



The surest way to please nobody, it has been said, is to try to please everybody.

This was my first concern upon hearing what the new Naismith Memorial Hall of Fame in Springfield was setting out to accomplish. Some of us love the history of the sport, the forgotten nuggets of trivia and so forth.

Others enjoy absorbing the glamour and Showtime of the modern pro and college game. Still others, maybe your kids (or even you) think basketball is not so much a sport to be studied or taught, but to be experienced with actions as simple as shooting a ball at a hoop, which is as fundamental a physical act (other than running, perhaps) as exists in American sports today.

The Basketball Hall of Fame attempts to walk you through the history and culture of a sport by introducing it through the many sets of eyes who have viewed and shape it – from the barnstorming teams of the 1920s and 1930s to the WNBA of today. From the eyes of the referees to those of the media, and from the hearts of everyone from the 1954 Milan, Indiana, high school state champions – about which the movie “Hoosiers” was based – to those in Croatia, Yugoslavia and other venues throughout the world.

And what is perhaps most amazing, perhaps, is that it succeeds. Do you have a little time to take a tour of the Hall? I did.

I. TAKE IT FROM THE TOP.

One of this Hall of Fame's most unique aspects, I found, was how the visitors are encouraged to view it. Your best route is to start at the top floor, the Honors Ring, and work your way down.

Basketball has produced a galaxy of stars, so it seems appropriate that the more than 200 elected to the Hall are displayed in a galactic ring that circles the upper floor. With each of the legends

comes an easy-to-follow chronicle of that Hall of Famer's individual achievements, described in such a way that allows you to connect the superstar with how his or her career affected the growth of the sport.

Arranged chronologically and starting with the first group of selections in 1959, it's easy to understand the progression of the game through the descriptions of the careers, complete with display cases containing artifacts relating to each Hall of Famer.

There's the ball used by Wilt Chamberlain to score his 25,000th point in 1968. There's a La Salle University program with Tom Gola on it, bringing us back to the 1950s college game. There's one of the fictional children's books of the Chip Hilton series written by Clair Bee, the legendary coach. Gee, I read that once, decades ago.

The day I was there, I liked overhearing what the fathers or grandfathers were telling their kids and grandkids, as they took the walk around the ring and through history.

