

(cont.)



Less than a year before his death Dr. Naismith gave some game pointers to the Denver Safeways and their coach, Ev Shelton.

rise to a general skirmish for possession. To avoid injury, one man from each team was designated to jump for the ball at the center of the court. Naturally, each team designated its tallest player, originating the center jump. This feature has been largely eliminated and is now used only at the beginning of each period.

Basketball's "dribble" came about by accident, when a player dropped the ball and batted it against the floor several times to retain it. The dribble gave the game a new twist, instantly copied everywhere. It permitted individual players to retain possession of the ball while advancing toward the goal of the opposing team.

After earning his medical degree in Denver in 1898, Dr. Naismith joined the University of Kansas faculty as "director of chapel." When this post was abolished he was made professor of physical education. He coached basketball and track during his 39 years on the university staff. He retired as director of athletics in 1937 and died at Lawrence, Kan., Nov. 28, 1939.

Dr. Naismith was born in Almonte, Ontario, Canada, Nov. 6, 1861, and attended Almonte High School. He entered McGill University at Montreal and studied for the ministry at Presbyterian College there. After his graduation in 1890, he enrolled as a student in physical education at YMCA College, Springfield, Mass. He was awarded his physical education degree in 1891 and was retained by the school as a physical education instructor, first initiating basketball as a new game in December of that year.

During the 1935-1936 basketball season, schools throughout America joined in raising a fund to send Dr. and Mrs. Naismith to

the Berlin Olympic Games, where basketball was played for the first time as an Olympic sport. Mrs. Naismith's failing health kept her from making the trip with her husband but Dr. Naismith attended the Berlin games as an honored guest of the United States Olympic team.

During his tenure at the University of Kansas, Dr. Naismith revisited Denver often. While spending the 1938 Christmas holidays with his daughter, Mrs. George Stanley, then living at Ordway, Colo., he came to Denver to watch the Denver Safeways, one of the nation's leading AAU quintets, play at the city auditorium. The Safeways, coached by Ev Shelton numbered Dick Wells as one of their stars. Naismith was so impressed by his performance that he asked to be photographed with him, remarking, "He's my idea of a clean basketball player." Wells is now a Grand Junction, Colo., businessman. Fans who remember Naismith's visit to the Safeway contest recall that he was honored by tossing the ball for the first tip-off.

Dr. Naismith was never impressed with his invention of basketball, insisting that the game "just grew" out of the worldwide need for a satisfactory indoor team sport. He was often perturbed because his game developed into a highly skilled contest, drawing some of the highest paid gates in organized athletics. "It's an amateur game, invented by amateurs—everybody should have a chance to play it," he often said.

Fans speculate about what he would say of developments since his death, including today's player subsidies, scandals involving "point spread" fixes and professional basketball with its fantastic gate receipt records.



Dr. Naismith was 30 when this picture was taken in 1891, the same year he invented the nation's leading indoor athletic game.