Sports and Entertainment in Colonial America





Entertainment differs from region to region in Colonial America

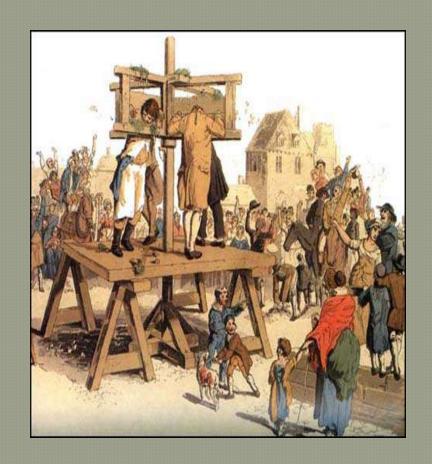
- Attitudes toward sport representative of settlers European background
- New England: Puritan
 - Against play generally
- Middle Colonies (New York): Dutch, Quaker
 - Moderate play acceptable
- South: Catholic, Baptist, and Methodist
 - Most friendly toward play
- Attitudes were strongly influenced by religion

New England Colonies

- Most sports were considered "idle activities" that did not contribute to the well being of the community
- The Puritan ethic calls for work rather than play and overcoming the urge to play was seen as achieving a greater morality

New England Colonies

- Breaking with the Puritan Authorities to spend idle hours playing could lead to colonists being placed in stocks
- Examples were made of those who played on the Sabbath(blue laws) such as John Baker who was whipped for "playing ball in the streets".



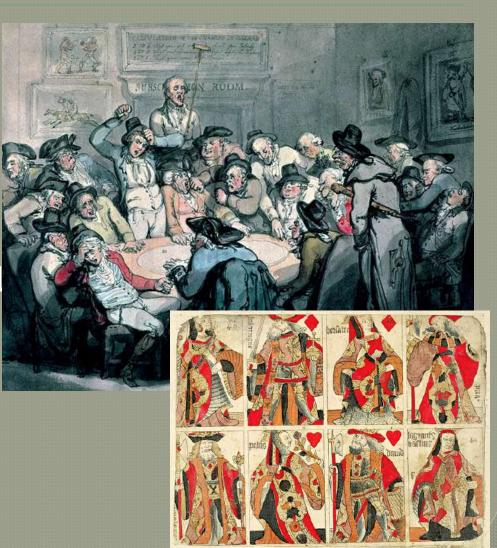
New England Colonies

- Play was eventually accepted as later colonists arrived and many drew away from the church.
- Hunting was allowed for a sport but still forbidden on the Sabbath.



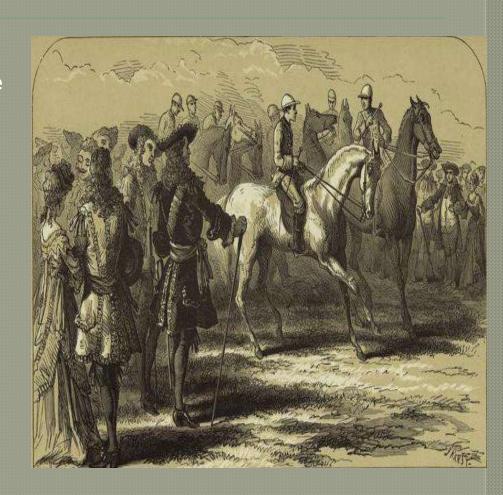
Middle Colonies

- Quakers and Dutch Calvinists were much more friendly to the idea of sports and entertainment
- Gambling and card games were very popular



Middle and Southern Colonies

- Horse racing became a popular pastime in both the Middle and Southern Colonies
- Many plantation owners prized the fastest horse
- Communities would gather to watch races held for local championships
- 1664- first organized horse race at the Newmarket Course on Hempstead Plains, Long Island.



Horse Racing

- Later in the eighteenth century Virginians turned from the native quarter horse to the English thoroughbred in search of a faster horse
- Horse owners formed jockey clubs in various southern states
- The clubs kept careful records of bloodlines and races



Early Colonial Horse Race



Horse Racing in the US today

Belmont Park- Elmont, New York

Pimlico-Baltimore, Maryland



Churchill Downs-Louisville, Kentucky

"I would advise you when You do fight Not to act like Tygers and Bears as these Virginians do - Biting one anothers Lips and Noses off, and gowging one another - that is, thrusting out one anothers Eyes, and kicking one another on the Cods, to the Great damage of many a Poor Woman." Charles Woodmason(Anglican Minister)

- Back country areas in the Southern Colonies favored such sports as wrestling and various forms of fighting
- Competitions were centered around martial activities such as fighting, running, shooting or jumping



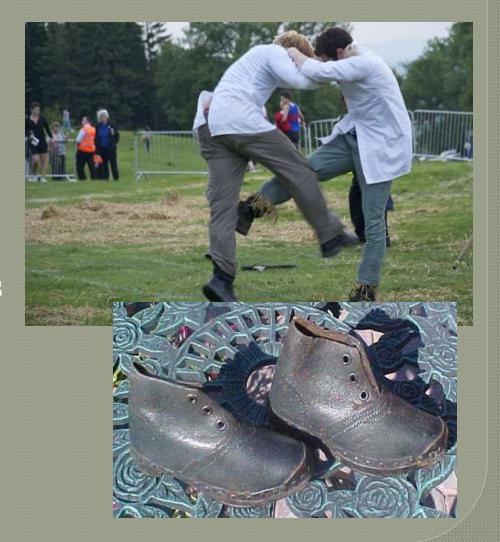
Bare-knuckled fighting

Bare-knuckled
fighting
Centered around
taverns throughout
the Southern and
even
Middle Colonies

