



Post Play Express

Vol.8, No. 5, January 2017

DID YOU RECEIVE “PRESENCE” FOR CHRISTMAS?

By Cam B. Moskal

CABO National Interpreter & National Evaluator

I was told quite some time ago, during a number, if not all, national tournaments that I have been fortunate enough to work, that I had "great court presence". I assumed that it meant that my 6'6" frame stood out on the basketball court. That's partly true. But is presence all about one's height or stature? Absolutely not! Over the years, as an official and national evaluator, I've come to realize the significance of possessing the characteristics that give someone a strong "court presence". There is much more to it than being tall or athletic in appearance.

So, what does it mean to you to "have presence" as an official? Have you heard this before? Perhaps you yourself have been told that you have presence...or quite possibly that you need MORE presence as an official? In my humble opinion, "presence" is the most important quality that you can possess as an official. And quite frankly, it is an important trait to have in your business and personal life as well. However, I also find that it is a hard characteristic to define and measure, particularly when speaking about basketball officiating.

Simply, in the dictionary, presence can be defined as: *“personal appearance or bearing, especially of a dignified or imposing kind”*. That's certainly a fine definition, but does it really get to the heart of what we mean by having a great "court presence"? If we dig a little deeper, presence can be further defined as: *“the ability to project a sense of ease, poise, or self-assurance, especially the quality or manner of a person's bearing before an audience”*. The "audience" in your life can be the players, coaches, fans, athletic directors, or evaluators when you're officiating. Or, it can be your boss, co-workers, clients, patients, customers, or friends within your day-to-day life. Presence is also a way of acting or behaving. Do you have a noteworthy appearance or compelling personality? Think about how you conduct yourself and how others perceive you in all aspects of your life. When you walk into a room, do

people take notice? Do you command their attention without uttering a word? Can you do this without being cocky or arrogant?

I often recall Bill Crowley, current Canada West Supervisor of Officials, a very successful on-court official, and a long-time friend, saying on numerous occasions that, because of his "smaller stature", and hence, what many perceived to be a smaller court presence, he needed to find ways to increase his court presence and command a much different image in a typically taller person's game. In essence, what he needed to do was find ways to project a sense of ease, poise, and self-assurance to his audience. There were many ways in which he could accomplish this, but the ones that stood out for me was his ability to effectively and firmly communicate with the game's participants, his habitually strong use of signals and mechanics, and the confidence that he exuded both on and off the court without ever crossing the line of arrogance. All of this worked for Bill, among many other strong characteristics, to project a very strong court presence.

You may or may not be ahead of the game if you're naturally taller and/or more athletic in appearance. I have worked with and evaluated several officials who fit into this category, but disappointingly lack the self-confidence and poise to give them that strong "court presence" we all talk about. Everything is not lost, however. Presence is something that can, and must, be developed.

If you find yourself being told that you "need more court presence" or "need to work on your court presence", it's because the image that you project doesn't say to your audience that "you are in control". Much of this is based on what you look like and how you carry yourself. Someone 6'6", like me, is likely going to have a different presence than someone 5'1" will have because of how they look. But the person that is 5'1" can control the room (or gym, as the case may be), if they do it right. And really, a lot of this has to do with the confidence in how you carry yourself, how you use mechanics and signals, and your knowledge of the rules and the game. If you look nervous or do not signal with confidence, this can show quickly.

John Weiland, a legendary and very successful Canadian official and current CABO National Evaluator, recently presented at our provincial clinic on the topic of "Presence" and he suggests that "Court Presence" includes, but is not limited to, factors such as:

- **Personal and Physical Attributes:**
 - Strong stance, decisive manner, approachable, on-time
 - Uniform: shirt & pants, shoes, jacket
- **Movement/Style:**
 - Fluid / don't be surprised
 - Running style
 - Athletic
 - Confident – move with a purpose
 - Signals/whistle/voice – sharp, crisp signals, strong whistle and voice

- **Attitude:**
 - **Confident**
 - **Listens (quick to listen, slow to speak)**
 - **Accurate**
 - **Concise**
 - **Self-control**
 - **Professional/Respectful**
 - **Works to improve**

John also suggests that having good court presence includes having a strong “game presence & awareness”. In other words, are you consistently and consciously aware of game and shot clock situations, substitutions, timeouts, tempo changes, player conflicts and coach concerns? There is no doubt that having an awareness of all these factors and managing them accurately helps improve your court presence.

