Meet James Naismith...He Invented Basketball

His Group of Lively Students Needed a Game to Play in the Winter Time, So the Young Instructor Set Out to Fill the Bill

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Because a lazy janitor didn’t take the trouble to throw a couple of old peach baskets into the alley, America’s most popular indoor sport was given the name of basketball.

This is what Dr. James Naismith told the writer in Lawrence, Kan., a few weeks ago. And Dr. Naismith should know what he is talking about. He invented the game. He has been teaching boys to play it ever since December, 1891.

Dr. Naismith was sitting on his second-floor front porch reading the Kansas City Star the evening the winter drove up. In Kansas it is wise to screen the porch in order to keep out flies, mosquitoes and black widow spiders. It is annoying, when trying to read or knit, to keep brushing flies off one’s nose or to chase a spider with a swatter.

“Well, you have come some distance,” said the doctor as he put aside his newspaper to look at the visitor’s cart. “By the way, folks have had some strange teams out in Oregon, both at your university and at your state college.”

Here the writer forgave himself for a moment, forgot that he was in the presence of basketball royalty, and, “Yes, but the California teams have more money and better jobs to offer our good football players,” was explained.

Game’s Start Explained

“I wasn’t thinking of football,” said Dr. Naismith, “I was thinking of your basketball teams.”

The man in the green sweater had the same look that a professor of wood收藏 would have in his mind.

“About the rules,” he continued, “I made them up on the spur of the moment. I wanted something to keep all the boys in the gymnasium, and something else to get them out somewhere. We had two gym classes and the school district wanted something for the weather. A new game that they would like if it took me all winter. I began to study all games as a whole. My first thought was we would have that morning was Frank Mahan from North Carolina. He was a football tackle and a very good player. He had been very difficult to handle in school, and had been the worst fault-finder in my classes. I was anxious to win him to my new-fangled game because I knew if I won him I would have the class.

But I didn’t have a very promising start. He said, seeing me there:

“Hello! Another new game!”

Reduced Team Size

“I didn’t let on as though I heard him, and when the other boys arrived I picked out two teams, saying to them, ’If this game doesn’t work, I’ll never try another new one!’ At first I had nine men on a team, but reduced this to seven before the first season was over; the next year I reduced the teams to five men each.”

Dr. Naismith had been so interested in the narrative that he didn’t allow any time for needless questionings, but at this point the visitor interjected:

“How did it get name?”

“I didn’t get the name,” said Dr. Naismith; “I got it from the Ft. I was thinking of the name for Ft. A game without a name would be any name as all. Mahan enthusiastically announced that it should be called Naismith ball. I was too shy and modest to allow that name to be given, so I suggested:

“Why not call it basketball?”

The Name Stuck

“This name took right away. And,” Dr. Naismith added, “before I knew it the Naismith ball and the Naismith rule book was being used in every school in the country.”

Large Ball Preferred

“I realized that when a small ball was used we would have a basketball team,” said Dr. Naismith, “now there are only two small teams in the country.”

The first man to come to class said, “Dr. Naismith, I think we should have a large ball that is used by many teams.”

Dr. Naismith said, “That’s true, but I wanted a basketball that would stand up to the wear and tear of a football.”

The Naismith ball, and I make something out of that. But the greatest thing I have made is the realization that my game has brought enjoyment and healthful exercise to tens of thousands of our young people.”

In 1890, James Naismith left Lawrence and went to the University of Kansas as a physical education instructor.

Teaches Two Subjects

“Like most people, I have a hobby,” said Dr. Naismith, “and I don’t think you could guess what it is. I may be the fellow you have met in your travels who has had such a hobby—I found it a very useful one at the time.”

Dr. Naismith put the leaves of the notebook together and said, “The main thing that I do every year is to tell my story.”

A Japanese basketball team touring the United States made a special stop at the University of Kansas to visit Dr. Naismith.

Springfield for Denver. In the Colorado city he completed his medical course, and aided in making his new game popular in the column through his autobiography which was published here in 1905. The book, which is the story of the life and times of the Naismith, is the story of the development of basketball. The book, which is the story of the life and times of Dr. Naismith, is the story of the development of basketball.