

EDITORIAL

S. H. IRWIN-CARRUTHERS

Since this issue of the Journal is devoted to sport for the disabled it seems an opportune moment to look at the aims of such sports programmes. Many and conflicting statements have been made in this regard, the main conflict centring around the recreational as opposed to the therapeutic value of sport. Some writers believe that sport should be entered into purely for its recreational value. Salbreux (1975) considers that to compare treatment and sport is to renounce the aims of one or the other, and probably of both. Barrish (1979) stresses not only the recreational value of sport, but also its role in social re-integration and work-preparedness. These aspects could surely be considered therapeutic — even if not falling within the bounds of physical therapy?

Sport for paraplegics and other similarly paralysed persons has been established for many years. More recently it has been established, also at international level, for amputees and the blind. Within these fields the controversy between sport and therapy does not arise. Whilst sport is undoubtedly of therapeutic value, in contributing to strength, balance and dexterity, this aspect is incidental to participation in sport for recreational purposes. Where the controversy rages strongest is in the field of cerebral palsy. It has been pointed out by several authors (Hunt, 1955; Huberman, 1976; Irwin-Carruthers and Richardson, 1976; Harris, 1978) that the conscious effort involved in competitive sport results in increased disability rather than improved performance. In addition the present handicapping system, based upon locomotor ability, has proved totally inadequate.

As a result Huberman (1974, 1976) queries whether the cerebral palsied should take part in competitive sport at all, or whether they should rather engage in participation sports only. He has stated categorically that cerebral palsied persons need not (and cannot, by virtue of the complexity of their problems) have the same sports experiences as able-bodied people. The opposing viewpoint is held by many physical educationists in South Africa, who have extended the principle "every child is entitled to education" to "every child is entitled to physical education". Physical educationists are becoming increasingly active in schools for the physically handicapped, often being placed in therapy posts, and great importance is attached to competitive sport.

Both Huberman (1976) and Irwin-Carruthers and Richardson (1976) have attempted to solve this controversy by proposing a handicapping system based upon

individual performance rather than locomotor ability and by suggesting a sports programme of activities selected and adapted so as to minimize abnormal reactions and enable the participant to perform at his best. A new handicapping system is at present being devised at international level and will be used at the 1980 International Games.

Sport for the disabled in South Africa has taken great strides in the few short years since its introduction. I would like to suggest a few areas which could be developed further. Firstly there appears to be a need for more sporting activities in which the minimally handicapped can take part. Secondly, are there not more sports in which the handicapped can compete on equal terms with their able-bodied counterparts?

Thirdly, more attention could be paid to developing participation sports for the handicapped as an alternative to competitive sport.

Lastly — not all able-bodied persons are interested in sport, nor do they all have the necessary physical skills; similarly the handicapped. Unfortunately "sport" has become synonymous with "recreation", but there are many other leisure activities of equal recreational value. The March 1975 editorial of the S.A.C.P.J. stated "A great deal of emphasis is being laid on the importance of "sport and leisure" in the lives of handicapped people. Perhaps it is unfortunate that "sport" has received most attention . . . The needs of the handicapped in areas of leisure activity are as great, if not greater, than those of us who have no physical handicap."

References

1. Barrish, M. (1979) South African Sports Association for Paraplegics and other Physically Disabled, *S.A. Physiother. J.*, current issue.
2. Harris, S. R. (1978) Neurodevelopmental treatment approach for teaching swimming to cerebral palsied children, *Phys. Ther.*, **58**, 979 - 983.
3. Huberman, G. (1976) Organised sports activities with cerebral palsied adolescents. *Physiother.*, **62**, 362 - 363.
4. Huberman, G. (1975) Organised sport activities with spastic adolescents. *S.A. Cerebral Palsy J.*, **19**, 3-5.
5. Hunt, V. V. (1955) Recreation for the handicapped, New York, Prentice-Hall.
6. Irwin-Carruthers, S. H. and Richardson, W. E. (1976) A Preliminary investigation into sport for the cerebral palsied child, *S.A. Cerebral Palsy J.*, **20**, 21 - 25.
7. Salbreux, R. (1975) Sport and treatment: freedom or restraint — leisure or education, *S.A. Cerebral Palsy J.*, **19**, 12-14.

Contents — Inhoud

Editorial/Van die Redaksie	3	Report on the Use of Biofeedback	11
South African Sports Association for Paraplegics and other Physically Disabled	4	The Need for Co-ordinated Research	13
Classification in Sport for the Disabled	5	News from Special Interest Groups	15
Riding for the Disabled	6	Branch News/Taknuus	17
Skiing with Cerebral Palsied Children: Experiences in Switzerland	8	Book Reviews	19
Sport and the Child with a Learning Disability	10	Vacancies/Vakatures	16, 21
		Courses/Kursusse	21