



# Development Dilemma and Resolution of American Football in Zhejiang Province

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## Abstract

In order to promote the development of the American football project in Zhejiang Province, through the interview method, field research, etc., this paper studies the promotion suggestion of the project. Conclusion: The development of American football in Zhejiang Province is faced with such difficulties as a small number of teams, unstable structure, high-cost consumption, large differences in the degree of specialization of coaches, and lack of field resources, which are restricted by social factors such as organization, culture, identity, competition platform and economic foundation. Suggestion: downplay competition, increase entertainment; linkage of Olympic projects to promote the development of projects; increase positive public opinion guidance and promote project culture communication.

## Subject Areas

Sports Science

## Keywords

American Football, Zhejiang Province, Competitive, Olympic Events

## 1. Introduction

The popularity of American football in the United States is crazy. However, this sport with obvious American cultural characteristics, as an imported sport, has a phenomenon of “ice and fire” in the development of China [1]. In 2012, the first American football club appeared in Zhejiang Province and achieved initial development. This article selects Zhejiang Province, deeply analyzes the development status of American football, and provides suggestions for the development and promotion of the sport in this region.

## **2. Brief Introduction of the Development History of American Football in Zhejiang Province**

In 1823, rugby emerged in Rugby Town, Warwickshire, England, and in 1880, Yale University in the United States appeared in the modern sense of American football. American football is a kind of sport with frequent contact, which is very confrontational and competitive. Rugby sportswear is the clothing of modern football players, without wearing protective gear. [2] In 1905, with the intervention of President Roosevelt, the United States began to improve the rules of football and the requirement to wear protective gear, and American football really broke away from its British roots. With the continuous rise of China's economic strength, coupled with the reform and opening up in 1978, as well as frequent foreign exchanges, rugby has gradually entered our vision, of rugby has become an Olympic event, but the development of American football is still relatively slow.

About the development of American football in Zhejiang Province, the earliest can be traced back to 2012. In the early days of American football in Zhejiang Province, the training was mainly organized by folk enthusiasts, who could not form a team with a scale, and could only carry out some simple physical and technical training, and could not effectively train tactics. In 2012, Hangzhou established the first American football club named Hangzhou Osprey, which completed the official registration in 2015, and is the only private non-enterprise club in Zhejiang Province specializing in the promotion of American football culture, and its competent unit is Hangzhou Sports Bureau. After 2016, Hangzhou Saber-Toothed Tiger American Football Team, Hangzhou General American Football Team, Wenzhou Red Deer American Football Team in Wenzhou and Jiaying Hornets American Football Team in Jiaying began to recruit players to organize training and competitions. Around 2021, the Hangzhou Hell Dog American Football Team in Hangzhou and the Ningbo Battleship American Football team in Ningbo were established one after another. So far, American football has taken root in Zhejiang Province.

## **3. The Dilemma of American Football Development in Zhejiang Province**

### **3.1. Small Number of Teams and Unstable Personnel Structure**

One of the difficulties in the development of American football in Zhejiang Province is the small number of teams and the unstable structure of players. According to the author's interview with the actual participation in the sport and the actual research, there are only 5 teams in Zhejiang Province that are still training and competing (Hangzhou Saber-Toothed Tiger, Hangzhou Fish Eagle, Ningbo Warship, Wenzhou Red Deer, Jiaying Hornet). There is no American football team in Zhejiang Province. The small number of players and the large turnover of personnel are the core problems that cause the number of American football teams to fail to grow. The private self-organized teams are composed of

amateurs, and some of the teams have members who have participated in the World College Football Championship. However, the overall training system is relatively poor, the team members enter the team very arbitrarily, and some of the teams due to training and competition conflicts will lead to team merger or separation, so the stability of the team only exists in the core of the team about 15 members, while a standard American football team includes the offensive group, the defense group and the secret service group, a total of 33 people. As a result, many players have to wear multiple hats to complete a game.

### **3.2. The Tournament System Is Incomplete**

The second dilemma of the development of American football in Zhejiang Province is reflected in the incomplete game system. From the perspective of national American football events, it is generally classified into two categories: one is the competition between colleges and universities, mainly for the exchange of events between schools, such as Soochow University Soochow Rangers and Soochow University Wenzheng College Musketeers regular competition every year. At present, there is no American football team in Zhejiang Province, so there is no way to talk about it. The other type is the competition between amateur teams organized by amateurs, which is based on hobbies and training needs. Since American football is a non-Olympic sport and flag football is selected for the Olympic Games in 2028, the provincial sports bureaus do not carry out American football-related events, nor do they include American rugby in a comprehensive event or hold a separate event. At present, although the Chinese American Football League CFNL belongs to the amateur league, it is precisely because of its existence, so that the amateur teams in East China participate in about 5 - 6 games a year, if some teams organize away games or home invitations to count, you can participate in 8 - 10 games a year. At present, the Shanghai Rugby Association organizes the "Yulan Bowl" rugby League named after its city flower every year, and at present, Zhejiang Province does not have its own American football League, only some teams carry out exchange games, such as the Ningbo warship home friendly match against Wenzhou Red Deer in July 2022.

