

Analysis of the Reasons and Solutions for the Decline in the Popularity of the NBA All-Star Game

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Abstract: NBA is a popular basketball league in the world, with top players in the world playing basketball games. As NBA league is gaining more and more attention from fans over the world, one of the popular games in NBA: NBA All-Star Game is becoming less attractive recently. In this article, the reasons for the declining popularity of NBA All-Star Game and solutions for it will be discussed, through the method of case study to analyze some detailed and typical examples. Reasons concluded are: decreasing competitiveness of NBA All-Star Game and inappropriate players playing NBA All-Star Game. Solutions offered are: policy implemented to force player to play harder, offering benefits to players and change in the format of the game according to the first reason. For the second reason, suggestions provided are: adding G-league great players and retired NBA legends to the game. These solutions can perfectly solve the existing problems.

Keywords: NBA, All-Star Game, Reasons, Solutions.

1 Introduction

Basketball is a popular sport around the world. This sport enables people to become competitive with their opponents and to improve the skills of cooperation and leadership. Some magnificent motions made by players can grab people's attention. NBA is a league that groups of top players playing basketball game together. NBA stands for National Basketball Association, and it is a league that consists of 30 teams in North America, which is also one of the four major sports leagues in North America. As more and more people begin to get in touch with basketball, NBA is getting more

and more attractions to basketball fans. One of the special games in NBA is the NBA All-Star Game. It was hosted by the NBA league on March 2, 1951, which has evolved into a yearly exhibition Game with top players in NBA [1]. The modern All-Star Game further changed to a seven-day “All-Star Weekend” [1]. The game is played by two teams that include the best NBA players in the league for the season, which is not hard to understand its high popularity. However, this game is now becoming less and less popular. There are increasingly more comments made to complain the NBA All-Star Game. Boston’s Jaylen Brown expressed his frustration towards this year’s NBA All-Star Game. He said that it was not how basketball should be played, only with some boring jump shots and three-point shots [2]. Players played relaxedly for the whole game, for only two fouls were called [2]. He believed that fans would love to see more than what they displayed [2]. Brown guessed that the format of the All-Star Game caused these problems, but he did not know how to deal with it [2]. Because of the worsening NBA All-Star Game, it is reflected in the declining television rates and viewership.

Figure 1

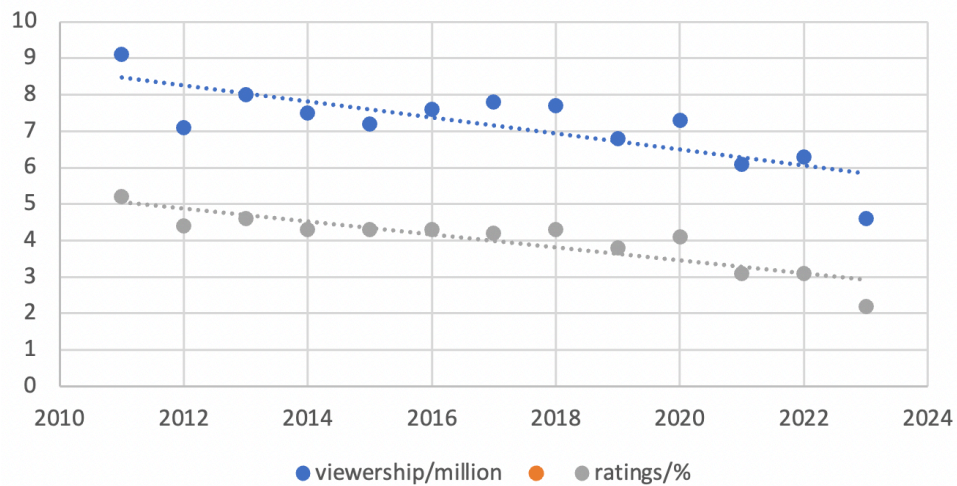


Fig. 1. NBA All-Star Game ratings and viewership from 2011-2023 [3]

Figure 1 shows that the overall trend of the ratings and viewership of NBA All-Star Game from 2011 to 2023 kept declining, and the stats of these both hit the lowest record in 2023. The decline was evident from 2020, very recently. Based on the phenomenon,

reasons for the worsening NBA All-Star Game will be analyzed by using case study and opinions to improve the NBA All-Star Game will be given.

2 Analysis on the Declining Popularity of NBA All-Star Game

2.1 Decreasing Competitiveness Because of Tradition and Friendships

Viewership rate is decided by the competitiveness of the All-Star Game, which reflects the number of fans and audiences who want to spend time watching the game [4]. All-Star Game is a time for players to relax and have fun. However, this purpose can intentionally decrease the competitiveness between two teams, as players want to spend this time relaxing and play. Thus, players tend to play the game with no defense and by throwing three points. Also, players' good friendships and relationships with each other is another reason for the decreasing competitiveness. In order to create an amiable and warm atmosphere, the NBA utilizes social media and technology to construct a friendly environment on and off the court [5]. Consequently, players tend to have closer contact with each other and care about each other more [6]. This reduces the sense of achievement and pride to the team, which is especially shown during the NBA All-Star Game. A typical example is LeBron James and Stephen Curry in the All-Star Game. When they play in the opposing teams in All-Star Game, they usually play like friends instead of rivals to make it hard for them to remain competitive. Stephon Marbury, Shareef stressed the significance of developing strong, trusting relationships between the players in order to achieve continuous improvement [6]. Thus, More and more people comment that the intensity of the All-Star Game has been lowered because the friendship between players.

