

Dr. James Naismith: How He Saw His Game Develop in Canada and the United States

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James Naismith, an imaginative and muscular Canadian Christian, invented the game of basketball in 1891 at the Springfield Massachusetts Y.M.C.A. Training School. He lived his life in accordance with classical Presbyterian precepts, acquired in the rural and puritan world of the Ottawa River Valley. Neither the formal education he received at McGill University nor his later studies in Massachusetts and Colorado would lead him away from his initial Christian goals. The game of basketball and the profession of physical education were for him the means of assisting youth to divine both moral and physical strength. The development of these strengths among the partici-

pants in his game of basketball was the major criteria by which he evaluated the success of his invention both in Canada and the United States.

Steeped in his Scottish Canadian heritage he grew to be equally proud of his adopted country and became an American citizen in 1925. He perceived the potential evils in the commercialism of basketball in the United States. However, he continued to extoll it virtues in contributing positively to the education of American and Canadian leaders. He was particularly supportive of Y.M.C.A., A.A.U. and commercial teams that emphasized the playing of the game in manner that stressed "sportsmanship" above "winning."

The "Jayhawker," the University of Kansas student annual was dedicated to James Naismith in 1925. The dedication at the front of this publications read:

To Dr. James A. (sic) Naismith. Twentysix years at the University as Director of Physical Education, father of basketball, exponent of clean sportsmanship, believer in the Kansas Spirit, a Christian gentleman, and true friend of all K.U. students.

Naismith's years in the State of Kansas saw him become basketball's elder statesman. He was revered for his humility, honesty and invention of the game. His idealism, diversified interests, and lack of management skills prevented this thoughtful educator from becoming a national leader in physical education.

This paper examined how James Naismith saw basketball promoting certain cultural values of his era in the United States and Canada.