

## ORIGIN OF THE GAME OF BASKETBALL

Basketball came into existence fifty years ago. Dr. Luther Gulick, the head of the Department of Physical Education of Springfield College, asked Dr. James Naismith, a young instructor, to design a game that could be played indoors as well as out, that was devoid of the physical contact of sports like soccer and lacrosse, yet possessed all the elements of skill, amusement and science.

Dr. Naismith complied with the request by prescribing certain principles on which his new game was to be based. He decided not only to prohibit personal contact, but also decided there would be no kicking of the ball or striking of it with the fist. The goal was to be horizontal and above the reach of the players.

All these fundamental principles were primarily to avoid injury on hard wood floor, in the limited confines of a small indoor gymnasium.

The first game was a most successful experiment. The players immediately appreciated the unlimited possibilities the new sport offered. Skill, speed, cleverness, strategy and sportsmanship were intrinsic parts of the pastime. Its popularity was assured from the very beginning, but not even imaginative Dr. Naismith ever dreamed it would flourish as it did, and as it does today.

Today, basketball is played by thousands of high schools and colleges, not to mention amateurs and professional teams. In more than 1700 colleges it is a major athletic activity, and the same importance is given to it in more than 18,000 high schools and preparatory schools. To countless church teams, clubs, and social organizations it offers a constant form of sport and pleasure.

Basketball, perhaps more than any other sport, appeals to youth of all ages and all classes. Easily played yet difficult to master it provides contestants with a constant challenge and gives spectators much amusement. No pastime has spread to all parts of the world as swiftly as basketball, and today there is scarcely a city or town anywhere that has not a court and a team. From the United States to distant China, and from Canada to South America, Dr. Naismith's game has its multitudes of adherents and followers.

Statements vary as to the attendance at basketball games in a single year, but it is generally agreed that more than 90,000,000 people watched the games in the last twelve months. But today instead of peach baskets, steel rims and glass or wood backboards are used, and instead of a small red brick structure, huge palestras and modern field houses are the setting for the game.

Take basketball out of the sport picture today and you would have an empty spot that nothing could fill. It is part and parcel of American life. It exudes the wholesome, healthy, free and fair competitive spirit which is one of the features of the American way of life.