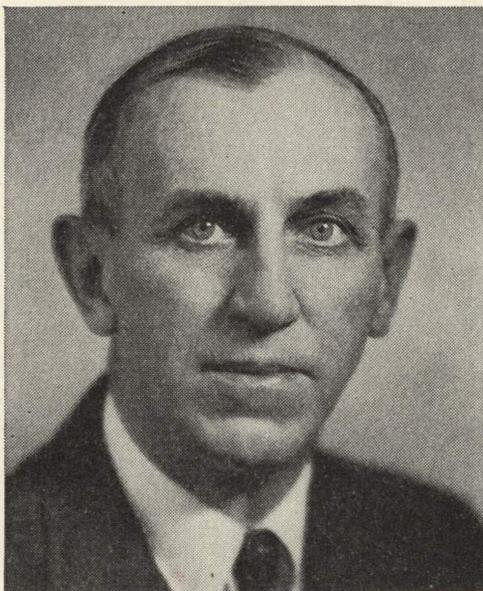


# THE RULES COMMITTEE KNOWS ITS BUSINESS



OSWALD TOWER has been a member of the Basketball Rules Committee for thirty years, and editor of the Basketball Guide for twenty-seven years. He is a teacher at Phillips Andover Academy. He has had a major part in directing the development of basketball.

**P**ERHAPS a more fitting caption for this article would be: "Does the Rules Committee Know Its Business?" Surely the latter smacks less of self-satisfaction, and no member of the Committee would make the flat assertion that this group knows everything about basketball or that it is infallible when it makes changes in the rules that govern the game.

My connection with the basketball rules committee goes back just thirty years when I was appointed to membership on the Collegiate Basketball Rules Committee. The other members at the time were Dr. James Naismith, Dr. Joseph E. Raycroft, Chairman; Ralph Morgan, Secretary-Treasurer; Harry A. Fisher, Editor; Dr. A. H. Sharpe, Lieut. (now General) P. D. Glassford. During many years of association with Dr. Naismith I was always impressed with his extreme modesty. He never took the attitude "basketball is my game—I know what is best for it"; quite the contrary, he did not try to impose his own ideas but was always open-minded and ready to support changes which others thought were desirable. I suspect that he found quiet satisfaction from time to time in seeing us return to some of his fundamentals after experimenting with new ideas.

Thirty years ago there were three published codes of basketball rules: the Collegiate, the A. A. U. and the Professional, to say nothing of the numerous unprinted codes. This caused a chaotic condition, with many teams not knowing just what code they were following and others using a home brew which would be a hodge-podge of various sets. It was not uncommon for teams to play "first half my rules, second half yours" with no one, not even the official, knowing exactly what rules they were trying to use.

This was the background when the Joint Basketball Committee was organized in 1915. The following paragraph is taken from Chairman Joseph E.

Raycroft's article in the first Guide issued by the Joint Committee: "The movement which has resulted in the formal co-operation of the rules committees representing the Young Men's Christian Association, the Amateur Athletic Union, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association, promises to be a most valuable influence in promoting the game of basketball along the right lines and should mark the beginning of a new epoch in the history of the game as a most desirable and useful indoor sport." My own editorial in the same issue contains the following sentence: "The joint committee of representatives from all three bodies has labored long and earnestly in efforts to get all that is good from both the A. A. U. and Collegiate rules into the new uniform rules that have their first publication herewith."

It may be of interest to mention the changes in rules which have had the greatest effect upon the game during the past thirty years. In 1911 the double dribble was made illegal and the four-personal-fouls rule was adopted. In 1912 the two-hand dribble was abolished. In 1917 the playing court was extended by arcs of circles reaching two feet behind the backboards. In 1918 this zone was made rectangular by moving the end lines two feet from the backboards, and just twenty years later this zone was made four feet deep. In 1922, running with the ball, illegal dribble, kicking the ball, carrying the ball out of bounds, and other infractions which previously had been technical fouls, became violations. In 1923 it was first decreed that free throws for personal fouls should be tried by the player fouled; thus the "free throw specialist" went into the discard. In 1927 time out began to be taken on all fouls. In 1932 the ten-seconds and three-seconds rules were introduced. In 1935 the center jump after successful free throws from personal fouls was abolished and the following year this was extended to cover goals from the field.