



# GARED: A Century of Sport

Can you imagine basketball without behind the back passes. Imagine if every time a shot hit the rim, the net came untied or the rim bent stopping play. Imagine the game without the slam dunk posterizing defenders because the backboards couldn't withstand the power. Would the sport still be the excitement that drives March into pure exhilaration? Can you imagine the sport stage without iconic names of Bird, Johnson, Jordan or Walton?

Thankfully, these questions will be left unanswered because GARED's innovation changed the trajectory of the sport forever. The shaping of modern basketball equipment started in a modest warehouse factory on the Mississippi riverfront in St. Louis, Missouri a century ago.

## EVOLUTION OF A BRAND

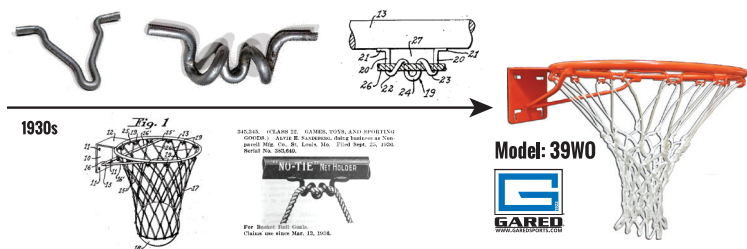


A. E. (Alvie) Sandeberg began his career as a sports innovator inspired by his passion as a boxing athlete. He left his role as a Famous Barr department store buyer to start Nonpareil Manufacturing Company in 1922. By 1940, he developed five patent registrations changing manufacturing standards in basketball and boxing equipment which launched Nonpareil Athletic Products. A century later, Mr. Sandeberg's basketball innovations opened the pathway to the rise in participation for today's most accessible and watched game in modern times – **Basketball.**

Faced with storage constraints of his riverfront factory, Mr. Sandeberg's first basketball patent was focused on creating a collapsible rim design. The updated backplate led to the development of the top guard piece to prevent balls from getting stuck. The top guard concept evolved into a solid piece and is standard for all rims available in the today's market.

According to Barb Meyers, Sandeberg's granddaughter, her grandfather would deliver twine bundles to local women for weaving into nets during the 1920s and 30s. The handcrafted nets were tied to rim rings with knots, but the process remained repetitive and time-consuming. Inspired by manipulation of a simple binder clip, Alvie transformed the metal into a series of round, spiraled loops named the "No Tie" attachment. Additionally, because the rims were bending and breaking from balls hitting the rings, his patent introduced the bracing component to increase the equipment's longevity. Combining the top guard, "No Tie" mechanism, and bracing, Mr. Sandeberg created the anatomy of the modern basketball rim by 1936.

### No Tie Net Attachment Evolution



After eviction from the riverfront location due to the Jefferson Memorial Park project, home of the Gateway Arch, Alvie constructed his first standalone sporting goods factory in downtown St. Louis in 1939. By 1940, the manufacturing patents changed the company's focus to primarily basketball. Together with his son Alvie C. Sandeberg, they created the universal adapter plate and rear-mounted product line. Nonpareil Athletic Products had become a leading source for fixed basketball goals, glass backboards, and front- and rear-mounted steel boards, living up to the company name meaning "having no match or equal" and cementing the Midwest as the home of basketball.

Changes in the labor market in the 1950s led to Sandeberg's decision to sell Nonpareil Manufacturing Company to Nixdorff Krein Company, led by Ellis Littmann. Nixdorff Krein began as a blacksmith company in 1854 and provided the rolled rings used by Alvie for his basketball rim line. Using an anagram, Ellis renamed it to Gared (G-AIR-ID) Company in 1958 in honor of his father Edgar Littmann. Under Nixdorff Krein ownership, GARED continue to build its legacy as one of the founding equipment innovators of basketball. In 1975, the company

moved into an expanded factory in the north area of downtown St. Louis, which remained their headquarters until 2002.

Tragically in 1980, Ellis Littmann and his wife lost their lives in the Las Vegas MGM hotel fire. The Littmanns' daughter Susie Schulte and her two aunts took over as owners, making Gared Company a female-owned sports company by 1985. Under her leadership, executives Bob Schulte and Millard Cohen readied the company for a full-court press with strategic acquisitions of direct-to-consumer brands Toss Back Inc. and Lillibridge Manufacturing, along with sister companies SSI Volleyball and Recreation Equipment Company (now PSS). Gared Company was rebranded as Gared Sports and maintained a worldwide dealer-based business model supported by internal and independent sales representatives, which continues today.

