

FROM THE TRIANGLE TO THE CAGE:
BASKETBALL'S CONTESTED ORIGINS, 1891 - 1910

By

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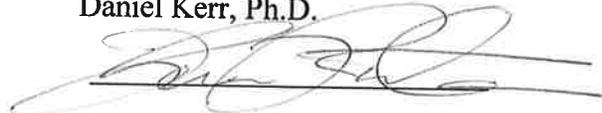
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ABSTRACT

As the United States increasingly urbanized in the late nineteenth century, white middle-class Americans faced crises of gender, racial, and class status. Fears of young men and women absorbing improper values and behavior from urban life abounded. Countering this dirty and rough landscape, middle-class reformers developed increasingly sophisticated physical education programs that promoted “clean sport” as a way to inoculate themselves from urban ills. Creating the sport of basketball in 1891 was a calculated attempt by these reformers at rescuing society through clean sport. Nonetheless, by 1910, it was apparent that basketball was not the panacea for promoting middle-class conceptions of clean sport and proper living. As basketball spread across the country, rough play, riots, and professionalism undermined the “respectable” intentions middle-class reformers had invested in the game.

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First and foremost I must acknowledge my parents and the proud example they set for me. Through Beatrice Luchin, an ardent educator, and Dennis Harris, a firm advocate of parks and recreation programs, I have learned that my life is to serve and do right by others. To them I am forever indebted.

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Finally, basketball has been an obsession of mine since I was a child. I’ve played, watched, and discussed the game for years. Without the encouragement of Kelly Dwyer and Matt Moore, however, I never would have considered seriously writing about the sport. The writers at *Hardwood Paroxysm* – Andrew Lynch and Amin Vafa, particularly – deserve praise as well for dutifully entertaining many of my thoughts and theories on basketball and society.

To these folks, I dedicate the following work.

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CHAPTER I

ANOTHER NEW GAME

As he strolled into class on December 21, 1891, Frank Mahan noticed a peach basket hanging ten feet above the floor of the gymnasium. Craning his head, Mahan noticed a second peach basket at the opposite end. It was ten feet off the ground just like the other one. In the middle of the gym stood his instructor, James Naismith, with a soccer ball and thirteen rules to explain. Loudly, Mahan scoffed, “Huh! Another new game!”

All semester at the YMCA Training School there had been nothing but new games from these instructors. Each proved more disinteresting than the last to Mahan and his classmates. Now here it was in late December, almost time for Christmas break, and Naismith was trying yet another new game that promised failure like the others. A. T. Halsted was the first physical educator who unsuccessfully tried new games that semester. Halsted “was an expert in marching and calisthenics” but the young men quickly bored of his regimens and had Halsted deposed as their instructor. Next in line was Dr. R. A. Clark, a master of gymnastics. He dropped the calisthenics and marching in favor of “apparatus work” and mixing in what athletic events could be held inside a small gymnasium during the winter. Still, the surly students opposed these unappealing exercises. Frustrated, Clark at a meeting of Training School instructors declared the class of young men “incorrigible” and that “no one could do anything with that group.”¹

Naismith protested that assumption. The problem was not the group of students, but the activities given to them. Devising an indoor sport that appealed to their “play instinct” would resolve the issue. The group of assembled instructors thought quietly upon Naismith’s words for

¹ James Naismith, *Basketball: Its Origins and Development* (1941; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 32-35.

a moment. Then the Training School's director, Luther Gulick, responded "Naismith, I want you to take that class and see what you can do with it." Thunderstruck, Naismith attempted to talk his way out of teaching the incorrigibles. Gulick, however, was unmoved. Referencing a prior conversation that occurred weeks before, Gulick simply told Naismith to "work on that new game that you said could be invented."² Finally, after several failures, Naismith had hit upon a new game he was sure would work. Despite Mahan's skepticism, which Naismith recalled as "rather discouraging," the rules were explained. Two captains, Eugene Libby and T. D. Patton, divided the class of eighteen into two teams of nine and the churlish class was quickly won over by the new game.³

Enthralled, the incorrigibles soon became ardent missionaries spreading it to their home branches of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Canada and the United States during their Christmas vacation in 1891. After the conclusion of their break, the students returned to the Training School for the spring semester. The once-cynical Mahan approached Naismith and asked him what he was going to call the game. Naismith had not given much thought to the matter. Mahan suggested calling the new game "Naismith Ball" after its inventor. Embarrassed, Naismith quickly rejected that notion. Mahan then proffered "basket ball" as a name. "We have a basket and a ball," Naismith replied, "and it seems to me that would be a good name for it."⁴

² Naismith, *Basketball*, 36-37.

³ Rob Rains, *James Naismith: The Man Who Invented Basketball*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 44-46.

⁴ Naismith, *Basketball*, 58-60.

Basketball, as its earliest proponents intended, was more than just a game. It was the embodiment of a worldview. The game exemplified sincere notions of morality from white middle-class Americans seeking firm control of American society. Examining the first two decades of basketball's formal governance reveals that white middle-class reformers and advocates of physical education used the sport as a powerful tool constructing and maintaining proper race, gender, and class relations in a society they viewed as dangerously turbulent.

Pertaining to athletics, white middle-class notions of race, gender, and class meshed into the ideal of amateurism. Buttressed by the ideologies of the Triangle, muscular Christianity, and clean sport, amateurism provided a safe and respectable place for native-born, middle-class whites participating in athletics. Amateurism's precepts eschewed, in theory, the increasing commercialization of sports enjoyed by more undesirable corners of society ruining the redemptive power of athletics. Instead of using sport as a means toward all-around development that included spiritual and mental improvement, professionalism demanded athletes recklessly specialize in one area of life without moral regard. The lofty ideals of amateurism were always fraught with tension, however. In the process of combating professionalism for the attention of young people, the reformers often borrowed the tactics of professional sports – most notably competitive tournaments attracting crowds and fans. With professionalization already underway, the appropriation of pro tactics by amateur authorities only served to hasten the professionalization of basketball and inevitably complicate the amateur ideal.

Basketball's invention during the winter of 1891 was another step in a larger, complex ideological struggle over physical education, sports, and American society. The students who first played the game were not teenagers, but young men in their twenties and thirties studying to be secretaries at branches of the YMCA. They were the frontline missionaries of the new theory

of physical education sponsored by progressive reformers combatting the unseemly and reckless aspects of urbanization. As young middle-class men and women migrated to cities, reformers feared they were losing the invigorating vitality provided by pastoral lifestyles. At the same time, urban life increased sinful habits in these young people as they encountered recent immigrants with suspect morality, gambling, prostitution, and other vices. The clean and Christian values of amateur sport offered an attractive alternative to violent sports like football and boxing, and the moral corruption of professionalized baseball. Indeed, basketball was quickly hailed as “free from much of the reputed roughness of Rugby.”⁵ However, by 1910, all levels of the game – male and female, amateur and professional – witnessed escalating violence, which left purveyors of amateurism distraught over how basketball had been so corrupted so fast.

Few histories of sport and progressivism have singularly focused on the moral origins of basketball. Of these, “Play by the Rules: the Creation of Basketball and the Progressive Era, 1891 – 1917,”⁶ is the best extant observation of basketball’s reformative purposes. What this study adds to “Play by the Rules” is greater focus upon the early work of the YMCA and Training School toward promoting and defining proper middle-class behavior and athleticism. Additionally, the dichotomy of refined civilization (amateurism) and primal savagery (professionalism) is more explicitly observed and discussed. Explaining the initial hopes physical education reformers at the YMCA had for basketball, fortunately, proves relatively easy. Those in favor of clean amateur sport left behind an extensive trail of organizations engaged in numerous, explicit public debates on the meaning of sport for race, gender, and class relations. Explaining the rebellion against clean sport is more difficult. These purported malcontents did

⁵ James Naismith, “Basket Ball,” *The Triangle* 1, No. 10 (January 1892): 143-45.

⁶ Marc Thomas Horger, “Play by the Rules: the Creation of Basketball and the Progressive Era, 1891 – 1917” (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2001).

not leave behind many explicit statements and ideologies on why they professionalized or why they enjoyed playing rough. Nonetheless, they left residual evidence of their motivations such as riots, brawls, and quitting YMCAs that left quite the impression on reformers and newspapers that reported on the disturbances.

To unravel and understand this moral story of basketball, the Physical Education Program Records of the YMCA at the University of Minnesota's campus in Minneapolis proved incredibly fruitful. Their records contained secretarial reports on meetings of athletic officials, speeches, and other documentation of how men and women believed clean sport could improve society and how dangerous professionalization was to their efforts. Just as important were the resources provided by the Springfield Training School where basketball was created over 120 years ago. Now known as Springfield College, the school has digitized and made publically accessible *The Triangle* and *Physical Education* journals published in the early- and mid-1890s. These journals featured commentary and updates from leading physical education reformers that concretely defined what they hoped sports and basketball could do for society. Furthermore the main editors of the journals were James Naismith and Luther Gulick, the two reformers most instrumental to understanding basketball. Other, supplemental primary sources include newspaper articles and contemporary books about basketball such as *Basket Ball for Women* published in 1899.

Secondary literature previously studying the different angles of this topic further strengthen this look at basketball's moral origins. Although academic works on basketball's early years are few, Robert Peterson's *Cages to Jump Shots* stands out as a treasure trove of evidence and anecdotes. Peterson's book chronicles the growth of professional basketball from the 1890s through the 1950s and has insightful information on the tension between amateurism

and professionalism. Other books such as *The Influence of the Protestant Ethic on Sport and Recreation* by Steven Overman, *Patriotic Games* by S.W. Pope, *Muscular Christianity* by Clifford Putney, and *Take the Young Stranger by the Hand* by John Donald Gustav-Wrathall help give theoretical and evidentiary support in understanding sport in American culture, the relations between athleticism and Christianity, and gender and sexuality in sports. Also helpful were studies that more broadly examine gender, race, nationalism, and class during the Progressive Era.⁷

“From the Triangle to the Cage” is bisected into one section contextualizing the landscape for basketball’s invention and another section explaining its subsequent utilization by society. Chapters II, III, and IV provide the contextual background necessary for understanding what middle-class reformers feared in American society and how they planned to control those threats. Chapters V, VI, VII, and VIII explain how basketball, conceived with the best of clean sport intentions, quickly proved difficult for its initial middle-class proponents to control. Finally, Chapter IX summarizes how clean and professional sports left residual influence upon the other, despite their antagonistic relationship.

Like any meaningful history, the purpose here is not altogether recalling and explaining events and debates of a bygone era. It is also helps explain the context of the present and the possibilities of the future. How we presently conceive and judge the people who play basketball makes more sense after observing the moral origins of the game. The blurred lines of amateurism and professionalism that began in the 1890s are even hazier today. With roots dating back to

⁷ See the following for overviews of problems pervading the YMCA, physical education, and the Progressive Movement: *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and YWCA in the City*, ed Nina Mjagki and Margaret Spratt; *Daily Life in the Progressive Era*, Steven L. Piott; *Major Problems in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era*, ed. by Leon Fink; *The Progressive Movement, 1900 – 1915*, ed. by Richard Hofstadter; *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement, 1870 – 1920*, Michael McGerr.

1906, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) nominally serves the interest of amateur athletes, or “student-athletes.” Nonetheless, the NCAA in 2010 signed an impressive \$10.8 billion contract with CBS to broadcast its basketball tournaments for fourteen years.⁸

Generating remarkable sums of money on the backs of amateur athletes caused historian Taylor Branch to describe terms like “amateurism” and “student-athlete” as “cynical hoaxes, legalistic confections propagated by the universities so they can exploit the skills and fame of young athletes.”⁹ Some amateur athletes share Branch’s assessment and have challenged the foundations of amateurism’s paternalistic control and exploitation. One former amateur player pushing for the unionization of amateur college athletes emphasized the need for these players to have power in the face of the NCAA’s “dictatorship.” “We’re asking for a seat at the table,” Kain Colter demanded, “to get our voice heard.”¹⁰ These athletes are clearly frustrated at the lack of agency they are provided in the amateur system.

Basketball’s story from 1891 to 1910 reaffirms the continuity of struggle within amateurism and its inexorable relation with professionalism. In the world of the late nineteenth-century, middle-class reformers fretted continuously over the health and vitality of their class. Basketball and amateurism were not simply ways of organizing a game, it was a way to organize society on their terms. Amateurism was birthed by these fears and carries the paternalistic, controlling, and anxious residue all the way to the present. Observing how this concept was

⁸ Dejan Kovacevic, “March Madness Built on ‘Bracketology,’” *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*, March 21, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/1319483198>.

⁹ Jorge Castillo, “After Leaving Football, a Historian Emerges as an N.C.A.A. Critic,” *The New York Times*, October 25, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/26/sports/ncaafotball/historian-taylor-branch-delivers-critical-view-of-ncaa.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

¹⁰ Teddy Greenstein, “Northwestern players seek to join labor union,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 28, 2014, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/college/chi-northwestern-football-players-labor-union-20140128.0,182603.story>.

formulated and applied to basketball 120 years ago will provide better context for contemporary debates over amateurism's efficacy.

CHAPTER II

THE NEED FOR REFORM

It should be understood at the outset that the new physical education as pursued at the [YMCA Training] school, does not aim at making athletes or gymnasts, ball players or prize fighters. The old idea that a man must develop his muscle, so as to be able to defend himself in a scrimmage or win victories does not come into consideration, except incidentally.¹¹

- Anonymous editorial, Springfield *Daily Union*, September 23, 1890

As the Springfield *Daily Union* attests, muscular development was no longer deemed a sufficient end for athletic training. A higher purpose was calling the men and women of the era. However, why did the new physical education espoused by the white middle class discard that old line of thinking? And why in the late nineteenth century? The advocates who institutionalized the new physical education via amateurism lived in an America filled with changes that promoted anxious concern. Industrialization, urbanization, mass (im)migration, (re)definitions of gender, violent riots and racial terrorism, and the United States' growing role in overseas imperialism were just some of the challenges facing the men and women of this generation. Their era was also one where participation in sports – whether through playing, watching, or discussing – increasingly altered gender roles and acquired greater symbolic importance.¹² The reformers believed that providing proper physical education erected a mighty pillar stabilizing society and meeting those aforementioned challenges. Institutionalizing the clean sport, amateur ideal could purify morally diseased American cities of violence and vice.

¹¹ Anonymous, “The New Physical Education,” *Springfield Daily Union*, September 23, 1890, page 3, Pamphlets, undated, 1888 – 1944 (Box 1), YMCA Physical Education Programs, 1887 – 1997, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Elmer L. Anderson Library, University of Minnesota – Twin Cities Campus (Hereafter cited as Kautz YMCA Archives).

¹² Park, Roberta J. “Sport, Gender and Society in a Transatlantic Perspective,” in *From ‘Fair Sex’ to Feminsm: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras*, ed. by J. A. Mangan and Roberta J. Park, (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1987), 59.

From the perspective of the middle class, immoral upheaval had permeated all corners of the United States for too long. As the men who first played basketball were born and came of age, several major events exemplified the mounting mayhem. Understanding how middle-class reformers perceived these events is fundamental for understanding basketball's subsequent invention and propagation.

Following the withdrawal of federal troops from the South in the late 1870s, black Americans and their white Republican allies faced increasing terrorism and violence at the hands of white supremacists. The U.S. attorney general for Alabama frustratingly noted that “any man may murder a Republican, for political reasons without the slightest reason to fear that he will be punished, but with every reason to believe that he will be applauded for the act.”¹³ Nearly thirty years later, acts of racial lawlessness had not dissipated across the South and were common across the North as well. In Illinois, for example, a mob of 200 persons broke into the Belleville jail and proceeded to lynch, mutilate, and burn black schoolteacher David Wyatt. The local police coolly observed the break-in, which took over half-an-hour to complete, but did nothing to stop it. Wyatt's lynching in 1903 was one of at least fifty-five across the United States that year.¹⁴ More than just displays of lawless mob behavior, these acts symbolize the racial antipathy toward black Americans and notions of racial equality. Indeed, when boxer Jack Johnson became the first black champion of prize-fighting, racist clamors for a Great White Hope to dethrone him sounded from coast to coast. When Johnson defeated the first such challenger, race riots swept

¹³ George Williams quoted in Robert J. Kaczorowski, *The Politics of Judicial Interpretation: The Federal Courts, Department of Justice, and Civil Rights, 1866 – 1876* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 156.

¹⁴ Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*, (New York: Anchor Books, 2008), 198-99.

the nation as whites retaliated against blacks for Johnson's affront to civilized order.¹⁵ Such racist activity largely prevented integrated basketball squads on the professional and amateur level for decades.

A crippling economic depression heightened middle-class anxieties as poor Americans took to "tramping" – traveling the nation's roads and railways searching for work, food, and habitation. Fearful, legislatures influenced by the middle-class enacted forceful measures curtailing the tramps. In Virginia, the town of Manassas banned all tramps from entering its borders. Several states banned any homeless person from owning a firearm. Ohio mandated three years in the state penitentiary for anyone who kindled a roadside fire or trespassed on private property. Challenges to such laws often proved futile. In 1900, Ohio's Supreme Court upheld the state's vagrancy laws since "the genius tramp... is a public enemy."¹⁶ The nomadic tramp stoked fears of man in his unrefined primitive nature capable of any wanton act of violence.

