

Institution: De Montfort University		
Unit of Assessment: 28		
Title of case study: Transforming Popular Understanding of Sports History: The International Centre for Sports History and Culture and Public Engagement		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000–present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Matthew Taylor	Professor	2002–present
Tony Collins	Research Fellow	1999–2006
	Professor	2011–2018
Neil Carter	Senior Lecturer	2002–present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014–present		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact <p>The research of the International Centre for Sports History and Culture (ICSHC) has changed the attitudes of sporting stakeholders from the boardroom to the terraces regarding the value and popular understanding of the history of sport at national and international levels. This has included: reshaping ideas of football's history among fans through its regular column in Leicester City Football Club's award-winning programme; contributing to a MOOC on the history of English football that challenged orthodox perceptions of learners across 117 countries; and, through Tony Collins's ground-breaking research, defining and leading rugby league's official historical and heritage work.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>Since 1996, the research of ICSHC historians has significantly reshaped popular perceptions of the history of sport. Through a concerted and extensive programme of public engagement, it has stimulated people outside academia – both nationally and internationally – to think of sports history as a form of social history and to reconceptualise sport's wider role in society, away from the sporting arena.</p> <p>The ICSHC is the leading institute for the study of the history of sport in the UK and the publications of Neil Carter, Tony Collins and Matthew Taylor, all based at the ICSHC, have been instrumental both in underpinning popular understanding and for establishing sport as a respected, academic field of historical enquiry. In particular, their work on the football codes in Britain and on the global stage has been consumed by mass audiences at sports events as well as informing exhibitions and online educational initiatives.</p> <p>Carter's work since 2006 has focused on the interconnected histories of coaching, medicine and football. His work on the history of medicine and sport [R2] explores the complex ways in which medicine and health impacted upon sport at elite and recreational level. In arguing that sport was a key dimension of the history of the body and health, it built upon his work on football management and its changes in the light of increasing commercialisation and media interest in post-war Britain [R1].</p> <p>Collins' work on the rugby codes represents a ground-breaking contribution to the history of sport and the social history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain. Following on from his research on <i>Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain</i> (2006) [R3], Collins has utilised the history of rugby union to shed new light on class relations, masculinity, ethnicity, regional and national identities, transnationalism and imperial relations. In focusing on the interconnected histories of social class and gender, he has challenged recent historiographical attempts to minimise both. In <i>The Oval World</i> (2015) [R4], a book written for a trade publisher and a non-</p>		

academic audience, Collins created a sophisticated and detailed work of global and transnational history through the lens of one of the world's most popular pastimes. Both books won the British Society of Sports History's Lord Aberdare Prize for the best work of academic sports history.

Taylor is one of the UK's foremost academic historians of football. As well as authoring a definitive study of both the historiography and history of British football (2008) [R5], plus an in-depth historical analysis of the Football League [R6], Taylor has innovated by challenging nation-based accounts and exploring transnational histories and connected identities in his studies of football. Nationally focused sports histories are also prevalent in the US, and by moving beyond national boundaries Taylor is helping the discipline to widen its field.

3. References to the research

- [R1] Carter, N. (2006) *The Football Manager: A History*, Abingdon: Routledge; ISBN: 9780415375382

This peer-reviewed book was shortlisted for the British Society of Sports History Aberdare Prize for Best Book 2007. Part of Routledge's Sport in the Global Society Series, it was reviewed in numerous academic journals including the *English Historical Review* and *Contemporary British History*.

- [R2] Carter, N. (2012) *Medicine, Sport and the Body: A Historical Perspective*, London: Bloomsbury Academic; ISBN: 9781849660679

This peer-reviewed book was shortlisted for the British Society of Sports History Aberdare Prize for Best Book 2013. It was a product of a joint DMU and the University of Manchester Wellcome Trust-funded project on a history of sports medicine and was reviewed in the journal *Social History of Medicine*.

- [R3] Collins, T. (2006) *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain*, Abingdon: Routledge; ISBN: 9780415396141

This peer-reviewed book won the British Society of Sports History Aberdare Prize for Best Book 2007 and was a runner-up (honorable mention) for the North American Society for Sport History Best Book Award 2007. The book was reviewed in both the *Journal of British Studies* and *Labour History: A Journal of Labour and Social History*.

- [R4] Collins, T. (2015) *The Oval World: A Global History of Rugby*, London: Bloomsbury; ISBN: 9781408843703

The book won the British Society of Sports History Aberdare Prize for Best Book 2016, and was shortlisted for Rugby Book of the Year. It was widely reviewed in national newspapers, including the *Sunday Times* and the *Guardian*.

- [R5] Taylor, M. (2008) *The Association Game: A History of British Football*, Abingdon: Pearson; ISBN: 9780582505964

This peer-reviewed book was shortlisted for the British Society of Sports History Aberdare Prize for Best Book 2008. It was reviewed in both *Sport in History* and *History Today*.

