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RULE CHANGES HELPED THE GAME

COLLEGE BASKETBALL has made tremendous strides in the last decade. It has improved in spectator appeal, in playing technique and officiating. But what, to this writer at least, is more important, is that it has destroyed the provincial barriers which for so long prevented normal development of the sport along intersectional lines.

True, the game still has sectional characteristics attributable to various coaching philosophies and types of personnel. These add to, rather than detract from, the value of basketball as a sport and spectacle. But only in recent years has it been possible for a team to go far afield from its native habitat and be certain that it will be able to play its game without having to overcome handicaps imposed by purely local rules interpretations.

When the National Basketball Committee rewrote and clarified the blocking or screening rule a few years ago, it removed the last obstacle in the path of happy intersectional relations. Of course, there are still some sections and some conferences which choose to ignore or modify this part of the playing code to suit their own peculiar ideas or supposed needs. These private interpretations, though, are generally reserved for closed competition.

There has been a general striving for competent, fair administration of games. Officials' boards and associations have done valuable work in the bringing of this policy to fruition. There is no place in basketball for the "homer" and the "politician." Interpretations are clear. Ambiguities have been cleaned out of the rule book. There is no longer any excuse for a referee to call them one way in New York and another in Chicago or San Francisco. You don't have to go back very far in your memory to recall the time when varying interpre-

tations were a matter sometimes of county and even city lines, much less state boundaries.

There can be no argument against the assertion that clear wording of the rules, uniform interpretation thereof and the exercise of fairness and good judgment in their administration have contributed most importantly to the scope of the college game.

Always, of course, there have been intersectional contests. Never, though, has the schedule been so studded with them as in the last ten years. Pacific Coast teams are no strangers to the Eastern seaboard. The Middle Westerners travel in all directions. The East has sent its representatives into the Midlands and the South.

Coaches have a keener appreciation of their colleagues' problems. Players from the great wide open spaces have a healthy respect for the skill of the city boys. Lads from the urban areas admire the speed and drive of the outlanders. Each learns from the other. Thus you find sections once wholly devoted to playing a game based on adroit ball handling and fakery, leavening their operations with aggressiveness and the lightning break from defense to offense. Boys whose conception of the game ran only to continuous driving now get cleverness and deception into their play.

The game is better to look at. It is more interesting to play. Teams once confined to tiny, outmoded gymnasiums now perform in Madison Square Garden and huge field houses.

Give the credit for the change in attitude to the pioneer promoters of intersectional matches, to the coaches who had the courage and foresight to invade strange territory and to those who had the vision to see basketball as a game far too big for the petty jealousies and chauvinism which once throttled its development.