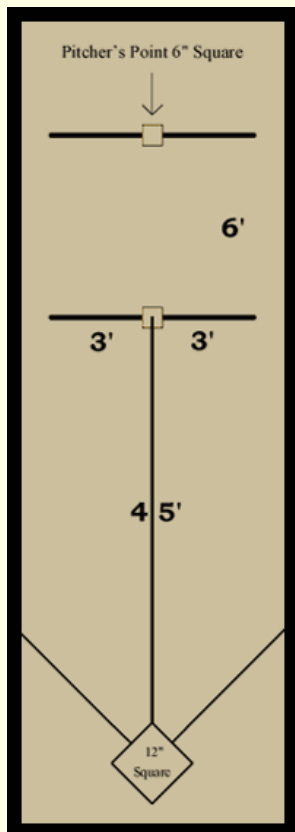


MORE TWEAKS TO PITCHING AHEAD OF '68 SEASON

P'S MAY NOW LIFT A FOOT WHEN DELIVERING; PITCHER'S AREA BECOMES A SIX-FOOT SQUARE

NEW YORK CITY (Mar. 16, 1868) – As they always do, the annual Spring Meetings of the NBBO Executive Committee have been taking place at the St. Nicholas Hotel in New York City during the middle of March, with a group of players, coaches, & executives discussing concerns regarding the rules & regulations governing the sport of base ball.

After the notable spike in offensive output that took place during the 1867 season the NBBOEC took a look at the addendums to the Laws of Base Ball, and once again decided to tinker with the rules governing pitching.



The first change will be noticeable to every person who goes to a base ball game in 1868, whether diehard fan or casual attendee: the pitcher may now lift one foot at a time while delivering the ball: the front foot during the windup and the back foot at the follow-through. Even though pitchers could move around inside their designated area during the 1867 season thanks to a rule change, they still had to slide their front foot during the delivery and keep both feet on the ground. No more.

The second change is yet another tweak to the Pitcher's Area, which has been modified for the fourth time this decade.

Just last year, the NBBOEC changed the size of the Pitcher's Area from a pair of twelve-foot parallel lines four feet apart to a pair of six-foot parallel lines four feet apart, with the pitcher newly allowed to move around before delivering from within the six-by-four area. Now the Pitcher's Area has been made two feet deeper, to what is essentially a six-foot square in all but name. The 1868 Pitcher's Area will have a pair of six-foot parallel lines six feet apart, within which the pitcher may move about before delivering the ball to the batsman.

The central points of the two lines have also been modified due to one change the NBBOEC has made to the field of play: the size and shape of home plate.

Up until this point, home plate has been literally that: an iron plate roughly 12" to 15" in diameter, painted white for visual accessibility. Starting this season home plate must now be a uniform twelve-inch square in every NBBO venue, and the "plate" can be made of iron, stone, or wood as long as it is still painted white. This will make home plate equal in size to the other three bases even if its material makeup is still different – the other three bases are canvas bags.

Where this change brings the Pitcher's Area into play is that the NBBOEC has decided the center points of both lines marking the area, which have been circles, will be changed to squares to mimic the change in the shape of home plate. This is just a cosmetic switch, but yet another tweak to the Pitcher's Area during a decade full of them.

The following summarizes the changes made by the NBBOEC during its Spring Meetings:

- *Pitchers may now have one foot off the ground at a time while delivering the ball.*
- *The parallel lines marking the Pitcher's Area will remain 6' in length*
- *The parallel lines marking the Pitcher's Area will now be 6' apart instead of 4'*
- *The central points of the lines marking the Pitcher's Area have been changed from circles to squares*
- *Home plate will now be a 12" square that may be made of iron, stone, or wood & painted white*

Will further changes to the Pitcher's Area have any effect on offense in 1868? Based on the mostly cosmetic changes put in place, that seems unlikely. If the NBBO really wants to put a damper on offense it will have to do something to make it harder for the batsmen to reach base, whether that comes by allowing pitchers to throw the ball, letting fielders wear padded gloves, being more strict on wayward deliveries, or some other mechanism.

The season starts in six weeks, and until then one can only speculate on what the latest round of changes will do.