



CARIBBEAN SOCCER: *Hispanoamericanismo* AND THE IDENTITY POLITICS OF *Fútbol* IN PUERTO RICO, 1898–1920s

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Abstract

When the United States took possession of Puerto Rico in 1898, an aggressive Americanization project introduced cultural practices, including American sports. However, although Puerto Ricans incorporated U.S. sports to their sporting profile, they did so adhering to a larger Hispanic-American ideology. Although soccer, or fútbol, was played in Puerto Rico during the first decades of the United States occupation, it was associated with Spain and Hispanoamericanismo. Due to this, soccer was discriminated and unpopular in a population that incorporated American sports. I argue that through soccer we see another important element in the negotiation over U.S. imperialism in Puerto Rico and in the broader expansion of Hispanoamericanismo in the early twentieth century. Despite its unpopularity, soccer's limited space within Puerto Rican sports came to symbolize a Hispanic and Latin American sport, helping to fuel broader notions of nationhood. In this regard, Puerto Rican soccer illustrates the conciliation of a colonial nation hoping to fit within Latin America, while also adopting American sports. Through Puerto Rican soccer we can observe broader cultural and political negotiations over Americanization and Hispanidad in the Spanish Caribbean and how this process can in turn help develop strong ideas of national identity.

While soccer in continental Latin America receives a great deal of attention, soccer in the Spanish Caribbean does not. This is not surprising given that the Caribbean is known for baseball. Basketball and boxing also receive more attention than soccer. Make no mistake, despite being a minor sport, soccer has been played in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic since the early twentieth century.¹ Although soccer is not mainstream in Puerto Rico, the study of soccer reveals new angles in larger issues of cultural politics, imperialism and colonialism, and hegemony at the turn of the twentieth century. Particularly, soccer lets us reimagine an unusual angle of *Hispanoamericanismo* and its relation to the United States' rise as a global power. In this article, we will study the reasons why soccer did not receive massive appeal in Puerto Rico, but instead remained at the margins of a growing popular Americanized sports sphere, reflecting crucial negotiations over Puerto Rican culture and identity in the

transition from Spanish to U.S. colonialism. I argue that soccer's negligible position in the growth of a sports culture in Puerto Rico was another angle in both the development of U.S. imperial/hegemonic project and in a growing transatlantic formation of Hispanic identity, of which Puerto Ricans occupied a special place.

The marginality of Spanish Caribbean soccer is inherently related to the region's increasingly close relation, practically and ideologically, to the United States since the late nineteenth-century. It is also related to the consequences of the Spanish-American War of 1898 where Spain lost its last two possessions in the Caribbean, Cuba and Puerto Rico (and the Philippines in the Pacific) to the United States, which officially inaugurated its trans-oceanic empire.² The Spanish-American War also had profound consequences in Spain and Latin America, as it showed not only the demise of the once powerful Spanish empire, but also the U.S.'s neocolonial threat to Latin America. *Hispanoamericanismo* or *Hispanismo*, then, surfaced as a strong movement of cultural solidarity and affinity that strengthened the bonds of the Spanish speaking world.

Hispanoamericanismo and U.S. imperialism/Americanization were the backdrop in the process of developing soccer in Puerto Rico. Contrary to other places in Latin America, where the English had a strong presence, the Spanish Caribbean islands had close social, economic, and cultural relations with the United States during the nineteenth century. In the Spanish Caribbean during the nineteenth century, rising U.S. economic power served as a barrier against the influence the English. Cubans, for example, considered baseball a cultural element in their visions of nation in the nineteenth century³, and Puerto Ricans viewed the United States as a beacon of modernity prior to 1898.⁴ Baseball was also played in Puerto Rico during the last few years of Spanish rule, as so were other sports such as gymnastics, fencing, running, and boxing.⁵ When the United States took over Puerto Rico in 1898 it established a process of cultural hegemony and sought an Americanization plan that included English as the medium of instruction in schools, heralding U.S. patriots and Holidays, Protestant proselytization, and the introduction U.S. sports. Baseball was joined by newcomers such as basketball, boxing, and volleyball. Soccer was not among the main sports in the United States, and as such, it was not part of the Americanization campaign. Although soccer was indeed played in the schools, I argue that there was as much a degree of passive dismissal by a population that looked to the United States as the source of modern sports, as an official downplay of the sport as foreign. In this regard, the downplay of soccer in Puerto Rico is a result of a systematic imperial process to Americanize newly acquired colonial subjects through the extension of American institutions, contrary to the experience in continental Latin America.

While soccer flourished where the English had a stronger presence in Latin America, in the Spanish Caribbean (Puerto Rico and Cuba) it arrived

later and mainly sponsored by Spaniards with the help of English in Cuba and Americans of Irish and Scottish roots in Puerto Rico.⁶ The fact that a group of Irish and Scottish-Americans played soccer in Puerto Rico evidences the complex dynamics of identity politics of sport in Puerto Rico. It is not historically accurate to draw sharp identity lines between sports, e.g. baseball = American, soccer = Spaniards/Puerto Ricans. Irish/Scottish-American soccer players identified outside the prevalent Anglo-Saxon American counterparts by naming their team "Celtics." Puerto Rico's first documented soccer match belonged to the membership of the Comercio Sporting Club, mainly Spanish merchants in San Juan, who also sought to establish baseball and Cricket teams.⁷ Spaniards also played basketball during the first decades after the war, but named their team "Iberics." And baseball was played in Cuba and Puerto Rico by locals who developed the sport as their own, eventually becoming national sports. The argument revolves around the general symbolic meaning ascribed to sports and the individuals and institutions that supported them.

With soccer's increasing popularity in Spain and Latin America, and with Puerto Rico's Spanish past too close, soccer meant a problem for Americanization. Soccer teams during the 1910s and 1920s showed direct connections to the Spanish and Puerto Rican elite, with teams such as the España FC and the Real San Juan FC. Indeed, the sport during the first three or four decades of the twentieth century was mainly played by foreigners, Spaniards leading the rosters.⁸ Spanish institutions like the Casino Español, Casa de España, and the Auxilio Mutuo were paramount to the establishment of soccer and most of the early soccer clubs draw their players from such institutions. Yet the story of soccer in Puerto Rico was not one of oppression and resistance against an American imperial sport machinery. Most Puerto Ricans welcomed American sports and considered, rightly so, soccer a sport of the local and Spanish elite. Puerto Rico, like Cuba, received a significant number of Spanish migrants after the war to partake in the opportunities that the American economic and political regime offered. On the other hand, although baseball and other U.S. sports are seen as athletic imperialism, they were developed locally, with local leadership and players for a local fan base. U.S. sports carried an aura of progress, liberalism, and democracy, the same aura of democracy the United States exposed and exported throughout the region. Puerto Rican soccer, then, has to be understood within these ideological agendas of Americanization and *Hispanoamericanismo*, not in polarizing opposition, but in a negotiated process over Puerto Rican identity, which defended its Hispanic roots, but also welcomed American institutions. While other countries in Central America and the Caribbean experienced different degrees of U.S. intervention, Puerto Rico as a colony of the U.S. and a member of the Latin American community became equally the centerpiece of U.S. imperialism and the frontline in the defense of the Hispanic culture. The practice and discrimination of Puerto Rican soccer provides us with a suitable window to observe the political and cultural

negotiations of a rising American Empire and the defense and solidarity of *Hispanoamericanismo*.

The first section of this article discusses the historical context when soccer spread globally, paying particular attention to Latin America, Spain, and the United States. The following section discusses the ways in which soccer was downplayed under Americanization, amidst the continuing presence of Spanishness in the immediate years after 1898. The last section will demonstrate the ways in which institutions like the Casino Español, Casa de España, and the Auxilio Mutuo helped to associate soccer with Spain and Latin America, helping to foster *Hispanoamericanismo* in Puerto Rico.