Perhaps most frightening of all was the massive, wide-spread rebellion of 1877, which included the takeover of St. Louis by a workers' commune comprised of disgruntled working-class poor. This working-class insurrection shut down two-thirds of the country's railroad tracks grinding the national economy to a halt. Nine state governors declared states of emergency and violently suppressed the movement. President Rutherford Hayes, while having abandoned blacks to their fate in the South, called up the federal army to augment the 45,000 state militiamen already clamping down on the indigent workers, of whom at least 117 were killed.¹⁷ Labor unrest

¹⁵ Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880 – 1917*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2-3.

¹⁶ Michael A. Bellesiles, *1877: America's Year of Living Violently*, (New York: The New Press: 2010), 122.

¹⁷ Bellesiles, *1877*, 164-75.

continuously marring the rest of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era even after this dramatic confrontation of 1877. These battles of labor and capital were not wholly economic, either. They were also grounded in varying conceptions of manhood. Rhetoric used in justifying the repression of the uncouth workers was familiar to the writings of physical education reformers in justifying amateur clean sport. In 1894, for example, the Pullman Strike in Chicago was brutally suppressed as General Nelson Miles proclaimed “American manhood [had] to assert its principles” by putting an end to the labor rebellion.¹⁸ Lower-class labor restlessly moving about as tramps or violently revolting indicated untamed manhood that deserved no respect from social superiors.

For middle-class reformers, the shocking scenes strengthened their resolve to ferociously guard their ideological and economic turf. Furthermore, the progressive reformers happily offered themselves as authorities on teaching the lower class respectable manhood. By creating the proper manhood in workingmen, historian Thomas Winter concludes that the reformers, particularly in the YMCA, concretely defined their own masculinity and values in opposition to the shiftless working class. “From the YMCA’s viewpoint,” Winter continues, “proper manliness was simply irreconcilable with political radicalism, class conflict, and labor unrest.”¹⁹ Just as disreputable for the middle-class progressive was the “criminaloid,” men who were “too squeamish and too prudent to practice treachery, brutality, and violence” themselves. At least the lower classes took criminality into their own hands. Meanwhile, captains of industry, party

¹⁸ Priscilla Murolo, “Wars of Civilization: the US Army Contemplates Wounded Knee, the Pullman Strike, and the Philippine Insurrection,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 80, no. 1 (Fall 2011): 77, <http://dx.doi.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/10.1017/S0147547911000081>.

¹⁹ Thomas Winter, *Making Men, Making Class: the YMCA and Workingmen, 1877 – 1920*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 4.

bosses, and railroad officials hired surrogates to prey upon and brutalize the public.²⁰ This class of men also happened to be the ones sponsoring and owning professional sports teams and leagues.

Major reforms from progressives such as regulated labor conditions, restrictions on child labor, capped working hours, and minimum wages were all efforts toward reducing the wild oscillations of society.²¹ Despite those achievements, the middle class was still unsure of itself and its gains. Indeed, urban life increased discontent within the middle class over their labor in an increasingly corporatized economy. Particularly, anxieties over managerial, or “brain work,” occupations worried the middle class. These positions paid better than the laborious jobs held by the lower class and offered greater job stability, consumer goods, and more leisure opportunities. However, the brain work potentially undermined their manhood through lack of physical work and subjection to “criminaloid” employers.²² Within this space, though, the middle class sought ways to exert their cultural authority and infuse society with their tempered values and virtues.²³ With their identities in flux, middle-class men began to construct new ideals and myths of manly independence and masculinity to cope with the new urban, industrial world and strengthen their segment of society.

²⁰ Edward A. Ross, “Edward A. Ross on the Criminaloid Type,” in *The Progressive Movement 1900 – 1915*, ed. Richard Hofstadter (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), 73-75.

²¹ Thomas C. Leonard, “Retrospectives: Eugenics and Economics in the Progressive Era,” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19, No. 4 (Autumn 2005): 207. <http://www.jstor.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/stable/4134963>.

²² Harvey Green, *Fit For America: Health, Fitness, Sport, and American Society*, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 181.

²³ Clyde Griffen, “Reconstructing Masculinity from the Evangelical Revival to the Waning of Progressivism: A Speculative Synthesis” in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, ed. Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 191.

The reformulation of masculinity assuaged fears that middle-class domesticated life – “overcivilization” – had irrevocably made men nervous, weak, and fragile. Physical education reformers began reinvigorating themselves and their children into the new mold of manhood. Men like G. Stanley Hall argued that all of humanity started out primitive in childhood. Western Civilization, physical education specifically, could lift the young from savage behavior to a state of proper civilization. Without such proper training, those of Anglo-Saxon lineage were doomed to child-like barbarism like the lesser races and lower classes of the world.²⁴ This desire to remove primitive strains from the middle-class midst during the Progressive Era meant “eugenic approaches to social and economic reform were popular, respectable, and widespread.” Progressives often targeted the feeble-minded, criminals, the irredeemably idle, and the morally deficient as archetypes to avoid and eliminate in society.²⁵ Believing that Americans of newly-arrived immigrant stock possessed these undesirable traits in abundance, the middle class also took note of their own dropping birth rates. The fear of lowered birth rates combined with weakened physicality portended an impending “race suicide.” In the process of race suicide, the white Anglo-Saxon middle class would therefore cede power to these lower groups. These combinations of racial, sexual, and class fears meant a growing emphasis on cultivating strong bodies in middle-class men. By revitalizing themselves physically, they could establish their leadership in the disjointed urbanizing world.²⁶

The implications of developing bodies through clean sport devoid of violent brutality and ill morals are suggested by Luther Gulick in May 1891. Gulick distilled the physical, moral, and

²⁴ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 89 – 92.

²⁵ Leonard, “Retrospectives,” 208.

²⁶ Winter, *Making Men, Making Class*, 5.

spiritual gains of exercise into ten qualities. Particularly, the following four qualities are a firm rebuttal of tumultuous era:

- Symmetry – Harmonious or all-around development of the body.
- Physical Judgment – ...tells a man what ought to be done and muscular control enables him to do it; either one without the other is practically worthless.
- Physical Courage – This comes naturally from the knowledge of ability gained through experience... A presumptuous daring is not true courage, being born either of ignorance of the real dangers or reckless indifference.
- Self Possession – Control of the mind over the entire man, enabling him to act naturally in times of danger and excitement.

Athletic training not only provided better physical health, but methodically harnessed and managed impulses that caused disorder. As Gulick reminds the reader, “presumptuous daring is not true courage.” True courage required training and preparation for events, not unthinking, mob mentality.²⁷

Gulick’s ideas proved a powerful influence on James Naismith’s eventual twelve values of basketball. In the late 1930s, at the behest of his son, Naismith finally wrote at length on the origins of basketball and his feelings toward the sport. Published in 1941, Naismith’s *Basketball: Its Origins and Development* included a concluding chapter in which Naismith listed the twelve values he believed were developed within men and women who play basketball. The list bore a striking resemblance to the virtues expounded by Gulick almost 50 years earlier. The emphasis on the individual exhibiting control and coordination was paramount for both men. Such traits revealed a trained and highly-developed discipline within that individual. Acquiring discipline prevented out-of-control and uncoordinated behavior. Such antics were indicative of novice skill, poor training, or uncaring attention. Another ability Naismith praised was the wherewithal to meet and conquer new circumstances without fear. Dedicated training was no good if a man were

²⁷ Luther Gulick, “Physical Health, Education, Recreation,” *The Triangle* 1, No. 4 (May 1891): 58.

robotic and unable to amend his plan of action. Highly-developed individuals possessed a capable mind that quickly recognized new endeavors while also controlling a body capable of adjusting to the shifting environment.

The three values that stand out the most from Naismith's list are "Self-Sacrifice," "Self-Control," and "Sportsmanship." They deviate the most from a conception of sports as pure physical athleticism. Also, these conceptions refute the notion that one plays to win at all costs and undergirds progressive ideals which eschewed unbridled capitalism and chaotic anarchy. As defined by Naismith, sportsmanship was "the player's insistence on his own rights and his observance of the rights of others." Self-Sacrifice was the "willingness to place the good of team above one's personal ambitions." Self-Control meant "the subordination of one's feelings for a purpose." Combined, these ideals did not simply mean that you shook hands at the end of a match that could have been rife with rough violent play and angry words. It meant all players *insisting* on their rights and also the rights of all others. Simply put, the purpose of physical activity was developing character not winning the game.²⁸

Naismith genuinely viewed basketball as a method for reforming and improving society. He hoped that those tenants of self-sacrifice, self-control, and sportsmanship would do wonders in general American society and between nations. Naismith personally crossed the color barrier in this quest, serving as a mentor for John McLendon, who in 1961 became the first black coach of a racially integrated professional basketball team. Naismith also approvingly observed the 1936 Olympics where Chinese referees were respected by Western players.²⁹

²⁸ Naismith, *Basketball*, 181-89.

²⁹ Ron Thomas, *They Cleared the Lane: The NBA's Black Pioneers*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 164-66; Rains, *James Naismith*, 160-61.

However, the classist and racist perspectives of the physical education movement germinating from the middle class left its mark on basketball's early years. The philosophy of the game was not developed by the working class or the "criminaloid" upper classes. Nonetheless, as the game radiated from the Training School, these other groups influenced basketball leading to conflict with the progressives. And even within the progressive camp, physical educators debated and disagreed over how best to employ and organize basketball. These debates on basketball practically began the moment the game was first played at the ideological hotbed of physical education, the YMCA Training School in Springfield, Massachusetts. As James Naismith and Luther Gulick began erecting the practical edifice of basketball, the debate on the sport's philosophical meaning invariably invoked the larger conflict on masculinity, race, and class.

CHAPTER III

THE FRAMEWORK FOR REFORM

The relationship between Luther Gulick and James Naismith was made possible by the growth of muscular Christianity in the second half of the nineteenth century. This religious idea adopted by a growing cohort of middle-class men espoused a positive view of sport to further Christianity by strengthening the physical body of man. With a strong body, an individual could more assuredly spread and defend the message of Christ.³⁰ This religious concept successfully steered men like Gulick and Naismith from traditional forms of missionary work toward physical education.

Luther Halsey Gulick II was a vital force in the larger physical education movement and particularly at the YMCA Training School in Springfield. Born in 1865, Gulick hailed from a devout reforming family. Historian Clifford Putney declared that “of all the reform-minded families in American history, few were more active than the Gulicks.” Thirty-two members of the Gulick clan served as missionaries beginning with Peter and Fanny in Hawai’i in the 1820s. The Gulicks left a profound mark on Hawai’i by promoting Christianity and Western culture through their missionary work. Although born in Honolulu, Luther Gulick II did not follow in the footsteps of his father, Luther Gulick I, or his grandparents, Peter and Fanny, as a missionary in the Pacific archipelago. Indeed, he was an exceptional Gulick in that he decided to make his reforming mark as a physical educator not as a missionary in a more traditional sense.³¹

However, traditions were changing in the 1880s. Gulick’s decision to proselytize for Christianity

³⁰ Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880 – 1920*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

³¹ Clifford Putney, *Missionaries in Hawai’i*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 1, 151, 153.

through physical education was an increasingly popular one for young men who championed the values of muscular Christianity.

By the time of his death in 1918 at age 53, Gulick had involved himself with organizations such as the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), the Camp Fire Girls, the United States Olympic Committee, and the American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education (AAAPE). For the purposes of this study, however, Gulick's time as superintendent of the Springfield Training School (1887 to 1900), editor of *The Triangle* and *Physical Education* (1891 to 1895), Secretary of the YMCA Athletic League (late 1890s), and his creation of the triangle concept are of particular importance. C. Howard Hopkins, a historian of the YMCA, called Gulick "the most unique genius to touch the first half-century of the American Y.M.C.A." Indeed, so profound was Gulick's influence that the 1890s could be termed the "Gulick Era" of the YMCA as he "convinced the Association to accept athletics as a central part of its mission." Prior to this conversion, the YMCA viewed athletics as supplemental, not essential, to its work of Christianizing young men.³² Although four years younger, Gulick's powerful ideas made him the mentor and inspiration for James Naismith.

Naismith was born in 1861 on the rural outskirts of Ottawa, Ontario. The farm life created a physically gifted young man. Upon graduating high school in 1883, Naismith had an internal tension: "For several years I had been wondering what I wanted to accomplish," mused Naismith decades later. "Finally I decided that the only real satisfaction that I would ever derive from life was to help my fellow beings." That conclusion usually meant training to become a minister or missionary like the elder Gulicks. So, Naismith earned a religious degree from

³² Clifford Putney, "Luther Gulick: His Contributions to Springfield College, the YMCA, and 'Muscular Christianity,'" *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 39, No. 1 (Summer 2011), <http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/873638018>.

Presbyterian College in 1890. Still, Naismith was not quite satisfied with continuing a career in traditional ministering. After his 1890 graduation, the young Canadian explored the possibility of proselyting through physical education and cultivating the body as well as the spirit. Despite arriving uninvited and unannounced to the YMCA Training School, Naismith was able to schedule a meeting with the superintendent, Luther Gulick. After the meeting, Gulick invited Naismith to attend the class he was teaching that evening. “Later, I was to find that he was one of the few men,” Naismith later recalled, “whose teachings have remained with me and have been a help not only in my profession but in my life as well.” The impressed Naismith decided to attend the Training School that fall and devote himself fully to physical education.³³

The YMCA Training School was a rather new institution founded in 1890 as an off-shoot of the School for Christian Workers established five years earlier in 1885. As the nineteenth century neared its final decade, the YMCA was concerned about having secretaries manly enough physically to catch the attention of souls that needed salvation – such as rugged railroad workers – while also having the professional know-how to manage them “toward higher ideals of manhood.”³⁴ The School for Christian Workers sought to fill this need by “train[ing] young men for various fields of Christian work open to laymen.” The burgeoning muscular Christianity movement inspired the formation of a physical education department in 1887, to go along with the already established secretarial division. Also, in 1887, Luther Gulick came aboard as physical

³³ Naismith, *Basketball*, 22 – 27.

³⁴ Winter, *Making Men, Making Class*, 88.

director. In 1890, the physical education department splintered from the School for Christian Workers to become the separate Training School.³⁵

The curriculum of the Training School quickly expanded and reveals the well-oiled bureaucratic machine the YMCA was becoming in its quest as a manhood factory. Coursework covered “the field, aim, history, organization, buildings, business management, methods of work by departments (district, state, international), and work for special groups... of the YMCA.” Students of the Training School performed mandatory service at local YMCA branches, which by 1893 was an increasingly emphasized portion of their final grades. Finally, in 1895, the faculty revamped the curriculum. The previously two-year program was now extended to three years with curriculum designed to focus upon four themes: “the Bible, Man (including a general study of the physical, mental, and moral nature and relationships of individuals), Association work, and Practice (including athletics, gymnastics and shop work in the industrial training department).”³⁶ These emphasized themes of Bible, Man, and Practice provided a holistic approach for physical educators for the betterment of the YMCA and its members.

The Triangle debuted in this energetic and fluid environment in February 1891. Publications like *The Triangle* were an important step toward middle-class reformers creating a sense of manly community through physical education. Indeed, this publication in particular was a leading voice advocating the ethos of physical education reformers at the Training School. Published directly by the school’s Physical Department, *The Triangle* was a printed bullhorn for the school’s staff trumpeting new ideas that promoted the themes of Bible, Man, and Practice.

³⁵ “Collection Overview,” Secretarial Department Records, Springfield College (Springfield, Mass.), Archives and Special Collections Department, 1.

³⁶ “Collection Overview,” Secretarial Department Records, Springfield College, 3-4.

An editorial in the first edition declared, “We aim primarily to be a medium of communication between the alumni and the students now pursuing the professional studies at the school.” New reports and studies by current students as well as the on-going work of Training School alumni filled the pages of the journal.³⁷ The original editorial staff of *The Triangle* comprised Amos Alonzo Stagg, W.H. Ball, W.O. Black, and W.E. Ninde, in addition to James Naismith. An editorial in *The Triangle*’s first edition explains, “What we stand for and try to represent will perhaps be best indicated by an explanation of our name.”³⁸

That name, *The Triangle*, was a concept developed by Luther Gulick, most likely in 1889,³⁹ describing the harmonic cohesion of man’s various parts: “the soul is not the man; the mind is not the man; the body is not the man.” Man was all three according Gulick as he further popularized muscular Christianity’s precepts. The physical, mental, and spiritual should be “equally developed, symmetrical with reference to itself, and also with reference to the other parts.” Furthermore, “The Triangle as an emblem is intended for the whole Association, not for the physical department alone.”⁴⁰ The physical was but one of three equally important sides. However, the men at the Training School would specialize in preparing the mental and spiritual sides by creating an excellent physical side.

After just a year of publication, *The Triangle* was significantly revamped. The biggest and brightest names in physical education would now contribute to its successor journal, *Physical Education*. This titular change signified an increasing focus on the *muscular* portion of

³⁷ “Editorials,” *The Triangle* 1, No. 1 (February 1891): 9.

³⁸ Amos Alonzo Stagg, “Winter Training for Base Ball,” *The Triangle* 1, No. 1 (February 1891): 1.

³⁹ Betty L. Mann and Jeffery L. Monseau, “The College Seal,” Secretarial Department Records, Springfield College, 1-2.

⁴⁰ “The Triangle as an Emblem,” *Physical Education* 1, No. 1 (March 1892): 17.

muscular Christianity, professionalization of the publication, and popularizing the ideas beyond the inner clique of physical reform. Such changes had already been afoot. In June 1891, *The Triangle* was no longer advertised on its front page as “published by the students of the Physical Department of the Y.M.C.A. Training School.” Instead, it read “published by the Triangle Publishing Co.” Furthermore, the August 1892 *Physical Education* debuted a ten-man advisory committee comprised of well-credentialed medical doctors and YMCA physical directors supposedly adding further legitimacy to ideas published within the journal. Finally, and importantly for historic investigators, the November 1892 edition states, “It should be also said in regard to the editorials that they simply express the personal opinions of the editors.”⁴¹ Those editors were Luther Gulick and James Naismith.

