
Post Play

(By Paul “Jacky” Loube, Executive Director, IAABO)

The purpose of rules is to assure the balance between defense and offense is maintained. It is therefore obligatory to center our officiating on the rules and “official rules interpretations,” and not on “individual philosophy.” Officials assume that both competing teams are trained and educated by their coaching staff as to the rules, but it is frequently apparent that they are underemphasized. Too often in today’s game, the individual’s and team’s performance and game results are based on simply which team is bigger and stronger, which new technique taught at summer camp without reference to rules can be implemented. The official cannot succumb and have his/her officiating performance be influenced by such factors.

This mantra is unquestionably applicable when officiating Post Play. Post Play guidelines must be strictly adhered to and followed by all officials to generate and maintain an environment of consistency and fair play.

To effectively officiate Post Play, officials must be able to proficiently identify post players.

A post player is a player with or without the ball, who with his/her back to the basket is in the free throw lane area. Once a player establishes his/her position, both offensive or defensive, they can neither displace their opponent nor can they be displaced from their desired position. If either happens, it is a foul. When officiating the traveling rule, the official must know where to look for pivot foot recognition. Post play is no different. It is absolutely imperative for officials to observe match-ups when players set their positions in the post area. Each official should be mindful of these match-ups in order to create a clear picture of the developing play. The officials moving in transition should always observe how the players initially set up in the post area. The rules have no provisions for ignoring contact when a player is displaced from a legal position, but it is difficult to call a foul when the official can’t determine which player was the “displacer” and which player was displaced. How does this occur?

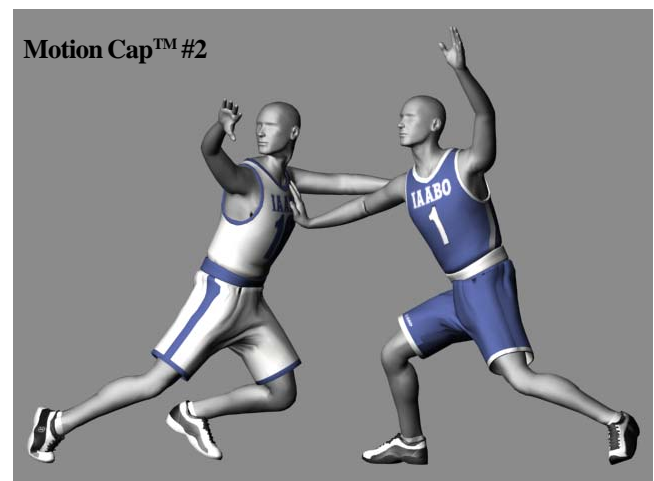
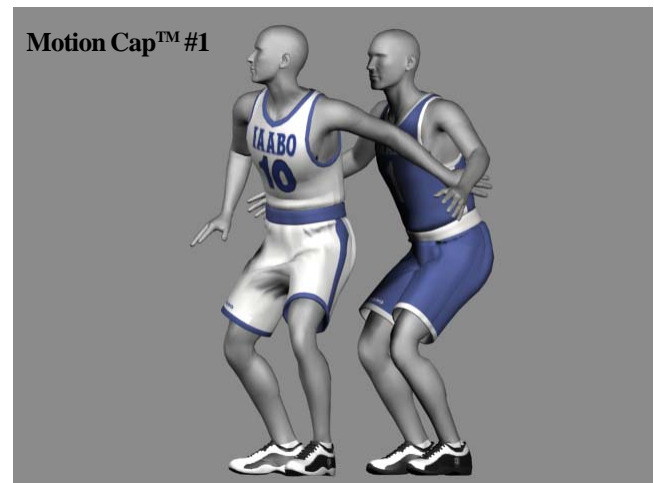
This lack of consistency is the result of officials “ballwatching” rather than attending to their primary coverage area and “looking in the right place.” All too frequently, these circumstances lead the official to miss the first foul and subsequently call the oh so familiar “second foul.” It is also affected by an obtuse officiating mentality that is pervasive in the community. “Well, let’s call illegal screens and post play fouls early and get it out of the way. They can’t say we didn’t clean up the post or get a few off-the-ball fouls.” This foundation that is established early, must be maintained throughout the contest.

