

Comparative Analysis of the Hungarian and American Physical Education

One of the Pioneers of Modern Physical Education and Sport: New England

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The project had four principal aims - to study the formation, development, and influence of the Young Men's Christian Association in the United States, to explore the work of Ferenc Hepp at Springfield College, to study the history of the early sporting practices of women generally in the U.S. and the early history of women's basketball in particular. To achieve the goals of my project, I did research at Springfield College in Springfield, Massachusetts, one of the most important colleges in the early development of physical education in the U.S., where the YMCA developed, and also where Ferenc Hepp studied. To further complete my research, I did research at Smith College, one of the foremost women's colleges in the U.S. and one of the most influential in the development of women's sport in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It is also the place where women's basketball began in the late 19th century.

The Journey Begins

As we (me and my son) were heading to the heart of New England we started our journey – fairly appropriately – in “Old” England. That is we changed planes at London Heathrow Airport on the way from Budapest to Boston. It was a very first as none of us were ever been to the United States of America. Under these circumstances we arrived on a snowy day on the first of February 2008. After just touching down at Boston Logan Airport and going through the process of the entering the US without any hassle (after hearing many things about the difficulties regarding this matter we were prepared for a much tougher procedure but in our case it was as fast and simple as one can wish for). We immediately left Boston having just a glimpse of the city because of the then-newly opened Big Dig (a highway megaproject that includes underground tunnels) we passed through downtown Boston below the ground and come back to the surface again barely enough to take a glance at the home of the Boston Red Sox, Fenway Park. We continued our voyage on the I-90 one of the big transcontinental highways of the US (its Massachusetts portion is also known as the MassPike with the pilgrim hat as its symbol) to our final destination, Northampton.

Getting to Know the Fulbright Program

Being a historian the name of Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas wasn't unfamiliar to me. During my university studies at the lectures and seminars dedicated to the history of the United States his name as well as his role in the US foreign and domestic politics was often mentioned. The Fulbright Program was initiated in 1946 after the proposal of Sen. Fulbright as an international exchange program for teachers, researchers and students. In the mid 1970s when I was a university student I could only dream about taking part in an international exchange program (to a non-socialist country) and to be part of an American exchange program was even beyond my wildest dreams. That Hungary joined the Fulbright program in 1978 (also the year of my graduation from the University of Budapest) wasn't a common knowledge for ordinary students and teachers for a long time.

After the System Change of 1989-1990 and with the establishment of the Hungarian Fulbright Commission in 1990 the Fulbright Program received more and more attention and gained recognition. The number of American scholars coming to Hungary in addition to the number of Hungarian educators, researchers, students and teachers going to the US gradually increased. It was during this period that I got in touch with the Fulbright Program. Between 1997 and 1999 my institution together with the University of Pécs hosted as a Fulbright Scholar – first in Pécs then at our faculty – Susan J. Bandy who is internationally known for her work in the scientific areas of gender as well as women and sport. She actively and efficiently took part in the life of our university both

as a lecturer and as a researcher. With her valuable help many of our students could complete thesis' regarding the subject of woman and sport. Also because of her efforts our institution expanded its international links in addition to joining many English language programs at my faculty. It was also Susan's connections that opened the doors of some American colleges – initially virtually – for me.

My sphere of interest and scientific subject is the history of sport and physical education in schools, the role of sport and physical education in 19th and 20th century in education. I have to say that in this regard the USA was – and is still nowadays – the frontrunner. America is still very much ahead of Europe even if we are taking into consideration that Europe was ravaged by two world wars. Above the world wars Hungary had to suffer the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 and with that losing 2/3 of its territory and after 1945 the enforced Soviet occupation. The countries of Europe had to start all over again more than once in the 20th century still America's merits in the development of modern sport wasn't just a result of peace and prosperity that it enjoyed after the Civil War.

At the beginning of the 19th century sport life in the United States initially was organized using the English (British) methods. In the English tradition physical education always played an essential role in schools and later in colleges. The number of newly founded high schools, colleges and universities increased greatly all through the era. By this time most new educational establishments had an outdoor sport field and from the second half of the 19th century an ever-growing number of them had indoor sporting facilities. The 20th century meant even stronger growth for sport and physical education. In the English-speaking world PE teachers and coaches were respected members of their respective institutions and if students achieved sporting triumphs the whole institution was proud of them. On the other hand in Europe the situation was contrary – with the notable exception of Scandinavia – schools and colleges were short of students at PE courses and programs and because of the old habits PE teachers and students usually had to felt inferior and often had to struggle to be equal with the others.

