

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

VOL. XXXV

ISSUED IN MARCH 1954

No. 3

Copyright 1954 by The State Historical Society of Iowa



The First Iowa Basketball Game

Basketball was originally a Y.M.C.A. game. It was invented in 1891 by Dr. James Naismith, while he was attending the Y.M.C.A. College at Springfield, Massachusetts. According to one account, basketball,

. . . enjoys the unique distinction of having been invented by a single brain at one sitting. In 1891 a lecturer on psychology in the training school of the Y.M.C.A. . . . speaking of the mental processes of invention, proposed the example of a game with its limitations and necessities. That same night, James Naismith, a member of the class, worked out basketball as an ideal game to meet the hypothetical case; and the next day in the lecture room it was put in practice with the aid of members of the gymnastic class. . . .

At first a soccer ball was used, it being worked up the floor by a team and tossed into a box placed at the end of the gymnasium on the floor. Then boxes (later bushel baskets) were suspended from the wall, and a lighter ball devised. Peach baskets made excellent baskets, until the iron hoop with netting was adopted.

The following year (1892-1893) A. A. Stagg and H. F. Kallenberg, two of Naismith's classmates at Springfield, came out west. Stagg went to the University of Chicago where he won fame as the "Grand Old Man" of football. Kallenberg became Y.M.C.A. physical director at the University of Iowa. Kallenberg taught his students the new game of basketball. Soon G. D. Lees, physical director of the Cedar Rapids Y.M.C.A., organized a basketball team. The Cedar Rapids boys promptly received a challenge from the Iowa City quintet.

On April 22, 1893, the *Vidette-Reporter* of the State University of Iowa informed students that a "match game of basket ball between the Cedar Rapids Y.M.C.A. team and our own team" would be played in the gymnasium in Close Hall on Wednesday evening, April 26. The preliminary program started with a dumbbell drill, followed by exhibitions on the parallel bars, the long and side horse, and the flying rings.

This will be the first match game of basket ball ever played in the State; and as our association is to bear the expenses of the Cedar Rapids team it is hoped that a large audience will be present. The admission will be fifteen cents. Exhibition will begin at 7:45; game called at 8:30.

On the evening of April 26 the two teams met in Close Hall, which housed both the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. The line-up of the two teams, as chronicled in the *Vidette-Reporter* on April 29, was as follows:

THE FIRST IOWA BASKETBALL GAME 99

C. R. Y.M.C.A.

Carnicle

Bruner

French

Leo

Hanson

G. D. Lees, Sub.

I. C. Y.M.C.A.

Shambaugh

Anthony

Ham

Monnet

Hurst

Pope, Sub.

Umpire: G. D. Lees, Cedar Rapids, Physical Director

Referee: Bert Weiss

The account of the first basketball game reported in Iowa is illuminating:

The players took their positions on the floor in the shape of the letter Z, one man from each side standing in the center to receive the ball when it was first put in play and two men near the goal to throw the ball into the basket. Ham played in the center for the home team and his superior size and quickness gave him a decided advantage over his opponent. Shambaugh and Monnet played near the goal; both played an excellent game. Shambaugh succeeded in throwing the ball into the basket four times, thus scoring 12 points for the home team. Monnet was exceedingly quick and sure in his passes. Two fouls made, one by Monnet and one by Anthony, gave the Cedar Rapids team their two points. On the whole the home team did much better team work and were much more skillful in their passes than the opposing team. The boys from Cedar Rapids were an excellent lot of fellows and received their defeat in a good natured manner. While the game is perhaps not as interesting as Rugby yet it is a very pleasant indoor game.

The rules and procedure followed in this 12-2 victory of the University "Y" over the Cedar Rapids "Y" are worthy of our attention. It was the era of the jump center which was to continue for

more than a generation. Three points were scored for a field goal instead of two. The best player at the foul line was allowed to shoot all free throws. Each team had but one substitute.

The participants in this historic game also deserve further comment. John Ham, the center, was not a student at the University but an outstanding Iowa City athlete who that very evening had "manifested great agility and strength" on the popular flying rings and in other exercises before the game started. Benjamin F. Shambaugh later became head of the political science department at the University and Superintendent of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Julien C. Monnet was a University law student who was destined to become Dean of Law at the University of Oklahoma. The shortage of players and officials is illustrated by the fact that G. D. Lees was both the umpire and lone substitute on the Cedar Rapids team.

From this humble beginning basketball has grown into one of the most scientific, exciting, and popular sports in the nation. And nowhere is it more popular than in Iowa.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN