

Heritage of the Game

The game of basketball is often referred to as the only major sport which originated in the United States. Unlike many other popular sports, basketball was not conceived by changing the principles or rules of an existing game. It was a deliberate and original invention created out of necessity to provide a challenging, vigorous activity that could be played indoors.



Basketball was born back in December of 1891, when Dr. James Naismith nailed peach baskets to the balconies at each end of the International Young Men's Christian Association Training School (now Springfield College in Springfield, Massachusetts).



The first game was played with a soccer ball, nine player teams, and governed by a set of thirteen rules. The team size was actually determined by the total number of students (18) in Naismith's physical education class. Although there was no scorebook, the score of the first game was said to be 1-0 with William Chase credited in making the first basket in the history of basketball. It was reported

to be approximately 25' (a half court shot in the small Springfield gymnasium) midway through the 30 minute game.

The 13 Original Rules Of Basketball

These original rules were first published in January 1892 in the school's newspaper, *The Triangle*. All of these original rules are in some way still in effect today (see comments).

1. The ball may be thrown in any direction with one or both hands.

Comment: Still current today. The ball can be passed or thrown in any direction with the exception that once the ball crosses the midcourt line, it cannot be passed back behind the midcourt line.

2. The ball may be batted in any direction with one or both hands (never with the fist.)

Comment: Ball can still be batted or tipped in any direction with one or both hands but never with a closed fist. Ball also cannot be kicked.

3. A player cannot run with the ball. The player must throw it from the spot on which he catches it, allowance to be made for a man who catches the ball when running at a good speed if he tries to stop.

Comment: A player still cannot run with the ball. If they do it's a violation. They must pass or dribble the ball with one hand. No allowance made when receiving a pass.

4. The ball must be held in or between the hands; the arms or body must not be used for holding it.

Comment: Players still cannot hold the ball against their body when moving. Results in a traveling violation.

5. No shouldering, holding, pushing, tripping, or striking in any way the person of an opponent shall be allowed; the first infringement of this rule by any player shall count as a foul, the second shall disqualify him until the next goal is made, or, if there was evident intent to injure the person, for the whole of the game, no substitute allowed.

Comment: These infractions or player fouls still apply. Players are disqualified from the game after committing five or six fouls. Flagrant fouls may result in automatic ejections along with suspensions.

6. A foul is striking at the ball with the fist, violation of Rules 3, 4, and such as described in Rule 5.

Comment: True today. The ball cannot be struck with a closed fist or kicked.

7. If either side makes three consecutive fouls, it shall count a goal for the opponents (consecutive means without the opponents in the mean time making a foul.

Comment: This rule has been replaced by bonus free throws after a certain number of team fouls.

8. A goal shall be made when the ball is thrown or batted from the grounds into the basket and stays there, providing those defending the goal do not touch or disturb the goal. If the ball rests on the edges, and the opponent moves the basket, it shall count as a goal.

Comment: Ball now goes through the basket. Defensive basket interference and offensive goaltending rules still apply. However, FIBA rules allow touching the ball by either team once it hits the rim.

9. When the ball goes out of bounds, it shall be thrown into the field of play by the person first touching it. In case of a dispute, the umpire shall throw it straight into the field. The thrower-in is allowed five seconds; if he holds it longer, it shall go to the opponent. If any side persists in delaying the game, the umpire shall call a foul on that side.

Comment: This out of bounds rule has been changed in that ball possession goes to the opposite team of the last player touching the ball. The inbounds five second count is still in effect and shot clocks have replaced the delay of game fouls.

10. The umpire shall be judge of the men and shall note the fouls and notify the referee when three consecutive fouls have been made. He shall have power to disqualify men according to Rule 5.

Comment: The umpire has been replaced with two or three person officiating crews. Player disqualifications have been modified to five or six personal fouls.

11. The referee shall be judge of the ball and shall decide when the ball is in play, in bounds, to which side it belongs, and shall keep the time. He shall decide when a goal has been made, and keep account of the goals with any other duties that are usually performed by a referee.

Comment: The referee has essentially been replaced by official scorers and timers. Out of bounds and goal decisions are made by the on court officials.

12. The time shall be two 15-minute halves, with five minutes' rest between.

Comment: Game formats including length and the number of periods played along with halftime periods vary according to level.

13. The side making the most goals in that time shall be declared the winner. In case of a draw, the game may, by agreement of the captains, be continued until another goal is made.

Comment: Sudden death or the first team to score has been replaced with five minute overtime periods.

From these original rules, the game has evolved into an exciting, high scoring, spectator sport played by the world's greatest athletes.