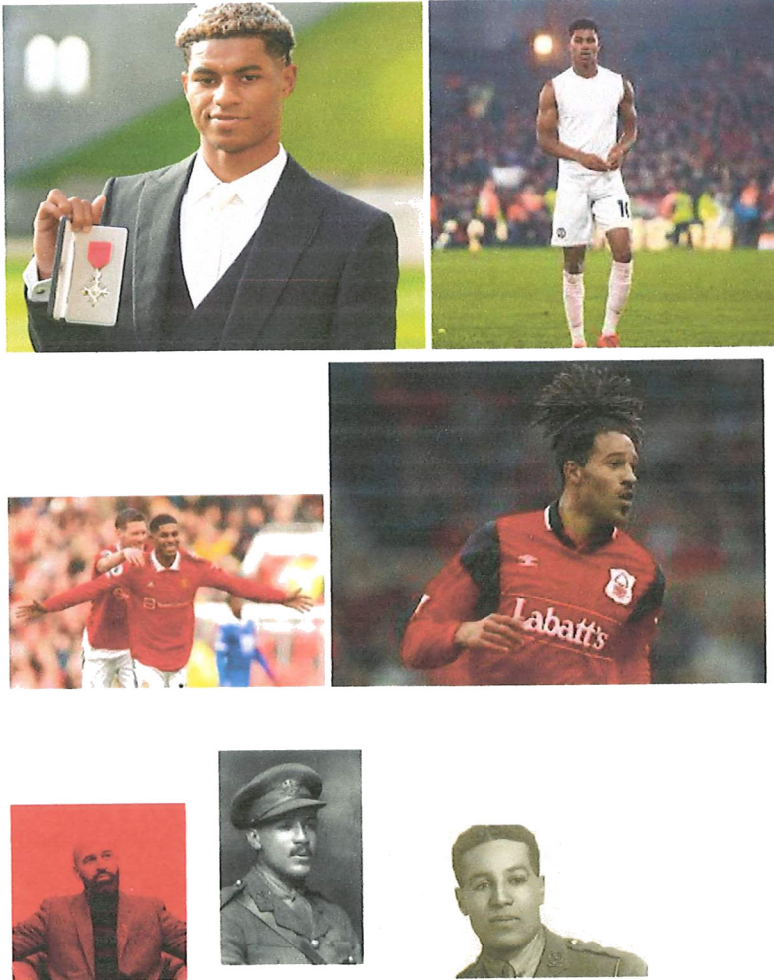


## Black British Footballers



**How far have black footballers' experiences been  
impacted upon by racism through the years?  
What has happened to them and how have they  
reacted?**

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## Introduction

Unfortunately, I personally think racism has had a key impact on most black footballers' experiences within their sport. In this essay, I will be investigating what sort of racist acts and/or abuse some footballers have had to deal with and how the amount has changed over the years and whether this fits with my initial thoughts. I also plan to include how they themselves have coped with the situations mentioned along with the teams they were or are playing for and other knowledgeable people. I intend to mention three key footballers who may not get the recognition they need or deserve. In this essay I have included: Walter Daniel John Tull (1900s), Jason Michael Lee (1990s) and Marcus Rashford (present day/2020s). Walter Tull, Jason Lee and Marcus Rashford are three very different people but have some similarities such as their race, their passion for football and are victims of racism. All three people have had to deal with different extents of racist abuse, from different backgrounds in separate time periods but all have certainly dealt with it.

I have chosen to do this project because I admire the topic and sport of football and I am interested in looking deeper into a few select players' lives- including ones I may have not heard of before- and what they've had to deal with and overcome just to be able to represent themselves and other people in the sport that they love. I also have an interest in exploring the topic of racism, especially in more historical times to see the comparison between current attitudes and the past.

In addition, all three sportsmen I have chosen have worked or are working to address the problems in society like Walter Tull in World War One (the war to end all wars) Jason Lee in women's football and Marcus Rashford with fighting for free school meals during lockdown for underprivileged families. Along with having an interest in these, Rashford's work is close to heart, Lee's role in equality and diversity in football is what I have always wanted to see be done and Tull's involvement in the war is something I deeply respect and look up to.

