



2021-22 Basketball Memo – January 14, 2022

January 14, 2022 Memo #5

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Observation staff: Continue to review the number of times officials are being observed. Make the effort to observe those without any or very few observations. Be real and honest with feedback. Make sure we are entering all observation comments in online forms in a timely manner.

Officials: Continue to be open and receptive to the insight offered and work to improve your game on the areas being suggested. Ask yourself, and be honest with your answer, what are the areas in which I have progressed? Should you have any questions or need further clarity, please reach out directly to Jo at the SDHSAA offices or myself. Our goals are clarity and consistency across our entire state. Always, continued progress, not perfection is expected.

CREWS MUST KNOW HOW TO HANDLE DOUBLE WHISTLES

Two whistles blow. The lead official steps out to give the offensive foul signal ... only to notice the trail was about to signal a block. A quick look of acknowledgment and the lead makes the call. The most important thing to take away from this play was how the two officials gave each other a quick look before the lead, who would have the primary whistle on a secondary defender play, made the call.

Acknowledgment is the key to every double whistle. You start with eye contact, verbal contact, and now you have a chance to discuss, verbally or nonverbally, who is going to take the play.

Acknowledging a double whistle starts with taking a glance at whether your partner stopped the clock with an open hand (violation) or closed fist (foul). If you both have an open hand, the official with the primary coverage should signal the violation and resume play. If one of you has an open hand and the other a closed fist, it becomes a matter of determining which came first. Did the violation happen before the foul (e.g., did a post player travel before getting fouled on a shot attempt)? Or did a foul cause the violation (e.g., was the post player pushed, causing the shuffle of the feet)?

Finally, if you both have closed fists, you also need to read body language. Did your partner take a step forward as if to punch a player control foul? Or perhaps took a sideways step, ready to sell a blocking foul?

Either of these situations require a quick check with your partner – emphasis on quick – to settle upon the right decision. Just a few words (“Push caused the travel” or “You got it, partner”) or a nod to the primary official should suffice.

As I observe games, I really find out quickly who the top-quality officials are as the crew works through double whistles. The best officials acknowledge the whistle and communicate with one another effectively and efficiently.

We must avoid “blarges” – SLOW down, stop the clock, give yourselves a chance for the correct call. The dreaded double foul that happens when both officials give preliminary signals – this is a BIG NO-NO, one a charge, the other a block. By slowing down, recognizing situations and areas on the floor where double whistles can likely happen and not going immediately to sell a call, but “sticking and holding” a foul signal until it’s clear who will take the call. From experience, the official “receiving” the play often – not always, but often has the best view.

Emphasize all these principles during the pregame meeting. A thorough discussion of how as a crew you will to handle double whistles, (the few you should have), in the pregame meeting is important. This gives us a fighting chance to deal successfully with them during the game. The key is who has the best look. Discuss how the right official should take the play to the table — and while the official in whose primary coverage area the foul occurs is often that official, that is not always the case.



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IF ONE OF YOU HAS AN OPEN HAND AND THE OTHER A CLOSED FIST, IT BECOMES A MATTER OF DETERMINING WHICH CAME FIRST.

Finally, on some plays with double whistles, being the right official means taking a play to the table to release some of the “heat” on a partner who has called the last couple of fouls.

No matter who ultimately takes the call to the table, determining that official should not take more than a second or two. Nothing can undermine the confidence of the players, coaches, and spectators more than watching two officials have a long, awkward conversation.

ANGLES “R” US – Thank you Brad Coleman for your insight and contribution here.

As basketball officials our jobs are to get ourselves into the best position possible to see a play from start to finish regardless of where we are on the court. In most cases, this requires us to get to a “spot” to be able to see through the play and not get straight-lined. Our friend and mentor, Buck Timmins, said all the time...Move to Improve! This is what we must do and since we are moving...why not move to the spot which provides us with the best angle to see the play.

One of the things we as officials can continually improve on is getting distance/space to get better angles. This is especially important as the Lead official. The deeper we can get on the baseline, the better “Angles” we create to see the play...the whole play. Our positioning as the lead needs to be as wide as the ball, out to the 3-point line, and then we flex in and out according to the play, all the while placing ourselves at a 45-degree angle to view our PCA (Primary Coverage Area). Not only is our body angle important to focus on our PCA but getting as deep as we can on the baseline also helps our vision and ability to see the whole play...our vision widens immediately. If we are officiating, while standing on the baseline...we’re missing a good game and many plays.

