PLAY BY THE RULES: THE CREATION OF BASKETBALL AND THE PROGRESSIVE ERA, 1891-1917

DISSERTATION

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By

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A new kind of professional social reformer sought to impact American society in a new way in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Physical education professionals - trained in scientific theory, confident in the wide applicability of their expertise - adopted competitive team games as a means of molding the physical, moral, and social characteristics of young men and women. The invention of the game of basketball in 1891 was one of the first concrete manifestations of their outlook. Educators and reformers used basketball to teach children and young adults particular kinds of values on organized playgrounds, in high schools and colleges, and in institutions like the YMCA and settlement houses. They viewed it as a tool of social cohesion. Yet it often became something different: a highly competitive public spectacle, played in front of paying crowds by professionals and skilled amateurs, and not simply a tool for educators and social reformers. Studying the game's early history therefore illuminates a wide variety of the issues currently of interest to scholars of the Progressive era: the growth and spread of the ethos of professionalism, the tradeoff between individualism and social cohesion, the
relationship of sport to contemporary conceptions of gender, and the relationship of sport and physical education to social reform. The development of basketball as both educational instrument and public spectacle illuminates the ways in which reformers and professionals designed an institution to suit their purposes - and how the targets of reform sometimes turned it to different purposes.
For Julie
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INTRODUCTION

There is an interesting paradox at the core of the history of American sport, and indeed of American culture as a whole, that runs something like this: how is it that in the United States, allegedly the most "individualistic" of the modern industrial nations, the landscape of sport is dominated by team games such as football, baseball, and basketball, while more clearly individualistic sports like tennis or track and field fail to draw a comparable following? Why did something like baseball become the "American Game," to be challenged over time by similarly team-oriented pursuits like football and basketball?

The answer lies, I believe, in the fact that America's dominant sporting ideology developed in what historians continue to call the Progressive Era, an era in which the contest between self-interested individualism and the necessity of social cohesion through shared values played out directly, contentiously, and self-consciously. The ideology of American team sport was and is very much concerned with questions that troubled a broad range of reformers, social thinkers, and public figures in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. What should be the proper relationship
between the individual and the social? How can individual initiative and invidious competition be reconciled with the common good? How can a nation have both social pluralism and social cohesion? How can social cohesion, if attainable, be encouraged and maintained by stable cultural institutions? How can aggressive conceptions of middle-class manhood be promoted in an increasingly “over-civilized” urban society? The late 19th and early 20th centuries therefore produced Yale football guru Walter Camp’s ideology of the football team as a corporate entity in which the individual submerges himself for the sake of team success; they produced the ethos of “scientific play” that dominated the aesthetic of baseball at the turn of the century, valuing the manufactured run over individual slugging prowess; they produced Theodore Roosevelt’s notion of football as a passable substitute for the regenerative qualities of war. This ideology of sport demanded individual achievement and valued winning above all else, but insisted that winning be achieved through team cohesion and sacrifice of individual success to corporate goals.¹

The early history of the game of basketball offers a unique means of looking at how Americans dealt with some of these questions. Although basketball was not the most

important or most popular game of the day by conventional standards (at least not for men), no game better illustrates the relevance of sport to the issues that shaped the Progressive Era. Unlike baseball, an evolution of English stick-and-ball games which had to have a moment of creation invented for it, or football, which also evolved slowly from English ball games and which remained under construction as the twentieth century opened, basketball was invented from scratch, and with a purpose. Basketball was invented to be an instrumental game — in other words, to instill particular values in those who played — designed by its creators to affect players just as they believed competitive team athletics should. For the physical education professionals and play experts who invented and attempted to control the game, basketball was a vehicle not just for encouraging the physical health of its players, but also their social health and moral development. It was a game designed to do so, and not an evolving game to which an ideology was attached. It was, in a limited but real sense, an exercise in Progressivism.²

"Progressivism," of course, continues to be a contentious and changing concept among American historians, one which has tended over time to become both more inclusive and less discriminating as a category of analysis. Originally defined in terms of Progressives’ own self-image, as a case of benevolent and forward-thinking reformers attempting to ameliorate the negative social and political consequences of an overripe industrial capitalism, Progressivism has been subsequently defined and re-defined by scholars in a series of ways: as a political and social expression of middle-class status

anxiety, as a conservative, business-driven movement more concerned with stabilizing corporate capitalism than ameliorating its social impact, as a move for social "efficiency"; as an attempt by a "new" urban middle class to reconstitute the social order in its own image through professional, organizational, and bureaucratic means; as an exercise in social control more interested in inculcating than in uplifting the masses (especially urban, immigrant masses), as a sublimated Protestant missionary impulse, as an application of scientific expertise to the problem of social cohesion; or, most commonly today, some convenient mixture of any or all of the above. Despite these scholarly disagreements, I believe it remains sensible to think of the social thought of the period, at least in part, as an effort to disseminate a shifting series of self-consciously "middle-class" values throughout as much of society as possible, and to do so by institutional and organizational means, in an effort to achieve social cohesion in an increasingly pluralistic society. "Here we come to the heart of Progressivism," historian Morton Keller has written. "However varied were the goals of social policymakers, they had a shared sense that the good society was efficient, organized, cohesive."

Sport played a role in the attempted creation and maintenance of an efficient, organized, cohesive society in these years. A series of health reformers, physical

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4 Keller, Regulating a New Society, p. 4.
education professionals, and scientific experts around the turn of the century developed and did what they could to implement an instrumental vision of sport – especially organized, supervised, rationalized, and competitive team sport – that saw sport as an organizational, institutional, and educational tool capable of deflecting "natural" human impulses and behaviors toward positive social ends. Play, they believed, was an instinct, one which could be turned to society's benefit if regulated properly. Intelligently designed and properly supervised sporting and athletic institutions could thereby instill and test a whole series of positive social values – manliness, character, efficiency, subsumation of the individual within the collective, and others. If placed within wisely designed organizational constraints and supervised by scientifically-trained experts, these educators and reformers believed, people would quite literally play themselves Progressive.\(^5\)

The Progressive vision of sport was shaped primarily by a series of ideological impulses and intellectual assumptions that began to emerge and gel in the late nineteenth century. The most fundamental of these was the notion that the reform and improvement of the social environment (especially the urban social environment) was both increasingly necessary and well within the power of right-thinking and far-seeing reformers. Urban middle-class reformers were disturbed by a series of economic and demographic developments which they felt impacted negatively on the American social order. Primary among these was the perception that the urban industrial environment impacted negatively

on individual health and character development in a variety of ways. Reformers believed that an urban middle class consisting increasingly of sedentary white-collar workers lacked the physical vigor, fortitude of character, and rugged manliness presumably forged by rural middle-class life; that the growing urban proletariat increasingly posed a threat to public health and safety unless better protected and better socialized; that these problems were compounded by the swelling tide of immigration from places other than northern Europe; and that action needed to be taken against these and a host of other urban pathologies by educated experts such as themselves.⁶

These apprehensions were fortified by the intellectual currents of the late nineteenth century. Changes in mainstream American Protestantism led to the notion that salvation of society was possible in the collective through the improvement of the social environment, and to the notion that physical strength and courage were integral parts of the complete Christian man. The widespread impact and acceptance of Darwinistic evolutionary thinking (actually, more frequently semi- or pseudo-Darwinistic evolutionary thinking) in a variety of intellectual fields led to the conceptualization and rationalization of social problems in scientific and, increasingly, racialistic terms. The rise of a cult of professional expertise in many fields led much of the middle class to conclude that these problems and their solutions were the province of these emerging professionals. Increasingly, the solutions these professionals devised were organizational and/or

institutional in nature, as reformers attempted to create permanent, systemic solutions to what were considered systemic problems.\(^7\)

Progressivism as understood in these terms frequently involved the imposition of external controls on organizations, institutions, and/or demographic slices of society which did not, in the view of reformers, exhibit the "self-control" necessary to perpetuate American society as they understood it. Predatory businesses must be regulated; corrupt political systems must be reformed or circumvented; unhealthy slums must be cleansed and purified; untutored and increasingly un-Protestant immigrants must be educated and Americanized. "Democracy," "social efficiency," and "self-control" were the fruits of success, even though a more participatory politics, a more organic social organization, and a more autonomous, self-governed individual were not necessarily what the users of these phrases meant. Promoters of instrumental team sport as a means of shaping the social development of urban youth -- the outlook from which basketball initially emerged -- understood their activities in this sense, and their discourse reverberates with these catchphrases of the cohesive society. In fact, as even casual students of the period quickly discover, these phrases littered public discourse so ubiquitously, loaded with so many varied meanings and contradictory valences, as to become just that: catchphrases, difficult to define consistently in any useful semantic sense but nevertheless powerful indicators of

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the social goals of those who wielded them. Furthering these social goals was the initial purpose of the game of basketball and the men and women who attempted to shape and control it. It comes as no surprise, then, that their own rhetoric was littered with these catchphrases of the cohesive, Progressive society.8

Yet basketball was simultaneously turned to other goals by other men and women. Not everyone who played basketball shared the social goals of the game’s creators and organizers; not everyone who promoted basketball did it out of a desire to further certain social values; not everyone who saw basketball as a forum for manliness saw “manliness” in exactly the same way; not everyone saw basketball as a forum for manliness. The best-laid plans of educators, reformers, and other social engineers did not always play out as expected, and people who promoted and/or played basketball generally did so for their own reasons. Indeed, basketball is a primary example of how attempts to shape the behavior of presumably malleable groups through organizational thinking seldom played out in the manner reformers had in mind. In many contexts, basketball became something very different from what its creators intended: yet another competitive modern team sport, played for victory rather than for values. It became an important varsity sport at most colleges, and the most important sport for women nearly everywhere. And the professional game, played inside wire cages before crowds of paying customers, became an often-violent urban recreation and a small-time commercial venture—a far cry from the original intentions of sport instrumentalists. A close examination of basketball’s first years

8 Haber, Efficiency and Uplift; Crunden, Ministers of Reform; Thomas R. Pegram, Partisans and Progressives: Private Interest and Public Policy in Illinois, 1870-1922 (Chicago: University of Illinois
therefore illuminates not only the values social reformers attempted to instill and the means by which they expected to be successful, but also the degree to which they were often not as successful as their own confident rhetoric suggested.

Basketball also very quickly became a game in which gender tensions lurking beneath the surface of Progressive-era efforts at reform and social cohesion exposed themselves in unique ways. Women as well as men played basketball in large numbers. In fact, it almost immediately became the sport most played by women, and, like basketball for men, was often seen by reformers and play organizers as a means of instilling certain values in those who played. In some communities, women began playing the game first, and in many places by the first decade of the twentieth century both men and women were playing the same (or at least a very similar) game in the same communities, sometimes in the same places on the same evenings. A game designed by what might be called play professionals to shape the social, physical, and behavioral characteristics of young men, in self-consciously “Progressive” ways, became popular among women – and in many cases was reshaped to prevent a series of gendered “dangers” that might arise as a result. This unique dynamic can tell us much about the gender tensions inherent in much Progressive-era social thought. What happened when a game invented to instill certain values in young men – including “manliness” – was played by large numbers of young women, who, many feared, might be de-feminized as a result? 9

9 Michael Kimmel, Manhood in America: A Cultural History (New York: The Free Press, 1996); Peter N. Stearns, Be a Man!: Males in Modern Society, 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes and Mercer, 1990); E. Anthony Rutondo, American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the
In addition, basketball’s earliest days, during which it spread rapidly in both the geographic sense and in the sense that a wide variety of organizations, institutions, and associations took it up, offer an interesting example of “entrepreneurship” in the broadest possible sense of the term. Basketball was packaged, promoted, proselytized, and boosted, sometimes as a business proposition or for financial gain, but more often for institutional or organizational aggrandizement, as social reform, as moral prophylactic, from simple love of the game, or for some awkward and fascinating combination of any of the above. Historian Stephen Hardy has suggested the desirability of thinking about the development of American sport in terms of a broadly-defined entrepreneurship encompassing more than just profit-oriented business risk-taking. This is a useful way of understanding the invention, promotion, and development of basketball from its invention in 1891 until World War One. A great deal of business, institutional, and social innovation characterized all of American culture in these years. Much of it was profit-oriented, much of it was in the name of social control, much of it was a response to the era’s gender anxiety, much of it was in the name of pure entertainment. Basketball was, at one time or another, all of the above.\textsuperscript{10}

This study therefore has several different, yet overlapping, stories to tell. First, it sets out the reform-oriented, Progressive-era intellectual worldview from which basketball

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initially sprang. Next, it examines the basic organizational and institutional establishment of the game, the process by which basketball became the nation’s primary indoor winter team sport. As the game spread and developed, however, it actually became many different games, some of which reflected the goals and desires of its creators, some of which did not. It became a reform tool on city playgrounds and an educational tool in city schools; it became a rough, rowdy commercialized entertainment spectacle; it became the winter varsity sport at colleges and universities; it became the primary team sport for women. Often, these transformations revolved around changes in the rules by which the game was played and/or conflict about what kinds of organizations should or should not shape its continued development. Finally, this study examines the entrepreneurial ethos, very broadly defined, which shaped and promoted all of the above.

As such, this study takes several cross-sections of basketball in the years before World War One as a means of approaching some of the social values and cultural concerns which preoccupied a variety of Progressive-era Americans. Chapter One examines the game’s invention and spread in the 1890s and contextualizes it within the developing ethos of professional physical education and instrumental team sport. What kinds of social problems did physical educators and other proponents of instrumental team sport believe could be impacted through sport and play, and how was that reflected in the design and, as it became popular, management of the new sport? Chapter Two chronicles the efforts of play reformers, amateur sport entrepreneurs, and other proponents to promote, organize,

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and proselyte basketball in the years between the turn of the century and World War One. What did it mean to “play yourself Progressive,” and to what degree did the athletes actually playing re-shape the game to their own personal, social, and/or cultural ends? Chapter Three examines the development, brief success, and subsequent collapse of one professional basketball team in East Liverpool, Ohio, where basketball became, if only briefly, the very sort of commercial urban recreation to which basketball’s inventors hoped to provide an alternative. Chapter Four examines the development of college basketball at several so-called “big-time” athletic universities, where intercollegiate athletics had already taken on a life of their own. Chapter Five examines basketball at Oberlin College, where maintaining a comprehensive athletic program became part of a small college’s institutional strategy in the increasingly university-oriented landscape of higher education. Chapter Six examines women’s basketball. What did it mean for a game originally designed to instill a particular vision of masculinity to be popular with large numbers of women?

As these varied cross-sections will demonstrate, basketball was not necessarily the same game at all times, in all locations, or under all circumstances. It was, however, and is, a revealing window into the social and cultural world of the Progressive Era.
CHAPTER 1

SOCIAL CONTROL FROM SCRATCH: RETHINKING THE BIRTH OF BASKETBALL

Unlike most modern sports, which evolved from informal, pre-modern practices of one kind or another, basketball has a well-known and well-documented moment of creation. In December of 1891, James Naismith posted thirteen rules on the billboard outside the gymnasium at the Young Men’s Christian Association Training School in Springfield, Massachusetts, hammered two peach baskets to the gymnasium balcony, produced an Association football, and ordered his 18 students to play. Half an hour and one basket later, the world had a catchy new game.¹

The story of the birth of basketball is often told – and often poorly contextualized. Typically, historians interested in the story of James Naismith are interested primarily in what his prefabricated game eventually became, not in what Naismith actually created. To those looking for the origins of a modern competitive spectacle, Naismith’s simple rules and makeshift baskets provide a quaint Chapter One. The title of a recent popular history of professional basketball makes the point nicely: *From Peachbaskets to Slamdunks*. But the competitive spectacle basketball later became is not at all what Naismith had in mind in 1891. As Naismith put it at the time, “Basket Ball is not a game intended merely for amusement, but is the attempted solution of a problem which has been pressing on physical educators.” What kinds of problems did “physical educators” consider themselves in the business of solving, and how did thirteen rules of play solve them?

Professional physical educators were themselves a relatively new kind of professional in an era of American social development rich with new kinds of professionals. They sought to make physical health an important branch of American educational pedagogy, and to make the pursuit of this goal a widespread and respected professional calling. This self-conscious emergence of physical education as a rationalized profession late in the nineteenth century involved standardization of training and qualification, development of a coherent professional worldview, and assumption of a shared sense of social mission. In the 1880s and 1890s, a series of normal schools of physical training and degree programs at four-year colleges sprang up around the country.

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2 James Naismith, *Rules For Basket Ball* (Springfield, Mass.: Springfield Printing and Binding Company, 1892), quote p. 3; Robert D. Bole and Alfred C. Lawrence, *From Peachbaskets to Slamdunks: A Story of*
to train professional gymnasium supervisors and physical training directors in this mold. Curricula became more uniform and more rigorous, and control of high school, college, and YMCA gymnasium around the country began to shift to faculty members or professional physical directors with the new specialized training, and, not infrequently at the college level, MD degrees. A national professional organization, the American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education, was founded in 1885, and publication of the *American Physical Education Review*, the AAAPE professional journal, began in 1896. It joined similar journals such as *Physical Education* (1892), the YMCA’s *The Triangle* (1891), and The North American Gymnastic Union’s *Mind and Body* (1894). As in many of the emerging professions, these organizations and journals quickly became sounding boards for an optimistic and expansive professional self-image. “There are few scientific fields today which offer opportunities for the study of problems of greater value to the human race, or more fundamental in regard to its ultimate success, than does physical education,” Luther Halsey Gulick told the AAAPE in 1890.

Physical educators saw themselves playing a wide social role, and they sought to impact the conduct of American life in permanent and meaningful ways through the application of their expertise. This vision was often not only sweeping – “Here is a field of

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study as broad as human thought.” said Thomas Wood in 1893 – but also one that presented remarkable examples of the tendency of Progressive-era professionalism to subdivide knowledge as it defined expertise through specialization, while simultaneously claiming a broad social role. For example, Gulick suggested in 1890 that physical training specialists, and not music teachers, might be best equipped to teach the complex finger exercises necessary to learn musical instruments. “Let each do what he can do best: physical trainer, physical training – music teacher, music and not physical training.”5 A remarkable portion of this rhetoric vibrated with the catchphrases of what Robert Wiebe has described as the emerging organizational society: “efficient,” “rational,” “scientific basis.” “Natural” and “instinctual” behaviors like play or competition were to be harnessed by ideas such as these and shaped toward the social good. It was this image of the cohesive, rational society many of these new professionals sought to achieve with physical education.6

Team sport was especially key to this outlook. Team sport, physical educators believed – especially organized, supervised, rationalized, and competitive team sport, under the control of educated professionals such as themselves – was an ideal means to their end, a tool capable of deflecting “natural” human impulses and behaviors toward

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positive social outcomes. Intelligently designed and properly supervised sporting activities, these reformers believed, could instill a whole series of positive values into those who played – manliness, character, efficiency, willingness to subsume individuality within the collective, and a host of others. If placed within wisely designed organizational constraints and supervised by scientifically trained experts, people would play their way into the values many of the day’s social thinkers believed were necessary to an ordered, cohesive modern society. “Organized play, particularly team sport for adolescents,” historian Dominick Cavallo has written of this outlook, “was seen by reformers as an ideal means of integrating the young into the work rhythms and social demands of a dynamic and complex urban-industrial civilization.”  

A major assumption of this outlook, sometimes unarticulated, at other times nearly fetishized, was that the primary purpose of such activity was to instill these values into men and boys. This was not simply the assumption that athletics were a male activity. It was also the belief that a particular sort of American male was necessary to the health of society, and that sport was an important means to his creation. Many observers, both then and now, have spoken of a crisis of masculinity in the American middle class in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It stemmed, according to these observers, from a variety of causes: the increased social and political assertiveness of the so-called New Woman of the 1890s, the shift from a rural middle class of vigorous farmers to an urban middle class of sedentary clerks and office-dwellers; the allegedly feminizing influences of higher

education, the extinction of the mettle-testing Frontier West; anxiety over the prevalence among intellectuals and professionals of “nervous debility,” “neurasthenia,” and other turn-of-the-century analogues of the nervous breakdown; and the notion that civilized society itself (specifically white society, or, as they would have put it, “Anglo-Saxon civilization”) was potentially an effeminizing influence on American men. How, amid this litany of gendered tension, could American society create competitive, vitalistic men simultaneously imbued with a Christian morality and the “self-control” turn-of-the-century social critics idolized above all else? How to create a “civilized” culture without creating an effeminate one? Team athletics represented a potential solution. They offered physical competition and achievement tempered by fair play; individual performance in the service of team; aggressive masculinity constrained by the rules of the game. The invention of basketball was one of the first concrete manifestations of this outlook on the American cultural landscape.\(^8\)

This outlook was based in a recapitulationary developmental sociology, most commonly associated with the thought of G. Stanley Hall. Hall, along with a series of popularizers and followers, developed a philosophy of physical education and play which theorized that the individual recapitulated the stages of social evolution allegedly passed

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through by world civilizations as he grew and developed, culminating in the presumed sociological genius of the adult male Anglo-Saxon. This odd amalgam of Darwin, Spencer, and Lamarck suggested that fierce group loyalty and the so-called "play impulse" were natural and innate characteristics of adolescent boys. In this schema, boys were essentially "tribal" in their social impulses. Allowed to develop on their own, these tendencies would lead to youth gangs, antisocial behavior, juvenile crime, and a host of other vaguely threatening urban pathologies. If harnessed by participation in organized, supervised, competitive team sport, however (and all of these adjectives were essential), these tendencies could be bent towards loyalty to team, the development of manly fortitude, a strong work ethic, acceptance of and assimilation into the social order, and, ultimately, progression to a higher level of civilization.⁹

Racial and ethnic considerations shaped this outlook, often overtly and specifically. "By team-play, I mean the play of individuals in such a way as to advance the interests of the team as contrasted with the interests of the individual," wrote Luther Halsey Gulick, an adherent and popularizer of Hall's philosophy, in 1901. "Games demanding team-play are played by the Anglo-Saxon peoples, and by these peoples alone, and may thus be said to be a differentiating characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon adolescent male." In addition, games and play solved a practical problem inherent in many pre-existing systems of physical education, namely their tedium. A philosophy based in the importance of play, physical educators recognized, was likely to attract more adherents than regimented

⁹ Cavallio, Muscles and Morals, pp. 1-11, 88-106; Macleod, Building Character in the American Boy, pp. 97-116; G. Stanley Hall, Adolescence, Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology,
gymnastics or calisthenics. In this schema, adolescents and young men, if placed into team
games and directed by trained professionals, would quite literally play themselves
Progressive.\textsuperscript{10}

By the 1890s, the YMCA was attempting to put an ideology such as this into
practice under the leadership of the aforementioned Luther Halsey Gulick. Born in 1865
in Honolulu, Hawaii, the son and grandson of American missionaries, Gulick was a
pioneer and archetype of the physical education professional, and also of the Progressive-
era social reformer who sought to wed scientific expertise and professional training with
the moral and spiritual goals of American Protestantism. The YMCA was only the first
stop in a professional career devoted to putting these beliefs into action through a variety
of institutions, including the Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls, the New York Public
Schools Athletic League, and the Playground Association of America. Gulick’s career-
long efforts to fuse Protestant spirituality and Progressive-era science with athletic
endeavor are nicely symbolized by his invention, in 1891, of the YMCA Triangle (the
YMCA’s symbol to this day), theorizing the three-fold nature of Christian manhood:
physical, mental, and spiritual.\textsuperscript{11}

Gulick first became interested in physical education while at Oberlin College in the
1880s, where he was influenced heavily by Delphine Hanna, herself one of the nation’s
earliest and most respected physical educators of the new type. As we will see in Chapter

\textsuperscript{10} Luther Gulick, “The Psychological Effects of Basket Ball For Women,” \textit{Line Basket-Ball, or Basket
\textsuperscript{11} Ethel Josephine, \textit{1865-1918} (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1934).
Five, Oberlin College was both a key institution in the development of physical education and an important seedbed of Progressive thought. Gulick left Oberlin without taking a degree (due, he said, to chronic headaches), but soon attended the Sargent School of Physical Training and then New York University Medical School, where he received an MD in 1889. By 1891 Gulick was in charge of both the theory and execution of the YMCA program of physical work as head of the new YMCA Training School in Springfield, Massachusetts, where he trained YMCA secretaries and physical directors in his own image. Physical work and gymnasium facilities had been part of the YMCA’s appeal to young urban men since at least the 1860s, but until now had been used primarily as a means of drawing men to the YMCA and its spiritual message rather than representing an institutional goal in and of itself. Sometimes categorized “Muscular Christianity,” this development actually represented something more than the reconciliation of athletic activity with Christian piety. Gulick integrated YMCA physical work into the developing scientific-professional ethos of physical education, and in turn integrated that ethos into the Protestant spiritual mission of the YMCA.  

One of Gulick’s first trainees at Springfield was a young Canadian theological student named James Naismith. Born in Ontario, Canada, in 1861, Naismith was the

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archetype Gulick had in mind when seeking candidates for the Springfield training school. Naismith had been a McGill theology student attracted to athletics and troubled by the negative attitude many of his minister-to-be peers exhibited toward sports and games. Disillusioned with the ministry and eager to find a way to use athletics as a means to similar moral and social ends, he was thrilled to learn of the existence of the Springfield school and its cadre of like-minded Protestant jocks, which included ex-Yale football and baseball player Amos Alonzo Stagg, famous nationwide for both his athletic skill and his principled refusal to exploit same as a professional baseball player. After completing his theology degree (and paying his way partly as a McGill physical education instructor), Naismith visited Springfield in 1890, hit it off immediately with Gulick, and became both a student and instructor there.\footnote{Naismith, \textit{Basketball}, pp. 19-26; Bernice Webb, \textit{The Basketball Man, James Naismith} (Lawrence: The University of Nebraska Press, 1973), pp. 26-40.}

It was in this capacity that Naismith was challenged by Gulick to solve “a problem that had been pressing on physical educators.” Gulick was experimenting at Springfield both with traditional forms of regimented physical education and with his developing ideas of team play, particularly with regard to football. Under the leadership of Stagg, Springfield, with just over 40 students, fielded a highly competitive football team which competed respectably with the east coast’s best college teams. “Stagg’s Stubby Christians,” as sportswriters enjoyed calling them, prided themselves on their commitment to amateurism, their underdog status, and their sense of Christian fair play (a sense not disturbed, apparently, by Stagg’s pioneering forays into strategic trickery like misdirection
plays and hidden-ball tricks). In addition to this high-level external competition, Springfield students also played intramural football and baseball as additional components of their physical training.¹⁴

These experiments suggested to Gulick that play-oriented, competitive athletics indeed held the interest of most students better than more traditional, regimented forms of physical training. Not all Springfield students were highly skilled athletes, however; nor were all the YMCA constituents they were being trained to serve. Furthermore, football and baseball were useful nine months out of the year, but attempts to play them inside during the winter, in an ordinary YMCA gymnasium, often endangered both property and personal safety. Indoor physical training was limited to much less interesting games (sailor’s tag, battle-ball) or, even worse, regimented calisthenics. One group of Springfield students in particular (a class of future YMCA secretaries, not physical directors, who were less motivated by physical work) was demonstrating on a daily basis the danger of offering dull exercise to unmotivated men. They hated it. Instructor after instructor tried to motivate this class, with no success. Gulick challenged Naismith – in, tellingly, his new seminar on psychology – to invent an indoor game that would hold the interest of these finicky students, would provide the physical and social benefits of existing team games, and would do so without destroying the gymnasium.¹⁵

Gulick, Naismith, and others at Springfield had concurrently been discussing the relative merits of existing team games and the degree to which they did or did not further

the development of what Naismith later called “the right type of manhood.” Working from these discussions, Naismith started by trying to modify existing outdoor games in order to make them safe indoors. He tried football with different tackling rules, soccer, lacrosse – all disasters. Football, played with an only-above-the-waist tackling rule borrowed from rugby, did little but amuse men trained to tackle hard and low; soccer tore up the gymnasium; lacrosse (which Naismith considered the ideal outdoor team game) tore up the players themselves, and also, Naismith found, gave an insurmountable advantage to students who had handled a crosse before. At this point Naismith began thinking about games in the abstract, in order to construct a new one from first principles. What kinds of behavior do I want to encourage or avoid, and what elements of play will provide them? After deciding that all worthwhile team games used a ball of some kind, Naismith decided that a large ball would be easier to handle than a small one; that games requiring use of some other tool to handle the ball (rackets, bats, sticks, etc.) were too difficult for novices; that prohibiting running with the ball would both reduce violence and force teamwork; and that a goal placed high and horizontal rather than on the ground would prevent the sort of high-velocity shooting that made indoor soccer dangerous. “Basketball was thus made in the office,” as Naismith said in 1894, “and was a direct adaptation of certain means to accomplish certain ends.”16

Naismith turned these principles into thirteen rules, typed them up, and posted them for his class. The rules themselves demonstrate not just the effort to make an indoor

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16 Naismith. *Basketball*, pp. 32-38
game both engaging and relatively non-violent, but also the values and behaviors physical educators believed themselves capable of transmitting through sport. In its original conception, the emphasis on teamwork was extreme: the ball, not the man carrying it, moved up and down the floor, and the only running allowed occurred without the ball. In this game there was virtually nothing but the cooperative "team play" Naismith (and, more importantly, Gulick) prized. The original rules did not specify the number of players on a team; Naismith’s assumption was that teams of virtually any size could play. Nine men a side played in the first game. Rule 5 -- "Noshouldering, holding, pushing, tripping, or striking, in any way the person of an opponent shall be allowed" -- specifically outlawed every kind of rough play Naismith could think of. Basketball was, at least in theory, a distillation of the philosophy Gulick was developing, a team game devised by play experts who sought to create a perfect game from scratch. The rules sought to transmit values associated with an interlocking social vision encompassing Social Gospel Protestantism, the sublimation of the individual to team/society, the desire to encourage a "manly" competitive spirit while restraining that competition within acceptable social bounds, and the notion that team play was a metaphor for success within a modern organizational society. It was the Progressive vision of sport in microcosm.¹⁷

Many who have studied the history of basketball are quite understandably more interested in what basketball becomes than in where it begins. Basketball is seldom seen, in other words, for what it was intended to be at the time: an instrumental, pedagogical

game, the application of a particular set of assumptions and beliefs about the nature of play to a particular problem of physical education. How, Naismith asked (or, more properly, Gulick asked Naismith), can I construct rules that will encourage particular sort of behaviors — not just physical but moral behaviors — and instill particular sorts of values, yet people will enjoy following? What is most interesting here is that these men were not just seeking to come up with something entertaining enough to draw more men inside their local YMCAs. They believed they could transmit particular values by having people compete according to rules of their own making — and, as we shall see, grew increasingly concerned and frustrated when the game began to take on a life of its own as a spectator sport that people played to win rather than to become Christian gentlemen. The pure physical strengthening of the Christian man was only a part of it. Along with this went the notion that professional expertise, based in scientific understanding, could and should shape the natural and instinctual to positive ends. And in fact these ends were not just spiritual but social. Social learning would take place through the game itself. Gulick’s presence at the creation is much more significant and interesting than Naismith’s in this context, as Gulick was largely responsible for this philosophy, as well as the instructions concerning the archetypal game from which Naismith worked. Naismith was simply fulfilling the assignment. It is no accident that Gulick soon took the lead in attempting to shepherd and control the game as it grew rapidly in popularity (with, as we shall see, mixed success), while Naismith moved on to other professional interests. The

development of basketball as it moved away from this instrumentalism is what most popular histories are interested in. The discontinuity itself, however, bears examination.¹⁸

This discontinuity began to develop very quickly. In the most basic sense, basketball was an immediate success. Despite the initial jaded response from Naismith’s finicky charges ("Humph! A new game," one of them snorted) the men at Springfield took to the game—and began to draw interested spectators, sometimes, according to Naismith, numbering one hundred or more. The game spread quickly to YMCAs around the country, through the Y’s magazine, The Triangie, which published the rules in 1892, and when Springfield men left to take positions as YMCA physical trainers. By 1895, YMCAs in at least 27 states had introduced the game. Just as at Springfield, spectators began taking an interest, and often proved willing to pay for the privilege. Competitive leagues began to form, sometimes within a single YMCA, sometimes between them. Perhaps, in fact, its success was too great. For in creating a game playable for its own sake, Naismith and Gulick created a game played for its own sake—and not necessarily for the moral, masculine, or spiritual benefits allegedly contained therein. YMCA directors in the 1890s found men flocking to their gymnasiums to play basketball and, sometimes, only to play basketball, monopolizing gymnasium time and ignoring other aspects of the YMCA program. Naismith and Gulick also, in truth, only initiated the

¹⁸ See Albert G. Applin II, "From Muscular Christianity to the Market Place: The History of Men’s and Boy’s Basketball in the United States, 1891-1957" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1982), pp. 18-49 and Luther Gulick, Spalding’s Official Basket Ball Rules, 1897-1898 (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1897). For Naismith’s subsequent career, first at the Denver YMCA and then at the University of Kansas, see Webb, The Basketball Man, pp. 103-189, 237-267. Naismith did rejoin active administration of the game of basketball in 1909, when he was asked to join the collegiate rules committee. See Chapter Four.
process by which basketball was created. For basketball, despite its identifiable moment of creation, nevertheless went through the same kind of evolutionary development in rules and conventions of play as other modern sports, a process driven, as in these other sports, by the prerogatives of the players as much as by the game’s rulemakers and gatekeepers—and a process that sometimes took the game places Naismith and Gulick never intended it to go.19

Consider, for example, the dribble, the existence of which seems, at first glance, to short-circuit Naismith’s first premise of eliminating roughness—no running with the ball. It evidently developed almost immediately, and right in front of Naismith’s eyes. The earliest players at Springfield noticed, as Naismith related, that “when a player has possession of the ball and was so closely guarded that he could not pass it to one of his team mates, the only thing that he could do was to lose possession of the ball voluntarily in such a way that he might possibly recover it. He did this by rolling or bouncing the ball on the floor.” Naismith’s original 13 rules said nothing about such a practice one way or another. The rules pamphlet released to the public in 1892, however, explicitly allowed that a player might “throw it and endeavor to get it again” or “bat it in front of him as he runs, or dribble it with his hands along the ground” and make progress up the floor. As

long as the defensive player had a fair opportunity to gain the ball when the offense did this, Naismith considered it within the spirit of his rules.\textsuperscript{20}

Initially, this probably made some sense, as “voluntarily losing possession” of the ball plausibly describes what these early attempts at dribbling must have been like. Players quickly became more skilled, however, and the dribble became something of a threat to the nature of the game as Naismith and Gulick originally understood it. Defenders, in order to stop a skilled, or simply determined, dribbler, had to resort increasingly to the tactic Naismith originally sought to avoid most – defending the man rather than defending the ball. There was soon entirely too much dribbling, and too much physical contact and rough play resulting from dribbling, for Naismith and Gulick (who took over administration of the game in 1895, when Naismith left Springfield for a job in Colorado) to stomach. Gulick differentiated in 1898 between “legitimate” dribbling, “rolling the ball on the floor with one hand or batting it with one hand on the floor,” and the far-more-prevalent “illegitimate” dribbling, “men catching the ball with both hands, bouncing it on the floor and running rapidly toward the opponents’ goal.” By this time, such “illegitimate” dribbling had evolved into a recognizable style of play, not only on the part of individual players but sometimes entire teams (the early teams at Yale being the best-known example), and had moved far from “voluntarily losing possession” of the ball.

“The greater part of the roughness that has been complained of,” said Gulick of the 1897-98 season, “has come from this illegitimate dribbling, there being no way to stop a man

progressing in this manner with the ball, except by deliberately getting in his path and being run down. It is generally recognized that this style of game must be restricted if the original form is to be retained.  

That Gulick said "restricted," not "abolished," is an indication that the game already had a life of its own, one determined in part by how players wanted to play and what spectators wanted to see, and that simply outlawing this commonly accepted and popular style of play—a folkway, essentially, even though a young one—was not really an option. This fact alone is a powerful measure of the game's early and rapid success, as an unpopular or geographically limited game probably could have been so altered by decree. Gulick understood this. "The function of the rules committee," he claimed, [Gulick established this committee in 1898, with himself at the head] "is not only to consider and adopt rules that shall ideally be the best... for games are not chiefly the product of makers of rules. Each game has its own evolution, that is somewhat independent of the rules.... [It is the business of the rules committee to understand and formulate this unconscious development of the game, as well as to endeavor to meet the evils that this evolution inevitably will bring to the front." Gulick considered too much dribbling one of these evils, and attempted to restrict and discourage its use. An 1894 restriction forced players "dribbling" in the air (batting or passing the ball to themselves as they ran) to bat it higher.

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than their head, a style of play not much resorted to thereafter. In 1898 a player was prohibited from using two hands on the ball more than once during a possession (meaning, for example, a player catching the ball with two hands and then dribbling could not use two hands again, even to pass or shoot. A player catching the ball with one hand and putting it on the floor immediately, however, could then stop and handle it with two hands). In 1901, a player was prohibited from shooting off the dribble altogether. But the dribble was too popular and, increasingly, too essential a playing skill to kill entirely.  

The dribble was not the only way basketball, as early as the middle of the 1890s, had developed into something different from what Naismith and Gulick originally intended. Everything prohibited in Rule 5—shouldering, holding, pushing, tripping, striking—was far more prevalent than its “prohibition” would suggest. The rule permitting a defensive player to knock the ball out of an offensive player’s hands, for example, seems to have been a particularly common catalyst of roughness, as the difference between a swipe at the ball and a swipe at the player holding it was not always either obvious or identifiable. Naismith and Gulick did not oppose physical or aggressive

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22 Gulick, “Editorial,” (quote p. 5); Basket Ball (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1894), p 12. Naismith, Basketball, pp. 63-65. The two-hands-only-once rule has been misunderstood, both in popular histories and, if commentary in the annual Spalding’s Basket Ball Guides is to be believed, by players and officials at the time. It is usually mentioned, including by Naismith in his posthumous 1941 book, as prohibiting the “double dribble” (or as permitting it only once per possession), but it did not mean this in the present sense of the term. There is some question of the degree to which this rule was enforced in the manner intended. As late as 1902, some teams in upstate New York insisted on playing by what they liked to call “97 Rules,” and the Spalding Guides felt compelled to re-explain the rule every so often. It is also worth noting that early basketballs had stitches, like footballs, and were otherwise irregular in ways that made them bound unpredictably. See J. Scott Button, “Features of the Game in Central New York,” Spalding’s Official Basket Ball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1902), pp. 35-37; Spalding’s Official Basket Ball Guide 1911-12 (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1911), pp. 5, 57; Spalding’s Official Basket Ball Guide 1912-13 (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1912), p. 13.
play per se, of course, did not object to occasional physical contact (indeed, both were supporters, and Naismith a former player, of football), and did not expect basketball to be something other than a strenuous physical workout. The levels of roughness they began to witness, however, and the levels reported to them from Associations around the country, suggested that such play was becoming tactical rather than incidental, in direct opposition to the spirit, not just the letter, of the rules. This was a profoundly distressing development to representatives of an organization which believed itself in the business of creating Christian gentlemen; the moral lapse it represented was far more serious than the possibility of physical injury. “A man is supposed to be a gentleman,” Naismith reminded umpires in 1894, “and the moment he shows himself to be other than this, then it becomes the umpire’s duty to protect the other players.” Three years later, Gulick was capable of the remarkable statement that “there is no game that offers the opportunity for rough playing, and which is more exciting to the temper, than is basket ball” – only five years after the game had been invented specifically to be otherwise.23

The “official” rules of the game, published annually by the middle of the 1890s, expanded rapidly in both quantity and scope in order to keep pace with developing styles of play, ingenious attempts by players to circumvent restrictions, and points of interpretation no one bothered thinking about until they actually came up in game situations. The first rules pamphlet, published by the YMCA in 1892, contained

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Naismith’s original 13 rules, only slightly elaborated from their first posting at Springfield, and a few pages of description and explanation. The second, published in January of 1894, had already expanded to 21 rules, some of them clearly responses to unforeseen situations or dirty tricks. Rule 8, for instance, mandated a jump ball when two opponents held the ball simultaneously; Rule 13 penalized the defense for trying to defend the basket by jostling it while the ball was on the rim; Rule 15 introduced the backboard, not to aid shooters, but because “[t]he goals must be protected against interference from the spectators.” These 21 rules still only covered about three pamphlet pages; the 1896-97 rules ran twelve pages. By 1898, annual rule revisions were too burdensome, and too contentious, for Gulick to handle alone. He established what he called the “Basket Ball Co-Operating Committee,” a rules committee, though it consisted this first year only of the 15 responses Gulick received to a questionnaire asking YMCA directors what changes they would like to see in the rules. This committee, another sign of basketball’s rapid spread and increasing importance, eventually grew in both size and regional diversity.24

The character of the game as actually played on the gymnasium floor was far from the only way basketball moved away from the original intentions of its creators during the 1890s. At some YMCAs, basketball grew so popular that it began to overwhelm the organization it had been designed to serve. Associations reported men joining specifically to play basketball – and exclusively to play basketball. Critical association directors

accused such men of trying to monopolize gymnasium time, ignoring the YMCA’s other programs and facilities, and, in some cases, conducting the game and themselves in a fashion that circumvented or contradicted the alleged moral, spiritual, and social benefits of muscular Christianity. These players, and many others, played basketball not to enrich themselves socially or to grow spiritually, but to compete and win. Many of the spectators who, increasingly, came to watch them expected no less. “In several places the game was played with such fierceness [during 1895-96],” reported Gulick, “the crowds became so boisterous and rowdyish, and the bad feeling developed between the teams so extreme that the game has been abolished in toto.” Such death sentences were certainly not the rule – far more institutions were adopting the game than abandoning it – but no one could deny that some of the reported behavior failed to live up to Gulick’s image of the Christian gentleman. In New York in 1895-96, the rivalries in a league made up of teams from New York City and Brooklyn YMCAs had grown so contentious that, according to one of the physical directors involved, “open fights were narrowly averted in one instance the small boys of the neighborhood vented their feelings by rotten-egging the visiting team as they left the Association.” Such were the dangers of a game played for its own sake.25

Rowdy crowds and rotten eggs were not necessarily the norm. Even obvious success stories, however, contained potentially troubling dynamics. Take, for example,

the Hartford, Connecticut YMCA, one of the first Association branches to organize competitive basketball as community recreation – i.e., specifically for the benefit of spectators as well as players. In the winter of 1893-94, the Hartford Y organized a five-team league within the Association which played once a week, every Saturday night, thereby attracting people to the Y on what had previously been an off-evening. To create a suitable spirit of rivalry between teams where none naturally existed, teams were organized partly by profession – a team of bankers, a team of insurance men, a team of high school students (here one gets a sense of the class profile of the Hartford YMCA). Each team played six games over the course of the season, and spectators got to see two games every Saturday. Admission was free, but by popular demand some reserved seats (most of them placed around the gymnasium’s suspended running track) were sold for ten cents apiece. “The character of the audiences was of the best,” physical director L.W. Allen reported, no doubt thanks to the bouncer he stationed at the gymnasium door to turn away “any objectionable person.” “Many prominent people,” he added, “have had their prejudice removed by coming to the gymnasium and becoming infused with the spirit manifested by the participants.” (Here again one gets a taste of the class profile of the YMCA: simultaneously dismissive of those it considered riff-raff and solicitous of the “prominent people” still in need of convincing about the merits of Muscular Christianity.)

Average attendance, Allen estimated, was about 550 people, and the largest crowd just over 700. Hartford newspapers covered the games, turning what had been the

Association’s slow night into its night of greatest community notoriety. At the end of the season, the Hartford YMCA had paid all expenses from the league and cleared $250 to boot, which was set aside to fund the Association’s outdoor sports. “Too much cannot be said of Basket Ball as a splendid recreative game to interest new members and add old ones,” Allen said.  

Despite Allen’s justifiable satisfaction, trouble for the YMCA, and for the YMCA’s vision of instrumental sport, lurked in this kind of arrangement. By introducing competitive rivalry, spectators, and gate receipts, even on a relatively small scale, Allen and other YMCA directors introduced forces capable of subverting instrumental sport as Gulick taught them to understand it. None of these things were considered objectionable in and of themselves; in fact, under certain conditions and in the right hands (i.e., their own), Gulick and like-minded colleagues specifically encouraged them. The “spirit of rivalry,” sport instrumentalists commonly pointed out, was part of what made team games so useful and valuable as an agent of un-self-conscious social education. Spectators, as Allen’s comments suggest, were considered capable of sharing in this remarkable process. As for gate receipts, Gulick actually encouraged their collection, not only to raise money for the YMCA, but because he believed this would keep away “objectionable” persons. This last idea turned out to be a tad naïve, as we shall see. But in the hands of enlightened physical directors, paying strict attention to the rules of the game and relying

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27 L. W. Allen, “Basket Ball at Hartford, Conn.” *Physical Education* 3 (June 1894), p. 58.
28 ibid.
on "the strong sentiment of the best men of the gymnasium," Gulick believed these potentially destructive forces could be controlled.28

However, as James Madison might have put it, enlightened physical directors were not always at the helm. In the hands of those less completely steeped in the metaphysics of physical education philosophy (say, players coming to the YMCA specifically to play competitive basketball), the spirit of competition plus excited spectators plus gate receipts sometimes added up to the greatest of all apostasies against instrumental sport: professionalism. Such was the case in Philadelphia, where basketball's rapid spread and intense popularity overwhelmed the physical facilities and the Christian patience of the YMCA very quickly. In 1894-95, five Philadelphia-area YMCAs, plus a team at Temple University, organized themselves into a city-wide basketball league. A similar league had existed in Philadelphia the year before, and had been a moderate success. This one, however, devolved quickly into everything Gulick warned against: teams more interested in fielding winners than instilling values; players who monopolized the gymnasium and ignored other elements of the YMCA program; roughness on the court; unruly spectators in the stands; dangerously violent rivalries between teams; and lenient officiating, which exacerbated all of the above tensions. Philadelphia YMCA directors attempted to eliminate this behavior by scrapping the league and prohibiting games pitting one YMCA branch against another. Some of the players responded by re-forming themselves under new team names and arranging to continue the league outside of YMCA auspices. Many

28 Luther Gulick, "How to Use Basket Ball," pp. 31-33 (quote p. 31); See also Robert Reach, "Basket Ball as an In-door (sic) Game for Winter Amusement and Exercise," Physical Education 2(April 1893), pp.
of them, in fact, were already playing as many games as they could arrange with other non-YMCA organizations in the Philadelphia-Trenton corridor and, occasionally, teams as far away as Baltimore and Washington. This not-technically-the-YMCA league continued into the 1895-96 and 1896-97 seasons.  

Freed from the supervision of the YMCA, faced with the necessity of hiring their own halls to play in, and drawing crowds with their skilled (and often very rough) play, these teams drifted inexorably across the Rubicon of instrumental sport: they began dividing surplus gate receipts among themselves. The exact point at which this line was crossed cannot be pinpointed exactly; the most plausible documentable claim to “first professional team” status seems to belong to the Trenton team in 1896, but there is no particular reason to assume that some other team in the area (or some other team somewhere else, for that matter; similar developments were already taking place in New York, for instance) might not have done the same thing before Trenton did. What is clear is that by 1897, the most competitive and interesting basketball in Philadelphia, once the province of the YMCA, was plainly professional, and that this was, to Gulick, a challenge to his vision of instrumental sport. “This kind of sport has ruined every branch of athletics to which it has come,” he claimed. “When men commence to make money out of sport, it degenerates with most tremendous speed, so that those who love sport have come to set their faces like a flint against every tendency toward professionalism in athletics.”

30 Robert W. Peterson, Cages to Jump Shots: Pro Basketball’s Early Years (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 32-37, 186; T.J. Browne, “History and Philosophy of Basket Ball,” pp. 33-35; Applin,
It may seem incongruous at first glance that Luther Gulick, archetype of the Progressive-era new professional, would despise the notion of professional athletics.

Understanding this paradox is central to understanding the philosophy of team sport and instrumental play originally behind basketball. "Amateurism" in athletics was one of the values Gulick and like-minded play professionals believed it was their job to proselyte, and the fact that they were themselves promoting, organizing, and supervising athletic activity professionally did not remotely strike them as either ironic or hypocritical. To them, "amateurism" in athletics was not just a question of remuneration, it was a moral condition, almost an ethical state of being. As in the British schema from which the concept was largely borrowed (itself based on the contemporary misinterpretation of athletics in Ancient Greece as initially amateur and pure, then later degraded by professionalism), this notion of "amateur athletics" was an idealized concept of athletics as a pursuit undertaken for reasons more noble than either earning a livelihood or achieving victory for the sake of self-aggrandizement. Professionalization meant contamination of this idealistic view. "There are no degrees of amateurism," wrote Caspar Whitney, sporting editor of Harper's Weekly and an exponent of amateur fundamentalism, in 1899 in defense of the argument that amateur and professional athletics should be rigorously segregated. As in the British schema, amateurism was also a proxy for class differentiation. Professional athletics, its enemies believed, drew the very urban "riff-raff" the YMCA sought to steer its members away from (and which L.W. Allen had posted a

"From Muscular Christianity to the Market Place," pp. 43-46; Luther Gulick, "Registration of Basket Ball Players," quote p. 5.

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guard at his games to keep out). It also drew their secondary vices, like gambling and a lack of deference toward referees and officials. The rough-and-tumble nature of America's existing professional sports in the 1890s—in professional baseball, for example, a ferocious era of umpire-baiting and unruly crowds—made this line of argument at least superficially plausible.31

This concept of amateurism as a pure, ideal state existing in binary opposition to a debased professionalism held up poorly to any kind of close examination, as, among others, Ronald Smith and Michael Oriard have pointed out in the American context. It was nevertheless central to the process by which sport instrumentalists believed team athletics could be a mechanism for social education. Playing for money altered not just why you played, but the way you played. The professional played a less "gentlemanly," less "sportsmanlike" game in order to "win at all costs," and not either for social benefit or as an expression of the spirit of play. This state of affairs negated the alleged benefits of instrumental team sport. Nor was it, from the perspective of the YMCA, particularly Christian. A conference of YMCA physical directors meeting in Chicago in 1897 passed a

series of resolutions about basketball demanding, among other things, "that the sport, rather than victory, be put in the first place, and that Christian courtesy be made to characterize officials, players and audiences." If local YMCAs found it impossible to impose such a perspective, they were advised to forgo competitive games and leagues with other associations. At least one disgruntled YMCA physical director in Philadelphia counseled scrapping the game entirely.\textsuperscript{32}

Sport which was not fundamentally about victory did not strike everyone as an appealing idea, as the example of Philadelphia suggests. Nor was the tightrope between sport-for-victory and sport-for-sport's-sake always an easy one for even its proponents to walk, as the necessity of subordinating individual accomplishment to team success was one of the principal alleged social lessons of competitive team sport – and how else to measure team success? "A youth who plays basketball perseveringly and courageously until 'time' is called," said T.J. Browne in 1899 (one year after authoring a \textit{Spalding's Basket Ball Guide} article attacking professionalism), "...thinking only of the ultimate victory of the team and subordinating his interest to that of the whole, other things being equal, will tend to become a thorough, determined man, capable of self-sacrifice for the promotion of the welfare of his associates."\textsuperscript{33} Striving simultaneously for "the ultimate victory of the team" and "Christian courtesy" was a supremely difficult task. Yet this was the very definition of the Christian Gentleman Gulick sought to create and the very image


of manhood he believed team athletics could instill. Competing to better one's self, rather than to defeat others or to make money, was exactly the kind of social behavior he believed the YMCA, and team sport, was in the business of encouraging. Gulick, in short, sought competition without greed, which is both a curious idea and the essence of what a wide spectrum of Progressive-era reformers sought to achieve within American society. Competition without greed was the difference between self-aggrandizement and self-improvement.

