

Michigan Time Traveler

An educational supplement produced by Lansing Newspapers In Education, Inc. and the Michigan Historical Center.

KIDS' History

March Madness

Today's Time Traveler joins "March Madness" as we discover high school basketball history in Michigan.

The Girls Were First

On February 5, the girls of the B.B.T. gave a supper at the new armory, and were well patronized, as a result of which they have paid for their baskets, and have partly paid for their suits, which are wine colored trimmed with white braid. (The Oracle. Lansing High School. 1898)

It's Women's History Month, and girls made the first high school basketball history in Michigan. In 1898 the girls of Lansing High School formed a basketball team.

According to available evidence, it was the first organized high school basketball team in Michigan history. The team was unbeaten in its first season, defeating a team from Michigan Agricultural College (now M.S.U.) three times.

High schools in Ann Arbor, Port Huron and Grand Rapids also organized girls' teams before boys' teams.

The Oracle. Lansing High School. 1898.



Basketball's Beginnings

During winter physical education classes, students at the YMCA training school in Springfield, Massachusetts, mostly did exercises. They were bored. James Naismith's teacher challenged him to invent a game that could be played indoors. Naismith tried children's games like leapfrog, but these students were young men in their 20s and 30s. They didn't want to play kids' games. He tried adapting outdoor games. The guys forgot that they were indoors and played too rough.

He then made up a game he called "basket ball." Players tossed a soccer ball into peach baskets attached to the gym's balcony. The baskets had no holes, so someone on the balcony (or on a ladder) would get the ball out of the basket. Different gyms had different size courts. The number of players on early teams ranged from 3 to 40, depending on the court size.

Soon YMCAs across the country were playing basketball. Within months, its rules were adapted for play by girls. In many high schools, basketball was first played by girls who had no other team sports. High schools first formed teams for boys between 1905 and 1910.

Community Pride

Successful teams and players have always been noticed in their communities. The whole Upper Peninsula took pride in the success of Chassell basketball squads in the mid-1950s. Coach Lofton Greene's basketball dynasty at River Rouge brought pride to the entire community for 41 seasons and 12 state Class B championships. Flint residents celebrated the success of sisters Paula and Pamela McGee at Flint Northern and followed Pamela and her 1984 Olympic teammates as they won gold medals.

Individual players brought attention to their Michigan home towns when they went on to play professionally. Earvin Johnson earned his nickname "Magic" at Lansing's Everett High School when he was 15 years old. He led Everett to a state championship, took M.S.U. to the NCAA title in 1979 and won the NBA Championship with the Los Angeles Lakers in his 1980 rookie year.

Four players from three different Flint high schools—Charlie Bell, Mateen Cleaves, Morris Peterson and Antonio Smith—took Michigan State University to the NCAA Final Four in 1999, losing to Duke. Flint honored them at a "Flintstone Community Celebration Day," May 17, 1999. In 2000 Bell, Cleaves and Peterson returned to win the NCAA championship.



Everett Vikings Scorebooks



This plaque names River Rouge Panther player Franthea Price to the USA Today all-USA Girls High School Basketball Team in 1986.

She went on to play for the Iowa Hawkeyes and the Sacramento Monarchs. Her father, Frank Price, played high school basketball in River Rouge for one of Michigan's greatest basketball coaches, Lofton Greene.

Charlie Bell's Jersey

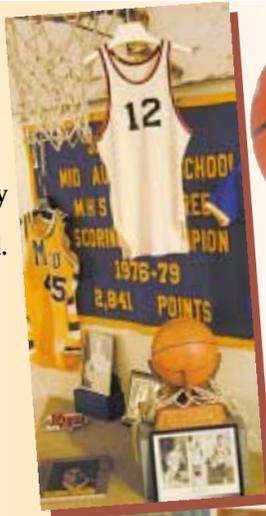
Hoops in History

- 1891 James Naismith invents the game of basketball in Springfield, Massachusetts.
- 1892 Woven wire baskets, still closed at bottom, replace fragile peach baskets.
- 1892-93 Baskets with an iron rim and closed bottom cord net are introduced; a pull chain device allows referees to tilt the basket and retrieve the ball.
- 1893-94 A Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, bicycle company makes the first basketball.
- 1895-96 The backboard size is set at 6 by 4 feet.
- 1910 The maximum court area is set at 4,000 sq. ft. More size changes occur in the first half of the twentieth century.
- 1912 Basketball nets open at the bottom are in common use.
- 1923 Players take their own free throws after being fouled. Previously, another player could take the shots for a weak shooter.
- 1930s The ball size is standardized.
- 1937 The jump ball after every basket is discontinued, a change which speeds up games and permits more scoring.
- 1943-44 Substitution rules are changed. Players can now enter and leave a game any number of times. Previously, once you left the game, you could not return.
- 1950 College and professional basketball teams are integrated.
- 1976 Dunking the ball, illegal since 1967, is again allowed during play, but not during warm-ups or intermission.
- 1987-88 The three-point shot rule is formally adopted for high school play.

The Michigan Jordan

Richie Jordan played basketball (as well as football, baseball and running track, earning 4 letters in every sport) at Fennville High School between 1961 and 1965. At 5' 7 1/2" and 160 pounds, he was never the biggest guy on the court, but he worked hard and he could jump! Jordan regularly dunked the ball.

During a regional game in the state tournament, the Fennville Black Hawks were playing without several injured starters. Jordan scored 60 points. But it was not enough, as the Bridgman Bees won 101-91. He had, however, set a new single season scoring record of 888 points. Jordan was an all-stater, a prep All American and was inducted into the National High School Sports Hall of Fame in 2001.



Jordan's game ball and net from his final high school game, along with his number 12 jersey and the backboard and hoop from his parents' garage (where he practiced until all hours of the night) are on exhibit in *Hometown Hoops*.

At the Michigan Historical Museum

Visit *Hometown Hoops: High School Basketball in Michigan* at the museum between March 8 and October 12, 2003.

The Michigan Historical Museum, 702 W. Kalamazoo Street, is located two blocks west of the Capitol in downtown Lansing. Museum admission is free. Hours: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m. The museum telephone hotline: (517) 373-3559. The museum is part of the Michigan Historical Center, Department of History, Arts and Libraries. Visit us on the Web at www.michiganhistory.org.



Alexandra, Austin and Samantha, students in Ms. Snell's 4th grade at Ralya Elementary School, Haslett, learn about Title IX at the *Hometown Hoops* exhibit. Title IX is a law requiring equal opportunities for both girls and boys to participate in sports at schools that receive federal funds.

Things to Do

- Ask an older grown-up about basketball in your town. What rules have changed since they were in school? If the teams play in a new gym, what was the old one like? Did anyone from the school play for a college or pro team?
- Follow your favorite team in the sports pages of this newspaper. Learn what all the statistics mean and see how they change for your favorite players.
- Visit the Web site of the MHSAA: www.mhsaa.com/.
- Go to *Hometown Hoops* and play the basketball trivia game at www.michiganhistory.org.
- Visit all the Summer of Sports sites at www.summerofsports.com.



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