



M. ALLEN



L. BIRKINS



C. CECCHINE



B. COBLEIGH



C. HENSAL



B. HOMM



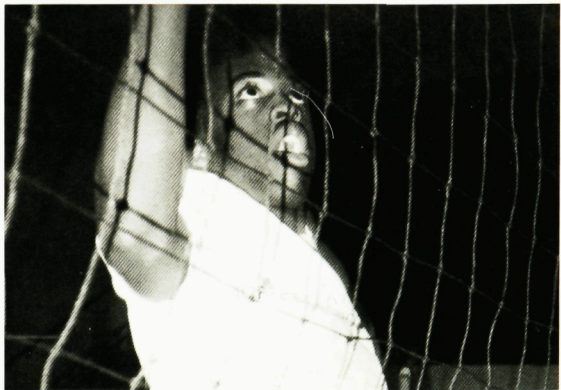
W. LEE



W. LEONARDI



D. PANKO



SHOULD ATHLETES TAKE GYM WHILE IN SEASON?

It is an issue which seldom provokes a neutral point of view.

Several years ago, the New Jersey State Department of Education announced that if a local Board of Education so ruled, participation in an extra-curricular sport would, during its own season, suffice for meeting the State physical education requirement. Go out for a sport, and you would be excused from taking gym during that season.

Not surprisingly, many Coaches and athletes agree with this idea. "I have always felt that it is ridiculous that athletes in season be required to take P.E. (Physical Education)," responded Coach Tom Breznitsky when CULMEN posed the question to him in December. "They get more physical activity in a month of soccer than most students get in P.E. all year." Senior Darin Fass, a wrestler, and Senior Rick Jackson, a football player bound for U. Conn. in August both concurred with Mr. Breznitsky. "For athletes like myself who practice 2½ hours a day, it (P.E.) is a strain," noted Darin. "As an athlete, I feel that gym should be optional," said Rick, who also voiced concern that this option "would mean you'd have to get a grade in the sport you participate in" a

"bad idea" that's "not fair."

Boys' Basketball Coach William Leonardi tends to oppose the idea. "Students involved in after school sports should elect activities that emphasize different skills than they are exposed to" after school. Coach Leonardi adds that "Physical activity during the day is also an excellent way to relieve the stress of sitting in the classroom." Mr. Jeff Grysko, District Physical Education Supervisor, cautioned that "to excuse a participant in an extra-curricular sport program from physical education courses will conflict with research that indicates that students need a comprehensive physical education program."

How many schools in the Watchung Conference currently take advantage of this option? According to Athletic Director Raymond Schnitzer, only Summit and Union Catholic, the latter due to "overcrowded conditions" and "limited outdoor physical education space;" only Seniors are eligible. At Summit, the option exists only for those with "two honors courses" and "no study halls."

Members of the Board of Education would not comment, as the issue is currently under deliberation.

Researched by Rebecca Elber