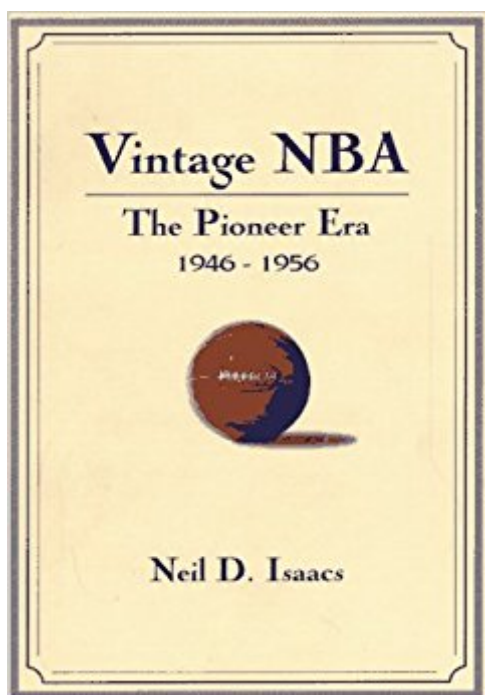


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Vintage Nba Basketball: The Pioneer Era (1946-56) : A Mostly Oral History



Synopsis

Book by Isaacs, Neil David

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Isaacs, a professor of English at the University of Maryland at College Park, commemorates the golden anniversary of the National Basketball Association with this nostalgic look back at the league's infancy. Relying primarily on oral accounts from players, coaches, writers and referees, Isaacs describes an era before million-dollar contracts. Referee Dorm Drucker recalls entering the league during the 1952-53 season: "I started at \$40 a game, and if you were rehired for the following season, you would receive an automatic \$5 per game raise." On the other hand, the game didn't have anything like the popularity it has today. Herald Tribune writer Harold Rosenthal remembers the Knicks' first road trip to Cleveland: "It was pitiful-there were about 50 people in the seats." Aptly, the book ends with recollections of the late Maurice Podoloff, president of the NBA from its founding in 1946 to 1963, who emphasize basketball's backdoor origins. Podoloff began in the ice hockey arena business and turned to basketball as "filler" for "dark" nights when hockey, the circus or ice shows were not available. Podoloff is credited with the league's survival and he, in turn, credits Danny Biasone's idea for the 24-second clock for saving game's commercial prospects. Before the rule, basketball was a long, lagging game hard-pressed to keep the attention of the TV viewer. According to Podoloff, with the rule, "Franchise holders almost tripled. Franchise fees jumped from \$10,000 to some millions. TV fees jumped from \$100,000 to \$18,000,000." There are other remembrances by impressive early players such as Dolph Schayes, Bob Cousy and George

Mikan, among others. Most of them offer lighthearted anecdotes, which Isaacs puts into sobering perspective by pointing out that not one of the book's 40 interviewees is included in an NBA pension plan. Author tour. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Oral history is a popular format for baseball books, but it is relatively unique for books about basketball's past. Included here are the reminiscences of more than 40 players, coaches, referees, writers, and league officials from the first ten years of the National Basketball Association, or NBA (which at the time was made up of two leagues: the Basketball Association of America and the National Basketball League). A number of themes run through the personal narratives: the shoestring nature of the league, racial integration, college basketball's gambling scandals, the Harlem Globetrotters, today's game and players, and the need for pioneer players to be included in the NBA pension plan. At times, the stories can be repetitious, but the narratives are usually well edited by the prolific Isaacs (*Batboys and the World of Baseball*, Univ. of Mississippi, 1995). In the 50th-anniversary year of the NBA, this title is a welcome addition. Recommended for all libraries. John M. Maxymuk, Rutgers Univ. Lib., Camden, N.J. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The pioneers of the NBA is a great piece of history that should be heard. After all they paved the way for today's players.

I feel fortunate in that I was very close to the beginnings of the NBA. Living in Marion, Indiana in the late 1940s and early 1950s I was able to see the NBA formed. Few people know that Indiana had three teams in the NBA in the early years. They were the Anderson Packers, the Indianapolis Olympians and the Ft. Wayne Pistons. I saw them all play and have recently been privileged to even talk to some of those old time players. Needless to say, this book held my attention as I learned even more about the formulation of the NBA. It is a fascinating book for anyone to read who has the slightest interest in how the NBA got started. I loved it. Norman Jones, Ed. D. author of *Growing Up in Indiana: The Culture & Hoosier Hysteria Revisited*.

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