With institutions like the Training School, reformers provided a physical space for the practice and perfection of physical education. Simultaneously, *The Triangle* and *Physical Education* spread the ideals of clean sport beyond the halls of the Training School. Growing up influenced by muscular Christianity, Naismith and Gulick infused their beliefs into these journals as editors and contributors. Furthermore, as editors, they were exposed to the latest theories and applications of physical education that proved influential on basketball’s early development and its revelatory lens on race, class, and gender perceptions of middle-class reformers.

⁴¹ “Editorials,” *Physical Education* 1, No. 9 (November 1892): 164.

CHAPTER IV

THE AIMS AND EFFECTS OF SPORT

As *The Triangle* set out to clean up sport and the young persons who participated, other reformers were simultaneously at work in their own spheres aiding the larger cause of a clean society. During the Progressive Era states across the Union established curriculum requirements espoused by reformers. The curricula and minimum standards for teacher certification were often met with resistance from rural communities used to the single-room schoolhouse.⁴² The imposition of child labor laws served to remove children from the workplace and contain them in schools. Reformers also pressed to “raise spending, lengthen school terms, increase attendance, improve school buildings, raise teacher salaries, strengthen vocational training... and add high schools.” These measures would help empower the education system to shape and mold the children of America, especially immigrant children, into proper modes of behavior. Edward Ross bluntly called the procedure “‘breaking in’ the colt to the harness.”⁴³ Physical education was increasingly seen as a vital part of that “breaking in” process.

Dudley Allen Sargent was a pivotal figure in expanding and legitimizing physical education. Sargent was hired as professor of physical education at Harvard in 1879, replacing an African-American boxing coach. The hiring of a white professional to replace a black man – who had specialized in morally suspicious pugilism, no less – is perhaps a sign of the movement’s growing respectability. Not that it was *entirely* respectable at that point. A Harvard alumnus, upon meeting Sargent and learning of his professorship, declared, “Ah, they had a nigger when I was

⁴² Steven Piott, *Daily Life in the Progressive Era*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press: 2011), 38-39.

⁴³ Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: the Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement, 1870 – 1920*, (New York: Free Press, 2003), 107 – 110; Edward Ross, *Social Control*, 166, as quoted in McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent*, 109.

there.” The response temporarily sunk Sargent’s spirits, but by 1885 his program of weightlifting and exercise gained national reput e and was adopted by nearly fifty other universities.⁴⁴ By 1900, the spread of physical education was truly extraordinary. Sargent reported that 270 colleges had physical education programs, 300 school systems required physical exercises of their students, and 500 YMCAs had gymnasia with over 80,000 members. Sargent’s program had emphasized the muscular Christianity link “between physique and character,” but he had injected a stronger emphasis on the *Christianity* than the muscular.⁴⁵ Luther Gulick was one of the many students to graduate from Sargent’s physical education program. As he grew older, Gulick would focus less on the theological aspects of physical education. Nonetheless, Sargent’s teachings inspired Gulick’s Triangle conception of physical education championed by *The Triangle* and *Physical Education*.

Despite a titular change, the editors of the March 1892 *Physical Education* reiterated that “the change of our name does not indicate any change of position on our part.” Indeed, their definition of “physical education” was wholly influenced by the Triangle conception of man. “Physical education,” begins their definitive take, “is the science and art of perfecting the bodily functions, and subjecting them to the will.” With that definition in mind, it is no surprise that they “differ also from those who hold that bodily health is the end of our endeavors.” Developing and perfecting the body was essential to prodding mental and spiritual development, but it did not guarantee mental and spiritual growth. Without the proper will, one could simply develop a well-

⁴⁴ James C. Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness: The History of American Health Reformers*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 283.

⁴⁵ Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness*, 284-285.

muscled physical brute without the proper civilized refinement.⁴⁶ The importance of this equality would be expounded upon just three months later in June of 1892.

A. T. Halsted, the physical director of a YMCA in Cincinnati, Ohio, contributed an article entitled “An All-Round Man.” Halsted commences with the question, “What constitutes an ‘all-round man?’” Various conceptions had been proposed such as “the athletic” and “the athletic and gymnastic.” These were men who excelled at “physical accomplishments,” but “to conceive of an all-round man, then, calls for the consideration of the relation of the term to man in his threefold nature.” That is the Triangle idea of “physical, mental, and moral or spiritual.” Halsted contended that to have developed all three of these sides “in a matchless unity” is the “true, the highest Christian conception.”⁴⁷ “This idea has long been held by the few,” unfortunately, though, “[it] is not practically *upheld* to the many.” Society was filled with men who overly developed one side of their triangular being to the detriment of the other two.

Easily discernable from *The Triangle* and *Physical Education* is reformer support for clean-sport amateurism and antagonism toward professional sports. Professionalism neglected all-around development by catering to paying crowds, corrupted men morally through gambling, and was distrustful since it largely employed working-class men. The totality of pro sports seemed to roll back the gains of white civilization. Resisting the immorality of professional spectacles, F. N. Seerley in a March 1891 article described the rightful purpose of physical exhibitions. Seerley remarked that “we do claim that the showing of the exercise itself is not the aim, but rather the effect of the exercise upon the one doing it, the way he was led to accomplish it, and the educational

⁴⁶ “Our Platform,” *Physical Education* 1, No. 1 (March 1892): 1-4; For more on the relationship between Protestant Christianity and sports, read Steven J. Overman’s *The Influence of Protestant Ethic on Sport and Recreation*, (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1997).

⁴⁷ George W. Ehler, “Suggestions for Summer Work,” *Physical Education* 1, No. 4 (June 1892): 70.

value of that kind of work.” He implored exhibitors to explain the importance and value of their performance, not to “spoil it all by making [the audience] believe we are sluggers, clowns, and acrobats.”⁴⁸ Not coincidentally, prize-fighting and circuses were some of the top forms of urban entertainment available to the working class. An unnamed editorialist, most likely Gulick, echoed Seerley’s sentiment. He demanded that if the people want clowns tumbling and making fools of themselves “for the sake of the audience,” then “let them get it from the circus and dime museum.” The YMCA had no use for the antics of commercialized entertainment. *Exhibitions* should “exhibit our aims and the way in which we secure them.” True to his word, the Springfield *Republican* and *Union* newspapers recalled a proper demonstration organized by Gulick on March 13, 1891. Gulick began the event with an “informal talk” that explained the “necessity and aims of physical exercise.”⁴⁹

These gymnastic exhibitions aimed at “securing as many [people] as possible to come and *do the work themselves*; not merely to see others do it.” Whether professional or not, spectator sporting was of little use in developing mentally, physically, and spiritually healthy men and women.⁵⁰ Even keeping track of individual records could raise the scorn of these physical educators. “We deplore the pushing of records,” harped one particular editorial. Seeking out records was symptomatic of a flawed individual, one not interested in all-around development. *Physical Education* promised “to not hold up in prominence those who succeed in doing extraordinary work in any single line.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ F. N. Seerley, “Gymnasium Exhibitions,” *The Triangle* 1, No. 2 (March 1891): 29.

⁴⁹ Seerley, “Gymnasium Exhibitions,” *The Triangle* 1, No. 2 (March 1891): 31.

⁵⁰ Gulick, “The Future of Athletics in the Y.M.C.A.,” *The Triangle* 1, No. 5 (June 1891): 71.

⁵¹ “Our Platform,” *Physical Education* 1, No. 1 (March 1892): 2.

Amateurism devoid of vain record-keeping focused more upon the development of the athlete's body and mind, while professionalism catered to the crowd's potentially debasing demands. Indeed, a pentathlon competition in the fall of 1891 between New York YMCAs attracted much praise from the *Evening Post* for encouraging "the class of men that we wish." It further states, "There were not any of those ghastly looking men who often carry off prizes for races." The prideful love for amateurism continued, "But each man whatever his height, was fully developed and seemed the embodiment of manhood." Players, according to the report, saw no advantage to fouling other men, or felt ill will towards their neighbors, but did "his best regardless of every other man" as "ample justice" prevailed over the competition.⁵² The emphasis on justice and doing your best is purely in the vein of Naismith's conception of sportsmanship. However, not all sporting endeavors could be counted on to produce this hearty respect for others or proper development of the self.

Although lovers of manly athleticism, physical education reformers maintained their middle-class aversion to brutal wanton violence. The great civil disturbances of the 1870s and 1880s generally gave reformers much to fear from mass violence. For physical education reformers, certain sports channeled man's primal urges more effectively and positively than others. In particular, boxing was the most derided of the "brutal" sports. Elliott J. Gorn's masterful work, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America*, addresses the discomfort and antipathy middle-class reformers held for pugilism. The brutality of the sport was cause enough for concern, but organized fisticuffs enticed young men into the ring with copious amounts of money.

⁵² "Pentathlon," *The Triangle* 1, No. 7 (October 1891): 100.

Furthermore, prize-fighting corrupted spectators through its unseemly gambling. It was the worst combination imaginable for the men of YMCA values.

If boxing was easily frowned upon, football proved a harder sport to judge. James Naismith was a lover of the sport, but was also cognizant of its dangers. He is widely accepted as the inventor of the sport's first helmet after he suffered a knockout hit. The debate on football revealed the tension of championing rugged men but trying to restrain violence. Football's uneasy place in the world of physical education could be seen within the folds of *The Triangle*. An article in February 1891 from an undisclosed "outside contributor" led with this self-conscious statement:

I think I see one good brother shake his head ominously as he reads this heading, with the exclamation: "Can it be possible that a Christian training school has given its sanction to so rough a game!" I hear another good brother exclaim: "Good! I am glad that the students are cultivating such a manly exercise, and fitting themselves to become the leaders and companions of young men in it!"

The author pledges to sidestep those burning questions and "write a news item, not an ethical dissertation" on the merits of the game. Indeed, much is written about the historical development of football on the Training School campus and its surprising on-field success. While the bulk of the article simply describes the play of the team that season,⁵³ the author indulges himself in an "ethical dissertation" in defense of football in the final paragraph. Seeking to address "the serious objections to which the extreme roughness of the game has exposed it," he declares football has two exceptional qualities. It is "the brainiest of games" and requires "complete self-rulership" for the highest success.⁵⁴ The contributor ardently defends football players declaring "it was far more important to maintain their reputation as Christian gentlemen," than to win games or engage in a

⁵³ An Outside Contributor, "Foot Ball at the Association Training School, Springfield, Mass.," *The Triangle* 1, No. 1 (February 1891): 6-7.

⁵⁴ "Foot Ball at the Association Training School, Springfield, Mass.," *The Triangle* 1, No. 1 (February 1891): 8.

ghastly exhibition of pugilism on the gridiron. Reading through this article, one gains the sense that football's extreme roughness and *temptation* to engage in physical violence made the sport all the more triumphant for the author. The best footballers not only played with intensity, but gentlemanly refused the lure of punching or intentionally harming their opponents.⁵⁵

In December 1891, the same month Naismith invented basketball, a front page article on football again appeared in *The Triangle*. It boasted of the surprising success of the Training School's scrappy football squad against more physically powerful opponents, particularly Yale and Harvard.⁵⁶ These opponents "averaged at least twenty pounds per man heavier" than the Training School team, which finished the season with five wins, eight losses, and one tie.⁵⁷ The author attributed the YMCA's unexpected good showing to team work and self-control. Every man "had been thoroughly drilled" in their position and knew how to co-operate in nearly all circumstances during a game. The author proudly affirmed that "neither chaffing nor rough treatment could distract their attention or entice them to reciprocate in kind." Although there were several instances that begged retaliation, the Training School football team upheld their character and "gentlemanly conduct" by not giving in to temptation.⁵⁸ These young men supremely upheld the virtues championed by Gulick, Naismith, and advocates of clean sport.

Right after this laudatory football article, however, a debate on the sport raged within *The Triangle's* pages. Although a member of the Training School football team, Naismith served as

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁶ Those Ivy League schools were football powerhouses and by 1901 sold out their amateur game to the tune of \$62,000, far beyond any financial windfall professional football teams could hope for at the time. Fox, *Big Leagues*, 236.

⁵⁷ "Foot Ball," *The Triangle* 1, No. 9 (December 1891): 126.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

one of the three judges of this debate on football. The affirmative side of the debate argued that football produced “all-around development” because it demanded “more physical, more mental, and more moral elements, than any other game.” A corollary argument was that football also solved “the problem of specialization.” Every position in football required “every man, to be able to play well, must be quick, strong, enduring, plucky, self-controlled, and so on.” A rather superficial argument was then proffered that football was an “attractive” sport to draw young men to YMCAs. Having been lured in by football, these young men would then be weaned off “bad habits, liquor, tobacco, impurity, etc.” Finally, football would subordinate these men “to team work, as well as to the captain.” This subordination had a seemingly spiritual power since it was described as “the secret.”⁵⁹

In assailing the sport, football’s detractors offered more tangible arguments. First and foremost was the game’s brutality. In one instance, nine players were removed from the field due to injury in this “modern gladiatorial fight.” Unshaken by the body count, defenders of football asserted that brutality was not inherent to the sport, but was “due simply to the neglect of the umpire in enforcing the rules.” Charges that football was too taxing in terms of time and money went unanswered by the defense. Additionally, football was unfavorable to the community, who “recognize[d] it as an unchristian game.” By a score of forty-four to forty-two, the three judges – Oliver Morse, Dr. R.A. Clark, and Naismith, ruled in favor of the anti-football delegation.⁶⁰ This ruling did not mean that they advocated a ban on football, just that the negative had trumped the affirmative in this particular debate. Nonetheless, the debate revealed the unease that existed with football and its roughness.

⁵⁹ Luther Gulick, “Foot-Ball Debate,” *The Triangle* 1, No. 9 (December 1891): 131-32.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 132-33.

The December 1891 issue of *The Triangle* continued its singular focus on football by praising it in comparison to baseball. Derided for not developing men in an “all around” fashion, baseball placed too much of the work on the pitcher and catcher. Those two star players would in the end be wrecked by over-exhaustion, while their teammates languished from lack of exertion. Such fears replicated the fears reformers had for larger society where the urban workplace could simultaneously threaten disaster by demanding too much or too little work. Most damning, though, was that America’s pastime was “largely a game played by professionals.” In contrast, football required teamwork, good physique, and was “not the kind of game for professional sports” since “it demands too much manhood.”⁶¹ That observer from 1891 would surely be astonished that football has become the largest and most watched professional sport in the United States some 120 years later.

The morally ambiguous physicality of football reared itself in other sports as well. As an article on wrestling warned, “Wrestling does offer opportunities for ungentlemanly and unsportsmanlike work, but so do all other competitive athletics. It is to the lover of sport, the true amateur, our little work is offered.”⁶² Physically, wrestling could pose danger, but only to men who had violent intent to begin with. For the true and pure man, the sport could be beneficial. In a show of support for decent wrestling, issues of *Physical Education* in April, May, and June 1893 offered pictorial demonstrations of wrestling moves for the true amateur. This qualified support for wrestling was countered by criticism in August 1893. An article entitled “Combative Exercises” feared for the young men and women of the 1890s who were “nervous, anxious, and careworn” from the rigors of modern life. Physical exercises would help relieve the stress, but that

⁶¹ “Base Ball versus Foot Ball,” *The Triangle* 1, No. 9 (December 1891): 138.

⁶² E. Hitchcock, Jr., and R.F. Nelligan, “Wrestling. Catch-As-Catch-Can Style,” *Physical Education* 2, No. 1 (March 1893): 7.

did not mean that *any* exercise met approval. Wrestling, sparring, and fencing did not suitably defray the nerves of young people. “In wrestling an uncertain element of strain arises from the spirit of *contest*,” that same spirit which made professionalism so despised. Instead of focusing on development and sportsmanship, victory was hailed above all else. The author continued, “It is also evident that these games may readily approach to brutal lines; and in proportion as this feature is developed the repulsiveness of the exhibition appears to refined natures.” Furthermore, boxing was denounced as “one of the most disgusting abominations of the day, and the participators in these contests, should be denied all countenance and association, professional or otherwise, of Physical Educators, anxious for their own reputation.”⁶³ Making the mere acquaintance of a brutal pugilist was worthy of tarnishing the reputation of refined gentlemen.

As championed by these reformers, creating perfect individuals was not just a matter of personal purity. It was integral to maintaining the larger health of the race through establishing strong individuals. *Muscular Christianity* by Clifford Putney helps give a framework to further understand the confluence of individual physical health, the nation-state’s health, and imperialism. A particularly interesting observation by Putney is that the experience of the Civil War had democratized manliness. So many men had demonstrated their manliness in combat, that it need not be proven again. However, as a new generation of men came of age, the Civil War experience no longer applied. Due to urbanization, traditional ways of proving manhood became few and far between. The obsession with manliness through sports helped fill in this vacuum of masculinity.⁶⁴

⁶³ Thomas Elkinton, “Wrestling and Sparring, Objectionable Features,” *Physical Education* 2, No. 6 (August 1893): 95-96.

⁶⁴ Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 23; also see S.W. Pope’s *Patriotic Games: Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007).

