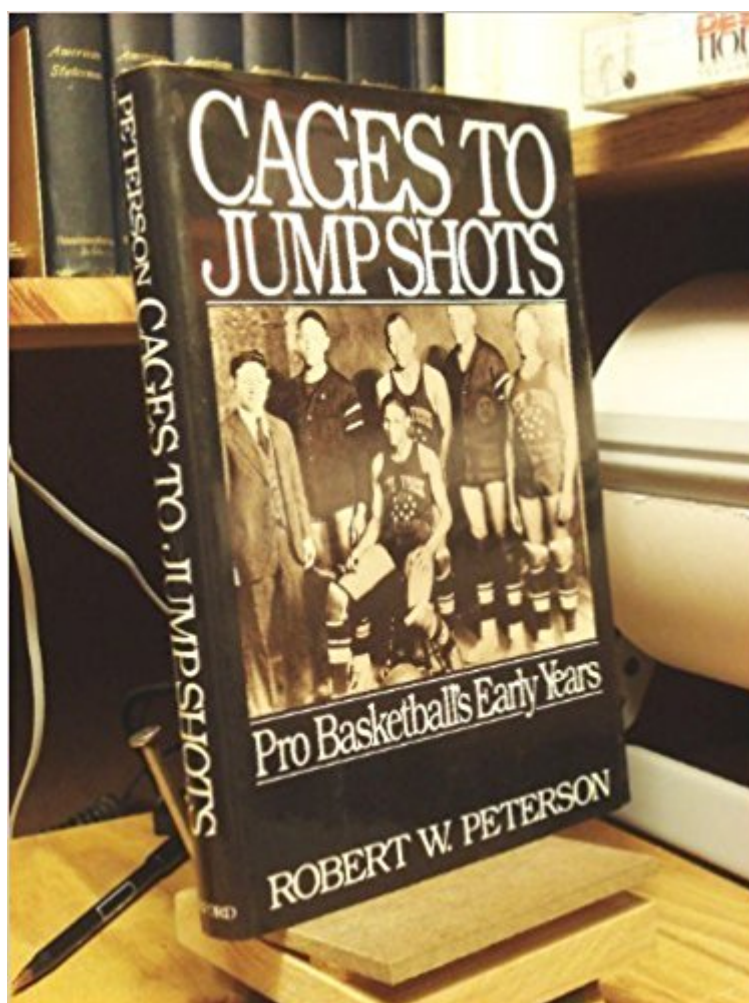


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# Cages To Jump Shots: Pro Basketball's Early Years (Sports History And Society)



## Synopsis

Robert Peterson has emerged as one of America's finest writers on sports history. His groundbreaking book *Only the Ball Was White* won wide acclaim as a compelling account of baseball's Negro leagues in the days before Jackie Robinson. Now comes *Cages to Jump Shots*, an insightful and entertaining look at early professional basketball from the birth of the sport through the first years of the NBA. In *Cages to Jump Shots*, Peterson paints a vibrant portrait of how this sport gained its place in American life. He traces the game from the day in 1891 when the father of basketball, James Naismith, drew up the first rules, through the early barnstorming professional teams playing in gaslit social halls, to the advent of NBA games in Madison Square Garden. His richly detailed account brings to life every aspect of the changing game and the society that grew to love it: the players, the fans, the owners, the officials, the rules, techniques, and equipment. Peterson draws on interviews with old players to recreate the experience of this dramatically evolving sport, as it went from a brutal, slow-moving game (with a sewn leather ball, underhand set shots, center jumps after every score, and a wire or rope cage around the court) to the high-scoring contests that emerged in the 1950s, with the start of the team foul limit and the 24-second shot clock. Along the way, he illuminates the impact of a changing society, such as the YMCA's early hopes that basketball would foster Christian values, the indignities suffered by black teams in a segregated society, and the influx of Jewish players during the Depression. Peterson brings the story up through the founding of the NBA and its final success in overtaking the popularity of college basketball. *Cages to Jump Shots* offers a unique and vivid look at a fascinating side of American life. Whether capturing the flavor of the rough-and-tumble early games, discussing the career of the Harlem Globetrotters, or tracing the origins of today's big teams, Peterson lends a lively and perceptive voice to the story of America's most popular sport.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Peterson, author of *Only the Ball Was White*, triumphs again with this history of the hoop game from its origins in 1891 to 1954, when the 24-second shot clock was introduced. Even those who are not fans of the sport will delight in Peterson's accounts of early games featuring 40 players on each side and the wild fights to recover out-of-bounds balls which led to the setting up of wire or rope cages all around the court. The book offers sidelights on the game as it developed: the gradually increasing importance of players' height (many of the early pros weren't even 5'10"), the influx of Jewish players during the Depression years and the rise of the Harlem Globetrotters to counter Jim Crow on the courts. Newspapers and magazines of the 1891-1910 era barely mentioned the sport, and Peterson has done admirable work in ferreting out information. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.

YA-- 1991 marks the 100th anniversary of the creation of basketball; Peterson's book deals with the neglected first 50 years of pro basketball. The author traces the game from when James Naismith drew up the first rules in 1891, through the early barnstorming professional teams playing in gaslit social halls, to the beginning of NBA games at Madison Square Garden. In addition to his careful research, Peterson draws on interviews with former players. Another informative aspect of the book deals with how changes in society have affected the game and the teams.- Mike Printz, Topeka West High School, KS  
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If there is a better book about the early stages of professional basketball, I haven't been able to find it. This is in-depth, well written and insightful. Must read for basketball historians.

A good source for information on basketball's early years. I would recommend to anyone interested in the game's history.

A great book detailing how it all started

A year ago I went to the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, MA and was disappointed that the

gift/bookstore did not have a single history of early ball. I returned to the new Hall of Fame (a must see by the way) last month and found this paperback reprint of a book that appeared about ten years ago. Peterson's book is a well researched, well written history of pro basketball from the 1890's to about 1950. While baseball has dozens of books written about its early years, basketball has, other than this one, none that I could find. This one is very satisfying, and provides a good roadmap for hopefully even more books about the early years and teams, which Peterson shows are filled with colorful characters and great scenes from American life. If you like basketball, you ought to know about its history, and this is a good (and-other than visting the Hall of Fame-practically the only) place to start.

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