

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF NETBALL AND THE
ALL-AUSTRALIA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
ASSOCIATION (AAWBBA) : 1891-1939**

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It was not until 1970 that the game known as 'Women's Basket Ball' in Australia officially became 'netball'. At a Council Meeting in 'Brisbane in August of that same year the word 'women's' was deleted and the name of the ruling body was changed to the All Australian Netball Association (AANA). Throughout this paper, however, the term 'netball' will be used to refer to the game which was called variously women's basket ball, basketball, outdoor basketball, seven-a-side or netball (unless the context of the discussion requires other terminologies).

The focus of the paper concerns the development of netball and its main co-ordinating body, the AAWBBA prior to World War Two. As one of few sports specifically available for girls and women, a study of the development of netball provides insights about factors such as how women considered their sport should develop, the attitudes of males towards women participating in 'vigorous' sports, and the coverage provided by the press. A comparatively modern sport, netball is a derivation of the basketball game devised by James Naismith in America in 1891. Naismith, a Canadian working in Springfield, Massachusetts, invented the game in the YMCA with the idea of maintaining fitness during the bad weather between the football and the baseball seasons.

The name 'basketball' stemmed from the two peach baskets which Naismith nailed to the balcony of the YMCA gymnasium in Springfield. The object of the game was to insert a soccer ball (association football) into those baskets.

Basketball was introduced into England in 1895 when Dr Toll, an American, visited Martina Bergman-Osterberg's Physical Training College, which was then at Hampstead.¹ Toll taught the game to the students and they passed it on by word of mouth to those who followed them. Not only were there no printed rules, there were also no lines, circles or boundaries on the court and the goals were two waste paper baskets attached to walls at each end of the hall. As the walls formed the boundaries to the court, the ball was never out of play.

Martina Bergman-Osterberg's Physical Training College was moved to a site at Dartford and, in 1897, an American woman visited the college and taught the game as it was then played by women in America. At that time there were various sets of rules - including the official rules for men, the inter-collegiate rules used chiefly by men, and Spalding's rules which were for women. These were adopted officially in the United States in 1899 but most of these rules had many local variations. When the game was introduced at Dartford, metal rings were used instead of baskets, there was a larger ball and the area of the court was divided into three sections. The game was also played outdoors on grass and by 1899 the USA Spalding rules for women had been adopted. After completing their studies at Dartford, many of the women teachers took the game into the schools, where the need for a uniform set of rules became apparent. The Ling Association (now known as the Physical Education Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) had been founded in 1899 with many of its members coming from Bergman-Osterberg's College and in 1901 it set up a sub-committee to revise and publish 250 copies of the first set of rules. Changes which were adopted from the latest American rules included reduction in the size of the ball to the same dimensions as a regulation football (soccer) to avoid the need for a special ball. Rings

were reduced accordingly, to their present size (15 inches or 380mm diameter). Nets were added and posts were raised to their present height of 10 feet (3.05 metres). Thus, netball in Great Britain was born. Another major change in the rules was the introduction of the shooting circle to prevent shooting at the net from long distances.

From 1901, the game progressed. It was certainly fostered by teachers in English schools and colleges and by a small but growing number of clubs. There is evidence that a Netball Association of the London Girls Secondary Schools was formed and much help was given by the Girls Public Day Schools Games Association. In 1906, a book entitled, *The Game of Netball and How to Play It*, written by B.H. Grieve² was published by the Ling Association. One of the key statements in that book was that:

Teams may number either 5, 7, or 9 a-side; for the first two, a piece of ground 100 feet long by 75 feet long is sufficient; for the latter, 150 feet long by 75 feet wide; but the 7 a-side with the shorter ground is the game usually played.

This statement (taken from the 3rd edition, 1916), proved to be a hindrance to the spread of the game both nationally and internationally because of the flexibility in team numbers.