Empire, Americanization, and Soccer

Sport became a cultural phenomenon in the last quarter of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹ Being an English product, soccer carried the values of British sportsmanship, competition, and strength so coveted in capitalist industrialized societies. This made it quite appealing to everywhere the British exerted influence, and the sport spread globally, including to Spain and Latin America, through a complex web of merchant or Royal navy, educational exchanges, or British schools abroad. Soccer was not only tied to transnational commercial flows, but became an integral component in the consolidation of national identities. Through this process, soccer became Hispanicized and Latin Americanized. In the last twenty years, we have seen an increase in academic studies about soccer in Latin America.¹⁰ Yet soccer in the Spanish Caribbean has not yet been thoroughly studied.

The English, for the most part, brought soccer to Spain and Latin America through commercial or military networks. English businessmen or sailors played to a local audience attentive to modern ways of recreation. British sailors and consulates in Spain, in addition to flow of Spanish students to England, were the three main vehicles by which Spaniards were exposed to soccer in the last decades of the nineteenth century.¹¹ Argentina was perhaps the first Latin American nation to play soccer, being introduced in a similar fashion as in Spain. In Argentina, soccer was first recorded in 1867, but institutionalized in 1893 with the establishment of the Argentine Football Federation.¹² In Spain, despite being considerably closer to England than Argentina, soccer was played in around 1890. In Spain, like in Argentina, English sports were considered a bourgeois manifestation of modernity.¹³

In his classic book *The Games Ethic and Imperialism*, J.A. Mangan demonstrates how schools were integral in the English use of sport for its imperial agenda.¹⁴ The role of schools and physical education was equally significant in the fostering of the idea of sport as progress in Spain.¹⁵ In Latin America, the public school system was equally important in teaching not only the tactics and rules of sports, but also in ascribing a sense of progress and in the efforts to consolidate national identity.¹⁶ For

example, the origins of soccer in Peru go back to an English club in the 1890s. Historian Gerardo Álvarez argues that Peruvian schools were the premier vehicle to help spread soccer through physical education. The first interscholastic competition occurred in 1898 during the *Campeonato Atlético Nacional* with the participation of the Instituto de Lima, Colegio de Lima, Colegio Whilar, Instituto Científico, Colegio de la Inmaculada, and Colegio Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, winner of the tournament. As an indication of soccer's impact, the tournament counted with the attendance of President Eduardo López de Romaña and a public of 20,000, with another 10,000 outside the stadium.¹⁷

While English soccer embodied progress to many in Latin America, other sports were viewed as progressive in Puerto Rico, as in other Caribbean countries such as Cuba and the Dominican Republic.¹⁸ In the Spanish Antilles, and other parts of the broader Caribbean, the United States extorted a strong political and economic influence as part of an imperialist westward expansion that turned the region into an "American Mediterranean."¹⁹ For the United States, sports were also used as a vehicle of imperialism and hegemony, particularly baseball.²⁰ Yet sports and physical education were also vehicles to consolidate ideas of U.S. national identity. American physical educators, such as Nils Posse and John Dewey, began to move towards a unified American system in the early 1890s that was truly American and differed from other systems, mainly the German militaristic *turnvereins*, the physiological Swedish system of Per Henrik Ling, and the English outdoor athletics.²¹ Instead, they took elements of these systems and developed their own, which by the 1920s became known as the *New Physical Education*, which legitimized sports and interscholastic competition as part of the curriculum.²²

Soccer was among the sports played in the United States during the late nineteenth century. Indeed, soccer had some popularity in New England and St. Louis in the 1880s and 1890s, intimately connected to communities of recent immigrants from England, Scotland, and Ireland.²³ However, it was not seen as American and was systematically dismissed by other sports including baseball and American football. Indeed, during the crucial period between 1870 and 1930 soccer was shunted out of American national sports sphere.²⁴ The English sports of rugby and cricket were modified to such extent as to deem them American and not European; rugby became American football and cricket became baseball. While adhering to Protestant Anglo-Saxon cultural profiles, Americans considered English sports (regardless of soccer's working class popularity in England) as aristocratic and monarchical, inconsistent with their republican model.²⁵ While others sports flourished in U.S. colleges, soccer was played sporadically and considered a sport for the rejects.²⁶

The lack of popularity of soccer in Puerto Rico is in direct correlation to its dismissal in the U.S. national sporting culture and in the use of sports to Americanize colonized peoples. In its efforts to expand its commercial, political, military, and cultural spheres, the United States in

the nineteenth century acquired land into the west of the continent and secured hegemonic control over Central America and the Caribbean. Imperial hegemony took different shapes, and in Puerto Rico it consisted of outright colonialism. After two years of military rule, in 1900 the U.S. Congress established the Foraker Act that provided Puerto Ricans with a civil government led by a presidentially appointed Governor, an Executive Council with five Puerto Ricans and six American members, and a 35 member locally elected House of Representative. Puerto Ricans became U.S. nationals without proper representation in the U.S. Congress, but one Resident Commissioner with no voting powers.²⁷ The U.S. Congress retained plenary powers over the island, and while classifying Puerto Ricans as “U.S. citizens” in 1917, did not relinquish its plenary powers, nor extend constitutional rights, Presidential votes, or equal representation in the U.S. Congress in a move considered more useful for hegemonic purposes than for democratic objectives.²⁸

These colonial measures coexisted with an articulated effort by Puerto Ricans to affirm their cultural uniqueness as a Hispanic and Latin American society. Even before the U.S. takeover of Puerto Rico in 1898, Puerto Rican *hacendados*, intellectuals, and artists had embarked on a project of their own to define a unique sense of Puerto Rican nationhood that would justify claims of political and economic autonomy and hegemony, mainly based on Spanish patriarchal and white cannons dubbed the “great Puerto Rican family.”²⁹ Still, just before the war, Puerto Ricans, especially those who negotiated autonomy from Spain in 1897, saw themselves as much Puerto Ricans as Spaniards. In reaction to the Americanization policies of the new regime, student, teachers, and university professors, for example, actively opposed English-only policies conducting classes in Spanish, yet still saw the American education system as a way to progress. By the 1930s, the articulation of a unique Puerto Rican identity was eloquently worked by a group of intellectuals, known as the *Generación del Treinta*, which sought to continue to hold on to paternalistic, patriarchal, and white definition of the nation in order to consolidate local hegemony.³⁰

Following the U.S. sporting hierarchies, soccer in Puerto Rico was discriminated against the concerted effort of both the education system, particularly through physical education and athletics, and the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA). The YMCA was responsible for the introduction and the nurturing of a sport culture in Puerto Rico despite its original religious proselytization agenda.³¹ The YMCA arrived to Puerto Rico with the invading troops in 1898 and established an “Army and Navy YMCA” that sought the conversion of Catholics to Protestantism through sports, and introduced the sports of basketball, volleyball, and tennis, among others. Through the activities of the YMCA and the education system,³² Puerto Ricans negotiated the introduction of U.S. sports as a key component of the American way of life of a broader Puerto Rican identity.

