Dreams Do Come True

Future scholars in the field of leisure and recreation may look back on the 1980s as a time when the human propensity for fantasy was focused and successfully marketed in new role-playing leisure pursuits. Brandmeyer and Alexander examine the adult baseball camp as one popular form of this new fantasy leisure. The expensive camps enable the avid fans who still imagine themselves as ball players to travel through a week-long simulated spring training camp complete with accompanying ex-big-leaguers. The authors use an interactionist approach to take the readers through all the various activities experienced by the campers. From the first bus ride to the ballpark to the final big game and awards ceremony, the camps blend practice sessions, intrasquad games, and clubhouse socials so the campers may learn the techniques, language, and lore of the game they love. Brandmeyer and Alexander point out that most campers are rather affluent and well-educated and simply want to play ball with some ex-big-leaguers. It is the chance to strike out, steal on, throw out, or otherwise impress real ballplayers that makes the camps so enticing. Further engrossments (an element of play which reveals the loss of self within the fantasy) include wearing your team’s uniform every day, traditional pregame clubhouse rituals, playing hurt and feeling no pain, and the recognition of one’s ballplayer status as the ex-big-leaguers make them feel like real team members. The authors also point out the important role of the sports media in helping to establish the campers’ imaginary social worlds. Fans are able to win and lose right along with their team and favorite players. This itself is free promotion to the factory camps who can in turn let the fans shake hands and be teammates with some of their favorite major-leaguers. The authors conclude that further attention should be paid to these commercially successful fantasy camps which do make dreams come true.


Fitness Can and Should Be Fun

Recent research has shown that American children are fatter than they were 20 years ago and are not as fit as they should be. One possible explanation is that we as health educators may be putting our emphasis in the wrong place. According to Corbin, too many physical educators are overly concerned with improving physical fitness test scores that may be unattainable and discouraging to some children and not concerned enough with promoting active life-styles whereby kids retain their enthusiasm for physical activity and strive to improve their own levels of fitness. Similarly, the author feels “the most important goal is to help each child achieve optimal personal physical fitness and to enjoy it enough to want to keep doing it.” He uses the acronym FIT to illustrate key concepts associated with keep-
ing children attuned to exercise and fitness. F is for fun: Children who enjoy exercise will get fit. I is for intrinsic motivation: Children are intrinsically motivated to play and need the opportunity to be successful in play, to try new things, and to explore with their bodies. T is for Two C’s, competence and confidence: We must reward effort and reinforce the process of play, exercise, and activity, not the product, which is fitness. The author concludes that young children will enjoy fitness and keep their intrinsic motivation and fitness dreams alive if the emphasis is on successful experiences rather than on the achievement of specific scores on fitness tests and if their efforts are rewarded and reinforced.


Competition and Intrinsic Motivation

By offering a Best Performance Award on a stabilometer task to fifth and sixth grade French-Canadian boys in a tournament, Vallerand and his colleagues investigated the effect of competition on perceived competence and intrinsic motivation. The subjects were randomly assigned to either the winning or losing competitive condition. Perceived competence was assessed following performance on a 4-point scale and intrinsic motivation was operationalized as initial task choice and time spent on the stabilometer during a postexperiment free-choice period. Results indicated that losers were less intrinsically motivated and perceived themselves to be less capable than winners. The authors concluded that the findings support the cognitive evaluation theory of Deci and Ryan (1980, 1985). Vallerand and his colleagues further suggest that competition can affect intrinsic motivation by reducing an individual’s sense of self-determination as well as “by leading individuals to perceive themselves as being incompetent through their inability to obtain scarce performance-contingent rewards.”


A Parents’ Guide to Youth Sports

Many Americans believe there is nothing more basic to child rearing than having their kids participate in organized youth sport programs. However, in recent years many have come to realize that the world of sports for youth is not an entirely innocent or happy one. Plagued by overzealous adults often imposing unchildlike standards on children’s sports, questions arise as to whether we have overorganized, overregulated, overstructured, and overtrained our kids. In an excellent review article, Katherine Martin interviews various authorities from sports medicine and sport psychology, asking the question, “Is winning everything?” and assessing what parents can do to make the sport experience a more positive one for their kids. Topics include parental expectations, parental self-reflections, stress in kids’ sports, organized versus unorganized sport participation, developmental guidelines, role of the coach, and girls in sports. In addition, nine suggestions are offered to help parents make their child’s involvement in sport a more positive experience. These in-