

THE 3X3 COMMUNITY'S VIEWS ON THE CURRENT RULES OF THE GAME

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Abstract: 3x3 basketball has developed rapidly during the last decade and has become an established competitive discipline with a clearly defined international structure and regulatory framework. Although it shares its technical foundations with traditional 5x5 basketball, the specific rules of 3x3 create a different competitive environment characterized by a faster rhythm of play, shorter offensive possessions, frequent transitions, limited playing space, and a high frequency of decision-making. These characteristics determine the physical, technical, and tactical demands of the game and contribute to the distinctive identity of the discipline. The present study examines the attitudes of the 3x3 basketball community toward the current FIBA rules and the way different groups involved in the sport perceive their effectiveness and suitability. Particular attention is directed toward key regulatory components, including game duration, the 12-second shot clock, the overtime format, the foul system, sanctions for technical and unsportsmanlike fouls, and the balance between offensive and defensive play. The study also considers attitudes toward possible future rule changes and their potential influence on the specific character of 3x3 basketball in comparison with the traditional 5x5 format. A mixed quantitative–qualitative survey design was applied. The research instrument consisted of 14 questions organized into four main sections: demographic and professional characteristics, evaluation of key regulatory elements, priorities for possible rule modification, and open-ended proposals for optimisation. The questionnaire included five-point Likert-scale items, nominal-response questions, and open-ended questions. A total of 93 valid responses were included in the analysis, representing players, coaches, referees, experts, teachers, and other participants directly connected with 3x3 basketball at amateur and professional levels. The results indicate an overall positive attitude toward the current rules. The overtime format received the lowest evaluation and was most frequently identified as the specific rule requiring reconsideration, while referees placed greater emphasis on the foul system. Overall, respondents favoured preserving the main characteristics of the current 3x3 game model. The findings therefore point to the reconsideration of specific regulatory elements rather than to substantial changes to the established rules.

Keywords: 3x3 basketball; rules; regulations; professional community; game development

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, 3x3 basketball has established itself as an independent discipline in the international sports calendar, characterized by a specific game format, high dynamics, and a competitive logic that differs from traditional 5x5 basketball (Aleksieva, 2024). Previous research comparing 3x3 and professional 5x5 basketball players identified specific motivational and behavioural profiles in the two groups, suggesting that the competitive environment of 3x3 is associated not only with distinct physical and tactical demands, but also with particular psychological and team-related characteristics (Aleksieva & Kirov, 2019).

The dynamics of the game, the opportunity to play with friends, and the sense of improving individual skills are among the factors that motivate young people to participate in 3x3 basketball (Kirov, 2018a).

The introduction of a unified international set of rules has played an important role in establishing 3x3 as an independent sport. Kirov (2018b) notes that the regulations have given the discipline a new identity and distinguish it from both traditional basketball and streetball through increased dynamics and intensity in offense and defense. Petrov and Bonev (2020) examine the influence of the rules on technical and tactical preparation, while Stavrev (2021; 2022) analyzes game efficiency and statistical indicators in official tournaments, confirming the specific characteristics of the discipline.

The importance of individual game indicators for competitive performance is also highlighted by Ferioli et al. (2023), according to whom winners in international games are characterized by higher shooting efficiency, more rebounds, fewer turnovers, and fewer fouls committed. This finding also draws attention to fouls as a component of the regulatory framework associated with competitive effectiveness.

Scientific research on 3x3 basketball has focused mainly on the physical, technical-tactical, and competitive characteristics of the game, including differences from 5x5 basketball in terms of game pace, physical intensity, shot selection, and decision-making (Boros et al., 2022; Sansone et al., 2023). Considerably less attention has been paid to the views of the professional community regarding the current rules. In this context, the aim of the present study is to investigate the opinions of specialists and practitioners in 3x3 basketball by assessing satisfaction with the main parameters of the rules, identifying the rules perceived as requiring modification, and

analyzing differences between the professional groups. This research gap determines the theoretical and practical relevance of the present study.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted through an online survey of a descriptive-analytical nature, including closed-ended questions with 5-point Likert scales and nominal categories, as well as open-ended questions. The study involved 93 respondents directly connected with 3x3 basketball - players, coaches, referees, experts, and university teachers - with practical experience at amateur and/or professional level. A purposive sampling approach was used.

The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions organized into four sections: professional profile of the respondents; evaluation of the main parameters of the rules; attitudes toward possible changes; and proposals for their improvement. An indirect control question was also included to monitor the consistency of the responses. The survey was administered via Microsoft Forms in 2026 with voluntary and anonymous participation, and respondents were informed in advance about the purpose and scientific use of the collected data.

The quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics, with the results presented through mean values, frequencies, and relative shares (%), as well as through comparative analysis between the professional groups. Responses to the open-ended questions were categorized according to semantic similarity and summarized thematically.

