

National Basketball Association

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Clementine Gazay
Afuad Hossain
Jonathan Glustein



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National Basketball Association

National Basketball Association (NBA)

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of the entire dais, I am pleased to welcome you to the National Basketball Association committee and Montreal. My name is Allen Chen and I am excited to be your chair for this committee. I am a Montreal native and a lover of poutine. I am going into my 2nd year at McGill in Dentistry (DMD).

In this specialized agency, you will have the opportunity to discuss all things related to the NBA. As delegates, you will assume the identities of a NBA team representative or a member of the board of directors. In the face of an impending lockout, you will have to work together to develop and present solutions to the many issues plaguing the NBA.

The 3 following vice chairs have worked very hard to help create this background guide: Clementine Gazay, Afuad Hossain, and Jonathan Glustein. Clementine is a 2nd year student honoring in political science and minoring in finance at Desautels. She was on the board of directors for the external portfolio of IRSAM and coordinated the staff room for McMUN 2014. Afuad is a 2nd year neuroscience student and a seasoned MUN delegate. He was a delegate for numerous conferences such as SSUNS, McMUN, and WorldMUN. Jonathan, an avid Toronto Raptors fan, has participated in MUN since high school, where he took home a Best Delegate at SOMA in Toronto. He is a member of McGill's Delegation Team and has participated at SCSY and ChoMun.

I hope you are excited as I am to be a part of this committee. I hope you become well-versed in the Rules of Procedure and peruse this background guide prior to the committee sessions. I can't wait to see everyone at this dynamic committee.

Cheers,

Allen Chen
Chair, NBA

Introduction

The National Basketball's Association (NBA) is the pre-eminent men's professional basketball league in North America. It consists of 30 franchises member clubs and is recognized by FIBA as the national governing body for basketball in the United States. Founded in New York City on June 6, 1946, the league continues to prosper and grow today. With over 100 international player 37 countries and territories, it goes without saying that the NBA's international influence is ever expanding. Names such as Kobe Bryant and LeBron James have become household names across the world. Also, the sport itself continues to transform as both players and audiences evolve. The innovative addition of the three-point field goal in 1979 is a notable example of good change. However, despite the league's success, many have criticized the NBA for its shortcomings whether it is the structure of the draft lottery or the parity of the two conferences. As SSUNS 2015 delegates, you will either assume the role of a NBA team representative or a member of the board of directors. Together, delegates must work on developing and presenting solutions in order to tackle the many issues plaguing today and tomorrow's NBA.

Image 1. Headliner screenshot from NBA.com following game 4 of the 2014-2015 NBA Finals



The screenshot shows the NBA.com homepage after Game 4 of the 2014-2015 NBA Finals. The top navigation bar includes links for Tickets, Teams, Scores, News, Video, Players, Standings, Stats, TV, Fantasy, LEAGUE PASS, Store, Playoffs, Draft, and More. A search bar is prominently displayed. The main content area features a large banner for the 2015 NBA Finals, showing the Golden State Warriors leading the Cleveland Cavaliers 4-0 in the series. The score is 127-86, and it's Game 4: Thurs Final. The banner also promotes NBA CHAMPS GEAR and has a SHOP NOW button. Social media links for Facebook and Twitter are visible.

NBA NEWS

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A NEW GOLDEN AGE HAS ARRIVED

The Warriors finished off the Cavaliers 127-86, sweeping the series 4-0. At the end of the first half, the Cavs only trailed by 3 points. However, the Warriors went on a big run in the 3rd, outscoring their opponent by 27. The Cavs continued to be outclassed by the Warriors as the latter's lead was maintained till the very end. Finals MVP Stephen Curry carried his team with a barrage of 3s, shooting 85% behind the line.



The road home

Lebron James now has a 2-4 record in the NBA Finals. Is the West too much for him to handle?



Nobody like him

Curry is on the road to becoming one of the best shooters ever. Is the 3-pointer becoming too easier for this generation of shooters?



Hack-a-Thompson

Thompson goes for 2-14 at the free-throw line. Are NBA fans tired of watching free throws?



Tanking for Towns?

Tanking teams are on the look out for number 1 projected draft pick Karl-Anthony Towns. Will the lottery balls fall in their favor?

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- Free Agent Tracker
- Hang Time Blog
- All Ball Blog
- @NBACom

LATEST VIDEOS



Potential NBA Expansion: Where next?

Where will the NBA expand next? Experts are now looking for possible regions in Canada.



West Too Strong? Possible Conference Restructuring?

Western Conference dominates its Eastern counterpart during the 2014-2015 season with 9 teams over 0.500 compared to just 5 in the East.



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Image 2. Game 4 Final Scoring Summary

GAME 4 FINAL SCORING SUMMARY

Final	1	2	3	4	T
Cleveland	22	26	18	20	86
Golden State	22	23	45	37	127

CLEVELAND CAVALIERS															
						REBOUNDS									
Starters	MIN	FGM-A	3PM-A	FTM-A	(+/-)	OFF	DEF	TOT	A	PF	STL	TO	BLK	PTS	
Matthew Dellavedova -G	42	2-9	0-3	0-0	-19	0	0	0	2	4	3	2	0	2	
Iman Shumpert - G	37	4-11	3-6	1-2	-10	3	2	5	2	4	1	1	0	12	
LeBron James - F	44	12-30	3-8	5-6	-11	1	10	11	8	5	1	3	0	32	
Tristan Thompson - F	40	5-12	0-0	2-14	-18	6	6	12	0	4	2	1	2	12	
Timofey Mozgov - C	15	2-5	0-0	3-4	-5	0	3	3	0	2	1	2	0	7	
Bench	MIN	FGM-A	3PM-A	FTM-A	(+/-)	OFF	DEF	TOT	A	PF	STL	TO	BLK	PTS	
J.R. Smith	35	3-20	3-16	0-0	-20	1	6	7	4	3	1	1	2	9	
James Jones	22	1-4	1-2	0-0	2	0	1	1	0	4	1	0	0	3	
Mike Miller	14	3-3	3-3	0-0	6	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	9	
Joe Harris	DNP														
Brendan Haywood	DNP														
Shawn Marion	DNP														
Kendrick Perkins	DNP														
Kevin Love	DNP														
Kyrie Irving	DNP														
Total	249	32-94	13-38	11-26		11	28	39	17	28	10	11	4	86	
		34%	34%	55%											

GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS															
						REBOUNDS									
Starters	MIN	FGM-A	3PM-A	FTM-A	(+/-)	OFF	DEF	TOT	A	PF	STL	TO	BLK	PTS	
Stephen Curry -G	35	14-24	11-13	2-2	24	3	4	7	6	1	2	3	1	41	
Klay Thompson - G	32	7-14	4-6	1-1	11	0	3	3	2	4	1	1	0	19	
Andre Iguodala - F	40	12-17	2-3	3-16	26	3	7	10	7	2	3	0	0	29	
Harrison Barnes - F	29	2-6	0-1	2-5	8	4	6	10	2	3	2	1	1	6	
Draymond Green - C	35	5-10	1-3	7-10	18	0	9	9	6	4	0	4	1	14	
Bench	MIN	FGM-A	3PM-A	FTM-A	(+/-)	OFF	DEF	TOT	A	PF	STL	TO	BLK	PTS	
Shaun Livingston	21	2-3	0-0	0-0	15	0	3	3	5	2	1	2	0	6	
Leandro Barbosa	19	4-10	1-1	1-2	2	0	4	4	2	3	0	2	0	10	
David Lee	15	1-3	0-0	0-0	-1	0	2	2	1	2	0	1	0	2	
Festus Ezeli	14	0-1	0-0	0-0	-8	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	
Andre Bogut	DNP														
Justin Holiday	DNP														
James Micheal McAdoo	DNP														
Marreese Speights	DNP														
Total	240	47-88	19-27	16-36		11	38	49	31	23	9	14	3	127	
		53%	70%	44%											



Topic 1: Expansion

Introduction: Facing a Lockout

This year, the NBA suffered a drastic hit that cannot be ignored. Many fans have finally spoken up about the flaws present in the sport, with disappointment especially visible in terms of TV viewership this year. The finals received less attention than any other major league sport, with the NBA receiving 5 million less views than the World Series, a program it usually surpasses by that amount. Merchandise sales declined overall, with jersey sales almost coming to a halt as polls report a sentiment of fan's dwindling respect for past NBA legends. The biggest NBA sponsor, Gatorade, pulled their official sponsorship of the Finals in a press release where the company declared they simply weren't improving their image through the NBA anymore. Fans around the U.S. were notably bothered by the disappointing matchup in the NBA finals game between the Golden State Warriors and the Cleveland Cavaliers. The Warriors, from the West, dominated the Eastern team extremely easily while the Western conference had been a tight race. The Western conference proportionally received much more attention than any other NBA game, but unfortunately received TV support only from the Western part of the U.S. revealing an increasing disinterest present among Eastern fans. International fans were disappointed as well, feeling more and more alienated as the American NBA system restricts their athletes from venturing out towards an environment of more international competition like the soccer World Cup. International sponsors seem willing to financially support a re-vamp, but only with some sort of commitment for international expansion. This general fall in prestige and revenue angered NBA officials and sponsors and raised multiple essential questions: Does an East/West conference really make sense? How can we make the NBA more internationally inclusive? How can attract more international fans using non-American NBA stars like Dirk Nowitzki and Joachin Noah? Whatever the answers may be, finding them is essential to avoiding another NBA lockout as seen in 2011. Players are angry. Fans are angry. Sponsors are angry. It is up to the delegates to find a solution before players stage a lockout to finally address the issues preventing the NBA from being what it once was.

The East/West Problem

In order to properly understand the conference problem, it is essential to understand how the NBA playoffs work through these conferences. The playoffs serve as an elimination process to narrow down the 16 competing NBA teams, which will each have a chance at winning the world championship and the Larry O'Brien trophy. During the regular season (October through April), the NBA teams each play 82 regular season games with the top scoring 8 teams from the East and the West advancing to the playoffs. During the playoffs, each matchup is seeded and played within the respective conference; all are best of 7 games. After the conference finals where there is a different winner in the

East and West, both champions make it to a showdown in the World Championship Final¹.

It is not news that the Eastern conference has long been inferior to the Western one, problematic because good West teams miss the playoffs while bad East teams make them every single year². The East's chances of improving are also hurt because of a resulting warped lottery. The following charts illustrate this clear imbalance: the first

shows how the West's lottery team in the finals has consistently had more wins than the East's #8 playoff team. The next chart is a representation of the West's winning percentage in comparison to the East's, as shown the West consistently preforms better. This matters because good teams in the West consistently miss the

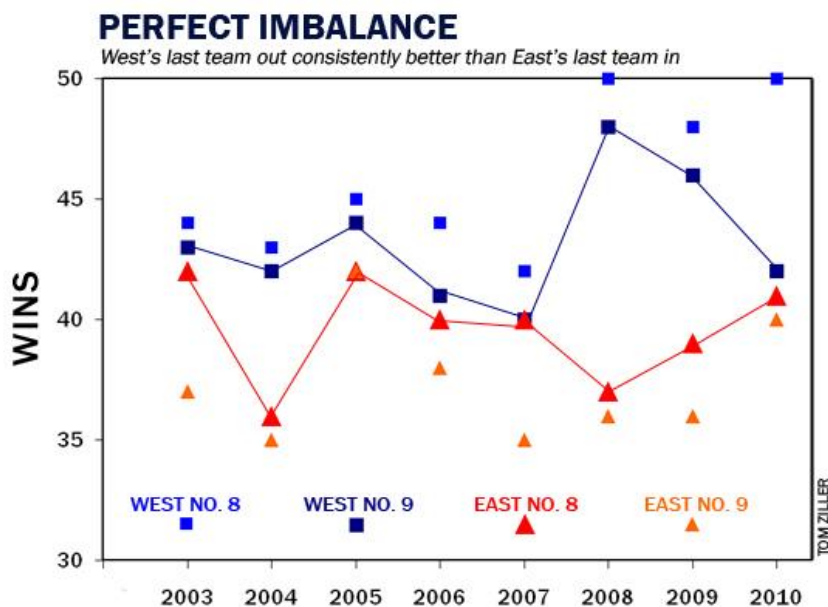


Figure 2 Source: SB Nation

finals, making the competition less intense and the game less interesting for fans. The bilateral structure of the NBA today is unequal, while it should be homogenous and more inclusive of better

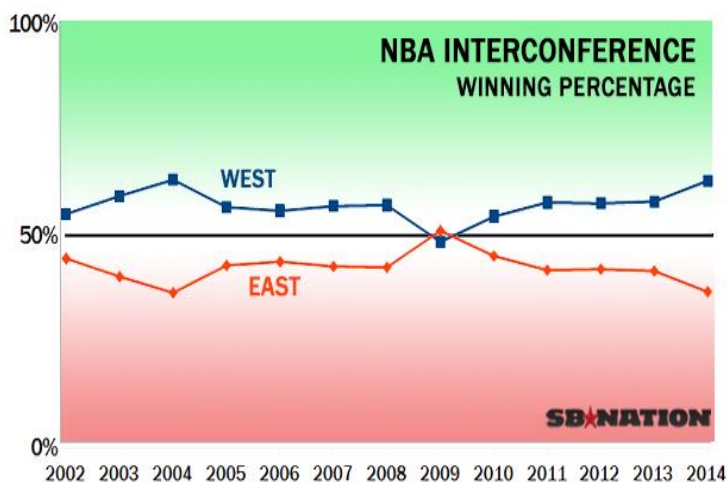


Figure 1 Source: SB Nation

teams. Abolishing the conferences could be a very good solution to this; it would give an opportunity for the best 16 teams regardless of where they are from to make it to the finals, allowing a more general support and viewership of the finals (although some disagree and argue the division alignments provide meaningful regional matchups and rivalries for passionate fans, keeping the

¹ "NBA Playoffs Explained" *The Mirror*. The Mirror, 15 Apr. 2010. Web. 31 May 2015.

