BOOK REVIEW

Title: THE RUNNING FOOT DOCTOR
Author: Steven I. Subotnick
Publisher: World Publishers
Price:

Whatever one may feel about Steven Subotnick, one cannot ignore him and there can be no doubt that he has made a most valuable contribution to sports medicine by stimulating greater interest in the foot and its problems in sport.

This book is in fact a manual of sports podiatry, a profession supplementary to medicine little known in the United Kingdom but which could be crudely defined as five-star chiropody! Perhaps the most important contribution of podiatry to medicine has been an identification of deformities of the foot and these are nicely described in the middle section of the book. Unfortunately it appears that the state of the art is currently such that podiatry tends to describe these deformities as causes of symptoms and sets out to treat them accordingly, rather than as the results of specific pathologies. To that extent much podiatric practice must be regarded as superficially based and to a degree, therefore, empirical. However, there is no doubt that many of the treatment techniques are effective and because they are effective should give a valuable lead to the nature of the underlying disability.

This book, larded as it is with Americanisms (sometimes irritating to the Anglo-Saxon taste) is yet full of interest and indeed immensely stimulating. Personally I find Mr. Subotnick's views a healthy challenge to my own views and attitudes and I heartily recommend this (and his other book, Podiatric Sports Medicine — Futura Publishing Co., New York) less as a manual of how to manage foot problems in sport (although it does contain a considerable volume of useful and practical information) than as a highly abrasive intellectual stimulant!

J. G. P. Williams

BOOK REVIEW

Title: THE FIT ATHLETE
Author: R. J. Shephard
Price: £3.95
214 pages, 25 fgs, including ½ tone, 21 tables

The Publisher's statement on the fly-leaf of the jacket states that this book is recommended 'for the athlete, but also for the layman, the arm-chair marathon expert, and the student — in physical education or coaching'. This is not true! The book is an excellent introduction to many aspects of sports medicine, and would be of value also to the student of medicine, to the sports scientist and to the doctor in general on hospital practice who is making a start in the medical care of the athlete or is continuing to participate in some form of physical exercise.

After a short introduction, the book starts with a history of sport, not only Hellenic and Modern Olympiad, but from many different cultures and periods coupled with an interesting philosophical discussion on the need for sport, fitness, and sports medicine. An interesting graph on the growth of Olympic participation is given on page 17, but it is a pity the graph was not extended to cover the 1976 Olympiad, though these figures are mentioned in the legend. (We would also hope that an honorary life member of B.A.S.M. would give us our correct title of British Association of Sport and Medicine, and not of Sports Medicine — page 22 — Oh Roy!)

Body build, strength, skill, and the psychological attributes of the athlete are dealt with next, followed by simple but very clear descriptions of diet, training, doping, environment, disease, injuries (in outline), and sport for special groups — women, young adolescents, the middle aged, the handicapped, and the place of sport in society. There is no detailed list of references, but a most useful bibliography of the main books and journals in the English language.
Very few faults could be found in the text or in the excellent clear graphs and half-tone photographs, but a few points should be noted for the next edition (and I sincerely hope there is one!). On page 33, weight-lifting and throwing events are included with boxing and wrestling as 'contact sports', and on page 138 it is implied that lung damage can ensue from breathing air at depth from a snorkel tube.

Apart from these trivial faults, this is a very good and very readable book. I selected it to read to allay the tedium of a long flight, but found it as interesting as a good novel or travel book. I have learnt a lot from it.

H. E. Robson

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REPORT ON A SECOND
‘COLLOQUIUM ON CLINICAL PROBLEMS PECULIAR TO SPORT’
J. G. P. WILLIAMS, M.Sc., F.R.C.S.

This was held at Postgraduate Centre, King Edward VIIth Hospital, Windsor on 1st and 2nd March, 1978, with 31 participants as follows: Orthopaedics 8, Rheumatology and Rehabilitation 9, (including 2 Registrars) General Practice 9, others 5.

CLINICAL TRIALS IN SPORTS INJURIES

The opening session was devoted to a discussion of problems of clinical trials in the treatment of sports injuries. Mr. David Muckle, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at Middlesbrough General Hospital presented his experiences with Drug Trials in the treatment of injuries in football. It was generally agreed in the discussion that followed that the use of placebos in double blind clinical trials of drugs in sport was unacceptable unless combined with other treatment e.g. physiotherapy which formed part of the control background of the trial. It was felt that sportsmen in general came seeking to find the quickest way back to their sporting activities, and this precluded the use of placebos in their treatment except under appropriate conditions. The question was then raised of the extent to which surgical procedures could be validated. This has become a matter of some importance with the development of aggressive surgery for the treatment of over-use injuries. Clearly any form of double blind trial was out of the question but matched pairs offered an approach in comparing one form of surgery with another, and surgery with conservative management. Other than that it appeared that individual experience with the careful follow-up and recording of results was the best that could be done to validate such surgical procedures.

THE FOOT

The afternoon was devoted to a symposium on ‘The Foot in Sport’ — the subject was introduced by Dr. John Williams, Medical Director, Farnham Park Rehabilitation Centre who presented a description of the foot as a biomechanical model. The function of the ankle and sub-talar complex as a torque converter could be deduced in part from the shape of the joint elements which gave a clue to the degrees of freedom of movement at each joint. The foot could be represented as a sprung tripod attached to the torque converter allowing considerable degree of freedom of movement of the body above the foot while the foot remained firmly planted on the ground. Study of the mechanics of running and walking showed that there were separate differently geared lever systems which were used in the foot in propulsion.

Mr. Howard Payne, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Physical Education in the University of Birmingham then discussed methods of analysing foot function with particular reference to the force plate. He described the construction of various types of force plate and indicated how they could be used to identify forces in the foot doing a wide variety of actions including not only running, walking and jogging but also such activities as hitting and throwing. Gait analysis using the force platform, stroboscopic filming or ultra-high-speed photography made possible a clearer understanding of the function of the foot and effect of pathological and other influences on it.

The clinical problems of the foot in sport were presented in profusely illustrated lectures by Mr. Leslie Klenerman, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at Northwick Park Hospital and Mr. Basil Helal, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at the London Hospital. The extraordinary variety of clinical abnormalities affecting the foot and influencing its performance was very apparent in these presentations. The general concensus agreed that remarkably little attention was paid to them in everyday clinical practice.