

ATHLETIC COMPETITION IN THE ELEMENTARY
AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

by 6291

CARL EUGENE FELVER

B.S., Kansas State University, 1968

-

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCES

Department of Physical Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

Approved by:


Major Professor

LO
2668
R4
1971
F44
C.2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
PURPOSE	1
METHOD OF STUDY	2
DISCUSSION	3
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL EFFECTS OF ATHLETIC COMPETITION	11
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	19
BIBLIOGRAPHY	22

INTRODUCTION

Many controversial issues confront the education profession from time to time. Some of these issues are discussed by authorities in education and steal the spotlight in many educational publications for short periods of time. However, they soon give way to new controversies and eventually fade into the background. There is one debatable issue that has been rather prominent throughout educational and non-educational journalism for many years, and that issue has been the controversy over athletic competition for elementary and junior high school students.

This controversy for and against highly organized athletics has been debated for years by physicians, psychologists, educational administrators, teachers, coaches, nurses and laymen. Many articles have been published and the debate continues in many educational circles. The author will attempt to provide some insight to pre-high school athletic competition in this report, and the reader may then determine for himself with which viewpoint he agrees.

Healy

PURPOSE

The purposes for this study were: (1) to determine authorities' opinions as to the justification of competitive athletics for young elementary and junior high school students; (2) to determine how highly organized this competition needed to be; (3) to determine to what beneficial or adverse effects in the area of physical and/or mental strain the young athlete was subjected; and (4) to determine what course of action was to be undertaken in the future in regard to competition at this age level.

METHOD OF STUDY

The information for this report was gathered entirely by library research. The author researched articles written primarily in professional periodicals with one exception. All periodicals were found in Farrell Library, physical education library, Kansas State University and author's personal library.

DISCUSSION

Competitive Athletics---Yes or No

Competitive athletics for elementary and junior high school students had been and still was somewhat of a controversial issue. Was a program of competitive athletics to be conducted, and, if so, how highly structured was it to be? What public schools had dropped their programs of competition in favor of varied intramural programs? Was the Little League, YMCA and other club sponsored competition to be discouraged? These were some of the questions discussed in this section of the report.

Educational publications stressed meeting the needs of students as one of the most important objectives in the total school curriculum. If any competitive athletics program was to survive it had to be structured on the needs of the participants. Emphasis had to be on health, safety, sportsmanship, leadership development, fellowship and the importance of teamwork in success. The program had to be "child-centered" and definitely not "high school-centered."¹ The athletic program to be of any value had to have an educational objective if it was worth making part of the school curriculum.

Agreeing there was a need for competitive athletics, especially at the junior high school level, it followed that it was necessary to build a philosophy of education aimed to meet the needs of the age. The program of athletics in any state had to be tied to the program of education.² However,

¹James W. Jordan, "Interscholastic Athletics," National Association of Secondary School Principals' Bulletin, XLVII (October, 1963), 5.

²Gordon E. Dannels, What Kind of Athletic Program in the Junior High

the useful programs now in existence were not to be disturbed, but rather constantly evaluated and improved as need arised. Thought seemed to be given not to more and enlarged sports programs so much as to that of getting more young people to participate. Students needed emotional and physical outlets and had to be subjected to a wisely directed program of intramural and inter-scholastic athletics.³

In a presentation to the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 1958, Ralph R. Lester, principal of Ponca City Junior High School in Oklahoma at that time, stated:

There should be a definite need for an athletic program in the school. Early teenage youth possess an abundance of energy and natural tendencies toward physical activity. What could better satisfy these urges and desires of youth than a well-balanced program of athletics organized properly and supervised adequately? In addition, this type of program would afford worth-while activities for many youth who have too much leisure time. The number of persons participating in athletic programs sponsored by schools, churches, Little Leagues, YMCA and civic clubs shows that voluntary participation in sports compared quite favorably with the number who elect to participate in other activities.⁴

Lester further stated:

Opportunities for everyone to participate and receive training in the fundamental skills of various sports are of major importance. Development of physical fitness, good health, mental alertness, social relationships, ethical conduct, and spiritual growth are personal values to be gained. Creating good attitudes of competition based on ideals of fair play, good sportsmanship, giving and taking according to the rules of the game, and respect for worthy opponents are desirable aims also.⁵

School?" National Association of Secondary School Principals' Bulletin, XLII (April, 1958), 133.