<<http://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/other-sports/american-sports/nba-playoffs-explained-214890>>.

² "Why the NBA Needs to Abolish Conferences." *SBNation.com*. N.p., 24 Nov. 2014. Web. 13 Apr. 2015.

game more exciting³). On their end, players could be opposed to this because traveling across the country is more tiring and the elimination of an east/west championship could potentially bring them less money.

It is therefore the job of this Specialized Agency to address the East/West concern and to fix the problem at hand. It will be essential to analyze the repercussions of changing the structure of the league, and to let these findings fuel a debate on how the new NBA Finals and Playoffs should look like. Delegates should consider both the pros and cons for players, owners, and NBA directors in order to find a compromise accepted by all.

NBA International Expansion



Figure 3 Source: Jacob Eisenberg

The newly appointed NBA commissioner Adam Silver has continued to explore the possibility of expanding the NBA overseas, claiming it is there “manifest destiny” to

³ Morales, Javier. "Why Weak East Makes NBA More Interesting." *Bleacher Report*. N.p., 26 Dec. 2013. Web. 13 Apr. 2015.



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develop teams in big cities like London and Paris⁴. Taking into account the amount of people from outside the US that support players from their countries playing in for the NBA, there is definitely room for the growth and development of the NBA fan base, supplying more money and power to the Association than ever. To give an example of the potential international market and interest present around the globe, a map⁵ has been included on the page to show the scope of NBA players' nationalities. It definitely suggests a huge opportunity for expansion in countries that provide many NBA players like France and Argentina. In terms of merchandising and expanding game attendance, pushing NBA teams into these countries could also be a very profitable payoff. The game of basketball is very centered on charismatic superstars that grow the hype of the game, and who wouldn't want to see a player representing their country on their own soil rather than in different cities in the U.S.? As cool as it may sound, this would also involve a tradeoff – is it worth the expense of losing fans by playing more away games in other stadiums in different time zones? Proponents of international expansion suggest a structure of four NBA teams abroad and a schedule where one or two trips per team happen each season with multiple games being played each trip to make the expansion viable. It is your job as NBA commissioners and players to decide if and how the international expansion should be, taking into account the needs of players but also the wild financial opportunities possible with such a move.

Another way to have the NBA branch out of the U.S. would be to play around with the network of basketball leagues already present around the globe. Maybe developing new teams isn't as necessary, but rather focusing on producing a larger finals system including the champions from more than one league. This could be a great opportunity for the NBA, as there are already many basketball leagues worldwide that could prove promising for international expansion (only these don't come anywhere close to the prestige of the NBA). The stellar leagues are found around the globe, with organizations like the Spanish Liga ACB and Argentina's Liga Nacional de Basquet, all playing outside of the NBA's scope but showcasing their promising talent every four years at the Olympics⁶. It would be a win-win situation, expanding the NBA and providing a more generalized and global viewing experience but at the same time avoiding the hassle of integrating faraway cities into the league. It would also mean the NBA having to compromise and negotiate with people outside the US, potentially losing money on sponsorships and endorsements.

International support would definitely increase around international players, connecting on a more personal basis the rest of the world to the NBA. The Finals could become an international event not unlike the World Cup, with different countries competing and therefore rallying together versus another rather than a "championship" between two American cities. For those that are skeptical of the practicality of worldwide

⁴ Feldman, Dan. "Adam Silver: NBA Needs Four European Teams for Overseas Expansion To work." ProBasketballTalk. N.p., 15 Jan. 2015. Web. 13 Apr. 2015.

⁵ Eisenberg, Jacob. *The NBA Goes Global*. Digital image. *Jacob Eisenberg.com*. N.p., 18 Nov. 2013. Web. 1 June 2015. <<http://jacobeisenberg.com/2013/11/18/podcast-going-global-internationalizing-the-national-basketball-association/>>.

⁶ Martin, Josh. "Power Ranking the Best Basketball Leagues in the World, Outside of the NBA." *Bleacher Report*. Bleacher Report, 9 Aug. 2012. Web. 05 June 2015. <<http://bleacherreport.com/articles/1291287-power-ranking-the-best-basketball-leagues-in-the-world-outside-of-the-nba/page/6>>.



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expansion, there is also the possibility of expansion into nearby countries that remain in the same time zone, like Mexico or Canada. An NBA team in Montreal could definitely change the game, although it is up to you to decide if for better or for worse. International expansion could revolutionize the NBA world in so many ways, but what concessions are players and board members ready to make?

Questions to Consider

1. How does a change impact the conferences and what is the best way to optimize a new structure?
2. How should expansion cities be chosen? Is proximity important (opening more teams in nearby places like Canada and South America) or is it worth investing in a bigger number of teams overseas?
3. Which is more important when choosing between moving a team and losing fan base or losing ticket sales due to inadequate facilities?



Topic 2: Draft Reforms

Introduction

More than ever before, parity in the NBA is set as an all-time imperative, resulting in small-market teams to flourish in the new age of the NBA.⁷ Along with innovative legislations and salary cap restrictions, most of the change has been accredited to the format of the draft, allowing small-market teams to acquire rising superstars and thus stay relevant against large market teams like New York, Los Angeles and Miami among others. The most common mean today for teams to acquire a franchise player that might veritably turn a franchise around is through the draft. It provides teams that otherwise might be unable to acquire stars on the free agency market with the star caliber players to compete, if not thrive.

In its current form, *the lottery draft format*, rewards the worst performing teams with *the highest possible chance* at the 1st overall pick at the NBA draft. In its initial development, the lottery draft addressed the issue of parity, providing bad small

market teams with the opportunity to improve their team without having to pay large sums in free agency.⁸ However, as finishing last in the league becomes further incentivized due to the incredible benefits of gaining the 1st overall pick, there remains a mushrooming critique of the current draft format, accusing the lottery draft of promoting “tanking”, creating a gap in the league between the good and bad teams. Critics thus suggest that if no reform is made to the draft, parity will be regress in the NBA.

Definition: *TANKING*

THE DELIBERATE ACT OF LOSING GAMES THROUGH IRREGULAR DECISIONS IN PLAYER PERSONNEL CHOICES, GAME TIME PLAYER MANAGEMENT IN THE GOAL OF FINISHING LAST PLACE IN ONE'S CONFERENCE.

