



NAT HOLMAN, Basketball Coach at City College of New York, has been one of the outstanding figures of basketball since his college days. He was a member of the Original Celtics and is the author of books and motion pictures on the technique of the game.

## A Glance Backward and a Look Forward at the Game of Basketball

“THIS GAME they play today is lavender and old lace compared to the basketball we used to play,” Bucky Harris, present manager of the American League Washington Baseball Club, said to one of the sports writers at a conference table. “I prefer to remember basketball as the rugged game that I used to know.” To one who has traveled the globe playing basketball under most trying conditions with the Original Celtics, I fully appreciated Bucky’s remarks. Playing the game in dance halls where a thick veil of smoke hung over the heads of the players; where the lighting conditions were so poor that at times one could barely see the other end of the court; where fans supported their teams not only with cheers but also with their fists; where the courts were considerably smaller—75 x 50; where the play was all spontaneous with rapid and sustained ball handling, fast dribbling and fast cutting for the basket, one knew basketball at its roughest and toughest. The lanes, you see, were always open. True, defense men would switch and pick up a loose man, but you did not have the compact defenses prevalent in our modern game. Any person impeding the progress of a defense player in pursuit of his man committed a foul. That being the case, in order to get out in the clear, an offensive player had to employ quick faking, quick starting. There were no aids, such as a teammate assuming a position on the floor and then enabling the offensive player to run his guard into his teammate.

Fifty years is not too long a time, yet the strides that basketball has made within the past ten years are startling to the old-timer. True, there always was a tremendous amount of interest in the game

even though the crowds were not as great in attendance. The “community spirit” was always present. However, the introduction of intersectional games, the formation of basketball sportswriters’ associations, the radio, current periodicals, National Collegiate tournaments, college and high school basketball coaches’ associations, basketball clinics, sectional rivalry, Madison Square Garden with two-game attractions, coaching schools, and highly competitive conference play have all added to the general growth of the game. The officiating has improved as a result of an officials’ organization. The sporting goods manufacturers have done their share to give to the game the best equipment possible. While basketball is primarily a passing game, we should note that the present circumference of the ball is not greater than 30 inches and that makes this a champagne era compared to the old days. Compare that to the ball we used to play with, with the circumference of 33 to 34 inches. How pleasant it is today to handle the ball at both passing or shooting!

Basketball is the only game which is universally popular that has no standard dimensions for playing courts. It is my humble wish that the rule makers and all those vitally interested in the growth of the game will pool their resources to overcome this problem.

IN SPITE OF IT ALL . . . our present game has brought joy and good health to millions of participants and spectators. Its players have had little mortality compared to other sports and no scandal over the years. Let the torch burn—God’s in His Heaven and all’s well with the finest of indoor sports—BASKETBALL.