,⁶⁵ whilst the fifth competitor, O'Reilly, an Irish emigrant living in Canada, came ninth in the marathon. He wrote to the NACA "stating that he would be available for the marathon if required."⁶⁶ By inference then, O'Reilly was the sole Irish athlete pictured with the Irish flag in a still of unearthed film footage of the opening ceremony.

Yet, the very participation of this team had been in doubt, and the NACA sought assurances that a team could compete as "Ireland."⁶⁷ Indeed, no more than four weeks beforehand, the NACA considered an amendment that proposed that no "Irish" team compete. National sensitivities were evident in this vote as was the diplomatic opportunity attached to representation on the international stage. The NACA found itself in a double bind: some members could not agree with participation in an Empire event of this kind, enshrined as it was in an oath of allegiance and loyalty to the king. Others maintained the ideology that sport and politics did not mix, a theme that featured consistently throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Yet, more did not

want to add succour to the politics and separation of sport on the island.⁶⁸ Caught between the drive to maintain all-island unity, or at least withhold the pressures of segregation in athletics along 26 and six-county lines, and the desire to promote Ireland in international athletics and certainly amongst a British-led contingent, this amendment was defeated by 8 votes to 4. The Empire Games Committee confirmed, “no objection would be offered to the team representing Ireland and not the Irish Free State,” something noted at the NACA standing committee meeting on 29 July 1930.⁶⁹

The Canadian organisers made \$1,000 available towards the travel costs of the Irish team. Reflecting their Imperial athletic ethos and pre-ordained claims to any “Irish” success, the AAA also extended an “olive branch” by offering to pay the expenses of Pat O’Callaghan, were he and Britton to compete in the hammer.⁷⁰ The only proviso held that they “should compete for the British Empire v USA in Chicago after the Games. . . . A letter was ordered to be sent to the AAA thanking them for their courtesy,” and no action ensued from the NACA.

There were other notable objections to both Ireland’s involvement in the Games and the participation of “Irish” athletes at the proposed Chicago invitational. On 2 August, GAA President Sean O’Ryan wrote to the NACA to withdraw his association with “an appeal for funds for an organization who are prepared to take part in any such project”; nine days later, Croke(s) Athletic Club took the decision to disband on the grounds of the inclusion of their member, Joe Eustace, in the Irish team.⁷¹ Cork County Board also sent a telegram to the NACA standing committee about “*the Irish question*,” but no action ensued as there was no application from any Irish athlete to compete for the Empire—under AAA auspices—in the Chicago invitational.⁷²

At the conclusion of the Games, standards were presented to each team, for which Britton was the nominated Irish captain—see [Figure 5](#), fourth from



Figure 5. Presentation of Standards (Hamilton Public Library, record 32022189115583).

left: “these standards [were to be] taken home [and] to be preserved until the next games.”⁷³

The subsequent use of this standard in Empire Games later that decade, in 1934 and 1938, is unclear. Contradictory media and sports reports exist regarding a team representing Ireland and/or Northern Ireland in 1934 whilst CGF and other public records use different nomenclature for the 1938 team.⁷⁴ This change in national representation partly reflected the cementing of the bifurcation of athletics on the island in which General Eoin O’Duffy, the leader of the Blueshirts,⁷⁵ emerged as the NACA president in 1931. The fact that Moles, the NIAACCA president and an international selector for the Irish Football Association, was also prominent in Northern Ireland athletics around the same time ensured that the ideological split became deeper and more enduring. Moles was a militant Unionist, a “confidant and advisor to Edward Carson [a hard-line Ulster Unionist] and was involved in the Larne gunrunning of 1914 [to arm anti-Home Rule Irishmen],”⁷⁶ managing editor of the *Belfast Telegraph*, and speaker at Stormont, the parliament in Northern Ireland. Two years later, Northern Ireland banned the Tricolour under a regulation issued by the Six-County minister of Home Affairs under the *Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act*, one Unionist MP stating, “the tricolour was not being flown as a Dominion flag, but as a rebel flag.”⁷⁷ South of the political border and five years after Hamilton, attendance at the BEG continued to be eschewed by some members of the NACA.⁷⁸ Thus partition in the case of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland made for a different articulation of nation branding, which was the same in terms of its elements but different in terms of its symbolism. This had long-lasting consequences for athletics, in particular through to the present day.

