

STRAIGHT ARROW?

You're the official looking at this play from the exact viewpoint of where this photo was taken. By rule, does the defensive player have verticality on this play?

Before we make any ruling about where the defender's arms are on this play, and whether they are legal, we must first look at her feet. Did the defender initially obtain (NFHS) or establish (NCAAM/NCAAW) legal guarding position (NFHS 4-23-2; NCAAM 4-17.4; NCAAW 10-4.4)? Without obtaining or establishing LGP, the principle of verticality does not apply to the defender (NFHS 4-45-1; NCAAM 4-39.1.a; NCAAW 10-3.1.a).

If the defender did legally obtain/establish her position, the next part of the sequence is whether she maintained that legal position throughout the play. So again, prior to the contact, we must know that the defender did not violate any rule provisions that would lead to the loss of legal guarding position (NFHS 4-23-3; NCAAM 4-17.6; NCAAW 10-4.6).

As detailed in the previous rule provisions, one of the ways a defensive player may continue to maintain legal guarding position is by raising the hands and arms within his or her vertical plane while on the playing court or in the air. From your perspective, is this defender in her vertical plane?

If you do not believe the defender has maintained verticality, is it because of her own actions, or has the lowering of the arms been caused by the offensive player initiating contact into the defender's torso?

These are the questions you will need to be able to answer, with rulebook support, when questioned by an upset coach who is dismayed because you called a foul on a "vertical" defender or chose not to protect an offensive player who was "clearly fouled in the act of shooting."



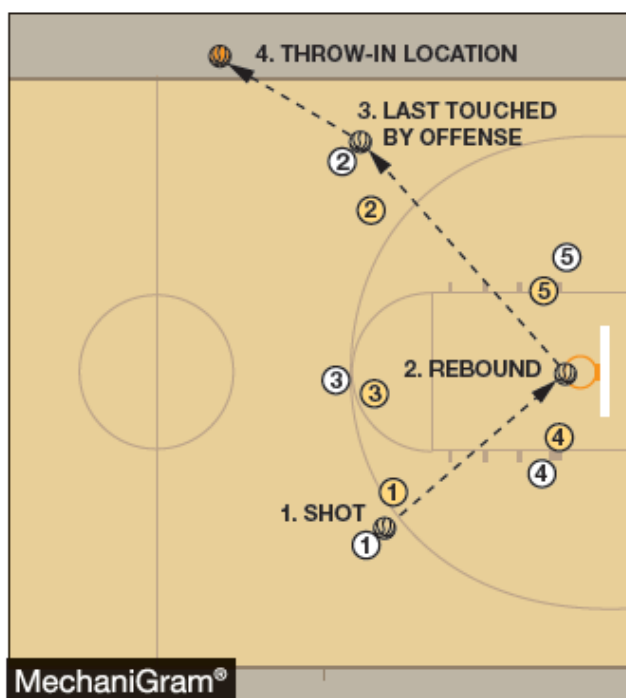
SHOULD YOU SET THAT SHOT CLOCK SHORT?

A disputed play this past winter during an NCAA men's basketball game underscores the need for officials working at the NFHS level to have a thorough understanding of how the shot clock works for their level of play — especially given it is now officially approved for use by state adoption at the NFHS level starting with the 2022-23 season.

Play: A1 shoots a long jump shot that bounces off the rim and creates a long rebound situation. As players are jostling for possession, A2 knocks the ball out of bounds (a) just shy of the division line in the team B backcourt or (b) just past the division line in the team B frontcourt. Ruling: A designated-spot throw-in for team B at the location where the ball went out of bounds.

This is a prime example of why it is so important for the officiating crew to administer the ensuing throw-in in the proper location. The location of the throw-in on this play — frontcourt vs. backcourt — drastically changes the status of the shot clock at the outset of the next possession in one of the three rule codes.

In NFHS play, while it is of paramount importance to administer the throw-in from the correct spot, it does not affect the status of the shot clock. The NFHS rule (Shot Clock-State Association Adoption 6-b-v.) states that when a violation occurs (with a few rare exceptions that do not apply to this play), the shot clock is reset to its full of 35 seconds. There is no difference based on the resumption of play taking place in the frontcourt or the backcourt. □



NCAAM



NCAAW



NFHS



NCAAM



NCAAW



NFHS

ILLEGAL USE OF LEGS?

To officiate basketball well, officials must have a firm grasp of the definitions found in the rulebook. This photo is an example of why that knowledge is important.

If this loose ball comes in contact with the outstretched leg of the player in white, is this a kicked-ball violation? The answer is ... maybe.

According to the NFHS rulebook, kicking the ball is intentionally striking it with any part of the leg or foot (4-29). It is a violation when a player does so (9-4).

