



BASKET BALL IN THE OLD DAYS

The first drawing of a basket ball court; from the first Basket Ball Rule Book, published in 1892 at Springfield Training School

A Physician Invented One of America's Great Sports

Basket ball, created twenty-nine years ago by Dr. James A. Naismith, now rivals football as a popular competitive sport. In the beginning, it was played with peach baskets and with nine to fifty men on each side

IF THE expert opinion of one of our most widely read sports writers is to be trusted, the game of basket ball bids fair to become, within a few years, the great American sport, rivaling even baseball and football in popularity. When that day comes, American sport lovers may pay homage to a member of the medical profession. It was Dr. James A. Naismith of the University of Kansas who invented the game in 1891, and who is known today as "the father of basket ball".

Dr. Naismith was at that time an instructor at the Y.M.C.A. Training School at Springfield, Mass. Like other physical directors, he felt the need of a stimulating game that could be played indoors during the long winter months when active young men rebelled against the monotony of gymnasium exercises. No indoor game of that day could compare with the great open-air sports like football, so Dr. Naismith undertook the task of devising one. He wanted a game that would not only be exhilarating to the players, but interesting to the spectators as well.

Furthermore, as a physician, he was deeply concerned with the effect of the different games on the physical development of young men. He had in mind a certain type of athlete that he hoped the new game would produce—"the tall, agile, graceful and expert athlete", he wrote, "rather than the massive muscular man on the one hand, or the cadaverous greyhound on the other."

A careful study of all the popular games and sports of that day was made by Dr. Naismith, before he decided which elements of each game were valuable and which should be eliminated. Then he drew up the first rules and regulations of his new game.

Most of our standard games are the result of a long period of evolution, some of them dating back many centuries. But basket ball is synthetic. It remains today almost the same in its essentials as when Dr. Naismith created it almost thirty years ago.

Early Basket Ball Rules

In those days, any number of men up to fifty could play on each side, depending upon the size of the playing space. Since tackling was dangerous indoors, it was prohibited, and the players were not allowed to carry the ball as in football. They were permitted only to pass it or bounce ("dribble") it along the floor. The ball used was the regulation association football. The first basket into which the ball was thrown to score a goal was a peach basket attached

to the wall of the gymnasium about ten feet from the floor. Dr. Naismith had borrowed two of them from the janitor.

It soon became apparent that too many players prevented any organized teamwork, so the number was reduced, first to nine and finally to five on each side. A standard size court was also decided upon.

At first the game was started by lining up the two teams at opposite ends of the field and having them rush for the ball when it was thrown into the center by an official. But this was quickly modified to the present method of tossing it up between the two center men.

Phenomenal Popularity of the Game

The sudden popularity of basket ball and its rapid growth have no parallel in the history of sport. Even baseball which spread like wildfire after the Civil War was slow in comparison. Within a few years every important school and college in the country was playing the new game and it had even spread to a number of foreign countries. In part this is attributed by Dr. Naismith to the fact that three of the students at Springfield who first played it went to the Orient when they left the institution, one going to China, one to India and one to Japan. In 1895 the game was first adapted for women and was used as a part of the gymnasium work at Smith College.

Basket ball makes great demands upon the players. Few games require so much in combined stamina and speed. When expert teams play, the pace set is sometimes terrific, and this fact, as well as the skill, strategy and technique displayed by good players, make it one of the most exciting of all games from the spectator's standpoint.

While football season brings with it scores of deaths from fractured skulls, etc., one seldom if ever reads of fatalities

from basket ball. Nor are "occupational diseases" heard of in connection with this game, as is the case with "tennis elbow," "golfer's stoop," "boxer's shuffle," "hockey curve," and "glass arm" from baseball. Basket ball is a strenuous but non-maiming sport, lower down on the list of occupational hazards than taking one's morning bath, according to the Travelers Insurance Company. According to this authority's statistics, basket ball is far less hazardous than such "safe" sports as golf, horseback riding, tennis and squash.

Effect on the Players

Being keenly interested in the physical development of the players, Dr. Naismith has kept a careful record of the condition of the men playing the game at the University of Kansas. He found that those men who had won their "letter" in basket ball were indeed of exactly the type that he had in mind to develop when he devised the game. They were lighter in weight than the average football player, and far more graceful in appearance, realizing his ideal of the "tall, agile and expert athlete."

No less important to Dr. Naismith are certain psychological aspects of the game. "One of the conditions that was thought necessary for the best kind of a game," he wrote, "was that it should be capable of teamwork. There are two kinds of teamwork, cooperative teamwork, in which each player uses his teammates at the right time, and to the right extent, and has become so accustomed to doing this that he does not stop to think but acts reflexly; and machine teamwork, in which each man does that which he has been told to do and does it the same way every time."

"Games differ in their capacity for one form or other, e. g., Rugby is cooperative, American football is machine like; lacross is cooperative; baseball, machine like. Each of these has its own advantages. Cooperation develops the individual, machine play the game; the former makes the player broad and independent, the latter makes him a cog; the former develops initiative, the latter subordination; the former makes him depend on his own resources, the latter makes him dependent on the coach. In basket ball the former type is emphasized.

"The attributes that are demanded in the life of our day are initiative, activity, quick judgment, adaptability to conditions, self-control, perseverance and concentration. These are all attributes developed by basket ball."



THE INVENTOR OF BASKET BALL AND THE OLD AND NEW EQUIPMENT

Dr. James Naismith (center) invented the game in 1891. Gordon Royal is seen dressed in the fashion of the players when basket ball was in its infancy. He is holding the original peach basket and the type of ball used. In contrast, we see James Hill, with a modern ball and the modern goal is in the background



MRS. NAISMITH PLAYS BASKET BALL TOO

Dr. James Naismith and his wife practising basket ball as it was played in 1891 when he invented the game



BASKET BALL ALSO POPULAR WITH THE LADIES

Members of the almost-unbeatable Temple University Basket Ball Team at practice