



Post Play Express

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THE NUMBERS' GAME

Submitted by Dave Morphy, Past President

As a high school assigner in Winnipeg, I have never experienced the challenges of finding officials to cover all of the games, as I am experiencing this year. A localized problem or a national challenge? Is recruitment the only answer and are there any magic bullets out there to enhance the recruitment of officials?

The number of officials is down significantly in my area and, more critically, the amount of time individuals are ready to dedicate to officiating is substantially reduced. My conference is small, some 16 schools, and the actual number of officials hovers around 30. The problem is somewhat similar across the city, but what adds to the difficulty is that the game is growing considerably at other levels. Club basketball is on the rise and officials are desperately needed. The senior men's and women's leagues are growing heavily which impacts officiating in that high school students continue to play rather than moving to officiating in order to stay in the game.

The real question is why is this happening and what can be done. Is it a money issue related to the fact that game fees are not so attractive as they once were perceived to be? Is it a lack of perceived opportunity whereby officials don't see the possibility to improve or they don't see a clear path to move on to a University panel or receive a FIBA card to officiate internationally? Or is it simply a life style choice where individuals choose to do other things with their time?

The challenging question is what can be done. Communication is certainly part of the answer whereby our partners, read clients, need to know that the lack of officials will eventually impact the growth of the game, the number of tournaments that can be played and the number of games that can be officiated in any given week. Yes I, as an assigner, may have to start saying : « No, I cannot accommodate that request. »

A solution that comes to mind is to work with our partners to identify potential officials, whether they be the parents of those kids who are playing club basketball or those who are working junior high basketball. Surely other solutions exist out there and I am hoping that this article may draw a response so that we can get a national picture on what is happening in terms of availability of officials as well as ideas that have worked in the recruitment of officials in other jurisdictions. I look forward to hearing from you.

CALLING THE FIBA GAME

Submitted by Roger Caulfield, Interpreter Nova Scotia

To be a successful official, you need to get the balls and strikes called correctly. It is important for the official to have a plan and know in advance what he/she wants to call. We only want referees to interfere with the play when necessary. It is important for all referees to call the obvious and not the obscure. The official needs to realize that the quality of his calls is more important than the quantity.

EMPHASIS (Making a Plan)

1. Make sure your first whistle is needed and correct. Verbal communication critical.
2. Call all fouls that lead to rough play. Holding and clutching fouls must be penalized immediately.
3. All unsportsmanlike fouls will be called at any time during the game, regardless of score or time.
4. Rebounding action that hinders the play must be called.
5. Call fouls on all dribbling situations that force the dribbler to be knocked off his or her dribble line.
6. Wrecks with bodies on the floor require a whistle. (Avoid blargers.) Give way to the calling official.
7. Call only what you see. Eliminate guessing.
8. Don't call anything you need a long time to explain or you cannot administer properly.
9. Eliminate the cheap « and-one » play.
10. Illegal screens and elbowing fouls shall not be tolerated.
11. Fouls that cause an injury cannot be missed. Protecting players from injuries is a priority.
12. Coaches, players and referees must not display negative gestures, bad language or unprofessional conduct.
13. Good communication skills and preventative officiating techniques are important.
14. Referees must be vocal on all calls. Inform everyone of the reason for your whistle and what is to happen next.
15. Be efficient during dead balls.
16. Be receptive to coaches' comments when appropriate. Do not initiate the discussion. There should be no delays.
17. Travelling must be called by the rule book. Do not permit players to get away with bad footwork.
18. Call all palming situations.
19. It is a foul when a defensive player extends his/her arms out of his/her cylinder and makes contact with the jump shooter.
20. Call a foul when a player jumps on top of another player especially during a scramble for a loose ball.

Guidelines for Coach and Official Interaction

Submitted by Tim Laurain, Manager, Officiating development, Ontario Basketball Association

It is recognized that both coaches and officials play an integral part in the development of the game and its players. The game is about the players. Coaches and officials are expected to be role models to the players and ambassadors of the game. It is understood that basketball is a competitive environment and that people will have emotional reactions. However, there is an expectation that all participants model acceptable behaviour during competition. There is concern with the effect inappropriate responses, reactions and communications have on the game and its players.

