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Development of Human Character Through Sports

*By Shoichiro Takenaka**

The true nature of sports, which constitute a special segment of human activities, eludes ready interpretation. The mental images formed of sports are quite manifold from person to person; some support the view that sports are conducted for diversified yet useful purposes such as preservation of health, improvement of physical strength, and cultivation of character, whereas others dismiss sports as meaning nothing more than indulgence in personal taste and pleasure. Up to this day, numerous persons have attempted to define the term "sports" in varying wording. Although there still are wide-spread disputes over the definition of this term, the author is rather sympathetic toward the opinion that sports are purposeless.

Many people can hardly resist the strong temptation to play their favorite sports simply because they are fervent lovers of sports. Sports are such kind of affairs. The performance of sports, therefore, has nothing to do with the question of virtue and vice, and this assertion lends support to the view that sports are purposeless.

Increasingly more physical exercises have come to adopt practices which are proved medically to be rational. This is not aimed at the preservation of health. Rather it is because those who engage in these exercises know that the adoption of these practices is the shortcut to the improvement of technique.

There is no objection to the assertion that sports are, in substance, a form of amusements. In order for sports to be discriminated from amusements as primitive activities, however, there are a number of requirements to be satisfied. One of the most important of all such requirements is that sports go through the process of "systematic exercises".

Spectators watching sports from the stand are at liberty to perceive aesthetic sensation, receive impression of moral feeling, or conceive contempt or dislike at the sight of the acts of those engaged in sports, whatever feelings they may manifest, however,

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those participating in sports ought not to allow their mental attitude to show any reaction to them. Although players of sports and spectators within one and the same stadium, they are in two separate worlds.

In a competitive sport, the greatest courtesy a sportman can accord his competitor is the utmost effort with which he plays the sport in question. Reservedness manifested in the play of sport is no courtesy, but is rather a rude thing for the competitor.

Teachers of physical education demand their pupils to observe rule, spirit of perseverance, and cooperation at the scene of actual education. Needless to mention, teachers are required to keep in mind the importance of moral training at all times. If this fails, the significance of physical exercise will be lost. It would be interesting to observe pupils who are moved from the scene of physical education to a sport ground. To their great surprise, teachers will likely find their pupils obey their demand so willingly and of their own accord, by sharp contrast to the fact that at the scene of physical exercise the very same demand must be repeated on countless occasions.

When the word "cultivation of human character" is uttered with the moral value in view, has this anything to do with the conduct of sports? To this question, I am not in a position to answer "yes" or "No".

In the cultivation of human character in the author, it is certain that there has existed something which apparently has played a role, the role which nothing other than sports have been able to play. Then, what is this "something"? For a long time past, the author gave it thought whenever he found time to do so. The answer which has been sought to this point is merely this: "The mentality that permits us to devote all energy and passion to what has nothing to do with material interests".