

“For the Love of the Game”

Basketball Reaches New Heights: Eleven Foot Basket Observations



In 1891, when James Naismith hung the peach baskets at ten feet the tallest players were 6'1" – 6'2". Therefore, it makes sense with today's seven footers that in order to keep the same perspective the baskets should be raised to eleven feet. The game today is being dominated by athleticism and strength rather than skill and technique. Raising the basket takes away the easy baskets and requires players to play with skill and techniques.

Even tough, spectators did not even know the teams or most players involved, the increase in passing and team work along with the reduction of fouls being called definitely made for an interesting and enjoyable game. 91% of the over 800 people polled said that they would attend another experimental game using eleven foot baskets.

Scoring

Contrarily to belief, the higher baskets did not produce a low scoring game as evident by the final score of 91 to 63. The 154 total points scored in the game was achieved despite both teams playing zone in the second half. Therefore, there is little doubt that raising the basket will not appreciably effect scoring at all. In fact, once players become accustom with playing on the higher baskets the odds are that it will actually increase scoring due to better team work and shot selection.

Shooting

Inside three point line players had no problem adapting to increased basket height. In fact, the first shot taken in the game taken from 17 feet was successful. Players adjust quickly to added height. Increasing shot angle was not a problem. Without exceptions, players liked playing on higher basket since it was more of a challenge to make shots. (Note: if you place to baskets next to each other, one at ten feet and the other at eleven feet, almost players, on all levels, will shoot at the eleven foot basket.)

Note: Increasing the college men's three point line by one foot should have little or no impact on three point shooting percentage and the game.

Under basket (within three feet) shots were eliminated or altered drastically because of the higher angle created by the added height of rim. Shots close to the basket are not a "gimmie" anymore. To create a shot under the basket players need to shoot the ball at least three feet away from basket. Other wise the shot angle is too difficult and exposure to a block shot is increased. Post players will definitely have to develop footwork and skills in order to score. Having to release the ball further away from the basket eliminates the power moves through defenders and finger rolls.

Athleticism: Raising the baskets definitely had an impact for those players that rely mainly on their jumping ability. Two of the most athletic players on the court, Eric Sandrin had only one layup attempt in 22 minutes and Dontay Harris was 2 for 8 around the basket. Both these players are good leapers and play professionally,

Dunk Shots

Dunks will still occur at the higher height, but they will take some ability and effort. Eleven foot basket does eliminate the cheap and easy dunks.

Layups

With the added height, players must take off further away from basket. Overhand lay shots replaced underhand and finger rolls.

Three Point Shots

Three points shots were counted as three points only in the fourth period. Once three point shots were counted team play totally disintegrated. Players were going one-on-one taking three point shots off the dribble rather than inside out passing.

Both teams combined were 4 for 22 during the fourth quarter. Players were not in season condition, so fatigue was contributing factor to fourth period poor three point shooting. Also, non-three point shooters, such as Kendrick Holley 1 of 8, start casting off.

However, more a factor may be contributed to the lack of practice time on the part of the players shooting at long range. During the game, players were shooting at their normal three point range but did not account for the increase in basket height. Players should have probably moved closer to basket or increased the angle and velocity of their shot to compensate for added basket height.

Shot Blocking

Shot blocking is reduced because of the high shot trajectory and inside shots being taken further away from the basket. However, block shots will increase when shots are taken inside three feet of the basket because of the increase height of the shot needed for the shot gives the defense more of an opportunity (time) to block the shot.

Intimidation: Do not see much of change here. Players are already have adjusted to the tall shot blockers by mastering “floaters” shots. However, the basket itself becomes an intimidation factor by preventing or extremely alternating all shots close to the basket.

Passing/Team Play

Spacing and ball movement (team play) is required to create open shots rather than one-on-one play. All five players touching ball, ala the NY Knicks of the seventies, was commonality. Spectators appreciated and acknowledge good passes.

Post players will have to develop good passing skills and may become the assist leaders. Post players also assumed mid post positions rather than low post positions for better feeds and shots.

Passers will have to adjust and get the ball to cutters earlier. Receiving the pass within three feet of the basket eliminates any shot attempt.

Eleven foot baskets do not impact isolations and individual player moves themselves. However, players will have to alter their finish since the higher basket takes away easy shots. Players like Bryant and James will adapt and will still be hard to guard. However, finishing with short shorts will eliminate a lot of the contact and protect them from injury. Maybe, even prolong their careers.

Rebounding

Rebounding: required more effort and exertion on part of the players. Higher basket did not produce notably longer rebounds as anticipated. However, it did produce longer “flight time” (the time the ball leaves shooter’s hands until it gets into a position that it can rebound). With the increase in “flight time” players had to extend to get ball. The increase in flight time also gives the shooter more of advantage since they know where the ball is going as soon as it leaves their hand.

Fouling

Only 24 fouls (2 offensive) were called in this 48 minute game. Neither team got into bonus. First half team fouls were 5 & 8 and second half team fouls were 5 & 6 respectively. Higher trajectory and releasing the ball further away from basket cut down the number on fouls on shots significantly reducing the number of “and one” fouls.

In cutting down the number of fouls called, it allowed court play to continue uninterrupted for longer periods at time to the players and spectators delight. Comparison: In this year’s NBA final game 43 fouls were called and 40 free throws were attempted.

One of the most impact raising the basket to 11 feet does is not on outside shots but rather to inside shots take near the basket. Since post players have to take shots out side three feet to be successful, it eliminates congestion and physical play under the basket cutting down fouls in the paint. Note: this something rule makers have been trying to do for years.

Increase basket height also alters any lower the shoulder power move to basket through the defender, ala Shaq O’Neal. Drop steps, back in and power moves to the basket will have to finish with a 3 foot floater or baby hook.

After 116 years, it just might be time to raise the baskets.

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