History of the Draft format⁹

1947-1965: Territorial Picks

In the goal of making fan bases more invested in their teams, the draft included the option for teams to forfeit their first-round pick and instead select a player from its immediate area.



⁷ “Small markets experiencing success in NBA playoffs,” NBA, last modified June 3, 2012. <http://www.nba.com/2012/news/06/03/small-market-success.ap/>.

⁸ “Explaining how the NBA Draft Lottery works,” Patt, Jason, last modified May 19, 2015. <http://www.sbnation.com/nba/2015/5/19/8625903/nba-draft-lottery-2015-rules-how-works>.

⁹ “NBA.com: Evolution of the Draft and Lottery,” NBA, accessed June 2, 2015, http://www.nba.com/history/draft_evolution.html.



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1966-1984: Coin Flip

The league adopted a coin flip between the last-place teams in each division to determine which team would draft first. The remaining draft order was determined by the inverse order of each teams' win-loss records.



1985: The First Lottery

The inaugural lottery had all non-playoffs have an equivalent chance at getting the first overall pick. The order of the non-playoff teams was determined by the lottery while playoffs team, and all teams after the first round selected based on the inverse order of their records.



1987-Now: Top Three Teams

The lottery would now only determine the order of selection for the first three teams only. The remaining teams were ordered based on the inverse order of their records. This adjustment assured that the worse overall record team would pick no worse than 4th overall.

1990-Now: Weighted Lottery System

The lottery would now have a weighted system where the worse performing teams would have a greater chance at the 1st overall pick. All other non-playoffs teams have adjusted percentages of getting the 1st overall pick.

Current Draft Format

In its current form, the weighted draft percentages for all 14 non-playoffs teams are as follows:¹⁰

1) 25.0%	2) 19.9%	3) 15.6%	4) 11.9%	5) 8.8%	6) 6.3%	7) 4.3%
8) 2.8%	9) 1.7%	10) 1.1%	11) 0.8%	12) 0.7%	13) 0.6%	14) 0.5%

¹⁰ "Explaining how the NBA Draft Lottery works," Patt, Jason, last modified May 19, 2015.
<http://www.sbnation.com/nba/2015/5/19/8625903/nba-draft-lottery-2015-rules-how-works>.

The Incentives of Tanking:

While league head officials and team executives involved in the supposed practice of “tanking” may deny that anything of that sort is taking place, analytics suggest that “tanking” does in fact have great appeal; the numbers proposing that “there are substantial benefits to landing the first overall pick that make short-term financial losses at the gate a worthwhile gamble”.¹¹

According to a study by Christopher Walters and Tyler Williams of MIT, landing the first pick in the draft lottery statistically benefits the team in ways such as:¹²

- Increases in attendance by 5 to 6 percent over each of the subsequent five years
- Increases in winning percentages in the short run, peaking at 8 to 9% in the 4th year

While data analysis tools provide statistically compelling arguments for teams to “tank”, do teams actually do it? In addition to the previous results, Walters and Williams’ study suggests that teams do in fact intentionally “tank”. With the help of their following estimating equation:

$$W_{isg} = \kappa_{is} + \lambda_g + \theta \text{Change}_{isg} + \eta_{isg}$$

Walter and Williams have shown that when eliminated from a playoff position, teams have a lower likely to win than previously in the season; a reduction in the probability to win a game by a significant 14 percentage points.¹³ These results contrast with pre-1989 results, where reduction

in probability to win post-elimination is much smaller, if not non-existent. A likely reason for this dramatic change is due to teams understanding the

incentives of losing in a weighted draft lottery.¹⁴

League	NHL	NBA	MLB	NFL
Drafts	2006-11	2005-11	2004-11	2006-11
Before Elimination	43.20%	37.43%	47.26%	39.09%
After Elimination	36.38%	32.35%	46.25%	36.72%
Change	-15.79%	-13.57%	-2.14%	-6.06%

Figure 4: League comparisons of change in win pct. before and after elimination from playoff contention (Business Insider)

Commonly proposed Draft Reforms:

In recent years, there has been a plethora of proposals floating around in academia, sports blogs and the typical sports bar. With an increasing call from the public

¹¹ “The Truth Behind “Tanking” in the NBA,” Tuchman, Robert, last modified April 15, 2015.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/roberttuchman/2015/04/15/the-truth-behind-tanking-in-the-nba/>.

¹² “To Tank or Not to Tank?” Williams, Tyler; Walters, Christopher, last modified March 3, 2012.

http://www.sloansportsconference.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/35-Walters_Williams_NBA_2012.pdf.

¹³ “To Tank or Not to Tank?” Williams, Tyler; Walters, Christopher, last modified March 3, 2012.

http://www.sloansportsconference.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/35-Walters_Williams_NBA_2012.pdf.

¹⁴ “To Tank or Not to Tank?”

to modify the current draft format, the NBA league office in recent years has had several proposals presented to the general managers. The most notable proposals are detailed below:

a) Revised weighting system

Proposed in the competition committee meeting in Las Vegas in late October of 2014¹⁵, this proposal pushes to modify the current odds at the 1st overall pick to ultimately have relatively similar odds across most of the non-playoff teams¹⁶. The proposal's key details are given below:¹⁷

- Give the four worse teams the same odds at winning the 1st overall pick (11%)
- The fifth worse team would have a 10% chance at winning the lottery
- The non-playoff team with the best record would have a 2% chance at winning the lottery, an increase of 0.5% from the current weighting.
- The lottery would pick the order of the first 6 teams picking at the draft, followed by an inverse draft order based on win-loss record. This would be a change from the current draft lottery which determines the order of the first three teams followed by the conventional inverse win-loss order.

The proposal would seek to equalize the chances of the bottom half of all non-playoffs teams, decreasing the urge to “tank” to the bottom. Furthermore, having only an incremental increase in the top non-playoff team chances at drafting first would assure teams do not intentional drop from a low playoff seed in order to enter the draft lottery.

b) The “Wheel” System

This radical proposal would do away with the current form of the lottery altogether and replace it with a system in which each of the 30 teams would pick first in a specified year every 30 years.¹⁸ Thus each team would alternate through different draft positions every year for the next 30 years. The current wheel proposal assures that each team pick at different regions in the draft from year to year. With this proposal, teams would know the draft position of each of their next 30 drafts.