Whilst diminutive in number, a team signifying Ireland captured something of the varied essence of nation branding. Perceptions existed at home—whatever that meant—that merely attending and representing one’s country in Canada was a “win.” Representing Ireland did not prevent the athletes from competing under an Empire anthem, emblem, or flag. Rather, it meant that they represented an athleticism that was personal and national—a variant that differed in tone from that associated with the exclusivity of Gaelic indigenous games—and one that sought to communicate the presence of Ireland on the international sports stage. It was important in light of the pressing eligibility question around the six counties of Northern Ireland. In fact, some of these athletes were comfortable representing the British Empire, and they were equally active in resisting identity formation “from above.” Their involvement in the BEG also revealed something of how the Empire adopted athletics to become an important means of expressing cultural diplomacy and harnessing a waning Imperial spirit through sport. For the inaugural Games to have

taken place, a category of “multi-actor diplomatic representation and communication focused on negotiating the terms of, and then producing, the event must have occurred already.”⁷⁹ Today, heralding the CG for promoting this same spirit, however rhetorical, and questions of identity politics still prevail. The BEG and its successor, the CG, have come to represent a form of public diplomacy and soft power for British and Commonwealth governments.⁸⁰ Indeed, the establishment of the Reform Group to promote Ireland’s possible re-entry into the Commonwealth means that, going forward, the CG is a fruitful case study for the interweaving of identity politics, public diplomacy, and statecraft. It is not least because of the specialised diplomacy of international sport related to accreditation that does not always coincide with sovereign states and recognised international borders.

This analysis addresses the link between the inaugural BEG and diplomacy, particularly in their use as forms of representation, communication, and negotiation. Non-state actors and sports administrators instigated sports diplomacy in the interwar era; Empire and dominion officials subsequently embraced it for their potential value. Importantly, the mixing of sport, politics, and diplomacy emerged alongside the internationalisation of modern sports and the desire to create recognisable nation-state and Imperial brands.

The study of the BEG and cultural diplomacy also provides an opportunity to explore the role that zones of prestige, emulation, and resistance play more generally in inter-civilisational encounters. These zones perform three main tasks, which help explain the interplay between sport, Empire, and diplomacy. First, they renew and confirm the identities of members of civilisations. London, for example, played this role but, in the context of twentieth century sport, and in terms of sport and Empire, there were also regional and local zones of prestige. Cricket clubs in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore not only were venues where players and officials would meet to play the game, but also were spaces in which Imperial power was on display and where local elites conducted aspects of this power. Second, zones of prestige attracted sojourners, students, and visitors. Drawn to the civilisational magnetism and cultural charisma of Imperial Britain, people sought to understand British success and involve the British in Imperial developments. Visits by Pierre de Coubertin, for example, confirmed his belief that this success had connexion to the sport and games of the British, whilst Robinson’s trip to London also reflected a desire for British approval and involvement. He was not alone in such beliefs—a range of students and visitors returned home, established inter-civilisational networks, and brought with them the values and practices of the British, including their sports. Third, these zones of prestige acted, and continue to act today, as networks where ideas, religious beliefs, and

social formations could and can be examined, discussed, and, crucially, exchanged. In terms of sports and games, British zones of prestige acted as magnets, but this involved not only the outflow and diffusion of games and sports. The established Imperial centre also experienced the inflow of ideas and practices—sports such as polo and badminton originating in South Asia flowed back from outposts of Empire and contained within them the imprint of other civilisational traditions.

Zones of prestige can also, as this case study shows, prompt rejection and hostility on the part of people from outsider civilisations. In phases of colonisation, indifference to, or outright rejection of, the civilisational practices of the more powerful established group also occur.⁸¹ Rejection can also be a feature of long-term antagonism between members of different cultures. Whilst established-outsider relations are thus contoured by an amalgam of political, economic, and social processes, inter-civilisational encounters are also based on dynamics that involve social networks of intellectuals, cultural workers, and organisations that provide a base for cultural production and consumption. Attracted to the zone of prestige, sojourners become pupils and followers. On returning home, they became keen advocates of what they had learnt and, in so doing, built successful careers—in the case of sport, as players, coaches, teachers, or administrators. The development of the BEG/CG is a case in point.

