



How to improve the variety of the game

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NBA basketball is the most compelling sporting spectacle in the world.

It is the right mix of agonism, precision, plasticity, fight, with a great variety of solutions: dunks, blocks, hook shots, no-look passes, counter-attacks, assists, 2-point and 3-point shots, and so on.

But lately some of these plays are becoming less frequent than others, making the game less varied.

In the current sharing of field goals, the frequency of 3-point shots is about 42% of the total, with peaks of 50%.

When they were established in 1979, 3-point shots were about 5% of the total, and in the 2000s about 16% of the total.

Why this meteoric growth?

20 years ago, the average 3-point goal percentage was about 28% while the average 2-point goal percentage was about 55%. It was convenient to shoot from mid-range.

Today, the average 3-point goal percentage is about 37.5% while the average 2-point goal percentage has remained similar. The gap has narrowed by almost 10 percentage points.

Because of this, the frequency of 3-point shots has increased, and we often watch games that are just a competition of shots from distance. As a result, 1-on-1 challenges and physical duels in the small area (hook shot, dunk, jump hook, sky hook, layup, blocked shot) have greatly diminished, with consequences for the spectacularity of the game.

How to find a new balance and give more space to plays close to the basket?

Possible solutions would be:

- increase the distance of the 3-point line to lower the goal percentages
- decrease the value of the long-distance shot

Increasing the distance of the 3-point line is an impractical solution, because it impacts the size of the playing court. To maintain the same distance for the side shots, the width of the court should be increased. This is not feasible in many cases, due to the structural constraints of the court.

Decreasing the value of the long-distance shot could be the solution.

Based on the average long-distance goal percentage compared to the average short-distance goal percentage, the optimal value should be less than 3 points, roughly 2.7 points.

But surely it is ridiculous to think of using decimal numbers in scoring games.

Then the solution could be:

- Round the value of the long-distance shot to 2.5 points
- The value of long-distance goal will alternate: 2 points or 3 points

The team's first long-distance field goal is worth 3 points. After the goal a prominent symbol, e.g. ">2", will appear on the scoreboard, indicating that the next long-distance goal is worth 2 points.

As soon as the next long-distance field goal is made, the symbol ">3" will appear on the scoreboard, indicating that the next long-distance goal is worth 3 points. And so on.

This way the average score will be 2.5 without using decimal notation.

However, if you assess 2.5, instead of 2.7, as the value of the long-distance shot, you penalise this choice too much, given the current distance of the line (23 ft. 9 in.).

In that case, the distance of the shooting line could be reduced to find the right balance.

In case of a half-point difference at the end of regulation time, a tie would be declared. Therefore, overtime would have to be played.

For example 95.5-95 would be equivalent to 95-95.

Overtime would be played the old-fashioned way, that is, with the long-distance shot always being worth 3 points.

In this way, without any impact on the size of the court and without upsetting the scoring boards, **the right mix between long-distance shots and more spectacular plays can be restored, improving the variety of the game.**