

James Naismith's Original 13 Rules

When you look at today's massive list and ever-changing rules of basketball, it's hard to imagine what the man who invented basketball would think.

James Naismith's original game had only 13 rules! These rules were made available to the public on January 15, 1892, when they were published in the Springfield College newspaper.

In those early days, the game was quite simple, could be played indoors or out and required nothing more than a ball, a peach basket and a pole.

Before starting the game, he laid out his rules and prefaced them by giving an overall description of the game. The goals are a couple of baskets or boxes about 15 inches in diameter across the opening and about 15 inches deep. These are suspended, one at each end of the grounds, about 10 feet above the floor.

The object of the game is to put the ball into your opponent's goal. This may be done by throwing the ball from any part of the grounds with one or both hands. The ball he described using was an ordinary association ball, or in other words, a soccer ball!

The number composing a team depends largely on the size of the floor space, but it may range from 3 on a side to 40. The fewer players down to 3, the more scientific it may be made, but the more players, the more fun.

The men may be arranged according to the idea of the captain, but it has been found that a goal keeper, two guards, three center men, two wings and a home man stationed in above order from the goal is best.

It shall be the duty of the goal keeper and the two guards to prevent the opponent from scoring. The duty of the wing men and the home man is to put the ball in the opponent's goal and the center shall feed the ball forward to the man who has the best opportunity, thus nine men make the best number for a team.

The Original 13 Rules of Basketball

- (1) The ball may be thrown in any direction with one or both hands.
- (2) The ball may be batted in any direction with one or both hands – never with a fist.

- (3) A player cannot run with the ball. The player must throw it from the spot on which he catches it, allowance to be made for a man who catches the ball at a good speed if he tries to stop.
- (4) The ball must be held in or between the hands. The arms or body must not be used for holding it.
- (5) No shouldering, holding, pushing, tripping or striking in any way the person of an opponents shall be allowed; the first infringement of this by any payer shall count as a foul, the second shall disqualify him until the next goal is made, or, if there was evident intent to injure the player, for the whole of the game, no substitute allowed.
- (6) A foul is striking at the ball with the fist, violation of Rules 3, 4 and such as described in Rule 5.
- (7) If either side makes three consecutive fouls, it shall count as a goal for the opponents (consecutive means without the opponents in the meantime making a foul).
- (8) A goal shall be made when the ball is thrown or batted from the ground into the basket and stays there, providing those defending the goal do not touch or disturb the goal. If the ball rests on the edges and the opponents move the basket, it shall count as a goal.
- (9) When the ball goes out of bounds, it shall be thrown into the field of play by the person first touching it. In case of a dispute, the umpire shall throw it straight into the field. The thrower-in is allowed five seconds, if he holds it longer, it shall go to the opponent. If any side persists in delaying the game, the umpire shall call a foul on that side.
- (10) The umpire shall be the judge of men and shall note the fouls and notify the referee when three consecutive fouls have been made. He shall have the power to disqualify men according to Rule 5.
- (11) The referee shall be the judge of the ball and shall decide when the ball is in play, in bounds, to which side it belongs and shall keep time. He shall decide when a goal has been made and keep account of the goals with any other duties that are usually performed by a referee.
- (12) The time shall be 15-minute halves, with 5 minutes of rest between.
- (13) The side making the most goals in that time shall be declared the winner. In case of a draw, the game may, by agreement of the captains, be continued until another goal is made.

Boy, the game has come a long way, hasn't it? Would the man who invented basketball have ever dreamed that these 13 simple rules of basketball would expand into the game we know today played by millions of people around globe!