

Women's Physical Education in China

By AH HUNA TONG (唐羅歡)

PHYSICAL education in China, especially for women during the past five years has progressed in vast strides. Considering the social system of the country, which for hundreds of years has kept women in the home, the showing made by women at the recent athletic meet, held in Kiangwan, during the celebration of the Double Ten holidays was phenomenal.

Out of nearly 3,000 athletes participating in the meet, 650 were girls, many of whom took part in several events (round figures used here). In considering this it must be kept in mind also the fact that these 650 girls are among the best of the country, picked out of possibly tens of thousands from schools in all parts of the country.

Leaders of the country and in educational fields are to be congratulated for their foresight in advocating physical education. In doing it, they are not only developing and strengthening the physique of the people but also preserving the future of the country.

The oft-quoted phrase that the children of today are the citizens of tomorrow, applies here, and the development of their health through athletics means bettering the health standards of the nation. In promoting physical education among women, a way is being paved for a better and more healthy class of mothers for the China of tomorrow.

Development of athletics among men came as a matter of course. It was more or less taken for granted that men were to participate in sports. But for women, athletics came rather slowly. Though for many years leaders, educated abroad, having seen beautifully and healthfully developed women, may have wanted to put physical education for women on the same basis as men, the public was not quite ready for it. There was always that thought of the girls' proper place in the home hovering in the back of the minds of the people which kept them from fostering athletics among women.

Sensing that attitude among the people, girls were hesitant in coming out, though they may have been quite athletic in a quiet sort of manner. It was not until five years ago that the attitude of the public changed—taking away the stigma of girls performing in public, or for the public to attend performances by girls.

This came about in such an inconspicuous way that no one really knows how it started, except that schools began having physical education for girls as well as for boys. The general public in China holds a high esteem for education, and it was through this medium that sports for women was made universal throughout the schools.

Now girl athletes are received with a warm welcome. They are on a par with the boys, and are admired for their beauty of body and ability to excel in sports. The development of the body of the modern girl through promotion of sports is a 100 per cent improvement from the model girls of the old times. She is full of life and

energy, and properly developed, in contrast to the weak, fragile, and anemic-looking girl of yesterday.

No aspersions are cast on the manner of behavior of the girl athlete and her clothing as may have been done formerly, for the public now recognizes athletics as a phase in the development of healthy youth.

At the National Athletic Meet, we only saw the cream of the athletes of the country. They were winners of preliminary contests held in the respective districts and provinces they represented. One needs only shut his eyes to picture the far-reaching good the National Meet has done for the country.

Thousands of youths in capitals and small towns of provinces took part in clean athletic competitions in order to win a place in the finals to represent their provinces in the National Meet. Competition in sports is a wholesome outlet for developing character and sportsmanship. It brings out the best qualities of the participating boy and girl, which goes into the development of a better standard of manhood and womanhood, where in former years it had been hidden.

Heretofore the educated boy or girl was an individual sort of person, the result of the old system of education and tutorship. Today clean sports is taking an important part in the development of cooperation and teamwork for youth.

Athletics gives them a sense of pride in working together for an ultimate aim, whereas, the old time person could not get along very much with other people. The higher developed a civilization becomes, the more inter-dependent do the people become. It is in the field of sports, where each and every person works for the attainment of a common goal until it grows out of the school and into the province and ultimately into the country, that cooperation will be developed in the full sense of the word.

Schools of the country are making sports a requisite in their courses of education. Where in former years, health and character building were sacrificed on the altar of false modesty, these characteristics are now given full attention by educators in the sports and athletics department.

In addition to working for placement in the National Meets, which take place every two years, there are school competitions and yearly exercise programs in which all students take part in displays to friends and parents.

The requirement of sports in the curriculum of all school children also results in highly sensitive coordination of the mind with the muscles of the body, which in itself will do great things for the country as a whole. It develops a fast thinking and fast moving population to react to any emergency which may come to the country. It trains the youth into being able to think

fast and how to do the best thing for the good of all, given a situation, as will usually come up in the course of a game.