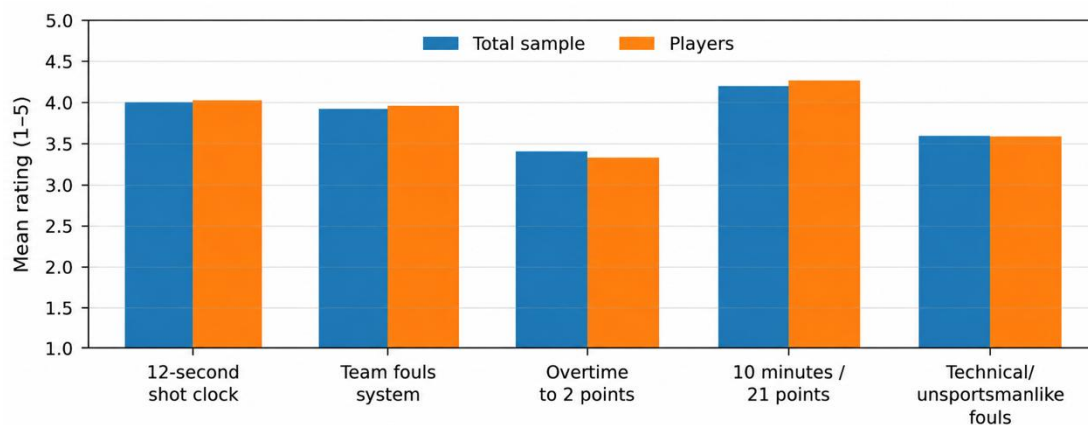
3. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The analysis included 93 valid questionnaires. Players represented the largest share of the sample ($n = 69$; 74.2%), followed by referees ($n = 8$), coaches ($n = 5$), and other specialists involved in the organization, teaching, and expert activities related to 3x3 basketball ($n = 11$). Given the structure of the sample, the analysis focuses on the overall trends and on the opinions of players as the largest group.

The overall evaluation of the main components of the current rules was generally positive. The highest mean rating was given to the game format of “10 minutes or up to 21 points” ($M = 4.18$), followed by the 12-second shot clock ($M = 3.98$) and the team foul system ($M = 3.90$). Sanctions for technical and unsportsmanlike fouls received lower ratings, while overtime played until two points are scored received the lowest rating ($M = 3.39$), identifying it as the most critically evaluated of the examined components.

A similar tendency was observed among players. The highest-rated element was the “10 minutes or up to 21 points” format ($M = 4.25$), followed by the 12-second shot clock ($M = 4.00$) and the team foul system ($M = 3.93$). Lower ratings were recorded for sanctions for technical and unsportsmanlike fouls ($M = 3.58$) and for overtime ($M = 3.33$) (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Average ratings of key elements of the rules (1 – lowest; 5 – highest rating)



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the survey data

When asked, “Which rule, in your opinion, is most in need of reconsideration?”, 39.8% of all respondents indicated that no change was necessary. Among the specific rules, the overtime format was identified most frequently (23.7%), followed by fouls (16.1%) and the shot clock (12.9%, including an open-ended response proposing an increase in its duration). A similar pattern was observed among players: 37.7% did not consider a change necessary, 27.5% identified overtime, while 14.5% selected fouls and 14.5% the shot clock. The results indicate prevailing support for preserving the basic structure of the rules, with the perceived need for reconsideration being associated mainly with individual components, particularly the overtime rule.

Comparison between the individual groups confirms the overall acceptance of the current rules, while revealing different emphases in their evaluations. Among referees, the system of personal and team fouls was most

frequently identified as requiring reconsideration (37.5%), whereas among players the leading issue was the overtime rule (27.5%). Among coaches, 80.0% did not consider a change necessary, although this result should be interpreted cautiously because of the small number of respondents in this group ($n = 5$). Despite these differences, the prevailing view in all groups was that the current rules provide a balance between offense and defense (54.5-62.5%).

The results also reveal a pronounced preference for preserving the distinctive identity of 3x3 basketball. Overall, 62.4% of respondents did not support bringing the rules closer to those of 5x5 basketball; among players, this share reached 66.7%, while another 18.8% accepted only partial convergence. Within the same group, 58.0% identified the high pace of the game as the main competitive advantage of the format. At the same time, 59.1% of players assessed frequent rule changes negatively or rather negatively, compared with 21.2% who perceived them positively or rather positively. Taken together, these results indicate a preference for preserving the main characteristics and relative stability of the rules, with any potential changes focused on specific components.

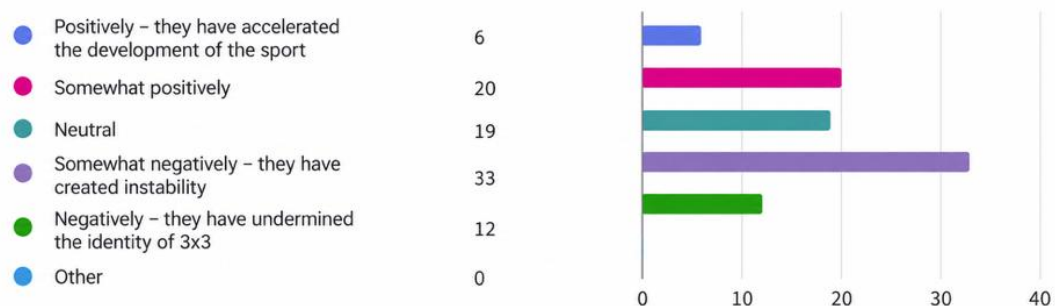
According to responses to the question, “Do you think that frequent rule changes would have an impact: positively, rather positively, neutrally, rather negatively, negatively?”, 50% of respondents believed that frequent changes to the rules would have a negative effect on 3x3 basketball. The results are presented in Fig. 2.