The early history of netball in Australia is not well documented although it seems probable that it was being played in Australia by 1906.³ It was certainly played in primary and secondary schools soon afterwards and it was most likely that the game was introduced by teachers from England. Hyland has stated:

In Victoria it is on record that an Inter-School seven-a-side basket ball competition was conducted in Victorian Primary Schools in 1913. The game was played in Secondary Schools too, and in 1915, two male teachers are said to have put rules on paper for State Schools!

Mrs Jean Cowan has recalled that in 1920 there was a sports ground which included outdoor courts at the Young Women's Christian Association Hostel in Church Street, Richmond, Victoria, and that teams representing YWCA clubs played there.⁵ Church and other girls' clubs made requests to play against each other at the YWCA and, in 1922, Misses Louise Mills and Nonie Hardie, both of the YWCA, called a meeting of girls who were interested in playing competitively: the outcome was the formation of the Melbourne Girls' Basket Ball Association with five affiliated clubs.⁶ Competition games commenced in May 1923, with six teams (St Matthews, Malvern Congregational, Davies Doery, Glenhuntly Congregational, Malvern Church of Christ and the YWCA). In the following year there were twelve teams in the Association.⁷

During the years preceding the formation of the All Australia Women's Basket Ball Association (AAWBBA) in 1927 there were active city, regional and state associations but detailed information about them is fragmentary. Mrs Jean Dolding has stated that 9-a-side Basket Ball was played in Queensland from 1920 until the late thirties, under the auspices of the Queensland Ladies Basket Ball Association (QLBBA), which had its headquarters at Albert Park in Brisbane.⁸ During the 1929-30 season a break-away group, the Queensland Women's Basket Ball Association (QWBBA) was formed and introduced the 7-a-side game into Brisbane and Queensland. Mrs Dolding relates that her club, Nirvana Sports Club, which won premierships in the 9-a-side competition in 1931 and 1932 joined the QWBBA as it entered its second year in 1933.

Dorothy Christensen has recalled experiences at Ithaca State School in the early 1920s where her teacher, Miss Letty Clark, would take Basket Ball on a rough, sloping playground with white ground markings. At one end the goal was on a post; at the other it was attached to a very large Ironbark tree. After any rain there were lots of washouts and gutters in the ground, so at the Ironbark tree end the goal 'got higher and higher'. The schools which Ithaca S.S. played against in 1923 were

Kelvin Grove Girls School, Petrie Terrace Girls School, Wilston Park State School and Junction Park State School - all of which had better courts!⁹ When 'Dorrie' went on to Commercial High School in Brisbane she was in the Basket Ball team from 1924 to 1926 but cannot recall playing against other schools, even though her team wore a uniform consisting of a white blouse and school tie, navy bandanna with the school form embroidered on the front, navy blue bloomers, black stockings, and white sandshoes.¹⁰

By 1926 the game had developed sufficiently in the south-eastern states to warrant interstate competition. In that year a team representing the Melbourne Girls Basket Ball Association travelled to Sydney. This first interstate match led, in 1927, to the formation of the All-Australian Women's Basket Ball Association (AAWBBA) which held its first tournament in 1928. The Constitution and Rules of the Association¹¹ and details of the Basket Ball Rules¹² appeared in the Minutes of the AAWBBA meeting of 1927 and 22 May 1928, respectively.

The program of the first AAWBBA competition, held in Melbourne from 1-8 September 1928 included social events as well as the games. Activities included a welcome social at the YWCA, a visit to the BryMay matches factory in Richmond, a theatre party to the Capitol, an all-day picnic at Belgrave and a visit to Semco at Black Rock.

