

# GIRLS, VYING FOR ALL-ROUND ATHLETIC CROWN, SMOTHER EACH OTHER WITH BOUQUETS OF PRAISE

## "Bobbie" Ranck and Betty Schenkel Set New Sporting Style by Telling How Good the Other Is—Winner Will Be Champion of Philadelphia

### PROBLEM OF PICKING TEN SPORTS FOR GREAT EVENT IS PUZZLING "MANAGERS"

### One Can Box, but Other Doesn't Like to Be "Mussed Up"—Gymnasium Is Forte of "Bobbie" and Betty Stars on the Cinder Track

WHO is the world's champion all-around woman athlete? Who is the Silvia who can row, box, race, jump, hurdle, swim, dive faster, farther and better than any other woman who lives within the four corners of the earth? Who is she who is without peer in fencing, throwing a baseball, putting the shot, gymnastics, hurling the javelin? It is a question which still rests with the gods, but earth's mortals are destined for some inside facts soon.

For hasn't Betty Schenkel, of Philadelphia, who excels in seventeen different sports already challenged any girl in America to a decathlon of sports for the world's championship? And didn't "Bobbie" Ranck, also of Philadelphia, even this very day answer defiance to that challenge?

"I don't want to seem conceited," said Miss Roberta C. Ranck, "but I can do a lot of things—especially in the gym—and I'd just like to meet Betty Schenkel. Even if I did win, you know what I mean is: even if I made a few more points than she did, I couldn't say I was the world's champion, because there are other countries besides America and other girl athletes besides Americans."

"I'm no champion," insisted Miss Betty Schenkel, with equal modesty, "and I guess I wouldn't even have made that challenge if it hadn't sort of been wished on me—I just play around with these things because they are fun. I like to run and box and jump—but gee! I s'pose there are plenty of girls who can beat me."

### Rivals Are Friendly and Unusually Modest

And so it appears from the above statements that, although the respective "managers" of these two jolly girls and the host of friendly fans have praised their ability to the very heights, the athletes themselves are from a figurative Missouri and they are just as much surprised over the challenge and the answer as any one is, and really just as interested.

At any rate they will compete soon. And both, extraordinary athletes though they are, will be content that one will remain the champion—of Philadelphia at least.

"Once we, in a friendly way, decide who's best in Philadelphia, then we'll invite anybody else to a contest," is the conclusion the girls have arrived at.

"I'm pretty good at gym work," says "Bobbie." "I can do some tricky things on the horizontal bars, and the parallels, and the rings. But I can't box much. Oh, I can get about with the gloves on, but I'm not so much. As a matter of fact, I don't like to box. I don't like my face to get all hit up. I'd rather swim."

From Betty's quarters comes a faint tinge of hesitancy and trepidation, too.

"I've boxed some with my two brothers," says Betty, "but 'Bobbie' Ranck will walk away with me in gym work."

"Can't say as I can swim very well," submits Betty, even glowingly. "But I like basketball."

"If Betty means that one of the sports is basketball I don't think that's entirely a fair test," comes information from "Bobbie." "This meet ought to be a personal meet. Nobody can tell how well a person plays if there is a whole team to play with. If Betty wants me to play a basketball I can do that pretty well."

And so the shrapnel flies. Both girls are extremely good sports. They haven't met each other yet, but they both seem to have profound respect for each other. There is nothing of the well-known confidence of prize-fighters about them. They are willing to try their luck—let the best girl win!

Of the two "Bobbie" seems to be the stronger. Not tall, she radiates a kind of physical force that would seem invincible. Besides that she is vibrant with enthusiasm and youth. She is about twenty years old, the same age as the challenger.

"Bobbie" is a graduate of high school, and she is now employed as a stenographer.

When she was six years old she was in poor health. Her parents despaired of her, and after consulting physicians decided to treat her with some form of pleasant and mild exercise.

cried "Bobbie" with delightful enthusiasm.

"Keep busy and be happy—that's seems to be all the reason in all the world for liking to live. And I like to keep busy by having other interests beside my work. I work hard every day at the typewriter. (On Sundays I almost live in the gymnasium, and two nights a week in the winter I go to take fencing lessons and boxing. When I get a chance I squeeze in some golf and some tennis or some horseback riding.

"Sports are my hobby. And I think everybody ought to have a hobby. Mine just happens to be athletics. But I don't say anybody ought to have athletics for a hobby. I'm the last one to say what other folks ought to do, and I don't like other folks to say what I ought to do.

"Of course, I don't approve of coffee or any drink like that. I have not touched coffee since I can remember. And I don't smoke either. Not that I disapprove of smoking. I couldn't do that, and believe so hard that folks ought to mind their own business. But I don't think smoking would do me any good—so I don't smoke.

