

JUST WHAT ARE GOOD MECHANICS

From Greater Philadelphia Basketball Officials Assoc. (gpboa)

Good mechanics are the difference between a basketball game that is well officiated and one that is not. A well officiated game is worked by a team of officials, not two or three individuals doing their own thing with no regard for the consequences. Whether it is a two-person or three-person crew, the sum total result should be the same. This result can be achieved with good mechanics, which consists of three important areas: good teamwork, total court coverage, and good communication between all officials. The negative result is achieved when officials disregard these areas and work as individuals.

The best way to lay the foundation for good mechanics is to begin with a detailed Pre-Game Conference. It is important that the Pre-Game should not be taken for granted. Instead, it should be a serious discussion lead by the Referee. This discussion should be well organized, covering the best way to work as a team to have the best game possible. The Referee should discuss how the crew will cover the floor during live ball and dead ball situations, the importance of constant communication (for example who the shooter is), and a number of other things detailed in this sample Pre-Game list. The umpires should offer contributions and ask questions when they are related to the topic of discussion. This is a great time for younger, less experienced officials to learn some valuable information. The value of the Pre-Game should not be minimized as the season progresses. Instead, it should become more intensified just as the games do. It must also be remembered that the number of times the officials have worked together does not grant the referee permission to eliminate this all-important meeting.

All will agree that basketball is the most difficult of all sports to officiate, due to the extreme amount of activity that occurs all over the floor, both on the ball and away from the ball. That is why it is very important that officials work together as a team. This means that each official covers his area of responsibility and trust his partner to cover theirs. This is particularly important with plays away from the ball. If the ball is not in your area of responsibility then make sure you do not "ball watch", but stay with what you should be watching. Contact that occurs away from the ball can in fact give a team a significant advantage if it is allowed to go on all game. This is excessive and flagrant contact also tends to occur. Why? Because players get irritated if they are being constantly fouled away from the ball and the officials are not calling it. **Teamwork** and teamwork alone will assist in reducing these illegal maneuvers. Many officials work under the misconception that when both call the same play, they feel they have done a super job. With but few exceptions, nothing could be further from the truth! When this occurs, it is obvious to the trained eye both officials are watching the ball. Now the question remains, who is looking off the ball to observe illegal action; action which often gives one team an advantage or places the opponent at a disadvantage? The answer is **no one**.

Discipline is the key word to officiating as a team. All are spectators by nature and prefer to watch the action. Officials are no different from spectators. They have the tendency to do the same thing. So, the answer is to train yourself to look off the ball when it is out of your area. Have confidence in your fellow official and know that he will cover his area and that he expects the same from you. As indicated above, good teamwork will provide the best possible coverage of the entire court.

This subject is further assisted by communication. Communication cannot only be made through the spoken word, but also through your signals. Not only are you expected to communicate with your partner, but it is essential that the players, coaches, and the spectators understand your call. It is a fundamental rule worth remembering that any signal that is given is worth giving correctly. This means:

1. Do not rush your signals. The clock is stopped, so no time will be wasted. Slow down.
2. Flash the number of the player committing the foul slowly so that it may be read correctly by the scorer.
3. Use your voice to notify everyone as to what you have.
4. Return to the correct position with haste. Remember, you set the tempo of the game. Take your time and don't rush but at the same time do not allow the game to lag.

NOTE: There is a difference between "rushing" and "hustling". When you rush, you fail to sell your call and make communication difficult. By hustling, you show all that you are completely in the game, in good physical condition and want to assist in keeping the game moving. This does not mean that you have to sprint everywhere on the floor. Run when you need to and when you don't run walk with a purpose. That means walk quickly and in a way that projects strength and enthusiasm in the job you are doing. Always give the impression that you are excited about your assignment and are determined to give it 110% effort.

To sum up, we must remember and practice three words: **Teamwork, Coverage, and Communication.**

Now is the time to take inventory and determine what you need to work on and improve on this season. Make a solemn pledge to improve each time you walk on the floor.

In conclusion, regardless of the ability of your fellow official, do not change your style, use of mechanics or the common sense application of the rules, so as to conform his work. Do your job properly and the way you believe it should be done. By doing anything else, you fail to assist your partner to reach his full potential.