

Basketball—How and When Introduced

By T. Duncan Patton

(Member of first team—1891)

ON NOVEMBER 6th, 1861, a child—afterwards to be known as James Naismith—first opened his eyes on the light of day. Both parents passed away when he was eight years of age and he was brought up by an uncle and aunt who lived on a farm. To them he was greatly indebted for wise guidance. The place was the charming little village of Almonte, Ontario, situated about forty miles west of Ottawa, Canada. He attended the public school, and subsequently the high school, from which he was graduated. Attendance at these schools necessitated a walk of two and one-half miles each way. In his early days he decided to prepare for the ministry. In due course he was admitted to McGill University in Montreal where he made a high standing. Not only was he brilliant in studies but he was prominent in football, lacrosse and other sports. Having won several medals as a leader, he was placed in charge of Barjuni's Gymnasium from 1887 to 1890. Graduating from the University, he entered the Presbyterian Theological College, where his record secured for him the silver medal. At this stage Naismith decided to go to Springfield College.

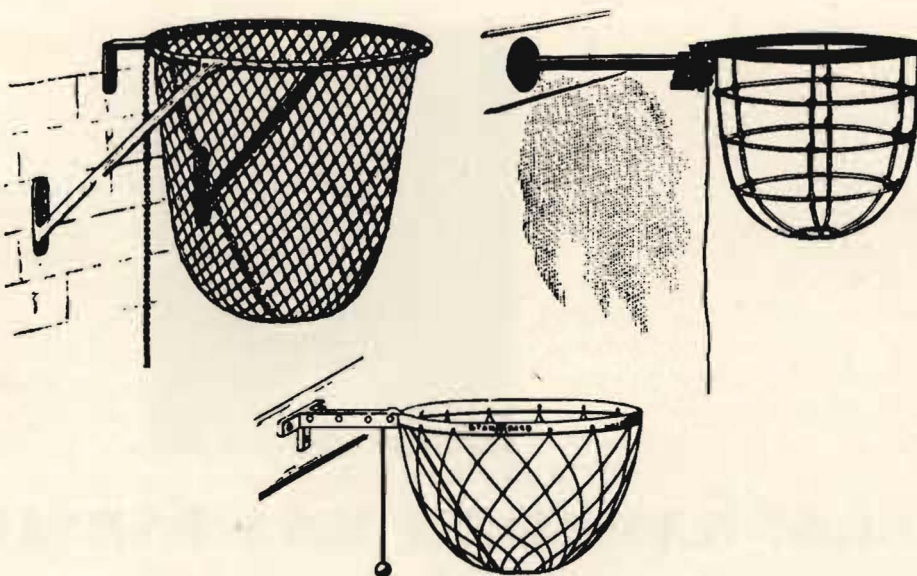
In the fall of 1890 Dr. James Naismith registered at the Training School of The Y. M. C. A. College at Springfield and thus was brought into close association with Dr. Luther Gulick, the head of the Physical Education Department. Dr. Gulick was never satisfied with following systems but was always exploring the possibilities of something better. He decided that more recreative sports were necessary, especially to fill in the time when outdoor games could not be played. In those days the number of games suitable for gymnasium work were few. He believed that suitable games would give splendid recreative work together with suppleness and the cultivation of team spirit. About the early part of December, 1891, the Physical Education Department students were challenged to bring in suggestions for new games which could be played indoors. The games were to be for groups of men, must be clean and free from rough play and give exercise to all parts of the body and could be played by all.

Naismith faced the problem in real earnest, as he usually did such challenges. His previous experiences had brought him into knowledge of outdoor

games and the comparative values of such games. Combinations of various games were worked upon until he thought that he had discovered something worthwhile. Rules were drawn up and the next thing was to test out the invention. One afternoon two members of the Secretarial Department—Eugene S. Libby of Redlands, Cal., and T. Duncan Patton of Montreal—were heading for their rooms to dress for regular gymnasium exercises when they were accosted by Naismith. He requested them to captain the two sides of a new game which he had evolved. From his pocket he produced the set of rules which he had drawn up and in a very brief interview explained what he wanted to have demonstrated on the gymnasium floor. They were quickly on the floor and teams of nine on each side were lined up in a gymnasium measuring about 45x65 feet, with a playing field about 35x50. The ball used at first was a soccer ball. The referee for the initial game was the originator. Men were designated for different positions on the floor. The original rules as compiled by the originator are as follows:—

1. The ball may be thrown in any direction by one or both hands.
2. The ball may be batted in any direction with one or both hands (never with the fist).
3. A player cannot run with the ball. The player must throw it from the spot on which he catches it, allowance to be made for a man who catches the ball when running, if he tries to stop.
4. The ball must be held by the hands; the arms or body must not be used for holding it.
5. No shouldering, holding, pushing, tripping, or striking in any way the person of an opponent shall be allowed; the first infringement of the rule by any player shall count as a foul; the second shall disqualify him until the next goal is made, or, if there was evident intent to injure the person, for the whole game, no substitute allowed.
6. A foul is striking at the ball with the fist, violation of rules 3, 4 and such as described in rule 5.
7. If either side makes three consecutive fouls it shall count a goal for the opponents (consecutive

Basketball equipment in the early nineties was crude but ingenious. At the time the baskets shown here were used as goals, no one thought of permitting the ball to drop through the net. The ball was released from the basket by pulling a cord. It wasn't until around 1905 that goals with open nets came into popular use.



means without the opponents in the meantime making a foul).

8. A goal shall be made when the ball is thrown or batted from the ground into the basket and stays there, providing those defending the goal do not touch or disturb the goal. If the ball rests on the edges, and the opponents move the basket, it shall count as a goal.

9. When the ball goes out of bounds it shall be thrown into the field of play by the person first touching it. In case of a dispute the umpire shall throw it straight into the field. The thrower-in is allowed five seconds. If he holds it longer, it shall go to an opponent. If any side persists in delaying the game, the umpire shall call a foul on that team.

10. The umpire shall be the judge of the men and shall note the fouls and notify the referee when three consecutive fouls have been made. He shall have the power to disqualify the men according to rule 5.

11. The referee shall be the judge of the ball and shall decide when the ball is in play, in bounds, to which side it belongs, and shall keep the time. He shall decide when a goal has been made, and keep account of the goals, with any other duties that are usually performed by a referee.

12. The time shall be two 15 minute halves with 5 minutes' rest between.

13. The side making the most goals in that time shall be declared the winner. In case of a draw, the game may, by mutual agreement, be continued until another goal is made.

Naismith had asked the Building Superintendent (Stebbins) for two boxes 18x18 inches to be used as goals. He replied that he could not supply such, but suggested that two half bushel peach baskets be used. These were accepted and used in the initial game. The goals suggested the name of the game, Basketball.

It will be noted that while the rules are changing from year to year the principles of the game are practically what they were on that afternoon in December, 1891. Attention is called to the fact that in the early days the gym uniform was black full-sleeve woolen jersey with long gray trousers; that boys were required in the gallery at the first game to remove the ball from the baskets; that the number of players was at an early date reduced from nine to five men on a team; that the spotting of men on the floor was dropped except in a very general way.

In 1898 James Naismith was graduated with the degree of M.D. and was called that same fall to the University of Kansas at Lawrence, Kansas, to be Instructor of Physical Training and Chapel Director. In June of 1937 he was retired to the position of Professor Emeritus.

So quietly and gradually did the game of basketball come into general use and popularity that no early effort was made to secure photographs of the setting of its beginning in the building on Winchester Square. Before any authentic stories of the early days of the game were sought, memories of many little incidents had faded out and some who took a prominent part had passed into the great beyond.