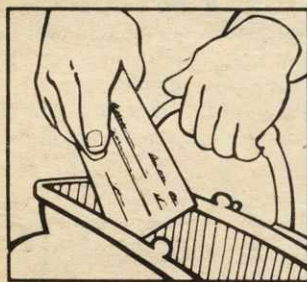


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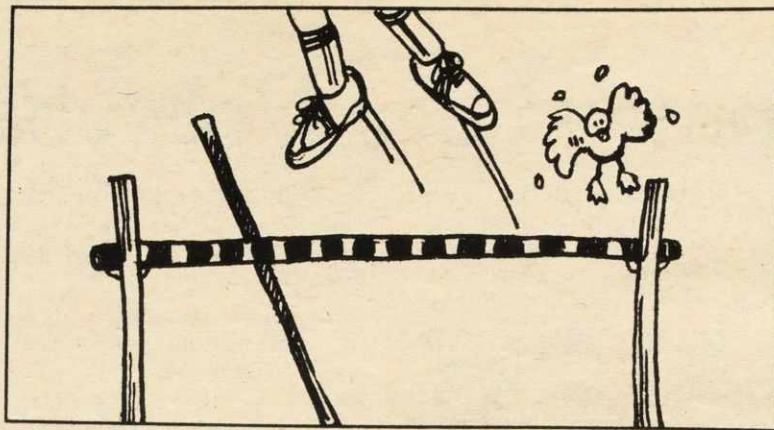
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Thoughts on excellence

by Lisa Timpf

What is excellence in athletics?

There are two basic ways of perceiving excellence. In absolute terms one must be **the best**, or one is not excellent. In relative terms one must be **the best one can be**—a fulfillment of personal potential. This form of excellence is less easy to measure objectively, more relevant on a personal level, and more difficult to define than the first variety.

The athlete who strives for this second type of excellence, "personal excellence" for the purposes of this article, still feels the need to measure his/her performance against others. Only, in this case, recognition that he/she is not **the best** need not be soul-destroying if the athlete has been able to perform up to his/her potential.

Looking back

by Lisa Timpf

In the sports pages of early Gazettes, references to women's sports are sparse. However, in 1913, the heading "Co-Ed Athletics" began to appear, with a roundup of women's intramural and interschool sporting activities.

As early as 1913, a women's basketball team representing Dalhousie played against Acadia. According to the Gazette, however, the Dal team was hampered in their efforts by little funding and few practises.

By 1922, a girls' basketball league, including Dal, King's College, and Acadia had been formed. Dal visited Acadia in Wolfville in February of 1922, and won by a 21-18 margin. Noted the Gazette:

"It was the first game of the newly organized Girls' Intercollegiate Basketball League comprising Acadia, Kings and Dal, and the girls were cheered by the announcement that W.H. Chase, Esq., of Wolfville had donated a fine silver cup as a trophy." (February 15, 1922)

Under the guidance of coach Miss Ward, Dal won the intercollegiate title that year. In addition to the intercollegiate games, they also played exhibition games with area schools such as Halifax Ladies' College.

The following year, King's College dropped out of the league, and Mount Allison entered. In 1924, the Mt. Allison class of 1923 donated a trophy "for competition among the Co-Eds of the Maritime Colleges", with the stipulation made that "the cup will be awarded for annual competition and will finally be awarded to the teams securing three consecutive or five individual wins." (February 6, 1924)

This practise of awarding the permanent possession of a trophy to the team or individual who won it a specified number of times consecutively was not a new practice at the time; George Brown, a Halifax rower, was the recipient of two Cogswell Belts, emblematic of the Halifax Rowing Championships, for winning that event five consecutive times not once, but twice.

While the Dal women's basketball has its present-day sharpshooters, it is unlikely that many of them will match the feat

The concept of personal excellence is seen in the pursuit of the "personal best" of marathoners and track people. The concept of personal excellence acknowledges that not only Olympic athletes, but also the Masters (over 40) athlete, the handicapped athlete, and the player on the last-place team who logs extra practise time to hone his/her skills are all capable of achieving excellence on their own terms.

Excellence transcends the mediocre. It excludes the possibility of being satisfied with the average performance or effort. It involves dedication, frustration, and endurance. It is a challenge not to be satisfied with less than the best one can be.

