



# Playing Before an Overflow Crowd

*Tim Brayboy, Bruce Barton*

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They weren't your run-of-the-mill basketball games. Instead of sneakers, players wore their work shoes or went barefoot. Games were scheduled between the picking times for tobacco, cotton, and corn and after all the crops had been harvested. Often the courts had only dirt floors. But for the Indian community living in Robeson and its neighboring North Carolina counties from 1939 until 1967, basketball was the symbolic measurement of life itself, where a single decision could lead to either victory or defeat. The stands were always overflowing, and spirits ran high.

It was a remarkable, but previously undocumented, era in the history of North Carolina sports. Now, every fan can enjoy this fascinating, little-known story in *Playing Before an Overflow Crowd: The Story of Indian Basketball in Robeson, North Carolina, and Adjoining Counties*. Names, dates, photographs, anecdotes—the entire history of the Tri-County Indian High School Athletic Conference is all here.

This chronicle of Native-American boys and girls high-school basketball during the South's racially segregated decades is a testament to the camaraderie and sense of community Indians established on and around the basketball court. And anyone who wants to learn the secret of the success of The University of Oklahoma's great basketball coach, Kevin Sampson, will find it here.

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