

A Historical Perspective of Professional Basketball and Rules Changes in North America

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a review of the basketball history and the professional leagues in the United States. In this paper I will discuss basketball rule changes over time intended to enhance the popularity and excitement of the game and increase the fan's support and television viewership. The rule changes as well as creation of professional leagues will be presented in a chronological order, as the formation of teams and more significant professional leagues will be described and the impacts on the style of the game and the plausible explanation for such changes presented. It is posited that NBA's league office actions are beneficial to owners and players as the league remain attentive to the fan's and business partners' expectation and demands.

Keywords: NBA, Basketball Rules, Professional Basketball History

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this paper is to present a historical review of the development of the game of basketball and creation of the professional leagues in the United States leading to the formation of the National Basketball Association (NBA) and the growth of professional teams. A primary aim of this paper is to discuss basketball rule changes that were conducive to a faster tempo of the game and increased scoring, as well as rules and penalties for curtailing physicality and violence in the game. The changes in rules of the basketball game throughout the history of the sport will be presented in a chronological order, as the formation of teams and more significant professional leagues will be described. The impacts of rule changes on the style of the game and the reason for such changes will be explained.

While the history of professional basketball is not as long as American Football, Baseball and Ice Hockey, the sport's success and growth have been remarkable in comparison. Much of the credit for the popularity and financial success of professional basketball arguably has been, attributed to the first commissioner of the NBA, Maurice Podoloff, who was instrumental in managing the leagues' "affairs early in its history. Star players and style of the game have also significantly helped the league in its

popularity and growth. However, the entertainment value of the game to the fan has to be the most important business aspect of the professional teams and driver of leagues strategies.

Cohesiveness of the leagues' franchises and the ability of the govern the leagues affairs through its policies rules and standards, has proven beneficial to owners and players over the past seven decades of NBA history. The league has vigilantly guarded the interest of its stakeholders paying significant attention to the fan and has attentively been cognizant of value creation for the supporters of the sport.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. In section 2, the early history of the sport will be presented. Next, the formation of professional league and college basketball will be described. In section 4 the history of NBA and franchises and well as merger with the American Basketball Association will be presented and the various rule changes and their impacts will be discussed. Concluding comments will be presented in the final section.

EARLY HISTORY

Dr. James Naismith's invention of the game of basketball in 1891 was to provide an alternative sport that can be played in the cold winter months when outside activities were not an option. His original 13 rules of the games seem

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to have been intended to develop an exciting and violence-free sport. For Example, Rule 9 of the game allowed 5 seconds for the out-of-bounds ball to be thrown in for the play to resume. Rules 5, 6, 7, and 10 discouraged physical contact between members of opposing teams.

Early on as the game gradually gained popularity, professional leagues began to organize in the Eastern cities of the United States. Many professional leagues were created and many disappeared. Some teams would choose not to join any league and remain independent. These teams would travel to different parts of the country to play and entertain. These teams were referred to as the “Barnstormers” The most famous barnstorming team that still exists today is the Harlem Globetrotters.

Shortly after that, colleges sponsored the sport of basketball and several colleges began competing Yale, Minnesota, Dartmouth, Columbia, Chicago, Utah, and Navy were the first colleges to play competitive basketball and Yale was the national champion. Games were very physical due to referees’ lack of training in managing the games. Violence and injuries detracted from the objective of the game; a public outcry and demand for regulation ensued. President Theodore Roosevelt made a recommendation to create a governing body for the game, resulting in the formation of the Intercollegiate Athletic Association in 1910.

Rules of the game and conditions of the arenas were modified to improve the flow of the game and eliminate unnecessary disruptions and violence. Early on, peach boxes would be nailed to the balcony of the arenas for the ball to be thrown in. Peach boxes had closed bottoms and after each successful attempt, the ball had to be retrieved for the game to resume. This, obviously, slowed down the game. In 1892 wire rims replaced peach boxes and starting in 1893 cast iron rims were used.