³Ibid.

⁴Ralph R. Lester, "What Kind of Athletic Program in the Junior High School?" National Association of Secondary School Principals' Bulletin, XLII (April, 1958), 134.

⁵Ibid., 135.

If competitive athletics were removed from the junior high school what was the student athlete to do with his leisure time? Paul W. Briggs, superintendent of schools in Cleveland, Ohio, believed interscholastic athletics at this level were relevant to what happened in today's society. He stated:

If you miss this opportunity to become relevant, someone else is going to step into the void. We've got to double the programs of America. We've got to use our programs to break the isolation of the ghetto. We've got to use our programs to keep the children in school, to teach them discipline, to teach them how to live with each other--a team approach. We've got to use the wholesomeness of the athletic field to do these things.⁶

Why did the schools abandon their competitive athletic programs and turn the junior high school youngster onto the street at the moment in his life when he had the greatest desire to be a member of some kind of team. For this reason the void Mr. Briggs mentioned was to be filled with other, maybe less rewarding interests. This was why one consistently viewed other groups going out and getting this youngster, dressing him, marching him and teaching him hatreds that were not to be taught to children. Maybe this was why junior high school students turned to drug experimentation and forms of petty and major crime. It was time these young people were taken off the streets and the schools opened. As long as competitive athletics tended to promote interest in students who might otherwise drop out of school then it was safe to assume these competitive athletic programs had a place in the educational structure.

How highly structured was athletic competition in the pre-high school years? Most authorities agreed that the type and degree of structure was to be determined by the community for tradition played an important role in most

⁶Paul W. Briggs, "The Opportunity to Be Relevant," Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, XL (May, 1970), 45.

communities--particularly in the smaller ones. Research indicated that interscholastic athletics was to be an outgrowth of the general programs of physical education and intramural activities. The number of teams in each sport were to be large so that a large number of boys could benefit from the experiences gained through participation.⁷ Some authorities also agreed that no leagues were to be formed (some were already in existence) and no tournaments were to be played. Awards were to be kept to a minimum, and the number of games played per season were to be regulated. It was found that most of the regulations mentioned above were dictated by the various state activities association or controlling department in each state. Organization and structure of competition will be discussed later in the report.

Up to this point most of the discussion had been centered around the athletic program in the junior high school, but what about elementary school competition in various sports? It was found in the literature that very few elementary schools in America had highly organized competitive athletics on an interscholastic basis. However, these youngsters participated in competitive athletics such as Little League, YMCA and other club and civic sponsored programs. Two questions came up when talking about elementary school age youngsters competition. First, were the programs sponsored outside the educational spectrum providing the proper form of athletic competition for the elementary school youngster? Second, was the school to provide a program of competitive athletics for the student the year around?

The Little League program was the first program outside the authority of the school to be investigated. On the surface the Little League program appeared to be one of opportunity for the youngster to enjoy himself in

⁷Elmon L. Vernier, "Secondary-School Athletic Programs," Theory Into Practice, III (June, 1964), 98.

worthwhile competition, but a study of the program proved otherwise. Suffice it to say the Little League was organized for worthwhile purposes, and that its founders had all the good intentions of promoting fun for many youngsters. However, in many communities this form of competition was found to be improperly supervised, inadequately coached and adult-centered. As research indicated, the entire Little League set-up had deteriorated in many ways into a silly yet thoroughly dangerous madness that had seized not only the children but those responsible for their well-being: parents, public officials, coaches and spectators. They had come to confuse Little League with big league; as if the pennants and world's championship were all that counted.⁸