However, this manliness needed proper control. As seen, that involved disdain for unrefined professionalism and savage violence. Progressives believed these traits germinated from and enforced unrefined character. Acquiring true respectability required accepting their civilizing bridle. For in the eyes of reformers proper civilization meant behavior conforming to white supremacy. One such reformer, Charlotte Perkins Gillman, suggested that the small portion of “civilized” African-Americans could possess full citizenship in the United States. The vast majority, however, were indigent and descending into criminality. These public charges were best utilized by society, i.e. white Americans, as a valuable source of conscripted labor. Gillman’s proposal, either through civilizing citizenship or impressed labor, would establish firm control of the supposedly savage African-American.⁶⁵ Reformer ideas of physical education and sportsmanship are, on a basic level, ideological kindred of this proposal. Where one uses hard labor, the other demands exercise. Where one councils citizenship, the other sportsmanship. Both desire to control humanity’s inner-self toward a refined, civilized principle.

The progressive drive of men like Teddy Roosevelt applied these basic principle overseas, as well. From 1890 to 1920, the United States annexed Hawai’i, Samoa, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico, and made interventions in Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, and Haiti. These nations were deemed savage or semi-civilized, thus justifying intervention and/or annexation. Exemplified by the guerilla warfare in the Philippines, however, the so-called civilized white Americans often degenerated into behavior expected of the savage other.⁶⁶ American soldiers indiscriminately torturing Filipinos seemed to confirm the physical education reformers’ anxieties of associating

⁶⁵ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 120 – 124.

⁶⁶ Gregg Jones, *Honor in the Dust: Theodore Roosevelt, War in the Philippines, and the Rise and Fall of America’s Imperial Dream*, (New York: New American Library, 2012).

with undesirables. The higher race, or clean amateur, risked the danger of tainted behavior once contact with the savage, or the professional, began.

Alongside fraught tensions of masculine violence was a concern over unbridled sexuality. A lust for sex was just as disreputable as a lust for violence and revealed a person unable to control their body. Gulick firmly advocated sex education for young boys to prevent masturbation and pornography usage, which he believed caused abnormal mental behavior.⁶⁷ Naismith in the 1910s would spend time in the National Guard working to dissuade servicemen from visiting prostitutes and lectured on preventing the spread of venereal diseases.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, these advocates for proper sex hygiene, which was thoroughly monogamous and heterosexual, often provided a space and network for homosexuality. The combination of sex education, physical education, and concealed physical facilities provided the necessary environment to foster same-sex sexual activity. The YMCA eventually arrived at an uneasy tolerance of homosexuality within its confines, so long as the behavior was not flagrant or public. Nonetheless, homosexual scandals periodically occurred such as the one that erupted at a Portland, Oregon, YMCA in 1912 involving fifty members of the Association. The majority of those involved “were from the YMCA’s traditional constituency – white middle-class Protestant businessmen and religious leaders.”⁶⁹ Although *The Triangle* and *Physical Education* never explicitly broached the topic of homosexuality, the journals did discuss sex hygiene to a predominantly male audience. Simultaneously, they encouraged membership at YMCAs, which provided the physical space

⁶⁷ Luther Gulick, *The Dynamic of Manhood*, (New York: Association Press, 1917), 103-08, <https://archive.org/details/dynamicofmanhood00guli>.

⁶⁸ Rains, *The Man Who Invented Basketball*, 100-04.

⁶⁹ Gustav-Wrathall, John Donald, *Take the Young Stranger by the Hand*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 158-62.

necessary for carrying out homosexual activity. Finally, the advocates for clean sport demanded all men aspire for a physical ideal. Leaving nothing to the imagination, photographs of barely-clothed, well-muscled men were provided.

WRESTLING.

44



41. Full Nelson from Behind, on the Floor.—Get a Half Nelson, force his head down and get a Half Nelson with the other arm.

NOTE.—This Hold, with the Strangles, is barred in amateur contests.

42. Double for Full Nelson.—Pin his arms to you sides and roll over sideways.



43. Arm Up the Back With Brake on, on the Floor.—See No. 6.

FIGURE 1 – Wrestling Demonstrations from Physical Education, May 1893

So sexually suggestive were the YMCA's periodicals, the publisher of *Physical Culture* in 1907 used them as a defense against his own obscenity charges. His defense noted the YMCA used similar nude and semi-nude poses in their magazines that he did.⁷⁰ Indeed, modern gay

⁷⁰ Gustav-Wrathall, *Take the Young Stranger by the Hand*, 151.

pornography evolved from magazines that displayed muscular men like those shown in *Physical Education*.

At the most basic sense, heterosexuality was needed to prevent the feared “race suicide.” And since it distorted proper sexual relations, homosexuality was not seen as a proper building block toward respectable civilization. However, distortions to individual Triangles and therefore the entire race, could happen in other ways. Luther Gulick, studying the downfall of previous races, proclaimed that “the greatest nations have been and are those which come the nearest to cultivating all three of man’s natures.” Those civilizations that have come closest to completing the perfect Triangle concept were built upon solid individuals who perfected the concept. In terms of intellect and physical prowess, the ancient Greeks were the most developed. However, the Greeks neglected “the higher parts of man’s nature,” presumably the spirit, and thus their intellectual and physical superiority was stripped away. Gulick then self-servingly declares the Anglo-Saxon race “pre-eminently the intellectual race of to-day.” Unlike the Greeks, though, the Anglo-Saxons did not forget that their Triangle was to be equilateral. The Anglo-Saxon race was also “superior physically whether in the matters of strength, skill, or endurance,” while also being “the chief race spiritually.”⁷¹ The dangerous ideological ground Gulick stood on could be pivoted toward “good” reforming work that could elevate lower races from their savagery. His recognition that races could rise or fall suggests an understanding that such matters are not pre-ordained. However, a reverse pivot is easily made suggesting that since certain races were in a privileged position to lift up the lesser peoples of the world. Indeed, Gulick invokes a certain deterministic approach to the

⁷¹ Luther Gulick, “Unity and Symmetry,” *The Triangle* 1, No. 3 (April 1891): 40.

races. He surmised, “The mental ability of any race may be judged quite accurately from the average weight of brain.”⁷²

“Physical Training among the Japanese” by Sidney Gulick, Luther’s brother and a missionary in Japan, underscores this paternalistic conception of race. Although Sidney Gulick confesses that within the United States there is uneven development of bodies and that the interest in athletic contests were “still limited to a very small portion of the community.” However, the Japanese presented a remarkably more destitute situation than Americans. Sidney Gulick laments the collapse of the samurai culture, which helped maintain strong men in Japanese society. Instead “habits of indolent inactivity” had overcome Japanese society thereby making it weak and whimpering. The Japanese could not be bothered to partake in “anything that can be dignified with the name of exercise.”⁷³

The screed further accuses Japanese society of burdening their children too soon with the responsibilities of adults. The weak and infirm adults rely “entirely on their children for support.” “This is one of the greatest obstacles that great masses of young men have to face,” and thus prematurely dogs them with physical weakness and dooms Japanese society to repeat the process. Any successful young Japanese man is still overrun with “a hoard of dependent relatives.” Ultimately, Sidney Gulick assigned “the root of it all” to “low vitality of the race, which may in large measure be traced to their centuries of squatting inactivity.” This remarkable statement is then buttressed with the declaration that the Japanese need the “Gospel of Peace” and the “Gospel of Activity” to encourage physical development.⁷⁴ Despite that scathing report, a clipping from

⁷² Ibid., 41.

⁷³ Sidney Gulick, “Physical Training among the Japanese,” *The Triangle* 1, No. 2 (March 1891): 21-22.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 23.

Good Health appeared in *Physical Education*'s June 1893 edition. The clipping addressed physical development in Hawai'i and seemed to show that supposed lesser races had something to laud: "The children are brought up to be healthy first, and there is not a boy or girl in any family that cannot ride and swim perfectly before the age of eight years." It should be noted, though, that Hawai'i had been a hub of Protestant missionary work for decades by Westerners like the Gulick family. Nonetheless, Hawaiians were praised for the healthy way children were raised and showed an example of formerly "indolent" races climbing the ladder of civilization.⁷⁵

Ever related, race and sexuality again converged in this era forming the "white slave" scare. Middle-class whites were terrified that the purity of white women was sullied through socializing with European, Chinese, and Southern black migrants via sex and prostitution. Men like Clifford Roe aggressively prosecuted foreign-born persons involved in the trade of white prostitutes. These prosecutions protected the notion that white femininity and masculinity were distinctly superior to those of foreigners and blacks. Although "native-born whites risked losing whiteness through immorality" and acts like lewd sex, historian Brian Donovan concludes that native-born whites were convinced they possessed the proper values and inner resolve required to stave off racial impurity.⁷⁶ These convictions and notions of white womanhood are further discussed in Chapter VI, as basketball and sports became increasingly popular amongst women.

Cobbling together these ideas pertaining to race, class, and gender, F. N. Seerley concluded the "basis for *Personal Purity*" and perpetual racial strength came from proper physical education. The mass of young men in the United States were "fearfully ignorant" on matters pertaining to

⁷⁵ "Physique of Hawaiian Ladies," *Physical Education* 2, No. 4 (June 1893): 67.

⁷⁶ Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887 – 1917*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 87.

anatomy, physiology, and hygiene. Teaching these subjects, with athletics as a gateway, were imperative to establishing personal purity. Successful purity would then mean “better young men, better husbands, happier homes, a healthier race,” and, Seerley determines, “with such possibilities nothing ought to keep us from doing our part.”⁷⁷ But how were physical educators to know whether their coursework and methods were effective? As Luther Gulick eluded to above with brain weight, calculating and classifying humanity scientifically provided a sound way toward measuring success.

“Physical Examinations,” an article contributed by E. Hitchcock, Jr., forcefully underscores the importance of observing and grading humanity. “The universal aim is the improvement of the individual and through him the race,” Hitchcock began, “but the absence of an ideal man, provided by Nature, has led each of us into much day-dreaming as to what she intends man to be.” Without a proper example given by nature, man would have to turn to scientific measurement to create perfection. “The Examination room at the Gymnasium is teaching us a great deal as to certain physical factors, especially the rate of growth and development,” and from these examinations the ideal of perfection could be ascertained. And this was by no means the only discussion on the matter of measurements.

In November 1893, Luther Gulick declared that physical measurements created three meaningful contributions. Firstly, it showed relationships “between different parts of the same individual,” “between different individuals,” “between individuals and types,” and “between types.” Second it would create “some rational guide if possible, as a standard of excellence of form.” Third, “to interest people in physical education by giving them knowledge along the line

⁷⁷ F. N. Seerley, “Physical Work in Associations without Gymnasiums,” *The Triangle* 1, No. 6 (September 1891): 82-83.

of bodily proportions, and how they may be studied.” This anthropometry would help distinguish between type and ideal. The type being a certain class of person, and the ideal being the characteristics the type ought to achieve.⁷⁸ Maintaining the American race – that is middle-class, white Anglo-Saxons – was supremely important for the physical educators. Their belief in racial eugenics is manifested through the practice of scientific measuring and classifying humanity’s individuals into various classes and types.

How were men like Gulick and Hitchcock to shepherd individuals toward the goal of physical, mental, and spiritual perfection? Groups tainted with immorality, indolence, and roughness surrounded the besieged middle class threatening to infect them with these undesirable savage traits. With regards to athletics, violent and professional sports were not proper for the new mode of masculinity offered by the middle-class reformers. Football may have been more appealing than baseball, and wrestling more appealing than boxing, but each sport suffered from some drawback. These flaws ranged from too much violence to inactivity to corrupting professionalism. For the new conception of man, a new sport was needed. To cultivate the right type of man, this new sport needed proper principles infused from the outset and its purpose clear. The all-around development of football was desired, but with unequivocal gentlemanly play and clean behavior a result. In December 1891, that new sport was created.

⁷⁸ Luther Gulick, “Physical Measurements and How they are Studied,” *Physical Education* 2, No. 9 (November 1893): 140 – 142.

CHAPTER V

BASKETBALL

Popular telling of basketball's creation rarely, if ever, invokes the complex ideology of the Triangle, muscular Christianity, and clean sport. And it certainly does not involve discussions of racial eugenics, savage guerrilla war, and proposals to impress African-Americans. However, these ideas and events were essential for the game's development. Without middle-class anxieties and reactions to urbanization and morality in the United States, James Naismith never would have gone searching for peach baskets at a YMCA. These circumstances of racial prejudice and gender constructions created the ideological bedrock that the new physical education was built upon. However, beside these ideological foundations was a very practical concern for a bureaucratic institution such as the YMCA: acquiring dues-paying members. For all the discussion of curing society, these men also needed to pay bills and maintain relevance.

Luther Gulick believed athletics was the answer to both problems. Sports could clean up society and also attract more members to the Y. Procuring as many members through sport demanded year-round athletic activities. These programs would create the necessary space for "the average man" to accomplish athletic success at YMCAs, which would create the broadest base possible for membership. Too much attention, Gulick asserted, had been given to star athletes. Gymnastics, in his opinion, had already reduced the focus on starlets. If athletics were to do the same, the YMCA "shall then have large memberships," but not a moment before. Given the YMCA's dependence on memberships to remain financially viable, this was indeed an important imperative.⁷⁹ Helping that membership goal, the YMCA needed a sport playable during the dull

⁷⁹ Luther Gulick, "The Future of Athletics in the Y.M.C.A.," *The Triangle* 1, No. 4 (June 1891): 69 – 71.

winter months when popular outdoor sports were impossible to play. The goal of expanded membership is neither explicitly supportive nor destructive of the Triangle concept. The possibility of friction, though, existed between these two goals and would become evident over time.

The unwieldy balance of the Triangle and popularity lay in the future. For now, the Training School tackled its winter sport problem. The very first article in *The Triangle*'s first issue clarifies this grave practical problem. Written by Amos Alonzo Stagg, "Winter Training for Base Ball" declared that "the game of base ball secured such a grasp on the American people that it bids fair to become a popular indoor winter game." Stagg acknowledged, however, that winter baseball "can never attain the popularity of the summer game" since the winter version would be indoors and require "the playing of the game in miniature." Indeed, Stagg's article runs down a laundry list of innovations and techniques to *practice* baseball in the winter. However, *playing* the game was impossible in winter months.⁸⁰ As winter approached for 1891, Gulick was desperate to have a game *playable* in winter that would excite and thrill YMCA members and students.

At a meeting with Naismith, Stagg, Seerley, and other members of the Training School, Gulick philosophically stated, "there is nothing new under the sun. All so-called new things are simply recombinations of the factors of things that are now in existence." Naismith remarked, "Doctor, if that is so, we can invent a new game that will meet our needs. All that we have to do is to take the factors of our known games and recombine them, and we will have the game we are looking for." Gulick summarily told those assembled to bring plans for a new game during their next meeting. As the winter of 1891 closed in, the problem grew stronger still and it was exacerbated by the Training School's bisection. One group of students at the school trained to be

⁸⁰ Amos Alonzo Stagg, "Winter Training for Base Ball," *The Triangle* 1, No. 1 (February 1891): 1-2.

physical directors while the others trained to be secretaries, but all had to fulfill physical education requirements. In Naismith's recollections, the physical directors were easy to handle in winter because they were always interested in exercise. The secretaries, however, proved more recalcitrant. These are the young men who proved extremely unreceptive to the teachings of A. T. Halsted, "an expert in marching and calisthenics," and Dr. R. A. Clark, a master of gymnastics.⁸¹

During the next meeting with Gulick, Clark declared the group of incorrigible secretaries hopeless. Naismith lobbed his protest that the problem was not the group, but the activities given to them. All of the indoor activities were boring and failed to ignite the "play instinct" within the young men. After solemnly reflecting for a moment, Gulick made Naismith the third instructor for the unmanageable class. Naismith may have believed better games were needed, but he did not want the assignment of creating one. After a brief protest by Naismith, Gulick ended the conversation by encouraging Naismith to "work on that new game that you said could be invented."⁸² Instead of inventing, the overwhelmed Naismith initially borrowed. He tried "battle-ball," "ante-over," and a modified form of cricket with drastic failure. Next he attempted modified forms of football, soccer, and lacrosse. Again, the sports were met with disastrous reception. He concluded that attempting to modify a known game would provoke antagonism from those who were familiar with the original form. There could be no shortcuts. An entirely new game, not a modification, was needed.⁸³

After much thought, Naismith concluded that small ball sports, such as baseball or lacrosse, were impractical. Since they required extra equipment they could never work in a crowded indoor

⁸¹ Naismith, *Basketball*, 32-35.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 36-37.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 42-44.

gym. Therefore a sport focused on a large ball was needed and this ball should be round, not egg-shaped. The oval disposition of a football or rugby ball encouraged running with the ball and that was a serious problem. “If he can’t run with the ball,” Naismith thought to himself, “we don’t have to tackle and the roughness will be eliminated.”

