

PROTESTANTISM AND SPORT : BASKETBALL 1 WINTER SPORT !

Birth of Basketball in the United States

PHOTO 1 // James Naismith in 1892.

In 1891, an arctic cold fell on Springfield (USA). Young college students from the **Young Men's Christian Association** (YMCA) could no longer play rugby or American football. Indoor gymnastics, suggested by their teacher **James Naismith** didn't appeal to them for long. He then looked for a team sport, indoors, favoring skill, liveliness and agility rather than strength and involving a strong physical commitment while avoiding violence and the risks of injury associated with it...To do this, **he raised the “goals”** of the gymnasium running track, thus avoiding the traditional scrums of football or rugby.

At the end of December 1891, **the first basketball game** took place. The students were won over. In the process, its inventor published the 13 rules of the game. Naismith refused to allow the sport to bear his name. **"Basketball"** is proposed by a player: In its infancy the sport was played with a ball, football until 1929, which was thrown into a wooden basket. After each goal, the ball is retrieved from the basket. From 1893 a steel hoop replaced the basket and in 1895 a panel was placed behind it to prevent spectators on the balcony from deflecting the ball.

PHOTO 2 // The Kansas Jayhawks, of which James Naismith (right) was the coach from 1898 to 1907, was the first basketball team in history (shown here in 1899).

The sport spread quickly in the United States and then elsewhere via the YMCA network. From 1892 Senda Berenson of the Northampton YMCA made it possible for **women to make it their own** by changing a few rules. The major American universities followed.

PHOTO 3 // In the beginning basketball was played with a leather ball and wooden baskets.

PHOTO 4 // In the United States many statues exist of James Naismith, inventor of basketball.

Basketball is one of the most played sports in the world today.

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THROUGH TRÉVISE, BASKETBALL GROWS VERY FAST !
Basketball in France

PHOTO 1 // The basketball has clearly evolved between its beginnings in the 19th century and today.

Basketball reaches France via the Christian Unions of Young People (UCJG/French YMCA). Five young students were at the origin of the UCJG in Paris in 1852. They wanted to create a **place of welcome**, mutual aid and sharing, beyond denominational barriers, and **where everyone could flourish in body, mind, and faith**.

The building, built by Bénard, benefited greatly from American financial support. Inaugurated in May 1893, at 14 rue de Tréville, there was: a cooperative restaurant, an indoor swimming pool and gymnasium, a multipurpose room for theater, concerts and conferences, a library, a bowling alley, a billiards table, and social and medical services...

Melvin Rideout, an educator trained at the Springfield YMCA, was in charge of physical activities at the **Paris UCJG**. At the end of the gymnastics session on December 27, 1893, he offered his students a new activity: basketball. Shortly after, the first European match was played in Paris! The sport **remained confined to Protestant circles** until 1898. It developed thanks to an article by Paul Field in *Le Petit Troyen*, first in Christian patronages and sports clubs, then secular.

PHOTO 2 // The 93-8 victory of the United States over France during the Interallied Games of 1919 at the Pershing stadium.

The clubs faced each other in friendly matches. When the “Sammies” (American soldiers) arrived this sport, **played on the front lines**, became more democratic and a French championship was created in 1921.

PHOTO 3 // The UCJG center on rue de Tréville, in Paris, was designed by the architect Emile Bénard.

In France, the first women's match took place at the beginning of the 20th century but it was not until the action of the secularist Alice Milliat in the 1920s that a women's championship was formed.

PHOTO 4 // Alice Milliat contributed greatly to the emergence of women's sport in France.

PROTESTANTISM AND SPORT: BASKETBALL 3

ADOPT A FLOOR BOARD !

The oldest basketball court

PHOTO 1 // Actor Eric Judor began his career at rue de Trévisé theater.

The UCJG building in Paris today houses a theater, training and activity rooms, a hostel for students and young workers, an old swimming pool, the remains of a bowling alley, and **the famous gymnasium, with its basketball court**, overlooked by a circular running track. The original Springfield court has since disappeared, so now the Parisian basketball court is today **the oldest in the world!**

It hosts hip-hop and krav maga classes, basketball games for students from the hostel or, more surprisingly, music videos (Eddy de Pretto) and fashion shows by young designers (Avellano). The theater is also a Parisian cultural venue which notably saw the debut of Éric Judor.

