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https://www.100test.com/kao_ti2020/133/2021_2022__E8_B5_96_E4_B8_96_E9_9B_84_E9_c96_133305.htm Lesson 9 , Why is Basketball so popular ? Soccer and baseball have more fans , but no other sport has increased in popularity so quickly over the past 30years than has basketball. What accounts for the sudden meteoric rise in a sport which , after all , is played best by people who are unusually tall ? The secret to basketball ' s success lies in three particular sources : the celebrities in the game ; commercial sponsorship of those players and the game itself ; and the mushrooming of crowded , urban environments around the world. All sports have their heroes. Currently , baseball has Mark McGuire and Sammy Sosa , the home runhitting kings. Tennis has Martina Hingus and Pete Sampras , the darlings of the courts. Soccer has players so popular that they are mobbed by fans wherever they appear , especially in Europe and South America. ONLY basketball , however , has celebrities who have caught the attention of the world like no others. Michael Jordan is so popular even after having officially retired from the game that there is talk of his running for public office in the United States. Dennis Rodman , the muscular , tattooed , and much ballyhooed player formerly of the Chicago Bull , makes headlines whenever he pulls another of his crazy but fun-loving publicity stunts. Former players like Larry Byrd and Magic Johnson continue to command respect for their personal integrity and unparalleled sportsmanship. Basketball shoes ,

T-shirts , and even movies are made with these basketball superstar icons. No other sport figures can compete with their popular recognition and appeal. Is this international superstar status solely due to these men ' s talents and contributions ? In no small part , of course , it is , but other leading athletes with equally commendable skills or who have performed attention-grabbing antics rarely reach the stratospheric level of stardom that basketball players enjoy. This special privilege is due to a concerted effort by the players behind the basketball players , that is , the basketball leagues ' owners and sponsors. Basketball has always been a distant third in sports rankings in the US behind baseball and American football. Basketball league owners and managers wanted to change this traditional perception of the immutability of these statistics and in the 1960s began a concerted effort to make basketball the game of choice by hand-picking more colorful as well as professional players and by making alliances with the commercial sponsors of athletic equipment. By the 1970s , basketball team recognition in the US had soared , with dedicated fans in the millions. Teams like the Los Angeles Lakers , the Chicago Bulls , and the Boston Celtics had become household names. Players like Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan were worth millions of dollars in commercial advertising spots for athletic equipment manufacturers , a trend which continues to this day. Today , basketball is a billion-dollar business. No amount of advertising , however , can account for the number of fans who not only double as spectators but as players themselves. Basketball courts , whether in schools , parks , or abandoned city

lots , have sprouted throughout the urban landscape. A child is never far from a basketball ball and hoop. With land becoming more expensive in ever more crowded cities , city governments are far more likely to construct basketball courts than baseball diamonds or soccer fields. As basketball equipment is minimal and inexpensive , it is no wonder that the game has become more and more popular around the world. What young boy doesn ' t dream of becoming as tall as a basketball player , or at least of having as much money or fame ? Basketball ' s quick pace and dynamic plays are in contrast to the much slower moves in baseball or even in much of soccer and American football. This dynamism is part of the pulse of our times , and so long as we live in a fast-changing world , basketball and its players will continue to appeal to sports lovers around the world.

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