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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Extracurricular Carries the Mission: Historical Perspectives on Games and Sports in Jesuit Education

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of extracurricular sports and activities in Jesuit education, tracing their historical development from the early modern period to the present. Contrary to the perception that Jesuit schools adopted extracurricular activities, including sports, solely in response to external cultural trends, the study highlights how these activities have been integral to Jesuit pedagogy's holistic vision. Through examples from the early modern sources and a focus on the French and Northern American contexts between the nineteenth and early twenty centuries, the article reveals the ways in which sports, games, and physical education have contributed to fostering formative education within Jesuit institutions. Emphasizing the centrality of extracurricular activities for Jesuit pedagogy, the study sheds light on how Jesuit educational institutions uniquely align these activities with their educational philosophy, impacting students' intellectual, physical, and moral formation.

Keywords:
extracurricular activities, sports, holistic education, historical pedagogy

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Preamble

This article is the first in a series dedicated to the history of the extracurricular dimensions of Jesuit pedagogy.[1] By "extracurricular," I refer to a range of activities—along with what I will later describe as "non-activities"—that took place in Jesuit schools. These were either not explicitly addressed in official regulations or mentioned only briefly, leading to their common interpretation as having a secondary importance. Although the full list of such activities is broad, I categorize them into four main areas for clarity: active leisure (recreations, games, and sports); well-being (rest and vacations, health policies, country holidays); performing arts (theater, ballet, music, speech and debate); and the cultivation of faith and service (sodalities, devotions).[2]

A key factor in the popularity of Jesuit schools during the early modern period, extracurricular activities have remained central to the education offered by Jesuit institutions from the restoration of the Society of Jesus in 1814 to the present day. Yet, despite their impact on the lives of both students and faculty over the centuries, these activities have not garnered the attention they deserve. The historiographical focus has often been placed on curricular foundations, continuities, and developments—a process I refer to as the "monumentalization" of the *Ratio studiorum*.[3] Others have

1 This series of articles originated from an invitation I received from Strake Jesuit College Preparatory (Houston, Texas) to deliver a lecture and lead a seminar with faculty and staff on November 8, 2024. I would like to express my gratitude to Mark McNeil, Sharon Sheara, Trip Norkus, and Jeff Johnson, S.J., along with all their colleagues—many of whom I have had the honor of engaging in conversations about Jesuit pedagogy through my courses at Boston College—for their invitation and generous friendship.

2 The names used in the passage are intended as conventional expressions for groups of activities that would now be included under broader categories. These names may not actually appear in historical documents, nor do the specific activity names in parentheses necessarily reflect the terminology used in the past. For example, "Speech and Debate" is a modern term, but Jesuit pedagogy since the 16th century has involved similar activities. The list of activities provided are examples rather than an exhaustive enumeration. Other areas, such as journalism, student government, and administrative boards, could also be included, though they appeared more recently in the history of Jesuit schools and colleges.

3 The tendency of certain historians in the past to essentialize Jesuit education by deriving its core pedagogical principles solely from the *Ratio studiorum*, thereby diminishing the impact of local adaptations and historical developments on the evolution of the Jesuit educational tradition, can be characterized as a process of "monumentalization." If one instead envisions a "living" Jesuit pedagogy, it is perhaps more apt to conceive of it as a historical corpus subject to change and progression—a unique narrative comprised of transformative moments and adaptations over time.

concentrated on outlining the nature and evolution of specific activities within the realm of Jesuit education. However, few have recognized the complexity and educational value of extracurricular activities within Jesuit pedagogy.[4]

Particularly in the historical context of North American secondary and higher education, the prevailing narrative portrays these activities as products of a historical, passive adaptation to local circumstances—mirroring what mainstream schools offered to attract students in an increasingly competitive, predominantly private educational market. According to this view, extracurricular activities became part of Jesuit education through a combination of "accommodation" to dominant trends and the gradual weakening of resistance from religious superiors.

Since the Jesuit tradition of education is a living one, the role of extracurricular activities within the educational model of Jesuit schools, colleges, and universities extends beyond the realm of historiography and engages directly with contemporary practices. However, a historiographical reassessment of the pivotal role they played for Jesuit pedagogy seems necessary. Indeed, the contemporary framework for evaluating institutional alignment with Jesuit educational traditions has evolved substantially from its historical emphasis on curricular content and administrative structures. Modern assessment criteria now center on seminal documents such as *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* (1986) and the *Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach* (1993), alongside broader organizational directives including the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) and global identifiers of Jesuit education. However, despite their persistent significance throughout the history of Jesuit schools and colleges, extracurricular dimensions seem to have remained peripheral to institutional evaluation. This marginalization, once fostered by a curricular-centric approach, persists even as recent authoritative documents have reshaped other aspects of Jesuit educational assessment.[5] In this evolving context, some lay and Jesuit educators in-

4 For example, François de Dainville, John O'Malley, Paul Grendler, and, more recently, Alessandro Arcangeli have all contributed to a broader understanding of the extracurricular in Jesuit contexts. When organizing a volume of articles by Dainville, Marie-Madeleine Compère devoted a section to extracurricular activities, aptly titling it "Éducation par le jeu" (Education through play). In describing the pedagogy implemented by French Jesuits during the nineteenth century, John Padberg, S.J. addressed extracurricular activities in a section called "The College as a Family." Beyond historians of education, Patrick Kelly, S.J. has made significant contributions to understanding the unique relationship between sports and Catholic, Jesuit spirituality.

5 See José Alberto Mesa, S.J., *Ignatian Pedagogy: Classic and Contemporary Texts on Jesuit Education from St. Ignatius to Today* (Chicago: Loyola University Press,

volved with extracurricular dimensions—including faculty, coaches, tutors, and administrators—may overlook the relevance of their work to the very core of the broader Jesuit tradition. This series of articles, which will culminate in a book on the historical nature of Jesuit pedagogy, seeks to reverse this trend. It will offer these educators source-based tools to reflect on the crucial role extracurricular activities have consistently played in the historical success of Jesuit schools and universities.

It is especially fitting to address these topics in the *Jesuit Educational Quarterly*. The enduring relevance of extracurricular activities for Jesuit pedagogy has been repeatedly emphasized in the conversations among members of the Jesuit Educational Association (JEA) over the years. During a pivotal transition period in American Jesuit education—bracketed by the publication of the final *Instructio* (1948) and the commencement of Pedro Arrupe's generalate (1965)—both the JEA's board of directors and the editorial staff of its flagship publication, the *Jesuit Educational Quarterly*, exhibited mounting concern over grounding extracurricular activities in Jesuit pedagogical tradition.[6] This preoccupation emerged precisely when the centuries-old *Ratio studiorum* had ceased to be a viable educational framework even before the international Jesuit network had developed an alternative means of articulating and disseminating the distinctive characteristics of Jesuit education worldwide. The question of how to preserve Jesuit educational identity through non-curricular channels thus became increasingly pressing during this interregnum period. In 1952, a "Manual for Jesuit High School Administrators," prepared by the JEA, articulated the importance of extracurricular activities as follows:

> The primary purpose of our extra-curricular program is to supplement the regular program; to provide opportunities of a less academic nature for the development of the whole person of the student. These activities encourage originality and initiative; they afford an outlet for a student's energy and enthusiasm; they offer opportunities for the development of individual talents. They are workshops for leadership, for learning how to organize, and how to deal with other people; they are well-springs of enthusiasm, which overflow into all the student's points of contact with the school. This last suggests the

2017); International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education, *Jesuit Schools: A Living Tradition in the 21st Century* (Rome: Society of Jesus—Secretariat for Secondary Education, 2019). For thorough documentation, see https://www.educatemagis.org, and for the North America context, https://jesuitschoolsnetwork.org (accessed November 12, 2024).

