



# Post Play Express

Vol.8, No. 9, May 2017

## THE THREE-SECOND RULE

By Seward Neilsen, Interpreter of New Brunswick

The three – second rule is dismissed in the FIBA Rule Book in a deceptively brief thirty-four words.

Too bad! There are few rules in basketball that demand the understanding of the intent that the three-second rule does. The basic rule is simple enough. A player may not remain within the opponent's restricted area (bounded by and including lane lines, end line and free throw line) for MORE THAN three seconds while his/her team is in control of a live ball in the frontcourt and the game clock is running. As well, one needs to understand that in order to establish himself/herself outside of the restricted area, the player must have BOTH FEET ON THE FLOOR OUTSIDE OF THE RESTRICTED AREA.

Obviously, step one in understanding “three seconds” is to understand “team control”. Team control begins when a player on either team establishes control of a live ball. Team control ends when a try for goal is released or an opponent secures control or a violation or foul is called.

The second step is to know when a player is in the restricted area or more importantly when a player ceases to be there. To enter the opponent's restricted area, all that is necessary is that a player step onto or over the lane (lane lines are considered a part of the restricted area). To leave the area, the player must move COMPLETELY out of the “invisible box” that is the restricted area extended vertically. Merely lifting a foot does not constitute leaving the area.

The crucial point, however, is that officials must be aware of the provision for suspending the three-second count. If a player, who has been in the restricted area for less than three seconds, receives the ball and then immediately moves to the basket (dribbles and/or pivots) to try for a goal, the count is suspended to allow for completion of the

try. The key word is “suspended” not “ended”. If the player completes the try, there is no violation, but if the player passes or aborts the try and in doing so has been more than three seconds in the restricted area, then a violation is called immediately. Remember this allowance pertains only to the player with the ball.

Similarly, if a player who has been in the restricted area for less than three seconds is making a serious attempt to leave the area, suspend the count to allow the player to do so. If he/she decides not to leave and has gained an advantage by being in the area for more than three seconds, and his/her team is still in control, then call the violation immediately.

A final suggestion is to “SNEAK A PEEK “. Before calling a three-second violation, take a quick peek to see where the ball is. If a shot is in the air or the ball is about to leave the shooter’s hand on a try for goal..... swallow the whistle! One of life’s most embarrassing moments for a basketball official is to call three seconds, after team control has ended, and the ball is passing through the net.

This is quite an explanation for initially thirty-four words!

## **MAXIMIZING YOUR RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

By Tim Laurain, Supervisor of Ontario

*«What you put into things is what you get out of them.» – Jennifer Lopez*

Congratulations for deciding to go to camp. Whether this is your first time or you are a veteran, there are some things to keep in mind with an eye to getting the most out of the camp. Whether you are going to a development camp or a selection camp, let’s look at what you can do pre-camp, at camp and post-camp to maximize the experience.

### **Pre-camp: Approach it like a Boy Scout and “Be Prepared”**

Foremost, assess your physical fitness and physical appearance. Your fitness level must be at a level to handle the workload of multiple games multiple days in a row. Think about your fitness in its entirety. Make sure your cardiovascular and stamina are up to the task. It’s not just steady state running, so incorporate some sprinting and/or intervals. I was just at a camp as staff where we had numerous officials get injured. Flexibility, muscular strength and functional training are preventative measures to keep you on the court. First impressions matter, you want to make the best one you can. If there is a pound or two you could lose or gain some muscle mass to look more athletic, put a plan into action in time to make it happen. If you need a haircut, get it. For possible consideration, fair or not, there is a negative bias towards facial hair for men. For women, consider that a new neon nail color or experimenting with a non-traditional hair color or bright highlights will probably create some discussion.