The drive to win had been traditional in America and was to be preserved, but it was believed a boy would absorb that lesson soon enough in high school. In his elementary years it was thought a youngster's recreation was to be guided toward other objectives; the fun of playing rather than the winning; the child rather than the game; the many rather than the few; informal activity rather than formal; and the development of skills in many activities rather than specialization in one or two. It was felt that many of these desirable objectives were not accomplished in the way the Little League now works.⁹

What had caused this transformation from its original purpose to what it was today? The answer was rather simple to understand when one looked at the organization, supervision, and purpose of today's Little League program. The organizational pattern was found to be almost entirely adult-centered.

⁸Dr. Charles A. Bucher, "Little League Baseball Can Hurt Your Boy," Look, XVII (August 11, 1953), 74.

⁹Ibid., 76.

The professional - baseball approach was carried by some Little League managers to the extreme of cursing umpires and heckling opposing players.¹⁰ The previous statement lead directly into the area of supervision and coaching. A certain number of coaches concentrated on building reputations as winners and seemed rather unconcerned with the purpose of the program.

What role had the parent played in the changing concept of the Little League? As one writer stated: "there is more than faint suspicion that the Little League is an ego-enforcement for the perennial adolescent who, pushing 40, passes the ancestral jockstrap on to Junior because he knows he isn't the man he used to be (and probably never was).¹¹ Parents seemed to forget the notion that children were not "miniature adults" for that belief had been swept away a long time ago by psychologists and physiologists. However, there were some parents who attempted to mold on the skill of the Olympic champion to the immature frame of the eleven-year-old.¹²

Was the Little League program beneficial to the elementary school youngster, and was there anything the school could do to help? The answer to both parts of that question was found to be, yes. First, more and better personnel were needed to direct the program. The Little League organizers needed to examine the results of the programs periodically in the light of its expressed purposes. They needed only to observe the actions of the spectator-parent to realize that Little League activities were not developing healthy values.¹³ At the same time educators were to re-examine the

¹⁰Ibid., 76.

¹¹Donald F. Schwertly, "Little League Can Hurt Kids," Today's Education, LIX (May, 1970), 41.

¹²Wilf Paish, "Get Them Young, But Do Not Ruin Them," Times Education Supplement, (April 25, 1969), 1354.

¹³Schwertly, op. cit.

desirability of intraschool athletics in the elementary school. Even though school coaches and physical education instructors were found to be overly ambitious with their programs, they were educators first and coaches second. Also, their programs were under the observation of professional supervisors and administrators, who were careful to see that school athletics remained a part of the total education program of the school. The schools were also to initiate an in-service training for Little League coaches, since the majority of educators had more knowledge about elementary school children than most laymen.

YMCA, club and civic sponsored activities while primarily voluntary in nature incorporated many of the same organizational and supervisory features as did the Little League. The coaches were found to be fathers or sometimes the sponsors themselves, and the kids usually ended up as cheap advertising for that sponsor. However, much of the same "do-or-die" winning attitude was stressed, many times at the expense of the youngster's enjoyment and learning.

The intramural program was the final aspect of competitive athletics to be researched. Many schools throughout America had dropped their interscholastic athletic programs in favor of wide intramural programs where more students had the chances to participate. Several reasons for dropping interscholastic sports were given, some of them were: lack of adequate facilities; lack of adequate finances; benefit for only a select few from competition; and improper emphasis being placed on the sport by the coach, parent or both.

