



NED IRISH tore his pants climbing through a window to cover a major college game in a small gymnasium, when he couldn't make his way through the crowded doors. That led him to thinking about putting college basketball into Madison Square Garden, whence in 1934, the game grew into major national prominence.

Development of College Basketball in Madison Square Garden

By Harold J. Halton

Life began twice for the American game of basketball. There was the natal period attributed to Dr. James Naismith in Springfield, Mass. in 1891 and the "Life Began at FORTY-three" period in December, 1934, attributed to Ned Irish, director of basketball at New York's Madison Square Garden.

Up to 1934 basketball was a game played and viewed by millions each year, it is true, but it was a sectional game without a really intersectional interest. The East wasn't interested in what was happening in basketball in the Midwest or the South. The Southern player or fan wasn't particularly interested in what his neighbor in the Southwest was doing, and the Midwest enthusiast wasn't paying too much attention to teams and star players of the Rocky Mountains or Pacific Coast, and vice versa.

But in 1934 Ned Irish, a sports writer covering college basketball for the World-Telegram, saw an opportunity to develop the intersectional aspects of the game by getting local college athletic authorities to play some of their home games in Madison Square Garden as double-header attractions. Eight twin bills were scheduled that year with Notre Dame playing New York University and Westminster meeting St. John's University the first night. Other visitors from the hinterlands were the University of Kentucky, University of Pittsburgh, Purdue, and Duquesne. The South and Midwest were introduced to the Eastern court fan.

In addition to the regular college schedule in Madison Square Garden, which has focused attention on the sport throughout the country and brought to light the fact that no one section is

supreme, the season is concluded each year with the National Invitation Tournament, sponsored by the Metropolitan Intercollegiate Basketball Committee, made of ten New York City colleges. Leading teams of various sections are invited to play in the tournament as a grand climax to the regular season. It is an incentive to players and teams, adds further national interest to the sport, and contributes toward singling out a possible national title claimant.

Attendance at basketball games in Madison Square Garden has increased yearly and in this, the eighth season, new records are expected to be set judging by the interest in the Golden Jubilee year and the large crowds which witnessed the Golden Jubilee Tournament there in November. Last year 247,023 people attended 17 college doubleheaders during the regular season, an average of 14,538 a night. The National Invitation Tourney in March attracted 70,826, seven high school quintupleheaders brought 44,379 fans, and an A.A.U. intersectional game at the start of the season added 8,219 more. Records were established on each of the last three nights of the National Tournament with 18,377 on hand at the finals. In six seasons of basketball at Madison Square Garden 1,014,000 persons have attended the games.

Fifty intersectional opponents have met the local New York City quintets in the past seven years with six newcomers listed for this season. In the first seven years 123 games were played between the New York quintets and those from out-of-town. The scores of the entire series bear out the fact that no one section has a monopoly on good play.