The Report of the AAWBBA in 1929 noted that all states had been represented at the carnival but that Tasmania was not affiliated to the AAWBBA.¹³ The lack of uniformity in the names of the state bodies was also an issue of concern in the early 1930s when Victoria and Tasmania were 'asked to come into line with the other States and call themselves WBBA'.¹⁴ The Western Australian association adopted this title in 1932.¹⁵ In that year the AAWBBA also passed an interesting motion: that Basket Ball 'be an absolutely silent game... The captain only may speak during progress of the game'.¹⁶

At the AAWBBA Council meeting of 1932 a synopsis of the 1932 annual reports from each state was tabled.¹⁷ Part of that very detailed

synopsis is provided in Table 1. On the basis that most teams had seven players in each side, it is calculated from the figures provided in Table 1 that there were approximately 1500 players in AAWBBA teams throughout Australia. There was clearly more support in South Australia than in any other state but the reasons for this are not yet clear. Without knowing the extent of participation by women in other team sports, of which there were few, it is difficult to speculate about the reasons for the development of netball in all states throughout the 1920s. In relative terms, women throughout this decade had acquired a sense of freedom unknown before and, women's sport boomed in Queensland. For example, rowing, croquet and hockey associations were formed,¹⁸ and in Melbourne Miss Kitty Gordon of the Central Institute of Physical Culture, Massage, Medical Gymnastics and Fencing advocated activities that exercised all the muscles.¹⁹ However, there were also warnings against women participating in too much sport, such as that published in the *Australian Women's Mirror* of 25 November 1924:

The woman who goes in for sports generally does it so strenuously or it might be more correct to say stridently, that she becomes too muscular and ungainly to ever attain the grace, ease and smoothness requisite for the ideal of feminine loveliness. Yet moderate sports are the ideal mode for keeping fit and young, provided one eats judiciously and cares for the skin and hair at the same time.²⁰

Table 1
Synopsis of Annual Reports for Each State - 1932*

	Queensland	N.S.W.	Victoria	South Australia	West Australia	Tasmania
The number of teams in the Association	21	45	53 divided into grades	73 divided into grades	16	6
Government of Association	Central control of delegates from each team	<i>Comprises</i> a no. of assns. which give representation on a council (5 assns.)	Central control of 2 delegates from each team	Central control of 2 delegates from each club	Central Control of delegates from each club	Central control of delegates from each club
	Junior assn. may affiliate		Junior assn. may affiliate			
Is 7-a-side game only 1 in the State	No There is 9-a-side	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some clubs in Metropolitan play 5-a-side	Yes
How do you popularise 7-a-side	Talks on wireless		Wireless talks night - ten minute tournaments Coaching given during the season	-	-	-

*Extracted from AWBBA Minutes, 1932, p. 69

Netball was probably regarded as one of those 'moderate sports' - it was a non-contact activity, the skills were simple and basic and the playing attire was decorous and appropriate. It was also a relatively inexpensive sport: an open-air small playing area of grass or bitumen with two metal uprights for goals and a ball. It is also significant that although both men and women used the term 'basketball' in this era, the games were very different, and most importantly, women were responsible for the organisation and administration of their own sport.

Some of the comments, attitudes and platitudes conveyed through reports in the print media during the early years of the AAWBBA interstate carnivals provide interesting insights into the socio-historical significance of this game for women. The following extracts, appearing under the headline "Women Out of Doors" by Beetec, are from a report in the Adelaide press during the Adelaide carnival in 1933.

When James Naismith invented the game of basketball 42 years ago, for the members of this Plainfield [sic] Y.M.C.A. gymnasium at Massachusetts, he little dreamed that in the course of time it would come to be one of the most popular sports for girls. It has a cosmopolitan interest in that the players are to be found among both industrial workers and academic students... Each day there has been a barracking partisanship from spectators at the court ropes. The small area in which the game is played makes for closer intimacy than is possible in the stand. Furthermore, the girls' play has attracted a large number of men, not a few of whom were acquainted with all the finer points of the game in spite of the fact that, judging by their fatherly appearance they could not have been players themselves... It is a tribute to the girls that they play the game with sufficient skill and seriousness to attract men and women of all ages to their matches... As in all team games, character building is an important feature born of important requirements. In basketball, coolness and self-control, endurance and accuracy, quickness of movement, and strong, immediate judgment, are the first essentials. Quick turns and eager anticipation are necessary for the passing of the 20-ounce leather ball; accurate judgment and coolness are required in tossing the 30-inch circumference ball into the 18-inch diameter net (or goal)

suspended from a pole 10 feet high. Although there are many tumbles and bumps, there is not the slightest element of roughness; unintentionally, there may be a foul, and the penalty is a free throw to the other side. Players worth while are 'on their toes' all the time and the 'orange adjournment' at half-time is a welcome break.²¹