Unlike interscholastic athletics, intramurals provided competition for everyone who wished to participate and who reported regularly for practice, and at the same time gave little regard to the degree of athletic ability. Also, intramural teams were divided into teams with respect to a

youngster's weight, size and age rather than age only. The intramural programs provided the degree of competition needed for each youngster without the external pressures of winning at all costs. Parental pressure tended to lessen with this type of competition. In some states the interscholastic athletic programs were justified by a strong intramural program where the former was an outgrowth of the latter. A good intramural program open to all students in addition to a well-regulated and supervised program interscholastically was found to be a necessity at the junior high school level.¹⁴

¹⁴Franklin P. Hanson and Don E. Weatherman, "Should the Junior High School Have an Interscholastic Athletic Program?," National Association of Secondary School Principals' Bulletin, XLIII (April, 1959), 19.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL EFFECTS OF ATHLETIC COMPETITION

Research indicated that competitive athletics at the elementary and junior high school level could be used as a powerful tool in teaching the habits, attitudes and characteristics of good citizenship, but they were found just as effective in producing very negative results. Whether the effects of competitive sports were beneficial or harmful to the participating children depended on the way the program was conducted. Prior to further research as to the mental and physical effects of athletic competition it was found that if a school, or any program for that matter, had qualified leadership and all other factors were equal then generally speaking competitive athletics for young athletes were beneficial.¹⁵

What was discovered as to the physical or physiological effects of competitive athletics for pre-adolescent and adolescent children? What changes positive or negative occurred physically within each child through intense competition in sports? Probably more than any other issue the physical aspect of athletic competition for the young was found to be the most highly controversial. Many individuals, even highly trained physicians, pediatricians and orthopedists disagreed as to the value or liability of athletic competition for the very young.

Lawrence Rarick, in a paper presented at the 1968 AAHPER convention, stated:

¹⁵J. W. Dellastatious and Walter Cooper, "The Physiological Aspects of Competitive Sports for Young Athletes," The Physical Educator, XXVII (May, 1970), 3.

The data on persons who have been subjected to heavy work in childhood and adolescence indicate that these individuals tend to be taller, heavier and of a more robust build than those who have been exposed to less vigorous childhood. The few studies which have investigated the effect upon growth of heavy athletic training continued over a period of several years indicate that growth is favorably influenced by such programs, and, in fact, may be somewhat enhanced.¹⁶

It was found that other physical changes also occurred as a result of athletic competition. Clark made the following physical traits about athletics:

Boys who make and are successful on interscholastic athletic teams in both elementary and junior high schools are definitely superior to their peers in maturity, body size, muscular strength, endurance and power. Outstanding athletes at the elementary-junior high school level had significantly higher mean skeletal ages than did the other groups. In general, the size of the athletes as compared with nonparticipants was more significant at the junior high school than at the elementary school level.¹⁷

Research was continued in the area of injuries such as broken bones, heart disorders and general overall exertion and fatigue. The literature indicated that these injuries did happen from time to time, but there were some authorities who tended to disagree with the apparent danger of them. Creighton Hale, instructor of physiology at Springfield College, Massachusetts, recently stated that: "no physiological harm can be done to the child, regardless of the sports he plays today. A broken bone is an injury but it will not be harmed physiologically--actually, it is stronger when it heals."¹⁸ As for damage to growing bones, it was found that jumping from trees and skiing or bicycle accidents caused more injuries than football

¹⁶Lawrence Rarick, "Exercise and Growth During the Growing Years," (paper presented at the 1968 AAPER convention, St. Louis, Missouri).

¹⁷H. H. Clarke, "Characteristics of the Young Athlete: A Longitudinal Look," Kinesiology Review, (1968).

¹⁸Creighton Hale, "Athletic Competition for Children," Athletic Journal, XXXIV (January, 1954), 18.

at North Shore Country Day School, Winnetka, Illinois. Many times it was the ninth grader just learning the game who was hurt, not the younger boys. In reference to the heart--some people feared and opposed tackle football because they feared it would hurt the boy's heart. This was found to be not true in a healthy child.¹⁹ Scientific evidence indicated that a normal heart could not be injured by strenuous physical activity. For many years it was taught that the arteries and the heart of pubescent children did not develop at the same rate. This was a mistake and there was sufficient proof that the arteries and heart did develop at the same rate and that pubescent children could engage in strenuous activity without potential damage to the heart. Research physiologists and physicians who specialized in sports medicine generally agreed that the human organism was protected by certain safety valves which prevented physiological trauma during and following strenuous physical activity.²⁰

Additional research was uncovered to support the athletic competition for elementary and junior high school youngsters. However, the evidence against competitive athletics for this age level needed consideration. The report would have been incomplete without the opposing view being expressed.

