

IS LITTLE LEAGUE GOOD OR BAD?

By RALPH R. GOMPERTZ

(Editor's note: A number of articles on the subject were consulted in preparing this report. They include Ben Solomon's brochure "Little League - Menace or Blessing?" [critical]; Life's "Kids Thrive on Competition in Little League Baseball," [favorable] June 28, 1954; and American Home's "Little League—For or Against?" [pro and con] November, 1955. Some individual unpublished reports and ideas were also studied and considered.)

Baseball is a great game. But the moment that you mention Little League, baseball is no longer just a sport. It becomes a controversial issue.

Like all controversial issues, Little League has captured the popular imagination. It has achieved enviable success. And in the process it has developed great virtues and also some serious shortcomings.

Torrance, like thousands of communities across the nation, has its Little League program which is directed toward boys between 9-12 years of age. There is a northern league, a central league, and a southern league.

Competition — Good or Bad?

A competitive spirit if approached wisely is a good thing. But Little League's use of competition is neither good nor wise, opponents of the program claim.

As long as children compete on their own level and at their own pace and are judged on their own terms by fair-minded adults who only have the child's welfare at heart, competition is a good and wholesome thing.

But this is not so with Little League, detractors of the program continue.

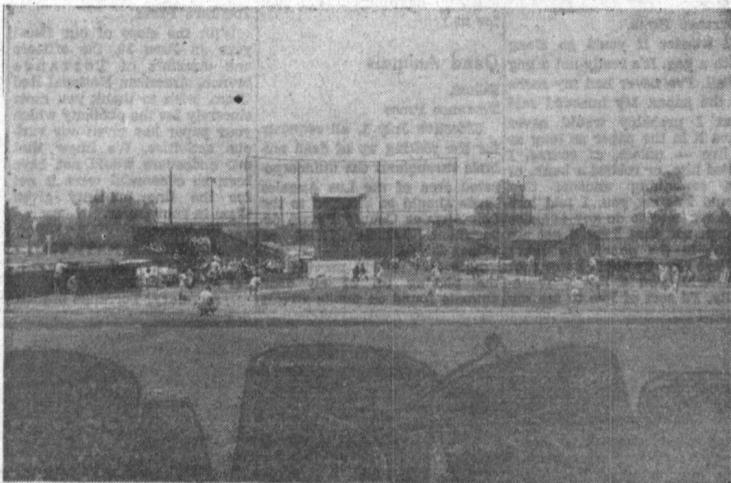
The children are whipped into near-hysteria. The emphasis is placed on winning — sometimes at all costs. And victory-minded spectators, coaches, and parents demand of children what they should only be asking of adults.

This creates emotional disturbances too difficult for a child to cope with.

But partisans of Little League come quickly to the rescue with the thought that life itself is competitive and that the sooner a child learns this, the better. Learning how to fight for victory, and then accept either triumph or disaster gracefully, strengthens the individual. This is the moral behind recreation in general, and Little League in particular, proponents claim.

Cost

The excessive cost of the program and the relatively few



people whom it benefits has also become the center of much heated discussion.

There are 60 ballplayers in one league, yet it costs \$1500 per summer to run the program. For that amount of money, the city could run an all-year recreation program at one elementary school with a Saturday attendance of 120-220 youngsters.

Advocates of Little League, however, counter with the argument that the money being spent on Little League would not be available for general recreational purposes. Some individuals want Little League—and ONLY Little League!

While on the subject of money, someone will usually denounce the glaring commercialism of the Little League program.

Sports News

Pvt. Barefoot Ends Course

Pvt. Frank L. Barefoot, son of Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Barefoot, 1921 1/2 259th pl., Lomita, recently was graduated from The Transportation School's stevedoring course at Fort Eustis, Va.

Barefoot was trained to load and unload cargo and to maintain freight records.

Barefoot entered the Army in December 1955 and received basic training at Fort Ord. He attended Naborne High School.

EC Swim Program Announced

The summer recreational swimming program at El Camino college has been extended to include Saturdays. The schedule is as follows:

Recreational swimming for all ages. Children under seven years of age must be accompanied by their parents:

8 a.m. to 9 a.m.; 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.; 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.; 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

Recreational swimming for adults only (18 years of age and over):

11 a.m. to 12 noon; 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Prices are 10c for children (under 18) and 25c for adults (18 and over), for each hour. This Saturday schedule begins June 23 through August 25, 1956.

New Babe Ruth Park Negotiated

Property at the northeast end of the Torrance airport is being cleared now for use as a Babe Ruth League Ball diamond.

It is anticipated that the diamond will be used this summer for the Babe Ruth farm league and for the regular league next summer; according to Norm Hawkins.

Negotiations for the use of the area were carried out with George Wing of Hi-Shear; Landon Gray of Sheridan-Gray; Mrs. Christina Wentworth and John Walti of Longren; Pierce Venable, Dave Desseau, and Nat Harty, of the Babe Ruth organization.

Individuals interested in helping with the development of the park may contact Hawkins at FR. 5-1665.

DAV to Meet

The Disabled American Veterans and their auxiliary will hold a regular monthly meeting Friday, June 29, at the YMCA, 2080 Washington st., Torrance. The meeting is open to interested individuals.

Recommendations

Various changes have been recommended to meet certain charges and correct some of the abuses. It has been proposed that public funds should be used strictly for public recreation, not Little League; that trained leaders should be used; that uniforms be reduced to T-shirts and caps; that record-keeping be eliminated; and that public recreation departments assume full control.

In the final analysis, the fate of Little League is tied up intimately with the enthusiasm or dissatisfaction of those who are responsible for its phenomenal success—the mothers and

fathers who want to give their children a chance to "play ball!" (Editor's note: How do you feel about this matter? We welcome discussion and will be glad to publish your opinions under Letters to the Editor.)



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