But the room is old. **After 130 years of use**, the place is under threat. Renovation is necessary. The original “herringbone” parquet flooring needs restoration and the whole hall needs renovation, particularly with a view to complying with accessibility and safety requirements. To finance this work, the YMCA is launching a **unique participatory sponsorship campaign:**

adopt a floor board (from 100 euros, tax deductible). The lucky sponsors will receive a numbered collector's adoption certificate in their name.

PHOTO 2 // Rudy Gobert in action during the France-Latvia match at the European Basketball Championship in 2015, supports the participatory sponsorship campaign.

PHOTO 3 // The cellist Gautier Capuçon adopted a board from the historic parquet floor of rue de Trévisé.

This unique operation attracted, among others, **the basketball player Rudy Gobert**, adopting board 27, a nod to his jersey, and **the cellist Gautier Capuçon**, board 1701, the year of his instrument.

In total, 2024 boards (in reference to the Paris 2024 Olympic Games) are to be adopted on the site called adoptuneblade.com. What will your board be?

PHOTO 4 // The rue de Trévisé gymnasium continues to host friendly basketball games.

PROTESTANTISM AND SPORT: VOLLEYBALL 4

WHEN BUSINESSMEN FLY

The beginnings of volleyball

PHOTO 1 // Finding basketball too demanding and too physical, William G. Morgan invented volleyball.

Basketball was not the only ball sport invented by Protestantism. **Volleyball was also born in a YMCA center** in Holyoke, Massachusetts, near Springfield. Pastor William G. Morgan was a physical education teacher there. He knew James Naismith and basketball in Springfield in 1892. He quickly noticed that while the sport was well suited to young sports students, it was not very suitable for older **businessmen**. They found it too "tiring" - too physically demanding. The young 25-year-old teacher was therefore looking for an indoor sport for them for the long and harsh winter periods. He developed the "**mintonette**" inspired by basketball, tennis and badminton (high net).

The **first "mintonette" match** was played on **December 2, 1895**. The rules were different from those of today: the number of players, for example, was unlimited, as was the number of touches of the ball before returning it to the opponent.

An exhibition match was held in January 1896. Alfred Halstead, noting **the importance of the "volley"** in the game, calls the sport "**volleyball**". A.G. Spalding, designer of American football and basketball balls, invented one for volleyball. After a few changes to the rules, the sport developed **in France from 1917-1918**. Less physically demanding, women adopted it all over the world.

In Alès, the Service Entraide Protestant (SEP) has its own volleyball club, thus continuing History.

PHOTO 2 // While the number of players was once unlimited, today volleyball is played 6 aside.

PHOTO 3 // Very quickly volleyball became a feminine sport.

PHOTO 4 // The interior of the old YMCA gymnasium in Holyoke.

PROTESTANTISM AND SPORT: **OTHER 5** FOOTBALL, SWIMMING, SAILING AND OTHERS

Supporting Sport

After having long **opposed football**, because of its violence and its Sunday practice, English Protestants **strongly supported it in the 19th century** under the influence of Muscular Christianity. Many ecclesial football clubs were then created by Protestant Christians, Methodists, like that of Everton, or Anglicans.

PHOTO 1 // Moussa Njie (in blue) defender of the Everton club created by Protestants.

At that time, in France, Protestantism supported learning to swim. The UCJG building in Paris, since its construction in 1893, has included a swimming pool in the basement. This was **the first private indoor swimming pool in France!** At its beginnings it welcomed men practicing not nudism but naturism: a Protestant movement of German origin from the end of the 19th century advocating a healthy lifestyle by **adopting a way of living closer to nature.**

PHOTO 2 // The Everton club, created by Protestant methodists, won the championship in England for the first time in the club's history in 1891.

PHOTO 3 // Rafting, canoeing and others, so many sports that EEUdF introduces you to during their summer camps.

Unionist scouting has the same objective. **The history of the Éclaireurs Unionistes** (EU. Today Éclaireurs Éclaireuses Unionistes de France) is strongly **linked to the UCJG**. In 1911, the movement was initiated in its premises by the Bonnamaux brothers. The U in “Unionists” comes from the U in UCJG. The same year three cadet sections, Parisian UCJG, Boulogne and Treviso, adopted the scout method under the leadership of their general secretary Samuel

Wiliamson.

In 1909, in Nantes, **a marine branch** was opened allowing young people to **learn to sail.**

The “Scout” method of popular education, in the middle of nature, develops autonomy and responsibility. It places great emphasis on sporting activities: theca (the origin of baseball), sioule (ancestor of rugby)...

