

IAABO E-Court

FREE THROW ADMINISTRATION

“Are You Looking in the Right Place?”

With the attention placed on rules and game management, we frequently overlook areas that have a significant impact on the game. When addressing free throw administration, officials overlook or ignore protocols that should be more strictly enforced. For instance, as the lead official is preparing to bounce the ball to the free thrower the horn sounds when an opponent rushed to the table to be beckoned into the game. The substitute is beckoned as the Lead Official hastily retrieves the ball from the free throw shooter. Another strategy has defensive players requesting to change lane space positions, thus creating a delay when moving to the same space on the opposite lane line. The Lead Official permits the delay. Further, as the Lead Official is preparing to administer the free throw, an opponent requests to enter a lane space. The official grants the request, delaying the free throw. Finally, as the free thrower is beginning the throwing motion for the first of multiple free throws, the opponents raise their arms. The officials ignore the action.

The above situations occur repeatedly when games are close; when time-outs are at a premium. You rarely observe these occurrences by the free throw shooting team. That should caution officials that these situations are used as a stratagem to delay the free throw or “freeze” the shooter. In all of these situations, officials should address the issues as soon as they occur. Eliminating them early minimizes the likelihood of repeated imprudence.

Another area that gets little attention is Free Throw Coverage. The Lead Official takes a position approximately 4 feet from the nearer free throw lane line and behind the end-line. The IAABO manual gives no indication that the Lead Official should be standing next to the player occupying the first lane space. Too many officials are watching television and/or are following women’s mechanics. Before utilizing new mechanics, officials should ensure that said mechanics are authorized. The Lead Official observes the player in the first lane space on the nearer lane line and in the three spaces on the farther lane line. This practice is becoming the exception rather than the rule when the Lead Official stands next to the player in the first lane space adjacent to the end-line. Proper coverage under these conditions is virtually unattainable.

The Trail Official will take a position approximately 3 feet behind the free throw line extended and approximately halfway between the nearer free throw lane line and the sideline. The Trail Official observes the free thrower, the top two lane spaces on the farther lane line and the flight of the ball. If both officials are observing the same lane line appropriate free throw coverage is lacking.

Responsibilities for a crew of three is virtually identical to those in a crew of two. The Lead Official observes all lane spaces on the farther lane line, the first lane space on the nearer lane line. The Center Official observes the free thrower’s feet, the top three lane spaces on the farther lane line, then rebounding activity. The Trail Official observes all lane activity in an effort to assist the Trail and Lead Officials.

