

# Sports at MIT?

By Bert Halstead

"MIT is the biggest jock school in the country." This statement is based on the over-worked but nonetheless significant fact that MIT has more intercollegiate sports than any other college in the NCAA.

That's a nice "wow" statistic to start off with, but what is important about it? After all, clearly MIT isn't a major national athletic power. Where is the gigantic stadium? And who at MIT could possibly afford to put down his books to play sports anyhow?

Well, wrong on several counts; Let's start with some facts. MIT has teams with recognized varsity status in twenty-two sports: baseball, basketball (men and women), lightweight crew (men and women), heavyweight crew, cross country, fencing (men and women), golf, gymnastics, hockey, lacrosse, pistol, rifle, sailing (men and women), skiing, soccer, squash, swimming, tennis, indoor track, outdoor track, water polo, and wrestling.

In addition, there are several sports in which MIT enters into

extramural competition on a "club" basis, in both men's and women's sports. Examples are rugby, softball, judo, and field hockey. More far-out examples are frisbee and tiddlywinks, in each of which MIT has held national titles in the last two years (a world title in the case of tiddlywinks)! Some of these have been club sports for a long time, and some (especially women's) are expected to attain varsity status in a year or two. Yes, people actually go out for all these sports!

But how many of these teams

are any good, you say? To the surprise of many and the delight of the MIT athletic staff, many of them are. Sure, there have been teams with winless seasons. In meet-type sports, there have been teams that came in dead last in every single meet. But what about the pistol team, national champions? What about the fencing team, New England champions for the third year, and holders of the Intercollegiate Fencing Association national team foil championship? What about heavyweight crew, second only to Wisconsin

in the Intercollegiate Rowing Association finals? What about women's sailing, taking fourth place in the national championships, after having been the champions the two years before?

There are also individual stars. Consider Frank Richardson '77, who qualified for the national track championships; Ed Hanley '74, undefeated in twenty-two wrestling matches this season; Johan Akerman '77, IFA national individual foil champion; or Bill Young '74, New England tennis singles champion in 1973, not to mention many others with similar accomplishments to their credit.

So sports at MIT is indeed a going concern. Certainly, though, any group of four thousand college students must include a few who are good at sports. That is true, and I make no claim that MIT has more of them than other colleges, but it is a fact that fully 60% of the student body participate in organized sports at some level, from the most random "C" league intramural teams up to intercollegiate competition.

None of this really describes what makes MIT sports the most unique and forward-looking program around, though. Sports at MIT is not big business. The MIT athletic program is 100% directed toward you, the participant. No admission is charged at any intercollegiate event at MIT. No "cutting" of team squads is done by the coaches. Any student with intercollegiate eligibility can go out for any sport, and stay with the team for the whole season. There is no guarantee that you will play, or go on all the road trips, but you will not be excluded from the team. A player's removal from a team roster must be initiated by the player himself.

It is not always easy to go out  
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# Fraternities provide social atmosphere

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which primarily helps with collective buying in order to get cheaper prices, and with organizing rush week. The IFC is presently attempting to help increase inter-house and community-wide social events. However, the IFC does not control the operations of the houses.

One of the major advantages of fraternities is their freedom of action. Fraternities own their own houses, and their members are responsible to themselves and set their own rules. Many houses have rules which have stood for a long time, some operate without any rules at all, voting only when an issue of importance arises.

With this independence goes additional responsibility. The Institute does not maintain the house, there is no landlord to whom to complain, there are no parents to go to when something goes wrong. All maintenance, financing, renovations, and meal systems must be planned and carried out by the members. The members must also be responsible for working out interpersonal differences, as well as judiciously when serious problems with cooperation occur.

This additional responsibility is rewarded by two things: self-determination and group spirit. Fraternities are able to choose their own direction socially and develop their own group image. As a fraternity member one has the opportunity to be close friends with about forty people, to be interested in their well-being, and to have them interested in yours. In order to allow the house to function smoothly, all members must be willing to be a contributing part of the larger group, and to work to make it a living group worth living in.

Group spirit, however, does not imply homogeneity. Look at the membership of any fraternity on campus and you will find a diversity of family, financial, and geographical backgrounds, of academic and extracurricular interests, of political beliefs and social activities. It is this diversity that is a major factor in the strength of the MIT fraternities, and it provides their members with the advantage of associating with people of many varied and different backgrounds.

The idea of fraternal spirit has, unfortunately, been tied historically with the extreme and vicious physical and mental "hazing" which "pledges" (fraternity members) often had to undergo. This presumably made a new member feel part of the group once he had successfully completed the pledge period. In some instances, however, this policy caused unnecessary mental and physical hardships, and sometimes resulted in tragedy. The accidental drowning of a fraternity man at MIT in 1956 caused the IFC to pass strict rules eliminating all physical and

emotional hazing in pledge training programs.

Present pledge programs range from giving immediate equality to freshmen and helping them learn as they go along to providing actual programs geared towards helping the freshmen learn about the running of the house, taking responsibilities in its operation, sometimes including freshman duties, and acquainting the freshman with the academic, social and cultural opportunities provided by MIT and the Boston area. Freshmen are expected to contribute in constructive ways, and are not given meaningless tasks to perform.