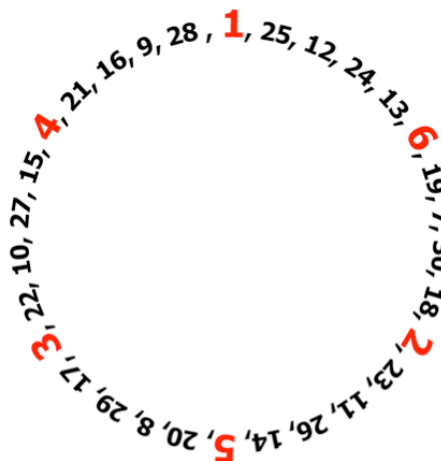


Figure 3: Example of a 30 year draft cycle

¹⁵ “NBA Lottery Reform Is Coming,” Lowe, Zach, last modified July, 16, 2014.

<http://grantland.com/the-triangle/nba-lottery-reform-is-coming/>

¹⁶ “NBA Lottery Reform Is Coming,”

¹⁷ “NBA Lottery Reform Is Coming,”

¹⁸ “The NBA’s Possible Solution for tanking: Good-bye to the Lottery, Hello to the Wheel,” Lowe, Zach, last modified December 23, 2013. <http://grantland.com/the-triangle/the-nbas-possible-solution-for-tanking-good-bye-to-the-lottery-hello-to-the-wheel/>

c) The Alternate “Wheel” System

Several issues are raised with the previous “wheel” model. For one it allows elite prospect to time their entry into the draft until a desired market gets the chance to pick first overall.¹⁹ Furthermore teams who fared poorly with early draft picks would have a difficult time improving going into next segments of the wheel. Left to fend at the bottom of the draft, bad small market teams would have no way out of mediocrity.

The alternate wheel system as proposed by Celtics general manager Mike Zarren would have “teams rotate through groups of picks, randomly getting a pick within each group”.²⁰ Zarren includes two options for the wheel, one where teams rotate through six-pick groups over 5 years and another where teams rotate through three-pick groups over 10 years. Below are examples of a 5 year-plan and 10-year plan

	POSITION IS CHOSEN RANDOMLY AMONG THE GROUPS									
5 YEAR CYCLE	1-6	25-30	19-24	13-18	7-12					
10 YEAR CYCLE	1-3	28-30	19-21	16-18	7-9	4-6	25-27	22-24	13-15	10-12

d) Other notable draft reforms

While the previously mentioned draft reforms have been officially discussed by league officials, there still remains an incredible array of options to be explored. As discussion continues in the league, other solutions including decreasing draft odds of regularly under-performing teams and other radical ideas such as randomly choosing a team from amongst the 30 teams to pick first may perhaps emerge. It is actively encouraged in committee discussion to discuss innovative yet sound draft reform proposals.

Draft Reform Barriers:

It comes without saying that the NBA’s ultimate goal is to ensure there is increased parity in the league and that small market teams be able to prosper among the larger markets in the league. Any measures taken with regards to draft reform should take into matter the ability of small market teams to compete in the NBA. Small market teams such as the Oklahoma City Thunder have expressed the risks of radical reform, citing that there already exists a heightened disadvantage between small-market teams and large-

¹⁹ “Re-inventing the Wheel: Mike Zarren presents modified NBA-draft-lottery-reform proposals,” Feldman, Dan, last modified February 27, 2015. <http://probasketballtalk.nbcsports.com/2015/02/27/re-inventing-the-wheel-mike-zarren-presents-modified-nba-draft-lottery-reform-proposals/>

²⁰ “Re-inventing the Wheel: Mike Zarren presents modified NBA-draft-lottery-reform proposals,” Feldman, Dan, last modified February 27, 2015. <http://probasketballtalk.nbcsports.com/2015/02/27/re-inventing-the-wheel-mike-zarren-presents-modified-nba-draft-lottery-reform-proposals/>



market teams in terms of recruiting.²¹ The current draft system is suggested as being an equalizer of sorts. Any sort of equalizing of the draft weight system would rather potentially create an imbalance between small and large market teams. It comes without saying that for any change to be made by the league, small market teams must also be on board for the changes to go through.

Other Notable Draft Issues:

Eligibility reforms for the NBA draft

Initially made law in the summer of 2005, Commissioner David Stern set an age limit on players entering the league due to concerns that direct entrance into the league from high school hindered a player's potentials. The instituted provision made players only eligible for the draft once they turned 19 or be a year removed from high school graduation, which effectively forced U.S.-born players to complete at least one year of college before they could declare their intention for the draft.²² While the reasoning behind the rule implementation has been put under heavy scrutiny, the rule has remained unchanged since its inception.

As the new NBA commissioner Adam Silver looks to raise the minimum age of players entering the league to twenty years old, a growing counter culture is pushing for a lower minimum age from the current 19 years old league limit.²³ Among the growing movement against raising the limit in the league include National Basketball Players Association Executive Director Michele Roberts, who rather believes a repeal of the 2005 provision is finally due in this day and age.²⁴

Proponents of the higher age limit have long suggested that a player entering the league more mature can only benefit a player, further citing evidence of promising high schools players who failed to acclimatize to the NBA pre-2005.²⁵ However, opponents strongly condemn the reasoning behind the league's age limit rules, suggesting that the league "cherry-picked" data to serve their interests. Ultimately, what major opponents believe the law to be is an attempt at bowing to NCAA interests and league owner interest of delaying a player's eventual eligibility for free agency.²⁶

In an era where the majority of leagues have no player age limits to speak of, the NBA's policy regarding its age limit is that much more of a glaring issue. Defending it against public opinion, the player's union has become that much more difficult, ultimately bringing it back to the debate table.

²¹ "Why the NBA's draft lottery reform is a slippery slope," Wojnarowski, Adrian, last modified October 21, 2014. <http://sports.yahoo.com/news/why-the-nba-s-draft-lottery-reform-is-a-slippery-slope-173150585.html>

²² "CBA Principal Deal Points," NBA, last modified August 4, 2005. http://www.nba.com/news/cba_summary_050804.html

²³ "Big Questions With Adam Silver," McCollum, C.J., last modified June 26, 2015. <http://www.theplayertribune.com/adam-silver-cj-mccollum-interview/>

²⁴ "A dozen possible moves to mull as free agency closes in," Aldridge, David, last modified June 30, 2015. http://www.nba.com/2015/news/features/david_aldrige/06/29/morning-tip-a-dozen-moves-for-the-offseason-state-of-one-and-done-players-in-nba-since-2006-qa-with-former-atlanta-hawks-gm-danny-ferry/index.html

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.



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Questions to Consider

1. Is there a current draft reform proposal that is viable enough for immediate implementation? If not, what constitutes a potentially viable proposal?
2. In developing a new draft format, what are pivotal characteristics needed in any new format?
3. What are points of contentions in the current batch of proposals? How can they be resolved?
4. Generally considered a “*players vs owners*” issue, how can the NBA Players’ Union realistically succeed in convincing owners in prioritizing age limit deregulations without jeopardizing general CBA negotiations?