## SLAM OUR GOALS, KISS OUR GLASS



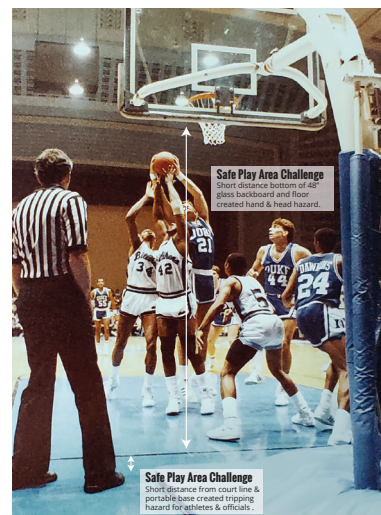
According to Bob Schulte, by the mid-1970s Gared Company owned 65% of the glass backboard collegiate and professional arena market. Prior to the influx of sponsorships, athletic equipment was chosen on quality rather than fiscal contribution. Facility managers knew that the best athletes deserved the best equipment to ensure athlete safety, maintain integrity of the game, and increase basketball's global appeal. GARED's equipment quality, popularity with elite athletes and a gentleman's handshake led to a relationship with the NBA.

"Back then, we weren't allowed to put the brand on products in collegiate or pro arenas. GARED is a special brand to us. It was a great product to produce and fun to watch perform during games," said Bob Schulte.

As play intensified throughout the years, an opportunity to create an elevated equipment line presented itself. When Darryl Dawkins would shatter a board, games would face hours of delays or cancellations. Fans winced when Dr. J's head hit the backboard when rebounding. The short safe play area between baseline and backstop bases created foot hazards for referees and athletes. The game of basketball was gaining popularity, but equipment designed for playgrounds was failing under the competitive spotlight.

First on the drawing board was the creation of the Snap Back® basketball rim. Inspired by a piston design used in John Deere tractors, the revolutionary spring could be adjusted to break at high levels of force. When Dawkins arrived at F & M Arena in 1979, he was unable to continue his assault on glass backboards because the host coach, Glenn Robinson, had switched out the rim to the Snap Back. While the rim passed the Chocolate Thunder test, it wasn't perfected for play until the late 1980s.

Next up was modification of the standard 48" x 72" backboard. Shortening the board to a 42" size reduced head and hand injuries and the smaller surface area decreased the risk of shattering. This new



super-powered glass backboard known as the Outer Limit® debuted with the industry's first continuous aluminum welded rounded corner frame and direct goal mechanism which distributed dunking force to the backstop structure. The Snap Back rim and Outer Limit® glass backboard created an unbreakable configuration leading to Gared Sports being named the official supplier of the NBA in 1989. During decades of use in pro arenas, the Outer Limit Pro backboard never failed and is still considered strongest backboard available on the market today.

In the early 1990s, the engineering team

accomplished their goal of creating an optimal player, official, and fan experience with the revolutionary GARED Pro H. This groundbreaking hydraulic backstop contained the first extended boom and unobstructed view in the industry, and quickly became the most replicated design on the market. While the minimum 8 feet boom extension provided more room for officials and athletes, it resulted in moving spectators further away from the court. Thus, the decision to move the board braces to the outer corners of the board produced an unobstructed view for the enjoyment of fans sitting behind the backstop.

The success in competitive basketball arenas expanded GARED's "Hall of Fame" inground retail basketball product units and introduced Mini-EZ and Micro-Z roll-around portable systems for youth and residential markets. Additionally, the Toss Back® training aids were solidified as a staple in the skill development for basketball players globally.

### 1920s - 1940s

Alvie Sandeberg starts Nonpareil Manufacturing opening on the Mississippi Riverfront in St. Louis, Missouri, on Chestnut St., now home to the Gateway Arch.

### 1940s - 1960s

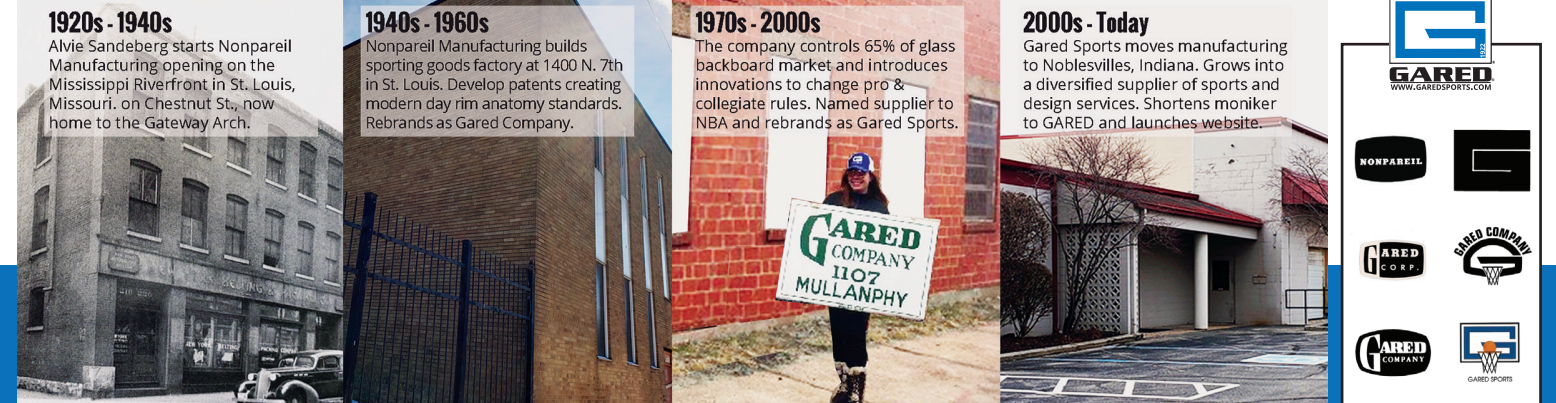
Nonpareil Manufacturing builds sporting goods factory at 1400 N. 7th in St. Louis. Develop patents creating modern day rim anatomy standards. Rebrands as Gared Company.