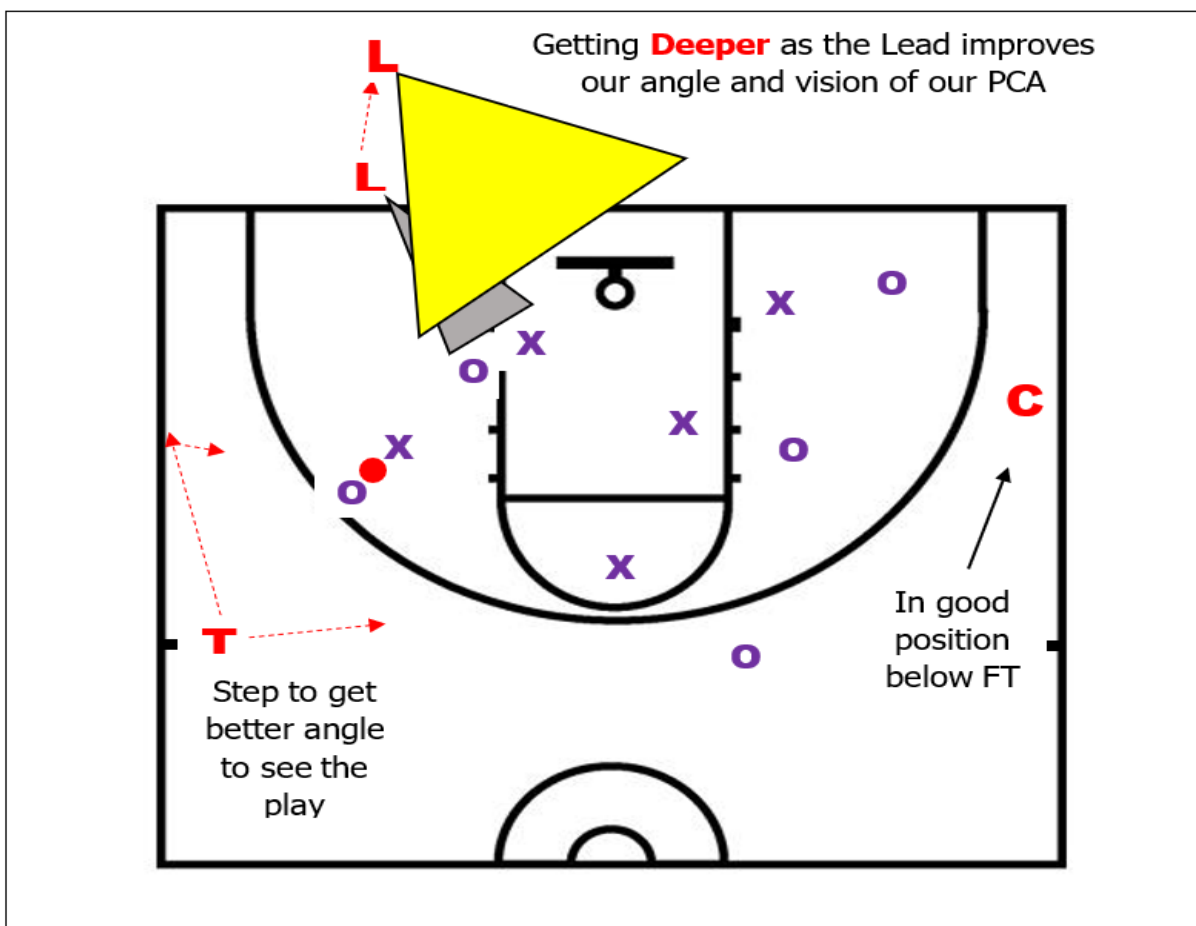
Be a “Wall-Finder”...This simply means that as the new lead, whenever possible, find the wall on the baseline with your hand and then you’ll be as deep on the baseline as you can, thus getting the best angle and view as you can. The more room you have on the baseline, the deeper we can get and the better our angles become. Unfortunately, some of the smaller gyms we work in don’t have much room...do your best to get as deep as possible.

As the Trail official, we are challenged with getting to the 28-foot line as much as possible. Also getting as wide as we can and turning our body angle toward the players in order to see the most competitive action in our PCA is very important. Again, the wider we can be from the play and the better angles we can create for ourselves, the better chance we’ll have to get the best vision of the play and get the play correct. Don’t be afraid as the trail to lower your position on the court to get the angles you need to see the play...nothing wrong with having two Centers occasionally.

As the Center official, we want to position ourselves at the free-throw line extended and a step or two below the free-throw line to provide the “Triangle” we need to effectively work a 3-person crew. Even as the Center official, we need to move up or down, depending on where the most competitive action is in our PCA which is for the most part the “Off-Ball Action”...Move to see the whole play.

Regardless of our position on the court (Lead, Trail or Center), we all need to close down on each play and not “Bail” in anticipation of the next play. We all get worried about getting beat down the court. Yes...it happens and when it does, use your “Angles” again by getting yourself out on the court and behind the play to simply officiate it from a different angle, then adjust as the play continues.

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NO PLACE FOR SECRETS

Situation = As the shot clock nears expiration, there is a try that may have hit the ring.

The ball gets quickly knocked out of bounds and there is confusion on the status of the clocks. Since this call is not in your area, you let the other two officials figure out what to do. Whew! You think, “What a relief. I am not under pressure on this one! I’m working with a veteran crew today. I’m pretty sure they got this one.” You may have had a view on this play but still “stay out” of the conversation since you are the less-experienced official and think your partners don’t want to hear your opinion. So, you tell yourself to stay back and “watch the players.”