- [R6] Taylor, M. (2005) *The Leaguers: The Making of Professional Football in England 1900–1939*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press; ISBN: 978-0853236399

This peer-reviewed book was shortlisted for the British Society of Sports History Aberdare Prize for Best Book 2006. It was reviewed in both the *American Historical Review* and the *Journal of British Studies*.

4. Details of the impact

This case study's impact has changed popular understanding of sports history, both nationally and internationally, and shaped the heritage policies of sporting bodies, specifically the Rugby Football League (RFL). ICSHC research has underpinned these changes through its

partnerships on heritage projects, with educational providers and through the Leicester City Football Club (LCFC) Matchday programme column.

HISTORY COLUMN FOR LEICESTER CITY FOOTBALL CLUB MATCHDAY PROGRAMME

Since August 2013, DMU historians have written a 'History Makers' column in the LCFC programme which has impacted on popular understanding of the history of the club and football more generally. Carter initially wrote a regular 500-word column on football's history, its significant events and pioneering individuals. From 2017, Taylor took over responsibility, with contributions also from ICSHC colleagues and PhD students. Up until the end of the 2019/2020 season, a total of 149 articles had been published with 5,000 copies printed for each game for a potential readership of 700,000 people; since the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions all programmes have been published online [C1]. Many articles have drawn directly on original ICSHC research. The first few 2013/2014 columns on the origins of football were based on Taylor's research [R5, R6] while Carter's was utilised for those on coaching and managers [R1]. Later columns on the Football League and European football drew directly on Taylor's work [R5, R6].

In 2015, Leicester City Football Club's historian said: 'I don't think any other programme carries articles quite like these. We run a 12-page heritage section in every match day programme and [the DMU] page is an important part of that' [C2]. In 2014/2015, LCFC's Matchday programme was named Premier League Programme of the Year by the Sports Trader and Soccer Club Swap Shop [C3]. One LCFC fan commented, 'The articles are a refreshing way of taking focus off Club history and onto the bigger picture and allows readers to place our Club within this larger narrative. I've immensely enjoyed learning about the football pioneers over the past few years' [C4].

In reflecting on the impact of the column on his own work on the history of the club and its sporting heritage, the LCFC historian has said that the column has influenced how he has 'understood and written about the history of football' and it has 'demonstrated the importance of locating Leicester City's history in the broader context of football's history' [C4]. More generally, the column has provided him with 'intellectual stimulus and inspiration' and 'inspired fresh lines of thought'. For the past two seasons, the History Makers column has focused on pioneering BAME footballers, and the LCFC historian added that this 'has led me to further research and establish meaningful contact with other pioneering BAME Leicester City players' [C4]. In addition, the chief editor of 'Football Makes History', an EU Erasmus+-funded project, has stated that 'the History Makers column has helped us to understand how the history of football has developed in a broader social context' and that the columns were a model for all European clubs in generating 'public knowledge and conversation' in the dissemination of football's history [C5].

SOCIAL HISTORY OF FOOTBALL MOOC

In January 2018 Carter fronted a three-week FutureLearn MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) 'English Football: A Social History', in collaboration with LCFC's historian and John Williams (University of Leicester), aimed at widening public access to, and understanding of, the social history of football. Carter produced 21 of the course's 67 'steps', once again drawing on ICSHC research, especially week 1's 'The Making of Modern Football'. The sections on 'Early Organised Football' were based heavily on the research of Taylor [R5, R6], while those on 'The Players', 'The Rise of the Manager' and 'Football and the Media' drew on Carter's work [R1, R2].

The MOOC had a broad, global reach. From 117 countries, 2,211 people joined, with over half from outside the UK, including 10% from Mexico, 6% from America and 2% from Brazil and Egypt. Nearly half were aged 56+ with around 26% aged 18–35; around a third had no university education [C6, C7]. Many defined themselves as football fans. By 18 September 2018, 5,623 comments had been posted, with many users leaving multiple comments [C8], reflecting the reach, impact and public engagement with football history prompted by the MOOC. The feedback reiterated that the course had fostered an interest in sports history beyond academia, with many describing football as an accessible and universal language.

Numerous enrollers highlighted how the course had altered their perceptions of football's history and challenged orthodox ideas. Comments included 'Fascinating – and there's a few myths and

preconceptions dismissed' [C8, p 37]. One follower of English football for over 40 years stated that 'the historical context provided in the course has been of immense value' [C8, p 489]. For some from outside the UK the course helped them 'learn more about international sports and the UK' and understand the game's origins [C8, p 107]. One commented that, 'At the beginning I had no idea of all the, I could say, painful process that football had to undergo so as to become the magnificent sport we have nowadays' [C8, p 204].

