

# The Dixie Classic and the Growth of Collegiate Basketball in North Carolina

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Basketball began to flourish in what is today's Atlantic Coast Conference following North Carolina State College's hiring of Everett Case in 1946. With players brought primarily from Indiana, Case showcased a fast-moving style of play which popularized the game as never before in the Tobacco Belt. He also started the Dixie Classic in 1949 which pitted Duke University, North Carolina State College, and University of North Carolina, and Wake Forest College against four nationally ranked teams in this Christmas-holiday, single-elimination tournament. His victories in the Dixie Classic and the Southern Conference influenced the University of North Carolina in 1952 to hire Frank McGuire whose underground railroad for players from New York brought basketball into national prominence there.

In spite of its ever-increasing popularity, in 1961 the President of the Consolidated University of North Carolina system ended the Dixie Classic. In doing so, he stated that this holiday tournament was exploitation for public entertainment

and for commercial purposes and thereby subjected the students, the coaches, and the institutions to unnecessary demands and unadvised distractions. This decision, made jointly by the President and the two Chancellors, was based, however, on even more critical problems at both institutions, namely violations of National Collegiate Athletic Association recruiting regulations and player involvement in the bribery scandals. In spite of a loud hue and cry, the administration refused to relent in its deemphasis of both basketball programs by limiting the number of games and the number of and region of recruitment for grants-in-aid. The restrictions on the basketball programs and the reduction of the commercialized influences were short-lived, however, as they gained national prominence in holiday and championship tournaments with their nationally-recruited athletes who played full schedules of games before thousands of spectators at home and on television.



Maxine Hunter      Vern Shockley