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Introduction

Gymnastics is the mother sports of all other games and sports. Gymnastics is a systematized form of exercise designed to produce effect on the organism. In today gymnastics, those exercises are included, where the rules are framed internationally.

Brief History

The word gymnastics mean naked art and comes from the early Greeks. It is believed that the Chinese were the first people to develop activities that resembled gymnastics the Greeks worked with apparatus rather than upon it, while the Romans used apparatus in the form of a wooden horse to practice on.

The word gymnasium is also a Greek word which means the ground or place for gymnastic performance.”

When the Roman civilization weakened, the common people were discouraged from participating in strenuous, and through the Middle Ages only the knight were formed during sieges and at public performances.

Johann basedow (1723-1790) was the first European to teach organized gymnastic exercises. Thus Johann Guts Muths (1759-1839) published the first book on gymnastics. Guts Muths is also referred to as the Great-Grand father of Gymnastics.”

After the Napoleonic victories the Germans, a plan for building up the national strength of Germany was formulated by Frederick Jahn during the period 1810 to 1852.

Jahn is credited with introducing the parallel bars, horizontal bar, the side horse with pommels, and the vaulting buck, he believed that the Germans should hike and there they invented these different types of apparatus. In 1842, ten years before Jahn's death, gymnastics were introduced into the German public schools but in a formal nature.

Mats were first used in Copenhagen and Denmark when the military gymnastics institute was opened to teachers in gymnastics. This was accomplished by the Turnverein clubs.

About 1850 a wave of German immigration brought these clubs to America where they were called "turner societies."

In 1865, the American turners established a normal college of the American Gymnastic Union for the purpose of training gymnastic teachers.

Gymnastics took a thorough hold through these turn clubs, Y.M.C.A.'s, schools, and colleges. In an elementary form of modern recreational use in our parks and community centres are the jungle-gyms, teeter-totters, slides, rings, swings, etc. a light and heavy type of apparatus such as: parallel bars, horizontal bar, side horse, buck and flying rings are equipments used in most schools, colleges, clubs, and Y.M.C.A. gymnasiums.

Gymnastics in modern usage and competition generally refers to bodily movements on apparatus, tumbling on mats, trampoline, and calisthenics.

The use of apparatus in American public schools and colleges has been impeded by three main factors.

1. About 1800 Dio Lewis introduced exercises that did not require apparatus and the schools accepted them enthusiastically.
2. The Swedish influence about 1900 emphasized calisthenics.
3. A gradual trend toward recreational activities in America took place after the World War 1.

Since shortly after the end of World War 1, gymnastics has not occupied its rightful place in the total program of high schools and colleges in this country. The trend has been toward mild recreational activities for majority while strenuous competition was encouraged for the small minority.

Modern Gymnastics

In 1774, a Prussian, Johann Bernhard Basedow, included physical exercises with other forms of instruction at his school in Dessau, Saxony. With this action began the modernization of gymnastics, and also thrust the Germanic countries into the forefront in the sport. In the late 1700s, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn of Germany developed the side bar, the horizontal bar, the parallel bars, the balance beam, and jumping events. He, more than anyone else, is considered the "father of modern gymnastics." Gymnastics flourished in Germany in the 1800s, while in Sweden a more graceful form of the sport, stressing rhythmic movement, was developed by Guts Muth. The opening (1811) of Jahn's school in Berlin, to promote his version of the sport, was followed by the formation of many clubs in Europe and later in England. The sport was introduced to the United States by Dr. Dudley Allen Sargent, who taught gymnastics in several U.S. universities about the time of the Civil War, and who is credited with inventing more than 30 pieces of apparatus. Most of the growth of gymnastics in the United States centered on the activities of European immigrants, who introduced the sport in their new cities in the 1880s. Clubs were formed as Turnverein and Sokol groups, and gymnasts were often referred to as "turners." Modern gymnastics excluded some traditional events, such as weight lifting and wrestling, and emphasized form rather than personal rivalry.

Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852)

The "Father of Gymnastics" was born in Linz, Prussia. He received his education in the higher classical school at Salzwedel and entered the University of Halle to study theology. He never completed his university education, but left school to wander on foot through the German confederation. After several positions as tutor to the sons of noblemen, he applied for employment in a school but was not accepted because he lacked the qualifications. Determined to teach, Jahn enrolled in one of the many Pestalozzian seminaries in Berlin and, when he had completed his courses, became a teacher of mathematics and history at Graue Kloster. In 1811 Jahn affiliated himself with Plamann's famous Pestalozzian school for boys in Berlin.

As customary in Prussian schools of this era, Jahn spent Wednesdays and Saturday afternoons in outdoor activities with his boys. In the spring of 1810 Jahn made a practice of meeting his boys at Graue Kloster in an open area enclosed by trees near the school which he called the Turnplatz.* There he assembled the material necessary to construct apparatus recommended by Guts Muths and other contemporaries and laid out a figure-eight running track. In the circles of the figure

eight Jahn provided a palaestra, or wrestling area, and a jumping pit with standards for high jumping and pole vaulting.

On this open-air gymnasium he led his boys in simple exercises, stunts, and games. When by the spring of 1811 Jahn united the boys from Graue Kloster with those of Plamann's school, he was obliged to adopt some plan of organization. By summer of the same year he had formally initiated the program which later was to serve as a guide in the development of the German Turner Societies. Jahn appointed vorturners, or squad leaders, graded and classified activities according to age and difficulty, and varied them to insure a balanced and interesting program. He soon found that street clothes were impractical and added nothing to the esprit de corps of his boys, so he adopted long trousers and a gray unbleached linen jacket as a uniform. This gymnastic costume became a trade-mark not only in the German states but in other parts of the world where Turners migrated.

An Evaluation Of Jahn

Jahn is sometimes condemned for introducing the world to a formalized and artificial type of exercise. Criticism of this kind often results from a failure to understand the philosophy and objectives of a foreign way of life. Jahn recognized the inclination of youth to run, jump, climb, and throw, and his personally planned program gave important consideration to these natural activities. His apparatus work was conducted as stunts, and boys were encouraged to invent new patterns of movement to challenge one another. In his book, *German Gymnastics* (1816), he expressed a dislike for artificial exercises and was himself critical of Pestalozzi, who promoted exercises in his school at Yverdon designed to improve the flexibility of the joints.

After the Sand-Kotzebue incident in 1819, Jahn, suspected of spreading liberal views, was imprisoned and not released until six years later. From the day of his release until his pardon in 1840 by King Frederick William IV, Jahn was kept under constant police surveillance and was forbidden to live within a ten-mile radius of Berlin or any city in which a higher school or university was located. Recognized and revered by the Germans as the originator of the Turner movement, which eventually became world-wide, Jahn made his contribution in the space of eight years. The final character of his program was determined by his successors and not by him.

Adolph Spiess (1810-1858)

Spiess was born in Lauterbach, the son of a Thuringian father. He entered the University of Giessen in 1828 to study theology and there became proficient in fencing and gymnastics. He left Giessen in 1829 with a group of fellow classmates and hiked to Schnepfenthal, where he visited Guts Muths's classes. The following year he enrolled in the University of Halle to continue his study of theology. In 1833 Spiess applied for the position of teacher of gymnastics, singing, writing, and drawing at Pestalozzi's school at Burgdorf, Switzerland, and was accepted.

At this time Friedrich Froebel, the founder of the kindergarten movement, was also associated with the Burgdorf School, and Spiess was considerably influenced by his philosophy of play and exercise as an educational method. Spiess's program provided gymnastics for two successive hours three afternoons a week. He also devised special exercises for girls and took the children on frequent hikes. In the fall Spiess held a gymnastic exhibition (Tuntest) at which the children demonstrated what they had accomplished during the school year.

