

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF BASKETBALL OFFICIALS

TO: All INTERPRETERS
FROM: Ted Montgomery, Ontario Provincial Interpreter
DATE September 16, 2009
RE: NFHS (Federation) Mechanics

There has been some confusion and concern about the latest Federation mechanics.

The 2010-12 NFHS Officials' Manual has been distributed to many Boards. Other Boards will soon have the IAABO Manual. They are different in a few respects.

Most mechanics have no direct impact on the game, but the Federation has made one significant change that could have a serious effect. The mechanic in question is that on fouls which result in free throws, the calling official is to go to the Trail position table-side. On all other fouls, the normal switch applies. If there is potential controversy, the calling official can go Lead on the side away from the table.

In Ontario, we will not use that mechanic but make a regular switch as on all other fouls and for free throws, remain with the Trail away from the table-side and the team benches. This is what all IAABO Manual boards are going to do in the U.S.

First, some relevant history:

When I first became OABO Interpreter, in Ontario we used 7 significant variations from the Federation Mechanics Manual.

Each year at the annual fall IAABO meeting, I would gather with other local Ontario board interpreters and discuss with them what changes we should make or adopt for Ontario. Their advice was most helpful and, for the most part, we had consensus.

Over the years, I was able to reduce those variations to one variance from the Federation Manual which Ontario has had for a long time now. In Ontario, we do not follow the Federation Manual with respect to the administration of flagrant, intentional, and technical free throws. It is so ingrained I expect very few will notice that we do not follow the Manual.

Most states do not follow the Federation Manual the letter. Many eastern states follow the IAABO Manual. Some north central states have an entirely different systems altogether and create their own manuals.

About 5 or 6 years ago, the editor of the Federation Manual, Mary Struckoff, advised the Interpreters that the Manual, unlike the Rule and Case books, was only "a guideline." It was not a definitive, must-follow book.

The process by which the Federation makes Manual changes has changed recently. In the past, a panel of experts, including officials, who drafted the Rule and Case books took another week to work on the Manual. That no longer happens.

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The mechanic of having the foul-calling official take a position table-side near the coaches was tried by the NCAA and quickly abandoned as it caused far more problems than it solved. Officials were spending too much time explaining calls and were being distracted from their on-court duties. The positioning led to a sense of entitlement to and a need for explanations. The NCAA quickly moved the calling official back to the side opposite the table and the benches.

This May at the Presidents meeting, the plan was put in place to see that all Ontario Boards would be provided with IAABO mechanics Manuals. As noted, IAABO is not going with the table-side for the calling-official-when-there-are-free-throws mechanic. That would have given all Ontario officials a book to follow for mechanics. Unfortunately, that plan eventually collapsed for this year but has not been abandoned.

In the interest of the game, in May and now, I have taken the position that Ontario should follow the sound decision of IAABO and not diminish the quality of our service by placing the calling official in a disadvantageous position on free throws.

There can be no doubt that IAABO are the experts in high school 2-person mechanics. They devote themselves to study and analysis of best officiating practices. The Federation has other priorities which serve different interests.

As in the past, when these matters arise, I have brought them to the membership, given the members my best counsel as OABO Interpreter, and followed the wishes of the majority where there is a clear majority opinion. I have always encouraged everyone to do the same thing and at OFSAA championships, the approved province of Ontario standards are expected. For example, we have always had technical, intentional, and flagrant fouls administered according to the Ontario variation rather than the Manual-preferred system.

Because of timing, I know some boards have taught officials the new mechanic prior to our provincial meeting. My advice will be to not adopt the Federation change in respect of free throws. All the evidence is that the mechanic is not good for officiating the games. Nevertheless, if there is a clear consensus to go with the new mechanic, I will certainly be open to that.

My further advice at this time is to teach that Ontario will not be using the new Federation mechanic. If that changes, it will not be difficult to amend the position.

The FIBA 2-person free throw mechanic in Canada places the Trail opposite the table.

There is one other FIBA and IAABO mechanic that is consistent but different from the Federation. I will be bringing that up at the annual meeting and clinic this month.

See you in Belleville,

Ted Montgomery, Ontario Interpreter