

New Basketball Rules Add Strategy

Here's a look at how the new basketball-game rules will affect play.

You say you didn't even know there *are* new basketball rules? Hey, that's what we're here for: To find out neat stuff and give it to you in a useful way.

Some of these are rule clarifications; others are new optional rules. The optional rules can be used individually or collectively. SOM's Bob Winberry says some are tailored for solitaire play; others for league play. Indeed, many are variations of rules used in SOM leagues. Winberry said he doubts that anyone will use all of the new rules simultaneously.

Playing time. Each player receives a rating indicating how many 2-minute intervals he can play each half. This optional rule replaces the "rest" rule and provides stiff penalties for overusing a player.

The penalties: The player's Shooting rat-

ing becomes 0. If the player shoots and a "D" is rolled on the black die, the shot is an automatic miss.

Impact: The "rest" rule always was a joke, statistically. The new ratings permit excess playing time, too (but not as much), so don't worry about resting a guy in foul trouble or during blowouts. He'll get his stats.

PLAYING TIP #1: Cut an index card into five pieces and mark them "10 minutes left," "8 minutes left," "6 minutes left," "4 minutes left" and "2 minutes left." Insert them after each 10 action cards.

Not only will this help you mark intervals for each player, it's a convenient game clock.

PLAYING TIP #2: For added realism, substitute most often at the end of quarters or at the six-minute mark of each quarter.

PLAYING TIP #3: As tough as the penalties are for overusing players, we would make

them tougher in two ways: A fatigued player automatically is a "0" offensive rebounder; if a fatigued player's defense column is needed during a press, change "Steal" or "T" results to F(1) and any shots to automatic baskets.

3-Pointers. An optional rule assigns each player a rating (0-6) for 3-point *attempts*. If

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a player playing outside gets an action-deck reading of "outside shot only," roll one die. If the roll is less than the rating, shoot a 3-pointer.

When using this rule, you may not "coach" for 3-pointers at other times, except for two new situations:

1) Half-court 3-pointers. If you grab a defensive rebound on the last action card of any period, roll

two dice: If it's a 12, count it!

Exceptions: If the Normal Control section calls for a pass, time runs out before the shot. If you are in Fastbreak mode, check for a fastbreak shot first. If none, then you get the half-court shot.

2) Catch-up 3-pointers. If you trail by three with two minutes or less in the game (or by 7 with four minutes, or by 11 with six minutes), you can choose a 3-

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pointer for any player who gets the ball outside.

Trailing by three on the last fast-action card, you may disregard your Fastbreak mode, shift to Normal mode and position all players outside. You can pass up a "dazzler" to attempt the three-pointer instead.

Impact: This more natural way for three-pointers to occur should also be more statistically consistent. This rule is great for solitaire players and for play-by-mail leagues, both of whom need objective opponents.

Penetration. An optional rule governs penetration frequency by the number of stars in the player's Shooting Tendency column. Roll one die — if it's equal or less than the number of stars, penetrate. If going against a Sag Defense, subtract one from the number of stars; if against a Close Defense, add one star.

Impact: Another nice rule for solitaire and play-by-mail leagues. It removes the judgment calls you will have to make for your opponent.

PLAYING TIP: When using this rule, SOM recommends that if a player has an OPEN outside shot, he should take it without rolling for a penetration chance.

Positioning. As stated above, only players outside may attempt three-pointers. Further, only players with an "T" tendency may be positioned inside offensively. An "I" with no shooting stars may not penetrate except in a switch situation.

Impact: These clarifications close loopholes in the rules that

made for such unrealistic plays as three-pointers by inside players. That's common sense, but the rules also now forbid using an Isiah Thomas as a post-up player to take advantage of a small point guard's awful Inside X column.

Holding for the Last Shot. With two cards left in any period, you may try to hold for the last shot (you can come out of Fastbreak mode to do it) if you haven't already had two consecutive Replay readings. Accept any Steal, T or F(1) readings from the passing or Opponents Defense columns or any turnover on the fast-action cards. But ignore all shots until the final fast-action card.

Impact: This will be used frequently and happily will end some of those disastrous finishes by "helpless" teams holding a slim lead with two action cards left.

Intentional Foul. A team trailing in the last two minutes of a game can call this play and surrender a two-shot foul. It takes precedence over holding for the last shot, but it's not automatic: If the fast-action card calls for a pass, play on. Otherwise, the defender fouls the player named in the Control section of the card.

Impact: Equally important as the new last-shot rule, for the same reasons.

Other Fouls. No longer will fouls automatically be assigned to the defender of the player fouled. An optional chart determines the fouler.

Impact: Although the defender still will get more of these fouls,

gone are the days when a Moses Malone can foul out a defender per quarter.

PLAYING TIP: A simpler (but slightly less realistic) way of accomplishing the same thing: When an F(2) or an X+F(1) occurs on the offensive player's card or the defensive TEAM card, roll one die. Nos. 1-5 are assigned to the defensive players from left to right. A 6 is the offensive player's defender.

Playing Safe. A player in foul trouble may play it safe. Change an F(1) in his defensive column to an unassisted basket. Fouls in an offensive player's shooting column still count. Playing safe cannot be used by anyone in a press, the defensive inside man or either defender in a double-team.

Impact: Useful strategy option for players who are much more important offensively than defensively. Still, many fouls occur on offensive cards.

PLAYING TIP: To play it safe offensively, position the player outside and do not penetrate.

Defensive Matchups. Players rated at more than one position may play one position on offense and another on defense, guarding a different player.

Impact: An important rule, realistically and tactically. Will add value to a Magic Johnson, Dennis Rodman and others.

PLAYING TIP: For each team, cut an index card in pieces and write a player's last name on each one. Place the strip next to the player being defended to avoid confusion.

Double-Teaming. Modifies the old rule, which turned all "D" and "X" rolls into missed shots for the

double-teamed player. Now, only the "Xs" are automatic misses. Also, the unguarded player gets a Position Shot if the fast-action card calls for an Opponents Defense reading by his supposed defender.

Impact: Reduces the suffocating effect of the old double-team rule, which reduced very good shooters to 25 percenters. The new rule also creates more shots for the unguarded player.

PLAYING TIP: Double-teaming may not be a good move if the unguarded player has a Shooting Rating equal or higher than the double-teamed player. But it can be very effective against a team with a dominant scorer and another player with lots of Rs (Replays) on his offensive card.

Blocked Shots. For purposes of determining whether the 24-second clock has expired ONLY, count a blocked shot the same as a Replay.

Impact: Adds value to the block, which often had no value over an ordinary miss before.

Timeouts. Optional rule for substituting players and changing strategy.

Unless there is a clock stoppage, only the offensive team can call a timeout.

Each team begins the game with seven full timeouts, plus one 20-second timeout per half. Each team has no more than six full timeouts to begin the second quarter, five to begin the third and four to begin the fourth. You have no more than three in the last two minutes. Each team gets two timeouts for each overtime.

Impact: Minor, but another touch of realism.