Physical education in Puerto Rico incorporated the Swedish system that stressed physical exercise as a matter of overall health. The source

of this approach was Luther Gulick, who was an important leader in the International Committee of the YMCA. Puerto Rican teachers were exposed to the educational ideology of Granville Stanley Hall of Clark University, first President of the American Psychological Association. Hall's approach, well suited to the imperial Americanizing regime, rested on authoritarian romanticism's belief that pre-adolescent children were non-reasoning and should be treated as savages in need of charismatic authority. He believed in fear of God, love of country, and a strong body through games, sport, and play.³³ His pedagogical philosophy reached the University of Puerto Rico's teaching manuals and was applied to physical education as "one of the surest and most effective ways to secure order, system, and co-operation [of] a disorderly, indifferent, and lawless class."³⁴

Puerto Rico's Normal School, precursor to the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), was established to train Puerto Rican teachers to help implement the Americanization program.³⁵ The UPR's curriculum of 1902–1903, J. H. A. Smith, included three years of physical exercises with the objective to improve mental and physical health. The hiring of Smith provides a lens to observe the conceptual and practical bases of physical education and sport during the first few years of the U.S. occupation. Before coming to Puerto Rico, Smith was the Director of the gymnasium at Dean Academy, a boarding school for boys and girls in Franklin, Massachusetts. He was also a graduate of the Posse Gymnasium Club of Boston, a school that advanced the medical Swedish system. At the Normal School in San Juan, Smith taught gymnastics, but also American sports. News of his success in the island were highlighted in the *Posse Gymnasium Journal* saying that Smith, who "also secured a government position," had "done more than any one in introducing American games in Porto Rico." Reporting from San Juan, Smith said that "Americans have virtually made baseball the national out-door sport in Porto Rico . . . tennis tournaments are being held, and [American] football, cycling and other sports have been tried to some extent."³⁶

The publication in 1913 *Course for Physical Training* shows the extent of physical education. According to the report, official sports included baseball, basketball, track and field, hockey, water polo, tennis, and surprisingly, soccer. The report advised that all schools should have a standard ball the size of a basketball or a soccer ball.³⁷ What is revealing is the way the report described the tactics of each sport. Baseball, and other games such as hill-dill and Captain-ball received complex explanations, soccer did not. Instead, it merely mentioned that soccer had features of American rugby and basketball. Clearly setting sport hierarchies, the authors indicated that among the sports that can be played during Field Days were baseball and basketball, no mention of soccer. Additionally, their recommendation for playground spaces and equipment were based on basketball and baseball needs and regulations, not soccer. Therefore, even though soccer was acknowledged as a sport, it did not receive the importance or institutional support as the American sports.

The preference for American sports and downplay of soccer was also indoctrinated through the Puerto Rican teachers' leading journal, *The Porto Rico School Review* (PRSR). In 1920 A. H. Linch, a school supervisor for the district of Cabo Rojo and Lajas, wrote about "school spirit":

"One of the traits of character that should be formed early in the school career is loyalty . . . Though the habit of loyalty to a group is developed in some games, these our small children do not play before entering school. Prisoner's Base, Basket Ball, and Baseball are excellent for this purpose . . . The school that can not [sic] develop it will not go very far . . . Proper school spirit tends to cleanness and order, through pride in the school . . . [and] respect for authority."³⁸

Later that year, Edwin Schoenrich, school Principal in Guayama, was resolute in the use of competitive sports to foster school spirit. He thought that the best sport to develop was basketball due to being fast-paced. He thought the faculty should be involved, basketball played three times a week, include banners, and award trophies. Baseball was another good American sport, but there were few proper fields. Tennis was too expensive and there were few players and was not a contact sport. Volleyball was a playground game. As for soccer, he said that it should not be played because it simply was *not an American sport*.³⁹

George Keelan is considered a major figure in the early development of athletics in Puerto Rican schools, becoming Principal of the University High School in 1926.⁴⁰ In 1923, as General Superintendent of Physical Education in Puerto Rico, he recommended the Department of Education to officially adopt the book *How to be an Athlete* by C. E. Hammett, Carl L. Lundgren, and John L. Griffith.⁴¹ This book was advertised in the PRSR as one that would provide school boys and coaches the fundamentals of track and field, football, baseball, basketball, and tennis.⁴² It should be observed the clear gender discrimination in Puerto Rican sport. As this book advertisement indicates, "athletics" were reserved for boys in Puerto Rico. For Keelan, boys did athletics, military drill, and physical fitness. Girls did physical education with "instruction in the care of the body."⁴³ Girls, and women overall, were relegated to sports that "do not force them to lose their femininity," including swimming, tennis, volleyball and fencing.⁴⁴ Although basketball was perceived as a girls sport, it nevertheless became another manly sport. Indeed, these were the only sports discussed in the book by Hammett, Lundgren, and Griffith, which despite claiming to be a "comprehensive treatment of athletics," did not mention soccer at all. The authors went on to argue that not only will the students benefit from learning these sports, but their reach went broader to "influence . . . on those witness the competitions and on those who read the story of the encounters in the papers."⁴⁵

Smith, Linch, Schoenrich, and Keelan represent the wave of American teachers involved in the Americanization agenda. Yet, as mentioned before, Puerto Ricans also welcomed American sports and even collaborated

with the American leadership, challenging a simple oppressor/victim paradigm. Such was the case of Juan Bernardo Huyke. Born in Arroyo, Puerto Rico in 1880, Huyke was a conservative pro-American lawyer, writer, educator, and sports enthusiast. He served as Superintendent of Schools from 1908 to 1910 proposing bilingualism, as a House Representative from 1912 to 1920, Commissioner of Education from 1921 to 1930, and as Interim Governor in 1923. As new Commissioner of Education, he wrote in October 1921 for the PRSR in favor of Americanization. He particularly said that Puerto Rican schools were “agencies of Americanism [sic]. They must implant the spirit of America within the hearts of our children. Americanism is Portoricanism [sic].”⁴⁶ Following the annexation proponents of the time,⁴⁷ he believed that the United States was a federation of sovereign States and that Puerto Rico, as a sovereign Caribbean State, should enter the federation. Since baseball, American football, and basketball were the sports of the federation, they were the ones to incorporate and celebrate.

As Puerto Ricans increasingly practiced these sports, enjoying the support of the public education system, the market responded accordingly and supplied the necessary equipment. A major sporting goods store in San Juan, “Los Muchachos,” advertised their products in the PRSR as early as 1922. Their marketing reflected the increasingly popular sports, which not surprisingly were those sponsored by the education system and included baseball, basketball, and track.⁴⁸ They published an advertisement in almost every issue beginning in 1922. Eventually, their ads grew in size and visual impact, but still did not include soccer equipment (see image 1).

Fútbol and Hispanoamericanismo

In 1968, Emilio E. Huyke published *Los Deportes en Puerto Rico*, which became a reference book on Puerto Rico’s sports history. A member of the Puerto Rican Sports Hall of Fame (which he helped establish), Emilio Huyke is considered one of the most important local sponsors of sports, gaining international credence by serving as General Secretary of Puerto Rico’s Olympic Committee from 1964 to 1972. A locally and internationally distinguished sports journalist since the early 1930s, by the late 1960s, Huyke had amassed a comprehensive knowledge of sports. Emilio Huyke was the son of Juan Bernardo Huyke and credited his father for his love and enthusiasm of sports and their history.⁴⁹ In his book, Huyke described and chronicled the history of different sports in the island. Huyke created a separate entry for “fútbol español” (Spanish soccer), associating it with Spanish speaking countries and claiming that it was the principal sport of the “Madre Patria” (Mother Country). He further stated that Spaniards brought the sport to the New World. As for soccer in Puerto Rico, Huyke argued it was played “during the Spanish years” by Spaniards.⁵⁰ Although the idea that soccer was played in Puerto Rico during the final years of the Spanish regime has endured,⁵¹ others, based on historical documentation, reject this claim and point to 1911 as the first documented soccer match.⁵²

Figure 1. Los Muchachos, "Atletas Perfectos," *Porto Rico School Review* 15, 5 (January 1931).

Atletas Perfectos

Se hacen con buenos entrenadores
y con un equipo de reconocida fama.
Los equipos de la afamada marca
"GOLDSMITH"
son usados con preferencia en Amé-
rica por su reconocida superioridad.
Tenemos surtido constante para
TODA CLASE DE DEPORTES.