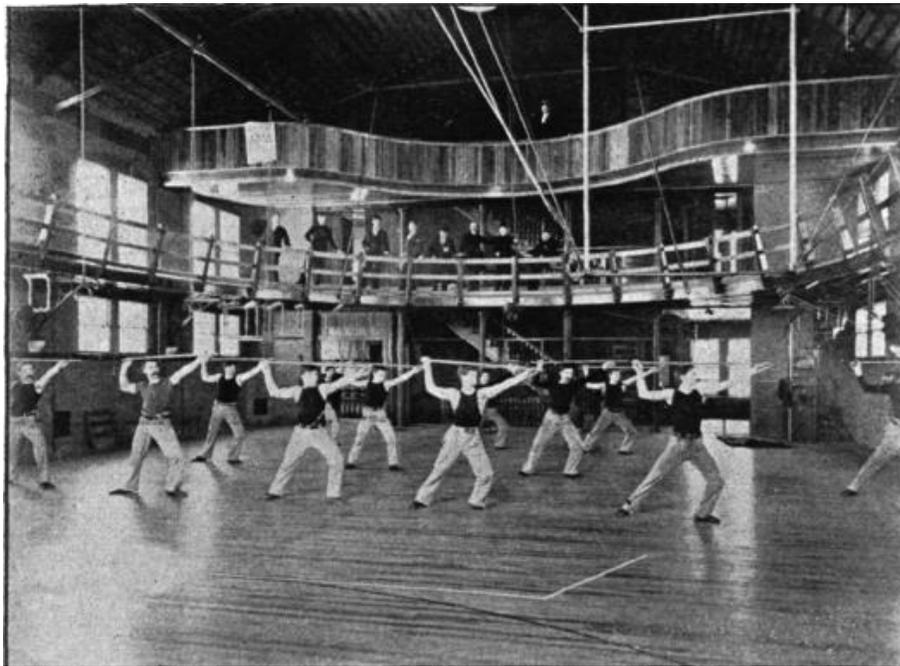


FIGURE 2 – The Training School Gymnasium in 1895. This was the Setting for the First Basketball Game in 1891.

Concluding that the player cannot run with the large circular ball, the rest of the game began to fall in line. For if a man could not run with the ball, how could he advance it? Only through passing. Remembering a ghastly injury he witnessed in soccer when a man tried heading the ball while another tried to kick it, Naismith determined that only the hands may be used to pass or advance the ball in his new game. Unnecessary roughness – a term often used by physical

educators for violence and bad behavior in sport – was excised from the beginning of this new game, so Naismith hoped.⁸⁴

Realizing his game was still an interesting form of “keep away,” Naismith now moved to creating an objective: scoring points. Recollecting that most athletic games had goals, Naismith hesitated to incorporate a soccer- or football-style goal that would stir up antagonism for ruining a current sport. Furthermore, a goal like that in lacrosse would not suffice because it encouraged participants to throw the ball as hard as possible, that is to say, encourage roughness instead of refined skill. Naismith then remembered an experience he had as a child in Ontario. He and his friends would play a game called “Duck on the Rock.” In that game, a player would attempt to throw a rock from a set point to knock off another rock sitting on top of a washtub. Naismith now reasoned that the harder and rougher a player threw his rock, the less chance of success. To loft the rock and use accuracy was the better play. This remembrance encouraged Naismith to use a horizontal goal that required accuracy – refinement – not sheer force for effectiveness. This recollection further removed roughness and imposed self-control. The last piece to this puzzle was placing the goal above the defenders to prevent them from physically impeding all access to the goal. This decision also removed a substantial source of violent play.⁸⁵

Conjuring up other ancillary rules, Naismith hurried to find a goal to use for his next class. Running into the Training School’s superintendent of buildings, Naismith asked for a box to use. There was no box available, “but I’ll tell you what I do have,” the man told Naismith, “I have two old peach baskets down in the store room, if they will do you any good.” Receiving the peach baskets, Naismith then hurried to the Miss Lyons’s office, the school’s stenographer, to have his

⁸⁴ Ibid., 45-47.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 48-50.

thirteen rules typed up. Arriving to his class, Naismith hastily posted the rules. As students began filing in, incorrigible ringleader Frank Mahan haughtily scoffed, “Huh! Another new game!” Despite those previous failures and the skepticism, this new game of basketball was a success.⁸⁶

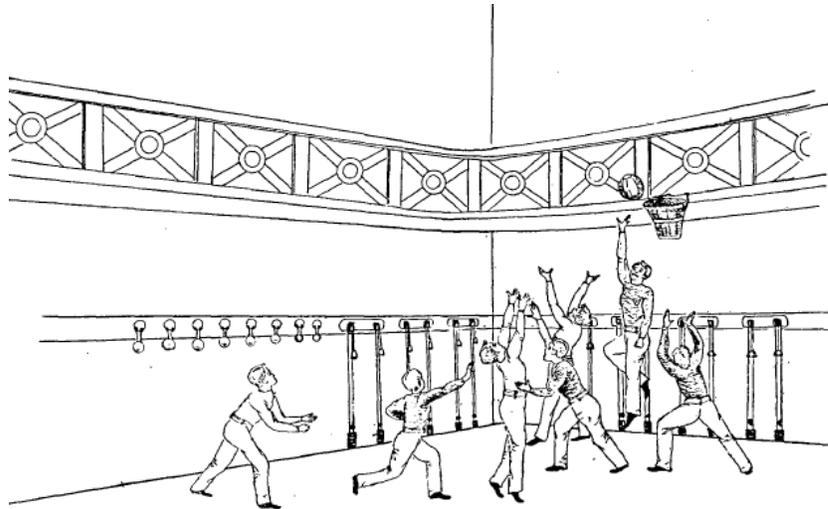
The converted incorrigibles soon became missionaries of the game, spreading it to their home YMCAs during their Christmas vacation in 1891. Soon after sessions resumed in January 1892 at the Training School, teachers from the nearby Buckingham Grade School took a keen interest in basketball. After observing some contests, these teachers asked Naismith, “Why girls could not play the game.” The thoughtful inventor “saw no reason why they should not.” Naismith refereed their first game and remained an ardent supporter of women’s basketball all his life. These same women would soon organize the first girls’ basketball team back at their grade school. Thanks to the zeal of the first team of men, the infrastructure provided by the YMCA, and the interest of those grade school teachers, basketball rapidly spread geographically and quickly crossed the gender line.⁸⁷

The Triangle in January 1892 announced basketball’s formation to its readership. Naismith’s thirteen rules were published along with hearty recommendations of the game’s benefits. Basketball was a game “which seems to have those elements in it which ought to make it popular among Associations.” “Any number of men may play it, and each one get plenty of exercise.” However, this fun game still helped create the Triangular man. Basketball called for “physical judgment and co-ordination of every muscle, and gives all-around development.” The

⁸⁶ Ibid., 52-57.

⁸⁷Naismith, *Basketball*, 58-60; James Naismith, “How Basketball Started and Why It Grew So Fast,” James Naismith Papers, Springfield College, 13-14.

game could be played outdoors in the summer and, most importantly, indoors in the winter so long as a box or basket was mounted as a goal.⁸⁸



BASKET BALL.

FIGURE 3 - Basket Ball Illustration from The Triangle, January 1892.

The institutional network of the YMCA worked with magnificent speed spreading the message of this new game. By 1893, *Physical Education* was laden with regular updates on basketball from across the country. From Rochester, New York, in January 1893: “Never has... a game to our knowledge, taken such firm hold upon our members.” The Rochester report also noted that three teams had been formed at their YMCA, one each for the “night class,” the “students,” and the “business men.”⁸⁹ “The new game of Basket Ball which was introduced last month,” trumpeted *The Advance* from Pawtucket, Rhode Island, “has become a regular craze among the more active gymnasts.” That same month, February 1893, a YMCA in Albany, New

⁸⁸ James Naismith, “Basket Ball,” *The Triangle* 1, No. 10 (January 1892): 143-45.

⁸⁹ “Clippings,” *Physical Education* 1, No. 11 (January 1893): 213.

York, reported that its squad was “in need of more scientific playing, for when the West Troy team comes down they always prove too much for us.” The teamwork of West Troy flummoxed Albany by a final score of six to two. Nonetheless, “whenever a game is announced it always brings a crowd, both of spectators and participants.” *The Month* from Springfield, Ohio, also chimed in with great results. “Basket Ball is one the best indoor games extant,” while also being notable for “combin[ing] all the exercise of foot ball, with roughness eliminated and requires quick mental effort.”⁹⁰ Gulick and Naismith must have beamed with glee at these initial reports at all-around physical development without the violence of football. Basketball also appeared on the road to accomplishing the goal of increased excitement and participation at YMCAs.

“The Basket Ball fever has broken out again,” playfully warned *Association Notes* from Providence, Rhode Island, “with greater severity and is very contagious, the atmosphere being full of the germ of excitement.” That Providence YMCA competed against squads from Pawtucket and Attleboro. Interestingly, the clipping also includes an early box score from the match with Attleboro. Each team fielded eight players on the court at a time. In these early years of basketball the number of players was not yet standardized, while modern basketball allows for just five players for each team on the court. The positions for the 1893 Providence team are also unusual for the modern reader: right and left guards, center, left and right centers, home, and left and right wings. Today, the five positions are point and shooting guards, small and power forwards, and center. Seven fouls were committed in the Providence – Attleboro game and the final score was seventeen to three in favor of Providence.⁹¹ Two months later came yet another filing, this one from Ohio. “Basket Ball has come to stay,” affirmed the *Cincinnati Monthly Bulletin*. “The boys

⁹⁰ “Clippings,” *Physical Education* 2, No. 1 (February 1893): 232.

⁹¹ “Clippings,” *Physical Education* 2, No. 1 (March 1893): 15.

are becoming very enthusiastic and proficient in their play.”⁹² The basketball fever was indeed spreading rapidly, so how could physical education reformers best harness this energy and make it an enduring part of their mission? That debate began in earnest and began to reveal the tension in the sport and in the new physical education overall.

Robert Reach hailed basketball as the long-desired winter sport to keep people physically active and entertained. Recognizing that the game “is played pretty generally at present in the Y.M.C.A.’s gymnasiums throughout the country, also at a few of the Armories,” Reach knew the sport could become a lasting craze. The trick to establishing that permanency would be to encourage the formation of leagues and championships. He suggested three such leagues for teams in YMCA, college, and “Athletic Club” competitions. At the end of the season, Reach encouraged the champs of each individual league to play one another “for the Supreme Championship.” “To make a game popular and interesting,” Reach concluded, “it is absolutely necessary to create a spirit of rivalry.” “How many of the thousands that attend base ball or foot ball games,” asked the author, “would do so if the game was advertised as a practice or exhibition game beforehand?” He even suggested organizing leagues for women and girls: “Another good feature about the game of basket ball is that ladies and girls can play it. Why not have them organize clubs also, and contest for prizes?”⁹³

Reach’s article from 1893, just over a year after basketball’s invention, already alludes to the difficulties of fostering clean sport and creating the Triangle man in society-at-large. Basketball was clearly proving popular, but a larger audience beyond the YMCA faithful was desired. Making basketball as popular as baseball or football would require creating rivalry and entertainment

⁹² “Clippings,” *Physical Education* 2, No. 3 (May 1893): 48.

⁹³ Robert Reach, “Basket Ball as an In-Door Game for Winter Amusement and Exercise,” *Physical Education* 2, No. 2 (April 1893): 21-22.

amenable to spectators. Would such concessions to spectators draw the game from its anti-professional origins and propel it toward the immorality many reformers despised in baseball or, worse yet, boxing? Like the Filipino war or the urban slum's white slaves, would contact with immoral contagions scar and ruin the middle-class game of basketball? Before fully addressing those questions, the development of basketball with regards to women demands observation. The progress in that field helps underscore the successes, failures, and anxieties of basketball's proponents in physical education.

CHAPTER VI

THE WOMEN'S GAME

James Naismith happily encouraged women to take up his new game and participated as a referee in the first women's contest. Generally, physical education reformers believed basketball, with some modification accounting for perceived gender differences, was an excellent form of exercise for women. An understanding of these perceptions necessitates an overview of physical education relating to women during the early 1890s. In many ways, reformers regarded women – even of the middle class – as inherently infantile and dependent like “immoral” persons and ethnic minorities. However, their dependence had a different twist.

While theorizing on humanity's primitive state, Luther Gulick theorized that man was naturally a hunter and a fighter. Although it needed control and rules, it was ultimately deemed reasonable and healthy for men to engage in competitive sport due to their natural fighting desire. Meanwhile women were nurturers. Given that nurturing role, competitive sport for women was viewed as extremely suspicious.⁹⁴ Instead, any exercise for women should relieve them of crippling idleness while also preserving their reproductive systems' effectiveness. Obviously, “idleness” was not something working class women experienced, but physical education reformers were not primarily concerned with preserving their womanhood. These reformers believed that too much exercise, however, would cause irreparable harm to middle-class women's reproductive systems, a surefire way toward race suicide.⁹⁵ Therefore, women's participation in sports would only be tolerated if it nurtured the well-being of the whole race and did not result in over-

⁹⁴ Allen Guttman, *Women's Sports: A History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 90-95.

⁹⁵ Paul Atkinson, “The Feminist Physique: Physical Education and the Medicalization of Women's Education,” in *From 'Fair Sex' to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras*, ed. J. A. Managan and Roberta J. Pack, (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1987), 44-45.

exhaustion. The combined racial, sexual, and class fears surrounding women easily and quickly influenced opinions of women in athletics. Indeed, when a daring baseball promoter attempted to form a women's baseball league in the 1880s, a flurry of accusations destroyed the endeavor. Like all pro teams, the women would be expected to travel a region, if not the whole country, and that stirred up fears of "white slavery." These women would sign up for baseball and be forced into prostitution at every stop.⁹⁶

The July 1892 edition of *Physical Education* was significantly devoted to considering the physical education of women. The topic was of extreme importance since "it is ordained that women are to be the mothers of the race," meaning that, "their condition, habits, strength, endurance, and so on, is one of the greatest if not the greatest factor in determining the character of the child at birth, determining very largely what inherited possibilities it has in the lines of physical, mental, and spiritual development."⁹⁷ Secondly, women "as a class are at present inferior, physically, to men." In a number of ways including strength, endurance, and skill, women were simply lacking in comparison to males and this led to a delicate nature. This fragility left women "less fitted for every day life" and more prone to disease than men. Thirdly, beauty would be developed by female physical education. This beauty certainly included the cosmetic, but also meant perfection of form, grace, and function of the body. Beautiful women were essential since it "means so much for the future of the race."⁹⁸ Physically improving women provided powerful antidote to racial suicide.

⁹⁶ Guttman, *Women's Sports*, 103.

⁹⁷ "Physical Education for Women," *Physical Education* 1, No. 5 (July 1892): 75.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

Considering what type of exercises conformed to proper womanhood, the physical educators largely held true to their Triangle concept. They wanted women to achieve proper physical, spiritual, and mental equality. Even though this achievement came differently for women than for men, it still involved a meaningful place for athletics. Aesthetic grace was certainly valued, but “strong, robust womanhood is of more importance than grace, muscular control, courage, or even the finer elements of expression, because it is fundamental to them.” Physical educators valued meaningful physical substance, as they defined it, over pure style.⁹⁹

A second editorial entitled “Physical Education In Its Relation to the Mental and Spiritual Life Of Woman” addressed how physical education was necessary to create strong all-around women of the Triangle. The editorial begins with a remarkable salvo: “Among my acquaintances I do not know of half a dozen women who are perfectly well.” The author continued, “We constantly hear the excuse by women... that they are not strong enough, or that their physician has positively forbidden any outside work.” Unmoved by such exhortations, the author concluded “Women are usually indifferent to the advantages around them in the line of athletic exercises.” During summer vacations, women lamentably had “books under their arms” instead of taking time to swim, row, or walk daily.¹⁰⁰ The denunciations from the author continue. The corset was assailed for “producing and perpetuating weak backs and waists” amongst women who wore them. Thereafter, a potentially bountiful observation (“Women have less opportunity for exercise and need it more than do men.”) passes without a critical look at why that peculiar social situation has arisen.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ “Physical Education for Women,” *Physical Education* 1, No. 5 (July 1892): 76.

¹⁰⁰ “Physical Education in its Relation to the Mental and Spiritual Life of Woman,” *Physical Education* 1, No. 5 (July 1892): 79-80

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

Finally, an article imploring women to take up bicycling unconsciously aligns itself into a thoroughly affluent middle-class worldview. “The American college girl” would be the biggest beneficiary of cycling since she had a well, if not overly, developed nervous system but a deficient body. Since bicycling demanded “a large amount of muscular strength” but also had very simplistic maneuvers, it was perfect for such a woman. Otherwise, endeavors that required more detail would overwork the girl’s mind and make her forget the importance of simply exercising. Through bicycling the mind was given rest and the body exerted.¹⁰² No observations are offered for women of the lower classes who worked in factories or as sharecroppers. Those women’s voices are never heard in the pages of *Physical Education*, but a prominent female physical educator joined the discussion on physical education for women.

Like her male counterparts, Senda Berenson warned of the delicate balance that needed to be struck in athletic endeavors for women. Proper womanhood could be preserved and enhanced with sports done properly, or it could be ruined. Berenson had seen sports develop for men in malformed ways and was wary that the same might happen as women increasingly took up sports:

But just as basket ball may be made an influence for good so may it be made a strong influence for evil. The gravest objection to the game is the rough element it contains. Since athletics for women are still in their infancy, it is well to bring up the large and significant question: shall women blindly imitate the athletics of men without reference to their different organizations and purpose in life; or shall their athletics be such as shall develop those physical and moral elements that are particularly necessary for them?¹⁰³

Berenson, then-physical director of Smith College and generally acknowledged as the mother of women’s basketball, wrote the appropriately titled “Basket Ball for Women” for the September 1894 edition of *Physical Education*. Carrying a hint of indignation, Berenson tersely

¹⁰² “Bicycling for Women,” *Physical Education* 1, No. 5 (July 1892): 84-85.

