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## BASKETBALL MEANS SPORTSMANSHIP

**L**IKE thousands of others who have had some little part in the growth of basketball, I look upon the flourishing game of today with considerable pride and satisfaction.

Basketball as played a generation ago, while basically the same interesting and thrilling game it is today, was vastly different. And of all the changes that have come about in the game, the two most far-reaching ones, which exercised the most good on the structure and substance of the sport, are in officiating and in player and spectator sportsmanship.

A little more than three decades ago, officiating was often nothing more than a travesty. Too often officials handling games in those days were victims of the same biases and provincialisms that characterized fans in all parts of the country.

A team traveling out of its own immediate bailiwick was usually convinced before it even stepped on the rival court that it had two strikes against it—to express it in the vernacular of another sport—and agreeably surprised when they received good treatment; except, of course, in organized leagues and in institutional and other intra-group competitions where friendly and fair rivalry had always been the rule. But in ordinary open games, visiting teams had good reason to feel that not only would the official in all probability give them the worst of the bargain, but that the crowd, too, would deal with them unfairly and even roughly. Some of my friends who played in the even rougher professional game sometimes had to contend, at tense moments, with local fans shaking the basket post, hoping to cause foul attempts to be missed.

Today, teams from the West Coast, the South, the Northwest or the Middle West willingly play at Madison Square Garden or any other place with-

out so much as questioning the choice of officials. They know that honest and capable officials will be provided. That is now standard practice. A dishonest official, as a matter of fact, is as scarce today as the proverbial hen's tooth.

What has brought about the change? Simply this: In the old days few officials had any particular qualifications for the job. They were former players, coaches or athletic directors without formal professional training. They were subject to the same prejudices and local stereotypes as over-enthusiastic spectators who supported their teams with epithets and cat-calls for the opponents.

The big change in officiating came about through the work of a large group of men who, during the last generation, have graduated from physical education schools and colleges, and now devote their lives to what was once nothing more than a part time avocation—namely, the physical education of youth. They have spread the doctrine of fair play, clean sport and honest dealing in athletics wherever they go.

And in teaching the players these things, they unconsciously raised the standards of appreciation of the crowds attending the games. Where once rival players were hooted and hissed, tripped and annoyed, today they are amicably welcomed and their performances are greeted with applause and enthusiasm by the crowd; and however hard fought the game, the players almost invariably shake hands and put their arms around opponents' shoulders at the game's finale.

Let my reader not think, however, that the millennium has been reached. Unfortunately, out of the same environment which has produced honest officials, competent coaches, fair competitors and sportsmanlike crowds—there still are throwbacks

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