Other tightropes confronted opponents of professionalized basketball. The most precarious may have been the problem of spectators. As we have seen, Gulick argued that charging spectators admission was the answer to "objectionable" crowds and their rowdy behavior. The very presence of a paying crowd, however, rowdy or not, was a potential threat to "clean," "amateur" sport, to a degree he seems not to have realized, or at least not to have acknowledged. Spectators had been welcomed on one sense or another since the very beginning, when Naismith let them watch his gymnasium classes play, and, as the attitude of L.W. Allen in Hartford suggests (see above), some believed spectators capable of imbibing "the spirit manifested by the participants." (Publicity for and interest in the YMCA were no doubt considered positives as well.) Yet a paying crowd was the first prerequisite – the primary goal, in fact – of professional athletics. Charging admission

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Browne's "History and Philosophy of Basket Ball" was originally prepared as a thesis at Springfield under Gulick's direction.
seems only to have proved that people would pay to see basketball, and therefore accelerated rather than retarded the movement by some toward professionalism.34

Rather than discouraging spectators altogether, Gulick advised not only charging them, but disciplining them. “It is well to charge admission to all public games between Associations,” Gulick wrote in 1896.

This successfully excludes the rowdy crowd, and the home team must always be held responsible for the behavior of the crowd, and where by hissing and making uncomplimentary remarks about the officers or players, they raise an atmosphere that is not in accord with the gentlemanly, Christian character of the place, the game should be stopped until such decorum is restored, and if it cannot be restored, the game should be discontinued.

The notion of preventing the crowd at a sporting event from behaving like, well, a crowd at a sporting event may strike the modern observer as odd. It was entirely in line, however, with the contemporary movement within middle-class American public culture, best described by Lawrence Levine, to enforce standards of decorum on the middle-class audience. At public exhibitions of middle-class-and-up culture in the late nineteenth century, most notably (but not exclusively) the theater, the museum, and the music concert, exhibitors and sponsors sought to reshape crowd behavior to make it more passive, more polite, and less participatory than it had once been. Spectators were increasingly expected to spectate, rather than participate in, the event in question, and often to experience it in a didactic, educational, “uplifting” fashion. One of the era’s most prominent enforcers of decorum, in fact, orchestra leader Theodore Thomas, even favored

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34 See notes 29 and 31.
Gulick’s suggested method of enforcement: Thomas would stop concerts dead and wait pointedly for noisy or impolite customers to cease and desist. Increasingly, boisterous, participatory public behavior was considered the province only of working-class and/or disreputable culture, unfit for “respectable” crowds and audiences. Gulick plainly saw basketball audiences in such a fashion.\(^{35}\)

Many basketball audiences just as plainly saw themselves otherwise. Commercial spectator sport, in fact, (including “amateur,” but nevertheless highly commercialized, collegiate athletics) ultimately proved a significant exception to this pattern of cultural development. Instead of disciplining crowds, increasingly entrepreneurial professional teams in Philadelphia, New Jersey, and New York catered to them. Beginning in Trenton in 1896-97, openly professional teams built cages around their floors, either of wire mesh and wood or of rope. (Hence the practice, still indulged in by the occasional grizzled sportswriter, of referring to basketball players as “cagers.”) This kept the basketball perpetually in play, and, therefore, kept the game perpetually in motion. It had the side benefit of protecting the spectators from the roughness of the game – and, occasionally, vice-versa – by eliminating the practice of players scrambling into the crowd after a loose ball. Openly professional teams also retained a permissive dribble rule and, by YMCA/Gulick standards, held a vastly more impressionistic view of what constituted fouls, roughness, and other game-delaying, action-deferring infractions. Marvin A. Riley,

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an early professional referee in the Philadelphia-New York corridor, put the matter bluntly:

In those days you must know that when a guard met forward, or any other player, head-on – no hipping or shouldering – just plain front to front – it was not called a foul. All that was necessary was to make a play on the ball, just as you make the play in football on the man who is carrying the ball – excepting, of course, you could not hold or use your hands – but you could play the ball and put all you wanted in back of your play. If the player who was dribbling happened to be right in back of the ball – that was his fault.

As we have seen, such a spectacle tended not to attract spectators inclined toward passive didacticism.50

In short, professionalism – among players, anyway – represented to sport instrumentalists a style of manliness, a pattern of public behavior, and a system of values threatening to what they liked to call, and think of as, “clean sport.” This metaphor, to which sport instrumentalists and other proponents of “amateurism” in athletics frequently resorted, is a telling one, based as it is in notions of purity and contamination. The YMCA’s response to the problem of professionalism in basketball was consistent with this conception of “amateurism” as a state of purity which required insulation from the contaminating effects of professionalism. Unable to prevent players from leaving YMCA auspices to play basketball on their own terms – indeed, the game was rapidly spreading beyond the YMCA – the YMCA sought instead to build a sort of firewall between amateur and professional basketball, so one would not be tainted by the other. To do this, however, they had to transfer their authority over the game (to the degree that it existed)
to another organization, one which could conceivably coerce the growing number of
teams not affiliated with the YMCA. In September of 1896, the International Committee
of the YMCA voted to turn administrative control of the game of basketball over to an
organization with a similar outlook toward "pure," "clean" amateur sport, a willingness to
coerce the recalcitrant, and, as it happened, organizational needs of its own which were
served by the transaction – the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU). 37

The AAU had been founded in 1888 by a coalition of athletic clubs dissatisfied
with the rule of an earlier amateur athletic association, the National Association of
Amateur Athletes (founded 1879, defeated by and absorbed into the AAU 1889). The
AAU considered itself the national guardian of amateur sport. It claimed jurisdiction over
a wide, wide variety of amateur sports – 29 of them in 1896 – though in fact the AAU
exercised very little practical authority over many of them, either because they were
actually controlled by some other organization or because the sports themselves were
obscure or unimportant. (Its real influence lay primarily in what we would now call track
and field sports.) The AAU also lacked practical control over an entire major category of
amateur athlete, the collegians, and, due in part to the economic trouble of the mid-1890s,
was largely broke. Nevertheless, it was the most prominent national organization
interested in policing amateur sport for the evils of professionalism, and it had experience,
through its battles with athletes and competing organizations, with the techniques of
organizational coercion necessary to make the attempt. It shared the YMCA’s notion of

37 Peterson, Cages to Jump Shots, pp. 32-45 (Marvin A. Riley quoted p. 40).
amateurism as a pure state requiring protection from corruption, and its primary weapon of choice was that staple of late-19th century organizational coercion, the blacklist. It banned from its own athletic contests (mostly track-and-field events) any athlete found to have accepted remuneration for athletic performance and, occasionally, refused to sanction other organizations' athletic contests (and blacklist the participants from future AAU events) unless they were conducted according to AAU rules. This arrangement gave Gulick – who was made secretary of the AAU Basket Ball Committee, and who continued to administer the rules, now issued under the authority of the AAU – an organizational platform from which to leverage basketball outside the YMCA and gave the AAU a new sport and a new base of membership over which to exert control.38

It also gave the AAU a new base of membership from which to collect registration fees. In November of 1896 – two months after the YMCA granted it authority over basketball – the AAU announced a controversial new registration program. In order to ensure the “amateur standing” of all athletes competing in AAU-sponsored events, all athletes participating in these events would be required to register with the AAU – and pay a $1 annual registration fee. Those who refused would be denied “amateur standing” and blackballed from AAU events. This registration policy initially affected only track-

37 See for example the YMCA’s “Clean Sport Resolutions,” passed in 1896 in protest of the perceived deterioration of YMCA athletics. Browne, “History and Philosophy of Basket Ball,” pp. 37-41, 49.
38 Robert Korsgaard, “A History of the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States,” (Ed.D. project, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1952); Arnold William Flath, A History of Relations Between the National Collegiate Athletic Association and the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States, 1905-1963 (Champaign, Ill.: Stipes Publishing Co., 1964); Paul Stagg, “The Development of the National Collegiate Athletic Association In Relationship To Intercollegiate Athletics in the United States,” (Ph.D diss., New York University, 1946); Riss, City Games, pp. 58; Rader, American Sports, pp. 50-63; Gulick, “Registration of Basket Ball Players.”
and-field athletes, and was not actually extended to basketball teams until January of 1898. When it was so extended, however, it meant that all amateur basketball teams, YMCA or otherwise, had to register with the AAU at a dollar a head (this was later reduced to 25¢). Teams which refused to register, and teams which played teams which refused to register, would have their "amateur standing" revoked, not only in basketball, but in any of the sports over which the AAU claimed jurisdiction. It meant this in theory, anyway, for the AAU registration system immediately became controversial throughout American amateur sport. College athletes, in particular, resisted the arrangement, which to them smacked simultaneously of a power grab and a financial boondoggle. Strictly in terms of basketball, this arrangement presented annoyances and difficulties even to plainly amateur teams willing to register, as the schedules of many such teams consisted of a wide variety of colleges, YMCA's, athletic clubs, military companies, and virtually any other type of organization willing to play them. Teams could run afoul of the AAU not only by playing against professionals, but also by playing against amateur teams not registered with the AAU, or by playing against amateur teams which had themselves played some third team deemed professionals by the AAU.39

Not everyone accepted the registration system peacefully. In Philadelphia, which was, as T.J. Browne put it, "the hotbed of professionalism, rough play and everything opposed to clean sport," a coalition of anti-AAU teams formed a rival organization called

the Eastern Amateur Basket Ball Association in 1898. Critics of professionalism accused this organization of being “amateur” in name only, concerned instead with allaying “the fears of managers and players that the A.A.U. would upset their money-making schemes.” They were probably correct; in 1899 this organization re-formed into the National League of Professional Basket Ball Clubs, modeled organizationally after professional baseball and run explicitly as a spectator sport and a business enterprise. This league played in cages and published their own set of more permissive rules, including a wide-open dribble rule. It was, in other words, a hotbed of professionalism, rough play, and everything opposed to “clean sport.”

Most genuinely amateur teams remained outside the AAU’s orbit as well, either because of their geographic location (though a “national” organization, the AAU at this stage in its history was influential mainly in the northeast), or because they were colleges (some registered, some did not), or because they simply chose not to. Nevertheless, the AAU now considered itself the guardian of amateurism and “clean sport” within basketball, and served as the organizational base from which Gulick sought to shape the development of basketball from then on. (Gulick left the YMCA and the Springfield school entirely in 1900.) The efforts of Gulick and the AAU to administer and control basketball from this point on were focused primarily not on stamping out professionalism, but on walling it off from “pure” amateurism through registration and blacklist. As we shall see in chapter two, it often proved a daunting task, as the drift of highly competitive

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and successful amateur teams into professionalism (or, more accurately, into violations of the AAU's definition of amateurism; not all of these teams or players were professionals in the sense that they made their primary living from basketball) continued on into the twentieth century. In addition, ambitious and competitive amateur teams continued to schedule games with a variety of AAU, YMCA, collegiate, and professional clubs.\footnote{Naismith, Basketball, pp. 102-04; Dorgan, Luther Halsey Gulick, pp. 60-62; See the back pages of any Spalding's Basket Ball Guide from these years to get a sense of the eclectic schedules many of these teams played.}

A final example will suggest the extent of the breach between basketball as originally envisioned and basketball as frequently played. In 1895, W.G. Morgan, physical director of the Holyoke YMCA in Holyoke, Massachusetts, invented a new game of his own, designed, as basketball had been, to provide the various and sundry benefits of team sport to YMCA gymnasium members. The new game, initially named "mintonette," was eventually named volleyball. Basketball, Morgan believed, had already grown too strenuous for the less talented athletes under his charge.\footnote{Hopkins, History of the YMCA, p. 263.}

It is important to understand that the primary initial purpose of basketball had been to foster, as Naismith put it, "the right type of manhood." The diversion of basketball to other ends therefore represented to its creators a diversion to, among other things, "wrong" types of manhood. The style of manhood on display in the professional basketball cages of New York, Trenton, and Philadelphia was not the style of manhood the YMCA or sport instrumentalists like Gulick sought to foster. In fact, it was very much the type of manhood the YMCA considered itself in the business of drawing young
urban men away from: aggressive, violent, commercialized, materialistic, a spectacle pandering to rather than elevating the baser instincts of its spectators. Gambling and fixing, sport instrumentalists believed with some justification, could not be far behind. "Manhood," of course, was not a unitary or uniformly agreed-upon concept in the late nineteenth century, not even within subsets of the American populace seemingly as homogenous as men who saw team sport as a proper avenue for the inculcation and/or expression of modes of manhood. Nor were differing modes of manhood necessarily mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, the "right type of manhood" represented by "muscular Christianity" or the "Christian gentleman" was, in the context of the commonly understood gender boundaries of the day, a somewhat feminized masculinity, not as aggressive, competitive, or vitalistic even as the manhood imagined by other proponents of team sport and physical exertion such as Walter Camp or Theodore Roosevelt, to say nothing of more atavistic (and more working-class) styles of manhood as expressed in, say, boxing or the saloon. This stemmed partly from the fact that Muscular Christianity was as concerned with masculinizing American Protestantism (which continued to carry a vaguely effeminate connotation) as it was with providing American Protestants with a means of asserting masculinity. But it was also a principle Naismith attempted to bake right into his game. Basketball as originally envisioned by Naismith and Gulick was more cooperative, more team-oriented, less confrontational, and less violent than existing team sports. That it quickly became very much like these other sports in the hands of some
athletes is testament to the degree to which the efforts of social controllers sometimes founndered on the prerogatives of those they sought to control.41

Nor was this the only way in which basketball, as it spread in the years before 1900, split into differing patterns of development. Another major pattern of development began to emerge almost immediately upon the game’s invention. Women began playing, both at Springfield and, increasingly, at women’s colleges and co-educational universities, beginning at Smith in early 1892. By 1900, basketball had become the most common team sport played by women; in a remarkable number of places and/or institutions, basketball was taken up by women before it was taken up by men. In Maine, some observers believed the spread of basketball among men there was partially inhibited by its reputation as a “women’s game.” This development presented interesting nuances and complications in terms of the gender ideology associated with the game: what were the consequences of a game designed to develop “the right type of manhood” becoming a game played widely by women? Chapter Six will deal at length with some of the consequences for female gender ideology. In terms of understanding Naismith’s sense of what constituted “the right type of manhood,” however, it suggests further the degree to which Naismith’s sense of manhood was, in the context of the day, tame – or, more precisely, taming, oriented around circumscribing masculinity within the bounds of Christian civilization (as mainline American Protestants understood this concept) as much

as around providing an outlet and/or a proving ground for the assertion of masculinity. Significantly, Naismith believed the way to do this was to circumscribe masculinity within the rules of a game. The masculinity on display in the National League of Professional Basket Ball Clubs, however, was best circumscribed by a cage.

The simultaneous adoption of basketball by both competitive professional athletes (who often embraced a style of masculinity different from the YMCA’s) and women (who, as we will see, ran cultural risks by embracing any style of masculinity at all) demonstrates very powerfully the degree to which basketball, as a structure of attempted social control, achieved both much more and much less than its creators hoped. It spread with a rapidity Naismith and Gulick did not expect; as it spread, it sometimes changed in ways Naismith and Gulick did not anticipate. By 1900, basketball had already split into three broadly definable lines of development. Physical educators and play reformers continued to see basketball as an instrumental sport, employing it as a tool of educational pedagogy and social reform among urban youth. Despite the pitfalls of violence, rowdiness, and professionalism, they still believed it possible to play yourself Progressive with basketball. Highly competitive, highly skilled athletes approached basketball as another competitive team sport. This line of development encompassed both open professionals and, especially (though not exclusively) at the intercollegiate level, highly accomplished amateurs.

Women, especially in high schools and colleges, made basketball the most prominent team sport played by women in an era in which women playing a team sport represented both

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gendered opportunity and gendered danger. As basketball entered the twentieth century, these three lines of development simultaneously diverged and entwined.
CHAPTER 2

PLAY YOURSELF PROGRESSIVE: BASKETBALL AS INSTRUMENTAL SPORT

By 1900, basketball was already well established and widespread both geographically and institutionally, played in most of the country and at a wide variety of institutions and locales. It was also already best understood as several overlapping phenomena developing in conjunction with one another. At the highest competitive levels, represented most obviously by the open professionals but also by aggressive amateurs and, increasingly, collegiate varsities, basketball was well on the way to becoming the standard team spectator sport in the wintertime. In this guise, basketball was often violent, ungentlemanly, and aggressively entrepreneurial – something less than the ideal manifestation of muscular Christianity James Naismith and Luther Gulick initially had in mind. A great deal of basketball, however, remained at least partially under the control of Gulick and like-minded play professionals, who continued throughout the first decades of
the twentieth century to view team sport as an analogue of the ideal American social 
order, and to deploy basketball accordingly. In addition, the Amateur Athletic Union, self-
styled guardian of “pure amateurism” in American athletics, continued its efforts to 
protect the sanctity of amateur basketball from the dreaded taint of professionalism while 
simultaneously advancing its own institutional prerogatives. Amateur basketball between 
1900 and World War One continued to reflect the belief of physical educators and play 
professionals that young men participating in team sport could play themselves 
Progressive. It also, however, continued to reflect the reality that young men playing team 
sport did not always share the social goals of the game’s guardians.

The best single set of sources for investigating amateur basketball in the first 
decades of the twentieth century reveal a great deal about the social goals of the game’s 
guardians. They are the Spalding’s Official Basket Ball Guides, published annually by the 
American Sports Publishing Company, a subsidiary of Albert G. Spalding’s sporting goods 
empire. On the surface, the Guides were simply inexpensive almanacs containing the 
previous season’s records, summaries, league reports, and team pictures, compiled largely, 
it seems, from submissions sent in by the various teams and organizations themselves. 
They were also more, however, and bear closer examination. When viewed closely, they 
reveal themselves as complex and multifaceted cultural products which speak volumes 
about the interconnected web of reform ideology, entertainment spectacle, and
salesmanship that basketball, and the organization and promotion of basketball, had already become by the turn of the twentieth century.

As was the case with their counterparts the Spalding’s Official Base Ball Guides, the basketball Guides were “official.” This was not just a marketing ploy; they contained the official rules, as revised annually by the Amateur Athletic Union, and served as the AAU’s mouthpiece regarding what was right and wrong within the game. They were therefore filled with praise for “pure amateur” sport, unstinting exhortation of the moral and social benefits of team games, and attacks on anything the AAU considered threatening to that vision — or to its control over the game. In this sense, they were primers of the theory and practice of instrumental team sport.¹

Moral admonition, AAU stewardship, and the dangers of “unregulated” sport were the ideological themes of most years’ Guides. George Hepbron, Guide editor and secretary of the AAU’s basketball committee, opened the 1902-03 Guide with an essay describing the difference between “Order vs. Chaos in Basket Ball.” “Athletics were in a chaotic state until some governing body was organized to enact rules for their government and promotion…. Many of the players not having had the restraining influences of these governing bodies in other branches of sport have not yet learned that influence is

¹ I have examined every Spalding basketball guide up through 1919, as well as examples of several other varieties of Spalding Guide from the same years. My general comments throughout this chapter reflect this reading; in the interest of space and legibility, I attempt to limit my footnotes to specific references, quotations, or incidents mentioned in a given paragraph. Because the nomenclature of these guides was changing and confusing (and because they can be very difficult to locate through library searches), I have chosen in this chapter to use a modified citation style, giving the full title and date for each guide each time it is cited, but omitting repetitive publishing information. Unless otherwise noted, all guides were published in New York by the American Sports Publishing Company. See also Albert Applin II, “From
necessary for the healthful perpetuity of the game under right lines.” He followed it with “Character in Basket Ball,” written by the Rev. Newton Black: “Few other games [besides basketball] can give such thorough discipline of self-control. Few are so beneficial to the boy, when properly played, and few so disastrous to character when allowed to run wild, without regard to rules because of the lack of control and direction.” (Black’s essay contained the word “self-control” four times in its first three paragraphs, and the word “character” ten times.) Similar messages appeared year after year. The 1908-09 Guide contained a friendly reminder from Luther Halsey Gulick that basketball “suits, as well as serves to develop and intensify, the characteristics of American boyhood. Team work, speed, endurance, splendid control of the body, discipline of the temper, the ability to do things before the public eye and not be intimidated thereby” were all to be found on the court. The 1913-14 Guide was still pitching. “It is interesting to note the strain of sportsmanship training that permeates every article in the Guide this year.” wrote Hepbron, who had assembled it, “which, of course, indicates that the sole idea of the game in the minds of the leaders is not victory, but something deeper and of greater significance.”

This last statement was misleading, not because basketball’s leaders felt it had no deeper or greater significance, but because basketball was, in their minds, far more than a sole idea. It was part of an interlocking vision of amateur sport as social force, business


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proposition, profession, and national institution. To understand this, we have to analyze the *Guides* for a moment as commodities, as which they reveal a great deal about the myriad linkages between team sports, their promoters and defenders, their rule-making and supervisory bodies, and commercial enterprises like the publishing and sporting goods industries. *Spalding’s Official Basket Ball Guide* was published annually by the American Sports Publishing Company in New York City, part of A.G. Spalding’s network of sporting goods and apparel enterprises. The ASPC, under the rubric of the “Spalding Athletic Library,” published dozens of different *Spalding’s [Fill-In-The Blank] Guides*, encompassing virtually every sport and all kinds of physical or athletic activity. All these guides were filled with strikingly similar messages about the nature of organized athletics, and with advertisements for a wide variety of Spalding sporting goods and apparel in their back pages. “A team equipped with Spalding shoes begins the game with a decided advantage over the opposing team, and the advantage increases the longer the game is in progress,” claimed a typical ad in the back pages of the 1907-08 *Basket Ball Guide*. The front pages of that same guide advertised the entire Spalding Athletic Library, and gives some idea of the series’ scope. In addition to the “official” annual guides in twelve sports, there were dozens of other more specialized guides, featuring esoteric fringe sports (ring hockey, rogue, jiu jitsu) training and how-to guides (*How To Wrestle, How To Play Third Base, How To Become A Skater*), and “physical culture,” what we today would call exercise and fitness (*Tensing Exercises, Ten Minutes’ Exercise for Busy Men*). The back pages of all these guides were filled with advertisements for Spalding sporting goods and apparel, much of it denoted the “official” ball, bat, shoe, jersey, etc., of the sport in
question. Spalding basketballs, baskets, and other sporting goods were “official” because the “official” guides – published by a Spalding company – said so. “Select teams that play with the official ball,” Hepbron warned in 1902, “and save your team from losing a game already won by having the game declared forfeited because another ball was used.”

It is not likely that anyone was actually forced to forfeit a basketball game for using the wrong ball. Nevertheless, the Guides were a complex and often disingenuous web of promotion and entrepreneurship which suggests the highly commodified and professionalized nature of “amateur sport.” The president of the American Sports Publishing Company, James E. Sullivan, was also secretary, and later president, of the Amateur Athletic Union. Many of the other contributors to Spalding’s Athletic Library were comparable examples of professional promoters of “amateur sport”: Luther Halsey Gulick; George Hepbron; Walter Camp, “Father of American Football” and “czar” of athletics at Yale; Harry Fisher, basketball coach and, later, graduate manager of athletics at Columbia; Matt Murphy, athletic trainer at Yale and Pennsylvania. While a few of the Guides, including the original and best-known, Spalding’s Official Base Ball Guide, focused on openly professional sport, most of them sold Spalding sporting goods by selling some variety of amateur sport or athletic activity. Often, as was the case with the basketball guide, they also promoted the hegemony of Sullivan’s Amateur Athletic Union and/or some other governing body of amateur sport. There were actually a variety of commodities on sale in a Spalding’s Basket Ball Guide, and the sporting goods were only

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3 Spalding’s Official Basket Ball Guide 1907-8, p. 197; Spalding’s Official Basket Ball Guide 1902-3, p. 13. (This admonition about the official ball was included in subsequent years as well. For example, see
the most obvious. Basketball as a game form was on sale; amateurism was on sale; the stewardship of Luther Gulick, George Hepbron, James Sullivan, and the Amateur Athletic Union was on sale; the whole of competitive sport as national pastime was on sale; dozens of other Guides promoting all the same things were on sale. They all reinforced and legitimated one another, and they all reinforced and legitimated the spread of a particular vision of amateur athletics in the United States. The vast Spalding's Athletic Library, in fact, represents an interlocking edifice of Progressive sport philosophy, in which common authorship and overlapping content spread a similar ethos. With few exceptions, that vision ran thusly: amateur sport is clean sport, clean sport is regulated sport, clean sport is regulated by professional sport regulators, professionally regulated sport is an agent of social cohesion.⁴

That vision was commodified and marketed, and not just in the sense that A.G. Spalding & Bros. used it to sell sporting goods, or that James Sullivan made a living promoting it (while simultaneously organizing athletic events in which none of the athletes could profit). It was commodified in the sense that one "consumed" it by participation in organized team sport. This was one of the overall cultural messages of the Guides, anyway, with its constant association of organized sport with positive personal attributes and social values; as we shall see, basketball was not necessarily "consumed" in exactly the way the Guides envisioned. The relationship of American sport to the development of

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⁴ To the best of my knowledge, and with the possible exception of Peter Levine's A.G. Spalding and the Rise of Baseball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), which discusses them briefly, the overall influence of these ubiquitous guides on the ethos of sport remains a subject begging for a historian. See
what historians have come to know as “consumer culture” is surprisingly under-examined. This relationship went deeper than the connection between athletic contests as commercialized spectacle, such as in the case of professional baseball or college football, and an economy based increasingly around the consumption of such spectacle. The strategies of promotion used by the ASPC and the AAU to encourage the spread of basketball encouraged athletes to play basketball in order to obtain a series of secondary attributes: manliness, self-control, physical health and vigor, and all the other positive aspects of instrumental sport. The Guides and other promoters of amateur sport spent enormous rhetorical resources associating sport with what Jean-Cristophe Agnew called “nonquantifiable attributes.” How to measure if someone has successfully “consumed” something like “self-control,” especially when no actual commodity purchase is part of the cultural transaction? Nevertheless, the promotion and justification of basketball, as with other varieties of organized sport in the first decades of the twentieth century, involved its incessant association with moral and social values such as these.5

Critics of American consumer culture often point out its “therapeutic” nature, a culture of self-fulfillment and self-realization through consumption and recreation rather than through hard work and deference of gratification. The most important secondary attributes associated with basketball, however, were far from therapeutic in this sense. It is interesting to note in this context how seldom “fun” is explicitly on display in the

Spalding's Basket Ball Guides. "Self-control," "manhood," "character," and "efficiency" are fetishized instead. The dozens of team photos which occupied nearly half of each Guide are telling in this respect. Hundreds of faces, many of them young boys or adolescents, peer from these pages, posing with basketballs and — if lucky — trophies, wearing the look of purposeful determination which was then the accepted trope of athletic photography. They do not suggest fun. It would be ridiculous to suggest that the thousands of Americans playing basketball or other competitive team sport were not enjoying it. That was not the face of competitive sport worn for public consumption or posterity, however. T.J. Jackson Lears has pointed out the sometimes-ambivalent nature of the therapeutic ethos, wherein producer-oriented values continued to lurk within the developing culture of self-fulfillment. He specifically mentions Gulick and other "self-styled 'philosophers of play'" in this context, who believed that "play impulses should be organized and channeled in 'healthy' directions." This is useful for understanding instrumental sport, especially the degree to which it sought to shape instinctual behavior — play — to positive social ends by containing it within properly engineered organizational structures. Players could just play; the game, if properly organized and controlled, did the rest. This orientation helps explain the other most-often fetishized attribute of team sport in the Guides, its organizational structure. "Organize leagues and thereby control the game," demanded the 1912-13 Basket Ball Guide, in boldface type, boxed and centered

in the middle of the page, "so as to pave the way for good citizenship." This was the ethos at its most succinct. Organize, control. Play yourself Progressive.\(^6\)

On a more basic factual level, the *Guides* also trace the geographic and institutional spread of basketball, incompletely (due to the self-selecting nature of the source), but very suggestively. Each year the *Guides* swelled with more pictures and more reports from more areas of the country. The national reach of the YMCA, of course, facilitated the game's rapid geographic dissemination, a state of affairs already obvious by the middle of the 1890s. But like many "national" entities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (the YMCA and AAU are themselves both examples), the "national" spread of basketball did not necessarily mean even distribution through all parts of the country. In the 1900-1901 *Guide*, for example, the teams which sent in their pictures and/or season records were concentrated very heavily in New England and the Mid-Atlantic corridor, with a few from the industrialized midwest and a stray oddball or two (a YMCA from Seattle, a turner club from Louisville, Kentucky). Between 1901 and 1910 or so, however, pictures and dispatches begin appearing in significant numbers from other areas of the country. The first article about basketball in the south (where anecdotal evidence suggests the game did not spread as quickly or deeply as the northeast and midwest) appears in the 1904-05 *Guide*, the first article from California in 1905-06. By the 1910s, the geographic content of the *Guides* was much

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more completely national, although the majority of teams and organizations represented continued to hail from the industrial northeast and midwest. The *Guides*’ content also grew more local and more detailed, as more high schools, small colleges, and other teams and organizations began sending in articles about the state of the game in their small slices of the country.

Occasional evidence of international spread also appears, usually linked in a fairly transparent way to the YMCA, American missionary influence, and/or the spread of American military power and capital. “Basket Ball in South America,” for example, from the 1913-14 *Guide*, was limited largely to YMCAs in major metropolises. “Basket Ball in India,” from the 1911-12 *Guide*, was actually a description of the Calcutta YMCA’s efforts to spread the game to Indian schoolchildren. “The final success of the games, however,” wrote Calcutta YMCA physical director J. H. Gray, “…depends on its introduction into the Indian schools and colleges and the adoption of it by the Indians as one of their own games, of which they have few.” The 1915-16 *Guide*’s “Basket Ball in the Far East,” describing the YMCA’s attempts to spread the game in China, also remarked on cultural obstacles to the widespread adoption of team games in non-Western cultures. “Although there are nearly 50,000 Chinese characters, there are none to adequately express the terms needed in athletics and many terms must be coined and the use of them taught.” In the U.S.-controlled Philippines, spreading the game among schoolchildren was a fairly straightforward process. It was government policy. “Like all

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American games it has won instant popularity with the Filipino people," claimed Manila YMCA physical director Elwood Brown in 1911, "and largely through the influence of the Bureau of Education, has spread rapidly over the islands." By 1914, after the formation of leagues and the "influence" of the Bureau of Education, Brown could claim that "basket ball is played by brown people and white people from one end of the archipelago to the other. The Igorottes of the North, classified under 'Wild Tribes,' enjoy the game. It is played in every Christian province. It is being introduced among the followers of Mohammad in the south, the fierce and warlike Moros of Mindando. The game is also popular with the American residents, civilian, army, and navy." Brown's racialized language, religious perspective, and off-hand notice of American economic and military presence suggest the forces most responsible for the game's spread, and the philosophy behind them. "It has often been said that 'base ball follows the flag,'" Brown noted. "So far as the Philippines is concerned this statement is equally true of basket ball."

The game's institutional spread in these years, however, is more interesting and more significant than its geographic spread. Virtually all the teams appearing in the 1900-01 Guide represented organizations already commonly associated with competitive team sport: YMCAs, city athletic clubs, colleges, turner societies, high schools. Ten years later, the Guide was filled with teams representing a much broader array of organizations, some of them not previously associated in the popular imagination with team athletics, some of

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them brand-new organizations themselves: grade schools and grammar schools, organized playgrounds, settlement houses, public recreation centers, church league teams, public school athletic league teams. It is no coincidence that many of these organizations shared essential elements of the underlying social philosophy behind instrumental sport, and/or had overlapping individual or philosophical influences, and/or were products of the organized play movement. Several of these institutions and their use of or relationship with basketball will be discussed more fully below, especially the organized play movement, which, like basketball, owed a great deal to Luther Halsey Gulick and became an organizational manifestation of his philosophy. For the time being, it is sufficient to note the diversity of organizations with which basketball became associated in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and the sometimes divergent interests which mingled therein.  

Divergent interests continued to mingle within the AAU in the first years of the new century. The organization continued its battle to uphold and protect “amateurism” within basketball, something many of its athletes continued to see as less than the shining  

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moral imperative the AAU made it out to be. Since 1898, the AAU had required basketball players (and all other athletes participating in AAU-affiliated events) to register with them annually, at a cost of 25¢, if they wished to be considered amateurs. Registered athletes who played with or against professionals, whether they themselves took money or not, forfeited their registration and their amateur status. Registered teams which played unregistered teams did the same, even if the unregistered teams were not professionals. This strategy — equal parts blacklist and quarantine — accepted the impossibility of eradicating professional basketball, but it also betrayed the AAU’s belief that professionalism represented instant and inherent contamination. “If a man competes with a professional, it makes him a professional, and he in turn makes all others professionals who compete with him,” the 1903-4 Guide warned in response to a question sent in by an athlete from Philadelphia. This was true no matter what kind of a “professional” was under consideration, even if, the Guide warned a second questioner, the “professional” was simply a gymnasium director. “If Mr. ——— has taught gymnastics for money he is a professional, and while he has a perfect right to act as an official in a basket ball game, the very fact of his playing in a game makes every man that played with him who knew he was a professional, a professional also.”9

If this had been literally true, of course, “professionalism” would have spread like smallpox, felling innocent and unsuspecting amateurs all across the land, until no one would be left to join the AAU. The loophole, and the reason this draconian approach to the problem made sense to the AAU as an organization-building strategy, lurks in the

9 Spalding’s Official Basketball Guide 1903-4, pp. 93-95.
Guide's response to the second questioner above: every man "who knew he was a professional" was contaminated. One had to know. How did one know? One joined the AAU and refused to play anyone who had not. The second questioner above, in fact, was not playing a registered team during the incident in question, nor was his own team registered. Therefore, the Guide informed him, he had no recourse and no protection from the evils of professionalism. "The AAU cannot deal with any class of men who do not voluntarily agree to abide by the rules of the AAU." Here was how the AAU proposed to grow an organization around the concept of throwing people out of it. The AAU positioned itself as the guardian of amateurism, a concept it continued to exalt as a moral imperative and contrast with the debasing effects of professional athletics. "Grecian physical training was ruined by the professional athlete," warned a 1900-01 editorial encouraging registration, "and history will repeat itself in America unless the young men who are interested take a hand and draw the line sharply between the man who exercises for recreation or physical perfection and the man who exercises 'for revenue only.' The two classes can never affiliate." Join the AAU and be safe.10

In theory, this strategy both separated amateurs from professionals and established the AAU as the organization that determined which was which. Many teams remained outside the AAU at the turn of the century, however, including large numbers of plainly non-professional teams. The AAU sold itself to these holdouts (and in many parts of the country this was almost certainly most teams, at least early in the century) as the only

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10 This mis-interpretation of ancient Greek athletics was widely held and widely cited as justification for amateur athletics. See Chapter One, n 30. Spalding's Official Basket Ball Guide 1903-4, pp. 93-95.
plausible arbiter of “regulated” basketball and the moral and social benefits therein. Specific registration campaigns were launched by local AAU officials to increase AAU membership in certain parts of the country. In New England before September 1901, only 17 basketball teams were registered with the AAU, 15 of them YMCA teams automatically registered because of their membership in the YMCA Athletic League of North America, an AAU-affiliated organization. After the appointment of a special registration committee and an information campaign in the press, registrations were up to 74 by January 1 and near 200 by the beginning of 1902-03. These registered teams did, in fact, occasionally refuse to schedule or play unregistered teams, which encouraged remaining non-registered amateurs to join and caused the AAU blacklist policy to serve as an incentive rather than a disincentive to membership. Registration and suspension information were published in the press, and, according to the head of the New England AAU Basket Ball Committee, the success of the registration campaign “reached proportions far beyond the fondest anticipations of its supporters, and furnished satisfactory encouragement to those who have struggled to place it on its present plane.” The growing number of registered teams which appeared in the Guides year after year suggests that this pattern was replicated around the country. While it is impossible to know for sure how many teams were registered with the AAU from year to year (AAU records from these years do not survive), there is little question that the number grew

significantly between 1900 and 1910, or that in many regions of the country the AAU did, in fact, gain control over a great deal of amateur basketball.\textsuperscript{11}

Another way in which the AAU blacklist attempted to encourage rather than discourage AAU membership was through reinstatement. The instant, inherent contamination warned of in the Guides was more rhetorical than actual; in practice, tainted athletes were encouraged to return to the fold. Unregistered teams which had played professionals in the past were urged to register, and registered athletes who strayed could, under certain circumstances, apply to have their amateur status reinstated. This second scenario appears to have been a change in policy. In the 1902-03 Guide, Hepbron stated specifically that “a professional can never be reinstated.” The 1903-04 Guide, however, provided information on how to apply for reinstatement. This state of affairs lacked logical consistency if one read the Guide’s hard-line rhetoric literally, but it made sense as an institution-building strategy. Increased AAU control over basketball, and increased AAU membership in all branches of amateur sport, were primary goals of this policy; only if the AAU controlled a critical mass of the nation’s amateur athletes would its blackball be a genuinely effective force against professionalism. This was also the logic behind another important part of the AAU’s eligibility policy, its assertion that a professional in one branch of sport was a professional in all. An unregistered or ineligible athlete was not permitted to compete in any AAU-sponsored contest, tournament, or event, in any sport.

\textsuperscript{11} Spalding’s Official Basket Ball Guide 1902-03, pp. 23-33; Spalding’s Official Basket Ball Guide 1903-4, pp. 5-13 (quote p. 9).
over which it claimed jurisdiction. Basketball, in fact, was only one element of the AAU’s effort to administer as much of the nation’s amateur athletic activity as it could.\textsuperscript{12}

One intriguing result of this state of affairs was that many of the battles the AAU fought against “professionalism” in basketball did not involve athletes actually receiving money for their play. Many of them involved amateur teams which either would not register or insisted on playing against unregistered teams or athletes. In Philadelphia, for example, the firm moral line the AAU wished to draw between amateur and professional athletes was nowhere to be found. Not only was the Philadelphia-Trenton corridor an important locus of openly professional, commercialized basketball, but the area’s amateur basketball players sometimes played with or against these professionals, “seemingly totally ignorant,” as the 1902-03 Guide put it, “of the fact that by doing so they were surrendering their amateur standing,” even if they took no money. The paucity of Philadelphia-area teams in the Guides suggests that AAU authority was not especially strong there in the first decade of the century. College teams were another ongoing problem. The AAU did not claim jurisdiction over basketball, or any other sport, when two colleges played one another, but they did claim jurisdiction when a college played some other kind of team. This happened frequently until about 1910, and unregistered college teams were a constant thorn in the AAU’s side. Both Yale and Harvard, for example, failed to respond to the New England registration campaign, and the AAU tried periodically to bring them to heel, with little success. Harvard, for example, canceled a

\textsuperscript{12} Spalding’s Official Basket Ball Guide 1902-03, p. 9 (quote); Spalding’s Official Basket Ball Guide 1903-4, pp. 91-97.
February 1902 game with the New York City Silent Five rather than join the AAU in order to play it. When the 1903 Harvard squad read in the Boston newspapers that the AAU had suspended them – from an organization they had not joined in the first place, for not joining it – their response was derisive. "It seems almost needless to state that this suspension in no way affects the University team as no outside organizations have any jurisdiction over our athletics," said the Harvard Crimson. "Not only will all the league games be played, but every outside game will also be played as scheduled."  

Yale, which constructed particularly extensive and diverse schedules in the 1890s and 1900s, sometimes including openly professional teams and usually with no regard for the desires of the AAU, was an even larger headache. At one point in 1906, they had been suspended three years in a row. (It is worth repeating here that the AAU was suspending a team which did not belong to its organization, in an effort to force it to join.) The AAU's ongoing attempts to leverage Yale eventually led to the creation of a separate set of collegiate rules which, in the long run, seriously inhibited the ability of the AAU to impact the conduct of college basketball.

In 1905, the AAU suspended Yale for playing Crescent Athletic Club, a Brooklyn team on its outlaw list. This meant little to Yale, but the AAU also began sending letters to other teams on Yale's schedule, threatening them with suspension if they played Yale. When the University of Pennsylvania basketball team received such a letter, Penn and Yale

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basketball leaders used the incident to create a separate Collegiate Basket Ball Rules Committee, outside the purview of the AAU. The AAU continued to claim jurisdiction when college teams played non-collegiate teams, but such games happened less and less by about 1910, by which time the conduct of college basketball, including questions of amateurism and eligibility, was for all intents and purposes controlled by the colleges and not the AAU. This challenge to AAU control did not blunt the entrepreneurial sense of AAU president and American Sports Publishing Company president James Sullivan, however. The morning after the Collegiate Basket Ball Rules Committee was formed in the spring of 1905, two of its leaders, Harry Fisher of Columbia and Ralph Morgan of Pennsylvania, approached Sullivan – from whom they were seceding – and asked him to publish their rules. The first *Spalding’s Official Collegiate Basket Ball Guide* joined Spalding’s Athletic Library that fall.14

The entrepreneurial promotion of amateur sport was often a murky cultural process in just this kind of way, made up of ideological and economic forces which contradicted one another. Promoters of amateur sport often did so in ways which either made amateurism more difficult to maintain or made the line between amateurism and professionalism more difficult to discern, even as they continued to consider that line all-important. The AAU’s promotion of local, national, and specialized championship tournaments provide another example of this dynamic. Organized championship

competition was another of the benefits the AAU offered amateur basketball teams as incentive to register. No blackballed team, obviously, could win an AAU championship. These championships were also entrepreneurial efforts on the part of the AAU, and not just in the sense that the AAU made money by selling tickets. Championship tournaments promoted the AAU's control over amateur sport. They also promoted basketball as a spectator sport. This increased basketball's visibility within the world of American sport. It also, however, encouraged both players and fans to see basketball as a commercial spectacle, and therefore something from which profit could be made.\(^{15}\)

Several AAU-sponsored tournaments early in the twentieth century involved promoting basketball within the context of some larger athletic or commercial event. In the spring of 1900, a series of basketball games were folded into the Sportsmen's Show of the Massachusetts Sportmen's Association, held over the course of two weeks at Mechanics Hall in Boston. Dozens of games were included, involving virtually every type of team playing amateur basketball, from colleges, athletic clubs and YMCAs to several women's teams from Boston-area colleges and physical training schools, whose well-played games were, as the 1900-01 Guide put it, "was a revelation to most of that immense audience, who demonstrated their approval by hearty applause time and time again." Dartmouth College was named All-New England champion by defeating a team of Cushing Academy graduates 7-3 in the final game. Officials believed the Sportsmen's

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Show games encouraged team registration in the area, and several teams were in fact
denied the opportunity to participate because they were deemed professionals. The 1901
AAU "national championships" (involving only eight teams, though they were in fact from
a variety of places around the country) were held in conjunction with the International
Forest, Fish, and Game Association Exhibition at the Chicago Coliseum. Ravenswood
YMCA in Chicago won the poorly designed double-elimination tournament to claim the
championship (a scheduling error on the AAU's part led to the disqualification of two
teams for refusing to play an extra game they should not have been forced to play).
Tournaments for the Chicago high school championship and the Cook County junior
championship were also included, for a grand total of 27 basketball games presented in the
context of a hunting and fishing expo. For an organization ostensibly devoted to the
notion that athletics were not something from which profits should be derived, the AAU
involved itself in a great deal of cross-promotion.\(^{16}\)

Few turn-of-the-century events were more cross-promotional than international
expositions, and the AAU attempted to harness those as well. International expositions
and World’s Fairs were essentially commercialized visions of U.S. and/or Western
European (depending on where the fair was held) self-image, wherein the triumph of
Civilization, as measured by economic, technological, and scientific achievement, was put
on display as a tourist attraction and consumed as entertainment. They were also

\(^{16}\) For a related view of amateur sport promoters and entrepreneurs in this period, see Mark Dyreson,
Making the American Team: Sport, Culture, and the Olympic Experience (Urbana: University of Illinois
Press. 1998).
extraordinary exercises in entrepreneurship, urban boosterism, and promotional ballyhoo, wherein a wide variety of businesses, industries, and organizations jockeyed for the opportunity to present themselves to the world as they saw fit. The AAU held its 1901 national championships in a variety of sports in conjunction with the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, including a special basketball tournament. The "real" basketball championship had already been held in Chicago, and the Buffalo games were being held in an outdoor arena, but a special three-day tournament was arranged nevertheless in order to promote and publicize the game to Pan-American fairgoers.\footnote{Spalding's Official Basket Ball Guide 1900-01, pp. 29-45 (quote p. 29); Spalding's Official Basket Ball Guide 1901-02, pp. 5-29.}

A 40x60 foot grass court was set up in the middle of the stadium, and players were allowed to wear cleats. This odd tournament was won under odd circumstances by a local team, the German YMCA of Buffalo. Due to school examinations, two Buffalo players did not arrive at the stadium on time for their final game. Rather than forfeit, the other three Buffalo players agreed to start the game shorthanded. The score was nevertheless tied 1-1 after about five minutes of play, at which point the fourth Buffalo player, Eddie Miller, appeared in the stadium, running at full speed and shedding street clothes. Miller entered the game without a stoppage of play; the crowd went wild. Team captain Allie Heerdt appeared two minutes later and did exactly the same thing. Buffalo eventually won

\footnote{Robert W. Rydell, All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Spalding's Official Basket Ball Guide 1901-02, pp. 31-35.}
the game 10-1 and claimed the “Pan-American Basket Ball Championship” with a record of seven wins and no losses. The legend of the Buffalo Germans was born.\textsuperscript{18}

When Sullivan decided to bundle the AAU's 1901 national championships into the Buffalo Exposition, he had more than cross-promotion in mind. He was also trying to hijack the modern Olympic movement away from its founder, French athletic enthusiast Baron Pierre de Coubertin, and remake it in an American – and an AAU – image. The second modern Olympics had been held in Paris in 1900 in conjunction with another international exposition, the Parisian International Exposition. Sullivan and Albert Spalding had been in charge of the U.S. team at Paris, and all of the American athletes had been registered and in good standing with the AAU. Some of the contests at Paris had been, by American standards, less than athletic, including, among other exotica, three-legged races, angling, and “automobilism.” Sullivan, who hated the aristocratic and Anglophilic Coubertin, tried to place the Olympic movement under U.S. and AAU control and scrap Coubertin's four-year cycle by declaring that the contests at Buffalo would be the third Olympiad. Coubertin, who hated the aggressive and nationalistic Sullivan, refused to allow the International Olympic Committee to go along. Coubertin and the IOC had already decided, however, that the third Olympiad in 1904 would be in the U.S. Through a series of political feints and maneuvers too extensive to go into here, the 1904

\textsuperscript{18} Spalding's Official Basket Ball Guide 1901-02, pp. 31-35; Peterson, Cages to Jump Shots, pp. 56-58.
Olympics wound up in St. Louis, held in conjunction with the Louisiana Purchase Exposition and under the firm control of Sullivan and the AAU.  

Basketball was included in Sullivan's program of events at St. Louis, making the 1904 Olympiad a golden opportunity for the international promotion of basketball, the only genuinely, fully American sport on the slate at an American Olympics. In theory, anyway. In practice, few events in the history of international sport have been less international than the basketball at the 1904 Olympics. The “First Olympic World’s Basket Ball Championship” was won by the Buffalo Germans (their nickname being the only remotely international thing about the whole business) over a six-team field of YMCAs and athletic clubs. Seven of the 15 games were decided by forfeit; the Buffalo Germans won their five games by an average of 46.8 points. Several other basketball tournaments were held in St. Louis in the summer of 1904, none of which were any more “Olympic,” despite the names Sullivan gave them. The “Olympic College Basket Ball Championship,” won by Hiram College, involved only Hiram, Wheaton College, and Latter Day Saints University. Latter Day Saints University “won” a bronze medal without winning a game. The “Olympic Basket Ball Championships of the Public Schools Athletic League” involved schoolchildren and high school athletes from New York, San Francisco, Chicago, and St. Louis, and The “Olympic Young Men’s Christian Association

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Championships,” featured six YMCA basketball teams, only one of which, Chicago Central YMCA, also competed in the main championship.20

The 1904 Olympics in general were something of a joke, tacked on to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition and far from central to what was happening in St. Louis in the summer of 1904. Sullivan was really just holding a very expansive series of AAU championships, with a smattering of foreign athletes included, and calling it the Olympics. This is more or less what Sullivan, who loved track and field but had great contempt for Coubertin’s internationalist idealism, hoped the Olympic movement would become. Of the 630 athletes competing in 1904, 523 were Americans. U.S. athletes won 22 of 23 track and field events. Few world-class athletes from the rest of the world bothered to attend, and the basketball tournaments were far from the only contests which were conspicuously un-international in flavor. (Coubertin did not even attend, and after the experiences in Paris in 1900 and St. Louis in 1904, he vowed never to hold an Olympics in conjunction with a world’s fair again.) Sullivan lost no opportunity to cross-promote. He slathered the Olympic name over every athletic contest at the Exposition as if it were catsup, even when the events in question were humorously non-Olympic. The various “Olympic” basketball tournaments must be so judged. Sullivan also saw to it that a Physical Culture exhibit, delineating all the physical, moral, and social benefits of regulated sport, was included in the Exposition proper. It contained, among other things, a large exhibit of athletic equipment provided by A.G. Spalding & Brothers. The “official”

history of the 1904 Olympiad, compiled by Sullivan, was published by the American Sports Publishing Company as part of Spalding’s Athletic Library.21

The supremacy of American Civilization was the central organizing theme of the entire Louisiana Purchase Exposition, of course, held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase and the nation’s subsequent expansion and industrialization, so Sullivan’s vision was not out of line in terms of the larger ethos of the Exposition. The ethos of the Exposition was explicitly social-evolutionary and, by any plausible modern standard, racist, built around the idea that American Civilization both led the world and pulled up “inferior” races and cultures along its way. The exhibits included the “Philippine Exposition,” demonstrating U.S. efforts to “civilize” the recently subdued Philippines and, as the official History of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition put it, “familiarize the American public with the various and incongruous tribal elements of the Philippine population, differing in race, language and religion, and representing many stages of social progress from the lowest types of head-hunting savagery to the best products of Christian civilization and culture.” “Various and incongruous” certainly describes the most embarrassing athletic competitions at the fair, the so-called “Anthropology Days,” wherein a handful of the fair’s representatives from tribal cultures, including Native Americans, were rounded up and asked to compete in Olympic-esque events with one another, to test the notion that non-white peoples were inherently and naturally athletic. Their un-heroic performances – in tribal dress – were taken as evidence that, as the official History put it.

