

## **Guidelines for Coach and Official Interaction**

It is recognized that both coaches and officials play an integral part in the development of the game and its players. The game is about the players. Coaches and officials are expected to be role models to the players and ambassadors of the game. It is understood that basketball is a competitive environment and that people will have emotional reactions. However, there is an expectation that all participants model acceptable behaviour during competition. There is concern with the effect inappropriate responses, reactions and communications have on the game and its players.

In the summer of 2011, Canada Basketball worked cooperatively with the Canadian Association of Basketball Officials to develop the Canada Basketball Technical Points of Emphasis aimed at creating a more consistent enforcement of the rules within their spirit and intent. The collective goal is to elevate the game in Canada and ensure that we are all doing our part to better develop our players. The three technical points of emphasis are: Travelling, Illegal physical contact and Coach/Official Interaction. The intent of the Coach/Official interaction guidelines are effective and efficient communication, consistency, modeling of positive interaction and the display of sportsmanship within the competitive environment. These points of emphasis have been adopted by Ontario Basketball and the Ontario Association of Basketball Officials and the guidelines for interaction are summarized as follows:

### **General**

1. Communication between coaches and officials and officials and coaches should be done in a respectful manner
2. Coaches' communication to officials should be done in order to gain information and for coaching purposes
3. Communication should not delay the game
4. Coaches and officials should strive for quality not quantity when communicating with each other
5. Communication should not be confrontational or on a personal level

### **Communication should be done in a respectful manner**

- Communication should be done respectfully and sincerely. Coaches and officials are reminded that it is both what you say and how you say it that delivers a message
  - Be mindful of tone
  - Be mindful of body language and gestures
- Coaches can and should receive technical fouls when:
  - Swearing
  - Making a comment which attack the integrity of the official(s)
  - Using consistent negativity towards the officials
  - Gesturing to influence the crowd or to express displeasure
  - Throwing an object
  - Making it personal i.e. "You have to do better" "You suck"
  - Consistently trying to interrupt the flow of the game through his/her communications
  - Behaviour such as posturing or holding the ball to make a point

### **Communication should be done in order gain information**

- Communication should be for clarification so that the coach can help his/her team improve or maximize their performance
- Statements are not appropriate communication, especially when directive i.e. “You must...” or “Call the...”
- Communication should not be used to try to gain an edge on the opponent or influence the official in future calls
- Both officials and coaches should understand that communication is to exchange information in a respectful and meaningful way but that does not/nor should it be expected to always result in a common acceptance
- Officials should answer appropriate questions in a brief and polite manner. Officials should work at being both efficient and effective in their communications

### **Communication should not delay the game**

- Communication should be efficient in manner
- Communication should not be prolonged such that it delays the game
- Officials and coaches should develop their abilities such that they can express their point of view in a accurate and concise manner
- Coaches should respect that after making their point and getting the official’s perspective that it may be a case of “agree to disagree” and move on
- Communication should deal with the present not the past or future. Efforts should be made to stay in the here and now. For example, interventions such as: “Okay fine but what about the play...” Should be avoided. That said, communication is expected to occur as the opportunity presents itself and thus may present itself ‘after the fact’ and should be acknowledged by the officials

### **When Communication May and May Not Occur**

#### **While clock is running**

- Communication should not occur when the clock is running. Appropriate comments can be made during live ball, but there should be no expectation on the coaches’ part for the official to turn his/her attention to the coach. During a live ball it is expected that the coach is coaching his/her players. Comments even though they may seem appropriate, are actually coaching officials and are not acceptable during this stage of the game. For example, “Ref, how long is #14 allowed in the key?”
- Communication during live ball distracts the officials from the game and coaches should not expect to be answered by the officials

## **During a clock stoppage**

- The head coach may communicate with the officials
- Ask questions that can help you coach your team
- Rhetorical questions are not considered acceptable and will not be answered. i.e. “What are you looking at?” and may result in a warning or technical foul
- Questions that are really statements are not considered appropriate. i.e. “Do you know the fouls are 6 – 0?” and may result in a warning or technical foul
- In a three-person officiating crew, the coach may talk to an official during the first of two or the first and second of three free throws, but the official should not be expected to come over to stand beside the coach and give eye contact. The official should maintain coverage of the court
- In a two-person crew an official can communicate with the coach prior to administering the free throws such that all communication is finished with the table and the communication does not create delay in the game administration
- During timeouts, quarter and half time intervals, the officials should not go over and talk to the coach until the end of the time out or interval. The communication should not delay the game
- Coaches are not allowed to come out onto the court to communicate with the officials
- When coaches/team personnel come out onto the floor to tend to an injured player, they shall not take this as an opportunity to voice their displeasure with the officials

## **Coaches should strive for quality, not quantity when communicating with officials**

- Communication should not be a running commentary from the bench i.e. “three seconds ref, he’s in there all day” or counting a loud “1...2...3...4...”
- Coaches should look to gain information and expect that the officials will consider their perspective as opposed to convince/influence the officials in a prolonged point counter-point discussion
- Coaches should look to get clarification on one point at a time

## **Communication should be professional**

- Coaches and officials should not ‘let their emotions get the best of them’
- It is not acceptable for coaches nor officials to be yelling across the court at each other
- Treat each other as professionals and adults. Communicate in the manner that you want to be communicated in
- If you are a coach and your first communication of the game is “Ref! That’s a travel!” or you are an official and your first communication is “Coach! That’s enough!” we are not communicating in an effective manner
- It is a good practice for the officials to introduce themselves to the coaches before the game. Both coaches and officials should look to create a positive working rapport.

## Reminders on Bench Decorum

- The head coach only is permitted to stand while play is in progress
- The head coach is expected to coach within the team bench area and refrain from coming out onto the court to communicate with officials
- The head coach is responsible for the decorum of all players and team personnel on his/her bench
- Only the head coach should be asking for clarification from the officials. Assistant coaches should not be involving themselves in communications with the officials or between the head coach and officials
- Behaviour that works to incite the spectators shall not be tolerated and will warrant a warning or a technical foul
- During time outs both coaches and officials should use the time wisely. The coaches to coach their players and the officiating crew to verify the game administration and to get together to effectively review and move forward. There is no need for a head coach to be communicating with one official while other bench personnel occupy another official. Coaches and officials should respect this. Officials should not be interrupting the time-out to be communicating information that could be communicated after the time out has ended.

## Comment

A warning is not a pre-requisite to a technical foul. Warnings may be given. If behaviour or communication warrants it, no warning will be given and a technical foul assessed.

## A final comment

Both officials and coaches should strive for quality communication that supports the development of the game and the players. Both officials and coaches are expected to be effective, efficient and respectful in their communications.

Although expected at all levels of the game, there are increased expectations to be positive role models in the younger age groups.



I would like to thank all who have participated in this process and development of the guidelines. I offer a special acknowledgment of Mike MacKay, Consultant for Coach Education and Development for Canada Basketball, for his work in the foundation of the guidelines. I can be contacted at [tlaurain@basketball.on.ca](mailto:tlaurain@basketball.on.ca)