6 See A. Taiga Guterres, "Articulating a Jesuit Philosophy of Education in the Twentieth Century: A Critical Translation and Commentary on the *Instructio* of 1934 and 1948," *Jesuit Educational Quarterly*, 2nd ser., 1, no. 1 (2025): 73–114, https://doi.org/10.51238/1ZnRn8z.

> secondary purpose of activities: to generate high morale. Interest in the activity leads to a liking for the school, which in turn leads to good scholastic progress.[7]

Five years earlier, Joseph Maxwell, S.J. (1899–1971) acknowledged that extracurricular activities had indeed become "an important part of the American school scene."[8] He cautioned that their growing popularity risked minimizing their educational function in Jesuit schools and downplaying their rootedness in Jesuit pedagogy. Maxwell warned against the dismissive "cynicism" of those who described extracurricular activities as "the side show of the academic circus."[9] While it is unclear whether this cynical remark came from within Jesuit circles, what matters is that Maxwell sought to counter this underestimation by vindicating the role of extracurricular activities in the Jesuit tradition. "Our approach to these activities should be wholly positive rather than negative," he argued, adding, "in our educational tradition we find that extracurricular activities were nurtured and developed."[10] For Maxwell, the Jesuit educational network in the United States was not historically unprepared to fulfill the needs of families who were looking for such activities to be offered in their children's schools:

> We had, therefore, a rich background against which to organize and conduct our school activities, and fortunately our schools in this country have carried on the fine tradition which was established by our educational forebears. The American scene is a rather pleasant one. Our schools have been wisely extracurricularly active, and the results have been good.[11]

The activities Maxwell focused on among the extracurricular ones mirrored those highlighted in a survey whose results had been published in previous issues of the *Jesuit Educational Quarterly*. These included student councils, assemblies, debating, dramatics, musical clubs, literary magazines, newspapers, yearbooks, and various literary and science clubs, as well as hobby clubs. Although athletic programs and activities aimed at cultivating students' character and spirituality were essential to completing the full picture of the "extracurricular" landscape in Jesuit schools, they fell outside the scope of Maxwell's article. Still, the pedagogical value of ex-

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7 Jesuit Educational Association, "Manual for Jesuit High-School Administrators." February 18, 1952. Boston College Burns Library, Jesuit Educational Association Collection, Box 20, Folder 7, 183.

8 Joseph R. N. Maxwell, S.J., "Extracurricular Activities," *Jesuit Educational Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1947): 41–46.

9 Maxwell, "Extracurricular Activities," 41.

10 Maxwell, "Extracurricular Activities," 41.

11 Maxwell, "Extracurricular Activities," 42.

tracurricular activities, as highlighted by the *Holy Cross College Yearbook*, applied to all such activities. According to the yearbook, these programs were meant to "supplement the work of the classroom and lecture hall," offering students opportunities for individual development by broadening their interests, stimulating "initiative and resourcefulness," and providing numerous occasions for "self-expression and self-control." They were seen as instrumental in building latent confidence, fostering sound friendships through shared interests, and, in their informal settings, providing "sound recreation, fostering maturity, and, in general, contributing to the physical, moral, and mental well-being of the student."[12]

Despite Maxwell's robust defense of the Jesuits' distinctive approach to extracurricular activities, the growing prevalence of such programs in American education made it increasingly challenging for Jesuit institutions to maintain a clear sense of their specificity. What were once distinctive features of Jesuit education—extracurricular activities aimed at holistic formation—were now being pursued in schools everywhere. Over a decade after Maxwell's article, *The Jesuit Educational Quarterly* revisited the issue in an attempt to provide both a theoretical and practical framework to reaffirm the uniqueness of Jesuit extracurriculars.[13] The editors of the journal sought to clarify how these activities, while appearing similar to those in other educational contexts, were deeply rooted in the Ignatian vision of integral formation and served the specific mission of Jesuit pedagogy.

The sustained efforts to anchor extracurricular practices within the Jesuit tradition can be interpreted as a deliberate strategy to counter narratives of mere passive accommodation to secular trends. These initiatives sought to reaffirm for Jesuit educational leaders the historical and philosophical foundations underlying their institutions' embrace of such activities. That this endeavor persists into the present day demonstrates both the resilience of prevailing assumptions and the inherently dynamic nature of articulating Jesuit educational distinctiveness. Indeed, any comprehensive understanding of this distinctiveness must acknowledge the crucial—perhaps even central—role that extracurricular activities have historically played in advancing the formative objectives that Jesuit institutions have consistently pursued in their mission to educate young people. To borrow a phrase that humorously nods to successful formulas in Jesuit pedagogy, we must reclaim the idea that "the extracurricular carries the mission," too.

12 Quoted in Maxwell, "Extracurricular Activities," 45.

13 Joseph E. Perri, S.J., "Theory and Practice of Extracurricular Activities," *Jesuit Educational Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1958): 73–79; Edward D. Horgan, S.J., "Extracurricular Activities in the Jesuit High School, *Jesuit Educational Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1958): 80–86.

Games and Sports in Jesuit Education: Early Modern Origins and Evolution[14]

Games and sports were embraced and actively promoted as forms of recreation for students in Jesuit schools as early as the sixteenth century.[15] While physical activities and games for the education of youth were certainly not a Jesuit invention, Philippe Ariès's *Centuries of Childhood* offers a valuable insight into their role in shifting attitudes. Ariès notes that, during the early modern period, a "common attitude of general condemnation" toward physical activities and games in schools began to change, largely due to the Jesuits' influence.[16] The emphasis on physical exercise within Jesuit pedagogy stemmed from both Ignatius of Loyola's own spirituality and the influence of humanist educators, who incorporated physical activities into

14 I want to thank Claudio Ferlan and Paul Grendler for their invaluable help and advice on an early draft of this paper. The topic of this paper also offers a fitting opportunity to express my gratitude to all the players and the entire Waltham Varsity Boys Soccer community, who have made the 2024 season such a special, unforgettable experience for their coaches. Let's go Hawks!

15 In employing terminology related to sports and games as applied to the early modern period, I follow the concepts and definitions discussed by Arcangeli in his introduction to the excellent collective volume *A Cultural History of Sport in the Renaissance*. Arcangeli builds on John McClelland's exploration of the challenges in projecting a modern concept such as sport onto the early modern period, as well as on Allen Guttmann's definitions of modern sports and their *longue durée*, and Eric Dunning and Norbert Elias's approaches to the history of sports and leisure. Arcangeli seeks to understand the meaning that contemporaries attributed to practices that can be defined as sports and games within this epistemological framework. See Arcangeli, "Introduction: Cultures of Sport in the Renaissance," and Arcangeli, "The Purpose of Sport," in *A Cultural History of Sport in the Renaissance,* ed. Alessandro Arcangeli (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024), 1–22; 23–43. See John McClelland and Brian Merrilees, eds., *Sport and Culture in Early Modern Europe: Les sport dans la civilisation de l'Europe pré-moderne* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2009); Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); and Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for Excitement, Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

16 Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Random House, 1962), 88. Ariès wrote that the Jesuits realized from the start that, rather than trying to suppress what looked like a natural disposition of youth toward games and sports, a positive attitude was necessary: "They proposed to assimilate them, to introduce them officially into their curricula and regulations, on condition that they chose and controlled them. Brought under discipline in this way, those pastimes which were deemed to be wholesome were accepted and recommended, and were henceforth regarded as means of education no less respectable than study." Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 88–89.

their schools inspired by the classical motto *mens sana in corpore sano* (a healthy mind in a healthy body).[17]

