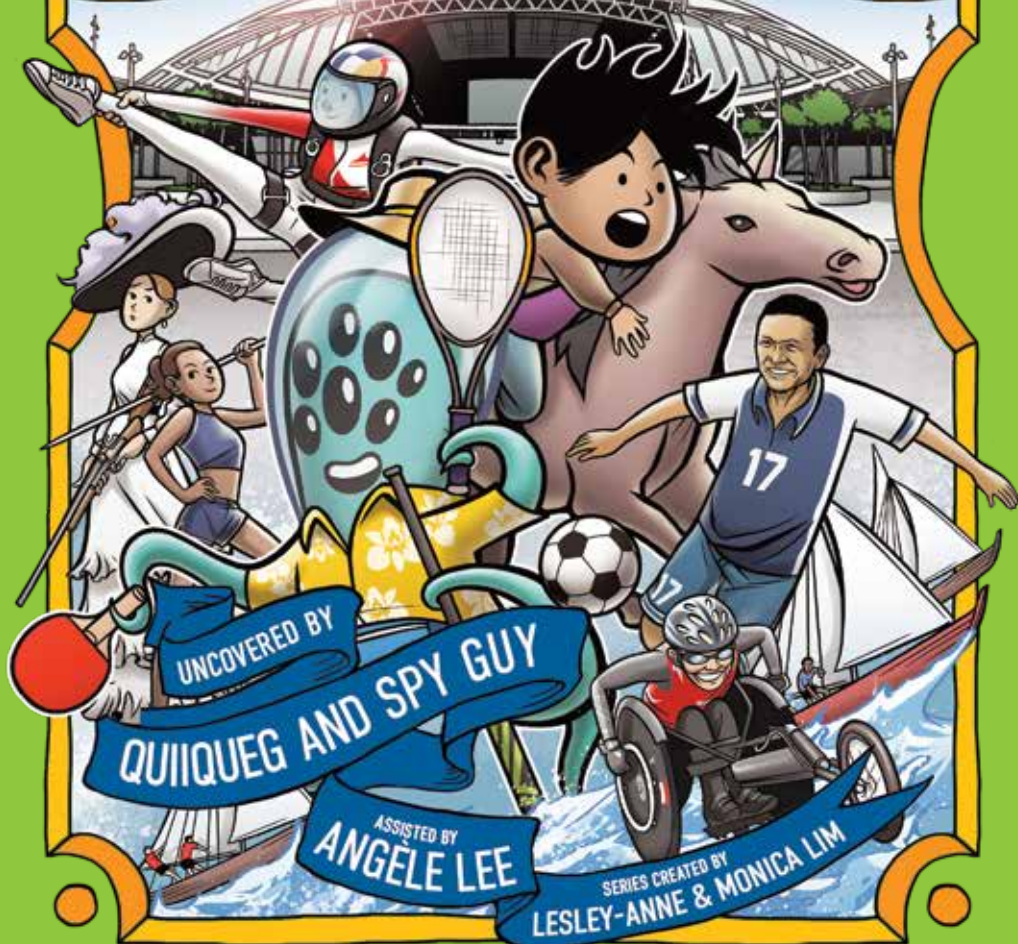


AWARD-WINNING SERIES

SECRETS OF SINGAPORE

SPECTACULAR SPORTS



UNCOVERED BY
QUIQUEG AND SPY GUY

ASSISTED BY
ANGELE LEE

SERIES CREATED BY
LESLEY-ANNE & MONICA LIM

**SECRETS OF
SINGAPORE
SPECTACULAR SPORTS**



**SECRETS OF
SINGAPORE**
SPECTACULAR SPORTS

written by
Angèle Lee
illustrated by
Elvin Ching



EPIGRAM

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*For my mother,
who loves literature and loves sports
(and loves me)*

I'll get it!



Hi Spy Guy!



Quiiqueg! You're back!

I had so much fun in Singapore the last time I was here, I took another intergalactic trip right back!