Distinctive to this study was the ways in which the BEG revealed the processes associated with “sport as diplomacy” and “sport as an instrument of diplomacy” from multiple perspectives in the period under examination. In this sense, the BOA/AAA in Britain and its virtuous “we-image”; Canada’s state and non-state actors who sought to bolster their senior dominion status through leadership of the Games; and, importantly; for Ireland—its athletes, the competing athletics federations, Northern Unionist politicians, and other prominent sports leaders/organisations.

No one seems to have wanted to remember or celebrate, to any great degree, the involvement of Ireland in the inaugural BEG and its silver medal success in sporting and/or political terms. Perhaps, not surprisingly, the NACA and the GAA saw the Games as important at the time for differing reasons but, falling between the Olympics—then, and now, a first order international multi-sport event—the 1930 BEG remain relatively invisible today precisely because of their comparative archival and historical absence. Neither has research to date indicated the explicit deployment of soft power by the Irish Free State in relation to the BEG, perhaps because of its stage of development. Part of the explanation may lay with the fact that the relative autonomy of sport and its lower status hierarchy outweighed the interventions of “the state” at that time. Equally present was a reluctance on the part of government—led by William Thomas Cosgrave—to make any formal statements about the anthem or

to discuss this in *Dáil Éireann*.⁸² Evidence for this also appeared in 1939 with Eamon De Valera's, the *taoiseach*'s, reluctance to intervene officially in the governance of athletics.⁸³ Any external-facing diplomatic resources at the time appeared to be devoted to other matters, for instance, signing accords with other Empire dominions at the 1932 Ottawa Imperial Conference and being an active—if not critical—member of the League of Nations.

Building on this analysis of the Games, the formation of the British Empire Games Federation in 1932 enabled sportspeople—many of whom held other public positions—to play an important role in its subsequent development, and that of the Commonwealth, by promoting circulation and interconnections. The 1930 BEG, and those that followed in that decade, had utility in underlining and re-enforcing Empire solidarity in the face of internal and external push and pull factors. The Games continued to fulfil this role such that today those closely associated with them view them as “the great four-yearly effervescence of the Commonwealth spirit on the sporting fields,”⁸⁴ a medium through which diplomatic messages are clearly conveyed.

The significance of this work lies not just in the socio-historical dimension alone. Sport plays a central role today in current identity and public diplomacy debates, particularly in dividing and divided societies such as North and South Korea, Cyprus, Israel, and Palestine, to pursue relations to advance the interests and expand the values of those represented. The involvement of Ireland in the inaugural BEG is of some contemporary relevance then, given the connexion between sport and post-Imperial identities, and the role that sport continues to play in the transitioning from Imperial to Commonwealth unity and the unsettled state of Britain. Indeed, given the recent political rapprochement and the historic visits of the British queen and future king—Elizabeth II and Prince Charles—to the Republic, the possible re-entry of Ireland into the CG may come, in time, to be considered on its own merits, more than ever since the 1930s.⁸⁵ “Get Ireland back into the Commonwealth” might well have been the headline in 2011 at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting because part of the drafted text, later removed for diplomatic reasons, laid out this very argument. One member of the Eminent Persons Group [EPG] noted, “there was a feeling by some members ... that Ireland had to reach a decision about re-entering the Commonwealth on its own.”⁸⁶ According to Sir Ronald Sanders and the EPG, this concern—a reflection of their sensitivity to the deep roots of the “Irish question”—outweighed the perceived benefits of the proposal. In that vein, establishing the Reform Group in 2009 featured the diplomatisation of the CG, and Ireland's involvement therein, as one means of amplifying their aspirational message.

Challenging orthodoxy on either side of the Irish Sea and north and south of the political border is never easy, not least because national and sporting

designations are complicated on the island. Nelson Mandela used the Springbok jersey symbolically to suggest reconciliation in South Africa. It is not possible as it stands to anticipate that Martin McGuinness, the *Sinn Féin* deputy first minister of Northern Ireland, Arlene Foster, first minister and leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, or Enda Kenny, Ireland's *taoiseach* at the time of writing, might follow likewise with an athletics singlet any time soon. This situation is because the peace process has generated a double bind spiral in which Catholic Nationalists and Protestant Unionists/Loyalists in Northern Ireland find themselves becoming more tightly bound. There may be logical sporting reasons for the participation by athletes from the Republic in the CG: their counterparts in Northern Ireland do so for a range of reasons, some for identity politics and others as a means of building up competitive international experience. Whether or not athletics in Ireland unify—as officials in the 1930s hoped it would—is an on-going question. And if nation-branding and public diplomacy are indeed “sisters under the skin,” as Jan Melissen suggests,⁸⁷ then it will be necessary to maintain a watchful eye on any attempts to leverage the CG as one diplomatic means in Ireland's potential re-entry into the Commonwealth.

