



NFHS • THREE-PERSON BASKETBALL OFFICIATING MECHANICS

3-Man Mechanic Table

Communication with Coaches

RECOMMENDED TABLESIDE COMMUNICATION

A quick-reference guide to the tableside mechanic and how to handle common coach interactions on the floor.

WHY THE CHANGE

Rationale for the Tableside Mechanic

Moving the foul-calling official toward the table changes the dynamic with coaches in four ways.



Better positioning

Puts the foul-calling official in a better position to communicate with coaches.



Improved coach behavior

The official nearby to explain the call, rather than the coach communicating across the floor.



Sharper responding skills

Improves officials' responding skills when addressing coach questions and comments.



Faster dead-ball periods

Speeds up the dead-ball period with the calling official moving toward the table.

General Techniques for Officials

1

Don't walk directly to a coach; go to your new officiating position. The coach will get your attention if he/she has a question.

2

Most statements by coaches don't normally need a response. Questions get answered; statements may need some type of acknowledgement.

3

Let the coach speak/ask his/her question first, before speaking. Be a responder, not an initiator.

4

Most coaches will have questions/comments when they believe the officials have missed an obvious call.

5

Having the officials in closer proximity often calms down the coach.

6

Be in control and speak in calm, easy tones. Be aware of your body language; maintain positive and confident body language.

7

Make eye contact with the coach when the situation permits.

8

Do not try to answer a question from an out-of-control coach; deal with the behavior first.

9

If you've missed a call or made a mistake, admit it. Use sparingly — perhaps once a game.

10

Don't bluff your way through a call.

11

Do not ignore a coach.

SCENARIO 1 OF 9

COACH BEHAVIOR

Coach sees the play very differently than the official.

POSSIBLE OFFICIAL'S RESPONSES

"Coach, if that's the way it happened/what you saw, then I must have missed it. I'll take a closer look next time."

"Coach, I understand what you're saying, however, on that play, I didn't see it that way. I'll keep an eye for it on both ends."

"Coach, I had a good look at that play and here's what I saw [short explanation]."

"Coach, I understand what you're saying, but my angle was different than yours."

"Coach, I had a great look at that play, but I understand your question and I'll have the crew keep an eye on it."

"Coach, I had that play all the way and made the call."

SCENARIO 3 OF 9

COACH BEHAVIOR

Coach is questioning a partner's call.

POSSIBLE OFFICIAL'S RESPONSES

"Coach, that's a good call, as a crew we have to make that call."

"We're calling it on both ends."

"Coach, they were right there and had a great angle."

"Coach, we're not going there, I can't let you criticize my teammate."

"Coach, he/she had a great look, but if you have a specific question, you'll have to ask him/her — he/she will be over here in just a minute."

SCENARIOS 2 & 4 OF 9

COACH BEHAVIOR

Coach believes you're missing persistent illegal acts by the other team.

"Ok coach, we'll watch for that."

"Coach, we are watching for that on both ends of the court."

COACH BEHAVIOR

Coach is very animated and gesturing.

"Coach, I'm going to talk with you and answer your questions, but you must put your arms down/stop the gesturing."

"Coach, please put your arms down. Now, what's your question?"

SCENARIOS 5 & 6 OF 9

COACH BEHAVIOR

Coach is raising their voice asking the question.

"Coach, I can hear you/I'm standing right here, you don't need to raise your voice."

"Coach, I need you to stop raising your voice and just ask your question calmly."

COACH BEHAVIOR

Coach is commenting on something every time down the floor.

"Coach, I need you to pick your spots, we can't have a comment on every single call that is being made."

SCENARIOS 7, 8 & 9 OF 9

COACH BEHAVIOR

Coach has a good point and might be right.

"You've got a good point and might be right about that play."

"You might be right, that's one we'll talk about at halftime/intermission/the next time out."

"You might be right; I may not have had the best angle on that play."

COACH BEHAVIOR

Coach is venting, making editorial comments.

"I hear what you're saying."

"I hear what you're saying, but we're moving on."

COACH BEHAVIOR

Coach just won't let it go.

"I've heard enough and that's your warning."

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Respond. Don't React.

- Move to your tableside position — let the coach come to you if there's a question
- Be a responder, not an initiator: let the coach speak first
- Stay calm, keep eye contact, and control your body language
- Acknowledge good points and admit mistakes sparingly — but don't bluff
- Know your go-to phrases for the most common coach interactions