According to the rules, the first team that touched an out-of-bounds ball gained the possession. Consequently, physical contact between opposing players and spectators caused injuries and violence while disrupting the flow of the game. Wire fences (cages) were put around the basketball court during the early decades, to protect players (Cagers) and spectators, and make the game faster. Rope cages replaced wire cages later and stayed in use in the northeast for decades.

In 1894 the free throw rule was added and the free throw line was set at 21 feet from the basket. A year later the distance of the free throw line was reduced to 15 feet. In 1895, a wire mesh backboard was added to prevent spectators’ interference. Wood replaced the wire mesh in 1904 and the wooden backboards were subsequently replaced with plate glass a few years later. Prior to 1896 a field goal and each free throw would count for one point. Subsequently, the number of points for a field goal was increased to two points while free throws continued to count for one point. These changes apparently were made to increase the pace and scoring in the game (Stern and Hubbard, 2000).

During the period of the First World War, and later following the stock market crash of 1929, attendance dropped and many teams failed. However, in 1925 with the support by small corporations the American Basketball League (ABL) was created (Madden, 2010).

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In 1932 the midcourt line was introduced in order to prevent stalling and keep-away strategies of the offense, and to promote more scoring. Furthermore, the new strategy to make the game more exciting for the spectators was reinforced by introduction of the 10-second clock; the time allowed the offense to move the ball to the defensive half of the court. The 3-second area under the basket was added in 1936 to increase flow of the game, as well as reducing the physical play under the basket in the ‘Key’-- a 6-foot wide area under the basket extending to the free throw line.

Formation of the Midwest Basketball Association (MBA) by owners of many farming communities in 1935 aimed to attract farmers and blue collar workers of the mid-Ohio region to the game. The new league was supported by three corporations, General Electric, Firestone, and Goodyear, and changed its name to the National Basketball League (NBL).

Success of the United States men’s basketball team, in the 1936 Summer Olympic Games, and the start of the collegiate competition for national championship by the Intercollegiate Athletic Association during 1937, increased enthusiasm for the game. The competition become known as “March Madness” since the games were scheduled annually during the month of March beginning in 1939. The league

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also announced that it would change its name to the National Collegiate Athletic Association, or the NCAA.

Over the first five decades, the quality and size of the ball had gone through several changes and modifications. The ball became easier to dribble and pass, and in 1942 molded basketballs replaced stitched balls hence making the flow of the game more consistent.

Professional basketball leagues however experienced a decline in attendance, and many of the teams were not profitable during the years of 1939 through the end of World War II period. By 1945 the ABL was struggling and several ABL teams had joined the NBL (Nelson, 2009).

The advantage of taller players in jump balls and defending the basket, which had become evident in late 1930s, became more pronounced in college games in 1942 by the emergence of George Mikan, a basketball prodigy, at DePaul in Chicago and Robert Albert Kurland, a 7-foot center, at Oklahoma State. Their defensive ability to block opponent's shots and goaltending skills slowed the opponents' scoring. In 1944 the goaltending rule was introduced in games, presumably to improve the flow and scoring.

Kurland, known as the "First Regular Dunker", dominated 1945 and 1946 NCAA championship games, and Oklahoma State won the title in both years. He did not join the professional leagues and played on US Olympic Champion teams in 1948 and 1952 games.

Mikan joined the NBL's Chicago American Gears in 1946 and immediately impacted the game. His team won the league's 1946-47 championship. The Gears' owner, Maurice White, decided to establish the short-lived 24-team Professional Basketball League of America (PBLA). White's miscalculation and collapse of the PBLA provided the NBL the rights to the league's players. The Detroit Gems, who had earned the worst record in the NBL during the previous season, had moved to Minneapolis during the off-season and was renamed the Minneapolis Lakers. Mikan was drafted with the first pick by the Lakers and the team won the 1947-48 NBL championship, while Mikan continued dominating opponents with his hook shot, rebounding, shot blocking, and scoring.

