

The student of today knows athletics only as they have been during the last six years, but to get a view of the progress that has been made we must go back at least four decades. Acts of sportsmanship that to us old times appear wonderful are accepted as commonplace. Only last year in a very closely contested race where either might have felt that he had won, while the judges were discussing the case the contestants were walking off the field with their arms around each other. Forty years ago the coaches would have been arguing with the officials while the contestants would have probably been indulging in a fist fight.

In a dual meet I was appointed head inspector. Knowing that one of the coaches was a superlative fighter for his team, I thought to forestall any trouble and asked how closely he wished us to rule on fouls. He said, "Don't worry; there won't be any fouls. Your men will be so far ahead that our men will not have a chance to make a foul, and I was properly taken aback at the change in his attitude.

Athletics may very definitely be used as an aid to develop good character but this is accomplished not by the individuals themselves, but by the officials who are responsible for their actions during the contest. If an official demands the respect of the teams through his fairness and good judgment, he may be exceedingly strict without complaint from the individuals. A team will very soon find that they are only defeating their own purpose by trying to infringe on the rules, and a coach soon recognizes the fact that he must train his men to strictly observe the rules. This fact is easily impressed on the spectators, and through the observance of the rules by the individuals on the team we may have a direct reaction upon a large group of people, as well as upon the players themselves.

There are some games that are played so close to the spectators that they can see when a player makes a foul. Under these conditions the official is compelled to enforce the rules. The team has been coached under the same set of rules that the official uses, and the spectators enjoy the game. While we may say that athletics affect the character of ~~the~~ the player it is in reality the regulation of the game that develops good character in the individual.

We often hear the statement that an activity does us no good unless we like it. But this is not true, as we may form a reflex even against our will and yet this reflex becomes a part of our equipment as truly as those that we acquire when we enjoy the activity. I have asked a great many young men who play the piano and enjoy it, if they have always enjoyed the activity. I usually get the answer that it was one of the hardships of their life but that their parents compelled them to practice a certain number of hours, and soon they began to enjoy it. Thus a reflex that is developed even against our will becomes a part of our character because it is a part of the combination.