The individual house also organizes its own educational and social activities. Some houses have a graduate student tutor to help with academic work and hold quiz reviews. Many houses have study hours, so that members can work without disturbance, and upperclassmen are always available to help and advise on any problems, academic or otherwise. Over the period of time when living groups had their academic performances measured, the fraternity system always did above Institute average, probably due in part to these programs.

Socially, houses have a wide range of activities. Some houses have parties almost every weekend, ranging from the standard band party to wine-tasting, casino, and finger-painting affairs. There is also at least one system-wide party a year, historically the Skuffle around Halloween or the Fiji Island Party. Often several houses will get together to hire one of the top small Boston groups for a party. Other houses, for those who prefer a lower-key approach, leave social activities up to the individual brothers for the most part, having large house parties only occasionally.

All houses field at least a few intramural teams, and while the quality of the teams may not always be of major-league caliber, there is a league for everybody, and everyone has a good time participating. This attitude prevails in many aspects of fraternity life, and is reflected in myriad bridge, poker, and chess games, and in group outings to baseball games, picnics, movies, concerts, and house retreats.

Fraternities offer other benefits as well. Since the members determine what they will eat, the food is generally more satisfactory than in the dorms. Costs will probably be much better than those in the dorms this year (the average fraternity housebill last year for room and board was \$1400), and the house-bill includes more - 18 to 21 meals a week, kitchen and social privileges, and linen. The low cost is attained by careful budgeting and planning. When redecorating and repairs are needed, fraternity members usually plan and

undertake them themselves. This also reduces the cost of fraternity living, as well as providing practical experience to the individual members.

The houses at MIT come in astounding varieties. They range from 80-year-old converted duplexes to governor's mansions, from perennial intramural champions to perpetual bottom-league hacks, from freshman work sessions and chores to house equality, from full-time cooks to cooking by members to open kitchens, from benevolent despotisms to structured committee governments to near anarchy, from all triples and equals to all single rooms, from the socially infamous to the totally unheard of, and from the traditionally ritualistic to the traditionally anti-traditional.

The fraternities have one basic thing in common: they each offer an intense living experience. When things go wrong, they can go very wrong, because the house has none to blame but itself, and none to correct the problems but itself. When things go right, however, the experience is much more rewarding. A house can realize that things

# Get extracurricular

By Forrest N. Krutter

MIT has many different facets to present to its students. One side of MIT is its student activities, which run the gamut from the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics to the Young Socialist Alliance. There are over one hundred student activities that are officially recognized by the Association of Student Activities (ASA). These activities can be divided into a number of broad categories.

The first category is the campus media by whose good graces I am able to bring you this article. MIT has four student newspapers, three to present the happenings at MIT and throughout the world from their respective viewpoints, and one covering foreign students' interests. We also have an FM broadcasting station, WTBS and *Tech Engineering News*, a journal dedicated to the publication of undergraduate research, *Technique*, MIT's yearbook, provides a glimpse of the year that has just passed. All these organizations serve to keep the MIT community informed of that which is going on around them.

Some organizations are service-oriented. APO and TCA have worked on blood and charity drives as well as projects benefiting the MIT and outside communities. Haute Saone Priory also runs service projects. The Lecture Series Committee shows movies at bargain basement prices on weekend evenings for the entertainment of the MIT community. Other groups

stage plays during the school year. We have an excellent symphony orchestra and concert band, which have been nationally acclaimed.

Foreign student organizations provide a tie with the home country as well as an interest to their membership and the general community. Information on foreign student organizations can be obtained from the Foreign Students' Office. Religious clubs conduct much more than worship services, with all kinds of events of interest to MIT students, who are not the world's most religious people.

The last group of clubs is the largest: the interest groups. Some of them are political, some academic, but most cover such areas as fish raising, strategic games, folk dancing, ballroom dancing, parapsychology, outings into the wild, automobiles, and everything in between. We have top chess and tiddlywinks teams in which you might participate, depending on where your talents lie, in your mind or your fingertips. Some groups represent certain ethnic segments of the community. One group tries to represent all of the varied interests of MIT's undergraduates, the Undergraduate Association (alias student government) and its committees.

MIT has far more student activities than can be listed in this article, and none can be adequately described in one sentence. I have tried to present a sprinkling of the student activities here, not an exhaustive list, with the result that many

very active organizations were not covered. In the Freshman Handbook you can find a listing and description of each activity. The Association of Student Activities is always glad to provide specific information about student activities. We have a complete listing of all recognized activities, where they can be found, and who heads them.

Another good way of finding out about MIT student activities will be to attend the Activities Midway in the duPont Gym on Thursday, September 5, from 6:30 to 9:00pm. There the activities have a chance to tell you about themselves, and you can find activities which meet your interests. Though the midway is part of R/O Week, it is not limited to freshmen. Everyone is invited. There are new activities every year, and your interests have probably changed since you attended the midway as a freshman.

MIT student activities exist to satisfy the varying interests of both undergraduates and graduates. These activities are able to provide services of all sorts to the MIT community because people give of their time. It is easy to enjoy a movie LSC shows, read one of the campus papers, or attend a musical, but the Association of Student Activities hopes that you will consider being an active part in one (or more) of the activities. It can become an important part of your MIT education.

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