While the struggling ABL had mostly concentrated on the northeast markets and NBL

markets were largely smaller Midwest cities, the owner of American and Canadian Ice Hockey teams incorporated the Basketball Association of America (BAA) in 1946 and appointed Maurice Podoloff, who was also serving as president of the American Hockey League, as president of the new league. The BAA intended to operate in more populated cities and larger arenas. Intense competition with NBL for players and fans ensued for the next three years culminating in four NBL teams, Minneapolis Lakers (now **Los Angeles Lakers**), Fort Wayne Pistons (now **Detroit Pistons**), and Rochester Royals (Cincinnati Royals, Kansas City Omaha Kings, Kansas City Kings, now **Sacramento Kings**), joining BAA after the 1947-48 season. In 1948 the Baltimore Bullets, an ABL team, and the Indianapolis Jets (Indianapolis Kautskys), a NBL team, joined the BAA league in 1949.

By August 1949 six remaining NBL teams, Syracuse National (now **Philadelphia 76ers**), Tri-Cities Blackhawks (Milwaukee Hawks, St. Louis Hawks, now **Atlanta Hawks**), Anderson Duffey Packers, Sheboygan Red Skins, Denver Nuggets, and Waterloo Hawks merged with BAA.

With addition of the aforementioned teams, together with six existing BAA teams, Chicago Stags, St. Louis Bombers, Washington Capitols, New York Knicks, Boston Celtics, and Philadelphia Warriors (San Francisco Warriors, now **Golden State Warriors**), the league had grown to 17 teams. It should be noted that five BAA teams, Pittsburg Ironmen, Cleveland Rebels, Toronto Huskies, Detroit Falcons, and Providence Steamrollers, had become defunct prior to the 1949 merger.

FORMATION OF NBA AS THE NEW PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL LEAGUE

In August 1949, after the merger of the NBL and BAA, the agreement was reached to create the National Basketball Association (NBA) headed by Maurice Podoloff, then president of BAA, to chart the future of the professional basketball teams. Initially some of the NBA teams were located in small towns and played in smaller gymnasiums and armories. As one may expect, Podoloff's vision for the league was closely in line with the original business model of BAA, i.e., creating franchises in large cities with facilities to enhance attendance by the fans and strengthen the financial condition of the league and its franchises.

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The league consisted of seventeen teams at this point in small and large cities. As such, NBA began consolidation of teams, and moving teams from smaller markets to larger cities. By 1950 four former NBL teams (Anderson Duffey Packers, Sheboygan Red Skins, Denver Nuggets, and Waterloo Hawks) and two former BAA franchises (Chicago Stags and St. Louis Bombers) had folded and NBA had replaced Indianapolis Jets with the Indianapolis Olympians. The league was left with 11 teams after the 1949-50 season and by the 1954-55 season, three more teams (Washington Capitols, Indianapolis Olympians, and Baltimore Bullets) had folded.

Minneapolis Lakers, under coach John Kundla and led by their big man, George Mikan, had won the 1947-48 NBL championship and the 1948-49 BAA championship. During the first NBA season, Lakers won their third championship as Mikan crushed the opponents with his back to the basket game and hook shots as he blocked his opponents' shots and controlled the area under the basket (Heinsohn, 2005).

Mikan's dominance had resulted in new rules in the NCAA, and later in NBL, against goaltending. Lakers' dominance stemming from Mikan's defensive ability had made the outcome of games predictable and the games less enjoyable for fans. The lowest scoring games between the Lakers and Fort Wayne on November 22, 1950 at the Minneapolis Auditorium ended with the score of 19-18 in favor of Fort Wayne Pistons. Murray Mendenhall was the Pistons' coach, he had instructed his players to hold the ball, stall, and slow the pace. Spectators were displeased and protested the style of the game (Blitz, 2013).

Podoloff become concerned and was determined to do something to prevent the repeat of this type of game. He wanted to make sure that professional basketball was fun and exciting for the spectators. "It seems to me that the teams showed complete disregard for the interest of the fans by the type of game they played," said Podoloff (Blitz, 2013).

The league widened the lane under the basket from 6 to 12 feet for the 1951-52 season. This change was attributed to Mikan and, together with the 3-second rule, was intended to open up the area under the basket and allow more scoring by smaller players. The strategy was clear, in order to increase popularity of the game and financial health of the league, the game had

to become faster with more scoring (Wolf, 2009.) NBA then signed its first television contract for the 1953-54 season.