**BASE-BALL
BASKET-BALL
VOLLEY-BALL
BOXEO - TENNIS
GIMNASIA
ATLETISMO
CAZA, PESCA, Etc.**

Los Departamentos de Instrucción vienen usando,
con marcado éxito, los productos "GOLDSMITH".
SOLICITE CATÁLOGO Y REGLAS GRATIS.
DESCUENTOS ESPECIALES A LOS DEPARTAMENTOS Y CLUBS ORGANIZADOS

Los Muchachos, Sucs. de A. MAYOL & Co.,
SAN JUAN, P. R.

Yet more than finding the precise origin of soccer in Puerto Rico, we should understand why this sport is believed to be an inherently Spanish sport.

Despite the undisputed English role in the spread of soccer throughout the world, in Puerto Rico soccer is viewed as a Spanish or Latin American sport. This is because soccer developed in Spain and Latin America at the same time as *Hispanoamericanismo* or *Hispanismo*. It should be noted that *Hispanoamericanismo*/*Hispanismo* have some elements in common, but also differ by country and/or region throughout Latin America and Spain. In *El sueño de la Madre Patria*, historian Isidoro Sepúlveda documented the ways in which *Hispanoamericanismo* became for Spain and its

former colonies throughout the globe the “articulation of a transnational community supported on a cultural identity based on language [Spanish], religion [Catholicism], history, and customs or social traditions.” For some, this movement positioned Spain as the harbinger of Hispanic values to be admired and emulated, in turn celebrating the idea of one “raza” (race). *Hispanoamericanismo* was a vehicle not only for Spanish national identity, but also for cultural neocolonialism and hegemony.

Yet in some Latin American countries, especially those with large indigenous or black populations, *Hispanoamericanismo* became a way to articulate and vindicate their European heritage.⁵³ In Peru, the *Generación del 900* devalued the indigenous populations as backwards and found in Peru’s Spanish heritage the model for modernity.⁵⁴ Other *Hispanoamericanistas* celebrated their Hispanic heritage and viewed the United States as a cultural, economic, and political threat.⁵⁵ However, this view of the United States is more nuanced. For one of Latin America’s most celebrated intellectuals, Mexican José Vasconcelos, the United States was both despised and admired. While Vasconcelos was critical of the U.S. imperial maneuvers, he held deep admiration of the U.S. education system, Federalism, and strategic incorporation of its British colonial past. For Vasconcelos, Latin America needed to also build on its European (Spanish) past and incorporate the features that make the United States and Northern Europe successful, doing so keeping and celebrating a creole (*criollo*) identity.⁵⁶ Likewise, not all Latin Americans celebrated their Hispanic heritage, and condemned their colonial Spanish past, especially the Conquistadors’ domination over the indigenous.⁵⁷ In Puerto Rico, the *Hispanoamericanismo* that is seen through soccer was the one that celebrated their Hispanic heritage with a degree of hesitation to U.S. presence. But in line with Vasconcelos, Puerto Ricans also welcomed and celebrated certain American institutions, including schools and sports, which seemed worthy of incorporation in their visions of progress.

Soccer in Spain was inherently tied to ideas of “regeneracionismo” (re-generation), which sought to renew a decadent Spanish society in the late nineteenth century. This decadence became evident in Spain’s defeat in 1898. A group of physical educators and promoters of sport sought in modern athletics a route to progress, of which soccer was an important component.⁵⁸ In his book *Construyendo una pasión*, historian Juan Antonio Simón demonstrates that despite regional rivalries, soccer during the first three decades of the twentieth century in Spain became a model of progress that would carry the masses into a vigorous and healthy future.⁵⁹ As a sport of the masses, soccer in Spain (particularly Barcelona) spread after 1899. The Barcelona Football Club was established on November 29, 1899. Between 1899 and 1903 more than 20 teams were established in the city. These were the decades that sport, especially soccer, became vehicles of nationalism, and in Spain it was no different. Although some teams adopted English names, many had Iberian names including the Catalá, Hispania, Español, Franco-Español, Catalonia, Ibérica, Barcelonés, and

Hispano Americano, the latter already indicating a transatlantic affinity.⁶⁰

In Latin America a similar process of soccer as progress and identity occurred in the early years of the twentieth century. After a period of introduction and adoption of soccer in different Latin American countries, and in line with nationalist currents of the time, there was a need to erase the English relation of soccer to create a national one, not necessarily in affinity with Spain, but emphasizing the Hispanic national archetype (i.e. *criollo*). The creation of national teams and international competition, such as the Lipton Cup between Argentina and Uruguay first played in 1905, served as an ideal visualization of the nation.⁶¹ By the 1920s, a sense of *criollo* soccer gained strength throughout the region, as Uruguay and Argentina became two of the best teams globally and celebrated this feat as a success of “la raza,” in this case the Uruguayan and Argentinean.⁶² Although *criollo* soccer was not glorifying Spain as the “Mother Country” of soccer, it alluded to pride in a cultural Hispanic identity, but specific to each nation. We see a strong turn towards *Hispanoamericanismo* in Argentina when we take into account the work of novelist Manuel Gálvez.⁶³ The idea of soccer and race in the making of *Hispanoamericanismo* is extensively documented in Cuba in the work of Santiago Prado Pérez de Peñamil.⁶⁴ As it happened in Puerto Rico, after 1898 the Spanish community in Cuba did not disappear, but now had to compete for economic and social space in a new political configuration. Prado Pérez de Peñamil argues that Spanish social clubs began practicing soccer not only as a way to foster Spanish unity, but also to foster *Hispanoamericanismo*. Soccer was highly associated with clubs “tightly related to the defense of *hispanidad* . . . the fervent defense of *hispanidad* joined soccer in various social and economic spheres as unique expression of the community.”⁶⁵ In 1912, the *Club Deportivo Hispano América* was established in Havana to strengthen the cultural bonds between Spain and Cuba, while the Iberia FC appeared in 1914.

As in Cuba, in Puerto Rico after 1898 the Spanish community also suffered displacement from the privileged state it once enjoyed under Spain’s rule. Under the U.S., Spaniards had to negotiate for economic, political, and cultural influence. From the start of U.S. rule, the Spanish community sought to be the cultural figure-head and considered itself the guardians of Spanish and Puerto Rican culture. Following *regeneracionismo* ideals, their presence in the now U.S. colony meant the continuation of Spanish culture with the goal of improving the Hispanic *raza*. The *Casino Español de Puerto Rico* was one of those cultural institutions that survived the imperial transition. Founded in 1871, the Casino was mostly a conservative Spanish institution enjoying the privilege of the Spanish government. This changed after 1898 and thereafter sought unity in defense of elite common interests. In their 1899 memoirs, the membership swore allegiance to Spain and to the maintenance of Spanish culture in Puerto Rico through Spanish language instruction, mercantile arithmetic, political economics, gymnastics, and fencing, especially among the youth.⁶⁶ That is, they would

fight Americanization in the fronts of language, business, politics, and sports.

Still an elite institution, the Casino increased its membership from 247 in 1898 to 768 in 1899,⁶⁷ and dues from \$352 to \$961 during the same period. In order to aid those Spaniards who were left displaced and out of work after the U.S. takeover, the Casino established a charity section (later the *Auxilio Mutuo* hospital), raising some \$10,538 from local donations. The Casino also fully counted on the support of the Spanish government, through the Marquis of Comilla, and received \$10,259 for the same project. The Marquis of Comilla, Claudio López Bru, had inherited massive wealth from his father's business enterprises in Cuba and was very invested in retaining the remaining Spanish overseas colonies. He invested a large sum of money in the 1898 war, and was later involved in the 1898 peace negotiations between the U.S. and Spain.⁶⁸ As such, López Bru had genuine interests in preserving a strong degree of Spanish presence in Puerto Rico.

