

HEALTH SERVICE PROBLEMS IN BASKETBALL *

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Basketball - started as play - has become a highly organized team game, and an excellent one. Developed into a useful and desirable interscholastic and inter-collegiate sport, it seems to some of us to have become highly commercialized in many places, and in some it looks like a racket.

The major purpose of any properly conducted game or sport - the physical, mental, and social welfare of the participants - seems to have been largely lost sight of. In place of this desirable and elemental goal, those who have control of rule making seem to ask only, "Will this rule increase the gate?"

Three years ago the basketball rules were changed to take out the regulation compelling the ball to be put in play, after a field goal was made, by means of the center jump. In its stead, it is now permitted that, following a field goal, play is continuous without the interposition of the center jump.

What has been the effect of this change? All of us, I think, sense the resultant "speeding up" of the game. It seems a case of "Hurry and hurry as fast as you can". Whether any chronic spectator, sitting at the mid court area has developed wry neck as an occupation neurosis is not known.

Four years ago, John W. Bunn (1) in the Athletic Journal of December, 1935, argued for the elimination of the center jump. His arguments favoring the changes were these:

- a. the center jump is difficult to control,
- b. there is variation in the toss-up by the referee,
- c. following the jump players collide with the official,
- d. elimination of the jump puts the officials in the background and relieves them of some difficulties.

These four arguments are in behalf of the officials. Other advantages suggested are:

- a. the modification would add "from six to eight minutes to actual playing time", therefore, there will be a higher score,
- b. "if seven minutes are added to each game, the tempo of the entire contest is speeded up considerably",
- c. following demonstrations of the game without the center jump, "a poll of several thousand spectators confirmed this statement".
(This is spectatoritis.)
- d. "some of the coaches at the Association ** meeting thought that a game without tip-offs would be more fatiguing for the players".

Any evidence on this point, says the article, must be subjective. To this speaker, that statement evidences dense ignorance. Fatigue is measurable scientifically.

* Read before the School Physicians Section, Eastern District Ass'n, Convention of the American Ass'n. for Health, Phys. Ed. and Recreation, March 29, 1940.

(1) "Should the Center Jump be Banned?", John W. Bunn. Athletic Journal, Vol. XVI, No. 4, December, 1935, pp. 6-7.

** National Association of Basketball Coaches meeting at Chicago, April, 1935.