

# The Controlled Development of Collegiate Sport For Women, 1923-1936

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## INTRODUCTION

Radical changes are taking place in collegiate sport for women. Opposition to high level competition has been dissipated. Under the control and sponsorship of women physical educators, regional and national tournaments are now sponsored in seven sports. Colleges are developing varsity teams with full schedules, some with rigorous training and long hours of practice. Scholarships will soon be sanctioned for women athletes.

These changes are confusing to many women physical educators whose training taught them to decry intercollegiate competition—especially of the varsity type. They lack the professional preparation to cope with the problems and decisions attendant upon the new sport programs and also the technical skills necessary to coach and officiate sports under the new conditions. As a result they are uncomfortable with the changes and find it difficult to reconcile them with concepts previously learned.

These concepts stem from the 1920's, a period in which a conscious decision to curtail intercollegiate competition for women in schools and colleges was made and implemented. New modes of competitive situations were established and/or popularized; these were designed to minimize competition and the development of high levels of skill. Hopefully, if the circumstances surrounding that decision—particularly the rationale for it—were to be set forth and clarified, it would assist in understanding and dealing with the current situation.

The story of the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation (NAAF) has been recorded as has *The History and Functions of the National Section on Women's Athletics*.<sup>1</sup> Four dissertations dealt with aspects of the topic as part of more general studies of a longer period in the history of collegiate women's sport.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Alice Allene Sefton. *The Women's Division National Amateur Athletic Federation*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1941); Eline Von Barries. *The History and Functions the National Section on Women's Athletics*. (Washington, D. C. National Section on Women's Athletics, 1941).

<sup>2</sup>Naomi L. Leyhe. "Attitudes of Women Members of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation Toward Competition in Sports for Girls and Women". D.P.E. dissertation, Indiana University, 1955; Patricia Bennett. "The History and Objectives of the National Section for Girls' and Women's Sports", Ed. D. dissertation, Mills College, 1956; Doris P. Watts. "Changing Conception of Competitive Sports for Girls and Women in the United States from 1880 to 1960". Ph. D. dissertation, University of California. Los Angeles. 1960; Mary Lou Remley. "Twentieth Century Concepts of Sports Competition for Women", Ph.D. dissertation. University of Southern California, 1970.

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Smith, in recounting the rise of basketball for women in colleges, discussed the curtailment of intercollegiate competition.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, there is no contemporary analysis which focuses on the crucial decision, clarifying how it came to be made and how it was implemented in the context of its time.

Accordingly, the purpose of this paper was to examine the controlled development of collegiate sport for women in the period beginning in 1923 when a national philosophy was formally articulated and concluding in 1936 when a survey indicated that the form and shape of the new intercollegiate sport program had emerged and been accepted. More specifically, this study was directed towards answering the following questions:

1. What was the status of women's sport in the colleges? What changes could be discerned during the period under discussion?
2. How was women's sport organized? What was the relationship of that organization to the practices associated with the sport programs in the colleges?
3. Who controlled collegiate women's sport? What were the mechanisms of control?
4. What was the philosophy underlying collegiate women's sport? On what premises was it developed? How was it implemented?

A note on terminology is necessary. During the period under discussion, it was common to use the term interschool or intercollegiate sport. Those terms approximate current use of the word extramural. Although the term intercollegiate sport has other meanings today, it seemed appropriate to use the term belonging to the period-especially since it is used by many of the authors quoted in this paper.

## STATUS OF COLLEGIATE COMPETITION

Intercollegiate competition for women developed in a limited way during the first two decades of the century. The first intercollegiate basketball game took place in 1896 and Smith reported several other instances of like competition.<sup>4</sup> However, most sport competition was of the intramural type.

A 1909 survey reported that "most of the women's colleges in the East and many of the co-educational institutions do not play outside games but have interclass contests . . . In the Middle West and West, intercollegiate contests are more common, but the percentage playing them there is less than one half."<sup>5</sup> A 1916 survey found that in 14 of

<sup>3</sup>Ronald A. Smith. "The Rise of Basketball for Women in Colleges", *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education* (December 1970) 1:18-36.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Gertrude Dudley and Frances A. Keller. *Athletic Games in the Education of Women* (New York: Holo, 1909). p. 99.

66 colleges responding, or 21%, some form of intercollegiate sport took place.<sup>6</sup>

Studies were undertaken in 1923, 1930 and 1936 which assessed the nature and extent of intercollegiate competition for women. The data relevant to this study are summarized in Table 1.<sup>7</sup>

TABLE 1  
Extent of Intercollegiate Competition for Women  
In Institutions of Higher Education in the  
United States, 1923 - 1936

	1923 (N=50)		1930(=98)		1938 (N=77)	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
<b>Varsity</b>	6	12	11	11	13	17
<b>Interclass-Intercoll.</b>	5	10	3	03	14	18
<b>Telegraphic</b>	5	10	39	40	57	74
<b>Play Days</b>	-	-	53	54	54	70
<b>Sports Days</b>	-	-	-	-	32	41
<b>All Forms</b>	11	22	Data unobt.		73	95

Although these figures represent only a sample of the total population, several interesting insights may be derived from them.

1. Varsity type intercollegiate competition in the periods surveyed was never very extensive. Furthermore, the figures given should be interpreted in light of the growth in high level competition for women in society at large. It can be concluded that the percentage of women in the colleges who engaged in high level competition vis-a-vis the total number of women competing, decline considerably during this period. Furthermore, since the average number of sports competed in per college in 1923 was 4, and dropped to 2.7 in 1930, the real numbers of women competing in the colleges also declined considerably.

2. Interclass-intercollegiate competition also was not practiced extensively prior to 1923 and dwindled almost to nothing by 1930. If schools sponsoring *both* varsity and interclass forms of intercollegiate

<sup>6</sup>Edwin Elworth Jacobs. *A Study of the Physical Vigor of American Women* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1920).

<sup>7</sup>Sources for Table I were: Mabel Lee. "The Case For and Against Intercollege Athletics for Women and the Situation as it Stands Today", *APER (January 1924)* 29: 13-19; Mabel Lee "The Case For and Against Intercollegiate Athletics for Women and the Situation since 1923", *Research Quarterly (May 1931)*. 2:93-127; Norma M. Leavitt and Margaret M. Duncan, "The Status of Intramural Programs for Women", *Research Quarterly (March 1937)*. 8:68-69.

competition are separated from the sample, the percentage drops to .01. It may be surmised that colleges which were willing to compete on the varsity level saw no particular advantage to this form of sport, while other colleges rejected it as being too highly competitive.

3. The telegraphic form of intercollegiate competition, on the other hand, experienced a steady gain in popularity during the period surveyed. The colleges were obviously desirous of engaging in competition and were willing to use a form that by its nature was non-intensive and precluded emotionalism and spectators. However in 1930 24 of the colleges competed in only one activity, thus minimizing the extent of even this limited form of representative competition.

4. By 1930 a new form of intercollegiate competition—the play day—had been developed. It was quickly adopted, but 42 of the 53 colleges utilizing this form participated in only one play day during the year. Thus in 1930 it represented a very small amount of sport competition of the non-representative variety.

