

# FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Somewhere along the officiating timeline, the dial on permissible contact between offensive and defensive players was turned up a few notches and what officials saw as illegal contact was now being filtered through the lens of “advantage-disadvantage.”

The practice of ignoring illegal defensive contact because the offensive player could hold his/her ground and be unaffected by the physical pressure, slowly but steadily, upped the ante, and skill was being stunted by strength.

*NFHS Rule 10-6-12 was instituted 3 seasons ago.*

The guidelines of the rule have been explained to both players and coaches, and officials have been put on notice they will be held accountable for ruling on the illegal contact, early and consistently throughout the game.

So, the defensive contact on a ball handler or dribbler that is to be ruled a foul is:

- **Placing TWO hands on the player.**
- **Placing an extended arm bar on the player.**
- **Placing and keeping a hand on the player.**
- **Contacting the player more than once with the same hand or alternating hands.**

While the defender’s torso is not specially mentioned in the new rule, you would be consistent to rule a foul on a defender who ‘rides a dribbler’ coming up the floor or who is driving to the basket, or who repeatedly ‘body bumps’ a player holding the ball.

The feedback from coaches and players on the enforcement of Rule 10-6-12 is quite encouraging and should dampen any misgivings officials have about the rule leading to a steady stream of disqualifications and a parade to the free throw line.

The reality is that players and coaches, by and large, are making the necessary adjustments to their style of play and game planning and they are accepting the consistent enforcement with not much complaining.

At the end of the day, coaches, players and likely spectators, want a game that allows athletic skills to flourish at both ends of the court, and not have them thwarted by illegal contact delivered with brute strength in the guise of ‘false hustle.’

*Rule 10-6-12 gives the participants what they want, and the officials the mandate to help transform the game...*

This will require a collective effort from all officials across the board. What you call today may not, “echo into eternity,” but it will certainly carry over into the two teams’ next games.

Don’t make it harder for the crew that follows you and have them be subjected to the protests of coaches and players loudly proclaiming, “that wasn’t a foul in my last game!”

Making the rules is above our pay grade. We are paid to enforce the rules consistently, without injecting our personal bias on the merits of any rule changes or points of emphasis.