

Sound Mind and Sound Body

LIVING THE BALANCED MAN IDEAL

The creator of the sport of basketball (and SigEp Brother) is memorialized with the...

Naismith Wall at Kansas

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There have been few men who have single-handedly changed the face of sports. Over 100 years ago, Dr. **James S. Naismith, Kansas '23**, became one of those men. Assigned the difficult task of inventing a game in two weeks time that would provide “athletic distraction” for a rowdy group of young men over the winter months, Dr. Naismith combined his ideals with a number of other sports of the time and composed a game he called basket ball. However, it is reported he didn't even conceive “basket ball” until the day before the deadline. Perhaps even more impressive, the original 13 rules were not written until an hour before his class. Although nearly every aspect of the game has evolved over the past century, including the way we now write the word

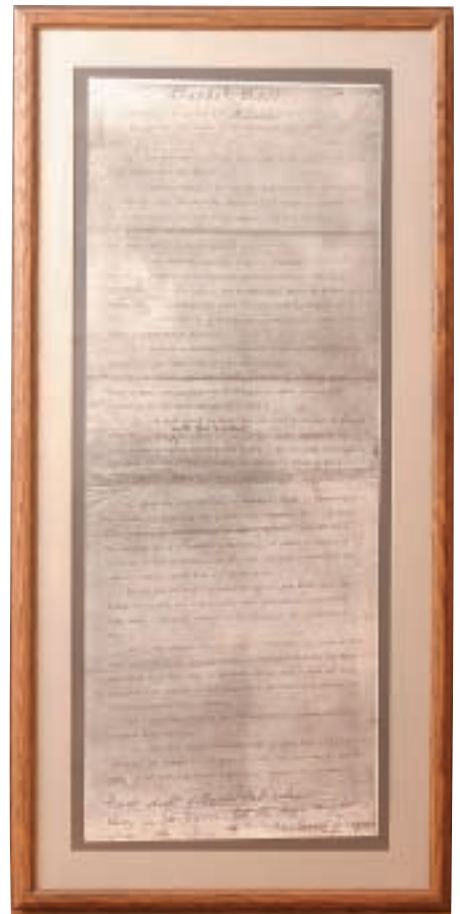
(Naismith wrote it as two words), the game remains the product of Naismith's invention.

Today at the University of Kansas, basketball serves as a sense of pride and tradition. From the court in Allen Fieldhouse which is named after James Naismith, to the walls of SigEp, Naismith's legend lives on.

In 1923, James Naismith was among the charter members of the Kansas Gamma Chapter. He went on to marry the housemother and become the Chapter Counselor. Today's SigEp house at the university chooses to remember Naismith with a wall containing, among other things, a copy of the 13 original, handwritten rules of basketball.

Through the original rules, Dr. Naismith's ideas of how games should be played are evident. Rule number five goes into the details of a foul. Dr. Naismith used this rule to take some of the physicality out of the game. Physical contact is what eliminated football as an indoor option. In the spirit of conducting fair games, Naismith mentions an umpire in rule nine and elaborates on the umpire's role in rules 10 and 11. As the game continues to evolve, most of the rules have changed.

At KU he is possibly remembered infamously as the only coach to don a losing record (55-60). But, basketball was more than winning and losing to the great coach who was sometimes not even present for the games, as he was away refereeing others. Naismith saw the game as one that was never meant to be coached, just played.



A copy of the original handwritten rules of the game on display in the SigEp chapter house.



SigEp's original Balanced Man-Dr. James S. Naismith

Also encased on this wall are plaques commemorating the “Peachbasket” Award which is given in honor of Dr. Naismith by the Greater Kansas City Alumni Chapter of Sigma Phi Epsilon. Nearly anyone involved in the game is eligible, from coaches to sportswriters. The first recipient of this award was John Wooden. Other memorabilia include signed copies of “The Basketball Man,” a book by Bernice Larson Webb about the inventor of the game. There are also signed items from other Kansas coaches such as Roy Williams and Larry Brown.

In the early 20th Century, a crowd of hundreds was large for a game. Through the years, KU has routinely drawn sell-out crowds of over 16,000. Basketball has become as much a part of student life as studying. Tickets are a precious



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commodity during the season, and all televisions are tuned in for road games.

Ironically, Dr. Naismith had no intentions of the game reaching this type of popularity. Basketball grew exponentially over its first century. In 45 years, it went from 18 young men in a YMCA to an Olympic event in 1936. Basketball is currently played by over 300 million people worldwide.

Dr. Naismith was the quintessential brother, and embodied nearly every aspect of the Balanced Man. In his lifetime, he earned degrees in philosophy, religion, physical education, and

medicine. Naismith also served in the First Kansas Infantry. However, he obviously is most remembered for his contributions to the sport of basketball. Dr. Naismith made everything he was involved in better. He set out on a mission, determined to positively affect the quality of other's lives. In a speech given to a class at Springfield College in 1932, Naismith summed up his beliefs in a single statement: "It is your inner life, the things you do and say that will influence (others) and make them men."



"Olympism is a philosophy of life exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind."

— Olympic Charter, Fundamental principles, paragraph two