It has been said that North American sport is the province of the superstar. The superstar mentality is one which stifles the desire to excel in athletes who recognize that they are not quite good enough to be the best. They feel that if they can't be number one, why bother participating?

Perhaps it is time to supplant the superstar mentality with an endorsement of the idea of personal excellence.

Rather than judging his/her success by the win/loss, points scored record, athletes should consider the questions, "How close did I come to fulfilling my potential?" and "Did I fulfil the goals I set for myself at the start of the season?"

Sport can be a personally rewarding endeavour. It can also be a frustrating, soul-destroying experience. But the recognition of the concept of personal excellence can transform sport from a one-winner activity to a human endeavour in which all participants have the chance to appreciate their personal ability to excel.

The challenge to recognize personal excellence is a challenge to the media to recognize excellence in areas other than high-profile, high-performance athletics. It is a challenge to the spectator to recognize and applaud excellence in effort rather than merely in statistics. It is a challenge to the coach to encourage athletes to aspire to be the best that they can be.

And it is a challenge to the athlete to recognize excellence as a personally relevant mandate to discover and expand upon the best that is within themselves.

of Isabel Woods in 1929. A game featuring Dal against King's College is described as follows:

"With Isabel Woods scoring sixty points and Marg MacDonald seventeen, the Dal girls' hoop team repulsed King's by a 79-12 score." (February 22, 1929)

It should be noted, however, that the team were competing under the Spalding Rules, which restricted players to occupying specific areas of the court; for this reason, the forwards could be expected to score a fair number of points because they were only allowed in the offensive zone. However, scoring sixty points under any condition is no mean feat.

In 1931, a meeting at Shirreff Hall saw representatives from Acadia, Mt. Allison, King's, and Dalhousie meeting to draw up the schedule, and agreeing "to play the Canadian Women's Basketball Rules rather than the Spalding Rules played in former years." (February 4, 1931) This brought the game closer to its modern-day equivalent by lifting the offensive zone/defensive zone restrictions.

The role of the referee has, it seems, always been subject to unfavourable comment. The referees of the 1920s did not escape the odd criticism. The Gazette, commenting about a Dal-Acadia women's basketball game which Dal won 25-20, noted:

"A feature of Friday's game, and a disagreeable one at that, was the work of the referee. The intercollegiate game is exceptionally slow at its fastest and this fact, along with too much whistle, left the fans with little to enthuse over." (March 1, 1929)

As was the case for all women's sports, the early teams were accompanied on trips by a "chaperone". Mt. Allison appeared at Dalhousie on one occasion "accompanied by their coach Miss J. MacMillan, their gym instructress, Florence Westhaver, and Jessie Rippey who chaperoned the party." (March 11, 1926) This particular Mt. Allison-Dal matchup in 1926 attracted "a hundred or more spectators" who, according to the Gazette, "witnessed one of the best exhibitions of the indoor sport seen here for a long while." (March 11, 1926)

Some of the Mt. Allison players, apparently, had taken time out before the game to visit the hairdresser, and were consequently "a little tardy in showing up for the match" -- a state of affairs unlikely to be greeted with enthusiasm by more modern-day coaches.

If Sherlock were around today



by Mark Alberstat

The disappearance of Irish race horse Shergar reminded me of the Sherlock Holmes story *The Adventure of Silver Blaze*. Silver Blaze was the name of a race

horse which was abducted, his trainer murdered, just days before the famed Wessex Cup.

Shergar was the winner of the Irish and English Derbies. Silver Blaze was said to have had a "brilliant" track record.

One of the slight differences between the two cases is that Shergar, unlike Silver Blaze, was held for ransom. The lack of a ransom demand led Holmes to believe that Silver Blaze was being held to keep him from

running and probably winning the Wessex Cup—he was the odds-on favorite at 3-1.

The mystery presented many puzzling clues to Holmes, including a stable dog who didn't bark the night the horse was kidnapped, lame sheep, and a wax vesta. Holmes of course saw through these clues to solution.

Silver Blaze was recovered in time to run in the Cup, which subsequently won, six lengths ahead of the second place horse.

Unfortunately, not all horse stories turn out so well. The officials in both England and Ireland could not locate Shergar and have now assumed that the horse did suffer an eye injury in the abduction and was destroyed shortly afterward, as one note from the abductors claimed.

Surely if Sherlock Holmes had been invited into the case as he had been in Silver Blaze's case, the great detective would have sorted things out soon enough.