Superiors particularly encouraged students to engage in games during recreational periods, which were of two types: daily recreations (small and big), typically taking place in the courtyard or, during inclement weather, in the dormitories; and weekly recreation, where students were usually accompanied outside the school for long walks or to fields or vineyards beyond the city walls.[18] While these recreations were seen as essential for the students' well-being, they also posed potential concerns for the superiors, as students could easily succumb to idleness, social isolation, or gambling. Consequently, regulations emphasized the importance of engaging students in physically active games, both within the courtyard and outside the city walls.[19]

In 1561, the rules for the College of Évora in Portugal explicitly forbade any games associated with gambling or those likely to result in physical injuries while at the same time recommending games that fostered physical activity and communal engagement. Among these, the rules listed the games of "pela," "argola," and "laranginha."[20]

In 1568, Superior General Francisco de Borja (in office 1565–72) responded to a group of rectors in Aquitaine, who had inquired about permissible games for students, advising: "Without forbidding them, do not encourage games such as chess and draughts; the best games are those involving physical exercise, such as aiming a ball at a hoop of metal with a

17 See Cristiano Casalini, "Active Leisure: The Body in Sixteenth-Century Jesuit Culture," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 1, no. 3 (2014): 400–418, https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-00103003 (accessed November 12, 2024). See also Michael Barnes, "The Body in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola," *Religion* 19 (1989): 263–73, and Pierre Emonet, S.J., "Du bon usage du corps. Selon Ignace de Loyola," *Choisir* (July–August 2006): 16. On physical activities and games in the Renaissance, see Paul Grendler, "Fencing, Playing Ball, and Dancing in Italian Renaissance Universities," in Grendler, *Humanism, Universities, and Jesuit Education in Late Renaissance Italy* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 251–74.

18 François de Dainville, S.J., *L'éducation des jésuites (XVIe–XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris: Minuit, 1978), 520.

19 See Patrick Kelly, S.J., "I Cattolici e lo sport: Una visione storica e teologica," *La Civiltà Cattolica* 3948 (2014): 557–70, here 567. For two important contributions to the history of sport in connection with church history and Catholic culture, see also Kelly, *Catholic Perspectives on Sports: From Medieval to Modern Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012) and *Play, Sport, and Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 2023).

20 László Lukács, S.J., *Monumenta Paedagogica Societatis Iesu (1557–72)* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1974) 2, 292–99, here 297.

bat."[21] In the same year, the provincial congregation of Aquitaine echoed Borja in forbidding chess and checkers, advocating instead for games that involved physical activity. Among those recommended were handball (*pila palmaria*), discus throw (*discus*), and a form of ring toss using spheres, likely corresponding to the *laranjinha* game played by the Portuguese in Évora (*sphaerae ad anulum iactandae, et ad pyramides ligneas*).[22] The Jesuits in Mainz added to this list the nine-pin bowling "qui dicitur Germanice Kegelen" (which is called Kegelen in German) and, with an eye toward adapting to local customs, permitted any other *ludus germanicus* that appeared honest and decent.[23]

Physical activities and games were regarded as essential strategies for maintaining students' health and psychological well-being, a point frequently emphasized in contemporary sources. This belief was so widely accepted that German Jesuits even petitioned (1571) to extend these activities—handball in particular—to scholastics and members of the order, arguing that such measures were necessary to preserve good health in climates characterized by cold and harsh weather, which often made long walks and other exercises impossible.[24] A similar dispensation to play handball had been granted four years earlier by Jerónimo Nadal (1507–80) to the Jesuits in Louvain on the condition that it was recommended by a

21 Quoted in Dainville, *L'éducation des jésuites*, 519. This is another description of the pall-mall, which was practiced almost everywhere in early modern Jesuit schools. These rules confirm the widespread practice of a range of games in the yard, with respect to which the major concern was to avoid physical contact between students: "Games during which students touch each other directly or indirectly, such as those with handkerchiefs or leapfrog, should not be allowed." These instructions are quoted in Luca Testa, *Fondazione e primo sviluppo del Seminario romano (1565–1608)* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 2002), 451–52.

22 Mon. Paed., 3, 35.

23 Mon. Paed., 3, 136.

24 The petition deserves to be quoted at length, for the argument is built upon strictly medical and environmental reasons: "Cum experientia doceat quod nostrorum sanitatem consuetis Societatis ludis et exercitationibus difficulter conservari multosque ante annum trigesimum, supra modum debilitari viribusque deficere propter defectum exercitationibus et motus satis vehementis simulque oblectantis ad vacuandos superfluos humores quos nostrates ex cibo humidiore magisque excrement avidius sumpto, et propter atri ambientis frigiditatem plurimos colligunt (nostratum enim stomachi ob frigiditatem plus appetunt quam commode concoquant), videbatur omnibus petendam, et quidem serio, *facultatem ludendi pila nostri fratribus*; tum quod aliis recreationibus et maxime deambulatione propter crebras pluvias et nives et ventorum vehementiam magna anni parte exluduntur; tum quo haec exercitatio omnes corporis partes optime saluberrime exerceat; tum quod in aliis regionibus etiam reformatissimis passim absque cuiusque offensione sit in usu." Mon. Paed., 3, 54.

physician for health purposes. It seems the scholastics took the game quite seriously, as Nadal found it necessary to appoint a censor to supervise these activities.[25]

Weekly recreations offered the opportunity for physical training in addition to playing games. From the complaints of Lorenzo Maggio (1531–1605), who wrote instructions to the rector of the college in Braniewo, we know that both students and clergy attending the seminary were training with jumps and "excessive" runs (*saltationes et nimii cursus*) on such recreations.[26] Giuseppe Cortesono (c.1537–71), for his part, was much more lenient when it came to endurance training. In his "Constitutions for the German College," he recommended that students go out of the college for long walks and return only "after a solid exercise."[27] And when students could not go out of school, Cortesono recommended they "play ball and other games for exercise."[28] Such activities were so important to him that these recommendations are all included in a section of the Constitutions that is significantly entitled "How to Keep the College Happy."[29]

Physical exercise gained particular prominence in the *seminaria nobilium* (colleges for nobles), which represented the highest social tier of Jesuit education throughout the seventeenth century.[30] In these institutions, the objective was to prepare students for courtly life by focusing on traditional knightly exercises like riding and fencing, as well as cultivating grace in movement and posture, known as *sprezzatura*. Many of these Italian colleges included extramural classes that extended educational activities into the summer months, coinciding with an increased emphasis on physical training. Of particular relevance was the country holiday, known in Italian as "la villeggiatura" or "vacanza grande." This was a time when Jesuit colleges—especially those for nobles—would move the entire population of students, teachers, and sometimes servants to a countryside villa for about a month at the end of the academic year, typically in August. Though it remained a supervised environment, the atmosphere was more relaxed. Latin classes were suspended, and the focus shifted to outdoor activities

25 Mon. Paed., 3, 144.

26 Mon. Paed., 3, 200.

27 Giuseppe Cortesono, S.J., "Constitutions for the German College," in *Jesuit Pedagogy (1540–1616): A Reader*, ed. Cristiano Casalini and Claude N. Pavur, S.J. (Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2016), 107–55, here 152.

28 Cortesono, "Constitutions for the German College," 152.

29 Cf. Casalini and Pavur, *Jesuit Pedagogy*, 150. The original in Italian reads, "Del modo di mantenere il collegio allegro." Mon. Paed. 2, 921.

