

SPALDING SAYS BASEBALL IS
THE GREAT MAN BUILDER

Father of the Game Tells Marshall That It Is One of the Nation's Important Assets—A Remarkable Analysis of the National Sport From the One Man in the World Best Qualified to Make It—Why It Is Better Than Any Other Form of Athletics.

By Edward Marshall.

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HIS FACE is that of a Greek hero, his manner that of a Church of England bishop, when I talked with him he was a candidate for United States senator from California, and he is the father of the greatest sport the world has ever known.

You don't know him? You are unfortunate. There are in the United States at least 1,000 men who do not know him, but I am writing now of A. G. Spalding, and he talked to me the other evening of the game's psychology.

"The game?" The only game. "The psychology of baseball?" he asked. "I confess that the psychology of baseball is a new one to me. Just what do you mean by the psychology of baseball?"

We dug up a dictionary. Webster defines "psychology" as the science of the human soul and its operations, the science that treats inductively of the phenomena of human consciousness.

"Well," said Mr. Spalding, "it is, then, a psychological fact that whatever interests or excites a number of separate individuals will interest or excite them still more when they are brought together. It is fortunate for the game and those that play it that this phase of the sport is not included in the present scoring system."

The Mind and the Game.

"It takes it that you are trying to find out what effect the game has on the mind, and what effect the mind has on the game. The general impression among those who do not know, and although there are several million people in this country who do know, still there remains a few who don't, is that baseball is simply a form of physical exercise which is interesting to watch and the game know well that it is more—much more. They know that it is quite as much a mental as it is a physical exercise."

As a matter of plain fact, it is much more a mental exercise than a mere physical sport. There is really no other form of outdoor sport which constantly demands such accurate coordination between the mind and body as this national game of ours. And that is rather fine, when you come to think about it.

"Just why do you say that?" I asked. "Well, stop and think. England had her cricket, far too slow a game to interest Americans. The Frenchman has no national sport which can be mentioned in polite society. The leading statesmen and educators of that country are now trying seriously to induce the nation to devote a new one or to borrow one from some one else, for they realize the value of a good, clean, national game; but they have none, as yet. The Germans are a little better off—they go in for heavy athletics, but they have no national game. The Spaniards have one and one very different from baseball—one which has, unquestionably, played a great part in ruining that nation as baseball has played in building this one up. Bull fighting is their sport, and it makes them brutal. Brutes are always brutes. The Spaniards sport consists of torturing dumb creatures, struggling against hopeless odds. It does not elevate, but it degrades."

Baseball a Man Maker.

"Baseball elevates, and it fits the American character. The emotional and moral as well as the physical side of a man's nature are brought into play by baseball. I know of no other medium which, as completely as baseball, joins the physical, mental, emotional, and moral sides of a man's composite being into a complete and homogeneous whole. And there is nothing better calculated to build a baseball player into a growing boy, self-poised, and self-reliant, confidence, inoffensive and entirely proper aggressiveness, general manliness. Baseball is a manmaker."

There are those who say that it is essentially a boy's game. They're not far wrong; they're far from right. If this is wholly true, then why do men so completely monopolize the professional sport? Because men are simply grown-up boys, and the more this may be true of them, the better men they are. Baseball, really, is a game which grows up with the player. A boy's game to a man's game. The skill of a good player must, inevitably, have been acquired in boyhood. No man can learn baseball after he has reached maturity. Very few men who first took up the game after they had passed their twenty-first birthday have become good baseball players. The paying public sees only men playing at the game, but thousands upon thousands of boys are in the meantime playing it wherever they can find the room to plant a diamond. Why, I will venture the assertion that for every man player who played baseball in 1910, there were 500 boys hard at it. Among American boys the game is well nigh universal. But only those who are first, particularly qualified, through physical skill, and, second, especially adapted through their mental disposition, keep at it after they have reached manhood.

Of course the professional baseball player is the one known to the non-playing public; he attracts attention through his superior talent, just as a great actor or a great singer does; but a great actor or great singer may start late, while a baseball player cannot. I do not believe there is a single player in the major leagues who had not demonstrated a peculiar fitness for the game, and made a reputation as a skillful player among boy associates, before he was 14.

It is, certainly, the game has its psychology—a part of the game's healthy and degenerate psychology of the whole nation. The professional baseball player is no true, trained to brutality like the prizefighter, no half developed little creature like the jockey, no cruel coward like the bullfighter. He is the natural development of the American boy's love of manly, skillful, outdoor sport—sport buying brain and body and not harming any one or anything. The average boy who loves baseball is not the sort of boy who loves to go off with a gun intent on killing some poor bird. Baseball has done a lot to keep the Yankee lad from being brutal.

Our Natural Game.

