

Because frankly, that's why I think the whole thing works. People want to experience history, not just look at it.

And since almost everybody has played basketball, and most of us have visualized competing at the highest level, this floor has that element in us in mind.

"Virtual Hoops" was a huge hit. Here, you're matched through the magic of modern technology against a current NBA star – Jason Kidd was the virtual one-on-one opponent when I was watching. (Sorry, that's all I did, watch). You guard him, you drive on him, you score on him. He scores on you, too. What do think, Virtual Jason was going to give you a totally free ride?

A Hall of Fame helper walks you through it, which is important for those who haven't done this before. What I liked about the interactive features of the Hall was that they didn't detract from the historical segments, they added to them.

As I've said, some folks love the chronicles of history. Others want the sport brought to life with videos, trivia games and virtual simulations.

But most people probably like both. This floor allows you to float in and out of the interactive and historic worlds, separated in most cases by only a few steps.

Once you're through going one-on-one with Jason Kidd, there's a rebounding game, a reaction-time test, and "Measure Up," a display in which visitors can compare themselves with anyone from Manute Bol (7-foot-7) to Muggsy Bogues (5-foot-3). For is there any other statistic more essential to the discussion of basketball than the simple measurement of height?

There's another feature worth mentioning here. If most of us have dreamed of becoming great players, almost all of us have called a little play-to-play in our dreams – and, when we thought no one was within earshot, out loud.

The Hall of Fame's media display gives visitors the opportunity to do a little broadcasting themselves. One Hall worker even coaxed me into reading a few lines of ESPN *SportsCenter* script off the monitor, while a separate screen put me on camera in the process.

"Very professional," he said afterward. He was being very kind, believe me, but it's easy to see why almost everybody loves this feature. If we can't all make the big shot, we still enjoy experiencing the idea of describing it to eager viewers and listeners, just like the celebrities of media do.

There's a little coach in all of us, too. A few yards from the interactive area are two display panels, covering a variety of the most famous pages from the sport's playbooks.

These displays come complete with diagrams explaining Dean Smith's four corners offense, Jack Ramsay's pressure defense (which I never knew Jack Ramsay invented, but that's part of the sneaky history you learn at this Hall), and the back-door cuts Pete Carril made famous at Princeton.

Nearby, other displays that bring the great moments of high school basketball to life. You've probably heard of some, but not all. Still other display cases highlight the great coaches or teams of the college game.

And there's one more thing I liked about this floor, and for that matter, the entire Hall. There's no so-called "women's wing." Just about every wing includes the history and growth of the women's game, integrated with the other aspects of basketball in a way that exposes it to visitors on an equal basis.

You'll see a Sue Bird display right next to an Alonzo Mourning display, a Cynthia Cooper jersey in the same room as the uniforms of great male players. I think that's the way basketball history, and basketball itself, should be viewed.

As mentioned previously, there is always, always sound. The "Reaching for the Top Theatre" is on the second floor, providing a backdrop of basketball's great sounds and moments.

We're not talking about a constant, distracting din of noise, but a pleasing, understandable hum of action and activity. Throughout the Hall of Fame, the audios and videos will remind you of that first time you heard the sport's most famous broadcasts – North Carolina State's shocking 1983 NCAA title, per-haps, or other great college finishes.

Or my personal favorite, that night Havlicek stole the ball.



*Honors Ring.*



*Media Gallery.*



*Coaches Gallery.*



*The Hall of Fame's state-of-the-art design was developed by Gwathmey Siegel.*