


Book Review

“SCIENCE AND SPORT, THE MEASUREMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF PERFORMANCE”.

Vaughan Thomas


This book is a valuable addition to the library dealing with sport in one aspect or another. It takes its place near the left of the shelf as it is relatively elementary - it should be one of the listed texts for GCE Human Biology. A list of further reading is given which is selective but the reader would be well advised to read this volume first so that he has some understanding of the merits of the recommended books. The controversial character of the author comes through in many ways and his references to his personal experience would be immodest if they were not factual. He tends to be severe on sports scientists who disagree with his “test to destruction” when his subjects reach states of unconsciousness because he has not perceived any ill-effects. Yet he monitors the electrocardiogram during exercise to detect abnormalities, inter alia, and he is cautious about moving a man with a chest injury in case of a rib fracture. One has the feeling that because abnormalities of brain function or minor personality changes cannot be detected by the current crude techniques, he considers the risk so minor it can be disregarded. It is a fair analogy that the very rare death during exercise often has an abnormality of the heart in these cases; it is asserted that the cerebral circulation has 20% anomalies. Inevitably, one of these cases of induced coma will eventually show serious after effects. No doctor would like to take the most minimal risk with any subject other than himself. This ethical question apart - and some minor misprints like Fig. 6 instead of Fig. 7 on page 80 - why not suggest this book as a suitable present from an admiring relative?

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