### **3.3. High Cost**

The third dilemma of the development of American football in Zhejiang Province is reflected in the narrow funding channels for equipment, training and competitions. Compared with other sports such as basketball and football, American football is relatively high in equipment, training and competition costs. Football equipment includes a helmet, shoulder armor, backboard, crash pants, braces and football shoes. Taking rugby helmets as an example, the price of a rugby helmet ranges from 2000 - 8000 yuan, and the price gap is significant according to the brand. The price of the shoulder armor also ranges from 1500 to 6000 yuan. If you count other scattered equipment and protective gear, the

cost of 5000 - 10,000 yuan is also conventional equipment. Therefore, from the perspective of American football equipment, compared with basketball, football and other collective big ball projects, the cost is high, resulting in fewer participants. At the same time, the cost of traveling in the national CNFL league is also borne by the players themselves, and the playoffs often need to be played in Beijing, Chengdu and other places, under the epidemic prevention and control, travel has become a more difficult choice. All other costs, including training field rental, training water and injury medical expenses, are covered by the players themselves, which has led to a decline in the number of people who want to participate in American football, and the high price of many people who love the game.

### **3.4. The Degree of Specialization of Supervisors Varies Greatly**

The dilemma of the development of American football in Zhejiang Province lies in the difference in the professional degree of the coaches. At present, the personnel engaged in American football professional guidance in Zhejiang Province are mainly divided into two categories. The first category is foreign staff coming to China, because they originally participated in American football in their home countries, have American football training or competition experience, and are willing to continue to carry out this sport after coming to China, such as: The former coach of the Hangzhou General Army, whose duty is to engage in physical training in the training hall, because of his personal experience in participating in this project, but also willing to pass on the American football culture, in Hangzhou city and coach the Hangzhou General American football team; The second type is the amateur in the folk spontaneous sports organization, this group level is uneven, some have studied in the United States, participated in the local high school or university American football team, after professional American football knowledge and technical training. There are even coaches who have worked as offensive or defensive coaches and coordinators in the NCAA1. Others just have a strong interest in the project, have a strong desire to learn by themselves, through books, external communication, etc., and actively guide others to learn and carry out the project. Therefore, in terms of professional differences, the level of guidance personnel between the teams is uneven, and the degree of specialization is quite different, and it is also because of the significant differences in some teams, resulting in significant differences in the strength of the teams, such as Hangzhou Saber-Toothed Tiger is the 2020-2021 season CNFL national champion, and some teams have not entered the CNFL playoffs.

### **3.5. Conflict between Chinese and American Cultural Differences**

The fifth dilemma in the development of American football in Zhejiang Province is that it is a typical product of American culture, which encourages physical confrontation, individual heroism, and the personality of the players involved, but also has a strong sense of discipline and collective cooperation. In China,

which is based on Confucian culture, some conflicts arise, and the culture at the root of the project and the culture at the target of dissemination are excluded. The difference in the root causes of cultural identity leads to the consistency and non-recognition of citizens' behavior identification. American football requires wearing helmets, shoulder armor and other protective gear, and the game has quite fierce physical confrontation, the intensity of the exercise is great in a short period of time, giving the masses a feeling of great danger and high risk of injury. From the point of view of the people in Zhejiang Province and even the whole country, most of them cannot accept this kind of movement. Chinese people are more inclined to badminton, table tennis, square dancing and other soft and nourishing sports, which also leads to one of the important factors for the slow development of American football in Zhejiang Province.

#### **4. Suggestions to Promote the Development of American Football in Zhejiang Province**

##### **4.1. Downplay Competition, Cultivate Enthusiasts**

In view of the current situation that people in Zhejiang Province have insufficient understanding of American football and have little enthusiasm to participate in it, American football can be actively improved by weakening the competitive nature, modifying the rules, lowering the threshold, improving the safety, strengthening the fitness and reducing the consumption of entry funds, so that it can be widely carried out in society, so that more people can know, understand and participate in this sport [3]. Flag football is a way to promote American football, its rules and skills are similar to American football, but it is not allowed to hug and push people, as long as the defender pulls the flag of the attacker, the attack is stopped, belonging to a "non-charging" sport. At present, the sport in Zhejiang Province attracts a large number of people to participate in it, there are fans of flag football, clubs and sports companies in various places in the province, through the wide development of flag football, for the further development of American football in the future, laying a good mass foundation.