21 Many of the events at St. Louis are not, in fact, officially considered “Olympic events” for record-keeping purposes, including basketball. Dyreson, Making the American Team, pp. 73-97; Mallon, The
"the representatives of the savage and uncivilized tribes proved themselves inferior athletes, greatly overrated." These unfortunate games were organized by W.J. McGee, head of the Exposition's Department of Anthropology, and his assistant: Luther Halsey Gulick. Play yourself Progressive.22

Basketball at the 1904 Olympics, then, was something of a sideshow-within-a-sideshow, a less-than-Olympic undertaking at a less-than-impressive Olympics. The efforts of Sullivan and the AAU to shape the Olympic movement to their own ends, however, were entirely of a piece with their overall approach to the regulation of amateur sport in the U.S., namely to try and control it themselves and to tie it to a particular social philosophy. Sullivan, however, was not alone in sensing the cross-promotional possibilities of amateur sport at events such as these. Shortly after the 1904 "Olympics," the Buffalo Germans abandoned the AAU and turned professional, becoming one of the nation's best-known barnstorming teams. They billed themselves as "World Champions," a claim they based on their performances in Buffalo in 1901 and St. Louis in 1904, and traveled the northeast playing local teams for the gate receipts. They won 111 straight games between 1907 and 1911 and continued barnstorming in one permutation or another until the mid-1920s. Its players also held day jobs. The Buffalo Germans are the best, but by no means the only, example of one of the paradoxes inherent in amateur basketball as it was organized and promoted by the AAU: the most successful amateurs had constant incentives to become professionals, incentives inherent to the conduct of American team

1904 Olympic Games

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sport in ways the guardians of “pure amateurism” either did not understand or did not admit. Crowds paid money to see skilled athletes. The AAU – and the colleges, and the YMCA, and the athletic clubs – encouraged and sometimes profited from this behavior. Many athletes saw no particular reason not to do the same.23

This dynamic, already underway in the 1890s, continued well into the twentieth century. Many of the era’s best-known and/or most successful professional basketball teams began as amateurs within the AAU or YMCA, then drifted into profiting from gate receipts. The Guides of the late 1890s and early 1900s are filled with teams that drifted from competitive success within the AAU to financial success outside it – the Buffalo Germans, The New York Wanderers (originally the 23rd Street YMCA in New York, which turned professional after winning the very first AAU basketball tournament in 1897), Fon du Lac, Wisconsin Company “E”, Kenton, Ohio Company “I”, just to mention a few. Encouraging a drive for excellence while discouraging profit from excellence was a difficult line to walk in a society as plainly entrepreneurial as turn-of-the-century urban America. The boundary between the entrepreneurism of the AAU, promoting amateur sport in order to promote its jurisdiction over amateur athletes, and the entrepreneurism of the Buffalo Germans, promoting their success in AAU tournaments in order to thrive as professionals, was blurry and easily crossed.24

24 See also Peterson, Cages to Jump Shots, pp. 1-61.
The 1904 Olympics was not the last time the AAU attached a “national championship” basketball tournament to an exposition or other athletic event for promotional purposes. Similar outdoor tournaments were held at the 1913 International Sports and Games Exhibition in Chicago, for example, and at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915; the AAU offered some kind of national championship tournament many other years (though not every year), even if not attached to some other event. Far more interesting, however, were the annual citywide and/or regional AAU tournaments, especially the New York metropolitan and AAU Central Association (dominated by Chicago) tournaments, which began expanding in the number and variety of participating teams. In 1907, the AAU began splitting these tournaments into three weight classes: unlimited, 130-lb., and 115-lb. This expanded the tournaments enormously, and allowed not just smaller athletes, but also younger athletes the opportunity to participate in tournament-style competition. The organization of more athletes, and younger athletes, was an increasingly common theme in AAU institutional strategy and Spalding Guide rhetoric as the 1910s approached. This can be explained partly as simple organizational self-interest: more athletes in AAU tournaments. It also betrayed a growing belief among play professionals and promoters of amateur sport, however, that the alleged social and moral benefits of organized team sport lay with “organized” as much or more as with “team” or “sport,” and that boys and adolescents required these benefits as much or more than young men did. The organization of as many registered teams as possible into leagues and the introduction of that vision of organized
amateur athletics to more and younger athletes therefore became prominent messages within the *Spalding Basket Ball Guides* throughout the 1910s.\(^{25}\)

Many of these young people were playing on organized basketball teams in the first place because of the efforts of an interrelated group of play professionals and organizations which came to be known as the organized play movement. These groups had significant individual and ideological overlap with the ethos of instrumental sport which produced basketball in the first place, including the single most important figure to them all: Luther Halsey Gulick. The trajectory of Gulick's professional career after 1900, in fact, is indicative of a significant strain of Progressive-Era social thought: the increasingly secular expression of the Social Gospel Protestant impulse. His early work in physical education and organized play, including his contribution to the invention and early development of basketball, had been contextualized in Muscular Christian terms, within the YMCA; after 1903, Gulick articulated his philosophy of physical education and play and pursued his professional goals through secular organizations and in increasingly scientific/professional language. This was not so much an abandonment of his initial spiritual orientation as a sublimation of it, for the objective substance of his physical education philosophy remained much the same. The ideal citizen allegedly produced by participation in organized, regulated team sport was much the same as the Christian Gentleman allegedly produced by the YMCA. After leaving the YMCA in 1900, Gulick involved himself in the foundation of several new urban reform organizations oriented

around turning urban youth into Christian Gentlemen through team sport without
specifically bringing up Christ: the New York Public Schools Athletic League in 1903, and
the Playground Association of America in 1906. This shift was in part a practical matter;
these organizations sought to impact the social development of the increasingly Catholic
and Jewish youngsters populating the city streets and public schools of urban America.
Basketball was quite naturally a part of these organizations’ programs, and teams
representing these and similarly oriented social reform organizations begin to occupy a
great deal of space in the Guides.26

The social philosophy and practical strategy of many of these organizations were
based in G. Stanley Hall recapitulationary developmental sociology, discussed in Chapter
One, wherein the social development of the individual was believed to recapitulate the
evolutionary development of civilization. Team sports could re-direct the potentially
dangerous, “tribal” social instincts of adolescents, especially adolescent boys, away from
undesirable behavior like gangs and toward positive social ends. In addition, organized
sport could replace the strenuous pre-industrial physical activity that, before large numbers
of Americans had moved to cities, once developed what Gulick called in 1903 “vital
power in the young. It is now our problem as biological engineers to face the situation...
that our children shall, under the conditions of city life, not only maintain the average
health of the past, but become stronger and finer children than the world has ever seen

26 Ethel Josephine Dorgan, Luther Halsey Gulick, 1865-1918 (New York: Teachers College, Columbia
University, 1934); Dominick Cavallo, Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform
before.” Gulick, who had recently been placed in charge of physical education in the New York City schools, started the New York Public Schools Athletic League along these lines in 1903. Its teams and tournaments became fixtures in the Guides, as did teams from similar leagues organized in other cities like Cleveland and Baltimore. The 1911-12 Guide claimed that the annual New York PSAL basketball tournament was the largest basketball tournament in the world, and had been for five years. Schoolboy and adolescent teams were by this time filling the Guides year to year, especially in terms of the hundreds of pictures depicting grade school and high school teams from all over the country. Given the promotional and entrepreneurial opportunities inherent in this situation, it comes as no surprise that the idea for the New York Public Schools Athletic League was first suggested to Gulick by James Sullivan. Teams and tournaments associated with indoor recreation centers and municipal playgrounds, many of which were outfitted with baskets as a matter of course, also begin appearing regularly; Gulick, one is not surprised to learn, was also professionally involved in this movement, being named first president of the Playground Association of America in 1906.27

Other urban reform organizations with similar views and strategies concerning the socialization and Americanization of urban youth and/or immigrants also appeared more and more frequently in the Guides. Settlement houses, for example, frequently sponsored basketball teams. Hull House in Chicago, in fact, had been organizing basketball teams for both men and women since the 1890s. Jane Addams, who was also involved in the

organized play movement and the Playground Association of America, had long considered sport a potential force for social cohesion and used it as such. New York settlement houses also organized teams for a variety of ages and weight classes, and competed very successfully in New York City leagues and tournaments, including AAU city championships. YMCAs, of course, continued to field teams, including junior and "midget" teams. In addition, perusing the pictures of any Guide in the 1910s reveals a large number of schoolboy and adolescent teams, their names offering little clue to their organizational affiliation, but no doubt hailing from the growing number of public school leagues and municipal playground organizations around the country: The 1907 Buhl Midgets of Sharon, Pennsylvania; the 1915 Emanu-El Brotherhood Five of New York City; the 1914 Darwol Team of Libertyville, Illinois.28

Public school leagues, municipal playground and settlement house teams, and other schoolboy and adolescent teams were the most obvious examples of basketball as instrumental sport. Public schools, playground advocates, and settlement house leaders all saw themselves as agents of Americanization, seeking to decrease ethnic differences, increase social cohesion, and instill nationalistic citizenship within the increasingly polyglot American urban population. They considered immigrant youth their most likely avenue of success, and team sport a useful means of reaching them. "It is especially popular among the younger boys," New York playground official William J. Lee said of basketball in

8(March 1903), pp. 25-30 (quote p. 28); Spalding's Official Basket Ball Guide 1911-12, quote p. 75.

1913. "The game promotes rugged honesty, alertness of body and mind, and the team spirit that predominates has its beneficial effect on the boys."29

The conflation of "team spirit" with American citizenship was a common theme sounded by advocates of organized play and team sport, and not only with reference to basketball. Baseball, for example, the "national game," was also used and promoted in much the same way by these organizations, and the nationalistic overtones of the language used to describe and understand American athletics generally in these years is a measure of how widely accepted this conflation was. Guide authors and contributors sometimes made a point of referring to basketball as the "winter national game" or "the American game of basket ball," associating the game with the era's increasingly nationalistic portrayal of baseball. (America's National Game, the influential and highly nationalistic history of baseball, appeared in 1911 - written by Albert G. Spalding and published by the American Sports Publishing Company. It was prominently advertised in the front of the Basket Ball Guides.)30

Questions of race, ethnicity, citizenship, and social control were therefore central to instrumental sport, and therefore instrumental to the way large numbers of athletes, especially young athletes, came to basketball. Drawing conclusions about the race, ethnicity, and/or religious orientation of individuals from photographs and lists of names

can be a dangerous business, and must be done very judiciously. Nevertheless, the
Guide, in conjunction with the nature of the organizations promoting and organizing
basketball among urban youth, plainly suggest the ethnic nature of basketball in many
urban areas. These organizations hoped that many young athletes would become, quite
literally, less ethnic and more American, a concept they understood not just in a
metaphorical, but also in a racialist sense. Here, for example, is Gulick, in a 1906
Collier’s article entitled “National Significance of Athletics,” conflating his philosophy of
sport with a vision of social cohesion, American nationalism, and racial identity:

Participation of some general interest is basal to unity and democracy. Democracy
is not merely the regarding of other people as worthy as ones (sic) self and the
willingness to associate with them. Most profoundly it is a passionate feeling of
oneness, of identity of interest and cause. It is comradeship knitted up into vital
cooperation. The conscious or unconscious joyful recognition of the fact that the
whole is greater than the parts coupled with the realization of the fact that the self
can come into most full and vivid life only through participation in what is common
to all. It is a deep loyalty and joy in the whole. Democracy involves specialization
and integration. It involves mutual trust and cooperation.

All of this is deeply characteristic of the Anglo Saxon. Nowhere is it more
simply shown than in the team games which are the dominant characteristic of the
sports of those of our traditions.

Here is a vision of social cohesion conflating American nationalism, a highly metaphysical
understanding of “Democracy,” a definition of “white” American racial identity, and, very
interestingly, the importance of “unconscious” social motivation, all contained within the
concept of team sport. When introduced to non-white youth, in whom this vision was
presumably not “deeply characteristic,” team games could shape the social development of
kids to an “Anglo Saxon” American state. In this schema, “Americanization” was not
necessarily just metaphorical. Nor did it necessarily need to involve a conscious choice on
the part of the Americanized, if one considers the implications of an “unconscious joyful
recognition” of the good of the social whole. Gulick, after all, considered play an instinct,
and believed team games could shape it to particular social ends. Those playing only had
to play. The rules and organizational structures which circumscribed their instinctual
behavior would do the work of social and moral edification.31

This also helps explain why the organizational and supervisory aspects of team
sport were important to public school athletic leagues and playground administrators. Not
just athletic activity, but team sport; not just teams, but teams organized into leagues,
tournaments, and championship series; not just organized teams, but teams organized by
trained professionals such as themselves. Like the AAU, playground associations and
public schools athletic leagues wanted as many athletes as possible playing under their
auspices; like the AAU, these groups believed the athletes themselves were best served by
this state of affairs. More so than the AAU, however, organized play groups considered
broad-based participation in athletics, rather than the determination of winners and
champions, the purpose of the whole business. This meant, among other things,
specifically encouraging less talented and less athletically inclined kids to participate. In
1914, the New York City evening recreation center league, run by the city board of
education, declared war on its own best athletes in the name of encouraging less-skilled
participation. Players and teams winning a championship in a Recreation Center Athletic

31 Luther Gulick, “National Significance of Athletics,” clipping in folder “Luther H. Gulick – Articles
Appearing in Various Periodicals 1906-16,” Springfield College Archives.
League basketball tournament, it was decided, would thereafter be banned from future
tournaments. "DISCOURAGING THE REIGN OF 'STARS,'" as New York City
Supervisor of Playgrounds Eugene C. Gibney put it in the Guide, would prevent dominant
teams from scaring off less talented athletes and permit "extensive rather than intensive
basket ball" in city recreation centers. (It also appears to have been a policy targeted at
RS 188, which in 1914 won the junior championship for the fourth consecutive year, and
the senior championship for the second consecutive year.) Stars or no stars, Gibney
viewed the very existence of the tournament itself a force for social cohesion:

We believe that our yearly contest is contributing its mite of assistance to our city
in her struggle for loyal, efficient citizenship. The high standard of physical fitness,
encouraged first by tryouts in the different centers, and then by the actual struggle
for the championship insures our city a goodly crop of vigorous youths each year.
The habits of obedience to authority and of respect for law and order, which are
developed by our excellent rules and efficient officials, lead many to useful civic
careers. The intermingling of immigrants around our courts unconsciously
acquaints them with our American customs and helps to teach them, through use,
our language and laws.

Play yourself Progressive.\textsuperscript{32}

The actual impact of all this on the allegedly Americanized is another matter. It is
too much to assume that targets of instrumental sport responded exactly as social planners
postulated they would, particularly since most of the evidence available with which to
address the question comes from promotional material generated by the social planners.
Likewise, it strains credulity to deny that something so heavily loaded with hegemonic

\textsuperscript{32} Spalding's Official Basket Ball Guide 1914-15, p. 69; Spalding's Official Basket Ball Guide 1913-14,
p. 67.
cultural freight had no effect whatsoever on the worldview of its participants. The most likely impact on those who were sometimes referred to as “hyphenated” Americans was probably to accentuate the cultural identity on both sides of the hyphen. The social impact of basketball in ethnic neighborhoods, for example, did not necessarily run only in the direction of “Americanization.” Teams were first of all usually organized by neighborhood and/or local institution, even in the case of many adult amateur or semi-professional teams, and therefore a locus of ethnic identity as much as an assertion of American-ness.

Particularly in New York and Philadelphia, basketball games between prominent adult teams were often followed by dances, making them community social events in a broader sense, and therefore events tied more closely to the social and cultural flavor of the community than the rhetoric of team sport and organized play would suggest. City playgrounds, too, often developed into ethnic turf, a condition which was then likely to manifest itself in its representative athletic teams.33

Historian Peter Levine, in his study of sport and the Jewish experience in the United States, discusses the nature of basketball as a “Jewish” game in the first half of the twentieth century, a reputation it developed especially in New York in the 1920s and 1930s. The roots of this cultural development can already be seen in the Guides before World War One, in the evident popularity of basketball among Jewish youth and in Jewish neighborhoods, and also in the competitive success of predominantly Jewish teams like the Lower East Side’s University Settlement. Levine’s interviews with Jewish ex-basketball

players, including several who began playing in Brooklyn or on the Lower East Side before World War One, suggest that many Jewish athletes saw basketball as a means of refuting the stereotype of Jews as “weak” and “un-athletic” and demonstrating an interest in cultural assimilation while simultaneously reaffirming Jewish identity and community. Typical of this perspective were the teams and leagues sponsored by the Young Men’s Hebrew Association, a Jewish urban cultural organization patterned after the YMCA whose twin purposes, at least according to the Washington Heights branch in 1917, were “Judaism and Citizenship.” This cultural dynamic may well represent “Americanization,” but not necessarily in the sense its Anglo advocates had in mind.  

African-American faces are few and far between in the Guides. They are not entirely absent, but almost. A team of African-American eighth graders turns up in an account of the Atlantic City public school league in 1913, for example, and a Norwich, Connecticut YMCA junior team from 1911 had a black captain. These are hard-to-spot exceptions, however, to an overwhelmingly white rule. The Guides, of course, are far from comprehensive sources, and African-Americans did, in fact, play basketball before World War One more extensively than the Guides suggest. Black high school and college athletes in Washington D.C., students at Hampton Institute, Tuskegee, and other southern black colleges, and New York-area amateur and semiprofessional teams all played by about 1910; historian Robert Peterson has found a handful of black athletes in eastern professional basketball before World War One. Most, though not all, of this basketball was played under segregated circumstances, however, and the face(s) of basketball

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34 Levine, *Ellis Island to Ebbets Field*, pp. 3-51.
presented to the public in the game’s national publications were overwhelmingly white – even though, as we have seen, not all of these faces were as “white” as others in the schema of play professionals.35

Immigrants and youth were not the only athletes to whom basketball was presented as an instrumental activity meant to serve some larger purpose on behalf of some external organization. U.S. Army and Navy teams begin appearing in the Guides in the 1910s, their existence explained in much the same language used to explain basketball at settlement houses and on playgrounds: simultaneous physical and social conditioning, in a package the men allegedly took to naturally. The Army even noted in 1913 that, like on city playgrounds, “[t]he old idea of developing an all-star post team has given way to the more broad one of ‘the most good to the greatest number,’” and that company leagues involving as many men as possible were replacing representative post teams. In 1916, as war convulsed Europe and the Wilson Administration began a “preparedness” campaign, physical educators and play leaders began arguing that participation in team sport generated the physical fitness and social values “preparedness” demanded, in both the nation’s military and society as a whole, and that a comprehensive national program of physical fitness and sport should be part of the nation’s preparation for war. In a sense, they had been arguing this all along, since the social values trumpeted by advocates of team sport -- voluntary obedience to authority, social cohesion and “efficiency,” increased

cultural uniformity, diminution of ethnic difference, sublimation of individual achievement within the good of the whole – were much the same as the social values trumpeted by many advocates of preparedness. Some of the trumpeters were the same, too: Gulick was instrumental in shaping the physical education policy of the U.S. Army during the war, for example, which included organizing basketball and baseball teams among American soldiers.35

Whether or not team sport actually did produce the individual and/or citizen play professionals argued it did is probably an unanswerable question. More interesting is the fact that this hypothetical person was more or less the same individual and/or citizen many other American social thinkers and reform institutions were attempting to create in the two decades before World War One. Many of the same social, ethnic, racial, and cultural preoccupations shaped their philosophy, and many of the same Progressive catchphrases – “self-control,” “efficiency,” “democracy,” “loyalty,” “the greatest good for the greatest number” – peppered their rhetoric. “Group games furnish a vehicle for teaching many of the traits so necessary in our complex form of civilization, self-control, loyalty, obedience to constituted authority, etc.,” George Hepburn claimed in the 1912-13 Guide. “Basket ball is one of the best group games for this purpose.” It was also, however, a vehicle for a variety of other purposes: for entrepreneurship, organizational expansion and

aggrandizement, aggressive competition, ethnic community, assimilation, and others.

Basketball was designed in the first place as an instrumental sport; instrumental to what, and for whom, often depended on who was playing and why.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{37} Spalding's Official Basketball Guide 1912-13. p 7
CHAPTER 3

ANGRY MAMMALS CHASING A BALL AROUND A SMALL CAGE: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE EAST LIVERPOOL FIVE, 1898-1909

The development of basketball as a professional sport and commercial recreation in East Liverpool, Ohio, a pottery manufacturing center on the Ohio River near Pittsburgh, provides an interesting case study in both the emergence of professional basketball in eastern and midwestern industrial cities in the first decade of the twentieth century and in the development of commercial recreational culture in such cities. Over about a ten year period, the game in East Liverpool went through several phases, phases characteristic of how, in certain contexts and/or locales, amateur basketball might easily drift into an entrepreneurial enterprise and a business proposition. Basketball in East Liverpool began as an amateur pastime for skilled local players sponsored by the YMCA, moved away from the YMCA to become a successful semiprofessional recreation spectacle involving large crowds of paying customers, joined and briefly dominated a full-
fledged, formally organized professional league, but then failed to maintain that success
and collapsed in a few years. This took place in the sort of small urban-industrial city that
increasingly dotted the northeast and midwest by 1900, places as integral to the era's
demographic shifts as the metropolises that dominate historical discussions of urbanization
- and places rich in the sorts of commercial and recreational enterprises with which
professional basketball is best compared. Tracing the arc of basketball's development into
a commercial recreation spectacle in a single location over a manageable period of time
reveals a great deal about how easily the line between amateur and professional sport was
blurred and crossed.

As we have seen briefly in Chapter One, successful amateur basketball teams in the
New York and Philadelphia areas began drifting into professionalism even before 1900.
Attempts to sustain formal professional leagues as stable business propositions, however,
as opposed to individual teams barnstorming and splitting up their gate receipts, were only
fitfully successful. The first (relatively) successful attempt to organize a professional
basketball league came in 1898, when Trenton and a handful of other successful teams in
the Trenton-Philadelphia corridor formed the National Basketball League. This outfit
lasted, with continuously shifting franchises, only five seasons. It was joined in its second
season by the Interstate League (formed by disgruntled National League team owner Peter
Wurfflein after his Mifflin team was barred from the original league) and in 1901-2 by both
the American League (also a Philadelphia-area league) and the New England League. A
series of other similar leagues, drifted in and out of existence throughout the early 1900s. These early leagues borrowed professional baseball’s business practices as best they could, particularly with regard to regulations which attempted to limit the ability of players to jump from team to team in search of higher salaries. None of these leagues ever achieved the stability or success of professional baseball, however, in part because while they usually succeeded in controlling player jumping within their leagues, they never found a way to prevent jumping between leagues, or from league teams to the multitude of independent professional teams which remained around the country. Early professional basketball therefore remained a colorful and inherently unstable collection of failed organizations larded with a few notable individual successes.¹

Many early professional basketball teams emerged not just in the biggest American cities, but also in smaller, second-tier industrial cities. The rapid urbanization that reshaped the United States demographically and culturally around the turn of the century was not simply a matter of the newly sprawling metropolises of the northeast and midwest. Just as typical, and in many ways just as interesting, were the dozens if not hundreds of smaller cities which sprouted at the same time, regional population centers and one- or two- industry towns which lined the growing rail networks of the nation and siphoned burgeoning populations from both the surrounding countryside and the flow of European immigration. Despite their smaller populations and tendency to slip beneath the

¹ Albert Applin, “From Muscular Christianity to the Marketplace: The History of Men’s and Boys’ Basketball in the United States, 1891-1957” (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1982), pp. 97-116; Robert W. Peterson, Cages to Jump Shots: Pro Basketball’s Early Years (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 32-45, 56-61. For the early professionalization of baseball, see Harold Seymour,
radar of historians, these new urban areas experienced many of the same demographic and cultural transformations characteristic of the rising megacities – simultaneous inner-city congestion and radial-suburban sprawl; large disparities of wealth and poverty; periodic labor unrest; new patterns of crime and vice, as well as social and political reform movements seeking to contain them; new problems of public sanitation, mass transportation, and urban administration; politically connected and often sensationalistic daily media; the growth of a distinctive commercialized popular culture tied into national patterns of urban recreation. The proliferation of these smaller urban areas was as central to what Arthur Meier Schlesinger famously called the Rise of the City as the development of megacities like New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, or San Francisco.²

The broad industrial belt encompassing eastern Ohio and Western Pennsylvania teemed with these new small-urban areas. East Liverpool was in some ways typical and in some ways atypical of them. Most cities in the region pivoted around the coal and/or steelmaking industries; East Liverpool’s single industry was pottery. The settlement that became East Liverpool was founded in 1798, but the city did not really come into its own until 1840, when the first pottery kiln was built to take advantage of the area’s rich clay deposits. By the turn of the century the East Liverpool area was the largest pottery-producing region in the U.S., challenged only by Trenton, New Jersey; the two regions.

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combined to produce almost half of all American pottery. Such was the dominance of the pottery industry that the 1900 federal census of manufacturing reported 87.5\% of all wage-earners in East Liverpool employed in the pottery industry in some capacity (p. 179). Dozens of separate pottery concerns dotted the city.³

The American pottery industry did very well in the years immediately before and after the turn of the century. High tariff rates on English pottery were integral to the protectionist policies of William McKinley, first as a Congressman from Ohio and then as Governor and President (East Liverpool pottery magnate John N. Taylor was a longtime political and personal friend), high McKinley-instigated tariffs in 1891 and especially 1897 helped fuel industrial expansion in East Liverpool. With the exception of a few lean and uncertain years during the depression of 1893-96, the city’s industry expanded more or less continuously from the late 1880s to the 1910s. East Liverpool experienced work stoppages and labor unrest between 1894 and 1897 like most of the rest of industrial America, exacerbated in the case of the pottery industry by the Wilson-Gorman Tariff’s lowering of rates on English ceramics. In the wake of the restored 1897 tariff, however, the industry entered a long period of industrial expansion and labor stability, including the formal recognition by East Liverpool potteries of the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters as a collective bargaining agent in 1897. Rapid demographic expansion followed. East Liverpool’s population grew over 86\% between 1890 and 1910, to 20,387; between

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1900 and 1910 the number of workers employed by local potteries jumped from 3455 to 5163.  

East Liverpool's dependence on pottery gave it an unusual ethnic homogeneity. For most of the city's history its prominence as a pottery center meant most of its immigrants were English, mostly skilled potters from Staffordshire and other English pottery-producing regions. By 1900, East Liverpool's population was 87.2% native-born, most of them either descendants of earlier English immigrants or recent arrivals from the surrounding countryside, and over half of the foreign-born population was English. Skilled English potters remained a significant minority in the kilns, though their prevalence was clearly on the decline. Only a very small, though slowly growing, percentage of the city's population consisted of southern or eastern European immigrants, the largest group among these being Italian (only 134 in 1910). The masthead of the East Liverpool Tribune may have summed up the city best: "Crockery City – The Staffordshire of America – Prosperity."

Despite the growing mechanization of the pottery industry in the late nineteenth century, the best jobs in the industry retained a large amount of skill and autonomy relative to other blue-collar work, as well as reasonably high wage rates, though rates for less skilled pottery workers were predictably much lower. By the turn of the century, East

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Liverpool potteries were also hiring large numbers of women for finishing work, usually at less than half the prevailing male wage scale. Approximately 24% of the city’s pottery workers were female in 1900. Working conditions and health standards in the industry were by modern standards very poor, though they were little changed from traditional conditions in the industry. Rich tapestries of airborne dust, some of it from toxic lead-based glazes, combined with poor ventilation and the dampness produced by roomfuls of wet clay to make potteries pulmonary nightmares. The formal recognition of the NBOP by the industry produced a long period of stable wage scales and piece rates, but did little to change working conditions in the shop or slip house.\(^5\)

Ethnic homogeneity and stable wage rates did not, of course, preclude growing disparities of wealth, best demonstrated not by the differing wage rates in the pottery but by the residential segregation and suburbanization well underway by the turn of the century. The vast majority of pottery owners and other well-off town capitalists had moved away from the congested central city area and up the hill to new suburban neighborhoods by 1900, aided by the development of streetcar lines which quickly latticed the city. This local social elite developed a series of institutions and cultural interests designed to set themselves apart much like any other economic elite in any other urban setting. Fraternal organizations, private clubs, and literary societies flourished, as did (relatively) highbrow commercial entertainment like opera house and “legitimate” theater. In 1904, local patrons opened the new Ceramic Theatre downtown, at the time the second

largest stage in the state (according to their own calculations) and tied into national theater syndicates.⁷

These developments were simply one portion of a new urban cultural landscape in East Liverpool, the same sort of landscape that everywhere tended to follow demographic expansion supported by industrial prosperity and serviced by effective transportation. A variety of commercial amusements aimed at all social groups became viable propositions. Vaudeville houses (also tied into national entertainment syndicates) flourished as well as opera house and “legitimate” theater. The moving picture craze soon struck as well, supporting half a dozen theatres by 1907. Several public roller skating rinks operated downtown. Across the river in Chester, West Virginia, Rock Springs Amusement Park beckoned to customers with dance halls, picnic areas, vaudeville, “shoot-the-chute” roller coasters, shooting galleries, and other electrified amusement wonders. Local saloons (64 in 1902) and vice emporiums beckoned the less scrupulous pleasure seeker. These institutions provided the local newspapers (three dailies by 1900) with a steady diet of sensationalism; they also quickly overwhelmed the city’s severely overmatched 6-man police force. Periodic anti-vice campaigns and local moral reform groups attempted to fill the gap, generating lots of newspaper fodder but less actual success at eradicating vice. The greatest victory of these forces came in 1907, when East Liverpool went dry in a city referendum by a vote of 1976 to 1690.⁸

⁸ The ostensibly moral nature of the question did not prevent some citizens from betting on the outcome. Gates, The City of Hills and Kilns, pp. 182-257; East Liverpool Tribune, 12/6/06, 6/24/07.
In short, East Liverpool contained all of the intriguing social developments and cultural contradictions commonly associated with the turn-of-the-century urban landscape, albeit on a smaller scale. It had a growing and shifting nexus of commercialized urban amusements that were simultaneously parochial entrepreneurial enterprises and connections to national networks of popular culture, as local businessmen sought to capitalize on national trends in consumer recreation. It had the typical spectrum of urban vice and urban reformers. It had economic elites (concentrated mostly in a single industry) that dominated the social and political landscape. Finally, it had a politically connected and, usually, sensationalistic local press that reported it all.

A wide variety of public athletic spectacles rounded out this urban cultural landscape. East Liverpool teemed with local athletic contests in a wide variety of sports, ages, leagues, and skill levels. High school football, industrial league soccer (supported by the region’s high percentage of first- and second- generation English immigrants), neighborhood bowling (regular and duckpin), the physical programs of the East Liverpool YMCA, and challenge-issuing neighborhood teams of all kinds augmented the highly skilled, “representative” city baseball and football teams which played other “representative” city teams from the region – often in front of substantial crowds – and stood at the pinnacle of East Liverpool sporting society. The concept of East Liverpool all-star teams playing extensive schedules with other such teams throughout the region was well established by the turn of the century; city baseball teams had been doing this on and off since at least the 1870s. When added to the pool halls and cigar shops which provided natural focal points for the discussion and encouragement of these contests (not
to mention gambling on same), the result was a sporting landscape that clearly took up large portions of the leisure time of the city’s male inhabitants.  

It is in this environment that basketball developed in East Liverpool, first as a commercial recreation and then as a business proposition. Basketball first came to the city the way it first came to many cities, through the YMCA. By the middle of the 1890s, basketball was played regularly by both youth and adult teams in leagues organized at the YMCA building downtown. As early as the winter of 1898-99, the best players in this house league occasionally formed themselves into a town all-star team and scheduled a few games with other teams in the region, mainly local high schools and colleges. Their only recorded loss that first year came against a professional club from Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh South Side. These games augmented, but did not overwhelm, the YMCA’s house league, conducted every Friday night. The East Liverpool stars played both on the road and at the East Liverpool YMCA, in a gymnasium just barely large enough to permit a few hundred spectators. Nothing suggests, however, that drawing large crowds was the YMCA’s primary goal in scheduling these games. Like many skilled athletes from many cities, the East Liverpool all-stars likely sought nothing more than the best competition they could find, along with a touch of town pride.

Already by the winter of 1899-1900, however, the local all-stars were arranging a more aggressive schedule. Their YMCA physical director began negotiations with area

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teams in November, and success in their first few games stirred within them the eternal optimism of the small-time athletic booster.

The All Star basketball team have proven their right to the title. Friday evening at the Y.M.C.A. auditorium they buried the Beaver college aggregation by a score of 23 to 4, presenting the visitors with three of their points out of pure compassion. Other crack teams are scheduled for the season, and if Physical Director Roseboro is a prophet, East Liverpool will not lose a single game this season. He concedes the team to be the strongest in Ohio.  

Embarrassing January losses to Geneva College (31-8) and Allegheny College (31-10) suggest Roseboro's limitations as a prophet. Not until the 1902-03 season, in fact, would the East Liverpool all-stars begin to build a reputation in the region as either a consistent competitive success or an exciting amusement attraction. But the potential clearly existed; forty rooters made the trip with the team to Beaver, Pennsylvania to witness the loss to Geneva. Already by 1899-1900, elements with the potential to turn private competition into public spectacle were in place: skilled play (or at least belief in the potential of skilled play, which amounts to the same thing in the eyes of a booster), fan interest, ready transportation to and from a wide variety of potential opponents, ample publicity, even the overwrought sportswriting and wildly optimistic managerial hyperbole that make good newspaper copy. Baseball and football, in fact, had been conducted throughout the region on this basis for years, sometimes by the very same YMCA. As long as local talent

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11 East Liverpool Tribune, 12/14/99.
existed, local facilities were available, and local people were interested, little stood in the way of this sort of small-time entrepreneurial development.\textsuperscript{12}

The change did not take place overnight, however. During 1901-02, the all-star squad was still just an outgrowth of the YMCA league, all of its players also playing on one of the local league teams. Priorities, though, were beginning to shift. "The Y.M.C.A. organization is being encouraged to go after championship honors in this as upon the football field," the Y's physical director announced in December, also announcing his desire to round up enough fans to follow the team on the road so that special excursion rates could be obtained from the railroad. When they played an amateur team from Sewickley, Ohio a few days after Christmas, the crowd of several hundred people was too large for the gym. From the standpoint of their competitive reputation around the region, however, the 1902-03 team was more significant. From a personnel standpoint, the team was the same it had been for several years — Burt Bloor, Frank Allison, Bill Powell, Dick Rigby, Fletcher Chadwick, and Tom Watkin — but their growing experience, and the spread of similar teams throughout the region looking for competition, made them a much-sought-after opponent. Their manager "receives challenges and requests for basketball games almost daily," fans learned in December. They played 20 games this year against colleges, other amateurs, and a handful of openly professional teams from the Pittsburgh area, winning 16.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} East Liverpool \textit{Tribune}, 1/11/00.
\textsuperscript{13} East Liverpool \textit{Daily Crisis}, 12/3/01 (quote), 12/4/01, 12/28/01, 12/13/02 (quote), 3/28/03.
Even though the YMCA Five continued to maintain their commitment to amateurism, they had clearly become a very different animal by this time, and not just because they occasionally played openly professional teams. The players may have received no money for playing (as far as can be determined), but they certainly could generate it. All indications were that, at least for some games, a potential audience much larger than the YMCA gymnasium could hold existed. More than once, fans had to be turned away from home games because of an overflowing gym. For a game against Pittsburgh DC & AC, management tore down a permanent partition in the gymnasium and added 100 extra seats in an effort to keep up with crowds. Admission was charged, and some opponents demanded cash guarantees up front. A team from Steubenville, Ohio tried repeatedly to convince East Liverpool to play them on a neutral floor for any stakes they cared to name. "The challenge was rightly ignored," Liverpool claimed, "in the first place, because the Y.M.C.A.'s have no desire to become professionals, and secondly, because Steubenville boys are a buck number." Apparently more amused than insulted by this attitude, Steubenville tried several more times (unsuccessfully) to finagle a game with a financial component of some kind.\footnote{East Liverpool Daily Crisis, 1/7/03, 2/3/03, 2/6/03, 2/11/03 (quote), 2/13/03, 3/6/03, 3/7/03, 3/12/03, 3/14/03.}

Money had not originally been the reason the East Liverpool YMCA Five sought outside competition. As athletes, they wished to test themselves against the best competition they could find; as representatives of their hometown, they were not immune from the civic chauvinism which, then as now, infested competitive athletics and typified
the outlook of a young city experiencing a burst of development. In pursuing competition and civic pride, however, they also found themselves in possession of a public spectacle that could produce considerable revenue if managed for that purpose. Revenue generated in this fashion might be used simply to obtain more and better competition, as had generally been the case up until 1903. Or it might be used for a different kind of enterprise entirely. They did not lack for practical examples; East Liverpudlians had been paying to see sporting events of one kind or another for years, and the crowds they encountered playing in the Pittsburgh area suggested that people might pay to see basketball in numbers much larger than the YMCA could accommodate.

For 1903-04, the East Liverpool all-stars (Bloor, Poweli, Watkin, Allison, Chadwick, and manager Frank Gallimore) separated themselves from the YMCA and re-organized themselves as a paying proposition for public consumption. The first thing they needed was a new place to play, one that held more than a few hundred people, and with some semblance of comfort. They found it across the Ohio River, in the new East Liverpool suburb of Chester, West Virginia, at Rock Springs Amusement Park.

Rock Springs Park was the pet project of local pottery, traction, and real estate entrepreneur C.A. Smith. Smith, together with a coalition of other local businesspeople, was presently involved in promoting the development of Chester (incorporated 1899) as an industrial suburb across the Ohio River from downtown East Liverpool. The post-McKinley-Tariff boom in the American pottery industry, combined with the geographic limitations on further industrial expansion within the East Liverpool city limits (the city was surrounded by hills), drove East Liverpool’s pottery magnates across the river to the
relatively flat, undeveloped, and un-taxed flood plains of West Virginia in search of room to expand their operations. By 1900, Smith was involved not only in the construction of a new pottery in Chester (Taylor, Smith, and Taylor, which by 1905 had come under full control of Smith and his brother W.L.), but also in a series of other enterprises designed to support the pottery and make Chester viable. By 1900, Smith owned the Chester Bridge, the first bridge over the Ohio in the area (first opened in 1896), as well as the Chester and East Liverpool Street Railway which ran across it. Smith either founded or obtained control of Chester’s electric, gas and water utilities. He even purchased the East Liverpool brick and sewer pipe factories that produced the materials from which most of Chester was built. Rock Springs Park sat at the end of the streetcar line on the West Virginia side and served as a means of bringing Liverpudlians and their recreational dollars across the river as often as possible.\textsuperscript{15}

Smith built Rock Springs up from an unimpressive picnic spot into a respectable urban amusement park featuring a wide variety of the attractions considered the state of that particular art: roller coasters, merry-go-rounds and boat rides, shooting galleries, vaudeville and dance pavilions, swimming facilities, roller skating rinks, banquet and meeting halls. He also built a ballpark and grandstand in order to attract East Liverpool’s baseball dollars in the summertime. The newly independent East Liverpool Five became one more element of this enterprise. Gallimore leased the vaudeville theater for the winter and built a basketball floor in front of the stage. In keeping with their turn to professionalism, they surrounded the floor with a wire cage, as most Eastern professional

teams did. This device sped up the game enormously, as the ball was never out of bounds, resulting in a great deal of fast and exciting play. The price of this excitement, however, was often a level of roughness commensurate with, well, angry mammals chasing a ball around a small cage.\footnote{Gates, \textit{The City of Hills and Kilns}, pp. 244-45; East Liverpool \textit{Tribune}, 10/28/03.}

As we have seen in previous chapters, this is not the sort of thing Naismith, Gulick, and the YMCA originally had in mind when basketball was invented. What began as an arm of the East Liverpool YMCA’s physical work, the ostensible purpose of which was to keep wholesome Protestant manhood away from the immoral temptations of the exploding city, was now rough-and-tumble commercial amusement harnessed to the expansionist ambitions of local capitalists. Smith carried the city’s legions of new basketball fans to games at his park, in his town, over his bridge, on his Chester and East Liverpool Street Railway cars. It is difficult to think of something more antithetical to the YMCA’s vision of sport than an alliance between a formerly-amateur basketball team and a local traction tycoon to professionalize and commercialize amateur sport in the name of publicity for his amusement park.

It is equally difficult to think of something more representative of the common interlinking of professional sport, traction and real estate interests, and other forms of commercial amusement which characterized sport entrepreneurship in the late 19th and early 20th century. Professional baseball, in particular, was marbled with these business interlinkages at all levels. Smith himself had attempted this sort of arrangement before. In the spring of 1902 he approached the YMCA about having the Y baseball team (which
was the "representative" team in town that year) play their home games at his new ballfield at Rock Springs. He was turned down on the grounds that the YMCA did not wish to associate itself with such an enterprise. Smith knew, however, that he had the right idea.  

Now in an environment more suited to the sort of enterprise they had become, the East Liverpool five set out to promote themselves as an exciting recreational opportunity. The team had, over the previous two years or so, built a small and knowledgeable basketball following in the city. They set out to expand it. The story they planted with the Tribune promoting the first really big game of the season, with Pittsburgh South Side (by now East Liverpool's most popular and most challenging opponent), not only explained the intense interest felt by fans of both cities - "Never before in the basketball history of this city has there been such interest manifest... there will be at least 1500 spectators... A special train will leave Pittsburgh at 6:30 this evening bearing the South Side team and 300 of their friends" - but included an explanation of the basic rules and practices of the game for untrained fans. The team practiced several nights a week for nearly a month to prepare for the season. Their first few games only drew a few hundred fans apiece, but the South Side game did indeed draw 1500, all of whom seemed to enjoy themselves despite a 14-9 defeat. "Bells clanged, horns tooted, people stood up and stamped, shouted, threw their hats in the air, and in short, did every conceivable thing that an enthusiastic East Liverpool crowd could ever have done, in order to let the players know they saw and appreciated every clever play made," fans read of themselves the next day.

17 Steven Reiss, Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1980); East Liverpool Tribune, 4/10/02; East Liverpool Daily Crisis,
The East Liverpool five went 30-4-2 this year, some of them close games in front of excited and appreciative crowds, others so lopsided as to approach farce, such as their 108-16 and 109-4 pastings of Alliance, Ohio and Pittsburgh Lyceum.¹⁸

This was the first of three successful years as an independent professional team. In 1904-5 the East Liverpool-South Side rivalry was strong enough that hundreds of fans from East Liverpool were willing to spend $1 apiece to follow the team to Pittsburgh. The return game at Rock Springs drew 2800; fans were required to draw numbers in order to stand in line for tickets. The 1904-5 season was also the first in which East Liverpool attracted the attention of eastern barnstormers; tickets for games against the famous Buffalo Germans were valuable enough that a few enterprising fans scalped them. In 1905-6 two different prominent professional teams from the Philadelphia area (Conshohocken and Tamaqua) spent several weeks in eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania, playing East Liverpool and the other prominent teams in the region several times.¹⁹

Famous barnstorming teams like the Buffalo Germans or the New York Wanderers are sometimes described as important proselytizers for professional basketball. Purveyors of the Barnstormer Thesis tend to argue that 1) barnstorming teams spread the idea of professional basketball around the country, and 2) that these teams frequently took advantage of inexperienced local amateurs, perhaps brought together only for that purpose. True as they may have been in some cases, neither assumption is particularly

¹⁸ East Liverpool Tribune, December 1, 1903 (quote). ¹⁹ East Liverpool Tribune, December 2, 1903 (quote). ⁴/16/04.
germane to the case of East Liverpool. The first point tends to de-emphasize the more salient fact that few people in urban areas of any size by 1900 needed to be introduced to the idea that people would pay money to watch skilled athletes. The second tends to forget that there must have been plenty of teams around the country like the East Liverpool Five for the Buffalo Germans or the New York Wanderers to have even bothered putting together a tour of dozens of them; there were certainly plenty of them in the steel and coal fields of western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio already. Furthermore, despite the obvious excitement and notoriety a visit from one of these teams generated, East Liverpool’s biggest games and biggest rivalries remained regional. South Side still brought out the biggest crowds.\footnote{East Liverpool Tribune, 3/24/05, 3/31/05, 4/5/05.}

For a brief period in the fall of 1905, it looked as if there would be not one but several 1905-06 teams. Manager Gallimore, Allison, and Dick Watkin went back to the YMCA to field a team under their auspices, and Powell and Bloor initially agreed to play for a team managed by local clothier Lyman Rinehart that planned to play at the new Sixth Street roller skating rink. A new financial backer, Adolph Abrams, engineered a partial reunion of the two camps under new manager Orlando Booton (Allison opted not to come back, and Rigby had enrolled at Ohio State University; Cartwright wound up playing only sporadically). Several new faces from the East Liverpool youth leagues were added, most notably Tom Watkin’s cousin Dick and Bill Powell’s brother Earl, and the new East Liverpool Five began the season at the new Sixth Street rink. This new arrangement

\footnote{Applin, “Muscular Christianity,” p. 110; Peterson, From Cages to Jump Shots, pp. 32-45.}
proved to have both an upside and a downside. The rink's shape provided more sensible sightlines than the old floor at the foot of a vaudeville theater. On the other hand, the temporary bleachers proved to be under-engineered; they collapsed — twice — under the weight of fans at a January 30 game against Conshohocken. Fans took it in stride; they stayed, and stood, for the remainder of the game.21

Seats that collapse, and fans that don't mind, were emblematic of the eclectic, sometimes ad hoc nature of small-time sport entrepreneurship, which the East Liverpool Five typified in these years. They played a wide variety of teams — amateurs, professionals, colleges, barnstormers — in a wide variety of facilities under a wide variety of conditions. Some floors had cages, some did not. Floor sizes varied infinitely. Even the rules used were subject to negotiation. Most of their games, in fact, were played by two sets of rules: the AAU amateur rules in one half (which limited dribbling and rewarded quickness), so-called "National" professional rules in the other (which allowed unlimited dribbling and rewarded brute force). This often led to two very different styles of play in the same game. East Liverpool, generally lighter and quicker than most of their opponents, tended to play better under amateur rules. Some nights would begin with preliminary games by local youth teams. Some nights would end with banquets and festivities conducted by the host team. The East Liverpool basketball five thrived under these conditions well enough that by the end of 1906 they claimed for themselves the

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21 East Liverpool Tribune, 10/3/05, 10/4/05, 10/31/05, 11/14/05, 11/21/05, 1/17/06, 1/31/06.
mythic Championship of Ohio, despite the fact that most of their games were against Pennsylvania teams. 22

All of this, majestically indefensible championship claim included, was characteristic of the aggressively entrepreneurial nature of basketball in its early years. The top traveling teams frequently billed themselves “World Champions” based on one tournament win or another, sometimes years in the past, or won with an entirely different lineup. The Buffalo Germans and New York Wanderers, for example, both billed themselves this way. Eclectic scheduling – amateurs playing pros, both of them playing colleges – was also common in the early days of the game, when teams by and large took the competition they could find. This eclecticism continued until every level of team had enough competitors of their own type in a given region to be content amongst themselves. Only then did rules, schedules, and styles of play among the three break cleanly with one another. As an openly professional team, the East Liverpool Five were not necessarily any more or any less entrepreneurial in the broad sense than they had been the previous two or three years. Only their goal had changed. The best spectacle for the most paying customers, rather than competitive success for its own sake, was now the East Liverpool Five’s primary entrepreneurial goal.

Something else new crept into the East Liverpool Five in 1905-6 as a result, however, foreshadowing the changes to come when East Liverpool would enter a formal professional league. New manager Orlando Booton (who was the sports editor of the East Liverpool Review by day) announced his intention to “build up a championship team

22 East Liverpool Tribune, 4/13/06, 4/30/06.
and he will not stop at any legitimate expense to do it," by which he meant the hiring of established professional players from out of town. He began the season by attempting, though failing, to hire a former member of the Buffalo Germans. By the end of the season he had hired several out-of-town players, the most important of whom were Billy Keenan and Frank Smith, who were in the area with the Conshohocken barnstormers and agreed to stay with East Liverpool when Conshohocken disbanded at the beginning of February. Keenan and Smith were both experienced professionals; Keenan had led the Philadelphia professional league in field goals the previous season. When the papers crowed again at the end of 1906 about the East Liverpool Five, mythical Champions of Ohio four years running, the team which represented the ability of East Liverpool in the minds of sports fans was somewhat less East Liverpudlian than it had ever been before.24

In the fall of 1906, a group of entrepreneurs in the Pittsburgh area, including representatives of East Liverpool and several of the teams they played regularly, met in Pittsburgh and decided to form a full-fledged professional league with unified rules, scheduling, and business practices. With the possible exception of Pittsburgh South Side, these teams all represented cities similar to East Liverpool: small, single-industry cities on or near the Ohio River. The East Liverpool representative was C.A. Smith, who assumed ownership of the team, now dubbed the "Potters," and returned them to Rock Springs Park, where he reassembled the basketball cage with new seating arrangements to include a private box for himself above one basket. Other league franchises were Pittsburgh

24 East Liverpool Tribune, 1/12/06.
South Side, the Homestead Young Americans, the Greensburg "Tubers," the McKeesport "Majestics," and Butler, Pennsylvania. A 30-game season was scheduled, the "National" professional rules were adopted, and play began in the middle of October.  