PHOTO 4 // The sailor scouts, from Nantes first, then from Bordeaux and other cities, allowed many young people to learn about sailing.

PROTESTANTISM AND SPORT: MOUNTAIN 6

THE ASCENSION OF THE HIGHEST PEAKS

Development of mountain sports

PHOTO 1 // The Swiss Horace Bénédict de Saussure was one of the first to climb Mont Blanc.

In the 17th century **Protestants took a different look at mountains**. They were no longer “supernatural” or feared but **desired, part of God's Creation**. In the 18th century, they therefore promoted the conquest of summits. The wealthy Swiss Horace Bénédict de Saussure, promising a reward to the **climbers of Mont-Blanc** encouraged the crazy ascent of the pair Michel-Gabriel Paccard and Jacques Balmat in 1786. The following year, after two aborted attempts, Saussure himself climbed the legendary summit accompanied by “Balmat Mont-Blanc”.

Protestants were also among **the leading Pyrenees alpanists**. Élisée Reclus and Émilien Frossard magnified their mountains in their writings or their watercolors. Others, like Léonce Lourde-Rocheblave, son of a pastor, **facilitated access to the feared summits**, those above the transhumance trails by **cataloging**, analyzing and **mapping the mountains**. He thus initiated new trails and founded a new mountain activity: that of **guides**. He was also the inventor of the **ogival-shaped mountain hut** which spread very quickly everywhere at altitude.

In 1865, Pastor Émilien Frossard was at the origin of the first Pyrenean society aimed at better knowledge of the mountains.

And in the French Alpine Club of Bordeaux Charles Gide was a prominent figure.

The solidarity economy theorist wanted to send urban children to the mountains to help them discover and love these majestic places.

PHOTO 2 // Protestants desacralized mountains and promoted access.

PHOTO 3 // Climbing and mountaineering, doors to accessing the highest summits.

PHOTO 4 // Paul Keller, chair of the guides society, Pastor and recognized Himalayist, opened the profession to women in the 80s.

PROTESTANTISM AND SPORT: ADAPTED SPORT 7

ADAPTED SPORT

A little-known discipline

Adapted Sport concerns people with an **intellectual disability** who may be associated with **physical or sensory disabilities** (multiple disabilities) and/or **psychological disorders**. It differs from disabled sports relating solely to physical disabilities and dating from the post-war period, whereas Adapted Sport appeared in the 1970s.

It is to **Eunice Kennedy Shriver**, American athlete and sociologist, that we owe the appearance of this discipline. Eunice, sister of President John Kennedy, grew up with her older sister, Rosemary, who was mentally challenged. Together, they played many sports. Eunice believed that **sport can unite all kinds of people**.

Her greatest accomplishment was the establishment of a competition which takes place every two years, the Special Olympics, reserved for children and adults with mental disabilities (not to be confused with the Paralympic Games in which people with motor disabilities participate).

During a stay in France, Eunice encouraged the creation of the **French Adapted Sports Federation (FFSA)**. Approved by Youth and Sport, it was founded in 1971.

PHOTO 1 // Walking, one of the very popular disciplines for adapted sports.

In each region, health and social establishments are contacted to join the FFSA. The **John BOST Protestant Foundation**, in Dordogne, quickly became a breeding ground for graduates. In 1986, the Departmental Adapted Sports Committee (CDSA), chaired by **Gérard Laplace** - professional of the John BOST Foundation - was created. He would be president for more than 20 years.

This adventure continues today! You can be a part of it!

PHOTO 2 // The blowgun, a disciple of skill and concentration.

PHOTO 3 // Multiple disciplines contain an adapted sports section.

PROTESTANTISM AND SPORT: VALUES 8

THE BODY, GIFT OF GOD

Protestant values in sport

Protestantism has not always viewed sport favorably. At the beginning of the 19th century, in England, Methodist Protestants were opposed, for example, to popular sports which they considered **too violent** against men (street football) or cruel towards animals (*throwing sharp objects to cut the necks of roosters*).

PHOTO 1 // In the 19th century, Methodist Protestants rose up against street football, which was very violent at the time.

It was necessary to wait until the middle of the 19th century to see a reversal take place. **The physical body**, with its muscles and tendons, **was given by God** in the same way as the soul. The believer can therefore **give glory to God** by the strength of his body, and not only by the beauty of his soul.

PHOTO 2 // American football is rejected by protesters for its violence.

PHOTO 3 // Popular education associations continue the spirit of basketball by organizing friendly sports meetings throughout the territory.