As previously mentioned, the first documented soccer match in Puerto Rico occurred on March 19, 1911 at the grounds of the Morro Castle in San Juan.⁶⁹ As in other parts of Latin America and Spain, soccer was played by the professional and business class, fitting the elite profile of *Hispanoamericanistas*.⁷⁰ Players were mostly Spaniards and a few white *criollos*. Given this membership, spectators would consider this a "Spanish" sport that was also played by white elite Puerto Ricans. This first match was played by teams 1 and 2 from the Comercio Sporting Club of San Juan. A public letter in the pro-Spanish newspaper *Boletín Mercantil* announced the match saying firstly that the sport was very popular in Spain.⁷¹ Interest in developing the sport grew and on April 23, 1911 the first Puerto Rican football cup was held also at El Morro. Connections to *Hispanoamericanismo* are present since this first cup. The match was played mostly by Spaniards with a few Puerto Ricans. Also, a recap of the March 1911 match stated that given soccer's popularity among the Latin youth, this sport helped promote the Vatican motto "Mens sana in corpore sano."⁷² While the motto was present in modern sport in general,⁷³ its association to "Latins" and the Vatican in this case reveals a deliberate Catholic association, in this case aligned with *Hispanoamericanismo*. Another connection is the first Puerto Rican to play for the Barcelona FC, Augusto Vicente Calixto Ozores. Augusto Ozores was born in 1893 in San Juan to Vicente Ozores Nieva, a Galicia native, and Puerto Rican María Iriarte Solís, and played for the Barcelona from 1914 until 1917 when he moved back to Puerto Rico to play for the San Juan FC. The Ozores family had moved to Galicia after the 1898 war, later on moving to Barcelona.⁷⁴ His brother, Francisco Javier Ozores, played for the San Juan FC at least since 1915.⁷⁵ In this regard, not only were these initial teams composed of Spaniards, but the few Puerto Ricans had strong ties to Spain.

Similar connections occur with the Lomba family, which was prominently connected to both the Spanish institutions such as the *Casino Español* and the *Auxilio Mutuo* and to soccer clubs. In effect, the Lomba family was

very invested in soccer, and had a significant hand in the development of soccer in early twentieth-century Puerto Rico, eventually helping establish the A Guarda Sporting Club in the 1950s in Spain.⁷⁶ In 1916, R. Lomba played for San Juan FC and A. Lomba for España FC, while Eduardo Lomba and J.A. Lomba doing so in 1917.⁷⁷ Manuel Lomba Peña was born in 1861 in A Guarda, Galicia, and along with his brother Eduardo traveled to Cuba in pursuit of business opportunities. Later, Manuel arrived in Puerto Rico in 1891 and quickly established himself as a business and social leader, being able to successfully navigate the 1898 transition. He became the President of the *Casino Español* between 1901 and 1902, and of the *Auxilio Mutuo* between 1904 and 1907.⁷⁸ The *Sociedad Española de Auxilio Mutuo y Beneficencia* was established in 1883 as a conservative institution for the wellbeing of Spaniards in Puerto Rico, but after 1898 worked jointly with the *Casino Español* in defense of Spanish interests and cultural survival.⁷⁹ Manuel moved to Madrid in 1907, but kept managing his business in San Juan. Manuel Lomba's brother, José María, also moved to Puerto Rico with his family, including his son Eduardo. In 1911, the Barcelona magazine "Mercurio" announced a special issue on Puerto Rico written by José María Lomba, which might also point to connections to the cradle of Spanish soccer.⁸⁰

In 1913, the newly established *Centro Español* or *Casa de España* in Puerto Rico organized a soccer tournament among its members. The *Casa de España* was established in 1913 as the principal institution for the support of the Spanish people in Puerto Rico and the defense and promotion of Hispanic culture, while the *Auxilio Mutuo* kept a more health oriented mission.⁸¹ Still, together with the *Casa de España*, the *Auxilio Mutuo* hosted soccer matches at their grounds, especially during the 1920s.⁸² It should be noted that the Spanish community did participate in U.S. American sports, illustrated by the basketball team "Iberic" composed of Spaniards and Puerto Ricans that dominated early games between 1918 and 1922.⁸³ Similarly, soccer was not only played by Spaniards and middle to high class Puerto Ricans. The team "Celtic" was established in 1914 by Americans. However, the majority of its members were of Scottish or other "Celtic" nations that included names such as Macfle, Merson, Cochran, McLachlan, Macpherson, and McBride,⁸⁴ and was known as the "English" team rather than American.⁸⁵ Celtic joined San Juan FC and Sporting Ponce for the early soccer activity on the island in 1914, attracting many to buy tickets and attend the matches. Nonetheless, for the most part Spaniards were associated with soccer and vice-versa.

Just as the English spread soccer through merchants and their navy, Puerto Ricans also benefited from this process. However, in the case of Puerto Rico it was not English sailors bringing soccer, but Argentinean marines. The leadership of San Juan FC hosted the marines from the Argentinean battleship *Rivadavia* for the celebrations of St. James, Patron Saint of Spain and Puerto Rico's national holiday under Spain, on July 25, 1914.⁸⁶ It is probable that the Argentinean sailors were aware of

Puerto Rico's colonialism, since as early as 1912 we see calls for Puerto Rican decolonization and independence in the Argentinean press.⁸⁷ The Argentinean visit was more than a soccer match, it was a celebration of Latin American solidarity and *Hispanoamericanismo*.⁸⁸ The match occurred to a numerous crowd that had waited hours to see the event. After the Argentineans beat the locals by a score of 5 to 1, both teams attended a lunch at "La Mallorquina" restaurant where all toasted for the Argentine Republic, Puerto Rico, Spain, and Puerto Rican soccer.⁸⁹ That night, the Argentineans were honored at a formal ball at the *Casino Español*. The ballroom was decorated with the flags of Argentina, Puerto Rico, and Spain, and the Argentineans performed a "fine and delicate paso de tango."⁹⁰ It should be remembered that the official flag of Puerto Rico between 1898 and 1952 was the same as that of the United States. The Puerto Rican flag was a sign of Puerto Rican nationalism, later adopted as an emblem by the radical and pro-independence *Partido Nacionalista* during the 1920s. The crew of the *Rivadavia* was also treated to a banquet at the *Casa de España*. Finally, the *Rivadavia* crew was invited to another banquet at the "Hotel Inglaterra" where José de Diego, President of the Puerto Rican House of Delegates and considered today one of the most important leaders of Puerto Rico's pro-independence movement, gave an eloquent speech.⁹¹

This was not the last time an Argentinean, or Latin American delegation, visited the island. The Argentinean Navy vessel *Pampa* accepted another invitation by San Juan FC to play a soccer match again during Spain's Patron Saint festivities on July 25, 1915. San Juan FC played team *Moreno*, and despite the loss, showed great fellowship. After the match, both teams went for lunch again at "La Mallorquina" where they toasted for Hispanic-American confraternity. Before leaving the restaurant at 8pm, both teams "cheered loudly to Argentina, Puerto Rico, and the noble Madre Patria, cradle of the American nations."⁹²

Puerto Rican soccer fans did not have to wait for a Latin American team to visit the island to celebrate Spain and soccer. The establishment of España FC in 1915, composed mainly of Spaniards in San Juan, served as a constant reminder of Spain in Puerto Rican soccer. Javier Ozores, brother of Augusto Ozores of Barcelona FC, played for España FC. The España became, along with San Juan FC, the most successful soccer team in the island during the 1910s and 1920s. Also in 1915 Arecibo FC was established, as the sport *very slowly* spread among Puerto Ricans. These two teams met several times with much enthusiasm and expectation. A newspaper article from *Boletín Mercantil* narrates the joyful train trip from Arecibo to San Juan to meet España FC:

