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UA1C11/5/1099 WKU vs University of Michigan, NCAA Tournament

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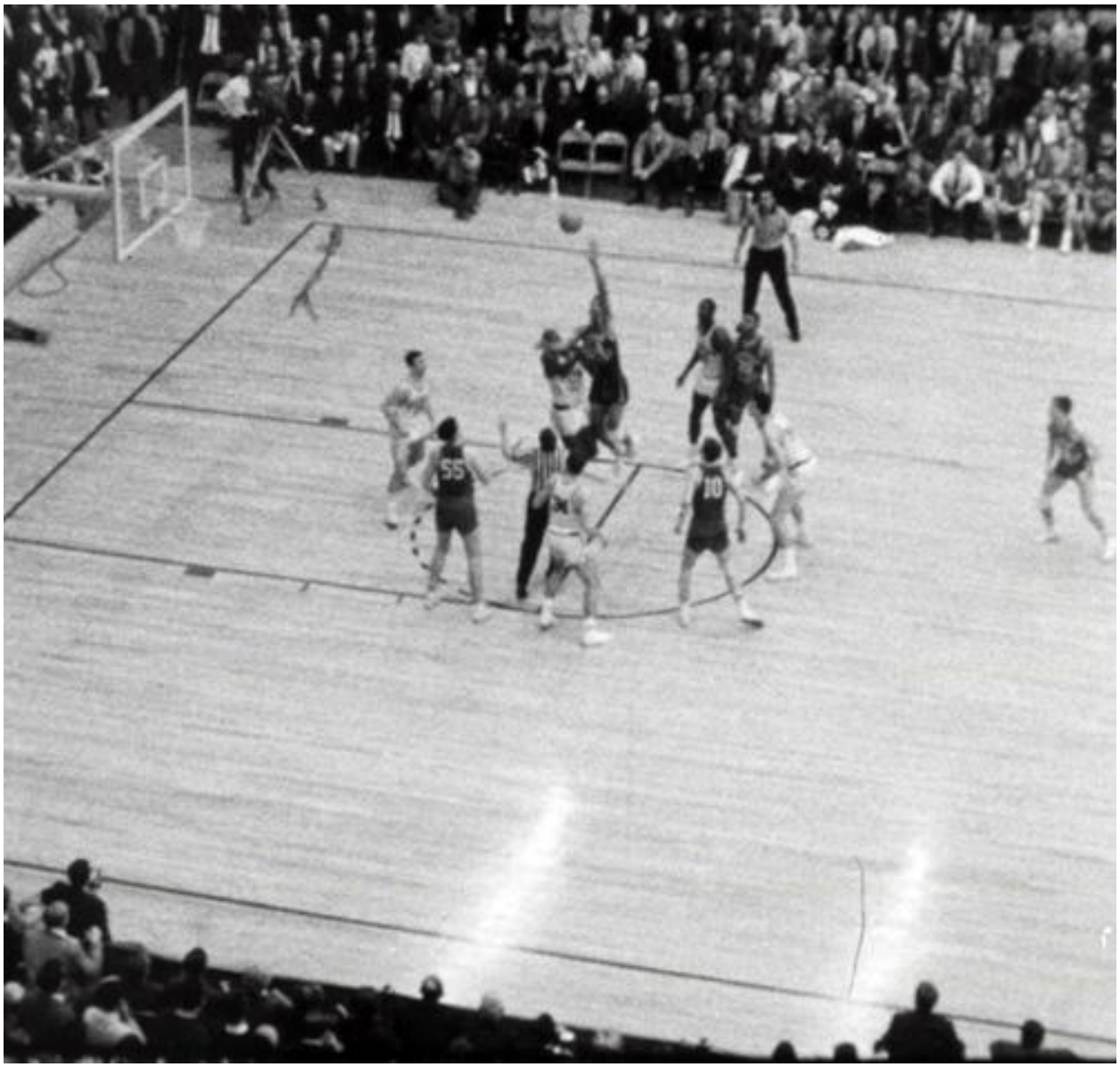
This jump ball is probably the most controversial play in the history of Western Kentucky University basketball. It occurred March 11, 1966, in Iowa City, Iowa, during the NCAA Mid-East Regional Semifinal game between WKU and the University of Michigan. The jump, at the free throw circle nearest the Western basket, followed a held ball between Western's Craig Smith and Michigan's Cazzie Russell.

Here the action is represented in six negatives:

N97 – With only 11 seconds to play and WKU holding a 79-78 lead, official Lou Eisenstein tosses the ball. Most observers agreed that the toss was not vertical, but angled slightly back over the head of Russell, who is in the white uniform behind Eisenstein. Other players are, from extreme left: Michigan's John Thompson (25), WKU's Steve Cunningham (55), Michigan's John Clawson (34) and Oliver Darden (55), WKU's Clem Haskins (22) and Wayne Chapman (10), Michigan's Jim Myers (54) and WKU's Butch Kaufman (21).