The Central League opened the season by luring talent away from established leagues with higher salaries. Although only two teams – East Liverpool and Greensburg – began the season with squads consisting mostly of out-of-town players, other teams gradually followed suit, and roster raids on teams in the Philadelphia league (the only other league operating concurrently) and on other established teams all over the east coast began in the fall and continued to take place throughout the year. New faces appeared in team lineups almost until the end of the season, and managers hopped eastbound trains with monotonous regularity to scout potential acquisitions. Although financial records do not survive, salaries were reported to be high by eastern standards. Besides demonstrating the difficulty one professional league had surviving in the face of raids from another without some kind of over-arching agreement between them (like baseball's National Agreement), this resulted in a similar phenomenon everywhere in the league: teams less and less made up of local talent, and more and more made up of hired hands. C.A. Smith and team manager William Hocking were no exceptions, abandoning some of their local talent and augmenting themselves with (relatively) high-priced Eastern professionals. At the beginning of the year, only Bill Powell, his brother Earl, and Billy Cartwright were

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24 East Liverpool Tribune, 11/14/05, 1/12/06, 1/17/06, 2/8/06, 2/10/06, 4/30/06; Reach Official Basket Ball Guide 1905-06 (Philadelphia: A.J. Reach & Co., 1905), pp. 32-40.  
25 Peterson, Cages to Jump Shots, pp. 49-51, 185; Applin, pp. 110-114; East Liverpool Tribune, 9/29/06; Barth, History of Columbiana County, p. 312.
native to East Liverpool. The rest of the team was made up of experienced professionals from the eastern leagues: Billy Keenan, lured away from Conshohocken the year before; Joe Fogarty; Ed Ferat; “Snake” Deal; John Pennino; and William Kincaide.\textsuperscript{26}

Management continued the process throughout the year, with little remorse. Nothing symbolizes this better than the firing of local hero Bill Powell in November. Powell, an original member of the team in the YMCA days (joining when he was just a teenager), had developed into one of East Liverpool’s top athletes in any sport. In addition to the basketball talent which made him an obvious choice to play in the new league, he was the city’s finest baseball player, having played professionally in a series of minor leagues; in 1909 he reached the majors and had the proverbial cup of coffee (84.2 IP over four years) in the National League. He was initially considered an integral part of the new franchise; he attended the charter meeting as one of East Liverpool’s representatives and was named captain.\textsuperscript{27}

Almost immediately, however, he clashed with management over playing time for his brother Earl, whose basketball gifts were less manifest. When Hocking released Earl for poor play, Will told management to re-hire his brother or he would quit. Hocking called his bluff. “Snake” Deal, another former Conshohocken player, was immediately hired to replace him in the lineup. Will (and his brother) found employment with an independent team in Canton for a month or so before filtering back into the Central

\textsuperscript{27} East Liverpool Tribune, 10/1/06, 1/30/07; The Baseball Encyclopedia, 8th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1990), p. 2134.
League with Greensburg. Earl’s career never blossomed, but Will remained a force in the league for several years with several different teams. Not only were the East Liverpool Potters no longer made up of East Liverpool players, but East Liverpool’s best player now played elsewhere in the league, and visited town as an opponent. With the Powells gone, Billy Cartwright became the only local player on the team for the remainder of the season, and his role was limited. Management continued their efforts to hire new talent the entire season. John Pennino, a starter by the end of the season, was not even hired until the end of January.28

These new and improved East Liverpool Potters cut a swath through the Central League. The season opened with pageantry and fanfare. The mayor emceed the first home game, introducing the players, announcing to the crowd in a brief speech that “all the civility and decorum customary in a first class theatre was expected” – by which he meant, apparently, no hats for women and no spitting for men – and (unsuccessfully) throwing up the first jump ball. East Liverpool overwhelmed Butler, 50-25, in front of a crowd of 1000. It was a typical night for the Potters. Crowds and fan interest were solid all season, especially against perennial rival South Side (who they now played six times instead of four). Hundreds of fans sometimes accompanied the team to big road games; fans brought bells, whistles, and noisemakers to games; city newspapers promoted them shamelessly. The Potters finished 22-8 and won the inaugural Central League season by five games. The season was successful enough financially that the decision was made to extend it by twenty games, and a “second season” was cobbled together for April. The

28 East Liverpool Tribune, 11/19/06.
second season was much less lucrative, at least in East Liverpool; at one point
management threatened to discontinue their participation if attendance did not pick up
This second season was won by South Side, East Liverpool coming in a somewhat
disinterested second. "None of the teams," the Tribune claimed, "with the exception of
South Side, appears to make any effort to play basket ball in the post season series."
suggesting that the financial interests of South Side were what really spurred the extra
games. An attempt to put together a post-post-season championship series between South
Side and East Liverpool fell apart due to a combination of squabbling over officials and
disinterest on the East Liverpool end. The Potters celebrated their half-championship by
borrowing two South Side players and taking a barnstorming tour of the east.²⁹

The league's inaugural season impressed eastern basketball critics – "Editor
Scheffer [of the Philadelphia Press] says that this league is the fastest professional league
ever known and that the highest salaries known to the game were paid its players" – but
the instability often inherent in this sort of entrepreneurial endeavor showed itself as early
as the beginning of the second season. Ownership in McKeesport initially backed out on
the grounds that they could not afford the salaries necessary to compete. The league
responded by giving a McKeesport team to new owners, at which time the old owners
(who had disbanded voluntarily) threatened to make trouble if they were not bought out
with a lump sum payment. (The league successfully ignored them.) An attempt to put a
new team in Uniontown fell apart when the owner of the new skating rink they hoped to

²⁹ Peterson, From Cages to Jump Shots, pp. 50-51; East Liverpool Tribune, 10/17/06, 11/27/06, 12/1/06,
12/3/06, 3/9/07, 3/30/07 (quote), 4/1/07; Reach Official Basket Ball Guide 1907-08 (Philadelphia: A.J.
play in refused to shut down his roller skating early on game nights. Once again, team rosters fluctuated all season, as managers continued to shop eastern professional teams for talent. Rather than attempting another awkward split-season schedule, the league doubled the number of games to be played over the course of a single season.  

East Liverpool’s team was essentially the same as the year before. They arrived in town late, out of shape, and out of practice— “Their condition is apparent to everyone. After a few minutes of fast work they are winded” – and started a poor 2-5. Once back in shape, however, the Potters were again the class of the league; indeed, they outclassed it. The Potters tore through the schedule with even more ease than the year before, finishing a ridiculous 53-19, 11 games in front of South Side, the only other team to finish over .500. This was too much success, and the gate receipts showed it. Only games against South Side attracted significant crowds, in part because only South Side offered significant competition. Playing more games a week than the year before did not help. What had been a viable business proposition at 30 or so games a season was clearly much less viable at twice that. By February, it was clear that the best team in the league was producing the least money. League officials talked of moving the team to Steubenville or Canton. Once the Potters clinched the league championship (before the end of February), attendance was so meager that management moved the team to Beaver Falls for a few games, though attendance was no better there, so they almost immediately moved back. After their second straight championship, the Potters headed east for a month or so of

Reach & Co., 1907, pp. 26-41.

East Liverpool Tribune, 10/8/07 (quote), 10/10/07, 10/19/07, 10/25/07, 10/31/07.
barnstorming and disbanded; C.A. Smith liquidated his interest in the team. The following year, East Liverpool’s players were split between two new franchises, Johnstown and Uniontown.  

East Liverpool now had its second straight Central League championship and no team. This was appropriately ironic given the path basketball had followed in the city over the past five or so years. What began as part of the YMCA’s program of physical work became part of the Rock Springs Park stable of commercial amusements. A team of “East Liverpool Champions,” made up of actual East Liverpudlians winning dubious championships, became a team of “East Liverpool Champions,” winning genuine championships but made up of dubious East Liverpudlians.

East Liverpool basketball supporters did manage to field a new Central League franchise in 1908–9, owned by local clothier Lyman Rinehart (who, you may recall, planned to organize a team in 1905 until Abrams and Booton put the original Five back together for one more year). This was noble but unwise. Without any returning players, manager Otto Powell (brother of Bill and Earl) had to start from scratch. He did not sign his first four players until ten days before the season began; they did not arrive in town until two days before. The fact that one of them was the legendary Sandy Shields of the New York Wanderers, once one of the greatest players in the country, was a good sign. The fact that the 5’10” Shields arrived in town weighing 200 lbs. was not. “The owners

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31 East Liverpool Tribune, 11/20/07, 11/30/07, 12/12/07, 1/2/08, 1/25/08, 1/28/08, 1/30/08, 2/22/08, 3/2/08, 3/21/08, 4/21/08; Peterson, From Cages to Jump Shots, pp. 50-52; Reach Official Basketball Guide 1908-09 (Philadelphia: A.J. Reach & Co., 1908), pp. 37-41.
are not predicting any pennant winner from this city,” said the Tribune, “but they do say that the team will be well to the front.”32

Alas. The new Potters split their first two games. They won their second game a week later against Greensburg. On the second of February, the East Liverpool Potters were a stomach-churning 4-42.33

Nothing helped. The corpulent Shields was fired at Christmas and made a league referee. Rinehart fired Powell and managed himself. The local press did what it could to help out. “The team has been greatly strengthened,” the Tribune said on December 28 (record: 3-23), “and there is every reason in the world to believe that the five will taste the sweets of victory tonight.” They lost twelve more times before their next, and last, win. Rinehart’s continuous efforts to find new eastern talent who might be able to help produced only a heroic rate of roster turnover. When the Philadelphia professional league collapsed in January after two and a half years of player raids, the basketball labor market became total chaos. By the middle of the season, two or perhaps three entire Potter teams had come and gone.34

On February 2, at 4-42, Rinehart gave up. He fired every player currently on hand except one. He replaced them, not with more eastern professionals, but with local players from the East Liverpool youth leagues. “Although it is hardly expected that they will win,” said the Tribune, “it is certain that they will be able to put up as good an exhibition as the men who have just left, and their appearance will lend fresh interest to the game and

32 East Liverpool Tribune, 9/16/08, 10/30/08 (quote), 10/31/08, 11/9/08.
33 East Liverpool Tribune, 1/10/08, 1/11/08, 2/12/09.
will be the drawing card of the evening.”35 For a few surreal weeks, the city that once saw its best amateur basketball players become successful professionals now saw its best amateur basketball players dismantled by them. On the other hand, Rinehart, like most clever marketers, had a point: they were hardly much worse than the team they replaced. “Every team that goes against the ‘kids,’ as they call the Potters, expects to run up a score of a hundred or more, but the way the little fellows make them play to win gives the best of them a scare before the game is over.”36 Fan interest and enthusiasm was boosted temporarily as fans came to see how the locals would fare, but, like most gimmicks, this one had no legs. At the end of February, the franchise moved to Alliance, Ohio for the rest of the season, where they lost their final ten games to finish 4-67.

An East Liverpool professional basketball game was designed and marketed as a (theoretically) profitable commercial recreation; it therefore needs to be considered not just as a sporting event, but also as a spectator experience. And as a spectator experience, a Potter basketball game was something less than genteel. A basketball game played by professionals on a caged floor under National rules was an extraordinarily rough affair. The caged floor meant the ball was always in play, games stopped only for fouls, baskets, or extracurricular matters like injuries or fights. The chicken wire and wooden posts which made up the cage at most venues frequently took chunks out of careless or

34 East Liverpool Tribune, 12/29/88 (quote), 1/20/09.
35 East Liverpool Tribune, 2/2/09.
unfortunate players; playing your man into the cage was often as useful a tactic as playing the ball off of it. National rules provided for unlimited dribbling, and lenient local referees generally provided unlimited prerogative for players wishing to dribble around or through their defender. Even if played cleanly, games played under these conditions tended toward force rather than grace.

Clean play does not seem to have been a primary characteristic of the region’s professional basketball, either before or after the advent of the Central League. “Slugging” as a strategic tactic was commonplace; games frequently devolved into fights, wrestling matches, or worse, as one might expect from this kind of intensity within this kind of proximity. Some games were stopped repeatedly to care for or remove injured players. Games were sometimes compared in roughness to football (in an era when college football was occasionally fatal) or worse. “For rough playing and slugging,” a 1906 game against Greensburg “...was the equal of a football game and at times resembled a Mexican bull fight.” At one point the referee declared a two-minute truce to allow everyone to calm down. A March 1907 game against South Side sent the Pittsburgh Dispatch running to the metaphor bin. “In comparison... football resembled an animated game of dominoes.” Fighting during a 1906 game in Canton was severe enough that a post-game police escort was necessary to protect the East Liverpool Five from the irate Canton crowd. Frequent ejections, suspensions, and injuries, major and minor, were the predictable consequences of all this, though they seemed to have little deterrent effect.37

36 East Liverpool Tribune, 2/16/09.
37 East Liverpool Tribune, 2/23/06, 12/14/06 (quote), 3/21/07 (quote).
Under conditions like these, a cage around the floor sometimes proved a prescient safeguard of public safety. During a 1907 game against South Side at Rock Springs Park, a group of over-enthusiastic and over-protective fans “rushed up to the cage and attempted to strike one of the South Siders through the netting for what they considered unnecessary roughness on his part.” Not that the Potters needed help protecting themselves from “unnecessary” roughness; they had plenty of practice. The following year, a South Side visit to Rock Springs grew so contentious that Bill Keenan attempted at one point to punch a hectoring South Side fan (the previous year’s team manager) through the cage. In Homestead, where the Young Americans played on a floor without a cage, fights between players and fans occasionally did break out. Eddie Ferat once drew a game suspension for attacking a Homestead fan attempting to interfere with an out-of-bounds play; Powell (then with Greensburg) dislocated his shoulder a month later doing the same. (Powell, both with East Liverpool and when he moved on to other teams in the Central League, seems to have been particularly contentious.) This kind of roughness was evidently what some fans paid to see. “The playing was pretty rough in spots,” said the *Tribune* of a 1906 game against McKeesport which had to be stopped occasionally to permit the removal of injured players, “but after all it was just the kind of game the 33rd degree fan likes to see.”

The 33rd degree fan also enjoyed a friendly wager. Gambling was an integral part of the festivities for many fans. An estimated $5000 changed hands (in a crowd of 2000) in a 45-26 victory over South Side in November of 1906, including a last-minute $500 bet

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38 East Liverpool *Tribune*, 1/13/06 (quote), 3/23/07 (quote), 1/2/08, 12/18/06, 1/21/07.
on East Liverpool sent in by the Homestead Young Americans (a bet large enough to shift the odds just before gametime). Speculative interest seems to have peaked against South Side just as general fan interest did, but gambling was clearly common no matter who the opponent. Nor was it necessary to bet only on the game’s outcome. Much of the betting on one March 1906 game revolved around a single defensive matchup. The speculative interest in games (not to mention the betting done by players as well as fans) often led to accusations that certain games were thrown, fixed, or otherwise less than square.

Suspicions ran particularly high when prominent barnstormers like the New York Nationals came through the region and played poorly; three East Liverpool fans were rumored in 1906 to have made $80 betting on a South Side-Tamaqua contest the South Siders were allegedly “slated” to win. Accusations of shady play did not always revolve around money. Some in Pittsburgh accused East Liverpool of tanking games against the Young Americans in 1907 in an attempt to keep South Side out of second place. As with most other spectator sport in the period, gambling and fixing were simultaneously integral to and potentially destructive of professional basketball’s appeal to fans.39

Even without pugilistic or criminally suspect play, the ordinary experience of watching one of these contests was a boisterous and participatory one. Contemporary critics of commercialized athletics often attacked the passivity they believed inherent in watching (as opposed to participating in) sporting events. East Liverpool Five fans would not have understood. Bells, whistles, and sundry other noisemaking aids frequently accompanied fans into the arena to supplement the shouting, stamping, and other natural

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39 East Liverpool Tribune, 11/28/06, 3/22/06, 2/5/06 (quote), 1/28/07.
forms of enthusiasm available to the ordinary sporting crowd. Enthusiasm sometimes spilled out of the arena and into the streets following significant victories. East Liverpool's first-ever victory over South Side in 1906 led to a post-game celebration in the streets of the city with fireworks, firearms, and other forms of conspicuous town-waking. Crowds that attempted to claw through the cage to attack opposing players may have been exceptional, but so were crowds that failed to express any enthusiasm at all. Even as attendance began to slip in the spring of 1907, games against South Side still drew large, loud, and conspicuously active crowds.  

Roughness, gambling, and crowd boisterousness suggest that these games were primarily a male cultural arena. Occasional attempts were made, both in East Liverpool and in other cities in the Central League, to modify the spectator experience so as to attract more female patrons. The fact that this attempt usually required, among other things, demanding that spectators refrain from spitting on the floor gives some idea of the futility of this exercise. As early as 1903, "ladies" attending an amateur game at the YMCA were "disturbed by the terrible noise made by enthusiastic fans with horns and cow bells" — this for a city youth league championship game, not even the East Liverpool Five. It is difficult to imagine large numbers of turn-of-the-century women frequenting on a regular basis the sort of environment provided by the East Liverpool Five. Nevertheless, the team was clearly considered enough of a civic institution that it had a degree of what might be called, for lack of a better phrase, public respectability. Opening day each year involved a public parade through the streets of town and a pre-game speech from the

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40 Peterson, Cages to Jump Shots, pp. 56-61.
mayor. Team successes were trumpeted in the daily papers, sometimes right next to stories detailing police attempts to clamp down on local saloons or raid gambling emporiums.41

Several currently prominent characterizations of popular culture in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era like to distinguish between distinctively middle-class and working-class forms of public recreation.42 Although the relative lack of ethnic factors in East Liverpool’s class structure combined with the fairly high percentage of skilled workers in the pottery industry make East Liverpool a slightly less obvious example, athletic contests like professional basketball are clearly a poor fit in a dichotomous class analysis of commercial recreation. The character of basketball as spectacle and of the basketball crowd as a public gathering was clearly less than genteel – an often violent, occasionally bloody game played in a cage before a screaming crowd full of hons, noisemakers, and bookies. Yet it strains credulity to believe that these crowds did not contain significant numbers of people who must be considered middle class – the fans able to afford train excursions to follow the team on the road, the clerks and office workers for whom game times were changed, the doctors, lawyers, and other prominent citizens willing to host team events, the YMCA origins of the whole enterprise.

The class makeup of a crowd is almost impossible to determine, even with the best information. The behavior of one, however, is more easily analyzed, and here it seems safe to say we have at least some middle-class people behaving publicly in ways generally

41 Peterson, Cages to Jump Shots, pp. 50-51; East Liverpool Daily Crisis, 3/21/03 (quote).
labeled “working class” by historians. The breakdown of this dichotomy is a key element of the development of a mass consumer culture in the twentieth century. This process is sometimes described in terms of a homogenization of alternative and working-class cultures into a larger (and, to some, oppressive or hegemonic) middle-class consumer culture. Consumer sport spectacles suggest a portion of this process ran in the other direction – the legitimation of un-genteel behavior by middle-class people in public places under certain circumstances. This went on in a multitude of places as seemingly insignificant as East Liverpool, Ohio.⁴³

This is not to suggest that the Rock Springs basketball cage was a favorite stomping ground of the city’s hoi polloi. Clearly, however, professional team sports in East Liverpool supported a higher level of status and acceptance than other activities or amusements at which these sorts of boisterous behaviors would be considered typical. They were not outlawed like boxing or hidden like cockfighting. It is no accident that commercially organized team athletics were frequently associated from a business standpoint with amusement parks, which were dedicated to breaking down the same cultural barriers.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the East Liverpool Five were not characteristic of the moral and social goals of instrumental sport from which basketball initially sprang. Indeed, the East

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Liverpool Five were the very antithesis of instrumental sport, the very kind of commercial spectacle Progressives wished to excise from urban culture. Entrepreneurial enterprises which packaged roughness, violence, gambling, and displays of over-excitement for public consumption were what instrumental sport was intended to offer an alternative to. Professional athletes who profited from roughness and gambling were the very characters the AAU and other proponents of amateurism considered threats to "clean" sport. The East Liverpool Five were a concise and telling example of basketball turned to ends different than those for which it was intended.

Over a span of ten years, basketball as played at its highest level in East Liverpool underwent a pattern of development characteristic not just of basketball as a whole in the same period, but also of the development of other successful team sports in modern American society. What began as an element of the city's YMCA athletic program, designed at least in theory to offer men morally and spiritually wholesome alternatives to the seedy recreational temptations of the industrial city, became one of the city's most prominent recreational temptations. At no point in the process did one outlook completely overwhelm the other. In fact, as the East Liverpool Five became less about the recreation of its players and more about the recreation of its fans, basketball the original YMCA way continued to flourish throughout the city, in youth leagues, the neighborhood teams that challenged one another to contests behind the local grocery store, and at the

YMCA itself. The extent of the divergence was made clear in 1909, when Lyman Rinehart sent the local heirs of one tradition into the Elite rink to do fruitless battle with the other.

The demographic of the city was unable to sustain over the long term what the East Liverpool Five created. Nor was the Central League itself much more stable; it folded by 1912. During its brief tenure, however, professional basketball in East Liverpool was briefly characteristic of the small-time, sport entrepreneurism entirely typical of the spread of professional athletics in the United States: commercial recreation with simultaneous local, regional, and national cultural ramifications, sustained by local boosterism and entrepreneurial zeal as mush as by sensible economics.
CHAPTER 4

MAJOR COLLEGE, MINOR SPORT: MEN’S VARSITY BASKETBALL AT FOUR BIG-TIME UNIVERSITIES

Highly competitive intercollegiate athletics were an established fact at most major colleges and universities at the turn of the twentieth century. At the most aggressive and successful of these schools, intercollegiate athletics were already, in terms of the resources they absorbed from players, coaches, and alumni, the revenue they generated, and the impact they had on the world outside campus, something much more than either simple extracurricular activities or purely amateur athletic contests. They were already "big-time"—commodified athletic activities which resided in a sort of untenable nether category between amateur and professional, between extracurricular activity and commercial spectacle. They claimed for themselves a commitment to amateurism and an educational role within the university, but in fact existed as semi-professionalized sport spectacles with only tenuous connections to the educational missions of the institutions
they represented. The most important of these intercollegiate sports was football, which at the nation’s largest and most prestigious universities had grown into a large and lucrative public spectacle. Other intercollegiate sports – primarily baseball, track athletics and, on the east coast, rowing – while less lucrative financially, were no less important to the calculus of athletic prestige which increasingly preoccupied students, alumni, and a growing audience of generalized fans around the country. Together these sports made up what became known as the “major” varsity sports. Despite an ongoing debate at the turn of the century as to whether or not varsity intercollegiate athletics, especially football, should be either reformed or discontinued entirely, the “major” varsity sports were nevertheless stable and well-entrenched institutions at most major American colleges and universities.¹

As basketball spread as an intercollegiate varsity sport, it spread within the context of this established system of college athletics. It was sometimes a strangely difficult context. Like many entrenched interests, especially entrenched interests which consider themselves under attack, “big-time” intercollegiate athletic programs were often protective of their resources and suspicious of sharing them with new teams and sports. In addition, established systems of athletic management and control at these schools, which differed from institution to institution, sometimes proved ambivalent or hostile to the

encroachment of what came to be called "minor sports." Often, minor sports emerged and survived solely through the entrepreneurial efforts of their athletes and student managers. This entrepreneurship was often of a peculiar type, an entrepreneurship not of financial gain or sociological vision but of institutional prestige. Examining the establishment and development of varsity basketball at four major athletic universities at the turn of the century also demonstrates the degree to which the spread of basketball at the intercollegiate level was neither uncontested nor inevitable. At Yale, perhaps the most aggressive and successful athletic university in the country, basketball established itself quickly, but nonetheless remained a "minor" sport, separate from the campus prestige – and the profit-sharing – of the four majors. At the University of Chicago, where intercollegiate athletic success was an explicit institutional goal under the guidance of tenured faculty, basketball became another avenue for the exhibition of its collected undergraduate athletic talent. At Harvard, where athletic success was highly esteemed by some members of the educational community and viewed with suspicion by others, varsity basketball was inhibited, and ultimately sacrificed, for the protection of major-sport prerogatives. At Columbia, one of the few major universities to experiment with the abolition of intercollegiate football, varsity basketball developed in football's absence into an important and (relatively) prestigious athletic institution.

Nowhere was big-time intercollegiate athletics more a part of the campus culture and public image of a college or university than at Yale. Yale was, in the 1890s, the
nation's standard-bearer of comprehensive intercollegiate athletic success. Yale athletic teams dominated their opposition on the track, field, and river; newspapers featured them in their expanding sports pages; large numbers of people proved willing to pay for the privilege of watching them compete; large amounts of money flowed through Yale athletic coffers as a result. The vast majority of this interest and activity revolved around football, which by the 1890s had established itself as the nation's primary intercollegiate athletic spectacle. Major college football games drew thousands of spectators and extensive press coverage; the biggest games grew so large as to move off campus and into the realm of commercial spectacle, such as the annual Thanksgiving Day game played in New York City between (most years) Yale and Princeton, which drew 30-40,000 fans by the early 1890s. Yale was the dominant football team and, along with Harvard and Princeton, the largest spectator attraction in these years. Yale's record between 1880, the first year they played on Thanksgiving Day in New York, and 1896, the last year they did so, was 178-5-6.2

This state of affairs was due largely to the organizational skills and promotional efforts of Walter Camp, father of American football, primary evangelist of its rise to favor with the American sporting public, and architect of the nation's first collegiate athletic dynasty. Under the guidance of Camp, college football grew from a quirky adaptation of English rugby into the most important American collegiate sport, and football at Yale grew into a defining attribute of the university in the minds of many Americans. The

financial scale of intercollegiate athletics, at Yale and elsewhere, grew correspondingly. In 1897-98, the four major sports at Yale took in $55,638.82, over $40,000 of it generated by football.\(^3\)

Yale’s overwhelming athletic success in these years was often attributed by admirers to its laissez-faire system of athletic management and administration. Intercollegiate athletics at Yale were run, at least in theory, by the undergraduates themselves, with little to no direct oversight by faculty or administration. Team managers and assistant managers, elected annually at a mass meeting of Yale students, handled their team’s administrative issues and business affairs; team captains, elected by vote of the previous year’s team, handled player selection, team preparation, and affairs on the field. Although ultimately answerable to the faculty for their conduct (and for their academic performance), no formal organizational structure existed through which faculty could easily oversee or interfere with their activities. Camp presented himself to the public as an informal “advisor” to this system, primarily in the capacity of advisor to the football team. “Managers and captains are absolute in their power,” Camp wrote in 1901, “the rest of us bearing ourselves with proper modesty and decorum in offering here and there bits of advice.”\(^4\)

Camp’s public stance was misleading, however, for Yale athletics in the 1890s were very much his personal fiefdom, and would largely remain so until the 1910s. In

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1892, at Camp’s behest, the finances of the four major sports were consolidated under the control of a committee called the Yale Financial Union. The Financial Union consisted of the four major-sport managers and the treasurer of the Yale Field Corporation, a private organization which owned Yale’s athletic fields and facilities. The treasurer of the Yale Field Corporation was also treasurer of the Financial Union, and had final approval of its transactions. Camp, of course, was the treasurer of the Yale Field Corporation, and through this roundabout arrangement Camp controlled the flow of money through Yale athletics. This financial consolidation allowed him to support the other three sports with football’s surplus revenue (both track and crew generally ran deficits, though baseball usually did not), to rationalize the purchasing of supplies and other matters of day-to-day business, and to manage the accumulated annual surpluses, which he called the “reserve fund,” as he saw fit. In 1901, the Yale Field Corporation turned Yale Field over to the university, at which time Treasurer of Yale Field became a university-appointed position. Camp drew a salary of $3000 from Yale in this capacity, part of it paid out of Financial Union funds, part of it paid by Yale proper.¹

¹ Camp and Welch, *Yale, Her Campus, Class-Rooms, and Athletics*, pp. 452-57; Borkowski, “The Life and Contributions of Walter Camp to American Football”, *Smith, Sports and Freedom*, pp. 121-23 (Camp quoted on p. 122)

² This convoluted organizational arrangement made Camp “czar” of Yale athletics without actually saying so in the constitution of the Financial Union (or, for that matter, anywhere else). It also made Camp’s constant contention that he was never a “paid coach” for Yale technically true – he was paid as treasurer of Yale Field – though laughable in any kind of realistic sense. Throughout this period Camp held a day job at the New Haven Clock Company; he was made company president in 1903. Untitled document in Walter Camp Papers, reel 19, #502-503; Borkowski, “The Life and Contributions of Walter Camp to American Football,” pp. 71-74, 177-185. See pp. 454-57 of *Yale, Her Campus, Class-Rooms, and Athletics* for Camp’s description of the “czar principle” in Yale athletics; he is talking, obliquely but unmistakably, about himself.
Other intercollegiate sports at Yale, however, were on their own, receiving little attention and no financial support from Camp or the Financial Union. Ironically, this made them vastly more “student-run” than the four majors, as they were genuinely forced to fend for themselves. As Yale students began broadening their intercollegiate athletic interests in the last decade of the 19th and the first decade of the 20th centuries, campus promoters of new sports were neither encouraged nor suppressed by Camp. The relative status of these new sports within the Yale community, however, is suggested by what they came to be known: the minor sports. Such was Yale basketball in the 1890s.

Basketball was first introduced into Yale gymnasium classes in the winter of 1894-95. By the following year, a “representative” team had been organized to face outside competition. As few other New England colleges had yet taken up the game, games were arranged with YMCA teams, National Guard regiments, and athletic clubs. Spectators numbered no more than a few hundred a game, at least in New Haven; one free exhibition game was played in an effort to raise campus interest in the team. While the new Yale basketball team did not draw from the resources of the Financial Union, neither were its managers inhibited in the pursuit of their own entrepreneurial arrangements (they were, however, limited somewhat in their access to the gymnasium). Under these circumstances, Yale Basketball paid for itself, just barely ($10.60 in the black), in its eight-game first season. Turned a majestic $10.60 profit in its eight-game first season. The following year, 1896-97, they played sixteen games, four against other colleges – Wesleyan, Trinity twice, and Pennsylvania – and the rest against a hodge-podge of the organizations and institutions which also took up basketball in the 1890s. Yale played as a
5-player, 7-player, and 9-player squad these first two years, depending on the preferences and/or gymnasium size of their competitors. Due to a football-related discontinuation of athletic relations in 1893, the game against Penn was the first athletic meeting between the two schools in over three years. About 800 spectators therefore came to watch Yale’s 32-10 victory, ending an 11-4-1 sophomore season. The *Yale Daily News’* backhanded promotion of this event, however, suggests the lack of prestige commanded by “minor sports” at Yale in the 1890s: “The relay race and the coming basket-ball game with the University of Pennsylvania, although both are far from important events, are yet the first athletic contests... at which Yale has met Pennsylvania for some years.”

The trajectory of varsity basketball at Yale over the next several years demonstrates the degree to which collegiate sport was often an entrepreneurial enterprise, even – perhaps especially – in the case of a student-run, self-supporting “minor” sport. In 1897-98, all but two of Yale’s fifteen games were played off-campus for financial reasons. Unable to survive financially by selling themselves within the Yale community, they sold themselves elsewhere as representatives of Yale athletic prowess. This included four games played in Philadelphia during Christmas vacation, the first of what became annual, and increasingly far-flung, Christmas trips. They played only one college (Trinity, twice) on the way to an 11-4 record. Between 1898 and 1901, Yale played as many as 15 games

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a season; their Christmas tours extended as far west as Fon Du Lac, Wisconsin and as far south as Washington D.C. They played 55 games total, most of them against non-collegiate teams and a few of them against teams which were plainly “professional” by the standards of the AAU. Although it is difficult to be sure in a period characterized by a still-changing game and an overabundance of “championship” claims made by even marginally successful teams, it is likely that such a schedule offered Yale some of the most competitive basketball in the country. Most of these games were played away from Yale. They demanded and received cash guarantees from host teams on their Christmas tours; the $200 Ohio State guaranteed them in 1900 and 1901 represented 35% and 44% of Ohio State’s basketball expenses for those seasons, respectively. The 22-6 and 36-5 defeats Yale handed them were nevertheless the highlights of both Ohio State seasons, simply because they had faced mighty Yale in some phase of college sport. “[T]here is but one conclusion,” the Ohio State Lantern told campus after the 1900 game, “and that is that the game was in reality a victory for purely amateur athletics, for Western student sports, and last, but not least, for the O.S.U. basket ball team.”

None of this activity was either supported or actively inhibited by Camp or the Financial Union. The limited available evidence suggests that Camp cared little for or about basketball one way or another in these years. The same seems true of “minor sports” in general. For example, Camp contributed 177 pages about Yale athletics to the

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1899 book *Yale, Her Campus, Class-Rooms, and Athletics*, a thorough (628 pp. total) and hagiographic social portrait of life at Yale. Sports other than the four majors occupied only eight pages, shunted into a vestigial chapter entitled “Outside Athletics.” (“There are but four main branches of athletics at Yale,” it began.) Basketball received two short paragraphs. In 1899, basketball team manager Winchester Noyes wrote Camp asking to meet and discuss the possibility of allowing basketball team members to wear “a Basketball cap the design of which we could arrange” in recognition of their year. Insignia, even lesser insignia like hats (as opposed to the “major” insignia, the varsity letter), were coveted markers of athletic prestige and campus status. The basketball team did not receive the right to wear hat insignia for several years.8

Nevertheless, they promoted and sustained themselves fairly successfully in these years. As Ohio State’s response to their visit suggests, they were more effective at positioning themselves as paragons of Yale athletic prowess away from campus than they were on it. Even their first year, when they generated little interest in New Haven, 1200 people saw them defeat the Brooklyn Central YMCA 8-7 at the Brooklyn 13th Regiment Armory. (Most of them booed and hissed Yale the whole way; they also menaced the Yale-friendly referee, who ejected two Brooklyn players for excessive roughness.) Their

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8 The basketball team did have the right to wear “Y B B” (or some years “B Y B”) on uniforms and sweaters – a lesser honor – at an earlier date; the earliest specific reference to such insignia I have found is in 1903. *Yale Daily News*, 3/17/03. Camp and Welch, *Yale, Her Campus, Class-Rooms, and Athletics*, esp. pp. 451-628 (quote p. 451); Winchester Noyes to Walter Camp, 3/13/99, Walter Camp Papers, reel 19, # 946 (quote); Minutes, Yale University Athletic Association, 11/3/13, Walter Camp Papers, reel 19, # 819. Minutes, Yale University Athletic Association, 12/7/14, Walter Camp Papers, reel 19, # 839.
competitive success, and the fact that they represented the nation’s pre-eminent athletic university, made them a good drawing card on the schedule of any other prominent team. Team member R.B. Hyatt claimed in later years that these Yale teams sometimes played in front of as many as 5000 spectators, often as unruly as those in Brooklyn; critics of their aggressive entrepreneurialism accused them of demanding guarantees well in excess of their expenses. Despite being denied the insignia, they aspired to the trappings, practices, and perks of “major” college sport as best they could. A team training table was established in 1898; the 1899 Christmas trip, thanks to the efforts of a well-connected Yale student, was undertaken in style, in a private railway car provided by the Wisconsin Central Railroad. It seems clear that these early Yale teams were among the best amateur (or perhaps “amateur” is more accurate) teams in the country. They became famous for their dribble-oriented style of play, and developed specialized strategies, signals, and set plays.\(^9\)

Despite the fact that their financial records do not survive, it seems equally clear that they were genuinely self-contained and self-sufficient financially, something that two of Yale’s four “major” sports, track and crew, were not. They were successful enough to be worth counterfeiting, at any rate. In the spring of 1902, after the completion of the regularly scheduled season, an unauthorized “Yale” basketball team, containing only two

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players actually from Yale (only one of whom had played on the real varsity), represented itself to teams in several midwestern cities as the "Yale" varsity on an Easter vacation tour. Their motive, as they admitted to the Indianapolis Journal after losing 59-1 to the Indianapolis YMCA, was "to do a little barnstorming during spring vacation without expense." Their embarrassing performance helps explain the vehemence with which Yale repudiated them once their exploits, for lack of a better phrase, became known. "Third-rate teams like this one ought not to be allowed outside of New Haven," complained an Indianapolis-area "Friend of Yale University," who appeared to be bothered more by the fact that they were third-rate than by the fact that they were profiteers. Another such counterfeit team popped up in 1905, playing an amateur team in Brooklyn. That such profiteering was worth attempting, however, suggests the degree to which presenting yourself to the public as a representative of Yale athletics could be a paying proposition, even in a "minor" sport.10

By 1901, enough eastern colleges had taken up the game at the varsity level to permit the formation of permanent intercollegiate leagues. Two leagues emerged for the 1902 season, the New England League (consisting of Yale, Harvard, Holy Cross, Amherst, Trinity, and Williams) and the Intercollegiate League (consisting of Yale, Harvard, Columbia, Cornell, and Princeton). Though Yale and Harvard were charter members of both organizations, insoluble scheduling conflicts forced them to choose one

10 On the 1902 "Yale" team, see Weyand, Cavalcade of Basketball, pp. 34-35; Indianapolis Journal, 4/6/02, 4/7/02, 4/8/02 (quote); Yale Daily News, 4/12/02 (quote), 4/14/02. On the 1905 "Yale" team, see New York Times, 2/2/05. For other circumstantial evidence of the financial health of Yale basketball, see, in addition to note 8, Yale Daily News, 12/15/00, 1/14/01, 1/15/01.
league or the other, and both chose the Intercollegiate League. In addition to providing frameworks for "championship" competition, these leagues standardized eligibility requirements and centralized scheduling among members, steps toward rationalization not yet achieved in the major sports on the east coast, where schools continued to function as autonomous fiefdoms responsible for their own scheduling arrangements and eligibility agreements with one another. Thanks in part to Yale's membership, the Intercollegiate League immediately became the standard-bearer organization of college basketball in the minds of many observers, at least in the east. Membership in the league gave Yale a regular annual schedule of on-campus games against other colleges.\footnote{11}

Yale won the first two Intercollegiate League championships, going 6-2 in league play in 1902 and 7-1 in 1903. A regular schedule of games on-campus, against prominent eastern collegiate rivals, made Yale basketball primarily an intercollegiate enterprise – and therefore primarily a commodity sold within Yale rather than outside it – for the first time. In addition, Yale continued to play an extensive schedule of other opponents. Most of these other opponents were also colleges, as basketball had by now spread widely enough as a varsity sport to make such a schedule feasible. Nevertheless, Yale basketball team managers continued to schedule a handful of games against non-collegiate opponents, and attendance figures suggest why. In February of 1902, about 600 spectators paid to see them defeat collegiate "über-rival" Harvard 34-21 at the Yale gymnasium; over a thousand spectators, however, had paid to see them in Utica, New York about ten days earlier.

where they defeated the non-collegiate, not-remotely-as-important-a-rival Hamilton team 40-5. They also continued their extensive Christmas tours, though the 1902-03 tour was canceled at the last minute when several of their scheduled opponents backed out. On the 1901-02 trip, Yale played Wisconsin and Minnesota, the first basketball games between “big-time” eastern and midwestern universities. (They defeated Wisconsin 35-20, but lost to Minnesota 29-23.) Minnesota, which won all 15 of its games that year against a strong schedule, was probably the best college team in the country in 1902, but in 1903, Yale lost only once (to Princeton) and claimed, probably correctly, to be the best college basketball team in the country. They were certainly the most prominent, even if that sometimes counted for more away from Yale than it did on campus.

At the University of Chicago, basketball underwent something of a false start. The first organized game on campus was played as part of a spring gymnasium exhibition in March of 1893, just over a year after the game was invented (and the first year of the university’s existence, founded in the fall of 1892 as an expression of educational philanthropy on the part of John D. Rockefeller). In 1894, a University of Chicago team compiled a 6-1 record against area YMCAs; the next year they formally joined the Chicago YMCA league. They remained in this league for three seasons (1895-97) and compiled a mediocre record. Few other colleges in the region had taken up the game, and Chicago therefore played only four games against another college team in these three
seasons, all of them against the University of Iowa. They left Chicago only once, in fact (for one of the games against Iowa, in 1896); a proposed trip to the east coast in the spring of 1896 to play eastern colleges, including Yale, was disallowed by the university. The sport generated relatively little interest on campus, and the team was disbanded after 1897 and not revived for seven years.\footnote{University of Chicago Weekly, 3/11/93, 12/13/94, 2/7/95, 2/28/95, 4/11/95, 4/18/95, 1/16/96, 1/23/96, 2/6/96, 2/20/96, 3/12/96; Basketball team records, 1895-1897, Department of Physical Education and Athletics records, Box 7, Folder 2, University of Chicago Archives (hereafter UCA); Weyand, Cavalcade of Basketball, p. 24; A.A. Stagg to B.J. Bernhard, 9/25/01, Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers, Box 64, Folder 2, UCA; A.A. Stagg to Grinnell Jones, 12/6/02, Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers, Box 64, Folder 2, UCA. Evidence exists that a game was scheduled in February of 1896 with a team from the University of Wisconsin, but I can find no evidence it actually took place. On the founding of the University of Chicago, see esp. Richard J. Storr, Harper's University: The Beginnings (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).}  

Basketball's rapid introduction at the University of Chicago is explained by the fact that the University of Chicago was the professional home of Amos Alonzo Stagg; its false start is explained at least in part by the system of intercollegiate athletics he constructed there. Stagg was, after Camp, the nation's most prominent steward of intercollegiate athletics, and under his management, Chicago's athletic program sought self-consciously to become the western Yale. Stagg had been a baseball and football star at Yale in the 1880s, where he gained national notoriety by declining to take his pitching talent into professional baseball in the belief that doing so would be un-Christian. He chose instead a career in muscular Christianity, much as James Naismith did. He was a colleague of Naismith's at the Springfield training school when Naismith invented basketball, and participated in many of the earliest games at Springfield. When William Rainey Harper, a Yale divinity professor, was made president of the new University of Chicago, one of his
first moves was to persuade Stagg to follow him to Chicago and take charge of athletics at the new institution. Intercollegiate athletic success was as central as intellectual distinction to Harper's vision of what the University of Chicago should be, and he therefore made Stagg an associate professor presiding over a centralized Division of Physical Culture and Athletics. Athletic administration, management, and coaching were a faculty rather than a student affair at Chicago, and the competitive success of Stagg's football, baseball, and track teams (crew was never popular in the midwest) was an explicit institutional priority. "I want you to develop teams which we can send around the country and knock out all the colleges," Harper told Stagg.\textsuperscript{13}

It is therefore no surprise that Stagg, a friend of Naismith's, introduced basketball to the University of Chicago very early, and likewise no surprise that Stagg permitted it to die when it proved neither very successful nor very intercollegiate. Despite the credit he is sometimes given for spreading the game and influencing its development, there is little evidence that Stagg was especially enthusiastic about basketball as a competitive sport, at least in these early years.\textsuperscript{14} His very first reaction to the game at Springfield, in fact, was

\textsuperscript{13} Lester, \textit{Stagg's University}, pp. 1-22 (Harper quoted p. 19). (Note that Lester has taken this quote from Stagg, in a letter between Stagg and a third party, and not from correspondence between Harper and Stagg.)

\textsuperscript{14} For example, Stagg is a member of the first class (1959) of the Basketball Hall of Fame. As of June 2009, his bio on the Basketball Hall of Fame website (www.hoopall.com/enshrinees) claims that "five-man basketball was the brainchild of Amos Alonzo Stagg," presumably on the basis that one of the 1896 games against Iowa (actually against the University of Iowa YMCA) was played with 5-player teams. Correspondence between Stagg and E.P. Ruggles of the Iowa YMCA, however, suggests that Iowa preferred 5-player teams, and Chicago 7-player teams; the game in Iowa was played 5-on-5, the game in Chicago 7-on-7. Chicago's other games in 1896 and 1897 were played with 7-player teams. (Yale also played games in 1896 with 5-player teams.) Biographies of Stagg, both popular and scholarly, tend to casually overstate Stagg's contribution to basketball in these years. See for example Ellis Lucia, \textit{Mr. Football: Amos Alonzo Stagg} (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1970), pp. 95-96, and Lester,
dismissive, although in a backhanded sort of way. "There is a great furor among the boys in the school over a new game which Naismith our center rusher invented, called basket foot ball," Stagg wrote to his sister in March of 1892. "I think the game could be easily adapted to girls – the main point being to get a basket as big as a house." The real basketball enthusiast in the family seems to have been Stagg's wife Stella, who played as a Chicago undergraduate in the 1890s (Stagg met her when she was a freshman). Efforts by other colleges to schedule basketball games with Chicago between 1898 and 1904 were rebuffed by Stagg on the grounds that, as he told a supplicant from Dartmouth in 1900, "[b]asketball is not played much in and about Chicago. A few years ago there was considerable interest in it among various Y.M.C.A's, this has died out. None of the colleges about here play the game."15

Basketball was renewed at Chicago in 1904 following the construction of a large new gymnasium on campus. The new Bartlett Gymnasium was designed primarily for the benefit of the university's established varsity athletes, and included state-of-the-art indoor track and baseball facilities. Nevertheless, the new building, along with the fact that many other midwestern colleges had finally taken up the game, compelled Chicago to return to competitive intercollegiate basketball. It did so systematically and strategically. The 1904 season was clearly designed as a preparatory year. Seven games were scheduled against Chicago high school and settlement house teams, and lopsided victories were the order of

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15 Stagg's University, pp. 101-2. E.P. Ruggles to A.A. Stagg, 12/7/95, A.A. Stagg to E.P. Ruggles, 1/3/96, Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers, Box 64, Folder 1. UCA, Yak Daily News, 2/29/96.
the day (with a single exception, a narrow 28-26 victory over Austin High School).

"Real" intercollegiate play returned in 1905, when Chicago posted a 9-3 record against a
schedule including Purdue, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Northwestern. That fall, a
Chicago joined Minnesota, Wisconsin, Purdue, and Illinois in forming the Western
Intercollegiate Basket Ball League to organize and regulate basketball relations between themselves, much as the major eastern universities had done a few years before.16

The re-establishment of basketball at Chicago was not shepherded primarily by
Stagg, but by his right-hand-man in the Division of Physical Culture and Athletics, Dr.
Joseph Raycroft. (Stagg was often not even on campus; he spent significant portions of
each winter convalescing at health spas and/or sanitariums, recuperating from his chronic
hip pain – and, no doubt, from the nervous strain of the football season – before returning
to campus to take charge of the baseball team.) Raycroft was one of Stagg's first
quarterbacks at Chicago; he stayed on after his collegiate career to become Stagg's
second-in-command in the Division of Physical Culture. Raycroft presided over Chicago athletics in Stagg's absence, and it is he, rather than Stagg, who most actively involved
himself in the development of intercollegiate basketball between 1904 and 1911, when he
became athletic director at Princeton. Raycroft organized Chicago's return to
intercollegiate basketball, represented Chicago to the Western League, became, in later

15 A.A. Stagg to Pauline Stagg (excerpt), 3/10/92, Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers, Box 64, Folder 1, UCA;
Lester, Stagg's University, p. 21; A.A. Stagg to F.S. Archibald, 11/10/00, Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers, Box 64, Folder 1, UCA; see also note 11, above.

16 Basketball team records, 1904, 1905, Department of Physical Education and Athletics records, Box 7, Folder 2, UCA; Chicago Daily Maroon, 1/25/05, 1/26/05, 1/27/05, 1/30/05, 2/6/05, 2/23/05, 2/24/05, 3/6/05, 3/20/05, 3/22/05; Spalding's Official Collegiate Basketball Guide 1906-07 (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1906), pp. 27-29.
years, a representative on the intercollegiate basketball rules committee (see discussion below), and, during some seasons, also coached the team himself. 17

Intercollegiate basketball nevertheless remained a lesser priority at Chicago than the major sports – which, in the midwest, included a winter season of indoor track – at least initially. This can be seen in the way Chicago dealt in 1905-06 with a freshman athlete named John Schommer, out for both the basketball and indoor track teams. Schommer was no ordinary freshman, as his subsequent athletic career at Chicago would demonstrate. An experienced competitive athlete before arriving on the Hyde Park campus – and an adult, 22 years old in 1906 – Schommer played for three years on the highly competitive Chicago Central YMCA basketball team which came in second at the 1904 “Olympics.” (see Chapter Two). He went on to become college basketball’s first superstar (to use an anachronistic term) and a charter member of the Basketball Hall of Fame. Schommer led Chicago to three Western League basketball championships, led the Western League in scoring three years in a row, and in 1908 led Chicago to victory in a post-season “national championship” series against Pennsylvania. He also lettered in four different varsity sports at Chicago, the first person to do so. 18

17 Stagg spent portions of the winter of 1903-04 in Chloride, New Mexico (this year he suffered from pneumonia), of 1904-05 in Hot Springs, Arkansas, of 1905-06 and 1907-08 in Miami, Florida, and of 1906-07 at a sanitarium in Mudlavia, Indiana, to give a few examples. See the Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers, Box 12, UCA, for regular winter correspondence between Stagg and Raycroft concerning the administration of Chicago athletics. Much of Stagg’s correspondence appears on stationery from whatever hotel or sanitarium he is staying in. See also Amos Alonzo Stagg and Wesley Winans Stout, Touchdown! (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1927), pp. 213-15, 241-42, and Lester, Stagg’s University, pp. 24, 86, 116.

18 For a brief overview of Schommer’s career, see Albert Herberg, Basketball’s Greatest Teams (New York: Putnam’s, 1965). It contains some inaccuracies, however, and must be used with great care. See also Chicago Daily Maroon, 1/18/07.
The 1906 season therefore marked the beginning of an era for University of Chicago basketball, perhaps the first “era” in the history of college basketball. Initially, however, Raycroft (and Stagg) viewed Schommer’s basketball talent as secondary to his “major sport” abilities as a high jumper and shot putter. Several times during 1906 basketball season, Schommer was held out of or played sparingly in basketball games on the orders of Raycroft, so as not to tire or injure him before indoor track meets. “I am not going to let Schommer do any basketball for a week before the Illinois meet,” Raycroft wrote Stagg, convalescing in Miami but keeping up with the department through Raycroft’s correspondence. “He has been running a pretty hard schedule, and the trip from home and back again, with the consequent late hours, doesn’t give him a chance to get rest enough.” This policy was overturned by a vote of the Athletic Committee (a committee of the university board which oversaw the Division of Physical Culture and Athletics), on the grounds that Schommer was more likely to bring Chicago a basketball championship than track victories. Even after this ruling, however, Schommer appears to have held himself back in games before track meets; at least one observer of his performance in a 31-29 loss to Minnesota – a game he was essentially ordered to play in by a university committee – believed he was “saving himself for the meet, even in the game, and did not play with his usual aggressiveness.” “To attribute defeat or victory to one man is somewhat unfair to the rest of the team,” said an angry editorial in the Daily Maroon, the campus daily, after the loss to Minnesota, “but the value of Schommer to the Varsity basketball team is so generally conceded that we do not believe it invidious to consider Chicago’s demoralization due very largely to the fact that Schommer had been
left out of the game for too long a period…. [W]e believe that the student body wishes to know why the basketball championship, unimportant as it may appear to some people, is thus placed in jeopardy by the incomprehensible – and, we believe, ill-advised – action of the authorities on this matter.” Chicago finished third in the Western Intercollegiate Basket Ball League with a 3-5 record, and a 5-5 record overall.¹⁹

No such policy restrained Schommer the next season, however, the beginning of a three-year stretch in which Chicago lost only 4 games, won or shared three Western Conference championships, and in 1908 won the first plausible “national championship” in college basketball history. They also, in 1907, won the AAU Central Division basketball championship, a feat which requires a bit of explanation and says a great deal about the importance of competitive athletic success at the University of Chicago in these years.

