

GETTING READY FOR OFSAA

The Pre-Game Conference

Many times the officials taking part in an OFSAA tournament will not be from the same area and may use different styles of officiating, for instance, how to communicate who will take responsibility for a foul when there is a double or triple whistle. This makes it imperative that the number one topic that should be addressed during the pre-game is the communication by the officials for the game.

Good Eye Contact

This entails several different, important areas. This should start with good eye contact between each official before the ball is put into play every time during the entire contest. Putting the ball in play when one member of the crew is not ready can only lead to bad things. It is a simple thing to check, and failure to do this often leads to additional breakdowns in game management.

Spot Throw-ins

When a violation is called, the calling official should communicate to the other crew member where the ball will next be put into play. This allows the entire crew to know where they need to set up for the inbound play. It is important to honor the spots that the calling official designates. If a sideline throw-in is designated, do not bring the ball inbound from the baseline just because it will save a few steps. Why is this important? Many times coaches see the designation and immediately call a play. If you decide to change the spot, the coach will now have to change his/her plans, may bicker about the procedure, and may also begin to question the cohesiveness of the crew. Pre-game this aspect of your game, and avoid the associated problems.

Calling Fouls

When a foul is called, the calling official needs to immediately communicate with his/her partner whether it is a shooting foul or a non-shooting foul. This will allow the partner to have the players set up by the time that the calling official returns from reporting to the table. The calling official also needs to let the partner know who will be shooting any free throws. This is especially important if the foul was an off-ball call, as the non-calling official may not have even seen the play. The calling official needs to slow down so that the partner has a chance to focus on what happened and pick up the shooter. The non-calling official should always work to get the shooter.

What To Do For a Time-out

Any time that a time-out is called during the game, the officials need to communicate with each other before reporting the time-out to the table. It is imperative that the entire crew knows what will happen when play resumes, i.e., throw-in or free throws, spot throw-in or run the baseline, how many free throws, who is the shooter, where the ball will be inbounded, which team will have the ball, etc. Nothing is worse than to have a coach stick his head out of a huddle to ask where the ball will be inbounded and you have to waste the rest of the time-out getting him information that you should already have had. Remember that this communication between the officials should have taken place before reporting anything to the table. This ensures that everyone knows what is going on, that any questions can be answered, and it also allows the players time to get to their benches and coaches to have a few extra seconds to instruct the teams.

Near the End of the Period

Near the end of each period, the officials again need to be communicating with each other, often while the ball is live. There is never a good reason for the end of the period to sneak up on a crew. There are various ways to communicate the waning seconds of the period,

which are shown in all mechanics manuals. Communication is a good first step to ensuring a well-officiated game. Work hard at it, and keep your co-officials informed of everything, just so that errors will be minimized or totally prevented.

An important part of any pre-game conference is making sure that everybody knows what is going to be done when, by whom, why, and where. These are simple things that, if done, lead to a well-administered game. However, if not taken care of, these things may jump up and cause trouble before the night is over.

Before Game Duties

The first part of game administration is taking care of all the before game duties of the officials. You should discuss what time the crew will take the floor, verify which official has what specific duties during the pre-game, and any irregularities that the Referee likes to cover. Most crews like to get the captains at about 12 minutes before tip-off, some around 8 minutes. The earlier is probably better, since some teams have a routine where they go back into the locker room for a few minutes before the start of the game. A simple way to find out about this is to simply ask one of the players if they are staying out or going back in.

The Table Crew

The Referee needs to make sure that he is able to check the book and have it verified by both coaches before the 10 minute mark. Talk to the timer and scorer and make clear your expectations for the evening. Find out about the pre-game festivities, such as when the National Anthem will be played, if starters will be announced, and any other special activities which may occur. Then let the coaches check the official book.

The Coaches

This is a great time to remind the coaches about the sportsmanship expectations for the evening. Also, by having the coaches verify their rosters and starters, they have nobody to blame but themselves if there is a problem with a number or an omitted player later in the game. The crew needs to discuss what time they will greet the coaches.

During the Game

As the game progresses, game administration and game awareness take on new meaning. The crew should be aware of what kind of game is being played by both teams. After just a few possessions it should be apparent what the main thrust of each team's offense will be, who the "go-to" players are, and whether or not the defenses will be aggressive or reactive. These factors often play a major role in how you call and control the game.

Foul Shooting

The crew should be continually aware of the foul situation for each team. In most gyms now, the clock operator is able to provide a foul count on the scoreboard. Check these numbers often. The intent is not to try to make sure that they are balanced, but rather to be aware of when each team will be shooting bonus free throws.

It is so easy to lose a shooter if you try to put the ball back into play after a foul, only to then have the table tell you that a correctable error has occurred because there should have been free throws. If the crew is aware that shots are to be taken, then it is easier to get the players ready for the foul shot administration before the reporting official returns from the score table.

The End Approaches

As the game draws toward its conclusion, knowing the approximate score is another essential part of game awareness. The crew should know if a team needs to foul quickly after they score or lose the ball, or if they will possibly want a time-out after a basket.

Thinking of these things and briefing them before the game will help you remember them during the contest. As the game winds down to the very end, the officials should have already discussed how they will leave the floor, who will get a visual verification from the table that everything is OK, and who will be escorting them off the floor. This matter should have been discussed with game management before the game ever started.

Good game administration and game awareness about team fouls, bonus free throws, and defensive and offensive plays go a long way toward contributing to a very well officiated game by the crew

Dead Ball Dangers

During the pre-game, the Referee needs to stress the importance for the whole crew to be efficient during the dead ball periods. These are the times where more can go wrong during the game than at any other time. The problems can range from forgetting how to put the ball in play, to losing the shooter, to missing dead ball fouls. If these problems can be eliminated, the game will be much more enjoyable - especially for the crew.

