



Wartime Basketball: The Emergence of a National Sport during World War II

Stark, Douglas

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By Chris Wilkes

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In his latest work, Stark (*The SPHAS*) maintains that World War II transformed basketball from a slow, deliberate game with regional differences to an up-tempo, high-scoring national pastime. The author briefly mentions college basketball, primarily concentrating on how the war affected the National Basketball League (NBL), the American Basketball League (ABL), and the World Professional Basketball Tournament while also recounting how World War II inadvertently led to the first integrated professional teams as the military drafted players. Many undrafted players simultaneously worked in factories full time and played for company teams, such as the Fort Wayne Zollner Pistons. On military bases, basketball play improved conditioning and prepared soldiers for battle. Service teams boosted morale and proved to be effective recruiting tools, while also exposing players to regional styles from across the United States. Stark includes brief biographies of notable players and coaches such as James Naismith, who invented the sport of basketball in 1891, and basketball pioneer George Mikan. **VERDICT** An important work for readers interested in the history of basketball before the NBA, complete with photographs and appendixes of league standings.—Chris Wilkes, Tazewell Cty. P.L., VA