In the summer of 2011, Canada Basketball worked cooperatively with the Canadian Association of Basketball Officials to develop the Canada Basketball Technical Points of Emphasis aimed at creating a more consistent enforcement of the rules within their spirit and intent. The collective goal is to elevate the game in Canada and ensure that we are all doing our part to better develop our players. The three technical points of emphasis are: Travelling, Illegal physical contact and Coach/Official Interaction. The intent of the Coach/Official interaction guidelines are effective and efficient communication, consistency, modeling of positive interaction and the display of sportsmanship within the competitive environment. The guidelines for interaction are summarized as follows:

General

- Communication between coaches and officials and officials and coaches should be done in a respectful manner
- Coaches' communication to officials should be done in order to gain information and for coaching purposes
- Communication should not delay the game
- Coaches and officials should strive for quality not quantity when communicating with each other
- Communication should not be confrontational or on a personal level

Communication should be done in a respectful manner

- Communication should be done respectfully and sincerely. Coaches and officials are reminded that it is both what you say and how you say it that delivers a message
 - Be mindful of tone
 - Be mindful of body language and gestures
- Coaches can and should receive technical fouls when:
 - Swearing
 - Making a comment which attacks the integrity of the official(s)
 - Using consistent negativity towards the officials
 - Gesturing to influence the crowd or to express displeasure

- Throwing an object
- Making it personal i.e. “You have to do better”, “You suck”
- Consistently trying to interrupt the flow of the game through his/her communications
- Behaviour such as posturing or holding the ball to make a point

Communication should be done in order gain information

- Communication should be for clarification so that the coach can help his/her team improve or maximize their performance
- Statements are not appropriate communication, especially when directive i.e. “You must...” or “Call the...”
- Communication should not be used to try to gain an edge on the opponent or influence the official in future calls
- Both officials and coaches should understand that communication is to exchange information in a respectful and meaningful way but that does not/nor should it be expected to always result in a common acceptance
- Officials should answer appropriate questions in a brief and polite manner. Officials should work at being both efficient and effective in their communications

Communication should not delay the game

- Communication should be efficient in manner
- Communication should not be prolonged such that it delays the game
- Officials and coaches should develop their abilities such that they can express their point of view in a accurate and concise manner
- Coaches should respect that after making their point and getting the official’s perspective that it may be a case of “agree to disagree” and move on
- Communication should deal with the present not the past or future. Efforts should be made to stay in the here and now. For example, interventions such as: “Okay fine, but what about the play....” should be avoided. That said, communication is expected to occur as the opportunity presents itself and thus may present itself ‘after the fact’ and should be acknowledged by the officials

When Communication May and May Not Occur

While clock is running

- Communication should not occur when the clock is running. Appropriate comments can be made during live ball, but there should be no expectation on the coaches’ part for the official to turn his/her attention to the coach. During a live ball, it is expected that the coach is coaching his/her players. Comments even though they may seem appropriate, are actually coaching officials and are not acceptable during this stage of the game. For example, “Ref, how long is #14 allowed in the key?”
- Communication during live ball distracts the officials from the game and coaches should not expect to be answered by the officials

During a clock stoppage

- The head coach may communicate with the officials

- Ask questions that can help you coach your team
- Rhetorical questions are not considered acceptable and will not be answered. i.e. “What are you looking at?” and may result in a warning or technical foul
- Questions that are really statements are not considered appropriate. i.e. “Do you know the fouls are 6 – 0?” and may result in a warning or technical foul
- In a three-person officiating crew, the coach may talk to an official during the first of two or the first and second of three free throws, but the official should not be expected to come over to stand beside the coach and give eye contact. The official should maintain coverage of the court
- In a two-person crew an official can communicate with the coach prior to administering the free throws such that all communication is finished with the table and the communication does not create delay in the game administration
- During time-outs, quarter and half time intervals, the officials should not go over and talk to the coach until the end of the time-out or interval. The communication should not delay the game
- Coaches are not allowed to come out onto the court to communicate with the officials
- When coaches/team personnel come out onto the floor to tend to an injured player, they shall not take this as an opportunity to voice their displeasure with the officials

Coaches should strive for quality, not quantity when communicating with officials

- Communication should not be a running commentary from the bench i.e. “three seconds ref, he’s in there all day” or counting a loud “1...2...3...4...”
- Coaches should look to gain information and expect that the officials will consider their perspective as opposed to convince/influence the officials in a prolonged point counter-point discussion
- Coaches should look to get clarification on one point at a time

Communication should be professional

- Coaches and officials should not ‘let their emotions get the best of them’
- It is not acceptable for coaches nor officials to be yelling across the court at each other
- Treat each other as professionals and adults. Communicate in the manner that you want to be communicated in
- If you are a coach and your first communication of the game is “Ref! That’s a travel!” or you are an official and your first communication is “Coach! That’s enough!” we are not communicating in an effective manner.
- It is a good practice for the officials to introduce themselves to the coaches before the game. Both coaches and officials should look to create a positive working rapport.