The 1907 team as initially assembled contained five freshmen. In 1906, the Western Conference (which regulated player eligibility among the so-called “Big Nine” midwestern universities), primarily in response to the football crisis of 1905 (see below), had ruled freshmen ineligible for varsity athletic competition. This prohibition initially applied only to football, baseball, and track. In January of 1907, however, one game into the University of Chicago basketball season, the Conference decided to include minor sports in the prohibition. The decision gutted Raycroft’s lineup. He responded in two ways. First, he reorganized his team around the remaining eligible players. Second, since

¹⁹ J.E. Raycroft to A.A. Stagg, 2/20/06, Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers, Box 12, Folder 3, UCA (quote); Chicago Daily Maroon, 1/19/06, 2/1/06, 2/5/06, 2/16/06, 2/26/06, 3/1/06, 3/2/06 (quotes), 3/5/06, 3/13/06; Spalding’s Official Collegiate Basket Ball Guide 1906-07 (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1906), pp. 27-29.
the Western Conference prohibition only applied to intercollegiate play, Raycroft decided to enter his original lineup in the AAU Central Division basketball championships. The result was, essentially, two University of Chicago basketball teams in 1907: a “purity squad” which competed against other colleges, and an “unpurified” squad which played Chicago-area YMCAs and other amateur teams in preparation for an AAU tournament at the end of March. Raycroft may not have considered a basketball championship as important as a track meet in 1906, but now he was pursuing two basketball championships at once. Five of the seven players who played the most for the “unpurified” team were “impure”: four of the originally disqualified freshmen (H. Orville Page, Frederick Falls, Edwin Hubble, and Arthur Hoffman) plus James McKeag, leading scorer on the 1905 and 1906 teams, whose college eligibility was now up but was still an amateur in the eyes of the AAU. Only Schommer and team captain Albert Houghton played regularly in both capacities. To state the matter differently, Raycroft went out of his way to keep in University of Chicago uniforms the very athletes the Western Conference sought to prohibit. 20

Both teams were very successful. The “purity” squad finished 8-2 and finished in a three-way tie with Wisconsin and Minnesota for the Western Intercollegiate League title (all three teams split their two games with one another). The ringers went 13-0, and appear to have been challenged only once, in the AAU tournament final against Chicago

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20 Chicago Daily Maroon, 1/15/06, 1/10/07, 1/12/07, 1/15/07, 1/18/07, 1/22/07, 2/5/07, 2/12/07, 2/19/07, 2/21/07, 3/5/07, 3/8/07, 3/16/07, 3/20/07, 4/2/07. “Minutes of the Intercollegiate Conference, Session of December 1, 1906,” document in Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers, Box 84, Folder 1, UCA. “‘Purity’ squad” and “unpurified” or “ineligibles” are phrases that appear in the Daily Maroon.
Central YMCA. Schommer was, as a sophomore, already the dominant player on "both" teams and the best player in the Western League. He averaged nearly 12 ppg. in Western League play (this when most team scores were in the 20s and 30s) and scored 35 more points than anyone else in the league. "Besides his jumping ability he could be depended upon to score field baskets for his team from almost any angle," said one league observer in putting Schommer on his All-Western Collegiate team. "At all times during a game he kept his opponent well guarded and was always on the aggressive." Later in 1907 the AAU prohibited athletes from competing for both a collegiate team and an athletic club in the same year.21

Raycroft's decision to enter the AAU tournament with his ineligible players was not purely a case of institutional self-aggrandizement or championship-mongering. It was also an exercise in long-term maintenance of a stable of athletic talent. Page, Falls, Hubble, and Hoffman all not only lettered in basketball in subsequent years, but all of them also lettered in at least one other sport in their Chicago careers. Page lettered in basketball, baseball, and football all three years and captained the football team in 1909. A stable of athletic talent was in fact what University of Chicago had quite self-consciously built under Stagg and Raycroft, and basketball became another avenue of its deployment. Recruitment of skilled high school and other amateur athletes was well-organized and systematic Chicago, especially after 1902, when Stagg and Raycroft began keeping a card-

file system on elite high school athletes and using it to, as Raycroft once put it, "engage actively in a canvass for new students." The large and well-developed talent pool of high school and amateur athletes in the Chicago metropolitan area helped these efforts greatly. Many of Chicago's most successful athletes in these years, including Schommer, Page, Hoffman, Falls, and several other 1907 basketball players, were local products. In addition to tracking promising athletes, Stagg and Raycroft also sought to establish ongoing relationships with prominent preparatory schools and public high schools, by "placing" ex-athletes there as coaches and/or physical education instructors, and through occasional perks, such as when area prep school basketball teams were invited, free of charge, to a 1906 game against Iowa. As the Daily Maroon put it, "The invitations were issued, in accordance with the policy of the University, to stimulate interest in basketball among the 'prep' schools." 22

In 1908, Schommer and a much-simplified University of Chicago team lost only two games, one of them against a non-collegiate opponent, en route to the first plausibly demonstrable national collegiate basketball championship. A championship series came about when Pennsylvania, undefeated winners of the Eastern Intercollegiate League championship, offered to arrange a post-season series with the Western League champion. When Chicago and Wisconsin entered the final week of their schedule with one league loss apiece, to one another, they agreed to a third meeting to determine who would face

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22 Lester, Stagg's University, pp. 45-64, 108-115 (Raycroft quoted p. 47); Chicago Daily Maroon, 1/25/05, 2/5/06 (quote), 1/18/07, 3/12/10; Edward S. Jordan, "Buying Football Victories," Collier's, 11/11/05, pp. 19-23. For Chicago varsity lettermen, see the annual University of Chicago President's Reports, 1907-1910 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1908-1911).
Pennsylvania. Chicago won a narrow and extremely rough 18-16 victory, and agreed to meet Pennsylvania in three games, one in Chicago, one in Philadelphia, and a third, if necessary, at a neutral site. It wasn't necessary; Chicago won 21-18 at Bartlett Gymnasium and 16-15 in Philadelphia. The second game, in Philadelphia, was tied eight different times and won by Schommer on a last-second shot from halfcourt.\textsuperscript{23}

Schommer was difficult to stop all year, in fact. He scored 105 points in nine Western League games; opposing centers scored a combined four field goals against him. Key games drew sizeable crowds to Bartlett Gymnasium; the home game against Wisconsin drew a capacity crowd of around 1700, and included, for the first time, a post-game dance. At the end of the championship 1908 season, the Board of Physical Culture and Athletics for the first time awarded the full varsity "C" to basketball players, making basketball the fourth "major sport" at the University of Chicago. Of the five 1908 letter winners, only W.M. Georgen did not also letter in at least one other sport.\textsuperscript{24}

The games against Pennsylvania were not Chicago's only experience against eastern collegiate competition in 1908. They also met Columbia during the regular season, winning 28-13 and, as it turned out, preparing them for the Pennsylvania series by introducing them to significant differences between eastern and western playing styles.

\textsuperscript{23} Their second loss was to Chicago Central YMCA, their opponent in the 1907 AAU tournament final. Chicago Daily Maroon, 12/7/07, 1/7/08, 1/16/08, 1/21/08, 1/22/08, 2/1/08, 2/7/08, 2/11/08, 2/12/08, 2/27/08, 2/28/08, 2/29/08, 3/10/08, 3/13/08, 3/18/08, 3/31/08; Spalding's \textit{Official Collegiate Basketball Guide 1908-09} (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1908), pp. 5-7.

Dribbling as a major offensive tactic was much more popular among eastern than among western teams. Chicago guard Page learned this the hard way, by chasing Columbia forward and inveterate dribbler S. Melitzer around the gymnasium all game, a spectacle which, as the Daily Maroon put it delicately, “took on a humorous aspect.” He was better prepared when Pennsylvania tried the same tactics in the championship series. A greater difference, however, was the level of physical contact and roughness allowed eastern players. Western basketball, many observers noted, not only utilized more passing than dribbling, but was also officiated with greater fidelity to the letter and spirit of the rules. Eastern basketball, on the other hand, was officiated much more impressionistically, such that it often resembled the no-blood, no-foul spectacle of professional basketball. By 1908, in fact, this roughness was contributing to the problems college basketball was beginning to have on the east coast (see below).\footnote{Chicago Daily Maroon, 1/7/08; Spalding’s Official Collegiate Basketball Guide 1908-09 (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1908), p. 29. On “eastern” and “western” styles of play, see most any Spalding’s Official Basketball Guide or Spalding’s Collegiate Basketball Guide from these years.}

There were few such problems in Hyde Park. Chicago was even more impressive in 1909, Schommer’s senior season, than they had been the previous two. They cut a 12-0 swath through the Western League and Schommer won a third straight scoring title, despite being the focus of every opposing defense. Page also played as well as he had the year before, despite being hampered by a football injury. Only the discombobulated state of basketball on the east coast prevented another opportunity at a national championship. Because there was no Eastern League in 1909 (see below), there was no clear-cut “eastern
champion.” Columbia, undefeated until the final game of their season, negotiated to meet Chicago but could not agree on dates. In the meantime, Pennsylvania defeated them 28-13 in their final regular-season game and, at 19-5 against college competition, demanded to play off the “tie” to see who would have the right to play Chicago. No championship series was ever arranged, and Schommer therefore ended his career with “only” one national championship, three Western League championships, three league scoring titles, and four years as the most dominant center in college basketball. The 1910 season, the last for the “ineligible” freshmen from 1907, resulted in a fourth Western League championship despite a late-season slump. They salvaged the title when an injured A.C. Kelly, playing because starting forward J. R. Clark had fouled out, hit a ¾ court shot with under ten seconds left to force overtime in their final game of the season against Minnesota. Thrilled Chicago fans swarmed the floor of Bartlett Gymnasium, which had to be cleared before Chicago could go on to win 18-15 in overtime.²⁶

Thrilled Chicago fans that swarm the floor at the prospect of a league championship indicate a mature college sport. The Division of Physical Culture and Athletics financial records indicate the same thing. Basketball receipts totaled $441 in 1906 and $422.75 in 1907, well below any of the three major sports (next smallest was baseball, $1839.21 in 1907). Receipts in 1908, the national championship year, jumped to $3030.13, second only to football. They hovered around $2400 the next few seasons, and

rose to $3500-$4000 or so in the mid-1910s. By the second decade of the twentieth century, varsity basketball was an established component of the University of Chicago's highly competitive intercollegiate athletic program and a fixture of student life.27

Such was not the case at Harvard, where basketball had much more difficulty establishing itself. In fact, no school offers better proof that despite the game's rapid spread throughout colleges and universities in the first decades of the twentieth century, the establishment of basketball as a stable varsity sport was not a foregone conclusion everywhere. The nation's flagship university and one of the most heavily and prominently athleticized, Harvard was nevertheless an institution sometimes at odds with itself over the grandiosity of its intercollegiate athletic program. Harvard at the turn of the century was sometimes simultaneously the institution most responsible for perpetuating "big-time" college athletics and the institution most interested in reining it in. Basketball was a casualty of this institutional schizophrenia, and from 1910 to 1921, one of the biggest of the nation's "big-time" college athletic programs had no intercollegiate basketball team.28

Harvard's first varsity basketball team began play in 1900-01. A "Harvard" club team existed for a year or two previously, playing Boston-area YMCA teams and other

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27 Budgets and financial documents, Division of Physical Culture and Athletics, in Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers, Box 21, Folders 4-10, Box 22, Folder 8, UCA.
similar aggregations, but it played no other college teams and generated little interest; the student daily, the *Crimson*, compared the minuscule attention it received on campus to that generated by bowling. The 1901 team, however, attracted 60 candidates to pre-season tryouts and played an 18-game schedule. Attendance was not large, however, and as at Yale and Chicago, the financial scale of the enterprise represented a drop in the vast bucket of Harvard athletics. Harvard basketball took in $265.10 in 1901, barely enough to cover the team’s travel expenses. Harvard football that year spent $229 on printing alone, and grossed $55,810. The *freshman* baseball team out-grossed basketball by $161.06.29

The 1901-02 season was slightly more substantial. Harvard joined the Eastern Intercollegiate League, and, with a core of players from the previous year’s varsity and *freshman* teams, hoped to be competitive. The team also gained a formal coach of sorts: J.K. Clark, a third-year Harvard Law student and the previous year’s captain. Clark’s supervision was augmented for a few weeks in January and February by one J.M. Riley, a player from the local Webster independent team who was hired to help troubleshoot Harvard’s floor game. “The main fault with the guards, that of playing apart, has been almost entirely corrected” “[T]eam play has become much more speedy and accurate” thanks to Riley’s work, claimed the *Crimson*, though it did not prevent Harvard from losing three ICL games in a row immediately following Riley’s stint (to Columbia 28-12.

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to Yale 31-21, and to Princeton 22-14). Seeking part-time “coaching” from professional athletes was not uncommon at Harvard. That same spring, for example, Harvard baseball hired Boston Red Stockings pitcher Cy Young to advise the pitching staff; the following spring, they hired Jack Chesbro and Willie Keeler. Guest coaches floated in and out of Harvard football and baseball practices frequently in this era, providing a few days or weeks of expertise, sometimes in exchange for a few dollars. That same spring, for example, Harvard baseball benefited from part-time pitching coach assistance provided by Boston Red Stockings pitcher Cy Young; the following spring, Jack Chesbro and Willie Keeler helped out. Harvard started terribly in the ICL, but managed to salvage a 4-4 finish with a late-season push, despite injuries to key players, including team captain J.W. Gilles. They split their two all-important games with Yale, winning 39-20 in the last game of the season at Hemenway Gymnasium, and finished 9-5 overall.30

“Great credit is due to the men who defeated Yale last Saturday,” said the Crimson, “for the Yale team had a great advantage in practice and experience.” For the Crimson, this was high praise. Here is what they had been saying only a month earlier:

The work of the basketball team, however, has not been at all satisfactory. To lose two out of three games played in the intercollegiate league to Cornell and Columbia, who seem to be weaker than Yale and Princeton, is not at all encouraging. To be sure this team has played in the face of some misfortune, but the fact remains that unless it can be shown that Harvard is able to support a basketball team that will be a credit to the University, the Athletic Committee will not be justified in allowing the team to enter the league another year….  

30 Harvard Crimson, 11/29/01, 1/3/02, 1/17/02, 1/28/02, 2/1/02, 2/10/02, 2/15/02, 2/20/02, 2/21/02, 2/24/02, 2/10/03 (quote 2/1/02).
If such a course becomes necessary the fault will lie about as much with those who have failed to try for the team and neglected to support it as with the team itself.

Something more than school-spirit jingoism and impatience with lukewarm play was at issue here. Questions of funding and survival were involved, as the not-so-veiled threat concerning the Athletic Committee suggests. Athletics at Harvard were controlled and administered by the Committee on the Regulation of Athletic Sports (commonly called the Athletic Committee), a mixed student-faculty-alumni body formed in the 1880s in response to criticism about the growing prominence of intercollegiate athletics, especially football. Originally intended as a brake on zealous undergraduate and alumni athletic promoters, it had since grown into a body protective of Harvard athletic prerogatives against critics within the university. Undergraduate team managers, as at Yale, administered the day-to-day business of teams, but the Committee controlled the money and had the final say. As the Crimson suggested, it had the power to encourage and support minor sports at Harvard – and also the power to kill them.31

As Camp did at Yale, the Harvard Athletic Committee controlled a large treasury generated primarily by football revenue. Also as Camp did at Yale, the Harvard Athletic Committee shared that money within the four major sports, but was reluctant to spread that largesse to new branches of sport, preferring instead to stockpile surpluses for a rainy day. Minor sports had largely to fend for themselves. Harvard basketball met this financial challenge, as many undergraduate organizations did at the time, by soliciting

31 Harvard Crimson, 3/17/02 (quote), 2/17/02 (quote); Smith, Sports and Freedom, pp. 127-31, 144-45.
campus each year for “subscriptions.” Student fundraisers prowled the Harvard dormitories each year on behalf of a variety of sports and organizations, and their collection totals often represented their tryout for the positions of team manager or assistant manager. “The dormitories,” said president Charles Eliot in his 1908-9 annual report, with some distaste, “are therefore rarely free of their assiduous attention.” In 1903, for example, $240 of the basketball team’s $601 in gross revenue came from subscriptions. Some teams, particularly freshman teams and more esoteric endeavors like fencing and cricket, derived nearly all their revenue from such subscriptions.

Much of this solicitation was perpetrated upon each fall’s crop of freshmen, who often found themselves inundated with endless demands for financial support in the name of Harvard spirit before they had taken their first Harvard examination. Most canvassing generally took place in the fall, no matter what the sport, so as to reach undergraduate pocketbooks before they were tapped out for the year. (A similar system prevailed at Yale and other colleges.) These practices bothered some critics of college athletics almost as much as the physical and financial excesses of football. The *Crimson* summed up the case against subscriptions succinctly in 1905. “[T]hey are inefficient, considering the smallness of the sum collected and the great expenditure of energy by collectors; they are unsatisfactory as means of competition for managements; they distribute the burden of expenses unevenly; and they are a nuisance to the undergraduate public.” Other critics fretted over the system’s susceptibility to fraud. The practice was banned at Harvard in

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32 *Harvard Graduates' Magazine* 18(Sept. 1904), p. 57 (hereafter *HGM*).
33 *HGM* 17(Dec. 1903), p. 271.
1910-11. In the meantime, however, the basketball team had little choice but to compete against Harvard's other minor sports for this financial support.\textsuperscript{35}

Its most formidable competitor was hockey, which began at Harvard in 1898 (1896 if you count a few years of play at ice polo, a closely related game using a rubber ball instead of a puck), and experienced a much more impressive early development on campus than basketball did. From 1903 to 1906 Harvard never lost a hockey game and won four consecutive Intercollegiate Hockey League titles. This organization, much like the Intercollegiate Basketball League, organized east coast collegiate hockey (some combination of Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Princeton, and Brown in most years) into championship-oriented competition and centralized scheduling among its members; most league games, in fact, were played at a neutral site, St. Nicholas Rink in New York City. Hockey revenues were generally higher than basketball revenues (though not extraordinarily so) year after year, and usually in fewer games. This success came despite less-than-ideal access to high-quality ice on campus. They had no local access to indoor ice until the Boston Arena opened in December of 1910; before this they trained on a series of outdoor rinks all over campus, of varying quality. Mild weather might shut them down entirely.\textsuperscript{36} Hockey's success in the face of all this led some observers to believe that

\textsuperscript{34} Harvard Crimson, 3/24/05.
\textsuperscript{35} HGM 15(Dec. 1901), p. 278; Harvard Crimson, 12/7/03; HGM 24(March 1911), p. 431.
\textsuperscript{36} Blanchard, The H Book of Harvard Athletics, pp. 555-588; Harvard Crimson, 1/8/03, 1/29/03, 2/6/03, 2/16/03; HGM 14(March 1906), p. 481. As an example of relative revenues, in 1903-4 the hockey team took in $1088.90, the basketball team $600.70; in 1904-5 the hockey team took in $1483.00, the basketball team $980.25; in 1906-7, hockey $2901.72, basketball $1414.47. 1902-3 was an exception to this pattern: basketball $601.90, hockey $287.40. HGM 12(Dec. 1903), p. 270; HGM 13(Dec. 1904), p. 303; HGM 14(March 1906), p. 483; HGM 16(June 1908), p. 717. Though basketball revenues grew
hockey, not basketball, was the winter sport of the future. As early as 1902, the *Crimson* remarked that

> It is interesting to note the way in which the game of hockey has come, within the last few years, into a place of importance among the various organized sports in the University.... As the most popular winter game, hockey containly (*sic*) deserves the position in the college which it now occupies... It seems only natural that the sport will come more and more into prominence in intercollegiate athletics.⁴⁷

This did not necessarily mean, however, that hockey—or any minor sport, for that matter—fared significantly better with the Athletic Committee, which continued to focus its resources on the major sports. “The position of greater prominence, which [hockey] has attained, and the more extensive schedule have meant increased expenses for the hockey management which the Athletic Association feels unable to meet,” the *Crimson* continued.⁴⁸

The management of the basketball team nevertheless continued its entrepreneurial efforts. The 1902-03 season promised a series of advances. A more extensive schedule was arranged. Their chances of attracting athletes improved when prospective football players were advised by the football coaching staff to go out for the basketball team in order to stay in shape in the off-season. In anticipation of what they believed would be an influx of talent (or at least an influx of athletes who had to be kept busy), management decided to keep multiple squads. “[F]our or five teams will be maintained throughout the

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season,” the Crimson claimed, “and the final team will not be picked until shortly before the final game with Yale on February 27.” In addition to head coach J.W. Gilles (the previous year’s captain), J.M. Riley was again secured to help out for a few weeks, as was W.A. Monten, an undergraduate who had been an assistant coach with the very successful University of Minnesota basketball team the year before. In an effort to create interest in the season, team management went out of its way to advertise for fan patronage outside the university. The usual spectator accommodations in Hemenway Gymnasium were modified in anticipation of 600 or so fans for some games.39

Friction between the Athletic Committee and the basketball team was already afoot, however. The schedule originally submitted to the Committee by team management had been even longer and more entrepreneurial, including a moneymaker game against Yale to be played in Chicago. The Committee rejected the schedule as “too long and miscellaneous,” refused to permit a Yale game in Chicago, and demanded revisions. In the middle of January the Committee threatened to disband the team at the end of the year if it did not settle its debts, and refused to permit it to schedule additional games until it did so. Already by 1902, critics of Harvard athletics including president Charles Eliot, were concerned that the rise of minor sports would mean college athletics conducted year-round—which in turn would mean more students absent from more classes more of the year. “There is now a series of competitive games which covers the entire academic year,” complained Eliot in his 1901-2 annual report, “and the distraction of large bodies of

39 Harvard Crimson, 10/9/02, 11/28/02, 12/18/02, 12/20/02, 1/31/03, 2/10/03 (quote 11/28/02); E. Bird Johnson, ed., Forty Years of The University of Minnesota (Minneapolis: The General Alumni Association,
students from the proper work of a university grows more intense and continues year after year.” Already some at the university were disturbed by the idea that minor sports might shortly become major sports (which, no doubt, they aspired to): a minor sport that failed to pay its bills and ran afoul of the Athletic Committee in other ways on a regular basis risked becoming a victim of these attitudes.40

Meanwhile, none of the team’s efforts this year were particularly successful. Several early-season games were either postponed or cancelled “owing to the slow development of the team.” They finished 5-7, with a last-place 2-6 mark in the ICL and two heavy losses to Yaie, 20-3 and 22-10, in the space of a week. The editorial sniping from the Crimson was more or less constant all season. “Poor Basketball Work” was a typical headline; attacks on poor passing, inaccurate shooting, and general clumsiness made up the bulk of the analysis (daily practices received as much coverage as games did, a measure of the degree to which the Crimson made a fetish of even the minor sports). As a final humiliation, the Athletic Committee— which in January had demanded that team management find a way to pay their bills—scuttled the team’s modest efforts at advertising and condemned them as inappropriate to college sport. “The position taken by the committee was that the University games were for members of the University and that any effort to solicit other attendance by advertising is undignified,” the Crimson


40 Minutes of the Harvard Athletic Committee. Harvard University Archives, 10/15/02 (quote). 10/21/02, 1/15/03 (hereafter HAC minutes); Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College, 1901-2 (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1902), p 41 (hereafter Annual Reports).
reported after the decision. "It is a relief to know that we will no longer see our athletic
games advertised like prize fights, horse races, and other unsavory sports."\(^{41}\)

A month later the Athletic Committee accepted a gift of $100,000 from the Class
of 1879 for the construction of a new football stadium. When completed it cost three
times that and was the largest poured concrete structure in the world. It held 40,000
people.\(^{42}\)

The construction of the nation's first steel-and-concrete college football facility
was a significant victory for big-time college athletics, not just at Harvard but around the
country. College football’s popularity and contribution to (for lack of a better phrase) the
American *zeitgeist*, upper-middle-class division, was truly impressive by the turn of the
century (or truly distressing, depending on one’s outlook). Here, however, things had
been taken to a new level: the nation’s flagship university now had a permanent and very
expensive football facility which, unlike wooden bleachers, could not simply be taken
down should the University change its mind about college athletics. In fact, the stadium
had to be financed over a period of years. The gift from the Class of 1879 represented
only a portion of the stadium’s eventual $300,000 price tag; the Athletic Committee
produced the remainder, some of it in cash out of their stockpiled surplus, some of it
borrowed from the Harvard Corporation to be paid back out of future receipts. This

\(^{41}\) Harvard *Crimson*, 1/9/03 (quote), 1/27/03, 2/10/03 (quote).
\(^{42}\) Harvard *Crimson*, 3/17/03.
meant that continued emphasis on college football as a grandiose commercialized spectacle was the most likely outcome in both the short and the long term.\footnote{Harvard Crimson, 12/17/04; HAC minutes, 10/7/03, 12/6/07.}

This hid, or perhaps rendered moot, the fact that the University community was certainly not of one mind about the scope or importance of big-time college athletics. Certain voices within the University had been trying for years to de-emphasize and de-commercialize athletics at Harvard – powerful and important voices like the Faculty Committee and president Charles Eliot, perhaps the nation’s most prominent and powerful educator. President Eliot, while a longtime believer in the importance of athletics to the development of the college man in general, believed by the 1890s that intercollegiate competition, particularly football, had grown out of control, generating too much money, taking up too much of the students’ time, and requiring too much absence from campus. He criticized what he considered the over-emphasis of college athletics regularly in his public statements and annual reports, year after year. The same year the Stadium gift was announced, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences asked the Athletic Committee to consider abandoning college football, on now-familiar grounds of brutality, expense, and over-emphasis. After some discussion – and after committing to the stadium – the Committee refused. They defended their decision to the University by arguing that recent rule changes rendered the game less objectionable and that “the game of football is only one of
many distractions in college life, and that there is no evidence that its abolition would necessarily turn the attention of the students to more serious problems."\[^{24}\]

In short, anti-football forces failed, and would continue to fail, to get the sweeping changes they desired. They may have outsmarted themselves, in fact, when they created the Athletic Committee in the first place. The Athletic Committee had been granted autonomy over regulation of athletics and made answerable to the Harvard trustees. It was not directly subservient organizationally to either the faculty committee or to Eliot. Partly as a result of this, by 1900 the Athletic Committee often protected Harvard athletics from the efforts of faculty and president to circumscribe them. Sometimes, however, the Committee achieved this through strategic retreat rather than intransigence. This is what happened after 1903. With a new stadium going up on Soldier’s Field, with new debts to pay, and with faculty and president continuing to demand stricter regulation of athletics, the Athletic Committee responded by restricting the athletic programs least germane to these critiques and most inconvenient to itself. Minor sports, specifically winter sports, took the hit.

At a four-hour-long meeting at the Harvard Union on November 4, 1903, the Athletic Committee passed resolutions prohibiting the basketball and hockey teams from scheduling more than three contests during 1903-04 which would require an overnight stay away from campus. A suggestion that the 1903-04 season be grandfathered in due to short notice and the policy not take effect until the next year was rejected. This policy

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“de-emphasized” Harvard athletics, and at least indirectly answered one of Eliot’s stated criticisms, but it did so without doing any damage to any of the major sports, all of which took place in the fall or spring. (Travel restrictions like these would have done considerable damage to the baseball team, for example, which took an extensive Southern trip each spring break in addition to its regular-season road games.) It also regulated the minor sports by reducing their most expensive, and to the Athletic Committee most annoying, aspect. In addition, the need to pay down debt on the stadium provided the Committee with a new reason to limit expenditures out of the general fund to minor sports, a rationale it would use with regularity over the next few years.⁴⁵

In this atmosphere, Harvard basketball opened a season even more disastrous than the one before. The management of the 1904 team made the mistake of attempting to deal with these restrictions by circumventing or ignoring them. Their commitment to the Intercollegiate League, which had already produced and released a schedule in October, required five road games of Harvard, including one before Christmas (December 21 at Cornell). In order to meet their obligations, team management first asked the Committee for a liberal interpretation of “overnight.” They received the reply that “returning from a trip at seven o’clock in the morning is not allowed under the rule for teams coming back the same night.” On December 18, the Crimson announced that the December 21 game at Cornell had been “postponed”; in fact, the Committee forced the team to forfeit it, and to submit a revised schedule that conformed to the new regulations. On December 21, the

⁴⁵ Harvard Crimson, 11/3/03; HAC minutes, 10/28/03, 11/4/03.
Committee formally approved a schedule for the rest of the season, a schedule which contained only three away-overnight games, at Princeton, Penn, and Columbia.\textsuperscript{46}

This schedule failed to take into consideration the league game at Yale, scheduled by the ICL for March 12. It did not appear on the schedule approved by the Committee, which believed it cancelled. But team manager R.A. Wood and assistant manager W.O. Dapping never actually cancelled arrangements with the Yale basketball team to play it. Perhaps thinking that when push came to shove the Committee would not actually cancel a contest with Yale. Wood and Dapping evidently hoped to cajole them into approving it as a fait accompli later in the season. (Schedules printed in the \textit{Crimson} continued to list the game, but noted parenthetically it was “provisional.”) They were mistaken. When the Committee learned, sometime in February, that the game had not been cancelled, they demanded that Wood notify Yale. He responded by asking (in conjunction with the hockey management) that the Committee permit the addition of a fourth road trip for winter teams. They refused. On February 17 the Committee re-cancelled the Yale game, demanded Wood’s resignation, and turned remaining team business affairs over to the graduate treasurer of the athletic association.\textsuperscript{47}

The Yale situation had not been the Committee’s only source of dissatisfaction with the basketball team. Throughout the season, Wood made a variety of demands that, while reasonable from the perspective of someone attempting to build a successful basketball program, proved tiresome to a Committee disinclined toward minor sports to

\textsuperscript{46} Harvard \textit{Crimson}, 10/15/03, 12/18/03; HAC minutes, 11/11/03 (quote), 12/21/03.

\textsuperscript{47} HAC minutes, 12/21/03, 2/17/04; Harvard \textit{Crimson}, 1/4/04, 3/1/04.
start with. In addition to trying to circumvent the three-trip rule in a variety of ways, Wood at various times requested $100 from the general fund to cover team expenses (grudgingly granted, with a terse warning that “no precedent is being established for future years”); addition to the schedule of a game at Brown (also grudgingly granted, with an equally terse warning that no player cut class to play); and a paid coach (denied, at the same meeting at which the baseball team was permitted to hire major leaguers Jack Chesbro and Wee Willie Keeler for a few weeks). In February, team captain H.G Bigelow was disqualified from any further participation in Harvard athletics for failing to take the pre-season strength test demanded of all varsity athletes. (It had in fact been Bigelow’s responsibility, as team captain, to make sure everyone on the team took this test.) Bigelow, who was injured at the time of the ruling, never bothered to respond or explain to the committee, and for public consumption the team claimed his permanent disappearance from the lineup stemmed from the injury, sustained in an 18-14 loss to Holy Cross, and said nothing about a suspension.\(^\text{48}\)

The season, in short, was a disaster of the highest order. On top of it all, they were lousy on the court, winning only once and suffering all year from injuries to key players. As team management no doubt suspected would happen all along, Yale cancelled its own trip to Cambridge (scheduled for March 5) as soon as it learned Harvard would not play them in New Haven the following week. With three forfeits already in the books,

\(^{48}\text{HAC minutes, 11/11/03, 2/2/04; Harvard Crimson, 2/17/04, 2/18/04, 3/1/04. This strength test, designed and administered by Harvard gymnasium director Dudley Sargent, was considered something of a nuisance by many varsity athletes and coaches. See Smith, Big-Time Football at Harvard, pp. 118-19, 139, 145, 148.}\)
the team on February 23 cancelled their final remaining game against Cornell (at home) and disbanded early. Meanwhile, the hockey team went undefeated for the second year in a row, and managed to maintain Harvard’s membership in the intercollegiate hockey league without violating the three-away rule (by talking Brown into playing them in Cambridge instead of New York).\(^\text{49}\)

The Athletic Committee constricted winter sports further the following year. Citing the need to pay down stadium debt, their desire to make further improvements to the university athletic fields, and the stadium’s still-unbuilt colonnade, the Committee voted that beginning in the fall of 1904 all freshman and minor sports (in other words, everything except football, baseball, track, and crew) would be left entirely to their own resources. No athletic association money would be used to cover their debts at the end of the year. This took a good deal of chutzpah on strict financial grounds, as the annual deficits in track and crew, which the Committee continued to cover out of the general fund, were usually vastly greater than anything any of the minor sports ever ran up. This point was not lost on critics of the new policy, who pointed out variously that these “economy methods” saved little money, poured money into new athletic fields meant to accommodate the university’s expanding athletic programs while simultaneously emasculating some of them, and drew an arbitrary line between the intrinsic value of “major” and “minor” sports. “[T]he committee has refused to concede,” argued fencing supporter H. W. Holmes, “the injustice of giving $3,200 worth of instruction to 400 rowing men and at the same time refusing $800 worth of instruction to the fencing men.”

Others noted with dismay that the most noticeable outcome of the new policy would be an increase in the rabidity of subscription collectors. In addition to these new financial restrictions, the Committee restated the three-overnight limit on winter sports.50

This abandonment of minor sports was not simply the product of a desire to protect the moneymakers at all costs, or of an arbitrary belief in the inherent superiority of rowing over hockey or lacrosse. The minor sports had no influence over the makeup of the Committee. The Committee consisted of three faculty members, three alumni, and three undergraduates, the undergraduates elected by vote of the class presidents and the captains of the football, baseball, track, and crew teams. This formula dated to 1886, when these four sports were the only ones on campus. By 1905, this arrangement amounted to an athletic rotten-boroughism akin to pre-1832 British Parliament, and helps explain why the Athletic Committee had always been suspicious of the new minor sports, considering them nuisances at best and unworthy drains on Athletic Association resources at worst. It would remain so for several more years. In the meantime, minor sports continued to present the committee with an easy target for regulation and retrenchment, and basketball continued to be the minor sport that dealt with this situation least effectively.

The 1905 team did not attempt to play in the Intercollegiate League. Even so, team management still submitted a schedule too expansive for the Committee to accept without modification, the fourth straight year they did so. Even when modified, the

50 The Committee did require significant subscription contributions from track ($2500) and crew ($3000) as a condition of the new arrangement. HAC minutes, 5/19/04, 5/25/04, 10/13/04; Harvard Crimson.
schedule contained more than three away games requiring an overnight absence. Several of these games were bundled into the same weekend road trip, however, such that while the team scheduled more than three games requiring a night’s absence, they only proposed three such trips. This was technically a violation of the new policy, but the Committee accepted the compromise (and would continue to do so for the next few years).

Basketball team managers also took steps designed to increase the team’s meager revenue potential. It was this season that they initially attempted to move some games to the afternoon to increase attendance, only to run afoul of winter track practice. They sold season tickets for the first time, as well as some “reserved” seats in the balcony at a price premium. They initially attempted to schedule some home games in the afternoon rather than the evening, but this served mainly to disrupt the track team’s winter workouts. (The Crimson demanded, tellingly, that the team “return to its old custom of playing its games in the evening when they will not interfere with the Gymnasium’s legitimate use.”)

Subscription collection went up substantially, from $262.50 the year before to $473.25. Their success on the floor helped; at one point in February they were 11-0, though they faltered after this and finished 11-5. As a result, team finances were also better than in previous years, though still a few dollars in the red.51

Ironically, the decision to cut minor sports off financially — done in part to mollify the complaints of Eliot and some on the faculty that Harvard athletics were over-

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51 HAC minutes, 11/1/04; Harvard Crimson, 11/23/04, 11/29/04, 1/14/05, 2/10/05, 1/18/05 (quote), 1/19/05, 1/20/05; HGM 18(June 1905), p. 677, HGM 19(March 1906), p. 483; “Harvard Athletic
emphasized and too commercial – forced the basketball team into increasingly commercial behavior in order to support itself. Nor did limits placed on travel prevent either basketball or hockey from assembling extensive schedules, maintaining training tables, and emulating the major sports in other ways as best they could. "In a number of these [minor sports]," Athletic Committee chairman H.S. White noted in 1904, "the tendency has been to enlarge the schedule and to imitate the more elaborate methods of preparation for the major sports in the way of establishing training-tables and securing expert coaching." Basketball (and hockey) expenses and receipts both continued to grow year to year, though they remained small relative to the four majors. The basketball team continued to have difficulty convincing the Athletic Committee they deserved a paid coach, however.

The football team had no such trouble. In 1904, the Athletic Committee, tired of what had become three straight shutout losses to Yale, abandoned its policy of engaging unpaid alumni football coaches and extended an offer of $7000 to William Reid, Jr. to coach the football team in 1905. Reid was a former Harvard football and baseball star who, in 1901 as an unpaid alumni, had coached the last football team to beat Yale; his return had been the goal of prominent alumni friends of Harvard football ever since. His acceptance made him the highest-paid coach in the country and the second-highest-salaried person at Harvard, well ahead of any faculty member and just shy of Eliot.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{52} Annual Reports, 1903-4, p. 122
\textsuperscript{53} $3500 of Reid's salary came out of Harvard Athletic Association funds and $3500 came from other sources, most likely raised from friendly alumni. HAC minutes, 2/17/05; Smith, Big-Time Football at Harvard, xiii-xxxv; Kim Townsend, Manhood at Harvard (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), p. 108.
Reid was an extraordinary (and extraordinarily fastidious) organizer, and in his two-year stay as head football coach he created a highly rationalized and regimented football system devoted to the singular end of winning at all costs (though he failed both years to beat Yale, and always considered his 30-3-1 career record as head coach a disappointment because of it). Those costs included extensive scouting trips to watch big-name opponents, premium accommodations at the training table (Reid demanded, among other things, more and better waiters, more and better food, flowers on the tables, and "clean napkins, folded in different ways to show the men that things were being made as presentable as possible for them"), and a day’s getaway for the team at Marblehead the day before the Yale game. In short, the Reid regime was not oriented primarily toward reducing costs. Just after dodging yet another anti-athletic bullet fired by the faculty and limiting minor sports to (allegedly) save a few dollars in the name of debt reduction, the Harvard Athletic Association now attempted to spend its way past Yale on the gridiron.54

The basketball team was not offered this option. The 1905 season was successful enough that a return to the ICL was attempted. In 1906 the ICL was to have, including Harvard, six teams, meaning at least five overnight road games. Team management solved this problem with the multiple-game road trip compromise reached the year before, and convinced the Committee to approve a 16-game schedule overall; the committee also granted them $170 worth of appropriations for equipment improvements and expenses. Decent talent and more strategic sophistication on the court than in previous years led to

54 Smith, Big-Time Football at Harvard; see esp. pp. xiii-xxv, 118-19, 155, 186-7, 240, 243, 258, 309-312 (quote p. 119); "To the Committee on the Investigation of Athletic Sports In Harvard University;"
another reasonably successful season, 6-4 in the ICL and 12-4 overall. Several of these games were marred by alarming levels of roughness, however, which did nothing to mollify critics who were beginning to believe that basketball had become almost as problematic as football. Slugfests broke out against both Yale and Columbia, both at home, both severe enough to bring shudders of self-righteous condemnation from the Crimson. "The game abounded in unnecessarily rough play, tripping, and holding," the Crimson said of the Yale game, in which Harvard's Firstname Quigley was ejected for punching Yale's Haskell Noyes. "Intercollegiate contests should, of all contests, be free from any of the unpleasant features of professional athletics."55

Intercollegiate contests of all kinds all over the country were placed in a state of limbo the following fall as a result of the football crisis of 1905-06. And once again, attempts by forces at Harvard either to significantly change or kill college athletics, primarily football, had a more serious effect on minor sports than major sports, this time setting in motion events that eventually ended intercollegiate basketball at Harvard for more than ten years. College football circa 1905 was, despite the elimination of the mass-momentum plays of the 1890s, a brutal business, a plain mockery of the gentleman-amateur image many supporters of college athletics continued to sell themselves and, in too many cases, plain dangerous; a few players a season generally died as a result of injuries sustained on high school and college football fields around the country. When

55 HAC minutes 10/25/05, 11/8/05, 3/21/06; Harvard Crimson, 12/8/05, 1/16/06, 1/18/06, 1/22/06, 2/8/06 (quote), 2/21/06. Noyes was himself ejected later in the game for what the Crimson described as "his numerous offenses."
Union College halfback Harold Moore was killed in a game against New York University the final weekend of the 1905 season, exasperated NYU chancellor Henry MacCracken called a conference of colleges and universities that eventually led (after a series of machinations and political compromises too elaborate to go into here) to the adoption of the forward pass and other rule changes designed to spread out the game, the end of Walter Camp's domination of the football rules committee, and the creation of the Intercollegiate Athletic Association (now called the National Collegiate Athletic Association) to regulate athletic relations between the colleges.\textsuperscript{56}

Harvard and Bill Reid were key players in these developments. Everyone involved understood that if the game was not reformed to the satisfaction of Harvard (meaning, essentially, the adoption of rule reforms drawn up by Reid and a committee of current and former Harvard coaches), Harvard would drop intercollegiate football, and probably take many other schools with it. This implied threat, along with astute political machinations on the part of Reid and less subtle pressure applied by President Theodore Roosevelt, football fan and Harvard Class of 1880, led to the acceptance of Reid's rules, including the forward pass. In April of 1906, the Harvard Athletic Committee voted to sanction football under the new rules, and in May the Harvard Corporation and the Harvard Board of Overseers both voted to continue intercollegiate football in 1906.\textsuperscript{57}

They also, however, ordered the creation of a special committee to investigate Harvard's system of regulating intercollegiate athletics and declared a moratorium on any

intercollegiate athletic activity (including the arrangement of schedules or the conduct of any financial affairs) after December 1, 1906, pending completion of the special committee's report. The Joint Committee on the Regulation of Athletic Sports did not even meet until the end of October, making things difficult for the winter and spring sports in the meantime (and causing some to believe that the intention of the Overseers all along was to pocket-veto athletics through inaction). When the management of the 1907 basketball team attempted to submit a schedule for approval in May of 1906, the Athletic Committee told them they could approve nothing until further action of the Overseers. The Athletic Committee also told them that their schedule "does not conform to the rules of the committee," indicating that they had overshot once again. In November the Overseers postponed the freeze until July 1, 1907, it being obvious that the special committee would not finish on time.58

The majority report of the Joint Committee on the Regulation of Athletic Sports, finally issued in February of 1907, contained a great deal of criticism. It attacked the increase in athletic expenses since 1901 and the expanding "extravagances" of training tables and road trips; expressed great concern at the amount of money flowing through Harvard athletics; and noted that some felt the faculty representation on the committee had never been particularly representative of the faculty. But its general drift was positive. It formally endorsed football as played under the new rules (and gave partial credit for those rules "to the active efforts of the Athletic Committee"), generally exonerated the Athletic Committee for its management of athletics over the years, and supported the

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58 HAC minutes, 5/11/06; Harvard Crimson, 10/10/06, 10/24/06, 10/30/06, 11/22/06.
continuation of intercollegiate athletics if certain reforms were undertaken. These reforms included changed representation on the Athletic Committee (undergraduates to be chosen finally by representatives from all varsity teams, faculty representatives to be the deans of the College, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and the Lawrence Scientific School); a new, full-time Graduate Manager to take greater control of Athletic Association finances; greater cost control of "extravagances" like training tables, that "every effort" be used "to get concerted action with other colleges to abolish professional coaches" (in other words, they were not asked to do so unilaterally); and, most significantly from the standpoint of basketball, "that the Athletic Committee be recommended to reduce the number of intercollegiate contests" and "be recommended to reduce the number, length, and time of trips of athletic teams away from Cambridge."

President Eliot had been making these last arguments all along, believing as he did that as few as two major intercollegiate contests per sport a year (as took place in the only intercollegiate sport he really liked, crew, in which he competed and earned a Harvard letter in 1858) were plenty. The President and Fellows voted to accept the report and reformed the Athletic Committee according to its recommendation. And as the Athletic Committee moved to implement some of the other recommendations of the report, winter

59 _HGM_ 20(June 1907), pp. 642-647. It is an indication of how divisive the issue continued to be among Harvard faculty that the joint committee also issued a vituperative minority report, written by Moorhead Storey, which attacked at great length what he considered the Athletic Committee's history of protecting and expanding, rather than regulating and restraining, intercollegiate athletics, contrary to its original mandate. "The Corporation, Overseers, and Faculty were considering the larger interests of the University and of education. The Committee was looking at the larger interests of the sports." Storey savaged what he considered years of Committee hypocrisy and demanded, among other things, the abandonment of football, the unilateral elimination of admission fees, a severe curtailment of intercollegiate
sports once again became targets of a Committee interested in answering demands for reform without changing appreciably the conduct of the major sports. By this time there was little question as to which winter sport best fit the bill with respect to the report’s recommendations. ⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the management of the basketball team continued to seek expansion rather than contraction of its program, partly as a means of keeping up with its opponents (Yale, for example, took a 14-game southern trip over Christmas break this season, as long as Harvard’s entire season), partly due to the combination of optimism and tone-deafness which characterized the program from day one. As soon as the Overseers postponed the freeze in November of 1906, the basketball management submitted a request for a long western road trip over Christmas vacation, which the Committee denied. The team put together another multiple-game-trip schedule to complete their ICL obligations, but were forced to take a forfeit against Penn (with whom Harvard had broken athletic relations over a stunt pulled in the 1905 Harvard-Penn football game) before the season even started. They were permitted to play one of the Yale games at Mechanic’s Hall, Boston, in order to accommodate more paying customers, but all minor sports were denied training tables (though they were later permitted to run them themselves if they promised to pay for them themselves). In conjunction with the hockey

contests, the elimination of paid coaches, and (probably his real beef) the explicit subordination of the Athletic Committee to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. HGM 20 (June 1907), pp. 647-666 (quote p. 651). ⁶⁰ Annual Reports 1905-6, pp. 42-47; Annual Reports 1906-7, pp. 30-34.
team, they continued to agitate periodically for relief from travel and schedule restrictions, to no avail. Their season – 7-9, 4-6 in the ICL – was a mediocre one.61

The real constriction began in the spring of 1907, when the Committee refused to permit the basketball team the travel necessary to participate in the ICL in 1908, forcing Harvard out of the league. They still managed a 16-game season and another Yale game in Mechanic's Hall, but by now forces were massing against them. Pressure to severely curtail or eliminate winter sports altogether was ongoing, and no bones were made about it being an attempt to protect the major sports. In January of 1908, the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences fired off a fresh missive of disgust at the extent of Harvard athletics, voting to send to the Athletic Committee, the President and Fellows of Harvard College, and a dozen or so other colleges in New England a statement declaring "That in the opinion of this Faculty the number of intercollegiate contests should be largely reduced." Throughout the spring of 1908, the Athletic Committee discussed the question of eliminating winter sports. "The whole proposition was a compromise to prevent the necessity of curtailing the major schedules," according to undergraduate Committee member Allen Hinkel, "which the Committee, as well as the undergraduates, knew would mean the death-blow to those sports, both inter- and intra-collegiate." Undergraduates, faced with losing the basketball they supported only mildly and the hockey played mostly in New York City, presented a petition to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in defense of

61 The Penn situation was actually a double forfeit; both games were cancelled and both teams were awarded one win and one loss. The night before the 1905 Harvard-Pennsylvania football game, Penn heavily watered Franklin Field and then wore special extra-long cleats to gain an advantage in the mud. Yale Daily News, 1/9/07, 4/30/07; Harvard Crimson, 12/12/06, 12/13/06, 1/9/07, 1/10/07, 2/1/07, 2/23/07;
minor sports, decrying unilateral action against athletics and proposing the creation of an undergraduate council to provide student input on potential compromise reforms. On April 3 the Athletic Committee announced its intention to slash the 1909 basketball schedule in half and begin “an investigation at once as to prohibition altogether of intercollegiate contests” in basketball. It also moved to “consider the desirability” of wiping out winter sports unilaterally, and served notice on all other minor sports that their necessity was under scrutiny. On April 28 the Committee decided to postpone action on winter sports until the fall, but it represented only a stay of execution.

Contributing to this growing momentum against basketball was the fact that by 1908 or 1909 the game had developed an unsavory reputation on the east coast (and particularly in New England) among some critics as excessively violent, perhaps even on a par with football. In May of 1908, a meeting in Boston of representatives from colleges all over New England, including Harvard, condemned the game as then played, 25 of 30 delegates to the conference voting against it. An “Editorial Note and Comment” in the 1909 American Physical Education Review argued that the game “has gradually degenerated until it is now a cross between a wrestling match and a pugilistic encounter . . . The Intercollegiate game, except on the largest floors, should be called indoor football, or some more appropriate name than basket ball ” The caged slugfest that professional basketball had become in the New England and New York/Philadelphia

HAC minutes, 11/26/06, 1/4/07; Smith, Big-Time Football at Harvard, pp. 276-77; HGM 20(March 1907), p. 451; HGM 20(June 1907), p. 683.

62 HAC minutes, 3/25/08, 4/3/08, 4/28/08; HGM 21(June 1908), pp. 714-17 (quote); “At a Meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, January 7, 1908,” document in HAC minutes after 12/27/07.
professional leagues could not have helped this image. President Eliot, in fact, had always lumped basketball in with football (and hockey) as undesirably rough and fierce games (though there is evidence Eliot never actually saw a college basketball game firsthand.) And for the Harvard Athletic Committee, the game had been a pain in the neck almost from day one, a drain on the Committee's finances and patience with (as the Committee saw things) an exaggerated sense of its own importance, a refusal to accept the restrictions put upon it, and a notable lack of success on the court.63

In 1909 the Harvard basketball team was permitted only a 9-game season, the lack of interest among both spectators and potential athletes was noticeable. They won once. On April 27, team manager Herman Goepper and captain-elect S.H. Brown appeared before the Athletic Committee to plead for the continuation of basketball as an intercollegiate sport. "They explained that the real difficulty with the game had been the impossibility of securing competent officials to enforce the rules," report the minutes. "They consider that the game is a good game, and should be continued as an intercollegiate sport in the University, although they admitted that Harvard had been unsuccessful in conducting the sport satisfactorily up to the present time." At the next meeting, May 10, intercollegiate basketball was abolished at Harvard. There was only one dissenting vote. "The game has not flourished here," Committee chairman LeBaron

Briggs wrote in his annual report, "and is regarded by many competent critics as among the least desirable of athletic sports in this part of the country." Hockey, on the other hand, survived the purge, and in 1915 was granted "major sport" status by the Athletic Committee. While intramural basketball at Harvard continued, intercollegiate basketball did not return until 1921.  