WRONG - the bottom line is when you have information to communicate and no matter how insignificant you think it may be, you need to share it with your partners. This could make or break the situation, game or credibility of the crew. Although it may be awkward or uncomfortable, you will learn to overcome that feeling. You should not be holding out on information on the court and then add it later in the locker room. This is a major pet peeve of assigners and other officials. In the locker room, it is too late to fix.

It is up to the crew to work as a team to get plays and rulings correct, no matter if it is one, two or three officials (or even the standby official) contributing to it. It may take an extra moment to figure it out, but it will go a long way in building confidence with the coaches and players, as well as making your supervisor happy because you applied the rules correctly.



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This idea of communicating within the game (time-outs etc...) should be covered in the pregame meeting. All crew members should get together and provide information on critical plays. Even if you think your partners are out of the play, they should still be consulted on their view.

Good leaders will invite the crew to get together on these important plays and an aware official will initiate a conversation. Making sure all officials participate and share information is another important part of our game. It's all about communication and avoiding the second guess later.

WHEN TO “T” and WHEN NOT TO “T”

It seems that some officials commonly dish out a lot of technical fouls, but others don't. Some referees rarely remember ever issuing a T, yet for others, that letter of the alphabet is utilized just about every game.

When this inequity becomes apparent, what are some possible reasons for it? Could it be that: Some officials rightfully possess less tolerance for unsporting behavior on the part of players and coaches than other officials? They, utilizing the unsporting technical foul for its intended purpose as a valid tool, are properly “taking care of business” and not passing off problems to other crews through shyness and neglect? They convey the recently adopted warning for unsporting bench behavior when called for, but aren't hesitant to pull the trigger and punish the lack of sportsmanship with the permitted penalty?

OFFICIALS NEED TO “TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS” WHEN NECESSARY. THE TECHNICAL FOUL IS A VALID TOOL TO BE IMPLEMENTED FOR THE SAKE OF THE INTEGRITY OF THE GAME WHEN NECESSARY, NOT IGNORED.

Officials need to strive for excellence in play calling so that, by virtue of solid, consistent judgment, and tactful confidence, a minimal amount of room is given for vociferous objections and expressions of anger on the part of coaches and players. Work to continually improve our communication skills (Verbal Judo tactics) so when the need to explain calls or situations arises, it more often meets a welcome response rather than a defensive reaction or comment.

WORDS MATTER

We are fond of the saying, “You can't quote silence.” While this is true, the reality is if you are a basketball official who cannot effectively communicate with players and coaches, you are making life difficult for yourself and your crew. You must be able to find the happy medium between saying nothing and saying too much.

Just as important as how much (or how little) you say is “how” you say it. Effective communication on the court means using the language that has been designed for the purpose. Because while a coach can't quote silence, you better believe he or she is going to quote what does come out of your mouth when you are explaining a controversial or contested ruling during a high pressure point of a contest. Therefore, what you say better be correct according to our NFHS rulebook and SDHSAA policy.

THIS IS NOT INTENDED TO BE A LECTURE ABOUT HAVING PERFECT RULEBOOK GRAMMAR EVERY TIME YOU OPEN YOUR MOUTH – WORK TO BE GOOD COMMUNICATORS



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However, when we as officials are put in a position where we must explain why we ruled a blocking foul instead of a charging foul, or why a defender was not called for a foul because of the principle of verticality, we better have a strong enough command of the rulebook language to convey the reason for the ruling and not use words or phrases that are going to challenge their credibility or rules knowledge.

- “Coach, your player was moving. That’s a blocking foul.”
- “Coach, your player never established legal guarding position. That makes your player responsible for any illegal contact.”

Use the first response, and you better be ready for the coach’s comeback: “Just because he is moving doesn’t make it a foul!” And said coach would be correct. Now, you have created two problems for yourself as an official. You have caused the coach to question your knowledge of the rules. And you have ensured that the conversation about your ruling must continue, as you now must make a second attempt at finding the proper language to explain why you made your decision.

Use the second response, and while the coach may still not agree with your judgment, he or she must accept your justification that you ruled on the play according to how the rules for such contact have been written. In fact, less is even more in this example, as you could curtail your response to the first sentence only and still be 100 percent accurate in describing the reasoning behind your ruling.

That said, we do not need to give anyone any additional ammunition to question our work by not knowing how to accurately explain said judgments and rulings. Having a firm grasp of proper rulebook language will keep you out of trouble and ensure that you are the effective communicator the game demands.

OFFICIATING RESOURCES LINK

As we are into the 2021-22 SDHSAA girls’ and boys’ basketball season please refer to the link below where you will find many officiating resources available. By posting documents and other resources we will have a single site to house and locate materials. If you have any materials you feel valuable and worthy of sharing in these memos or on our website please forward to Jo Auch, Marsha Karst or me for review and publication.

NEW POSTINGS:

1. Check out the link below for new postings.

Resource Link: <https://www.sdhsaa.com/activity/basketball-officials/>

REMINDER RESOURCE: A BETTER OFFICIAL – YOUTUBE LINK

Below is a link for relevant, updated teaching, instructional video and narrative solely focused on NFHS rules and mechanics. Please make it part of your growth and development.

A Better Official: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLI4T_SHvEVdekqAKvW-rxQ