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Notes

1. There is also an important story in the nomenclature concerning “Ireland,” “Irish,” “Éire,” “Irish Free State,” “Northern Ireland,” “North of Ireland,” and so on in which the terms can refer variously to the people on the island, its athletics bodies, its states, citizens, and representative athletes. Quotation marks illustrate the contentious nature of these terms and the associated complexities of identity politics on the island in the period under examination. See Mary Daly, “The Irish Free State/Éire/Republic of Ireland/Ireland: A Country by Any Other Name?” *Journal of British Studies*, 46/1 (2007), 72–90.
2. Stuart Murray and Geoffrey A. Pigman, “Mapping the Relationship Between International Sport and Diplomacy,” *Sport in Society*, 17/9 (2014), 1099. Cf. Geoffrey A. Pigman, “International Sport and Diplomacy's Public Dimension: Governments, Sporting Federations and the Global Audience,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 25/1 (2014); Brian Stoddart, “Sport, Culture and Post-Colonial Relations: A Preliminary Analysis of the Commonwealth Games,” “The 1984 Olympic Scientific Congress Proceedings,” *Sport and Politics*, 7 (1986); Joseph Maguire, “European Body Cultures and the Making of the Modern World: Zones of Prestige and Established-Outsider Relations,” *Human Figurations*, 1/1 (2012), 1–16. For an overview of available literature and an argument for taking the link between sport and diplomacy more seriously, see Heather L. Dichter, “Sport history and diplomatic history,” *H-Diplo Essay* No. 122 (17 December 2014):

- <https://networks.h-net.org/system/files/contributed-files/e122.pdf>; and the special issue “Sport and Diplomacy,” *Sport in Society*, 17/9 (2004).
3. Murray and Pigman, “Mapping the relationship,” 1101.
 4. “Invitation to Irish Teams,” *Irish Independent* (20 February 1930).
 5. Ibid.
 6. “Athletics in Canada,” *Irish Times* (5 February 1930). James McNeill, an Irish politician and diplomat, who served as first high commissioner to London and second governor-general of the Irish Free State, held this post. He was also brother to an Irish nationalist leader and declined an invitation to attend the annual college races at Trinity College Dublin on 12 June 1929, which played *God Save the King*.
 7. “Empire Games in Canada,” *Times* (4 February 1930).
 8. “British Empire Games: An Appeal for Funds,” Ibid. (27 June 1930).
 9. Murray and Pigman, “Mapping the Relationship,” 1099.
 10. See Section C, Code of Conduct, A, 33: <http://www.thecgf.com/about/constitution.pdf>.
 11. See <http://www.commonwealth-of-nations.org/xstandard/Directory.pdf>.
 12. See, for example, Tom Hunt, “‘In our Case, it Seems Obvious the British Organising Committee Piped the Tune’: The Campaign for Recognition of ‘Ireland’ in the Olympic Movement, 1935–1956,” *Sport in Society*, 18/7 (2015), 835–52.
 13. Murray and Pigman, “Mapping the Relationship,” 1100.
 14. Andrew Linklater, “Norbert Elias, the ‘Civilising Process’ and the Sociology of International Relations,” *International Politics*, 41/1 (2004), 3–35.
 15. Geoffrey A. Pigman and Simon Rofe, “Sport and Diplomacy: An Introduction,” *Sport in Society*, 17/9 (2014), 1096.
 16. For instance, Edward Said noted the ideology and discourse of Orientalism through which the “West” constructed and justified their involvement in the “East”—the non-Western world—represented as “other” in Imperial relations. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (NY, 1978).
 17. Maguire, *Global Sport*, 47–56.
 18. Johan Arnason, “Civilizational Patterns and Civilizing Processes,” *International Sociology*, 16/3 (2001), 387–405.
 19. Castells’ work on resistance identity—for instance, drawing on ideas of the nation—bears some similarities here: “generated by those actors that are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, this building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society, as Calhoun proposes when explaining the emergence of identity politics.” Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (London, 2009), 8.
 20. John Keane, “The Irish Free State and the British Empire,” *Journal of the British Institute for International Affairs*, 5/1 (1926), 284–99. Searches of the Chatham House archive—the British Institute for International Affairs—reveal no formal consideration of sport in the Institute’s papers from 1922 to 1930.
 21. Michael Dawson, “Acting Global, Thinking Local: ‘Liquid Imperialism’ and the Multiple Meanings of the 1954 British Empire & Commonwealth Games,” *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 23/1 (2006), 4.
 22. In 1891, Reverend Astley Cooper suggested a Pan-Britannic Contest and Festival and “the name which I should choose for the gathering would be the ‘United English Festival,’ or the ‘English Festival.’” “The Proposed Pan-Britannic or Pan-Anglian Contest and Festival,” *Times* (30 October 1891). Australia too, through Richard Coombes, President of the New South Wales Amateur Athletic Association, claimed heritage of the idea of an Empire Games. *The Age* (15 January 1938).