If this ball grazes against this player's leg, is that intentionally striking it with the leg? What if the ball becomes trapped between her leg and the playing court? What if the opposing player has a hand or both hands on the ball at the time the leg and the ball make contact with one another?

This situation is going to require the officials to have patience and see every part of the play. The play will also require the officials to exercise judgment and gauge intent. If this ball touches the player's leg then bounces away, chances are it's a play-on. If the player does pin the ball to the floor, for any length of time, it's likely a violation. □



HESTON QUAN

UNTANGLING A MESS

What's your quick initial impression if you're the lead official on this play? Blow the whistle, signal a held ball and everyone moves on, none the wiser?

If so, there's a good chance you are not seeing the complete play or are hesitant to apply concrete rules knowledge to what you are seeing:

1 HELD BALL: The player in white clearly does not have his hands on the ball at all, much less so firmly enough that control cannot be obtained without undue roughness (4-25-1).

2 LEGAL POSITION: We can see the player in blue is completely on the playing court. Are the legs of the player in white touching the end line? If so, does his contact with the opponent cause the opponent and/or the ball to be out of bounds (4-35-1a, 7-1)?

3 LEGAL POSITION, PART TWO: Who is at fault for the tangled arms between the two players? Is this illegal use of the hands and arms (4-24)? Could this be deemed incidental contact (4-27)? Is the player in blue afforded extra protection because he is the only one of the two in contact with the ball?

4 LOCATION, LOCATION: This pileup takes place inside the free-throw lane. If this is on the blue team's offensive end of the floor, are you

ruling there is team control and therefore the provisions regarding three seconds in the lane apply (9-7-1)? What if it's in the white team's frontcourt? Is there any way the white team remains in team control at this snapshot in time?

Let's say you haven't been too quick with your whistle, you let this action play out, you consider the points raised above, and now:

5 PILING ON: Now, the second player in white becomes involved in the scrum. Again, many of the same factors still apply, but you also must now rule on whether he has illegally influenced this play. Just because the ball is loose does not allow a player to illegally contact another player in an effort to secure it. The player in blue is legally entitled to his spot on the floor. The second player in white is not legally entitled to that same position.

Again, is it easier to just rule a held ball and be done with it? Yes. But officials are not hired to do what is easy. They are hired to do what is fair and safe according to the rules book. Use the rules — not the path of least resistance — to dictate your rulings.



GET A GRIP?

What requirements need to be met in order for an official to rule a held ball? Is it necessary for players on opposite teams to each have both of their hands on the basketball in an effort to secure possession for an official to blow the whistle and make this ruling?

While the player in black clearly has both her hands on the ball, the same cannot be said for the player in gray. In fact, it appears she has neither of her hands on the ball.

Because the player in gray has no hands on the ball, is her current positioning legal, or could she be ruled for a holding foul given the positioning of her left arm?

NFHS rule 4-25-1 and NCAAM/W rule 6-4.2 state that a held ball occurs when "opponents have their hands so firmly on the ball that control cannot be obtained without undue roughness." Which part of the rule should take precedence: the hands being firmly on the ball, or the concerns over undue roughness? Could the officials make an argument for stopping play as it appears roughness will be necessary for the player in black to break free with the basketball?

If you don't believe the "undue roughness" parameter has been met, then how about this argument? The NFL is famous

for making a ruling many years ago that "one knee equals two feet." In basketball, can one elbow equal two hands? Could such logic be applied to rule the player in gray has forced a held ball based on her contact with the ball?

Should game conditions at the time of this play matter? What if this is the first potential tie-up during the game? Should the officials have a patient whistle and attempt to allow the players to resolve the situation? Or should they stop play and prevent the possibility of setting an overaggressive tone? Conversely, what if this game has already had an abundance of held balls? Does that change how quickly the crew should decide to put air in the whistle?

The answers to these questions require a combination of rules support, crew philosophy and effective game management to make the decisions that best fit each unique situation.



STAY STRONG ON CRASHES FROM 'C' SIDE

Let's break down the mechanics of a crash play that starts and develops on the center official's side of the floor and finishes on the block on the center's side of the free-throw lane.