30 Cf. Gian Paolo Brizzi, *La formazione della classe dirigente nel Sei-Settecento: I seminaria nobilium nell'Italia centro-settentrionale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2016 [1976]).

such as riding, hunting, fishing, and playing games.[31] In the French colleges of Clermont and La Flèche, weekly long walks were a regular activity, and more substantial excursions were planned every six months (monthly from 1621). At La Flèche, these excursions featured games held in the woods, alongside other sports like handball (*la paume*), a game that began to incorporate rackets in the sixteenth century and enjoyed considerable popularity in the seventeenth century.[32]

Practices such as swimming and ice-skating are mentioned in the regulations issued by the province of Flanders-Belgium in 1625. However, it remains unclear whether the prohibitions in certain months—November for ice-skating and May for swimming—were intended as temporary restrictions or if the superiors aimed to prevent students from engaging in these potentially risky activities independently, which could pose health hazards.[33]

Physical activities and games continued to be a prominent feature of Jesuit education throughout the early modern period. In the ballet *De la jeunesse* (On youth), staged in 1697 at the Collège Louis Le Grand in Paris, one of the four parts was entirely dedicated to physical activities, featuring portrayals of dancing, hunting, fencing, wrestling (*la lutte*), running (*la course*), and horsemanship. The Jesuit author and long-time professor of rhetoric Gabriel-François Le Jay (1657–1734) explained the ballet's argument by stressing that one of the four pillars essential to properly forming youth is the cultivation of the body: "Physical exercises are also necessary to prepare them for the functions of a more advanced age."[34]

After the Restoration

After the order's restoration in 1814, games and physical activities regained their traditional importance in Jesuit colleges. However, as modern sports began to gain prominence within the broader educational landscape, the

31 See Miriam Turrini, *Il "Giovin Signore" in collegio: I Gesuiti e l'educazione della nobiltà nelle consuetudini del collegio ducale di Parma* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2006).

32 See James Ullman, *De la gymnastique aux sports moderns* (Paris: Vrin, 1971).

33 *Instructio pro scholis Societatis Iesu provinciae Flandro-Belgicae: Distributio temporis per menses, septimanas, dies ex Ratione studiorum Romana provinciae Flandro-Belgicae accommodata; Anno MDCXXV*. The manuscript is conserved at the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Studia 1003c, fasc. 5, doc. 13. An edition of this document was published by Charles van de Vorst, "Instructions pédagogiques de 1625 et 1647 pour le collèges de la province flandro-belge," *Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu* 19 (1950): 181–236.

34 Gabriel-François Le Jay, S.J., *Ballet de la jeunesse qui sera dansé au college de Louis le Grand a la tragedie de posthumius dedié a Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne le mercredy 7 jour d'Aoust à midy* (Paris: Antoine Lambin, 1697), 1.

Jesuit faculty sometimes responded with mixed feelings to the introduction of team sports in their institutions over the course of the nineteenth century. That some of these team sports originated in non-Catholic educational contexts, and that Catholic schools and colleges began to adopt them only later, contributed to the caricatured image that Catholic, particularly Jesuit, institutions were not in favor of sports or that sports were not central to their pedagogy. Sometimes, the Jesuits themselves accepted or shared that narrative. Nonetheless, games and physical activities were always offered in their schools as the underlying philosophy of Jesuit pedagogy remained consistent with Renaissance ideals. Indeed, we see that games and physical activities were offered as a distinctive feature of their model by Jesuit colleges in France, for example. As a positivist and historian who was not usually friendly to the Society of Jesus, Hippolyte Taine (1828–1893) reported with some admiration in his *Carnets de voyage: Notes sur la province 1863–1865* that the Jesuit college in Metz held physical education as distinctively important:

> Impossible to be more adroit in little affairs. For example, gymnastics are ordinarily neglected in other places despite the fact that they are valuable. Immediately [the Jesuits engage] an excellent director of gymnastics, with the rigorous obligation for all the students to engage in exercise every day. In this also, their students were truly superior.[35]

Taine's comment was on point. The Jesuits in France paid considerable attention to physical activities and games. Two of them, Charles de Nadaillac (1839–1918) and Joseph Rousseau (1845–1926), collected and published descriptions and rules for college games. First published in 1875, the book expanded over time and had several editions. In their introduction, the authors did not miss a chance to emphasize the importance of games for education: "Play in a school has an undeniable influence on the health, mind, and heart of children. Playing well means both developing physical strength, preparing for serious study, and powerfully combating immorality."[36]

To vigorously combat immorality, the two Jesuits meticulously compiled and described 142 games in the first edition of their work, categorizing them based on the type of recreation (grand or small), the nature of the

35 Hippolyte Taine, *Carnets de voyage: Notes sur la province 1863–1865* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1879), 227–28. Quoted in John W. Padberg, S.J., *Colleges in Controversy: The Jesuit Schools in France from the Revival to Suppression, 1815–1880* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 223.

36 Charles de Nadaillac, S.J. and Joseph Rousseau, S.J., *Les jeux des college* (Paris: Librairie de J. Delalalin et fils, 1875), v.

games (contests, small armies, walks and conferences, children's games), the seasons (summer games, snow or ice activities), and the locations (dormitory games for rainy days, countryside games). These games were designed to engage the largest number of students possible.[37] For some, the authors provided guidance on creating multiple teams with evenly matched players, ensuring that everyone could experience the excitement and satisfaction of potential success.

Among these games, early versions of modern team sports like soccer and volleyball were included. The authors praised *ballon au camp*, a form of possession ball played with the feet, calling it "the most beautiful of games."[38] Some activities, such as throwing snowballs, were seasonal and did not qualify as sports in the traditional sense. However, the "Contests" section provided detailed rules for the organization of speed races that foreshadowed the modern Olympics in both the solemnity of the event and the organization of student-officials who supervised the runners:

> The main jurors must organize everything in advance so that the contestants are of equal strength and, to maintain interest through the variety of the races, skillfully intersperse the more important contests. The list of contestants is posted as soon as the competition is announced; a student keeps a copy of this list to call the contestants in advance and record the names of the winners. The most coveted honor is to give the signals: the signal is given by counting aloud, "one, two, three!" and lowering a small flag.[39]

Nadaillac and Rousseau also made a sharp observation regarding the periodization of athletic contexts like these. They noted that frequent repetitions of such games would inevitably diminish interest in both participation and attendance. However, allowing some time to elapse between

37 As Padberg notes: "The school considered such games an important part of the whole educational process, for all had to learn to join in cooperatively." Padberg, *Colleges in Controversy*, 222.

38 Nadaillac and Rousseau, *Les jeux des college*, 1.

39 Nadaillac and Rousseau, *Les jeux des college*, 114. A certain number of students are selected as jury committee and are given a "special card" with special decorations. In pairs, they are distributed over the course to check that runners don't cheat by taking shortcuts. "Les jurés principaux ont dû tout organiser d'avance, de telle sorte que les concurrents soient d'égale force, et, pur que l'intérèt soit soutenu par la variété des courses, entremêler avec art les concours plus importants. La liste des lutteurs est affiché aussitôt que le concours est proclamé; un élève conserve une copie de cette liste, afin d'appeler à l'avance les concurrents et de prendre le nome des vainqueurs. La dignité la plu enviée consiste à donner les signaux: le signal se donne en comptant à haute voix: 'un, deux, trois!' et en abaissant un petit drapeau." Nadaillac and Rousseau, *Les jeux des college*, 114.

contests would heighten anticipation for what was perceived as a grand event.[40]

