

Learning About Reality Creation from Basketball

Learning about the early days of basketball is a great way to learn how realities are created, evolve and work. Most people have probably seen a basketball game because basketball is a big business in America. Last season the NBA made \$7.4 billion in revenue and one of the most famous NBA players, LeBron James, made a salary of \$33.5 million with an added \$52 million in endorsements – *a total income of \$85.5 million.*¹ Without the game of basketball the NBA and LeBron's income sources would not exist. So, who created basketball?

It was just before Christmas in 1891 in Springfield, Massachusetts at the YMCA Training School. The head of the school was Dr. Luther Gulick and he had a problem. A group of boys, most of whom played football, were sick of being cooped up inside because of the weather and they were rowdy and on edge. They had a lot of energy, but no way to burn it off. It was too cold to play football and baseball -- *and too dangerous to play those sports in the gym.* Dr. Gulick called an employee, **Dr. James Naismith**, and gave him 14 days to come up with an indoor activity to solve the problem.²

After thinking about the problem for a few days, Naismith remembered a *rock-tossing game* he played as a child and asked himself -- *How about a game where players threw a ball at a target?* And what came to mind next was that the team that tossed the most balls into the target would win. So what could he use for a target in the gym?

Naismith asked a janitor to find a pair of square baskets. The janitor could not find square baskets, so he brought Naismith two round peach baskets he happened to find. Naismith's vision changed from square to round baskets and told him to nail them to running track above the gym floor. The track just happened to be ten feet above the gym floor.³



SOURCE⁴

Naismith settled on a soccer ball next. Since the baskets had bottoms the janitor had to keep a ladder handy to retrieve the ball when shots were made. He wrote up 13 rules and called the new game "*Basket Ball.*" Each team had nine players -- *dressed in gray trousers and long-sleeved gray gym shirts.* Players could not run with the ball, dribble or kick the ball. It could be thrown in any direction or batted with an open hand, but no shouldering, holding, pushing, tripping, or striking of an opponent was allowed. On December 21, 1891, the game of basketball was born.

The first goal was made by William R. Chase in the basket pictured on the left. LeBron makes his shots in a basket and gym like the one on the right – *a very different reality!*



SOURCE⁵



SOURCE⁶



SOURCE⁷

Basket Ball quickly grew in popularity. Naismith's students went on to become teachers and coaches, spreading the game. Teams sprung up at high schools and colleges. Boys and girls across the nation began playing basketball. In the early days, courts were of different lengths and widths; some had very low ceilings. Pro leagues were formed and some used backboards and surrounded the courts with wire cages to keep fans from injuring opposing players.⁸ Other leagues hung baskets from a steel rod -- *no wall or backboard*. Games were also unpredictable because balls were made of leather covering a rubber bladder and sealed with raised laces -- *and causing the ball to bounce in unanticipated directions*.⁹

A player from Yale was very skilled at maintaining any lead by dribbling the ball up, down, around and all over the court for long periods of time. After a lot of complaining by Yale's opponents, a midcourt time line was added along with time restrictions for how long players could maintain control of the ball. At first teams had one designated player to shoot all foul shots and a game consisted of two fifteen minute halves with a five minute rest period.

Over time, usually as the result of new challenges and problems, changes were made and the game evolved into the “basketball” we know today. But one thing early professional players and professional players today share is that they make more money than laborers. In the early days, professional Basketball was a chaotic and potentially dangerous experience. The average pro earned about twenty-four hundred dollars per season (the equivalent in current value of slightly more than sixty-eight thousand dollars today). The average skilled laborer made eight hundred dollars annually.¹⁰

The story of basketball teaches us about much more than a game. It helps us understand that people living at different times had different realities connected to the word “*basketball*.” When they heard the word “basketball” -- *they visualized different things and had different meanings about those things*. Humans do this because we are amazing creatures with a biological organ that is the most complex known thing in the universe – *the human brain*.

As Dr. Naismith searched for a solution to the problem, somewhere in the massive complex neural networks of his brain, constellations of neurons re-fired and experiences of playing a childhood game were remembered. Next, with that memory in place, other neurons re-fired and the “*targets*” of the childhood game became “*square baskets*.” A new idea had begun to form. The process repeated until *the new fuzzy idea* became the *neural model* he named “*Basket Ball*.” Other people acquired Naismith’s neural model through a process we call “*memes*.” In their brains new neural models reshaped and replaced Naismith’s until the model we now call “basketball” emerged.

With every new neural model for basketball we find new names, rules, strategies, expectations and standards of determining what is right, wrong, good or bad. All of this is the result of the biology of the brain – *it is what all human brains do*. Understanding “**what we are**” and “**how our brains work**” helps us understand how we became “**who we are**” and “**why we behave the ways we do**.” In the past, religion, philosophy and psychology provided many of the answers for those questions. Today, we know that the same process we observed in the creation and evolution of basketball took place in the origins and evolution of the neural models we call *religions, governments and economic systems*.

We have the power to transform social problems in a way no previous generation could because they did not have the knowledge of human biology we have. The first step for acquiring that power is self-discovery:

1. What am I?
2. How does my brain work?

3. What are the most important neural models that affect my life and create my reality?

We created the TOV Center to be an information resource that helps people answer those questions and take the next step of networking with others to co-create change in their lives. This is the first of a series of free learning modules that are designed to help you understand what being a human – *a genetic memetic social creature* -- means. Our goal is to help people empower themselves and network together *to co-create more inclusive, safer, healthier, more prosperous and happier lives and societies* by putting Lives 1st in their realities.

¹ <https://www.wsn.com/nfl/nfl-vs-nba>

² *The Chosen Game; A Jewish Basketball History* by Charley Rosen © 2017; University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE; p. 1.

³ *The Chosen Game*; p. 1.

⁴ <http://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/how-basketball-history-made-springfield-mass-1891/>

⁵ <http://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/how-basketball-history-made-springfield-mass-1891/>

⁶ <https://www.etsy.com/listing/193067166/basketball-court-10ft-x-10ft-backdrop>

⁷ <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/355925176770211710/>

⁸ *The Chosen Game*; p. 5.

⁹ *The Chosen Game*; p. 8.

¹⁰ *The Chosen Game*; p. 10.