During the spring semester of the 2007/2008 academic year thanks to the Fulbright Commission I could spend 5 months in two prestigious New England colleges that both have significant traditions in sport and physical education.

Northampton, the Paradise City

Northampton was our home during our stay in the United States. The city is in Hampshire County and sits on western banks of the Connecticut River about two and a half hours drive from Boston and three and half hours drive from New York City. The area was named Nonotuck or Norwottuck by the Native Americans meaning “mist of the River”. In 1653 the land of modern Northampton was purchased from the indigenous population and colonial

Northampton was founded in 1654 by settlers from nearby Springfield.

In 1851 the visiting famous opera singer Jenny Lind (also known as the “Swedish Nightingale”) said that Northampton is the “Paradise of America”. Ever since then the nickname Paradise City has been used. Northampton was incorporated as a city in 1883 and today has a population close to 30’000.

With the weather fortunately a little above freezing we arrived in the evening in Northampton on the 1st of February 2008. Our apartment was in a two-storey house on Elm Street (Smith College campus begins at the other side of the street). With winter slowly replaced by spring we gradually got used to the pace of life in Northampton from taking long walks in nearby woods to buying groceries in Stop & Shop supermarket.

Smith College

Smith College in Northampton was chartered in 1871 and opened its doors in 1875 as one of the first private women’s college. Nowadays it is the largest member of the Seven Sisters (Seven Sisters are seven prominent liberal art colleges that are historically women’s colleges in the Northeast of the US. They are Barnard College, Bryn Mawr College, Mount Holyoke College, Radcliffe College, Vassar College, Wellesley College and Smith College). Smith is also a member of the Five Colleges that links five institutions of the Connecticut River Pioneer Valley namely Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Smith College.

Founder Sophia Smith inherited her family fortune at the age of 65 and when she died in 1870 she left substantial funds for the establishment of an institution for the development of women’s education (that included sports) which resulted in the foundation of Smith College. Regarding sport Senda Berenson made the college historically important. The daughter of Lithuanian Jewish immigrants she turned to sports and physical activities in her early age because of health problems. After learning the benefits of sport as well as taking pleasure in it she went to Boston and obtained a diploma in gymnastics. In January 1892 she became the Director of Physical Training at Smith College. In the same year she visited the near Springfield College (my other host institution) where she saw the recently invented basketball and carefully studied its rules. On the 21st of March 1893 she formed the first female basketball team in the world and with that become the pioneer of female basketball. In the first match the freshman team played against the sophomore team. As Senda Berenson thought that for women’s basketball there should be different rules from men’s basketball she was asked to draft the rule book for female basketball. That was published in 1901 titled Spalding’s Athletic Library Basket Ball for Women. Female basketball was played with different rules until 1951, since

then the same rules apply to both men’s and women’s basketball.

Apart from basketball Senda Berenson also launched other sports at Smith College like gymnastics, rhythm gymnastics, fencing and field hockey. In 1985 she was (with Margaret Wade) the first two female inductees in the Basketball Hall of Fame that is in Springfield. The memory of Senda Berenson is highly appreciated until this day at Smith College. In the excellent library and archives of the College both hers as well as other materials regarding women and sport were an outstanding opportunity for me and it will be for future researches in sport history as well. Furthermore, beyond sport history I found some very interesting data with a Hungarian connection in the Smith College archives. The written documents as well as the Hungarian and English language books of Róza Bédy-Schwimmer are at the Smith College archives. Bédy-Schwimmer was the leading figure in the Hungarian Feminist movement and also in the struggle for equal suffrage for women. She was also the first female ambassador of the modern age when she was accredited as the Hungarian Ambassador to Switzerland for a short time during the Károlyi Government in 1918-1919. She moved to the United States in 1921. In 1929 she appealed for American citizenship but she was denied because – as she was a great pacifist – she refused to sign the document that said she should in the case of war serve her new country with weapons. She died in 1948 as a stateless person in New York City.

