

Dr Naismith Gave KU Basketball Its Start Back In 1898

Dr. James Naismith, who invented basketball in Springfield, Mass., in 1891, gave basketball its start on the KU campus seven years later.

Dr. Naismith came to Mt. Oread because the University needed a physical education director who also could lead the chapel services.

Basketball and other athletic events did not meet with immediate success on the campus. In fact, it is reported that Dr. Naismith was so discouraged by the lack of interest that he would have returned home if he hadn't sold all his household goods.

By 1920, enthusiasm had so increased that sufficient seating was at a minimum. The seating capacity was 1000, with single admissions at 25 cents and reserved seats at

15 cents extra. Reserve seats for the season were \$1.

In 1921, the game was becoming so popular that members of the physical education department stressed the need for a bigger gym with a larger seating space. That year, season tickets for the 10 conference games sold for \$5.

Dr. Naismith, who had been educated for the ministry, originated basketball for 18 young men in a class at Springfield, Mass., YMCA college in 1891 while training to become a physical director.

The idea came in answer to the question as to what the physical education classes could do when the weather would not permit outdoor sports. At that time the only winter sports were ice hockey, snow

shoeing, and other sports which required considerable equipment and were carried on out-of-doors.

The only indoor games were group games where a number of people gathered and played without any reference to teamwork.

Physical educators of that time felt a need for a game that could be played indoors in the evening, and that called into play competitive spirit and teamwork. It was with this aim in view that the game was developed.

The first basketball team con-

sisted of nine players. This number of players was used because the class consisted of 18 members and the game had to be devised to accommodate a large number of players.

The first baskets were ordinary half-bushel vegetable containers hung to the balcony at the ends of the floor, with someone stationed to empty them after each goal. Later peach baskets were used because of their greater depth. The name basketball was adopted due to these baskets used.

Rules were very uncomplicated

with no free throws, out of bounds did not count and the penalty for fouling was the penalty box on the sidelines. The game usually ended when all the players had fouled out.

The popularity of the game was immediate and soon became a national sport. YMCA directors took the game to many parts of the world, and now over 50 nations play basketball. In 1936, basketball was adopted by the eleventh Olympic games at Berlin, largely through the efforts of Coach Phog Allen.

"Why Forrest," he exclaimed, "basketball is just a game to play. You don't coach it."

Basketball was responsible for what Dr. Naismith regarded as the greatest experience of his life. In 1936, as a gesture of honor to the game's inventor, one week of the season was set aside and a penny from each admittance charge went into a fund to send Dr. and Mrs. Naismith to the Olympic Games in Berlin where basketball was to be played for the first time in the International Games.

Illness prevented Mrs. Naismith from making the trip, but her husband saw the United States win the first Olympic championship and was suitably honored and recognized for his tremendous contribution to the sports world.

Upon his return home he told a friend that seeing the game played by teams from many nations was the greatest compensation he could have received for his invention, from which he never profited a cent, except for royalties received from sales of a ball bearing his name.

Dr. Naismith was born in Almonte, Ontario, November 6, 1861. He was graduated from McGill University in Montreal in 1887, and was director of physical education there three years while he studied for the ministry at Presbyterian College.

He decided that he could be of more value in YMCA work than in the pupil so he went to the YMCA training school at Springfield, Mass. There he studied and then moved up to the faculty. The gymnasium at Springfield was the birthplace of basketball during the winter of 1891-1892.

Dr. Luther H. Gulick, head of the physical education department of the school, assigned Dr. Naismith the task of devising some game to occupy the students in the winter months when the weather kept them from playing games outdoors. The father of basketball often recalled how he tried to dodge the assignment, but Gulick was insistent.

As a rugby player, Dr. Naismith started with the idea of incorporating that game into some kind of an indoor contest. Tackling had to be eliminated since it