

July 20, 1945

T/Sgt. F. H. Bell - 17064111
468 Ftr. Sqdn APO 959
c/o Post Master
San Francisco, California

Dear Sgt. Bell:

I do not know what I am letting myself in on when I answer your query of a recent date.

First, I think that it is a general conception that athletes as a whole are dumber than a non-athlete. However, it must be considered that an athlete spends two hours a day on intensive training which many times fatigues him and makes him less comprehensive of intensive study. An athlete in order to be eligible for the varsity teams must be passing in more than the average hours carried by a non-athlete.

In 1930, I collaborated with a number of other educators on the text by Ginn & Company - Higher Education in America - My chapter being on Organization and Administration of Physical Education and Athletics. May I quote you from phrases of my contribution on pages 592 and 593 --

We hear little of the thousands of athletes who have graduated and have taken their places as worthy citizens, but we hear much about the undesirable athletes who sift into the institutions and bring them no credit. Many men graduate from college and become prominent in the professions and in business because of their athletic inclinations. Athletics and the urge to play kept them in high school and led them to college. Even though such a primary motive is insufficient, in many instances it helps the boy to the place of larger vision and truer motives.

Of other undesirable students who matriculate and fail to live up to college standards, however, we hear very little. A recent survey was conducted in one of our Mid-Western universities to determine what percentage of the student body was eligible for athletic competition under the present ruling of twenty-seven hours of passing work the preceding semester. The findings were interesting. Out of a total enrollment of 4082 students, 2197 were found to be eligible and 1992 ineligible. But it was the average of the student average standing in the women's classes that brought the average of the student body a little past the 50 per cent mark. Of the men students, 1240 were eligible and 1461 were ineligible; of the women, 957 were eligible and 531 were ineligible. Perhaps it is unjust to the athlete to focus so much attention upon the undesirable reflection that he brings upon his school when his class grades render him ineligible for intercollegiate competition.

In spite of a mass of such statistics which might be compiled there are those who see no remedy for the evils of the system except the abolition of intercollegiate athletics and the establishment of an extensive system of intramurals which will engage the entire student body in a program of play in their stead. The organization of the American college is such that a spirit of rivalry in intramurals could not be sufficiently aroused to take the place of intercollegiate competition. In spite of the fact that nature has endowed us with wonderful powers of substitution, we should have difficulty