5. In the 1930's another new form—the sports day—became the chief form of representative intercollegiate competition which actually took place on a face-to-face basis. All but five of the reporting schools indicated that they had participated in sports days for both team and individual type sports.

6. Although a hard core of colleges continued to compete on the varsity level (5 of the original 6 schools remained constant from the 1923 to 1930 samples), the general concept of intercollegiate competition was rejected by the women during the twenties. The amount of competition in any form was minimal. In the early thirties a much greater acceptance of non-varsity intercollegiate competition was evidenced. From this it may be conjectured that the women physical educators found their “solution” to the problems associated with high level competition too radical. They adjusted their focus, therefore, to new forms which seemed to meet the perceived student needs while having none of the qualities of high level competition deemed objectionable. The result was that by 1936 almost all colleges engaged in some form of intercollegiate competition which called for minimal levels of skill and intensity. High level competition continued to be discouraged.

## BEGINNING TO ORGANIZE

In 1899 the confusion caused by the various sets of basketball rules used by the women (who insisted on modifying the men's game because it was too rough) led to the formation of a Women's Basketball Rules Committee. Under the leadership of Senda Berenson, this group published the first basketball guide. In 1905, it became the National Women's Basketball Committee, continuing to

function within the American Physical Education Association (APEA).

As the women's sport situation grew in complexity, in 1917 the Committee on Women's Athletics (CWA) of the APEA was formed and the basketball committee became its sub-committee. By 1922 there were five sport sub-committees including basketball, hockey, swimming, track and field, and soccer. The work of the sports committees was "concerned primarily with making, revising and interpreting rules."<sup>8</sup> The CWA was appointed because of the "insistent and increasing demands coming in from all parts of the country for assistance in solving problems in connection with the athletic activities for girls and women, which demonstrated the need for a set of standards which should be based on the limitations, abilities, and needs of the sex."<sup>9</sup> The first chairperson of the CWA was Elizabeth Burchenal.

In 1919, Burchenal published "A Constructive Program of Athletics for School Girls: Policy, Method and Activities" in which it explicitly stated: "Athletics carried on within the school . . . and no interschool competition."<sup>10</sup> It is clear, therefore, that the organizational growth was meant to facilitate the conduct of sport programs within schools and *not* as a means of encouraging or sponsoring interschool sport. In fact, this researcher was unable to locate a single article, chapter, book, or statement from a single prominent woman physical educator which avowed support for high level (varsity type) intercollegiate sport for women.

From 1917 to 1922 the CWA functioned with little fanfare. In their chief organ for publicity, the *American Physical Education Review* (*APER*), the few articles which appeared on women's sport were primarily descriptive of operational programs.<sup>11</sup> Two articles argued against interscholastic athletics.<sup>12</sup> One article reported on a survey on "The Influence of Games on the Sex Health of Girls."<sup>13</sup> Actually, that dealt with the relation of strenuous activity to menstrual functioning and child birth. And, finally, one article misleadingly titled "Everyday Problems in Girls' Basket Ball," which was a speech given at the 1920 APEA meetings discussed the pros and cons of interschool sport.<sup>14</sup> In other words, there was as yet no hue and cry

<sup>8</sup>Von Borries, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup>*Athletic Handbook*. 1923 quoted in *Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup>Elizabeth Burchenal "A Constructive Program of Activities for School Girls: Policy, Method and Activities" *APER* (May, 1919) 24: 272-279.

<sup>11</sup>Anna S. Cressman "A Plan of Athletics and Honors for High School Girls", *APER* (1918) 22: 420-426; Lydia Clark "Illinois League of High School Girls Athletic Association", *APER* (March, 1921) 26: 138-142.

<sup>12</sup>Augusta L. Patrick "Athletics for Girls and Its Problems in the High Schools." *APER* (1918) 22:427-431; Jessie I. Whitman "Physical Efficiency of High School Girls" *APER* (1922) 27: 18-22.

<sup>13</sup>Mary Stansfield "The Influence of Games on the Sex Health of *Girls*", *APER* (1922) 27:240. 242.

<sup>14</sup>Elizabeth Richards "Everyday Problems in Girls Basket Ball", *APER* (December, 1920) 25: 407-414.

against intercollegiate sports though most writers on the subject indicated a preference for intramural activities.

An apt description of this early period of organization was given by Wayman talking in 1924 at the Annual Meeting of the Women's Division of the NAAF:

We've been too unconcerned—too lacking in active interest.

We've had *no* constructive program- we've *drifted* . . . The organization of this women's division means that we are refusing to be towed any longer. We are setting forth under our sail with women at the helm and women manning the whole craft.<sup>15</sup>

## THE FIGHT FOR CONTROL

In 1922 the impetus to take more vigorous action came as a direct result of the AAU's decision to take over women's track and field. It should be noted that the AAU had taken control of women's swimming in 1914 with no apparent objection from the physical educators. The difference in the reaction may have been the result of the AAU's handling of the latter occasion. Ironically, they tried to secure the complicity of the physical educators and instead succeeded in being renounced: At a meeting in New York, William C. Prout, President of the AAU, stated:

The time has come for properly regulating the girls' athletics (track and field), Numerous requests have come in from clubs in the AAU asking that girls' events be put on field day programs.

It was

Resolved that the Board of Governors of the AAU be requested to provide for competitions for women, and that they co-operate with women's athletic organizations, and consult with medical authorities, with a view to the standardization of events for women.<sup>17</sup>

The motion carried unanimously. At the same time the AAU also agreed to support Harry E. Stewart's proposal to send a team of women to the 1922 Paris Women's International Athletic Games. Though this action may have further inflamed the ire of the physical educators, they had watched in silence when the American Olympic Committee sent a team of women swimmers and some figure skaters to the 1920 Olympics. Thus, it seems that it was not the fact of high level, international competition per se that caused the reaction.

The women were challenged by the AAU's blatant statement that henceforth they would control girls' athletics. Disapproving of their plans, and unable to influence a change, the women physical

<sup>15</sup>Aqnes R. Wayman "Women's Athletics—All Uses—No Abuses", *APER* (November, 1924) 29 517-519.

<sup>16</sup>*New York Herald* April 9, 1922.

<sup>17</sup>*New York Times*. April 9, 1922.

educators withdrew from AAU committees, refused to serve in the future,<sup>18</sup> and created their own organization. to control women's athletics. The report of the organizing committee came right to the point:

Whereas, we believe that we are in the early stages of a great advancement in athletics for girls and women which is destined to be of incalculable value for the vigor, health, and character-training of girls and women as citizens and future mothers, or of great possibilities for harm; and we believe that the program of athletics for the welfare, health, and education of women depends upon the women experts on girls' and women's athletics organizing themselves as a deliberating and administrative body to deal with the special problems of athletics for girls and women; *whereas* we believe that there must be an organization concerned with the national problem in athletics common to both boys and girls and men and women:

*Therefore*, be it resolved,

First, that there shall be a special organization of women to stand as a deliberating, investigating, legislating,, promoting, advising,. and finally controlling body on the special problems of athletics for girls and women: and

Second, that the N.A.A.F. shall be considered the inclusive body concerned with the national problems and all problems of deliberation, investigation, legislation, promotion, and control in athletics which are common to both sexes . . .

