

By EVERETT MORRIS

The men who write and do nothing but talk basketball from December through March are split into two camps today, just because Paul Mooney, Columbia's forthright coach, had an idea. The idea, in case you don't read "The Saturday Evening Post," is to remove the backboards and return basketball to the game of skill it once was but is no longer, according to Mr. Mooney and his amanuensis, Stanley Frank.

It's about time, says the Columbia coach, in effect, we got rid of these dribbling Carneras who clutter up the court and who do little toward playing basketball except tap in a rebound occasionally or tap out a shot by the opposition. Eliminate the backboard, he says, and you eliminate the rebound; eliminate the rebound and you minimize the importance of abnormal height; eliminate abnormal height and you give the game back to all the boys instead of leaving it in the hands of the few who have overactive thyroid glands.

At the risk of being called a diehard and a reactionary, this observer finds a good deal of merit in what Mooney says. It's getting a little tiresome to try to keep up with a group of prancing Gargantuas who rush up and down the court hell bent for basket. The deft feint, the quick thrust at an opening, the skill that made basketball the greatest of indoor games, are completely absent except in cases rare enough to be notable. Basketball has become notoriously ragged, and height means just about everything.

* * * * *

BASKETBALL HAS DEFENDER

A basketball fan who has followed the game more than a quarter of a century steps forward to defend the present style of play.

"Don't let them tell you the present game of basketball is a sissy sport, or anything like it," writes Larry Krieger. "I have been a court fan more than 25 years. It was my privilege to see the teams in action back in the days when they were turned loose in a cage, as your Philadelphia Oldtimer remarked.

"Basketball today is much faster, and it is ridiculous for the Oldtimer to claim science has been removed from the sport. Basketball and all other sports must be controlled. I am willing to admit that overzealous officials sometimes spoil the game, but on the whole I should say the officiating today is satisfactory.

"The elimination of the center jump has been one of the greatest benefits. There is far more speed offered the fans as a result. I dare say the players of today are far from being sissies, as claimed. Many of the players I saw in action 25 years ago could not keep up with many of the star athletes of this era."

* * * * *

SIX FEET FOUR LIMIT ON NAVY BASKETBALL SQUAD

Annapolis, Dec. 29--(AP)--Pass the crying towel to Johnnie Wilson, Navy basketball coach--he really has a moan coming. While other coaches scour the hinterlands for players towering six feet seven and up, Wilson has to get along with youths no more than six feet four. Because of low transoms on ships and other standard equipment in the navy, youths taller than six feet four inches are barred from the naval academy.

* * * * *