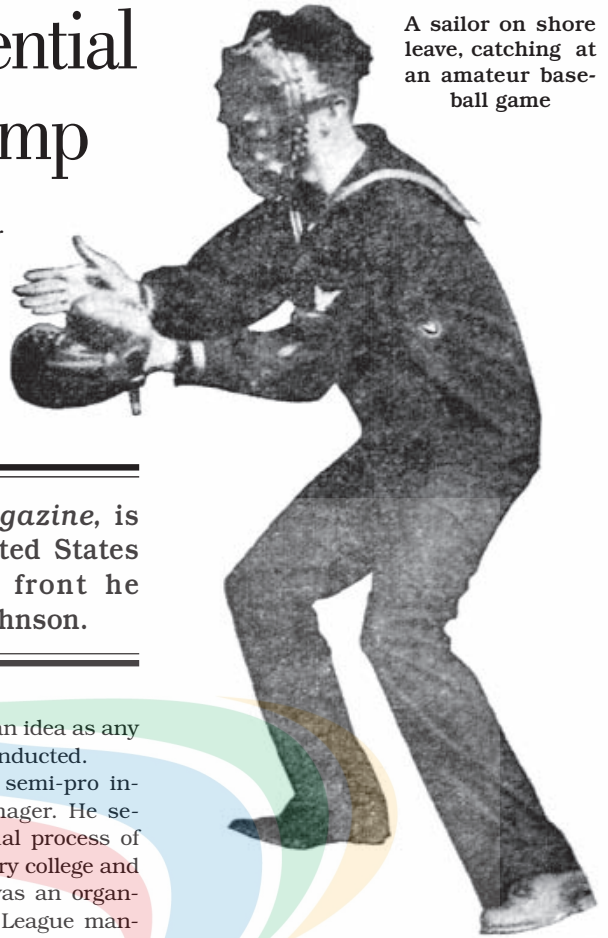


Why Athletics Are So Essential in an Army Training Camp

*The Value of Outdoor Sport, Particularly
Baseball, as a Needful Recreation for
the Soldier and Sailor*

By J. C. KOFOED

A sailor on shore
leave, catching at
an amateur base-
ball game



J. C. KOFOED long a contributor of the *Baseball Magazine*, is now in France doing his bit as a member of the United States Expeditionary force. Just before he left for the front he contributed the following sketch on athletics at Camp Johnson.

EVERYONE knows what a vital part baseball has played in American life.

Fewer know what part it has played in preparing the "Sammy" for his battle overseas.

I was stationed at Camp Johnston, Florida, for three months of the year when baseball could not be played in the northern cantonments: December, January and February, I was enabled, therefore, to see how the game was conducted among the soldiers, and just what benefit accrued from their participation in it.

In the first place, this cantonment, which is one of the models of the country, is divided into "blocks," each block containing the necessary barracks, mess halls, and latrines. When I came to Johnston, the camp was more or less in a formative period, and baseball as well as other sports was conducted in an entirely informal manner. "Scrub" games were of daily occurrence, of course, for one can't put thousands of red-blooded American boys together without having an uncounted number of diamond battles. But athletics, except for the daily "setting up" exercises, were unorganized.

It was the lay-out of the camp that undoubtedly promoted the idea of an Inter-block League. There is nothing like healthy rivalry to stimulate interest, and when Lew Riess, the well-known college coach, was appointed Camp Athletic Director, he seized on that idea. He first had the commanding officer of each block appoint a block athletic director from the enlisted personnel. This man saw to it that athletic teams were organized and kept going in his district.

Baseball provoked the most interest, as it always does. I will detail the experiences of my own company as a concrete example, because it was unusually successful, and

because it will give as clear an idea as any just how the games were conducted.

Jimmy Kelly, a Boston semi-pro infielder, was appointed manager. He selected his team by the usual process of elimination employed by every college and high school team. And it was an organization that many a Minor League manager would be proud to own.

Meeks, the mainstay of the pitching staff, was branded by Larry Doyle as one of the most promising bits of prospective big league timber he had ever seen. Catcher Tom Borrus, a star of the Pennsylvania coal country, was once offered a

TO THE ATHLETE-SOLDIERS By FORD C. FRICK

We've played the game on the gridiron,
The diamond—the field—the track,
And now we're headed for "Over
There"

And maybe we won't come back.

We've known the thud of the ball on bat
The smash on the 10-yard line
We faced the gaff with a hearty laugh,
We lose—but we never whine.

We may not be in the "highbrow" class
Our lessons have been hard knocks,
But we're off to France to take our
chance
With "Luck" in the pitcher's box.

We may not star in the game of war,
Nor win a place with fame,
But we'll fight our fight for the cause of
right
For we've learned to "Play the
Game."

try-out by Hughey Jennings, while third-baseman Reed was a choice of Connie Mack's. Second sacker Pat McDonnel, as well as manager Kelly, bore a splendid reputation, while the outfield of Best, Weiss and Sheridan contained three shining lights of the semi-pro game.

Money for equipment was raised by the Company Minstrel Show, and every day after drill the team, in brand new uniforms, worked out on the parade ground.

The big event of the season was a contest with Company D, of the Motor Supply Train. It was played at Rose Field, South Jacksonville, where the Athletics' annually train. The fact that we won by a score of 7 to 2, that a big crowd of civilians and soldiers was present, that a substantial sum of money was raised, that Colonel Munson, the commanding officer of the camp, Mayor Martin, Harold Lockwood (accompanied by other stars of the movie firmament), Larry Doyle, Dominick Mulaney and others equally well-known were present, was all beside the main issue—which was a vindication of what baseball is doing to help win the war.

That game and the ones that followed did more to keep the men contented and cheerful than anything else could have done. A barrack, after all, is a poor substitute for a home, and many a man would have spent his evenings far less cheerfully had it not been for the "fan



CHARLESTOWN NAVY YARD BASEBALL TEAM

Top row, left to right: Corkery, Harvard; Gainer, Red Sox; Gaw, Buffalo; Gill, Buffalo; Shorten, Red Sox; Bader, Red Sox.

Middle row: Pennock, Red Sox; Carr, Buffalo; McNally, Red Sox; Rico, Braves; Splaine, Holy Cross.

Bottom row: Walsh, Red Sox; Shay, Chicago; Killilea, Buffalo; Barry, Red Sox; Carroll, Holy Cross; Norton, Holy Cross; Callahan, Brooklyn; Gleason, Pittsburgh.

In front: Left, Witt, Athletics; right, Shore, Red Sox.

ning bees" that took place every night before "lights out."

This organization of sport does not aid the specialist at the expense of his less proficient brother. Of course, the block and company teams are picked from the best players to be obtained, but every man is encouraged to take up some sport. Each Y. M. C. A. hut keeps a supply of balls, bats, gloves, and other paraphernalia that is loaned to anyone who applies. The aim of the commanding officers of every cantonment is to keep all his men fit, mentally, physically, and morally. Nothing can rival athletics in this respect.

I have seen in northern camps and forts what a difference there is in the men during Winter and Summer. Throughout the cold months when athletics are impracticable, the men are not nearly so cocky and

cheerful as when baseball and other sports occupy their leisure moments.

Next to the national game, boxing is the favorite pastime. What the Y. M. C. A. and Lew Riess have done for baseball in Camp Johnston, the Knights of Columbus and Director Manion have equalled in promoting the manly art. Contests at every weight are conducted several times a week, and on "hikes" of more than a day's duration, gloves are taken with the company, and battles fought in the shady dells.

There are lots of unthinking people who declare sport in war is a waste of time. They forget the gallant Tommies who dribbled a football across the waste of No Man's Land to the trenches of the Hun, They forget the added quickness of brain and strength of arm that baseball

has given our Sammies and Jackies. They forget that boxing more than any other single thing trains a man in bayonet fighting.

There is another factor that has been overlooked, and that is the element of fair play. The beefeater and the Yankee are sportsmen, and sportsmen find no pleasure in maltreating the helpless. Baseball in Germany might have saved her the stain of mangled Belgium, of the *Lusitania*, of the "scrap of paper" episode; for baseball would have bred a different national viewpoint.

Baseball and boxing and the other sports favored by youth are by no means confined to the enlisted personnel. The officers indulge in them just as frequently as their subordinates.

Last Fall the officers at Camp Meade (the National Army cantonment for Pennsylvania and Maryland) had a football team that won many victories, including among their victims Eddie Mahan's famous Marines. Down here in Camp Johnston, though the officers and student officers have not organized regular teams, they spend as much of their spare time as possible (which isn't much these days) in playing ball.

In one way this camp, which lies twelve miles from Jacksonville, falls naturally an heir to sport. The city is the gateway to Florida, and through it stream, in the Winter time, the most famous celebrities of sportdom. Their presence stimulates the boys in khaki as nothing else could do. Early in March, Jess Willard sparred with his ex-trainer, Jack Phelon—now a soldier—and that exhibition gave boxing a wonderful impetus in camp.

I think I have told you enough to make you realize how the men in camp feel toward the continuance of sport. If baseball and other recreative games were to be abolished, it would hurt the morale of the soldiers more than any other single thing. And morale—or spirit—is of more value to an army than the heaviest guns.