

## 2005-06 Points of Emphasis

1. Sporting Behavior. The NFHS Basketball Rules Committee continues to be concerned with player, coach and fan behavior. While administrators continue to focus on solutions, it is imperative that all parties involved accept responsibility and improve behavior. Specifically, the committee wants the following addressed:

A. Uniforms: Players are increasingly using their uniforms in unsporting ways. Examples include: Holding the uniform out from the chest area to display the team name to the opponent or fans; pulling the uniform out of the shorts in an emotional display; and removing the jersey either on the court or near the team bench, especially after a disqualification. The committee expects jerseys to be worn properly and remain on. New Rule 3-4-15 adds, "A player shall not remove the jersey and/or pants/skirt in the confines of the playing area." The result is a technical foul.

Uniforms must be worn as intended and the rule must be enforced. The jersey must be tucked in and shorts must be worn properly. When a player is in violation of the rule, the player is directed to leave the game. While an untucked jersey during the normal course of play is understandable until it can be corrected, too often there are multiple warnings for clear violations. Coaches bear a great responsibility in ensuring uniforms stay on team members. Officials must enforce the rule.

B. Time-outs: When a team goes on a scoring run, emotions often run high. Nationwide, there is an apparent increase in bench personnel running out onto the court after a time-out is whistled. Typically, the bench personnel of the team that has gained momentum run out onto the court to celebrate and congratulate their teammates. The other team's players, heading toward their bench area, often cross with the celebrating team. This situation often leads to bumping, pushing and/or taunting.

Coaches must make sure that bench personnel remain in the team bench area (1-13-3) after a time-out is called. Officials must be aware of the potential for confrontation, use preventive officiating techniques and penalize appropriately.

C. Spectators: There has been emphasis over the years on player and coach behavior and the trends show improvement. However, fan behavior remains a critical concern. Too often, fans are using abusive language toward coaches, players and officials. Fans are also approaching the court, team areas and locker rooms – places that used to be "off limits" – to confront participants.

Game administrators must create and follow security procedures and support efforts to have offending fans removed from the premises. Proactive policies lead to fewer problems. It is the game administrator's ultimate responsibility to provide a safe environment for players, coaches and officials. Do not wait for the official to point out the problem. If it gets to the point that the officials have to address fan behavior, there were most likely opportunities for game administrators to deal with it before it got to that point.

Officials should never directly confront fans. Find the game administrator to take care of the problem. In extreme cases, delay the game until the offending fan is removed. Coaches must not incite fan behavior. The coach's sideline actions often have an impact on fan behavior – positively or negatively. Schools are encouraged to have security personnel on site for such situations.

D. Coaching box: The committee wants coaches to stay in the coaching box. There is a constant problem when coaches wander. It is a distinct advantage to the coach who is permitted to be out of the box because the coach has a better chance to communicate with his/her team. The coach can also influence play by being out on the court.

The rule is black-and-white, but it has not been dealt with properly. Most officials have not enforced the rule. The fact that the coach is not directing comments to the officials or is "coaching the team" has no bearing on rule enforcement. The coach who continually abuses the coaching-box rule risks having his or her governing body remove it completely. The official who doesn't enforce it runs the risk of not following what the governing body wants enforced.

Once the coaching box has been removed because of a technical foul, all related rules restrictions must apply.

There's no way to get the box back after the privilege has been lost.

Assistant coaches must be seated at all times except during time-outs, to attend to an injured player after being beckoned and to spontaneously react to a play. The rules that permit a head coach to rise in certain situations (time-outs, confer with table personnel for a correctable error, dealing with disqualifications) do not apply to assistant coaches under any circumstances. Again, the fact that an assistant coach is "only coaching" has no bearing on the rule or enforcement.

Head coaches have the responsibility to remain in the box. School administrators must support that by demanding their coaches do so. When violated, the official must enforce the rule with a technical foul.

## 2. Free Throws.

A. Lane spaces. There has been much debate on what — if anything — to do with free-throw situations. Some want rules that would move players up on the low block or even eliminate the first lane space. The theory: The players underneath the basket are at a rebounding disadvantage. Data collected from a variety of sources does not support that theory.

Multiple studies show players in the first marked lane space garner roughly 75-80 percent of all free throw rebounds. That is a range the rules committee finds acceptable and is consistent with historical norms. The team closest to the basket is supposed to get most of the rebounds! The rules in this case are not designed to give each team an equal chance or guarantee a rebound to the defense.

B. Rough play. Keeping the block between players continues to serve its initial purpose. It reduces rough play. The same is true for player restrictions ending when the attempt hits the ring. Still, rough play is a concern. Coaches must not teach players to "lock up" arms along the lane line, nor drive players further under the basket with brute force. Officials must call those fouls.

C. Disconcertion. Free-throw disconcertion must be carefully monitored. Of particular concern is when the free throw will become dead (first of two or first two of three). Defensive players often employ tactics which serve no other purpose than to disconcert the shooter during free throws ("boxing out" the free thrower off the free-throw line, waving arms, yelling instructions to teammates, etc.). Another increasing trend is opponents outside the arc saying things to the thrower. With team free-throw percentages hovering in the mid-60's on average, teams welcome a second chance free throw. They deserve it if disconcertion occurs and officials must call it.

3. Intentional Fouls. The committee is concerned about how games end. The intentional foul rule has devolved into misapplication and personal interpretations. The committee has revised the rule to improve understanding. An intentional foul is a personal or technical foul that neutralizes an opponent's obvious advantageous position. Contact away from the ball or when not making a legitimate attempt to play the ball, specifically designed to stop or keep the clock from starting, shall be intentional. Intentional fouls may or may not be premeditated and are not based on the severity of the act. A foul also shall be ruled intentional if while playing the ball a player causes excessive contact with an opponent.

A. Anytime in the game. Acts that neutralize an opponent's obvious advantageous position and must be deemed intentional include:

- Excessive contact on any player attempting a shot
- Grabbing or shoving a player from behind when an easy basket may be scored
- Grabbing and holding a player from behind or away from the ball

These are "non-basketball" plays and must be considered intentional fouls anytime they occur during a game.

B. Late in the game. Fouling is an accepted coaching strategy and is utilized by nearly all coaches in some form. It is viewed as a chance for a team behind in the score to get back in the game while the clock is stopped. There is widespread belief that it works or it wouldn't be coached.

There is a right way and a wrong way to foul. Coaches must instruct their players in the proper technique for strategic fouling. "Going for the ball" is a common phrase heard, but intentional fouls should still be called on players who go for the ball if it is not done properly. Conversely, a coach who yells, "Foul!" instructions to his or her team does not mean the ensuing foul is "automatically" an intentional foul — even though it is a strategic foul designed to stop the clock. Coaches, officials, players, fans and administrators must accept fouling as a

legitimate coaching strategy.

With that, officials must have the courage to enforce the intentional foul rule. Far too often, officials do not whistle fouls as intentional when the act clearly meets the criteria. Officiating philosophies should not change because of the time remaining in the game or the score differential. The correct call should be made — not the popular one.

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