Beetec's report provides positive insights about the acceptance of netball by both men and women and, significantly, by the media. This was also the case in 1934 when the AAWBBA carnival was held at New Farm Park in Brisbane from 27 August until 3 September. The teams arrived by the 'Kyogle Mail' on 26 August and gathered for a civic reception by the Lady Mayoress, which was broadcast on radio by Radio 4BC. The media of the day were most supportive, with the captains of each state team being interviewed on Radio 4BC on the morning of the first day of play. Several matches were also broadcast.²²

In Sydney, the City Girls Amateur Sports Association was very actively associated with 'Basket Ball' as well as other sports such as cricket. In a scrap-book compiled by Ms Maisie Mudie there are undated newspaper cuttings which provide an indication of the involvement of various banks, shops, offices and industrial establishments. Ms Mudie who was a member of the NSW team which participated in the first All Australia Basket Ball carnival in Melbourne, has provided an article which reports on some aspects of the sport in Sydney:

The basket ball season has now come to a close, after a successful season, in which forty-three clubs competed in four grade competitions.

We feel that the standard of our play has greatly improved this year, due to the fact that several weeks of compulsory coaching was held on Wednesday evenings at Rushcutter's Bay Oval (electrically lit) and regular practices were offered throughout the winter nights on Mick Simmons' roof, under the able tuition of Mrs Bryson Taylor.²³

An interesting commentary about clothing was recorded in the press, with an accompanying photograph, during the 1929-1930 Queensland Ladies Basket Ball Association 9-a-side season, under the by-line 'Shorts Too Tight':


There is a likelihood that the Basket Ball Association may be troubled with a variation of the 'shorts' problem which caused a stir in athletic circles last year. The athletic shorts were considered to be too short but length does not constitute the objection to the Romantique team's nether garments. It is the tightness of the shorts which is causing uneasiness. Quite apart from the daring appearance of the players, there is a feeling that one day the strain will be too much, and, as on the football field, players may be asked to 'gather round' while a necessary change, perhaps, repair, is effected. This new departure in basket ball fashions originated with the Sunbeam team in Toowoomba. Their combination of colours is cream and gold, but as their shorts are well tailored and built on ample lines their smart appearance is much admired. For street wear the shorts are covered with a cream coat bound with gold. Romantiques are the only Brisbane team so far to adopt shorts. Theirs are blue with a stripe down the side.²⁴

The appropriateness of attire has always been a matter of discussion; despite the 'smart appearance' of those dressed in shorts as described above, 'tunics' or skirts with a maximum length above the knee became the accepted mode.

An early indication of the promotion and growing significance of netball may be gleaned from the travel pass provided for Maisie Mudie while attending the 8th AAWBBA Carnival in Tasmania in 1935.²⁵

HOBART MUNICIPAL TRAMWAYSTO CONDUCTORS:

The Bearer M. MUDIE is a member of an Interstate Basket Ball Team and is entitled to travel on all trams up to 11.15 p.m. for 1d. per car ride. This pass is available from August 24th until Sept. 2nd.


for ENGINEER & MANAGER.