Spiess's Free Exercises

Through his experiences in teaching the German system at Burgdorf Spiess became convinced that this type of gymnastic exercise was unsuitable for the school situation. He therefore devised a series of exercises that could be performed in the classroom. Based on the mechanistic theory, these later became known as "free exercises," which could be performed with or without apparatus in the hands.

In his free exercises Spiess combined the six parts of the body (two arms, two legs, head, and trunk), six directions (up, down, forward, backward, right, and left), and the different forms of locomotion. He soon realized that the mathematical possibilities of the various combinations of these were practically unlimited.

Spiess separated muscular work from the vital physiological functions of respiration and circulation and, because of his scanty knowledge of body mechanics, failed to consider the physical principle of levers. Physiological facts were of little significance to Spiess because he knew that he had a system of free exercises which was simple to teach, easy to perform, and economical in its space requirement. To move his pupils into position to perform the free exercises, he arranged marching formations (Class Exercises in Marching, 1846). Since he had a gift for music he devised rhythmical accompaniment for his free exercises and marching drills, and this feature added much to their popularity in the schools.

Spiess's Promotion Work

The ascension of King Frederick William IV presaged a more liberal attitude toward the Turnverein. Sensing the change of attitude, Spiess returned to Prussia in 1842 and approached the influential leaders of the Turner Society with the hope that they might adopt his system of free exercise. The leaders, however, were too

satisfied with German gymnastics to consider a system which had not been tried and proven.

In 1848 Spiess received an appointment to introduce gymnastics in the schools of the state of Hesse. At Darmstadt he introduced his free exercises in two secondary schools for boys (Gymnasium and Realschule) and in a higher school for girls (Madchenschule). A public gymnasium (Turnhaus) was built in Darmstadt in 1852 for the use of both boys and girls. This gymnasium, one of the first of its kind to be constructed for the use of the public schools, featured movable partitions which made it possible to separate the 100-by-60-foot room into two gymnasium areas.'

By 1849 Spiess found it necessary to establish a four weeks' course for teachers of his free exercises in the schools of the Grand Duchy of Hesse, and between 1852 and 1854 his classes at Darmstadt attracted many official visitors from the German states and foreign countries. Spiess had succeeded in making free exercises a part of the school program and in so doing had introduced the gymnasium as an important part of the school's facilities. In the ensuing years his free exercises also became an accepted part of the activity program of the German Turner Society.

The Expansion of the German System

From its modest start on the Turnplatz near Plamann's school in 1811, Jahn's system of gymnastics gradually attracted the enthusiastic support of the German people. For the first time they had an opportunity to participate in a popular movement through which they could gather to exercise, sing, and march. The Turner Society was strictly a German institution, compatible with the political climate and social traditions of its people.

Although the Prussian government suppressed the Turner movement from 1819 until 1840, the members of the various societies met in secret and continued to practice gymnastics as well as spread propaganda for a united Germany. The perpetuation of the German system was not dependent upon a single leader or teacher but was a way of life and the common property of all Germans. Government restrictions only served to nurture the growing interest in the movement, and by 1850 the membership had increased to huge proportions. Though Jahn had become a marked man during the troublesome years, his work was ably carried on and expanded upon by Eiselen, Friesen, Massman, Passow, Arndt, Harnisch, von Raumer, Bernardi, Strauss, and Goethe, among others. Until 1847 no other book on a secular subject was so widely read as Jahn's German Gymnastics, and in that year Eiselen, one of Jahn's close companions, made the first revision.

The first Turner festival (Turnfest) was held in Coburg, Saxony, in 1860 and was attended by thousands of members of the organization from 139 cities and villages.

In 1868 delegates from the various Turner Societies in the German states and Austria met at Weimar and organized the German Gymnastic Association (Deutsche Turnerschaft). The Franco-German War of 1870 only halted temporarily the activities of the societies. The final unification of Germany, an objective of the Turners for more than fifty years, helped to increase the number of societies and augment the membership of the established ones. In addition, the physical stamina of the Turners as soldiers was fully recognized, and the Reich looked with favor upon the German Gymnastic Association, which was to exert an important influence upon future educational and national affairs.