Be it further resolved,

First, that the Commission (seven women to serve pro tem as the controlling body) shall strive to formulate a special organization on girls' and women's athletics which shall give the opportunity to being together in the Federation representatives of all social groups of girls and women, and all agencies concerned with the athletic activities of girls and women . . .<sup>19</sup>

The scene was set. An overt attempt to control girls' and women's athletics was made by the AAU and the women physical educators responded by asserting their own authority in this area. Fortuitously, the concern over the physical fitness of potential inductees in World War I had created a national interest in programs of physical activity

<sup>18</sup>Blanche M. Trilling "Women's Athletic Committee Report", *APER* (1923), 28: 69.

<sup>19</sup>"Report of the Committee on Organization of the Conference on Athletics and Physical Education for Women and Girls. April 6 and 7. 1923, at Washington, D.C.", *APER* (June, 1923, 28:284.

for the country's youth. General dissatisfaction with the direction of boys' sport programs, many of which were not then run by physical educators, had led the War Department to take an active role in organizing the National Amateur Athletic Federation (NAAF) in the hope that it could promote desirable sport practices as a means to improving the general physical condition. The War Department itself wanted a women's division and asked Lou Henry Hoover (Mrs. Herbert) to organize it. At the very moment when the women needed it, the means to organize and the mechanisms for control were at hand.

## MECHANISMS FOR CONTROL

As Spears demonstrated, almost from the beginning of physical education for women in the colleges, all aspects of the program, including sport competition, were firmly under the jurisdiction of the faculty.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, starting in 1910 when Amy Morris Homans invited the Directors of Physical Training and the Presidents of Athletic Associations of New England colleges for women, to a meeting at Wellesley College, the female physical educators in the colleges had a special forum for discussing their programs. This group, the predecessor of National Association of Physical Education for College Women (NAPECW), helped to unify thinking and influence the direction of programs.

To date there has never been an NCAA sponsoring women's sport in the colleges. Nor has there been any other authority totally divorced from physical education specifically seeking to control college women's sport. Thus far, the physical educators have had *carte blanche* to control the national development and organization of collegiate sport programs.\*

One derivation of this power was the support—both financial and moral—of the national body, the APEA (now the AAHPER). It provided the women with status through official bodies\*\* which included voting seats on the national executive councils starting in 1927. The APEA provided a forum through convention programs and official publications, particularly the APER (now Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, JOHPER). Ultimately it

<sup>20</sup>Betty Spears "The Emergence of Sport as Physical Education" Paper presented at the 88th Anniversary National Convention, AAHPER, Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 13-17, 1973:

\*This situation may change, however, with the intervention of the courts. In recent months the women have been forced to relinquish their long-standing position against athletic scholarships for women as the result of litigation.

\*\*These were: Women's Basketball Rules Committee, 1899; National Women's Basketball Rules Committee, 1905; Committee on Women's Athletics, 1917; Section on Women's Athletics, 1927; National Section on Women's Athletics, 1932; National Section for Girls' and Women's Sports, 1953; Division for Girls' and Women's Sports, 1957.

provided a communications center in the national office with staff support and other financial backing.

Important as all this was to the “cause,” another feature of women’s physical education was probably equally significant to the long term success in the enforcement of what amounted to national policy. Few departments of physical education for women separated their three functions of teacher preparation, general physical education and extra-curricular physical recreation or sport into different staff responsibilities. The same people who ran the sport programs conducted the teacher education programs and thus indoctrinated the teachers-to-be in the national philosophy. The result was a remarkable unanimity of opinion expressed in the literature and practices for several decades.

Another factor which made possible the controlled development of women’s collegiate sport was the Women’s Division of the NAAF founded in 1923. Its membership was *broad* based (see Figure 2) and its geographical distribution was equally wide, enabling the Division to reach most groups having anything to do with women’s sport.<sup>22</sup> In the seventeen years of its existence, the Women’s Division disbursed over \$106,000 dollars, most of it for promotional and educational work.<sup>22</sup> The Women’s Division and the CWA worked hand in hand. This was literally true, because the leaders of both groups were frequently the same. The first executive committee of the Women’s Division was composed of seven women—all of whom were physical educators. Women such as Ethel Perrin and Blanche Trilling served both groups (and Trilling founded the Athletic Conference of American College Women as well, still another central body which adhered to *the* philosophy).

TABLE 2  
Classification of Memberships  
NAAF, 1930 - 1938

	1930	1932	1934	1936	1938
Total	650	659	708	715	768
Universities and colleges	88	102	76	66	64
Public schools	28	36	23	23	29
Private schools	43	37	22	16	15
Y.W.C.A.’s	58	58	37	40	45
Women’s athletic associations	120	131	122	138	139
Girls’ athletic associations	63	69	48	66	68
Other organizations	44	48	41	35	33
Individuals	206	178	339	332	375

<sup>21</sup>Source of data, Seften. *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 32.

This network made it possible to formulate a national philosophy on competition. It was articulated by appointed and elected officers of women's sport, working within the framework of the APEA, and published in the *APER* or in separate brochures disseminated by the Women's Division. The women now had the power, the financing, the communications media, the professional support, and the influence to control girls' and women's sport throughout the nation, with the exception of that run by the AAU and some independent groups. The figures on participation show that they were almost totally successful in directing school, college and agency sport in the next four decades. The only question remaining was the nature of the sport to be endorsed.

## THE PLATFORM

Historically, the women physical educators were opposed to inter-collegiate sport. Smith and Evans documented the opposition of the women instructors including that of Senda Berenson who played an instrumental role in the development of basketball for women.<sup>23</sup> In 1904, the Midwest Conference of Deans of Women went on record as being opposed to intercollegiate athletics. *APER* articles by prominent women physical educators over the years usually recommended sport for the masses rather than interschool sport.<sup>24</sup> It is evident, therefore, that the philosophical position expressed in the platform of the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation was derived from historical antecedents.

The Women's Division set forth a platform which detailed their beliefs; it was endorsed in toto by all groups most concerned with women's collegiate sport including:

Committee on Women's Athletics of the APEA, 1923

The Association of Directors of Physical Education for Women in Colleges and Universities, 1924.

The Athletic Conference of American College Women, 1924.

American Association of University Women, 1925.

National Association of Deans of Women, 1926.

<sup>23</sup>Smith. *op. cit.* ; Virginia L. Evans "The Formative Years of Women's College Basketball in Five Selected Colleges. 1880-1917", M. A. Thesis. University of Maryland. 1971.

<sup>24</sup>See for example Frances A. Keller "Ethical Value of Sports for Women", *APER* (September. 1906). 11:160-171; Florence A. Somers, "The Right Kind of Athletics for Girls", *APER* (May, 1916), 21:369-375 (Incorrectly published under name of Summers); Elizabeth Burchenal "A Constructive Program of Activities for School Girls: Policy. Method and Activities", *APER* (May, 1919). 24: 272-279.