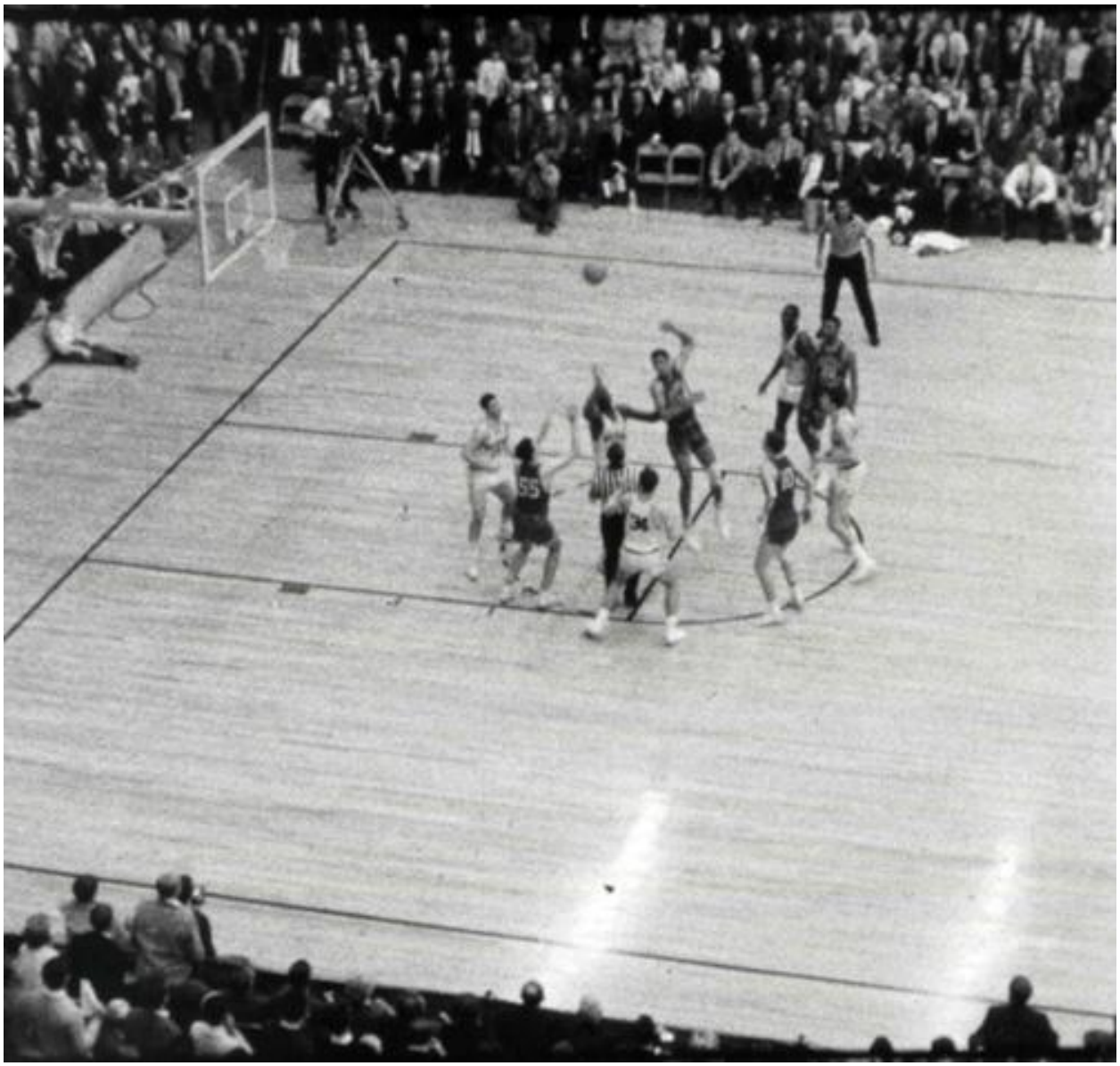
N94 – Russell stoops, apparently unable to jump backward as the ball goes over his head. Smith is already on his toes preparatory to leaving the floor.

N96 – Russell looks straight up at the ball over his head and places his left forearm in Smith's right side. Smith's right arm is already well above Russell's head as Greg's left hand moves toward the ball.



N98 – Smith is still on the way up and the ball has not yet been tipped, indicated by the fact that no other players have yet entered the jump circle. Smith's knees are nearly level with Russell's hip, indicating that Greg's arm, clearly above Russell's head in the previous photo, is still at least that high. Cazzie's left arm is still pushed against Smith's right side.

N99 – As Smith's left hand contacts the ball and tips it toward teammate Cunningham, his right arm has been brought all the way in front of his body and away from Russell.



N95 – The ball continues toward Cunningham as Russell backs away and official Steve Honzo (background) calls a foul on Smith. Russell made both free throws in a bonus situation to give Michigan an 80-79 victory and eliminate WKU from national title competition. It was only the Hilltoppers' third loss in a 28-game schedule.

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