

PHYSICAL FITNESS IN THE MODERN AGE

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In a sports page interview last month, a famous internist from the Lahey Clinic took issue with the oft-repeated, hackneyed theme that high school and college football finds its justification as a great builder of character, fitness and bodily strength. Having lost the article, we cannot quote the doctor directly but the meat of his argument was that the physical fitness benefits derived from a previous gridiron career were largely mythical: that conversely, it often delivered into adult manhood a number of unfit specimens with a tendency to beefiness and obesity who suffered from recurrent shoulder dislocations, missing teeth, battered knees and old back injuries. He was all for the physical conditioning of young men but felt that the direction of such training should be aimed at producing more male adults with a firm and hard handshake, a back that could stand up under a hearty slap and a digestive tract better conditioned to withstand the rigors of prolonged cocktail parties and lunchtime Martinis.