

# Health, Strength and Fitness

A Cheery Chat concerning  
physical fitness and athletics

By PERCY LONGHURST

EVERY right-thinking lad admires fitness—the fitness that will enable him to play a good part in any sport or game right up to the end without being winded or fagged.

Health, strength, and fitness are the three essential qualities, and the way to gain them is by physical exercises taken regularly; but they must be exercises of the right kind, not the uninteresting drill sergeant's sort.

I've heard it said more than once that a boy does not need these daily exercises, that he gets all the exercise he needs to make him strong and keep him healthy in his normal running about. That is not correct. All of us need exercise of a practical, rational, and developmental kind. And those who get it are the ones who shine at games and who do best at all kinds of sports.

Success in games depends upon strength and fitness, power of muscle and quickness of action, condition of wind and staying power. Skill, of course, does count. It is simply silly to under-rate the value of skill; but it is only too plain that strength and fitness, plus skill, is a far better and

stronger combination than skill plus weakness and want of condition.

I'm going to tell you how you may make yourself a better player than you are already and how you may enjoy your sports even more than you do now.

The first thing you have to bear in mind is that it does not matter a brass farthing how big and hard your muscles are if your lungs are not properly developed and your heart is not properly trained. How much good are you in a race or a boxing bout when your wind goes? Very little. Make sure that your lungs are well developed, well exercised; when they are, your wind won't go wrong. So when you get up every morning—and it must be every morning, because occasional exercise is worth little or nothing—before you are fully dressed, throw your bed-room window

open and give your lungs a bout of exercise—that is, deep breathing.

Deep breathing does *not* mean gulping air into your lungs, puffing out your chest like a pouter pigeon, and then trying to see how long you can hold your breath. That's all



Success in games depends upon fitness—and it is easy to see who isn't fit in this picture!



wrong. Beneficial deep breathing means taking in the fresh air naturally through the nose, slowly filling all of the lungs—not, as most people do, only just the top part—and being careful to get the air well down into the lowest part of the lungs. To do this, let the stomach come forward when you breathe in; tilt your chin a bit and, hands on hips, keep your shoulders from slinking forward. You know where your “wind” lies?

Well, if you can feel that part of your chest coming forward when you breathe in, you’ll know you are breathing correctly.

If you can’t do this standing up—some can’t at first—try it lying on your back, head slightly raised. In that position it is quite easy, and, after some practice, you’ll find you can do it standing erect.

Having filled the lungs, breathe out through the mouth, not too quickly, and making breathing out a real effort to empty the lungs of as much used-up air as possible. That used-up air is poisonous; the less you leave inside you, the better.

When you’ve taken ten such breaths you’ll be ready for something more vigorous. Before you get on to it, drink half a pint of cold water. After that, get on to another lung-developing movement, which is good also for broadening your chest and strengthening its muscles.

Stand erect with one foot well forward—change feet when you have done half the number of movements—arms extended forward, fists level with mouth and clenched knuckles uppermost. Now take in a full breath, and, as you do so, carry your weight



How much good are you in a boxing bout when your wind goes?

upon the forward foot; at the same time your arms go out sideways and then back as far as you can get them. Turn your hands over, palms up, as the arms are moving. Keep your arms still level with shoulders for a second, then lower the hands about a foot. Stay thus for two seconds, then, while you are breathing out, return to starting position. Make ten such movements.

Your middle-body muscles need exercise, and this also serves to keep the

internal organs working properly. Feet well apart, knees stiff all the way through, bend as far forward as you can, then rise and bend back ten times each way. Then ten times from side to side, one arm up, the other thrust down towards the floor. Change arms as you bend over to the other side. Keeping hips square and firm, turn the body from right to left and back again at the waist, ten times each way. This last exercise will keep your liver right.

Now we’ll deal with you below the waist. You know how important your lower back and abdominal muscles are—this next exercise will make them strong. Stand erect and, working the legs alternately, bring each knee close up to the body, then put down strongly. If you’ll keep your back quite straight and do not allow it to bend forward every time the knees come up, your back muscles will improve. From ten to fifteen movements of each leg will be quite enough.

Last exercise. Rise on tiptoes twenty to forty times, having your arms stretched—make an effort of this stretching—and breathing quite slowly. After this bout of work, finish dressing, and you’ll be hoping breakfast is ready.