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# Top K-State Cage Team Is Salute to Kansas' Own Dr. Naismith, Inventor of Game

## Capital News Service

**D**R. JAMES NAISMITH, the father of basketball, would have been proud of the record of the Kansas State College cage quintet as one of the top teams in the nation this year, although he spent 39 years at the University of Kansas, arch rival of K-State in athletics.

The transplanted Scot-Canadian who invented basketball at the Springfield, Mass., YMCA College in 1891, died at Lawrence November 28, 1939.

**ALTHOUGH THE** game was conceived by Dr. Naismith seven years before he became associated with K. U., it was during his years at the university that he saw the game become an international sport.

Dr. Naismith was born at Almonte, Ontario, Canada, in 1861. His father came from Glasgow, Scotland, his mother was a native of Almonte. Both died of scarlet fever when he was 9. Peter J. Young, an uncle on his mother's side reared him.

Upon graduation from Almonte High School, he entered McGill University, Montreal, where he studied for the ministry. He graduated from Presbyterian College in 1880 and because he was athletically inclined and an excellent soccer football player, athletics carried greater appeal for him than the pulpit.

**THAT FALL** he enrolled at the Springfield YMCA College and the following spring graduated with a degree in physical education. That fall he was hired to teach that subject and it was while engaged in that capacity that he invented the game of basketball.

Four years later he went to Denver, Colo., as director of physical education of the city's YMCA at that time he became interested in the

With three degrees to his credit—a minister, a physical education expert, a doc-

tor of medicine and the inventor of the game of basketball, he was hired by the University of Kansas shortly after graduation from the medical school as "Director of Chapel"—a title since abolished.

Subsequently he became director of physical education, basketball and track coach, director of student health and director of athletics. For 39 years his presence on the K. U. campus brought prestige to the university and the state.

**OFTEN ASKED** how the game was invented, he always would calmly relate the incident and was often amused—but never critical—of the many stories in newspapers and magazines concerning the origin of the game by people who "professed to know" all the details.

The truth is that the game came out of a physical education class which he taught. The "court" was the main floor of the Springfield College gymnasium where the class was being held and the original "goals" were not peach baskets, but huge wooden boxes—used as refuse containers.

When the players sat in the goals, turned them upside-down and otherwise tried to interfere with a shot, he decided to put them high and out of reach of the players. This, he thought, would stop interference—which it did.

But the boxes were too big to fasten to the balcony of the running track. It was then that the peach baskets were substituted and one was fastened at each end of the court. Although the height of the baskets from the floor was not measured at that time, later, it turned out to be 10 feet which has withstood the 67 years of attempts to change it.

**THE PEACH** baskets being smaller than the boxes, eliminated roughness and reduced injuries.

The ball was of the soccer football type and because the class was made up of 18 men—it was divided into two "teams" and with the instructor Naismith as referee, basketball, the new indoor game was born! The bottom of the baskets were removed when it became monotonous for men to climb to the running track to remove the ball after each score.

The game caught fire instantly and was soon being played by colleges and universities all over the country. In February of 1892, when every school was playing the game with "its own rules," Dr. Naismith wrote a set of them and posted them on the Springfield College bulletin board. They were immediately adopted as standard for the game.

The dribble was discovered when a player accidentally dropped the ball and

batted it several times to retain it. This play created a sensation and was instantly copied because it permitted players to retain the ball while advancing toward the goal—something unknown up to that time.

**ORIGINALLY**, games were started by tossing the ball into the air between contestants. This made for a mad scramble and roughness. To avoid injuries a

In 1936 a grateful nation started a fund to send Dr. and Mrs. Naismith to the



**WIDOW OF DR. NAISMITH**—Mrs. James Naismith now is a sorority housemother at Kansas State. She formerly was a sorority housemother at Washburn University. She is shown here with a basketball and metal goal in a department store.

**HIS GREATEST** satisfaction came in watching youngsters play the game—especially on sandlots and backyards with make-shift goals and equipment. One day he discovered four Lawrence boys playing on an empty lot with crudely fashioned goals fastened to a garage.

He was so thrilled that he called a photographer and had a picture taken of himself between the four bewildered youngsters.

While attending a game in Topeka one day he was approached by a man for an autograph. As he signed his name the man asked him, "How does it feel to be the inventor of a game which keeps millions of people employed—thousands of coaches salaried—players all over the world in good condition and countless of people entertained?" The reply came in one word, "Satisfying!"

## Naismith Funds Payable to K.U.

The Kansas University Athletic Department is taking part in the fund-raising campaign to build the Dr. James A. Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame at Springfield, Mass. Administrators of the fund plan to have the first building by 1958.

Contributions to the fund may be mailed to A. C. Lonborg, K. U. athletic director, Allen Fieldhouse. While the late Dr. Naismith invented the game of basketball while at Springfield College, he had an active career in physical education at Kansas University.

Dr. Naismith came to K. U. from a position as physical director of the Denver YMCA in 1898. His first job here was as director of chapel. Later he became a professor of physical education. He headed that department until 1925, retiring from active teaching in 1937.

Lonborg points out K. U. has a direct stake in the Naismith Hall of Fame.

While Naismith was known as the Father of Basketball, Kansas basketball coach Phog Allen is known as the Father of Basketball Coaching. Allen and Naismith were close friends. Phog is currently in his 39th year as head cage coach at K. U. and the impressive 17,000-capacity, \$2½ million fieldhouse at the school is named after him.

As an honor to Dr. Naismith, the road past the fieldhouse was named after the game inventor.