

BASKETBALL, THROUGH THE EYES OF A SPORTS WRITER
By Everett Morris
(A Speech delivered at the 1940 Meeting)

I want to assure all that there is no evil in my eyes. They are neither bi-optic nor astigmatic. They may be a little red rimmed, but that comes from spending forty-eight hours on the train with the metropolitan district basketball coaches and trying to sleep in this hotel.

There is an unwritten rule in my profession that newspaper men should read and not see; another part of that rule is that they should write and not speak. Well, if certain basketball conferences can disregard basketball rules, I guess that I can disregard the rules of my profession, too, and stand up here and let you look at me and shoot off my mouth.

The subject is rather a broad one. I have no preconceived plan of how to attack it. Maybe I had better go into something transitional and stratified, employing principles of man for man, at the same time using the zone and spreading myself out to protect all vulnerable lanes or something of that sort.

It is none of my business but I do wish that the University of Kansas basketball team would come East some time. I would like to know what the little guy up in the corner is doing when the other guy is going around him. Of course, I may have an evil mind.

I have been asked a lot of times what I think about basketball and what I think is wrong with it, and except for what I read in the newspapers I do not think there is anything wrong with it, but every time I pick up an out-of-town newspaper or the afternoon wire reports of the Associated Press or the United Press, I read that some coach thinks that this is a very bad game we are playing, that it is a terrible mess, and he has a panacea that will cure all the evils with which our notable game is afflicted. Some of these panaceas involve the use of circles and detour signs and policemen with whistles and white stripes across blue shirts, and some of them call for the illusion of a bean bag and a wash boiler.

I remember that 210,000 people were in the Garden for fifteen basketball double-headers this year, and I remember that when Indiana plays Purdue you cannot buy a ticket for two or three weeks in advance, when Missouri plays Kansas you cannot even get in the town, and when Oklahoma plays Oklahoma A & M they call out the Texas Rangers to keep the crowds in order. I cannot see anything very wrong with a game that has that much spectator appeal.

But I think that if there is anything wrong with the game, it is probably traceable right back to two fundamental sources. First (and this isn't very hospitable) the coaches; second, the officials. The subjects are probably interrelated inasmuch as, unfortunately, you cannot play basketball games without officials and there never seems to be enough good officials to go around in any part of the country. In every section of the country you will hear: "We have so-and-so who is good and so-and-so is fair and the rest of them are terrible," and when you have a conference that is playing four games in one night, one game has good officiating and, the other three have terrible officiating or at least they think so. Perhaps this is the fault of the coaches and perhaps it is the fault of the officials' groups themselves. I do not pretend to know, but I do think that one of the most intelligent suggestions that I have heard this year for improving basketball had nothing whatever to do with raising the baskets up to the balcony, or cutting another twenty or thirty square yards of playing area off the floor or using an indoor baseball