"Interscholastic competition on a varsity pattern and similar organized competition under the auspices of other community agencies are definitely disapproved for children below the ninth grade." So said the 1952 report of a committee made up of representatives from NEA; the National Council of State Consultants in Elementary Education; the NEA Department of

¹⁹M. T. McCarty, "Advocates Tackle Football for Elementary School Boys," Medicine In Sports Newsletter, VII (May, 1968).

²⁰Creighton Hale, "Athletics for Pre-High School Age Children," Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, XXX (December, 1958), 19.

Elementary School Principals; the Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education and Recreation; and the American Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, an NEA department.

The Educational Policies Commission of NEA and the American Association of School Administrators had this to say in a report published in 1954:

No junior high school should have a school team that competes with school teams of other junior high schools in organized leagues and tournaments. Varsity-type interscholastics for junior high boys and girls should not be permitted.²¹

The reasons for justification given by these groups were primarily of a physiological nature. The major points advanced by the opponents of athletic competition for the young were:

1. Boys of this age are growing and developing at an accelerated rate and, consequently, are particularly susceptible to injuries of the bones and the joints. The stresses and the strains associated with participation in interscholastic athletics are too severe for such immature youngsters.

2. Boys of junior high school age vary widely in respect to height, weight, and physiological maturity. Unless the boys are matched on an equitable basis, competition in body-contact sports may be dangerous.

3. Boys who are likely candidates for positions as linemen in football because they are taller and heavier than their classmates are not necessarily physiologically mature and may be susceptible to injuries of the epiphyses (parts of the bones).

4. The single stethoscopic examination to which an athlete is usually subjected is not infallible in determining whether the heart is "normal." Thus, the strenuous exercise that accompanies participation in interscholastic athletics may have a deleterious effect on the heart.

5. Participation in interscholastic athletics may interfere with normal growth pattern of junior high school boys.²²

Physicians had not remained silent as to their beliefs about early competitive athletics for youngsters. Wilton Krogman, director of the

²¹Louis E. Alley, "Junior High Interscholastic Athletics?" NEA Journal, L (May, 1961), 10-11.

²²Ibid., 11.

Philadelphia Center for Research in Child Growth, warned of permanent bone injury from highly organized athletics and opposed contact sports during early adolescence. He went on to emphasize the fact that in this terrific surge of the teens the ratio between energy intake and output was nearly equated:

If this balance be tipped in the direction of excessive functional demands--such as those inherent in the vigor of football--then fatigue may cross the threshold of exhaustion, of depletion or near depletion of physiological and nervous energy. That is what vulnerability means--it is a sort of energy-nakedness when growth and exercise demands are excessive.²³

In a poll of nine hundred orthopedists regarding the athletic activities of adolescents the results were found to be that approximately seventy-five percent agreed that interscholastic athletic competition was to be discouraged in a program of adolescent youngsters. Most of them believed fatigue and body contact sports, particularly football, were to be ruled out.²⁴

Finally, research indicated that adolescent and pre-adolescent children were at a vulnerable age. They were particularly susceptible to joint dislocations and injuries involving the growing portions of the bones. A study in the Minneapolis schools revealed fourteen unrecognized fractures in fifty-seven pre-teen boys at the end of an athletic season. Many of these fractures had been concealed by the players because they feared they would be accused of being sissies by their coaches or fellow players. Most of the fractures occurred in the hands, wrists, forearms, feet, ankles and lower legs. Consideration was given to the hazards of permanent deformity in

²³W. M. Krogman, "Child Growth and Football," Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, XXVI (September, 1955), 12.