And he revels in baseball, does this American boy—good luck to him! No one ever has to urge the normal Yankee lad to participate in this clean game. He takes to it as a duck to water. He knows its rudiments before he learns to read and write. His father played

baseball before him, and of this generation, most of his forefathers. And it is a sport which parents may encourage, for it is neither dangerous nor demoralizing. I never knew a father who played baseball in his youth to object to his son becoming interested in the game. It is a game which mothers need not shrink at mention of. It is our natural as well as our national game.

The professional baseball player is doing more for the nation than any one engaged in any form of sport has ever done for any country in the past. They say horse racing has resulted in improvement in horse breeding. Well, baseball has done something better. It has resulted in improvement in man breeding. Aside from giving outdoor recreation to the public, the professional baseball player is, by his example, encouraging the boy to healthy sport with which not one unpleasant feature is connected. Little gambling is associated with baseball. When the game first started as a professional sport there was an effort made to exclude it with all the gambling features which beset the race tracks, pool selling and all—and from 1870 to say, 1875, the gamblers practically had control of our professional baseball. Every baseball park had its betting ring. This made decent people stay away, and interest in the game fell to a low ebb. Every crowd made was charged to crookedness upon the player's part, and not always, probably, unjustly. William Hulbert of Chicago had become interested in the game, and I explained this all to him. I was actually afraid the game would have to go. He wanted me to take my winning club on from Boston to Chicago, and I told him that I would if he'd clean out the gamblers, and not otherwise. He said he'd try, and he did try, to mighty good effect. That saved the game, undoubtedly, and in the winter of the following year the National league was organized, and has been getting more and more important to the life of all America with the passage of each day since then.

Gambling Driven Out.

The elimination of the betting evil was the cornerstone of the success of baseball as an exhibition game. The fight against it was a fierce one, lasting four or five years. Then we triumphed, and the cleanest game on earth had been established. No betting, no Sunday playing, no liquor sold upon the grounds. It was a revolution in the world of professional sport. Baseball is the only game which suits the mighty populace and yet is wholly free from ties to bind it to the gambling and the liquor selling element, whose aim it is to victimize the populace.

That's part of its psychology—it is clean, honest, and important part of it is that it is a leveler. That makes it, in the truest sense, American. It is almost, if not exactly, the same game in all parts of the United States, and nowhere is it changed by caste. Caste may not wreck a sport in countries where caste dominates the social life, but it would surely wreck baseball in this country. That's the finest thing about baseball. Its spectators, once they settle in their seats and give their eyes upon the diamond, are absolutely equalized by their delight in what they see. The hod-carrier, if his seat, so placed him as to make it possible, would be just as apt, in case of a good play, to best the president upon the back, in his enthusiasm, with a cushion or his hat, and the president would almost surely turn and grin at him. I don't know that that has ever actually happened, but I have known a workingman in jumpers to so lose his memory of social and financial and political rank as to hiss twice a great senator. It was a fine and a significant spectacle, because none of this—the senator was not offended. He couldn't clear his mind of frantic joy in time to be offended, and, better yet, he would not have been offended if he could have cleared it. Right here I ought to explain something. This interview was quite a family affair. Across the room from me sat Mr. Spalding's nephew—a young scientist—and at my right, upon a couch, was Mrs. Spalding. She is a fit mate for her classically featured husband. She is really very handsome, has a notably delightful voice—soft, cultured, vibrant—and she does what the "advice to wives" departments in the women's magazines always urge young wives to do: she takes an interest in her husband's soul-enrichments. Interest? Well, some.

Two Cranks in a Family.

Men at baseball games, all men at baseball games, are brethren, equal sharers in whatever joy or sorrow or protest the great game may bring," said she. "And utterly irrelevant. Ben Johnson, the old president of the league, was sitting near us in the stand, and a man wanted to make a photograph of him. Did the crowd sit averted and reverent? Not notably. That crowd admired Ben Johnson and, in a way, revered him, but the camera man was an obstruction. What a cry went up! Too much Johnson! Too much Johnson! roared instantly unto the vast throngs."

Mr. Spalding smiled at her. "Two cranks in a family means domestic bliss, if they are both baseball cranks," he commented, thereby adding to her exposition of the game's psychology.

"Any one who blocked a crank's view of the game would meet with instant criticism," he said proudly. "And Teddy himself were playing and made an error he'd be roasted by the best friends he possessed upon the bleachers."

