

BASKETBALL FROM ALL ANGLES

By Joseph M. Sheehan

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Notwithstanding an apparent trend to the offense in the game, most of the conversation at yesterday's luncheon of the Metropolitan Basketball Writers Association at the Hotel Lincoln was devoted to defense.

Dave Walsh, veteran official, made the prevalent neglect of this phase of play the central theme of his discourse on "What's Wrong with Basketball." On the other hand, Honey Russell, Seton Hall coach, asserted that his emphasis on defense was a contributing factor to the New Jersey team's 32-game winning streak.

No longer an active whistle-blower in his capacity as associate director (to Asa Bushnell) of the College Basketball Officials Bureau, Walsh pointed out that "the value of a basket has been cheapened" because of the reluctance of the defensive side to come and get the ball.

"In any game where a ball is involved the ball has value," Walsh maintained. "With the ten-second rule the defensive team no longer makes a play for it, but packs in around its basket and waits for the attacking side to bring it down the floor. As a result basketball is being played on less than half the court.

"With possession reverting to the defensive side after a successful shot, the tendency is to give the offense all the time it wants for "picture shots" from way out and concentrate on retrieving the ball. As I see it, this is bad for the game, and I'm not speaking from the official's point of view, for it means more work when there is aggressive guarding all over the court."

At the same time Walsh hailed the progress made in this sector in attaining uniform interpretation of troublesome plays. "Our officials now are absolutely consistent in their decisions," he stated. "We are sticking to the rule book 100 per cent, and no Eastern or visiting team will have the slightest difficulty if it does likewise."

In analyzing the success of his Seton Hall team Russell said that one of his "few fixed ideas on basketball" was that "defense is paramount." "The fewer points the other team makes the fewer you have to get," he declared. "We emphasize defense all the time, and now and then use what I call a 'Blitzkrieg' defense, in which we guard all over the court."

Material in such quantity that he is able to use two and even three distinct teams on an alternate basis was willingly admitted by Russell as another factor at East Orange, N. J. "And then our players aren't so smart that they think they don't have to drive and run to win," Honey added.

Howard Cann, in telling "Why N. Y. U. clicks," also stressed the importance of condition and its manifestation in relentless moving and driving. "We go in for calisthenics, apparatus work and rope skipping to get our boys in shape," the Violet mentor said. "There's one mistake high school coaches make. They do a fine job technically, but they ought to pay more attention to developing their players physically."

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