

By Whitney Martin
(Associated Press Sports Writer.)

New York, Jan. 9 - A perusal of the average run of basketball scores these nights, with the totals leaving the impression that maybe the teams should try out a defense sometime, if only for the novelty of it, brings up the memory that such shooting affairs are a comparatively recent development.

In fact prior to 1932, when the rules committee made probably the two most important changes in the code since the embryo period of the game, a fan had a pretty fair chance of seeing two quintets battle in a furious scoring duel which might end in a one-sided 9 to 7 or 13 to 10 decision.

The rules in question were the 10-second rule, making it necessary for an offensive team to advance beyond the center of the floor in that period, and the elimination, or modification, of the pivot-post play, in which a team with an Eiffel tower center would anchor him at the foul line and feed him the ball like it was tossing herring to a seal.

RULE PREVENTS STALLING.

The 10-second rule was by far the major improvement, in that it eliminated stalling. It was not an uncommon sight to see a team in the lead, even a one or two point lead, get the ball in the back court and defy its opponent to come and get it.

If the opponent was equally stubborn, a stalemate developed and the game became something of a minuet in G. In fact, the back-court team often not only held the ball when it got tired lobbing it around. It sat on it, and it was such a travesty on the game that the rules committee was prompted to take steps making it necessary for the referees to learn to count.

NATIONAL TITLE ON 15 POINTS.

In contrast to this bountiful scoring, every fan of the 20's or before can recall games which ended with the total score of both teams thirty, or even twenty, points or less.

In 1932, just before the new rule was adopted, the Wichita Henrys won the National A.A.U. title by defeating the Maryville, Mo. Teachers 15 to 14. In 1928 Ashland, Ky., high school won the national intercollegiate tournament at Chicago, and most, if not all, its winning scores were twenty points or less.

In 1922 the army quintet lost two games to opponents, who failed to register a single field goal. That was the year before the rule was adopted requiring the man fouled to shoot his own free throw, and a team which had an expert in the free-throwing department was sitting pretty.

NOT ALL SCORES RAN LOW.

It does not follow that all scores in that prehistoric period were puny, Passiac, N.J., high school ran up a phenomenal string of 159 victories before it was defeated by Hackensack in 1925, and some of the Passiac scores were whoppers.

We were a substitute on a Cedar Rapids, Ia., high school team back in the 'teens that won a game 108 to 0, but such a score not only was unusual then. It would be astonishing today.

The 3-second rule as applied to the pivot-post play tended to take some of the advantage away from a team which had a towering player. The bean pole might not be able to get out of his own way, but if he could catch a ball, wheel around like an engine on a turntable, and pop at the basket that was all that was necessary.

The elimination of the center jump was a later development, tending to speed up a game that already was virtually perpetual motion, but the real reason for the large scores of today is the rule which made the players do their sitting on the bench, not on the ball.