**It is a truism that rules knowledge is a foundation of officiating. Take the time to review the relevant rule set. If you are going to a camp south of the border, study the appropriate rule book: NCAA Men's or Women's, NFHS or NBA Rule Book. Here in Canada, besides the Official Rule Book, go through the latest Interpretations and CABO Case Book. If there are areas you identify as weaker in your rule knowledge, put some extra focus there. If there is a rule or interpretation of which you are unclear, get it clarified before camp or, if at camp, before you step onto the floor. Be the official who can give the crew the correct ruling when situations arise. Don't wait to find out the answers in one of your post-games after kicking the situation.**

**Have your mechanics and signals down as much as possible before you step on the floor. Camp is a learning experience, but even developmental vs selection camps provide an opportunity to "be seen" and noticed. Take every opportunity to put your best foot forward. Knowing what to do and where to go helps you individually and benefits your crew. Have strong, sharp, visible and decisive signals delivered with a clear and appropriate rhythm. Only use approved signals from the manual. If available, look at videos of yourself reporting and/or step in front of a mirror and check yourself out. Practice in front of the mirror as needed. I just returned as staff from a provincial camp. Some of the areas cited were: don't hurry your signals, come to a stop, use the correct and/or appropriate signal for the act, use correct numbers.**

**Have the proper uniform and enough sets to "dress to impress" each game. Ensure you have enough socks and other clothing items. Take stock of your uniform and make sure it fits properly. Is your pant hemming the right height (doesn't bunch the leg around the ankles)? Does your waist have to be let out or in an inch? If your shirt is too loose or too tight, consider getting a new one. Not everyone has patent leather shoes. If you don't, consider a light polishing so your shoes don't appear worn and/or scuffed. You want to show professionalism and a personal attentiveness to detail.**

**If you are a veteran camper, look at any previous year's evaluation and video. Have you addressed the items indicated? Officiating is about continual improvement. If you are going back to a camp, having addressed previous items shows commitment.**

**Whether it is your first time or not at camp, know what you want to get out of the experience. Going in, have in mind some specific development goals/areas you want to improve. Personal goals help us to be organized, set priorities and become energized. Share those with your partners in pre-games and with your evaluator/observer before the game: "This is what I'm specifically working on in this game...". This ensures you to get feedback on areas you are specifically targeting.**

**Spend some time to create your own personal pre-game. There are many times during the officiating season when either there hasn't been an opportunity to thoroughly pre-game or possibly lead a thorough pre-game. At camp, you will have the opportunity for both. Creating your own is a personal learning and development tool. It will give you more confidence when your time comes to lead one and ensures that information you want to cover doesn't get overlooked.**

## Maximizing Your Time at Camp

Back to that first impression, be punctual. Leave yourself plenty of time and get where you need to be early. Consider the time you spend at camp as belonging to the whole group. There is an expression which says: “Five minutes early is on time.” Know the dress code and understand that what you wear, say and act give people impressions of you. Camp may not be the time to model your latest forays into underground fashion.

On the court, nothing stands out more than a lack of hustle. Hustle and stay engaged both during live and dead ball, but don't appear too rushed. This is where mirror practice comes in. Have a strong whistle, project a strong voice and be sharp and decisive with your signals without going over the top. The image you want to project is decisive, confident and alert, yet relaxed and on top of things. You sometimes hear the term “step up” your game. What that means is to come prepared, stay focused and act when the opportunities present themselves. Come out of your comfort zone to give that technical if warranted or speak up if you are sure of a rule interpretation and the crew is conferencing to get it right.

Good officiating involves teamwork. Pre-game and practice good personal and crew verbal and non-verbal communication. There is an old Robin Williams movie called Cadillac Man. Robin Williams is a car salesman whose motto is “No one gets out alive” meaning sales at all costs. As is most often the case in life, he learns that caring about what he is doing and who the people around him are is the secret to success and the motto changes to “Everyone gets out alive”. Don't look to show yourself or each other up. If the crew has switched incorrectly, there is no need to hold up the game while you run across to displace someone to get it right. There is a difference between calling out loudly “Joe, you go there” and a subtle reminder as Joe passes going to report. What about «Joe, I'm now Lead.», instead?

FIBA promotes an active mindset on the court. Have the same off the court. Constantly scan your environment, identify opportunities for yourself and stay engaged.

*“Every person in this life has something to teach me — and as soon as I accept that, I open myself to truly listening.” ~ Catherine Doucette*

Whether on or off the court, listen first and talk second. Take every opportunity to learn from both staff and fellow campers. Just as on the court, you strive for open versus closed looks. Learning from others requires an open mind. There may be times that what you hear doesn't sound true to you.

