

---

## **“Take Away the Baseline”**

*(By Jacky Loube, Executive Director)*

IAABO has received innumerable questions concerning the Editorial Change in Rule 4–23.

This editorial change was a result of the following question proposed to the Visualization and Education Committee by an IAABO member. “If defensive player A–1 leaves the player he/she is guarding on the weakside of the court, runs along the endline partially or completely out of bounds in an attempt to guard B–1 who has beaten his/her defender, does A–1 obtain a legal guarding position if both feet were not initially inbounds? Would the subsequent contact result in a block because the defender had not obtained a legal guarding position, or would the contact result in a player control or charging foul?”

Let’s make it clear from the beginning. The rule regarding obtaining and maintaining a legal guarding position has not changed. I might also add “tongue and cheek” that neither has the size of the playing court changed. The game is played between the lines on the court! The patriarchs of the game have excellently designed the rules to maintain the balance between offense and defense. If the offense cannot play while out of bounds, then the defense cannot play while out of bounds. Would you fail to make a ruling if the dribbler steps on the endline or sideline “just a little bit” or would this action result in a violation? A violation, most assuredly!

If the defender is “taking away the endline or sideline” by stepping or standing on the line, the defender must be ready not only to absorb the brunt of the collision, but also be prepared to be charged with a blocking foul. If the offensive player steps on a sideline or endline before contacting his/her defender on the torso and the defender had obtained a legal guarding position, would the official ignore the stepping out of bounds? Of course not! You would never observe an official calling a player control foul under these circumstances.

**Whether the defender is attempting to obtain or is maintaining a legal guarding position while totally out of bounds, partially out of bounds, or barely touching out of bounds, the defender is no longer in a legal guarding position.**

Many officials suggest this interpretation is repugnant to the “spirit” and intent of the rules. But this clarification has nothing to do with “spirit and intent.” The rule clearly defines the playing area as that area where the game is to be played.

Officials have pointed out the resulting difficulty in refereeing the defense in a guarding position while also watching the “lines.” Suffice to say, the quality official will see the whole play, he/she always does. Of course there will be circumstances where the official may not see the foot or “toe” touch the line, that’s part of the game. These isolated situations are different than “rule avoidance.”

Please review the following rulebook citations for clarification:

Rule 1.1 Playing Court Dimensions

Rule 4.23.1 Guarding

Rule 4.23.2 Obtaining Legal Guarding Position (both feet on playing court)

Rule 4.23.3 Maintaining

Rule 4.23.3a “The guard is not required to have either or both feet on the playing court or continue to face the opponent.”

This section explains that the defender may have one or both feet “in the air” after obtaining a legal guarding position on the playing court. This is no different than a player, from a position inbounds, jumping with both feet off the floor to prevent the ball from going out of bounds or to prevent the ball from going from the frontcourt to the backcourt. It is not to be interpreted that the defensive or offensive player is permitted to play off the playing court.

Once again, this question has been consistently asked because of the language in rule 4.23.3a. Hope this article explains the issue