



MAJOR JOHN L. GRIFFITH, Commissioner of Athletics of the Western Conference for the last nineteen years, has been intimately associated with sports ever since he was a student at Beloit College. For five years he was President of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, and is at present its Secretary and Treasurer. He also served as a member of the American Olympic Committee.

WESTERN CONFERENCE BASKETBALL

BASKETBALL in the Big Ten, as nationally, has been recognized for its superior qualities as a game of youth.

It is a rugged game, and it is the rugged games which are making their greatest contributions in these times. They are the games which, by their demands of physical stamina and fortitude, are building men better prepared physically for the rigors of their times. They are the games whose demands of moral stamina and fortitude sharpen the competitive instinct and equip their players to take punishments and disappointments but return unsubdued, better defenders of their nation's welfare, as citizens in times of peace and as members of the armed forces in times of emergency.

The high schools and colleges of the nation, since the last war, have given increasing attention to those athletic programs which best develop the desirable qualities of leadership and loyalty. The Big Ten is particularly indebted in the progress of its programs to the sports emphasis of the high schools in its Mid-Western area. It is perhaps significant that a recent survey among 4,723 high schools in the seven states of the Conference area showed that 4,662 schools, or 98.9 per cent, supported basketball teams.

The Western Conference was organized in 1895, four years after the invention of basketball by Dr. James Naismith, and it appears that the sport was being played at Conference schools about that time.

By 1901 intercollegiate basketball competition was being conducted but in wholly unorganized fashion. In 1905 five members of the Conference, Chicago, Illinois, Purdue, Minnesota and Wisconsin, met to organize the Western Intercollegiate Basketball League, sponsoring formal schedules. As other institutions adopted the sport on an inter-

collegiate basis or were admitted to Conference membership, competition extended to its status as a Big Ten sport.

The high caliber of play throughout the history of the sport in the Conference has been manifested of recent years in the record made by Big Ten teams in National Collegiate Athletic Association tournament competition. In 1939, first year of the tournament, Ohio State, the Conference champions, went to the tournament finals before meeting defeat. In 1940 Indiana, which had placed second to Purdue in Conference competition but which had twice defeated Purdue during the year, represented the Big Ten in the tournament and proceeded to a championship victory. Last year Wisconsin, the Conference champions, repeated that championship performance in the national tourney.

Conference teams are limited to 20 games during the regular season, and in 1942 will for the first time play 15 of those games against Conference opponents in a near round-robin schedule of home-and-home games. In 1941-42, however, the Conference Faculty Representatives have given special permission for 21 games to be played, to accommodate the scheduling of contests with service teams from Great Lakes Naval Training Station and Champaign Field, Rantoul, Ill., both of which number on their squads several former Conference athletes.

In the Western Conference we are proud of the quality of play of our teams. Their fast passing, hard running, and aggressive tactics are in keeping, we believe, with the kind of game Dr. Naismith visualized fifty years ago. Basketball holds an important place in the scheme of things at all Big Ten institutions. The players like it and the public likes it, and they are two good tests of a sport's real worth.