



**BY BOB ARMBRUSTER**

What sports are mentioned in the Bible?

A journalistic colleague once raised this question. I have been having a lot of fun thinking about it lately and discussing it with others, including my students in a satellite program of Jersey City-based Saint Peter's College.

If you have some extra time on your hands these days, you also might find it a new and enjoyable way of looking at the Bible.

Wrestling is one of the first sports mentioned in the Scriptures to come to mind. Genesis tells us that Jacob wrestled all night with a messenger of God.

Boxing and track also come quickly to mind. In 2 Timothy, Saint Paul tells us that he has fought the good fight ("competed well," in the New American Bible translation). I have always taken the good fight to be boxing. And Paul says he has finished the race and kept the faith.

Fishing was the occupation of most of The Twelve apostles. Today, many people make their living from fishing, but for others it is a sport. Check out especially the summons in Matthew 4: "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Sailing and rowing are sports for many people today, but they were important modes of transportation in biblical times. Jesus and His apostles sailed on the Sea of Galilee. In Acts 27, we read that Saint Paul traveled in sailboats and suffered shipwreck. When the sailing vessels got close to shore, the passengers often traveled to the shore in dinghies or rowboats.

Swimming saved the lives of some of those who suffered shipwreck with Paul, but today it is a very enjoyable sport.

Horseback riding – a sport today – is referred to in I Kings.

Archery also receives mention in I Kings. There are a variety of mentions of camping in the Old Testament, and in II Corinthians our earthly dwelling is referred to as a tent.

Mountain climbing is a sport today. Moses, of course, climbed Mount Sinai, and Jesus, Peter, James and John climbed a high mountain where Jesus' transfiguration took place.

Hikers might recall the many times walking considerable distances is mentioned in the Bible. During the Easter season, Bible readers might want to recall the passage where Jesus met two disciples when they were on the road to Emmaus.

Javelin throwing, a sport today, was an ancient method of warfare. Look for this in the Old Testament.

Was shooting a rock from a slingshot, the method of warfare in which David killed Goliath, somewhat similar to discus throwing?

Perhaps you can find other references to sports – or what are now sports -- in the Sacred Scriptures.

I was discussing this matter with a rabbi who said baseball is referred to the Bible. I looked surprised, and he chuckled, "In the big inning."

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Animal lovers also might think of the many animals named in the Bible. And music lovers can discover the many musical instruments. Hint: The Book of Psalms is a good place to begin.