

New Free Throw Rule Works Well

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The new free throw rule in basketball this season has proven to be very successful and worked out well. Many fans not knowing about the rule were confused at the start of the season and others wondered how it would affect the scoring.

Actually, it has very little and probably no affect at all on the scoring.

What the rule does is give a team which was fouled the ball out of bounds and no free throws are shot until the bonus is in effect – unless a player is fouled in the act of shooting.

This means that at the start of each half a team misses out on the opportunity of shooting the first four free throws, or a maximum of eight per game.

Sometimes most of these are fouls committed in the act of shooting and sometimes, none are shooting fouls. It can be figured that usually at least two of the eight are shooting fouls, so the player fouled will go to the free throw line anyway.

It can also be assumed that at least one of the remaining six would be an offensive foul which were not shot before the rule was changed. So, this leaves only five free throw opportunities that a team loses.

IF THE TEAM averages making 80% of its free throws, it would have made four points more in an average game on the fouls.

However, at the same time it would have had to give up possession of the ball after each successful free throw, and on the one it missed chances are almost 100% that the other team would have controlled the rebound.

So, under the new rule the team will have possession of the ball five times it would not have had before. Let us assume that during

those five possessions the team would have lost the ball once on a turnover (which is a lot). The other four times the team would have gotten off a field goal shot.

If the team averages between 35 and 40% from the field that means it would have gained at least one and possibly two field goals. On the two or three missed shots it is reasonable to assume that the offensive team would have controlled at least one rebound and gained another shot from the field.

THEREFORE, the team gains at least two and possibly three field goals to compensate for the four points lost at the foul line. But this is only one of the good side effects of the rule.

More important, the tempo of the game is not interrupted by the foul. A team does not lose its momentum and as a result the quality of play is greatly improved. Also, the length of a game is shortened by between five and ten minutes.

In the past many games degenerated early into a parade between the foul lines which certainly is not what the fans came to see. This year this did not happen, or if it did, it didn't occur until much later in the game and there were not nearly as many games won at the foul line as in the past.

All this has been accomplished without taking away the penalty imposed on a player or team who fouls excessively.

Of all the rules in the game of basketball which have been altered in the past few years, the one changed by the rules makers this year on foul shooting has done as much to improve the game as any.