

M4
N144i
c.1

INTERCLASS CONTESTS.*

JAMES NAISMITH, M. D., UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS.

We may lay it down as a fundamental principle that no game or event can survive unless it is capable of progress, as the requirements of life change; for games are played to satisfy that instinct which is the hereditary habit of the race, and as the race advances the race instinct must also advance. Thus most of our games have changed materially in the last few years, and have changed in such a way as to bring into play the powers that are used in everyday life. Thus football is changing from a game in which brawn is the chief requisite to one where skill, finesse and concentration are the chief factors, as these are of greater value to the business and professional man of to-day than weight of body or strength of muscle.

So, too, baseball has changed from the game where individual skill was the main requisite to one where the whole team works together as a unit. The game is becoming more complicated and difficult to acquire.

The business world and each social unit is becoming more complex and dependent on the other units to make up the whole, as we find in the units taking their part in the work of the whole. So our games must partake of this same element, and the factor which is made prominent is that of coöperation.

Track athletics are lacking in this element of coöperation. In the events there is very little of the social or coöperative. It is the individual alone who is responsible for the event.

It is this element of individuality that makes track athletics lag in popularity among the college games. The event becomes one of individual merit and the single strong competitor may far outweigh a combination of good men. This is against the spirit of the age where the majority of the units determine the result of the contest.

The line of evolution now for track events must lie in the effort to make them partake more of the coöperative and less of the individualistic spirit.

Intercollegiate athletics are for the few rather than for the many, and the number of participants is necessarily limited, but there is no reason why this should be true of class athletics. The

* Read before the Society of College Gymnasium Directors, New York, December 31, 1908. Reprinted from the AMERICAN PHYSICAL EDUCATION REVIEW, March, 1909.

hindrance to many taking part in intercollegiate contests is mainly a financial one, as it is impossible to carry more than a limited number of contestants any great distance. But in our class contests there is not this element and therefore there is an opportunity to enlarge the sphere of the sport. It is not a hard matter to select the best men of a class and there is little incentive for the others to do more than look on at the work of these men as they compete for the honor of the class.

The first question to be settled is the place and value of inter-class contests. These have been the backbone of sports even before there were intercollegiate contests, and they are the basis of all college contests. As soon as we begin to classify students, there is a common ground for the individuals and they are united on this factor. Class contests are a natural condition of student life. Every college is an illustration of this fact; for we find that there is a natural tendency to compete for this superiority, as is seen in our class scraps, our class or cane rushes and our may-pole. Each college has its own way of settling this matter and it is one of the questions of the day to find a suitable game to take the place of these rough-and-ready tests of class strength and loyalty. There have been several attempts to regulate this matter or to find a means of accomplishing this end. In my estimation there is no need for a new game which will involve the whole class as the old class scrap did, for that was mainly a test of brute strength or endurance and the element of skill took a minor part.

Class scraps had their place in the development of a modern university and the benefits which came from them are necessary to-day, but they must be reached by modern methods rather than by those which present such decided disadvantages.

The benefits which came from these were principally:

First. They were a method by which the students got acquainted and men found their *level*. Leaders came to the front naturally, and the would-be leader who is apt to mislead by his oratory found that men wanted deeds not words, and that they were willing to combine when results were in view.

Second. They fostered a class spirit which is a necessary predecessor of college spirit. The man who will fight for his class is the likely man for a loyal collegian. Whereas the man who has little class spirit is not likely to care much for his college. The man who uses his college merely for what he can get from her will lose track of her when his wants have been supplied.

Third. Interclass contests might, if they do not now, lead to a development of the whole student body, by insisting that each individual do his part in the contest. I have seen men with weak

hearts beg to be allowed to take part in a class scrap because their attitude would be misinterpreted. So great was the spirit of loyalty that to seek to avoid the contest was a mark of disloyalty. If this was true of the class scrap which demanded only strength, the same spirit might be invoked to develop skill and even health if that were required in the class contest.

Fourth. It would develop an appreciation for an educated and effective body and do more for the general student welfare than compulsory training. The incentive would be to benefit the class through the benefit to the individual, which is one of the strongest appeals that we can make to a student.

Fifth. It would be the best means of developing the right spirit in athletics; the man who competed for his class would do it through a desire for his class and not for some gain, and it is an easy step to doing something for his college which cannot be bought for mere money.

Interclass contests reach their highest value only when they accomplish these purposes. And we are missing the greatest means at our hands if we fail in this matter.

