

ONE SHORT LESSON IN FREE THROWING

by

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So-called "charity tosses" made or missed in a championship game frequently bear a lasting impression upon the mind of a player or coach. Such happened to be the case with the author in a crucial game against California while playing for the University of Southern California.

The regular season ended in a tie between the two universities for the Southern Division title of the Pacific Coast Conference. A play-off was necessary, and the winner was to meet Washington, Northern Division Champions, to decide the Coast title. By a flip of the coin it was decided that the game was to be played on California's home court, the circus maximum or the "Boo" Auditorium in Oakland, so named by the San Francisco sports writers because of the "jeers" and Boos" that always greeted a visiting team.

The huge auditorium was packed hours before game time. Bears versus Trojans! A natural scrap that could always induce the populace away from Amos and Andy. The doors were closed all too soon to hundreds who were begging for standing room. The air was filled with feverish excitement and expectancy as game time grew near. As the Trojan team took the floor, I thought the roof was coming down from the vibrating "boos". This same mental lash fired and spurred us on to greater heights in previous encounters.

Coaches Nibs Price and Sam Barry had agreed upon Herb Dana and Verne Landreth as the officials. Referee Dana blasted his whistle and shouted "Play Ball." The battle was on.

The first half was a nip and tuck affair with the lead see-sawing back and forth the entire time. The tight defenses held the offenses of both teams almost to a standstill, which so often happens when teams are tense and keyed to such a pitch. The half ended with each team ten counters to its credit.

The second half both teams took the floor with a determination to jump into the lead. It was the age old case of an irresistible force meeting an immovable ob-

ject, because even more closely played than the first was the second stanza. The frantic Bears and Trojans dogged each other with resultant fouls called for undue roughness. Each time the Bears were penalized, the antagonistic disapproval of the fans became more audible than ever. The game was on the verge of getting out of hand.

I had been fouled on numerous occasions the first half, and because each point seemed the size of a mountain, Coach Barry between halves suggested that the next time I stepped up to the foul line with the crowd booing, to withhold the free shot in an effort to obtain an additional shot for unsportsmanship conduct on the part of the audience.

There were but two minutes remaining to play in the ball game. Again the score was tied, this time twenty all. The crowd was frantic. As the ball was thrown up at center, Bill Pierce, our center, jumped like a tiger into the air, tipped the ball to Cliff Capps, who relayed it on to me near the foul circles. With a path ahead, as clear as a school room on Sunday afternoon, I started a dashing dribble to the basket, only to be fouled from the rear by Carl Vendt, California captain and guard. Referee Landreth awarded me one three throw. Just as I started to shoot a tremendous "boooo", accompanied by a beating bass drum vibrated my ear drums. At last! The opportunity for which I had been waiting had arrived. Stepping back from the line, I handed the ball to Landreth, refusing to shoot until he had quieted the ten thousand howling fans. He called time out and held up his hands to warn the crowd. They became silent. Again I took my place on the line, this time to the tune of whistling and hissing. A true case of mob psychology. I stepped back again refusing to shoot to such accompaniment. Now I was becoming angry and tense as I waited. The crowd was fouled, giving me the extra shot, awarding me for my patience and Coach Barry for his strategy.