The league introduced the 24-second clock starting with the 1954-55 season to further improve the pace of the game. The shot clock was the brainchild of Daniel Biasone, the owner of Syracuse Nationals (now **Philadelphia 76ers**), who won the 1955 NBA championship. Regular season average scoring increased by almost 10 points that season, and reached 100 points by the following season.

The league's attendance had increased during the late 1950s in spite of Mikan's retirement in 1956, the same year another great big man, Bill Russell, joined the Boston Celtics. Boston Celtics won 11 championships between 1957 and 1969. By 1959 Wilt Chamberlain also joined the league as the center for Philadelphia Warriors (San Francisco Warriors, now **Golden State Warriors**) after a brief stint with Harlem Globetrotters. Although skillful guards such as Elgin Baylor (drafted in 1958) and Jerry West (drafted in 1960) had begun to impact the games with their shooting accuracy, big men dominated the board, in the paint, and around the basket (Schumacher, 2008).

A new professional basketball leagues, American Basketball League (ABL), was formed in 1961 to compete with NBA. The new league introduced the 3-point rule at 25 feet from the basket, set the possession time to 30 seconds (compared to 24 seconds in NBA) and widened the lane to 18 feet. However, the new league folded after one full season and a partial second season. The NBA had been gaining popularity as the first expansion team Chicago Packers (Chicago Zephyrs, Baltimore Bullets, Washington Bullets, now **Washington Wizards**) was added in 1962.

NBA widened the lane to 16 feet in 1964, a change attributed to Chamberlain, to further open up the game and curtail crowding under the basket. Scoring reached historical highs throughout the 1970's. By 1960 all teams' scores exceeded 100 points, and the average number of Field Goal Attempts (FGA) on average exceeded 100 per team from 1957-58 through most of 1960s. It is said that the 24-second clock saved the league, which was losing fans and teams. NBA had increased the number of regular season games from 60 in 1949-50 to 72 games in 1953-54 season, and gradually added more games to reach 80 games per team by 1961-62, and 82 games by 1967-68 season,

thereby increasing the potential revenue for the league.

A second expansion team, Chicago Bulls, was added in 1967 before another professional basketball league, the American Basketball Association (ABA), was founded with George Mikan as its first commissioner. While NBA franchises were located in the Northeast, Midwest, and Western urban areas, the ABA targeted the Southeast markets adopting 3-point shots from the defunct ABL to attract fans. Three-pointers "would give the smaller player a chance to score and open up the defense to make the game more enjoyable for the fans" (Pluto, 2007.) Four more expansion teams, San Diego Rockets (now **Houston Rockets**) and Seattle Super Sonics (now **Oklahoma Thunders**) in 1968, and Phoenix Suns and Milwaukee Bucks in 1969, joined the NBA.

By 1975 the league expanded to four other cities, adding Portland Trail Blazers, Cleveland Cavaliers, and Buffalo Braves (San Diego Clippers, now **Los Angeles Clippers**) in 1971, and New Orleans Jazz (now **Utah Jazz**) in 1975, before merging with the ABA in 1977. The merger resulted in NBA absorbing four ABA teams, San Antonio Spurs (Formerly Dallas Chaparrals, Texas Chaparrals), Indiana Pacers, Denver Nuggets (formerly Denver Rockets), and Brooklyn Nets (formerly New Jersey Americans, New York Nets, New Jersey Nets). Five of the original ABA teams had folded before the merger and two teams, Kentucky Colonels and Spirits of St. Louis (formerly Houston Mavericks, Carolina Cougars), were bought out by the NBA.