The platform, adopted at the Conference on Athletics and Physical Recreation for Women and Girls, April 6-7, 1923, was originally a set of sixteen resolutions. Those resolutions relevant to this analysis are:

II. That vigorous, active, happy, big-muscle activity be liberally provided and maintained and carefully guided for every girl and boy;

IV. In order to develop these qualities which lit girls and women to perform their functions as citizens:

- a) That their athletics be conducted with that end definitely in view and be protected from exploitation for the enjoyment of the spectator, the athletic reputation, or the commercial advantage of any school or other organization.
- b) That schools and other organizations shall stress enjoyment of the sport and development of sportsmanship and minimize the emphasis which is at present laid upon individual accomplishment and the winning of championships.

V. That for any given group we approve and recommend such selection and administration of athletic activities as makes participation possible for all, and strongly condemn the sacrifice of this object for intensive (even though physiologically sound) training of the few.

IX. That since we recognize that certain anatomical and physiological conditions may occasion temporary unfitness for vigorous athletics, therefore effective safeguards should be maintained .

XII. That all publicity be of such a character as to stress the sport and not the individual or group competitors.

XIII. That it is the sense of the Conference that in the future such competitions (international), if any, be organized and controlled by the national organization set up as a result of this Conference.<sup>25</sup>

These original resolutions espoused competitive sport for women and did not contain a clearcut statement against intercollegiate sport or even against international competition. The physical educators envisioned their role as protective and included numerous provisions regarding the conditions under which sport should take place. For

<sup>25</sup>Seften. *op. cit.*, pp. 77-79.

example, they called for women's programs to be completely under the supervision of qualified women, for repeated medical examinations to be administered, and for suitable costumes to be adopted.

The women physical educators designed their position on women's athletics to be in accord with three general factors. These three factors, which represented a positive attempt to locate intercollegiate sport for women in accordance with the prevalent environment were:

1. The educational and physical educational objectives of the period.
  2. Reliefs concerning appropriate social behavior for women.
  3. Existent knowledge of the physical capacities of women.
- At a later time, the conduct of men's intercollegiate sport, the development of national competition for women with its attendant exploitation and the participation of women in Olympic competition, strengthened their rationale with a fourth factor:
3. Reaction to the negative aspects of sport.

## SATISFYING EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

In 1916, John Dewey's work *Democracy and Education* was published. It was an important conceptualization which, along with his earlier books, quickly influenced the theory of American education and physical education through the powerful Teachers College group. The essence of the Deweyian philosophy was the primary importance of society. He advocated that education should be "a freeing of individual capacity in a progressive growth directed to social aims."<sup>26</sup> In fact, according to the pragmatic theory from which Dewey's principles derived, it was the *majority* of society whose needs were of primary importance. "The greatest good for the greatest number" was an associated slogan.

The school functioned as an agent of democracy in that it was expected to work to "balance the various elements in the social environment, and to see to it that each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born, and to come into living contact with a broader environment."<sup>27</sup>

The Seven Cardinal Principles of Education, formulated by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (1916), offer an insight into the educational thinking of the era. The inclusion of citizenship, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character as aims of education indicate the acceptance of the emphasis on social functioning. Furthermore, the listing of health and safety as the first aim, demonstrates this to have been an overriding concern.

<sup>26</sup>John Dewey. *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan Paperbacks. 1963), p. 98.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Physical education espoused similar goals because it was in this period that the profession began to fully conceive of itself as an arm of education and not simply preparers of the body for education by others. As a demonstration of how quickly physical educators adopted Deweyian ideas, the first aim of physical education of four stated by a Committee of the Society of Directors of Physical Education (now NCPEAM) in 1920 was:

If the perfection of the individual in his social relations is of greater importance than purely personal values, then the first aim is the development of habits of obedience, subordination, self-sacrifice, cooperation, friendliness, a spirit of fair play, and sportsmanship.<sup>28</sup>

The second aim begins: "Other character traits of indirect significance to community life . . ."<sup>29</sup>

Jesse Feiring Williams stated firmly that "the purpose of physical education should in the main be the purpose of all phases of education."<sup>30</sup>

The resolutions proffered by the Women's Division were clearly in accord with these stated aims of education. The concept of "education for all," which became a watchword of American society was replicated in the notion of "sport for all." In a restatement of the resolutions into a creed, the first article was "To promote programs of physical activities for all members of given social groups rather than for a limited number chosen for their physical prowess."<sup>31</sup> Or, as was said at a conference called to consider the outstanding problems of girls' athletics: "There are too many wholesome social values in athletics to miss any chance for development; there are too many sound physical values which may be lost sight of if athletics become a matter of over strenuous indulgence by a few select girls who don't need the training anyway."<sup>32</sup>

If schools were to equalize opportunity, then programs which excluded the lesser-skilled failed to meet this important function: it was important to devise programs which were not demanding enough to exclude anybody. The sacrifice of the needs of the highly skilled few for specialized training to the needs of the great majority, also was consistent with the philosophy of pragmatism and progressive education.

<sup>28</sup>"The Aims and Scope of Physical Education", *APER* (June, 1920). 25: 259.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>Jesse Feiring Williams. *The Organization and Administration of Physical Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1922). p. 10.

<sup>31</sup>Lillian Schoedler "Report of Progress, Women's Division National Amateur Athletic Federation of America", *APER* (June, 1926) 29: 305-310.

<sup>32</sup>"Outstanding Problems of Girls' Athletics", *APER* (May, 1926) 31: 846-848.

The conviction that the social values and behaviors necessary for good citizenship should be taught through education was held by the women physical educators. They were convinced—as were many of their male colleagues—that social values could be taught through sport. Numerous articles noted that women were lacking in experience in teamwork, sportsmanship, fair play, etc., and that they must be given the opportunity to develop it through the sport experience.<sup>33</sup> Williams typified the general view when he said: “If girls are not good losers, and it is granted that they show less evidence of sportsmanlike qualities than boys, how, it may be asked, are we to overcome this deficiency?” The obvious answers were to see that more girls did get an experience in sport and to recognize that sport which emphasized winning and glorified the individual players was detrimental to this purpose. Thus the creed advocated as an aim: “To eliminate types and systems of competition which put the emphasis upon individual accomplishment and winning rather than upon stressing the enjoyment of sport and the development of sportsmanship among the many.”<sup>35</sup>

## EXEMPLIFYING SOCIAL MORES

Williams also commented that “if a self-controlled, self-reliant woman is to be sought, then interscholastic and intercollegiate sport may be made of great assistance in this respect.”<sup>36</sup> In this belief he was more of a feminist than the female physical educators who *nowhere* talked of developing “self-controlled” or “self-reliant” women. In fact, the women’s point of view reflected a conservative social viewpoint regarding appropriate feminine behavior.