What are you up to?



Just playing a game of football.

Ooh, I love games! Tell me more.

About sports in Singapore? You got it!

Here we go...



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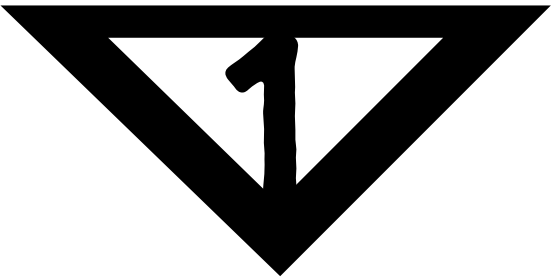
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SECTION



A Romp Through the Eras

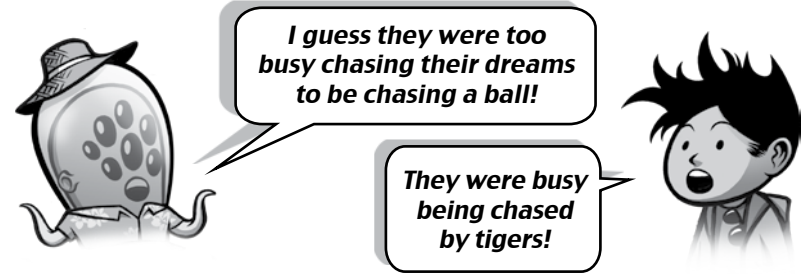
There isn't much known about sports in Singapore in the 14th century. Did Sang Nila Utama and his courtiers wrestle or swim or sail? They probably did it all! These were some of the activities documented in the wider region at the time, though whether the people trained for sport or out of necessity is anyone's guess. Certainly, when the people settled in Singapore, hunting was an important exercise. Clearing the jungles of people-chomping beasts must have been foremost in the Prince's mind, given how he named

our island after one! And really, if you're going to risk your life hunting tigers, you may as well have fun doing it, right?



Five Centuries Later...

Having fun was far from the minds of the new settlers when Singapore was founded (*again!*) in 1819. People were pouring in from all over the world, attracted by the opportunities presented by the trading post the British had set up. Even so, the population was small, the environment was harsh and **WORK** was the order of the day.

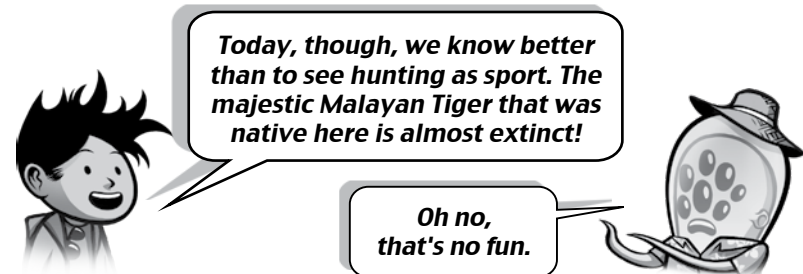


I guess they were too busy chasing their dreams to be chasing a ball!

They were busy being chased by tigers!

A Very Short History of Hunting in Singapore

Yup, tigers were still around 500 years after Sang Nila Utama's time, because the island was still a vast jungle. The tigers weren't particularly happy that their home was being taken over by humans either. There were frequent tiger attacks—as many as one a day—so villages were being abandoned out of fear. Money being offered to anyone who killed a tiger was a game changer though! Suddenly, tiger hunting was fashionable and adventure-seekers saw it as good sport. By the early years of the 20th century, folks here got what they had *preyed* for: the tigers were all but gone (along with the sport of hunting).

