



The Inquiring Mind

This series of articles, on many different subjects, results from work by senior students at the school of journalism at the University of Oregon. Each is a condensed version of a full-length thesis written as partial requirement for graduation at the school.

COMPARATIVE SPORTS FOR YOUNGSTERS

By Neil Anderson

The car left the little town behind and hurried through the night. Its headlights probed the increasing darkness of the countryside.

Suddenly a figure appeared on the road.

A small boy, his head bent forward, arms swinging dejectedly at his side, shuffled aimlessly along the shoulder of the road. A baseball glove hung limp and worn from his hand.

The car stopped and the driver offered the boy a ride. As the boy climbed into the front seat of the car, the tears trickling across his cheeks reflected the glare of the light.

"Where you going?" asked the driver.

"Home, about three miles up the road," the boy dejectedly replied.

"How come you're walking alone at this time of night?" the driver asked next.

"Dad's punishing me," the boy explained. "When I got home I'm going to have to go to bed without supper too."

"Play right field for a Little League baseball team and I dropped a fly ball on 'em the other night," he continued, "Dad's punishing me."

One of the problems of this episode is the problem of the adolescent competitive athlete.

The value of athletics in the development of boys and girls has long been recognized by educational leaders, physical educators and parents. But the question of whether or not these activities should be organized and directed toward highly competitive sports is a point to be resolved.

Within the last 20 years, interest in highly competitive athletics for boys 12 and under has greatly increased as a result of the growth of Little League and similar organizations in both football and basketball. The growth of public recreation facilities, increasing emphasis on physical education programs in the public schools and glorification of the professional athlete by the press, radio and television have tended to reinforce the trend.

The conflict over such participation has developed around two aspects: the physical and the psychological. The physical problem concerns itself with the question of stress and strain upon the organs and skeletal structure of the youngsters involved. Furthermore, it considers the effect of such strains in terms of the child's growth and development.

Can't Be Disputed

The medical arguments against bone injuries, organic harm and physical fatigue cannot be disputed. However, they do not apply only to competitive athletics. Conditions that provide opportunity for physical injury are present in every-day play. A fall while running or walking may cause as serious an injury as sliding into second base. The relative ease with which bone injuries may occur in noncompetitive situations makes them invalid as an argument against organized athletics.

Those who stress the psychological aspect of the question are concerned with the individual's mental health. They are concerned with his reaction and adjustment to his stress and whether the tensions that occur in competitive athletics are significant in the development of personality.

With children in their formative years, both physically and mentally, two questions can be asked about competitive athletics: What good can result and what harm can be done to a participant in such a program? No one really knows either answer.

As the controversy has grown there has been an increasing number of magazine and newspaper articles dealing with the subject. Much of the so-called information in the fields of physical fitness and competitive athletics is idea, feeling or belief rather than fact. Little clinical evidence is given to support claims for either the beneficial or harmful effects of competitive athletics for pre-adolescent youth.

Educators and psychologists, physicians and parents are in general agreement that over-emphasis of competitive athletics is potentially harmful to the individual. The controversy, therefore, centers around the point at which competition becomes harmful.

What most critics object to is the over-emphasis placed on these programs.

For the moment, disregard the implications of the physical problem. Assume, instead, that physical injuries are the result of over-emphasis on participation. As a result of external pressures created by parents, coaches and commercial interests, participation is carried to the point where the child is unable to cope with the situation physically. Any physical harm then can be considered, indirectly, as neither the fault of the program nor the boy himself.

This suggests that psychological motivation is the area of potential harm.

Not So Harmful

There seems to be no belief that competition per se is psychologically harmful. Authorities agree that a child is born and reared in a competitive society and that he continually competes with himself, his playmates and his environment.

However, just as there are limitations on physical ability, there are also limitations on a child's ability to comprehend and analyze a situation. Children are sensitive to an extreme. The tensions, fears and excitement of an adult can be transferred to the child. If the child lacks the mental ability to comprehend, the result is an increase in emotional conflict.