Owing to an epidemic of infantile paralysis in Melbourne, the 1937 AAWBBA tournament was cancelled and the 1938 tournament scheduled for Melbourne. The abandonment of the 1937 event prevented the annual general meeting of AAWBBA so all officers retained their positions for the ensuing year.²⁶

The efforts to link Australia with New Zealand and England, 'and foster an international code of basket ball' was the main thrust of the Annual Report of the AAWBBA in 1938. As stated previously, from the earliest days of the AAWBBA one of the prime objectives was 'to organise interstate and international matches'.²⁷ Therefore, it was not surprising that the association began to approach both England and the United States in 1932 in an attempt to establish international netball links. These efforts proved to be unsuccessful but contact was made with New Zealand in 1935.²⁸ At this time, there were no standardised international rules, of course, and different countries played different games or variations of the same game. As has already been stated, even within Australia there were varying forms of 'netball' being played - even to the

extent that there were rival associations to the state bodies of the AAWBBA.²⁹

In 1957 a further attempt to establish relations with England was made. Mrs O. Peatfield, the President of the NSWBBA, was touring England in her capacity as manager of the Australian Women's Cricket team and was to make a direct contact with the All England Netball Association (AENA). Regrettably, this contact was not made because of the illness of one of the team members.³⁰ However, a significant move towards establishing international links occurred in the same year when Miss Edith Hull visited New Zealand as a representative of the AAWBBA. The opportunity for the visit arose because of the cancellation of the annual interstate carnival in Melbourne. The Victorian WBBA proposed to send a delegate to the New Zealand inter-provincial tournament which was to be held on 31 August, 1937. Miss Hull, who was the current President of the AAWBBA, was elected as the delegate to go to New Zealand with the task of reporting on the New Zealand game and to issue an invitation for a representative New Zealand squad of twelve players to attend the 1938 AAWBBA inter-state carnival. It was hoped that her visit would 'lead to the adoption by New Zealand of the Australian seven-a-side game and a regular interchange of visits'.³¹

Initially, there appeared to be no chance of a compromise by the AAWBBA regarding rules. It was expected that New Zealand would need to comply to the request of the Australian body. Not surprisingly, the New Zealanders were reluctant and Edith Hull reported their reaction to her address to the annual meeting of the NZWBBA:

After the luncheon adjournment Australian Rules were explained to all delegates and discussed. There was no enthusiasm in regard to a complete change and in view of the apparent feeling I deemed it wiser to merely suggest a compromise.³²

It was apparent that the New Zealanders were not going to be dominated by the netballers from across the Tasman. Their initial reaction was to reject the invitation to the 1938 AAWBBA tournament on the grounds that it coincided with their own. They also rejected outright the idea of adopting the Australian game, but they were more amenable to a compromise on the rules. Hull was informed that if an agreement had not been reached by the end of the following year (1938), the New Zealand association would not be interested in pursuing the matter any further.³³

Facing this sort of resistance, Hull found it necessary to step outside her allotted representative powers and become more conciliatory. Her actions led to the establishment of international netball in Australia. At the next meeting of the NZBBA it was agreed that the invitation from the AAWBBA to attend the 1938 tournament be accepted. It was also agreed that 'it was not a matter of which game they preferred but which would be in the best interests in the long run for International Basketball'.³⁴ However, the New Zealanders did want some conditions met; one was that all Australians be given a demonstration of the New Zealand 9-a-side game. Another condition, probably as a result of the above stipulation, was that the touring party be increased from 12 to 15. There was also an agreement that a uniform set of rules should be negotiated for internationals and that they be 'as near as possible to the English rules'.³⁵

Edith Hull believed that by the end of her visit she had convinced the New Zealanders of the advantages of the 7-a-side game in most instances. One problem she saw was in the method of starting and re-starting a game. The Australian game used a centre bounce which was considered potentially dangerous by the administrators of New Zealand basketball. The 9-a-side game used a centre pass, with a coin toss determining which team started the match. From then on the centre pass was taken by the team which had the goal scored against them. Some of the differences in rules led to the evolution of two different and distinct

styles of play. An obvious difference was the 'guarding' rule in the New Zealand game where the defending player was allowed to attempt to spoil an attacker's pass by jumping in a vertical plane extending the arms sideways or upwards without actually making physical contact. This tactic meant that the New Zealand style of passing differed from the Australian style because it required two-handed passes from behind the head or from the chest. In fact, the New Zealand style of goal-shooting was also two-handed from behind the head.³⁶ The Australian style of throwing tended to be one-handed from the shoulder.³⁷ Hull also noticed that the New Zealand players passed the ball on quickly with the ball rarely being held for any length of time by any player.³⁸ Perhaps this was because of the rule which allowed them up to two bounces of the ball, with no bounce being used to gain territory. There were also other minor rule differences which had to be negotiated for the forthcoming tour, such as re-shooting for a goal if the first attempt was unsuccessful.