The jazz age had a vaunted reputation for new social freedom. The passage of suffrage for women supposedly launched at least an immediate decade of independence and attempts to establish sexual equality. However, earlier in the decade propriety for women was still circumscribed. For example, in 1922 policemen arrested women who appeared on a Chicago beach in a one piece bathing suit.<sup>37</sup> Anyway, educators tend to teach or preach the morality and behaviors consistent with their own upbringing and training—which in this case included a strict code for female behavior. As Chafe concluded:

At a time when the sexual division of labor posed the primary obstacle to the advancement of economic equality, it appeared

<sup>33</sup>See for example Marjorie Kennan “Playing Like a Boy”, *Outing* (July-August, 1920) 76: 206-209, 244, 246; Elizabeth Halsey “The College Curriculum in Physical Education for Women”, *APER* (November, 1925) 30: 490-495.

<sup>34</sup>Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>35</sup>Schoeldler, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

<sup>36</sup>Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>37</sup>Oliver Jensen. *The Revolt of American Women* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 164-165.

that the nation's colleges and universities were reinforcing the image of woman as wife and mother.<sup>38</sup>

Many articles written on women's athletics showed their cognizance of the dangers of high level sport to femininity. Agnes Wayman spoke of high school girls travelling around the country "wearing immodest clothing before mixed audiences."<sup>39</sup> Ethel Perrin noted that some people believed that because women "Should always preserve her inborn sense of modesty and innocence she must never be seen by the opposite sex when she is likely to forget herself"<sup>40</sup> (i.e. when caught in the emotional excitement of an important contest).

J. Anna Norris thought that the lighting features of physical activity have led to "the development of aggressive characteristics that added nothing of charm and usefulness, and were not in harmony with the best traditions of the sex."<sup>41</sup> Mabel Lee, summarizing the opinions of physical directors for women in the leading colleges and universities, cited as a disadvantage of intercollegiate sport:

An undesirable newspaper notoriety would be sure to come to the girls; especially undesirable would be the mention of the fact that certain players are to be out of certain games . . .<sup>42</sup>

The fear of publicity apparently reflected the lingering Victorian notion that women should be unobtrusive.

There was also an inordinate concern with the women's child-bearing function—an attitude probably reflective of the social belief that it is *the* most important woman's function. A well-known male physical educator, Ernst Herman Arnold, reported to the Eastern District Convention on his study which showed that the regimen of activities in his school caused the number, extent and flow of menstruations to be diminished. Most women would consider this sufficient cause to engage in sport, but Arnold *reasons* from this evidence, that any reduction in menses is a reduction in fertility.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, since "function makes the organ," this would lead to a smaller uterus.

If athletics will diminish the function of the uterus, if the

<sup>38</sup>William H. Chafe. *The American Woman Her Changing Social, Economic. and Political Role. 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972). p. 104.

<sup>39</sup>Wavman, *op cit.* p. 519.

<sup>40</sup>Ethel Perrin. "Athletics for Women and Girls". *Playground* (March, 1924) 17: 658-661.

<sup>41</sup>Norris. 1924 quoted in Mabel Lee "A Consideration of the Fundamental Differences Between Boys and Girls as They Affect the Girls' Program of Physical Education". *Education* (April, 1933) 53: 468.

<sup>42</sup>Mabel Lee "The Case For and Against Intercollegiate Athletics for Women and the Situation as it Stands Today". *APER* (January. 1924) 29:13.

<sup>43</sup>E.H. Arnold "Athletics for Women". *APER* (October. 1926) 29: 452-457.

lessened function means an infantile uterus, if an infantile uterus means a small pelvis, the chain of evidence would seem to be closed.<sup>44</sup>

He concluded:

What is needed is a restriction in quantity of competition in any form. What is further needed is to diminish the quality of competition by taking the intensiveness of competition out of women's athletic efforts. The exploitation of oncoming womanhood by national or international competition is a menace to womanhood, the magnitude of which one can only contemplate with a shudder.<sup>45</sup>

The men did tend to overstate the case a bit! Arnold had company for his theories in the person of Frederick Rand Rogers who thought "That it constitutes a menace to the future happiness of all girls who are lured into Olympic, or even intensive interschool competition."<sup>46</sup>

why?

The foregoing discussion (on sex differences) leads inevitably to the conclusion that competitive sports tend to develop behavior patterns which are contrary to feminine nature. Natural feminine health and attractiveness, whether physical, emotional or social, certainly are impaired if not destroyed by the belligerent attitudes and competitive spirit and development of which intense athletics inevitably fosters. One has only to postulate a female Roosevelt to reduce to absurdity the claims of those who foster the masculinization of girls. Neither men nor any normal women would embrace or willingly tolerate any tendency toward such an eventuality, yet competitive athletics will bring it about more surely than any other social behavior.<sup>47</sup>

The people quoted here were all professional leaders and the women were, in fact, among the top leaders of women's sport. It was evidently of major concern that sport should in no way damage the image of femininity or the chances of women to fulfill their future roles for motherhood. Highly competitive sport was seen as a threat to the social woman. Play days or other forms of sport for all were conceived of as a suitable instrument to meet the social purposes advocated by theorists of education and to "develop in all perfection

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 455.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 457.

<sup>46</sup> Frederick Rand Rogers "Olympics for Girls", *School and Society* (August 10, 1929) 30: 191.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

the physical possibilities of women, as workers, wives, mothers”<sup>48</sup>

## MEDICAL OPINION

An extract of an article from *The Journal of the American Medical Association* (July 25, 1925, p. 270) printed in *APER* stated:

Our young girls, in this age of feminine freedom, are also overdoing athletics. A girl should not be coddled because she is menstruating, but common sense . . . at such a period should be exercised. How many of a basket ball team of girls, scheduled to compete with another team on a given day, are beginning or in the midst of this feminine function, in which the uterus is physiologically congested and temporarily abnormally heavy and hence, liable to displacement by the inexcusable strenuousness and roughness of this particular game? Why should girls try tests of vaulting? Is such prowess worth the possible price?<sup>49</sup>

This article entitled “Athletic Strenuousness” put its finger on the biggest medical issue related to women in sport: menstruation.

The literature indicates that most women were aware that medical authorities differed as to the advisability of exercise during the period. Therefore, declaring that it is better to err on the safe side, they recommended that players refrain from very active playing during the menstrual period.<sup>50</sup> They feared, though, that for the sake of winning an important competition, girls might hide their condition in order to participate. As Lee summarized:

There would be ever present the tendency to take an active part in activities during the menstrual period for the sake of the trip and the honor of having played. Also the members of a team who can be the least spared by their team would be urged to keep secret their condition so the team would suffer no handicap through their absence, the desire to play the best players being so much more intense in inter-collegiate games than it would ever be in a series of inter-class or intra-mural games.<sup>51</sup>

As long as professionals like Arnold spoke of the dangers of physical activity to the menstrual cycle, it was virtually impossible for the women not to decry intercollegiate sport for that reason alone.

In 1916, Harry E. Stewart, the man responsible for sending the

<sup>48</sup>Clelia Duel Mosher “The Means to the End”, *APER* (December, 1925) 30: 535-540.

<sup>49</sup>“Extracts, Abstracts and Notice of Magazine Articles” *APER* (November, 1925) 30: 523-528.