Topic 3: NBA Rule Changes

Introduction

In 1891, Dr. James Naismith invented basketball.²⁷ While the sport has retained certain aspects of its original form, basketball is a living, breathing sport that has been altered through the years. Throughout history, the nature of rule changes are varied but most were implemented in order to promote a more free-flowing and entertaining brand of basketball. It is to be noted that most recent rule changes were caused by certain players and teams abusing a particular aspect of the game. Examples of commendable rule changes include the implementation of the 24-second shot clock rule in 1954, the 3 second defensive zone rule in 1966, and the elimination of perimeter hand-checking in 1994²⁸. These rules, along with many others, were shown to have pushed the NBA brand of basketball in the right direction as the number of NBA fans around the world grows every day.

Hack-A-Shaq

In today's NBA, many existing rules have been highlighted as detrimental to the game. Similarly, with the possibility of NBA viewership declining, different rules changes have been proposed to increase the excitement level of NBA games. Chief among the rules that have provoked fan outcry is the "Hack-a-Shaq" strategy, which was of particular significance in the past and current NBA finals. The "Hack-a-Shaq" play, originally used by Don Nelson, Dallas Mavericks coach, revolves around the rules concerning intentional fouling. With the other team in the "bonus", employing the strategy would intentional foul and send a poor free-throw shooter to the free-throw line. The name of the strategy comes from its common use against center Shaquille O'Neil²⁹. If the person in question has below a 50% FT%, this play call can statistically make sense as on average the team who is fouled will only get 1 point per possession (or less). However, this play disrupts the tempo of the game and the normal fast-paced game of basketball can be reduced to a free throw contest. Critics of this strategy argue that it makes the game unpleasant to watch as it violates the spirit and flow of the game. Often, key starting players such as DeAndre Jordan have to be benched in key moments in the 4th quarter in order to prevent the use of Hack-A-Shaq.

RK	PLAYER	TEAM	GP	PPG	PER GAME		TOTAL		FT%
					FTM	FTA	FTM	FTA	
125	Andre Drummond, C	DET	82	13.8	1.7	4.5	142	365	.389
124	DeAndre Jordan, C	LAC	82	11.5	2.3	5.7	187	471	.397
123	Mason Plumlee, PF	BKN	82	8.7	1.9	3.9	157	317	.495
122	Josh Smith, SF	DET/HOU	83	12.4	1.5	3.1	127	255	.498
121	Dwight Howard, C	HOU	41	15.8	3.5	6.6	143	271	.528

Figure 5: Worst 5 Free-throw shooters during the 2015-2016 season

²⁷ "Basketball in America: A History." Basketball in America: A History. Accessed September 3, 2015.

²⁸ "NBA.com - NBA Rules History." NBA.com - NBA Rules History. Accessed September 3, 2015.

²⁹ "Hack-A-Shaq Definition - Sporting Charts." What Is Hack-A-Shaq? Definition from SportingCharts.com. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.sportingcharts.com/dictionary/nba/hack-a-shaq.aspx>.

³⁰ "NBA Player Free-Throw Shooting Statistics - 2014-15." ESPN. Accessed September 4, 2015.

The efficiency of the Hack-a-Shaq play has been questioned by players and coaches alike. However, the following graph illustrates the score change distribution before and after an opposing team fouls Dwight Howard, a poor free throw shooter. According to the graphs below, the opposing team has a significant chance of improving their score with the use of Hacking, 41% vs. 34%.

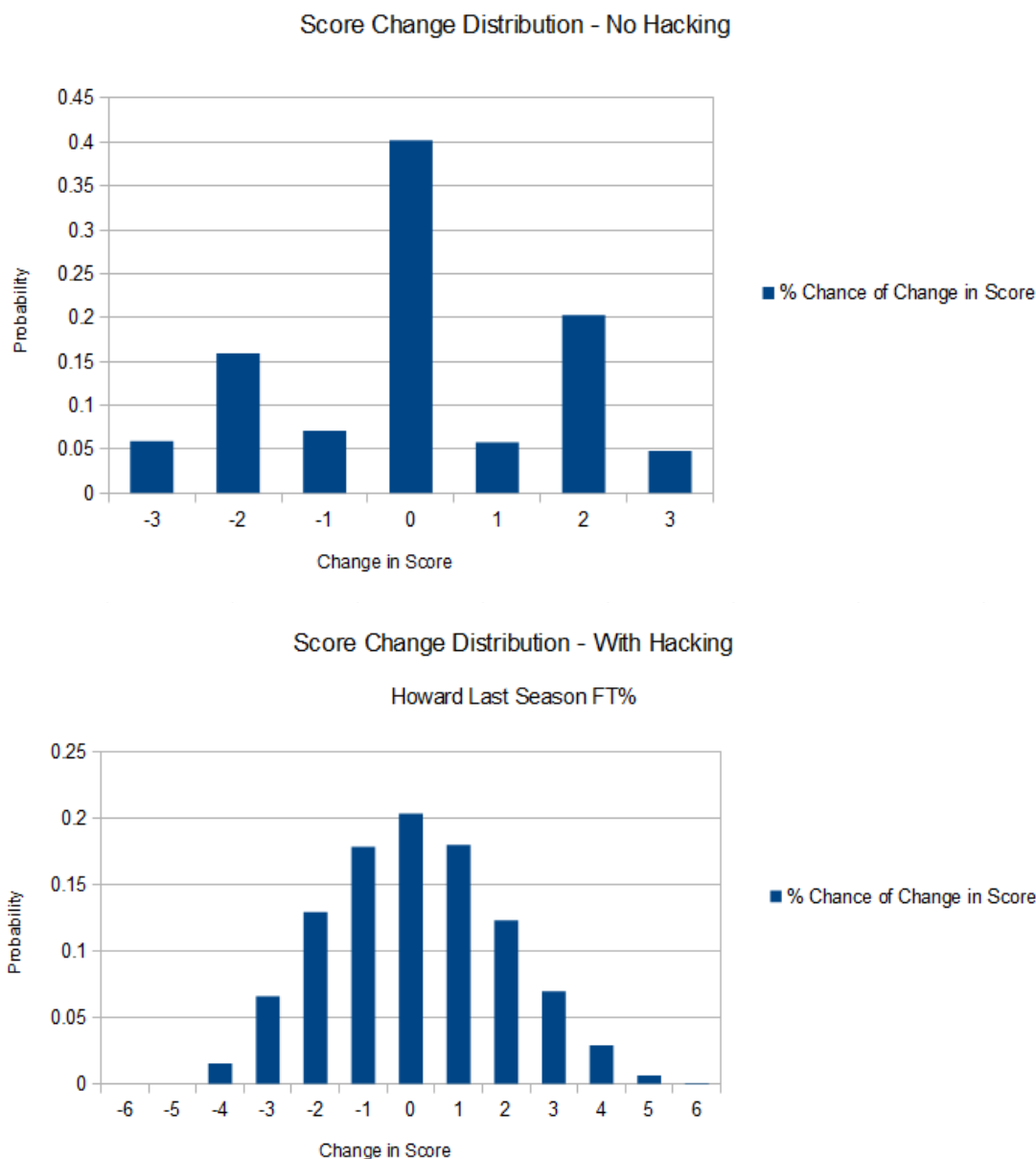


Figure 6: Score Change Distribution in a simulated game with regards to “hacking” Howard³¹

³¹ "The Mathematics of Hack-a-Howard - Red94 | Houston Rockets News and Musings." Red94. July 27, 2013. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.red94.net/the-mathematics-of-hack-a-howard/12960/#>.