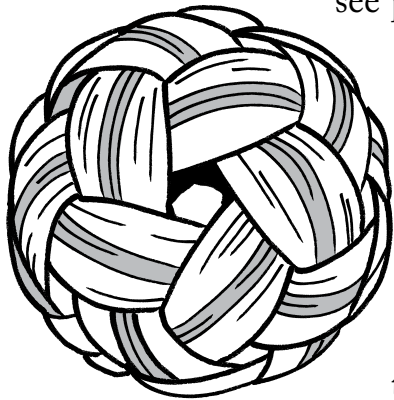


Today, though, we know better than to see hunting as sport. The majestic Malayan Tiger that was native here is almost extinct!

Oh no, that's no fun.

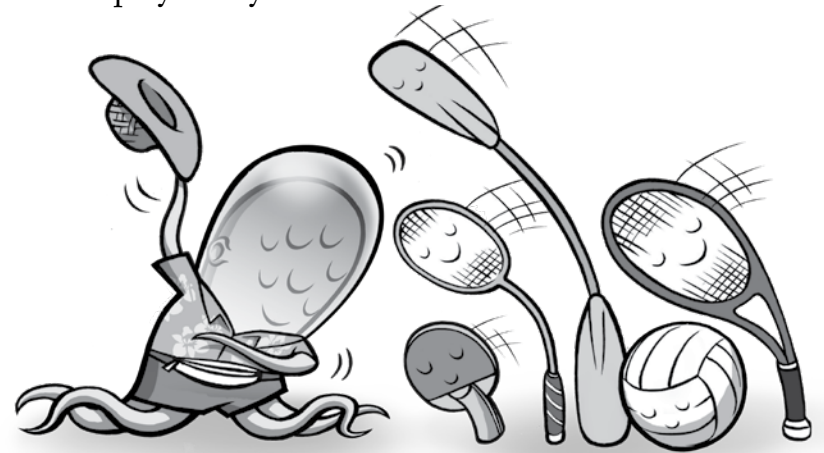
Busy as they were, the locals managed to amuse themselves. They brought into play their sampan panjang and koleks and tongkangs—the fishing and cargo boats of their daily work—and turned them into racing vessels. They played sepak raga with a light rattan ball, challenging each other to keep it up in the air without using their hands for as long as they were able. Sounds familiar? That’s because after a net was included, the game became the sepak takraw that you

see played today. Both sepak raga and sailing were specialities of the Malays who were originally here, though later when the Indians arrived, they also took to the ball game.



The western settlers, though, tried to make the tropics feel more like home by playing the games they used to half the world away.

They introduced to Singapore many of the sports we still play today.



Brought by the Brits

Some of the sports that were brought to Singapore by the British are still popular today, while others are no longer played.

How much do you know about the games we had in the past? Test yourself.

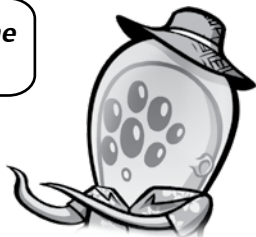
POP SPORTS POP QUIZ!

1. How long was a football half: 25 minutes or 45 minutes?
2. Which sport was played in Singapore first: 10-pin bowling or badminton?
3. There was a game called fives. Was it called this because there were five players per team or because you could only use five body parts to touch the ball or because you used your hand (five fingers!) to play?
4. Which came first: rugby or football?
5. Which popular game played today was also known as gossima?
6. Was tea-time scheduled during a game of cricket or during a sports CCA?
7. If you were out and about in the 1800s and saw a woman practising a sport, which was it more likely to be: badminton, swimming or shooting?



Think you know the answers?

Read on to find out!



The British residents, mainly employees of the British East India Company, were restless for ways to pass their leisure hours. The Brits, after all, were the ones who had long before coined the phrase, “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”. It was a very British idea that sports were a manly pursuit. Being a sportsman lent credibility to a newcomer—it was a sure sign of his being “**a decent chap**”!