The New Zealand team arrived in Australia in 1938 primarily to participate in the inter-state tournament which was held from 15 - 22 August in Melbourne. As well as playing against the states, the tourists also played an All-Australian team on 20 August in Australia's first international match. The final score (Australia 40 New Zealand 11) was apparently not indicative of the closeness of the match or of the 'splendid teamwork' displayed by the New Zealanders. A press report stated: 'Time and again the New Zealand team's system outwitted the Australian players but faulty goaling lost it chances of victory'.³⁹ *The Sporting Globe* of 20 August 1938, included the following:

Brilliant play by Australia's defenders, Merle Leabon and Jean Wood kept New Zealand subdued in the early stages of the Women's International Basketball match at Royal Park today. With a lead of 14 goals at half-time Australia went on to win 40-11.

With the exception of Roma Good and Mavis Richber, both South Australia, the Australian team comprised Victorian girls. Miss Richber played a splendid game on the defence wing until she

slipped a cartilage in her knee just on half-time. Dot Eckhart was moved out to the wing and Edna Metcalfe (NSW) brought into the centre. It was the first international game played in Australia.⁴⁰

It transpired that the New Zealand game utilised a larger goal ring which was placed directly adjacent to the pole rather than 6 inches from the pole as in Australia, which might account for the inaccurate shooting in this match. The New Zealanders also had problems with the 'foot rule'.⁴¹

The New Zealand touring party included four officials whose major function was to negotiate a set of rules for international play. It was clear that these were intended to cover all international matches and, in particular, future matches against England. New Zealand proposed to host a tournament in 1940 to celebrate their centenary, at which both England and Australia would attend. It was felt that further discussions about the modification and standardising of international rules would be held at that time.⁴²

Discussions about these rules were held during the Melbourne tournament and the 'modifications' were trialled in the Australia-New Zealand match, and for a practice match between Victoria and Tasmania.⁴³ In all other matches on the tour, New Zealand played according to the 7-a-side rules, apart from the 'demonstration' 9-a-side match which was one of the conditions of the tour. The international rules drawn up were a mixture of the New Zealand, Australian and English codes. For example, it was decided for the 'progression rule' to ...adopt English rule, plus New Zealand note ...plus English rule 13 substituting 'difficult' for 'impossible'...⁴⁴ New Zealand made major sacrifices by allowing the reduction of team members from 9 to 7 and also the elimination of guarding, which suggests they were eager to establish an international code of basketball.⁴⁵ The major differences between the international rule and the Australian code were:

- (a) commencement of game by pass instead of centre bounce, then alternate pass throughout the game;
- (b) difference in size of court;
- (c) tightening up of body foul rule to eliminate all personal contact;
- (d) throw-up instead of a bounce for a 'tie-ball';
- (e) time limit of five seconds for goal shooting;
- (f) a more liberal interpretation of the progression rule;
- (g) players to stand anywhere within their own playing areas;
- (h) elimination of 'off the court' play (outside boundaries);
- (i) opponent of player taking a penalty pass may not take part in the game until the ball is touched by another player.⁴⁶

The 'new rules' were accepted by the AAWBBA which urged the various state associations to adopt them.

