

TEAM ATHLETICS

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Fort Benning, Georgia 31905
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SUBJECT: Team Athletics

1. PROBLEM. To determine the value of team athletics in a physical training program.

2. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM.

a. Field Manual (FM) 21-20 states "that team athletics deserve a prominent place in the physical training program" (4:181).

b. The United States Army Infantry School (USAIS) Memorandum Number 600-100 states that the scope of the program will be "a ninety-three hour Physical Fitness Program designed to provide participation in conditioning activities, team athletics, and physical fitness testing to comply with Annex Q, US CONARC Training Directive, and provisions of AR 600-9, Army Physical Fitness Program"(7:1).

c. The USAIS Memorandum Number 600-100 states "that one of the objectives of the Infantry Advanced Course Physical Fitness Program is to teach the student conditioning activities and athletic contests" (7:1).

d. The USAIS Memorandum Number 600-100 states "that one of the objectives is to foster class esprit, enthusiasm, and interest through team and platoon level, intra-company competition in vigorous non-contact team sports" (7:1).

3. DISCUSSION.

a. Team athletics are influential in establishing and maintaining an enthusiastic interest in a physical training program. It also helps maintain a prolonged level of physical fitness. (4:181).

b. Team athletics should be a supplement to a physical training program, not a substitution. Also, team athletics should not replace conditioning activities, since team athletics do not develop all the physical traits that are desirable in physical fitness (4:181).

c. Care must be exercised to keep the objectives of team athletics paramount in the participants mind. This will alleviate the problem of individuals considering the activity only as a record producing or record breaking contest (annex A).

d. The unit as a whole should participate in the athletics. A common pitfall is the same individuals dominating or controlling the activity, while the rest of the unit sits on the edge of the field watching and not participating (annex A).

e. The athletic activities selected should be of the most vigorous type and facilitate 100 percent participation. Otherwise the event will make a poor contribution towards the physical conditioning of the unit (4:181).

4. CONCLUSIONS. Team athletics are a value in a physical training program because:

a. Team athletics develop character building qualities such as initiative, persistence, cooperation, confidence, physical courage, and the ability to think and act quickly.

b. Team athletics are an important means of maintaining the soldiers interest in a physical training program.

c. Team athletics contribute in so many ways to increasing the combat efficiency of the soldier.

5. ACTION RECOMMENDED. The conclusion in paragraph 4 be approved.


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ANNEXES: A -- Discussion of Team Athletics
B -- Bibliography

CONCURRENCES: (Omitted)
NONCONCURRENCES: (Omitted)
CONSIDERATION OF NONCONCURRENCES: (Omitted)
ANNEXES ADDED: (Omitted)
ACTION BY APPROVING AUTHORITY:

DATE:

Approved (disapproved), including (excluding) exceptions.

Signature

ANNEX A - Discussion of Team Athletics

1. Athletics, when employed for the sake of their value as a means for the development of large numbers, which should be the case in the Army, have nothing in common with competitive athletics. In other words, their value lies entirely in their usefulness in the development of physical strength, endurance, and skill, and not in the making or breaking of records.

2. There are certain fundamental elements necessary in the development of a team athletic program so that it is effective.

a. Condition and physical aptitude of the men. The men participating in team athletics must be physically and mentally conditioned to prevent injury. They should have completed the first phase of a good physical training program which is the toughening stage. Also they should be at least in the latter part of the second phase which is the slow improvement stage. The main reason for this is that the muscles, organs, joints and ligaments must be accustomed to the stress and strain of a vigorous sport (4:181).

b. Area and Equipment. These two factors must be considered when designating which team activity the unit will participate in. Generally the area or facilities required can be satisfied by using available training areas or parade fields. However, one must consider the number of playing areas available before he selects the type of sport to be conducted. Equipment is usually available within the unit or at Special Services. Caution must be exercised so that just because there may be a lack of facilities and equipment, the unit does not get trapped into a narrow, restricted program. Also, sports and games require more space and equipment than other physical training activities (3:146).

c. Time. This is a decidedly important factor, and, no plan can be made unless those in charge know exactly how much time they have at their disposal. One of the considerations of time is the amount of time the area or equipment is available. Team athletics usually require "a minimum of 45 to 60 minutes to complete" (4:147).

d. Location and Climate. These two factors will almost dictate the type and length of activity that the unit will conduct outdoors (4:18).

3. The value of team athletics in the Army is dependent upon the effect it has upon the mass, and not the effects upon the individual few. Team athletics break up the monotony which is inherent in a physical training program that has become stagnated. These are instrumental in the development of coordination, endurance, skill, team work and the will to win (4:181). Team athletics are one of the most effective means of developing and maintaining at high levels the esprit de corps needed in an effective unit. Team athletics increase the combat efficiency of an unit by the development of aggressiveness, teamwork and esprit de corps. The soldier will usually participate in team athletics enthusiastically because of their natural appeal and the competitive nature of the normal United States soldier. "Competitive games offer a diversion from military duties and gives the men an opportunity for wholesome self-expression. Finally, soldiers enjoy athletics" (3:72).

ANNEX B - Bibliography

1. D'Eliscu, LT COL Francois, How to Prepare for Military Fitness. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1943.
2. FM 21-20, Physical Training. Washington, D. C.: Department of the Army, November 1950.
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5. Staley, S.C., Individual and Mass Athletics. New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1925
6. Stewart, CPT M. B., The Physical Development of the Infantry Soldier. Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1913.
7. USAIS Memorandum Number 600-100, Infantry Officer Advanced Course Physical Fitness Program. Fort Benning, Georgia: Headquarters United States Army Infantry School, February 1969.