Regarding my stay and research at Smith College I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Christine M. Shelton for her invitation as well as her professional and personal help during our time in Northampton.

Springfield, the *City of Firsts*

Springfield is the largest city on the Connecticut River as well as in Western Massachusetts. It is located in Hampden County and has a population of around 150’000 inhabitants. The city is nicknamed the city of firsts as when it was founded in 1636 it became the first of many cities and towns with the same name in the United States. Once a manufacturing center much of the industry left the city in recent decades producing economical and social hardship.

Nowadays Springfield is primarily noted as the birthplace of Theodor Geisel better known by his pen name, Dr. Seuss. In 2002 the Dr. Seuss National Memorial Garden was opened in the Quadrangle in downtown Springfield. Basically it is a sculpture garden with life-sized bronze statues of the writer himself as well as some of his prominent creations like Horton the Elephant, the Cat in the Hat, the Lorax and the notoriously bad-tempered Grinch with his dog, Max.

Moreover, Springfield is also the birthplace of basketball and today its chief attraction is the Basketball Hall of Fame officially known as the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. It was founded by Lee Williams a former athletic

director at Colby College. The first public display was unveiled at Springfield College in 1968. In 1985 it moved off-campus to a new building. Its current location is just next door from the previous one and was opened in 2002. The new \$45 million, 80'000 square foot (7'400 m²) facility was built to resemble the shape of a basketball.

Springfield College

During my scholarship my research also took place in Springfield about 19 miles (36 kilometers) from Northampton. Springfield College is the birthplace of basketball. In 1891 James Naismith a sport instructor arriving from Canada organized the first basketball game here. Naismith came to Springfield by the invitation of Dr. Luther Gulick Head of the Springfield YMCA of Physical Education. At the same time they were looking for a team sport that can be played during the long and harsh New England winter (something I also experienced). Naismith tried several sports and finally by chance – looking at youngsters throwing balls into a peach basket – he invented the rules of the new game. First there were many players on the court at the same time, there was no dribbling and the maneuvers often ended in violent moves. Rules of the game gradually formed and basketball became more and more popular at colleges then at professional sport clubs. In just a few decades basketball turned into an international sport. Nowadays basketball enjoys wide media coverage; millions of people are attending matches or play the game themselves.

Springfield College also has an important connection with Hungarian sport history that was one of the reasons that I chose this institution in my scholarship. During 1934-35 Ferenc Hepp studied at Springfield College thanks to a YMCA stipendium. Ferenc Hepp is considered the “father of Hungarian basketball”. During my research I was especially interested in the materials in reference to him. The library and archives of Springfield College cannot be compared to the ones at Smith College. In terms of human resources and substance they are first-class but in terms of infrastructure there is still room for development.

Nevertheless, I received warm welcome and help from my hosts Dennis Gildea and Deborah Alm as well as from Ed Sims who sadly recently passed away. I would like again to express my gratitude to all of them.

Finally, I would like to introduce a short biography of Dr. Ferenc Hepp as his activities made it possible for me to apply for this Fulbright research scholarship in the field of sport and physical education history.

As it was previously mentioned Ferenc Hepp is today best known as the “father of Hungarian basketball”. He was born the 3rd of November 1909 at town of Békés in Békés County. He had to suspend his high school studies because of the severe financial situation of his family. Hepp started to work as a dyer and finished his high school studies while

working. Throughout his school years his teachers and fellow students noticed his enthusiasm towards sports and physical education. After graduating from high school he was enrolled at the Royal Hungarian College of Physical Education in Budapest. Because he was the first of the class of the academic year 1932/33 he was awarded with a special scholarship. With that he first studied at the Institute Rousseau in Geneva (Switzerland) and then in the “home” of basketball in Springfield, Massachusetts in the United States. In Springfield he obtained a Master degree. Later he completed his PhD studies at the University of Iowa with a dissertation titled “The Unitary Elements of the Character”. After returning home in 1937 his work was respected but to have a doctorate recognized in Hungary he had to write a new dissertation. The topic of his new dissertation – that he successfully defended in 1943 at the University of Budapest and earned the title “Doctor of Psychology” – was the physiologic background of throwing in ball games. In 1960 Hepp had to confirm again his doctorate status in the new Soviet-styled scientific system at the Hungarian Scientific Academy. His theme this time was the sensory aspects of athletic movements.

