

Historica Canada Education Portal

Innovation and Origins of Sport

Overview

This lesson plan is based on viewing the Footprint videos for [Jeff Adams](#), [Father David Bauer](#), [Debbie Brill](#), [Foster Hewitt](#), [James Naismith](#), [Lester Patrick](#), and the [Brier](#). Each of these legends in Canadian sports history made major contributions to their sports, as did the founding of curling's Brier. The legacies of these achievements and their impact continue to be felt today.

Aims

To increase student awareness of prominent Canadian contributions to the origin and development of Canadian and international sport; to examine these accomplishments in their historical context; to understand the challenges that each of these Canadian innovators faced in the pursuit of their goals; to explore the roles of both individual character and sponsorship in these innovations.

Background

The past one hundred years of Canadian sport include many remarkable examples of innovation and invention. For over a century, Canadian

athletes, broadcasters, and coaches have had a profound impact on sport across the world. In the late nineteenth century, James Naismith - from tiny Almonte, Ontario - invented basketball, a sport that has since become an international athletic and marketing phenomenon. Soon after, the establishment of Canadian curling's first Brier served as a symbol of unity between the Western and Eastern regions of the country, as well as a model for the corporate sponsorship of national sporting events. Throughout the 1920s and beyond, Foster Hewitt pioneered the live-to-air broadcasting of Canada's national sport that was the precursor to Canada's most famous televised sporting event: Hockey Night in Canada.

In the 1960s, Father David Bauer founded Canada's first national hockey program while in the 1970s, BC High Jumper Debbie Brill invented a jumping style, the Brill Bend, which revolutionized the women's high jump event. In the 1990s wheelchair athlete Jeff Adams, one of Canada's most successful Paralympic athletes, helped establish parathletics as a viable and legitimate sport in this country while continually challenging the barriers facing all Canadians with physical challenges.

While each of these innovators and innovations made their mark in different aspects of Canadian sport, there are common threads that unite them. Each one of these pioneers shared a fierce dedication to their chosen fields, as well as a single-minded willingness to overcome cultural, political, and business barriers to their success. Many also shared a belief that the true measure of success cannot be measured in the wins and losses columns, but rather by strength and character.

David Bauer played for one of Canada's finest junior hockey teams in the late 1940s and was universally touted for major success in the National Hockey League. Before he could enter the professional league, however,

he surprised the hockey world by enrolling in the seminary to become a Roman Catholic priest. Ordained in the Basilian order, Bauer would forgo a playing career in the NHL and instead would become a teacher at St. Michael's College in Toronto, where he coached the St. Michael's Majors Junior A team (winning the Memorial Cup in 1961). Unlike most junior coaches, Bauer considered academics as important as hockey and kept extra players on his team so that students who required study time could skip games when they needed to.

As a coach and teacher at St. Mark's college at UBC in the early 1960s, Bauer convinced the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association that Canada needed a permanent national hockey program. At the time, professionals were barred from Olympic and World Cup competition and Canada's regional teams were failing to produce results in competition with the national hockey programs of major European countries. NHL teams, on the other hand, were vehemently opposed to Bauer's national team efforts. They feared that Canada's best young players would choose to participate in the national program instead of playing in the NHL. During the 1960s, NHL players made nowhere near the million dollar salaries they do today so the financial incentive to play in the NHL was far less. Bauer, however, persevered in the face of both repeated player poaching by NHL teams and major opposition from Clarence Campbell, President of the National Hockey League. In the end, Father Bauer's teams would represent Canada with a class and dignity that reflected the priest's feeling that success in sport "should not be an end, but a means to an end," bringing home World Championship bronze medals in 1966 and 1967, and winning Olympic bronze in 1968.

The idea that sport could be used to build character was of central importance to James Naismith, the inventor of basketball. A theological student at McGill University in the 1880s, Naismith, unlike many of his

religious contemporaries, did not believe that sport and spiritual or religious observance were mutually exclusive. In fact, he believed that sport could be used in order to foster spiritual development. As a physical education teacher at the YMCA Training School at Springfield College in Massachusetts, Naismith was given a class of young men considered "difficult" and uninterested in the gymnastics regimen that constituted their regular sporting activity after the end of the fall football season. Rather than forcing them to pursue an activity they did not like, Naismith elected to invent an indoor sport that would appeal to them as much as their favourite outdoor sports, football and baseball. Naismith wanted a safe game that emphasized sportsmanship, as opposed to violence and a goal that was elevated so as to minimize potential injury. Inspired by a childhood game called Duck on a Rock, Naismith conceived the game of basketball with 13 simple rules that remain the foundation of basketball as it is played at all levels today. The sport proved immensely popular with his class and is now one of the most popular team sports in the world.

Despite the fact that Canadian Wheelchair Athlete phenomenon Jeff Adams is a two-time Olympian, four-time Paralympian, six-time World Champion, and former World Record Holder in the 1500m men's wheelchair event, he still faced discrimination familiar to many with physical challenges. Adams, who has lived in a wheelchair since contracting a virus called Transverse Myelitis at the age of nine, began competing in wheelchair athletics at a time when the sport received little to no recognition from the Canadian public. By the time he won five medals at the 2002 Paralympics in Sydney, the achievements of elite parathletes like Adams were more generally recognized.