The open-ended responses complement the quantitative results and identify three main directions for possible change. Most frequently, the proposals concern the overtime format - playing until a two-point margin is reached or introducing a time limit. The second group of proposals relates to increasing the shot clock to 14-18 seconds, justified by the possibility of more tactical interactions and fewer rushed decisions. The third direction concerns the foul system, including the introduction of an individual sanction after a specified number of fouls.

Despite these proposals, the overall pattern of results does not indicate rejection of the current rules or the 3x3 basketball game model. Rather, there is support for preserving the basic characteristics of the game, combined with a need to discuss specific components of the rules, most notably overtime and the foul system.

Fig. 2. Answers to question number 13 “Do you think that frequent rule changes would have an impact: Positively - they would accelerate the development of the sport, Rather positively, Neutrally, Rather negatively - they would create instability, Negatively - they would undermine the identity of 3x3, Other”

13. Do you think that frequent changes in the rules have influenced the development of 3x3 basketball?



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the survey data

4. DISCUSSION

Comparison of the responses across the individual questions reveals a consistent tendency in attitudes toward the current rules. The highest ratings were given to the rules that determine the rhythm and dynamics of the game - the “10 minutes or up to 21 points” format and the 12-second shot clock. At the same time, the majority of respondents did not support bringing 3x3 more closely in line with 5x5 basketball, while among players the high pace of the game emerged as the main competitive advantage of the format. This indicates that the critical evaluations of individual rules are not directed at the fundamental concept of the game, but rather at specific components of the regulatory framework.

This attitude corresponds with the distinct characteristics of 3x3 basketball established in the literature. Research indicates that its rules, including the 10-minute game duration and the 12-second shot clock, determine a different physiological and technical-tactical profile compared with 5x5 basketball. The higher relative intensity, short work cycles, and limited opportunities for recovery increase the physical demands placed on players, while rapid transitions between offense and defense and the need to make decisions under conditions of limited time and space shape the specific technical-tactical structure of the game (Boros et al., 2022; Sansone et al., 2023).

Among the individual components of the rules, the most clearly expressed critical assessment concerns overtime. It received the lowest mean rating both in the total sample ($M = 3.39$) and among players ($M = 3.33$), and at the same time it was the most frequently identified specific rule in need of reconsideration. The open-

ended responses reinforce this tendency through proposals to play until a two-point margin is reached or to introduce a time limit. The convergence of results across different questions identifies overtime as the component of the current rules that is most consistently called into question.

Differences between the professional groups can be interpreted more as reflections of different practical perspectives than as opposing positions. Referees emphasize the need to reconsider the foul system, whereas players direct their attention primarily to the overtime format. Among coaches, support for maintaining the current rules predominates, although this result should be interpreted cautiously because of the small number of respondents in the group. The identified differences may be related to the specific roles of the participants in the competitive process: referees directly apply the rules governing fouls and sanctions, while players appear to attach greater importance to a rule that can directly influence the course and outcome of a closely contested game.

The foul system is of particular interest in this context. Ferioli et al. (2023) found that committing fewer fouls is among the indicators distinguishing winners in international games, which underlines the competitive significance of this component of the game. In the present study, referees were the group that most frequently identified the foul system as requiring reconsideration. This result may be associated with the specific position of referees, who directly apply the rules and assess contact situations under the high-paced conditions of 3x3 basketball.

In summary, the results of the present study and the available literature support the understanding of 3x3 basketball as an independent game model in which the rules determine the high pace, specific technical-tactical decisions, and physical demands of the game. The surveyed community generally supports preserving the basic structure of the current rules rather than substantially changing it. Individual rules with lower levels of acceptance emerge as subjects for further discussion - primarily the overtime format and, for certain professional groups, the foul system. Any potential changes should be considered not only in relation to the specific regulatory mechanism, but also with regard to their possible impact on the dynamics, technical-tactical specificity, and identity of 3x3 basketball.

5. CONCLUSION

The study shows that the attitudes of the 3x3 community are directed more toward improving individual rules than toward changing the established game model. The results identify overtime and the foul system as the main areas for further discussion, while preserving the dynamics and distinctive identity of the discipline.

The uneven representation of the professional groups in the sample limits the possibility of generalizing the observed differences between them. Future research with a more balanced representation of players, coaches, and referees would allow for a more precise assessment of the need for and directions of potential changes to the rules.

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