"The train engine and cars were profusely decorated with the colors and banners of the Arecibo team... The team's players, swollen with health and vigor, with young blood through their veins, were joyful. They went to their baptism by fire, to the fight, to their first match. The nearly one hundred fans that traveled with them were

Figure 2. Taken from *Puerto Rico Ilustrado*, March 20, 1915, 6. Photographer unknown.



cheerful. The sun brightened the emerald color of our countryside and the multitude of wild flowers . . . it was the train of happiness. To make it more pleasing, along with them traveled gorgeous ladies and charming 'señoritas' . . . Our inexperienced and brave kids from the Arecibo fought with enthusiasm, and defended with the right assiduousness of their race against the friendly and kind kids from the España."⁹³

The match ended with a tie, with all parties fully pleased with the cordiality of the event. España later visited Arecibo, but this time they beat the host team 2-0. España FC also held matches among their membership, one of which was covered by an important newspaper from San Juan that called it a "very interesting match" between team 1 and team 2 (see image 2).⁹⁴ Amid the institutional strength of U.S. sports, soccer was gaining a niche (albeit small) in the island, and sport chroniclers duly reported. Covering a match between the Celtic and San Juan Fortuna FC in 1915, the reporter said "'matches' [sic] like this one honor the sport of Foot Ball in Pto. Rico [sic]. This chronicler warmly congratulates both Clubs and wishes to see them again battling in the sport arena."⁹⁵ By 1915, soccer was gaining some spaces outside the capital. As mentioned, Arecibo FC and the Ponce Sporting Club were established in 1915 representing two of the most important cities outside the capital San Juan, in the north and south respectively. The city of Mayagüez in the west was also starting to catch up with soccer. In 1915, San Juan FC and Ponce Sporting Club met in Mayagüez to dispute the "Copa San Juan." Both teams were received in Mayagüez at the tune of the famous Spanish pasodoble entitled "La gracia de Dios."⁹⁶ By 1916, Mayagüez FC was organized along with Hércules FC and Borinquen FC.

The linkages and association of soccer with Spain and *Hispanoamericanismo* needs to be understood in a broader context. As mentioned before, *Hispanoamericanismo/Hispanismo* was not the same throughout the Spanish speaking world. There were differences between the northern and southern parts of Latin America. There were differences within regions in each country depending on particular sets of social, economic, and political circumstances. Nonetheless, Spanish language, a common Spanish colonial history, and to some extent Catholicism were some unifying elements. For Spaniards and some friendly *criollos*, their affinity rested in finding ways to foster cultural bonds in order to maintain social hegemony given the new U.S. regime. However, they fully worked under the new system in order to benefit from the new economic opportunities that U.S. capitalism provided. Due to the political and economic weakness of Spain and the different Latin American countries in global capitalism, these conservative sectors sought a cultural union to foster economic and political growth. A critical gathering space to develop this project was the *Asociación Unión Iberoamericana* (AUI) and its *Revista Unión Iberoamericana* (RUI) (1885-1936) founded in Madrid.⁹⁷ A group of Spaniards and Puerto Ricans established a chapter of the AUI in Puerto Rico in 1901, under the leadership of President Ordoñez, a Spaniard, and Vicente Balbás Capó, a Puerto Rican. Balbás Capó was a hardline defender of the Spanish regime, serving as volunteer in the Spanish-American War and was among the 229 Puerto Ricans who rejected the imposition of U.S. citizenship in 1917. For rejecting the obligatory U.S. military draft in 1917 he was sentenced to seven years in prison.⁹⁸ To counteract Americanization, Puerto Rico's AUI intended to establish literary awards, founding of schools throughout the island and a university, in effect declaring a sort of educational system parallel to the official.⁹⁹ Although, this group of *Hispanoamericanistas* encountered resistance from liberal Spaniards and pro-American Puerto Ricans, they were very vocal and struck a particular cord in the larger sphere of *Hispanoamericanistas*. Puerto Rico's AUI lost traction by the 1930s at the onset of the Spanish Civil War, and their education plan never came to fruition.

Through the pages of the RUI we notice the singular role Puerto Rico played in *Hispanoamericanismo*; Puerto Rico was the only place in Latin America formally colonized by the U.S. Prominent Puerto Ricans wrote for the RUI, including men such as J. Ramírez de Arellano, José de Diego, Luis Llorens Torres, and Cayetano Coll y Cuchi, and during the 1920s the leadership of the *Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico*. Celebrating "la raza," in 1911, J. Ramírez de Arellano, who belonged to a sport loving family, affirmed Puerto Rican *Hispanidad* as descendants of Conquistadors, saying also that Spaniards were born to conquer, not to be conquered.¹⁰⁰ News about Puerto Rico's "Partido Unión" adopting an autonomist/independence platform was celebrated in an issue from 1914. The report highlighted artistic and literary contests in Spanish to combat Americanization, indicating as well that Puerto Rico "placed between two traditions, between two civilizations, chooses its original

[tradition] and openly looks towards a past that offers such high examples of constancy, anguish, and heroism.”¹⁰¹ A review for Luis Llorens Torres’s *Sonetos sinfónicos* said that “Currently in Puerto Rico reigns a Spanish sentiment that is noticeable everywhere . . . praise for Spain are many and can be considered ‘symphonic.’”¹⁰² From 1914 onwards Puerto Rico appeared often in the RUI. News from Puerto Rico carried the same message, Puerto Rico despite being occupied by the U.S., was defending the “raza” in all possible ways and from within the colonial structures of the mightiest rival. Through the pages of RUI, Puerto Ricans announced solidarity with *Hispanoamérica*, and in José de Diego’s lengthy essay on “Hermandad Antillana”, with their Caribbean brothers in Cuba and the Dominican Republic.¹⁰³

The RUI did not cover sports regularly. Yet, the popularity of sports was noted in 1915 when an article dismissed the erroneous idea that Spanish games were only relegated to bullfighting or Andalusian dances. Instead, the author argued, Spaniards were also passionate about modern “sports”, which included tennis, target shooting, boxing, and football among others.¹⁰⁴ This author was correct in stating that Spaniards were passionate about modern sports. As a matter of fact, King Alfonso XIII (1902-1931) was known for his love of sports, as both a spectator and participant. He ran marathons, practiced swimming, tennis, hunting, fencing, automobile tours, and equestrian exercises, which helped his popularity. Taking a personal identification with *regeneracionismo*, Alfonso XIII’s practice of sport became a way to overcome his weakness as a young boy, but also as an embodiment of a new physically fit modern Spain.¹⁰⁵

While the RUI did not cover specific sports in expanded essays, it did record events where soccer was prominently played. An important component of *Hispanoamericanismo* was the celebration of Cristóbal Colón (Christopher Columbus), as the premier figure that united Spain and the Americas. Colón’s role in *Hispanoamericanismo* can be traced to the 400 year anniversary of the “Discovery” in 1892 with the unequivocal support of the UIA.¹⁰⁶ Despite many discontents who viewed the “discovery” as the start of a European imperial genocidal campaign, the figure of Colón and the date of October 12 eventually became the “Día de la Raza,” as the UIA sought to institutionalize the celebrations among the Spanish speaking world. Celebrations for the *Día de la Raza* throughout Latin America were documented in the RUI during the month of October. Delegates from each country sent lengthy reports detailing the celebrations, which included soccer matches. Soccer was played in Costa Rica during the 1916 *Día de la Raza* celebrations alongside the dances, mass, and school parties and featured the *Sociedad Gimnástica Española* and the *Club Sport La Libertad*. The winner was awarded a silver cup courtesy of the Alfonso XIII Club.¹⁰⁷ In its trajectory to becoming the sport of Latin American nations, soccer was predominantly played in *Día de la Raza* celebrations. While playing soccer at *Día de la Raza* celebrations does not imply evidence of *Hispanoamericanismo*, it shows that both cultural performances shared the same very