¹⁰³ Senda Berenson, “The Significance of Basket Ball for Women,” in *Basket Ball for Women*, ed. Senda Berenson (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1905), 35.

opens her column: “The value of athletic sports for men is not questioned. It is a different story matter, however, for women.” The ideal woman, lamented Berenson, “until very recent years... was a small waisted, small footed, small brained damsel, who prided herself on her delicate health, who thought fainting interesting, and hysterics fascinating.” Sanity, in Berenson’s opinion, had finally prevailed in recent years creating a better image of womanhood that included developing the body physically and scientifically. Basketball, in her opinion, “has helped to develop the athletic spirit in women more than any other [game].” It had produced the “best results” and provoked “the greatest enthusiasm.”¹⁰⁴

Designed with the dangers of an indoor gymnasium in mind, basketball had wisely eschewed much unnecessary roughness. This made the sport particularly useful for nurturing women in the eyes of physical educators. Nonetheless, Naismith had designed the game for competitive men. Berenson concluded that some modifications to the original rules were needed if the game would ever be perfectly suitable for women. Berenson was not alone in this conclusion. By June of 1899, a committee composed of Berenson and other leading physical educators met at the Conference of Physical Training in Springfield aiming to regulate and standardize the rules of the women’s game. Berenson would later note that the patchwork of non-conforming women’s rules had “brought about a great cause for dissatisfaction; namely, that scarcely two institutions of education for women play with precisely the same rules.” Having the same rules was imperative to creating a class of women physically fit and comparable to one another. The equilateral perfection of the Triangle could not be achieved without standardized rules and guidelines. The

¹⁰⁴ Senda Berenson, “Basket Ball for Women,” *Physical Education* 3, No. 7 (September 1894): 106.

committee issued four points that began the bureaucratic process of harmonizing the regulation of the women's game:

- First – that the Conference give its approval to the publication of a set of rules for Basket Ball for Women, based on the official [i.e. men's Y.M.C.A.] rules, but with such modifications as seem desirable.
- Second – That these rules be offered for publication with the Spalding Official Rules, or by the Spalding Athletic Library, together with some articles discussing the use of the game by women.
- Third – That the leading institutions wherein the game is played by women be consulted, asking suggestions as to modifications thought necessary.
- Fourth – That this guide be edited by Miss Senda Berenson of Smith College.¹⁰⁵

Three subsequent rules changes proved instrumental in conforming basketball to the specific, perceived athletic needs of women. Firstly, a defender could no longer take the ball from the hands of an offensive player. Snatching the ball directly from an opponent, Berenson argued, encouraged rough play. Although formally adopted in 1899, Berenson experimented with this rule at her school years earlier. By forcing players to steal the ball *after* it left an opponent's hands, Berenson noted that players had “developed fine jumping” and tipping skills. The contrast in development is clear. Stealing directly from an opponent encouraged overly competitive and brutal behavior, while the ban on such behavior encouraged refined skills.

Another stimulant for rough and exhausting play was constant running. This led to the second major rule change. The court was divided into three segments where the home, center, and guard positions would be confined to their particular zone. Although some tireless players complained, Berenson believed it was for the better since “one will always find two or three [players] who take the lead and do most of the work if not bound by rules.”¹⁰⁶ Berenson would not have professional baseball's overreliance on the star pitcher and catcher repeated in women's

¹⁰⁵ Senda Berenson, “Editorial,” in *Basket Ball for Women*, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Berenson, “Basket Ball for Women,” *Physical Education* 3, No. 7 (September 1894): 107.

basketball. Much like larger society, everyone was expected to pull their own weight and develop themselves instead of relying on one or two stars.

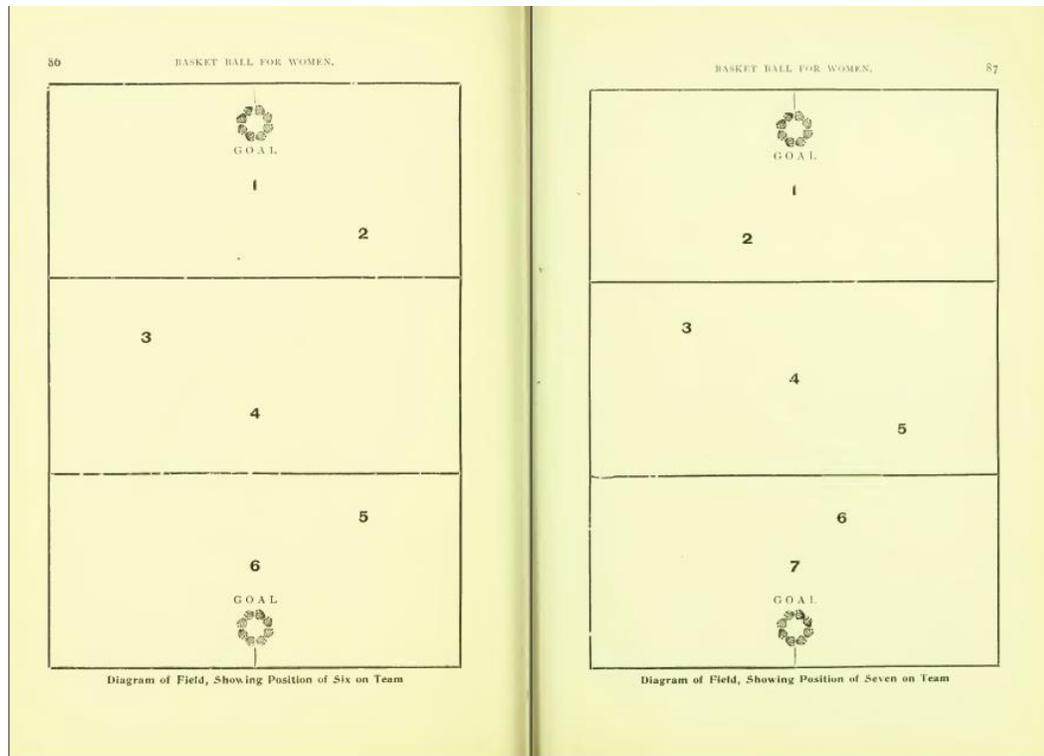


FIGURE 4 - Division of Women's Basketball Court; Women Were Confined to Specific Zones on the Court in an Effort to Curtail Over-exhaustion and Star Players

Players did not stop at mere complaining. They were clever and proved adept at defying rules and discovering loopholes. Such ingenuity required a third major rule change for women in 1899, which had been brewing for years, as well. Berenson in 1894 noted one enterprising woman began making bounce passes. The bounce pass, compared to overhead passes, reduced the chance opponents had for stealing the ball. The angles and spin this young woman put on the ball were so effective, others began to emulate her style. Opponents had little hope of stealing the ball in a refined manner. Eventually, a new rule was needed constraining this supposedly unfair advantage. Any team that attempted more than three consecutive bounce passes was charged with a foul. Additionally, the troublesome dribble was corralled in the same fashion. Any more than three

dribbles would also constitute a foul. Furthermore, during any dribble the ball must bounce higher than the knees of the player. Berenson believed that excessive dribbling destroyed team play and ruined all-around development.¹⁰⁷ Although he never envisioned the dribble, the game's inventor loved the maneuver. Naismith called dribbling "one of the most exciting and spectacular" in all of basketball¹⁰⁸ Naismith's support aside, many men in basketball shared Berenson's fears and they too would restrict dribbling during the 1890s and early 1900s.

Berenson's complaints reveal the intentions of governing bodies were quickly challenged by the people actually playing the game. In fact, Berenson seemed to acknowledge the cat-and-mouse nature of player innovation and restrictive rules. Although bounce passes and dribbles had been restricted, they had not been outlawed entirely. Nonetheless, "if bouncing the ball becomes a nuisance – and one never knows what peculiar play will become popular – it can easily be remedied by doing away with it altogether until the team appreciates that it is a great advantage if used in moderation, a great hindrance if used to an extent."¹⁰⁹ Despite these misgivings, Berenson's efforts were made because she truly approved of basketball as a sport for women. It cultivated "self-denial, as it teaches to give up one's own honors for the good of the whole." Furthermore, it provided "opportunity for self-control and gentle manners, all of which form such a great part in the development of character and true womanhood."¹¹⁰ So thoroughly had basketball become popular amongst women and girls, some men refused to play the game.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Berenson, "Basket Ball for Women," in *Basket Ball for Women*, 41; Berenson, "Basket Ball for Women," *Physical Education* 3, No. 7 (September 1894): 108.

¹⁰⁸ Naismith, *Basketball*, 63-64

¹⁰⁹ Berenson, "Basket Ball for Women," in *Basket Ball for Women*, 43.

¹¹⁰ Berenson, "Basket Ball for Women," *Physical Education* 3, No. 7 (September 1894): 109.

¹¹¹ Naismith, *Basketball*, 149-53.

By the late 1890s, basketball was widespread across YMCAs, schools, and colleges, but organizationally unwieldy. Berenson was doing her best to provide the women's game with proper structure. Likewise, Luther Gulick set out to do the same for the men's game. From Gulick's and the physical educators' perspective, codifying and standardizing basketball through amateurism, clean sport, and the Triangle would not only provide positive structure for the sport, but also for the lives of the men participating. Ultimately, Gulick and his colleagues would face similar problems that confronted Berenson as they established the YMCA Athletic League. However, the men faced the added problem of moneyed professionalism. The women's game already suffered from "star play" and roughness *without* the sinful allure of play-for-pay. Resisting the corrupting barbarity of professionalism, the physical educators created a powerful amateur system. Unfortunately for the reformers, the dichotomy of pro and amateur was not starkly black-and-white. Indeed, proponents of amateurism encouraging high-level tournaments of the best basketball teams increased public spectator demand for competitive basketball in all its forms, whether it be professional or amateur, savage or refined.

CHAPTER VII

CODIFYING CLEAN SPORT

As basketball's popularity grew, so did the difficulty of managing the game. As more and more people played the sport, it began to undergo variation. Senda Berenson found this obnoxious since hardly any women's institution played the game by the same rules. However, the problem of variation was more than just making sure an orderly game took place between two teams. Having a harmonized, standard sport was necessary for monitoring and measuring whether the Triangle concept and amateurism were being achieved. The variations in play could very well mean imperfections in fulfilling clean sport ideals. Ensuring clean sport was being adhered to, a national governing body with rules clear on amateur intentions was sorely needed.

James Naismith would not have a large role in this undertaking. He graduated from the Training School and left for Denver, Colorado, in 1895 assuming leadership over a local YMCA and working toward his next degree. Prior to his departure, Naismith and Luther Gulick collaborated on revising the official rules of basketball for men. With Naismith gone, Gulick soldiered on for two years editing the rules by himself.¹¹² Ultimately, Gulick abandoned his solitary efforts and encouraged a formal governing body overseeing the work. The YMCA Athletic League assumed that mantle with Gulick as its secretary. The League's members hoped to firmly regulate basketball by reaffirming principles of the Triangle and clean sport in five key areas: membership and geographic division, defining amateurism, obtaining regulation equipment, forming an alliance with the Amateur Athletic Union, and standardizing rules for basketball.

¹¹² Naismith, *Basketball*, 100-102.

The formation of the YMCA's Athletic League was a long-time coming and not directly instigated by basketball's issues. As noted in the Athletic League's provisional constitution, "the general Secretaries' Conference held at Orange, NJ, in 1889... [featured] extended discussion regarding the advantages of the formation of an athletic league among the Associations of the country."¹¹³ By 1895, the extended discussions resulted in the League's formation. Expanding the reach of the League, geographically speaking, was a top priority. However, "correspondence with Mr. James Naismith of Denver, in regard to the organization of the Western Section," revealed that the time was "not yet ripe" to proceed in that region.¹¹⁴ The Associations that did initially join were divided into three large geographic districts centered on Chicago, New York City, and Springfield. These three cities anchored seventy-six Associations with an impressive combined membership of 48,363.¹¹⁵

With nearly 50,000 potential participants, securing proper equipment was another major concern. Without proper standardized equipment, systematic development could not occur for the men in the Athletic League. Gulick tirelessly sought out an appropriate supplier to arm the League and its members with suitable basketballs and goals. In February 1896, Gulick was formally instructed by the Committee to "ascertain from manufacturers of athletic and sporting goods what special terms" could be procured for the League.¹¹⁶ That same month, Gulick in his secretarial report noted that the Overman Whole Company was, unfortunately, "endeavoring to sell as many

¹¹³ "Provisional Athletic League Constitution," adopted October 4, 1895, page 3, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

¹¹⁴ "Report of Secretary," April 28, 1896, page 36, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

¹¹⁵ "Report of Secretary," January 10, 1896, page 16, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

¹¹⁶ "Committee Meeting Report," February 7, 1896, page 21, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

basket balls as possible” without regard to quality or approval from the League. Nonetheless, Gulick was pleased that “the balls themselves are selling better than any of us expected.” The Secretary personally inspected forty basketballs and determined thirty-two to be of appropriate quality. The quality of these balls was not important just for the quality of the games to be played in the League. The sale of equipment netted a royalty fee to the League thus helping fund its operations. As of that point, February 1896, the League had sold ninety-two balls. With a royalty fee of sixty-three cents, that procured \$57.96 of much needed funding to the League office. Ever doting, Gulick noted, “On Monday next I am to go to the factory to examine a fresh lot.”¹¹⁷

Negotiations for discounted regulation equipment proved more difficult than originally imagined.¹¹⁸ Finally, after a summer of work, Gulick reported to the Committee in the fall of 1896 that a mail vote of Associations authorized him “to award the official adoption of basket balls and goals to Spalding Brothers.” The company would immediately provide the League with 108 basketballs. The energetic Gulick “was requested by Spalding Brothers to send down a rubber stamp” with his name on it, so that they may inspect and designate balls as official at their factory. The miffed Spalding Brothers company was “greatly surprised” that Gulick had intended to personally inspect each ball. They noted no one had ever done such a thing at their factory. This humorous anecdote nonetheless shows that basketball, incrementally and by degrees, was rising above and beyond the control of individuals like Gulick.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ “Report of Secretary,” February 7, 1896, page 24-25, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

¹¹⁸ “Report of Secretary,” April 8, 1896, page 31, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

¹¹⁹ “Report of Secretary,” October 15, 1896, page 49-50, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

This equipment not only made standardized games possible in the Athletic League, it also served as an incentive to corral wayward Associations. Perhaps the idea of amateur competition did not entice these YMCAs, but the financial discounts on equipment could grease the wheels toward membership. Indeed, members of the Athletic League would receive a “25 percent discount on their general sporting goods” not just basketball equipment. Offering up another carrot, if the League would “adopt their apparatus as standard or recommended it to the Associations,” Spalding would increase the discount to one-third of the price “on nearly all of their gymnasium apparatus” equipment. Finally, if their equipment was adopted as standard for the League, Spalding would give “5 per cent of all sales made to members of the League to the Governing Committee.” With such a sterling deal, Spalding was made the League’s standard.¹²⁰ These financial incentives helped strengthen the Athletic League and its amateur regime. The monetary windfall also called into question the purity of the amateur proponents practicing what they preached.

As time wore on, this regime grew increasingly hostile toward dribbling. In 1898, dribbling was flatly declared “productive of roughness.” Following in the footsteps of women’s basketball, men’s basketball banned the maneuver. Gulick does not elaborate, but he does acknowledge dissension on the decision: “I anticipated during the early part of the Fall [of 1897] that [outlawing dribbling] would result in a counter-organization to advocate a rougher or rather less controlled form of game.” Despite the feared uprising, Gulick maintained that the sport would “become too dangerous for use except for those who are able to give it special time and training as foot ball players do,” if dribbling remained an integral part.¹²¹ Along with roughness, dribbling tended to

¹²⁰ “Secretary’s Report,” October 15, 1896, page 50-51, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives; To Members of the Athletic League of North America, page 57, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

¹²¹ “Report of Dr. Gulick,” November 22, 1898, page 98, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

create star players, and there was no place for such men in clean amateur sport as far Gulick was concerned.¹²² With dribbling outlawed, Naismith's original thirteen rules had now ballooned into ninety-nine rules covering thirteen *pages* in the Athletic League Handbook.¹²³

Two years earlier, in April 1896, the Committee motioned that "a Hand Book for the Association Athletic League, giving athletic and gymnastic rules, records and so on," be prepared, and bylaws for the organization clarified. Furthermore, the committee negotiating with the AAU for an alliance reported progress.¹²⁴ Six months later, the League settled on its bylaws with the exception of one issue: "The By-Laws have been delayed on account of the impossibility of coming to an agreement on the amateur definition." Gulick failed to include the exact bones of contention, but implored that "this meeting should take action about" the topic. Such immediate action would enable the Committee on Athletic Rules to begin steps to publish the Hand Book.¹²⁵ Quick action on the amateur definition was not forthcoming and festered until the fall of 1896.

Finally, the debate on amateurism's definition came to an end after an agreement of association was reached with the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) in October 1896 that lasted through July 1911. The YMCA Athletic League would thereby adopt the AAU's definition of amateurism. In accordance with the affiliation, the League would nominate four members to sit on

¹²² Robert W. Peterson, *From Cages to Jump Shots: Pro Basketball's Early Years*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 37.

¹²³ "Official Handbook of the Athletic League of the Young Men's Christian Associations of North America," 1897, Athletic League Handbooks (Box 52), Kautz YMCA Archives.

