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SPORTS

UW men's basketball: Noah's arc

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The video proof was indisputable. That was indeed Kammron Taylor making a cameo appearance in an episode of Basketballs Gone Wild last season.

"Last summer there was a coach I was working with and we videotaped myself shooting the ball and it was like two different cameras," Taylor said, comparing the in-season images from 2004-05 to the offseason images. "When you see yourself on tape you're like, 'Man, was it that bad?' That's why my shot was so inconsistent last year."

That inconsistency was the reason University of Wisconsin men's basketball coach Bo Ryan and assistant coach Gary Close implemented some changes to the junior guard's form.

"Basically they wanted me to get more of my legs into the shot, make sure I'm releasing the ball at the right point and not on the way down, and not shooting the ball right in front of my face," said Taylor who was 85-for-224 (37.9 percent) from the field as a sophomore. "I had a problem where I was shooting the ball in front of my face."

Taylor said he also had a tendency to drift while shooting and "usually when I miss shots I'm floating left or right, I'm not going straight up and straight down." And instead of "reaching into the cookie jar" on his follow-through, as Ryan put it, Taylor's shooting wrist would finish askew to the right instead.

"If you throw darts and you're doing this, try hitting the bull's-eye," Ryan said re-enacting the improper form. "It's kind of hard."

Changing something you've done one way for so long is, likewise, a difficult adjustment. But it was one Taylor embraced.

"Any good player wants to get better and he's going to be willing to listen. Even if you feel like it might hurt you, it's really going to help you," Taylor said. "I didn't have a problem with (Ryan) telling me he thought my shot could be better. If you hear something can be better, you want to do it."

And Taylor is certainly doing it better this season.

Going into tonight's Big Ten Conference game against No. 12 Ohio State (18-3 overall, 7-3 Big Ten) at the Kohl Center, Taylor is shooting 41.1 percent from the field and leads UW (17-7, 7-4) in 3-point field goal percentage at 42.4 percent (59-139), a significant boost from last season's 33.8 percent.

"He's a lot more confident shooting the ball," junior forward Alando Tucker said. "I look at his shot and it doesn't look that much different to me."

But Taylor says he's now doing a lot of things differently.

"Now I catch the ball and when I'm going up, I make sure (the ball) is closer to my right side, right off of my hip," Taylor said. "I'm trying to release it at my highest point and coach always tells me to make sure the ball comes off my index and my middle fingers and make sure I'm getting good rotation on the ball, so I have to snap my wrist. Boom, snap my wrist straight down."

Taylor's shot reconstruction was aided by the Noah Basketball System - a computer-based audio/video system that gives the shooter immediate verbal feedback and data analysis on the accuracy of each shot taken.

With the machine watching during the offseason, Taylor launched revamped jumper after revamped jumper, requiring himself to make 100 3-pointers and 100 mid-range jumpers, at a minimum, per workout.

"The ideal number, I think was 45 or 46 (on the Noah)," Taylor said. "I was up and down (at first). I would shoot like a 41, then a 48, 47. As the summer went on, I definitely got more consistent.

"But I'm still working. I'm definitely not satisfied with where I'm at and I definitely think I can improve. And I don't want to wait for this summer to do it. The days that we have off, I want to try to get back in the gym and continue to work on that shot."