

Irish culture through sport: a mix of traditional and globalised sports

Sports have gone through various great historical periods and are crossed by the great transformations of society. This allows to understand that sport is a social practice and that the values it carries are above all those of the society in which it is practiced. Sport in Ireland has a very important place through traditional sports but also through international sports in which Ireland participates such as the Olympic Games, rugby, or football. Hence the question: how does Ireland cultivate its specific culture through sport?

Traditional sports

Ireland has many traditional sports that are still widely practiced in the country. Here are examples of these special sports that belong to the typical Irish culture.



Gaelic Football :

Gaelic football is one of the most popular sports in Ireland ahead of hurling although it is not played internationally or really known by the general public. It is a mixture of football, rugby and new rules specific to this sport. It is played on a pitch similar to the international football and rugby pitches. The sport is very fast but less violent than hurling or rugby. Feet and hands are allowed for all players, unlike in traditional football.

Hurling :

It was invented several centuries ago; hurling is one of the main sports in Ireland. It is played with a wooden stick and is very similar to hockey. This sport is widespread in Ireland; indeed this sport is one of the most practiced in this country; crossing the streets as we can see in France children playing with a football, in Ireland you can



see children playing hurling.



Camogie :

Dating from the Middle Ages, Camogie is the female equivalent of hurling and is virtually identical except for a few rules. It is an Irish team sport played with a stick (the hurley) and a small ball. Thanks in part to the institutionalisation of Camogie by the Gaelic Athletic Association (the GAA), the sport became

fashionable again in the 1930s after a decline during the War of Independence.



Gaelic handball :

It is a kind of squash with a rigid glove instead of a racket, played by 2, 3 or 4 players.

It can be played indoors or outdoors. This sport is quite popular in Ireland, even if it is largely outnumbered by hurling, Gaelic football, and rugby. However, it has spread to most English-speaking countries (United States, England, Scotland etc...) following Irish emigration.



International sport

With the invasion of Ireland by England, the English brought their culture to England. Along with this culture, the English also brought their traditional sports such as rugby and football which they invented.

These sports developed within Ireland before expanding internationally. Currently, rugby is one of the most popular and most played sports. This popularity is accentuated each year with the increasing performance of the Irish national team. This year, the Irish won the VI Nations Tournament with a grand slam, meaning that they won all their matches. This victory even allowed them to be 1st in the world ranking of men's rugby. This shows that Ireland is one of the best teams in the world, which explains why the popularity of the sport is so high in the country.



Like rugby, football is also a sport played in Ireland. Although it is less popular it is still important as it is ranked 48th in the FIFA rankings. We can therefore see that the relationship between Ireland and England has allowed Ireland to grow in its sporting practices and to become one of the leading nations in sports such as rugby. Ireland is also involved in world sports and events such as the Olympic Games in which they participate in all the different disciplines.

To conclude

Thanks to globalisation and media coverage, some traditional sports have become international, such as rugby. We can see that Ireland cultivates its specific culture through traditional sports such as Hurling or Gaelic football but also through more widespread sports such as rugby which is part of the Irish culture because of the history of the country and the English invasion.