

SPORT: The Essence of Life

"The essence of life is to play a sport".

To approximately 75% of the world, this statement could well be true. No matter how trivial that sport may be, it is still a sport. It provides a host of emotions essential to the health and well-being of most individuals. For truth, even as a spectator, if you are deeply involved in the struggle or the playing field in front of yours, you are also a participant. Sport provides relaxation, participation, "the thrill of victory, the agony of defeat", a sense of physical well-being, a deep pride in your own personal skill, and every other fine, basic emotion.

In short, sport is a Panacea, a cure-all, it relieves you from the boredom of the everyday life you lead, and places you above and

beyond the petty conspiracies and conflicts of life.

But sport is not all fun; sport is sacrifice (you've gotta pay the price); sport is dedication (when the going gets tough, the tough get going); sport is the ability to compete with the desperation of a dying man on his last grasp, but if you lose, to accept defeat like a man, and try it again.

I realize that this is a funny way to start a column, but to most of the students of this university who do not play a society sport (95%), varsity sport, in their eyes, is strictly one sided.

As a student at this university I participated in varsity football and hockey. I spent a lot of time in athletics. Although occasionally I felt as if I was wasting my time, the experience, on the whole, was one of the happiest and most informative of my entire life to date. My feelings about sport hit rock-bottom two years ago when two sisters, both students at Dal-

housie, said to me "You only play football and hockey. What do you contribute to the university?" If I had been capable of it, you would have heard the explosion in Truro.

However, I do feel that most students do think along these lines. But the time of reckoning has come. I would like to describe to you what goes on behind the scenes in just one sport in preparation for every season and every game. The sport I have chosen is football.

To begin, every year, in mid-July, the coach mails to all returning players, all freshmen and all other students coming out for football that he knows about, a comprehensive list telling the players where and when the training camp will start, how long it will last, and the kind of physical condition he expects a player to be in at the start of training camp. He is very explicit. Camp usually starts on Sept. 1. The players stay

in residence. Each player must be able to run a mile in six-and-one-half minutes and be able to do fifty situps and fifty pushups. If a player cannot do them, he will attempt them every day, once a day, until he does.

On the second day, regular practices start. The team practices three times a day for eleven days. Two of the practices are in full gear (i.e. wearing all of their equipment) and one practice is in light gear (players wear only their helmets).

Following camp, regular practices start. The players during the regular season, have to practice every day during the week from 5:15 until 7:30. By the time they have supper and get home it is nine o'clock, and then they must try to study. This routine continues for two months, over half of the fall session. This means that for two months they are contributing four hours a day of their time to the university.

Also, every year half of the Tiger's games are on the road. This means that they are travelling for three out of six weekends, on which they play regular season games. It should be quite obvious that in order to do this, they must have a great deal of dedication, and they must sacrifice a great deal of studying time. Not only this, no fan can realize what practices are like to a losing team that has been losing, and over the past few years we have lost our share of games. It takes real guts to face practices every day.

So in closing, I would like to say that all you armchair quarterbacks who sit in the stands and gripe, think before you yell at the coach or laugh at the players. They have put a lot more into it than you can see or realize, and you don't have the right to do anything except cheer them on and praise the effort and skill with which they play the game.

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