

Urged to Give Schools Gas for Athletics

SPORTS POLL INDICATES 70% OF PEOPLE FAVOR SOME ALLOWANCE FOR COMPETITIVE GAMES

THE government should make any possible mileage concessions to enable high schools to carry on their competitive athletics programs during the war. That is a present public need and wish. The statistics on this question in the *Esquire Sports Poll* for March show that 70.38% of the people are in favor of lending a lifting hand to the high schools that are trying to carry on the good work of inoculating pre-draft age boys with the typically American spirit of competition.

High School Athletics Should Not Be Strangled

A number of our military leaders already have gone on record to state that the men we had who were trained in competitive athletics saved the country in the early months of the war. In view of this, it is considered by the majority as illogical to strangle high school competitive athletics by gas rationing unless it is absolutely necessary. A minority, with strict realism for the blunt facts, however, held that the rubber used in this way was lost to the military machine just as definitely as rubber used in any other way.

Competitive Sports Make Good Fighters

Testimony on the value of competitive athletics in the war picture was given by Lieutenant Commander Justin M. Barry, former Southern California coach who is now director of athletics at the St. Mary's Pre-Flight School, which participated in the poll. "Cadets who have graduated," reported Commander Barry, "have reported back that their athletic training here has been just the background they needed for the stamina, coordination and spark of daring that a man needs when he gets into the modern super-plane."

Lieutenant Commander Gerald A. Oliver, head football coach at St. Mary's Pre-Flight School, added: "The American is a good fighting man because he is a good competitor, having developed the competitive spirit in sports. Football is more important than ever because its hard-hitting element of danger is the nearest thing to war that we have in peace-time. The game should be especially encouraged in the high schools."

Cadets Profit by Football Training

Ensign Frank Albert, former Stanford All-American quarter who is in the St. Mary's Pre-Flight School, wrote on his ballot: "Here at St. Mary's we found that comparatively few had played football in school. These cadets approached the game timidly at first, but when they found that the harder you play the less chance you have of getting hurt, they became real enthusiasts. After this training these cadets are much tougher and much less likely to hesitate when facing a jolt or real danger than they were before they ever made a try at the game."

That rationing would tend to promote more participation in sports was doubted by 50.48% of the voters. That greater selectivity would be manifested in attendance at outstanding sporting events, at the expense of secondary attractions, was voted by a majority of 68.91%. Bowling was rated the sport



that would benefit most during the period of rationing in 79.10% of the ballots. A majority of 57.62% figured that rationing might be a blessing producing better national health through better diet and more exercising.

Basketball A Good "Quickener"

Nevertheless, the young war birds at the St. Mary's Pre-Flight School repudiated this supposition, placing a number of other sports ahead of the big pin ball game. Ensign Hank Luisetti, the former Stanford cage immortal, said: "Basketball is one of the best 'quickeners' given to Naval Aviation cadets. It improves their reactions and gives them the ability to see movement almost in all directions at once." Lieutenant James R. Smith, water polo coach at the St. Mary's base, declared for water polo as the best sport for these times because it best prepares men to survive if they are precipitated into rough seas.

Sports Should Reach All

Substantiating the results of the *Esquire Sports Poll*, we quote from a letter from Lieutenant Charles J. Ellis of the U. S. Navy, which appears in the *Sound and Fury* department of *Esquire* for March.

"Competitive sports, are, as you know, the fundamental basis for the fighting spirit developed in the American people and in view of this, it is my personal belief that not only should competitive sports be continued but they should be developed to the extent that they will reach every single individual in the country—particularly those boys who are soon to be doing the fighting. Without a determined will-to-win and the proper competitive spirit, and without the necessary physical stamina to out-do their enemies, then it will be these boys in our schools today who will die as a result of this neglect. It will not be the administrative officials who apparently are not thoroughly cognizant of the necessity for proper training."

Athletic Officials Entitled to Occupational Mileage

According to OPA regulations anyone engaged in a gainful occupation is entitled to additional occupational mileage up to a maximum of 560 miles per month if his A ration book is not sufficient to meet occupational engagements and assignments. School officials, athletic officials and coaches all make their living in the occupations designated and so are entitled to the additional gasoline required. This in most instances is helping solve the transportation problem of out of town games in some sections. The fact that the empty seats in the coach's car may be occupied by players constitutes no violation of the spirit or letter of the regulation, according to OPA headquarters in Washington.

It is hoped therefore, that no athletic official is longer restrained from obtaining their necessary and legal gas rations that may be allocated by local boards. It is of paramount importance to the welfare of the country that our competitive athletic program be kept going at full speed ahead.