

JJ Redick Wants to Give Fans The Why and The How

Derek Futterman | November 9, 2021 | Barrett Sports Media

When you think about the best three-point shooters in NBA history, a surfeit of names that have very much transformed the game of basketball come to mind. Dražen Petrović, Kyle Korver, Steve Kerr, and Hubert Davis implemented the three-point shot regularly into their game when the shot was introduced in the 1979-80 season. Today though, shooting from distance is an art form in and of itself, with snipers such as Stephen Curry, Joe Harris, Klay Thompson, and Duncan Robinson consistently knocking down the near 24-foot shot from the top of the key. Sometimes, the high-arching shot comes from distances even farther away behind the arc for purposes of creating space from defenders or taking advantage of an open look. Even occasional half- and full-court heaves result in a 'swish,' electrifying the team and their fans, and becoming moments played on highlight reels for years to come.

Through his 15-year playing career, JJ Redick was no stranger to the three-point basket, making 1,950 of them during his time in the league. In 2015 as the starting shooting guard for the LA Clippers, Redick began his first endeavor into the world of sports media, becoming the first active NBA player with a weekly show during the regular season. The original podcast, which was incorporated into a larger show hosted by current-ESPN NBA Insider Adrian Wojnarowski, evolved into *The Old Man and the Three*, hosted by Redick and Tommy Alter.

In August 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, Redick and Alter co-founded ThreeFourTwo Productions, which "aims to give an inside look at the stories and personalities in the worlds of sports, business, politics and entertainment." Additionally, the production company will explore ventures among many different focuses, ranging from film to food.

Redick recently announced his retirement as a player from the game of basketball; however, he will not be far from the court, continuing his journey in the world of sports media in his post-retirement career as an analyst for the NBA on ESPN.

"I pretty much knew last year was going to be my last year in the NBA," said Redick during his media availability, "so I've been sort of preparing for this transition for a long time. I met with ESPN again this fall around the time I was getting ready to announce my retirement, and I just looked at this as sort of a perfect opportunity."

In his quest for a job in sports media, Redick spoke to both ESPN and Turner Sports about working as an analyst. An aspect of post-retirement life in which he garners considerable value is being able to spend quality time with his two children, Knox and Kai. Being able to have the flexibility to be with his children, while also staying involved in the game of basketball, was a key factor that ultimately pushed Redick to go into broadcasting on television.

“I talked to a coach earlier this summer who had done TV and front office stuff... and one of the things that he impressed upon me was just the time that was available to spend with your young kids when you were doing television,” said Redick. “It’s one of the reasons that I retired, because I wanted to spend more time with my wife and my kids. This is perfect for me right now.”

Redick is excited to begin his journey with ESPN and will initially serve primarily as a studio analyst. Additionally, he will serve as a color-commentator for select NBA contests, something that he feels comfortable doing with his experience in podcasting.

“I’ve never done a game before, and honestly if I’m being truthful, that’s probably the thing I’m most excited about. I would compare it to a live podcast because you’re just sort of reacting to what’s going on [out] on the court, you’re providing insight, providing analysis, hopefully a little bit of humor, and hopefully, there’s some chemistry with the play-by-play guys.”

The NBA veteran, who played for the Orlando Magic, Milwaukee Bucks, L.A. Clippers, Philadelphia 76ers, New Orleans Pelicans and Dallas Mavericks, was always thinking about going into broadcasting during his NBA career. Prudential in his mindset both on- and off-the-court, Redick has always focused on “the next thing, not the end thing.”

“You’re always thinking about what kind of path you want to take post-career,” said Redick. “This was just a perfect opportunity. It was the right sort of work-life balance in year one.”

A standout college player at Duke University, Redick is the Blue Devils’ all-time leading scorer, and a protégé of Coach Mike Krzyzewski, a legend on the bench colloquially referred to as “Coach K.” Entering his final season at the helm of Duke University’s men’s basketball program, Redick is open to talking about his time at the school on-the-air. Other than that, though, he does not have a genuine interest in covering college basketball for ESPN.

“I did a Zoom call with some folks on the college basketball side and the NBA side [this summer],” said Redick. “My agent and I expressed to ESPN that I was only interested in doing NBA basketball.”

Redick will not demur from criticizing his former teammates while behind the microphone. Something he does not look to be, though, is an on-air personality who relies on giving hot takes; rather, he will provide his expertise and insight to give listeners a unique perspective during the broadcast.

“I’m looking to provide analysis,” said Redick. “I’m looking to provide the why, the how, all that stuff... I’ve got 30 years... of basketball knowledge in this brain, and I want to share it with the average fan. I want the average fan to come away from one of my appearances knowing [and understanding] the game a little bit better.”

Redick will also seek to incorporate analytics into the broadcast, synthesizing esoteric concepts to render them comprehensible to the viewing audience.

“This may come as a shock to some people, but although I’m a player, I’m also an analytics person, so I study analytics,” said Redick. “I know ESPN uses a lot of great stats, and I’m looking to impart some of those stats so that the average fan can understand [them].”

The spontaneity of the NBA is something Redick cherishes as a student of the game, and a part of his viewpoint as a player he feels he will be able to describe to basketball fans in his new role. He expounded on this component of the game by spotlighting an elementary math equation — with a twist.

“I always say this league is not two plus two equals four. Sometimes two plus two equals five and sometimes it equals seven. You never really know. That’s what makes our sport so beautiful, because it’s this sort-of organic mixture of personalities and skills and luck. You never know what the on-court product is going to result in.”

Working with a team of professionals is an element of the job Redick enters with years of prior experience from his time on the hardwood. He knows that being a team player is essential to sustained success and will be something he focuses on as he enters this new chapter of his career.

“One of the things that I love about basketball is that it’s collaborative,” explained Redick. “It requires cooperation, and when you’re [part of] a really good group, there’s really good chemistry, and you just love going to work every day. I’m approaching this in the same way.”

Redick made his studio debut last Wednesday ahead of ESPN’s NBA doubleheader featuring matchups between the Atlanta Hawks and Brooklyn Nets, along with the Charlotte Hornets visiting the Golden State Warriors on the new studio show *NBA Today*, hosted by NBA reporter Malika Andrews.

“After 15 years in the NBA, I am excited to take what I have learned on the court and be able to provide my insight and strong opinions about the game I love,” said Redick in a press release from ESPN. “I am thrilled to have found a place on the biggest platform in sports, ESPN. I look forward to starting my post-playing career with such an incredible organization.”