
Sport and the Terrible Swift Sword

by
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This research studied Civil War sport in the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia. Sport was found to be an integral part of the soldier's style of life. This was reflected through the ways sport functioned in the lives of soldiers. Sport was used as a training technique to improve performances in training tasks. During holiday seasons sport became an opiate freeing soldiers from nostalgic thoughts of holidays at home. Holiday sport served as an escape from the despondency of soldier life. It substituted for more traditional holiday activities which were not possible because of the circumstances of army life. During winter encampments sport broke monotony and produced enjoyment. It may have been an outgrowth of soldiers' exuberance and it may have improved morale. On the march, before battle, and occasionally during battle sport occurred. At this times sport produced excitement and functioned as a dispute settling technique. At times the war was overlooked as soldiers took time for sport. Sport served a variety of functions and was able to exist under a variety of circumstances. Sport could exist and serve a variety of functions because it was an integral part of the soldier's style of life.