

## Bench Personnel and “The Fighting Rule”

*(By Jacky Loube, Executive Director, IAABO)*

Officials frequently ask: Why is only one indirect technical charged to the head coach regardless of the number of substitutes or bench personnel that leave the confines of the bench area when a fight takes place? This year the National Federation Rules Committee did address penalties for bench personnel with stricter enforcement parameters. Previously in Rule 10 fighting was defined solely on the principle that a punch had taken place. The rule, this year, has been narrowed in scope to include any activity that “may lead to a fight.” The broad language of the rule now grants a great deal of flexibility to the official in monitoring any unsportsmanlike activity, fighting words, finger pointing, and language that appears to be inappropriate when applying the rule to bench personnel.

When **bench personnel** enter the court and do not fight, each bench personnel is charged with a flagrant technical foul and **one** indirect technical foul is charged to the head coach regardless of the number of personnel who enter the court. If the number of flagrant fouls for each team are not the same, **two** free throws will be attempted by the team with the fewer flagrant technical fouls.

When **bench personnel** enter the court and **fight**, although it may

appear unusual, there is no additional penalty for bench personnel participating in the fight other than the flagrant technical foul for leaving the confines of the bench area. The head coach, however, is charged with an additional indirect technical foul for each bench personnel who is charged with fighting.

Each **player** who participates in a fight is charged with a flagrant technical foul. If the number of flagrant fouls charged to players for fighting are the same for each team, **no** free throws are administered and play resumes with an alternating possession procedure throw-in. If one team has more players than the other participate in a fight, **two free throws** will be administered for **each** technical foul that is not offsetting.

There is no tolerance for players, coaches, bench personnel, and spectators who exhibit behavior inappropriate in an athletic event. An official, as part of the educational process, has a responsibility to respond and act quickly, professionally, and systematically in addressing any unfortunate events. This is one circumstance where the official is called upon maintain order, impart some teachable moments, and exhibit a high level of game management skills. Take a step back, know the applicable rules, and respond promptly!