Harvard was not the only place college basketball experienced lean years in the first decade of the twentieth century. At Yale, where the relationship between major and minor sports was also tenuous and contentious, basketball did not have the same success in the first decade of the twentieth century that it had in the last decade of the nineteenth. Yale won the first two Eastern Intercollegiate League championships in 1902 and 1903, but after an uncompetitive 1904 season which generated very little interest on campus, rumors spread that Yale would drop basketball altogether. These rumors proved untrue, but they boded poorly for the future; Yale's representative to the Eastern Intercollegiate League meeting in March of 1904 felt the need to specifically deny that Yale would be leaving the league in 1905 (the year Harvard was dropped). Yale did not leave, but neither did they prove especially competitive over the next few years. They placed second in 1905 (5-3), but fourth in 1906 (4-6), finishing behind Harvard, to whom they lost twice. Their Christmas tours remained extensive and perk-filled (on the 1905-06 trip through the

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64 HGM 22 (March 1909), p. 492; HAC minutes, 4/27/09 (quote), 5/10/09; Annual Reports, 1908-9, p. 121 (quote).
south, the team attended, among other diversions, the opera in New Orleans and the
S.C.S. Christmas Ball in Mobile, Alabama as the guests of local alumni), but they were not
quite as overwhelmingly successful as in the past. On the 1905-06 trip, they went only 7-7
against YMCAs, athletic clubs, and relatively unprestigious colleges, emblematic of the
mediocre state of Yale basketball in 1906.65

The football crisis of 1905-06 did not challenge the conduct of athletics at Yale in
quite the same way as at Harvard, but it did serve to reinforce the inferior status of the
minor sports. As at Harvard, the Yale faculty demanded a special investigation into the
conduct of Yale athletics; as at Harvard, the investigation stirred rancor and revealed
fissures in faculty support for big-time college athletics; as at Harvard, re-assertion of the
division between major and minor sports was one of the consequences of the investigation.
The Yale investigation was shaped not just by the football crisis, but by a July 1905 article
in the muckraking magazine The Outlook, written by ex-Yale football and baseball player
Clarence Deming, which, among other things, exposed the size of Camp’s accumulated
(and unreported) “reserve fund,” criticized the general state of privilege and largesse
surrounding Yale’s major sports, and hinted at the corruption of Yale’s “amateur”
athletes. The document eventually produced by Yale’s Committee on Inquiry on
Athletics, however, was even less critical than its Harvard counterpart. It reaffirmed
Yale’s “student control” over athletics, nibbled at the edges of player and coach perks

65 Columbia Spectator, 3/16/04; J. L. Raycroft to Walter Camp, 11/14/04, in Walter Camp Papers, reel 14,
#675, YUA; Yale Daily News, 1/12/05, 3/1/05, 3/10/06, 3/10/06, 3/12/06; Moyer, “History of College
Basketball,” pp. 98-117. The 1904 season is notable for its relative absence from the pages of the Daily
News.
("we incline to recommend that no theatre tickets be furnished coaches under any circumstances") and, in its most substantial criticism, did away with the $8 "blanket subscription" collected for the benefit of the Financial Union. It also reiterated the second-class status of the minor sports. "We think it best not to place the common purse [of the Financial Union] at the disposal of the minor sports... for they would inevitably want coaches, training tables, and such facilities. We would reserve to them the subscription field," the report said. "Under this arrangement, the minor sports will be permitted to prosper in proportion as they justify themselves to public opinion." As we will see momentarily, not everyone involved with the minor sports was satisfied with the prospect of being "permitted to prosper," especially given that two of the four major sports ran annual deficits covered by football revenue. In the meantime, the Financial Union's "reserve fund" continued to grow (Deming reported it at $61,541 at the end of 1904, not counting interest; one estimate in 1907 placed it near $130,000), and Camp's eventual use for it became increasingly obvious: a permanent Yale football stadium to match Harvard's.  

Another consequence of the football crisis of 1905-06 on college basketball, not only at Yale but generally, was the aforementioned establishment of the Intercollegiate Athletic Association. Formed in response to the football crisis, the ICAA (which later changed its name to the National Collegiate Athletic Association, or NCAA) gradually

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expanded its authority over other branches of college sport. In 1905, an incident in the ongoing turf war between the AAU and the colleges over which basketball teams were "amateur" and which were not led to the creation of a collegiate basketball rules committee separate from the AAU. This committee was eventually folded into the ICAA, giving the new organization primary organizational control over college basketball and, in the long run, contributing to the unique American state of affairs wherein the colleges, and not the national amateur athletic organization, control the most important branches of amateur athletics.⁶⁷

Because of their extensive non-collegiate schedules, Yale basketball teams periodically ran afoul of the AAU for playing teams on the AAU blacklist (see Chapter Two). This did not especially bother Yale, which usually did not register with the AAU from year to year in the belief that, as a college team, the AAU was largely irrelevant to their existence. The AAU, on the other hand, continued to argue that it had the responsibility to regulate college athletes when they competed against non-collegians. In 1905, the AAU blackballed Yale for playing Crescent Athletic Club of Brooklyn, another team on their outlaw list, and began threatening Yale’s upcoming opponents with the same treatment. University of Pennsylvania basketball manager Ralph Morgan received such a threat from AAU secretary James Sullivan just before his team was to face Yale in January. He ignored the directive and Yale and Penn played; after the game, former Yale captain R.B. Hyatt suggested to Morgan that the incident be used to establish a separate

⁶⁷ On the history of organizational relations between the AAU and the NCAA, see Arnold William Flath, A History of Relations Between The National Collegiate Athletic Association and the Amateur Athletic
collegiate rules committee, free of AAU sniping about player eligibility. Response around the Eastern League was favorable, and at the Penn Relays in April, delegates from about 15 colleges chose a seven-man Basket Ball Rules Committee to write and administer a new set of rules for college basketball.68

The actual rule changes made by this new committee were relatively minor. The organizational break itself was more significant, and grew increasingly so as basketball games between colleges and other kinds of amateur teams grew less frequent over the next five or so years. In 1909, after several years of organizational courtship, the ICAA invited this new committee to join it and administer college basketball under its auspices. This was part of a desire on the ICAA's part to establish itself as more than just a football rules body, several of which had already come and gone. Despite its almost geological presence in American athletics today, the long-term success of the ICAA/NCAA was not at all assured in its first years. Over the long term, the addition of the basketball committee helped strengthen the ICAA by making it more than a football organization and made basketball a college sport controlled by the colleges, and not by the national amateur athletic organization.69

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Over the short term, however, this rules committee presided over a game increasingly under attack in New England and on the east coast for being too violent, as we have already seen. Roughness and violence seem to have been more characteristic of college basketball in the northeast than in the midwest, due to the greater use of dribble-oriented offensive tactics and more permissive officiating. The differences in eastern and midwestern styles of play were commonly remarked upon, sometimes derisively. “The Minnesota and Wisconsin men played in the style prevalent among most of the girl colleges in the East, that is the ‘no contact’ game,” said Yale’s W.C. Hyatt in 1905. “Under this interpretation of the rules a foul is called upon an average of every two minutes during the game and the result is the entire breaking up of the team play of a team unused to this style of game.” “It is characteristic of Western basketball to enforce the rules as printed in The Official Guide,” countered Wisconsin coach E.D. Angell, “and it is certainly true that the game played in the West is cleaner than the Eastern game – and it is not effeminate – is not lacking in interest – and is a man’s game, played by men, with science and skill.” In addition to the submerged gender anxiety expressed here, which we will examine more fully in Chapter Six, these comments suggest the degree to which basketball has always been, from the beginning, the most impressionistically officiated of the major team games, where the difference between the rules as written and as actually played has been greatest.\footnote{R.B. Hyatt, “Intercollegiate Basket Ball in the East,” \textit{Spalding’s Official Collegiate Basket Ball Guide 1905-06} (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1905), pp. 13-27 (quote p. 19); Emmett Company, 1905); Morgan, “Ten Years of the Rules Committee”; Morgan, “Thirty Years of Basketball Rules Committees.”}
When Harvard president Charles Eliot publicly denounced college basketball for being too violent, his opinion was taken very seriously due to his immense prestige in the educational community (and despite the fact that he likely never saw a college basketball game himself). Eliot's dislike of basketball corresponded with a larger movement in the spring of 1908, spearheaded by himself and Princeton president Woodrow Wilson, to greatly reduce the number of intercollegiate contests in all sports and prevent college athletics from becoming a permanent year-round enterprise. This effort ultimately failed, but it contributed not only to the abolition of basketball at Harvard but also to its weakness elsewhere in the east. At Pennsylvania, the Athletic Committee passed a resolution in the spring of 1908 calling for fewer "indoor contests." Yale and Princeton pulled out of the Eastern Intercollegiate League before the 1909 season for financial reasons, causing it to collapse; the Big Three, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, had all left it within two years. It would not re-form until 1911. The collegiate rules committee responded to charges that the game had grown out of control by instituting the continuous dribble rule in 1909, preventing a player from stopping his dribble and starting it again.\footnote{\textit{New York Times}, 3/22/08, 3/23/08 (quote), 3/29/08, 4/18/08; \textit{Boston Evening Transcript}, 5/9/08, \textit{Yale Daily News}, 3/28/08, 12/11/09, 4/12/10; Moyer, "History of College Basketball," p. 91. See also note 68, above.}

Basketball at Yale struggled in the wake of all this. The 1907 season was something of a return to form after several disappointing years. They played a very, very extensive 35-game season against a wide variety of collegiate, YMCA and athletic club...
opponents, and won their first Eastern Intercollegiate League championship since 1903.

Their 14-game Christmas trip was far-flung – as far south as Birmingham, as far west as St. Louis – and long on victories. The 1908 season was also long and relatively successful, though their 5-3 league finish (tied for second) was slightly disappointing given that they lost only one important player from the previous year’s team. The financial records which survive from 1908, however, show an organization just paying for itself, and not through gate receipts. Of their $4137.92 in total income, just under $1000 of it came from subscription collections. Another $1512.60 was income from the Christmas trip, most of it probably guaranteed, and most of it cancelled out by the $1452.60 in Christmas trip expenses. In addition, much of the entertainment and other extras afforded the team on Christmas trips appears to have been the work of friendly alumni in host cities. Only $1265.97 was collected at the home gate (compare with $2500-3000 at Chicago in 1908 and 1909, in fewer home games). Yale’s total 1908 expenses were $4131.67, giving them a net income of $6.25. This was self-sufficiency, but with a tight margin. 72

It was to grow tighter. In 1908, due primarily to the efforts of swim team manager Robert Moses, the basis by which the minor sports at Yale were organized and funded changed. Moses forced the creation of the Minor Sports Association, which consolidated all of the minor sports’ various subscription collections into a single collection drive and a single fund to be distributed by the new association. (Moses had originally gone to Camp and, in person, demanded that a portion of Financial Union revenue be distributed to

72 Yale Daily News, 1/9/07, 3/12/07, 4/30/07, 1/8/08, 3/4/08, 3/28/08, 5/15/08. See above, note
minor sports. When Camp, unused to being challenged in this fashion, rejected him out of hand, Moses badgered the university until his alternative was accepted.) This was something of a setback for the basketball team, at least in the short run, for joining the new association meant abandoning their separate subscription collection. It cost them a significant amount of money. Their 1909 share of the pot was $400 — less than half what they had raised on their own in subscriptions the previous year.\(^7\)

The 1909 season was scaled back in a variety of ways, in fact, the first of several disastrous years in a row. There was no Eastern Intercollegiate League; there was no Christmas trip; there were no games against non-collegiate opponents. The team was solvent, but on a much smaller scale. Gross receipts from all sources in 1908 had been $4131.67; in 1909 they were only $1893.80. The home gate was only $708.55, much smaller than the previous year even when a shorter schedule is factored in. They cleared expenses by $112.39, but this was mostly an indication of how much their expenses had been reduced. In addition to giving up the Christmas trip, the team had also been forced to give up its paid coach, a $425 expense in 1908. Their 9–9 record was deceptively good, as most of their victories came against lesser opponents. Things would get worse before they got better. They were 4–11 in 1910, 8–10 in 1911, and a miserable 1–9 in

\(^7\) This is the same Robert Moses who went on, as New York City Parks Commissioner, to build (and/or tear down) much of twentieth-century New York. Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 1–2, 40–44; *Yale Daily News*, 4/22/09.
1912. Their finances continued to indicate a program limited in scope and unpopular with Yale students. Gate receipts in 1910 amounted to only $379.27.\textsuperscript{74}

By 1913, rumors of Yale basketball's demise were commonplace and had been circulating for several years. The Eastern Intercollegiate League had been re-formed in 1911, but Yale was forced to leave it in 1913 for financial reasons. Observers of Yale basketball offered a variety of theories as to why the game had grown unsuccessful there. Gymnasium director W. G. Anderson, who had first introduced the game to Yale in the 1890s, suggested that roughness, not only in colleges but as played by professionals, had given the game a bad name. Eastern Intercollegiate League secretary and former Pennsylvania basketball manager Ralph Morgan believed Harvard's abolition of the game hurt Yale by robbing them of their natural rival. Former player Haskell Noyes believed the run of uncompetitive teams killed interest in the team on campus. Whatever the reason, Yale athletic authorities had, in fact, considered dropping the game in 1913. They decided instead to let the team continue but forced it to withdraw from the Eastern League (which had been re-organized in 1911) for a year, as a sort of provisional recovery season without the expenses of competing in the league. When this year went relatively well, the team was permitted to re-join the league in 1914, and even to hire a paid coach again.\textsuperscript{75}


\textsuperscript{75} By this time, Camp's suzerainty over Yale athletics was considerably reduced. In 1912, the Financial Union was dissolved and replaced with a new Yale University Athletic Association. Camp was still treasurer, but the controlling committee was now larger, and contained representatives of the Minor Athletic Association. Under attack due in part to Yale's recent lack of football success, and in part because he had become something of a dinosaur, he resigned from his various Yale athletic posts in 1914-15, after overseeing completion of the 80,000-seat Yale Bowl. Yale athletics were re-organized again after his resignation, under a system of faculty-student-alumni control similar to Harvard's. Borkowski,
The 1914 coach was Haskell Noyes, who re-instigated the Christmas trip and produced a team good enough to go 11-6 and come in third in the league. In 1915, Yale won its first Eastern Intercollegiate League championship since 1907.76

At Columbia, the football controversy of 1905-6 claimed a different victim: football. Along with only a handful of other major universities, Columbia abolished intercollegiate football after the 1905 season, and did not resume it until 1915. In football's absence, basketball took on greater importance at Columbia than at many other universities, both as a campus institution and as a manifestation of Columbia in the eyes of the outside world. It became the sport for which Columbia was best-known, in the city where basketball was probably more important than anywhere else. Columbia replaced Yale as the standard-bearer of eastern college basketball, and the game remained popular and prosperous there despite the setbacks it experienced elsewhere in the east. Basketball did not, however, fully replace football in the minds of many Columbia athletic boosters, for whom the absence of football remained an unfilled void in Columbia campus life and to whom basketball, despite its popularity, remained a "minor" sport.77

76 Yale Daily News, 3/12/14, 3/17/15
Varsity basketball began at Columbia in 1899; in just a few years, Columbia established itself as one of the top college teams, gradually replacing Yale as the most consistently successful of the major eastern colleges. After Yale won the first two Eastern Intercollegiate League titles, Columbia won or shared 5 of the next 9. A large measure of this success can be traced to the playing and coaching career of Harry Fisher, who led Columbia on the floor from 1903 to 1905 and then as coach until 1916. As a player, Fisher played forward on teams that went 17-1 in 1904 and 19-1 in 1905 (both losses coming against a professional team from Schenectady, NY, the Washington Continentals). won two Eastern Intercollegiate League titles, and, in 1905, claimed a “national championship” on the basis of regular-season victories over Wisconsin and Minnesota. As a coach, Fisher established what today we would call a “program” with “tradition” (and what the Columbia Alumni News once called, in the era’s most stereotypic words of praise, “scientific coaching”), a system similar to Yale’s system of football coaching, wherein former players returned each year to help coach the team under Fisher’s tutelage. Between 1904 and the first World War, few major-college athletic teams were as consistently successful. In addition, Fisher represented Columbia on the collegiate rules committee from its founding until 1914, edited the Spalding’s Collegiate Basketball Guide, and was for several years Columbia’s Graduate Director of Athletics. Along with

Columbia Spectator, 11/28/05, 11/29/05, 12/4/05; Columbia University Quarterly 8(March 1906), pp. 166-171.
Joseph Raycroft and maybe Ralph Morgan of Pennsylvania, he was the individual most associated with the trajectory of college basketball before World War One.78

During Fisher’s playing years, Columbia still had football, and the consistent campus support for basketball that developed in later years does not appear to have been in evidence. “There has been a lack of enthusiasm at the games this year,” the campus paper, the Spectator, complained before the last game in 1904. “The cheer-leaders who were elected early in the fall seem to have failed to realize the fact that they were chosen not for the football season alone.” Nevertheless, his teams were both highly successful on the court and highly entrepreneurial in the sense that Yale had been in the 1890s, or that Raycroft’s Chicago teams were later in the decade. They played extensive schedules against good competition, including non-collegiate opponents and, occasionally, open professionals. Many years, they played a series of games over Christmas vacation. They also, under the institutional guise of the New York Athletic Club, entered and won the 1905 New York metropolitan AAU championship. The extent of amateur basketball in the New York City area seems to have been an element in Columbia’s success, both when Fisher was a player (Fisher and every other 1905 regular were New York products) and over the long term, much as the University of Chicago benefited from Chicago’s well-developed high school sports. The status of basketball at Columbia is suggested by what the University Athletic Council, the body in control of Columbia athletics, did for the 1904

78 Had the league existed in 1909 and 1910, Columbia’s record would likely have been 7 of the next 11. Frank O’Connell, “Intercollegiate Basketball,” Columbia Monthly 1(March 1904), pp. 68-71; Columbia Spectator, 3/12/04, 3/11/05, 10/18/12; E. Howard Osterhout, “Basketball – A Real Columbia Sport,” Columbia Alumni News 5(March 27, 1914), pp. 517-20; Spalding’s Official Collegiate Basket Ball Guide
team. They awarded its members the full varsity "C", but did not make the honor a permanent right; it was awarded as a one-time recognition of a championship season.79

When Columbia abolished football after the 1905 season, the student body and many alumni did not take it well. Undergraduates demanded the game's reinstatement at mass meetings; football-friendly alumni complained. Rumors spread that Columbia would abandon all intercollegiate athletics, a rumor president Nicholas Murray Butler felt the need to deny in person in front of a mass meeting of Columbia undergraduates. Nor did the issue die in 1905-06. "INTERCOLLEGIATE FOOTBALL MUST BE RESUMED AT COLUMBIA!" demanded the banner headline that ran across the top of the Spectator every day for two and a half weeks in December of 1906, their first season without a team. Throughout the next few years, students and alumni attempted to convince the university that football was an essential component of a major university, to no avail. Nor did the Columbia football apparatus itself give up willingly. The football association had about $13,000 in reserve when it was dissolved; $10,000 was placed in a 5-year trust to await the day when football returned.80

80 The other $3000, as well as the interest on the $10,000, was distributed to other sports, mostly crew and track. For examples of the ongoing agitation over football, see Columbia Spectator, 11/28/05, 11/29/05, 12/4/05, 12/6/05, 1/8/06, 9/26/06, 12/7/06, 12/19/06, 4/5/07, 4/9/07, 11/4/07; Frances Bangs to Nicholas Murray Butler, 12/21/05, and Butler to Bangs, 12/22/05, in Francis S. Bangs Papers, Columbia University Central Files, 317/6, Columbia University Archives (Bangs resigns from the University Committee on Athletics in the belief all intercollegiate sports are dead; Butler reassures him he is mistaken);
In the meantime, Columbia basketball games grew into significant and successful social events on campus, to a much greater degree than at the other institutions studied closely here. Hints of this state of events were already developing in 1905, in fact, Fisher’s final season as a player and the year before football was abolished. The final game of the season, against Pennsylvania, was presented as both a major campus social event and a coronation capping two consecutive years of (virtually) undefeated basketball. The large crowd witnessed not only a 56-16 dismantling of Penn, but also the official hanging of the previous year’s league championship banner from the gymnasium rafters, surrounded by the pennants of the other Eastern League universities. Special cheering sections were reserved both for Columbia student groups and for a group from Penn who followed the team to New York. As was common in both New York and Philadelphia, the game was followed by a dance; as was less common, the dance featured engraved invitations. That summer, the team entered and won the city AAU championship. When Columbia abandoned football the next fall, they had just finished crowning themselves national champions of college basketball and the best amateur team in New York City.\footnote{I have chosen to take Chicago’s 1908 “National Championship” more seriously because it involved a head-to-head post-season series between the eastern and western champions. It is a reasonable assumption, however, that Columbia was the best college basketball team in the country in 1905. The league championship banner was provided by none other than James Sullivan, New York AAU president and president of the American Sports Publishing Company, publisher of the Spalding’s Guides. See Chapter Two for more on the Spalding’s Guides. Columbia Spectator, 3/16/04, 3/9/05, 3/11/05. See also note 83, above.}

The vacuum left in campus life by football is far from the only explanation for the success of Columbia basketball before World War One. In retrospect, the difficulty college basketball experienced elsewhere in the northeast was an exception to the
widespread acceptance of basketball as the primary winter varsity sport, though that was not necessarily obvious in 1908 or 1909. The other major northeastern university where basketball flourished consistently, Pennsylvania, was also the other major northeastern university located in a city where basketball was widely popular generally. But neither should this factor be discounted entirely. At the very least, there was no powerful football interest around to resent basketball’s existence, or to withhold financial support. In fact, without the help of football revenue, Columbia’s surviving major sports ran into financial difficulties of their own. The crew team alone was nearly $6000 in the red by 1908-09, and being supported largely by sympathetic alumni. While estimates of crowd size and spectator enthusiasm must be used with great care, it seems clear that by the 1910s, basketball games at Columbia involved consistently larger crowds, more campus and community interest, and more organized pageantry than at the other institutions we are examining closely here. Crowds of 2000-3000 were common estimates for important games, the most important of which were usually against Penn. Post-game dances and organized rooting remained standard features. Prom Week and Alumni Week were both organized partially around home basketball games. Nevertheless, the status of a “major” or a “minor” sport was based on prestige and perception more than it was on rationality, and, though the full varsity “C” would sometimes be awarded to basketball players in a league championship year, basketball remained technically a “minor” sport at Columbia until 1926.82

82 Columbia Spectator, esp. 2/27/08, 9/23/08, 1/4/09, 2/3/09, 2/4/09, 9/22/09, 10/23/09, 1/8/10, 3/9/10, 2/17/11, 3/6/11, 2/12/12, 3/4/12, 10/18/12; “Basketball I – News Clips,” box in Columbiana collection,
Major sport status aside, Columbia basketball remained healthy and popular throughout the sometimes-troubled years from approximately 1908 to 1914, during which it was the standard of the eastern college game and Harry Fisher was arguably, as the Columbia alumni magazine put it, “the Walter Camp of basketball.” It was the most successful of the various Eastern League schools during the two years in which the league itself did not exist; the league’s absence in 1909 probably cost them their shot at Schommer and Chicago in a post-season championship series (see above). The *Spalding’s Collegiate Basketball Guide* chose every member of the Columbia five for their annual All-Eastern team in 1909, an honor only slightly diminished by the fact that Fisher made the selections. When the league resumed in 1911, Columbia won the next two titles, and lost only four games between 1909 and 1912. When Columbia football resumed in 1915, Harry Fisher was the Columbia’s graduate manager of athletics, and his basketball players were prominent on the new squad.\(^3\)

As World War One approached, college basketball had grown into a stable, widespread, essentially mature intercollegiate sport, not just at major eastern and midwestern universities but all over the country. Interested fans could watch this process in the annual *Spalding’s Guides*, which swelled year by year with reports from different areas. The 1914-15 *Guide*, for example, included reports from 11 different states or regions in addition to the major eastern, midwestern, and New England colleges. The

colleges had their own *Spalding Guide*, in fact, every year that they had their own rules committee. This is not an insignificant point, given that the president of the American Sports Publishing Company, the Spalding subsidiary responsible for issuing the guides, was James Sullivan, also a major official in the AAU the colleges were specifically rejecting. Organizational infighting was apparently no reason to reject another opportunity for positive publicity for amateur athletics -- or another outlet for Spalding Sporting Goods advertising. In 1915, the split between the AAU and collegiate rules committees was ended with the creation of a superunified Basket Ball Rules Committee representing the NCAA, the AAU, and the YMCA. This arose not from the AAU attempting to re-assert itself over college basketball, but from the AAU and YMCA essentially joining the college committee; though representation on the new committee was equal among all three organizations, the only major remaining rule difference – the dribble rule – was settled in favor of the colleges. The order in which the three organizations appeared on the cover of the also-superunified *Spalding Guide* was rotated each year, an indication of the tenuous spirit of compromise at work. By this time, games between colleges and non-collegiate teams were no longer common, and control over college basketball was plainly in the hands of the colleges, regulated by the NCAA and by the various athletic conferences around the country.

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*In addition to the *Spalding's Guides* in these years, see Flath, *A History of Relations Between The National Collegiate Athletic Association and the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States*, pp. 26-29.*

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Just as Charles Eliot and Woodrow Wilson had feared in 1908, in fact, basketball had become the winter equivalent of football or baseball on college campuses, and highly competitive intercollegiate athletics had become a continuous nine-month phenomenon. Such a development was not inevitable; as we have seen, sometimes it was inhibited by the very stewards of college athletics themselves. However, the fact that Eliot, the nation’s most prominent and prestigious educator, could not stop this development at his own university, let alone nationwide, is an indication of how entrenched the notion of highly competitive intercollegiate athletics had become by the first and second decades of the twentieth century. Even Harvard went back to basketball after the war (and they had maintained hockey all along). Despite ongoing criticism, varsity athletics were plainly part of the institutional landscape of the American college and university. As we are about to see, this was true not only at major multi-versities with athletic treasuries overstuffed by football, but at smaller colleges, which felt the need to offer a full slate of varsity athletics in order to compete with larger institutions for quality students and institutional legitimacy.
CHAPTER 5

MINOR COLLEGE, MAJOR SPORT: BASKETBALL AT OBERLIN COLLEGE

The attention generated by the development of "big-time" college athletics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, both among contemporary observers and subsequent critics and historians, has obscured a centrally important point concerning the development of competitive intercollegiate athletics in the United States: not all of it was "big-time." Comprehensive intercollegiate athletic programs grew throughout the American system of higher education, at small institutions as well as large ones, and at many institutions where the massive football stadiums and vast athletic profits associated with "big-time" college athletics were not at all a part of the equation. Varsity athletic programs developed not only where spectator interest, student entrepreneurialism, and gate receipts were all high, but also where inadequate facilities, small enrollments, and shoestring budgets had to be stretched to fit outsized aspirations. What, exactly, were those aspirations? Why did
small as well as large institutions of higher education devote their limited resources to
emulating the grandiose intercollegiate athletic programs of Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and
the University of Chicago?

The development of intercollegiate basketball at relatively small Oberlin College
suggests that these institutions considered the ability to offer students a full complement of
athletic opportunities, and offer observers a record of athletic achievement, important
measures of institutional prestige and of their ability to attract male students. As was the
case at "big-time" universities like Harvard and Yale, basketball was a secondary aspect of
this dynamic, which revolved primarily around college football. It was not, however, quite
as secondary as at some large institutions; basketball was for the most part a welcome,
rather than a resented, presence. The differentiation between "major sport" and "minor
sport," which shaped the development of college basketball at some "big-time"
institutions, was less important and less contentious at these schools, and basketball
developed relatively uncontentiously into the primary winter varsity sport at these
institutions. At Oberlin, the ability to offer comprehensive physical education and athletic
programs was considered an important institutional priority -- and, as co-educational
colleges, important to their desire to remain primarily "male" institutions in the minds of
observers and potential students.

While Oberlin College was not a particularly influential institution in terms of the
larger development of intercollegiate sport, a few of its unique institutional characteristics
make it an interesting venue for examining the emergence of basketball within a specific
context. Oberlin at the turn of the century was an important center of physical education – the outlook, as we have seen, responsible for the development of basketball in the first place. It also had a long history of coeducation, an established program of female as well as male physical education, and a program of women’s basketball that predated the introduction of the game for men. Oberlin was also, by virtue of its institutional philosophy and its student body, a palpably Progressive institution; among the future reformers who received part of their education at Oberlin, in fact, was none other that Luther Halsey Gulick. These factors make Oberlin an interesting place at which to look in on the development of basketball. Basketball, and competitive athletics in general, was something of a hybrid at Oberlin, part instrumental sport in the sense originally intended, part emulation of the “big-time” varsity athletic programs at other colleges and universities.¹

Basketball was introduced to Oberlin men in 1902, and by the end of the decade it had become the second most important intercollegiate sport at the college. Unlike the initial apathy and/or resistance which sometimes greeted basketball’s introduction at “big-time” athletic universities, a confluence of interests between students, physical educators, and faculty/administration within the game form of men’s basketball made possible its relatively quick and uncontroversial establishment as a fixture in student life at Oberlin. Basketball satisfied the interests of students by providing an additional avenue for intercollegiate athletic competition; it advanced the interests of Oberlin physical educators

¹ John Barnard, From Evangelicalism to Progressivism at Oberlin College, 1866-1917 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969)
by expanding the institution's athletic offerings (and, they hoped, its level of athletic participation), it fit into faculty/administration efforts to attract a greater number of men to Oberlin by advertising its athletic and physical education opportunities, and it did these things within a framework of organizational control over competitive athletics that faculty and physical educators considered sufficient to control the "excesses" of athletic competition.

Physical work of one sort or another had been a central element of Oberlin's education philosophy from its founding in 1833. All students were required to perform four hours of manual labor daily, labor which Oberlin guaranteed to provide. Manual labor remained a central tenet of Oberlin's educational ideology through the Civil War, though the work itself became harder to come by; by 1856 the college gave up on its earlier promise of guaranteeing all of its students Oberlin-arranged work. By the latter decades of the century, manual labor gradually gave way in the educational routine to an emerging commitment to organized, supervised physical education.

The initial impetus for this shift came from students. A small gymnasium for men was built in 1861 by student subscription (the college agreed to provide land but refused to fund construction), but the Civil War all but killed interest in its use; it was torn down two years later. A more substantial and more permanent men's gym was built in 1873, by which time Oberlin's manual labor program had atrophied almost completely and gymnastic work had become more popular generally. Control of this facility passed from
the student Gymnasium Association, which had raised the money to build it, to the college proper in 1877, and a gymnasia requirement of one sort or another faded in and out of the curriculum periodically throughout the 1870s and 1880s.\(^3\)

Oberlin women, however (Oberlin had been co-educational since 1837, the first such American college), were the first to receive full-time professional instruction in physical education. A small separate gymnasium for women was built in 1881 (replacing an older building that burned the year before), and in 1885 Oberlin hired a full-time professional to run it: Delphine Hanna, hired as Instructor in Physical Training. Hanna was one of the first and best-educated female physical educational professionals of the day, graduating from the Brockport State Normal School in 1874 and the Sargent Normal School at Harvard in 1885; she later earned an M.D., at Michigan in 1890. After trying and failing to obtain work teaching at normal schools in New York, Oberlin hired her provisionally, at very low salary, for one year. She stayed until 1920, moving up to Director of Physical Training, Women's Department, in 1887 and receiving a full professorship in 1903.\(^4\)

Hanna's professional philosophy stressed expanding the influence of physical education through teacher training classes and organizing physical education along scientific lines. In addition to organizing and leading gymnasium classes for women (125


her first year) and a special class for local public school children, Hanna taught a physical education training course for men in which undergraduates were trained to provide knowledgeable instruction for classes in the men's gymnasium. Her instruction for women featured physical examinations and anthropomorphic measurement, and after 1900 Hanna's anthropomorphic charts were used widely by other colleges.⁴

A full-time professional to run physical education for men soon followed. In 1892 Fred E. Leonard was hired as Professor of Physiology and Director of Men's Gymnasium. Leonard was an Oberlin graduate who had been active as a student gymnasium supervisor, one of the undergraduates trained each year by Dr. Hanna to provide rudimentary supervision for men's physical training. Leonard had been student director of the gymnasium his senior year. After several years of advanced training in physical education and a stint as a YMCA physical director in Brooklyn, Leonard was hired, as a full professor, to teach classes in physiology and to direct physical education for men. His outlook on physical training and its place in education shaped physical education at Oberlin until his death in 1922.⁵

That outlook stressed professionally-trained supervision, rational organization, and scientific principles. It also stressed the importance of physical education to spiritual and intellectual as well as physical development and aimed to extend the benefits of physical education to as many students as possible. No student was allowed inside the gymnasium

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without a comprehensive physical examination and evaluation. This, of course, was the very outlook behind instrumental sport. Gymnasium work was never conducted without supervision (provided by Leonard and by undergraduate and graduate instructors trained for the work). The necessity of going about physical work in a rationally organized manner in order to achieve its maximum benefit was stressed. Vigorous physical work was considered a necessary balance in the educational routine against the supposedly feminizing influences of intellectual activity and religious training, and the benefits of physical education were seen to go beyond the physical condition of the body to the edification of the whole Christian man. It was a philosophy of physical education, in short, entirely congruent with the physical training philosophy of the YMCA which the game of basketball was invented to serve. The congruence is less than accidental. Luther Halsey Gulick was briefly an Oberlin student and a member of Hanna's physical training course, an experience Gulick considered formative.  

In addition, by the middle of the 1890s, Oberlin had an established program of intercollegiate athletics and a student-faculty-alumni system of athletic management and

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7 Shults, "Life of Fred Eugene Leonard"; "Oberlin College Men's Gymnasium -- Retrospect and Prospect" (June 1893), typed manuscript in Leonard papers (Subgroup 1, Series 10, Box 1), O.C.A.; C. Howard Hopkins, A History of the YMCA in North America (New York: Association Press, 1951), pp. 246-270; Gerber, Innovators and Institutions, pp. 325-31, 348-56; James Naismith, Basketball. The rhetoric of Leonard (and of others at Oberlin speaking about physical education at this time) exhibits congruence with both the "three-fold nature" philosophy of man's physical, intellectual, and spiritual balance and with the notion that the period between about 15 and 25 is developmentally the most important period in life and therefore the period in life when organized physical education is most important, two ideas associated with Gulick's philosophy. See, in addition to above, Oberlin Views, 12/20/01; Dominick Cavallo, Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform (Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 1981). Leonard's papers in the Oberlin Archives contain innumerable outlines and abbreviated texts of speeches.
control which left it largely at peace with football during the brutality controversies of the 1890s, as well as with the role of intercollegiate athletics in general on campus. Intercollegiate athletics arose at Oberlin much as they had at other colleges, largely through student initiative and under student control. A student Athletic Association formed in 1881 with the purpose of bringing Oberlin intercollegiate competition in baseball. Oberlin faculty had resisted student petitions for intercollegiate baseball from as early as 1869, but now relented, and intercollegiate baseball under student control quickly became a fixture of student life. Athletic Association requests for intercollegiate football, however, continued to draw faculty vetoes until 1890, when the Association was permitted to schedule a single outside game with Western Reserve University. This game was canceled by a Thanksgiving blizzard and never played, but precedent had been set; the faculty permitted a full schedule for the fall of 1891.8

Oberlin's early football history was quite successful. The 1891 team went only 2-3, but the following year they hired an outside coach—none other than John Heisman, after whom the trophy is named, fresh from an illustrious playing career at Penn and at the first stop on a soon-to-be-legendary coaching career. This team, on which Heisman also played (by enrolling in a postgraduate art course), went 7-0 and outscored their opponents 262-30, including a 24-22 victory over Michigan. The 1893 team went 6-1 and defeated both the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois. Although Heisman left after 1894 (and coached only two games in 1893, not uncoincidentally the two against Chicago

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he gave on physical education at various times, from which my understanding of his philosophy has partially been drawn. See esp. Leonard papers (Series 4, Subseries 2, Box 3), O.C.A.
and Illinois), the program remained strong through most of the 1890s. Oberlin continued to schedule, though increasingly not to defeat, larger eastern and western schools like Cornell and Michigan throughout the decade, and to handle the smaller Ohio schools which made up the bulk of their schedule with varying degrees of ease.  

After a few years of football, the faculty decided to impose a greater degree of control over intercollegiate athletics. Through 1893, athletics had remained almost completely student-run. The Athletic Association, membership in which was open to all, met twice annually and voted on officers, team captains, and team managers. Team managers handled the daily nuts-and-bolts of scheduling and team management; a student treasurer disbursed funds with authorization from the president and secretary; coaches were paid out of Association funds, accrued mainly from gate receipts but occasionally augmented by special student subscriptions and fundraisers. The Association also organized and oversaw class athletics. The faculty committee retained veto power over the Association's actions. 

In 1894, the faculty added a layer of oversight. An Athletic Advisory Board, similar in organization to Harvard's, was formed to oversee the activities of the Association, made up of three faculty members, three student members chosen by the captains of the varsity and class teams, and three alumni. Primary responsibility for

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8 Shults, "History." pp. 66-76.
Oberlin' success against major football programs declined precipitously after the mid-1890s. In 1899 Oberlin lost 58-0 to Chicago and 81-0 to the Carlisle Indians; between 1895 and 1902 Oberlin was defeated by Michigan four times by a combined score of 131-6. Oberlin Hi-oh-hi (1904).
scheduling and nuts-and-bolts daily management was also transferred in 1899 to a Graduate Manager, George Jones '94, who delegated responsibility to undergraduate team managers as he saw fit; financial responsibility was split between an undergraduate and graduate treasurer. By the turn of the century, coaching was done primarily by Oberlin alumni. The system of control in place by 1900, in short, was a mixed one, a balance of student enthusiasm for competitive sport and faculty concern for controlling its excess.11

Twin brothers Edwin and Edgar Fauver, Oberlin football and baseball coaches from 1900 to 1905, personified this mixed system. "Win" and "Gar" were both standout athletes at Oberlin in the late 1890s. Win quarterbacked football teams that went 12-2-1 in two years and outscores their opponents 142-6 in 1898; Gar played two years of varsity football and, like Win, four of varsity baseball. The pair were hired in 1900 to coach Oberlin's football and baseball teams. On the surface, Win and Gar were typical rah-rah 1890s football stars turned alumni coaches, scouring the student body for football prospects, trumpeting their success on the gridiron as a fount of school spirit and institutional prestige, pleading with the college for the devotion of more resources to athletics. They were not volunteers, however, and the manner in which they were paid says much about the nature of Oberlin's commitment to intercollegiate athletics and its desire to support them despite limited resources. Win and Gar were paid in three separate capacities: as coaches, as instructors in the men's gymnasium (which they had also been as

11 "Constitution and By-Laws of the Oberlin College Athletic Association 1892," booklet in records of the Department of the Secretary (Group 5, Subgroup 1, Series 1, Box 1). O.C.A.
11 Oberlin College Annual Report (1894, 1906-07); Oberlin Review, 10/2/95, 10/16/95, 12/17/98; "Constitution and By-Laws of the Oberlin College Athletic Association, also Constitution and Rules of the
undergraduates, with training from Leonard), and as academic instructors in Oberlin Academy, the college’s preparatory school. To put it another way, the Fauver twins had simultaneous personal commitments and financial dependencies to three different institutional outlooks concerning the role of athletics in college life: the boosterism of the Athletic Association, the physical education philosophy represented by Fred Leonard, and the educational outlook of Oberlin proper. In addition, because the “coach” portion of their salary came out of Athletic Association funds, not the general operating fund, Oberlin maintained a salaried coaching staff at something of a discount.12

Though started by the students, and initially fought by the faculty, intercollegiate athletics had clearly become a legitimate, desirable aspect of Oberlin’s institutional self-image by the 1890s. As early as 1894, Oberlin president William Ballantine publicly defended college football from charges of brutality – provided, of course, that it was carried on within wise and judicious institutional controls like Oberlin’s. "An undiscriminating condemnation of football would be most unreasonable," he argued in his 1894 annual report, providing the institution took care to reduce the game's negative influences and preserve its positive benefits through wise and judicious controls. Oberlin, he believed, had largely done so. "The manly and honorable bearing of our teams and student crowds has called out deserved praise." That Oberlin be viewed as a “manly” and “honorable” institution was of great concern to Oberlin faculty and administration at the turn of the century. This was evident not only in Oberlin’s support of intercollegiate

Advisory Board" (n.d.), booklet in records of the Department of the Secretary (Group 5, Subgroup 1, Series 1, Box 1). O.C.A.: Sluitts, "History." pp. 240-246.
athletics and defense of football, but also in its construction, in 1900, of a state-of-the-art, $50,000-plus gymnasium for the benefit of its male students.\textsuperscript{13}

The money came from Dr. Lucien C. Warner, a successful New York businessman and philanthropist who was an Oberlin alumni trustee and a previous donor to the college (a similar gift in 1883 funded the construction of Oberlin Conservatory’s concert hall). Warner publicly described his gift as an outgrowth of his own experiences in field athletics and manual labor at Oberlin in the 1860s, and his lifetime of involvement with the YMCA (he was at the time chairman of the YMCA International Committee) certainly suggests that he indeed had some level of commitment to physical work as an important element of the complete education of the Christian man. But his gift was most likely spurred less by personal philosophy and more by the fact that Oberlin considered the construction of a new men’s gym its foremost educational need in 1900. The gym built with Warner’s gift, in fact, had been in the works throughout the 1890s, waiting only on the money necessary to build. The faculty voted as early as 1890 that a report be prepared regarding the size requirements of a possible new gym, and a gym proposal outlined in 1893 matches almost exactly the description and dimensions of the building eventually built. Architectural plans were commissioned as early as 1897. The new Warner Gymnasium was finished and occupied by December of 1901.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Oberlin Review, 12/17/98, 12/19/01; Oberlin College Annual Reports (1900-1905).
\textsuperscript{13} Oberlin College Annual Report (1894). The Oberlin Review excerpted these comments in 1895 for the edification/persuasion of students, running them alongside Theodore Roosevelt’s famous 1895 remarks praising the manliness of college football. Oberlin Review, 3/20/95.
\textsuperscript{14} Oberlin Review, 3/3/00; Lucien C. Warner, The Story of My Life During Seventy Eventful Years (New York: Privately Printed [1], 1914), pp. 201-206; Hopkins, History of the YMCA in North America, pp. 410, 428; Oberlin News, 6/29/00, 12/20/01; Oberlin College Annual Report (1897); F.F. Jewett to F.E.
A new gymnasium was considered so essential partly because of the plain inadequacy of the old facility, but also because of faculty concern over the growing percentage of women in the college. In 1895, the ratio of men to women in the college proper was 225-146; by 1897, however, the split was 214-214, and by 1900 women outnumbered men 228-197. Faculty and administration feared this development would lower the prestige of the institution and upset the balance between men and women they deemed necessary to successful coeducation. These fears stemmed from the notion, common at the time, that intellectual work was a potentially feminizing influence, coupled with a belief that the primary educational purpose of Oberlin was to train men to be good Christians active in the world of affairs. To become viewed primarily a women's college would lower Oberlin's prestige in this respect and make it more difficult to attract high-quality male students. An expansive physical education program met this problem two ways, by drawing more men to Oberlin and by making them more masculine when they arrived. Replacing Oberlin's cramped and outdated gym with a modern facility comparable or superior to the physical education facilities increasingly available at other colleges was therefore considered an essential element of Oberlin's efforts to attract male students.\footnote{Furthermore, the overwhelming preponderance of women in the conservatory of music (made a separate body in 1865) meant that even in 1895 over 100 more men than women populated the educational community as a whole. Oberlin College \textit{Annual Reports} (1895-1900); Warner, \textit{The Story of My Life...}, p. 206. The overbalance of women in the conservatory (366-72 in 1895) was partially offset by Oberlin Academy, a sister preparatory institution that was 178-138 male in 1900. Varsity athletes were sometimes drawn from academy ranks. In 1895 the total enrollment in all Oberlin departments was 1422, only 371}
The association of competitive sport and physical work with virility and manliness was a basic assumption of Oberlin's drive to attract men. Fred Leonard articulated these beliefs succinctly in a speech celebrating the gym's official presentation in June of 1902.

"Too much scholarship may lead to unwholesome effeminacy and over-refinement, to a disinclination to undertake what is difficult or disagreeable.... There is still rough work to be done in the world, and a place for the primitive manly virtues — self-control, robust self-reliance, presence of mind, physical courage, and indomitable will. These qualities develop in an active life; they are not the product of the classroom or study."

Warner Gymnasium, Leonard added later in his speech, would be a powerful force for developing such qualities.¹⁶

A second basic assumption of Oberlin's drive to attract men was the necessity of good advertising. An annual publication entitled "Physical Education for Men at Oberlin College" was produced to advertise the facility to prospective students. This photo-filled brochure showed off the facilities of the new gym, outlined Oberlin's philosophy of physical education and system of control over intramural and intercollegiate athletics, and aimed at convincing men interested in athletics and physical culture that Oberlin was equipped to meet their interests. Warner Gymnasium was indeed an impressive structure, particularly when compared with the building it replaced. Its main hall was five times as large, and its locker room was larger than the whole of the old building and equipped with

¹⁶ Manuscript of a speech dated June 25, 1902, in Leonard papers (Series 4, Subseries 2, Box 3). O.C.A.
lockers for over four hundred. It also featured a running track suspended above the main floor, an indoor baseball cage (itself also larger than the old gym), a physical education library and reading room, a large office for the Director of Athletics, modern shower facilities, and a trophy room in which the recently-won 1901 state football cup was proudly displayed.17

The new gymnasium led to the establishment of varsity basketball, though not immediately. (The old gymnasium had been way too small to play in, its ceiling, for example, being only thirteen feet high.) Because few men in the college had any previous experience in the game, the Athletic Association deemed it best to play only interclass games in 1902 in the hope of scaring up sufficient talent to form a credible varsity the next year. Class captains were chosen, teams were organized, and Leonard set aside eight hours of gymnasium time a week for practice. The extensive fouling and sloppy play chronicled in the coverage of the 1902 class season suggests that the game was indeed novel to many. Despite Oberlin's start from scratch, however, the Review believed that "with proper training and faithful work it is possible to have a varsity which can successfully compete with the largest eastern colleges." The push for varsity basketball was in large part emulative: Oberlin needed a competitive basketball team as an avenue of competition and a matter of prestige vis a vis other colleges (and note Review had in mind not just other Ohio colleges, but also more prestigious Eastern schools), and it was the duty of students to support such a team in the name of supporting the school. The

17 Oberlin News, 12/20/01; "Physical Training For Men at Oberlin College" (1902), copies in Leonard papers (Series 4, Subseries 2, Box 3), O.C.A.
following year, basketball was adopted as a varsity sport on a one-year trial basis and made a branch of the Athletic Association along with football, baseball, and track. ¹⁸

Oberlin’s first season of intercollegiate basketball was fairly successful. Their chances of reasonable competitive success were boosted by the matriculation that year of three players with previous competitive basketball experience. A hoped-for contest with Yale never materialized, but they did secure a game against Allegheny College, a team with an established program that competed successfully with the larger eastern colleges. Oberlinites were so eager to measure themselves against. Though Allegheny (fresh from a win against eastern power Penn) defeated them handily with their rough, physical style of play ("some of their tactics seemed to be questionable," complained the Review), Oberlin went 5-3 overall. A 37-16 drubbing by Ohio State in Columbus was rationalized by the fact that the Ohio State baskets were decidedly non-standard (indeed they were; the homemade rims were backed by a thin iron strip rather than a proper backboard) and by the fact that Oberlin had defeated them at home a few weeks before (where Oberlin's large floor may have been almost as much of a home-court advantage as eccentric baskets). Their third loss, 39-17 at Western Reserve, was likewise soothed by a return victory at home. ¹⁹

¹⁸ Oberlin Review, 1/16/02 (quote), 3/27/02, 4/3/02 (quote); Minutes of the Oberlin College Athletic Association, 6/6/02, in records of the Department of the Secretary (Group 5, Subgroup 1, Series 1, Box 1), O.C.A.

¹⁹ The players were John Olmstead, George Vrudenburg, and Harry Sandberg, all of whom had experience at the Y.M.C.A. level in their hometowns (and all of whom were classed in Oberlin Academy rather than in the college proper). Oberlin Review, 11/30/02, 12/12/02, 1/22/03, 3/5/03 (quote), 3/12/03, 3/19/03; F.L. Olmstead to I.A. Olmstead, 11/27/02, in Olmstead papers (Series 1, Box 1), O.C.A.; J.G. Olmstead to I.A. Olmstead, 3/16/03, in Olmstead papers (Series 1, Box 1), O.C.A.; Bob Hunter, Buckeye Basketball (Huntsville, Ala.: Strode Press, 1981), pp. 13-33. It is interesting to note that Oberlin’s baskets were also
More encouraging from the standpoint of the sport's permanency was the fact that the games were attended well enough to pay for themselves. The Review noted crowds of a few hundred a game, and at year's end the basketball department of the athletic association showed a modest profit of $82.44. It was enough to convince the advisory board and the faculty to make varsity basketball permanent and allow the team an official coach for 1904 – the versatile Win Fauver, now in charge of football, baseball, and basketball. Under Fauver's reins, the 1904 team went 4-4 and again showed decent student interest and a small budget surplus. The Review's post-season claim that Oberlin had the second-best team in the state was somewhat preposterous, but its simultaneous assertion that basketball had become "permanently established in Oberlin as the winter athletic sport" was a quite sensible one.

Oberlin's quick embrace of men's basketball was a result of a confluence of interests between students, physical education professionals, and administration within the game form. Students embraced the game because it provided another outlet for emulative intercollegiate athletic competition in a season currently without it; it made that competition, in fact, year-round. "[I]t will keep up the interest in college sport throughout the year and thus do away with the necessity of a revival for next season," said the Review, adding that it also allowed Oberlin to expand its competition to schools it did not

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20. At least according to Allegheny, who levelled the same complaint against Oberlin in victory over Oberlin's defeat against Ohio State in 1903. Oberlin Review, 3/19/03.

