

# David K. Brace: 1891-1971

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David K. Brace has been widely honored for his contributions to local, state, regional and national organizations. However, his lifelong efforts at improvement in quality and quantity of sports participation have never been acknowledged. Many of his ideas were not understood, others greeted with hostility. Yet, those which were implemented were successful. Since his death, several of his ideas have become widely accepted and credited to others. Brace's personal manuscripts and professional files, along with countless interviews provide evidence that throughout his career he adapted his carefully developed principles of evaluation toward unique innovations in sport.

While a graduate student and faculty member at Teacher's College, Columbia University, Brace experimented with measurement of achievement in sport skills. He devised his principles of "Achievement Standards" based upon specific goals which could be scored "pass-fail," and serve as objectives for instruction, tools for evaluation and screening, and measurements of accomplishment. These standards were the basis for the Brace Motor Ability Test, published in 1927, and of his subsequent endeavors in curriculum, physical fitness programs and interschool sport.

When Brace's manuscripts and speeches concerning the writing of Achievement Standards are compared with contemporary literature on Behavioral Objectives, it is evident that the terms are synonymous, and the guidelines for their preparation and application nearly identical. Contemporary writers cite curriculum guides based on Behavioral Objectives as "innovations of the 1970's." Brace wrote and published such guides for the State of Texas beginning in 1930, but no reference has been found to his work.

Contemporary historians cite "Operation Fitness" as the first such program not to interrupt ongoing programs of school sport. In 1943, Brace utilized his principles to organize and implement the Texas Victory Fitness Clubs which introduced sport instruction, club, intramural and extramural competition to thousands for the first time. The program was similar to that currently advocated by the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sport. Although the effects of Brace's program on the Texas schools was permanent, no reference to this work has been found.

Financial difficulties have caused renewed interests in testing prospective recipients of College Athletic Scholarships. Lack of valid instruments is cited as reason not to seek permissive NCAA regulations. In 1946, Brace devised a Battery which selected 77% of the starting members of the University of Texas football team. He subsequently devised a plan whereby such testing might be administered by high school personnel through the University Interscholastic League. This would violate no NCAA regulations but would provide every prospective athlete, regardless of team record or publicity, of an equitable, objective rating. Increasingly sophisticated instruments for evaluation, as well as computerized data processing make the plan more viable today than when Brace proposed it. Should such a plan become reality, it is hoped that Brace will be given the deserved credit.

Many more examples could be cited. David K. Brace was a successful athlete, teacher and administrator. Yet his greatest hope, seeing his principles utilized to improve and spread sport participation nationwide was never fulfilled. Today his ideas are winning widespread acceptance, but his unique contributions are seldom mentioned. It has been the purpose of this paper to re-examine Brace's works in light of contemporary developments so that his achievements might attain the recognition long overdue.