

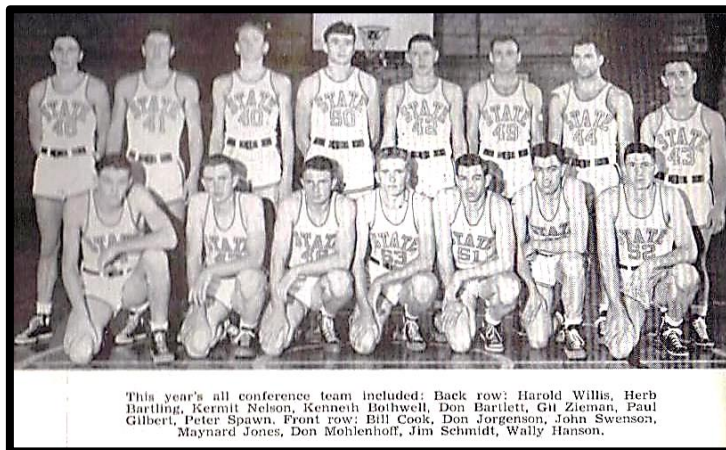
# The Time Machine

## The 1948 NAIB Tournament

### Article #20

In the early 1930's there were no post-season tournaments for any college basketball teams. Dr. James Naismith (1861-1939), credited with inventing the game of basketball in 1891, and others wanted to establish a forum for small and large colleges and universities to determine the national basketball champions. Small colleges had their first 8-team tournament in 1937. In 1938 the NIT held their first tournament and the NCAA tournament kicked off in 1939. Because the NIT tournament was held in NYC it was considered the more prestigious tournament for the large colleges and universities. Our focus will be on the small college "National Association of Intercollegiate Basketball," (NAIB founded 1940) tournament of 1948. In 1952 the NAIB became the NAIA.

The 1948 NAIB 32 team, by invitation only, tournament was always held in Kansas City. Naismith, for 40 years, was a teacher, coach, and administrator at the University of Kansas. He coached future coaching legends "Phog" Allen (Kansas), Adolph Rupp (Kentucky), and Dean Smith (North Carolina). One of the 32 invited teams was South Dakota State College in Brookings. They finished the regular season at 19-6 and among their starting five was a junior, Harold Willis. On March 6 the team boarded a bus and took off for Kansas City (here I come!).



Remember, this is the "small" college tournament. On March 8 the Jacks opened against Louisville (24-6) and were defeated 63-60, in part due to making only 8 of 21 free throws! Louisville would earn a trip to the final four by beating Emporia (KS) and Beloit (WI). Their opponent in the semifinal round would be Xavier (20-7). In the other semifinal game Indiana State University (Larry Bird's alma mater) would take on.....some mystery team that I cannot yet divulge. First, let's discuss Indiana State University. A year earlier they were invited to the 1947 tournament, however their coach rejected the invitation. Believe it or not, the tournament rules included one that barred black players from participating. The Sycamores had a black player on their roster. Sometime before the 1948 season the tournament committee eliminated that rule. Who was that courageous coach? Another mystery to be dealt with later.

In the semifinals Louisville upended Xavier 56-49. Indiana State's semifinal mystery opponent had beaten Mercer (GA) 85-41, Gonzaga (WA) 70-55, and Manhattan (NY) 60-51. The mystery college took Indiana State into OT before falling 66-65. In the battle for third place, they defeated Xavier 59-58 in another overtime game. The national title game was next. The Cardinals of Louisville would prevail over Indiana State, 82-70. Louisville's closest game of the tournament was against South Dakota State! Sixty-five years later, under the direction of Rick Pitino, in 2013 Louisville would defeat Michigan 82-76 to win the NCAA tournament. Speaking of coaches, who was the head coach at Indiana State in 1947 and 1948? A young man you may have heard about. In fact, there is a very interesting story about how he would have become the head coach at the University of Minnesota, had it not been for a bad snowstorm. As it turned out he ended up taking the job at UCLA. John Wooden's Bruins would go on to win 10 national titles in 12 years.

One more loose end to tie up. The mystery team came into the tournament 24-2. They belonged to no conference, choosing to be an independent team, and free to schedule opponents from all around the country. They were considered a national power. They were the Pipers of Hamline University.