It is curious—but can this truly be mere coincidence?—that Pierre de Coubertin (1863–1937), the famous Baron de Coubertin, considered the father of the modern Olympic Games, had just enrolled as a student at the Jesuit Externat Saint-Ignace in Paris one year before Nadaillac and Rousseau's book appeared. Oftentimes, when biographers of de Coubertin traced the roots of the idea of reviving the Olympic Games to his formation at a Jesuit school, they emphasized the classicistic culture that permeated the curriculum therein. De Coubertin's philo-Hellenism could well be associated with the Jesuit *Ratio studiorum*, as he himself remarked when remembering Jules Carron, S.J. (1839–1923), his former teacher of rhetoric at Saint-Ignace: "He did not instruct me in sports, but he imbibed me of Hellenism."[41] In 1937, while addressing the Alumni Association of the Externat Saint-Ignace de la rue de Madrid, de Coubertin downplayed the sporting culture that had existed at the *externat* "fifty years" earlier. He remarked: "Sport was not held in high regard among us, your predecessors, and except for horseback riding and fencing, which we practiced rarely and in moderation, we left it to the English, who believed they had exclusive rights to the pursuit, to excel in sporting activities."[42] Despite minimizing the importance of sports at his former institution, de Coubertin acknowledged the enduring presence of traditional activities such as horseback riding and fencing. That games and physical activities were in fact not a negligible feature of the education as pursued at the Jesuit schools in Paris, including the one that de Coubertin attended, can be proved through an article published in *Le Figaro* on June 2, 1879: "Games and amusements

40 "Les concours mettent les jeux en honneur et sont pour les enfants une veritable petite fête. Leur usage immodéré, en permettant de longues causeries, les rend nuisible et peu intéressants: mais venant rarement ils sont fort utiles pour rehausser l'éclat de quelques fêtes et pour fournir aux élèves, qui en ces jours ont besoin de quelques jeux exceptionnels, un sujet de conversations et un motif de Joyeuse emulation." Nadaillac and Rousseau, *Les jeux des college*, 114n1.

41 Cf. Pierre de Coubertin, "Discours à l'Association des anciens élèves et de l'externat de la rue de Madrid," *Bulletin de l'Association des anciens élèves et de l'externat de la rue de Madrid* 2 (1937): 12.

42 "Le sport, il y a cinquante ans, ne fut pas en grande faveur près de nous, vos anciens, et qu'à l'exception de l'équitation et de l'escrime pratiquées d'ailleurs à doses rares et modérées, nous laissions alors aux Anglais qui s'y croyaient des titres exclusifs le droit de chercher à exceller dans les exercices du sport." De Coubertin, "Discours à l'Association des anciens élèves," 10.

occupy an important place in the schools of the Jesuits. They are as much interested about the place of recreation as about the study hall."[43]

Notably, in his address to the alumni of the *externat*, de Coubertin did not mention the various games promoted and described by Nadaillac and Rousseau, which were most likely played in Jesuit institutions in that period. It seems that the sports he believed were largely neglected, yet popular in British educational institutions, were those team sports that had in fact been invented in England, such as soccer. De Coubertin quickly became an advocate for the practice of such sports at the school level, and in 1889 he was among the promoters of a "football" (soccer) inter-school game that was organized in the Bois de Boulogne:

> It was forty-eight years ago last December 10th that I dared to present to President Carnot, on a lawn in the Bois de Boulogne, the honors of the first inter-school football match; a game that the famous chronicler Francisque Sarcey (1827–99) had written the day before, 'is played with wooden rackets and very hard little balls' . . . No! It wasn't played like that; but the important thing was to spread the game, not to describe it.[44]

The issue, then, seems to shift to the types of sports that Jesuit institutions were fostering during an era when modern team sports were emerging, rapidly gaining popularity, and becoming formalized in terms of rules and organizations. With this context in mind, we can better understand the response of Jesuit colleges in the United States when team sports such as baseball, football, and basketball were introduced or adopted in other educational environments.

The North American Context

The growth of organized sports in American colleges was generally slow in the nineteenth century, and Jesuit institutions were no exception.[45] However, at a Jesuit institution like Georgetown, a strong sports culture emerged relatively early, gaining support from both students and faculty.[46]

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43 Quoted in Robert Schwickerath, S.J., *Jesuit Education: Its History and Principles Viewed in the Light of Modern Educational Problems* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1904), 573.

44 De Coubertin, "Discours à l'Association des anciens élèves," 10.

45 See Steven A. Reiss, *Sport in Industrial America, 1850–1920* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1995), 116–31; Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 96–97; and Edward John Power, *Catholic Higher Education in America: A History* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1972), 277–80.

46 Robert Emmett Curran, *A History of Georgetown*, vol. 1, *From Academy to University 1789–1889* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 187.

Handball gained popularity at Georgetown as early as the 1820s, becoming a year-round activity. By the mid-nineteenth century, outdoor courts or "ball alleys" were present across the campus. Ice-skating was also practiced, and as early as the 1830s, forms of rugby and soccer appear to have been played.[47] In the same years, swimming in the Potomac River became a favorite summer activity at Georgetown. Swimming also grew in importance on the West Coast. In 1856, the Jesuit school in Santa Clara dug out an old orchard to build a swimming pool for its boarding students, proudly claiming it to be "the first college plunge on the Pacific coast."[48] Handball and baseball intramurals were also organized and grew in popularity during the 1870s.[49] Similar developments occurred at other Jesuit colleges, including St. John's College—later Fordham University—in New York.[50] In 1874, both Georgetown and Holy Cross became the first Jesuit institutions to establish formal athletic associations.[51]

Founded in 1863, Boston College serves as an illustrative example of how a Jesuit educational institution in the United States became involved with sports. As early as 1870, Boston College formed a "militia company," engaging students in military exercises that included marches and other physical activities.[52] In 1875, BC president Robert Fulton, S.J. (1826–

47 Curran, *History of Georgetown*, 1:187.

48 Gerald McKevitt, S.J., *The University of Santa Clara: A History 1851–1977* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 61.

49 McKevitt, *University of Santa Clara*, 85.

50 Thomas J. Shelley, *Fordham: A History of the Jesuit University of New York; 1841–2003.* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 68.

51 A few years earlier, in 1855–56, there was a short-lived "Gymnastic Association" at Georgetown. It was initiated as a result of the building of a gym, which featured parallel bars, rings, and other tools for workouts. See Curran, *History of Georgetown*, 1:188, 325. See also Anthony J. Kuzniewski, *Thy Honored Name: A History of the College of Holy Cross, 1843–1994* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 139–41. At Holy Cross, the Athletic Association was spearheaded by the Jesuit scholastic Harry J. Sandaal. This association was included in the catalogs for 1874 and 1875, but it subsequently vanished until its revival in 1894. This gap suggests that the initial two years of the association's activities relied heavily on Sandaal's personal initiative. See Kuzniewski, *Thy Honored Name*, 140. In Cincinnati, the St. Xavier Athletic Association appeared in the college catalog from 1898. Lee J. Bennish, S.J., *Continuity and Change: Xavier University 1831–1981* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1981), 106.

52 At St. John's College, the Cadet Corps, a program in which students took part in regular military exercises, like the Boston College Militia, appeared in 1885. See Shelley, *Fordham*, 68. At Saint Joseph's in Philadelphia, a Cadet Battalion was formed in 1892. Participation in twice-weekly drills on the courtyard was mandatory for all students. The first organized athletic programs started as a replacement for cadet drills. See David R. Contosta, *Saint Joseph's: Philadelphia's Jesuit*

95) oversaw the establishment of the Young Men's Catholic Association (YMCA), a Catholic counterpart to the more popular YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), and allowed the association to use the existing college gymnasium for its activities. While many of these activities were social and cultural—such as lectures and discussions—the growing enrollments in both the college and the association led to collaboration in expanding the school's facilities and renovating the gymnasium.

When the renovations were completed, the gymnasium was equipped with parallel bars, rings, a swinging trapeze, and vaulting horses. An adjacent room featured a punch bag and rowing apparatus. Additionally, baths with showers and a plunge pool, along with about two hundred lockers, were constructed. The building's second story boasted an oval "rubber-covered running track" along the upper walls.[53] Upon returning to Boston College after years of service elsewhere, Fulton was notably moved by the progress the YMCA had made at the institution, reflecting the growing importance of physical activity and organized sports within the college.