²⁴C. L. Loman, "The Vulnerable Age," Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, XVIII (November, 1947), 635.

unreported fractures involving the growing portions of these bones.²⁵

What was found in the research concerning the mental aspect of athletic competition for pre-high school age youngsters? It was discovered that adults failed to recognize this aspect of competitive athletics. The research also provided answers as to why youngsters desired to compete in athletics and what type of student, academically, the athlete was.

There were emotional benefits to be gained from athletic competition as research proved. However, on the other hand, there were emotional strains that put undo pressure on the youngster who was not capable of dealing with the problems common in direct competition. Children learned to escape from emotional upsets by physical self-expression in sports, and these competitive sports aided children in becoming emotionally stable.²⁶ The question was raised: "should the child who gets upset over such things as music solos, dramatic performances or even spelling bees be separated from music, drama or spelling?" One author did not believe so and proposed an answer that: "if athletics, which tap most of the emotions, can help the adolescent learn to control himself by allowing him to remain a part of competitive programs." Athletics, like music, drama and spelling, were found to provide real and positive contributions to the education of the child.²⁷

Examples of emotional strain tended to over-shadow the emotional benefits derived from athletic competition. Authorities believed that competitive athletics developed tensions to a level that was undesirable in the

²⁵J. L. Reichert, "Pediatricians View of Competitive Sports Before The Teens," Today's Health, XXXV (October, 1957), 29.

²⁶J. D. Lawther, "Role of the Coach in American Education," Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, XXXIV (May, 1965), 66.

²⁷James Bradshaw, "Highly Organized Sports for Small Boys...A Debate," The Rotarian, XCIII (October, 1958), 49.

pre-teen age group.²⁸ Stresses and strains put on children by competition before they were ready lead to extreme cases of emotionalism.²⁹ Two extreme examples were sighted, both involved Little League:

A man was driving along a southern road one night when he picked up a youngster not more than nine years old. He asked why he was walking at that time of night, and the boy replied, "My daddy made me because I muffed a fly in the Little League game today. And I won't get any supper either."

The second instance involved defeated players in a Midwestern state finals crying like babies and wrecking the lobby of their hotel.³⁰

Research provided the casual reader with many additional examples of emotional upset of youngsters resulting directly from athletic competition.

Finally, how did boys who competed in interscholastic athletics at the junior high school level rank academically with their peers who did not compete. Results of a California study of ninth grade boys who were participants in interscholastic athletics were compared with non-participants with respect to academic achievement. The athletic group tested higher in academic ability on the School and College Ability Test and earned a higher academic grade-point average. The majority of boys who participated in sports for only one semester did as well or better academically during their semester of participation than they did the other semester. For boys who were athletically inclined, the time and energy expended in interscholastic athletics did not seem to detract from performances in the classroom.³¹

²⁸N. A. Patterson, "Are Little Leaguers Too Big For Their Britches," Childhood Education, XXXV (April, 1959), 359.

²⁹W. R. Johnson, "Emotional Upset in the Athlete," Athletic Journal, XXXII (November, 1951), 16.

³⁰Bucher, op. cit., 75.

³¹Norman Airoidi, "Junior High School Athletes Excell in Scholarship," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XLV (June, 1967), 1024.

Research also indicated that whether or not schools provided interscholastic competition, youngsters were going to compete. If the schools did not provide these opportunities, the boys would, in their free time, play under conditions that were much more dangerous than those in school-sponsored programs.³²

³²Alley, op. cit.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The preceding pages of this report presented facts as to the pros and cons of competitive athletics for elementary and junior high school youngsters. Did research present any ideas as to what was to be done by schools, Little Leagues, YMCAs, clubs and civic organizations to improve competition at this level? The answer was a definite--yes. There were several recommendations throughout the literature as to the ways the various programs were to be improved.