"My mother has always let me run my own life to a great extent. I guess that is why I still want to run it and why I like other folks to be free to run theirs. 'Let your conscience be your guide' is a little old motto, but it's true," said Miss "Bobbie" with not a little conviction.

Today "Bobbie" is a champion in the most energetic and exhausting type of gymnastics. She can bend a crab on a horizontal bar, and keep the tiring position for minutes. She lost by a fifteenth of a second the first award at the historic meet of the American Gymnastic Union a number of years ago.

### Has Praise for Deaf Mute Who Bettered Her Record

"I was beaten then by a deaf and dumb girl from St. Louis," she said. "And I'm glad I was, for that girl is remarkable. You know she couldn't

hear the crack of the gun at the start in the races. She had to watch the others, and then she flew like the wind."

"Bobbie" hasn't been ill once for the last seven years.

"Yes, I was, too," she interrupted herself. "Last winter I fell off the apparatus at the Turners and broke my toe." She was silent for a moment and then resumed gravely, "but I guess you wouldn't really call that being ill, would you?"

When "Bobbie" was six the mild form of exercise chosen by her parents was esthetic dancing. And she has kept up her dancing. But too much ballroom dancing bores her.

"I can't explain it very well," and her smooth brow wrinkled prettily with the effort to explain it, "but I don't like anything that ties you down. I like to be up and doing, I like to get out in the open, I like to work at my sports activities hard. For instance—here's about the way it is:

"I've just come home from my vacation. I was at Delaware Water Gap. It rained the other day and the girls began to play bridge on the porch. That was too slow. I just had to go downstairs and shoot some pool—it kept me moving around and I was happy.

"Same way with books. What's the use of reading a 'dry' book. If you're going to stay indoors to read why not read a book with a whole lot of adventure and action in it? They are the kind I like—though I don't find time to read much."

When "Bobbie" grew to be a little stronger, her father, Marcus D. Ranck, sent her to the Sherwood Recreation Center, at Fifty-fifth and Christian streets. Here she learned to swim and the rudiments of gym work.

### Chocolates Are Favorite Training Diet for Her

"I don't train the way athletes usually do," she said. "For instance, I like chocolates. I like good heavy, mushy ones. I eat any hour of the day. They make me happy—and I believe that being happy is the way to be healthy."

The little poem by fourteen-year-old Hilda Conkling, written to her mother, was quoted to this bronzed and freckle-faced girl:

If I am happy and you, And there are things to do, That seems to be the reason of this world.



Likes basketball

Ready for the next event

Bobbie Ranck on the flying poles

"But I think you ought to please your own conscience, and not worry too much about somebody else's. I approve of bobbed hair. I don't bob mine because I sort of feel it wouldn't look becoming that way. And I believe in one-piece bathing suits and in the men's trunks and jerseys for girls in track and field competition. Of course, if I didn't feel that way about those things it would be very nice for me to wear them. And if other folks disapprove of them they oughtn't to wear 'em, but neither ought they object to anybody else wearing them."

Miss "Bobbie" seems to be sufficiently able to take care of herself. One might swing a hefty enough right or left. In addition to that, she has the type of mind which is matter of fact and downright. She never hesitates much about her opinions—except when she is discussing her own ability. She can blush like any other pleasant girl, and stammer a little to boot.

### Smile a Winning Climax to Well-Formed Athlete

She weighs about 130 pounds, she reaches five and one-half feet in height and she is well developed. Her shoulders are broad and her strong kneecap limbs are those of a dancer. Her voice is soft and enjoyable and her hair a wavy brown. When she smiles she displays teeth that are regular and neatly white. And all this array is being listed only to refute the impression that girl athletes are nervous—that "Bobbie" is nervous.

In her street clothes Miss "Bobbie" seems the eternal feminine. One might never suppose that she can twist and

turn on the bars with the precision and grace rarely equaled by men; that she can outrun the average young man one meets on the streets; that she can turn handspins, stand on her head and swim a tank.

"Of course athletic women make good mothers," said Miss "Bobbie." "Why shouldn't they? They are healthy, and they have sense enough to want their children to have the same advantage of open air and physical exercise as they've had. Besides, no athlete can be intolerant. He or she always has to respect the other fellow—and how can you possibly do that and be intolerant? In athletics you are entirely on your own—if you lose, well, you simply haven't measured up, and must give credit to the girl who wins. When anybody says that women are poor sports, I just don't believe them. Seems to me they have more determination than men—they want to win more—but they know how to lose, too."

And she tagged on to that:

"If Betty Schenkel beats me, why should I be a bad loser? I'll do my best, and I want her to do her best. Nobody can ask any more from either of us."

