

Blister Toll Blamed on PIAA Timidity

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THE tug-of-war between high school administrators and athletic coaches is an incessant struggle that often hinges upon the impulsiveness or whims of our society.

The Russians' decisive victory in the 1956 Olympic games prompted some schools to place added emphasis on sports.

A year later, however, education reached the spotlight after the Russians launched Sputnik.

Educators are still sensitive to such words as "emphasis," "over-emphasis" and "de-emphasis." They prefer to think in terms of balanced curriculums.

Most school boards are indignant when their selection of textbooks is questioned. But the same school boards seem to bend when they are accused of over-emphasizing such activities as intramural ping pong or football.

In recent years, several high school football coaches have caused indignation among the esteemed rulers of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA).

An annual suggestion, which is annually rejected, is to allow high schools to issue football shoes one month before fall classes begin.

The PIAA permits gear to be issued and organized drills to

begin no earlier than the third Tuesday of August, three weeks before most schools open.

The request, mind you, is not for an additional week of football practice. It is merely a measure that will enable players to become accustomed to football shoes and diminish a high preseason blister rate.

Paul Tomko of Phoenixville High School is one Ches-Mont League coach who is extremely concerned over preseason blisters.

"It's the same thing every year," Tomko said. "The youngsters come to camp with tender feet and their first task is to get used to the hard leather of football shoes."

Tomko said he has had 18 blister cases, which is approximately one-fifth of his squad, since Aug. 18.

Three of the cases, he added, were severe and required medical attention.

"They can't run so they sit on the bench," Tomko said. "If you added up all the lost time caused by blisters, I bet it would be considerable."

John Petercuskie of Neshaminy High School in Bucks county concurred.

"On the surface, blisters seem like a trivial problem to most people," Petercuskie declared. "Believe me, they're not.

"We take all of the pre-

cautions," he continued, "but we still come up with blisters the size of a half-dollar. We've had about 20 players sidelined with blisters so far."

During the summer, Petercuskie said he mails letters to his prospective football players, advising them of foot care.

"We advise them not to go swimming because the water softens their skin and not to go barefooted," Petercuskie explained, "but it still doesn't do any good."

Petercuskie said many youngsters who are on the borderline of making the club hesitate to report blisters early because they don't want to jeopardize their chances.

"What they don't realize is that another blister will form over the old blister and then they may miss as much as a week of practice," Petercuskie said.

Petercuskie blamed the PIAA.

"They're so afraid of over-emphasis," Petercuskie charged. "They forget that coaches are members of the faculty and are educated and professional people.

"Coaches are just trying to do a job and look at the situation from this standpoint.

"For the sake of the kids."

DISA AND DATA—For some unexplainable reason, Phil-

adelphia suburban schools report few blister cases . . . John J. Dermigny, new head coach at Penncrest, said he has the problem under control . . . Dermigny said he personally inspects all shoe fittings and encourages athletes to use a skin-toughening lotion . . .

After a year's absence because of illness, Joe Orse has returned as head basketball coach at Bridgeport High School of the Inter-County League . . . Substituting for Orse last season was Louis Ritrovato . . .

Ferd Davis, Jr., of Jenkintown has recently published an isometric exercise booklet in partnership with Chuck Bednarik, former Eagles star and a resident of Abington . . . Joe Liscio, the Phillies' trainer who also lives in Jenkintown, assisted in the booklet's research . . .

Three players on the Wissahickon Hawks of the Delaware Valley Football League were married on the same day recently. . . . They are Ralph Gatto, Bob Turner and Phil Culp . . .

Bill Ersek, golf pro at the Springfield Country Club, is still beaming over the 76 he fired last weekend at Llanerch . . . Ersek said he discovered a "magic" putter . . .