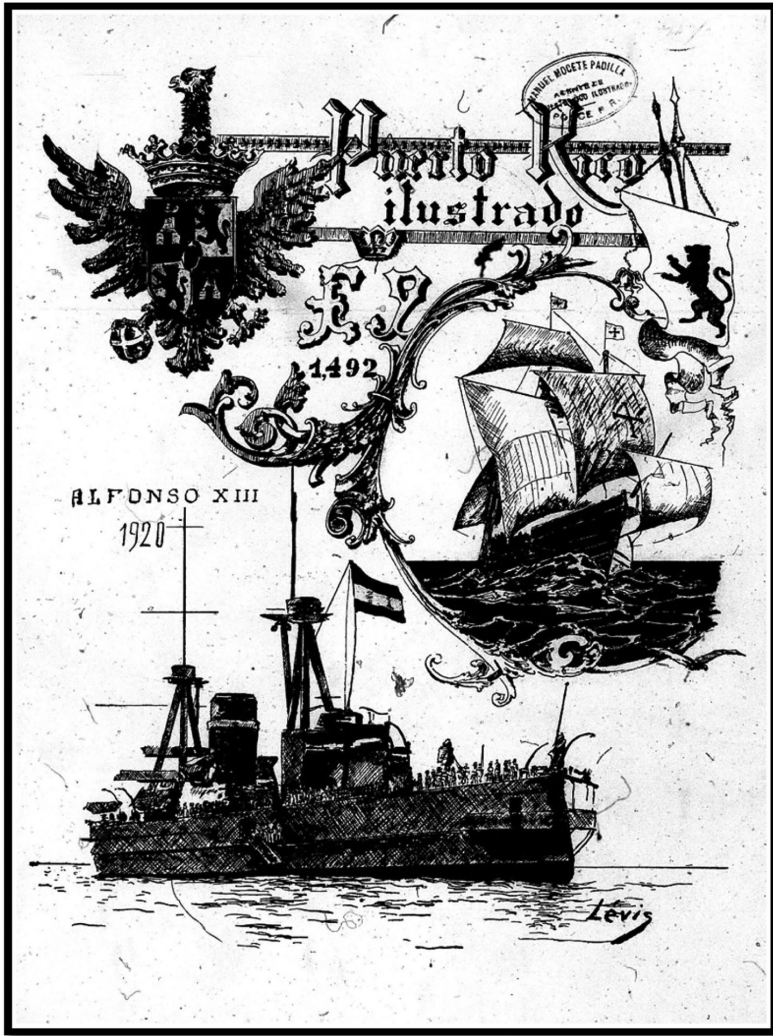
visible platform. *Día de la Raza* celebrations in Chile's *Parque Cousiño* (today *Parque O'Higgins*) also featured a soccer match, as it did in the city of Iquique.¹⁰⁸ In Peru, a soccer match was played in Huarás on October 12 between the Fifth Regiment and the *Colegio La Libertad*, which was attended by a large crowd.¹⁰⁹ In the city of Colonia, Uruguay, team Rosario played team Colonia during the festivities that included a formal dance, a parade, and bands that played the Royal Spanish March. The government declared *Día de la Raza* a national holiday and encouraged local businesses to remain closed so that everyone could attend the events.¹¹⁰ In 1918, a soccer match was played for the *Día de la Raza* in San Fernando, Buenos Aires.¹¹¹

Puerto Ricans, who celebrated *Día de la Raza* since 1913,¹¹² played soccer during the celebrations since at least 1916 in Arecibo.¹¹³ During these "Fiestas" they also held basketball, baseball, and volleyball tournaments, and cycling and track meets. In Puerto Rico, celebrations in the transition from Spanish to U.S. rule became mediums to negotiate imperial alliances. United States Independence Day celebrations on July 4th were celebrated by the local elite as a way to signal alliance with a regime perceived as necessary to modernize.¹¹⁴ While both baseball and soccer were played during the 4th of July celebrations,¹¹⁵ baseball was privileged by having preferential scheduling treatment and access to the fields. Eventually, the official support of American sports (e.g. schools) and the increasing hegemonic ties to the United States (e.g. U.S. citizenships since 1917) led to continuing languish of soccer.

Puerto Rican *futboleros* did not need the *Día de la Raza* to celebrate Spanishness through soccer. As noted before, they played soccer matches during the July 25 celebrations. Yet, perhaps the most significant event that forever associated soccer as a Spanish sport in Puerto Rico was the visit in August 1920 of the Spanish battleship Alfonso XIII, which carried the King's official sponsorship of San Juan FC and renamed it *Real* (Royal) *San Juan FC*. This title of "Real" was not unique to the San Juan FC. The Monarchy, in an attempt to use sport and the King's popularity to quell internal instability, granted permission to different soccer clubs to use "Real" in their names.¹¹⁶ The visit by the Spanish, only three years after the imposition of U.S. citizenship upon Puerto Ricans and a week after visiting Havana, was highly anticipated and even compared to the arrival of Colón in 1492 (see image 3).

Once the ship entered the bay, they were received by a record breaking crowd. At the tune of Spain's Royal March, more than 25,000 people gathered throughout the bay and the old city, more than 1,000 cars lined up multiple streets, and hundreds of small and medium sized boats followed the battleship as it entered the port.¹¹⁷ Buildings and houses were decorated with Spanish, Puerto Rican, and U.S. flags, the later following protocol. Cristóbal Real, co-founder with his brother Romualdo of *El Mundo*—the most important newspaper in twentieth century Puerto Rico—eloquently described the visit by saying,

Figure 3. Taken from *Puerto Rico Ilustrado*, August 21, 1920, 1. Artist unknown.



“There exists an immanent truth, consubstantial with humanity, which is transmitted from generation to generation, and that cannot be destroyed. That truth is that the love of a child for his mother, regardless of the contingencies of life that have separated them, increases more with the pass of time, which cannot ever be erased. And if the progenitor is Spain, which has given her life many times for her children, love grows in direct relation to the number of years that elapse since luck, or fatality, made them change course.”

Figure 4. Alfonso XIII and San Juan FC players. *Puerto Rico Ilustrado*, August 21, 1920, npn.



Real goes on to say that “the battleship ‘Alfonso XIII’, brought news from the ‘Ibero-American Association’ in Madrid, in which they invite the twenty New World Republics that owe their being and culture to the historic Mother, to celebrate with more enthusiasm the year’s October 12 than previous years, date in which the sword and the cross arrived for the first time to the Continent discovered by Spain and Columbus.”¹¹⁸ Real was not the only one with glowing words towards the Spaniards. Journalist Sergio Romanacce, member of the International Academy of History in Paris and the Hispano-American Academy in Cadiz, discussed the symbolisms of the Spanish visit by the “accredited ambassadors of the old *patria*.” Romanacce stated that “these are Spanish lands that the sailors from the Alfonso XIII touch upon. These are lands in which the luster of the Spanish civilization and culture is patent and alive and where you find humans that carry in their hearts and in their minds the noble seeds of the human ideals that mother Spain happily watered in the Indies. Sailors of the Alfonso XIII: you have arrived to a country that is yours. To a country to which Spain gave what it had: its laws, its blood, its robust language, its God . . . [sic] You are not, therefore, in strange lands.”¹¹⁹ Poet Luis Villaronga also said “when the ship is Spanish and visits a territory that was hers and that spiritually keeps being Spanish, then the party becomes a sweet and kind fraternal character.”¹²⁰

The Spanish sailors gave a boost to soccer in Puerto Rico. The sailors from the Alfonso XIII played a much anticipated and attended soccer match with San Juan FC. The winner of the match was awarded a special “King Alfonso XIII” Cup, but we remain unaware of who won the match (see images 4 and 5). It is clear, though, that the crew of the Alfonso XIII was enthusiastically welcomed. San Juan FC hosted them for lunch at a packed Casino Español (see image 6). Upon arrival the crew’s commandant in chief

Figure 5. Spectators during the match. *Puerto Rico Ilustrado*, August 21, 1920, npn.

