



Just For Fun: The Story of AAU Women's Basketball

ROBERT IKARD

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Prior to the 1972 passage of Title IX, women's basketball was a minor sport in the United States. It was played by companies such as Cook's Goldblume Beer and Sunoco and for obscure colleges such as Iowa Wesleyan and Wayland Baptist as part of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU). But during the two generations of the mid-twentieth century, women's basketball improved and became more popular throughout the country. AAU All-Star teams dominated women's international basketball until the emergence of subsidized national teams in the 1960s.

The women who played on these AAU teams helped to lay the foundation for women's athletics today. Most of the teams came from central and southern states, and most of the players had rural origins. "Country girls" from Arkansas, Iowa, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas competed at an elite level unknown to their city sisters. The AAU formed several successful international teams of gifted players that gained fame abroad but that were anonymous at home. Until nearly the last quarter of the century, skilled women basketball players had only one option after high school: the AAU.

This is the history of these gifted women, their coaches, and their teams--their records, motivations, and personal stories. Extensively illustrated, Just for Fun is the first book to thoroughly explore the complex history of the Amateur Athletic Union's women's basketball program and to bring to light the four decades of women's basketball all but forgotten in the current success of women's athletics.

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