<sup>50</sup>Halsey. *op. cit.*; Lee. *op. cit.*; Elizabeth Richards “Everyday Problems in Girls Basket Ball”, *APER* (December. 1920) 25: 407-414.

<sup>51</sup>Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

women's track team to Paris, wrote in the *APER* of a study on the affect of violent exercise on girls of prep school age. He reported:

This seemed to show conclusively that with previous medical examination and careful supervision, girls might not only safely indulge in such sports but their hearts were greatly improved by them.

Nevertheless, there was a vague notion that girls were not physically up to really vigorous activity.

Sixty per cent of the directors surveyed in 1923 thought that intercollegiate athletics physically harmed participants.<sup>53</sup>

Halsey said that "granted that normal activity is beneficial, the necessity for caution is not thereby eliminated."<sup>54</sup> Somers cited authorities such as the famous John M. Tyler who said of the young girl entering high school:

All her girths are below normal. Her lung capacity is small, her digestion poor; she suffers from constipation and headache, is anemic and pale, her complexion is sallow and her eyes heavy.<sup>55</sup>

Mabel Lee typified the opinions with a phrase that later became cited by many physical educators, when she said: "They would be apt to get more 'physical straining than physical training' . . ."<sup>56</sup>

Many arguments were based upon the fact that girls were anatomically different from boys and therefore not as capable of participating in vigorous activity. Joseph Lee was cited as saying in *Play and Education* that "The girl's development . . . is evidently not to be, to any extent at all comparable with that of boys, through participation in strenuous athletic games. Some forms of athletics indeed are especially injurious to her."<sup>57</sup>

There seemed to be much concern, for instance, that "pelvic disturbances" could be brought on by overactivity and also the conviction that falls, collisions, violent contacts-all of which were a feature of highly competitive sport-were more dangerous to girls than to boys. William Burdick, who as President of the APEA appointed the first Committee on Women's Athletics, said: "There should be no opportunities for punching or scratching as it has been

<sup>52</sup>Harry E. Sheivart "A Survey of Track Athletics for Women" *APER* (January, 1916) 21: 13

<sup>53</sup>Lee. *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>54</sup>Halsey, *op. cit.*, p. 495.

<sup>55</sup>Somers. *op. cit.*, p. 371.

<sup>56</sup>Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>57</sup>Quoted in Somers. *op. cit.*, p. 37.

found that many cases of neurosis in women have been caused by scratches, blemishes and disfigurements of the face.”<sup>58</sup>

A notice from the *Herald Tribune* of 1931 illustrates how this belief was translated into action:

Acting on the suggestion of. . . (the) girls’ physical education instructor, who said strenuous competitive basketball “is detrimental to the girls’ condition” and “injures them physically,” the board last night voted unanimously to withdraw the sport from the interscholastic calendar.”<sup>59</sup>

Coupled with the fear of actual physical harm was a fear of emotional danger. “The question of the demonstration by girls of excessive emotion when playing games is often the subject of discussion,” said Somers writing in 1930 in a timely book on *Principles of Women’s Athletics*.<sup>60</sup> “The emotional strain attendant upon competition would be injurious,” said the women physical directors.<sup>61</sup> Intercollegiate sports are “apt to cause too great tension and nervous strain,” claimed another group of 115 physical educators.<sup>62</sup> Ethel Perrin, usually a voice of reason, wrote: “Girls are not suited for the same athletic programs as boys. The biological difference between them cannot be ignored unless we are willing to sacrifice our school girls on the altar of an Olympic spectacle. Under prolonged and intense physical strain a girl goes to pieces nervously.”<sup>63</sup>

Clelia Duel Mosher, a medical doctor and researcher of women’s health, tried to counteract these ideas by warning physical educators that they

must not think in terms of yesterday in dealing with the girl of today, who is the woman of tomorrow . . . When we consider the woman of thirty years ago and the conditions which produced her, we can understand how the idea of her traditional weakness and incapacity hamper us even now in our work, interfering with the full development of the modern woman herself. . .<sup>64</sup>

However, even while demonstrating that women were far less delicate than their teachers were accustomed to think, she worried that the athletic ideal was overemphasized and urged the women to concern

<sup>58</sup>William Burdick “Safeguarding the Athletic Competition of Girls and Women”, *APER* (May, 1927) 32: 367.

<sup>59</sup>*New York Herald Tribune*. April 3, 1931, p. 26.

<sup>60</sup>Florence A. Somers. *Principles of Women Athletics* (New York, A.S. Barnes, 1930), p. 37.

<sup>61</sup>Lee, *op cit.*,

<sup>62</sup>Richards. *op cit.*, p. 409.

<sup>63</sup>Ethel Perrin “A Crisis in Girls Athletics”, *Sportsmanship* (December, 1928) 1:10.

themselves with the weak girl “still with us.”<sup>65</sup>

The facts as known during this period were mostly opinions of an inconclusive nature. There seemed little hard, non-conflicting evidence to prove that women could or could not engage in vigorous activities without permanent damage to their nervous or reproductive systems. It seemed self-evident to the women physical educators that it was far better to conduct activities of a moderate nature, which everyone agreed were non-harmful and of benefit, than to conduct sport in a manner about which there was some question. They further emphasized the importance of medical examinations to insure that no woman personally unfit to play should ever do so.

## NEGATIVE EXAMPLES OF SPORT

The men’s intercollegiate athletic program was widely known, then as now, for its abuses. Jay D. Nash, another professional leader of great influence, summed up the problem:

The earmarks of bad athletics . . . will always centre around intensive coaching of a few, neglect of the many, spectators, gate receipts, State and National championships. Such activities are not educational. They exist to give publicity to the coach, the principal of the school, the president of the university, the alumni, some local newspapers, the town boosters’ club, and the players.<sup>66</sup>

It is doubtful that the male physical educators were any happier with this situation than were the women. As an editorial on “Intercollegiate Athletics for Women,” in the *APER*, urged: “The long experience of men in competitive athletics, coupled with their many mistakes, should aid the women leaders in physical education in avoiding their chief mistakes.”<sup>67</sup> Agnes Wayman put the issue succinctly:

What is sauce for the gander, is *not* sauce for the goose!<sup>68</sup>

Mabel Lee, during the time when she was the first woman president of the APEA, said: “May the time never come when the ideals of athletics for women are thrown to the winds as ideals have been in men’s athletics.”<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 539.

<sup>66</sup> Jay B. Nash “Athletics for Girls”. *The North American Review* (January, 1928) 225: 100

<sup>67</sup> Editorial “Intercollegiate Sports for Women” ,*APER* (April. 1924) 29: 198-199.

<sup>68</sup> Wayman. *op cit*, p. 517.

<sup>69</sup> *New York Times* April 2, 1931. p. 32.

The women also had some very specific complaints about women's athletics. Foremost among them was the treatment of women athletes by their sponsors. Industrial league and AAU sport for women mushroomed during the 1920's and the physical education women saw the conduct of these programs-and occasionally some inter-collegiate programs-as the epitome of evil. They believed the women athletes to be exploited for promotional purposes, with little attention paid to their special needs as women or as people. Observing similar motivations behind the treatment of these women athletes and the treatment of men athletes, the women concluded that high level sport was destructive rather than productive for the participants.