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The flip side of the debate is that the Hack-a-Shaq play forces players to learn one of the most essential skills in the game of basketball: free throw shooting. Many view the play as a legitimate part of basketball and that getting rid of it gives a free pass to poor free throw shooters. It has been compared to walking the 8th hitter in baseball to get to the pitcher; boring, yet an essential part of the game.³² Delegates must investigate whether TV viewership does or does not decline during Hack-a-Shaq plays. Therefore, the league can make an informed decision on whether or not this strategy will lead to a decline in NBA popularity.

Clarification of Personal, Flagrant, and Technical Fouls:

According to the NBA, there exists a definition for the 2 types of flagrant fouls.³³

Flagrant "1" (FFP1) - unnecessary contact committed by a player against an opponent. The opposing team is awarded two (2) free throws and possession.

Flagrant "2" (FFP2) - unnecessary and excessive contact committed by a player against an opponent. The opposing team is awarded two (2) free throws and possession and the player committing the foul is automatically ejected.

Any player who commits two Flagrant "1" Fouls in the same game will be automatically ejected from that game.

Basketball is a very physical sport but it is necessary to punish players who use excessive or unnecessary force during the game in according with textbook rules. This is done in order to promote sportsmanship and protect players from unnecessary harm. However, the textbook difference between a personal & flagrant 1 fouls and flagrant 1 & flagrant 2 fouls is very subjective and vague. Given the current definitions, the only difference between each type of foul are the words "unnecessary" and "excessive". In today's NBA, it is up to the referee's judgment to determine the severity of a foul committed by a player. Considering that each type of foul has a vastly different consequence on players and the game, it becomes imperative that a referee make the right call in a timely manner for each foul. A miscalled foul may even be the deciding factor in close NBA game. Thus, the league must develop a manner in which referees can consistently measure the severity of a foul.

Also, in the NBA, referees are able to assess a technical foul to any player or coach whose conduct is deem detrimental to the game. This rule was instituted to ensure positive perception of basketball players, as the league wishes for more respect for the game and its officials.³⁴ This has led to an expansion of punishable unsportsmanlike actions. Examples of punishable offenses include waving off an official as a sign of disrespect or clapping sarcastically at an official. Players are fined for each technical foul earned which starts from \$1000 and can increase in increments of 500\$. Delegates should

³² "Hack-A-Shaq Will Likely Be Outlawed next Season, According to Report." SBNation.com. May 4, 2015. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.sbnation.com/2015/5/4/8544557/nba-hack-a-shaq-intentional-foul-rule>.

³³ "Rules and Regulations: Flagrant Fouls." NBA.com. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.nba.com/2010/news/features/04/18/flagrant.technical/>.

³⁴ "NBA Will Whistle More Techs for 'overt' Gestures." NBA Will Whistle More Techs for 'overt' Gestures. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.nba.com/2010/news/09/24/officials.crackdown.ap/>.



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be reminded of the infamous “laughing Duncan technical”. In 2007, a laughing Tim Duncan was ejected from the game after being given 2 consecutive technical fouls from referee Joey Crawford. Crawford would be later suspended and not allowed to officiate during that year’s Finals³⁵.

Section V--Conduct

a. An official may assess a technical foul, without prior warning, at any time. A technical foul(s) may be assessed to any player on the court or anyone seated on the bench for conduct which, in the opinion of an official, is detrimental to the game. A technical foul cannot be assessed for physical contact when the ball is alive.

EXCEPTION: Fighting fouls and/or taunting with physical contact.

Figure 7: Ruling regarding technical fouls³⁶

Many players such as Michal Beasley believe that this rule has taken emotion and expression out of basketball. In the 2014-15 season, Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook leads the league with 17 technical fouls, followed by Draymond Green, Markieff Morris, and DeMarcus Cousins with 15 each³⁷.

3-Pointer Discussion:

In the 1979-80 season, the NBA adopted the 3-point line from the ABA, the other basketball league that it merged with.³⁸ From an analytical perspective, the 3-point shot is one of the most important scoring options on the court. However, has this shot become too easy for today’s players? During the 2014-2015, the Houston Rockets led the NBA with 11.4 3-point field goals per game compared a league average of 7.8³⁹. Only 10 years ago during the 2004-2005 season, the league average for 3-pointers made was 5.6. The league average number of 3 point attempts per game has also been steadily increasing, going 12.7 3PA in 1997 to 22.4 3PA in 2015⁴⁰. During the 2014-2015 season, 3s accounted for a record 27% of all field goals while shooters made 35% of them. Considering that players only hit 2-point jump shots at 39%, the expected value of the 3-point shot far exceeds any other shot other than a lay-up, free throw, or dunk. Therefore, coaches and players find it easy to understand that it is more efficient to take more 3s.

³⁵ "Crawford Ejects Tim Duncan for Laughing." Bleacher Report. Accessed September 3, 2015.

<http://bleacherreport.com/articles/2074035-flashback-friday-joey-crawford-ejects-tim-duncan-for-laughing>.

³⁶ "NBA.com - RULE NO. 12-FOULS AND PENALTIES." NBA.com - RULE NO. 12-FOULS AND PENALTIES. Accessed September 3, 2015. http://www.nba.com/analysis/rules_12.html?nav=ArticleList.

³⁷ "NBA Basketball Player Stats - Technical Fouls." NBA Basketball Player Stats - Technical Fouls. Accessed September 3, 2015. <https://www.teamrankings.com/nba/player-stat/fouls-technical?rate=season-totals>.

³⁸ "Is It Time to Move the NBA 3-Point Line Back?" Grantland. June 23, 2014. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://grantland.com/the-triangle/is-it-time-to-move-the-nba-3-point-line-back/>.

³⁹ "The 5 Best 3-Point Shooting Teams in NBA History." The Cheat Sheet. July 18, 2015. Accessed September 4, 2015. <http://www.cheatsheet.com/sports/the-5-best-three-point-shooting-teams-in-nba-history.html/?a=viewall>.

⁴⁰ "NBA League Averages | Basketball-Reference.com." Basketball-Reference.com. Accessed September 4, 2015. http://www.basketball-reference.com/leagues/NBA_stats.html.