Historically, dominating centers brought NBA teams much success as most championship teams relied on the defensive abilities of their centers to block opponents' shots, and control the backboard and rebounding, as well as their scoring ability in the post and close to the basket. Milwaukee Bucks, with the right to the first pick in 1969, drafted Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, arguably, the most skillful center in the league's history (ESPN, 2016). Portland Trail Blazers drafted Bill Walton in 1974 with their first draft pick. Moses Malone, a hall of famer Center, had been drafted in 1974 by ABA's Utah Stars (formerly Anaheim Amigos, Los Angeles Stars), one of five defunct ABA teams. He had joined Spirits of St. Louis in 1975, was picked up by the Buffalo Braves as a result of a merger in 1976, and traded to the Houston Rockets soon after. Other great centers that were

drafted as the first pick over the next two decades included Hakeem Olajuwon 1984, Patrick Ewing 1985, David Robinson 1987, and Shaquille O'Neal 1992.

No player can control a game so much as a dominating basketball center. Quarterbacks only play offense, goalies defense; pitchers only play some games. Outstanding big men, though, can rule at both ends of the court most all game long. They can utterly change a game, and they do. Frank Deford (2005)

However, it would typically take much longer for big men to set up the play resulting in the slower pace of the game. The height was not enough to become a dominating center. Many taller players who played in the league did not experience the success of the dominating centers each of whom, with the exception of Ewing had contributed greatly in winning multiple championships. Many of the tallest centers in the league history did not possess the skill set and agility of the guards and forwards.

While the league adopted three-point shots in 1979, the high-scoring games throughout the 1980's was for the most part attributable to the "Show Time" style of the game played by Los Angeles Lakers in their competition with arch rival, Boston Celtics. The Lakers, who drafted their super star point guard, Earvin "Magic" Johnson, in 1979 to complement their superstar Abdul-Jabbar, later drafted their hall of famer forward, James Worthy. Boston Celtics drafted Larry Bird in 1978 (who did not sign with Celtics until 1979), and Kevin McHale, and acquired Robert Parish in 1980. The competition between the two teams created much excitement for fans during most of 1980's.

Average FGA that had seen a gradual increase after the introduction of the 24-second clock in 1954, was trending downward after 1970 through 1998-99 season. However, the Field Goal percentage improved during the 1970-80s and reached its historical high of over 49 percent by mid-1980. The shooting accuracy over this period had helped the league with high-scoring games through 1980's in spite of declining FGAs. By the end of 1980's the one-on-one isolation offense, post-up plays, emphasis on defense and physical plays, and hard fouls had slowed down the game to 78 FGAs per team, resulting in decline in scoring.

The rules were modified to eliminate resetting of the 24-second clock after technical fouls in 1980 and in 1992 the 24-second resetting was

limited to when the ball hit the rim, as opposed to the rim or backboard. In 1981 the league revised the free throw rule: 'three free throws to make two; two to make one', omitting the extra attempt. The rule changes theoretically increased the playing time. Yet, the free throw rule change might have inadvertently lowered scoring and perhaps encouraged physical plays over the next decade. The area under the basket at times seemed more like a wrestling ring in late 1980's when the league added an additional referee to the officiating crew starting in 1988-89, bringing the number of referees in the game to three, presumably to better control players' actions on the court.

Concerned about the violence in the game, safety of players and the fans as well as public perception of the sport, the league had begun to increase financial penalties for teams and players involved in altercations during games. While scuffles among players in the 1980s' would normally be settled by the referees, it was the altercations and brawls among teams that had caused great concern for the league and franchise owners. During the 1993 playoffs, the league instituted harsher financial penalties, and player ejection and suspension rules resulting from fights and altercations. Teams would be fined for their players' violations, and individual player fines increased five-fold.

NBA successfully negotiated multi-billion dollar contracts with the network and cable television outlets, as well as other broadcasters during late 1990's. The league and the commissioner were cognizant of the importance of television viewership and its impact on the league's revenue streams. Once again the league took note of declining scoring and shortened the 3-point line in 1994 and increased the number of free throws awarded to players who were fouled while attempting 3-point shots from two free throws to three. Rules were also modified to eliminate hand-checking in the backcourt and above the opponent's free throw line to open up the court and allow offensive players more freedom to move the ball.