In 1879, however, Fulton appeared less enthusiastic about promoting sports among Boston College students. In a speech, he cautioned them against following the recent trend from England known as Muscular Christianity. This religious movement, inspired by figures like Thomas Hughes (1822–96), Charles Kingsley (1819–75), and Ralph Connor (1860–1937), had gained popularity in the United States, with President Theodore Roosevelt (in office 1901–9) among its prominent adherents.[54] To Fulton, these individuals were sectarians who believed "the chief end of man [was] to develop his muscle and improve his physique," a dangerous philosophy he saw as gaining traction in America. He warned that "the disciples or converts to Muscular Christianity are very numerous in America, and a small army of pugilists, racers of all sorts, and, latterly, walkists predominate."[55] Fulton's conclusion seemed to suggest a partial, if not total, rejection of

University; 150 Years (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph University Press, 2000), 65.

53 James O'Toole, *Boston College: A History* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2022), 81.

54 See Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), and Rhys S. Bezzant, "Muscular Christianity: Celebrating and Constructing Manhood at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Fides et historia* 53, no. 2 (2021): 1–16. See also Gordon J. Christen, "Roosevelt, Boy Scouts, and the Formation of Muscular Christian Character," Religious Studies Honors Projects, 2014, paper 14, https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/reli_honors/14 (accessed November 12, 2024).

55 "What to Read and How to Read: Some Valuable Hints by the Rev. Robert Fulton to the Young Men of Boston College," *Boston Daily Globe* (March 19, 1879), 2.

sports as central to Jesuit pedagogy: "More books and less sporting is what is needed, and more gymnastic exercise of the mind, and less of the body."[56]

Fulton's concerns were primarily religious, aiming to address views that did not align with Catholic faith. Yet, his need to address this issue underscores the growing success of physical activities, games, and sports among college students in Jesuit institutions. Jeremiah O'Connor, S.J. (1841–91), who succeeded Fulton as president of Boston College, proved more tolerant, if not supportive, of athletics. In April 1882—just two years after Fulton's departure—Boston College hosted intramural competitions featuring events such as "a tug-of-war, a 30-yard dash, a mile walk, the high kick, and the shot-put."[57] However, the promotion of these activities did not imply that all students were eager to participate. An anonymous student penned an article in *The Stylus*, the student journal, advocating for the practice of physical activities, especially during recreation. The student lamented that some of their peers seemed overly focused on studying and intellectual endeavors. While this focus was admirable, the student viewed it through the humanistic lens of Jesuit tradition, cautioning that "whilst collecting the gems of classic lore, they are wasting that most precious of all treasures, health."[58]

The article employed a comparative image between exercising the mind and the body that echoed Ignatius himself and could easily have been cited by sixteenth-century Jesuits:

> We have literary societies for the improvement of our mental faculties, but, since the work of the intellect is so far dependent upon the condition of the body, it is not unreasonable for us to ask that some steps be taken which will ensure our students against the danger of leaving their Alma Mater . . . so injured in health as to be totally unfitted to cope with the stern necessities of this sturdy world.[59]

By the end of that year, the Boston College Athletic Club, later known as the Boston College Athletic Association, was established, marking a significant step in the institution's involvement with sports.

Presidents and superiors of American Jesuit colleges did not reject sports outright; rather, they initially allowed students to organize and manage these activities independently. As sports grew in popularity, pol-

56 "What to Read and How to Read," 2.

57 Ben Birnbaum and Seth Meehan, *The Heights: An Illustrated History of Boston College 1863–2023* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Linden Lane Press at Boston College, 2023), 36.

58 Athlete '85, "Athletics," *Stylus* 1, no. 4 (July 1883): 39.

59 Athlete '85, "Athletics," 39.

icies quickly adapted, leading Jesuit colleges to organize both intramural and intercollegiate competitions. In 1866, Georgetown hosted intramural baseball games that were played before a public audience, generating considerable enthusiasm.[60] Three years later, the Jesuit diarist recorded that "baseball occupies the attention of all," including President John Early, S.J. (1814–73), who began granting students permissions and extra holidays to attend games between semiprofessional club teams in Washington.[61] Alongside more individual recreational pursuits such as cycling, walking, and boxing, organized sports became a prominent and marketable aspect of the education offered at Georgetown.[62] The 1868 catalog explicitly recognized the importance of organized athletics as an integral part of student life, emphasizing their role in enhancing the educational experience. A few years later, with the establishment of the Athletic Association in 1875, track and field began. Lacrosse, a sport that was already popular in Baltimore, made a timid appearance in the 1880s, but it failed to attract the interest of students.[63] Most notably, when compared to the experiences at the *externat* in Paris, which de Coubertin attended as a student, and the list of games included by Nadaillac and Rousseau in their celebrated book, the month of November at Georgetown was dedicated to "athletic sports" intramural competitions. These competitions featured a diverse array of activities, including picnic-style contests and "Olympic events," which encompassed dashes, jumps, hurdles, a three-mile walk, a mile run, shot put, and rifle firing. Additionally, from 1879 onward, a form of marathon was introduced, further enriching the competitive landscape for students.[64] Georgetown actively promoted its athletic facilities and the development of a sports culture as part of its broader strategy to attract and engage prospective students, showcasing the value placed on physical activity within its educational model. So did Marquette College, which established its Athletic

60 Curran, *History of Georgetown*, 1:287.

61 Curran, *History of Georgetown*, 1:288. As we will see for Boston College, not every Jesuit was happy about this policy. In 1872, Patrick Healy, S.J. (1834–1910), prefect of studies, noted in the official diary: "Such things have been done before, but it is a sorry practice, at best. The Schools of a University dismissed to see a B.B. match!" Curran, *History of Georgetown*, 1:288.

62 By 1869, professional velocipedists were allowed to give private classes to students. Curran, *History of Georgetown*, 1:288.

63 The history of lacrosse—claimed to be the oldest organized sport in North America—is intertwined with Jesuit history. The Jesuit missionary Jean de Brébeuf (1593–1649) is credited with observing and documenting the game as played by Huron tribesmen in 1637. He described it using the French term "la crosse," as the players were using "a stick" with a curved tip like a shepherd's staff to play it.

64 Curran, *History of Georgetown*, 1:325.

Association in 1883 "to promote the physical development of its members by manly games and healthful exercise" and, echoing the words of Cortesono's "Constitutions for the German College" in 1570, to foster "a college spirit."[65]

At Boston College, the first two teams established alongside the Athletic Association were the baseball and track teams. Given the Jesuit faculty's earlier reservations in the 1860s about students playing baseball, it is telling that this sport was the first to be officially organized, as it suggests that the "baseball fever" had not diminished within the college, reflecting its enduring popularity among the students.[66]

Once established, athletics and team sports grew consistently at Boston College, although sports that presented risks to the students' health were always monitored, as with the case of football, which Boston College students were allowed to play from 1893. In 1894, Edward Devitt, S.J. (1840–1920), a successor of Fulton as a president of Boston College, congratulated the students "on their prominence in athletic sports," as this would hopefully serve to erode "the existing impression that the faculty of Boston College [*sic*] does not favor college athletics."[67]

The primary concern for presidents and superiors, much like Nadal in the sixteenth century, was the potential for harm and physical injury. This concern was a significant factor in the Gridiron crisis involving football, making Jesuit institutions among the most cautious regarding its continuation. Yet, rather than a piece of evidence for an intellectualistic turn in Jesuit pedagogy between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these events showed that sports and physical activities were still seen as essentially connected to students' well-being and health.

