

# Coaches split on shot-clock format

by Frank L. Christlieb

DALLAS — Some basketball coaches don't like change. Others don't seem to care one way or another.

Arkansas' Eddie Sutton is one of those traditionalists who doesn't like to stray from the beaten path unless it's absolutely necessary. So that's why Sutton doesn't care for the new 45-second shot clock that will be used in the Southwest Conference this season.

Sutton says the shot-clock format, adopted after the conclusion of the past season, won't change the style of SWC basketball. But, he said, the clock will change the game from the spectators' point of view.

"In my opinion, the shot clock is going to have no effect on the game of basketball in the Southwest Conference," Sutton said at Sunday's meeting of league coaches in Dallas. "I think fans are going to be completely screwed up this year. I think they're going to watch basketball games in the Big Ten, the ACC and the SWC and they're going to wonder what's going on in our conference."

"I think we have the greatest game right now in the world ... and all of a sudden the ACC decides they want to put a shot clock in. Some of the great things that have happened in the sport have happened as a result of experimentation, so I'm not opposed to that."

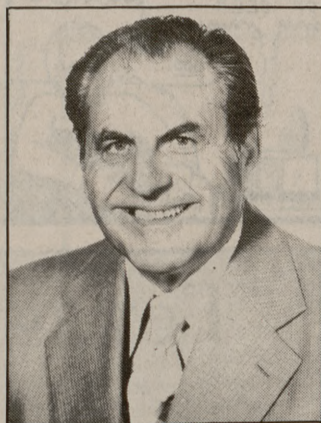
"But all of a sudden, it's almost like a snowball effect," he said. "The ACC, the Big Ten and everybody gets involved in it, so now we're playing with about 15 different sets of rules across the country."

College basketball's mad rush to adopt a shot-clock format began when NCAA coaches voted against the concept at the Final Four in New Orleans during the spring. Immediately after the conclusion of the tournament, however, Atlantic Coast Conference officials decided in favor of a 30-second clock for their league.

The SWC, in adopting the 45-second variety, chose to turn the clock off during the final five minutes of each game, since it would have the most effect on the game during that time.

Sutton, who is also opposed to the idea of a three-point play in college basketball, said the shot clock "could be damaging to the sport because of what we've allowed to happen."

Sutton, whose Razorbacks are



Houston's Guy Lewis not sure if shot clock needed



Eddie Sutton says 45-second clock isn't really necessary



SMU's Dave Bliss calls new format "great" for league

picked to finish second or third in this year's SWC race, said: "I don't think it's right. When we came to the conference meeting last spring, I begged the coaches not to change the game ... but to play it like the NCAA tournament is played. But they said, 'Well, everybody else is doing it, so we need to make some kind of change.'"

"But a 45-second clock isn't going to affect the game at all. It will prevent a North Carolina or Virginia all-out stall — which is good. But as far as affecting the game ... I guarantee there won't be 10 times all year long that the horn will go off as a violation of the 45-second clock."

"There's nobody in our league that's going to go out there and hold the ball for 45 seconds," Sutton said. "But if you're talking about a 30-second or 24-second clock, I think that

could change the game completely."

Coach Guy Lewis of Houston doesn't have any complaints about the new system.

"I don't think it's going to have any effect on our game," Lewis said. "If you can't get an offense started in 45 seconds, there's not much anybody can do for you."

"I think it'll completely eliminate any out-and-out stall game — there's no doubt it'll do that. I think it's a step in the right direction."

"After this year," he said, "I'm sure the rulemakers will look at all the results and decide whether we really need a shot clock. I voted for it, but I'm not a bit sure that we need it in the Southwest Conference, because we didn't have that many stall games."

"I don't mind sitting on (the

ball) sometimes to protect a lead, either, mainly because it's pretty good basketball. Regardless of what people write about you after you lose, it's pretty good strategy. I think the 45-second clock will do one thing. It'll get coaches off the hook on whether they should or should not have stalled — and I'm very much in favor of that."

Dave Bliss, head coach of the SMU Mustangs, said the shot clock may create somewhat of a faster tempo in the league.

"I think it'll make this league a very, very interesting league," Bliss said. "The shot clock itself doesn't make you think that the game is going to change a whole lot, but there is a certain amount of benefit for us to have something like this."

"It forces you to do some things differently ... and you know that you can do more de-

ensively because they've got to shoot the ball a little bit faster. Because of that, you coach in a different way."

"I think you'll see additional zones being put on in the forefront, and I would guess that the teams will be split between man-to-man defense and zone," he said. "I think the shot clock will be just great for our league. Having it not in effect during the last five minutes (of a game) or in overtime will be good, too, because that allows it to still be college basketball."

Tommy Suits of Rice said there might not be a need for the shot clock, but doesn't think it'll change the league drastically.

"I don't think the shot clock will affect our conference," he said. "I don't think anybody in our league plays slow enough for us to need a shot clock."

Several conferences throughout the nation have adopted the shot clock or a three-point play system for their teams. In addition, eight different sets of rules will be put to use in college basketball this season.

Texas Tech's Gerald Myers said he doesn't foresee any prob-

lems with the new format.

"The 45-second clock isn't going to force anybody to shoot the ball quick or anything," he said, "but it still favors the zone defense, particularly with the teams that don't have great shooters."

Bob Weltlich, the new head coach of the Texas Longhorns,

said: "I think (the shot clock) is fine, but I don't think it's going to make that much difference in our league. There's no question that shot clocks favor the teams that have the most talent."

"Personally, I like it. I think it'll be a plus for us and it'll make for some interesting basketball."

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