But in spite of this, baseball is the most good, natural, pastime in the world. Partisans will rave and tear their hair, but how often do you hear that one of them has torn another's hair on the baseball grounds? In the history of the world no such great crowds have gathered to watch anything the world has ever known—sport or anything else—with so few fights. Baseball, you see, arouses no brutal instincts. It is a turmoil rather than a battle. It is more a war of skill than a war of strength. Football often breeds fights. That game calls for heavy muscles, don't you see, as well as skill, and I shall dare some critics when I say that football science is less delicate than baseball science. Brute strength in one football player, can, and often does, overcome the pure science of another. In baseball this could not possibly occur.

The One Game in the Open.

The game is in the open, too. Twenty

thousand people can cluster round a diamond and see every move the baseball players on it make. There is no chance for secret cheating, therefore there is no tendency in that direction. It is not alone the umpire who can see what happens on the field, but every newsboy, every millionaire among the spectators. In football, there is often chance for hidden fouls.

"Professionalism has not wrecked baseball," he has merely brought about a higher degree of skill in players by offering them an income which permits them to keep up, after they have become men, the sport in which they have excelled as boys. The professional is merely a grown boy and, in the minds of a large number of his fellows, a very lucky boy at that. His profession is his sport a little glorified. He is the natural outcome of the boy's love for the game—ah, how that game boy loves it!"

And it is the only professional sport I know of which it does not hurt a boy to reveal in. He worships the professional who wins, and doing this, he never worships a plug-ugly or a thug. Drunkards and all other moral undesirable are barred from real success upon the baseball field by the very nature of the sport. The men whom the boy looks up to as a very decent lot of fellows—such a decent lot of fellows as no other professional sport the world has ever known could show. The professional baseball player, by his example, does not encourage his young devotees to anything unworthy. That's a fine detail of our national game. Parents need not be alarmed if their young sons announce at breakfast some fine morning that they plan to be professional ball players when they reach maturity. In the first place, out of 500 boys who may express that firm determination, only one upon an average will ever make good in a major league, or minor league for that matter, and, in the second place, that one of the

500 will not, by making good, prove himself to be anything at all unworthy. Success as a baseball player does not plunge a youth into a vicious or a dissipated life, but on the other hand, insures him from that sort of a career.

Professionalism Lucky Chaps.

Indeed, lucky is the boy who can develop sufficient skill to get a place on a league team. That means a mighty good salary and a pleasant, clean and healthful life. The professional baseball player is no mollycoddle—there are no mollycoddles in the game; but neither is there any room for things in it. No training could be more severe than that of the league player. Under the present system of organized baseball, he must conform to the strictest mental, moral and physical discipline, and must develop wonderfully in patience, self-reliance, and fair-mindedness. He must keep at the top notch in all these details of fine character if he would keep position in the game. Ability to take criticism cheerfully is one of the great requisites of real success in any line. I know of no profession which requires of those who win in it the disposition and ability to do this which baseball requires.

And for a man to enter baseball as a professional it is not necessary that he should give up all ambition. The professional life of the ballplayer is at best but short. It averages, I think, 10 years. Let us assume that it absorbs a man from 21 to 31. During those 10 years he has been building up a splendid body, he has been getting a brain training which will be most useful in almost anything he may decide to round his life out with, and he has been drawing a high salary, without learning how to waste. The expenses of the life are not exorbitant. A player may well save full half his salary, and if he does he will, when his ballplaying days are over, have sufficient capital with which to begin competently a more serious battle with the world. In what other line can a young man accomplish all these things? I do not know of any. And no matter what business or profession he may enter, it will be easy as compared to the fierce schooling which his early youth has known on the baseball diamond. The psychology of baseball? Why, baseball is a soul builder.

Baseball and the Mind.

Now as to the effect of baseball on a mind of the boy player. If a boy is naturally selfish, peevish, or crab-mind-

ed, the members of the team he plays with will soon knock that out of him, or drive him from the team. He won't want to leave the team, for baseball, you must remember, is ingrained in his blood. If he is inclined to be ill-tempered, the loss of a few games and the respect of his associates as the result, will help mightily toward correcting it. If he is prone to be a cad, to put on airs to assume a superiority over his fellow players as a result of his social or financial standing of his family, a little joshing from his fellows on the errors he made upon the field will soon bring him down to earth again. If he is unduly timid, and shows cowardice in a pinch, his mates will quickly encourage him or eject him. If he is apprehensive, pessimistic—and no trait is more entirely un-American—he will soon lose his place upon the team. The lad who is continually predicting a defeat will not win. The thing is that rarely will he let his faults go far enough to bar him from the game—his love for it is too instinctive and too real. Rather will he let the game correct the faults. And there you are. It's a man as well as a soul builder.

The psychology of baseball? It is the psychology of success.