And like an echo comes the same phrase from Betty:

"I'll do my best, and I won't get mad if I'm beaten."

she has more of those honors than "Bobbie," who has a sufficient supply in her own right, however.

She had had the advantage of two brothers just a little younger. "Bobbie" has but one brother, sixteen years old, with whom she has learned to play basketball. Betty, as does "Bobbie," plays rather well at billiards; roller skates, riding, even football, number, however, among the sports which she has developed without much chance of feminine rivalry.

If the decathlon includes football, "Bobbie" will be up a tree.

"But I'll try anything in athletics," she insisted bravely. "I believe in trying all sports. It's the only way to find out what you can do—and the more sports you try the more fun you have and the more chance to excel in some of them."

If the decathlon includes bowling, at which Betty is no mollycoddle, "Bobbie" will again have to fight with little experience.

"Betty uses a rifle too," says her "manager." She's just started with the rifle, but she is breaking 30 out of 50 every time. She's champion of the P. R. R. on the track. She wears spiked shoes just like a man! She's won all the championships up to 100 yards. She did that in 13 1-5 seconds and 50 yards in 6 3-5."

can't do on the apparatus!" said Miss Sullivan, director of athletics at Sherwood Recreation Center. Miss Sullivan, modest like her protégée, refuses to admit that any credit is due her for the early training she afforded Miss Ranck.

"Bobbie" has it in her to be an athlete," is the authoritative conclusion from Miss Sullivan. "She was born with the knack, and had the good sense to develop it. I haven't seen Miss Schenkel, so I don't know how good she is. But there are few better than 'Bobbie,' and any rival of hers will have to work hard."

For a while recently it was necessary for "Bobbie" to call a halt in her vigorous activities. Her doctor advised that nothing ailed her, excepting her too energetic training. Consequently, lately, she has diminished her many interests for a while to but two—swimming and golfing.

"And I have been playing spectator," she smiled. "I think there is nothing lovelier than a good game of baseball or tennis. Fact is, I like most any of those games—though I have to admit that whenever I watch other folks playing, I want to jump in, too—but I have restraint enough to be able to enjoy meets from the sidelines."

### Parlor Athletics Not for This Strenuous Miss

Perhaps it is her partiality for visible action which has made her more

friendly to the theatre and the movies than to books.

"I like the movies and the theatre—if there is a lot happening," is her manner of suggesting this. "Of the other social diversions I find I like dancing best of all—though I'd rather go to the gymnasium than to a dance."

It is not so onerous a task to pick out the influences which have led Miss Ranck to a whole-souled affection for athletic competition. It might be the pathway for any girl, provided parents in the early years of their girl-child exhibit a degree of intelligent direction.

Mr. and Mrs. Ranck, since they discovered that their daughter appeared to be in delicate physical condition, understood that it was just as necessary to develop the girl-body as it seems to be to develop the boy-body. With her privilege to compete in athletic work she was able to develop the boy-interest along with her girl-interests. And

with a body as healthy as any freckle-faced boy's.

Comes, strangely enough, at this late moment word from Miss Betty Schenkel's manager, Jack Roden, who says that under no circumstances "will his athlete compete in gymnastics. He says she welcomes competition in all the legitimate track and field events and that she will be ready to meet any woman immediately after the Pennsylvania system outdoor championships, September 23, at Altoona.

This doubtless will bring down "Bobbie's" score for she excels in gym work—but it does not discourage her.

"I believe in trying out most any of the games," is her gentle ultimatum. "Somehow I've been winning a lot of things—and I want to see what I can do, anyway, with Betty Schenkel."

And the championship meet for the all-around woman athlete will not be canceled.

And the world will wait and wonder, like the singer in Bill Shakespeare's play:

Who is Silvia? What is she—a-s? That all the fancy commend her?

Whether Silvia will be seen—as they both admit themselves the prize will go to the best.

### Predicts Day When Girls Will Beat Men Athletes

"Some day maybe women will whip the men in gym events," she believes. "Just now the difficulty is that women are not so strong as men. In work on the bars and the rings a competitor needs strength and cleverness. Women are as clever as men; they often show better form, but they are rarely as strong."

For the delatation of her small audience she flipped a difficult turn on the parallel bars. It was a whole series of turns—and seemed the most excruciatingly hard work.

"Not so pleasant," she gasped, "in the summertime." And because she believed it so, she cried: "I'll say it isn't," and then laughed.

"There seems to be nothing that girl

### Girl's Trophy List Is Long as After-Dinner Speech

Betty Schenkel has been doing most of her work with the girls of the Pennsylvania Railroad. She holds all kinds of cups, ribbons, certificates—perhaps