The AAWBBA proposed that some form of international body consisting of delegates from Australia, England and New Zealand be established to control international basketball. The AAWBBA decided to draft a constitution of an 'Empire Council' to send to England and New Zealand, and to the Australian states for their consideration.⁴⁷ The subsequent constitution for the International Women's Basketball Council was submitted in 1939 and accepted by the AAWBBA. This Council was to consist of two delegates from each affiliated national association and business was to be conducted by mail. The aims of the council were to further international basketball and to standardise the rules.⁴⁸

It is clear that the tour by New Zealand generated much enthusiasm in Australia for further international competition. The AAWBBA was keen to undertake a reciprocal tour to New Zealand in 1940. However, the association was not financially viable enough to underwrite such a tour so it was decided at an early stage that any players selected to tour would be responsible for their own expenses. The AAWBBA did agree to cover 75 per cent of the manageress' and

umpire's expenses. It was also decided that the team would be truly representative of the federation and, if possible, it would include at least one player from each state.⁴⁹

The enthusiasm among the players was such that they were prepared to bear the cost and a team was selected after the 1939 interstate carnival at Adelaide in September. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 4 September named the players stating it was 'the first representative All Australia women's basketball team to tour New Zealand'. They were B. Douglas-Ballen, L.M. Conchie, D. Middleton, J. Wood, M. Linton (Victoria); R. Good, M. Wester (South Australia); E. Metcalf (New South Wales); D. Basley (Western Australia); P. Ferricks (Queensland); N. Reardon (Tasmania); D. Rooney (Manager) and A. Clark (Umpire). The team members were expected to be more than merely good players; they were to be 'promoters' of the 'new outdoor basketball' an international game! Players were required to pass an examination of the new rules prior to embarking on the tour. Additionally, '... the Council requires that you will take an active part in umpiring and general basketball matters in your state on your return.'⁵⁰

The proposed 1940 tour was as much an investment in the dissemination of the international rules to the states as it was a sporting tour. However, World War Two intervened and this tour to New Zealand was cancelled. There was to be no further consideration of any international netball for the next five years.

Conclusions

Netball, in its many guises such as basket ball, 7-a-side, and women's basketball, became a popular team sport for girls and women during the period of its introduction in Australia in the late 1890s. Although reliable historical data about its development in each state over the first two decades is scarce, one may speculate from the fact the AAWBBA was formed in 1927 that there was a steady growth in the

number of players in school, suburban, church and commercial teams. Until the formation of the AAWBBA there were state and regional variations in the rules of play. Much of the confusion, especially in relation to the number of players in a team, stemmed from publications from the Ling Association in England which promulgated the flexibility of teams numbering 5, 7 or 9. The annual interstate carnivals which followed the formation of the AWBBA did much to standardise and promote the game throughout Australia. New Zealand netballers played the 9-a-side game with different rules and it was not until 1938, when a team from across the Tasman visited Melbourne primarily to participate in the inter-state tournament, that Australia first played an 'international' match. Lest one consider that netball was a very 'late-starter' on the international scene it should be noted that the first women's cricket test between Australia and England was played in 1934 and that inter-state games had begun only in 1932.⁵¹

By the end of the 1930s sport was becoming a part of life for the average Australian woman; sport had become for many women a pleasant social occasion that was a diversion from home.⁵² Netball was a sport which provided such an opportunity and the AAWBBA had grown in significance and strength. As a national co-ordinating body, it was well-established to provide leadership in organising and promoting netball in its growth and development after the war. A significant factor in that growth in the 1950s was regular 'international' netball competitions against teams other than New Zealand. Despite many discussions throughout that decade, the first International Federation of Netball Association's 'world tournament' did not occur until 1963.⁵³

NOTES

- * The authors acknowledge the support of the Australian Sports Commission and AANA for the provision of a grant under the National Sports Research Programme to undertake research which forms the basis of this paper.
- 1. The researchers are indebted to Christine Maylor, an international player for the All England Netball Association, for much of the historical information about the early

