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Conclusion

Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, British Supreme Allied Commander, Southeast Asia, delivering a speech at the steps of Municipal Building (City Hall) after the Japanese surrender on 12 September 1945, marking the official end of the Japanese Occupation. 1945. Source: RAFSA Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No: 20170000053 – 1727)



Spectators at Victory Rally at the Padang after the Japanese Surrender and end of over 3 years of occupation in Singapore. 10/10/1945. Source: David Ng Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No: 19980005701 - 0008 and No:19980005701 – 0005)

Impact of War on Sporting Culture

Singapore's current sport culture emerged battered but not disabled from the ruins of war. As a remnant of happier times, it was able to rejuvenate spirits and provide an optimistic view of the future.

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Sport uplifted spirits in a time of despair and helped build resilience amid adversity.

Sport was also a distraction from austerity.

Over time, the colonial rulers of old were stung by the shame of defeat, and lost influence over clubs. Post-war, sport became part of national identity in the fledgling nation.

Humanising Force of Sports

In war and sport, there are always winning and losing sides. It is how we respond to defeat and adversity that defines us.

For sportsmen during the occupation, such as pioneer Olympians Chia Boon Leong, Chua Boon Lay, Chu Chee Seng, Lloyd Valberg (b.1922-d.1984), and many others, survival meant not be consumed by defeat, but to find the will to bounce back.

The sporting community of Syonan contributed to critical functions by clearing streets, helping to restore the city's basic amenities and building public air raid shelters.

Despite hardships, survivors of WWII adapted and persevered. The individual and community fighting spirit shone through in the worst of times, and the positive and humanising force of sport was none so evident as during deprived conditions of war.

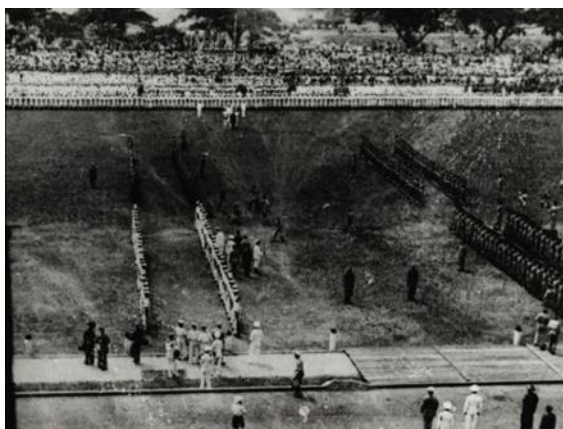
Dark Side and Brighter Side

Paradoxically, during this period of oppression the Japanese embraced the affective quality of sport in nationalising disparate social groups in Singapore. It was a way of maintaining control. There was a dark side and a brighter side. Being good at sport paved the way for opportunities.

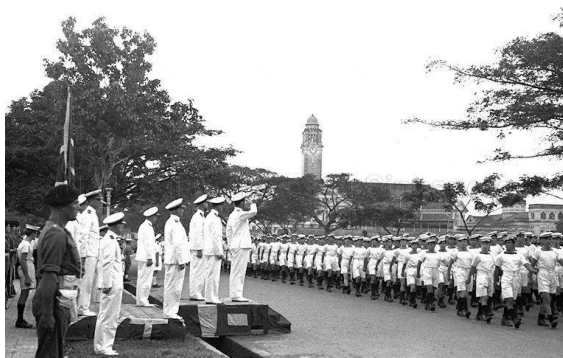
Meanwhile, Mamoru Shinozaki (1908 – 1991), who clearly related well with members of the Syonan Sport Association, remains a controversial figure till today. Detractors accuse him of distorting history to portray himself in a positive light, whilst others have lauded him for his humanity and genuine welfare, labelling him the “Schindler of Singapore”.

Fraternising with the Enemy

While competing together – and sometimes, with our foes – our shared humanity became self-evident. During the occupation, locals and POWs played games with or against the Japanese, for the love of sport transcends nationalities and gender. In the final analysis, all men and women are equals regardless of race or creed.



