

Instructions: Everyone must read the introduction and the paragraphs about their topic.

Introduction:

On the 29th of July 1913, 23 youngsters met in the neighbourhood of Vålerenga in the eastern parts of Kristiania, in what today is Oslo. They established the football club Spring, but already the year after the club changed its name to Vålerengens Idrettsforening, also known as VIF. The founding members were young men aged between 15 to 21. All of them were local boys, born and raised in the streets that are Vålerenga.

Today VIF is one of Norway's most well-known sports clubs, with athletes and teams and sports like ice hockey, handball, basketball, cross-country skiing and American football. But it is with football that most people associate the club, winning the league five times and the cup four times. And it was football that was the starting point in 1913. But why did the 23 young men want to establish a new club in 1913?

Urbanization:

At the end of the 19th century, Vålerenga was a neighbourhood largely populated with people who had moved into the city during the last decades. In 1890 four out of five people living there were born outside of the city. The area seemed like a magnet to people from the countryside outside the capital. The migrants usually hailed from the lower classes of the countryside seeking jobs and a better future in the capital. This wave of migration from the countryside happened because of the transformation that was happening in Norway at the time, including industrialization and population growth. In the countryside, machines and new production methods were replacing manual labour. In the cities, industry craved new employees, offering a work to those were no longer needed or lived in poverty in the countryside.

Local patriotism:

Being a neighbourhood in which a lot of people shared the same background and social status, people in the area felt a sense of togetherness. This local identity was reinforced by the fact that the neighbourhood had its own church and school. This feeling of togetherness led to a

sense of pride and patriotism for the area. None were more eager to show that pride and to defend their neighbourhood than the young boys of the community. This often led to gang fights against youths from other areas of the city. The establishment of a football club was a way for the youngsters who established the club to show their pride and identity of the neighbourhood. Therefore, it was a natural consequence that they named the club after the neighbourhood. The football club became a different way of showing their rivalry against other parts of town.

Industrialisation:

Vålerenga was a community of people working mainly as crafts men and industrial workers. In 1910, 29% of every work active man in the area worked as a crafts man while 23% worked in the industry. The area was well known for its carpentry industry and nearby were some of the biggest factories in the capital at the time, like Kværner Brug and Jøtul. The opportunity to work at one of the big factories in the capital was one of the main reasons behind the population growth in the capital at the end of the 19th century. The working-class background of VIF becomes obvious if you take a look at what some of the founding members' fathers did for a living. Two worked at a matchstick factory, five worked at other factories, while others had occupations such as hirelings, harbour workers, carpenters and wheelwrights.

Influences from abroad:

In 1885 the first football club was established in Norway, Kristiania Football Club. As the name suggests it was inspired by English clubs. In the following years more football clubs followed both in Kristiania (Oslo) and in other major cities. Those who spread the sport were often businessmen who had encountered football on their trips to the British Isles or through their British business partners. This is not unique for Norway. Football were spread to the European mainland through the ports and capitals of Scandinavia, Belgium and The Netherlands. Those who played football at the end of the 19th century, were among the upper classes of society, often being businessmen, academics, or officers.

Class struggle:

In the early days of organized football, membership in a club was often restricted by class or social and economical status. To obtain membership in Kristiania Football Club, three members had to recommend you and then the members vote cast a vote. Some clubs had a membership limit in order to keep membership exclusive. As a result, people from the lower classes were excluded from participating in the organized football clubs. Besides having an exclusive membership base, the early clubs also reflected certain values, such as patriotism, conservatism, and defence of the nation and the ruling classes.

This exclusion, both regarding membership and values, called for the need to create separate football clubs for the working class. In 1909 the first sports club with its roots in the working class was established, Sportsklubben 09. In the following years, several clubs followed. A federation for working class sports clubs was established in 1924. This coincided with a more political conscious working class who were fighting for political influence. In the years between 1924 and 1940, Norwegian football and sports were divided into two federations, the working-class federation and the bourgeoisie federation. It is worth noting that VIF, along a lot of other clubs and athletes with working class background, opted to remain in the bourgeois federation.

The wish to do something with social problems:

Although the neighbourhood of Vålerenga was not among the poorest in Kristiania (Oslo) at the beginning of the 20th century, it still had a lot of social problems. It was a neighbourhood of migrants who had moved from the countryside and into the capital. That meant that they had often left both their families behind, as well as a a very paternalistic society, and moved to a new, urban society, often feeling estranged and alienated. In such a society, social problems, like drunkenness, could occur, especially among those who had lost their ties to their families or who were not able to get work. Football could become a beacon of hope to those who faced social problems, and a way to make friends in a new environment as a migrant. One of leading men behind the foundation of the club was the teacher at the local school, captain Johan Skau. In his opinion, the establishment of a football club could save the local boys from a moral and social pit and help them to become good citizens.

Muscular Christianity:

Even in the years before 1913, boys in the local area were playing organized football. In 1903 the football club Spark (Kick) had been established by the local vicar, Hans Møller Gasmann. He established the football club in connection with the local YMCA affiliate. One of the reasons why he established Spark was to recruit new members to the YMCA. Another reason was to spread religion using football. "May we through sports receive the grace to testify about our Lord and saviour," Gasmann said in 1905. The vicar's work was in fact a part of an international trend with its roots in England. Professional clubs such as Aston Villa, Birmingham City, Everton, Fulham and Southampton all have their origins from church organizations. The establishment of football clubs within a Christian context was a way of trying to reverse the secularisation in the modern, urban society at the beginning of the 20th century. Gasmann was also inspired by ideas from Victorian England called "muscular Christianity." Masculinity and good health were looked upon as Christian ideals, and a team sport such as football a way of cultivating male companionship. Using football as a way of spreading Christianity laid the foundations of football in the local area of Vålerenga. However, in 1911 the football activities within Spark stopped. There were those among the YMCA who thought that sports and football had become a distraction from religion. Another reason was also the fact that most of the youth were more interested in playing football than hearing the gospel.

More spare time:

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, sports and football were reserved for the privileged classes. One reason for this, was the fact that they were the ones who had time to spend on doing sports and playing games to amuse themselves. The working class on the other hand, was restricted from doing sports because of hard working conditions and long working days. Another reason was the fact that the working class was unable to afford the necessary equipment to perform sport or play football. Sometimes they were even prohibited from using sporting grounds. During the first two decades in the 20th century new laws were introduced by parliament that gave the workers more rights at their work place and shorter work days. In 1915 new laws introduced 10-hours working days, while parliament introduced 8-hours of daily work. One of the arguments for introducing the new laws was

they would lift the working class both socially and culturally. These new laws meant that members of the working class now had a spare time, and time to do leisure activities such as football.

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