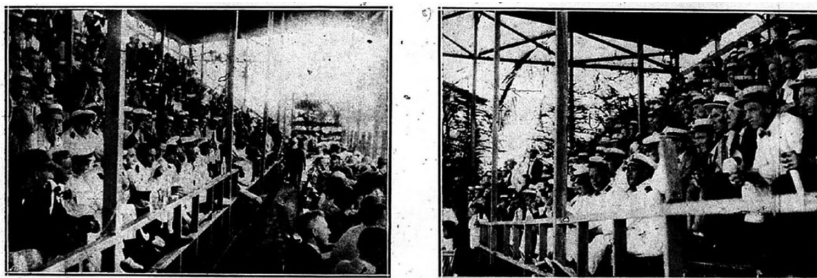


Figure 6. *Puerto Rico Ilustrado*, August 21, 1920, npn.

CONFUNDIDOS EN UN SOLO Y ALTO IDEAL Y EN UN SOLO Y ALTO ANHELO DE AMOR



Los miembros del ALFONSO XIII congregados en las salas del "Casino Español" donde fueron obsequiados con mucha esplendor y alegría por los distinguidos jóvenes que constituyen el "San Juan Foot Ball Club", quienes para conmemorar con entusiasmo el fervor con que la noble escuadra en San Juan la historia nava, asistieron por el pueblo con orgullo y alegría y extra gloriosa estirpe que honra por igual a portorriquinos y españoles.

and other officers were officially greeted by San Juan's top officers and 49 Puerto Rican women representing Spain's 49 provinces. The crew had a full itinerary with formal receptions at the Governor's Palace *La Fortaleza*, at the Bishopric, City Hall, Casino de Puerto Rico, Auxilio Mutuo hosted by the lady's "Svastika Club", Union Club, lunch at the Rotary Club, tours to the towns of Barranquitas and Arecibo, and a formal reception at the Casino Español.¹²¹ The Alfonso XIII's officers also hosted a select dance at the vessel, and a closing dance was held at the San Cristóbal castle in old San Juan.

Without a doubt the visit by the Alfonso XIII battleship marked an important turn in Puerto Rican soccer in its association and identity with Spain. Although the Spaniards were cordially received by the pro-American leadership (and at the YMCA), the ambiance was a celebration of *Hispanoamericanismo*. The association between soccer and Spain

in Puerto Rico continued in the following years. In 1921, Real San Juan FC and "Athletic" played a soccer match in honor of Mr. Puig, the vice-President of Real Deportivo of Barcelona.¹²² Another Spanish emigrant, Francisco "Paco" Bueso, began playing during the 1920s and became a crucial figure in safeguarding and developing soccer through the 1960s.¹²³ Also during this decade, the most fierce, and at times controversial, soccer rivalry involved Real San Juan FC and España FC,¹²⁴ further symbolizing that soccer was a the sport of Puerto Ricans and Spaniards. In 1925, soccer matches moved from playing at the Puerta de Tierra field to the Auxilio Mutuo, a more stable and friendlier ground on which to play. Puerto Ricans were visited by an English soccer team, "Valerian" in 1925. However, the sport's foremost association was with Spain or Latin American countries, including the crew of the Brazilian cruise ship "Bahia" who played Real San Juan FC in 1926, winning 6-0. In 1927, the Covadonga Cup was disputed at the Auxilio Mutuo during the Covadonga Festivities. Covadonga, a cave in Asturias is officially recognized as the site where the Spanish Reconquista wars began in 722.

Soccer was not only associated with *Hispanoamericanismo* in Puerto Rico, but perhaps in Spain as well. With the success of Uruguay, Argentina, and Brazil in the world soccer stage, and the Spanish interest in securing cultural neoimperialism in Latin America, soccer might have very well provided another element of unification. Despite emerging trends in Latin American soccer that defined national styles, often incorporating Hispanic, but also Indigenous and African traits,¹²⁵ Spaniards involved with the UIA jumped in the bandwagon of Latin American soccer success. The editors of the RUI joined the celebration of Uruguay's gold medal at the Olympic Games of 1924 in Paris. Uruguay was the only Iberian-American country participating at said Games and for the first time the RUI devoted a whole page of one issue to soccer by celebrating the Uruguayan victory. According to the editors, the victory served as a symbolic reparation for Spain's gold medal loss to the Netherlands in 1920: "The great *iberoamericana* race, which is one, triumphs, prevails, and that victory makes up for the reparable loss we suffered and as such we remain compensated."¹²⁶ Whether this claim occurred in cultural affinity or in a neoimperialistic appropriation, the RUI editors effectively equated the Uruguayan victory as Spanish redemption. Uruguay and Argentina continued to increase Latin American soccer prestige by winning the gold and silver medals respectively at the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam, and at the first soccer World Cup in 1930 in Montevideo. In the context of Puerto Rican sport, these victories further equated soccer to Latin America and Spain and helped to stimulate the contrast between American sports and soccer.

In 1929, the first Puerto Rican national team was selected from players belonging to Real San Juan FC, España FC, and Deportivo Río Piedras (the only three active teams at the time) to play a group of sailors from the

English Bellasco vessel. The Puerto Ricans won 7 to 2, with Spaniard Facundo Bueso leading the charge for the Puerto Ricans.¹²⁷ However, it was clear that soccer was not quite popular and remained a sport of the white male upper middle and upper class of a mix of Spanish, Latin American, and Puerto Rican players. U.S. sports flourished in the schools and in the streets, and soccer was painfully slow to grow. In 1930, Puerto Ricans participated at the second Central American and Caribbean Games (CACG) in Havana, by sending a small delegation in track and field and shooting, thus beginning their journey into Olympic nationhood. At the 1935 CACG Puerto Ricans expanded their delegation to include basketball (winning bronze) and volleyball (winning silver) teams; it was obvious that Puerto Ricans did not need soccer to successfully perform the nation. Schools continued to use baseball, basketball, and volleyball in their physical education curriculum, while soccer was played at the marginal Auxilio Mutuo and sporadically at the University of Puerto Rico. The fate of the sport landscape in Puerto Rico had been decided by the early 1930s and soccer persisted understated.

At the turn of the twentieth century, in the transition from one empire to another, Puerto Ricans negotiated as much as they could the terms of U.S. imperialism. For many Puerto Ricans, the U.S. fulfilled their desires for progress not met under the Spanish regime. In addition to evaluating U.S.'s political, economic, and social benefits, an evaluation of education and culture also occurred. Despite soccer's association with modernity around the globe, Puerto Ricans, like Cubans and Dominicans, chose U.S. sports as the basis of educational and physical progress rather than "Spanish" soccer. Given with the option of choosing between Spanish/European progress and U.S. progress, they chose the latter. Aiding this process were the new colonial institutions such as the school system, led by U.S. and Puerto Ricans alike, which contributed to the disregard of soccer. However, Puerto Ricans did choose to keep other elements of their Spanish heritage, including language. Soccer as an element of *Hispanoamericanismo* was not as important as maintaining the Spanish language, which was defended at all costs. Yet soccer, did not fully disappear, but persisted as a constant, albeit dull, reminder that Puerto Ricans also played the *deporte hispanoamericano*. Soccer's unpopularity should not be interpreted as the defeat of *Hispanoamericanismo*, but as a proof that this cultural identity project existed in Puerto Rico, at times prominently, but mainly in the background. Soccer, and Puerto Rico's Latin heritage, did not die, but was selectively performed and nurtured in Puerto Rico as sports *Hispanoamericanismo*.

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Endnotes

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