

= Basketball (The Office) =

" Basketball " is the fifth episode of the first season of the American comedy television series The Office , and the show 's fifth episode overall . The episode aired on NBC in the United States on April 19 , 2005 . The episode was written and directed by producer Greg Daniels , marking both his first solo writing credit and first directing credit for the series . This episode also marks the first appearance of comedian Patrice O 'Neal .

In this episode , Michael Scott (Steve Carell) and the office staff take on the workers in the warehouse in a basketball game . Owing to racist and sexist stereotypes , Michael chooses many less @-@ skilled office workers for the team over their more athletically talented peers . Michael claims a " flagrant personal intentional foul , " stops the game , and declares his team as the winners . The warehouse finds the call unfair and Michael caves under pressure , and concedes the victory to the warehouse staff .

The episode was inspired by a deleted scene from the first episode where Michael talks about a pick @-@ up basketball game . For two days , the cast of The Office played actual basketball games , which were then spliced together to give the effect of one continuous game . In addition , several lines from the episode became fan and cast favorites . " Basketball " was viewed by an estimated 5 @. @ 0 million viewers and received a 2 @. @ 4 / 6 % rating share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . The episode received positive reviews from critics .

= = Synopsis = =

Michael (Steve Carell) comes in to work prepared to pit the office staff against the warehouse in a game of basketball , with the losers having to work on Saturday . Michael picks Jim (John Krasinski) , Ryan (B.J. Novak) , and Stanley (Leslie David Baker) , the last of whom he believes possesses significant basketball skills based on a racial stereotype . In addition , he also reluctantly picks Dwight (Rainn Wilson) and Phyllis (Phyllis Smith) , but refuses to pick Oscar (Oscar Nunez) or Kevin (Brian Baumgartner) .

The game begins and Stanley proves to be a horrible player . Furthermore , Michael cannot make a shot , nor is he a fan of passing or defending . Upon gaining possession of the ball , Michael fools around and intentionally acts stupid to tease the opponents , which results in Roy (David Denman) snatching the ball and scoring against Michael 's team . Despite the fact that Michael is the one who foolishly lost the ball , he blames the scoring on his teammates ' ineptitude . Jim switches with Michael on defense and defends Roy . As Jim begins to show his prowess at the game , Roy and Jim gradually become aggressive toward each other , with Pam (Jenna Fischer) looking on . At a crucial point in the game , Michael is accidentally hit in the face and claims it is a " flagrant personal intentional foul " . He pettily stops the game and declares the office winners since they were winning when the foul occurred . The warehouse finds the call unfair and Michael caves under pressure , conceding the victory to the warehouse staff . As everybody returns to work , Kevin demonstrates his excellent shooting skills .

Afterwards , Michael , in a rare moment of heart , tells the office that they do not have to come in on Saturday either . However , his justification does little to calm them : " Like coming in an extra day is going to prevent us from being downsized . "

= = Production = =

" Basketball " was written and directed by producer Greg Daniels . Although he wrote the episode , Daniels was not originally scheduled to direct " Basketball . " Rainn Wilson remarked that he really pushed for Daniels to direct the episode . John Krasinski applauded Daniels for being the first writer to " take [the characters] out of the office . " Daniels later said that his favorite shot from the episode was when Michael takes Ryan on a tour of the warehouse because " you got to see the whole basketball [set] . " The editors ' cut for the episode was 40 minutes long . During the commentary for the episode , Steve Carell argued that the American version of The Office was more

difficult to shoot because the British version was 29 minutes long , whereas the American version could only be 22 minutes .

The inspiration for the episode was a deleted scene from the pilot episode where Michael talks about a pick @-@ up basketball game . During filming , the cast and crew were filmed playing real basketball games for two days . The takes were then spliced together to make it appear as if only one game had taken place . NBC was worried about the episode because several of their other pilots had done basketball episodes . The network put a lot of pressure on the cast and crew to make the episode appear " as realistic as it could be . " Donald Lee Harris designed the warehouse set , which Krasinski described as " amazing " and " detailed . "

Several of the actors had basketball experience , such as Krasinski , who played for his high school team . Brian Baumgartner , who portrays Kevin , actually succeeded in making 14 free @-@ throw shots , of which several were included in the final footage . Steve Carell later said of his basketball skills , " The thing about looking like you 're bad at basketball is , it 's like anything else , you have to be incredibly good in order to look bad [?] but that 's not the case with me and basketball . I just was bad . " However , Carell joked that he would " kick ass " at a hockey episode , a reference to his real @-@ life hockey skills .

" Basketball " contained several lines that became fan and cast favorites . Two of Michael 's lines , " The hand strikes and gives a flower " and " Blessed be those who sit and wait " were described by Wilson as Confucian and biblical , respectively . Carell joked that Michael Scott himself should self @-@ publish a book of inspirational sayings . Jenna Fischer revealed that her line , " Please don 't throw garbage at me " was her favorite line of the first season . Michael 's line , " Try not to be too gay on the court " was improvised by Carell and Krasinski 's reaction was real , as he had no idea Carell was going to say it .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

In its original American broadcast on April 19 , 2005 , " Basketball " was viewed by an estimated 5 @. @ 0 million viewers and received a 2 @. @ 4 / 6 % rating share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . This means that it was seen by 2 @. @ 4 % of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 6 % of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . The episode , airing after Scrubs , retained 92 percent of its lead @-@ in audience .

= = = Reviews = = =

The episode received moderately positive reviews from critics . Travis Fickett from IGN retroactively gave the episode a 7 @. @ 5 out of 10 , signifying a " good " episode . Fickett commented that " Basketball " was stylistically different from most of the other episodes in the fledgling series , pointing to its lack of a sub @-@ plot and its characterization of Michael Scott . Fickett , when discussing the latter , singled out the moment wherein Michael hurts Phyllis ' feelings by telling her she can 't play basketball , writing , " The moment is played mostly straight ? and it does feel more realistic and uncomfortable and in that way , the show leans more towards the feel of the UK series . It 's a great moment , but feels like a different show . " Overall , he wrote that , " There is still quite a bit of funny stuff [in ' Basketball '] , but in many ways , this episode suggests what the show would have been like had it taken a slightly different direction in terms of tone and style . " Miss Alli from Television Without Pity gave the episode an " A ? " . Jenna Mullins from E ! News referred to " Basketball " as her " all @-@ time favorite episode of The Office " in an article about Steve Carell 's last episode of the series .

Not all reviews were as positive , however . Erik Adams of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " C + " and highly criticized the characterization of Michael . Largely , he felt that Michael 's antics made him out to be a jerk because the series has not worked at showing that he truly " isn ? t a

complete asshole " . Adams noted that Michael " could truly force Darryl and his staff to work on Saturdays , and he truly could fire them for winning the basketball game . But that would be an outrageous abuse of legitimate power , which isn ' t funny . " Ultimately he argued that the basketball scenes went on for too long ; he said the " episode ' s original cut ran too long to air , and it ' s obvious where the basketball scenes boxed out other threads of the episode " .