



## ACROSS THE YEARS: NAISMITH'S GAME

Everyone who is at all interested in athletics is now talking basketball yet it does not stop here. Those who hitherto have manifested no interest in any sports of skill and strength seem now to be enthusiastic over the new game.

"It is talked at the club; it is discussed in the gymnasium and on the campus. Even the professors have become actively interested in the game and are giving their time of recreation over to this pastime."

*University Weekly*, Dec. 10, 1898

Basketball was invented in 1891 by James Naismith of the Springfield YMCA College as part of its research program in developing new games.

In the fall of 1898, Naismith came to the University of Kansas as associate professor of physical training and chapel director, beginning 41 years of service to the University.

It is safe to hazard the opinion that while there have been more important contributions to the world made by members of the University faculty, none has touched more lives and brought greater interest to millions the world over than the invention of basketball.

Although the game was not introduced into the University until after Naismith's arrival, its adoption had been suggested as early as 1896. His presence and active interest initiated the game at the University and in the state. Eight class and faculty teams were organized with the object of

playing a schedule and developing players for a University team.

The gymnasium at this time was in the basement of Snow Hall and was woefully inadequate for any actual games. The skating rink downtown, however, had a large floor and was rented for practices and games.

After class games had developed some skill at the game, Naismith selected a varsity team and began scheduling games. The first game was at Kansas City against the YMCA. YMCA teams throughout the country had been quick to follow the lead of the YMCA College, and their teams were therefore seasoned ones. The YMCA team defeated KU 16-5.

KU had several good excuses for not winning. It was the varsity's first game, while the YMCA was experi-

enced and had in its lineup a player by the name of James, of whom the *Weekly* wrote:

"Jesse James, the man who has lately come into prominence by his alleged connection with recent train robberies in Missouri, played a rough, and at times, a very ungentlemanly game. He was cautioned and punished by the referees several times during the game."

Later in the season, a rematch with the YMCA without the services of James (it was discovered later he was not the known bandit) resulted in KU winning 17 to 14.

The first home game was played at the skating rink Feb. 10, 1899 with the Topeka YMCA. The score: KU 31, Topeka 6. Attendance, about 50.

The first game with a neighboring state university took place the following year against Nebraska at Lincoln, Mar. 2, 1900.

The score is not recorded in the *Weekly*, but it was stated, "The little northerners tossed baskets so fast that our men lost count and did not linger to find the score after the game."

The few home games were played in the local YMCA gymnasium, a practice which was continued until Robinson Gymnasium was completed in 1907. Basketball moved to Hoch Auditorium in 1927 where it was played until 1955 when Allen Field House was completed. Ironically, the Field House, where all varsity games are now played, is located on Naismith Road.

