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## Change of Sporting Identity



Raffles College freshmen's football team. The team captain, Edmund William Barker (front row, third from right) was an avid sportsman and champion student athlete. Barker (1920-2001) played various sports including hockey, cricket, rugby, athletics, and badminton. After the war, he became Minister for Law and Minister for National Development, and contributed significantly to the development of sport. 1939. Source: Raffles College Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media – Image No: 19980005802 – 0112)

### Centralised Control and Racial Integration

The Japanese Occupation created a change of sporting identity. The sportsmen and sportswomen of Syonan were now confronted with an approach of centralised control and a loss of autonomy. This was unlike the British club system, which advocated for a policy of segregation and promoted a laissez faire approach.

The new regime aimed to bring the different racial groups together through sport. Sport represented a common interest, and an attempt by the invaders to win over a population that had seen its world turned upside down. The vulnerable society was softened by the introduction of sporting opportunities, particularly for the youth.

The administration of sport bordered on dictatorial with the creation of the Syonan Sports Association (SSA) by the Japanese to regulate sport for its political purposes.

### Colonial Legacy - British Sport and Pastimes

Spread by the military across the vast British Empire, British sport and games were adopted by local clubs and institutions and were played by both men and women in the colonies.

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The new rulers ironically promoted British sport. Games and activities remained much the same as before the occupation, with the addition of baseball which was a popular sport for the Japanese.

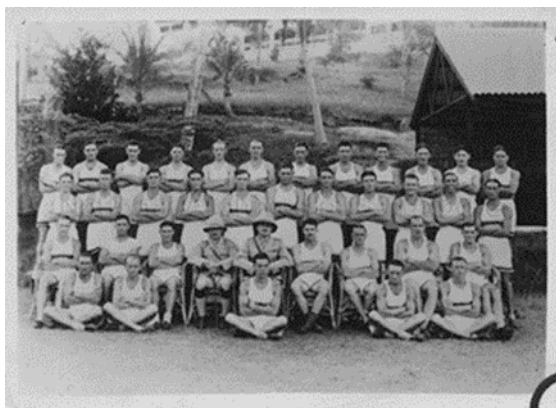
Photographs dated between 1930 to 1940 depict sporting teams in the decade before the shocking Fall of Singapore in 1942:



First Committee of Singapore Girls' Sports Club. Standing, from left: M Lewis, G da Silva, R Woodford and Tennis Convener M de Souza. Sitting: Honorary Secretary Zena Clarke, President D Oehlers and Honorary Treasurer M Clarke. Front row: Hockey Convener T Oehlers and Netball Convener B Oehlers. 1930. Source: Singapore Girls' Sports Club, courtesy of National Archives Singapore (Media – Image No: 19980005133 – 0099)



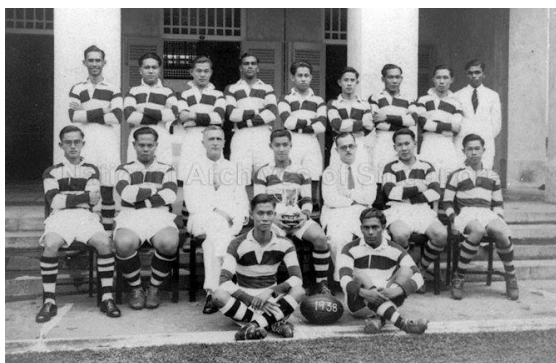
Singapore Chinese Swimming Club water polo team. 01/08/1939. Source: Singapore Sports Council (Media – Image No: 19980005602 – 0037)



Sports team of the 1st Battalion Middlesex Regiment, Gillman Barracks in Singapore. 1936/1937. Source: Glyn Wright Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No: 20160000040 - 0016)



Raffles College athletics team. 1938. Source: Margaret Clarke collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No: 19980005816 - 0009)



Raffles College rugby team. 1938. Source: Margaret Clarke Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No: 19980005816 - 0010)



Singapore Girls' Sports Club netball team with Mr Conrad Clarke, a sports patron in pre-war Singapore who donated the Clarke Shield in 1930 to encourage netball teams to hold competitions. His daughter, Mrs Zena Tessensohn, was also one of the founders of the Girls' Sports Club in 1930. c.1936. Source: Singapore Girls' Sports Club Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No: 19980005133 - 0097)

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Visit the [Singapore Sports Museum](#) to discover Singapore's sporting heritage and the Hall of Fame (HOF), which honours more than 50 sporting legends. The Hall of Fame was created in 1985 by the Singapore Sports Council (now Sport Singapore) to recognise and celebrate the achievements of Singapore's top athletes.