

PART I. THE PROBLEM EXAMINED

FOR a decade preceding the outbreak of the present war there was a growing number of persons, claiming some prominence in the field of health, who received wide spread publicity through statements asserting that school and college athletics were so strenuous that participants were damaged physically. These critics submitted as proof for their assertions a few cases of collapse of players, and then demanded that school and athletic authorities reduce the vigor of playing periods and increase the time for rest. Basketball, being both vigorous and popular, was a favorite target of these spellbinders whose campaigns received enough support to force some coaches to "ease up" in their training of players. In fact, a few coaches also became persuaded that the game was too tough for growing boys, and joined in the propaganda to reduce its speed.

Arguments that basketball and other strenuous forms of school athletics harmed too many players were, without exception, based on a small number of individual cases. Careful thinkers usually refuse to draw general conclusions from a few specific cases, but many conscientious people are not careful thinkers. Coaches and other school athletic authorities found this faulty logic difficult to combat and, in addition, were handicapped by lack of scientific facts with which to answer the arguments.

At present there is a noticeable decline in protests concerning the evil effects of strenuous exercise because of war time results in the physical training of soldiers and sailors. Military leaders have maintained consistently that soft living during the last years of peace caused physical deterioration of vast numbers of American youths. Results of medical examinations for draftees sustained their contentions. Four million of thirteen million were rejected as structurally unfit. Too many of the structurally acceptable nine million were functionally unfit. Almost one million of the accepted nine million have been discharged as unusable. With the acceptable young men under their control the commanders of the armed forces immediately established schedules of physical training activities far more rigorous than coaches had ever dared to enforce. The valuable contributions of this conditioning program to the health