



# ***POST PLAY EXPRESS***

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## **OFFICIATING LICENSES : THE NEXT STEP IN THE EVOLUTION OF YOUR ROLE IN THE SPORT**

**By Morgan Munroe, President of CABO and Chair of CBOC**

I played high school basketball back in the “dark ages” of the early 1970’s. In Alberta, it was pre-FIBA with 8-minute quarters, no shot clocks or 3-point lines and the game was played at a much different pace and style than the current game. One of the best officials in my area was a gentleman named Ira Bourne. He was very well known for his unique voice, signals and overall style. He was a local legend and was in fact the first Alberta official to receive CABO’s Wink Willox award in 1984. When I began officiating in the late 1980’s, Ira would often stop in for a visit when I worked games in his community. One time, I had the opportunity to ask Ira how he got into officiating and what it was like in the early days. He told me that in those early days, there were no “official” signals or mechanics so one developed their own system to keep control of the game. Further, each team supplied one official and one quickly learned that the other official was perhaps a bit too “nice” to the team they travelled with. If this happened too frequently, it became necessary to cancel their call with one of your own. A foul on the defense could quickly be “corrected” by a timely travelling violation by the other “team’s” official. Obviously, as the game grew, this system proved to be unsustainable. Local associations came into existence to formalize assigning and training programs. These local associations joined with other like-minded bodies to form the respective provincial bodies that each of us belong to. CABO came into existence in 1974 when the provincial bodies first met to form a national organization. But what does this brief historical summary have to do with the current situation and, more importantly, going forward with the development of the next generation of officials in this country? In my opinion, there are two lessons we can glean from it.

The first is that the development of officiating has undergone a continued evolution. In the beginning, officials were left to their own devices to keep control of the game. Later, there were the beginnings of formal signals and mechanics. Today, information is readily available to cover these areas and the focus has clearly shifted to the more complex areas of game control, player and coach interactions, video review at many levels and a variety of other on and off floor responsibilities as set out by associations and other entities. It should come as no surprise that these increased expectations require more support in a variety of ways that often tests the capacity of the volunteer bodies which oversee officiating.

It must have been very unsettling in those early days for officials to suddenly have to follow a mechanics manual, use standardized signals and trust the objectivity of their partner and yet, most did as it was the right thing to do for the good of the game. We should expect no less from the current group of officials who will be asked to begin adapting to changes which are in no way as “unsettling” as those faced by our predecessors.

The other lesson we can draw from the past is the evolution of what it means to be a member of an organization. In the beginning, there were no organizations, hence no memberships. The officials really were independent contractors, but were working for only one school or coach. Starting an association led to people being members and membership carried certain benefits. In most cases, membership was based on a desire to officiate. Competency and commitment were not always priorities, especially in areas with growing populations requiring additional officials. The game has evolved, as everyone is aware, and it is now time to move membership from simply paying a yearly fee, to a licensing system that is stratified based on the level of competency of the official and the demands of the games being officiated. Let me use the analogy of the system of driver’s licensing in place in every province. Depending on the size of the vehicle and in some cases the experience of the driver, licenses are issued to successful applicants. In some cases, drivers are required to periodically prove their continued fitness to operate the vehicle. The costs of the licenses reflect the complexity of the process as well as the benefits the licensee receives. Basketball officiating would follow a similar model. Novice officials would pay a lower fee and would be encouraged to move to an advanced license as they get additional experience. The majority of the officiating community would be similar to people with standard car licenses. These drivers make up the vast majority of people on the road. In our sport, this group of people would constitute the vast majority of the officials working games throughout the country. They are officiating competitive but not necessarily elite club or scholastic games. They are competent and can meet the standard needed to maintain control of these games. If they maintain a reasonable standard of performance like passing the rule exam, attending local clinics etc., then they will maintain their license. Officials who aspire to work at the elite levels of play would be like commercial drivers who earn a living driving various vehicles. More is expected of them, including scheduled medical exams, road tests, etc. High performance officials would need to expect more scrutiny to maintain their status. This could include mandatory attendance at provincial or conference rule clinics, formalized fitness assessments and other professional development responsibilities indicating that they are keeping current on the latest officiating information. Our international license holders would of course need to meet the expectations laid out by FIBA. Other sports have already developed a licensing system for all participants including players, coaches and officials. This is part of an overall system that includes the formal sanctioning of games played within a province. Basketball is moving in that direction and again it is part of the normal evolution of the sport.

Sanctioning may seem to be adding more “red tape” to our sport, but the overall goal of improving the game is well worth the minor inconvenience that will occur as the system is rolled out. Let me use this analogy to illustrate how sanctioning is part of the overall safety system officials and other participants should be happy to see brought into our sport.