The MOOC also led learners to re-evaluate relationships and pursue further learning. One learner believed that it would 'enhance my enjoyment of watching the game' [C8, p 434]. After finishing the course, another reflected, 'I'm asking myself, why does football matter so much to me and millions of others?' [C8, p 453] and one learner reflected that 'The course has definitely changed how I look at sporting issues' [C8, p 476]. Some highlighted the link between football and family, such as the mother who wanted to learn more about the history of the game so that she could discuss it with her husband, son and daughter [C8, p 499]. Others re-evaluated personal ambitions to pursue further learning, such as the learner who commented that the course had 'added significant values to my knowledge and career' and 'has definitely made me want to study this and similar areas in more depth' [C8, p 519]. Another learner was looking at 'continuing research on my own into several topics related to the course' [C8, p 552] while for another the course had prompted him to 'go back and finish a football course' he had started 12 months previously [C8, p 607]. One learner has since registered for a PhD at DMU in the ICSHC.

HISTORY, HERITAGE AND THE RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Tony Collins is the leading authority on the history of rugby, and, uniquely among sports bodies, his expertise [R3, R4] has shaped how the Rugby Football League has understood the importance and relevance of the sport's history. In December 2020, Collins was inducted into the RFL's Roll of Honour in recognition of his status as 'an outstanding historian, both of Rugby League in particular, and of the sport's social and cultural significance' [C12]. The head of the RFL's media, has stated that Collins's academic output 'has been a significant factor in the organisation realising the importance of both its history and heritage from a commercial and public relations perspective' and that 'his work has put the sport's history at the centre of the RFL's heritage strategy' [C10].

From August 2013 Collins has led the RFL's historical and heritage work. Since 2015 he has been a member of the National Rugby League Museum development team, which is now to be located at the George Hotel in Huddersfield. In the same year, he was commissioned to write the inscription on the plinth of the rugby league statue outside Wembley. The statue both represents and reinforces the sport's historic link with the stadium with over 300,000 rugby league and millions of soccer fans since attending Wembley games in addition to the national stadium's other events such as concerts. Later, in 2019, Collins gave an induction talk to the staff of Super League about the sport's history and drew up a plan for the RFL's Hall of Fame [C10]. Collins is also a member of the History and Heritage Working Group of International Rugby League, the sport's global governing body [C10].

In addition to his RFL role, Collins has led several rugby history-related Heritage Lottery Fund projects, which have broadened popular understanding of the sport's history. In 2014, for example, Rugby League Cares – for which Collins is a trustee – was awarded GBP97,200 to develop a national touring exhibition on the sport's history. Staged at 20 venues, over 40,000 people visited the exhibition, which reached out to non-traditional rugby league audiences, such as Bradford, where local primary schools with ethnically diverse populations were invited. For some the exhibition opened up new ways of thinking about the game's history. One visitor commented, 'This is an absolutely enjoyable exhibition for enthusiasts and people with little knowledge of the game' [C9].

Collins's research on rugby has achieved further reach and impact on rugby fans through his 'Rugby Reloaded' podcasts series, launched March 2018 and recording 87,134 plays on SoundCloud up to April 2020. Customer reviews on iTunes are overwhelmingly positive and draw attention to the insights Collins's podcasts offer into the history of the game. This includes

the reviewer who commented that they 'loved all the social history that formed these great games' [C11].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

LEICESTER CITY FOOTBALL CLUB MATCHDAY PROGRAMMES

- [C1] Excel spreadsheet, LCFC Programme 2019/2020, sales figures (excludes last four games due to Covid-19), total – 80,395 (available on request).
- [C2] Statement from Leicester City FC Historian, also available at: <https://www.dmu.ac.uk/about-dmu/news/2015/august/sports-history-academic-enjoying-premier-league-success-with-leicester-city-08301208.aspx> [12 August 2015].
- [C3] <https://www.dmu.ac.uk/about-dmu/news/2016/august/dmu-expert-starts-new-season-of-writing-for-lcfc-matchday-programme.aspx> [19 August 2016].
- [C4] Testimonial from Leicester City FC Historian, LCFC.
- [C5] Testimonial from the Chief Editor, Football Makes History.

SOCIAL HISTORY OF ENGLISH FOOTBALL MOOC

- [C6] Excel spreadsheet of enrolments, including data on gender, country, age, education and employment (available on request).
- [C7] Extracted statistics from FutureLearn website (19 September 2018), tabulating and graphically presenting number of enrolments, retention rate, type of learner, age and country of enrollers, and profit for FutureLearn.
- [C8] MOOC course comments and feedback (334,310 words). By 18 September 2018, 5,623 comments had been posted. All relevant quotes have a page reference and have been highlighted in MOOC document.

RUGBY HISTORY AND HERITAGE

- [C9] Evaluation Report of Rugby League Cares Touring Heritage Exhibition, November 2015.
- [C10] Testimonial from Head of Media, Rugby Football League Ltd.
- [C11] Rugby Reloaded listening figures PDF and <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/rugby-reloaded/id1358627156#see-all/reviews>
- [C12] Tony Collins inducted on to RFL's Roll of Honour; <https://www.rugby-league.com/article/57444/rfl-roll-of-honour---inductees>