23. "Empire Games," *Ibid.* (4 February 1930). It is also feasible that he, and the BOA, sought to retain a degree of influence over developments in Empire athletics.
24. *Ibid.*
25. "Proposed Empire Games," *Ibid.* (24 August 1928).
26. James Mangan, *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society* (London, 1992), 1.
27. Maguire, "European Body Cultures."
28. Shridath Ramphal, "Ireland: Time to Come Home," *Ireland the Commonwealth: Towards Membership* (Dublin, 2009), 152.
29. Roy Garland, "Foreword," *Ibid.*, 12.
30. Katie Liston, Robin Gregg, and Jim Lowther, "Elite Sports Policy and Coaching at the Coalface," *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 5/3 (2012), 341–62.
31. Keith Jeffery noted "a belief in the enhanced importance of the Empire to Irish affairs which was characteristic of both Unionists and at least moderate nationalists during that period of political, cultural and intellectual crisis." Keith Jeffery, "An Irish Empire"? *Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996), 2. *The Irish Times* also noted, "Irishmen ought to find peculiar pride in the fact that men of their race have done so much to create [the Empire]." "Tasks of Empire," *Irish Times* (23 February 1929).
32. Harold Perkin, "Teaching the Nations how to Play Sport: Sport and Society in the British Empire and Commonwealth," in James Mangan, ed., *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society* (London, 1992), 211.
33. Pdraig Griffin, *The Politics of Athletics, 1850–1990* (Ballinamore, 1990), iii.
34. Kevin McCarthy, *Gold, Silver and Green: The Irish Olympic Journey 1896–1924* (Cork, 2010), 4.
35. *Ibid.*, 6.
36. *Ibid.*, 8.
37. According to *The Irish Times*, eight of the 28 were from Northern Ireland in 1928. "Letter to the Editor: Ireland at the Olympic Games," *Irish Times* (19 July 1928).
38. See "Olympic Games," *Irish Times* (1 April 1924), in which "an interesting Irish point was raised" concerning the eligibility position of Ulster teams. J.J. Keane of the Irish Olympic Council responded in which, on behalf of the IOC, he laid claim to "the nationality of every Irishman resident in England, Scotland and Wales" and "to every Irish man, whether he resides in the North or South." Any Irishman resident in Britain, who refused to compete for Ireland in the Olympics, if so called, was also to be "debarred from competing for Great Britain." "Ireland's Status: Mr Keane's Reply to General Kentish," *Irish Times* (5 April 1924). See also "Athletics and Cycling—The Secession of Northern Clubs," *Ibid.* (20 May 1929).
39. The latest list of Irish international athletics caps acknowledges Bill Britton's representation of Ireland at the 1930 BEG and his many national titles won under the auspices of the GAA and IAAA; but it excludes his AAA titles and his involvement in the British Empire versus America athletics meet organised by the AAA on 11 August 1928. Evidence for other 'Irish' involvement at this 1928 meet can be found in J.A. Lucas, "The Greatest Gathering of Track and Field Olympians: The British Empire versus the U.S.A., 1920, 1924 and 1928," *Journal of Olympic History*, 7 (September 1999), 42, 43. It records McSweeney as being a member of the same hammer-throw relay team as Britton and McEachern as a runner in the 4 x 880 yards Empire team. The *NY Times* (12 August 1928) and *Western Daily Press* (13 August 1928) record N. McEachern (Ireland) as having participated in the two-mile relay. This is most likely Norman McEachern, a member of Clonliffe Harriers AC (Dublin), winner of the 800 yards at the 1924 *Tailteann* Games and Irish Olympian at the 1924 and 1928 Games. In its 1930 Jubilee Souvenir book, the