Combatants would fight until one was knocked out or submitted

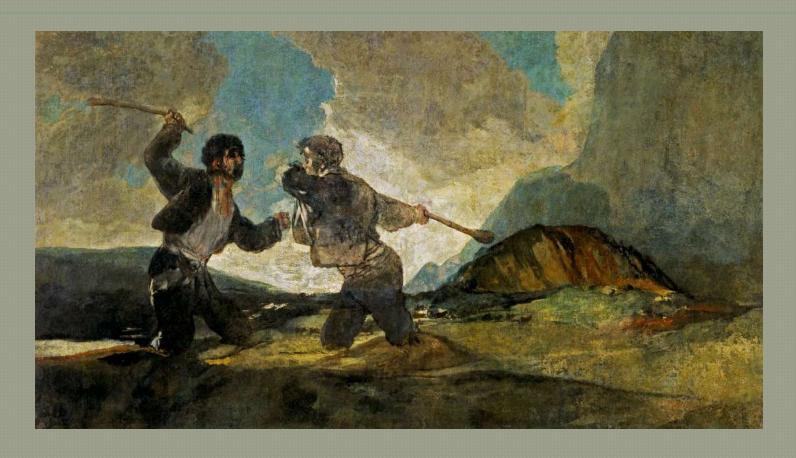


- Purring or Clogging was carried over from England and was practiced throughout the colonies
- The sport centered around two combatants kicking each other in the shins until one either fell or gave up



- Gouging was a form or wrestling where opponents fought until a eye was removed from a combatants
- Many "gougers" grew their nails long to aid in removing an eye
- The sport eventually faded away around 1830



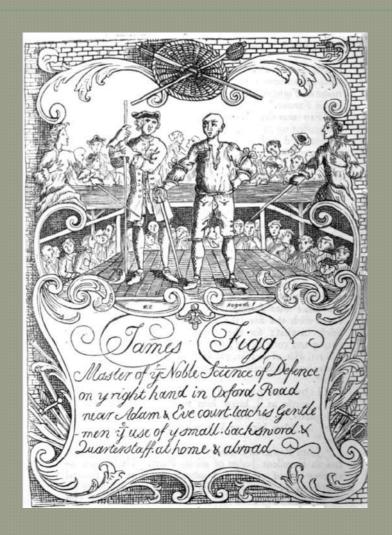


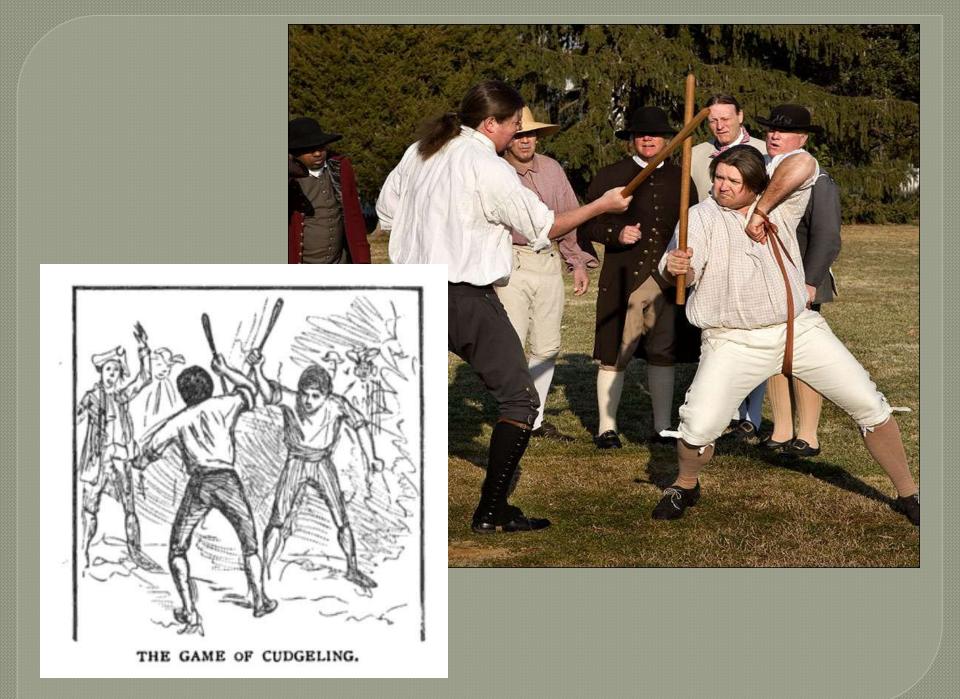
De Goya's "Fight with Cudgels"

Stick Fighting, Single Stick or Cudgeling was a popular sport in Europe

Combatants fought each other using either a single long stick or two shorter one

The match was ended when one combatant was knocked out





Native American Sports

- Lacrosse became a very popular sport that many colonists adopted from Indians
- Many communities played with both Indians tribes and against one another