However, the number of FGAs and scoring continued to decline in spite of the increase in the number of 3-point attempts, 3-pointers made, and the 3-point percentage during the next three regular seasons. The 3-point line was moved back to its original distance of 23 feet, nine inches (22 feet in the corners), for 97-98 season. The no-charge zone under the basket was better defined by a half circle under the

basket, and the use of forearms by defense was disallowed. Yet, FGAs, FG percentage, and scoring continued to dip, reaching their lowest levels during the 1998-99 season. The rule for a shot-clock reset was modified such that the shot clock would remain either where it was or be reset to 14 seconds, whichever was greater, on kicked balls, defensive technical fouls, and non-shooting fouls, instead of being reset to the full 24 seconds (Wyche, 1999.) During the following season, the 5-second rule was implemented.

The new five-second rule will force post-up players who backed into the basket, to either pick up their dribble, shoot, or pass the ball within five seconds once they are below the foul line. An infraction results in the loss of possession. (Wyche, 1999)

To further enhance the flow and pace of the game, and in response to the criticisms by fan and sportscasters, the league appointed a "select committee" to review and revise, the rules.

The select committee, chaired by, then, the Phoenix Suns owner Jerry Colangelo. He had raised concerns about slow flow and pace of the game, and experts such as Jack Ramsay, Jerry West, Dick Motta, and Rod Thorn, was formed to make changes to the rules in order to make the game faster, provide for freedom of movement by the offense and level the playing field for smaller players (Blinebury, 2006). "Many of the people in favor of these changes have been in the game over the last three decades," Colangelo said (Wise, 2001).

"The game has changed in the sense that we've lost a lot of fluidity. We've evolved into an isolation game because of our defensive guidelines, and we weren't satisfied with the way the game looked." Jerry Colangelo (ESPN, 2001)

The new rules seemed to de-emphasize isolation play and big men control of the paint by introducing a defensive 3-second rule, eliminating illegal defense guidelines and allowing "Zone Defense"; the mid-court 10-second rule was reduced to 8 seconds in order to further increase the speed of the game. In the following years the league also changed the rules to reduce the length and number of time-outs during the game in order to reduce disruption in the games. "It was boring, and it wasn't the intent of how the game should be played ... We were going to try to dictate a faster game," Colangelo said (ESPN, 2001). Further refinement of hand checking in 2004-05

reduced the subjectivity of the foul calls by referees, and adjustment of block calls provided the offense a better chance to move the ball (ESPN, 2001)

NBA's former Senior VP of Basketball Operations, Stu Jackson, later offered justification for the elimination of illegal defense guidelines by suggesting that rules were difficult to administer and caused confusion for the fans. He claimed the isolation plays had become a uniform approach among the teams at the expense of player/ball movement and fast-break opportunities. Additionally, he stated the change to 8-seconds to advance the ball to the mid-court promoted a faster game and full-court defense. The 3-second defensive rule was also intended to prevent clogging the lane by bigger players, causing a low percentage mid-range shots. Elimination of "touch fouls" was also in line to improve the flow of the game and avoid unnecessary stoppage in the game (NBA, 2002).

The rule changes appear to be consistent with the league's objectives and strategies to de-emphasize the big man's power game under the basket, in favor of increasing speed and pace of the game by creating opportunities for smaller players to more freely move around the court and shoot the ball more efficiently. Under the new rules, the game was intended to be less physical and more skill-based. Players with ball handling and passing abilities, shooting accuracy, and agility were expected to contribute more to the excitement of the game.

"Games were 90-85, and defenses were beating each other up and beating the offenses up. I think the league really made some good changes with the illegal-defense rule and allowing you to zone and kind of encouraging pace and flow." (Steve Kerr)

Furthermore, the new rules provide players' more freedom of movement and ability to be closer to the basket shots, resulting in more lay-up opportunities in the game. The "Seven Seconds or Less" style of offense is attributed to the Phoenix Suns' Coach, Mike D'Antoni, whose team flourished under the new NBA rules. They earned first place in the division during 2004-05, 2005-06, and 2006-07 regular seasons by utilizing the new rules and taking advantage of their sharp-shooting players, shooting 3-4 more 3-point shots than the league's average, with more than 3 percent better accuracy than the league's average. Other

teams then adopted this so-called "small ball" style (Bontemps, 2017.)