In a seminal work on the historiography of Jesuit pedagogy published in 1904, Robert Schwickerath reaffirmed Jesuit education's humanistic origins by emphasizing the importance of cultivating the body alongside the mind:

> The physical culture of the pupils forms a most important feature in a good system of education: *sit mens sana in corpore sano*. Athletics, out-door sports and gymnastics do much for the physical health of the students. Besides, they demand, and consequently help to develop, quickness of apprehension,

65 See Thomas J. Jablonsky, *Milwaukee's Jesuit University: Marquette, 1881–1981* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007), 39.

66 "Boston College students shared the growing national passion. 'The base-ball fever has now become an epidemic,' one Jesuit wrote in 1883." O'Toole, *Boston College*, 84.

67 "Honors at Boston College," *Boston Globe* (July 6, 1894). Quoted in O'Toole, *Boston College*, 87.

> steadiness and coolness, self-reliance, self-control, readiness to subordinate individual impulses to a command. This is all valuable for education.[68]

If issues emerged with the cultivation of the body in Jesuit colleges or, more specifically, with athletic programs, Schwickerath believed that such issues were not related to the activities per se but to the social impact that sports were increasingly exerting on the lives of athletes, including those who were still students:

> The dangers arise not so much from athletic exercises themselves, as from their publicity and the universal admiration in which they are held. There is in our days a morbid craving for notoriety; people wish to be interviewed, to be talked about, to be kept before the eyes of the public. Many a young man thinks he cannot realize this ambition better than by athletic triumphs.[69]

Notably, in 1904 Schwickerath reaffirmed the importance of sports within Jesuit pedagogy, just a year before the Gridiron crisis threatened the place of football in the American collegiate system.[70] Between 1900 and 1905, at least forty-five football players died from injuries sustained during games. The 1904 season alone ended with twenty-one fatalities and over two hundred injured players on American college gridirons. This alarming toll prompted a national outcry, with major newspapers, including the *New York Times*, leading a campaign to reform the sport. In response to growing concerns, several colleges suspended their football programs, signaling the need for substantial changes to the game's rules and safety measures. During this period, some prominent Jesuit institutions were certainly not among the strongest advocates for maintaining football at the collegiate level.[71] Yet, also thanks to President Roosevelt's championing, football

68 Schwickerath, *Jesuit Education*, 570.

69 Schwickerath, *Jesuit Education*, 571.

70 See John S. Watterson, "The Gridiron Crisis of 1905: Was It Really a Crisis?," *Journal of Sport History* 27, no. 2 (2000): 291–98; Watterson, "The Football Crisis of 1909–10: The Response of the Eastern 'Big Three,'" *Journal of Sport History* 8, no. 1 (1981): 33–49; and John J. Miller, *The Big Scrum: How Teddy Roosevelt Saved Football* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2012).

71 The case of Santa Clara is illustrative of the early tensions around football. When attending the first football game at Santa Clara, a professor declared the game "too dangerous and hence unfit for our students." In 1895, a delegation of students successfully petitioned President Joseph W. Riordan, S.J. for the official recognition of football. Riordan attempted to restrict the sport to intramural competitions, but by 1896, the first game against an outside club, a team from Santa Cruz, had already been organized. Mounting criticism of the game's unsafe rules eventually led to the suspension of the football program in 1905, when Santa Clara joined other colleges in boycotting the sport. In 1907, a rugby program

managed to survive the crisis, leading to the formation of the National Collegiate Athletic Association as a regulatory body. Despite their initial reservations, Jesuit institutions eventually established their own teams that competed at the intercollegiate level.[72]

Jesuit colleges embraced football with the same rationale as other athletic programs, viewing sports as integral to the students' holistic development. When football faced challenges—such as in the post-Second World War period, when many American colleges discontinued their programs due to financial difficulties—a few presidents and administrators at Jesuit colleges turned to Jesuit pedagogical principles to justify and reaffirm the value of these initiatives.[73] In 1951, when Santa Clara's football program was threatened by a shrinking pool of local competitors and financial difficulties, President Herman J. Hauck, S.J. (1911–78) defended it with a compelling comparison to the performing arts. He described football as an "organized symphony of motion not unlike ballet" and emphasized that "in the Jesuit system of education we consider the academic side and athletics in much the same way. We try to develop a man's intelligence, his search

was introduced and continued until 1919, when football was ultimately reinstated. See McKevitt, *University of Santa Clara*, 144–45. Xavier College in Cincinnati, though, won the championship in the Interscholastic Football League in 1901 and maintained the program. In 1911, football and baseball were the only intercollegiate sports Xavier participated in. Bennish, *Continuity and Change*, 119.

72 Michael T. Rizzi, *Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the United States: A History* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022), 280. In 1951, Francis Corkery, S.J. (1895–1959) offered an instructive perspective on football in Jesuit universities. As president of Gonzaga University, Spokane—an institution that had ended its football program a decade earlier—Corkery sent a survey to twenty-seven Jesuit universities in the United States to assess their football programs. By then, football had become well established as an intercollegiate sport, but it faced criticism for evolving into what many saw as a quasi-professional and lucrative endeavor for universities. Taking a measured stance, Corkery was a supporter of football programs and warned against overreaction. He wrote: "We should beware of unjust and wild exaggeration, and of all-inclusive universal condemnations. We should avoid the error of the Prohibitionist, who would abolish the use of alcoholic beverages, because of their abuse." Francis E. Corkery, S.J., "Intercollegiate Athletics in Jesuit Higher Institutions," *Jesuit Educational Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1951): 171–78, here 172–73.

73 While Boston College, Holy Cross, and John Carroll University continuously fielded football teams, many other Jesuit colleges discontinued their programs. In many cases, the lack of a privately owned stadium was the primary cause of the financial difficulties that led to these suspensions. However, in several instances, the discontinuation proved to be only temporary. Rizzi, *Jesuit Colleges and Universities*, 407.

for knowledge and truth right along with bringing his athletic ability to his fellow man."[74]

For the same reasons, other sports gained popularity among Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States, with basketball emerging as a major focus during the years when football faced financial difficulties and crises. Basketball proved to be financially sustainable, and since competitions typically took place during the coldest months of the year, it became a particularly appealing option for many Jesuit institutions located in the northeast. Moreover, basketball also facilitated racial integration. Although this article's scope does not allow for an in-depth discussion of the evolution of sports in Jesuit institutions after the 1960s, it is worth noting that Loyola Chicago's Ramblers won the 1963 national championship with a starting lineup that featured four African American players—a groundbreaking achievement that was "virtually unheard of at the time."[75]

If such was the scenario for Jesuit colleges and universities, the network of Jesuit secondary schools facilitated an even broader proliferation of sports culture and programs. In 1946, when the Jesuit network was already split between high schools and higher education, James Markey wrote an article in the *Jesuit Educational Quarterly* that promoted the role of sports in Jesuit schools. Athletics and sports are central to the pedagogy that Jesuit schools offer because of the "irreplaceable lessons of cooperative action and competition" that can be taught through them.[76] Athletics and sports are functional to the formative education of youth that Jesuit schools mean to pursue, particularly to the means of physical education, intramural and organized sports. When Markey wrote this article, team sports culture—which we saw as being taking up hesitantly by Jesuit col-

74 Quoted in McKevitt, *University of Santa Clara*, 276. Despite this effort, the program was discontinued in 1952. See Rizzi, *Jesuit Colleges and Universities*, 407.

75 Rizzi, *Jesuit Colleges and Universities*, 403. For the history of the Ramblers, see Michael Lenehan, *Ramblers: Loyola-Chicago 1963; The Team that Changed the Color of College Basketball* (Chicago: Midway Books, 2013). Other sports also rose to prominence during these years, with soccer becoming particularly significant. The University of San Francisco led the way, establishing itself as a powerhouse with an exceptional record of fourteen championship titles between the 1960s and 1970s.

