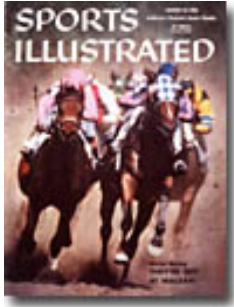


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January 26, 1959

A New Lease On Fitness

The youngsters shown above are ground-floor members in the first constructive nationwide program for fitness of American youth since **President Eisenhower** became concerned about the problem in 1955. The new action program, which could and should sweep the country, is entitled, with just a bit of proper flourish, Operation Fitness—U.S.A. An ambitious five-year plan which gets under way this week, it is backed by the largest and most expert fitness group in the country: the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation. The AAHPER consists chiefly of some 25,000 teachers and directors in public, private and parochial schools in the U.S. Members are in a position to reach virtually every child and parent in the U.S. Armed with a new program and a realistic plan to raise money from foundations and public-spirited business groups, the nation's physical education teachers could well be the folks to save Ike's fitness program from being talked to death.

One part of their program is a new national fitness test for young people 10 to 17, already tested under AAHPER auspices by some 8,500 youngsters (SI, May 26). The **Washington, D.C.** kids shown here wear accomplishment insignia which Operation Fitness will award, from here out, to participants everywhere. Standards have been devised from data on the first 8,500 so that every youngster will be able to measure himself against national norms and keep a record of his own progress.

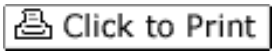
This is no effort to make all children conform to one national standard. There is plenty of room for individual differences, and the accent is on self-improvement, on competing against one's own last best score. Some of the standards by sex and age: a 10-year-old girl who can do 27 sit-ups scores 70% (by the time she is 17 she need do only 23 to make the same score); a 13-year-old boy who can run the 50-yard dash in seven seconds scores 85%. Other standards are based on a combination of sex, age, height and weight. Tests and insignia are available through the AAHPER at 1201 16th Street N.W., Washington 6, D.C.

The tests are just one phase of Operation Fitness, which will reach every community through schools and city recreation departments. Other projects include plans for a nationwide chain of sports clinics, festivals and demonstrations; movies on fitness to be shown in schools and before community groups; recognition for good existing programs.

Both the President's Council on Fitness and the [Citizens Advisory Committee](#) have given Operation Fitness their endorsement. It should also be supported by Americans in general who are anxious to do something about the unfitness they've been hearing so much about.

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