2.2 Unattractive Players Playing the NBA All-Star Game

Another reason is that some players that are selected to play NBA All-Star Game may not be very suitable to play the game. This is because some players can only play some serious games to contribute to their teams. However, for the NBA All-Star Game, their type of playing the game may not be very attractive to audience. Their motions can be very strange, and even ugly. Examples of this type of players are Khris Middleton and Jrue Holiday, two players from Milwaukee Bucks. Middleton and Holiday are two important players in Bucks, especially in NBA play-offs. Middleton always scores during the vital period in the last quarter, which leads his team to success, and Holiday is skillful at defending and passing, which can also essentially aid the team.

Nonetheless, neither of them plays well and happily during NBA All-Star Game, since they are not suitable for gorgeous playing.

The league currently does not have enough fabulous players such as Ja Morant and Zion Williamson, or previous NBA legends such Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant to contribute amazing dunks and movements to please the audience. Also, the league does not possess many funny players in the NBA All-Star Game such as “Shaq”. Thus, there are less and less for fans to expect for the All-Star Game as it is increasingly boring.

3 Suggestions

According to the problem of decreasing intensity of NBA All-Star Game, there are some possible ways for the league to solve it out.

First, the league can implement policy to force players to play seriously for the game because this will be a rule that players must obey. Top players having real battle can make the All-Star game more wonderful. There will be some ancillary revenue generated such as ticket sales, food and beverage and merchandises such as jerseys. Ancillary revenue is a kind of income accessed by a business from selling goods and services which are not the business' main revenue sources [7]. Additionally, providing benefits for players is also an incentive for players to play harder in the NBA All-Star Game. This is because players will want to play hard to get the benefits. For instance, the league can provide the NBA team which the NBA All-Star MVP player stays with a privilege to play NBA play-offs more at its home court. It is an appealing deal. The effects of playing at home in basketball have always been considered as a sixth player advantage [8]. Players will play more seriously for the All-Star Game to try to get the best stats and prevent their opponents from scoring. The competitiveness of the game can thereof be increased. Besides, the format of the NBA All-Star Game should be modified in order to intensify competitiveness. Adding more one-on-one battle can be a strategy. The audience must be very expected to see the one-on-one battle between two players with some special or interesting meaning. Take this year's NBA All-Star Game as an example, two teammates from Boston Celtics: Tatum and Brown were in opposing teams. It would be very exciting to see two top teammates playing against each other. This really happened. During the game, Brown and Jayson Tatum went to the right wing, where Brown, with a mask on his face, dribbled to the baseline and shot the ball into the basket on Tatum's face [9]. Tatum also responded by giving answer

balls. The situation continued for a while, which became the memorable moment for the whole game.

According to the second problem, which is lack of suitable players to play the NBA All-Star Game, some ideas are suggested.

Firstly, some magnificent G-league players can be considered to go to the NBA All-Star Game. For some explosive G-league players who play very well in the season and are able to donate some amazing dunks and motions in the game, they are the ones to get involved. For one thing, their unbelievable movements excite the audience and can generate a good financial effect. For another thing, these skillful G-league players may get the attention of some NBA basketball teams, thus increasing the chance of signing contract with NBA teams and getting into NBA. For this year's dunk contest, NBA league invited a G-league player: Mac McClung to attend the contest.

McClung only played two games in NBA and went to the G-league. To attend the NBA Dunk Contest "officially", 76ers signed a two-way contract with him. In the dunk contest, McClung became the shining star among the fans and players by giving brilliant performance [10]. He successfully won the game with lots of wonderful dunks, which surprised the audience and judges. As this worked in dunk contest, adding G-league player into an NBA All-Star Game is possible. It may get some unexpected results.

Furthermore, it is also a way to invite some retired NBA legends to the All-Star Game. This is a very novel thought, and audience must be very expected and interested to watch such a game. Players of all-time having a game together can have a lot of fun.

An appropriate player to participate is Shaquille O'Neal. In 2011, Shaq retired from NBA. Shaq, known as a very funny player, had tons of funny moments in previous NBA All-Star Game he attended. For example, as a center in the game, he unusually dribbled the ball in front of the defender and shot the ball, just like a guard. His behaviour made many of his teammates, coach and audience laugh. Also, Shaq did not do well in free throws, so when once when he was about to shoot a free throw, he threw the ball to the backboard and jump immediately to dunk the ball. Everyone was surprised by his imagination. Thus, NBA legends can have the chance to return to the court and make the game more intriguing.

4 Conclusion

There are some reasons that cause the declining popularity of NBA All-Star Game. The first one is that the intensity of the game is declined due to the purpose of the NBA All-Star Game and relationships between players. The second reason is that there are not enough gorgeous players to make the game more exciting and wonderful. These problems caused a decline in the NBA television ratings and viewership. To address these problems, the league can implement policy or offer benefits to players as incentives for players to get fully engaged in the NBA All-Star Game. And some one-on-one battles can be added more to the game. Apart from this, it is also possible for the league to invite some top G-league players to the game, which has already been proven effective in this year's dunk contest. Plus, some retired NBA legends can also be considered to get engaged into the game, especially some funny ones. This is a novel suggestion, which can be tested and tried by the league. It is up to the manager of NBA to determine how to modify the worsening NBA All-Star Game and make it a popular and attractive game that meets the fans expectations.

The significance of this article is to inform people the reasons for the declining popularity of NBA All-Star Game and suggestions for improvement. It is conducive to the NBA leagues if they take some suggestions to improve the quality of the game. However, the limitation is that management of NBA may not implement these suggestions mentioned in the paragraph. Also, there is no advice for fans and audience to do something to improve the quality. The NBA All-Star Game will become more popular, attractive and intriguing after the NBA management takes suggestions from the article.

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