Many articles contained "scare" stories. Smith told of a player who fainted during a game. An investigation of her medical history turned up malnutrition, anemia and a rapid heart. Nevertheless she was permitted to play throughout the season. In another story she told about a girls' basketball tournament sponsored by a sporting goods firm for the purpose of selling their equipment. There were no medical exams and the girls were to play in peach-colored bathing suits.<sup>70</sup>

John R. Tunis described in vivid detail the problems happening to "Women and the Sport Business," which included scenes of crowded, smokefilled halls in which the atmosphere and the emotions caused a player to become "racked by hysterics, her body tightly drawn in a knot; for the moment she is a nervous invalid. Although she is physically sound, so acute is her nervous suffering that it will be weeks before her health is fully restored."<sup>71</sup> In his pages we read of a girl who overstrained her heart playing a game a week for some sixteen weeks, of two girls teams who worked up such excitement that they "pulled hair, hit one another viciously in the ribs with sharp elbows, tripped one another, tore one another's clothing . . . (and) finally one girl kicked her opponent a terrific kick in the abdomen which sent her sprawling to the floor, doubled up with pain." He added: "If this were an isolated case it would hardly be worth mentioning; but it is the sort of thing which too often happens in championship contests with big stakes at issue."<sup>72</sup>

Wayman reported that "we see our adolescent high school girls playing long schedules of outside games, traveling around the country, other groups competing in open meets as they are doing in the East-wearing immodest clothing before mixed audiences, attended by men rubbers . . ."<sup>73</sup> Coops told of a tri-state tournament in basketball in which "the team was utterly exhausted by playing six

<sup>70</sup> Helm N. Smith "Evil of Sports for Women, *JOHPE* (January, 1931) 2: B-9. 50-51.

<sup>71</sup> John R. Tunis "Women and the Sport Business", *Harpers Monthly Magazine* (July, 1929), 159:

214.  
<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218, 214.

<sup>73</sup> Wayman. *op cit.*, p. 519.

games in two days and three girls were removed from the floor in fainting and hysterical condition . . .”<sup>74</sup>

Doubtless some very poor playing conditions existed in that period. The accuracy of the accounts must, however, be questioned because it is difficult to reconcile the hysterical, fainting girls described with the observable results of highly competitive sport today. Either the accounts were exaggerated or the women were physically and emotionally quite different from contemporary women; the former possibility seems more likely. Nevertheless, the people who wrote these articles and the people who read them probably believed the stories. Certainly they were cited by others and the problem of exploitation was frequently mentioned. Popular magazine articles during this period, which discussed the abilities of women athletes in a positive manner, apparently were ignored. For example, Grantland Rice, a sportswriter with at least equal reputation to John Tunis, declared:

The woman of today is doing something more in sport than merely proving her skill. She is also proving her stamina and her contempt for the years to an amazing degree.<sup>75</sup>

But it was Tunis’ negative comments which were quoted in the professional literature.

Many of these scare stories came on the heels of the participation of American women in the 1928 Olympics—an event bitterly opposed by American women physical educators who issued an official protest. The usual arguments against the sacrifice of the many for the few, the exploitation of girls and women, and the possibility of overstrain, were offered as reasons for their disapproval.<sup>76</sup> Later after the Olympics, the story of the competitors collapsing during the 800 m race helped to further inflame the issue and, in fact, the 800 m race was dropped from the next Olympics.

The negative aspects of high level competition, as perceived by the women physical educators, undoubtedly reinforced their convictions. However, judging from the dates when comments began to appear in the literature—primarily in the latter half of the twenties—it appears that the decision to eliminate high level competition and to encourage the play day form as a substitute, was based upon the more positive purposes previously described. Summarizing the negative opinions of the physical directors in 1931, Lee commented:

It is interesting to note the rising tide of condemnation of men’s intercollegiate athletics. It has grown from a mild protest, voiced

<sup>74</sup>Helen L. Coops “Sports for Women” *APER* (November, 1926) 31: 1088.

<sup>75</sup>Grantland Rice “Is There a Weaker Sex”, *Collier’s* (February 12, 1927) 79: 34.

<sup>76</sup>Sefton. *op. cit.*, p. 82.

by a few in the study of 1923, to most emphatic statements of disapproval, voiced by a large number in this present study of 1930.<sup>77</sup>

## JOINING PHILOSOPHY WITH PRACTICE

The basic philosophy embodied in the resolutions focused on the concept of "sport for all" which later became sloganized as "a sport for every girl and every girl in a sport." Any kind of competition that hindered the fulfillment of the aim of sport for all, even under conditions which recognized the physical and psychological status of the American girl or woman, was condemned *for that reason* and not because competition was necessarily evil unto itself. Articles written subsequently by the national leaders of women's sport emphasized this point. For instance, Agnes Wayman stated:

The Women's Division does believe whole-heartedly in competition . . . What it disapproves of is the *highly intensive specialized* competition such as exists when we have programs



<sup>77</sup>Mabel Lee "The Case For and Against Intercollegiate Athletics for Women and the Situation Since 1923". *Research Quarterly*, (May, 1931) 2:124).

of interschool competition, intergroup open track meets, or open swimming meets, with important championships at stake.<sup>78</sup>

Ethel Perrin, who chaired both the Executive Committee of the NAAF and the CWA wrote; in an article entitled "More Competitive Athletics for Girls-But of the Right Kinds":

The women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation is more concerned about the promotion of a fine inclusive program for all girls, than it is with a destructive campaign based upon opinions of what may or may not happen to Olympic participants. It does not believe that an inclusive program and a selective one can be successfully carried on at the same time in any group and it casts its vote unanimously for the one which provides equal opportunities for health and joy to all girls.<sup>79</sup>

It is worth noting that both those statements were made in 1929. Recalling the statistics on intercollegiate competition which was reported earlier, you will remember that by the end of the decade almost all interaction between colleges had ceased. It appears that the physical educators had taken the resolutions and other exhortations too literally and had virtually put an end to competition. Evidently the leaders believed it necessary to clarify the precise meaning of their philosophy. Those comments just cited would have been unnecessary if the resolutions had not been somewhat misinterpreted.

Clearly, though, varsity type competition was not a sport form appropriate to the aims of the women physical educators. Even mild forms of competition such as telegraphic meets still encouraged chosen groups and provided an incentive to win for alma mater. In essence, no form of intercollegiate competition then in use met the criteria implied by the resolutions. Appropriate sport programs would have to be available to all; thus no special skill could be necessary and the need to practice, train, be coached, or evaluated was obviated. In order to stress enjoyment rather than winning, all incentive for winning had to be eliminated. The activities had to be chosen and conducted in an absolutely safe way, eliminating all sports which evidence had not shown to be safe. Traveling over distances which might be fatiguing or playing too frequently could not be permitted. All contests which might rouse emotions were deemed inappropriate. Since no forms of competition met all these criteria, the conclusion that all competition should be eliminated was warranted under the circumstances.