- years of netball in Great Britain. Much of the material is from an unpublished manuscript of Christine Maylor, written in 1985.
2. B.H. Grieve, *The game of netball and how to play it*, (London : Ling Association, 1916), 3rd edition.
 3. *Basketball in New Zealand*, (n.d.), p. 3.
 4. P.D. Hyland (ed.), *AANAA Golden Jubilee Booklet*, (Sydney: AANA, 1977).
 5. Jean Cowan, unpublished manuscript, 1977.
 6. *ibid.*
 7. *ibid.*
 8. Jean Dolding, correspondence to the authors, 21 April 1986.
 9. Dorothy Christensen, correspondence to the authors, 24 April 1986.
 10. *ibid.*
 11. Minutes of the All-Australia Women's Basket Ball Association (AWBBA) 1927, p. 4.
 12. *ibid.*, 22 May 1928, pp. 8-10.
 13. *ibid.*, 1929, p. 28.
 14. Minutes of the AWBBA 9th AGM, Sydney, 27 August 1931, p. 45.
 15. The revised constitution published in 1932 stated that the recognised official controlling body for WA in Australia was the Basket Ball Association of Perth (p. 51).
 16. *ibid.*, 'All infringements of this rule, caution for first offence, then free pass on all subsequent occasions.'
 17. Minutes of the AWBBA, 1932, p. 69.
 18. A. Wood, 'The evolution and growth of womens organisations in Queensland, 1859-1958', *Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, 1 (September 1959), p. 207.
 19. *Australian Woman's Mirror*, 13 April 1926, p. 8.
 20. *ibid.*, 25 November 1924.
 21. Beetec, 'Women Out of Doors' - unknown Adelaide newspaper, 1933.
 22. Programme of events - information supplied by Jean Dolding, Brisbane.
 23. Material supplied to the authors by Maisie Mudie, Brisbane.
 24. *ibid.*
 25. *ibid.*
 26. Honorary Secretary's Report to the AAWBBA, 1937.
 27. Minutes of the AGM of AAWBBA, 15 August 1938, p. 145.
 28. P.D. Hyland, *op. cit.*
 29. *ibid.*, p.5.
 30. Report of the AAWBBA, 1937.
 31. *ibid.*
 32. Edith Hull, Report on visit to the New Zealand Basketball Tournament, September 1937, p. 1.
 33. *ibid.*
 34. *ibid.* pp. 1-2.
 35. *ibid.*, p.2.
 36. *ibid.*

37. Annual Report of AAWBBA 1938.
38. Hull, *op.cit.*, p.1.
39. "Basketball Carnival Concludes", press clipping, undated in Jean Cowan Scrap-book.
40. *The Sporting Globe*, 20 August 1938.
41. Jean Cowan Scrapbook, *op.cit.*
42. Annual Report of AAWBBA, 1938.
43. Minutes of AAWBBA Annual General Meeting, 19 August 1938, p. 2.
44. Minutes of Adjourned Conference between AAWBBA and NZWBBA, p. 1.
45. Minutes of AAWBBA Annual General Meeting, 1938, p. 3.
46. Annual Report of AAWBBA, 1938, p. 1.
47. Minutes of AAWBBA, 1938, p. 3.
48. Meeting of AAWBBA, 29 August 1939.
49. Meeting of AAWBBA, 15 August 1938.
50. Circular to players selected for 1940 New Zealand tour.
51. For a more general overview of women's involvement in sport, see Rhonda Bushby and Ian Jobling "Decades of Sport and the Shape of Australian Womenhood" in *Fit to Play* (Sydney: Blake and Hargreaves Ply Ltd., 1985), pp. 64-91.
52. Wood, *op.cit.*, pp. 208-209 has claimed that later generations 'can thank women of the 1920s and 1930s who realised the need of young married women for sport, where they could take their youngsters and enjoy the company of other women while seeking recreative relaxation'.
53. For an overview of AAWA meetings, results of carnivals, Australian and international team selections, see Hyland *op.cit.*; P.D. Hyland, *Little Anne: a biography of Anne Clark, B.E.M* (Sydney: NSW Netball Association, 1987).