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

I have presented a historical development of the leagues and Basketball rules that preceded the formation of the National Basketball Association. I also described changes in the rules over the seven decades of the league's successful history in fine-tuning the rules to support its overall strategy of increased support for the game and the league, and enhancing financial rewards for the franchise owners, players, and the league.

"We want to make it a more free-flowing, fluid, wide-open game," said Rod Thorn, the former NBA's vice president of basketball operations. The rule changes were intended to increase scoring and cut down on physical play (Wyche, 1999). According to Stu Jackson the new rules discourage the bigger players staying in middle of the lane and preventing passing, player movement, and therefore, improving shooting percentage close to the basket. The rules also speed up the ball movement to the frontcourt and bring about full court press, as well as reducing disruption by touch foul calls (NBA, 2002).

Under new rules the offense has been given the advantage by disallowing hand-checking and limiting the big men's ability to stifle smaller guards and forwards. The ball handlers can no longer hog the ball below the foul line, and dribble with their back to the basket to slow down the offense. Changes in defensive rules have made the two-man game and post-up plays less likely and promoted the five-man offensive schemes. "Rather than impede the game, zone defense arguably has helped foster the offensive renaissance by giving teams more incentive to score on fast breaks" (Beck, 2005). The rules have stretched to limit the defense and reward the offense with fast break and 3-point shooting opportunities by eliminating defensive contacts (Scaletta, 2014.) Portland Coach Terry Stotts said. "They wanted to bring freedom of movement and skill and opening up the court and moving it from the side of the court to the middle of the court." (Bontemps, 2017)

Some coaches and players disagreed with the changes and claimed that post-up, mid-range shooting skills will be lost in favor of layups and 3-point shots, and that the game becomes softer. Jason Kidd said, "There are maybe two handfuls of guys who can post up anymore". Other

coaches also expressed doubts about the rule changes. “The game is getting out of balance,” says George Karl, a coach whose emphasis was on defense and post-up coaching “But until we figure out a way to make the post-up more efficient, we’re not going back. You just can’t win throwing the ball into the post 60 times per game.” Kidd says. “Sometimes it feels like we are making the game harder than it should be. The bottom line is this: The closer you get to the basket, the bigger a threat you are.” (Lowe 2015).

Lowe (2015) reports that according to Kiki Vandeweghe, the league’s senior vice-president for basketball operations, “Everyone wants to dribble and shoot jumpers. But at the same time, NBA coaches have looked at the numbers and found that 3-pointers are efficient, the pick-and-roll is efficient, and that it’s more efficient to shoot early in the shot clock.”

Hubie Brown believes that the changes have given the ball-handlers freedom to move around and pass the ball to outside shooters but he does not think coaches were accepting of 3-point shots. According to Larry Bird, “Now, if you’re not firing up thirty 3’s, you’re just not playing basketball” (Haberstroth, 2015). However, in recent years every team relies heavily on the long-distance shooters rather than a dominant center to succeed (Bontemps, 2017.)

The NBA success in signing the 2014’s nine-year contract with Network and Cable Televisions at \$24 Billion doubled the annual amount of the contract signed by the league in 2008, and almost six times the contract the league signed with the network and cable television in 2002. The salary cap for teams has significantly grown over the years. NBA owners and players have financially benefited handsomely by the increased in the ticket and merchandize sales as well television broadcast of the games.

Yet, there are other basketball enthusiasts who long for the more physical and power game of the 1990s. As such, the new BIG3 league has been created, perhaps, to serve that market. The Olympics have announced that the BIG3 basketball games will be included in the Tokyo Olympics in 2020. It remains to be seen if the new league populated by, for the most part, retired NBA players closely resembles the style of basketball played before the new rules were implemented by the NBA, and if it will present formidable competition for the NBA.

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Citation: Mahmoud M. Nourayi, "A Historical Perspective of Professional Basketball and Rules Changes in North America", *Journal of Sports and Games*, 2(1), 2020, pp. 1-9.

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