

The Y.M.C.A. Originated Basketball and Carried It 'Round the World

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BASKETBALL owes its origin and its spread throughout the United States and the world very largely to the Young Men's Christian Association.

While he was an instructor at the International Y.M.C.A. Training School, now known as Springfield College, Dr. James Naismith invented basketball to provide gymnasium classes with a competitive indoor sport that players would enjoy as much as football and basketball.

Following the invention of basketball by Dr. Naismith at Springfield, the game spread rapidly through the network of Y.M.C.A.'s throughout the United States. The Y.M.C.A. in those days was one of the few organizations interested in physical education and having the necessary gymnasium space for basketball, so it is only natural that for many years the sport was thought of as a Y.M.C.A. game. School gymnasiums, though almost universal now, became numerous only in recent years.

Basketball leagues composed of different Y.M.C.A. branches were organized shortly after the game's introduction. One of the first of these was in Brooklyn, N. Y., where basketball still is played with an enthusiasm rivaled by few other cities.

The game did not have entirely smooth sailing in the Y.M.C.A., however. Some of the old-time Y.M.C.A. physical directors, who then were judged by the number of members in their classes, began to question the value of a game that would allow but 10 players on a gymnasium floor that could otherwise accommodate 50 or 60. The physical directors felt (and not unreasonably) that physical education for a large group was more important than a recreative game in which only a few could take part.

This conflict resulted in an attempt on the part of some physical directors to legislate the game out of the Y.M.C.A. Basketball was denounced because of its "monopoly of the floor and its evil effect on the Association's reputation and influence." This naturally only served to increase the game's popularity, and Y.M.C.A.'s expanded their basket-

ball programs, teaching thousands upon thousands of boys to play and love the game.

As these youngsters grew up and entered high school, they took basketball with them. Many of the early high school teams, lacking gymnasiums of their own, played in Y.M.C.A.'s. The game spread rapidly through high schools, and soon thousands of teams were playing. From Y.M.C.A.'s and the high schools, basketball spread to colleges. According to Dr. Naismith, many colleges did not offer basketball at all until it was introduced by students who had played the game in high school, or at the Y.M.C.A.

From the game's beginning, the Y.M.C.A. has had an important part in making the rules. The first rules were published by the Y.M.C.A., and for some years the Association made all changes in the rules, organized leagues, and in general supervised the game. As basketball developed and spread to other institutions, the Y.M.C.A. asked the Amateur Athletic Union to join in promoting the game. These two organizations governed basketball until 1905, when a group of colleges, feeling that since the game had been so widely adopted by them, decided they should also adopt rules. Having two sets of rules was a disadvantage for basketball, and in 1915 the Y.M.C.A. proposed that the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the A.A.U., and the Y.M.C.A. merge into one rule-making body. This resulted in the formation of the Joint Basketball Committee.

There are few countries in the world where basketball is not played. Because it is an international organization operating in more than 60 countries, it is only natural that the Y.M.C.A. should have played a leading part in carrying the game it developed to every corner of the world. Until the introduction of basketball, the code of sportsmanship as we know it today was not firmly rooted in many countries. Athletes too often played only to win, and had not learned to lose graciously. Basketball, because it was so well liked by the players, under trained leadership did much to overcome this when introduced by the Y.M.C.A.