

# Anticipate the Play

*“Anticipate the difficult by managing the easy.”*



So as officials we are all called to ANTICIPATE; just not to ANTICIPATE too much.

*You must sharpen your skills to anticipate plays; but you should not anticipate fouls or violations.*

The following scenarios will paint a clearer picture of the concept of anticipating plays: When a team (Team A) is trailing late in a game, you have to be aware that Team A is going to likely apply defensive pressure after they score. As the new Lead official (crew of two) or Center official (crew of three) you should anticipate this forthcoming pressure and not transition too far, too quickly and leave your new Trail to referee multiple match ups in Team B's back court. Also, the new Trail should anticipate this back court pressure and consider staying behind the play to obtain the best angles to evaluate any illegal contact by Team A players who are trying desperately to create a steal or turnover.

Play has moved to the front court of Team B and you are now evaluating A-5 fronting B-5 who is set up in the low post area. Your sharpened referee instincts alert you to be anticipating a potential lob pass into B-5, so you are looking for the weak-side defensive help by a Team A player who will be looking to take a charging foul from the rolling B-5. If you did not anticipate this scenario, it is quite likely you have no idea whether the Team A player established a legal guarding position, or if B-5 caught the pass with at least one foot on the floor, which means you will either pass on the contact or 'flip a coin' in your mind to determine your block/charge ruling.

But if the Lead official sensed this play developing (or watched it used several times during the contest) he/she can anticipate the action and clearly see that B-5 did not yet have the ball when the contact occurred, and the defender did not give B-5 at least one step, so the official confidently signaled a blocking foul on the Team A player.

The official will **anticipate the lob pass**, but **will not anticipate the subsequent action** (i.e. the blocking foul on Team A; the charging foul by B-5; or the traveling violation on B-5.)

## **ANTICIPATE TIMEOUTS**

Officials should be looking and listening for a timeout request from:

- Team A that just scored late in the game and wants to discuss its defensive strategy.
- Team A whose ball handler is on the verge of being called for a closely guarded violation.
- Team A whose player with the ball is trapped and is about to be tied up by a Team B defender.

### **ANTICIPATE FREE THROWS**

In this lull in the game action, officials should be making sure:

- If the team that was fouled is in the bonus.
- If the team that was fouled is in the double bonus.
- The correct player attempts the free throws.
- The free throw shooter does not cross the line before the ball hits the rim.
- The free throw shooter hits the rim, if trying to intentionally miss.
- A defender does not foul the free throw shooter or violate their space.

### **ANTICIPATE BLOCK-CHARGE**

Officials need to “split screen” their vision and find the defender who lies in wait, while tracking the movement of the ball handler:

- On a breakaway, anticipate when the defender will put their “stake in the ground” and attempt to take a charge.
- On a drive from the wing or corner who has beat their primary defender and will encounter a secondary defender.

So the humble words of the venerable Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu to, “*anticipate the difficult by managing the easy*” have transcended time and leaped forward to teach open-minded officials to be ready for the challenging rulings that will come to you in every game by managing the easy set up pieces that will guide you to the correct call.