Still, at a restaurant in Toronto, in 2002, Adams was asked to leave because the manager felt that his wheelchair represented a fire hazard. It

is this kind of attitude that inspired Adams' to perform a new sort of athletic feat, one quite different than the competitions he had previously entered. On 26 September 2002, Adams climbed all 1776 steps of Toronto's CN Tower in his wheelchair. He performed the climb in order to highlight the need to improve the level of accessibility in Canada, and to address the prejudices and stereotypes that still exist about people with disabilities. Adams also raised money for a nation-wide school outreach program to teach children about celebrating diversity, about recognizing their own abilities and the abilities of others, and about the need to build a society that includes and accepts all of its members. Jeff Adams served as the Chair of the Accessibility Committee for the Toronto 2008 Olympic Bid Committee, as the Chair for the Ontarians with a Disability Advisory Council, and was the athlete representative responsible for integrating the Paralympic Program into the existing able-bodied world of Athletics Canada.

While Naismith, Bauer, and Adams have a dedication to the use of sport to positively affect people's lives, the founding of Canada's national curling championship, the Brier, and the achievements of legendary broadcaster Foster Hewitt share a pioneering understanding of the relationship between business and sport.

In the 1920s Canada was beginning to recover from the horrifying experience of the First World War. It was during this time that curling became a well-known national sport. Winnipeg was the centre of Canada's curling world. George J. Cameron, a Winnipeg curler who also happened to be the president of the company that represented the giant Macdonald Tobacco Company in the west, believed that curling could help unite the eastern and western regions of the country. He proposed this idea to the Macdonald Tobacco Company and they were enthusiastic. They agreed to sponsor the establishment of the Macdonald

Brier trophy as part of the 1925 MacDonald Bonspiel curling competition. The winners were to receive a trip to eastern Canada for a series of exhibition games against eastern teams, with all costs to be paid by the tobacco company. This led, in 1927, to the first national competition, which was held at the Granite Club in Toronto. Thus began the Brier – a Macdonald Tobacco trademark name – as the national curling championship of Canada. The longstanding relationship between the Brier and a major corporate sponsor continues today: the Brier is now officially known as the Tim Hortons (after stints as both the Labatt's Brier and the Nokia Brier). It is a model that has become dominant in contemporary sports.

Equally important to the sporting relationship between Eastern and Western Canada were the innovations of hockey great Lester Patrick. In the 1920s, Patrick and his brother were single-handedly responsible for the development of professional hockey in Western Canada. They founded and ran the Pacific Coast Hockey Association, which eventually formed the basis for the western section of the NHL, after the Patricks sold their roster of players to the new national league. The Patricks were also responsible for many hockey rules still in effect today. From the blue line to the penalty shot, a penalty for checking into the boards, the assist for helping score a goal, the numbering of players, the forward pass, and the playoff system; many of hockey's essential rules trace their origins to Lester Patrick.

The relationship between sport and business were also important as Foster Hewitt established hockey broadcasting as one of the most cherished and lucrative sporting enterprises in Canada.

What we now know as Hockey Night in Canada – a cultural event shared by millions of Canadians every week - owes at least a part of its

existence to Hewitt. In 1922, Hewitt was only twenty years old when he was assigned to announce the first radio broadcast of a hockey game by his employer, Canada Covers America First!, a radio station owned by the Toronto Star newspaper. Reporting on the game from a cramped glass box far above the ice, it was during this game that Hewitt first uttered his famous phrase, "He shoots, he scores!" After the broadcast, letters from listeners began pouring in; its popularity was unprecedented. Though officially a reporter, Hewitt began live broadcasting of hockey, lacrosse, sculling, motorboat and motorcycle races, sailing, football, and baseball.

It was broadcasting hockey, however, where Hewitt really made his mark. In concert with Toronto Maple Leafs owner Conn Smythe, Hewitt formed a company and began broadcasting all Maple Leafs games, doing so over the objections of many of the Maple Leafs' Directors, who felt that broadcasting would hurt ticket sales. Needless to say, the directors were wrong. Soon, companies looking for popular programs in which to place advertising became interested in hockey broadcasts. In 1931, General Motors became the first corporate sponsor of a Saturday Night hockey broadcast, beginning a tradition that continues today. This work would make Foster Hewitt a household name across the country, and a near institution in the history of Canadian sport.

Activities

1. The Role of "Character"

For several of the Footprints innovators, the development of "individual character" was a major motivation for their dedication to athletics.

Ask students to individually brainstorm the attributes they associate with "individual character." When they are finished, collate these results on the board.

Lead a class discussion. Does participation in sports and athletics contribute to the development of these character attributes? Why or why not? How?

