

---

# The Social Historical Function of Six-Player Girls' Basketball in Iowa

JANICE ANN BERAN  
Iowa State University

Each year since 1963 members of the Iowa Girl's High School Athletic Union Executive Board have inducted four-six outstanding former basketball players into the Iowa Girl's Basketball Hall of Fame. These 128 members, having played in the time span 1917-1971, were the subjects for this study on the history of girl's basketball in Iowa. A questionnaire eliciting both quantitative and qualitative data was developed and sent to the seventy-five Hall of Famers whose addresses were secured. Eighty-nine per cent of those who received the instrument completed and returned it along with a variety of substantiating material such as newspaper clippings and pictures.

Analysis of the data showed that six-player, three court basketball was played until 1934. Scores of games were low and often lopsided because an agile jumping center forward could intercept passes to the front court. As the two court style was adopted, hook shots, screens, and use of a tall pivot forward made high scoring games the standard competitive force.

Although originally played by larger high schools, it gradually became the sport of the smaller schools until the late 1960's and 1970's when school consolidation and Title IX resulted in larger school representation. In the rural communities the girls' basketball team has traditionally engendered much pride and garnered much support.

Hours of practice varied little except during World War 11 when practices were held during physical education class time. The number of games per regular season varied from fifteen to twenty-two. All teams except those during the 1920's were coached by males.

Tournament-associated activities were numerous in the 1920's, dropped during the 1930's, and thereafter gradually escalated. All respondents expressed positive feelings about the state tournament. Subjects prior to 1960 expressed virtually no negative feelings. There seemed to be significant correlation between increased pre-tournament, tournament, and post-tournament activities and negative feelings by Hall of Fame subjects in 1960. The data showed that the sport has been affected by changing times, that former players continue to value this particular six-player basketball, and that Iowans are willing to invest quantities of time and treasure in it.