

2011 ABOA Points of Emphasis (POEs)

This memo is focused on 3 Person mechanics for ACAC and CW officials. However, local boards can incorporate some of these POEs, their intent & philosophy and apply them to officials working 2 person mechanics as well. But it must be presented judiciously with the appropriate credibility and awareness of an official's current level of experience and understanding.

To reinforce what was stressed at the Provincial Clinic, while a **solid pregame** is mandatory, the focus is on getting the officials **comfortable as a team**. Therefore the pregame should be a total crew discussion rather than just the CC doing all the talking. It is not a time to impress anyone with your knowledge, experience or superiority. Rather the emphasis is on preparing as a team that is ready to be **accountable** to the game, the participants and to fellow officials. This can't be stressed enough.

Loosen up the locker room and see where your crew's heads are at. Where some may need to relax, others may need a little inspiration. Recognize these differences as a **crew dynamic**, not just the CC, but the U1 and U2 too. Leadership is applied action and not a position; therefore if you're well trained lead by example by offering guidance and direction, and be supportive and accept feedback by being **trainable** as well. Open and honest communication is a key component of a unified officiating team.

Also review and set contact, violation & conduct **parameters** for your game rather than trying to cover every possible scenario. The finite details should be in your back pocket by this point in the season (see POE #4). Be ready for the opening tip and the first situation, call or no call, regardless of the quality of the game or level of comfort with your crew. Then work hard to recognize how to establish **consistency for 4 quarters**, yet bear down the last couple minutes of each quarter and call what's right for the game. We need a whistle to end quarters, with a clear wave off if the ball's still in the hand or a 3 point attempt if it's a valid try. You can have a solid 38 minutes but you may be remembered for your last two.

Here's some more POEs to print off and review **before** you get to the gym:

1. There's magic in 3s! Say what? Well, there's an old saying that we need to learn how to dance. A typical dance step is 3 steps forward and only 2 steps back. If we keep on dancing we will move forward and get ahead. Remind yourself of this when you face adversity or a difficult decision, and we all do in the course of a game or season. "Sh_t happens", but it doesn't have to stop us from our desired goals or outcomes. Use the "aha" method – "adversity handling analysis" and get back up on your feet. We don't always have to score touchdowns, just keep moving the ball. Lucky for us we get to referee with the collective, magical efforts of 3 great people with a common bond. Use this for mutual benefit.

2. Referee with passion! Make a commitment to the game, yourself and your crew to give it your best by focusing on the opportunity before you. Most people speak more passionately about what they don't have than what they do have. Be grateful that you're one of a select group of people who are given the opportunity to do this thing well. And it's basketball after all, not one of the world's worst jobs!

3. Captains' meeting at 12 minutes! Identifying the captains or team leaders is a good

tool this time of the season and can be an asset down the stretch. Some of you may argue that it's not in the book. But "aha", a **whole** Article (6) as well as 7.7 & 7.8 are dedicated to the role of the Captain(s). Might as well go shake their hands and smile, no? (And don't argue...)

4. Develop your presence! Be ready to start the game with a good balance of poise and focus. Calm down and learn to appreciate the butterflies, remember you have passion, right! But don't look so casual or distracted that it reflects on your credibility. Watch the good ones, in your board or on TV. Model what they do with their uniform, stature, running ability, mechanics and communications. Practice your sequence, rhythm and cadence for the following: Bang on your whistle, maintain an appropriate & crisp signal that demonstrates a clear foul or violation, verbalize everything with a minimum standard gym voice, finish your story with a result but don't rush to indicate the obvious 2 shots, clear the players, get your numbers shoulder height & steady, eye contact with scorer & finish again, then get back in position efficiently. Simplify by developing the priorities, minimize the distractions and use common sense. This is where "great results are a product of doing the little things repeatedly".

5. Develop your court awareness! In all 3 positions start with getting your shoulders comfortably back, head up & still, and heels lightly touching the hardwood. The Lead should initially be wider with an open stance of 45 degrees and no more than a metre off the baseline. The Centre should initially be FT line extended and shoulders parallel to the sideline. The Trail should initially trail the ball with shoulders square to both the play and the basket. This allows us to see our **Primary**, the beginning & middle of plays in our **Secondary**, and our **Partners** in all areas of court coverage. We can referee what's in front of us and still be aware of any play peripherally when it starts in our secondary. We're now in position to anticipate the next play as it develops, which is the one that can hurt us. As Kenner says, "Don't just watch the hood of the car, see the road"!

6. Rotate and referee! From our initial position (indicated above) and with better court awareness we now should mirror the ball as Lead and **anticipate** the rotation. The Lead's cue, by dividing the court in half, is being aware (not watching) when the ball is at the top of the key. Then the Lead must be in close down with at least one foot inside the key off the baseline. Next, we need to **shift our thinking** to recognizing there are only 3 reasons not to rotate. Often we have compromised our coverage because we wait for a reason to rotate which has included several variations of the ball penetrating weak side, settling and waiting for a competitive post match up. Furthermore, we've observed that officials across the board have been too passive once we set up in our initial half court positions and we need to be more **active throughout the whole game**. The emphasis we want officials to adopt is to recognize there are only **3 times when we don't go ball side**. Namely, an immediate shot, drive or skip pass when the ball swings. This new emphasis will establish greater confidence in, first, the Lead who no longer hesitates getting to the strong side sooner. By adopting this mindset, the Trail must respond quicker and be ready to accept new Centre coverage. And the Centre must have the discipline to rotate last which means we will always temporarily have 2 C's prior to completing any rotation. The next step is **critical** to the crew's success.