So, what can you work on that will lead to developing a greater presence?

Here are a few suggestions to get you thinking:

- **Watch other officials who are accomplished and see how they carry themselves before, during and after games. Then watch yourself on tape working a game and see how you compare.**
- **Work on having a voice that commands attention when required.**
- **Work on having the best signals and mechanics.**
- **Know your rules and how to correctly interpret and apply them.**
- **Look Sharp. Most people will form an impression of you within the first 30 seconds, and these initial judgments are based on visual cues. Take advantage of this. How you carry yourself and wear your uniform will weigh in on their assessment. Looking sharp includes being well-groomed and wearing a clean-pressed uniform. In short, if you look sharp, people will assume you are sharp. If you look sloppy, people will assume you perform sloppy work.**
Act Sharp. Carry yourself with professionalism and authority. Know your job. Being confident in your abilities generally reflects in your body language. Walk tall, speak clearly and stand up straight just like your mother told you. Doing so will reflect your command presence and help project authority.

If everything else is equal and I am presented with an official who has “presence” and another official who does not have “presence”, I am selecting the official with the good court presence all day long!

Hopefully, this year, you received some more “presence” under the tree for Christmas!

TWO-PERSON COVERAGE AND THE SHORT PREGAME MEETING

*By Morgan Munroe
CABO President and CBOC Chair*

In September of 2016, I was asked by the Alberta Basketball Officials Association (ABOA) to make a presentation at their provincial clinic. The ABOA executive asked me to review the current 2-person mechanics including some pregame thoughts. This is a synopsis of my presentation from that session.

Background

In March of 2016, Carl Jungerbrand, the FIBA head of refereeing, was in Canada to speak to members of the CBOC as well as officials from across the country about a number of topics related to officiating. It was a very informative classroom session as well as a series of practical on-floor drills. Most of the on-floor session focused on 3-person coverage, which of course lead to the obvious question about 2-person mechanics and if FIBA would be updating their mechanics manuals. Mr. Jungerbrand assured us this would be happening, but it might be a while before they were on line. With that in mind, Canada continues to use the modified 2-person system that was adopted in 2008.

The following comments on 2-person coverage are based on my observations as a provincial and national evaluator, reports I receive from provincial officiating associations and the feedback the assignor evaluators of the U15 national championships provide the CABO executive when the events are completed. Most games in Canada are still officiated using two officials, so it is always good to review and keep trying to get better at this court coverage system.

Two Person Coverage

In my opinion, the success of 2-person crews usually comes from solid work by the Trail official. The official who works to get in the best position to observe play when the ball is in areas 1, 2 and 3 will make better decisions and the accuracy of calls will improve. Rarely is that place just across the centre line, near the sideline, and yet, quite often, that becomes the preferred position for many Trails. With the increasing quantity of 3-point attempts from players at even the younger age groups, the necessity of the Trail to get into a position much closer to the FT line extended must be a priority for the committed official determined to see the whole play from start to finish and then to rule on the outcome of any contact. Several plays now start above the 3-point arc and must be called correctly to ensure that the game remains fair and safe.

Consider one common play that the Trail is often responsible for – the high pick and roll:

- The high pick and roll with all the options has now become a staple of basketball offenses at multiple levels.
- Drives by the dribbler to the basket.
- Fakes to the basket and shots that often originate near to or beyond the 3-point line.
- Options for the screener to roll to the basket and receive a pass.
- Plays where the screener doesn't always roll to the basket, but sometimes moves to a spot outside the arc for a 3-point attempt.
- Plays where the screener sets a second screen off ball to free up another cutter.

