MIT sports

By Gordon Haff

Although this is probably an overworked subject, it is nevertheless true that the sports program at MIT, while not entirely unique, is very unusual. To be more specific:

1) It has more varsity sports than any other college or university in the country.
2) It charges no admission to sporting events.
3) It features an intramural program which, by Athletic Department figures, up to 75 percent participation among the student body.

The last point underscores the fundamental difference between MIT and many other universities. While a similar percentage of students may be "involved" in sport at MIT and Ohio State, the nature of their activities is totally different. At Ohio State, except for a very small, semi-professional athletics, the involvement is in the form of cheering their football team on to victory. The athletic department revolves around that sport. For that reason, the football team has the only real chance for post-season play.

At MIT, the situation is reversed. There is almost no interest in varsity sports. Even those students who are involved with intramurals know almost nothing about varsity sports. There isn't a football team at all. This is remarkably due to its economic infeasibility, but I personally feel that it is due to people not being able to think of a college football team in less than big-time terms. Either way, this is still typical of MIT's attitude.

All of which brings us to the point of this column. Over the course of the last month or two I have discussed intramurals at MIT, their problems and highlights. I have just finished talking about how the participation attitude at MIT replaces the spectatorship attitude at many other universities. I would like to add that this participation is more important than spectatorship. For physical reasons nothing else, intramurals are the only reliable method of keeping worth-while sports.