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WHAT ATHLETICS MEAN TO ME

Eddie Yost

Washington Senators Baseball Club

What do we live for if not to make life happier and less difficult for each other? If men are to remain civilized, or to become so, the art of associating together must grow and improve. These principles are very true and can be applied directly to the field of athletics in physical education. Where can individuals learn to cooperate, help, assist, and at the same time compete, any better than when playing on a team. The foundation of life is laid when we are young. Through athletics we learn to be loyal, truthful, confident, develop an esprit de corps and in general prepare for a society that demands a cooperative and competitive attitude.

The influence that the educational program, the teacher, and school atmosphere have on the student is tremendous. For this reason I would like to cite some simple examples and experiences in my own school and professional life, with specific reference to athletics.

I will never forget my high school baseball coach because of his fine character, drive, and ability to teach not only sports but sportsmanship as well. He posted signs such as the following in the locker room. "Reputation is what men and women think of us, character is what God and the angels know of us," "My son, observe the postage stamp! Its usefulness depends upon its ability to stick to one thing until it gets there," "A chain is as strong as its weakest link," "A quitter never wins, a winner never quits," "When the one great scorer comes to write against your name, he writes not if you won or lost but how you played the game." Very often, during a meeting, our coach would read and discuss one or two of the sayings. He not only wanted us to believe these maxims but to practice them as well. Because of his efforts and energy we had a successful won and lost record, and more important we developed character.

The coach was of great assistance to the whole school because of his understanding nature and also because of the respect the boys had for him. I can remember how he gave guidance and confidence to a boy who was a discipline problem for the entire school. The boy was intensely interested in baseball and the coach was aware of this fact. This player was late for practice the first and second days of the season. On the third day he came out on the field after everyone was in uniform. The coach called the group together and reprimanded the

boy in front of the entire squad. He explained that he expected his boys to be reliable, dependable, and cooperative and if this boy in particular couldn't assume responsibility he wouldn't derive any benefit for himself or for the group. After practice was over the coach had a private meeting with the boy. From that day on the boy seemed to get progressively better because of the coach's guidance, praise, and assistance. He became a credit to his team, school, and community. It was not so much what our coach said but what he did and how he acted that made his character and personality radiate. He set an example that his boys tried to emulate.

I always like to feel that being an athlete was directly responsible for my receiving a college education. Going to a university would have been difficult had it not been for an athletic scholarship which I received from New York University. I was grateful for receiving the baseball scholarship and decided to do my very best, scholastically as well as athletically.

Going to college was an entirely different experience for me. I was entering a new phase of my educational and social life. I met and associated with many people. We played and worked together, enjoyed each other's company and learned how to make personal and group adjustments.

My college education was interrupted because of induction into the armed services. Once again because of my background in physical education and athletics, I was given an opportunity to do something that I liked and at the same time was qualified to do. After boot training I remained at the camp as a physical instructor to work with new trainees. It was interesting to compare the difficulty non-athletic men had with the stress and strain of boot training compared to those who had participated in sports. The men who were athletically inclined went through their training with comparative ease while the non-participant had a very difficult time making the adjustment.

With military training a part of many young men's life today they should be prepared to stand the test. This can be partially accomplished by giving them proper physical education in school. A good physical education program will provide an opportunity for physical development and at the same time will furnish a laboratory in which good will, discipline, and freedom will become a part of the students.

Sports have been a major part of my life for many years. Baseball, in particular has had great appeal for me. I played this sport during every spare moment as a youngster. I developed enough skill to play with my church teams, my high school team, then my college team. It was while I was in college that I was approached by a major

league scout and afforded an opportunity to play the game professionally. I accepted and signed a contract to play that summer and have just completed my tenth year as a major league player.

My interest in sports has benefited me financially because of my playing professional baseball. However, there have been many other benefits in addition to the money. Through sports I have learned to cooperate with members of the group, to give assistance wherever possible, to win humbly and to lose gracefully, to live happily, to respect the ability and skill of my adversaries, and to give credit where credit is due. Furthermore, I have had a wealth of experience in playing with and gaining respect for players from both sides of the tracks, of all creeds, nationalities and races. The old adage, "It Pays to Play," cannot be repeated too often.

BOOK REVIEWS

Social Problems and the Changing Society. By Martin H. Neumeyer.
New York: Van Nostrand Company, 1953. 463 p.

The besetting sin of social problems textbooks was once the rigid separation of each problem from the others. Valuable data were usually provided for a succession of social problems, but the emerging textbook was more a source-book than a useful guide to a course of study.

Neumeyer's new volume avoids this weakness. Instead of merely *implying* that data are presented for analysis, his book *provides* through the organization of material for such analysis. Section and chapter headings do not adequately indicate the extent to which problems-data in this volume serve the students' development of basic concepts of sociology. From evidence of personal and social disorganization in one problem area to identification of the social values endangered by the disorganization, and on to problems of social control illustrated in coping with that problem area, the data are "used" for educational outcomes somewhat more ambitious than mere descriptive knowledge.

The book is addressed to the junior-college-level course in sociology; with supplementary source material, however, it could serve effectively in more advanced courses.

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