

### Sport should become a fundamental right in Education

by HRH Prince George William of Hanover



*Sport has always played an important role in the life of George William, Prince of Hanover. It is not only the fact that he has competed brilliantly in 3 day equestrian events (before the war he was a member of the German national team) and that he was a hockey player and skier, which make him an expert, but also his Presidential activities at the International Olympic Academy in Olympia, as well as the 72 years spent at the head of Salem School, which give him the right to make statements, even judgments, on the educational fortunes of sport.*

The road towards good physical condition leads to increased "joie de vivre" and maintains good health if it is followed in a sensible manner. But one cannot deny that many adults who enthusiastically and ambitiously begin such activity initially find it very difficult to adapt to the tempo, as they first of all have to struggle against excess weight and stiff muscles which have not been used for years.

But even if they enjoy this activity afterwards, in the meantime they have lost out on a great deal of things. If they are asked what they have missed, they can only reply in the following manner : School did not succeed in giving sport a sufficiently positive image to encourage young people to continue after school-days. In order to offer future generations a better opportunity from the beginning, it is essential that sport becomes a fundamental right in education. It is impossible to participate fully in sport without training and for that you can never begin too young.

#### Self discipline and self control...

Self-discipline and self-control are an integral part of sport. In fact, it is impossible to cheat on these two conditions. They go together with spontaneity. And this spontan-

eity will only be granted to someone who believes that it is worth making an effort, and that belief will become strengthened in relation to experience. This all forms a whole.

#### Continuous effort is the condition sine qua non

The therapy of experience in the field of sport should be put into practice at an early stage. I am not only thinking of competitive sport for children, which is, moreover, a subject of controversy, in disciplines such as gymnastics, ice skating or swimming. I am thinking much more of the educational aspect of physical exercise; in the same way as children are trained to become accustomed to intellectual work, it is necessary to accustom them to physical work. The difference from training for competition referred to above, is that there are not only people who are talented to be catered for and encouraged, but also those who are less interested and who have less aptitude, and who need to be taught very patiently. Often it is those who have the least talent, once they have realised that they are not totally estranged from success, who make a great deal more effort than those with talent.

Pleasure gained from practising a sport becomes greater in direct relation to the amount of progress made. To this effect, it is necessary for everyone to have a training programme. If each individual learns to become his own master, he becomes more aware that he cannot cheat himself. He develops slowly a "sports' conscience" which encourages him. The sports programme during school-days has also a further result. It fosters between the teacher, or the coach, and the pupil a relationship based on confidence. The teacher has therefore more the role of advisor, and sports classes, or indeed training, often

## INDEPENDENT VIEWS



*It is never too early to start playing sport or to begin training.*

considered as an unpleasant obligation, finally lead to friendship between teacher and responsible young people.

### **A healthy balance**

The daily hour devoted to sport should not be considered as an "optional item" but as "obligatory".

What I mean when speaking of a "fundamental right" is that we will not succeed in achieving at school, given the framework of the established guidelines, a healthy balance between scholarly, intellectual work and physical activity, unless the mind is refreshed daily by physical exercise. It is frightening to learn that already at school age, more and more young people need nicotine, alcohol and drugs, and that physical activity, deemed anti-intellectual, is rejected. This is not simply the fault of those young people, but merely the proof that the therapy of experience, favouring sporting harmony was lacking, or just weak.

### **The model function**

Clubs are often concerned with physical education, neglected at school. But again this involves those who are already interested in sport and games. And what happens to the "beau reste" ? They become grumblers who treat their health shamefully because they have no respect for their bodies. The teachers of intellectual subjects ought to take an interest in the way their pupils behave whilst practising sport. They would be astonished to see how differently their proteges behave, and could draw psychological conclusions.

On each pupil's certificate at the end of a period of study appears a report on physical education. It is necessary to evaluate each person's sporting potential and whether they behave in an exemplary manner with their fellows.

Can he (she) teach his (her) young friends, has he (she) organisational talents in the management of his (her) team, is he (she) fair, master of him (her) self, selfish, or rather a sneak ? What is his reaction when he loses ? Sport has multiple facets and involves so many educational elements, that the comments very good, good, satisfactory, are insufficient.

Self-discipline in sport can have useful consequences for the entire school community. If one can manage to encourage the sporting spirit of the older pupils who are at the head of the school team, it would be easier to explain to them the dangers of cigarettes, alcohol and drugs. If it was fashionable for older pupils to reject these poisons, this would provide an example for young pupils.

Sport has not only a beneficial influence on an athlete's character. It also provides a model for young people. Sport should take advantage of the example it sets to lead to real success.

I firmly believe that only physical education which does not shrink from exacting moral qualities of its athletes deserves to play an important role, and contributes to the development of the personality. I also believe that it is the only way to achieve the Olympic idea at school.

G. W. H.

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