## Research

### Walter Tull

#### Early life

For these facts I used the [National Archives](#) which I found very reliable. The reasons I found this source reliable are: there is a range of topics, a variety of primary and secondary resources to look at, it includes other websites and you can also look at the records they have about related topics.

<sup>1</sup>Walter Tull was born in Folkestone, April 28th 1888 to Daniel Tull and Alice Elizabeth Palmer. Daniel was from Barbados and Alice from Kent. Walter had a brother - Edward James Alexander Tull-Warnock.

#### Football career

For this information, I used [footballandthefirstworldwar.org](#) which I found somewhat reliable as due to the lack of technology during the First World War, some of the information may have been distorted by time. However, they have whole sections just on people who fought, and their roles within the war with many sources and records.<sup>2</sup>At the age of 21, Walter Tull signed up for the Football First League division team at Tottenham Hotspur in the summer of 1909. When he joined Tottenham, he received many racist comments such as: "You may be born here but this is our patch and you're not going to do well" and was called a "woolly headed n\*\*\*\*r".

#### Other roles in society

For this information, I used '[Against all Odds](#)' by [Stephen Wynn](#) which I then double checked using other sources to validate the facts provided. The reason I liked this book is because they provided a range of sources about a variety of topics such as: his early life, his football career and his time spent

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<sup>1</sup> National Archives- <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/walter-tull/>

<sup>2</sup> footballandthefirstworldwar-<https://www.footballandthefirstworldwar.org/walter-tull-footballer/>



in the military. However, I really had to dig for answers to my questions and therefore was not too sure on the reliability of my information I found. As well as this, the book being a biography means that some of the information might not be fully accurate as the author did not know Tull himself.<sup>3</sup> However, from this I learnt that when the first world war came around, Tull enlisted for it, into Pals Battalion football regiment.<sup>4</sup> He went in alongside Tom Billingham.

## **Jason Lee**

### **Early life**

To find out this information, I used [AcademicKidsEncyclopedia.com](http://AcademicKidsEncyclopedia.com) as finding information about Jason Lee's early life was difficult and resources were limited. The reliability of this source is questionable due to no references as to where the information was obtained from and as a result, I double checked my facts with the little information I could find outside of this website.<sup>5</sup> I was then led to find out that Jason Lee was born April 25th 1970 to parents Greg and Carol Lee in Forest Gate, London.

### **Football career**

For these facts, I used '[Pitch Black](#)' by Emy Onuora. I found this book somewhat reliable as the information provided in the book can be backed up by other sources. Although, the information is a secondary source and therefore can be open to the authors interpretation. I was able to find out much more about this part of Lee's life including that he began his career at Charlton Athletic and ended it in Arnold Town.<sup>6</sup> He went on to manage for Boston United later in his career. Lee also suffered racial abuse from David Baddiel and Frank Skinner especially on the show '[Fantasy Football](#)' which the pair hosted.

### **Other roles in society**

To find out this information I looked at [AbsoluteLee](#) which is Jason Lee's own website therefore making me feel like it is very reliable. It includes primary accounts from Lee himself and many quotes from him. You can also listen to

<sup>3</sup>Against all odds by Stephen Wynn

<sup>4</sup> youtube-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxfXb2A0TdY>

<sup>5</sup> wikipedia-[http://academickids.com/encyclopedia/index.php/Jason\\_Lee](http://academickids.com/encyclopedia/index.php/Jason_Lee)

<sup>6</sup> pitch black by Emy Onuora

podcasts that are also available on other streaming platforms about his own personal experiences with racism. I found the facts very interesting, and I also used this website for additional information in other sections.<sup>7</sup> I found out that Lee is also an activist within women's football and their rights and the sexism towards them.

## **Marcus Rashford**

### **Early life**

To find out the information about Marcus Rashford's early life, I used **Black Heroes Foundation** which I found reliable because many quotes and sayings are included and other resources are referenced/named, such as, biographies along with other sources such as newspaper articles around his successes and campaigns.<sup>8</sup> This website showed me that Rashford was born October 31st 1997 and his family were very dependent on free school meals and food banks when he was a child. He grew up with a love for football and joined his first team aged 4.

