

Basketball Was What It Was

By Gary Knehans

Many of us remember when there was no such thing in basketball as a three-point field goal, but what about some of the other rules of those earlier times on the court?

And, do you remember those much smaller, oldtime courts? Many times it was necessary for players sitting on the benches along the sidelines to move their feet out of the way when the action was right in front of them.

Longtime Pulaski County Collector George Lane, now retired, recalls a wild and crazy game the Waynesville team played on the road some time in the 1920's. While our team was pretty darn good, and was used to playing in what we would consider cramped quarters today, Lane says our boys were completely taken aback by the even smaller dimensions of this court. As a matter of fact, the gym was so diminutive that the sideline boundaries were drawn at the base of the walls. The significance of this was not fully appreciated by the visiting cagers until the game began. When the home team began passing the ball off the walls and racking up points without out-of-bounds being called, the Waynesville coach and his roundballers learned a quick lesson in pure home court advantage. Their opponents really had a substantial advantage playing at home, as each player knew the right spots on the walls to hit for each pass. Our boys ~~did~~ not, and came home sadder but much wiser.

Former Pulaski County Clerk Al Lercher recalls that when he played basketball at Richland in 1935, the game was played in truly full court fashion. A team with the ball could travel backcourt at will.



Crocker eighth-grade basketball team in 1928. The late Kenneth Cowan, former mayor of Lebanon, is second from the left. Max Henry, also deceased, is second from the right. Photo courtesy of Maxine Mallach.

In these low scoring games, teams with the lead often employed a true full court stall. When the opposing team came backcourt to apply pressure on the ball, the stalling team would then fast break to the forecourt goal to score.

There were plenty of jump ball situations, for which two opposing players actually jumped for possession of the ball. Nowadays when 'jump ball' is called, possession is awarded on an alternating basis. Years ago, the two involved players jumped for possession of the ball

at center court or at one of the two free throw lines. When Lercher played in 1935, there was a jump ball opportunity after every basket was scored. Imagine the shin splints!

The clock kept running when the ball went out of bounds, allowing even more delaying tactics by the team in the lead. The trailing team, of course, would rush its inbound in hopes of fashioning a comeback.

No coaching was allowed during timeouts. It was the job

of substitutes to bring the coach's instructions on the court when they came in to replace a teammate.

Back in '35, the basketball players almost always aimed all shots at the backboard, even the free throws. Some aficionados say today's young players could improve their shooting averages if they employed the same approach to their shots. Most players, however, shoot at the goal rather than the backboard.



John Anderson Smith, subject of last year's article, "The Portuguese of Portuguese Point". Smith lived to well over 100 years in age. This obviously is he at a younger age.

OSG Now On Microfilm

With early issues of the Old Settlers' Gazette hard to locate, KJPW Radio is happy to announce that all fifteen previous issues are now available on microfilm, thanks to the State Historical Society of Missouri.

After several requests by the historical society, KJPW personnel located a complete set of the Old Settlers' Gazette and sent the papers to Columbia for microfilming. The process was completed last summer.

As a result, history buffs, researchers, and those who enjoy reading about our past can now peruse past Gazette articles at the State Historical Society of Missouri, located in the same building, but separate from, Ellis Library on the University of Missouri campus in Columbia.

KJPW wishes to thank the State Historical Society of Missouri for their interest in our unique publication, the Old Settlers' Gazette!