



Wartime Basketball

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Wartime Basketball

Douglas Stark



Wartime Basketball tells the story of basketball's survival and development during World War II—and how those years profoundly affected the game's growth after the war.

Among its many impacts on the home-front, the war forced professional and amateur leagues to contract and combine rosters to stay competitive. At the same time, the United States Military created base teams made up of top players who found themselves in uniform.

The formation of the World Professional Basketball Tournament (WPBT) in 1939 included all-black and integrated teams, the first time black American players could compete in the "World Series of basketball" against white teams. This paved the way for the National Basketball League to integrate in December 1942, five years before Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in baseball.

Jews played an important role in basketball's evolution during World War II. Future coaches Red Auerbach and Red Holzman played on military teams; Les Harrison helped integrate the game in 1946; Arnie Risen, Bernie Fleigel, Dutch Garfinkel, Ossie Schectman, Shikey Gotthoffer, and Peter Rosenberg all played significant roles in basketball.



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