The rules of this great game are developed with the well established principle of incidental contact (advantage/disadvantage). Clearly, the rules permit contact in certain situations in order for players to demonstrate the remarkable abilities they possess. But the rules must be enforced as written and within the spirit of the rule. There is no incidental contact provision that permits an official to ignore a player being held

or forcibly moved out of his/her legal position. Uncontrolled aggressiveness, plus the intentional contact which is taught as part of the game today, creates problems which are difficult to solve. Officials must do a better job implementing the rules in this area.

So, what should the skilled and experienced official look for in making accurate and consistent rulings in Post Play?

The OFFENSIVE PLAYER, can “seal” his/her defender to receive a pass or force the defensive player to deploy or assume a legal guarding position at the side, in front, or behind the offensive player. Whether the offensive player is preparing to receive a pass or is a player in control, the offensive player is prohibited from using the “swim stroke” (*see Motion Cap #1 below*), employing a “backing down” or “displacing” technique on the defender to prevent the defender from getting to a “fronting position” once a legal guarding position has been obtained. Neither can the offensive player hold, use an extended arm, elbows or forearms to “clear out” or “hold off” the defensive player (*see Motion Cap #2 below*). The aforesaid movements generally demonstrate rough physical movement and serves as a precursor to “rough play.” If these tactics are utilized it is a foul on the offensive player and must be ruled that way by the official. It is imperative for each



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continued

official to enforce these illegal movements and impose the penalty for the following “don’ts”:

- Don’t allow the offensive player to back in and move the defensive player.
- Don’t allow the offensive player to extend an arm to keep the opponent from playing defense from the side or front.
- Don’t allow the offensive player to use a “swim stroke” technique to receive an entry pass or clear out their opponent. If the defensive player cannot get around the extended arm of the offensive player, it is a foul on the offensive player when he/she does not drop the extended arm and contact occurs.
- Don’t allow the offensive player to push off to receive a lob pass for an easy basket.
- Don’t allow the offensive player to push off prior to the try or during the try.
- Don’t allow the offensive post player to maintain a position in the free throw lane for longer than 3 seconds. It is a violation that must be called to avoid the offensive team from gaining an unfair advantage and serves as a deterrent to illegal post play.

The DEFENSIVE PLAYER can assume a legal guarding position on the side, front, or behind the offensive post player. When the defensive player undercuts (initiates lower body contact), pushes a leg or knee into the rear (*see Motion Cap #3*), slaps, pushes, holds, elbows, uses forearms, uses a swim

stroke to lower the arm of the offensive player (*see Motion Cap #4 for side view and Motion Cap #5 for front view*), or just generally demonstrates rough physical movements or tactics, it is a foul on the defensive player and must be ruled that way by the official.

Physical dominance of a game is wonderful if a team has physical players, but much too frequently physical play destroys the very basic aspects of the game which make it unique. A game that was conceived as one of skill, quickness, and finesse is slowly being transformed into a contact sport by pioneering the philosophy of “let ’em play.” What does that mean? Should the philosophy only be applied when both teams have physical players or should one team be permitted to wield physical dominance? When a lesser experienced, impressionable official, observes post play “warfare” as acceptable action that is not ruled upon by the high profile veteran official, it serves as an example of the “trickle down theory.” “If the successful veteran official calls it that way, why should I bring attention to myself and call it any differently. I aspire to the same level and schedule he/she has!”

The official must apply rule 4.27 (incidental contact) to each and every contact situation he/she observes. As previously mentioned all contact is not a foul. When a post player pivots and turns to the basket some contact may result. Players bodies may be touching each other in maintaining their positions in the post. The experienced official who recognizes and officiates “match-ups” can frequently anticipate the ensuing play, but it is of equal significance that the official also be certain to observe the entire play to determine if incidental contact applies. But “let ’em play” means let them both play. So when team A’s “let ’em play” does not permit team B’s “let ’em play”, “let ’em play” must be stopped by the official ruling a foul. The emphasis should be placed on “LET ’EM BOTH PLAY.”

Post play, like all other situations, does not belong to the offensive player or the defensive player. In every guarding situation (post play, block/charge, verticality, rebounding, etc.) the rule principles are identical. Upon obtaining legal guarding position the defensive player may maintain his/her position until beaten (head and shoulders past) by the offensive player. Neither the offensive player nor defensive player may cause contact (beyond incidental) without being penalized.

Motion Cap™ #3



Motion Cap™ #4



Motion Cap™ #5