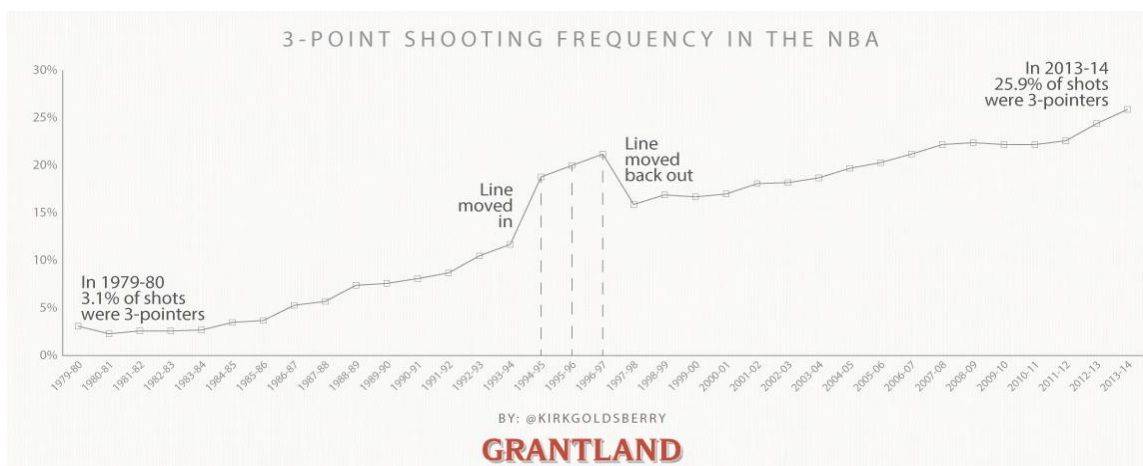


Figure 8: 3-Point Shooting Frequency in the NBA⁴¹

Needless to say, the 3-point line has changed the game of basketball, creating careers for “3-point specialists” who specialize in shooting from beyond the arc. Before the creation of the 3-point line, players had to be strong, able ball handlers who could drive against the league’s biggest players. Now, the 3-pointer is one of the most exciting plays in basketball. Its existence has opened the floor and allowed spot-up shooters to thrive in today’s offense. Although few would believe that the proliferation of 3-pointers is a real problem, it is becoming harder and harder to justify an extra point reward for a shot that is becoming only marginally more difficult than any other jump shot.

In response, critics have proposed 2 different solutions:

1. Moving the 3-point line back.

In the WNBA, the league has already moved their 3-point line back 19.5 inches to correspond to FIBA’s line. The consequences were significant as the percentage of 3-point attempts and 3-point FG% both dropped from 35.2% to 21.5% and from 35% to 32.7%, respectively⁴².

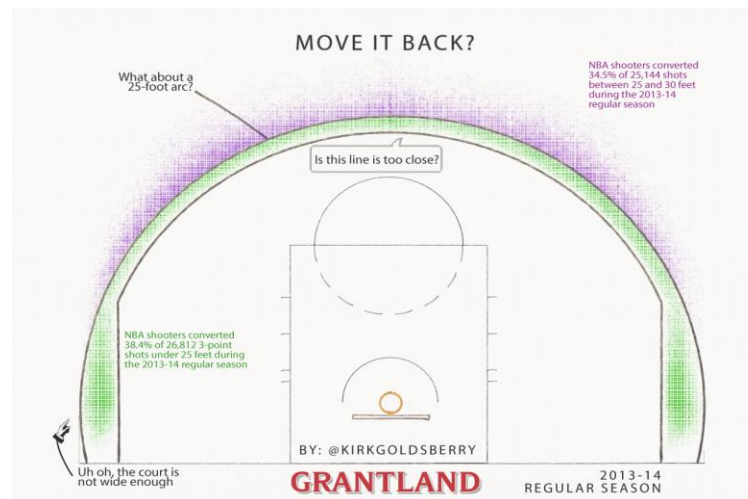


Figure 8: FGA% with regards to the current and extended 3-point line

⁴¹ "Is It Time to Move the NBA 3-Point Line Back?" Grantland. June 23, 2014. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://grantland.com/the-triangle/is-it-time-to-move-the-nba-3-point-line-back/>.

⁴² "Is It Time to Move the NBA 3-Point Line Back?" Grantland. June 23, 2014. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://grantland.com/the-triangle/is-it-time-to-move-the-nba-3-point-line-back/>.

2. Implementing a 4-point line⁴³.

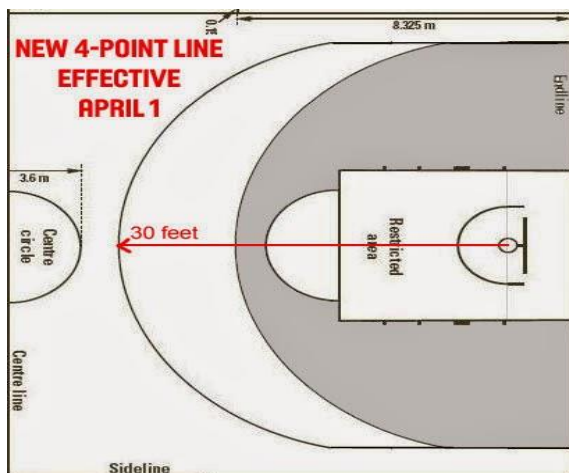


Figure 9: Possible imagining of the 4-point line⁴⁵

A 4-point line could also potentially make games more exciting, as teams could come back and build leads more quickly with pinpoint shooting. However, it could also lead to more perimeter shooting and expedite the demise of the leagues big men, who are being increasingly rendered obsolete as the NBA becomes more focused on jump shots. Four point lines have already been instituted in Manitoba at 30 ft from the basketball net.⁴⁴

Questions to consider:

1. How should the league deal with the Hack-A-Shaq strategy? Is it detrimental to the popularity of the sport or is it a necessary evil?
2. How should the league clarify the differences between common, flagrant 1, and flagrant 2 fouls? How can the league help referees be consistent with regards to grading the severity of fouls?
3. In response to the ever increasing proliferation of 3-point shots, should the NBA make changes to its 3-point shot rules? If so, the delegates must provide a clear solution by either elaborating on the ones provided or create their own.

⁴³ "NBA Discussed New Court, 4-pointer." ESPN. Accessed September 3, 2015.

http://espn.go.com/nba/story/_/id/10517078/nba-discussed-bigger-court-4-point-shot.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "New Four Point Line Added to All Levels of Basketball ~ Basketball Manitoba." New Four Point Line Added to All Levels of Basketball ~ Basketball Manitoba. Accessed September 3, 2015.

<http://www.basketballmanitoba.ca/2014/04/new-four-point-line-added-to-all-levels.html#gsc.tab=0>.



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