If you are part of the baby boomer generation, you likely remember when seat belt legislation was introduced into your province. The first province introduced legislation in 1976, but it took until 1991 for all provinces and territories to pass legislation mandating their use. You might also remember some of the resistance that people

had to the law. In fact, in one province an individual actually asked a police officer for a ticket so he could challenge the constitutionality of the law. This illustrates that change takes time and people adopt it at various points. Resistance isn't necessarily a bad sign, but more of a normal reaction to different ideas that initially seem unsettling, but eventually become quite accepted. Today, seat belt use is ubiquitous and almost no one questions the benefits. Other safety features have been added to vehicles which have reduced injuries and deaths when accidents occur. In point of fact, each of these safety features add to the cost of manufacturing a vehicle, but people have accepted the extra costs because of the benefits if an accident occurs. These benefits are there even though statistically, the chances of needing them remain relatively low. Sanctioning and the costs of licensing for officials is a similar situation to that of safety features in a vehicle. It is an added cost but, if an unfortunate incident occurs, suddenly one is happy to have the safety features no matter the cost.

This past February I was invited to be part of a forum discussing sanctioning for club teams in Alberta. I discussed a few incidents of which I have become aware in the past 24 months. I'll review two of them here. One involved an injury situation in a school sport. A player who was 16 at the time was treated for a head injury by staff members at an event. However, as a matter of law, as a minor, the injured party has a two-year period, from the time they turn eighteen, to file a claim if they believe people are at fault, either as a result of the original incident or the care received. In this case, the individual was nearly twenty when they filed a claim against many of the people involved in the original incident. As a result, part of the investigation involved interviewing the officials to see if the play in question was penalized? Were reports filed and to whom? What training did the officials have etc.? Remember, a number of years had elapsed since the original incident and the lack of information was a factor in the settlement decision that was reached. Events like this cause me to wonder how many officiating associations keep records for extended periods of time? Do we record the attendance of people present at clinics? Do we match those to the level of competition that an individual is assigned to? Having a licensing system and a sanctioning process with oversight by a formal body like a provincial or territorial sport organization would be a very worthwhile investment. In practice, we would be investing in the safety features of our game much like we pay for safety features in our vehicles. Rarely used I admit, but invaluable when an unfortunate incident occurs.

Two months ago, I was sent a video clip from a basketball game of a player being undercut on a breakaway by an opponent. To my disbelief, no foul was called perhaps because neither official made an effort to cover the play. As I mentioned, the clip was sent to me, but as I inquired a bit further, it was clear that the play was recorded on a phone or some other device held by a fan. I mention this because it is a reminder that, in this day and age, the probability that someone records events in most games has become quite high. This may be of great benefit to officials if they act properly and prudently in a game, but could also be very problematic if the game is not administered according to the expected standards. Having a license won't guarantee safety, but it would formalize the training standards and the performance expectations during games.

Basketball continues to evolve in terms of style and strategy. Rules are regularly updated and refined, so it shouldn't surprise anyone that the training needed by officials must also be updated accordingly. Licensing officials, players and coaches is a logical outcome for the benefit and protection of all involved. Ideally over time, the benefits of licensing will be well established and seen in the same light that we view the safety features found

in vehicles. With automobiles, it began slowly with seatbelts and has grown to a multitude of innovations. Basketball officiating licenses will hopefully start with simple advances that will hopefully spawn new and better training and other benefits for officials throughout the country.

## **FROM THE DESK OF THE CABO EDUCATION OFFICER**

**By Jim Cervo, CABO National Education Officer**

Each year around this time of the year, I write an article for Post Play Express. This year, I thought I would include information related to my portfolio as well as something on the personal side.

### **National tournaments – CBOC committee**

The Spring National tournaments were taking place as I wrote this article. The officials selected to these tournaments along with the A/E's were published in the February edition of PPE. As a note to this, Alfie Paoletti replaced Paul Deshaies at the CCAA Men's championship at Collège Montmorency in Laval, QC. Congratulations to all.

The tournaments took place at the following venues:

**U Sports Women – Regina, Saskatchewan**

**U Sports Men – Halifax, Nova Scotia**

**CCAA Men – Laval, Quebec**

**CCAA Women – Sackville, New Brunswick**

The official's selection process for the U Sports tournaments was under the direction of the CBOC selection committee for the third year and this year, the officials' selections for the CCAA tournaments were assigned to this committee at the request of the National CCAA Board. The U Sports and CCAA conference supervisors were asked to nominate officials for each of the respective tournaments. The addition of the CCAA tournaments increased the workload for the committee, but the same process was followed. The CBOC selection committee was tasked with recommending 12 officials and one alternate for each tournament using the information received from the Conference Supervisors. The CCAA asked that we select a minimum of 3 officials from the conference hosting each tournament and the remaining 9 officials could come from anywhere else in the country including Manitoba and Newfoundland and Labrador even though neither province has a member school. The only stipulation was that these officials must work a regular U Sports schedule. A strong slate of officials was provided to the Selection Committee which made the decisions difficult, but resulted in an excellent crew of officials at each tournament.

