

Introduction

In October, just before the NBA canceled the scheduled start of the 2011-12 regular season, the National Basketball Players Association took to Twitter with a message to the owners locking them out: “Let us play.” One player didn’t quite get the message. Los Angeles Lakers forward Derrick Caracter instead tweeted, “Let’s play,” a softer version that unintentionally summed up the reaction from fans everywhere.

During the 160-day lockout, basketball didn’t stop. We filled our time with everything from the WNBA to international tournaments to the Euroleague to charity games to the D-League to the NCAA. On Basketball Prospectus, we even simulated the results of canceled games using Strat-O-Matic’s simulation. Still, it wasn’t the same as the NBA game that all of us have grown to love. So when the lockout was finally resolved on Nov. 26, it was a celebration as much as a relief.

The last few weeks have been a whirlwind. While teams were working to understand the new NBA Collective Bargaining Agreement and stock their rosters during an abbreviated free agency period, we at Basketball Prospectus were scrambling to update and finish the third edition of our annual. The result is what we believe is the most complete preview of the 2011-12 season you will find anywhere.

Over the next 350 pages, you will read a comprehensive assessment of what each team accomplished in 2010-11 and where they are headed this season and beyond. There are also capsules on every player who saw action in the NBA last season, as well as rookies and other newcomers. Of course, we brought our usual analytical slant to the task, using statistics to supplement our evaluation of teams and players. With so much change in such a short period of time, our SCHOENE projection system has come in handier than ever before to help us figure out what to expect from this shortened season.

With the launch of Basketball Prospectus Premium on our website, basketballprospectus.com, we’ve been able to add to our stable of NBA analysts. Newcomers Dan Feldman, Neil Paine and Sebastian Pruiti have taken their talents to this book, helping beef up the section of general essays that follow chapters on each team. These essays include cutting-edge research and unique insight into trends that affect the entire league.

We hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we’ve enjoyed putting it together. After an unnecessarily long break, it’s time to focus on NBA basketball. Let’s play.

Bradford Doolittle
Kevin Pelton
December 2011