21. Oberlin Review, 12/3/03, 12/10/03, 3/24/04; "Statement of Athletic Operations, Oberlin College Athletic Association" (1904), in records of the Department of the Secretary (Group 5, Subgroup 1, Series 1, Box 1), O.C.A.
otherwise meet in intercollegiate competition. Emulative competition against other schools had been a large element of student support for football (and baseball and track) in the 1890s, and continued to be into the 1900s; it was also part of the reason why Oberlin continued to schedule schools like Michigan and Cornell long after it was competitively unwise. This notion stressed the necessity of Oberlin to compete athletically against other schools "of its rank" (which generally meant schools above its rank) as a matter of institutional prestige and the duty of students to contribute to the effort both individually and as a community. Typical of this attitude is the following Review exhortation to flush out talent for the baseball and track teams:

Mere sentiment and the most loyal support of these teams from the bleachers, will not be of use in obtaining the desired end. Every man in school should thoroughly test himself, and if any athletic ability is found he should consider it a duty as well as a pleasure to develop it to its utmost for the interest of his college.22

It is easy to caricature this sort of Gay Nineties, rah-rah college life impulse, or to write it off as a simple manifestation of over-enthusiastic and unrepresentative student newspaper boosterism. A series of things, however, suggest that intercollegiate athletic competition was seen by many in the student body as an important, even essential, element of community self-definition, and that the expansion of such competition was considered beneficial to Oberlin's prestige as a national institution: the frequency and earnestness with which students were exhorted to support athletic teams in any way possible, even against their own personal inclinations, in the names of school spirit, school prestige, and school

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21 Oberlin Review, 11/30/02.
duty; the constancy with which they were urged to compare Oberlin to other institutions (especially to "the large Eastern institutions") in terms of prestige and innate value through the prism of athletic achievement; the eagerness with which Oberlin continued to schedule or attempt to schedule teams "at the highest level" in all branches of sport despite their increasing uncompetitiveness at that level; even the frequency with which the goings-on of student life at other colleges, mostly the prestigious eastern and western ones, were dwelled upon in the student newspaper. Coupled with this was a sense of emulation – if Harvard and Yale, or even Western Reserve, have basketball teams, it is necessary for Oberlin to have one.23

It is interesting to note that this push for basketball as an index of institutional prestige came just as the split between institutions like Oberlin and the schools her students sought to equate her with – the old-line elite colleges-turned-universities of the east coast and the rising multiversities of the west – was widening immensely, both academically and athletically. Increasingly, it would be regional liberal-arts institutions like Ohio Wesleyan and Western Reserve, and not national megaschools like Harvard or Michigan, that belonged in a discussion of Oberlin's peers. The football team's disastrous record against big-time programs after 1895 was already beginning to bear this out on the athletic field. The concurrent effort of Oberlin administration to re-dedicate the school to a liberal arts ideal in a university age was doing the same in the classroom. "Oberlin is not

22 Oberlin Review, 2/20/02.
23 These tropes are ubiquitous in the rhetoric of the Review during this period. For particularly good examples, see esp. Oberlin Review, 12/19/01. For the importance of these sorts of student life activities to
a university," said president John Henry Barrows in 1900, dedicating Oberlin instead to
the task of becoming "the best of the Christian colleges of the world... where the spirit of a
liberal culture shall ennable gymnasium, athletic field, and the toils of the hand, as well as
the halls of science, language, and philosophy."24 This was a noble re-assertion of
Oberlin's traditional educational goals; it was also the pragmatism of a small institution
finding itself in an era of large institutions. There is reason to suspect that some students
saw basketball as an opportunity to show that in a new avenue, Oberlin might yet be able
to run with a few of the big dogs.25

Oberlin faculty and administration were willing to embrace basketball for a variety
of reasons, the foremost of which was that it emerged within a framework of
organizational control over athletics with which they were largely satisfied. New president
Henry Churchill King (inaugurated in 1902) continued to reiterate the belief that Oberlin's
system, in which faculty members played an integral part, went far toward mitigating the
excesses and abuses that characterized athletics at other schools. "[O]ur arrangements
here are such... that, if there is anything specially at fault, the College must be held directly
responsible for it. Students cannot well be bought up for our athletic teams without our
knowledge."26 The chances of this sort of excess were further diminished by the fact that
basketball did not yet involve the financial stakes of football (or even baseball), nor did it

the formation of colleges as cultural communities. see Oscar and Mary Handlin, The American College
24 Oberlin College Annual Report (1900).
25 See especially Laurence Veysey, The Emergence of the American University (Chicago: University of
Chicago Press, 1965), and Frederick Rudolph, The American College and University: A History (New
York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), pp. 329-54, 440-61, for the growing split between college and university in
this period. See note 15 for Oberlin's poor record against major football teams after 1895.
come with the additional baggage of excessive roughness and occasional death that continued to plague football. Faculty, in short, had no reason to fear basketball.27

Expanded athletic offerings also, of course, dovetailed with the original intent of faculty and administration for building Warner Gymnasium, namely to attract more men to Oberlin. Male enrollment did indeed increase in the years immediately after 1900, from a low of 197 in 1900 to 242 in 1902 and 279 in 1904. Female enrollment, however, increased just as fast – from 228 in 1900 to 257 in 1902 to 354 in 1904 – making it difficult to access the effect of the gym, and leaving faculty with much the same situation with regard to balance. Nevertheless, King noted with approval Leonard's annual reports enumerating the broad participation in class and varsity sports. "The last point is especially worth noting, as against the common criticism that a very small number of college men really take part in athletics."28

Faculty and administration also had an interest in promoting intercollegiate athletics as a demonstration of institutional prestige and as a means of representing Oberlin to the larger community, though not for exactly the same reasons or with the same focus as student boosters. Students emphasized Oberlin's necessity to compete with and succeed against colleges "of its rank" in all areas of student life and the duty of Oberlinites

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26 Oberlin Colleger Annual Report (1903-04).
27 As a point of comparison, the Athletic Association's revenue from basketball in 1904 totalled $682.30 for eight varsity games and a handful of class games (only about twenty dollars came from class games); football revenues in the fall of 1903 totalled $3799.18 and baseball revenues in the spring of 1904 totalled $1792.75. The Review reported fourteen men killed around the nation and many more seriously injured playing college football in 1903. "Statement of Athletic Operations, Oberlin College Athletic Association" (1904), in records of the Department of the Secretary (Group 5, Subgroup 1, Series 1, Box 1), O.C.A.; Oberlin Review, 12/3/03.
28 Oberlin College Annual Reports (1900, 1901-02, 1903-04, 1904-05); quote 1904-05.
to pull together in support of this endeavor. The administration perspective certainly did not reject these prerogatives. Occasionally, in fact, the faculty committee voted to rearrange class schedules in order to facilitate participation in and attendance at Oberlin sporting events. But administration saw intercollegiate athletic competition principally as a means of demonstrating Oberlin's wise system of athletic control -- and its purported beneficial effect on the sportsmanship and character of Oberlin athletes and positive statement of Oberlin's overall educational virtue -- rather than as an avenue to pursue prestige through victory. It was the system of control over athletics, for instance, and not competitive success on the field, that was emphasized as the primary selling point of Oberlin's athletic program in the "Physical Training for Men" bulletins put together to advertise Warner Gymnasium. The periodic pronouncements of support for athletics that pepper the annual reports of this period emphasized Oberlin's rational system of faculty control, downplayed victory as an index of athletic success, and hailed the comportment of Oberlin athletes in road contests as a force for establishing the college's positive reputation among outside observers. Broad athletic offerings stripped of "excess" by rational controls, in short, spoke to the virtue of Oberlin as a whole. Basketball, a sport with great potential for broadening participation and little potential as yet for fostering excess, fit these prerogatives quite nicely.29

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29 Oberlin College Annual Reports (1900-1905); Oberlin Review, 11/27/03; "Physical Training for Men at Oberlin College" (1902, 1998), copies in Leonard papers (Series 4, Subseries 2, Box 3), O.C.A. Faculty committee minutes relating to athletics are transcribed in an appendix to Shults, "History"; the nearly illegible originals are on film at O.C.A. For examples of action taken by the faculty committee to facilitate varsity athletic participation and/or support, see pp. 242-248.
Notions of control, in fact, permeate the rhetoric of athletics and physical education floating around Oberlin throughout this period – control over the recreative impulse in order to channel it toward constructive ends, control over athletic sport to blunt the excesses of unrestrained competition (both athletic and pecuniary), control over roughness and creeping professionalization, control over the people in control. This outlook is hardly surprising, of course, coming as it did from an educational mouthpiece of American Congregationalist Protestantism. Recall that "self-control" was the first of the "primitive manly virtues" Leonard believed were developed in a physically active life. The mindset that sees self-control as a "primitive" virtue lost in society's progression from brute physicality to cultivated intellectual civilization is likely to find the importance of self-control everywhere it looks, and to look everywhere. It is a mindset familiar to students of this period of American middle-class social and cultural thought.

What is interesting, however, is the degree to which inculcating old-fashioned, internalized self-control on an individual basis is not really what they had in mind in the case of athletics. What they had in mind was institutional control over group behavior, the erection of institutional structures in which participants that behave without such an internalized ethos will still be held within the bounds of proper behavior dictated by such an ethos. In other words, athletes playing within proper structures of institutional control can just play; the system of control, not the restraint of the player, blunts the risks of excess. This, of course, was the philosophy behind basketball (and other varieties of instrumental team sport) in the first place. It is perhaps unsatisfying to stamp this "social control" in the same sense that, say, the New York Public Schools Athletic League was,
since what went on within the context of Oberlin (and college athletics in general) was really the education of elites by elites rather than the assertion of cultural control over subordinate groups. Nevertheless, the underlying philosophy was much the same. Natural youthful impulses are channeled toward an ethos of self-control and restraint through the implementation of wise structures of institutional organization, structures which take the very "naturalness" of the competitive and recreative impulses and make them benefits rather than drawbacks. Self-control and restraint are taught not so much by teaching self-control and restraint, but by rigging the institution to do it automatically by redirecting "natural" behavior to more desirable social and/or educational ends. At Oberlin, more so than at most "big-time" athletic universities, the rhetoric of physical education and instrumental sport shaped the conduct of men's intercollegiate athletics.

Basketball for women at Oberlin was even more a matter of educators encouraging physiological improvement and social development through "natural" participation within institutional restraints, primarily because the women's game was more directly controlled by physical educators and much less a product of student prerogatives. Women had been playing the game at Oberlin at a competitive organized level since at least 1896, when Hanna first began organizing dorm and then class teams and staging brief series each spring for intramural championships. Women's basketball, of course, was not uncommon at the time; by 1900 it was played in various modified forms at a host of women's colleges and physical training schools around the country. "It is by far the most popular game that
women play," said Senda Berenson in 1901, the Smith physical educator who introduced a modified version of the game at Smith as early as 1892.\textsuperscript{30}

Basketball for women at Oberlin took on a very different form from that which basketball for men did, for a variety of reasons. First of all, it was primarily an outdoor game, a means by which women might obtain some of the physical benefits of outdoor sport and some of the cooperative benefits of team competition afforded men by baseball and football — without, of course, the same degree of roughness, strenuousness, or invidious competition. Contemporary boosters of basketball for women insisted that the game's popularity with women and with women's physical educators lay in the way the game form struck a balance between physical vigor, teamwork, and control over excessive exertion and enthusiasm — and the way the game form could be easily modified to shift this balance toward even greater emphasis on teamwork and restraint.\textsuperscript{31} Practice games and instruction for beginners at Oberlin were often conducted semi-inside (on the hardwood floor of a roofed outdoor skating rink) but only as preparation for the regular outdoor series. "[A] hardwood floor," Hanna argued furthermore, "is a dangerous place to play a matched game." Encouraging outdoor activity on the part of women was one of Hanna's pet goals throughout her career. In 1897 she began keeping track of the amount of time

\textsuperscript{30} Senda Berenson, ed., \textit{Line Basket Ball, or Basket Ball for Women} (New York: American Sports Publishing Co., 1901), pp. 5-6; Betty Spears, "Senda Berenson Abbott: New Woman, New Sport," in Joan Hult and Marianne Trekel, eds., \textit{A Century of Women's Basketball} (Reston, Va.: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, 1991), pp. 19-38; quote from Berenson. The earliest reference to intramural basketball competition among women at Oberlin I have found is from 1896. However, vague references to an unexplained outdoor game called "battle-ball" date from 1894 and 1895, and one of the 1896 basketball reports in the Oberlin Review called the game both "battle ball" and "basket ball." If "battle-ball" was indeed some type of basketball, women's basketball at Oberlin then dates to 1894. See Oberlin College \textit{Annual Report} (1894), Oberlin Review, 10/10/95, 5/13/96, 5/27/96.
each female student spent outdoors, and strongly encouraged participation in activities like hiking, bicycling, skating, and tennis. Basketball was therefore adopted specifically to be the primary outdoor game. (It was also, therefore, not hindered by limited physical facilities as the men's game was.)

More fundamentally, women's basketball was not seen as an avenue of inter-institutional competition or a barometer of institutional prestige. Competition was strictly intramural; no outside games were sought and occasional offers from outside parties were not acted upon. It was used as a means of fostering community self-definition, by both student and faculty, but not at the level of Oberlin as a whole. This was partly because only other women were allowed as spectators, likely as much because of the less restrictive gymnasium clothing worn as because of the nature of the spectacle. It was also, however, because Hanna and others used basketball to encourage class spirit among women, focused on inter-class competition, not school spirit among Oberlinites focused on victory over other institutions. It was designed to be genuinely competitive; scores and records were kept, sound principles of play were encouraged, stories were printed in the Review, champions were named. But it was not conceptualized, either by students or faculty, as a means of representing Oberlin to the outside world. It was also not called for

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31 See Berenson, ed., Line Basket Ball.
from below by students, though it was rather quickly embraced. It was introduced by physical educators, primarily in the interest of achieving physical education goals.\textsuperscript{33}

While the exact rules of play used are difficult to determine from limited and sketchy accounts, evidence suggests that Oberlin did not formally adopt any of the more severely modified rules for women designed to decrease physical exertion and force teamwork associated with people like Sendra Berenson (whose "line game" divided the court into three sections and prohibited player movement across lines) or Clara Gregory Baer (whose "Basquette" divided the court into a separate box for each player, the ultimate application of separate spheres to sport). The rules used and the style of play encouraged, however, had much the same effect. Seven players per team were used (a player in front of each basket was added), and game accounts make it clear that the ball, not the players, moved up and down the court during play. Oberlin sent a representative—Alice Bertha Foster—to the conference in 1899 at which Berenson's line game was agreed upon and published as the "official" women's rules, but Foster dissented, arguing that a time limit for holding the ball and a "no snatching" rule were just as effective and less restrictive. The effect of these sorts of rules on the flow of the game, of course, was largely the same: lots of passing, a quicker game with less running, and an even greater dependency on teamwork for success.\textsuperscript{34}


\textsuperscript{34} Berenson, ed., Line Basket Ball, pp. 8-10; Oberlin Review, 5/13/96, 5/27/96, 6/1/98, 12/17/98, 5/25/99, 5/24/00. Nine-woman teams were used in 1896.
Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, women's basketball does not seem to have influenced the introduction or development of men's basketball in any appreciable way. Oberlin men looked outside Oberlin when calling for the introduction of basketball, seeking what they saw at YMCAs and other colleges "of their rank" around the country. Furthermore, there is no evidence that basketball at Oberlin had to overcome notions that it was a feminine or feminizing game. It arose, in fact, in conjunction with an effort to attract more men to the college, and there is no evidence that anyone involved saw tension between basketball as a male versus as a female game. In fact, the women's game at Oberlin eventually drifted closer toward the men's game, at least as a game form. In 1906, when the college enclosed the skating rink completely and converted it into a new women's gymnasium, basketball for women moved inside; it also eventually moved to five-person teams. In 1906 Oberlin also began what soon became a major campus event: the Yale-Princeton game, wherein two all-star teams faced off as "Yale" and "Princeton," in front of a packed house waving the appropriate school colors and chanting the appropriate school cheers. The women's game remained, however, strictly intramural. It is also worth noting, in the context of educational priorities and Oberlin's efforts to draw more men to the school, that physical education facilities for women remained relatively meager and underfunded in this period, despite the growing preponderance of women in the college.35

35 Oberlin College Annual Report (1905-06); Oberlin Hi-oh-hi (1907); Dorothy Niehus, "The Development of the Physical Education Program for Women at Oberlin College Since 1837," (Master's thesis, Ohio State, 1942), pp. 116-51. By 1906, Hanna had developed a series of other outdoor offerings, including tennis, horseback riding, skating, and golf.
Though the two games had little direct impact on one another’s development within the context of Oberlin, they did represent essentially similar phenomena: efforts to set up structures of control within which players could simply play, "naturally" and unself-consciously, and the rules imposed upon them would make that behavior edifying. The difference was that athletic sport promised different benefits and threatened different excesses for women than for men. The rules under which women played increased the game’s cooperative tendencies at the expense of individual play, downplayed the necessity of victory and the aspect of public spectacle, and above all sought to provide healthful exercise while guarding against "excessive" physical exertion. The women’s game was also, both because its rules were more restrictive and because physical educators had more control over those rules since competition was exclusively intramural, much more explicitly an agent of physical education purposes.36

Once men’s basketball was firmly established as a competitive varsity sport, its development continued to be shaped by the institutional developments that contoured all of Oberlin athletics. The first was the introduction of inter-institutional athletic control in the form of the Ohio Athletic Conference (OAC), formed in 1903. Oberlin had been a part of a track-only organization, the Ohio Inter-Collegiate Athletic Association, since 1896, but the OAC was an attempt to standardize eligibility rules and requirements for

36 See Berenson, ed., Line Basket Ball, for examples of how contemporary physical educators viewed the potential benefits and dangers of basketball as an activity for women. See also Donald Mrozek, Sport and
intercollegiate competition between a series of Ohio institutions across the board for all sports. Oberlin, Kenyon, Ohio State, Ohio Wesleyan, Case School, and Western Reserve were charter members, and membership had expanded to nine by 1907 and twelve by 1910. Members agreed to abide by a series of jointly-drawn eligibility rules for players in all athletic contests with one another, most of them designed to prevent professionalism, college-hopping by players, and use of players not enrolled as genuine full-time students. The original rules limited eligibility for varsity play to four years, and in 1906-7 limited it to three years and declared freshmen ineligible. While not a conference in a modern sense (institutions continued to make their own scheduling arrangements, for instance, merely attaching a copy of the OAC rules to each individual contract, nor did every school in the conference play every other each year), the majority of Oberlin's subsequent competition was conducted with member schools (many of whom Oberlin had played regularly anyway). President Barrows hailed the OAC as much-needed reform that would keep Ohio athletics above reproach for years to come. "All that is dishonorable, unsportsmanlike, ungentlemanly, or unnecessarily rough, in any branch of athletics, is particularly and expressly condemned," declared a statement released by the conference along with its first rules in 1902.37

Even more significant for Oberlin was the hiring in 1906 of C.W. Savage to be the full-time Director of Athletics, a move that centralized athletic control in the hands of a faculty member with full-professor status. Savage, like Fauver, was an Oberlin product.

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with ex-football-hero credentials. He was a halfback on Oberlin's first two teams in 1891 and 1892, running the ball behind a series of innovative if brutal Heisman wedge formations. After graduation in 1893 he stayed at Oberlin for three years to teach Latin and Greek at the Academy and to coach and manage Academy athletic teams. He spent two years as a graduate student at Harvard, six years as an instructor at Shadyside Academy in Pittsburgh, and a year at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York in order to prepare himself for his work at Oberlin, which included teaching in Dr. Hanna's Teachers' Course in Physical Training. He remained Oberlin's Director of Athletics for twenty-nine years.\(^{38}\)

Savage's appointment was a mark of Oberlin's desire to exert a greater amount of faculty control over athletics, but it was also a response to practical considerations: Win Fauver quit in 1905 to enter Columbia medical school in pursuit of a further career in physical education, leaving gaping holes in the coaching and administration of Oberlin athletics and in the teaching of physical education in the men's gymnasium. Graduate Manager George Jones, who was responsible for most of the daily dirty work of scheduling and administering (and who was also made Oberlin secretary in 1899), also sought relief from his workload with the Athletic Association. "The appointment of a member of the faculty to give the larger part of his time to the interests of the athletic

\(^{37}\) Oberlin College Annual Reports (1901-2, 1906-7, 1909-10). The conference's founding meeting was held in 1902; the rules adopted went into effect Jan. 1, 1903.

\(^{38}\) "Relations of Mr. C.W. Savage to Oberlin Athletics," typed manuscript in records of the Department of the Secretary (Group 5, Subgroup 1, Series 1, Box 1), O.C.A.; Minutes of the Oberlin College General Faculty Committee (reprinted in Shults, "History," p. 338). Savage was also selected in 1905 to represent Oberlin and the state of Ohio at the National Intercollegiate Foot Ball Conference (which became the
teams," Jones wrote in his annual report the year of Fauver's resignation, "would be a wise step.... and such an appointment would be a great relief to me personally." Leonard made a similar request in his own report. They were both obliged.39

Savage moved simultaneously to recast Oberlin athletics in the physical education model of "the greatest good for the greatest number" and to centralize control over that good and those numbers in his own office, with varying degrees of success. Control over athletics was already, as we have seen, de facto centralized to a good degree in administration or proto-administration hands. Jones handled scheduling, arrangements, and general correspondence with outside parties (and was, as secretary after 1899, now part of Oberlin administration), and by 1900 the Advisory Board met weekly to sign off on Association expenditures. The Association met only twice yearly, to elect captains and officers and to propose innovation (like basketball), and occasionally in special session. Savage's appointment, however -- and his replacement of Jones as Graduate Manager in 1907 -- made de facto official.40

Savage's primary desire was to remove the necessity of funding athletics through gate receipts, an arrangement Savage considered the root of the overcompetitive evils of football and the main barrier to de-emphasizing varsity sports to the benefit of the larger body of students. "If I may be pardoned for my diversion," Savage said in the middle of his 1909-10 annual report,

let me at this point call your attention to the altogether precarious and undignified system under which we are still carrying on our sports here. By special subscriptions, chapel appeals to college loyalty, rallies and clap-trap advertising methods, we exploit our student body in the hope that we may persuade or bulldoze a sufficient number of them into attending athletic events to furnish us with the revenue necessary to maintain our teams, our plant, and our athletic prestige. To my mind such a state of affairs is deplorable.

This was only the most colorful of his annual condemnations of receipt-funded athletics. By removing the need to produce winning teams in order to raise money, and by finding an alternative method that provided a more secure and more regular source of funding, he believed that it might be possible to limit intercollegiate varsity competition and divert time and resources toward expanded intramural offerings.\footnote{Oberlin College Annual Reports (1905-07): Minutes of the Oberlin College Athletic Association and Athletic Advisory Board (1892-1906), in records of the Department of the Secretary (Group 5, Subgroup 1, Series 1, Box 1). O.C.A.}

Oberlin's athletic program was hardly the hotbed of shady recruiting, high-priced professional coaching, and big-money public spectacle that some college programs had become by this time, but the need to win in the name of financial solvency had produced abuse nonetheless. In October of 1905, for instance, a special meeting of the Athletic Association was called to convince and/or coerce a recalcitrant S.D. Morrill to come out for the football team. His support was needed, Graduate Manager Jones argued, because he was essential to making Oberlin football a box-office draw and a competitive success. When Morrill continued to refuse, Jones abandoned personal persuasion and tried punitive legislation: "Mr. Jones moved that it be the sentiment of the Association to ignore any one

\footnote{Oberlin College Annual Reports (1909-10).}
in the affairs of the Association who is disloyal to the interests of our athletic teams." This surreal motion passed. At the regular meeting a month later, the Association repudiated the rashness of its previous decision, but not its essential surreality. A motion carried that the previous legislation "be resented," "inasmuch as there was no definite definition of loyalty given." No record exists as to whether or not Morill also received the dreaded silent treatment on campus.42

Part of the problem was exactly that Oberlin was not a hotbed of big-money spectacle. By 1907 the Athletic Association groaned under a debt of over $1500. Basketball, as has been noted, was a modest financial success, but football, the Association's primary source of revenue (about $3000 a year on average) was up and down every year, depending on team talent and weather. And baseball and track were big losers. After three profitable seasons at the turn of the century, baseball lost money every year until World War I; track lost $1341.08 between 1901 and 1907. The Association had only two profitable single years overall between 1901 and 1907.43

Oberlin students proposed solving this problem in 1907 through taxation. A mass meeting of Oberlin men on June 6, 1907 adopted unanimously a resolution petitioning for a three dollar annual fee to be added to the term bill for the support of athletics, every student receiving a universal season ticket to all athletic events (except basketball, for reasons of space) in exchange. College and conservatory women unanimously upheld the

42 Minutes of the Oberlin College Athletic Association, 10/2/05, 11/11/05, in records of the Department of the Secretary (Group 5, Subgroup 1, Series 1, Box 1). O.C.A.
resolution in mass meeting two days later. The Athletic Advisory Committee reported against this plan, citing a variety of reasons – students, or more correctly their parents, they argued, should not be compelled to support athletics; if support was indeed unanimous, it should be given voluntary; it set bad precedent for similar schemes to fund other extracurricular activities like literary and debating societies – and the trustees tabled it indefinitely. Savage's own various suggestions – a voluntary universal season ticket, a permanent endowment, a special fund to wipe out the debt, the transfer of coaches' salaries to Oberlin's general fund – went no farther.44

Another innovation never made was one Savage believed was already in place when he was hired – the elimination of paid coaches. "I was surprised to learn," Savage wrote Jones the spring before beginning work in 1906, "...that the Ohio colleges had not done away with the professional coach as I had understood." President King, comfortable in the belief that faculty control buffered the roughest edges off of football but convinced that a return to pure amateurism could sand it clean, tried to convince Savage to push Oberlin ahead on its own. "Do you think it is entirely out of the question for us to get on at once with voluntary coaching under your supervision?" King wrote Savage. "Ought not the game to come back to a real sport and not to a professional encounter between men professionally trained?" Yes, responded Savage, but not yet – and not at the expense of

43 "Statement of Athletic Operations, Oberlin College Athletic Association" (1901, 1903-07), in records of the Department of the Secretary (Group 5, Subgroup 1, Series 1, Box 1), O.C.A.; Oberlin College Annual Reports (1907-17); Oberlin Review, 12/11/02.
44 "Report of the Advisory Committee on Athletics, June 22, 1908": Untitled resolution of the men of Oberlin College and "Meeting of the Board of Trustees, November 13, 1908," typed manuscripts in records of the Department of the Secretary (Group 5, Subgroup 1, Series 1, Box 1), O.C.A.; Oberlin College Annual Reports (1907-12).
his authority. "I hardly believe that the time is ripe for this at Oberlin. It would certainly place me at a disadvantage at the very outset of my work and probably greatly lessen my influence over the men of the institution." It would also, Savage believed, force him to do much of the coaching himself, a job, he made clear, he had not signed on for.  

King never got his pure amateurism. What he did get, by and large, were low-paid Oberlin alumni coaches (and occasionally experienced undergraduates). After 1910, coaches were granted faculty status as instructors and formally made directly answerable to Savage, though still paid out of Athletic Association money. Savage also conquered the Association's debt in 1911, not through innovative funding but by continuing to hire inexpensive coaches and by greatly reducing guarantees to visiting teams. Savage funneled this surplus into the construction of new athletic fields, in conjunction with an alumni fundraising drive to provide expanded athletic facilities for intramural use. And in 1915, the faculty made a small ($100) but philosophically significant appropriation making it possible for one of the assistant varsity coaches to devote his spring exclusively to intramural instruction.  

These and other solutions to the problem of how competitive athletics fit into Oberlin's larger institutional picture represented more than just a move toward a physical-education-oriented vision of what sport should do for the college man. They also represented pragmatic responses to the problem of where small-college athletics fit into

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45 C.W. Savage to G.M. Jones, 4/12/06, in records of the Department of the Secretary (Group 5, Subgroup 1, Series 1, Box 1), O.C.A.; C.W. Savage to H.C. King, 6/28/06, 7/7/06; H.C. King to C.W. Savage, 7/2/06, in King papers, reel 41. O.C.A.
the emerging world of big-time collegiate sport. Just as Oberlin sought to re-define itself educationally as a Christian liberal arts institution in a university age, it also sought to reposition itself athletically as a pure alternative to the corrupt, win-or-else model of collegiate sport, a model Oberlin lacked the size, money, and physical talent to emulate. Savage and King, like others in their positions at small institutions around the state and around the country, sought an alternative vision of collegiate sport.

Basketball grew slowly but steadily in this period into the second most important intercollegiate sport at Oberlin. By 1907 the basketball team played a twelve-game schedule each year, five more than the football team and usually one or two more than the baseball team, mostly with other small Ohio colleges but also including a two-or-three game eastern trip each year to play schools like Syracuse, Cornell, Rochester, Army, and Colgate. Fan support increased steadily. Annual basketball receipts soon exceeded baseball receipts and Savage felt it necessary to write the architects who designed Warner Gymnasium's balcony/running track to make sure it was capable of supporting the large crowds being loaded onto it to watch games (it was). The basketball department of the Athletic Association lost money only once (in 1905) from 1903 until World War I. Basketball also became the most popular intramural sport, accounting for 20 different teams over the course of 1915-16.47

46 Oberlin College Annual Reports (1909-15). A significant exception to the alumni coach policy was Harvey Snyder, football coach from 1906 to 1910 and a Harvard product. No undergraduates coached after coaches were given instructor status in 1910-11.
47 C.W. Savage to Patton & Miller, Architects, 12/15/09, Patton & Miller, Architects, to C.W. Savage, 12/23/09, "Statement of Athletic Operations, Oberlin College Athletic Association" (1903-07, 1909-11), in records of the Department of the Secretary (Group 5, Subgroup 1, Series 1, Box 1), O.C.A.; Oberlin College Annual Reports (1906-11, 1915-16).
Coaching, however, remained an inexpensive alumni affair. Savage coached the team himself in 1907 (much to his dismay, no doubt), then replaced himself with a string of young alumni coaches, seldom more than a year or two beyond graduation, usually also football or baseball coaches, and never paid more than $150 for the season (football coach Harvey Snyder received $875 in 1910). In 1910 and 1911, the basketball and baseball teams were coached by undergraduates, George Vradenburg in 1910 and Glen Grey in 1911. Furthermore, while receipts rose and profits remained consistent, the overall amount of money basketball generated remained well below that of football. In 1915-16 football receipts totaled $6992.43, basketball receipts $1811.23. From a standpoint of prestige, revenue generation, and concern about potential abuse, basketball remained a distant second to football.\footnote{Report of the Director of Athletics, Oberlin College Annual Reports (1906-16). It is important to note that coaches who coached more than one sport were paid for each sport; the amount allotted to the basketball coach for basketball, however, never exceeded $150. Note also that Vradenburg, while an}
became popular with men at Oberlin. It did not, however, become popular only because of these ideological congruences, or only because of Oberlin's physical education tradition. Basketball at Oberlin developed as a competitive varsity sport much as it did at other colleges and universities, primarily through the entrepreneurial efforts of students, athletes, and associated advocates. Basketball for men at Oberlin was therefore something of a hybrid, a combination of the instrumentalist ethos responsible for the game's invention and the boosterism of "big-time" college athletics, if perhaps on a smaller scale.

Basketball for women at Oberlin represented a fundamentally different phenomenon from the men's game as spectacle and as a focus of student life. In fact, it was not intended as spectacle; nor was it an avenue by which Oberlin or Oberlinites sought to represent themselves to the outside world. It was, however, an exercise in instrumental sport — much more so, in fact, than was the case with men's basketball. Women's basketball at Oberlin was a much clearer example of team sport as part of an effort to improve physical health and encourage desirable social values by placing people within organizational structures of control in which "natural" behavior would be directed toward beneficial ends. However, while the women's game was introduced from the top-down, by physical educators interested in pursuing physical education goals, its success was not necessarily any less due to its popularity with players. As we are about to see, tension between the prerogatives of organizers and the desires of athletes was no less characteristic of basketball as played by women.  

undergraduate, was an exceptionally experienced one; he was one of the Academy men on the first team in 1903.
CHAPTER 6

"EACH ONE WAS A REGULAR LIONESS INSIDE": THE OPPORTUNITY AND DANGER OF BASKETBALL FOR WOMEN, 1892-1917

Early in 1892, Senda Berenson, just hired as Director of Physical Training at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, read James Naismith's description of Basket Ball in the Triangle. She introduced the game to her students, with whom it proved an immediate success. "Women have long felt the need of some sport that would combine both the physical development of gymnastics and the abandon and delight of true play," Berenson wrote in 1894. If the response of Smith women was any indication, she’d found it. Basketball was quickly popular with both athletes and spectators; in a short period of time, the annual Freshman-Sophomore game was one of the major athletic and social events on campus. Nor was Smith unique. By the middle of the decade, basketball was played by women all over the country, at both women's and co-educational colleges, in normal schools and high schools, at settlement houses and on city playgrounds. In not a

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few of these institutions or locations, women took up the game before men did. Designed as the answer to a particular problem of physical education for men, basketball also became the answer to a problem of physical education for women no one had quite asked yet – and the cause of other “problems” no one had considered. Berenson praised Basketball as “the game that has helped to develop the athletic spirit in women more than any other, that has given us the best results, and aroused the greatest enthusiasm.” That enthusiasm sometimes developed athletic spirit in spite of the athletes themselves. “Timid students who are afraid to jump a low rope, who say with a pale smile that they are not made for athletics – meaning anything in the world except making a ball of themselves over a book – get so interested that before they know it they are in the midst of the runners.”

Athletes swept away into team sport in spite of themselves was the very definition of instrumental play. Yet young women swept away into anything in spite of themselves was a potential gender disaster at the turn of the century, even in the minds of people who, like Senda Berenson, believed in the expanded physical and professional capacities of the so-called New Woman. As Smith women began playing basketball, Berenson began to see disadvantages as well as advantages. “It was great fun,” Josephine Wilkin, Smith ’95, wrote her mother of the very first basketball game played there in March of 1892, “+ very exciting, especially when we got knocked down, as frequently happened.” This, for

Berenson, was a clear disadvantage. "In the original rules," Berenson wrote, "a player is allowed to take the ball from his opponent's hands. This proved to be a great encouragement to roughness." Berenson made it illegal for Smith women to snatch at a ball controlled by the offensive player, and also made it illegal for that player to hold the ball for more than three seconds. "We also found that allowing the players to run all over the gymnasium led to several bad things. It encouraged individual playing, discouraged team work, overworked the ambitious ones, and gave comparatively no work to many."

Berenson divided Alumnae Gymnasium into three with a piece of chalk and made it illegal for Smith guards, centers, or forwards to leave their third of the court. "In this way we insured almost equal playing for every one on the team. The indefatigable players found it hard to be stopped by a chalk line, but even they preferred it after a while to the old method." Overwork, individualistic play, and indefatigability thus conquered, Berenson proclaimed basketball, under altered rules, the ideal team game for women. "We played it for a while strictly according to the rules given by Mr. Naismith... but as Mr. Naismith probably planned the game more for men than for women, we found that we should have to change a few rules and make a few others in order to adapt it more to our peculiar needs and to get the best results from it."

Similar stories played out at women's and co-educational colleges around the country during the 1890s and early 1900s. Basketball spread quickly among female

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students, and coaches and physical directors frequently changed the rules to accommodate their "peculiar needs" (and occasionally disappointed an indefatigable player or two).

Smith played the so-called "line game," with six-woman teams, both inside the gymnasium and, in the fall and spring, outside. Bryn Mawr played by the men's rules, outside, on a boundary-less field with seven-woman teams. Oberlin played outside with seven-woman teams, without lines but with a no-snatching rule. At Newcomb College in New Orleans, Clara Gregory Baer created a slightly bizarre version called "Basquette" in which guarding an opponent with the ball was illegal, no one was permitted to run unless the ball was in the air, and a division on the floor was made for every player and her opponent. Falling down was a foul.  

By the turn of the century, thousands of women played basketball, and remarkably few of them played exactly the same game. Most of them that played a game substantially different from what men played at the YMCA or on the playground did so because physical education professionals, often women themselves, changed the rules to take into consideration the physical, social, or nervous limitations of young women as they understood them to be. Women who played the "men's" game made these same physical educators personally and professionally uncomfortable. Senda Berenson was far from a believer in Victorian notions of female physical fragility – "Until very recent years," she wrote in 1894, "the so-called ideal woman was a small waisted, small footed, small

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brained damsel, who prided herself on her delicate health, who thought fainting interesting, and hysteric fascinat- ing” – and basketball as played at Smith was far from the comically genteel keep-away of Basquette. Nevertheless, basketball at Smith was purposely different from “men’s” basketball, for particular, gendered reasons, and Berenson made it such in the same way Naismith had approached his original problem – by creating and altering rules of play.

As more women than ever before began entering institutions of secondary and higher education in the years around the turn of the century, educators, critics, and health professionals were confronted more directly than ever before with questions concerning the potentiality, physical as well as intellectual, of middle-class-and-up American women. To what degree, men and women raised on Victorian notions of female physical frailty and “natural” gender difference were increasingly forced to ask themselves, was it physically and sociologically healthy to expose young women to the same physical and intellectual stresses used to educate and socialize young American men? To what degree was it wise or useful to encourage strenuous physical play among women, and what were its physiological, educational, and social purposes to be? Basketball became a central focus of this discussion. Despite the degree to which basketball as played by men touched on a

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4 Berenson, “Basket Ball for Women,” p. 106.
variety of issues concerning masculinity, morality, and professionalism in athletics, it remained a secondary concern to those interested in “the problem of college athletics,” or “roughness in athletics,” or “professionalism among college athletes,” questions that continued to pivot with regard to men largely around football and baseball. As the most popular and most visible sport played by women, however, basketball was far more central to general discussions of “the woman question in athletics.” A discussion of basketball is therefore far more central to understanding the ways in which team sport became an arena of discourse concerning the capacities and potentialities – physical, intellectual, social, psychological (or, as they would have put it, “nervous”), professional – of young American women at the turn of the century, as well as the ways in which the construction of gender roles was, and always has been, interrelational. What happened when a game designed to create Muscular Christians, moral yet not effeminate, was also used to create New Women, muscular yet not masculine? What happened when some women, as athletes, proved newer women than even advocates of the New Woman were prepared to contemplate? These tensions were not exclusive to basketball, but inherent in the ongoing re-definition of manhood and womanhood characteristic of turn-of-the-century American middle-class culture. In this context, physical educators asked themselves, should we provide, or protect women from, strenuous team athletics? As at Smith, they often sought to do both.

Discourse concerning female health and physical stamina was clearly in flux around the turn of the century, and increased female participation in both higher education and recreational athletics were key reasons why. Often discussed, both by contemporaries and
historians, as the era of the “New Woman” or “Gibson Girl,” it was a period in which significant numbers of middle and upper-middle class women (and, perhaps as importantly, those who portrayed such women in popular media) challenged and expanded mid-century notions of what constituted ideal womanhood. More women than ever before sought secondary and higher education; more women than ever before sought to put that education to work in the public sphere; more women than ever before participated in athletic or relatively strenuous recreational activities of one sort or another. The New Woman/Gibson Girl was often portrayed, both by supporters and detractors, as an athlete, a college girl, or both, and the stereotype she refuted was the same one Berenson ridiculed – the small waisted, small footed, small brained damsel who took pride in her delicate health.  

Nevertheless, such stereotypes, and their intellectual undergirding in Victorian-era medicine and developmental psychology, remained the starting points of much turn-of-the-century discourse concerning the social roles and physiological capabilities of women. In the late 19th century, these professions generally espoused – and thereby buttressed within the larger culture – a conservative, essentialist view of gender roles based in the belief that female biology was female destiny. The physiological demands placed on women by their reproductive organs, monthly cycles, and childbirth, these health professionals (overwhelmingly men) argued, placed excessive strain on women’s “vital force” or

“nervous energy,” quantities considered both precious and finite. Any significant diversion of nervous energy away from reproductive development – to, say, excessive intellectual or physical activity – was physiologically dangerous to women and, because of their predetermined role as mothers of the race, socially irresponsible. This was especially true during adolescence and young adulthood, when reproductive development was most important and women’s health most fragile and impressionable. This view, popularized by Dr. Edward Clarke’s 1873 book *Sex in Education* and prevalent in one form or another in professional medical literature throughout the late 19th century, argued that men’s and women’s different physiologies corresponded to different “natural” social roles and, therefore, different educational needs. The inescapable corollary of this line of reasoning was that “male” intellectual education was hazardous to female health. “Experience teaches that a healthy and growing boy may spend six hours of force daily upon his studies, and leave sufficient margin for physical growth,” Clarke maintained in a typical passage. “A girl cannot spend more than four, or, in occasional instances, five hours of force daily upon her studies, and leave sufficient margin for the general physical growth that she must make in common for a boy, and also for constructing a reproductive apparatus. If she puts as much force into her brain education as a boy, the brain or the special apparatus will suffer.”

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These doctrines had never gone unchallenged, even in the 1870s. By the turn of the century, however, they were contested not only by the obvious fact that a growing number of women ignored them and headed to high schools, normal schools, and colleges for the express purpose of applying force to their brains, but also by the fact that these institutions increasingly employed female physical educators, a new cadre of health professionals committed (both in their training and in their very existence as female professionals themselves) to the notion that intellectual achievement was not necessarily detrimental to the health of young women, at least not when conducted under the watchful eye of professionals such as themselves. Nevertheless, physical educators, both men and women, demonstrated in both their rhetoric and professional conduct the degree to which female physiological essentialism remained an element of medical, educational, and psychological discourse well into the twentieth century. Physical educators, with their expansive professional worldview, saw the problem (so-called) of women in higher education as a suitable target for their expertise; through supervised exercise and physical work to “balance” the nervous strain of intellectual activity, college women could be kept healthy. This simultaneously refuted the notion that higher education inevitably threatened female health and reinforced some of the medical assumptions that contributed to that notion in the first place. Harriet Isabel Ballintine, Director of Physical Training at Vassar, expressed typical concerns in defense of outdoor sports for women in 1897:

On entering college, all of our students [at Vassar] are questioned in regard to the amount of exercise they are in the habit of taking, and while in the last few years there has been some improvement in this respect, yet it is a matter of surprise that girls have been able to attain their present standard of health, considering their lack
of systematic physical training and their unhygienic conditions of life. In the training of women, it is not physical overwork that is to be guarded against so much as nervous exhaustion, worry and the depression coming from general unhappiness.

The anxiousness of these institutions to provide students (and, no doubt, to mollify parents and hostile outside observers) with supervised physical education and related facilities also suggests the degree to which the Dr. Edward Clarke perspective remained the baseline of debate. G. Stanley Hall, the prominent psychologist whose recapitulationary developmental schema of physiology shaped the thinking of Luther Gulick (and therefore the practice of physical education), did more than suggest in his 1904 tome Adolescence: "It is utterly impossible without injury to hold girls to the same standard of conduct, regularity, severe moral accountability, and strenuous mental work that boys need."

This, then, was the basic medical-scientific-professional environment in which debate over strenuous athletic activity and competitive team sport for women took place at the turn of the century. Sport's usefulness as a component of the education of young women was a central belief of physical educators, for many of the same reasons they touted it for young men: women, too, had a "play instinct"; women, too, needed exercise

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to maintain health; women, too, could benefit from (indeed, required) the alleged social benefits of competitive team sport. As physical educators began introducing basketball to high school and college women in the 1890s, however, their ambivalent, sometimes contradictory relationship to the question of female physiological capability caused them to see the game as equal parts opportunity and danger. As they watched women play, many of them, like Berenson, were concerned or unnerved by what they saw. Like male athletes, women sometimes played more roughly than the rules allowed, like male athletes, more talented women sometimes showboated or dominated play; like male athletes, women sought creative ways around the rules in pursuit of victory. These were many of the same tendencies physical educators saw, and attacked, in “over-competitive” athletics for men. The physiological, social, and cultural stakes were higher, however, and the necessity of control and supervision greater, because of the assumptions related to gender difference physical educators brought to the table. Furthermore, in the minds of many outside observers, women were on thin cultural ice in the first place for pursuing either athletics or higher education, never mind both at the same time; physical educators did not necessarily agree, but remained cognizant of the potential limitations this outlook placed on them. Physical educators sought relief from their discomfort in a fashion congruent with their professional outlook: they attempted to write and disseminate different rules of play that would create a less physically strenuous, more teamwork-oriented game of basketball.\(^8\)

\(^8\) See Susan Cahn, *Coming of Strong*, pp. 7-30, on the physical education profession’s commitment to “Moderation” in athletic activity for women as a response to both outside critics of female athletes and
In 1899, a group of physical educators (all of them women) with experience teaching and coaching women’s basketball met in Springfield, Massachusetts, to hammer out what they hoped would become a universally adopted set of basketball rules for women, modified to provide what they considered the benefits of competitive team games without the accompanying dangers. Their rules, published in 1901, and the commentary published with it, provide an interesting look at what physical educators feared about women playing basketball by “men’s” rules and why they believed their modifications could solve these problems. The rules they produced were largely the same as Berenson’s at Smith. They sought to limit players’ physical exertion by dividing the court in three and prohibiting players from leaving their third; force more teamwork (and therefore, presumably, imbue more cooperation) by limiting the dribble and prohibiting a player from holding the ball more than three seconds; and prevent roughness by making it illegal to “snatch” at a ball controlled by the offensive player. “[U]nless a game as exciting as basketball is carefully guided by such rules as will eliminate roughness,” Berenson wrote in support of what were, essentially, her rules, “the great desire to win and the excitement of the game will make our women do sadly unwomanly things.”

These rules were published along with a series of articles, from members of the committee and other prominent physical educators, explaining the need for simultaneously providing women with and protecting them from basketball. In addition to the dreaded

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and all-purpose specter of “unwomanliness,” physical educators warned of the
physiological and psychological dangers of playing basketball by unrestricted “male” rules.
Perhaps most telling was the warning of Theodore Hough, who argued not only that
unrestricted basketball was potentially hazardous to female health, but that this was doubly
true because the hazards were unconscious:

Basket Ball involves a large amount of work with a proportionately small element
of conscious fatigue. It consequently makes larger demands on the heart and other
organs of respiration than the player realizes, and in this lies the danger. This
danger can be successfully avoided, however, by proper attention to training and
by proper regulation of the game itself; indeed, we may add that few other games
can be so easily regulated to meet this end.

The belief that outside regulators were better able to control and monitor fatigue than the
individuals actually experiencing the fatigue, and that this was especially true with respect
to women, was indicative of the over-arching assumption at work here -- women will get
carried away and hurt themselves if we physical educators fail to prevent it. Berenson’s
own comments about the dangers and opportunities of competitive games are similarly
telling:

In competitive games one or two strong forces must become all-important. One will either abandon one’s self to instinct and impulse in the quickness of action
and intense desire for victory, and hence develop rough and vicious play, or,
eliminating brute and unfair play, one’s powers are put into developing expert
playing, quickness of judgement and action, and physical and moral self-control.

I would not be understood as believing that hard, earnest playing is
objectionable. Just such playing is the best to bring out manliness and fearlessness
in a youth. But it is because I believe that competitive games are such tremendous

_Frailty to Final Four_ (Reston, Va.: National Association for Girls and Women in Sport, 1991), pp. 83-
108.
forces for good as well as for evil that I would have those elements in them encouraged which bring out the love of honor, courage, and fair play, and eliminate those which encourage the taking advantage of laws, cruelty, brutality and unfairness …

Rough and vicious play seem worse in women than in men. A certain amount of roughness is deemed necessary to bring out manliness in our young men. Such rough play can have no possible excuse in our young women.

This conception of play as an instinct, and instinct as something to be simultaneously feared and bent to positive ends, suggest the degree to which physical educators saw competitive team athletics as a means of directing natural, but potentially hazardous, instincts to positive social ends – and the degree to which they viewed this process in gendered terms. Essentialist notions of gender baked into their professional training suggested to them that these processes were more complicated, more dangerous, and more in need of their expertise when women were involved. *Basket Ball For Women* also argued that uniformity of rules was a positive thing in and of itself, another indication of the degree to which the implementation of social order was one of their primary aspirations. It was not a good sign for the future, then, that the committee chair – Alice Bertha Foster, then at Oberlin College – felt the need in an “Official Note” to file what was essentially a minority report, arguing that, under certain circumstances, she still preferred her own, less restrictive modifications.10

Uniformity in basketball as played by women remained elusive, then, even at a meeting called specifically to create it. Around the country, a variety of different rules remained in use at a variety of different institutions, including, to the continuing dismay of
many in the profession, the unrestricted men’s rules. In 1909, Gertrude Dudley, Director of the Women’s Department of Physical Education at the University of Chicago, and Frances Kelior, the sociologist and Progressive reformer who worked as a physical training instructor and basketball coach at a variety of institutions while doing graduate work at the University of Chicago, published *Athletic Games in the Education of Women*, a book which documented and often decried the continued fractious state of instrumental sport for women. Combining their own first-hand experience with survey results from a hundred or so high schools, colleges, and other institutions, Dudley and Kelior concluded that the team sports available to young women, dominated by (though not limited to) basketball, remained not nearly instrumental enough – meaning, in many cases, they were conducted far too much like athletics for young men. Like Senda Berenson, Dudley and Kelior were hardly apologists for frail female stereotypes; they disliked the most restrictive women’s rules and argued that the “threat” competitive athletics posed to female health was greatly exaggerated – at least when conducted under the watchful eye of trained experts such as themselves. In fact, Dudley and Kelior were much more explicit than most other commentators about the usefulness of team sport in preparing women not just for the physical rigors of childbirth or the nervous strain of college life, but also for productive contributions to the wider world of affairs. “Upon completion of her education, the girl... has no longer the simple choice of marriage, teaching or missionary work. She has before her a wide range of vocations and a great array of opportunities in almost every field – all

\[10\] Berenson, *Basket Ball For Women*, quotes pp. 29, 20-24. Foster’s article argued against lines and in favor of a no-snatching rule and a time limit for holding the ball.
of which offer a livelihood and practically all of which, while demanding individual
efficiency, demand increasingly the power to work harmoniously and effectively with the
group.” Athletic Games in the Education of New Women would have been an equally
appropriate title. So, one might argue, would have been Education of Women in the
Creation of Social Order. Education; efficiency; work harmoniously and effectively
within the group: these were the catchphrases of the organizational society a generation of
reformers – just beginning to call themselves Progressives – sought to construct. ¹¹

As such, Dudley and Kellar were firm believers – ideologues, even – in the
usefulness of team sport to what they liked to call “social education,” and opposed team
sport for women conducted on nearly any other basis. “We believe that athletic games –
the spontaneous yet directed expression of the play spirit – are peculiarly fitted, if
intelligently used, to increase social efficiency through the development of the right social
spirit.” They were therefore distressed by the wide variety of rules and conditions they
encountered in their survey, not so much because of physiological fears, but because the
variety in rules and conditions represented a variety of deviations from instrumental,
pedagogical sport. They opposed, for example, Berenson’s line game, not on the basis of
player or spectator dissatisfaction, but because it artificially inhibited the most complex
team play – and, they claimed, covered up the real problem with women’s basketball,
namely lack of trained supervision. Better for young women to learn to hold their

¹¹ Gertrude Dudley and Frances Kellar. Athletic Games in the Education of Women (New York: Henry
York: Hill and Wang, 1967), and Paul Boyer, Urban Masses and Moral Order in America (Cambridge:
positions on the floor of their own volition rather than because they cannot cross lines on
the floor — and to learn it from an expert, their instructor, trained to teach them so. “Of
course they do not do this at first, but it is made a part of their training. Inhibition is
invaluable as an element of team work as compared with prohibition.” For Dudley and
Kellor, the amount of basketball being played by women without this kind of pedagogical
supervision was their greatest concern. Men’s rules, under such supervision, were
perfectly safe; without adequate supervision, any rules were potentially unsafe.¹²

Nevertheless, the lack of uniformity they found in rules and conditions was both
significant and problematic, at least to their own sense of order (a highly sensitive faculty,
as they considered themselves specifically in the business of creating order). Especially
disturbing to them were the variety of conditions under which highly competitive inter-
institutional contests often took place. The purpose of such contests — to win — negated
the very concept of instrumental sport almost by definition. “Athletics are a means to an
end,” Dudley and Kellor maintained, as nearly any other purveyor of instrumental sport,
male or female, would have, “not an end in themselves, and are to be conducted for the
good of the entire number and not for the purpose of making championship teams,… The
spirit to be striven for is not grim determination to win at any cost but the exhilaration and
joy of playing.” Yet the grim determination to win lurked throughout the land, and
Dudley and Kellor blamed the lack of “intelligent supervision” for its continued
suzerainty. It is worth quoting at length, as Dudley and Kellor did, one of the replies to
their survey, from a high school:

¹² Dudley and Kellor, Athletic Games in the Education of Women, quotes pp. 20, 182.
The games were always public and many were played in the evening. Any one who paid for his ticket could attend. We frequently played double headers – the girls’ team would play one half, then the boys’ team one half, etc. If both the boys’ team and girls’ team from the same town won, they took all the gate receipts, otherwise it was divided. In this way the teams covered expenses and divided the surplus if there was any. The game was usually followed by a dance at one of the men’s clubs or in the hall where the games were played. If in the hall, the men in the audience indiscriminately joined the dance. These games were characterized by much unfairness and scrapping. Coaches ran up and down the side lines giving instructions, roughness was unchecked, and the players boasted of their ability to trip players and not be seen owing to their baggy suits, or afterwards described mean tricks that had won the game.

