

Army School of Physical Training,  
Aldershot.

25th August, 1941

Address by Colonel G.N.Dyer, CBE, DSO, Commandant, of the  
School, to Representatives of the Press

Gentlemen,

I am very glad to have this opportunity of  
welcoming you to the Army School of Physical Training.

This/the headquarters of what you might call physical  
fitness in the Army and also the headquarters of the Army  
Physical Training Corps.

Army physical training has what you might call three  
objects. Firstly, it gets a man fit; secondly, it keeps him  
fit, and thirdly, it re-fits him after he has become a  
casualty.

Every man who joins the Army goes through a regular course  
at his Training Centre of Training Unit. The length of that  
course varies with the various Arms of the Service. During  
that course he does three-quarters of an hour actual physical  
training every day. To get the full benefit of physical  
training it must be continuous and it must be progressive.

Now, we here train officers as supervisors in their units  
and we train all the non-commissioned officers of the Army  
Physical Training Corps.

Those instructors of the Army Physical Training are spread  
out all over the World. We give them to units and other  
formations to act as advisers to the Commanding Officers in  
making and keeping their men physically fit.

Now the Army system which we use here is not designed to  
produce big muscles. Big muscles are no use to anyone. What it  
does do is to teach a man to use the muscles he has got to the  
best advantage. Large muscles are not of great advantage  
because they tend to make a man slow, but if we tone up a man's  
muscles to do their job we consider that that is the principal  
object, the idea being that a soldier's job is very largely one  
of endurance. He has got to endure and to have stamina to stick  
hardship and so forth.

The object of physical training is to teach a man to use his  
muscles in the normal military work of marching, running, lifting  
shells, and so on with the least amount of muscle energy.  
If a man marches 15 miles in the correct manner, he saves  
energy to go into action or do whatever his job is at the end  
of it. We lay great stress on that point, that a man must do  
his job as a soldier with the least amount of muscular energy;  
to reserve his strength.

In war we have that definite object. Everything we do in the  
physical training line is definitely directed to making the man  
a fit soldier with plenty of endurance; that is the main object.

You know as well as I do that 'All Work and No Play make  
Jack a dull boy' and so in addition to the purely physical  
training, we teach here the practice and organisation of every  
form of recreation. We teach how to coach and referee football,  
coach and referee hockey, how to teach boxing, how to organise  
a boxing meeting and how to organise and run all the various  
what we call 'Minor Team Games' with special reference to  
what are called small detachments. As you know, many men are  
split up into small detachments and their recreation is a  
difficult problem and so we have here a regular system of  
teaching how to organise recreation of all sorts. We know that  
soldiers prefer football but you have to realise that football  
takes a full-size pitch and only 22 men are exercised in  
1½ hours, and a football pitch is not always available. And so  
we have got to find substitutes and we do that by teaching  
what we call Minor Team Games, such as Basket Ball, Soft Ball,  
Handball and various varieties of football played with the

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hands, played sitting down and all sorts of funny ways.

The idea is to give good exercise and bring in the competitive element and keep them cheerful - recreation for the mind as well as the body.

Every Corps instructor is able to teach boxing. But every Corps instructor is not a champion boxer; we teach him how to teach a man the elements of boxing.

So we may say that this work of this School is,

- (i) Army Physical Training;
- (ii) Equally important, Recreational Training.

I did mention the question of re-fitting a man after he has become a casualty. A great many of our Corps instructors are trained in the application of Remedial exercises for every kind of disability. These exercises are only applied under the supervision of a qualified medical officer, but we find it of tremendous value and we find now that we get a man back into the ranks after being a casualty in a much shorter time than ever done before. This is done by Remedial exercises and Remedial recreation that is carried out at various depots throughout the country and has proved of enormous value. It means that instead of having a man unfit for a considerable time we have shortened it down considerably and we are getting very valuable experience in re-fitting a man after operations such as appendicitis and so on. We are getting extraordinarily good results from the various Remedial exercises and Corrective exercises that are being carried out.

Well, gentlemen, that gives you very shortly what is going on here. The average number of students we have here is about 400. As a rule about 140-150 are officers; about 100 training to be A.P.T. Corps instructors and the balance are Corps instructors who are here to be refreshed and brought up to date.

Experiments are always being carried out here. We have our own resident Medical Officer - anatomical and physiological aspect. We are always trying out new things. When we think we have found a winner we apply to the War Office and get authority to bring it in. But we do not bring it in unless we are satisfied that it is an improvement on methods we have tried before.

You are now going to see a demonstration of about 256 men doing physical training exercises, followed by running exercises then endurance exercises done with logs averaging about 180 lbs in weight. They then change into battle dress and do the running again in battle dress and then go over one of the obstacles on the course.

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