

The role of historians in the creation of «sports archives»

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We are two researchers in the history of sport, PhDs in STAPS, Sciences et Techniques des Activités Physiques et Sportives ('sciences and techniques of physical and sporting activities') and, as part of a postdoctoral research, we wanted to delve into the history of rugby on Reunion Island to understand how the sport was introduced and then spread to this French island in the Indian Ocean.

To do this, we first contacted the Réunion Territorial Rugby Committee, which was unable to provide us with archives prior to the end of the 1970s, in particular due to the loss of documents during the institution's successive relocations. The storage of available files was grotesque.



Image 1: 1 Archives of the Reunion Island Rugby Committee.



Image 2: Archives of the Reunion Island Rugby Committee.

We have only been entrusted with the press archives, in the absence of any other kind of archives.² However, the president of the Rugby Committee gave us the contact details of the pioneers of rugby on the island. Thus, we were able to meet these people, create oral archives, and also collect their private collections to complete our study of this sport on Reunion Island.

¹ Distinction made by Patrick Clastres between «sporting archives» and «sport archives» in *Le Sport, de l'archive à l'histoire*, 2006.

² Although there are several types of archives: administrative documents, press articles, photos, videos, web page, audio recording... See Cœuré and Duclerc, 2019.

Secondly, we contacted the Departmental Archives of Reunion Island to find, among other things, the administrative documents and the players in this sport that allowed different rugby clubs to be founded on the island.

This phase took a lot of time for several reasons. Firstly, the location, the opening hours of the departmental archives and their operation (document request / waiting / consultation) did not allow for quick and efficient access to documents. Secondly, the collections available in the archives were very limited, and we had to look for additional information in the press archives, which were not always accessible because they were in poor condition or absent from the general catalogue.

At the same time, we contacted the rectory and more specifically the academy inspectors, regional pedagogical inspectors (IA-IPR) in physical and sports education (EFE) and the regional service of the National Union of 'School Sports (UNEE). We also contacted the head of the Délégation régionale académique à la jeunesse, à l'engagement et aux sports DRAJ ES ('Regional Academic Delegation for Youth, Commitment and Sport, DARJ CE'). Neither could we access the archives here, as they were missing or had been destroyed.

Therefore, through these comments, we want to highlight the role of the historian in the possible creation of the collection within the departmental archives by sport actors or institutions.

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