

Do Players Today Shoot Foul Shots as Well as Dad and Grandpa?

Essay by Dan Kern - 2016

There is a common thought in the world of high school basketball that the players of today do not perform the fundamentals of the game as well as the players of the past. It is a fact that players today are bigger, stronger, taller and faster than former players. However, a common question is whether the “greats of the past” could compete in today’s game with the pushing, shoving, traveling, etc. Most would agree that field goal shooting skills have declined over the years due to the roughness and the three-point line has lowered the shooting percentages.

However, one aspect of the game hasn’t changed. And that is putting a basketball into an 18-inch circle of iron from a distance of 15 feet while being unguarded

Some fans feel that players do not shoot foul shots as well as in the past. This is not true. The three best foul shooting teams in the history of Putnam County are Ottoville at .7524 in 2013, Ottoville at .7513 in 2015 and Columbus Grove at .7424 in 2015.

From 1975-2016 and from 2010-2016, the nine Putnam County boys’ basketball teams have averaged 64% at

the foul line. For 34 seasons, from 1975-2009, only 11 seasons have averaged BETTER than 64%. Twenty-two seasons have either been the same or lower.

Not all the schools have statistics for each of the seasons, but there is still a great sample to look at and compare. So, it is difficult to say that the foul shooting skills have declined over the years.

When one looks at the very early years, it is easy to say that foul shooting was horrible in comparison to today. Granted the sample is small, but Ottoville, from 1930-1954, was one of the best teams in Putnam County. Their foul shooting percentages only ranged from 38-59%. It would not be a stretch to assume that most schools in Putnam County probably did the same.

In the 1960’s, the free throw shooting percentages started to climb from the 50% range and level off around the 64% mark for the next 50 plus years. In summary, it is safe to say that kids today shoot fouls just about as well as Dad and Grandpa did in their “glory years”.