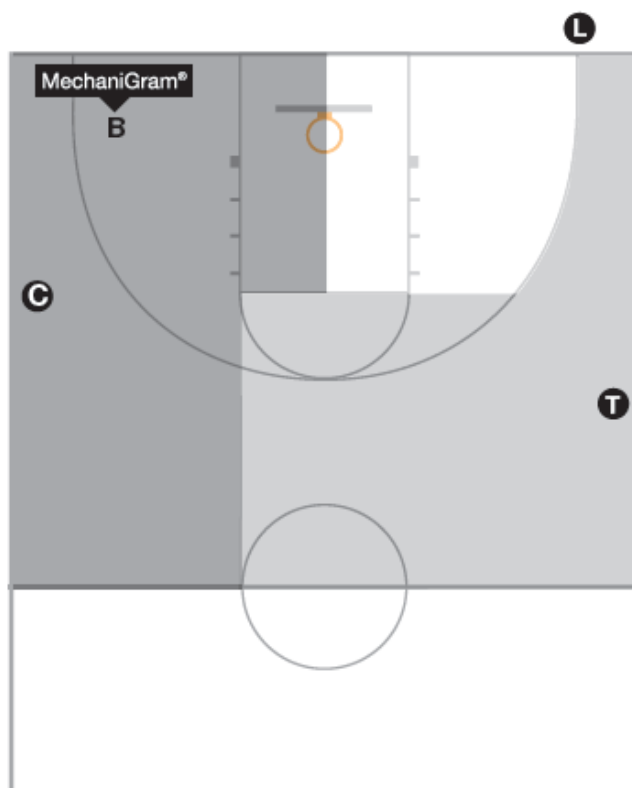
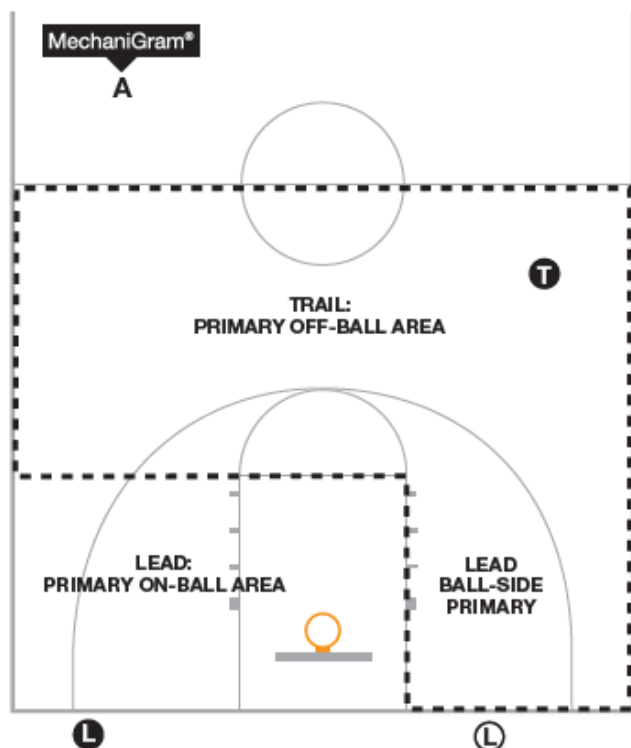
The first thing we need to be aware of as a crew is whether we are working with two or three officials. With just two officials, the trail official is going to be working closer to the division line (MechaniGram A), and as such anything in the proximity of the lane is going to be part of the lead official's primary coverage area (PCA).

With three officials, this type of drive is always going to start in front of the center official, and both the center and lead officials need to be aware of where the contact occurs on these plays. The PCA for the center official extends to the midline of the free-throw lane (MechaniGram B), meaning any crash plays that occur in the center official's side of the paint are the center official's primary responsibility.

Note that word "primary." While the ideal scenario is that the center official will stay with this play, preventing the lead official from

having to "call across the lane," different factors may exist that necessitate the lead offering assistance. Is it a pass-and-crash play instead of a garden-variety block/charge ruling involving a shooter and a primary defender? Does a secondary defender who started in the lead's PCA and who has the lead's attention slide over and become the defender involved in the play? Does the contact occur smack-dab in the middle of the lane, where double whistles are possible, as opposed to on the opposite block, where it should be expected that only the center official will blow?

If a double whistle occurs, it's of the utmost importance that the two officials make eye contact and avoid any preliminary signals until either verbal or non-verbal communication between the two dictates which official is going to make the ruling. The last thing a crew wants to have is the dreaded "blarge" and then have to explain to the coaches on both teams why a foul is being charged to their respective players (not to mention having to determine and explain how the game resumes at that point). □



LOOK OUT BELOW

It's not every day officials witness the moment in time captured in this photo: a player who is horizontal to the playing court, hanging on to the basket.

Still, it's always a good idea when working a game where above-the-rim play is a possibility to address during the pregame crew awareness of such situations.

First, what is legal regarding the grasping of the basket? None of the three rule codes state a player can legally grasp the ring.

Instead, they offer definitions for a dunk, which is a try for goal that involves driving, forcing or stuffing the ball through the basket (NFHS 4-16, NCAAM/W 5-1.6), and explain grasping either basket at any time during the game (NFHS) or during the officials' jurisdiction

(NCAAM/W) and doing so in a manner that is not trying to prevent an injury is grounds for a player technical foul (NFHS 10-4-3; NCAAW 10-12.3b) or a class B technical foul (NCAAM 10-4.1e).