In spite of all the good which sports are doing for the country and the people, there is still one thing which the public only can undo for itself. This is over-recognition of the one-man sports and placement of too little

emphasis on the team sports. Individual glory is too much recognized in China today. Not that this is not good, but the public pays so much attention to the one-man game, as in swimming, tennis, or other individual sports, that it forgets the sports which require the co-ordination and cooperation of six, nine or eleven men or women to make a winner.

The Other Side Of The Question

By LIN YU (林鹵)

TIME was—and it was not so very long ago—when our beauties used to sing, with a bit of pride perhaps, of their worries and ailments, and actually “little pale face” (小白臉) is a phrase used to describe beaux in old China. This phrase has survived till 1935, though today our conception of the attributes of an ideal young man has changed much. Perhaps the pendulum has swung to the extreme and many of our boys and girls are paying so much attention to athletics that they forget that their primary purpose in school, barring the school of physical training, is to study. Hence, let us consider the other side of the question.

Let it be understood at once that I am not proposing that we go back to the good old ways. I have no quarrel whatsoever with the present trend stressing the physical culture of our manhood and womanhood. However, there is always the danger of going to the extreme, and the method which the different schools, colleges and universities employ in picking and training their athletic teams always appears questionable to my mind. Moreover, there is the publicity connected with athletics that may be called to question. Let us take up these questions one by one.

It may be true that a sound mind resides in a sound body, but to have a sound body one does not have to go the length of training oneself to win honors for his school. In fact, one seldom meets a good athlete who at the same time has a good scholastic record. There may occasionally be such a one or a good scholar who also excels in one of the different varieties of sports, but an all-round sportsman who has also high scholastic accomplishments is as rare as an Edison or a Marconi. The question arises then: are we to raise up fine sportsman or fine scholars?

The argument may be advanced that while our scholars may run the government and work out rehabilitation plans, it yet remains for the soldiers to run out the reds and bandits first, before these plans may be put to work. Shall we then not train up soldiers for our immediate need? And what is true internally within our country is equally true in our international relations. We need today perhaps more soldiers to defend the country than poets whose pen is no longer mightier than the sword, or diplomats whose kid-gloves are no match for steel gauntlets. There is, I am ready to admit, truth in such an argument, but does physical prowess always mean the pluck to fight in a life-and-death encounter? Besides, war needs anything but sportsmanship. That sportsmanship is still found among soldiers belonging to different camps need not blind us to the fact that sportsmanship is absolutely lacking in the high com-

mands of either side, which no amount of sportsmanship among the soldiers can help to improve. Moreover, mechanical and chemical “progress” is fast eliminating the physical strength of the soldiers as a decisive factor in a battle, though occasion may still arise wherein soldiers with greater physical endurance may win the battle in the proverbial last five minutes.

Next, we will consider the methods employed by many, if not all, of our colleges and universities to train up athletic teams. Let us consider first the motive behind the training of athletes. A few years ago when I inquired about the impression of our compatriots in the South Seas concerning one university which claims to have a special mission in educating the sons of our overseas, this was the reply I got: “Oh yes, the impression was good, because it had just sent a football team to the South on a goodwill trip.” Now, I am not suggesting that our universities are consciously doing that, but the danger is there nevertheless. Nearly two decades ago, several universities in Shanghai, my *alma mater* included, in one way or other, paid for some of the athletes who were to win honors for these universities. Whether the condition has grown worse or better, I am in no position to tell. I can only hope for the better.

Leaving the “paid” athletes alone, we still have the question of the teams. It is, of course, impossible for whole schools to go into athletic contests and games, such as football, baseball, etc., hence the various teams. Because of the “reputation” involved, the school authorities always pay the greatest attention to the care of the team, even to the neglect of the physical education of the average students. And this is what I am opposed to, not without reason, I hope.

Under the present system, by far the greater part of the money that the school authorities spend for athletics is spent on the teams, and the physical education of the average students is poorly taken care of, though the schools usually charge the students an equal amount for the purpose. This is most unfair. However, let us pass over this point.

Considered purely from the standpoint of physical education, the selection and training of the teams for inter-school meets, benefits only the team members and those who aspire to become one of them. The result is that the winning or losing teams may or may not represent the actual physical well-being of the student bodies they are supposed to represent. Now, it does not take one more than five minutes straight thinking to realize that if