7. Continue refereeing your Primary while rotating! The final component of correct coverage is that all 3 officials must continue to referee their Primary while and until the rotation finishes. This means that the Lead maintains their Primary focus on the area where

they've last been and not shift to their new coverage until they get completely to the new strong side. The Trail will continue to referee action in their Primary, perhaps off ball play at the top of the key or the elbow, flight of the ball, etc even though they are moving or have moved to a new C position. And the C will continue to referee action in their Primary which may be a shot or drive on the wing and not move away from a favourable angle just because they are now becoming the new T. We have observed C officials turn completely away from action in their Primary and walk to the Trail position. Of course, we expect the new Trail to be ready for a fast break transition to new Lead, but that must be secondary coverage for the moment until the rotation finishes. This needs to be **accepted** by all ACAC officials and thoroughly discussed in your pregames.

8. Think objectively! All of us take pride and do a good job at giving both teams a fair chance to win, that's not the point here. But do we have the same objectivity about ourselves, our fellow officials and about some of the calls we make? I think we need to **reflect** on this question more closely. Some officials are ambivalent about feedback, others can get defensive and yet others again are easily upset. Some bring their work or home personas to the gym. But refing ACAC basketball often requires stepping outside of our usual comfort zones. We may have either a passive or aggressive response to **criticism or conflict** in our everyday lives, but applying these methods universally to every basketball game is sometimes not what the game or your crew needs at that moment. Let's say, for instance, a player gives us attitude. That never happens, right! Sometimes we can win them over by offering a gentler response or an empathetic ear. Do we need to be harsh or **assess a T** in this case? Other times everyone in the gym observes calculated, repetitive unsportsmanlike behaviour, but it's ignored or not dealt with. Those are moments when we need the whole crew to take their share of the heat and respond in a way that doesn't put the spotlight on only one or two officials who unfairly get labelled "**bad cop**". All 3 officials must be able to read the situation and respond in similar fashion in these cases, and that involves a certain degree of risk for some of you. Or maybe you've noticed in the postgame evaluation, there's a perspective offered that raises eyebrows or maybe ruffles feathers because that's not what the official(s) was told last time or it's contrary to how they saw it. After situations like this, are there officials who are not ready or willing to be truly objective about their performance? Maybe they don't want to bring the issue up and leave well enough alone, and just get on with the back slaps and laughs all around. That's not a bad thing, this should be **fun**, but we also need to be more aware and discuss objectively at the same time. Granted this area is perhaps the most difficult aspect of an official's development, and there generally isn't one right answer to how we **handle adversity** and conflict. Maybe that's the point though with this POE; that we be willing to take a step back and accept that just maybe there's a different or even better way to deal with the matter than the one that was used tonight. Can we open ourselves up to the possibility?

9. "Game management" calls! Are we talking now about changing the way we call the game when the foul count is 5 - 0? Reporting an adjacent teammate's number instead of the player who appeared to commit the foul? Or identifying certain players who try to intimidate or upset the flow of the game by making a few timely calls? The answer would be 'no' from a purely black and white perspective. But as ABOA provincial level officials, refereeing ACAC or CW basketball has certain unique challenges. And this aspect of the game can't be ignored. This is where postgame discussions & evaluations or observing & asking veteran officials relevant questions have their merits and can reap positive results. But we need to fully

engage in these discussions with an open mind, and not stay focused on only one way. Without going into a lot of detail, learning to referee the grey area is a skill that can be developed with experience and a willingness to really listen. To reach your full potential, and to get to the next levels, officials need to recognize and insert unique judgments into a basketball game, and that requires each of us to step off our safe, remote island and swim in uncharted waters once in a while. For example, when a 50/50 charge happens against the team that's on the short end of a lopsided game or in the 5 – 0 foul scenario, how do we respond convincingly and rule a block in this case? Officials **"just have to know"**, and it's a very subtle thing that is more art than science. Additionally, being a **good partner** sometimes means going to get a call well outside our Primary when the accepted practice is to trust and respect our partners' judgment. As with many successful outcomes, good timing is helpful, but anticipation is the key to making that call when the Primary official was blocked out and it's appreciated by everyone concerned. So what's the take-away on this point? Learning the rules is considered an important prerequisite to becoming a good referee, fairly obvious point, right? But understanding their intent and applying them is the duty of an ABOA provincial level official. So have a look at **Article 47.3** and there are 4 bullet points you'll never see on any exam. I'll bet most of us have never even cracked the book open to page 51. We all need to study and understand these points and then dialogue amongst ourselves as often as we shine our shoes. Applying this knowledge will take all of us a lot further than any other rule in the book and will help us develop a better feel for the game.

10. Where we shine! We saved this for last to see if you read this far...LOL. The POEs were discussed extensively by 6 Provincial Evaluators who ganged up on the referees at the Sait tournament at Christmas. We do recognize that we have a lot of very good officials at the provincial level and therefore, we're doing many things very well. Over the past few seasons, we have seen better rule application and consistent judgment **refereeing the Defence**. The offensive player no longer has a free pass at the hoop and we're calling more charges correctly. Officials throughout the province, from Peace River to Medicine Hat, are generally all on the same page with court coverage and mechanics. These are all positives, but it's the responsibility of ABOA to maintain a high standard and to train and develop officials to this standard rather than to a "safer middle ground". That means the focus of the POEs will always be on areas where we need, not only improvement, but more attention. This approach has served ABOA well and we should continue to raise the bar in order to provide the game with solid officiating.

"Talk is cheap, but money buys the whiskey". Take these POEs to heart and let's have a great 2nd half!!