- AAA lists McEachern as a competitor from the Irish Free State. In the same book, Olympic hammer winner, O'Callaghan, is titled by the AAA as representing Ireland.
40. McCarthy, *Gold, Silver and Green*, 10.
 41. Tom Hunt, "The National Athletic Association of Ireland and Irish Athletics, 1922–1937: steps on the road to athletic isolation," *Sport in Society*, 19/1 (2016), 132.
 42. "Letter to the Editor: Ireland at the Olympic Games," *Irish Times* (19 July 1928).
 43. Because of changes to the IAAF's constitution in 1934, the NACA(I) were constrained to 26 county jurisdiction. This they refuted, which led to their suspension in 1935.
 44. Control of athletics in Northern Ireland, 1929–1965, CAB [Cabinet Archives, Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast] 9/B/160/1. This file also includes correspondence from the Belfast Telegraph to Stormont Minister for Finance, Pollock, referring to 'crookedness from Dublin' regarding the participation of RUC athletes. Dawson Bates, Minister for Home Affairs, had previously written to Barclay, Secretary of the AAA in May 1929, entreating him to 'use your influence' 'in connection with the crux which has arisen regarding the position of clubs which are affiliated' to 'the North of Ireland AAC and CCA.' That same year, RUC Inspector General Wickham resisted the attempts of Dawson Bates to urge him to sanction officers who competed in athletics meetings organised by the NACA. Regarding it as 'an unwarrantable interference', he asserted the rights of officers 'to do what the like' 'in their spare time and on leave' 'provided that they do not impair their efficiency as police.' Wickham also countenanced the opening up of 'a hornet's nest' 'if the North becomes a separate unit then at all matches it will have to have separate representation ... Besides being wholly illogical I do not think that the question of the Dominion status of the Free State can be confined to one sport only.' Craigavon, Stormont leader, also wrote to Desborough to thank the latter 'for promising to do what you can to carry through the affiliation of the Northern Ireland Association to the English Amateur Athletic Association, which will be a great boon to us here.'
 45. Minutes of the General Committee of the Amateur Athletic Association held at the Polytechnic Institute, London, 15 February 1930, GB [AAA Archives, Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham] 150 AAA, 1880–1991.
 46. O'Callaghan stated: "I am glad of my victory, not of the victory itself, but for the fact that the world has been shown that Ireland has a flag, that Ireland has a national anthem, and in fact that we have a nationality." "Why double Olympic Champion O'Callaghan Didn't Compete in Berlin 1936," *History Ireland*, 20/4 (2012): <http://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/why-double-olympic-champion-ocallaghan-didnt-compete-in-berlin-1936/>.
 47. "An Irishman's Diary: Ireland and the Olympic Games," *Irish Times* (23 May 1928).
 48. "Olympic Games: Question of Irish Flag—An Objection to the Tricolour," *Ibid.* (30 May 1928).
 49. *Ibid.*
 50. *Ibid.*
 51. These included government, library, and sports archives in Dublin [National Archives, National Library, and Croke Park], Belfast [Public Records Office of Northern Ireland], London [Commonwealth Games Federation and Chatham House], Birmingham [AAA Archives, Cadbury Research Library], and Canada [Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa; Hamilton Public Library, Hamilton] including newspapers and other relevant written material. Oral interviews were also conducted with a surviving family member of a BEG competitor in 1930, amateur athletics historians, and older members of selected "Irish" athletics clubs. This research also uncovered film footage, photographs, and memorabilia of the BEG cited here for the first time.