But the sport promoted by Protestantism is not practiced in just any manner. If the body must be strong, it is not to exercise violence against adversaries. Both basketball and volleyball were designed to avoid the contact and violence of American football or rugby, the reason for their early adoption by women. **What matters is respect for others** - showing love for others. Nor does the Protestant tradition want to promote competition that crushes the other. For a long time competition was absent from both basketball and volleyball.

Protestantism is attached to what sport can teach about oneself (effort, surpassing oneself, the importance of discipline), about others (respect for one's body, recognition of one's strength and superiority) and about God (praise for the body, for the joy of the game, of others and for the Creation).

PHOTO 4 // Sport becomes praise for the Creator of Creation

PROTESTANTISM AND SPORT: VALUES 9

MUSCLES AND SWEATING !

“The muscular Christian”

PHOTO 1 // On a wall of a YMCA center, where the values to be embodied by the Christian are recalled, there is, in the center, 1 Timothy 4.8 which advocates the usefulness of sport and faith.

At the end of the 19th century many Christians found that **the Church and society were softening**: the Church because the prayers and hymns smack of sentimentality and "feminization", and society because the defeat of 1870 would be partly due to a lack of physical education among French youth. To combat this softening **Muscular Christianity** emerged from English-speaking Protestantism. This movement upheld **courage and strength**, the “Victorian” values of patriotism and honor. With this in mind, sport allowed you to maintain good health and contributed to the strengthening of the soul through learning from defeat and the pain of effort. **A holy soul in a healthy body!** This movement immediately experienced resounding success, first in British colleges, then all over the world. The men were seduced by a "manly" message, presenting **Jesus as a vigorous carpenter** capable of holding out for forty days in the desert and strong enough to overturn the tables of the money changers in the Temple.

The spiritual movement emphasizes **physical strength** but not at the expense of **moral strength!** The strong man is physically and morally strong. He knows how to demonstrate self-control at all times without ever giving in to laziness and ease.

PHOTO 2 // Today women represent more than half of the pastoral body. This is a joyful consequence of the distance taken from the virile message carried by Muscular Christianity.

PHOTO 3 // Caravaggio represents Christ endowed with amazing musculature.

It is this close link between spiritual development and physical development that allowed the development of sports practice in all Protestant associations.

PHOTO 4 // Muscular Christianity encourages patriotism and honor.

PROTESTANTISM AND SPORT: SPORTSMEN 10

PORTRAITS OF SPORTS PEOPLE

From the mountains to football

Paul Keller: Mountaineer and theologian Paul Keller (1926-2015) was a man of mountains and reflections: he knew how to write and climb. A wise companion, the embodiment of the rope spirit, he was a guide. Moses and Paul the Protestants would say "guide and pastor"...

Emmanuel Arnaud: This young Bordeaux native, who previously attended the parish of Brive-la-Gaillarde, has distinguished himself in athletics for several years. In 2021, he was a French cross-country champion in adapted sport and in 2023, he was bronze medalist in 800 and 1500 meters, the two disciplines in which he was engaged.

Benjamin Roubiol: This Savoyard did his catechism and participated in the ÉÉUdF in Chambéry; a significant stage of his life and in his relationship with others. It is based in Thônes near Annecy (Haute-Savoie). At only 23 years old, he is already the 2023 long trail world champion!

Olivier Giroud: After a meeting with a Protestant chaplain, this footballer decides to be baptized and to tattoo a verse from Psalm 23 on his arm. Responding to an interview with *Plus que sportifs*, he says he prays often and not just for football: "I pray because I am grateful for the life that God has given me and the gift he has given me! I also learned to pray for persecuted Christians! ».

PHOTO 1 // In 1967, Paul Keller, pastor, took part of the group of young people (from top to bottom, F. Valla, glaciologist, P. Keller, N. Philibert, filmmaker and Jean Glasser) to the summit of the Maximin corridor.

PHOTO 2 // Emmanuel Arnaud

PHOTO 3 // Olivier Giroud 2018 FIFA World Cup

Émane Gévrise: Several times titled at the European and world championships, this judoka is based in Paris where she attends a Lutheran parish. She believes, in an interview, that her faith helps her "in concentration (and) in the desire to do things well. I also think that being a believer allows me to mitigate my failures: there are more serious and important things in life."

PHOTO 6 // Annet Böhm against Emane Gévrise at the 2007 world judo championships in Brazil.

PHOTO 5 // Benjamin Roubiol won the long trail world championships in 2023.