

An Iowa Tradition: 6-on-6 Women's Basketball

Mount Vernon, Iowa

Introduction:

In Iowa, women's basketball began with 6-on-6. The fast-paced game was created for girls to play, long before Title IX. The first Iowa State Championship for girls was played in 1920 and continued until 1993. In Mount Vernon, the last 6-on-6 team played in 1985. Former players reminisce about everything from bloomer requirements for uniforms to today's Granny Basketball League, which fundraises for girls 5-on-5 basketball and the grannies always win.

Special thanks to Renee Nydegger and the Iowa Women's Archives at the University of Iowa. Video created by Mount Vernon sophomores Jace Delancey, Jeremy Kline, Megan Zobac, Paige Emig, Kailey Shannon and Sam Stoner.

Story Narrative:

Heather Allen: [0:08] When I first think of six-on-six basketball what comes to mind is fast. It was a game that was played really quickly because of some of the roles that were in play at that time.

Jo Ann Stoner: [0:20] You can't run, you can't jump. and you can't have any body contact.

Jane Henik: [0:26] Two courts, three forwards, three guards. That was your team.

Jo Ann Stoner: [0:30] Guards did not cross the center line. You stayed on one side.

Heather Allen: [0:37] You could only go to the half court. So there's a lot of strategy in six-on-six that wasn't at the time in five-on-five.

Jo Ann Stoner: [0:47] You need to have bloomers on. You have to have blouses that could cover everything. They cover your arms and you've got to have socks that go with knee-high. Nothing is exposed. If you have bare arms that's a foul.

Dorthea Wheeling: [1:04] We had red and white cottons and then we got new,

Heather Allen: [1:14] Our uniforms for us at that time looked a lot like your current cheerleading uniforms look like. So it was a dress with shorts underneath.

Jane Henik: [1:21] It was short, like really short, and they were made out of really heavy polyester. Now they're stretchy but not like the Knights lightweight, dry fit stuff today. It was thick stuff. Guards could not go through all across the half court line and neither could the forwards. So there's a whole strategy of play that occur right at the half court line. You

could only dribble twice. You could only hold a ball for three seconds at either end of that dribble. So you could look around for three seconds, dribble, dribble. You had to know where you're gonna go, because if he stopped, again you only had three seconds to pass. So there was a lot of cutting and angling and back doors because there were fewer players. There was room for that kind of place to be put into place. You were serving back into the same court unless, when you checked in, you would specifically have to tell them if you're switching courts and you couldn't do that just willingly. You know once you switched over to that court, then you took it, and stay in that court. That's why a lot of times they only did it for a house. Fouls were the same, you got five, but that was back in the day that if you did not raise your hand, when you fouled, you got a technical.

Kim Benish: [2:39] We have Granny Basketball League. And so, they have community members sometimes play against the grannies and we always get beaten by these old women.

Jo Ann Stoner: [2:47] I am a member of Mount Vernon Trittee Association, and Trittee uses Granny Basketball as a fundraiser so we can send fourth grade girls to camp. They follow the 1920's rules for basketball and when they've done it as an exhibition game, we have had teachers and community members be our participants and they find that it's really difficult with a lot of athletes who have played the grannies the grannies have beat them. And so that a nice club.

Jane Henik: [3:27] I love playing it.

Heather Allen: [3:28] I do miss playing six-on-six. Playing that game is unique not many places did it.

Kim Benish: [3:36] The training, I don't miss . The running I don't miss but I love competing. I loved competing It was a huge part of my life for a lot of my life.

Dorthea Wheeling: [3:47] You better believe it.

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