Of course, those rules require the use of officials' judgment and a blending of officiating art and science in determining whether a "ring grab" during a dunk attempt is excessive in force or duration, and in understanding whether the player or any opponent is in imminent danger if the basket is released.

On this play, there should be a philosophical understanding the player needs to be able to return to a physical position of verticality before being expected to release his hold on the basket and return to the playing court.

The officials should also take notice as to whether there are any other players in the dunker's landing area and whether an extended ring grab is necessitated to avoid any collisions under the basket.

However, if this player instead swings his body and does not prepare for landing, the officials then must be willing to recognize the grasp has become an unsportsmanlike act and be ready to administer the proper penalty of a technical foul.

Officials are fond of saying players are always becoming bigger, faster and stronger, and this type of play is a perfect example of that axiom, and our need to be prepared to rule when such athleticism makes its way into our game. □



The Art of Moving Parts

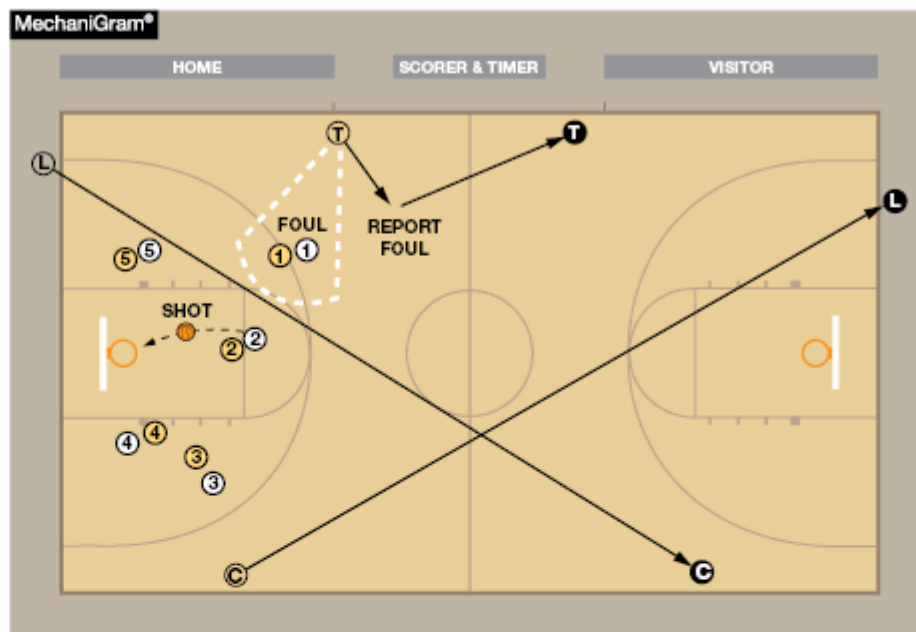
A pregame joke often shared by high school officials working three-person mechanics is if the crew incorrectly handles a switch following a foul ruling, it's not the end of the world, as chances are only the three officials on the court actually understand the proper court movement in the first place.

The truth be told, there are certain situations in which that isn't even accurate.

A great example of a switching situation that often throws a crew for a loop is when the tableside trail official rules a foul on the offense that is going to result in free throws on the opposite end of the court (see MechaniGram). The most likely scenario is a foul committed by the offense during rebounding action after the defensive team has already reached the bonus (remember, if it's a team-control foul on the offense, such as an illegal screen, it is not going to result in free throws).

The easiest duties following this whistle belong to the trail official. In NFHS mechanics, any foul ruling that results in free throws causes the ruling official to remain tableside. As such, the trail official simply moves to the foul reporting position and then remains as the trail. No muss, no fuss.

Where things get interesting is regarding the movement of the two remaining officials. Many times the lead official, who at the time of the whistle is on the same side of the floor as the trail, believes the proper course of action is to head to the opposite



endline, remaining as the lead official and administering the free throws. The logic is that in doing so, there are not multiple officials having to cross over to the other side of the playing court from their positions at the time the trail official made the foul ruling.

However, this is not the correct mechanic. In simple terms, what should happen is the official who is closest to the endline goes there and becomes the lead, with the remaining official becoming the center. So, on this play, the old center official crosses the court, heads to the endline, becomes the new lead and administers the free throws. The old lead official also

crosses the court and becomes the new center, with responsibilities including the legality of the free-throw shooter, rebounding action and chopping to start the clock once the ball is touched following a missed free throw.

At first, this mechanic may feel awkward for a crew, as it requires two officials to move to opposite sides of the court. The benefit in doing so is it actually creates a switch for all three officials as opposed to keeping any official "locked" into the same position, which would be the case for the center official if the old lead ran the length of the floor to become the new lead at the opposite end. ■