

Ohio State Must Adjust To Deeper Three-Point Line



Ahead of the 2019-20 season, the NCAA's Men's Basketball Rules Committee approved an adjustment to the three-point line, moving it back to the international basketball three-point distance.

The previous collegiate three-point line extended to 20 feet and 9 inches, whereas the international arc is at 22 feet and 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann was asked about the extension of the three-point line during a press conference.

"It will be interesting to see how the line impacts our game," Holtmann said. "It will certainly create a little more space because everybody will be spaced now. Two or three offensive players will be spaced behind that line. That creates some opportunities."

While a deeper three-point line might indicate a need for marksmen from distance, the opportunities Holtmann spoke of are not limited to shooters.

"With shooting, people talk about how it will be important to have guys who can shoot the ball and shoot it with range," Holtmann continued. "But it will also be really important to have guys who can drive gaps and deck the ball because there will be more space available potentially. We struggled a little bit in that area this year. But that will be important to continue to recruit to that here."

The 2018-19 Buckeyes exceeded most expectations to finish 20-15, with the season culminating in an upset win against Iowa State and a loss to Houston in the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

While Ohio State may have overachieved after losing such critical pieces from the 2017-18 squad, it did not enjoy much success from three-point distance. The Scarlet and Gray finished No. 198 in the country at 34.1 percent from three-point distance and tied for No. 198 in three-pointers made per game at 7.5.

Junior forward Kyle Young only made one three-pointer in six attempts in 2018-19, but the Massillon (Ohio) Jackson product said working on his perimeter shot has been a major focus of his offseason. Like Holtmann, Young said he envisions the deeper arc affecting slashers, as well as shooters.

"I want to keep working on that and trying to add that to my game," Young told BSB of the three-point

shot. "I think that's going to affect a lot of people's games in good ways and bad, because it adds more space. It's going to leave bigger gaps for people to drive, stuff like that. So I think it will affect the game a little bit, but it's going to be a lot of good ways and a lot of bad ways, just because it's farther back, but I say, mostly good."

More floor spacing sounds great in theory, but in order to space the opposing defense out, a team must knock down outside shots. Ohio State struggled in that area a season ago and will face an uphill battle with a deeper line and the loss of C.J. Jackson, who hit the most threes (62) on the team in 2018-19.

Ohio State might have more experience from the international three-point line — albeit limited — than other programs. The Buckeyes played in Spain during last offseason and competed using the deeper distance.

Another veteran for Ohio State, senior forward Andre Wesson, said the three-point line adjustment did not affect shooters much physically, but could have psychological effects. Regardless, the Westerville (Ohio) South product knows he and his teammates must practice from the new line.

"It's more of a mental thing," Andre Wesson said of the deeper arc. "Just getting more shots up at that line — that's probably the biggest thing that we're focusing on. It's something that we've definitely been working on, trying to get more shots behind that line."

Ohio State tends to run its offense through junior center Kaleb Wesson, who led the team in scoring (14.6) and rebounding (6.9) as a sophomore. The younger Wesson demands a lot of attention in the post, creating openings for his teammates on the perimeter.

It may not seem that moving the three-point line back would have a massive effect on a player who does most of his work in the post, but it's true.

When the ball is thrown into Kaleb Wesson in the post, defenders help off their men to contest him. The Buckeyes' perimeter players on offense must threaten the defense with their ability to shoot or the defenders will just double and triple team the post.

"Definitely floor spacing is a big thing, but for it to be a big thing, you've got to hit shots," Andre Wesson said. "It can definitely space the floor, but it can also shrink the floor on (Kaleb Wesson) real quick if we're not hitting shots. So that's a big thing that we've got to focus on this year."

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