

# Womens College Basketball

We've come a long way since the inception of women's college basketball.

The first game, played in 1893 at Smith College, was played between sophomores and freshmen. However, the first "official" women's college basketball match was recognized in April 1896 with a game between Berkley and Stanford. This match was played in a locked gymnasium, as men were not allowed to watch as the women ran and jumped on the basketball court.

In 1901 a separate set of rules was written for women's college basketball. The early years involved some crazy rules. The basket was sewn shut, so the umpire had to go up and retrieve the ball whenever a goal was scored. In addition, it was required that some games be played on grass courts. Thankfully, the game progressed and over the years the rules were modified.

The Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women did not conduct the first National Basketball Tournament for Women until 1975. In this same year, the Women's Basketball Coaches Association selected their first All-America Team. The American Basketball League (ABL) was founded in 1996, and the Women's National Basketball Association followed in 1997. These associations were created to keep talented American players from moving to foreign leagues.

Then NCAA continues to supervise women's college basketball, having three divisions in place to filter the best players. Division I remains the most prominent and popular league, played by colleges that sponsor at least seven sports for women players. These colleges are required to play all but two of their games against other Division I teams. Division II includes those colleges that organize at least four sports each for women, and they are required to play at least half of their games against Division I or Division II teams. Division III includes colleges that organize at least five sports with two teams.

Winners of 31 conferences are automatically qualified for NCAA's annual Women's Basketball Championship. The remaining 34 teams are chosen by a selection committee to make it a field of 64. All of these teams are then organized in four pools, with each pool seeded from one to 16.

The annual tournament begins on the third Thursday of March. The first two days are most hectic, with a total of 32 teams leaving the competition by the end of the first day. By the end of day two, another 16 teams will be eliminated. Then, the action really begins to heat up as they remaining teams play for the Final Four position, and then the playoff for the ultimate tournament winner.

Women's college basketball has certainly evolved from those grass court days of the 1800's, making today's sport an exciting part of modern day professional athletics.