After the return from the United States in 1937 his first workplace was the Royal Hungarian College of Physical Education as an assistant professor and from 1941 as a professor. He mainly taught two subjects, basketball and another one called “Introduction into scientific research”. From the latter subject he was the first person to write a text book. Between 1947 and 1951 he was the interim Director of the Physical Education College but in the early 1950s his American “background” was deemed too risky by the political elite and he was dismissed from his position. From that time he dedicated himself to sport science and basketball. During the fall of 1945 he exerted to launch the Scientific Association of Physical Education and in 1954 he was one of founding members of the – then officially sponsored – Scientific Council of Physical Education. His international recognition was proved when in 1956 he was elected Vice-President of World Sport Scientific Council that operated under the helm of the UNESCO. Between 1959 and 1969 Hepp was the director of the newly created Scientific Research Institute of Physical Education. Obviously he was one of the pioneers of Hungarian sport sciences and it was characteristic of him to say that to fully understand the physical movements and there parameters one should equally use the methods of both natural and social sciences. One of his most important work was the so-called “Sport Dictionary in Seven Languages” that reflected his talent for languages as well as his general knowledge of sport. To honor him in 1983 the Hungarian University of Physical Education founded the Hepp Ferenc Prize to honor excellence in sport sciences.

Apart from sport sciences his “second love” was basketball. After introduced to basketball during his studies in Springfield he promoted the sport once he returned to Hungary. He also worked as a coach; in 1947 he worked

with champion team Kinizsi (FTC). Hepp joined the international basketball movement in 1940s. Between 1960 and 1980 he was President of the Commission of Finances of the International Basketball Federation or FIBA. He was also a prominent member of the Central Board. From 1946 until 1957 he also worked as an international referee. In Hungary he was a founding member of Hungarian Basketball Federation and was the President of the organization from 1956 until his death in 1980. Because of him Hungarian sport organizations enjoyed good relations with the international sport organizations. Not long before his death in 1980 he was elected into the Hall of Fame of Springfield College and in 1981 he was elected into the International Basketball Hall of Fame that is also in Springfield.

Further Sport Hall of Fames in the Northeast USA

The Volleyball Hall of Fame

Volleyball was originally called “Mintonette” and was invented by William G. Morgan at the Holyoke YMCA. Morgan had personally known James Naismith from his studies at Springfield College. He used characteristics of tennis, handball and basketball to create the new kind of ball game in 1895.

Holyoke is about halfway between Northampton and Springfield. The Volleyball Hall of Fame first opened as a small exhibition in 1987. In 1997 it moved to a new temporary location and is now in the process of moving into a permanent venue.

The International Tennis Hall of Fame

The International Tennis Hall of Fame is located at the Newport Casino in Newport, Rhode Island. In 1881 the United States Lawn Tennis Association held its first championship at the Newport Casino and continued doing so until 1914. Later the event became internationally recognized as the US Open.

The International Tennis Hall of Fame was founded in 1954 and today it is one the biggest and most comprehensive tennis museum in the entire world. The United States Tennis Association officially endorsed the Hall of Fame in 1954 while the International Tennis Federation recognized it in 1986.

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum

Although it is not in New England, nevertheless the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum is very close in upstate New York located in the town of Cooperstown. Cooperstown was part of the land that Judge William Cooper bought in 1785 (he was also the father of the American author James Fenimore Cooper) and the town was named after him.

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum was opened in 1939. Baseball wasn't invented in Cooperstown and the town itself shares nothing special with the history of baseball rather the idea of establishing a baseball hall of fame come from a local hotel owner who wanted bring in more tourists to revive the weakened economy after the years of the Great Depression. The original initiative was a success and today the Hall of Fame is a major attraction in central New York State.

The Journey Ends

All good things must come to an end – the saying goes. It was also very true in our case. The time in the United States went much too fast until it was time to go home. The whole experience was a once in a lifetime opportunity personally as well as professionally. Both I and my son have memories about this time that we will cherish forever.