It was pointed out in the literature that elementary schools should be without interscholastic athletics. The elementary school age was thought to be the skill-learning age, and that the skills were taught most effectively through activities natural to the maturity level of the child. The emphasis at this level was to be placed on the establishment and functional physical education program. Once this program was firmly established then intramural activities were to be established with sports and competition conducted sanely in terms of childhood experiences, rather than through adult interests and activities merely scaled down to youngster size. Schools were to allow the youngster to come to the sport--not have the sport seek out the boy. Once learning had taken place and the youngster had met some form of success, then competition was to begin if he so desired. Authorities believed that nothing succeeded like success, and the boy, like all of us, tended to shun activities in which he had none of the fun of performing well. Generally speaking, when a youngster was unable to succeed in an activity he was not yet ready for--physically, mentally, or emotionally--that activity did not appeal to him.

The elementary school was to discourage highly organized competition for that age youngster. Its duty was to disprove the opinion of adults that a best way to develop a high degree of athletic skill in a boy was to begin his participation in sports at as early an age as possible. Some coaches at the elementary level were becoming more and more concerned about the possibility that midget athletics were actually driving some potentially fine athletes away from any future interest in the sports they play in these programs.³³ None of the purposes, common in the adult athletic pattern, were thought likely to result in a marked contribution to the growth and development of the elementary school youngster. The major goal for elementary schools throughout America was to get children involved and learning first, then to worry about the competition.

Little League, YMCA, club and civic sponsored programs were to attempt to reevaluate the programs in terms of objectives, goals and purposes. Special guidance was needed along this line by professional people such as physicians, psychologists and teachers. It was believed that these programs should search out better leadership for coaching and other responsible duties. There was definitely a place for properly operated and adequately supervised programs. However, some of the programs, such as the "miniature big leagues" were to be eliminated for the elementary school age youngster.

Finally, the junior high school programs of competitive athletics, what were the answers for these programs? It was believed that there was a place for interscholastic athletics at this level with certain limitations. If an interscholastic program at the junior high school was to be maintained, then concomitant to this was to be a program of intramurals, adequate enough

³³K. D. Miller, "Children's Sports," Today's Health, XXXV (May, 1957), 20.

to involve all who wished to participate. This program should be an out-growth of the physical education program similar to that of the elementary school where the emphasis was placed on learning. The interscholastic program should supplement, rather than serve as a substitute for, the physical education, intramural or physical recreation programs. The competitive program should be so conducted that the physical welfare of the participants was protected at all times.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Airolidi, Norman, and others. "Junior High School Athletics Excell in Scholarship," Personnel and Guidance Journal, XLV (June, 1967), 1021-1024.
- Alley, Louis E. "Junior High Interscholastic Athletics?" NEA Journal, L (May, 1961), 10-12.
- Beyer, Kurt. "Athletics on the JHS Level," The Clearing House, LX (October, 1960), 110.
- Briggs, Paul W. "The Opportunity to be Relevant," Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, XL (May, 1970), 42-45.
- Bucher, Charles A. "Athletic Competition and the Development Growth Pattern," The Physical Educator, XXVIII (March, 1971), 3-4.
- Bucher, Charles A. "Little League Baseball Can Hurt Your Boy," Look, XVII (August 11, 1953), 74-77.
- Dannels, Gordon E. "What Kind of Athletic Program in the Junior High School?" National Association of Secondary School Principals' Bulletin, XLII (April, 1958), 131-133.
- Dellastations, J. W. and Cooper, Walter. "The Physiological Aspects of Competitive Sports for Young Athletes," The Physical Educator, XXVII (May, 1970), 3-5.
- Dowell, Linne J. "Environmental Factors of Childhood Competitive Athletics," The Physical Educator, XXVIII (March, 1971), 17-21.
- Hale, Creighton J. "Athletic Competition for Children," Athletic Journal, XXXIV (January, 1954), 18-20.
- Hale, Creighton J. "Athletics for Pre-High School Age Children," Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, XXX (December, 1958), 19-21.
- Hanson, Franklin P. and Weatherman, Don E. "Should the Junior High School Have An Interscholastic Athletic Program?" National Association of Secondary School Principals' Bulletin, XLIII (April, 1959), 16-19.
- Johnson, Warren R. "Emotional Upset in the Athlete," Athletic Journal, XXXII (November, 1951), 16, 50-51.
- Jordan, James W. "Interscholastic Athletics," National Association of Secondary School Principals' Bulletin, XLVII (October, 1963), 5-6.

