

SPORT IS RATED GOOD TRAINING FOR ARMY MEN

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Objective Is to Have
Every Man Take Part
in Athletic Events

NOT ALWAYS THUS

In giving every possible encouragement to the promotion and continuance of organized sport among the troops in training at the Exhibition Grounds, the authorities recognize the great value that sport has in the development of a soldier.

It isn't that every soldier in Toronto, and at other centres of training in Canada, is expected to become a first-rate soccer or hockey player. Far from it. The plan is to have as many men as possible take part in games, not merely to organize teams to represent each of the military units in a garrison league.

Action for All.

When a soldier enters the athletic battle on behalf of his platoon or section against a platoon from the next corridor in the Horse Palace or the Automotive Building, he gets far, far more value than by merely standing on the sidelines cheering a regimental team on to victory.

That is the ideal the regimental committees and such civilian organizations as the Sports Service League have in mind—every man playing (or at least trying to play) some game.

Sport is being recognized in preparation for this war much earlier than it was in the last, although this is true mainly of the Canadians, as the British Army had taken up sport seriously some time before 1914. In fact, the "Old Contemptibles" have been termed the finest body of athletes in the world.

It wasn't always thus. A few years before the last war, the British soldier had to accustom himself to makeshifts, if he felt the urge for recreation. He had to be satisfied with the barrack square as a sports field, while a muddy field behind the barracks was something really to be boasted about.

However, the Tommies, being adaptable and resourceful, as they still are, managed to get in a certain amount of games and even developed some prowess, depending on the keenness and assistance of individual officers.

My
Sports
League
James

No encouragement was given officially to the games-spirit. In fact, a few years before the period mentioned, punting or kicking a football between parades, which is now looked upon as part of the day, would have been treated as a kind of sacrilege. Any "delinquents" indulging in such relaxation under the eagle eyes of the n.c.o.'s would certainly have been pulled up short, to find themselves booked for fatigues or scrubbing floors. It was not until 1889, when the first soccer challenge match was held (won by the 2nd Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders) that organized army sports were recognized. This was a beginning, and the good work continued, but the staff were still a difficulty. Just before the Great War, the brilliant idea—why not combine military training with the making of sports grounds? No sooner thought of than started.

Old Order Changes.
By degrees and almost unconsciously after a series of progressive operations in digging, levelling and turfing, battalions and batteries found themselves the proud possessors of playing fields—a revolutionary change which had sprung up in the night almost by magic. And the first two divisions of the famous Expeditionary Force were, with equally blissful unconsciousness, graduates in the tactical use of the pick and shovel—very handy when trenches had to be dug not long after.

A British general said truly that leather played one of the chief parts in winning the war, and that few people realized what was owed to the boxing glove and the football—two great factors in upholding or restoring morale among the troops.

At Exhibition Park, many a recruit has found, it was revealed Saturday, that he was possessed of quite unrealized athletic ability. He had been coaxed, perhaps, by a pal or sports organizer to "get out and play with the boys."

The point is that more and more soldiers are "getting out," and it doesn't matter whether it's for soccer or horse-shoe pitching. They're learning to play for their side and not for themselves as individuals.

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