Reminders on Bench Decorum

- The head coach only is permitted to stand while play is in progress
- The head coach is expected to coach within the team bench area and refrain from coming out onto the court to communicate with officials
- The head coach is responsible for the decorum of all players and team personnel on his/her bench

- Only the head coach should be asking for clarification from the officials. Assistant coaches should not be involving themselves in communications with the officials or between the head coach and officials
- Behaviour that works to incite the spectators shall not be tolerated and will warrant a warning or a technical foul
- During time-outs both coaches and officials should use the time wisely. The coaches to coach their players and the officiating crew to verify the game administration and to get together to effectively review and move forward. There is no need for a head coach to be communicating with one official while other bench personnel occupy another official. Coaches and officials should respect this. Officials should not be interrupting the time-out to be communicating information that could be communicated after the time-out has ended.

Comment

A warning is not a pre-requisite to a technical foul. Warnings may be given. If behaviour or communication warrants it, no warning will be given and a technical foul assessed.

A final comment

Both officials and coaches should strive for quality communication that supports the development of the game and the players. Both officials and coaches are expected to be effective, efficient and respectful in their communications.

Although expected at all levels of the game, there are increased expectations to be positive role models in the younger age groups.



I would like to thank all who have participated in the process and development of the guidelines. I offer a special acknowledgment of Mike MacKay, Consultant for Coach Education and Development for Canada Basketball, for his work in the foundation of the guidelines. I can be contacted at timlaurain@rogers.com

SYSTEM, MY FRIEND!

Submitted by Mario Lessard, Interpreter Quebec

Refereeing means pressure, whatever the level of competition. That pressure comes from various sources which can be grouped into two categories : external sources and internal sources.

Coaches, the presence of a supervisor, the expectations of one's colleagues, players, and other participants, what is at stake in the game, and spectators are some examples of external sources.

The desire to do well (ego) and to provide both teams with the same opportunity to win, the motivation to be a role model for others, the will to work efficiently as a team, the need to develop and progress illustrate internal sources.

Pressure usually causes « butterflies in the stomach ». Does it constitute an undesirable feeling that may hinder the official's performance? Not necessarily if those butterflies are « of the right colours », as Gilles Brière (a venerable Quebec supervisor) used to say. Stress may be positive and trigger a level of attention essential for a superior level of performance on the part of the official.

However, pressure may also become the official's number one enemy and cause him to lose his/her concentration and go to pieces. This is when the official loses his/her bearings and focuses on anything but the essential. A mistake is followed by another and the official becomes prisoner of this infernal spiral.

Mistakes are inevitable in officiating. We are still looking for the perfect game. Then, what can be done? An interesting approach would be to reduce the probability of incorrect decisions. How can that be done? First, let's explore the following scenarios.

1. The ball is in the air on a 3-point attempt and, after touching the ring, it is retrieved by the offensive team. Three seconds later, the 24-second signal sounds. Play is interrupted. The centre official does not remember if the ball hit the ring or not. Problematic and embarrassing situation... Fortunately, the trail official confirms that the ball had hit the ring and play can resume correctly. After the game, in the locker room, the trail official shares his/her trick to remember the ball touching the ring. Each time the ball hits the ring, he »she whispers to him/herself the sound : « Tick ». That sound signal imprints in the short-term memory that the ball in fact hit the ring.
2. An offensive player is attempting to catch a pass thrown too high by a team-mate. He/she covers several meters with the ball at his/her fingertips before really taking control of the ball. The official observing this action withhold the whistle in spite of the outcry for a violation. His/her colleagues are impressed by his/her level of concentration. The official replies that he/she has established a list of priorities in his/her mind for such situations and that control of the ball is at the top of that list.
3. A block/charge situation occurs under the basket. The ball enters the basket and the lead official decides to pass and play continues. At the other end, a potential block/charge situation has developped and the new lead decides to pass on a contact similar to that which occurred previously. Later, during a time-out, both officials exchange a look of satisfaction and the official responsible for the second situation explains that, during the transition, he uses self-talk to remember the type of call or no-call that just happened and adjust his judgement so that it will be consistent with the frame of decision already established by the crew.

Other scenarios could be described dealing with elements such as the last 2 minutes of the game, the last shot in a period, the possession arrow, communication during time-outs, refereeing the defence, responsibilities in free-throw situations, what to do when a partner makes a call, etc.

The common thread of those situations is that an official needs to establish a *system* that will be triggered almost automatically when needed. Such a strategy allows the official to concentrate more rationally on the task at hand and decreases the risk of emotional contamination. Focusing on the task, on the steps to follow to render the best decision possible leads the official in a kind of tunnel where focus is optimized (somewhat like the athlete who concentrates before going into action).