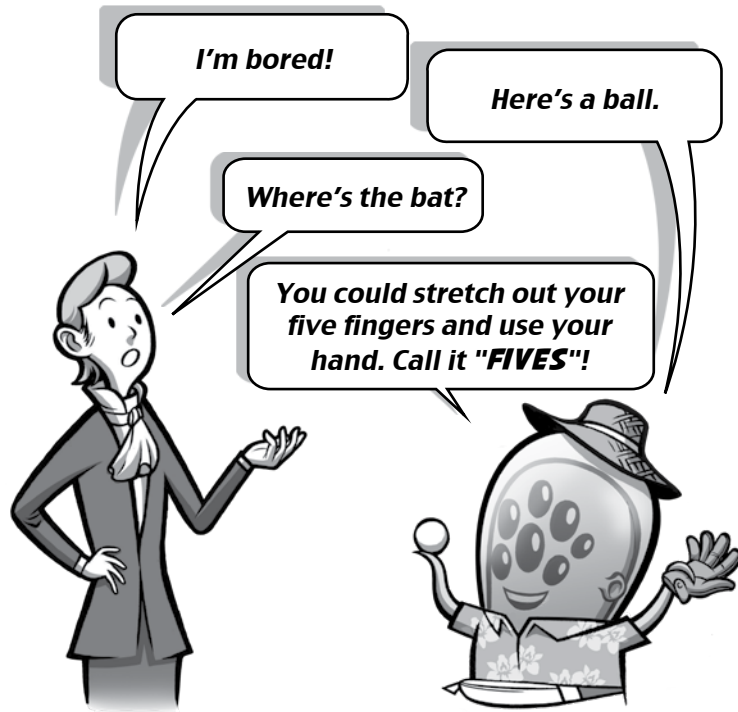
Indoors, the gentlemen played billiards, snooker and card games, but despite struggling with the heat, they could not always stay inside.

They braved the sun to practise shooting, and at tea parties, they played croquet with the ladies. They walked and cycled for exercise (**being very concerned about keeping in good health since medical care was scarce**). They were also often accused of horsing around at the Padang (**on their horses, of course**), which put those enjoying quiet strolls along the Esplanade at risk. **Tsk!**

More importantly, the colonials brought with

them the sports they had played in school. One of these was the game of fives.

High Fives



Fives came to Singapore in the year 1835. Played with a hand (usually gloved) and a hard ball, it is basically squash, but without a racquet. The first fives court—a three- or four-walled room like in

squash—was built near where the statue of Sir Stamford Raffles currently stands outside the Asian Civilisations Museum. It was a *hit*, of course. The game was so popular that players would scurry into town at 5.00am to squeeze in a match before work! And before the workday was done, it would be crowded again. Those coming from the other side of the Singapore River would race to get to the court for a chance to play. Mind you, there were no bridges in those days, so the excitement started with jumping into wonky little boats which wobbled wildly trying to be the first across. You've got to *hand* it to the players—they sure knew how to pack in the action!

Regattas Rocked

The Brits didn't just race across the river. They held proper regattas out at sea, too, sailing from the police office near the mouth of the Singapore River to Sandy Point at Tanjong Rhu and back. It was one of the first sports, and probably the only one in

those days in which the British competed alongside the locals. Good sportsman*ship*, we say! However, their western-style yachts, lateens and schooners couldn't hold a candle to the local vessels, especially the koleks, which were helmed by the **Orang Laut** (that is, the indigenous people) who, as mentioned earlier, had been sailing the local seas for ages.

The colonials were used to having the advantage. Losing must have been a horrifying ordeal!



Horses for Courses

Oh, those restless young Englishmen were always racing about it seems. And if they had a horse, the temptation to tear around was great. Informal races among the British East India Company officers would take place along the Esplanade, and enthusiasts would cheer them on (except the strollers, who would get most upset and write letters of complaint to

the newspapers after almost getting knocked down. There were many such tales of **WOAH!**). The pastime became popular enough for a proper race track to be built across town in 1842, which stopped the *neigh*sayers from *nag*ging about the hooligans on horses. It was also popular enough for professional jockeys and race horses to be imported over.

