

Activity 2

Read the text and answer these questions.

- a) When was basketball invented?
- b) Who were the Dream Team?
- c) What was the surprise in 2004?

What is the most popular sport in the world? The answer, of course, is football, or soccer, but what about the most popular indoor sport? The answer to that question is: basketball. Basketball was invented by a Canadian sports teacher, Dr James Naismith, in 1891. Dr Naismith was working in a college in Massachusetts in the USA and he wanted to find a way of keeping students fit during the winter – basketball was his solution.

A full-size basketball court is 28.7 metres long and 15.2 metres wide. At each end there is a hoop, or basket, three metres above the floor of the court. The game is played between two teams of 12 players, but only five players are allowed on the court at the same time for each team. The aim of the game is to score as many points as possible. Points are scored by throwing the ball through the hoop – scoring a basket. But the number of points for each 'basket' depends on where the player throws the ball from. So, if the ball is thrown from inside the three-point line then only two points are awarded, but if it is thrown from outside then it is worth three points. When a player gets a free throw, after a foul has been committed, then only one point is given for each 'basket'.

Basketball made its Olympic debut in 1936. At the Olympics, the USA has dominated the men's competition winning twelve out of sixteen gold medals. In the 1992 Olympics held in Barcelona the American Dream Team won the gold medal without losing a game. It was known as the Dream Team because it included some of the stars of the NBA, the professional basketball league in the United States. But, in 2004 the Americans were shocked when they only finished third after losing to the eventual winners, Argentina.

Basketball is now played in over 150 countries around the world and, in Europe, teams from countries such as Spain, Latvia, Greece and Serbia regularly play against each other in European competitions.