76 James J. Markey, S.J., "Sports in Our High Schools," *Jesuit Educational Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (1946): 105–9, here 105. As for the necessity of keeping cooperation and competition as two leading principles of such a philosophy of education, Markey writes: "Athletics teach cooperation, and teach it, perhaps, better and more strikingly than any other method we might select. But the lessons of cooperation would not make men; the further lessons of competition are needed." Markey, "Sports in Our High Schools," 106.

leges at the end of the nineteenth century—had taken deep roots in Jesuit schools. Markey concludes:

> The extracurricular life of secondary schools centers around their teams. Sports are discussed at lunch-time sessions, at parish and school dances, on the bus to and from school. The sport sheet is the *Vade Mecum* of the high-school boy. And if we are to get to the boys in any way, to teach them the lessons they so urgently need, why not do so through a medium they understand and which touches them closely?[77]

For Markey, athletics and sports offered formative opportunities for Jesuit educators to engage with students in a less formal setting than the classroom, where the rigidity of curricular activities can often constrain personal interactions. On the field, these interactions can develop more naturally, fostering lasting relationships. The memories that students carry of their Jesuit educators in these contexts, along with the moral and formative values imparted, would endure far beyond the necessary but routine memorization of lectures.[78]

Hence, his conclusions relate to the importance of pursuing a cohesive connection between the extracurricular activities such as sports and the curricular programs in order to promote formative education, a key historical feature of Jesuit schools since their inception: "An adequate athletic program, well directed . . . and integrated with the school's academic curriculum, will go far to prepare Jesuit boys for life not only in the physical order, but what is far more important, also in the moral order."[79]

The history of sports in Jesuit educational institutions during the twentieth century reveals a gradual yet significant increase in the popularity, organization, and promotion of athletics. However, the rise of organized sports in modern times—especially in British and American colleges—along with the dominance of team sports like rugby, soccer, baseball, football, and basketball in predominantly non-Catholic institutions, contributed to a common misperception: that Jesuit schools were hesitant or slow to embrace sports as part of their educational offerings. This misconception

77 Markey, "Sports in Our High Schools," 109.

78 "In the classroom the boy is on the defense, to employ his jargon, 'under wraps.' He is not completely relaxed, not himself; but on the athletic field we can observe him off guard; we can see him at his best and at his worst. The Jesuit coach can note the causes for his sudden flares of temper and seek to remove them; he can teach the lesson that life's only failure is the man who does not understand defeat, who cannot overcome obstacles. The example of many scholastics working with the boys becomes a memory then after life is never effaced, never dimmed." Markey, "Sports in Our High Schools," 109.

79 Markey, "Sports in Our High Schools," 109.

was reinforced when Jesuit colleges introduced athletics programs, as these efforts were often seen as a mere adaptation to external cultural trends rather than the continuation of a long-standing educational tradition.[80]

In reality, the inclusion of sports in Jesuit education was not a reluctant response to modern demands but rather aligned with the Society's broader commitment to holistic education. Athletics had always been viewed as integral to the formation of students, fostering discipline, teamwork, and physical well-being alongside intellectual and moral development.

In 1951, Francis Corkery, S.J. reflected on the benefits and risks of running intercollegiate sports programs in Jesuit schools.[81] After recognizing that such programs had become a widespread part of American higher education, including at Jesuit institutions, he examined their alignment with the mission of Jesuit education. Among the few drawbacks Corkery identified—aside from the common critique of prioritizing sports over academics and moral formation—was the concern that intercollegiate sports could restrict participation to a select few students. This limitation, Corkery argued, ran counter to the Jesuit educational aim of promoting sports for the largest possible number of students. His proposed solution was to strengthen or expand intramural programs, thus ensuring broader access to physical activity. To support his argument, Corkery drew upon the deep-rooted tradition of sports within Jesuit pedagogy, emphasizing its long-standing role in the holistic formation of students:

> Most schools find it very difficult to develop and maintain interest in intramural sports, but such a program is very necessary, especially where a goodly number of students are "boarders" living on the campus day and night. If an idle mind is the devil's workshop, an idle body is the devil's playfield, especially the body of energetic, vibrant youth. Some form of physical exercise is almost as vital for our college youth as in mental exercise, if we are to develop

80 Some echoes of such overlapping traditions can be found in William J. McGucken, S.J, *The Jesuits and Education: The Society's Teaching Principles and Practice, Especially in Secondary Education in the United States* (New York: Bruce Publishing Company, 1932), 25, 195.

81 Corkery, "Intercollegiate Athletics in Jesuit Higher Institutions." A thorough reflection on Corkery's points can be found in Claudio Ferlan's "In mezzo alla vita di ogni giorno: L'attenzione pastorale allo sport nel pensiero cattolico e il caso dei gesuiti di Gorizia (1938–1965)," which I read in its draft version. The chapter will be published in the forthcoming volume edited by Ivan Portelli, *I cattolici isontini nel XX secolo, VI, gli anni del concilio* (Gorizia: Istituto di Storia Sociale e Religiosa, 2024). I want to thank my friend and colleague Claudio for sharing his draft with me.

> the well rounded man. Physical, mental and moral development must go and demand, in the educational process.[82]

An Open-Ended Conclusion?

The second half of the twentieth century provided Jesuit educational institutions with significant opportunities for development, particularly in re-rooting their sports programs within the traditional cultivation of physical activities in Jesuit schools and universities. This era saw the introduction of women's sports within Jesuit co-educational institutions, a landmark in expanding athletic opportunities.[83] Additionally, the public's increasing involvement in sporting events helped to strengthen the sense of belonging and community, fostering enthusiasm not only among students but also within the broader networks surrounding these schools. The participation of spectators in these events further reinforced the role of sports as a unifying and formative element in Jesuit education. In the United States, increasing investments in intercollegiate sports at the university level and the expansion of athletic programs at the secondary level have at times positioned Jesuit educational institutions as adaptive entities within the dynamics of the "educational marketplace." In this competitive environment, success in sports and a strong athletic reputation often raise an institution's visibility, contributing to its branding and appeal. However, the cultivation of sports within Jesuit institutions is less an adaptation to external pressures and more a reaffirmation of the core principles of Jesuit pedagogy.

From their earliest schools, the Jesuits have integrated physical activities not as an end in themselves but as a means to shape character, foster community spirit, and enhance students' overall development. The practice of sports reflects the order's enduring commitment to holistic education, which includes the physical alongside the intellectual and spiritual. As Jesuit poet Jacques Vanière (1664–1739) poignantly expressed in two memorable lines that resonate with Jesuit pedagogy even today: "Animosque levant exercita duro / Membra fatigantes ludo" (They lift their

82 Corkery, "Intercollegiate Athletics in Jesuit Higher Institutions," 172.

83 On this history, see Richard C. Bell, "A History of Women in Sport Prior to Title IX," *Sport Journal* (March 14, 2018), https://thesportjournal.org/article/a-history-of-women-in-sport-prior-to-title-ix/ (accessed November 12, 2024) and, in relation to Jesuit institutions, Susan A. Ross, "It's Been 50 Years Since Most Jesuit Colleges Went Co-ed: But Have They Truly Embraced Their Female Students?," *America Magazine* (September 20, 2021), https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2021/09/20/jesuit-coeducation-college-university-ross-241373 (accessed November 12, 2021).

spirits while their limbs grow weary from strenuous play).[84] Like Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*, where the comparison between exercising bodies and spirits is introduced from the very first page, Jesuit schools are designed to function as literal *gymnasia*—spaces where both bodies and spirits are strengthened and trained.

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84 I quote from Jacques Vanière, *Jacobi Vanierii e Societate Iesu praedium rusticum: Nova editio* (Amsterdam: Petrum Justice, 1749), 25.