

# RIGHT INTO THE OLD PEACH BASKET

*By Jo-Ellen Kidd*



Photo by The Detroit News

Dr. James Naismith invented basketball in 1890 and refused to have it called Naismith ball when the question of a title came up the next year. A cheerful, bright-eyed chap, he went to school all his life, got himself a half-dozen degrees. Somewhere along the line, the press got the idea that his non-existent middle initial was "A." Naismith's reply to this, typical of his wit, was that he couldn't figure out what it stood for unless it was "anonymous."



This picture was posed by the Springfield college basketball team of 1942, and all the players probably had raging nightmares for a long time afterwards. As far as can be ascertained, every foul in the modern rule book is being committed in this picture, and it becomes a deep mystery how the first players survived from season to season to pass the art of the game along to younger and less crippled men. The gentleman wearing the handle-bars and the leer, standing on the step-ladder, is saddled with the responsibility of retrieving the ball when, if ever, the players manage to drop it in the suspended peach basket. He was not allowed to participate in the game actively, but, from time to time, probably kicked, swatted or otherwise maimed his opponents from his high vantage point. Brass knuckles were out, though.

THE TALL, lean red-head dribbled the ball on place to kill time as his eyes darted about the court searching for a teammate in the clear. Then he caught sight of Saunders—streaking down the court toward the basket with not a State man covering him. High over his opponents' heads Red sent the ball twirling into the outstretched hands of the crack shot of the team. Saunders seized the ball and in one motion sent it sailing toward the backboard and right into the old peach basket to win the game

for his alma mater as the final gun sounded.

Right into the old peach basket. And that's what it was—literally—in the early days of basketball. When Dr. James Naismith originated the game in 1890 while he was an instructor at the YMCA college in Springfield, Massachusetts, he asked for two boxes, 18 by 18 inches. Instead the building superintendent brought him two half-bushel peach baskets.

They served the purpose, but they were soon replaced by a net basket