### 1970s - 2000s

The company controls 65% of glass backboard market and introduces innovations to change pro & collegiate rules. Named supplier to NBA and rebrands as Gared Sports.

### 2000s - Today

Gared Sports moves manufacturing to Noblesville, Indiana. Grows into a diversified supplier of sports and design services. Shortens moniker to GARED and launches website.



## LEGENDS AREN'T BUILT OVERNIGHT

In the late 1990s, Nixdorff Krein sold Gared Sports to Gared Holdings, LLC, led by Dimitrios Koukoulomatis and John Duggins. In 2002, they relocated manufacturing from the St. Louis factory to Noblesville, Indiana, to streamline production with sister company, PSS. In 2007, Mr. Koukoulomatis named Laura St. George as Vice President, returning the company to one of the few women-led sporting organizations at that time. In 2013, the headquarters formally moved to Noblesville, with the legacy sales and customer care staff remaining in St. Louis. In 2017, the parent company ownership was transferred through a manager's buyout which included Ms. St. George, expanding her leadership responsibilities beyond the GARED division.

In the 2000s, Gared Sports focused on increasing its footprint in the sports industry through expansion of a diversified product line. Starting with SSI Volleyball rebranding as Gared Sports, the expanded portfolio included architectural renovation, field sports, and site amenities. Over the next decade, the company widened its dealer network, doubling its channels of distribution to include park and recreation, facility maintenance, e-commerce, and sport specialties. As the sales volume in volleyball, soccer, tennis, lacrosse, pickleball and site amenities has grown, the Indiana factory quadrupled in size due to increased in-house manufacturing capabilities. In 2010, Gared Sports rebranded as GARED to timestamp the evolution of its offerings beyond sports.

Recognized by Modern Business as a top US based sporting goods manufacturer, GARED continues to lead the market in equipment performance with its premium breakout rims and handcrafted competition glass backboards. Alvie's innovations continue to be preferred on playgrounds worldwide. Focused on creating championship moments, the innovation team designed Hoops21® basketball and Go Court Jr® volleyball tournament systems, as well as the Touchline Soccer product line. Debuted in fall of 2021, the Outer Limit® Pro portables garnered instant acclaim and continues the company's tradition of resetting the baseline of excellence. GARED continues to be the first call from elite athletes for home gym and community projects.

Using a philosophy of creative play solutions through matching product to play level, GARED continues to innovate the athletic experience. Through compilation of its expertise, the PlayRX® program launched in 2012. The program empowers facilities to evaluate the health of equipment installed onsite and served as the framework for 2018's digital platform project. The website allows users to get inspiration from showcase projects, create customized game plans, and choose products based on skill level and environmental factors. The digital tools have generated thousands of leads and hundreds of new dealers worldwide, fulfilling GARED's goal of increasing revenue for its dealer network. In addition, since its introduction, the company has converted to a nearly paperless marketing initiative, saving thousands of trees each year.

Today, GARED continues to be a proud advocate for play. They are active

members of the National Sporting Goods Association, Sports and Fitness Industry Association, International Basketball Federation Association, National Recreation and Park Business Council and American Sports Builders Association. Additionally, GARED's leadership members participate in equipment education sessions, industry roundtable discussions, judging in sports industry innovation challenges, and serve on the SFIA Board of Directors. Believing in a world of accessible play regardless of zip code has led to yearly contributions to park build projects in underserved neighborhoods and lobbying on Capitol Hill to support funding of physical education and passing of the PHIT Act.

"Tracing the legacy has been an extraordinary journey for Kara and me. It has been surprising to find how much has been undocumented, but the vision Alvie implanted remains: create optimal sporting experiences through innovation and thought leadership. My mission is to ensure that Mr. Sandeberg's impact on basketball isn't forgotten. The sporting industry is built on family, and it's a true honor to be a part of this tree," said Laura St. George (EVP, GARED; Managing Member, Gared Holdings, LLC. (Kara Oughton, Marketing Manager at Gared Holdings)

Today, the progressive company is celebrating a century of sport and continues to impact the way sports are played. As games have quickened and athletes have grown stronger, one thing has remained the same. GARED continues to lead the industry in activating play spaces, elevating athletic experiences, and celebrating communities through sports and recreation. In celebration, GARED has minted a commemorative lapel pin, recreated an iconic image for their 2022 marketing campaign and will be rebranding legacy products to honor moments of historic innovation.



**"YOUR GAME, OUR BUSINESS"**