THREE-POINT REVOLUTION

The three-point shot is an important scoring option in basketball. However, the once tough shot has become the go-to shot in today's National Basketball Association (NBA) league. What is the reason behind this?

HISTORY

1. Basketball strategy in the past focused on two-point shots such as mid-range shots, layups and dunks. Shooting from far was considered an unnecessary risk.
2. The NBA introduced the three-point shot in the 1979-80 season.
3. It was invented to reduce congestion around the net and as a means for trailing teams to catch up.
5. Not much changed and the shot remained unpopular as no player could reliably score the three-point.
6. In the 1994-95 season, the line was moved closer to the net. Ironically, the average score of games declined.
7. The line moved back to its original location three years later and has remained in the same position since.

WHY ARE TEAMS BEING SEDUCED BY THE THREE?

The heavy reliance on three-pointers today stem from one simple statistic:

33% of three-point shots = 50% of two-point shots

- Scoring only one-third of shots from behind the three-point line is the same as scoring half from two.
- Therefore, volume shooting from three will probably yield better results, if a team have good shooters to support it.
- The league took notice and teams formed around three-point shooters became more prevalent.

MARKSMAN

Stephen Curry of the Golden State Warriors set the new NBA record for three-pointers on Dec 14 with 2,977 shots made in 789 games.

NO REAL SOLUTION YET

- Moving the line farther or closer to the net is only a temporary solution as modern players can quickly adapt and it would be back to square one.
- Drastic rule-changing ideas such as limiting the number of three-point attempts per game have been floated by basketball analysts.
- Shooting is one of the basic fundamentals of basketball and punishing better shooters seems contradictory to the nature of the game.
- The NBA has no official plans to change rules regarding the three-point.
- Fans are more invested in supporting their teams regardless of the style of basketball.
- Teamwork and passing is still required to create open looks for three-point shooters.

DRAWBACKS

- The traditional five positions in basketball are assigned to cover specific offensive and defensive roles.
- That concept has been torn apart with as many as four three-point shooters on the court at the same time.
- Teams start adopting the same strategy and winning simply depends on which team can hit more threes.
- Basketball games might become boring with nuances and strategy removed.

DRIVEN BY STATISTICS

- The Rockets were the first team to hit more three points than twos and continued for three consecutive seasons.
- The most of any team in that play-off season.
- The Rockets also set a new NBA record of 27 made three-pointers in a single game on April 7, 2019.
- During the 2018-2019 regular season, NBA shooters made 27,955 three-point shots. That is more than the entire 1980s tally of 23,871.

Sources: NBA, VOX, SB Nation, Basketball-reference, Grantland, Clutchpoints, FiveThirtyEight, The Ringer

GREGG POPOVICH

Head coach of the San Antonio Spurs, on how the three-point is ruining the game

There’s no basketball any more, there’s no beauty in it.”

TRADITIONAL

Three-point line

A good backspin helps the ball bounce forward into the net after coming in contact with the rim or backboard.

THREE-POINT FOCUSED

A player’s feet must be completely behind the three-point line before shooting for it to count for three.