### **Football career**

For information about Rashford's football career, I used **Sportskeeda** which I found fairly reliable but I had to dig for my answers as it's a big news platform specifically for football meaning there are a variety of clips, podcasts and documentaries about many subjects and topics. Once I found my facts, I found them to be reliable and trustworthy.<sup>9</sup> I learnt that Marcus Rashford joined Manchester United where he was confronted with racial abuse via twitter and other social media sites after he missed a penalty in the 2020 Euro finals.

### **Other roles in society**

To find these facts out, I used **The BBC**, which I found very reliable because not only was there factual information and paragraphs of writing, once again there were video clips, documentaries, and a variety of other sources to look at. Also, The BBC is a very large and well known company. It also offers relevant articles and other options, including counter arguments from the government. From these resources,<sup>10</sup> I learnt that Rashford felt very strongly about his family's reliance on food banks and free school meals and fought very hard to change people's minds during the COVID-19 lockdowns. He wished for free school meal vouchers to ensure children were fed despite schools having to close down.

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<sup>7</sup> absolutelee-<https://www.absolutelee.co.uk/about/>

<sup>8</sup> Black heroes foundation-<https://www.blackheroesfoundation.org/people/marcus-rashford/>

<sup>9</sup> sportskeeda-<https://www.sportskeeda.com/player/marcus-rashford>

<sup>10</sup> bbc-<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000qq41>

## **Discussion**

In this section, I will propose the answer to my project question that I have found as well as any counter arguments that may exist.

### **Opposing argument**

On the one hand, it can be argued that footballers of colour have not been impacted by the racism that exists in their sport because it has had no effect on their performance or mindset towards football. It can be argued as such because for example,<sup>11</sup> Marcus Rashford continued to score goals for England in the world cup which proves that therefore his performance was not hindered. Also at this time (in the year), racist protests were prevalent in society so the racism he received could've been deemed as natural for some people despite the law.

In addition, when <sup>12</sup>Jason Lee was mocked and humiliated by both Frank Skinner and David Baddiel, he didn't react. Lee didn't force an apology, he waited patiently (25 years) for one. He also respected David and Frank after they apologised showing that it didn't leave 'scars too deep'. It again didn't affect his performance within football and if anything, encouraged him to work harder and fight for other things as well. Black facing and racism was fairly common through the TV despite laws preventing it.

Similarly,<sup>13</sup> Tull came back from being sent home to Folkestone in the war to lead his troop to victory on a mission that could've ended terribly with not a

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<sup>11</sup>

goals-<https://www.goal.com/en-gb/lists/how-many-goals-marcus-rashford-career-manchester-united/bltb9ef52712694e47f>

<sup>12</sup>

huffpost-[https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/frank-skinner-jason-lee-blackface-fantasy-football-league\\_uk\\_62de7865e4b03dbb991afaa5](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/frank-skinner-jason-lee-blackface-fantasy-football-league_uk_62de7865e4b03dbb991afaa5)

<sup>13</sup>

aljazeera-<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/12/5/walter-tull-how-one-of-britains-first-black-footballers-became-a-war-hero>



single new wound on any of his soldiers. Being sent back, when in colour, in those days was seen as cowardice so Tull was faced with abuse more than usual. This didn't stop him as he went on to be nominated for the military cross which was only allowed to be awarded to white soldiers. Officers broke the rules for him. Racism was still deemed as normal or useful in this time period approving the actions of the other officers calling him a coward. Similarly, this behaviour/view of people of colour was usual.

### **For argument**

Despite all those points being valid, in my opinion, these 3 footballers have certainly been impacted and affected by the racist acts and abuse they have received.

For example, Marcus Rashford felt the need to report all of the racism he received to the police out of fear. He explains that <sup>14</sup>“Honestly, no. I don't think it would've been the same.” when questioned about whether he thought the threats and abuse would be the same if it was a white player who missed that penalty. He also states that he “struggled to find stability at Manchester United” when quizzed on the struggles he faced due to the abuse.

Rashford also stood up and raised his voice to confront the problem of racism and the effects it has on its victims. He didn't forget to mention the kind of society that allows this behaviour and how he feels about this type of people.

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<sup>14</sup> Daily mail-<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/sportsnews/article-11018577/Marcus-Rashford-White-England-players-WOULDN'T-received-racist-abuse-Euro-2020-final.html>



Not only did Rashford state and share how it had impacted himself, he also mentioned how if his children<sup>15</sup> were to read or witness any of the abuse their father had been receiving, then it would have a huge mental effect on them. In my opinion, this proves racism has had a massive impact on Marcus Rashford.

