

CHAPTER I

PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSES

It may be well to inquire first what is meant by the term, intramurals. We are using it as an abbreviation of the two words, Intramural sports. The many other fine activities sometimes included in the school point program, such as music and debate, are not included in this book.

Intramurals are our oldest type of school physical education. One is likely to think of intramurals as something new in the program; as a matter of fact, these contests within school communities were their first forms of competitive sport and preceded both the required program of physical education and the interscholastic and intercollegiate (varsity) teams of today. So, in seeking expansion in this field, as so many schools are now doing, they are only returning to their first love.

At the present time intramurals are growing rapidly throughout the country. They are without question the field of most rapid development in school physical education. Here is a field in which active sports practice is open to all who are interested. With adequate direction common, it is to be hoped that everyone who wishes it may find opportunity for engaging in interesting competition at his own level.

What reasons lie behind this growth? The history of intramurals antedates that of varsity competition. In these early days, of course, intramural programs were unorganized and at first entirely under student control. With the growth of varsity sports this field has been a little neglected by students and faculty alike. The interest which was focused on physical education and development, as a result of the information revealed by the medical examinations of the selective draft during the World War, resulted in a wave of enthusiasm throughout the country for a developmental activity program. The need for able bodied men for both military and civil life stood out clearly. It was evident a broader base for this program than that offered by the limited competition of varsity sports was required. This demand has done much to boost the development of the intramural programs. Present unsettled world conditions will work in the same direction. The growing realization among physical educators of the need for wider service to all has also done much to speed the growth of intramural athletics.

The age range at which intramural programs are suitable is wide. It starts with a period when boys and girls find competitive group games holding a steady and compelling interest for them. This is usually about the fifth or possibly sixth grade in school, and sports continue to hold the interest of the students from here on through high school and through college.

The relation of intramurals to the rest of the physical education program and the place of intramural athletics in this program are of interest. A big and growing part is being played by these activities. There are many reasons why this is true. Let us inquire into the philosophy behind intramurals. They are primarily recreational and primarily must be fun. America and Americans have thrived on competition, and friendly competition is the back-bone of the whole intramural program. After the student develops a taste for sport, there is every likelihood that he will develop a "carry over" interest in sports beyond school years. Participation in sports--an important part of living and getting fun out of it--is dependent upon one's philosophy and way of life. With the present emphasis on "worthy" use of leisure time, it is important to credit physical activities with recognized recreational values. Such values these sports certainly have.