



The Sports Parade

By Leonard Cohen

Another one of those really big boys of basketball will appear on the Garden floor tonight when John Ludka, Syracuse's 6 ft.-10½ in. center, opposes City College. He's only a freshman and may still be growing, for all we know. But his presence this evening makes timely a couple of letters we received about our comments here last Wednesday regarding the problem of tall men in basketball.

The suggestions they contain possess some merit, as did Israel Ornstein's idea, discussed then, of eliminating the backboards so that the giants of the court would be unable to use their terrific height advantage in the scramble for rebounds.

Jacob Podoloff of New Haven agrees with us that you can't legislate against any group of players because of their height. "I think you can get to the heart of the matter if you see why it is that tall men have taken possession of the game," he writes.

Mania for Speed and Scoring Draws Blame

"The demand for speed and the mania for continuous scoring has caused a change in the rules which is responsible, in my opinion, for the importance of the big man. The particular change in the rules is the one requiring that the ball be advanced to the middle of the floor within ten seconds or the side carrying the ball loses possession. Back court play, opening up the play, is a thing of the past because of the rule. Furthermore, when a team had the entire court on which to operate, the small, agile man had a chance against the biggest man, but when the game is compressed within ten seconds to one-half the area, the big man, under a system of zone defense, becomes important.

"Without that ten-seconds rule, zone defense wasn't worth a tinker's dam. Eliminate the importance of zone defense and you eliminate the reason for the big man. There will always be men of size who can fit into any team, but with the whole floor open to play, the big man cannot afford to be so near the basket all the time and the little five-footers can make a monkey out of the average big man. Ganging up under the basket will be partially eliminated. Then you will see a return of fancy passing and dribbling and the 'eels' that used to be the marvel of basketball will return. I would like to see one game played without that ten-second rule again.