These programs designed to provide the children with supervised activity, have been supervised by the adult and his standards. The child's idea of fun has been replaced by the adult concept of winning. As a result, commercialization by business and the vicarious satisfaction of parents have combined to produce an unhealthy over-emphasis on these programs.

Commercialization has resulted in an intricate system of play-offs and championships with their tension-creating situations. The excitement of these tournaments and the desire to win have led many parents to overlook their child's ability to relax and to lose in the reflected glory of the youngster's achievement.

Often times the child is punished, criticized or berated for inability or mistakes on the field. Loss, understanding and help are forgotten. Consequently, the child, susceptible to adult pressures and influences, will attempt to gain approval by attempting to fulfill the adult's expectations. Eventually, however, the child will reach a point where he no longer has the mental or physical ability to handle the pressures. A parent, coach or sponsor who fails to put the child's welfare first, adds measurably to the development of tensions and frustrations in the child.

Admittedly these situations are few, but they do exist. And when and where they do exist, they must be eliminated before they ruin the game for the children. The mental and physical welfare of one child is more valuable than any championship.

All adult influence isn't harmful or bad. A properly supervised and organized program has many advantages over unsupervised play. Properly trained adults with an understanding of psychology, a practical knowledge of first aid and the necessary character to guide youngsters, are highly desirable.

Obviously there are single answers to every individual, adult and child alike, will have to provide the own answers.

A sensible evaluation of every program to determine the detrimental aspects is recommended. The American Research Conference in 1957 outlined a program for pre-adolescent competitive athletic programs. The Conference recommended that competitive athletic programs should serve four purposes:

(1) To provide an outlet for the natural energy of childhood; (2) To provide a healthy atmosphere for group or group activity; (3) To train the children in speed, endurance, flexibility and strength—motor skills—through activities suited to their capacities; (4) To provide a hobby or recreational interest which, although important during childhood and adolescence, may be of even greater value when carried into adulthood.

How can these goals be attained? We could start by giving the kids back their games.

Washington—The Maritime Administration has announced that it is offering for sale reserviships located at Vancouver, Wash., and Glendale, Calif.

Small Worlds Around Us

By Lynn M. Watkins

Contact Response

The family cat comfortably curled up in its owner's lap, the dog with its head on its master's knee are only examples of what is now called "contact response."

In most creatures it takes on considerable importance, it is a part of their behavior pattern. It is an action not too well understood by scientists or students of animal actions.

Most animals desire bodily contact with their surroundings or by pressure against some solid object during periods of sleep. This "contact" gives them a sense of security; something to hold on to.

The nesting bird builds her nest to exactly fit her body on all sides. She shapes its final size by her own breast. When completed it touches her firmly on all sides. This gives her a feeling of security, something she desperately needs during the long period of incubation.

On a dark, stormy night, when the wind is howling through the branches of the home-tree or bush and the world is full of strange and unexplained sounds, she must have a feeling of belonging, the sensation of the familiar nest pressing against her body. Otherwise she would "push the panic button" and dash herself against a tree or a building in the stormy darkness.

A rabbit or almost any other small animal lives in a burrow or a den which actually fits, rather than one with more room. Not because the creature is lazy or too tired to make the place larger but because he wants the comfortable feeling of pressure.

The hermit crab, in the shallow waters of the ocean's edge, searches until it finds a discarded mollusk shell that exactly fits its body. Not too large, not too small but one that presses reassuringly against its soft body. This lowly creature, without thought or reason, still manifests that same "creasure comfort" by selecting a home that gives its body a sense of constant pressure.

Insects press their bodies into a crevice barely large enough to permit the entrance of their body, thereby imparting to themselves a feeling of security.

The family cat or dog shows a preference to sleep in a small box or container or under or behind a pillow or some other object almost as if they wanted to "be cozy," but actually it is reacting to that strange fact of animal emotions that, for a better name and a deeper understanding, we humans call "contact response."

