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# Interscholastic Basketball: Bane of Collegiate Physical Educators

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Basketball for girls and women was the bane of four generations of collegiate physical educators. Almost since its inception basketball was the subject of vociferous debate among women physical educators. Convinced that the game's "fighting features" developed aggressive characteristics that were not in harmony with proper behavior expected of young ladies; collegiate physical educators launched a restoration campaign that spanned nearly three-quarters of a century. Attempts to control the game through rule modifications were initiated soon after women began playing basketball. Perpetual rule changes confirm the

persistence of women physical educators to regulate the physical demands of the game. Additionally, regulations curtailing competition were continually approved. By 1930 intercollegiate basketball competition was relegated to play day status throughout most of the country, however, interscholastic competition thrived at least two more decades in many states.

Because girls' basketball in Florida paralleled the development of the sport in other states, factors that influenced the development and eventual decline of competition serve to explain in part why collegiate physical educators were unable to control the sport in the nation's high schools. By the 1920's girls basketball flourished in Florida and for several years, seasons culminated at a state tournament. Its growth demonstrates the contrast in controlled collegiate basketball. Competition continued in varying degrees of intensity until the number of teams drastically declined in the 1950's.

Interscholastic basketball, the antithesis of collegiate basketball, developed in Florida because: 1) some schools were too small to conduct intramural programs, 2) many counties in the state did not have physical education programs, 3) small towns rallied around winning teams, 4) women who began coaching prior to 1923 were not indoctrinated by women who opposed highly organized competition, and 5) principals frequently hired one male to coach both boy's and girls' teams. Because men favored interschool competition, they promoted basketball for both boys and girls.

The demise of the girls' state basketball tournament and eventual decline of the game played by high school girls in Florida can be attributed: 1) the persistent opposition voiced by physical educators at the Florida State College for Women, 2) male coaches demanding the gymnasiums for boy's junior varsity programs, 3) elimination of girls' teams by schools who favored the expansion of boys' programs, 4) lack of leadership among women who formed a loosely organized basketball conference, 5) influence exerted by women who became disciples of women who objected to interscholastic competition, and 6) a convincing campaign led by men who promoted the myth that vigorous physical activity was detrimental to girls.

After a hiatus of nearly twenty years interscholastic basketball has resumed and is among the most popular distaff sports in the country. Numerous physical educators recognized that highly skilled girls and women were not being challenged through intramural and play day competition. Having virtually no coaching experience, physical educators began to develop competitive basketball programs in the 1960's. Further impetus to the return of interscholastic and intercollegiate basketball has come from Title IX. Women physical educators are confronted with a myriad of problems resulting from highly organized basketball. Perhaps basketball has emerged as a moot issue for distaff physical educators. It is the bane of contemporary physical educators?