Every element of this was troublesome: roughness, cheating, coaching to win, playing for gate receipts, mingling with “indiscriminate” mixed crowds. In some places, few of these conditions existed; in others, nearly all of them. Many institutions surveyed were somewhere in between. All of it made persons such as Dudley and Kellor uncomfortable. When, for example, they discussed the common practice of playing some games by two sets of rules in order to accommodate both teams – “This makes one half fair to each side, but it makes the game unscientific, perplexing and distressing to an audience” – one suspects the perplexity and distress was primarily their own.\footnote{Dudley and Kellor, 	extit{Athletic Games in the Education of Women}, quotes pp. 26, 70-71.}

This was in fact what male inter-institutional athletics were often like, and while Dudley and Kellor saw the problem mainly as one of supervision – elsewhere they specifically accepted men’s rules, inter-institutional contests, playing in front of crowds, and post-game socialization under certain controlled conditions – there was clearly a degree to which a gendered outlook shaped this distaste. Proponents of instrumental
sport such as themselves disliked, of course, the fact that male sport was like this, and
argued similarly that the lack of trained supervision and the grim determination to win at
all costs was the problem. Yet even as Dudley and Kellor argued in some places that the
social lessons team sport offered young men and women were much the same, in other
ways the social education they had in mind was clearly specific to women and to a
particular view of how women could best contribute to the ordered, cohesive society they
sought. At the University of Chicago, for example, they chose class teams based on,
among other things, “form” (“no girl who persisted in careless dress and playing should
participate in any match game”), to what they described as the “considerable indignation”
of their players. “When a team ‘straggles’ on the field; when players chew gum; when
they lie or sit upon the floor or gather in groups and talk when time is called; when they
call each other; or when they clap hands or whistle for the ball – then the audience may be
certain that good form has not been considered.” That audience, ideally, would be
allowed into the gym by invitation only, in order to control their character; once there,
they were in for a dose of social education themselves. “Games played by women can be
taught and played with a view to making them interesting and educational to the audience;
if this be neglected, there is small justification for inviting persons to attend.”

Some of Dudley and Kellor’s advice for improving the supervision of female
athletes suggests further the degree to which their vision of social control retained
gendered aspects. Take, for example, their suggestion that the “persistent faults or

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14 Dudley and Kellor, Athletic Games in the Education of Women, quotes p. 41 (a typographical error in
the original has been corrected), 43.
defects" of players be corrected through the use of a "prescription card" system, whereby each player would receive a note card containing a summary of the faults or defects of which they were most consistently guilty. The following is "a typical card for basketball":

**Physical:** Inaccuracy – throw too hard, run too hard. Practice jumping, starts and circle throwing.

**Mental:** Lack of attention; reaction too slow; bad judge of distances. Practise line work; catching and throwing ball from wherever get it.

**Social:** Co-operation is weak – practise with forward and center. Lacking in loyalty – refrain from laying the blame on others for your bad plays. Vanity – as shown by choice of positions. Selfishness – sulk when reprimanded or position is changed.

**Esthetic:** Stand badly while waiting for ball; squeal when running; clap hands and call names to attract player's attention; open mouth when catching balls.¹⁵

Note that "physical" and "mental" mistakes – which relate most closely to actual competitive success – were fewer than half of the "typical problems" Dudley and Kellor had on the brain. And while some of the "social" mistakes might also have preoccupied physical educators concerned with boys (though they might have phrased them differently), it is hard to imagine even the most demanding of them fretting about "esthetics" – or open mouths. Lack of co-operation, vanity, selfishness, and lack of loyalty were also all traits Dudley and Kellor believed young women particularly deficient in – more so, in fact, than young men – and team sport particularly capable of instilling in them. "One of the greatest drawbacks to the work of women's organizations to-day is that they do not know what team work is," Kellor said elsewhere. "One of the great difficulties in the homes is that women have not learned the power to adjust themselves
quickly, or to know what are essential things and what are trifles. Many a community
interest is sacrificed for lack of loyalty and because women so much earlier than men lose
the play spirit and its inspiration."

Dudley and Kellor found that when basketball for women was conducted on
something other than this kind of an instrumental basis, it was often being conducted
either by the players themselves without supervision, or by men. This was most often the
case at high schools. When physical educators savaged the various and sundry evils of
interscholastic competition, unrestricted male rules, unsupervised female athletes, and
ogling crowds of questionable character, they often had high school basketball in mind.

"Nowhere else are to be found such contrasts, lack of system and absence of intelligent
supervision as in high schools," said Dudley and Kellor, who estimated that seventy
percent of them permitted interscholastic competition, most of it basketball. High
schools were more likely than colleges (or other institutions such as settlement houses or
playground leagues) to compete interscholastically and by unrestricted rules, in part
because high schools were far less likely to supervise student athletics, for women or men,
as closely as colleges did, and in part because they were also less likely to employ
professional physical educators. High school girls’ basketball teams at the turn of the
century were as likely to be under the control of male basketball coaches, uninterested
“chaperone” teachers, male students, or the players themselves as by physical educators.

16 Frances Kellor, “Ethical Value of Sports for Women,” American Physical Education Review 11(March
17 Dudley and Kellor, Athletic Games in the Education of Women, p. 70 (quote), 149.
These civilians, many of whom either preferred unrestricted "male" basketball or were familiar with nothing else, tended to be more permissive of varsity-style interscholastic competition and less squeamish about the rules that governed play. As a result, they tended to downplay or ignore the restrictions and limitations of "women's sport," not because of a considered rejection of existing gender ideology, but because they lacked the professional training that would have, in that particular context, instilled it. As a result, high school basketball for girls generated interesting paradoxes: where it was controlled by men, it was less likely to employ competitive restrictions based in essentialist notions of gender. Where it was controlled by women — usually physical educators, and therefore sport instrumentalists — it was more likely to be oriented as much toward protecting players from basketball's dangers as it was toward providing them with basketball's benefits.

Such was the case in Chicago, at least until disgruntled educators put a stop to interscholastic competition for women in 1907. Between 1896 and 1907, high schools in and around Chicago fielded girls' varsity basketball teams which played competitively, usually by 5-player, unrestricted men's rules, often in front of paying crowds, often covered in the daily newspapers. In 1900 they organized themselves into a formal league and competed for city championships. Many of these teams were coached or supervised by men (though not all of them; Hyde Park was coached at least one year by none other than Frances Kellor. "She has taught them to play with quick, snappy team work," said the Tribune in 1900). Girls' basketball took hold in area high schools around 1895; in the spring of 1896 Austin High School, coached by one of the players from the Chicago
Central YMCA team, became the first to play outside competition by facing a 7-woman squad from Hull House at Austin’s Library Hall in front of a boisterous “mixed” audience of 400. By 1900, the four-team Cook County League had already become everything physical educators feared about young women playing unrestricted, “male” basketball – at least according to Kellor, whose stint coaching the girls at Hyde Park seems to have been the firsthand source of her distaste for high school girls’ athletics. “The first [style of play, by men’s rules],” Kellor wrote in 1900 in the Chicago Tribune, where interference is permitted, insures swift, snappy playing and quickness in securing and depositing of the ball. It is a passing, ground floor game, often involving mass plays and deadlocks. In this style of play more than any other there is danger of roughness and overfatigue, because of the close personal interference and violent attempts at snatching. Mass plays have a tendency to produce injury. Massing prevents good, clean, team work and exercise of judgement. In the interference game the liability to irritation is also great, and this is no small consideration, especially of teams consisting of the younger girls.

Kellor was also less than enthralled, we can presume, by the mixed-gender crowds (many of them high school boys, likely) shouting school cheers and heckling play; or the long road trips to games around the state occasionally taken by several teams; or some of the facilities, like the “gymnasium” at West Division High – actually an abandoned streetcar garage – with ceiling pillars clogging the playing floor every ten feet or so and wastebaskets wired to the walls at either end for goals.18

This league grew to eleven teams by 1905, though it split one year into two divisions, one of which continued as before and one of which added a no-snatching rule. (One disgruntled University High player told her school newspaper the no-interference game was "altogether too ladylike.") A combination of forces were massing against it, however. School principals and parents were increasingly concerned about what they considered the physical strain of 8-10 games a season, as well as the lack of female modesty they associated with high school girls wearing gymnasium outfits in front of anyone willing to buy a ticket. Chicago Public Schools superintendent Edwin Cooley, elected in 1900 as a self-styled reformer and presently involved in taking control of school athletics, both boys' and girls', away from students and placing it wholly with school administration, sided with the principals. They considered eliminating such competition in 1906, but declined. They did so in 1907, however. So did the Illinois High School Athletic Association (which had no direct jurisdiction over Chicago high schools, but did have over several hundred others throughout the state), which in November of 1907 banned interscholastic girls' basketball among all its members. The IHSAA's report cited the girls' "circusy" costumes, record of "blackened eyes, scratched countenances, and bruised limbs," and general transgression of gendered expectations as reasons for the crackdown.

After several years of experimenting the committee has decided to rule that the high school girls of this state who are under supervision of this association should not appear before the public promiscuously in interscholastic basketball games... The game is altogether too masculine and has met with much opposition on the part of parents. The committee finds that roughness is not foreign to the game, and that the exercise in public is immodest and not altogether ladylike.
Evidence exists of a stray contest here and there after 1908, but for all intents and purposes this killed off interscholastic basketball for girls in Illinois, for the very reasons that at least one University High player liked the game in the first place.¹⁹

A very similar story played out in New York City high schools, where girls’ teams played interscholastically under very competitive conditions until physical education professionals moved to stop them, beginning around 1905. Before 1905, when the New York Public Schools Athletic League began to organize girls’ basketball in the city schools on an instrumental-sport basis, few New York high school girls played basketball at all. Those that did, however, played full seasons (10-20 games a year) of 5-player, unrestricted men’s rules with very little oversight from teachers or administrators, mostly male coaches (sometimes outside “professionals,” sometimes teachers, sometimes fellow students), and, sometimes, in front of paying crowds of spectators. In some cases, teams began practicing several times a week as early as October and continued all the way through to the spring. Critics were predictably agitated. Elma Warner, a physical educator from Brooklyn, presented this comprehensive indictment in a speech before the Public School Physical Training Society in 1906:

In some cases no attention is paid to the physical condition of a girl when she comes on the field. If her playing is poor, the reason is not sought. She is simply scolded and whipped – not literally – into making stronger effort. Particularly is this true when a man is in charge. This is a strong point against the employment of a man coach for athletics for girls.... In planning schedules, the manager, a

¹⁹ Johnson, “Not Altogether Ladylike” (quote from University High student n. 23); Chicago Tribune, 1/17/06, 11/3/07 (quotes).
member of the team, has full sway... In no case is the age, weight, height, or amount of training of challenging teams considered, nor the court, audience or previous record... The rules of play are men's rules, that is, no lines, five men on a team, twenty minute halves and interference allowed. In comparison with women's rules, this means a greater amount of running, fewer women to do the work, greater strain on individuals, and probability of much roughness... The keen competition on match games means a much more severe strain on nerves and muscles than in ordinary play, and in the very great excitement girls do not realize that they are overdoing, until they drop.

The results also predictably agitated paying crowds, the existence of which bothered Warner and other critics as much as anything else. Though some games admitted spectators by invitation only, most games were either free or charged from ten to fifty cents. Warner, like some other critics, believed invitations represented a way of controlling the tone and character of crowds, making them less likely to behave like, well, crowds. "The more we try to establish the spirit of hospitality and to make the audiences feel that they are our guests, the less liable we will be to a vulgar display of partisanship, shown by cheers, hisses, mechanical noises, audible comments on players and officials, coaching from side lines, and general rudeness. There is absolutely no reason for our contests for girls partaking of the same public character as those for boys and men."

These conditions, and the basketball that resulted, violated nearly every premise of instrumental sport for young women as understood by physical education professionals. Warner was correct, however, about the degree to which they conformed rather closely to competitive sport for young men, right down to the dances sometimes held after the game.

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a common feature of men’s basketball games in New York. Nor was she likely deluded about the genuinely physical, rough nature of many of these games. Tales of sprains, faints, bloody noses and lips, “hysteria,” “temper,” and one case of a player temporarily knocked cold while wrestling for a held ball peppered Warner’s jeremiad to the Public School Physical Training Society. At one city high school, disgruntled mothers put an end to the team one year by preventing their daughters from playing any longer; at another, Warner once heard the team’s male coach say he would never let his own daughter play basketball under such conditions.²¹

None of this particularly conformed to china-doll notions of what turn-of-the-century young women were capable of physically or constitutionally, but critics were correct in suspecting that neither was it particularly the result of considered reflection about what basketball for women should or should not be like. What could be more disturbing to the middle-class parents of a high school girl at the turn of the century than a basketball coach asking a level of physical exertion and aggressive competition from their daughter that he would not ask of his own -- and in front of a paying crowd? Warner attributed this state of affairs in part to the lack of professional training among coaches and their haphazard method of selection.

The prevailing method is not that of selection, but of chance. Any teacher in the school who will volunteer his services is put in charge, regardless of qualifications. In some cases, such teachers have been successful in working up a strong team, but the result to individual girls has not been beneficial, to say the least. When

unable to secure a teacher, a student coach is sometimes employed. Teams
coached in this method are lacking in responsibility, in refinement of speech and
manner, and are rough, unfair, even dishonorable in playing. When a professional
coach is secured, excellent play results, but girls show a lack of the spirit of
courtesy and good will. It is a battle for victory, not a game for the sake of sport.

Critics scandalized by excellent play and unrefined speech clearly had a vastly different
definition of what competitive sport was about, independent of their concerns about health
and safety, than the male "professional" coaches and/or ordinary high school boys whose
experiences with athletics suggested that sport was inherently for the sake of victory.
Such critics also clearly believed professional supervision to be as important to the success
of instrumental sport, and to the protection of young women's health, as the nature of the
sport itself. They also, it seems, had very different notions of appropriate feminine
behavior than the players themselves, who, it must be remembered, were participating
voluntarily in a time-consuming and physically demanding extra-curricular activity. More
than one New York City principal predicted that girls would lose interest in basketball
altogether if limited to intramural competition and forced to play by anything other than
men's rules.22

This prediction proved false, but it gives some indication of the degree to which
young women who sought out unrestricted competitive sport seem to have been interested
in just that. At any rate, the Girls' Branch of the New York City Public Schools Athletic
League, the very flagship of the organized play movement, eventually moved in. They
began organizing intramural basketball for high school girls in 1905, replacing coaches

22 Warner, "Inter-School Athletics," pp. 182-6 (quote p. 184)
with physical training instructors, men’s rules with Berenson’s line game, and
interscholastic competition with intramural trophies and trinkets (such as the “Winged
Victory” pins awarded to each intramural champion). Some high schools welcomed these
changes; others held out and continued to play one another competitively. In 1910 the
city board of education outlawed interscholastic competition for girls in the New York
City Public Schools altogether, completing the victory of, as Elizabeth Burchenal,
Executive Secretary of the Girls’ Branch of the PSAL, put it, “Athletics for all girls.
Athletics within the school and no inter-school competition. Athletic events in which
teams compete (not individual girls). Athletics chosen and practiced with regard to their
suitability for girls, and not merely in imitation of boys’ athletics.” Basketball under such
conditions became much more widely played by high school girls in New York City. It
also became an involuntary educational activity, like any other classwork, administered by
professionals with a particular kind of scientific training and the best interests of the young
women (as determined primarily by that training) in mind. Many more high school women
received the benefits (such as they may have been) of basketball in this fashion. What the
many received, however, was very different from what the few had sought out on their
own.

Such tensions were not exclusive to high schools, however. Despite the more-or-
less universal existence by the turn of the century of physical education instructors and
facilities at women’s colleges and co-educational universities, at some of these institutions
women participated in varsity-style, competitive, inter-institutional or intercollegiate

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basketball for a greater or lesser period of time. In some cases, development paralleled the situation in New York and Illinois high schools, where interscholastic competition existed for a few years before being suppressed. In others, varsity teams existed continuously. Overall, it continued to be true that, despite the publication of “official” women’s rules in 1901, and their occasional revision every few years, “women’s basketball” was not necessarily the same thing in any two places. This state of affairs continued into the second decade of the century, gradually becoming more and more offensive to physical educators’ sense of order and rationality – the creation of which, one might argue, was their purpose for existing at all.

At Ohio State University, competitive intercollegiate basketball experienced a rise and fall very similar to the game’s trajectory in Chicago and New York high schools. A competitive intercollegiate women’s basketball team lasted until 1907, when it was quashed by the university’s physical educators. The game was first played by women at Ohio State in January of 1899, when it was introduced in gym classes. By February, outside competition had already been scheduled, and that spring OSU women played three games against teams organized by the local YWCA, consisting mostly of high school students. Men were excluded from attendance, but a significant crowd of female friends and well-wishers attended. Women’s basketball existed at OSU for the next few years largely as an intermural phenomenon, with an occasional outside game against other local teams, usually Columbus high schools.24

24 Mary A. Daniels, “The Historical Transition of Women’s Sports at The Ohio State University, 1885-1975 and Its Impact on the National Women’s Intercollegiate Setting During That Period” (Ph.D. diss.)
In the spring of 1904, Ohio State women formed an athletic association and played their first intercollegiate contests, two games against Miami University of Ohio and one against Otterbein. The second game against Miami, played at Ohio State, took place in front of a large, and likely co-educational, crowd; the university band even attended and played during the game. In 1904-05, Ohio State women fielded a full-fledged varsity which played an 11-game schedule, charged 25¢ admission to games, bought team uniforms, awarded varsity letters, and played in front of the dreaded "mixed crowds." After going 10-1 (losing only to Ohio Northern; six of their eleven games were against other colleges), the Ohio State women proclaimed themselves, on no particular authority, "State Champions" (as successful men's teams did endlessly, usually on much less evidence). Financially, the team just covered their expenses. The following year the team requested, and was denied, financial support from the Ohio State athletic department; their schedule, however, was arranged by the graduate manager of athletics, who controlled scheduling of the male varsity teams. The 1905-06 team prepared another long schedule, but disbanded midway through the season due to a player revolt against team captain Frances Paterson, who was accused of mismanagement and favoritism by some of her players. In an effort to avoid similar problems, the 1907 team elected against coaching themselves. They turned instead to Ohio State football and basketball star "Rink" Barrington, who coached them to a 5-2 record in the spare time between his own appearances as captain of the men's varsity. As many spectators attended some of this

Ohio State University, 1977), pp. 55-66: Robin Bell Marks, "Bloomer Basketball and Its Suspender Suppression: Women's Intercollegiate Competition at Ohio State, 1904-1907." *Journal of Sport History*
year’s women’s varsity games (3-500) as attended Barrington’s own male games; the
Lantern devoted comparable amounts of ink to both teams. The Lantern also noted the
frequent rough play on the part of both Ohio State and their opponents.25

Large crowds pay good money to watch college basketball players play rough,
complain about their playing time, bicker publicly with management, declare themselves
champions in the local press, and award themselves felt letters to commemorate the whole
process: this, indeed, was emulation of “male” athletics. It was also too much for Dr. H.
Shindle Wingert, hired in 1907 to take charge of the university’s newly re-organized
physical education department. Wingert, who was also made Director of Athletics, had a
diverse and distinguished record within the world of physical education. He had at various
times been a YMCA physical director (including at the West Philadelphia YMCA during
the professional basketball controversies of the 1890s), a college physical educator, and,
for five years, dean of the Philadelphia Normal School of Physical Training. Ohio State
combined its men’s and women’s physical education departments into a single department
under Wingert. One of his first moves within the women’s department was to outlaw
intercollegiate basketball in the fall of 1907. “None of the first class institutions of the
country allow the coeds to leave the university to play basketball anymore, nor do they
allow games before the public,” Wingert told the Lantern in explanation of his decision.
“It is the belief that such games are detrimental to women, both physically and morally.
Not that this has resulted at The Ohio State University, but there is this tendency. Also

27(Spring 2000), pp. 31-49; Ohio State University Lantern, 3/15/99, 2/28/00, 4/11/00.
the team has not always been a paying investment.” Ohio State reverted exclusively to intramural basketball for women, with male spectators prohibited from attending.26

Students at the Florida State College for Women, opened in 1905 and eventually folded into Florida State University, also experienced a few years of intercollegiate basketball along competitive “male” lines before its ultimate prohibition in 1910. Between 1907 and 1910 FSCW women played several intercollegiate games a year with other Florida colleges, by five-player men’s rules and in front of crowds, sometimes in gymnasiums and sometimes on outdoor courts. For at least part of this period, FSCW employed a male coach, as did at least some of its adversaries. After a particularly contentious 1908 contest against Stetson, during which FSCW players complained of biased officiating (officiating was shared by the teams’ [in this case both male] coaches, as was common in such contests) and Stetson exhibited poor sportsmanship after their 15-9 loss (at least according to FSCW observers), Florida State College for Women authorities began to re-think the propriety of the whole enterprise. In 1910, FSCW prohibited intercollegiate competition, arguing that it diverted attention away from students’ studies, limited “the benefits of athletic games... to a few who possibly need them the least,” and that “trips to other schools have a demoralizing effect – the girls cannot get their minds on their work for several days afterward.” Basketball reverted to an intramural activity, and also to six-player, line-game rules. Intramural competition, however, became both highly

25 Daniels, “Women’s Sports at the Ohio State University,” pp. 55-66; Ohio State University Lantern, 3/2/04, 3/16/04, 3/22/05, 1/10/06, 1/17/06, 2/21/06, 2/27/06, 3/6/06, 3/13/07.
26 Daniels, “Women’s Sports at the Ohio State University,” pp. 69-71; Ohio State University Lantern, 10/10/06, 11/27/07 (quote).
competitive and highly ritualized as an important campus social event. The annual Thanksgiving Day game between “odds” and “evens” grew into one of a handful of major social events on the school calendar (the other important one being Field Day in the spring, which also involved a basketball game), eventually incorporating layers of ritual and pageantry, including a postgame parade across campus and into the streets of Tallahassee. Thanksgiving Day basketball at FSCW became, from a standpoint of campus ritual and social life, an analogue of the football “big game” on men’s and co-educational campuses.27

At Smith College, basketball continued to adhere very closely to the template established there by Senda Berenson in the 1890s and enshrined in the official rules: intramural play only, on a lined floor, but nevertheless highly competitive and highly organized. Smith’s relatively large gymnasium (100 x 60 feet) allowed 9-woman teams; its nearly year-round season – played outside until November 1, inside the gymnasium until Easter, than back outside in the spring – and systematic organization involved, according to Berenson, 400 or so students a year in the game at one time or another. Each year Smith freshmen were proselyted on the benefits of basketball, funneled onto teams, rigorously coached on basic skills and team strategies, and pitted against one another twice a week (once a week for those also playing field hockey) until February, when the final class teams was chosen from the best players. The sophomore class team


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was chosen similarly, junior and senior class teams usually carried over from the previous year. From February on, these class teams engaged one another in a variety of competitive permutations in front of crowds of their peers.  

The most interesting of these permutations, and the most remarked-upon by outside observers then and now, was the annual Freshman-Sophomore game. Played every March, this game, like the Thanksgiving game at FSCW, functioned as a sort of analogue of the big season-ending football games at male and co-ed colleges. It was not necessarily the “best” game of the year from a standpoint of pure basketball skill. The more experienced junior and senior teams faced each other in a similar “big” contest in February, and a series of odd-year versus even-year games (which divided the best players into two, rather than four, teams) were played throughout the year. Nor was the Freshman-Sophomore game even the only time of the year the freshman and sophomore teams met one another. It was the most highly ritualized game of the year, however, and represented one of the most important campus social events on the Smith calendar. The gymnasium was decorated heavily with banners, streamers, and pennants. Team mascots were chosen; class songs were sung, student spectators and a handful of invited guests (which would have included the only men in attendance) packed the gymnasium quite

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literally to the rafters. After the game itself, the sophomore team gave a dinner for the freshmen team and the game's officials and officers.  

The quality of play and level of athleticism at these games was no doubt high. "The playing was very rapid and extremely vigorous," wrote one contemporary outside observer. "One who supposes it is a simple or weak game would be surprised to see the dash and vigor with which it is entered into.... The amount of physical strength and endurance which is cultivated is readily apparent." But far more interesting than the quality of play was the quality of the event as a ritualized expression of social life at a women's college. So, for example, the game was preceded and followed by pageantry, cheering, class songs, and similar analogues of typical student behavior at an "ordinary" (male or co-ed) college sporting event — but no cheering was allowed by students during the game. It is difficult to imagine enforcing such a provision at a collegiate football or men's basketball game. It was characteristic, however, of social life at women's colleges in general, which, as imagined by its gatekeepers, was often simultaneously an exercise in providing young women with something resembling a (male) collegiate experience and in circumscribing that experience tightly. Similarly, Smith's best basketball players were chosen to the "varsity" each year, but, as Smith met no outside competition, this honor was strictly honorary. Basketball at Smith College was therefore something of a

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microcosm of women’s collegiate experience in the early twentieth century – it was college, but it was nevertheless circumscribed in significant ways.30

At Radcliffe, intercollegiate, or at least inter-institutional, basketball survived into the 1920s. The development of basketball at Radcliffe, in fact, is instructive of some of the difficulties an institution faced if it wished to choose a representative “varsity” team each year and play outside competition. It required a willingness to scramble each year for teams to play and suitable locations to play them, and the flexibility to play by a variety of different rules depending on your opponent. In many cases, in fact, Radcliffe would play half the game (or one of the games in a two-game series) by their own “home” rules, and the other half by the rules their opponent was most familiar with. Radcliffe itself was a compromise and a hybrid of sorts in its early years, neither a traditional women’s college nor a fully co-educational institution, and the varsity basketball team was one of the few school activities, and its games some of the few social events, that provided a sense of “college” at an institution that in some ways was not yet really an institution.

Radcliffe was founded in 1879 as the Harvard Annex, an attempt to provide a Harvard education to women without either integrating Harvard or creating a “women’s college” per se (or, to look at it from the other direction, an attempt by Harvard to parry that unwelcome demand with a minimum of effort and expense). Most of its students lived in the Boston area, and Radcliffe was slow to build dormitories or other permanent

facilities. Radcliffe’s first purpose-built campus building was, in fact, the gymnasium, built in 1898, an indication of how important women’s colleges considered the necessity of supervising student health. A few Radcliffe students had been playing basketball among themselves even before this, however, both on outdoor courts and in the small, makeshift “gymnasium” used before 1898 (actually half of a converted house; the other half was an equally makeshift chemistry lab), a gym so small only four-on-four games were possible and errant passes sometimes rolled into the abandoned fireplace. Regular intramural basketball, organized by class, began the first full year the new gymnasium was open; in 1901, Radcliffe selected its first varsity to meet outside teams.31

From 1901 on, Radcliffe’s varsity played approximately a half-dozen games a year against Boston-area high schools, normal schools (usually Posse Normal School and/or Sargent Normal School of Physical Training, both physical education schools), and colleges, usually Mt. Holyoke. They also, between 1903 and 1908, played “Smith,” not the Smith varsity (which, as Senda Berenson asserted repeatedly, was only honorary), but an unofficial team made up of Smith women from the Boston area home on Easter break. Playing such a schedule each year required an enormously versatile team. Radcliffe’s “home” rules, the ones used in their inter-class games, called for nine players a side on a divided court. Games with outside teams, however, often involved negotiating the rules of play to accommodate other schools’ preferences. Sargent Normal preferred the

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standard six-a-side women’s game; Mt. Holyoke and Posse played five-a-side with no lines; preferences of area high schools varied. Generally, teams would agree to play one another’s rules for half the game, or, if two games were scheduled that year, to play their own rules at home and the opponent’s rules on the road. Opponents also sometimes demanded a neutral site; Mt. Holyoke’s team manager did so in 1908, complaining of the Radcliffe gym’s size and unsatisfactory backboards. Radcliffe games often drew 400-500 spectators and served as significant campus social events. This was especially true of each year’s game against “Smith,” scheduled during Easter break, to which a large number of alumni came (and which was also sometimes played at a neutral site). In addition to this varsity-level activity, Radcliffe class teams sometimes scheduled their own outside games, usually against high schools.  

Radcliffe varsity basketball was serious, competitive business, and it cannot be attributed either to the presence of a male coach or a preference for the unrestricted male rules. Though technically overseen by the physical director, Radcliffe basketball was controlled by the team manager, who put together the schedule and made administrative arrangements, and the captain, who chose and “coached” the team. Players had to appear in at least four games to earn the varsity R, which sometimes served as both carrot and stick; the 1905 squad was threatened with revocation of their letters if they failed to

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maintain their practice schedule. The minutes book of the Radcliffe Athletic Association (the student organization responsible for managing all athletics) lists training rules for varsity and class athletes, which included nine hours of sleep a night, no snacking between meals, one hour of exercise a day, no “pastries,” and the reminder that “Candy shall be eaten only as a dessert.” Both varsity and class basketball players were for the most part already experienced athletes when they arrived at Radcliffe, as an occasional critic pointed out. “Four or five freshmen come out each year to learn the game,” wrote one student in 1909. “Unless the candidate shows remarkable aptitude the first day or so, she is stuck at side center or guard on the scrub team, where she could hardly get the ball passed to her if she knew what to do with it if it came. It is not remarkable that in a week or two she stops coming to practice, and that in three or four weeks the class captain cannot get eighteen girls to make up a game.”

This state of affairs was a direct affront to the ideologies of sport-for-sport’s-sake and athletics-for-all. Note that the disgruntled student above is complaining about inexperienced players being driven from class teams, not even the varsity (which was not chosen until after the fall class series). Basketball was not, of course, the only athletic or gymnastic activity available to students, or even the only highly competitive one; varsity Rs were also awarded for field hockey and baseball, both of which also met outside competition, and physical exercise of one kind or another was in fact required of all students. Nevertheless, Radcliffe physical director Elizabeth Wright, a firm believer in

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physical education as professional stewardship over the health of potentially unhealthy young women, grew concerned about varsity basketball players over-extending themselves. In 1916 she asked the Athletic Association to consider changes in the basketball program, suggesting either eliminating the varsity, shortening the varsity schedule, shortening the class season, or limiting basketball players’ participation in other extracurricular activities. Rather than implementing any of these by decree, she asked the officers and team captains of the association to vote on her suggestions. The status quo prevailed with only minor changes in schedule and training rules. Radcliffe did abandon nine-player rules in favor of the conventional six-player rules that year, but for the most part varsity basketball at Radcliffe existed into the 1920s much as it had in 1901.\textsuperscript{34}

By the middle of the 1910s, it is entirely likely that more women than ever before played basketball in one form or another. In some locales, more competitive forms of the game had been reined in at the behest of physical education professionals, school administrators, and/or unhappy parents; in others, high-level competition remained, sometimes in spite of these critics. In at least a few demonstrable cases, the existence of

\textsuperscript{5} (quote); Powell, “Spirit of Radcliffe in Athletics” (quote).
\textsuperscript{34} “Radcliffe Athletic Association 1901-1907”; “Radcliffe Athletic Association 1915-21”; “Exit Candy and Cha\-\ing Dish at Radcliffe! Enter Health and Beauty for the Girls,” newspaper clipping in Kristen Powell Papers, Schlesinger Library Archives (SC 118, Cartin 1 Folder 7); The Radcliffe Fortnightly, 3/17/15, 3/31/16. See esp. “Exit Candy and Cha\-\ing Dish…” for insight into Wright’s professional outlook, which included, beginning in the 1910s, a “card report system” in which every Radcliffe student kept a daily record of her sleep, diet, exercise, hygiene habits, and other health information, subject to periodic inspection and correction by Wright. “Radcliffe has a reputation as a place filled with very
competitive women’s basketball before the very eyes of physical educators and school administrators reinforced rather than diminished their commitment to preserving essentialist conceptions of gender – in part, one suspects, because what they saw did not always conform to those conceptions. Many civilian observers from outside the medical and educational communities continued to view any kind of athletics for women as suspicious on the general principle that they violated commonly accepted gender conventions. “Many people honestly believe that athletics are making girls bold, masculine and overassertive; that they are destroying the beautiful lines and curves of her figure, and are robbing her of that charm and elusiveness that has so long characterized the female sex,” Dudley Sargent told readers of the Ladies’ Home Journal in 1912. Sargent’s overall message in this 1912 article suggests the degree to which the physical education profession continued simultaneously to refute the argument that athletics inherently de-feminized women – young women needed, in fact, their physical and social benefits – and reinforce the notion that athletics might de-feminize women if not properly regulated and supervised. Furthermore, women, in part because they are women, must be prevented from hurting themselves, and our rules and expertise can do it.

I have no hesitation in saying that there is no athletic sport or game in which some women cannot enter, not only without fear of injury but also with great prospects of success. In nearly every instance, however, it will be found that the women who are able to excel in the rougher and more masculine sports have either inherited or acquired masculine characteristics.... There are no sports that tend to make women masculine in an objectionable sense except boxing, baseball, wrestling, basket-ball, ice hockey, water polo, and Rugby football.... Considering studious girls. I hope and believe it will earn a reputation of turning out girls perfect physically as well as being good scholars.”

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also the peculiar constitution of her nervous system and the great emotional disturbances to which she is subjected, changes should be made in many of the rules and regulations governing the sports and games for men, to adapt them to the requirements of women.... Women as a class cannot stand a prolonged mental or physical strain as well as men. Expect it of them and they will try to do the work, but they will do it at a fearful cost to themselves and eventually to their children.

The appearance of all this in the *Ladies' Home Journal* suggests the degree to which these views were being popularized effectively.35

Nevertheless, significant numbers of young women continued to play basketball by rules and under conditions that made Dudley Sargent fear for them and their children. Every year, the *Spalding's Official Basketball Guide For Women*, still edited by Senda Berenson (after 1912 Senda Berenson Abbott, and retired from her position at Smith) felt the need to rejoin the attack against women — especially, it seems, high school girls — playing basketball by men’s rules, under charge of male coaches, in front of boisterous mixed crowds, to the point of exhausting themselves without their own knowledge.

“Girls, if you would only pull down from the pedestal on which you have placed it, the ideal offered by boys’ athletics!” lamented Kathryn Darnell, a girls’ gymnasium director in Chicago-area high schools, in the 1913-14 edition. Berenson’s own editorials sounded these themes repeatedly. Here is Berenson in 1910, declaiming against the stubborn evils she considered all too prevalent:

> So much abuse has there been of this game through ignorance and low ideals, so many appalling things have been done in its name that the situation seems quite disheartening to one who knows the wonderful possibilities for good of basket

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ball... Except in a very few cases no one should be allowed to play more than twice a week and never more than a half hour of playing time. Over-playing of this game is certain to bring about exhaustion and neurasthenia. Not infrequently do we find that some of our entering students have come to us nervous and exhausted from unsupervised playing of basketball in preparatory schools.... Men do not make good coaches for women players. They are ignorant of a woman’s physical organism and are interested only in developing a winning team, and are apt to leave out all ethical and reproductive elements of the game.... I do not believe in intercollegiate or interscholastic games. The great desire to win, the hard grind of practice – not for the joy of playing, but to develop a winning team – the traveling of teams to different schools and towns, often unchaperoned, bring about nervous excitement, worry, sleeplessness and all the evils of athletics.

In addition to these fears, Berenson and other physical educators were also disturbed, though they could only say so obliquely in print, by the tendency of some young women to ignore restrictions against playing during their menstrual periods. In fact, to physical educators, it continued to be true in general that too many female basketball players ignored too many restrictions too often.36

At the annual convention of the American Physical Education Association in 1913, concerned physical educators discussed new ways to create a new set of women’s rules that would, in the words of one attendee, retain “the speed and fascination of ‘Men’s Rules’ without their rough and dangerous elements.” They circulated a letter and survey to every institution they could think of which organized basketball for women, asking them to describe their present rules and suggest revisions for a new, unified set of rules.

Basket ball, the great American indoor game, is now being played by thousands and thousands of our girls and young women. The conditions under which the game is being played are chaotic. At least five different sets of printed rules exist, the two most used being Spalding’s “Women’s Rules” and “Men’s Rules” (A.A.U.).

“Women’s rules” allow the development of a pretty and interesting game, but unfortunately do not appeal to the vigorous girl athlete of to-day. That is the reason that from one-half to two-thirds of the girls’ teams are playing men’s rules. “Men’s Rules” are dangerous in the extreme unless the team be in strict athletic training and under the care of a trained physical director or physician. These ideal conditions seldom obtain, and many teams are under the charge of a man coach desirous only of bringing out a winning team.

The responses received indeed demonstrated the state of chaos in rules and customs around the country. They also demonstrated, in the multiplicity of incompatible suggestions for reform they contained, the likelihood that things were likely to remain so. Of 148 respondents, only 19 expressed support for the official women’s rules as they then stood. Twenty-seven preferred the man’s game. The remaining 102 suggested a laundry list of proposed changes or compromises. Nor was this chaos limited to high school respondents. Major women’s and co-educational colleges continued to support their own variations: Bryn Mawr played A.A.U. men’s rules, but with seven players; Oberlin played men’s rules with their own no-snatching modifications; Mount Holyoke published their own set of 5-player rules; Syracuse played women’s rules, but with five players and without floor lines. This lack of uniformity should not have mattered much at all, really, as the best reason to have uniform rules – to permit consistent competitive conditions over expanses of time and space – was opposed by many of the same people uncomfortable with the lack of uniformity in rules. It was the lack of uniformity in and of itself that
disturbed them, as it did violence to their collective professional worldview as dispensers of physiological, sociological, and ideological rationality. 37

Indeed, as was the case with instrumental team sport for men and boys, the rhetoric defending the necessity and desirability of properly conducted basketball for women continued to vibrate with the catchphrases of physiological and sociological rationality. If anything, this tendency strengthened throughout the 1910s. Newtown (NY) High School physical educator Kathryn McMahon contributed to the 1914-15 Spalding's Official Basket Ball Guide for Women an article entitled “Basket Ball as a Means of Developing Character and Efficiency,” which articulated nearly every assumption of this outlook. “The actual playing of basket ball is of minor importance compared to the development of character gained from a well-supervised game,” McMahon argued.

The cultivation of self-control, consideration of others, quick, accurate thinking and the instantaneous application of the latter – are of paramount importance in basket ball. For that reason it is better, in my opinion, not to have basket ball at all, rather than have it unsupervised or to have it coached by one who simply has the winning of the game in view. The training in self-control, responsibility, honor, etc., is not just for the playing of basket ball. Why should not these traits be emphasized in basket ball where there is such splendid opportunity for developing them?

In addition to articulating these assumptions, McMahon distilled them down to lapel trinkets and distributed them as prizes. “Efficiency pins” were awarded each year to the Newtown players who, in McMahon’s opinion, best exemplified the social lessons to be

learned from basketball. The following behaviors and characteristics were necessary to earn the Girls' Basket Ball efficiency pin at Newtown High School:

1. Fairness – In claiming only what rightfully belonged to one, such as giving up the ball immediately if the opponent had two hands on it first and not waiting for the referee to make the decision.
2. Helpfulness – In stirring up enthusiasm and showing loyalty to one's team by taking responsibility, such as reporting regularly for all practice work, in being a forceful influence and inspiration for good by actions as well as by words.
3. Cheerfulness – By taking defeat good naturedly and by making it a rule to pass no unfavorable comments about an opponent.
4. Uprightness – To do the right thing because it is right, no matter how small or insignificant the thing may seem, whether it be reporting on time, dressing properly, etc.
5. Politeness – Remembering that the same rules of etiquette hold good whether on a basket ball court or in a drawing room.
6. Quietness – To show one's self-control to such a degree that a game may be played without any talking.

This was the Progressive vision of social cohesion circumscribed within notions of gender (not to mention the third appearance of "self-control" in only 2 ½ pages). Kathryn McMahon and others like her wanted to instill many of these same characteristics into young men, but with far more emphasis on competitive success – and far less on drawing-room etiquette.38

In some cases the behavior of women playing basketball competitively convinced some observers that their beliefs about the differences in male and female potentiality were not as true as they might have liked. With play classified as instinct, team competition constructed as a means to shape instinct to social good, and excessively competitive
behavior considered unseemly for proper young women, sometimes female basketball
players demonstrated entirely too much instinct for competition to suit some tastes. A
final example is instructive. One professionally trained female coach of a women’s high
school team, from Ohio, reported with disdain the result of facing an opponent playing
along “male” lines:

Our opponents were coached by a man and they used boys’ tactics....
Consequently, the game took on the aspect of a combination of feminine football
and a wrestling match.... I had told my girls that I didn’t want them to play rough;
that I expected them to be good sports and act like ladies even on the basketball
court.... [using these tactics, the girls are down ten points at halftime] ....They
were furious; I tried to appease them but knew each one was a regular lioness
inside... The second half they asked to be allowed to play as they wanted to.... It
was all a gladiatorial combat, witnessed by a primitive people yelling they knew not
what for; played by a group of respectable young girls acting in animal fashion to
uphold the glory of their school, to win the league championship and to disregard
everything that was good sportsmanship, womanly and socially proper, if
necessary, in order to attain their end.39

Here the lioness lurking dangerously within the players and the primitivism of the crowd
hoping to see these “lionesses” in “gladiatorial combat” suggest the era’s tension between
fascination with the power and vital energy that the “elemental” and “instinctual” seemed
to represent and the fear that these forces would overwhelm if not rigidly contained within
the middle-class ideology of self-control. These tensions were exacerbated when the
instincts in question were, from a gender standpoint, “wrong.” If turned loose to play “as

38 Kathryn A. McMahon, “Basket Ball as a Means of Developing Character and Efficiency,” Spalding’s
1914), pp. 68-70 (quotes pp. 68, 69).
39 Jane Ann Wilson, “A Study of Girls’ Interscholastic Basketball in Ohio From 1900 to the Present, With
Emphasis mine.
they wanted to,” women might actually turn loose the lioness within, to the detriment of
their moral and physical health and, in the minds of physical educators, defeating the
purpose of playing in the first place. The players, on the other hand, seem to have
different purposes for playing in mind. It says much about the era’s notions of gender,
instinct, and social control that a game, if designed improperly, could turn these dangerous
forces loose – and if designed properly, could control them.
CONCLUSION

By World War One, basketball was an integral, uncontroversial, taken-for-granted part of the American athletic landscape, the nation’s de facto winter team sport. It was understood by large numbers of Americans as just that: the winter team sport, as football was the autumn team sport and baseball was the spring and summer team sport. When viewed in this limited sense, basketball had become something simultaneously much more and much less than what Naismith and Gulick created in 1891. They did not anticipate their experiment in physical education and play philosophy would take on a life of its own; surprised and gratified by its rapid spread, they were sometimes distressed by what it became in the hands of athletes, promoters, and fans with values different from their own. Indeed, basketball is a superb example of the degree to which attempts to shape the behavior of presumably malleable groups through organizational thinking seldom played out in the manner reformers and social engineers had in mind. Naismith and Gulick initially intended basketball to be an uplifting, nearly pedagogical pursuit, one which would provide for the inculcation and demonstration of what Naismith called “the right type of
manhood.” Once they had created a new avenue for the inculcation and demonstration of masculinity, however, they did not retain absolute control of it for long.

A variety of “styles” of masculinity can be glimpsed on the basketball courts of the Progressive Era, in fact, some of them close to what Naismith and Gulick had in mind, some of them—especially at the commercialized professional level—the very styles of masculinity they hoped instrumental team sport would temper. One thing which joined these disparate versions of Progressive-era manhood was the very need for styles of public masculinity. The YMCA felt this need; colleges and universities felt this need; social reformers felt this need; children on New York City playgrounds felt this need; fans of the East Liverpool Five felt this need. Basketball filled this need, though not always in exactly the same way.

Masculinity, of course, cannot possibly be the only Progressive-era need basketball met, given the game’s enormous popularity with women. It is worth repeating that in a significant number of locales and/or institutions, women played basketball first. Turn-of-the-century American men and boys interested in athletic pursuits had a variety of choices—though few during the winter—and needed little help contextualizing basketball within the larger milieu of competitive team sport. “Indoor football,” as basketball was occasionally called in the early years, was a concept that made sense. Women playing competitive team sport in large numbers was a new development demanding explanation—or at least, as we have seen, special rules and precautions. The two developments are closely related. That large numbers of turn-of-the-century women took up a game designed to inculcate the “right type of manhood”—and that this fact does not seem to
have appalled Naismith or Gulick, though both supported more restrictive women’s rules – is an indication of what was meant by “the right type of manhood.” It meant, in the context of the day, a somewhat feminized manhood, emphasizing teamwork, cooperation, and the good of the team/whole. It was also congruent with what many Progressive-era reformers and social critics had in mind when they used words like “civilization,” “citizenship,” or “self-control” – words they used often. Progressives sought to moralize politics in a society where politics was “male” and morality was “female.” Through competitive team sport, they sought to temper competition through subordination to the social group in a society where competition was “male” and subordination was “female.” They sought to teach subordination to group through competitive team sport and thereby masculinize “female” behavior.

On the other hand, women who played basketball – like women who went to college, or women who worked outside the home, or women who demanded the vote – may well have been a contributing factor in the need many Progressive-era American men felt to demonstrate their masculinity in ritualized public fashion. It seems safe to say that the “style” of public femininity represented by what our coach from Ohio called in Chapter Six “a combination of feminine football and a wrestling match” was unsettling to many, and not only to men. Interestingly, basketball as played by women was often more “Progressive” than basketball as played by men – more circumscribed, more instrumental, more likely to be under control of professional physical educators, more likely to be organized around controlling “instinctual” behaviors by altering the rules of play. Indeed, the theory and practice of instrumental team sport focused very closely on what its
proponents believed was instinctual behavior. Its proponents sought to achieve both social reform in the abstract and concrete change in the specific individual not just through education, acculturation, and other kinds of direct, "conscious" influence, but also by shaping instinct through control of the physical body. Play, they believed, was instinct. The right kind of play, circumscribed by the right kinds of rules, created the right kind of individual and a more "efficient" society. The wrong kind of play, by the wrong kind of rules, released the lioness. This faith in rules and organizational rationality was a typically Progressive response to the challenges posed by a modern, multiethnic urban society.

Many women, like many men, rejected this formulation and sought less restrictive, more competitive basketball, lioness or no lioness. The battle between these two visions of sport, both for women and for men, continued into the 1920s and beyond. To a certain extent, it continues yet. In short, many women, like many men, brought different values to and sought different meanings from basketball in the years before World War One than its creators originally had in mind. In this sense, instrumental team sport was not nearly as successful as the optimistic rhetoric of its purveyors suggested.

Over the long term, however, the intellectual and sociological orientation behind instrumental team sport succeeded to a remarkable degree, such that its assumptions permeate American culture. Its victory has been so complete, in fact, as to obscure the monumental nature of its own success. Initially envisioned in part as preparation for success within a modern, rational, bureaucratically-organized society, team sport has become that society's preferred metaphor for success. Luther Gulick and Walter Camp believed team sport would make its participants better bureaucrats and industrial workers.
Today, American bureaucrats and industrial workers are constantly admonished to behave as if they are on an athletic team. In addition, competitive team sport remains to many Americans a crucible of masculinity and a means of instilling positive social values in youth. Not everyone who played basketball before World War One shared the social goals or cultural values of James Naismith and Luther Halsey Gulick. The goals and values themselves, however, proved resilient. Unselfish team play is still considered by many the best means of encouraging competition without greed.

Finally, the invention and spread of basketball must be seen as an entrepreneurial event of extraordinary success, even if that success was not always of the kind initially intended. Like most successful entrepreneurial acts, the creation of basketball involved intelligent design and planning, an aggressive campaign of advocacy and promotion, the leveraging of financial and organizational resources, and a certain amount of inexplicable dumb luck. Who, after all, can say for sure why throwing an Association football into a peach basket is fun?
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