

# The 3-point arc and the evolution of a game

—by Fred Bowen

The college basketball season is over. One change in the men's rules in 2008 was a decision to move the three-point line one foot farther from the basket. Three-point shots have always been tough for kids. Now they will be a little tougher for college shooters.

The rules for basketball are always changing. When the Canadian-born physical education instructor James Naismith invented the game in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1891, he wrote down 13 simple rules.

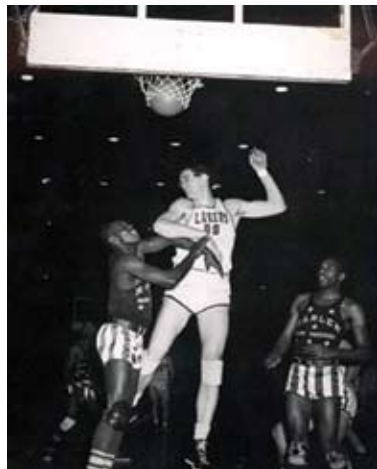
The first set of rules did not say how many players should be on the court for each team. By around 1900, five players for each team had become the standard, although many women played for years with six players per team. A basket counted for only one point, instead of two points the way it does today. There were no foul shots. Foul shots came a few years later.

Also, Naismith's early rules did not allow for dribbling the basketball. Players simply passed the ball and then shot it at the basket. Dribbling to move the ball around the court came into the sport about 10 years after Naismith had written his original rules.



The home of basketball—Y.M.C.A. training school in Springfield, Mass.

pro games were as low as 19-18. Both the college men's and women's games adopted the shot clock in the 1980s.



The Minneapolis Lakers' George Mican

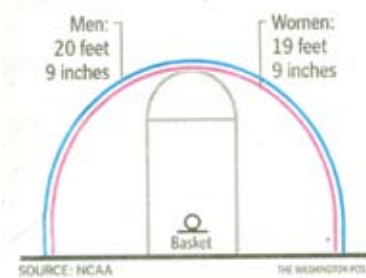
Many of the other rules that are familiar parts of today's game were introduced later. The three-second rule that limits the time an offensive player can stand under the basket started in 1936. At first, the restricted area underneath the basket was small, only six feet across. That didn't stop talented big men such as George Mikan, who played for a team called the Minneapolis Lakers, and Wilt "the Stilt" Chamberlain, who once scored 100 points in a professional game. So the three-second lane was widened first to 12 feet and later to 16 feet across.

In the early days of basketball, the referee would stop the game and have a jump ball to determine which team would possess it after every basket. That rule changed in the 1930s so that the non-scoring team got the ball after each basket, making the game faster and more free-flowing. Now, jump balls are rare.

The National Basketball Association (NBA) introduced the shot clock and the rule that the offensive team must shoot within a certain amount of time in 1954 to make the game more high-scoring. Before the shot clock, the scores of some

## Three-Point Change

The NCAA basketball rules committee increased the distance of the three-point arc in men's games this season. The arc distance in women's games has not changed.



After several early experiments with a rule that a shooter be awarded three points instead of two for long shots, the NBA adopted the three-point shot in 1979-80 season. The college game followed suit a few years later.

Three-pointers have been an exciting part of every college game. They may be harder to come by, under the new rules.