

So after a week of watching games with the new ball, I still think it was the right business move for the NBA. The NBA is on a business roll and our leadership continues to be consistent in their decision making abilities.

IN terms of the impact of the ball on the game itself. Its clear that the ball impacts all teams equally. Its also clear that it doesnt impact all playes equally. Some players have really benefitted from the new ball, while others have suffered. While i think players will make adjustments over the course of the season, and players "muscle memory" of the old ball will disappear and be replaced with a natural comfort of the new ball, its far from there yet.

The players who seem to benefit the most are guys who make their living with jumpers in the 10 to 15 foot range. The ball doesnt come off the rim as hard as the old ball, which has led to shots that I think would have bounced out in the past, staying in now. Players with soft touches on short jumpers are loving the new ball.

On the flipside, players, particularly point guards who are great passers instinctually, where a split second is the difference between an amazing pass or a turnover, or where a quick move to the basket with a quick release to the rim to get the ball between , around or above 7 footers appear to have suffered the worst. Why ? Because you have to know exactly where the ball is and how it will bounce to make an off the dribble no look bounce pass between 2 defenders to a cutter for a layup or dunk. Players who have been in the league for years have gotten used to the old balls and trusted where it would be and how it would feel coming off their hands and how it would bounce. Its muscle memory combined with instincts perfected over many, many years of practice. Even with all the ball to ball variances of the leather ball, it still could be trusted to be where you wanted when you wanted it while dribbling.

The new ball can also be trusted to be where you want it, when you want it. Its just not the same place as the old ball. That is creating problems.

Watching Nashie last night, I felt bad for him. Steve knows the game so well, his passes are all about precision and timing. He knows where the game is going before the game does. He doesnt have to think it through. He just knows. It just seemed last night that there were times he had to hesitate to make sure the ball was there before he could make the pass he wanted to make. I could be wrong of course, that was my perception. That hesitation was all our quick guards needed to get in the passing lane, or for a guy to get a hand down to tip a bounce pass, it even seemed one time he had made eye contact with a guy on a pass, but when it didnt come immediately like the player expected, he looked away, a split second later the ball was there and the player wasnt looking.

I saw similar problems with our guards the past couple games on quick power drives to the basket. Devin Harris has lost the ball several times while driving hard for layups. Its not that the ball slipped out of his hands, its that it wasnt where he expected it to be when he started to explode up to the basket. The same thing happened to Jason 1 time last night as well.

Is this a long term problem ? No. Its a problem these players can adjust to , but it wont be easy for them. The interesting thing will be if rookies and young players have relatively fewer turnovers because they never had to "deprogram" themselves from the old NBA ball.

The other place where adjustments will have to be made will be on dunks. Guys are definitely adjusting to the new ball. They are still trying to figure out when they can dunk with 1 hand or if they always have to use two. For guards, whose hands arent the size of 7 foot guys, we may not see as many contested dunks at the end of games when the ball is slicker. Personally, I dont think thats a bad thing. If not being able to dunk in traffic means players get craftier and more dependent on skill, thats good for the game.

Of course, this is all just personal observation. Thats fun for bar talk, but Im not going to depend on it. So we are working on shooting percentages from locations on the court and by type of shot. Fortunately, I have several years worth of this data, so it will be easy to compare results a few weeks into the season.

The new ball means adjustments, but then again, so does every change made in the game. It doesnt matter if its the ball, the rules, the dress code. A business that doesnt evolve to meet the demands of their customers, doesnt excel.

what have you seen with the new ball so far ?

Im not saying Google shouldn't have bought Youtube. Im just saying that maybe only Google was crazy enough to take on the responsibilities of such a deal.