Which sport:

1 was invented to keep young people entertained? ☐
2 might have been based on an English game? ☐
3 had a special group of experts set up to uncover its origins? ☐
4 is supposed to have resulted from one player breaking the rules? ☐
5 was later prohibited by the organisation where it was invented? ☐
6 was not intended to be played outside? ☐
7 was officially declared to have been invented by a member of the armed forces? ☐
8 was named after the place where it was reputedly first played? ☐
9 was far more successful than its inventor expected? ☐
10 was almost certainly first played in England? ☐

SPEAKING Read the quotation from British actor, Robert Morley. What do you think it means? Do you agree with it? Give reasons.

The ball is man's most disastrous invention.

B A Canadian invention

James Naismith was a Canadian physical education instructor who worked at the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) training school in Springfield, Massachusetts, in the USA. In 1891, he was asked to devise a new sport which the students could play indoors during the winter to stave off boredom. Naismith came up with a game which involved two teams of nine players trying to throw a ball into peach baskets which were fixed to the wall at either end of the gym. It was loosely based on a game from his own childhood called 'Duck on a rock'. On 15 January 1892, he published the rules of his new game, which he called basketball. Naismith's handwritten diaries, which were discovered by his granddaughter in 2006, reveal that he was anxious about the new game and thought it would prove a failure, like many other attempts at inventing new indoor sports. On the contrary, the game was a huge success and rapidly became very popular throughout the USA, spreading across the country through the network of YMCA gyms and beyond. (Ironically, the YMCA banned the game from its gyms a few years later because it was too rough.) In 1893, iron hoops with nets were introduced to replace the original baskets. However, it was another ten years before open-ended nets were developed; prior to that, players had to climb up and retrieve the ball from the net whenever a basket was scored.

A A public school product

A new form of football originated in England during the 19th century, taking its name from the place where it was supposedly invented: Rugby School. In the early 1800s, football was played throughout England (and in many other countries too) but there were no standard rules, and in most versions of the game, the ball could be caught as well as kicked. However, running with the ball was largely outlawed. Legend has it that in 1823, a student at Rugby School called William Webb Ellis picked up the ball during a football match and ran with it towards the opposing goal line. This illegal action caused a permanent change in the rules of the game, or so the story goes, and from that day onwards, Rugby School played its own version of football which became known as Rugby Football. (The more familiar kind of football is officially known as Association Football to distinguish it from Rugby Football.) To this day, there is an inscription at Rugby School celebrating William Webb Ellis and his actions, and although the historical truth of the events is highly questionable, the story endures. The plaque reads: 'This stone commemorates the exploit of William Webb Ellis who with a fine disregard for the rules of football as played in his time first took the ball in his arms and ran with it thus originating the distinctive feature of the Rugby game.'

C An all-American sport

In 1905, a famous sportswriter named Henry Chadwick wrote an article suggesting that baseball evolved from the old English game of rounders. This upset Albert Spalding, one of the game's earliest players and a manufacturer of sports equipment. He resolutely refused to accept that the great American game did not originate in America. So Spalding organised a commission of seven prominent and patriotic men to determine the 'true origin' of baseball. The project was widely reported in the newspapers. In charge of the commission was Colonel Mills of New York. He had played baseball before and during the Civil War and was the fourth president of the National League in 1884. The commission's investigations were essentially at a dead end until Abner Graves, a mining engineer from Denver who was travelling through Ohio at the time, happened to see a newspaper article about it. He sat down in his hotel room and wrote a long letter to the Mills Commission. In the letter, Graves stated categorically that at Cooperstown in 1839 he had watched a US army officer called Abner Doubleday scratching out a baseball pitch on the ground and instructing other young men how to play baseball with teams of eleven players and four bases. Graves described how the ball that they used was made of roughly-stitched horse-hide and stuffed with rags. The Mills commissioners and Spalding were elated. They promptly proclaimed baseball was invented by an American army officer, Abner Doubleday, in Cooperstown in 1839. The only evidence for this was the testimony of Graves, who was perhaps not the most reliable of witnesses. A year later, he murdered his wife and was committed to an asylum for the criminally insane.