- Krogman, Wilton M. "Child Growth and Football," Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, XXVI (September, 1955), 12.
- Lawther, John D. "Role of the Coach in American Education," Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, XXXVI (May, 1965), 65-66.
- Lester, Ralph R. "What Kind of Athletic Program in the Junior High School?" National Association of Secondary School Principals' Bulletin, XLII (April, 1958), 134-136.
- Lowman, C. L. "The Vulnerable Years," Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, XXIII (November, 1947), 635-636.
- Miller, Kenneth D. "Children's Sports," Today's Health, XXXV (May, 1957), 18-20.
- Paish, Wilf. "Get Them Young, But Do Not Ruin Them," Times Educational Supplement, (April 25, 1969), 1354.
- Patterson, Norris A. "Are Little Leaguers Too Big For Their Britches?" Childhood Education, XXXV (April, 1959), 359-361.
- Reichert, John L. "Pediatrician's View of Competitive Sports Before The Teens," Today's Health, XXXV (October, 1957), 28-31.
- Schwertley, Donald F. "Little League Can Hurt Kids," Today's Education, LIX (May, 1970), 40-41.
- Scott, Harry Alexander. Competitive Sports in Schools and Colleges. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1951.
- Vernier, Elmon L. "Secondary-School Athletic Programs," Theory Into Practice, III (June, 1964), 98-104.

ATHLETIC COMPETITION IN THE ELEMENTARY
AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

by

CARL EUGENE FELVER

B.S., Kansas State University, 1968

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCES

Department of Physical Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

The purposes for this study were: (1) to determine authorities' opinions as to the justification of competitive athletics for young elementary and junior high school students; (2) to determine how highly organized this competition needed to be; (3) to determine to what beneficial or adverse effects in the area of physical and/or mental strain the young athlete was subjected; and (4) to determine what course of action was to be undertaken in the future in regard to competition at this age level.

Authorities seemed to generally favor athletic competition at this level. However, most agreed that the competition should be kept at a low organizational level with more emphasis placed on intramurals and extramurals than interscholastic programs. Research indicated that Little League, YMCA, club and civic sponsored programs had become too adult-centered and many programs were in need of re-evaluation and re-structure. These programs were found to be failing to meet the needs of today's youth. Pressure became so strong in some instances that the learning and enjoyment on the part of the youngster had all but disappeared, and as a result some potential athletes were driven out of competition.

A wide range of disagreement among competent authorities concerning the beneficial and adverse effects of athletic competition in pre-high school years was found throughout the research. Some authors agreed with competition at this level and gave the example of competition in life as justification. It was thought that if competition was learned in youth then life would be an easy adjustment. Others supported the belief that youngsters in elementary and junior high schools were not capable of meeting the emotional demands of athletic competition at that level. Numerous examples of tension

and emotional strain were sighted throughout the literature. Physical harm and injury were also debated by physicians, orthopedists and other medical experts. Some gave examples of bone injury and possible permanent deformity in the young athlete resulting from highly organized athletics, and other authorities justified their positions by stating that youngsters injured themselves from climbing trees, riding bicycles and ordinary play activities more than from competitive athletics. However, there was agreement among all in that there was a greater need for more adequate supervision at that level of competition.

Tradition played the largest role in determining whether athletic competition at that level should continue to be allowed. Some studies of committees definitely disapproved of any athletic competition prior to high school, while other studies approved of athletics with some elementary restrictions. There was unanimous agreement among the educational authorities that if athletic competition was to continue, then it should supplement, rather than be a substitute for, the basic physical education and intramural programs, particularly at the junior high school level.