Possessing such systems in one's toolbox constitutes a precious asset for any official who wants to deal with stressful situations adequately. However, in spite of all systems and tricks of the trade, errors will happen. The management of errors is probably one of the systems to develop rapidly. One cannot live in the past, but one must and can learn from it. Once a mistake occurs, one needs to refocus as quickly as possible because the next decision must be made in the short term. What happened (the factors that led to the error and the emotions that followed) must not be eliminated, but stored in the long-term memory for analysis at a later time. An old saying suggests : « You are as good as your last call ». After a miscall, I say : « You are as good as your next call. »

Developping a strategy or a system which will enable the official to get back on his/her feet and to concentrate on the process rather than on the result, is probably one of the know-hows that each official must control, especially in basketball where the frequency and speed of the decisions to make are very high.

For butterflies with the right colours!

The Newfoundland Association of Basketball Officials

Submitted by Jamey Jennings, Supervisor Newfoundland/Labrador

The Newfoundland Association of Basketball Officials (NABO) is composed of three branches on the island section of the province: St. John's Association of Basketball Officials (SJABO), Central Newfoundland Association of Basketball Officials (CNABO) and Western Newfoundland Association of Basketball Officials (WNABO). Each has a large geographic area to cover. The majority of basketball played in the province is in the St. John's metro region and is where we are putting most of our emphasis and resources in recruiting and retention. The two other branches are working just as hard at recruiting new members as the popularity of the game continues to grow in these areas as well.

Since our inception in 1969 numerous attempts have been made to recruit members and form branches in Labrador (a.k.a., The Big Land). With the exception of years when Labrador has hosted the Provincial Winter Games there have been few members from this area of the province. See map.



To those of you not familiar with the island portion of Newfoundland; it's larger than it looks! The drive from St. John's to Port-aux-Basques takes approximately 12 hours, depending on the driving conditions and the weather. It may take longer; high winds in the Wreckhouse Area near Port-aux-Basques, have been known to blow tractor trailers off the TCH!

Travel is an issue in covering games in all branches. As in other areas of the country, there are times that we do not have enough officials to cover games in each branch. Memberships in the three branches are primarily located in the major centers on the Island – St. John's Metro Region, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Deer Lake, Corner Brook and Stephenville. There are members located in rural parts of the province as well. On any given weekend, crews of

officials may leave from one of the above major centers to officiate games in places like St. Lawrence (SJABO), Clarendville (duel coverage between SJABO and/or CNABO), Fogo Island (WNABO) or Plum Point on the Great Northern Peninsula (WNABO). All of these excursions are a minimum travel time of 2 hours, and as much as 4 hours driving each way, which necessitates a 2 night stay for the weekend. In the case of the Fogo trip, it also includes travel by provincial ferry. This is true of other small island schools that require service from time to time.

In Newfoundland, each branch has negotiated local contracts with the organizations that they service. One thing that is different in NABO from the rest of the country in local and provincial basketball is that members are paid by their evaluation level, and not a flat fee. Members of WNABO and CNABO have adopted the NOCP as the only evaluation scheme, while SJABO uses the old Provincial Rating System in dealing with remuneration of their members with the leagues in the Metro area. Provincially, members are paid by their NOCP rating only – and this is agreed upon by NABO and the Newfoundland-Labrador Basketball Association (NLBA). School Sport Newfoundland and Labrador (SSNL) is not affiliated with the NLBA, and thus, we have purchased a liability policy for NABO members who work non-sanctioned games. The cost of the policy is absorbed by the users of our service. We charge \$1.00 per official per assignment for all high school and junior high school games not sanctioned by the NLBA. As well, NABO sets the game fees for its members for SSNL regional qualifiers and provincial championships. All games are officiated using 2 person crews.

The writer is pleased to report that we have an excellent working relationship with the staff of the NLBA, and with Memorial University through its Athletic Director, Michelle Healey-Gushue. We hope to continue these great relationships in the future.

NABO members have an interesting and rewarding experience in officiating in our province. Besides the basketball, we get the opportunity to meet some of the friendliest people on the planet in the communities that we visit, as well as see some of the globe's most amazing scenery. If you are a CABO member moving to Newfoundland or Labrador, we would love to hear from you. If you aren't – come and visit and see what our province has to offer. You will not regret it.

Map Credit

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Note – Doug Jewer is a NABO member from the Town of Mount Moriah, just south of Corner Brook where he lives with his wife Ann. He is one of the founding members of the Western Newfoundland Association of Basketball Officials, and a valued member of the NABO evaluation panel.