



Above, Dr. Naismith with his lifelong friend, Alonzo Stagg, during a meet at Kansas University. Right, Dr. Forrest C. Allen, dean of basketball coaches, and colleague of Dr. Naismith



Courtesy Y. M. C. A.

Above, a critical moment in a "Y" basketball game.

sports group without its own basketball court and equipment. Dr. Forrest Claire Allen, with whom Naismith was to be associated at the University of Kansas and who is himself a celebrated coach, says that all the large field houses, the large auditoria and gymnasias where basketball is played today are owing to Dr. Naismith. For before this game was originated there were very few large indoor arenas. Now, dotting the Middle Western states, from the largest cities to the tiniest hamlets, are high school gymnasias much bigger than the entire school buildings were thirty years ago.

James Naismith was born in Almonte, Ontario, November 6, 1861. His parents died when he was eight years old and he was brought up by an uncle. Midway through high school he quit and went back to the farm. His Scotch grandfather whose extraordinary strongmindedness his own direct temper resembled used to say regarding any difficulty: "Don't think you can't master it: get it and make a man of yourself!" And young James went back to school, finished the course and entered McGill University in Montreal.

In 1938 Dr. Naismith was summoned to McGill commencement and the degree of doctor of divinity was conferred on him by McGill Theological Seminary. During his lifetime he had been ordained a Presbyterian minister, though he never held a pastorate. The Rev. Theodore H. Aszman said that Dr.

Naismith "preferred to do his preaching in active living rather than from the pulpit," though he delivered pulpit sermons from time to time throughout his long life, and combined the roles of teacher and preacher and physical director in an effort to build character and give at the same time a chance for enjoying a full human life on all fronts. Dr. Naismith also completed a medical course and was a member of the Kansas State Medical Association during his teaching career at the University though he did not practice medicine any more than he did preaching as a separate profession.

As a youth in McGill he joined in sports with the other Canadian students and used to rise at six o'clock mornings to practice football. Coach Allen of Kansas has given his chief credit for the spectacular forward pass in football. Always practical, he devised a canton flannel helmet to protect his ears, and the other boys copied it. Later the idea was taken over, pattern and all, by manufacturers and made in leather for football players everywhere.

One day at McGill he talked with the Y. M. C. A. secretary about the possibility of becoming a trained leader for young men. The secretary told him of the college at Springfield, Massachusetts. There Naismith went in 1890 after remaining at McGill as physical instructor for three years following graduation. The rest is basketball history.

James Naismith invented basketball in the winter of 1890-91, and completed the game in two weeks. Modifications and additions for the original thirteen rules were under the direct supervision of the inventor, who was honorary chairman of the Basketball Rules Committee throughout his life as well as honorary president both of the Basketball Coaches Association and the International Basketball Federation. Three years after his notable invention, Dr. Naismith was married to Miss Maude Sherman of Springfield who died in Lawrence, Kansas, March, 1937. To the Naismiths were born three daughters and two sons. Following their marriage they went to Denver; in 1898 after earning an M.D. degree at the University of Colorado, Dr. Naismith was called to the University of Kansas as professor of physical education and chapel leader. Almost at once Kansas became an outstanding basketball school. Recently its great teams have been developed by Dr. F. C. Allen who, disagreeing goodnaturedly with Naismith over many rules and rule-changes, was for more than two decades his friend and coworker. Naismith once told Allen: "Basketball is just a game to play. It doesn't need a coach." His interest in the game he invented was never that of a pedant; yet he realized the importance of the education that comes through play, and he was constantly on the watch for mind and character traits as they appeared in the give-and-take of his exciting basketball contests.

Dr. Naismith (who always referred to himself as plain "Jim Naismith,") served more than forty years on the faculty of the University of Kansas. During that time he was in military service as chaplain with the Kansas regiment on the Mexican border for four months in 1916; and he was with the Y. M. C. A. in France from 1917 to 1919 where the strength of his robust idealism aided substantially in preserving high American morale. The father

basketball died in Lawrence, Kansas, on November 28, 1939 after a short illness following a cerebral hemorrhage. Until that brief sickness his health had been unusual. Describing his appearance a reporter for the *Lawrence Daily Journal World* had written: "The straightness of his carriage resembled that of a man many years his junior. His stride as he walked was brisk."

A major interest of his life had been scientific physical education. When basketball was opposed by early critics as being too strenuous for adolescents, its originator made a thorough study lasting over several years, noting the time all players were in action and the effects of that action. He found that on the average the players ran only fourteen minutes out of the forty minute period; also that the game can be played with safety by both boys and girls of high school and college age. "Common sense must be used," he told his own teams; "boys and girls might as well be given a diet of pie and nothing else as play continuous basketball." He scored players on the following points: Physique; Physical Judgment; Character. In the third category he listed such traits as self-control, persistence, and cooperation.

Fourteen years ago I enrolled in Dr. Naismith's class in child development at Kansas University. As I read over the notes on his lectures I find the word "duty" frequently occurring; and with the memory of how often the study of bone hygiene and nervous tissue went over into an ethical discourse is the memory of the voice—that character Lafcadio Hearn calls the most definitely individual of all physical traits—of the inventor of basketball.

In Dr. Naismith's article on basketball in the last *Britannica* one paragraph is labeled, "Philosophy." True to his early ambition to wield a good personal influence he was proud of having originated a game for young people that shows up the quick-tempered and egotistical as poor players and makes assets both of self-ability and altruism. "Basketball," he wrote, "is a team game demanding a high degree of accuracy, judgment, individual skill, initiative, self-control and the spirit of cooperation. It demands that each player be skilled in all phases of the game, thus developing all-round rather than highly specialized ability. Since the object of the game is to have the players of one team put the ball into their own basket and to prevent the opponents from putting it into the other basket, it is frequently necessary for one player to pass the ball to another in order to keep possession of it until a favorable opportunity to make a goal occurs. This necessitates cooperation on the part of the members of the team and skill on the part of each man to score." For if the father of basketball prized cooperation, he saw with equal clarity the need for such individual development and decency as makes cooperation worth while. "I do not have to observe 'honor among thieves,'" he said once during a discussion of the problem of good citizenship, "if I am not a thief." "Not only must one do what he thinks is right," the great sportsman went on, "he must *think* right."