Victory Parade at the Padang in front of the Municipal Building (City Hall). 1945. Source: Tham Sien Yen Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No: 20080000015 – 0087)



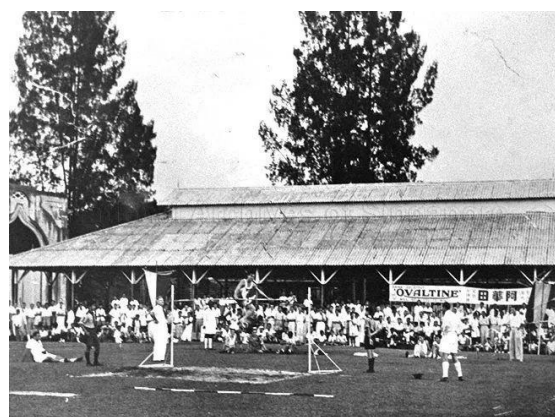
Victory Parade by the British and Australian Navy at the Padang. 07/01/1946. Source: David Ng Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No: 19980005785 – 0037)

Shifting the Game

The competition for opportunities increased the seriousness of sport and physical education, while at the same time the seriousness of war also had the unintended consequence of shifting the game.

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The function of sport shifted from play and socialisation, to one of personal fitness with an emphasis on the disciplining of the body into the production of a combat-ready citizenry.



Post-war: Olympian Lloyd Valberg (1948 London Olympics) in an exhibition leap in Sydney. c.1947-1950. Source: Singapore Sports Council (Media - image no: 19980005603 – 0032)

Post-war: First Olympian under Singapore Olympic and Sports Council - Lloyd Valberg

Three years after the end of WWII, Singapore sent her first official representative to the 1948 Olympiad in London under the newly minted Singapore Olympic and Sports Council (SOSC, formed on 27 May 1947).

It was a strange scenario indeed, whereby two Singaporean soccer athletes (Chia Boon Leong and Chu Chee Seng), and two basketball athletes (Wee Tian Siak and Ng Liang Chiang), represented China, whilst another Singaporean from the athletics fraternity, Lloyd Valberg, participated as a lone athlete in the Singapore contingent.

As there was no Singaporean flag then, Lloyd hoisted the Union Jack at the flag raising ceremony at the Athletes' Village before the Games. Lloyd overcame adversity in London

and on his return, became one of the most versatile athletes in Malaya and Singapore.

Lloyd was to inspire a future Olympic star, his grand-nephew Joseph Issac Schooling, Singapore's first-ever Olympic gold medallist.

Keep the Spark Burning

Whilst sporting culture will evolve as society evolves, the fundamental spark for sport through the ages, both in peacetime and in wartime, is playing to derive pleasure and challenge. This pure spark must be kept burning.

Sport has now grown in significance as a source of national pride and international identity, yet there is still room for the flames of sport to grow.

A New Battle with an Invisible Enemy

Eighty years on, our nation and the world are fighting against an invisible enemy, and exercise and sport have aided Singaporeans to upkeep their physical and mental health in these most challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The same enduring values of sport – courage, resolution and tenacity – will help to us triumph against the odds, and to sustain our Singapore Spirit.



Victory Parade along North Bridge Road near Elgin Bridge. 10/10/1945. Source: David Ng Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No: 19980005701 – 0004)

“They died so we might live.”

- *Inscription on The Cenotaph war memorial to honour the fallen from WWI & II at Esplanade Park*

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Unveiling of national war hero Major General Lim Bo Seng Memorial by Commander-in-Chief, Far East Land Forces, Sir Charles Falkland Loewen, at the Esplanade Park in 1954. The unique bronze pagoda with four bronze lions was designed by architect Ng Keng Siang and was gazetted as a National Monument in 2010, collectively with The Cenotaph, a war memorial that honours the heroes who fought and died during World Wars I and II, and the Tan Kim Seng Fountain. 29/06/1954. Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No:19980001068 – 0013)

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