

SPRING, ATHLETICS AND EDUCATION

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A sure sign of spring—we should say pre spring—was the appearance of helmeted and padded, white-shirted youngsters on the high school practice fields. The calendar had hardly turned from February to a cold, drizzly first week in March when, like a fresh crop of mushrooms, an army of spring practice football hopefuls sprouted on the lake bottom field.

One of our local sportswriters, addicted to the disjointed, one sentence paragraph often beginning with "which," apparently had some misgivings about the emphasis on football and its interference with the usual spring sports. He had this to say in a column that appeared early in March:

There are a number of high school coaches who would be perfectly agreeable to calling off spring football practice. That is, if a ban on spring football practice could be enforced. Most coaches don't seem to think it could be. They point out that it's absolutely necessary to hold football practice in the spring for their own protection. They feel that if it's ruled out, other schools against whose teams they must compete will hold practices on the sly, thus leaving those who observe the rules at a disadvantage. Which, if true, doesn't say much for some of our educational institutions.

Well, we can sympathize with boys, coaches, teachers and even school principals who may feel unhappy or imposed upon by spring football practice. We do question the statement that such practice is "absolutely necessary" for anybody's "protection." What is it that needs protecting: the coaches' jobs, the team record in the won-lost column, the players' health, the educational director's prestige?

Last fall in a fit of exasperation, the *Bulletin* sounded off about the overemphasis on football, other sports and related activities in our local schools, and our opinion has not changed. In trying to emulate the performances and the training schedules of professional athletic teams, which must rightfully emphasize extensive training because this is their sole business, our tax-supported schools, both at the preparatory and college levels, lose sight of the fact that their sole business is that of education.

Competitive athletics are desirable in our educational institutions; their overemphasis is not. Athletic teams and competition between schools should continue to exist, but only as part of broad physical education programs that encourage participation

for entire student bodies. The objectives of such programs, all entirely secondary to fundamental schooling, are entertainment recreation, and improvement of physical fitness.

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