I know of nothing which more fitly trains the body, mind and soul. The game plays havoc with a boy's or man's emotions. In a day the player may well rise to the fine heights of victory and drink to the dark depths of black despair in a defeat. And it must be the one or the other. There is no midway station. The score is 5 to 3. You win or lose, and quickly learn that nothing is accomplished by trying to lay the blame, if defeat comes, upon the umpire or upon your fellow players. Pleading a sore finger or strained muscle or tendon wins nothing for the vanquished player in his own mind or the minds of his associates. That is a good thing. After many victories and the defeats which are quite certain to go with them, a player must of sheer necessity, achieve self poise, learn to take winning calmly, and lose philosophically. He may well reach that super point where he looks grave in victory and smiles with hope when he is vanquished.

Baseball has for a long time been important in the education of our youth—far more important than most people think—and it is destined to become still more important. The day will come, I

think, when all American school authorities will supply the necessary grounds to play the game on as an essential adjunct to every public school. The game means countless benefits and not a single danger to the boy who plays it. You may have gathered from what I have already said that I consider it the greatest game on earth. I do, and, doing so, am proud of my good judgment. There should be baseball grounds adjacent to or very near each public school building in the United States.

Baseball is the only sport which is severe enough to benefit and not severe enough to overstrain. Baseball players live to good old ages, almost always. I wish I had the list at hand. The longevity of ex-professionals would surprise you. I myself began to play on the advice of my physician, and I made a business of it in the end.

Prizefighters, jockeys, football players, even college athletes, are not long lived.

I had not asked so very many questions. They had not been needed. Mr. Spalding puts his words across the plate as accurately and as logically as in the old days, he pitched his balls. But now I asked one.

"Even if the game had not resulted in great wealth and fame for you, would you still be glad you took it up?"

He laughed. The Greek countenance, framed with white hair, broke into a particularly winning set of wrinkles; the bishop's face became that of the fully monk in the world famous picture.

"I'm a candidate for senator," he said, "and ought not to use slang, but—sure—would. Glad? Why, I tell you it meant health to me—the biggest thing of all. It has taken me around the world again and yet again, it has thrown me into contact with the finest set of men this country ever has produced. It has taught me that humanity is, at the bottom, clean of mind and soul. It has made me a rank orator—and it has kept me one. It is the only sport on earth. The prize fighter is brutalized and his heart both hardens; the rowing man is almost certain to be most unsexually developed physically, and his heart, also, generally goes wrong; football maims and brutalizes; horse racing sends its devotees to pieces morally and gives them little of the compensation coming from good exercise and honest rivalry. It is gambling."

Find 50 men from all these sports

who have outgrown them and reached real importance in the world. You can't. I could name a hundred baseball players—yes, two hundred and two more—who have become important, wealthy and respected men in later years. There's John M. Ward, for instance. Senator Gorman was a baseball player once. John K. Tener, who, as you talk, is a candidate for governor of Pennsylvania, was a professional and went around the world with us in 1893. Senator Bulkeley of Connecticut was a player first and then first president of the National league. Baseball for a few years is one of the best character builders I can think of. An able boy's blood always runs high and the first thing he must learn, if he is to win success, is to control it. Baseball teaches that, first, last and all the time.

The game was fortunate from the beginning. It was spread throughout the country by the soldiers returning home after the Civil war. Now it is in its third generation. I hesitate to guess what it will be when it has reached its fourth. The crowds today are big; the crowds of future days will be much bigger. Every boy, you see, plays baseball, and the players of today are the spectators of tomorrow. The human being who has ever got the germ of baseball in his blood, whether the infection comes when he is young or after he has reached maturity, never gets it out.

What effect has your baseball record and enthusiasm had upon your candidacy for the United States senate?" I inquired, really wondering.

"How do I know yet?" he asked. But then he added: "Give me the baseball votes of California and my opponents may have the seat."

Across the room from me sat Homer Davenport, most famous of the world's cartoonists, and himself a baseball crank of advanced mania. "Any man," said Davenport, not looking up from his sketch pad, (which Mrs. Spalding, also, was intent upon), "who can pitch every game, every season for the Boston team for five long years, and win the pennant every time, and then go to Chicago and take the pennant with him in his trunk, as Mr. Spalding did, can capture a seat in the United States senate on wet grounds, with a glass arm in the box and the rosters all against him. The

(Continued on Page Five.)

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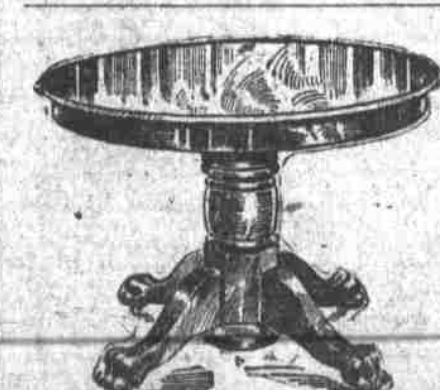
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