##### **4.2. The Participation of Colleges and Universities in the Province Is Linked to Attract Outstanding Talents and Improving the Level of Teaching and Training**

Colleges and universities in Zhejiang Province and the official organizations of NFL China held coach training, invited domestic and foreign football players and coaches to promote American football and give lectures, and conducted in-depth analysis of football training and teaching; The municipal sports bureau organizes more exchanges and training of relevant coaches in various cities in the province to promote mutual learning of teaching experience. This can not only improve the teaching level of the existing civilian coaches, but also improve the level of American football referees and promote the development of rugby games. In the physical education, sports training and other majors in colleges and universities to set up American football elective courses, inter-group Amer-

ican football clubs, the creation of American football teams, learning other universities such as Shanghai Fudan Dragoon, Soochow University Soochow Rangers, etc., to set up American football teams in colleges and universities in Zhejiang Province. At the same time, with a complete theoretical system and professional special skills to teach students, train professional American football coaches, and further strengthen the promotion and development of American football.

#### **4.3. Effectively Link the Waist Flag Football and Give Play to the Industrialization Function of the Olympic Project**

The 2016 Rio Olympics included rugby sevens as an official sport, while flag football has been added to the Olympic programme for the 2028 Los Angeles Games. In the future development of sports in China, government management organizations, civil society organizations, relevant associations, supporting resources and talent selection will all have institutional supply advantages. At the same time, in the historical period when national fitness was upgraded as a national strategy, the industrialization of rugby has also been rapidly improved with the development of Olympic events. Through the promotion process of English rugby in our country, it can be inferred that under the current situation of the development of China's sports system, flag football will also become the main part of the development of rugby industry. For the development of American football in Zhejiang Province, it is necessary to effectively combine the Olympic project and link the waist flag football industry for the development of the project. Through the promotion of the government, increasing the inflow of funds and the expansion of competition venues can effectively promote the development of flag football in Zhejiang Province, and after understanding flag football, there will be more and more attention to American football. Therefore, it is a necessary regional development path to effectively link rugby and flag football and give full play to the industrialization function of Olympic events.

#### **4.4. Increase Positive Public Opinion Guidance and Promote Project Culture Communication**

As a sport imported from the West, American football has significant American cultural attributes. In terms of cultural identity, American football differs greatly from the culture of Zhejiang Province and even the whole country, resulting in obstacles to cultural dissemination. However, due to the implementation of its tactics and the needs of the competition, the participants must have a strong sense of discipline and collectivism, which is in line with the collectivist spirit of our culture. For this sports project full of fierce confrontation, Zhejiang Province needs to popularize the project culture, and positively guide the development of American football through the platform resources of public media and relevant Internet organizations. From the perspective of the introduction of sports culture, we should increase the in-depth coverage of American football by public opinion and public media. CNFL East China Division can be described as the

devil division, the competition level in this division is high, some teams have original NFL players, with top competitive level, but few media reported on it, and the competition venue is difficult to hold in the province's larger stadiums due to the impact of the epidemic, resulting in low attention; From the perspective of the sports industry, by encouraging diverse social participants to join the American football industry, Hangzhou Osprey American Football Club and Jiaying Hornet American Football Club have launched campus youth training systems in a number of primary schools and junior high schools in the city, conforming to the spirit of combining sports and education introduced by the state, and increasing the effective dissemination of American football culture in the sports field. Enhance the choice space of spectators.

## 5. Conclusions

The development of American football in Zhejiang Province is still in its infancy. Due to the lack of venues, no tournament system, high cost of training and equipment, lack of funds, and the public's understanding and understanding of this sport is relatively insufficient, the participation and competitive level of American football in society and schools are low. In order to fundamentally change this situation, it is necessary to take national fitness as the premise, strengthen the fitness, and dilute the competitive nature, so that the organization and management of American football in the people will gradually move toward systematization and standardization, and encourage colleges and universities in the province to participate in it, provide software and hardware facilities such as talents, knowledge and venues for American football, and continue to accumulate quantity. Only in this way can American football produce a qualitative leap in Zhejiang Province.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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