¹²⁴ "Committee Meeting Report," April 8, 1896, page 29, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

¹²⁵ "Secretary's Report," October 15, 1896, page 49, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

the board of the AAU.¹²⁶ On October 21st, 1896, a memorandum was distributed to members of the Athletic League announcing the alliance with the AAU. Of special importance for this survey is the effect this alliance had on amateur athletes. The following definition for amateurism comes from the AAU's 1890 Handbook:

One who has not entered in an open competition; or for either a stake, public or admission money, or entrance fee; or under fictitious name; or has not competed with or against a professional for any prize or where admission fee is charged; or who has not instructed, pursued or assisted in the pursuit of athletic exercises as a means of livelihood, or for gain any emolument; or whose membership of any Athletic Club of any kind was not brought about or does not continue because of any mutual understanding, express or implied, whereby his becoming or continuing a member of such Club would be of any pecuniary benefit to him whatever, direct or indirect, and who shall in other and all respects conform to the rules and regulations of this organization.¹²⁷

Violating this principle was dealt with rather harshly. For example, the AAU and the League agreed to make individual athletes sit out one year if they decided to simply change from one amateur athletic club to another. The only way this one-year probation could be abrogated was if the athlete's prior club agreed to waive the waiting period.¹²⁸

Restricting the freedom of movement for players was predicated, supposedly, on amateurism and competitive balance: "The reason for its origin was that the strong athletic clubs could by superior facilities draw away the best members from the small athletic clubs and thus render it difficult for the smaller clubs to do anything in the line of athletics." As the memorandum bluntly states, "It was a measure of protection" – protection for the Associations, of course, not the athlete. The League memorandum laments "that it was impossible to hold in the Associations

¹²⁶ "Secretary's Report," October 15, 1896, page 50, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

¹²⁷ Amateur Athletic Union, *Hand Book of the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States*, (New York: A.G. Spalding & Bros., 1890), 8-9.

¹²⁸ "To Members of the Athletic League of North America," October 21, 1896, page 54-55, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

men who excelled in any line of athletic sport, even though they had been trained by the Association.” Such unpleasant occurrences would be “largely remedied in the future by operation of” Articles IV and V of the agreement with the AAU.¹²⁹ The YMCA’s rules makers and physical educators clearly felt a sense of entitlement to the skills of these athletes. Having trained and developed these young men, they fiercely restricted player movement within the amateur world and hoped to seal them off from nascent professional leagues. The draconian restrictions on player mobility ratcheted up early in 1897.

In a dramatic coup, Luther Gulick assumed chairmanship of the AAU’s Basket Ball Committee and successfully persuaded the AAU to adopt the YMCA’s rules concerning basketball. This meant that all games played under the AAU auspices were subject to the rules devised by the YMCA Athletic League. Together the AAU and the YMCA Athletic League conspired to prevent professionalism’s undesirable characteristics from penetrating the world of amateur basketball. “Individuals competing at unsanctioned games” – that is games not run by the AAU or the League – would be disqualified “from all future competition in amateur sports.” Gulick believed such dramatic punishment maintained “a hold” on basketball, promoted “the spirit of clean amateur sport,” and purged undercover professionals from the ranks of the amateur sporting world. “All believers in clean amateur sport will welcome this action, which looks to the rescue of the sport (basketball) from the dangers of professionalism and unsportsmanlike conduct which were so seriously threatening it.”¹³⁰

¹²⁹ “To Members of the Athletic League of North America,” October 21, 1896, page 54-55, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

¹³⁰ “The Athletic League of Young Men’s Christian Associations of North America,” January 13, 1897, page 54-55, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

As Gulick was working diligently toward his aims in the late 1890s, the first professional basketball leagues were already forming. The alliance between the AAU and the YMCA Athletic League bolstered the efforts of clean amateur sport and spread its Triangle benefits to young competitors. Nonetheless, the lure of cash prizes and fame encouraged young men into the world of professional basketball. Certainly, these professional teams were often stocked with working-class men, but these pro teams were also staffed with many young middle-class men who had spent years at the YMCA. As pro ball became more popular, it presented many scenes physical education reformers feared. These fears included play-for-pay competition, gambling on the results of matches, spectacles of uncontrolled rough play on the court, and riotous mob violence by fans. In short, it unleashed the brutality of men and women who were unrefined and lacked any sort of all-around development in their gendered and racial, mental and athletic beings.

CHAPTER VIII

PRIMAL PROFESSIONALISM

The game of basket ball is open to numerous abuses, and unless it is held with a strong hand, it will be a detriment to all lovers of good sport. That it has not been held with sufficient firmness in the past is shown by the fact that a number of teams from Young Men's Christian Associations and from military companies have left their respective organizations and have organized independently, some of them forming professional teams.¹³¹

- Luther Halsey Gulick II, *Official Basket Ball Rules*, 1897

The rise of commercialized entertainment in the late nineteenth century reshaped the urban landscape and posed challenges for the reformers. Along with commercialized sports, circuses, Wild West shows, vaudeville, dance halls, night clubs, and other forms of entertainment proved popular.¹³² For those in the physical education movement, entertainment for entertainment's sake was, at best, a suspicious undertaking. These men and women did, however, understand the necessity for fun and play as a stepping stone for all-around development. Hence James Naismith's annoyed plea that instructors at the Training School design a game that took advantage of humanity's "play instinct." Luther Gulick wrote an entire book, *A Philosophy of Play*, on the necessity of play. However, the type of play and entertainment offered by commercialized professional sport was certainly not what Gulick and company had in mind.

So entertaining and popular was basketball that some Associations banned the sport. Its passionate players monopolized the gymnasias marginalizing other sports and games, while attracting men of disreputable character.¹³³ This enthusiasm for the sport, and not necessarily the

¹³¹ Luther Gulick, "Registration of Basket Ball Players," in *Official Basket Ball Rules*, ed. Luther Gulick, (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1897), 5.
<https://ia600504.us.archive.org/20/items/officialaaubaske00amat/officialaaubaske00amat.pdf>.

¹³² Andrew Heinze, *Adapting to Abundance: Jewish Immigrants, Mass Consumption, and the Search for American Identity*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 116 – 117.

¹³³ Fox, *Big Leagues*, 269.

sport's aims, fueled the rise of professional leagues where fans paid for tickets to watch athletes entertain them. Alongside watching the spectacle was wagering on its result. Generally, middle-class reformers viewed gambling as an immoral use of money. Gambling also greatly resembled the risky venture capital and stock market that helped create the economic booms and busts of the era.¹³⁴ It was a reckless endeavor that no man or woman of respectability should ever engage in. Along with violence and rough play, gambling was just another manifestation of the dangerous allure of professional sport.

Dislodging the corrupting influence of commercial sport from amateur basketball required vigorous enforcement of amateurism rules by the YMCA Athletic League and the AAU. George Hepbron, Gulick's successor as the Athletic League secretary, reported in March 1900 that "56 men have been suspended" over the course of the preceding year for violating amateurism. Hepbron glowingly approved of "a firm stand" taken by the YMCA of Washington, DC, in demanding registration of amateur players for the District of Columbia Amateur Basketball League. The stand swung that league toward "clean sport."¹³⁵ Hepbron's delight proved a bit premature. Three years later, the District Basketball League was roiled in controversy as investigations swirled concerning the amateur status of registered players. The resulting investigation discovered that every club in the six-team league had players who had violated the tenants of amateurism. However, the District Basketball League concluded that there "had been no serious breach of the amateur rules" and all players would continue participating in the league. The trouble nonetheless did result in a significant change for the league's operations. Previously,

¹³⁴ Ann Fabian, *Card Sharps and Bucket Shops: Gambling in Nineteenth-Century America*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 12 – 15.

¹³⁵ "Report of George T. Hepbron," March 15, 1900, page 145, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

players had registered for the league through team managers, who would determine eligibility. This gave teams leeway to laxly enforce the amateur rules. After the scandal all player registration would take place through Lieutenant Crawford, president of the league, and would remove the power of individual teams to skirt the amateurism bylaws.¹³⁶ C. A. Aschom and Thomas Cornelius reported to Hepbron that the AAU, “through the influence of the League,” also took forceful action against professional basketball in New England. Members of two pro teams were denied registration at an event in Boston even though “one team went so far as to present affidavits asserting their amateur standing.”¹³⁷ Hepbron noted other sanctions at a YMCA in Kingston, Ontario, and one in Springfield, Ohio, to violators and corruptors of amateurism.¹³⁸

So fervent were the AAU and the Athletic League in policing amateurism that rooting out pros from their competitions was not the sole objective. Maintaining control on amateurism also meant excluding amateur clubs who had not *explicitly* registered as such. In December of 1901, the AAU issued a flurry of suspensions for this very reason. Eleven amateur clubs in New York City were suspended but they were not exceptional “for similar legislation has been meted out to delinquent teams in the New England and the Central Associations.” The trouble arose when unregistered college teams, like Harvard University,¹³⁹ played games with AAU teams. In the AAU’s eyes, knowingly playing against teams that had ambiguous amateur status was a violation

¹³⁶ “District Basket-Ball League: Three Teams Tied for the First Position in a Fine Race,” *The Washington Post* (1877-1922), Jan 19, 1903, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/144462638?accountid=8285>.

¹³⁷ “Report of George T. Hepbron,” March 15, 1900, page 145, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

¹³⁸ “Report of George T. Hepbron,” April 25, 1900, page 151, Athletic League Minutes 1896-1904 (Box 33), Kautz YMCA Archives.

¹³⁹ “BASKET BALL TROUBLES: Washington Continental Team Plays Harvard Despite A.A.U. Threat of Disqualification” *New York Times* (1857-1922), Jan 25, 1903, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/96338576?accountid=8285>.

of amateurism. Calling out the AAU's truculence as "uncalled for interference," some universities resisted. However, after the "matter was thoroughly explained" these clubs backed down and paid the fee. Increasingly, teams needed money for the privilege of amateurism. Clearly, even working-class men interested in the amateur ideal, would have a hard time independently entering the financially exclusive world of amateurism. It seemed that if the poor, undesirable masses ever partook of the amateur ideal, they would need the backing of a paternal middle-class benefactor.

Instead, of paying for the privilege of amateurism, more and more basketball players decided others should pay them for their talents. Hence, "the professional taint that became so apparent in basket ball" during the late 1890s.¹⁴⁰ It would be decades before professional basketball truly rivaled baseball and football in popularity, but in many urban areas it gained a permanent hold by 1910. Despite their best efforts and ramped up enforcement, the AAU, the YMCA, and advocates of clean sport amateurism could not shackle professional basketball. Just as galling, many of the first professional teams actually arose directly from the amateur YMCA causing consternation among the refined advocates of clean sport.

The most successful professional basketball team prior to World War I was the Buffalo Germans. Newspapers in February 1911 celebrated as the seemingly unstoppable troupe won an astounding 100 games in a row.¹⁴¹ These professional stars began their careers as amateur teenagers at the German YMCA in Buffalo, New York, in 1895. Fred Burkhardt, who had learned basketball directly from James Naismith and played in the first-ever game back at the Springfield

¹⁴⁰ "WANT CLEAN BASKET BALL." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Dec 30, 1901, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/96148609?accountid=8285>.

¹⁴¹ "BUFFALO GERMANS REMARKABLE FIVE." *The Atlanta Constitution (1881-1945)*, Feb 13, 1911, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/496483553?accountid=8285>.

Training School, organized the youngsters and taught them the principles of the game.¹⁴² The Buffalo Germans offered a direct connection between basketball's amateur origins and quick adoption of professionalism. Although, pro basketball was not the sole source of income for the Buffalo Germans, it did improve their financial lot in American society. Their athletic exploits also exposed the robust glory available for star players in the United States. After winning exhibition contests at the 1904 Olympic Games in St. Louis, the Germans were welcomed back to Buffalo with a parade and were received by local dignitaries.¹⁴³

In Trenton, New Jersey, the reaction to professional basketball was anything but dignified as the local YMCA reacted with contempt at play-for-pay athletes. Since the winter of 1892-93, the Trenton YMCA had fielded basketball competitions at its gymnasium. Its talented bunch of players "by 1896 claimed the mythical national championship" after defeating other YMCA, amateur, and college clubs in the New York City – Philadelphia corridor. This claim to a "national title," however, occurred following the team's expulsion from the YMCA. In November 1895 "cryptic" notes in the Trenton YMCA's meeting minutes discuss a two-man committee appointed "to investigate the reported trouble in the gymnasium." The trouble undoubtedly centered on the Trenton team's decision to turn professional and discard amateurism.¹⁴⁴

Indeed, the rupture between the ball players and the YMCA appeared the next year in the *Daily True American*, a local Trenton paper. The basketball players "are no longer sailing under the colors of the YMCA but have organized independently this year, through some difficulties." Contemporary basketball historian Marvin A. Riley mentioned "considerable friction developed

¹⁴² Peterson, *Cages to Jump Shots*, 56; "The Buffalo Germans," Buffalo Sports Hall of Fame, <http://buffalosporthallfame.com/member/the-buffalo-germans/>.

¹⁴³ Peterson, *Cages to Jump Shots*, 59.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

between the YMCA team and the secretary.” Riley determined that the “little things” of dispute added up to a “breach which resulted in the YMCA team leaving the old home and going up to Masonic Temple” to professionally play their games.¹⁴⁵ The *Daily True American* on November 4, 1896, carried what historian Robert Peterson believes is the first advertisement for a professional game. The owner of the *Daily True American* was also the sponsor of the Trenton team, so he had a vested interest in spreading awareness of the budding pro game. The ad put the public on notice that the Trenton Basketball Team would take on the Brooklyn YMCA for a price of 25 cents per seat or 15 cents for standing room. One wonders how the Brooklyn YMCA secretaries reacted when word reached them that their squad would play against a professional team.¹⁴⁶

Whatever the Brooklyn YMCA’s reaction, we know that of a neighboring YMCA in Manhattan. In 1897, the AAU held its first national basketball championship tournament. Twelve amateur teams competed for the AAU title in New York City and the local 23rd Street YMCA Team bested the competition winning the tournament. Following the victory, the 23rd Street Team informed their YMCA and the AAU that they would begin playing professionally. The YMCA summarily banned the young men not just from amateur competition but from YMCA facilities entirely. Without a permanent home, the 23rd Street Team began traveling to various gyms and towns in search of opponents in paychecks. Soon nicknamed the “Wanderers,” the old 23rd Street Team became basketball’s first barnstorming professional team.¹⁴⁷

The Buffalo Germans, Trenton Basketball Team, and the New York Wanderers shared the common thread of germinating from the clean-sport YMCA into the corrupted wilderness of

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 32-33.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 33.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 38.

professional basketball. Trenton and the Wanderers also had the distinction of participating in the first professional basketball league. The National Basketball League founded in 1898 took on grand titular aspirations, but in reality all its inaugural teams originated in Philadelphia and southern New Jersey. The Trenton Basketball Team became the Trenton Nationals and won the first league title for the 1898-99 season. The Wanderers temporarily gave up their barnstorming lifestyle and joined the league for the 1901-02 season.¹⁴⁸ The National League, like so many of the early pro leagues, folded quite quickly, however. By 1904 it was in financial ruin and faded away. Still, by the outbreak of World War I in 1914, at least fifteen professional leagues had been formed. The most successful and stable of these was the Eastern League, which lasted from 1909 to 1926.¹⁴⁹

These scenes of professional basketball gave reformers and advocates of clean sport much to fear. Beyond simply corrupting sport into a paid endeavor, the pro games often became brutal spectacles of player-on-player roughness. On January 18, 1900, the Trenton Nationals hosted the New York Wanderers. Trenton defeated New York by a score of 23 to 17, but the *New York Times* called it “the roughest game of basket ball ever played.” Two Trenton players had to be carried off the court due to exhaustion at the end of the first half of play. A Trenton player was disqualified for “landing a right swing with much force” on Wanderer player-coach Bob Abadie.¹⁵⁰ The violence pervading the games in Trenton and other early pro games was embodied by the implementation of “the cage.”

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 187 – 200; See Appendix B for a list of early pro leagues in this era.

¹⁵⁰ "BASKET BALL, AT TRENTON: New York Team Beaten in an Exceptionally Rough Game," *New York Times* (1857-1922), Jan 19, 1900. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/95958304?accountid=8285>.

Basketball's first professional team, the Trenton Nationals also devised a wire netting that would envelop the perimeter of their basketball court in 1897. This cage, as it became known, was initially intended as a way to prevent fan interference with the game, but it also kept the basketball in continuous play. There was no out-of-bounds and officials soon learned that during cage matches, the best policy was quickly tossing the basketball in play and speedily exiting the cage for their safety. The scene resembled a zookeeper flinging a slab of meat and then exiting as fast as possible from the lion's den. A side effect of the Trenton team's innovation was that basketball players gained the moniker "cagers," which lasted through the 1960s, long after professional leagues had ceased using the cage.¹⁵¹

Pro players quickly adapted the cage as a weapon of brutality, utilizing hockey-like body checks that left their opponents scarred from the unforgiving metal wiring. Prior to its disuse by East Coast pro leagues in the 1930s, the cage sped up the pace and action of the game, thereby keeping fans more entertained. Besides, if there was little scoring, at least there was plenty of action in terms of the hits and fights. The cagers were likened to Roman gladiators. Little wonder then that amateur and college teams never adopted the cage for use. Even pro teams in the Midwest and on the Pacific Coast never adopted the cage either. It was a distinctly big city phenomenon on the East Coast.¹⁵²

Even more troublesome than gladiatorial cagers beating each other up were the rowdy crowds rioting during pro games. Studying fan violence in North America, Jerry M. Lewis defined a sports riot as "violence – vandalism, throwing missiles, rushing the field or court, committing arson, and/or fighting - committed by five or more individuals in a crowd of at least one hundred

¹⁵¹ Peterson, *Cages to Jump Shots*, 33.

