

Sport, National Identity and the (dis)United Kingdom

Whilst the possible constitutional break-up of the United Kingdom has been much discussed in recent years, in the context of sport disunity has tended to be the norm. This paper outlines the importance of distinctive national identities in relation to the organisation of and public reaction to sport in the UK and Ireland and seeks to explain the primacy of national autonomy in major team sports such as association football and rugby union. Specific attention will then be paid to Olympic sport, for which the nation-state (i.e. the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) as opposed to individual nations, is the key organisational focus. Finally, the implications of contestation between nation-state and nation for British representation in association football at London 2012 will be considered.