<sup>78</sup> Agnes R. Wayman "Competition", *APER* (October, 1929) 34: 469.

<sup>79</sup> Ethel Perrin "More Competitive Athletics for Girls- But of the Right Kinds". *APER* (October, 1929) 34: 474.

This created problems of its own. As the resolutions and other literature indicated, the women physical educators considered it part of their mission to provide physical activity for all. Yet the years of Victorian ideals had left women with an antipathy to physical activity. Motivating the masses to participate was a problem. As Somers said:

Those who do not want to play must be persuaded to play: and it is part of our work to devise methods that will create in the entire student body a desire to play.<sup>80</sup>

Furthermore, many students still desired intercollegiate competition. For example, an Editorial in the *APER* reported that the student body of Wellesley College voted 237 to 33 in favor of intercollegiate sport.<sup>81</sup> However, the Athletic Conference of American College Women (ACACW), a student organization guided by the faculty, voted against intercollegiate competition in 1924. Lee reported 81% of the Women's Athletic Associations (WAAs) to be against intercollegiate competition in 1923 and 86% against it in 1930.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, that still left close to a fifth of the students *for* intercollegiate competition in 1923.

The pressure for some form of intercollegiate competition led to the invention of the play day. It appeared to be an ideal solution to the problem because it met all the criteria described earlier. The following typical statements culled from the NAAF collection of play day programs, gathered from all over the country, testify to the viability of this form:

The Play Day at Santa Cruz May 2, 1925 . . . was a success from beginning to end. The spirit of Play for Play's Sake was evident in everything and it was felt by all that the best goals of Physical Education were attained.<sup>83</sup>

Plan: To have all sports, but in no sense will there be any intercollegiate competition. We want to stress the play spirit; to take part in sports for the fun and good fellowship.<sup>84</sup>

Purpose: To provide a more desirable type of athletic competition than is found in varsity or intercollegiate competition.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>80</sup>Florence A. Somers "The Right Kind of Athletics for Girls" *APER* (May, 1916) 21: 370.

<sup>81</sup>Editorial, *APER* (April, 1924) 29: 198.

<sup>82</sup>Lee. *op. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>83</sup>"Report of the G. C. C. A. L. Play Day. Memorial Park, Santa Cruz. California. May 2, 1925. Typed manuscript.

<sup>84</sup>Athletic Association, Brenan College, Gainesville. Georgia. 1927. Mimeographed sheet.

<sup>85</sup>Play Day, University of Pittsburgh. May 16, 1928. Mimeographed.

We think that it is quite worth while because it has brought us in contact with girls from other schools, and in that way we have a more sympathetic feeling with these girls and the schools they represent. The idea of using color teams as a basis of competition is especially good, because it places some girls from each school on each team and does away with any inter-college antagonism.<sup>86</sup>

#### Object of Sports Day.

- A. To bring various colleges in the state together in friendly athletic competition.
- B. To provide wholesome recreational activities they can learn quickly and can take home to teach in their own communities throughout the state.
- C. To prove the value of play for play's sake alone. There will be no competition between colleges. Each college will have members on every team.
- D. To promote friendly relations through playing *with* instead of *against* each other.<sup>87</sup>

A perusal of the NAAF collection of play day programs\* plus the information in the surveys cited earlier, suggests that there were few college play days before 1929. Two sources cited in the above quotations indicated that they began in 1929. The Wellesley girls finally got their intercollegiate competition in the form of the first New England College play day which also began in 1929.<sup>88</sup>

Play days were the entree to intercollegiate competition; by 1936, 70 percent of the reporting colleges held playdays with mixed teams and 41 percent with teams which represented their own institutions.<sup>89</sup> The women physical educators had found a way to join philosophy with practice.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This paper has attempted to set forth and analyze the controlled development of collegiate sport for women in the years from 1923 to 1936. During that period, varsity type competition was quite limited and declined relative to the extent of competition taking place outside

<sup>86</sup>First Play Day for Teachers Colleges in Middle West is Held at Warrensburg, Missouri. Typed manuscript.

<sup>87</sup>First Annual Sports Day at University of Nebraska. Saturday, May 11, 1929, Mimeographed.

<sup>88</sup>News Notes" *APER* (October, 1929). 34: 472.

<sup>89</sup>Leavitt and Duncan. *op cit*.

\*The collection came into my hands accidently. I have no way of knowing with certainty how complete a part of the original collection it is, though it appears to be the complete file. Furthermore, there is no way of ascertaining how complete the original collection was.

the colleges. All forms of intercollegiate competition were virtually eliminated by 1930. In the early thirties there was a rebirth of intercollegiate competition using the play day and telegraphic meets as the primary forms.

The organization of women's sport, including the Committee and later Section on Women's Athletics of the APEA and the Women's Division of the NAAF, both of which had financial and professional support and good means for communication on a national scale, made it possible to exercise tight control over the collegiate women's sport programs.

A coherent, unified philosophy on women's athletics was set forth in the form of resolutions in 1923 and adopted by most relevant organizations. The resolutions were based upon the educational objectives, social mores and medical opinion of the time and further bolstered by the negative examples of sport at hand-particularly men's intercollegiate athletics, AAU and industrial league competition, and the performance of women in the 1928 Olympics. The play day form of sport competition was invented as a means of implementing the philosophy set forth in the resolutions.

It is reasonable to criticize the form of women's sport developed under this tight system of control on the grounds that it is not appropriate today. Educational concepts are now being redefined. One important difference may be noted in the interpretation of the concept of "education of all." In the earlier time, the nation was embarked on a drive to raise the educational level of all its citizens-focusing particularly on those who had the least amount. The women physical educators understood that their charge was to provide physical activity for all women-particularly the weakest and least skilled. Today, the emphasis is on equality of opportunity-particularly in the quality programs. Education for all in relation to sport programs is construed to mean that women who want it will no longer be denied the opportunity for high level competition that their male peers have long enjoyed.

The role of women in today's society is also being re-evaluated and rapid changes are taking place. Today's women are preparing for careers in a highly competitive society where the ability to behave independently, aggressively and courageously is a necessary ingredient for success. The importance of experiences in high level competitive sport is greater than it was for women preparing for housewifery and motherhood.

In the last half century active sportswomen have proved their capacity to perform in high level competition under great physical and emotional pressure. Medical science has agreed that women are far more durable than heretofore believed.

These and other changes make it imperative to evolve a new

philosophical position on women's sport. The model set forth by the leaders of collegiate women's sport in the 1920's is worthy of emulation. To formulate a position in accordance with educational objectives, the role of women in society, and the knowledge of physiological capacity, appears to be an excellent basis for decision-making. Contemporary leaders of women's sport would do well to promulgate a platform based upon a re-interpretation of the same factors.

The premise of using professional expertise to design, organize, promulgate and control intercollegiate sport has been shown to be effective. With a new platform for a new time, the sport program for college women undoubtedly will take new directions. The insights of our earlier leaders can be used as a framework for the forging of contemporary programs.