Present conditions are defective in several ways:

First. Only a few get the benefit of the contests; the others are not only losing an opportunity to compete but they lose an opportunity to know their own value and class themselves among the incompetent. There is no more hackneyed phrase than the one, "I can't do anything, so I am not going to make a fool of myself." If we look at the roster of our class athletes we are more than likely to find that the same person is taking part in several of the sports. Indeed, in the smaller colleges the same parties take part in all forms of athletics. Thus the number getting the benefit of these interclass contests after all is much more limited than would at first appear.

Second. There is no chance for the great mass to show their class loyalty save to go to the game and shout to the players to do a little better than they ever have done, and there is an opportunity for the onlooker to criticise the competitor, who has done his best to win the meet. There is no surer way to get a broad charity for the contestant than for every man to take his own part in the contest.

Third. It requires no effort on the part of any but a few. If competition is the incentive to good work which we claim that it is we should have that incentive as wide as possible. Only a few hope to make the intercollegiate team, and only a few hope to make the class team. It is true that the intercollegiate team gives an incentive to perfect the skill of those who are already skilled, but while we are doing this we should not leave undone anything

that will extend this incentive down to the most poorly equipped individual, who is the one who needs it most.

There are two principles which should be considered in an interclass contest.

First, it should, as far as possible, include and interest every member of the class no matter what his athletic ability; and should be an incentive for every member to take part.

Second, it should be an incentive for every member of the class to improve his athletic ability.

While these conditions may seem ideal, yet these are the ends towards which we, as directors, should aim: there are enough to keep looking on the present and the easy.

Can these conditions be fulfilled? There are two ways in which it may be done. We can get some new sport which will produce the result, or we may vary our present athletics so that they may be more effective. There have been several attempts to do each of these, but it seems to me as if the latter were the better procedure.

The easiest of the athletic events to arrange in this way is the cross-country run. If we can get the class interested enough to take hold of this event there is an easy way to include the whole class.

We do not need to change the event at all but simply change the method of scoring. This method is not new, but it is not used, because we have not pushed it as it ought to be pushed, nor made it an inducement to count in this way. The method is simply to give the first man the number of points corresponding with the number of contestants, the next man, one less, and so on through the line, the last man getting one point. This makes it an inducement for the slowest man to hasten that he may make one point or more for his team. Then the total points won by the team is the test of that team's ability. This it seems to me involves the two principles above quoted, for the greater the number of entries the greater the number of points, and the better the individual the more points can he make.

There is no prettier sight than to see two or more whole classes start out on a cross-country run, for if there is any benefit in it the whole class should partake of that, and not simply a few who hardly need it.

There are several variations which may be introduced to make the contest more equal. We may count only the first forty or one hundred if that would equalize the classes from the standpoint of numbers actually in the class, though I do not favor a compromise on this matter when there are other factors which give the smaller number an advantage in some other respect.

For example the freshman class is always large, but the other classes have had one or more years' training and should be better able to get all their men out for such an event.

Another variation, which may be made, is to score the men according to the time it takes them to run the course, e.g. if the course should be run in 20 minutes then the man running it in that time should have 100 points, the man who makes it in 21 minutes should have 90 points and the man running it in 22 minutes should get 80 points and thus he would get 1 point for every six seconds that he cut the course under 30. This would be fairer, for then every man would get value for his run and there would be an inducement for every man to do his best instead of merely waiting to win out ahead of the man nearest.

This seems to me the best method of scoring where the contestants are nearly of the same ability, but if there is a natural difference in the personnel of the class there might be allowance made for this; e.g. in a high school there is a difference in age for the younger presumably has not reached his best as compared with one a few years older. In one school we attempted to arrange this by taking the difference between the ages from the points of the older, thus giving the younger and less mature the benefit, though this handicap was slight yet when the whole class was considered there was established some equality between the classes.

Track athletics form the greatest field for the interclass contests. Even though they lack the personal contact of the may-pole or the cane rush, they may be the means of doing good work among the classes. But in order to do this we must meet up to the two principles laid down for class contests, viz. to get every member of the class interested, and to get every member striving to do better.

I know of no better way than that used by Dr. Gulick in the modern pentathlon, where each individual gets the reward of his efforts regardless of how meager that may be. This plan has been used for the individual and there is no reason why it should not be used for the class. There would thus be an incentive for the class, and for the individual.

The plan which has been tried is to take three events and allow the individual to compete in one or all of these events, scoring him for his work. We selected the three events, 440, high jump and shot put, as being typical of running, skill and strength. We felt that too many events would make it cumbersome and too few would keep some out. Each of these events can be done to some degree by every person, and each is capable of advance. Thus the 440 has the element of speed, but mere speed will not do