¹⁵² Fox, *Big Leagues*, 264 – 265.

people associated with a formally organized sporting event.” Lewis’s study focused upon post-1960 fan violence, but his observations can still provide insight into the riots that plagued basketball games around 1900. Lewis concludes that sports rioters are typically white men below the age of thirty.¹⁵³ Other research of mid-and-late twentieth century rioting suggests that sports riots are a regular occurrence not an anomaly. Further evidence reveals that sporting events are not *the* likely cause of a riot, but serve as *the* occasion for a riot. Economic dissatisfaction, hooliganism, ethnic strife, and local pride were all the fuel for violence. Sporting events, however, were the moments that channeled and spurred these feelings toward destructive behavior.¹⁵⁴

On Christmas Day 1900 in Trenton, a mob of angry fans numbering 500 attacked and nearly killed referee L. P. Pratt. The riot occurred after a game between Trenton and the Pennsylvania Bicycle Club of Philadelphia. The game itself had been played under considerable chaos. Pratt had been verbally abused by Trenton players all night, some of whom threatened bodily harm to the official. After experiencing enough heckling, Pratt ejected a Trenton player. The home team refused to comply with the ejection. In light of the insubordination, Pratt awarded the game to visiting Philadelphia. The fans reacted angrily and Pratt’s “head was cut and his body was a mass of bruises when he finally escaped from the mob.” Three policemen sent to escort Pratt were also wounded in the melee.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Jerry M. Lewis, *Sports Fan Violence in North America*, (Lanham MD, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2007), 2, 63-69.

¹⁵⁴ Gordon W. Russell, *Aggression in the Sports World: A Social Psychological Perspective*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 138, 144; Also see Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987) for the role athletics played in channeling riotous energy at universities in the nineteenth century.

¹⁵⁵ "MOB NEARLY KILLS A REFEREE." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Dec 26, 1900, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/95968668?accountid=8285>.

At least two other riots occurred in Trenton over the next two seasons. In 1901, fans believed a referee, E.C. Rutchman, was biased against their home team. Descending upon the official with malice, the rioters were beaten back by policemen. The officers “used their clubs freely” as they escorted Rutchman to a friend’s home for the night until peace settled upon the area.¹⁵⁶ More worrisome was the scene on February 15, 1902, when Trenton players and fans did battle with the visiting Millville basketball club and their contingent of fans. Police were again called in to restore order as the situation degenerated into a slugfest. The police officers whisked the Millville players away from the slugfest and to the train station. “For some time,” reported the *New York Times*, “there has been bad feeling between the two teams.” This riot was two years after Trenton had defeated Millville for the National Basketball League title, so the two teams likely despised one another and any pretext to fight was welcomed. Trenton players also reportedly held a grudge over being mobbed by Millville fans in an earlier game that season.¹⁵⁷

Back in Massachusetts, birthplace of basketball, Harry Haskell “Bucky” Lew routinely endured vicious taunts and jeers from rabid fans starting in 1902. On at least one occasion an opposing team objected so stridently to Lew they refused to take the court and play a scheduled game. The fuss arose because Lew was the first black player to play organized professional basketball in the New England Basketball League. He ultimately spent two decades playing pro ball in New England. In an interview with the *Springfield Union* in April 1958, Lew recalled his first game back in November 1902: “I took the bumps, the elbows in the gut, knees here and everything else that went with it. But I gave it right back. It was rough but worth it.” Over the

¹⁵⁶ "Crowd Attacked Basket Ball Referee." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Apr 12, 1901, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/96119453?accountid=8285>.

¹⁵⁷ "RIOT OVER BASKET BALL: Trenton Police Escort Millville Team to Station" *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Feb 16, 1902, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/96233543?accountid=8285>; Robert D. Bradley, *The Compendium of Professional Basketball*, 2nd ed., (Tempe, AZ: Xavier Press, 2010), 51.

ensuing years, white fans would routinely threaten violence and mob action protesting the presence of black players in pro basketball.¹⁵⁸

Early professional basketball certainly served as riot kindle by gathering large groups of people for rough entertainment. Furthermore, many early pro teams, like the Buffalo Germans and the all-Jewish Philadelphia SPHAs, were formed on ethnic or neighborhood lines. Although explicit ethnic and racial strife cannot be concluded from the available information, it is not hard to imagine that the scenes of fan and player violence described here might have had ethnic conflict as precipitating factors. Further research in this realm is needed, but team rivalries and sports riots were perhaps the latest manifestations of ethnic and economic competition between various urban groups.

Rioting and uncivilized play were not relegated to the professionals, however. The intense competition inspired by competitions like AAU and Athletic League tournaments blurred the line between refined amateurism and unsophisticated professionalism. Taunts and insults precipitated a scrum between “at least 30” players and fans in a YMCA game between teams from Baltimore and Washington, DC. Taking “nearly five minutes” YMCA physical directors and peacemakers in the crowd quelled the disturbance.¹⁵⁹ Another “free-for-all” fight took place “between the players and fans” of Western High and Business High in the District of Columbia. *The Washington Post* speculated that the brawl was “instigated by the importance of the game, the winners being entitled

¹⁵⁸ John Christgau, *Tricksters in the Madhouse: Lakers vs. Globetrotters, 1948*, (Lincoln: the University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 107; Thomas, *They Cleared the Lane*: (Lincoln: the University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 4-6.

¹⁵⁹ “TEAMS IN FREE FIGHT: Washington and Baltimore Y.M.C.A. Fives Clash,” *The Washington Post* (1877 – 1922), February 28, 1909, <http://search.proquest.com/proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/144954462>.

to challenge the Georgetown Preps to decide the scholastic title of the District.”¹⁶⁰ These rough spectacles weren’t relegated to the men’s game, either. An editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* warned basketball was quickly falling into “the same disreputable state” as football. “Already,” continued the editorialist, “many of the schools are discouraging basketball as a girls’ game.”¹⁶¹ Perhaps fresh in the mind of that writer was an incident two years earlier in nearby Santa Monica, California. Playing in a local tournament, Los Angeles High School and Santa Monica High School took part “in the hardest and roughest game of the season” where “fouls were the order of the day.” Although Santa Monica lost 27 to 15, its players “were determined to die hard” on the court.¹⁶²

A dramatic scene of amateur basketball rioting took place in Chicago in January 1907. “Dumbbells, Indian clubs, wands, and other gymnastic apparatus were used as weapons” in a massive melee between students of Lake High School and Wendell Phillips High School. The incident began as the basketball game neared its conclusion and two players from the rival schools exchanged blows. Immediately “players, substitutes, and rooters” from all sides rushed the court “striking at any strange face that confronted them.” As men poured onto the court for fisticuffs, “the women, not to be outdone, cheered and pushed them on.” Phillips High School’s principal and several teachers were unable to contain the violence that spilled out of the gymnasium and into the school’s hallways. Finally, the police were called in to restore order. The principal

¹⁶⁰ “BASKETBALL PLAYERS FIGHT: Rooters Also Mix Things Up During Western-Business Game,” *The Washington Post* (1877 – 1922), January 15, 1910, <http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/145032229>.

¹⁶¹ “GAME NEEDS REFORMING: Basketball is Becoming as Rough as Football, and Is Losing Prestige as a Girl’s Game,” *Los Angeles Times* (1886 – 1922), April 8, 1906, <http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/164468825>.

¹⁶² “ROUGH BASKETBALL: SANTA MONICA BEATEN,” *Los Angeles Times* (1886 – 1922), May 15, 1904, <http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/164225906>.

demanded the police arrest all the rioters, but the police deigned and allowed the game to resume. The two players who instigated the scrum, however, were banished for the night.¹⁶³

Physical educators were not surprised at the scenes of violence routine in pro basketball. It was the logical result of men who played sport for any amount of money. With improperly placed values, they could hardly be expected to control their savage behavior and inclinations. Amateur basketball devolving into exhibitions of fisticuffs and wanton violence, proved a more alarming and confusing development. How could the men and women playing amateur sports so seamlessly behave like irredeemable professionals? Whether for money or mere amateur trophies, it seemed that competition brought about the worst behavior in all athletes, amateur or otherwise. For this, the physical educators at the Athletic League, AAU, and other institutions had themselves to blame. They protested on the beneficial nature of sport constructing proper middle-class values, but soon displaced attention on those benefits via the medals and trophies awarded at their increasingly popular tournaments and leagues. In this, the reformers resembled their professional brethren far more than they would have liked to admit.

¹⁶³ "RIOT OVER BASKETBALL: SCHOOLBOYS FIGHT TILL THE POLICE ARE CALLED," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 19, 1907, <http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/173359068>.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

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. It has in the past inevitably resulted in men of lower character going into the game, for, on the average, men of serious purposes in life do not care to go into that kind of thing.¹⁶⁴

- Luther Halsey Gulick II, *Official Basket Ball Rules*, 1897

The difference between the hopes of physical education reformers and the realities that beset basketball are helpfully viewed through the Triangle and the cage. The Triangle sought containing the more erratic and rough tendencies of man. By cultivating a controlled physical body, proper manhood and womanhood could be achieved. Interweaving conceptions of race, gender, and class, proponents of the Triangle believed that middle-class Anglo-Saxons held the perfect civilization for humanity. Indeed, they personified civilization. If malformed or primitive persons attained some modicum of respectability, it was done by subsuming and comporting themselves to the white middle class. However, fears of “race suicide” spurred reformers to strengthen and perpetuate their class. Amateur sport and the Triangle were methods preventing the Anglo-Saxon middle class from sliding into a state of savagery plaguing recent immigrants, sexual deviants, and other groups they condescendingly pitied.

In contrast, the cages admitted man’s primitive, anarchic nature. Instead of refining this nature, the cage concentrated the savagery. The professionals, despite excellent physical bodies and origins in the clean sport world, seemingly desired no higher purpose. They did not seek civilized refinement as the end goal of their athletic endeavors. Their only goal seemed the instant

¹⁶⁴ Luther Gulick, “Registration of Basket Ball Players,” in *Official Basket Ball Rules*, 5, <https://ia600504.us.archive.org/20/items/officialaaubaske00amat/officialaaubaske00amat.pdf>.

gratification of a paycheck or fight, not the higher rewards of Christian salvation or upstanding morality. At least that's how reformers would survey the situation. These early professional players surely perceived amateurism as a hindrance for making a living and surviving financially.

For all of its civilizing promise, basketball seemed to have arrived back at square one. The sport was quickly marred by the same rough and professionalizing tendencies of football and baseball. Disenchanted, pioneering physical educator Dudley Allen Sargent created a substitute for basketball. Sargent believed his new game provided “a recreation that would not be so rough as basketball” by deemphasizing great offensive players.¹⁶⁵ Meanwhile collegiate basketball authorities adopted a rule that would disqualify rough players who committed five fouls in a game. This nod to clean sport was simultaneously contravened by strengthening the power of dribbling. Restrictions on a player shooting the ball after dribbling were removed. The new rule was a “sweeping change... calculated to make the game more popular.”¹⁶⁶ Advocating clean amateur sport while also seeking popularity was an enduring tension that undermined physical educators' larger efforts.

These educators who championed amateurism and clean sport consciously wanted increasing membership at YMCAs and eagerly promoted *competitive* athletics, not just educational athletics. How could they genuinely tell amateur athletes that their civilized development is what truly mattered, when amateur tournaments gave prizes to the team with the most victories, not the one that demonstrated Triangle advancement most effectively? Furthermore, the AAU and the Athletic League handbooks, filled with advertisements for athletic equipment made by Spalding

¹⁶⁵ “BASKETBALL SUBSTITUTE: HARVARD DIRECTOR'S NEW GAME ON TRIAL.” *Los Angeles Times* (1886 – 1922), October 28, 1906, <http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/164480120>.

¹⁶⁶ “CHANGE BASKETBALL RULES.” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872 – 1922), July 1, 1908, <http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/173469582>.

Brothers, kept track of individual records in a number of sports and promoted championship tournaments. If it was reasonable competing for a YMCA trophy or medal, why not for something more useful like money? The Trenton YMCA team apparently deemed their Triangles good enough and set out for the benefits of professional play.

The professionalized Trenton Nationals also gained a degree of autonomy not found in the amateur world. Indeed, the physical education reformers and purveyors of muscular Christianity did little promoting the autonomy and independence of these young men and women. This paternalism reflected parallel developments in other domestic realms of the Progressive movement as well as the imposition of “beneficial” imperial authority on the Philippines, whether Filipinos wanted the benefits or not. Efforts by young athletes to make basketball their own through stylistic flourishes like dribbling and bounce passes were often met with condemnation. What the players may have seen as creative expression and solutions for winning games, reformers often saw as circumvention of proper morality concerning race, class, womanhood, and manhood. The dribble eroded teamwork and made men unduly selfish. The women who bounce-passed were too clever, seemingly calling into question the scrupulousness of their character. Certainly, all who engaged in disgraceful roughness on the court were frowned upon. In the eyes of reformers, these malcontents necessitated the strong hand of amateurism.

Even when present, the strong hand advocated by Gulick often proved useless in preventing violence and roughness at games. High school, college, and amateur club teams of both sexes routinely engaged in unseemly fights and foul-ridden games. And if the strong hand of amateurism couldn't keep a firm grasp on amateur basketball that nominally abided by clean sport, how could it resist and defeat the corruption of professionalism? Individual professional teams and leagues struggled to maintain permanency but there was a hydra-like quality with the pros. When one team

or league folded, two or more sprouted up to take its place. The individual teams of this era proved temporal, but the idea of professionalism proved perpetual.

The endurance of professional teams, and the routine violations of amateurism's constructed racial, gender, and class meanings, proved that significant numbers of individuals interpreted basketball's purpose differently than the physical education reformers. Designed as a tool bringing rightful order to a chaotic world, the defiance rampant in basketball's early years was evident right from the beginning in 1891. The looming insubordination echoed in the air when Frank Mahan strolled into the Training School gymnasium and scoffed at another new game.

APPENDIX A

YMCA Athletic League Members, 1897

State/Province	City	Members at YMCA
California	Redlands	156
California	Sacramento	166
Colorado	Colorado Springs	384
Colorado	Pueblo	425
Connecticut	Bridgeport	771
Connecticut	Danbury	212
Connecticut	Norwich	150
Connecticut	Stamford	405
Delaware	Wilmington	217
Illinois	Chicago - Central	2272
Illinois	Hyde Park	83
Illinois	Chicago - West Side	480
Indiana	New Albany	253
Indiana	Terre Haute	378
Iowa	Dubuque	532
Kansas	Wichita	384
Manitoba	Winnipeg	310
Maryland	Baltimore - Central	1352
Massachusetts	Boston	2752
Massachusetts	Brockton	465
Massachusetts	Chicopee	135
Massachusetts	Fitchburg	469
Massachusetts	Holyoke	700
Massachusetts	Lynn	590
Massachusetts	Melrose	340
Massachusetts	Northampton	291
Massachusetts	Quincy	286
Massachusetts	Southbridge	575
Massachusetts	Springfield	888
Massachusetts	Taunton	360
Michigan	Grand Rapids	1188
Minnesota	Duluth	544
Minnesota	Minneapolis	877
Missouri	St. Louis - Central	799
Missouri	Sedalia	216
Nebraska	Omaha	1105
New Brunswick	St. John	674
New Hampshire	Concord	521
New Jersey	Camden	404

State/Province	City	Members at YMCA
New Jersey	Morristown	339
New Jersey	Newark	1121
New Jersey	Orange	587
New Jersey	Paterson	393
New Jersey	Plainfield	446
New Jersey	Trenton	440
New York	Albany	1195
New York	Auburn	650
New York	Brooklyn - Bedford Branch	489
New York	Brooklyn - Central Branch	1434
New York	Brooklyn - E. District Branch	251
New York	Brooklyn - 26th Ward Branch	235
New York	Brooklyn - Greenpoint	217
New York	Buffalo	1849
New York	New York - Harlem Branch	883
New York	New York - Railroad Branch	1470
New York	New York - 23rd Street Branch	2251
New York	New York – Washington Heights	174
New York	New York - Young Men's Institute	653
New York	Rochester	2113
New York	Troy - Railroad	289
Ohio	Cleveland	2353
Ohio	Dayton	2480
Ohio	Piqua	675
Ohio	Springfield	1035
Ontario	Hamilton	501
Oregon	Salem	238
Pennsylvania	Bradford	160
Pennsylvania	Philadelphia – Kensington	762
Pennsylvania	Sewickley	315
Pennsylvania	Scranton	1347
Pennsylvania	Williamsport	350
Quebec	Montreal	1732
Tennessee	Knoxville	321
Tennessee	Memphis	720
Texas	Austin	405
Texas	Dallas	763
Texas	Galveston	612
Texas	Houston	812
Texas	San Antonio	549
Vermont	Rutland	526
Wisconsin	La Crosse	400
Wisconsin	Milwaukee	783

APPENDIX B

Professional Leagues, 1891-1910

Name	Years in Operation	Location	Number of Teams
American Basketball Association	1900	Philadelphia	6
American Basketball League	1901-1902	Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey	10
American Basketball League	1902-1904	Philadelphia	12
American Basketball League	1903	Connecticut	8
Central Basketball League	1906-1912	Western Pennsylvania	17
Central Massachusetts Basketball League	1901-1902	Massachusetts	6
Central Massachusetts Basketball League	1902-1903	Massachusetts	8
Eastern League	1909-1923	Eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York City	34
Hudson River League	1909-1912	Hudson River Valley and New Jersey	16
Interstate Basketball League	1899-1901	Eastern Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey	9
Massachusetts Basketball League	1900-1902	Massachusetts	11
National Basketball League	1898-1903	Eastern Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey	25
New England Basketball League	1903-1904	Massachusetts and New Hampshire	12
Philadelphia Basketball League	1902-1909	Philadelphia	25
Western Massachusetts Basketball League	1903-1904	Massachusetts	9
Western Pennsylvania Basketball League	1903-1904	Pittsburgh	5

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