



Life in Tudor Times

8. Tudor Sport

COMMENTATOR 1: Welcome. Welcome, sports fans to another edition of Plays of the Week with me, your host, Wynkyn Thomas, and my co-host Lettice Play...

COMMENTATOR 2: Thanks Wynkyn. All ready for a thrilling show today. Where shall we begin?

COMMENTATOR 1: We start off today over at the hallowed turf of Sudeley Castle, home to a number of Henry VIII's most famous jousting victories until that horrific tumble in 1536 put an end to his career.

COMMENTATOR 2: Hmm, interesting. You know that sounds about the exact time he became a bit of a tyrant, if you ask me. I'm sure the two are connected. Tell us a bit more about the jousting.

COMMENTATOR 1: All right. Well, you've got your weapons, you know, your lances made of ashwood, your axes, your swords. You've got your transport of choice: usually your horses, reaching speeds of up to 40 km per hour; and you've got your head-to-head fights for money, or even for the favour of a lady; two riders, one at each end, ride at each other and try to knock each other off.

COMMENTATOR 2: A violent sport, is it? One for the rich or for the poor?

COMMENTATOR 1: Definitely a sport for noble folk and potentially very dangerous. You can knock them off. But you also get points for striking the helmet or the coronel - the head to you and me - of the lance, while hitting an opponent's horse is a no-go.

COMMENTATOR 2: Oh, thank goodness for that.

COMMENTATOR 1: What have you got for us Lettice?

COMMENTATOR 2: Well, I've been receiving news about this football match for eight hours now and it's not even close to finishing, I tell you. The two entire villages have turned out.

COMMENTATOR 1: Always a good turnout at the football.

COMMENTATOR 2: Oh, no, not to watch, to play... Who's at home looking after the cattle? That's my question. No, but seriously. There's no limits on the number of players and no limit on brutality, either, it seems. I've seen plenty of broken bones, bloody noses and some teeth flying about, let me tell you. I think we're going to need a few magic sponges from the old apothecary. Let's put it that way.



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COMMENTATOR 1: What's the referee playing at? Has he lost control? Where's VAR when you need it?

COMMENTATOR 2: The ref's about a kilometre down the road trying to catch up. Think Capture the Flag, but with a ball made out of a pig's bladder. To get it between the goalposts, you can kick it, carry it, throw it. This game I'm watching now, three kilometres apart, the posts!

COMMENTATOR 1: Oh, sounds awful. I don't even know why we're still reporting on it. It's been banned since 1540.

COMMENTATOR 2: It's the beautiful game. You can try to ban it, but people keep playing it!

COMMENTATOR 1: Moving on... Maybe something less violent?

COMMENTATOR 2: Sure, we can go over to Hampton Court Palace and speak to our real tennis correspondent, Annette Sirviss.

ANNETTE SIRVISS, CORRESPONDENT: Thanks Lettice. I'm here in the viewing gallery, which also just so happens to be one of the goals, keeping a close eye on the game of real tennis playing out in front of me.

COMMENTATOR 1: Aren't you supposed to just hit it over the net? You'll have to tell me more.

ANNETTE SIRVISS, CORRESPONDENT: Of course. Real tennis, the sport of kings, once played with hands. We now use racquets - handy. There's a play line six metres up on all four different-sized walls. The ball can't hit above there, but it can hit the rest of the walls, and, unbelievably, the sloping ceiling too. There's a net, though sometimes it's just a cord. The main aim? You win points by getting the leather, stuffed ball as far as you can past the net without it coming back to you. There are lines on the floor to measure how far away the ball has landed and hazards or goals to hit in the other side of the court. Points win games. Games win matches. I think that's about all there is to it.

COMMENTATOR 1: Always straight to the point, Annette. Right, Lettice, any more for any more?

COMMENTATOR 2: Last up on my script, the ever-popular... public executions.

COMMENTATOR 1: (*quickly interrupts*) That's all we've got time for this week. Join us next week for more Plays of the Week.