



Post Play Express

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THE GAME IS IMPORTANT TO THEM

Submitted by Rob Connell, Interpreter of Prince Edward Island

Take a moment and think back to when you started your basketball officiating career. Some may have to go back decades, others only a few years or less. The reasons we became involved with officiating are the same reasons for which individuals get involved today. You could be a fan of the game, a player, you were recruited, you coached for years and wanted a change or you thought you could be involved with the game you love and make some money at the same time.

One thing we all have in common is we all start off with the same introductory level of basketball. In PEI it means our Mini Ball (grade 5-6), or Junior High "A" level basketball. At the time, this is probably all we could handle. We think we know the game, but then we have to learn all the mechanics, positioning, rules, foul calling, reporting etc. Our knowledge is challenged. Up until we started officiating, we all made calls from the stands or the bench and thought we knew it all. That changes when we have to make the calls quicker, with little time to analyze what we see as an official, with coaches, fans judging and making the calls with us. We quickly realize that there is a lot more to this officiating than we thought. We embrace the challenge and begin to learn quickly and advance up through the levels. We start looking for the big games at the higher levels and , when we are passed over, we are disappointed. We continue to work and eventually get put into the bigger games.

Even though we get the "big" games, we are all required to remember that we started with those Mini games. They may for some, seem as only a stepping stone, but no matter how long we officiate, we should never think we are too good for a Junior High "A" game. Even those officiating at the highest level should be willing to officiate beginning

levels. While in these games, it is imperative that we work hard and maintain our professionalism. We are never bigger than the game.

Players and coaches don't care if you were officiating a local University game the night before. They expect you to bring your best to their game. You still need to gain their respect. I can remember when my teaching career started at a small school. There was no basketball program at the school so you can imagine what the caliber of play was. The players were keen and eager to learn. Even though we were still developing, we entered the league after my third year. I remember how it bothered me to have to pay some officials for doing the game. They made their way up and down the court with no desire to really be there, and their body language showed it. It was not good for our league or the confidence of my players. We need to remember the game is important to the players. One of the best pieces of advice I received from one of my senior officials was that, when you are doing lower level games, it's a great opportunity to work on your mechanics and/or positioning. Keep in mind, as a senior official, that you are most often doing an introductory level game with a beginning official. It is your responsibility to help the new official with his/her game. You are responsible for taking the experience you have gained from your senior officials and educating beginning officials for the betterment of the game, sport and officials. Let's face it, we were all once that new official looking for guidance to succeed.

In order for our associations to develop good officials, the senior officials must be required and willing to do all levels of basketball, improve their mechanics, assist new officials and officiate every game as though it's the biggest game in town.

GAME PREPARATION

Submitted by Gerard Brien, Interpreter of Newfoundland/Labrador

In reading an excellent article by Bill Carr in a recent Post Play Express concerning the calling of out-of-bounds, I was struck by how little thought I had previously given to such a basic basketball situation. We, as officials, sometimes forget how important it is to review the basics when it comes time to prepare for our next game assignment. With this in mind, I offer some thoughts regarding the preparation for a game.

It is surprising how seldom some officials review the basic rules, interpretations, mechanics and cases. Obviously, all officials should constantly refer to the available educational tools in order to be prepared for all possible challenges that might present themselves during a hotly-contested basketball game. Nothing looks worse than an official who is hesitant at a crucial point of a game. The perception that an official is confident in his calls, is of utmost importance in the proper administration of a game, and should result in fewer confrontational situations with players, coaches and fans.

Officials should arrive at the game site with ample time to mentally prepare for the game. I feel that, once on site, the most critical preparation tool is the pre-game conference of the officiating crew. I fear that some officials are becoming complacent and are not using pre-game discussion to its greatest benefit. In my opinion, it is imperative

to have a thorough pre-game conference in order to ensure that, once the game begins, the officiating crew is totally in sync. There are many vital topics that should be covered, some of which are as follows:

General knowledge

- Review the Prior History of Games between the Opposing Teams.
- Review the Defensive and Offensive Tendencies of the Opposing Teams.

Basic principles

- Review the concept of Advantage/ Disadvantage, and eliminate soft "and ones".
- The importance of Refereeing the Defense.
- Recognizing tempo changes during a game and adjusting call selection and game control accordingly.