Barroom Bowling

Did you think bowling is a recent sport? What with those fancy automated ball-return lanes, score-keeping machines and even glow-in-the-dark pins and balls we have now, it's hard to imagine a more modern sport. But no, bowling goes as far back in history as 5200BC—apparently, the ancient Egyptians played a similar game!

Cosmic bowling is right up my alley!

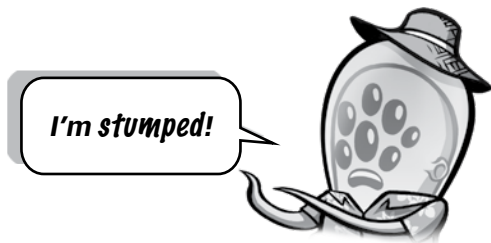
It is adorabow!



Coming back to 1851 in Singapore, European hoteliers **got the ball rolling** by building bowling alleys next to their bars. Bowlers had a blast showing off their skill at skittles, as the game was sometimes called. They often played late into the night, and hotel guests would go **ballistic** because it was too boisterous for them to sleep. It was still good business for the hotels, though.

Cricket-crazed

The game of cricket was at the time considered England's national sport, so of course it was imperative for the imperialists to import it. How English is it?

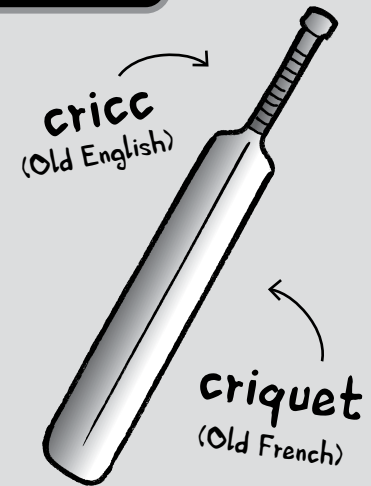


Well, as implausible as it sounds, between innings

there's literally a break for **tea**, which is considered an important part of the game. **Howzat?!** ("Howzat" is "how's that"). It is what players shout to ask if a batsman is out, like when the ball has bumped the stumps. Yup, cricket is intricate like that.)

FASCINATING FACT

The game cricket is not named after an insect. Its origin is most likely from the Old English word "cricc", or the Old French word "criquet", for staff, stick or wooden post.



Cricket's impact was impressive. In 1852, *The Straits Times* printed a letter by an impassioned proponent who implied that the game imparted improbable powers to players. "The game of cricket," he opined, "is, beyond all doubt, a powerful agent in keeping

About the Author



After having a tonne of fun as an industrial engineer, Angèle Lee has returned to her first love, writing. She adores telling stories—almost as much as she adores her husband and two boys, potato crisps, corgis and dodgy puns. Angèle earns her keep writing for businesses, but has also written a short story for the Istana's *Open House Adventures* series of children's books.

About the Illustrator



Elvin Ching is an illustrator and storyboard artist in Singapore. He is the illustrator of several *Danger Dan and Gadget Girl* books and the *Secrets of Singapore* series; his cover for *Secrets of Singapore: National Museum* won best children's book cover at the Popular Reader's Choice Awards 2017. He is also the creator of the graphic novel *The Woodsman*, published by Epigram Books. Elvin likes to create his own little comics in his free time and has so many comics at home that he hasn't found time to read them all yet!

“Spectacular Sports is a smashing read! The author takes a dive into Singapore’s sporting history, giving great insights and fun facts. This comprehensive book will give any young sports fan an easy start on local sports. Like me, readers will be bowled over by the quirky jokes and witty puns. Highly recommended.”

—Teresa Teo Guttensohn,

Assistant Director, Sport Heritage Division, Sport Singapore

EVER WONDERED WHAT SPORTS WERE PLAYED IN OLD SINGAPORE? OR WHY YOUR PE TEACHER INSISTS ON PUSHING YOU TO RUN SO MUCH?

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