52. "Empire Games in Canada: Invitation to Irish Teams," *Irish Independent* (20 February 1930).
53. "Athletics in Canada," *Irish Times* (5 February 1930).
54. Ibid. Italics added.
55. *The Times*' reference to cost stipulates Britain: "Empire Games in Canada: A British Committee"; "Empire Games," both (4 February 1930).
56. Commonwealth Games Federation, *Official Report—British Empire Games—Hamilton, Canada 1930* (London, 1930).
57. *Empire Games Film Footage*, V1 [Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa] 8502-0086.
58. The wording of this oath was: "We declare that we are all loyal subjects of His Majesty the King Emperor, and will take part in the British Empire Games in the spirit of true sportsmanship, recognizing the rules which govern them and the desirous of participating in them for the honour of our Empire and for the Glory of Sport." *British Empire Games*, (London 1930), Timetable of Event, HPL [Hamilton Public Library, Hamilton, Ontario] Record 32022189115229.
59. HPL Records 32022189115476, 32022189115484, 32022189115443; *Empire Games Film Footage*, V1 8502-0086.
60. Jack O'Reilly displayed this shamrock in the marathon on 22 August 1930. HPL Record 32022189066117.
61. HPL Record 32022189115567. A gold Irish harp on a blue field is also associated historically with the flag and coat of arms of Leinster, an Irish province, and with the arms of the king of Ireland dating back to the thirteenth century. The Irish Free State adopted the coat of arms of Ireland as its emblem in 1922.
62. See Bob Phillips, *Honour of Empire, Glory of Sport* (Manchester, 2000), 12.
63. The Irish Amateur Boxing Association noted a request from the Empire Games Committee but decided, "that it would not be possible to take part ... owing to the fact that intensive preparations were being made for the next Olympic Games." "I.A.B. A. Affairs," *Irish Times* (27 February 1930).
64. See also America versus British Empire Programme, AAA Archives. Britton won numerous international titles in triangular meets against Scotland, England, and Achilles AC (Oxbridge). He was also AAA champion and an *Aonach Tailteann* winner.
65. Though registered for Croke(s) AC, Eustace was also a member of Dublin University Harriers and Athletic Club. "The story goes that he was given an allowance as long as he remained a student and completed his studies. He repeated years at university supported by his allowance. He never got a degree or any qualification from Dublin University." E-mail communication from Cyril Smyth, chairman of the Dublin University Central Athletic Club, 15 September 2014.
66. "British Empire Games: An Ireland Side for Canada: Irishmen and the AAA Team v America," *Irish Times* (30 July 1930).
67. "AAA's surprising request," *Irish Independent* (19 July 1930). The *NY Times* (11 March 1930) cites Robinson's diplomatic visit to Britain and Ireland. "Efforts are being made to have separate teams representing England, Scotland and the Irish Free State, he explained, but if this does not prove possible there will be one large team representative of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as a team from the Irish Free State."
68. Cassidy and Healy proposed not to send a team whilst Rowlette strongly urged the acceptance of the invitation. Proved possible so far from the current material, there was some suggestion of "anyone but the Brits" and others may have had a sportive motivation.
69. "British Empire Games: An Ireland Side for Canada: Irishmen and the AAA Team v America," *Irish Times* (30 July 1930).