Ask each student to write a personal essay outlining an aspect of their own experience in athletics and the ways in which they did or didn't feel that it contributed to the development of their own, or others', "character."

2. Corporate Sponsorship

Both Foster Hewitt's broadcasts and the Brier were early examples of the corporate sponsorship of sporting events. Divide your class into groups of four to six students.

a. Allow each group to pick one or two major sports (professional or amateur) and identify the current major corporate sponsors of those sports. Collate the results and lead a brainstorm/class discussion around the following questions, referring to the specific examples researched by class groups:

- Why might sports teams/leagues seek sponsorship from corporations?
- What is the benefit of sponsorship to the corporations? Are they simply the same as advertising on television?
- Is it possible to discern a relationship between the events/sports sponsored and the company that sponsors them?
- Are some events/sports more attractive to certain companies than

others? Why? Provide examples of possible benefits.

- Branding is an advertising strategy that focuses not on the product a company produces, but on the associations people make with the company's identity. How might sports sponsorship affect a company's brand? If it's a small Olympic team? If it's the NHL?

b. Is there any corporate sponsorship visible in your school? Why might a company be interested in having its products and brands available in a school? What kind of companies might be most interested? Why?

3. Canada and Invention

Very few people are aware that the inventor of basketball was a Canadian. Canadians are responsible for numerous inventions that affect our lives, in the world of sport and beyond. Choosing from the list below, give each student research and write a short history of one of the following inventions, its impact and the Canadian(s) who developed it.

- 5 pin bowling, T.E. Ryan in 1909
- Computerized Braille, Roland Galarneau in 1972
- Electric Light Bulb, Henry Woodward in 1874 (sold the patent to Thomas Edison)
- Electron Microscope, Eli Franklin Burton, Cecil Hall, James Hillier, Albert Prebus in 1937
- Electric Organ, Morse Robb of Belleville, Ontario, patented in 1928
- Goalie Mask, Jacques Plante in 1960
- Heart Pacemaker, Dr. John A. Hopps in 1950
- IMAX Movie System, Ivan Grahame Ferguson, Roman Kroitor and Robert Kerr, 1968
- Java (programming language), James Gosling in 1994

- Music Synthesizer, Hugh Le Caine in 1945
- Newsprint, Charles Fenerty in 1838
- Robertson Screw, Peter L. Robertson in 1908
- Snowmobile, Joseph-Armand Bombardier in 1922
- Standard Time, Sir Sandford Fleming in 1878
- TV Camera, F. C. P. Henroteau in 1934
- Telephone, Alexander Graham Bell in 1876
- Walkie Talkie, Donald L. Hings in 1942
- Wireless Radio, invented by Reginald A. Fessenden in 1900

Depending on the focus of the class, reports can be presented as an Essay, Pictorial History, Poster, Power Point presentation, Narrative Biography, or other teacher approved format.

4. Invention: the Challenge

Each of the figures discussed in the Innovators and Originators Footprints series was responsible for a major invention or innovation.

Working in small groups or alone, challenge your class to invent its own game or sport. Individuals must design a new game/sport, or major modifications to an existing game/sport that changes it significantly. Be creative! Use trial and error. Encourage your class to think like James Naismith. Ask them to think about what they want their sport to be? What kind of sport would they like?

Once the general parameters of the new sport have been established, students must then formulate rules. Again, devise them through trial and error and necessity. Test the rules. If they don't work, alter them so that they do.

Have groups teach each other their new sports. Assess their practicality and teachability. Are they fun? Would other people play? Watch?

Vote on the sports/games that work best. Why did they work? What made them fun?

5. Parathletics

The inclusion of differently-abled athletes in major competitions is a relatively recent phenomenon, and one many parathletes have fought long and hard to achieve. Most of us, however, know very little about their sports.

The following are a list of Paralympic sports currently included in the International Paralympic Games. Divide into groups and prepare seminar presentations on these sports, their history, adaptations, rules, and major athletes.

Archery, Athletics, Basketball, Biathlon (winter), Boccia, Cross-Country Skiing, Cycling (track cycling and road cycling), Equestrian, Football, Goalball, Judo, Paracanoe, Parashooting, Powerlifting, Sailing, Shooting, Swimming, Table Tennis, Volleyball, Wheelchair Basketball, Wheelchair Fencing, Wheelchair Rugby, Wheelchair Tennis, Alpine Skiing, Sledge Hockey, Nordic Skiing, Wheelchair Curling, Nordic Skiing.

An excellent source for information on Paralympic sports is the [International Paralympic Website](#) as well as the [Canadian Paralympic Committee website](#).

Resources

Footprints Videos

[Jeff Adams](#)

[Father David Bauer](#)

[Debbie Brill](#)

[Foster Hewitt](#)

[James Naismith](#)

[Lester Patrick](#)

[Brier](#)

The Canadian Encyclopedia

[Father David Bauer](#)

[Ice Hockey](#)

[Foster Hewitt](#)

[James Naismith](#)

[Basketball](#)

[Lester Patrick](#)

[Brier](#)

[Curling](#)

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