

Learning Can Be Fun: Student Made Movies Re-Create Sport History

by

Joan Paul

Southeastern Louisiana University

As old puritanical concepts often relate play with the workings of the devil, modern day academicians have been slow to accept play and/or fun as possible factors associated with scholarly pursuits. However, it is slowly being recognized that enjoyment of any activity is a prerequisite to total involvement or commitment to that activity. In an attempt to get students involved in enjoyable studies related to sport history, a number of innovative approaches were used in my spring, 1977 undergraduate class. One of the most successful ways of getting all of the students involved during class was through the use of game boards I developed on physical education and sport history in western civilization. These games created total group discussions, they stimulated deeper thinking, and appeared to accelerate their learning and retention of the material covered. They were received enthusiastically by the students and requests were made to play the games outside of class as well as in.

Another project that totally involved some of the students was in making a movie. Two men and a woman chose to make a film on the history of basketball. This demanded that they thoroughly research the subject, write the script, secure the actors, set up their props, film the action, edit the film, and then write and record the commentary. As neat, cut and dried as this description sounds, the task was monumental in that the students nor the instructor had ever had a previous experience in such a project. Some of the biggest headaches to the students were the failure of some of their "actors" to show up on the days of the filming, and for the "actors" lack of regard for correct "period" dress. There were only certain hours that they could reserve the old gym for filming because of other school functions necessitating use of the building, and the use of school photographic equipment had to be scheduled around many other school activities.

The movie covers the historic beginning of basketball, some of the prominent personalities associated with the game, rule changes, and other pertinent facts relative to the game's development. Many of the other class members served as actors in the film, and the whole class began to show an interest in the project and in the history of basketball. It is not being shown now because of its sophistication, complete authenticity, or because it sheds new evidence into the history of basketball. Its weaknesses are evident, but it is being shown as one example of the type of activity you can do in a history class to involve your students in interesting and meaningful learning experiences.