

Bergman Österberg Union

Patron: Ann Brightwell M.B.E.

Re: The Origin of Netball

The game of Netball was founded between 1893 and 1901 by Madame Bergman Österberg and her students, at Madame Österberg's Physical Training College.

Please note that the following facts can be verified by reference to original sources and photographs held in **The Österberg Collection**:

- During summer 1893, Madame Bergman Österberg visited Chicago. She had been invited as one of the Vice-Presidents of the Physical Education Department at the International Congress of Education and later reported comprehensively on *Physical Education in the States*. It is possible that she witnessed the new game of Basket Ball and introduced the game informally to her students on her return to England.
Hampstead Physical Training College, Report for 1893, p9 & p21-31.
- In May 1895, Dr. Justin Kaye Toles, an American and a guest of Madame Bergman Österberg, taught students at Hampstead Physical Training College a version of Basket Ball. This can be verified by a student's comments in the Games Record printed in the College report for 1895.
Madame Bergman Österberg's Physical Training College, Report for 1895, p7 & p16.
- In July 1897, Ester Porter, of Baltimore, was a guest at Madame Bergman Österberg's Physical Training College. The students appreciated her instruction in American Basket Ball. This can be verified by a student's comments in the Games Record printed in the College report for 1896-1898.
"Most of all we appreciated her instruction in American Basket Ball. It is very similar to the game we have had so long, but is played with a football on a much larger ground, and the goals consist of iron rings fixed at the top of poles ten feet in height. For children, we consider the College game is preferable, and therefore we keep up the two as separate games, though the rules are much the same."
Madame Bergman Österberg's Physical Training College, Report for 1896-1898, p14-15.
- In June 1909, Miss Mary Hankinson, a student at Madame Österberg's College 1896-1898, and Secretary of the Ling Association of Gymnastic Teachers, presented a paper entitled, *The Game of Netball*. The paper is a comprehensive review of the game, from its beginnings at Madame Österberg's Physical Training College to the date of the paper (1909). Miss Hankinson makes it clear that having been taught the game of Basket Ball, students passed the game on from year to year and as there were no printed rules, each set of students thought they could improve on the rules, so the game was constantly changing. When students finished their training they introduced the game in their schools, but with so many variations on the rules it became difficult to establish which rules should be followed before inter-school matches could be played.
- The Ling Association of Gymnastic Teachers included a number of teachers trained at Madame Österberg's Physical Training College. The Association decided to appoint a sub-committee to review the rules and establish a uniform set which would be accepted by all those playing the game. The first set of rules for the game of Net Ball were published in 1901.
- Miss Hankinson's paper establishes that the game (which was developed by students from Madame Österberg's Physical Training College) was first called Net Ball with the publication of the first set of rules in 1901:
"We sent to America for the latest rules. But there were many things in the American rules which we did not like, and which we thought (and I still think rightly) that we could improve upon.....As we had made so many changes from the American rules, and as we had given up the baskets for nets and rings, we called the game Net Ball."
The Game of Net Ball: A Paper Read on June 18th 1909, at the Roan School for Girls, Greenwich... by Miss Hankinson, Secretary of the Ling Association of Gymnastic Teachers.

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