Hustle

Hustle should be a key word for the crew, especially when the clock is stopped. When the ball goes out-of-bounds, try to get it back in play as soon as the players are ready. When you are doing this, do not forget to acquire eye contact with your partner. Hustle does not mean hurrying to the crew's detriment. If there is a foul called, the non calling official should be getting the players ready for the next play while the calling official is reporting the foul to the table. This is part of being efficient. If shots are to be taken, the players should be urged to hustle to get to their spots. If it is to be a throw-in play, the players should be where they need to be.

Minimize the Dead Ball Time

A suggested goal for the crew, under normal circumstances, is to take no more than 20 seconds between the time that the foul is called and the time the ball is put back in play. Take care of business efficiently. If the players see the officials hustling during the dead balls, e.g., jogging to the other end of the floor if free throws are to be shot there, plus encouraging players to be ready to resume play, then they will usually respond and the game will have better flow to it. Yes, you can even have "flow" during a dead ball.

Coach Problems

Coaches usually get into more trouble when the clock is stopped since they feel that is their time to complain instead of coach. If the crew is getting the ball back into play in a timely manner, the coaches will usually resume coaching and the game will proceed, often with fewer hitches. Again, it takes an efficient crew to help this process along.

Continue to Encourage

As the game goes along, encourage the crew to continue to be efficient. However, do not ignore duties just to hurry through the game. Instead, work to remove the unnecessary delays that slow down the game. This will improve the quality of the game - or at least the impression that the crew presents for everyone in attendance.

Don't Forget the Clock

It is imperative that clock awareness be discussed before the game. Even though the officials are not physically running it, if there is one thing that can get the entire gymnasium in an uproar it is a clock that is not starting or stopping at the proper times. The crew has to make sure that they are aware of what is going on during the entire game.

Seeing the Clock Start

The responsibility to make sure that the clock is started on each possession somewhat

depends on what type of clocks are in the building. If you are in a building with the scoreboards on the wall on both ends and or over each backboard, then all officials have equal responsibility to glance up and check to see that the clock started on time. If you are in a building with a clock at one end only, this responsibility will fall to the official who can see the clock without having to turn and look away from the players. This is something that the Referee should check out even before the pre-game conference starts.

Seeing the Clock Stop

Making sure that the clock stops on the whistle is another important thing that the crew has take into account. If the official who blows the whistle is blowing it for a violation and he is in the position on the floor where he has the duty to check for the clock starting, he should quickly check to make sure that the clock stopped, also. However, if he blows the whistle to call a foul or held ball, his partner must take the responsibility to check the clock. The calling official must stay with the potential problem situation that occurs anytime that there is enough contact between players to have to stop the action.

Ending the Period

The entire crew needs to be aware when the period is about to end. The Referee needs to get the crew to decide how they want to communicate this. There are many different signals used, and as long as the crew knows what they are doing that night, whatever works should be OK. It is a good thing to start communicating the time when the clock goes under one minute. Another great time to communicate with your partner about the time is when you are shooting free throws. It also alerts the players to the clock situation. The crew needs to know who has last second clock responsibility. In a two-person crew, it will probably be the Trail. Talk about these situations and possibly what may change these responsibilities, such as a transition play in the two-person game at the end of a period. Example: Lead may want to take the last shot if Trail is too far in back court

Action Is Occurring All Over the Court

The way that basketball games are being played essentially means that action is happening all over the floor all the time. Teams often play defense for the entire 84 feet. Motion offenses are frequently the norm instead of the exception, and thus, back screens are being set constantly.

"Protect Your Primary"

In order for the crew to do a good job covering all of this activity, each member must be willing to trust their partner. If any one of the crew begins to ball watch, a whole lot of nasty stuff is going to occur without any whistles to keep it clean, and the game will quickly deteriorate. I like to take the point of view that officials need to do is protect their primary. By this I mean that each official has to worry about everything in his/her own area of responsibility, and that if anything bad goes unnoticed in that area, the official has not protected it. Obviously, that is what is to be avoided. Officials are to protect their area from any illegal activity going unnoticed. By doing this, each member of the crew stays focused where they need to, and the majority of the whistles get made by the proper official during the game.

Calling Outside the Primary

Having said this, there are times that an official can stretch and call something outside the primary. This normally should only happen when the call being made will improve the game. Examples of this might be a player crashing through a screen and continuing even after the screener has been sent into the 2nd row of the bleachers.

If the person who was responsible for making the call does not see it for some reason, or goes totally brain dead for a moment, then another official can (and should) make this call. A missed travel call or a touch foul that the primary official passed on is not a call that will

improve the game, and therefore should not be made by someone outside their primary area of coverage. Only getting the calls that have to be made outside your primary will show that the crew is working together, and that the game is being covered properly.

Competitive Match-Up: A New Buzz Word

The new buzz word this year as far as what to watch in your primary is competitive match-up. This means to look for the places in your primary area where there is a possible confrontation between opposing players. It could be the dribbler and defender, or it could be the post play situation, or it could be an imminent screen. Locate these situations and referee them, remembering to focus on seeing the whole play to see how it developed. Learn to anticipate the play, not the call.

Overlapping Primaries

Also remember that there will be times that primary areas of responsibility will overlap during the game. We will discuss these another time when court coverage is talked about. Learn to protect your primary and trust your partner and you will be amazed how much more of the game you will see and how much cleaner the game can be made when the players realize that they are being observed away from the ball.