

February 21, 1946

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Dear Bob:

We are getting ready to leave for the University of Missouri today at noon and so I will not have much time to give you the benefit of my reactions concerning "how to enjoy basketball".

The first thing I would say is that naturally the individual spectator watches the ball too much. To enjoy the finer points of the game he should watch the pattern of play of the offense and of the defense. I think that is the common fault of even the officials who work the game. The umpire naturally should watch the back court and also the feet of the too often travelling players, but both officials, generally speaking, together with 95 percent of the spectators, watch the progress of the ball. This is perfectly natural, however. It is difficult to do otherwise.

Naturally, my next statement is going to be a criticism of the Rules Committee in eliminating the center jump. I have just finished an article for an eastern magazine pointing out this fault. Jim Barry of U.S.C., John Bunn of Stanford, Bob Koegon of Notre Dame, Harold Olson of Ohio State, and a lot of other false prophets stated, "Eliminate the center jump and you will run the taller goons out of basketball." I maintained then and I still maintain that games are won or lost on the rebounds of the offensive and the defensive basket. Therefore, when the Rules Committee eliminated the tip-off, or the center jump, they inaugurated an hysterical, hockeyized-shuttle basketball imbroglio.

The game now is too fast and desperate for coordinative play. The spectators now become so excited with the harem-scarem milling of the players and it is too fast for two officials to work the game. Basketball is now much after the manner of a ballyhooed fake wrestling bout. Please do not misunderstand me that I think basketball is a fake as is wrestling, but the result is the same. The wrestling promoters know that if the spectators were left to their sane judgment during an orderly wrestling bout, they would go once or twice and soon the attendance would fall off. However, the wise promoter knows the thing to do is to make the public excited; therefore, they have put in some eye gouging, strangling, fisticuffed rough house tactics, and many other things that they think the public will get excited about. The promoters even have policemen rush into the ring at times when the wrestlers have slugged the referee. All of this, of course, is a fake but it gets the crowd.

Now basketball has this common attraction, namely, that the game is so fast and furious and the fundamentals are so poor in this fast moving circus that the ball flies hither and yon, going out of bounds many times in the consequent changing of hands. Coaches, most of them, do not teach good fundamentals of defense. Everything is all out on the offense and patterns of play which once existed are now practically extinct.