The Summer national tournaments this year will be played at the following locations:

**U15 & U17 Men's tournaments – Kamloops, British Columbia**

**U15 & U 17 Women's tournaments – Fredericton, New Brunswick**

Provincial allotments to these tournaments have been communicated to the Provincial Supervisors.

## CABO data base – National exam

In November 2017, I put together a 25-question refresher exam and posted it on the CABO data base. The message was sent to the provinces to encourage as many people as possible to take this exam and work out any “kinks” prior to rolling out the 2017 FIBA exam. Unfortunately, very few officials wrote the refresher exam. There were a few issues again this year for some while writing the national exam and we tried to resolve them as quickly as possible. Once again, Martha Bradbury deserves a lot of thanks for putting in countless hours and managing the exam in a professional manner. There were a number of people within each province who assisted us in making the process run as smoothly as possible. I would like to single out the efforts of Don Thorne from Ontario. They of course have the most members and Don was right on top of things, communicating with Martha and myself on almost a daily basis. We hope the process continues to improve each year and the end result will be a benefit to each member.

On a personal note, after 30 years officiating at the university level, I retired from the Canada West Panel in January 2018. I was fortunate to officiate my last 2 games at Trinity Western University and the University of the Fraser Valley where I spent many hours on the court and officiated over 400 games during my career. I am still keeping active at the high school level doing games 1-2 days a week, but I have to admit, I am enjoying having weekends off. Something I haven't had for a very long time. During my time officiating, I have had the pleasure of working with some great men and women that I am happy to call my friends. That is one thing I will really miss.

I hope everyone has a great summer and gets a little time off the court although we all know that basketball has become a year-round sport. If you are planning to attend a development camp this year, there are quite a few being held across the country that will be of great help to improve your skills and interact with some excellent evaluators and build friendships with fellow colleagues.

## **CONSISTENCY**

By Robert Ferguson, Vice-president of CABO

They need to be told! How often have we heard this statement from our referee coaches, crew chiefs or those in a leadership position within our tidy silo of officiating? I believe it is probably done with the belief that an official must be told in order to be educated or with the intent to change their habits on or off the court. Also, in most cases, it is probably done with the best of intentions in order to establish consistency with rulings or how we approach the game. I absolutely agree that consistency of message and consistency of rulings should be our first priority to the game of basketball. My struggle with this method of “must be told” is that it doesn't always help and may sometimes actually hurt our ability to establish consistency at all levels of officiating.

Ask yourself as a referee coach or crew chief - what if your message is wrong, out of date, expired and you have not established enough trust for effective feedback? What if your insecurities won't allow you to listen, but bring you into attack mode? You believe in your mind that your message is bang on and it must be delivered in a

**“strong and decisive” manner so that no one will question your opinion. I believe this approach too often results in our officials struggling with their consistency and confidence on the court due to the attitude of our ‘they need to be told’ method of leadership.**

**Can we be better? Absolutely!**

**The trust and the leadership start in the pre-game. Crew chiefs must have a relevant discussion based on the experience and skill level of the crew for that particular game. It must be an inclusive discussion looking for inconsistencies, so the issue can be quickly addressed for that game and, if necessary, back to the leadership of a local board or an elite panel. Crew chiefs must be secure and confident enough in their abilities, to listen and accept the possibility that maybe they are not consistent with the rest and must be willing to change. Leadership during a game must always be looking to build confidence and this is done by empowerment, not by means of belittlement using the excuse that they must be told. One can tell from the stands whether the crew has chemistry, and this appears after a tough emotional segment within a game. Time-out is called, and the crew gets together to discuss it. Watch their body language during and after the time-out and whether they are prepared to officiate with confidence or still frazzled by a member of the crew voicing displeasure.**

**As referee coaches, time is a factor for all of us and sometimes it is just a matter of getting into a post-game and delivering a few fast points and moving on to the next game. When time isn’t a factor and technology is available, a good referee coach just has to start the discussion and then listen for inconsistencies. Rulings have already happened, so deal with whether it was correct or not and then go to the process behind the ruling such as positioning or maybe discussing the intent of a rule. If the officials trust the referee coach, they will quickly want to discuss their perceived failures on the court and want honest feedback.**

**Locally (Ottawa), post games are generally open and inclusive for OUA games. This past year, another step was taken to enhance this by visiting Montreal for games and 5 officials visiting us from Quebec for the Carleton/Ottawa games - all in terms of building consistency and providing a better service to the game.**

**Consistency must be worked on all the time. Rules, views on best positioning for play situations and how we present ourselves are always evolving. Therefore, it is very tough to stay current, even when we do our best to do so. We live in Canada and, except for a few individuals, officiating receives our left-over energies after we meet our daily responsibilities with family, job and friends. Therefore, it is very important to build those relationships, listen to foster consistency and create discussion.**

**My views stated above stem from a career as a police officer, former OUA supervisor and current national referee coach. I hope you disagree with some of my comments, so we may have a discussion and hopefully it will cause me to reflect and be better going forward.**