

OLYMPIC POINTEREAST READY FOR BATTLE OF SPORT

Hotfoot to Helsinki - for the Olympic Games of '52. That's the ambition of athletes the world over. First pictures from behind the Iron Curtain for some months show how Poland is getting ready for the clash of nations on the sports-field. Though not yet officially confirmed - it is expected that Russia, too, will for the first time, send a strong team to the Olympiad. The Eastern world is doing its training the scientific way. Top sportsmen - and women - are going back to school, for the Soviet-controlled states are making no bones about the fact that they are out to win. Study of the body's reaction to physical exertion comes first in the theoretical curriculum.

The practical side is worked out in the spacious grounds of Warsaw's sports academy. There, a squad of instructors keep the students on their toes - ready to deal with any situation.

Whether this type of mass training breeds winners, only the Helsinki Games can tell. Those in favour of it, point to the pre-war successes of the Germans, and the triumph in England of the Moscow Dynamos. Those against say that this sort of thing turns the sportsman into a machine, kills the amateur and stifles all individualism. While ours may be the right way of playing the game for the game's sake it's that word "winner" that carries international prestige.

Gone are the days when a sporting triumph brought fame only to the individual. Unless Britain prepares seriously to meet the challenge of other nations, we'll maintain our tradition of being the world's best losers.