(Released by The Register and Tribune Syndicate, 1959)

Cub Scouts

Approximately 100 Cubs and parents attended the meeting of Pack 8, Jackson school, in the gymnasium last Thursday.

Twenty-five of the Cubs who received their Lion badges that evening took part in the flag ceremony.

Dr. D. Kirkland West, First Presbyterian church, gave the invocation.

John Wimer, ticket chairman for the Scoutennial, reported that Pack 8 sold 93 tickets.

Billy Wimer was top salesman and received a neckerchief slide and a one year subscription to the Boys Life. Larry Russell received a neckerchief slide.

A gift was presented to Mrs. John Lynch, mother of Den 11, by the boys of her den. Den 4 won the attendance cup and also put on a skit with the Centennial theme.

Harry Barneburg was introduced by Cubmaster Jack Lynch and spoke on Scouting for boys and its help for better citizens.

Awards presented were: Jack Rice, Webelos badge; Harry Chastain, Webelos and lion badge, gold arrow, three silver arrows and year pin; Den 4, Ronnie Phillips, bobcat; Dan Hankins, assistant denner; Jim Phillips, bear and denner badges; Paul Chinn, lion badge; Den 5, Mike Ford, denner badge; Billy Wimer and Craig Meadows, assistant denner; Den 6, Dell Wiles, bobcat and lions badges, and gold arrow; Clyde Lees, two year pin; Steven Ogler, bear and lion badge and two year pin; Shawn Lees, one year pin; Danny Hanson, lion badge and one year pin; Den 8, David Rowe, denner badge, Ronnie Ogler, gold arrow; Stephen Rothback, gold arrow; Steven Buck, wolf badge and gold arrow; Jon Hardin, silver arrow; Craig Van Brunt, wolf badge.

Den 10, Steven Lance, assistant denner; Ken Murrey, assistant denner; Bob Cook, wolf badge; Bruce Dwight, wolf badge; Den 11, Michael Clark, silver arrow; Richard Champion, lion badge; Richard Cole, lions badge and silver arrow; Spencer Webber, lions badge and gold arrow;

Steven Wilcox, lion badge; Gary Custance, lion badge and two year pin; John Lynch, lions badge and two-year pin and assistant; and Michael Updike denner badge and gold arrow, Den 12-Nicky Briggs, Ricky Frazier, Paul Greeny, Bobby Kolkemo, Tim Nolte, Gordon Wiseman, David Uhrine and Larry Russell, all lion badges.

Following the presentation refreshments were served by the den mothers and the Cub committee.

Transient Admits Murder in Utah

Oakland, Calif. (UPI)—James W. Worwick, 46, transient laborer, has admitted a May 21 murder in Ogden, Utah, according to police.

They said Worwick, jailed here last week for disturbing the peace, had boasted to cellmates of having killed a man.

"I'm tough," he was quoted as saying. "I killed a man a month ago."

Worwick, under questioning by detectives, later gave the details of the killing. He said he had been drinking and got into a fight with James D. McCall, 45, another transient, in the Ogden railroad yards.

Officers quoted Worwick as admitting he then knocked McCall unconscious with a wrench and held his head under water in a nearby stream.

Ike Not To Back Off In Strauss Deal

Washington (UPI)—Senate Republican Leader Everett Dirksen said after checking with the White House Monday that there are no signs President Eisenhower will back off in the Senate fight over the controversial nomination of Lewis L. Strauss to commerce secretary.

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by Alice Brooks

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Steven Wilcox, lion badge; Gary Custance, lion badge and two year pin; John Lynch, lions badge and two-year pin and assistant; and Michael Updike denner badge and gold arrow, Den 12-Nicky Briggs, Ricky Frazier, Paul Greeny, Bobby Kolkemo, Tim Nolte, Gordon Wiseman, David Uhrine and Larry Russell, all lion badges.

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by Marianne Martin

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