

(Continued from third page preceding) the only major sport which is national with us. Baseball stems from cricket and rounders; football, from rugby and soccer; but basketball is thoroughly American.

The game was invented nearly half a century ago by a harassed gym instructor named James A. "Pop" Naismith in Springfield, Massachusetts. Pop had an especially lively group of boys in his gymnasium one year, and was finding it hard to keep their minds on their work and their chins on the bars. So one day, in desperation, he kicked the bottoms out of a couple of peach baskets and stuck them up on facing walls. Then he chose up sides, chucked in a soccer ball, and hoped for the best. The result was basketball.

"I soon found," Pop said the other day—he's seventy-six now and a Professor of Education, "that it filled the same place during the winter season that football and baseball did in the autumn and summer."

Other gym instructors found that out, too. The new game had a mild vogue in the East, mostly in Y's, and gathered strength as it rolled westward. The Springfield start was in 1891. By 1893 the game had a firm foothold in Detroit, with Adams Y and Detroit Athletic Club furnishing the keenest competition.

Pop's game had only one rule: that a player could take only one step with the ball in his hand. The present game has a hundred and thirteen rules. And therein lies the reason why basketball developed so slowly as a national game.

Coaches, teams, players made their own rules. Different systems of play grew up in different localities. The game went into a polyglot era.

The first national regulatory body, the Basketball Rules Committee, came into existence in 1934 and promulgated the national rules which are now universally accepted. Since then the growth of the game has been phenomenal. Last year ninety-six per cent of all schools and colleges were playing basketball, and leagues, both professional and amateur, were operating all over the country.

Recognition of basketball by the general public, however, has been delayed until recently by the lack of seating capacity already referred to.

But all of this is rapidly changing. The Big Ten colleges of the Middle West now have large arenas constructed especially for basketball. In the East, Pennsylvania built its Palestra; in the West, Leland Stanford built its Cracker Box. Important games attracted important crowds. The press gave it space. Basketballitis became an epidemic. Personalities began to emerge.

THERE had long been successful and colorful coaches; but until uniform rules made intersectional contests possible their fame reached only limited areas. Finally, at the University of Nebraska, where Pop Naismith had gone as Professor of Physical Education, a great basketball mentor of national repute, "Phog" Allen, emerged as a trainer not only of players but of coaches; and in 1930 one of his pupils, John Bunn, migrated to California, where, as basketball coach at Stanford, he became the game's best known figure.

Bunn's most notable contribution to basketball is the jumpless game. Instead of bringing the ball out to the center after each goal and tossing it up in the air for what is known as the "center jump," Bunn gives the ball at once to the team that has just been scored on for a toss-out from under its own goal.

This change adds even more speed to the game and between six and seven minutes of playing time. Also, it reduces the advantage that the tall player has always had over the short player. The jumpless game is now in the national rules.

The big universities are at last wise to the importance of the game from a financial standpoint. In most colleges basketball is the only sport besides football which pays for itself.

As the game increases in general public interest our shrewd graduate managers appreciate more and more the value of colorful personalities to draw a big gate. Already they are scouting the high schools and academies for players who are not poison at the box office.

In 1934 a new fillip was given to the intercollegiate game by a young New York sports writer named Ned Irish, who began promoting intercollegiate matches in Madison Square Garden. From the very first game, this professional promotion of an amateur sport proved itself a huge success.

To be sure, the game still suffers, as does football, from the absence of a real world's series to determine the national championship. Such synthetic attempts as have been made to determine the champion team have only increased the confusion. Last year, for instance, Duke won the Southern, Dartmouth the Eastern, Purdue the Western, and Stanford the Pacific Coast Conference titles; yet the tentative effort at a world's series, staged by the Metropolitan Basketball Writers' Association in New York, did not bring any of these leading teams together.

All we know for sure is that skill in the game, like interest in it, seems to be very evenly distributed.

In our larger cities public-school athletic leagues, Catholic Youth Organizations, the Y's, and many Protestant churches support basketball fives and conduct tournaments.

So-called commercial and industrial leagues also flourish in the metropolitan areas. And as I write, politicians and retail liquor dealers are also going in heavily for the basketball-sponsoring game. Popular, too, are the intercity leagues composed of teams manned by outstanding ex-college players.

AVOWEDLY professional clubs and leagues are also springing up in increasing numbers every year. For example, there is the American Professional Basketball League, which embraces principal cities in the East and Middle West.

Good players in the league sometimes earn as high as \$1,500 a month, which may not compare with the top baseball salaries, but is not bad for a five- or six-months season. As a result, the pro game is attracting more and more young college grads who are all dressed up and have no place to go.

On the whole, however, professional basketball is still in the barnstorming stage. Freak teams like the bewhiskered House of David, the Roller-Bearing Flashes (who play the game on roller skates), and the Harlem Hottentots perform to sell-out houses in competition with locally known fives. The team captained by Jesse Owens, the Olympic champion, has cleaned up as a sort of olio between features in the movie houses.

Professional basketball offers a longer season than pro football does, and in the end should provide a larger income. Also, since it is played at night, the game enables its players to engage in business of their own during the day.

Another great advantage which the court game has over both baseball and football is the very general participation in it of women. Basketball is a strenuous game. But its strenuousness is of the quick-strength rather than the brute-strength variety. Quickness and resourcefulness are prime requisites. Into such a picture the woman athlete fits like a silk stocking.

In high schools the girls' basketball teams are almost as many and as popular as the boys'. In co-ed colleges the same situation prevails. And in colleges exclusively for women basketball is *the* major sport.

What the basketball craze, with its high entertainment value, its appeal to women, and its after-dark playing schedule, will do to the movies these winter nights, nobody can rightly tell.

With the development of floodlighted open-air arenas, basketball is also sure to cut into big-league baseball's summer take, because, although a game of vast activity, it can be played to advantage outdoors on the hottest evenings—and will be so played, I prophesy, within the next two years.

Then indeed basketball will have fulfilled its destiny. It will be a true national game, played by both men and women, appealing to both men and women spectators, enjoyed North and South, East and West, indoors or outdoors, all the year round!

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