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DR. NAISMITH WAS FARSIGHTED

BASKETBALL fans the world over join in the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Basketball to honor the memory of the inventor of this game, which has grown so steadily in popularity in fifty years that it is recognized as the most popular of our sports. Since its beginning in eighteen ninety-one it has become indeed our national game. It is neither an adaptation nor an importation of some older game for it was originated in Springfield, Massachusetts. On the contrary, the sound elements of this game-sport are so appealing to all youth that it has become an article of export and bids fair to become the most popular international sport in the next fifty years.

It was a unique experience for a man to invent a game which, in his lifetime, flourished to the extent that Dr. James Naismith's game had flourished. It is quite likely that, when he consolidated his ideas on the new game and drew up a code of rules for it, he had no inkling that it would be taken so completely into their lines by so many of the youth of the land. That so many continue to do so proves the soundness of the four outstanding principles which he thought should govern this new game.

As stated by Dr. Naismith, he felt "that it should be an interesting game with a ball that could be handled but not be hidden by the hands." "That it should be an easy game to learn so that anybody could play it." He thought it should be "so skillful as to require considerable indulgence and even then be a little shy of perfection." And finally, "that it should lack the roughness of football and be played indoors." "In this connection, while personal contact is forbidden there are continuous intellectual and physical contests between players in trying to out smart each other." "Another factor

in eliminating roughness was in making the basket horizontal rather than perpendicular, thus requiring added skill in arching accuracy rather than direct force." On these principles he based the game, which has proved sound in recreation, physical development and character building.

It is remarkable that his original code of rules has stood the test of time. Today the game is holding persistently to the basic aims which he laid down for it. This is noteworthy when one considers that in fifty years the sport has attracted many thousands of youthful participants of varying talents and attributes. Coaches have been industrious to develop these talents into game techniques which have had a great effect in the development of excellence of individual play and team work. But it has also, from time to time, upset the balance of opportunity afforded the offense and defense by the rules of the game.

To have a sound game the prime consideration is the maintenance, by rule, of a balance of opportunity which will not give undue advantage to the strategic possibilities allowed the offense over the defense and vice versa. Since the founding of the game rule changes have been necessary frequently to maintain this important principle of a sound game, but in spite of much heated argument and high pressure in rule-making bodies the conduct of the game remains basically the same as it was when Dr. Naismith gave it to the youth of the world.

Of basketball it can justly be said that no game has changed so much in the short span of half a century, and yet so little. Different as the game is in technique from that which was played in 1891, the basic features still remain, and the same possibilities for intense competition are present.