70. “AAA’s surprising request,” *Irish Independent* (19 July 1930). Numerous references exist in the AAA archives to a lack of British success in field events that partly explain the olive branch to O’Callaghan and Britton for the proposed Chicago invitational. O’Callaghan previously refused to represent Britain on the grounds of Anglo–Irish relations and Ireland’s friendship with the United States. He remained loyal to the NACAI in 1936, which prevented him from competing at the Berlin Olympics.
71. “Empire Games,” *Kerryman* (2 August 1930); “Club Disbanded: Crokes’ Protest against NACA,” *Irish Independent* (15 August 1930).
72. *Irish Times* (30 July 1930), emphasis added. Given that at least two “Irish” athletes—from Dublin and Cavan (previously Tipperary)—had represented the Empire in 1928, this possibility of action two years later represented a conscious shift in the position of some athletics clubs on the island about questions of international representation.
73. “Conclusion of Empire Games,” *Irish Independent* (25 August 1930).
74. In 1934, Ireland had representation in lawn bowls captured in footage; a boxing team from the Royal Ulster Constabulary represented Northern Ireland and achieved medal success [CGF Archives]; and Eddie Boyce (Belfast) competed for Northern Ireland in the long jump—athletic singlet courtesy of North Belfast Harriers. There are also varied archival assignments for Paddy Bermingham in the 1934 BEG—as Irish Free State or Northern Ireland. Our research indicates continued nuance in 1938 despite claims that Ireland no longer competed: a 1938 CGF programme lists a team from Ireland in lawn bowls—W. Clarke, singles competitor; elsewhere in this document is a photograph of a team entitled “Northern Ireland.” The *Sydney Morning Herald* (9 Feb 1938) also record Clarke (Ireland) in bowls. G. Bolsover, *Who’s Who and Encyclopaedia of Bowls* (Nottingham, 1959), 406–07 indicates a 32-county basis to lawn bowls in Ireland and a stronghold in the Northeast. It records Ireland as runners-up and unsuccessful in the 1934 and 1938 BEG, respectively.
75. The Blueshirts was the nickname used for a short-lived right-wing organization in the Free State in the 1930s. O’Duffy was also president of the Irish Olympic Council and commissioner of *An Garda Síochána*, the Irish police force. He is described as “the chief sports” evangelist of the Irish revolutionary generation. Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O’Duffy: A Self-Made Hero* (Oxford, 2007), 141.
76. Paul Rouse, *Sport in Ireland* (Oxford, 2015), 241
77. “Tricolour Banned in Six Counties,” *Irish Times* (15 December 1933).
78. “Athletics and Politics: Decision of the NACA Congress,” *Irish Times* (4 February 1935).
79. Murray and Pigman, “Mapping the Relationship,” 1110.
80. For instance, developing and post-colonial countries have self-consciously pursued the CG for international status and economic and cultural legacies. Diplomatic contexts were also noted in Canada’s “prodigious ... efforts to develop the Gleneagles Declaration in 1978 which set the stage for their subsequent leadership of the Commonwealth in the fight against South African apartheid.” Donald Macintosh and Donna Greenhorn, “Canadian Diplomacy and the 1978 Edmonton Commonwealth Games,” *Journal of Sport History*, 19/1 (1992), 51.
81. Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 464.
82. See Ewan Morris, “‘God Save the King’ Versus ‘The Soldier’s Song’: The 1929 Trinity College National Anthem Dispute and the Politics of the Irish Free State,” *Irish Historical Studies*, 31/121 (1998), 72–90.
83. Memorandum of Meeting between NACAI and *An Taoiseach*/Minister for External Affairs, Eamon de Valera, 23 January 1939, TSCH [National Archives Ireland, Dublin] 3/S11053A; memorandum to secretary Department of External Affairs, 6 January 1948, DFA [National Archives Ireland, Dublin] 6/415/32.

84. Reform Group, *Ireland and the Commonwealth. Towards Membership* (Dromara, 2011), 38.
85. Unaware, it seems, of the involvement of a team from Ireland at the 1930 BEG and of Birmingham's participation in 1934, the *Irish Independent* noted in 2014 "there must be Irish athletes who must entertain the thought that participation in the Commonwealth Games would be a good opportunity to get competitive experience." "We influenced the early Commonwealth, so it's a pity that Ireland isn't taking part in Games," *Irish Independent* (28 August 2014).
86. Sir Ronald Sanders, "The EPG Wanted Ireland Back in the Commonwealth" (13 December 2013), 23: <http://commonwealth-opinion.blogs.sas.ac.uk/2013/the-epg-wanted-ireland-back-in-the-commonwealth/>.
87. Jan Melissen, "The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice," in idem., *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*. (Basingstoke, 2006), 19.

Notes on contributors

Katie Liston is Senior Lecturer in the Social Sciences of Sport, Ulster University, Jordanstown. After completing her PhD at University College Dublin, she worked at the University of Chester for a number of years, co-directing the Chester Centre for Research in Sport and Society. Since 2008, she has been a member of the Sport and Exercise Sciences Research Institute at Ulster where she actively researches and publishes on various aspects of the sport-identity nexus, including gender, sexuality, pain and injury, and national identity.

Joseph Maguire is past-president of both the International Sociology of Sport Association and the International Sociological Association Research Committee 27. He has published extensively on sport, culture, and society and has received two major awards: the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport Distinguished Service Award (2010) and the International Sociology of Sport Association Honorary Member's Award (2011). In 2012, he received the title of Academician of the Academy of Social Sciences and is currently a Visiting Professor at the University of Copenhagen; recently, the University of the Western Cape awarded him the title of Professor Extraordinaire. His recent work includes *Reflections on Process Sociology and Sport* (2013) and, since 2014, editor of *Social Sciences in Sport*.