Another example that racism truly does have an effect, is Jason Lee who had to wait <sup>16</sup>25 years for an apology from David Baddiel. Even though he waited patiently for this event, and did not force it, the sheer amount of time it took had an impact on him. He states that "I think it was a poor excuse to say that he couldn't get in touch with me. I always thought I was both contactable and approachable." Lee also describes how the apology is "long overdue" and how it took him a long time to put his shirts up in his house because he was ashamed. "When I played for Forests, there were no 'pineapple chants'<sup>17</sup>."

Baddiel would never have gotten away with anything if they were in the same room. Lee is not a violent person. Again, Lee also mentioned how these acts made his children feel as they were among the many who watched this reckless show. He says that his children felt <sup>18</sup>"traumatised" by what was said about their father.

In addition, Tull also was somewhat impacted by racism. Due to the time era Tull was a part of, and the lack of resources and technology the people had back then, there is not too much evidence to support my answer but this is what I have managed to find out. Tull was a victim of racism in both the war and on the pitch. Along with the quotations earlier mentioned (Walter Tull football career) some other key things to mention are that Spurs were not prepared to stand up for him, therefore asking Tull to leave; over<sup>19</sup> 20000 football fans used to sing "ruthless" racist chants and songs.

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<sup>15</sup> Daily mail-<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/sportsnews/article-11018577/Marcus-Rashford-White-England-players-WOULDNT-received-racist-abuse-Euro-2020-final.html>

<sup>16</sup> Nottingham post-<https://www.nottinghampost.com/sport/football/football-news/look-him-eye-jason-lee-7856100>

<sup>17</sup> Daily mail-<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-6199221/From-pineapple-head-PFA-Jason-Lee-Fantasy-Football-infamy.html>

<sup>18</sup> mirror-<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-6199221/From-pineapple-head-PFA-Jason-Lee-Fantasy-Football-infamy.html>

<sup>19</sup> The nenequirer-<https://nenequirer.com/2018/02/17/the-amazing-adventures-of-walter-tull/>

All through the war, Tull was discriminated against, especially when he was transported back to Folkestone due to severe shellshock. This type of action was seen and interpreted as cowardice so many people continued to 'attack' Tull with racist abuse. He didn't react to it all and faced it with retaliation. Even though there is not too much evidence, I still think it shows how Tull was impacted by racism.

The website 'Kick It Out' openly expresses its views about the racism in the world of football and has ways to tackle it. A lot of footballers are mentioned<sup>20</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I think footballers of colour have been fairly heavily impacted by racism within their sport and lives. To begin with, I thought the 3 victims of racism had completely suffered and there would be no evidence to prove

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<sup>20</sup>Kick it Out <https://www.kickitout.org/#reciteme-launch>

otherwise but I found out that they weren't affected quite as much as I thought and they had all dealt with and faced it.

From this project, I have learnt how to reference websites, articles and authors along with how to structure an essay. In addition, I have been able to look into Walter Tull's, Jason Lee's and Marcus Rashford's lives and experiences and compare the racism of the past to the current day and make comparisons between the two.

### **Evaluation**

Personally, I think I met most objectives but some need more work in order to fully meet them. I think it mostly went well because I was able to follow a plan and time limits along with the word count, give or take a few words. I definitely think that my skills have improved since the beginning of the project and I have surprised myself with what I could actually achieve within this project.

In my opinion, the reason things went wrong was because of lack of research time, not fully understanding some points within the brief and having to reschedule the time plan as I had to restart my whole essay near the beginning because I wrote the research section wrong.

Next time, I think I would start my actual essay sooner allowing me more time to read through and check everything. Similarly I would also take a bit more time to make sure everything is the best it can be and specifically relevant to the section I was writing. I would do this so I wouldn't have to worry about whether it was done and good enough to fulfil the brief.

If I were to continue my research into this project, I would send out a survey to local football clubs with players of colour asking how much they believe they have been impacted by racism and how it affects their daily life. I would do this to extend my knowledge of how people are faced by it and to continue making comparisons to how racist attitudes in football have changed.

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