Communication and mechanics

- How the crew will communicate, especially during tough stretches in a game.
- Rotations and Switches.
- Double Whistles in the Paint.
- Substitutions and Charged Time-Outs.
- How to handle the Fifth Foul of a Player. How to handle an Ejection.
- Technical and Unsportsmanlike Fouls.
- Off-Ball Coverage.
- How to handle situations when help is needed on Out-of-Bounds calls.

Game awareness

- Shot Clock, e.g. incorrect resets
- Alternating Possession Arrow and the Game Clock
- Teams' Foul Counts: re the Penalty Situation

Game management

- Dead ball efficiency
- How to Manage Decorum (Coaches, Players, Bench Personnel)

Additional items for 3-person crews

- Off-Ball Coverage, particularly around the Elbow Areas.
- The importance of staying in your Primary Area, when to Stray from your Primary Area.
- Review who is responsible for a Shot Near The End Of A Period.
- Review who is responsible for Goaltending/ Basket Interference.

To recap, officials who are properly prepared prior to the opening jump-ball, both individually and as a crew, have a much greater probability of success. Avoid complacency and take the necessary action to achieve proper preparedness for each and every game assignment.

VISUALIZATION AND MENTAL PRACTICE

Part 1

Submitted by Bill Redden, Member GVBOA

and

Tim Heide, Supervisor of British Columbia

Visualization occurs when a person is able to create an image or a series of images in his/her mind; sometimes referred to being in the “mind's eye”. Daydreaming, an everyday event for many people, provides an example of a similar mental process. These images are provided in “still” photo or video form. Mental practice is the repetition of an image or series of images in order to help learn/correct a skill. The image(s) may, or may not include the person doing the visualizing, depending on the purpose of the mental practice.

Selected participants in a variety of sports currently use mental practice effectively. These team and individual sport athletes use mental practice sessions to help make a skill virtually automatic through repetition. Some athletes, before their event, visualize themselves using planned competition tactics and their obedience to the rules of their sport to help provide their best performance. The above types of mental practice also have the potential to provide the focus and confidence needed in competition. Other aims are preventing unwanted emotional reaction, reducing negative anxiety, and developing trusted instincts. Officials can benefit similarly by using mental practice.

Officials perform both closed and open skills. Closed skills are simple skills in that there is little thought process or decision making involved. These skills are also predictable, self-paced, serial, fixed and stable. Three different closed skills are involved when the administering official puts the ball in play by jump ball, throw-in, or free throw. Open skills are more complex in that the thought processes of analysis and decision making are involved. Open skills are unpredictable, externally-paced, unfixed and unstable. Two examples of open skills are: infraction recognition and game management (coach and bench decorum). The style of mental practice for closed skills is different from that employed with open skills.

When mentally practicing closed skills, it is necessary to repeat in the mind's eye, the movements and sound (voice or whistle) of all the standard procedures in smooth video order. For example, on a throw-in, see yourself as the administering official and the thrower-in establishing positions based on the designated throw-in spot. The other images follow in order : partner check or table check, throw-in warning cue, put whistle in mouth, off-hand straight up in air to be able to signal “time in”, place ball with the down hand at disposal of thrower-in, back off from throw-in spot and count with the down hand for the release of the ball by the thrower-in, and chop “time in” when the ball touches a player on the court. The order and style of sub-skills in the above complete scenario may be slightly different based on the administering official's established throw-in habits. It is important that the whistle be in the official's mouth before the ball is put at the disposal of the thrower-in.

For best throw-in mental practice: a) conduct practice sessions in a comfortable place – be sitting down with eyes closed and be relaxed; b) visualize both officials (administering and non-administering) and thrower-in wearing standard game uniforms. Visualize the of-court location of the scorer's table with table officials in place. c) develop scenarios that see the ball being put in play from different positions (end lines, side lines, throw-in lines, center line) and mentally practice the scenario in each position a set number of times (minimum - 10 reps. each position); d) gradually add conditions to the scenario (i.e., throw-in defender violation warning).

Next edition of Post Play Express: Visualization and Mental Practice Part 2.

- A) Mental practice for open skills (example: infraction recognition).
- B) Research findings on the effect of mental practice on learning and performance.
- C) The portability of Mental Practice in a variety of daily settings AND individual differences among people in visualization ability.