- **Backdoor cuts that result from the defense being forced to guard so many options off the initial action.**
- **Rebounding action that starts because of the shot attempt by either the initial ball handler or the screener, if he/she receives a pass and then shoots.**

As Trail, here are some of the things the official needs to watch for:

Where is the screen being set relative to the defender?

Is it in the field of vision of the defender?

If not, is there legal time and distance for the defender?

Does the defender move into the screener before the screen is set?

Is there a push off by the dribbler to free up space?

Is there a push off by the screener?

Does the player defending the screener “hedge” and contact the dribbler?

Is the defender in legal guarding position?

Does the player guarding the screener try and push the screener to force the play higher and further from the basket?

Does the player with the ball move his/her pivot foot illegally?

Does the shooter have his/her feet on the 3-point line?

Did the shot leave the hand before the buzzer sounded on the shot clock or at the end of quarter on the game clock?

If the ball comes loose and goes out of bounds which team last touched it?

That is a lot of things for a Trail to watch on just one play and it could happen repeatedly throughout the game. Simply crossing the centre line and stopping in the same spot and hoping to get the call right is not acceptable to the serious committed official who understands the effort needed to do a proper job each and every trip down the floor.

How does an official improve his/her ability to call this play and many others like it? In my opinion, it starts well before the game with mental preparation, visualization and observation of other officials in action. These aren't easy and they take time, effort and commitment, but if one thinks about the time and effort the athletes put into their game it seems reasonable for the officials to make a similar effort.

One of the most forward thinking decisions made by Paul Deshaies, our former national interpreter, was to spearhead the move to allow the Lead official to move across the restricted area (the lane) to observe post play on the opposite side. Not only is it a good principle for the specific game being officiated, but it also builds confidence in officials and allows for a smoother transition when they move to 3-person assignments. Under the revised FIBA mechanics, the Lead has a wider set up position and can move where he/she needs to see the ball when it enters areas 4 or 6 on their side of the floor. As mentioned, when it is clear that there will be post play action on the opposite side, the Lead is encouraged to move to the opposite side, but no further than the point where the restricted area meets the endline.

An effective Lead official develops key words that convey immediately to the players how they should behave to maintain a fair and safe game. These words need to be short and used in a non-threatening way to make the players

aware that they are close to a foul or violation. “Easy” or “Hands” will convey quickly to the players that they are at the limit for legal contact and something may happen if the action isn’t modified. “Lane” or “Move” will alert an offensive player that he/she must leave the restricted area. Strong work by the Lead to see post play, off ball action and the correct but limited use of preventative words, coupled with consistent effort and hustle by the Trail, can be a pleasure for the players to play in and the experienced fan to watch. The breadth and depth that a writer could go on about 2-person coverage is quite extensive and I’ve only scratched the surface and discussed a few areas.

The ABOA asked me to also highlight some areas that I would cover, if I was part of a 2-person assignment and had limited pregame time. The rationale for this request is based on the tight time schedules many officials have when they must get from their day jobs to a game that starts in the late afternoon or early evening and the officials arrive very close to tip time. With that in mind, I offered the following statements and questions. This list is included for discussion purposes and I encourage officials to develop their own pregame regimen.

- ❖ I’m Lead; this is how you will know I’m on ball ...
- ❖ I’m Lead; how will I know you’ve given up the ball?
- ❖ As Lead, I will move opposite when ...
- ❖ I’m Trail; this is how you will know I’m on ball ...
- ❖ I’m Trail; how will I know you’ve given up the ball?
- ❖ As Lead, if I move opposite where will you move your coverage to?
- ❖ As Trail, how many players can you handle in the backcourt if a press occurs?
- ❖ Eye contact is critical; let’s be aware of each other’s focus, concentration and body language.
- ❖ Do we know any history between the teams/ coaches?
- ❖ If one of us “leaves the building”, we are in trouble. No matter what happens, we will stay positive and solve any challenges we face.

Two-person coverage is the staple of officiating for most of Canada’s officials. The principles learned in this system become the tools of officials at the elite level. Attention to detail and hard work start here and often are key factors in the long-term success of many officials.