*“New opinions often appear first as jokes and fancies, then as blasphemies and treason, then as questions open to discussion, and finally as established truths.” ~ George Bernard Shaw*

Show enthusiasm in being there. Enthusiasm and positivity are contagious. All feedback is opportunity. How you take feedback, and that includes criticism, and what you do with it will determine your success. Stay positive. There may be times that you feel you are getting conflicting information. Take the information in, don't automatically discount it. Avoid arguing, making excuses and being that ‘yeah but’ person who consistently replies to criticism

with “yeah, but this is why” or the official for whom it’s always someone else’s responsibility. Take an appropriate opportunity and tact to further explore it with an observer if you need too. Challenge your beliefs. Sometimes the information is phrased differently, but is essentially the same. The truth of the matter is that officiating is on a continuum. An evaluator may tell you to step down while another tells you to step in. The principle is the same. Better your position/look. The reality is that you do both, not exclusively, but as appropriate to the situation. Be that person that looks for similarities and connections rather than focus on differences in the information provided. Remember to thank people for their feedback. Consider, like just on the court, that your body language will speak volumes. Make eye contact, lean towards, have an open posture, nod, smile as appropriate. Check for understanding with questions, paraphrasing and other techniques.

Think of you, the official, as a mechanic. Everything you learn and apply are the tools of your trade. You don’t have to use every tool every game. Having a more extensive toolbox of tools and knowing how to apply them allows you to effectively and efficiently complete more varied jobs as they are presented to you.

As to calling the game. You are expected to handle your primary. That also infers you have a secondary and there are times you may have to extend coverage. You aren’t showing up your partner and they aren’t showing up you, if an obvious foul is called by an official out of primary. Be thankful to that official. That said, understand that accurate calls are the result of having an open look, seeing the play from start to finish and assessing the result of the contact. The most incorrect calls are the ones we make out of position or out of primary without as open a look, or not seeing the entire play. For the most part, here are simple criteria for calls in general and specifically calling out of primary: be correct and be necessary. Don’t guess.

Look to improve your own play calling and that of the crew using the communication and teamwork already briefly mentioned. Break down situations and calls as a crew during time-outs and between periods. Work towards a common game awareness and criteria for what is being called a foul. Be honest and open in your assessment of your performance. This will go towards building consistency within yourself, your crew and game to game.

To take advantage of all the opportunities afforded you, watch other officials work. Sit with an evaluator if/as allowed. Ask questions. When watching other officials, you are there to support them and not trash them and act that way. Often you can listen in to the feedback provided others. If this is the case, ask for permission as a courtesy regardless and you are there to listen not talk, remember that. Volunteer to work the table if allowed, working the shot clock, game clock or score sheet will not only help you appreciate those who do but will help to make you more aware of potential problems and aid in developing your own game awareness.

Individuals have different learning styles, but consider both taking notes and keeping a game journal. Potential benefits of note taking are 1) need be focused and attentive to take notes, 2) greater retention of points, and 3) source of better recall for later review. As possible, make the notes even more relevant by noting/including not just the what, but also the how and/or when to apply it. For example, someone is giving a presentation on handling coaches and you hear something that makes you think “Gee, I could try that with Coach X”, make that annotation. Another example would be hearing something in a presentation, writing it down and making a note to include in the pre-game. Consider recording feedback given to you and/or personal reflections you have during your time at camp

on your phone, digital voice recorder, iPad or other electronic device.

The benefit of a camp environment is that you officiate a game, get feedback and then are afforded another opportunity to apply what you were told and then get further feedback. It is a great opportunity, but also can be overwhelming. Pick the most important points and/or the easiest to implement from one game to the other. Two principles on which I will elaborate in a few paragraphs are “Get the best bang for your buck” and “Nothing breeds success like success”. Both can be applied here. Show that you are taking in the feedback by trying to apply it from one game to another.

Lastly, be social. Not only can you learn about officiating from others, but also about life. When you talk to retiring officials, ask them what they remember the most and the likely answer will be the experiences and friendships that have come about because of officiating rather than this game or that game. For you, more “focused” officials, let me put it another way – great opportunity for networking. I hear supervisors say all the time ‘I don’t just hire good officials, I hire good people’.

### Post-Camp

Within a day or so, send a thank you note to the camp staff or individually. Saying a genuine thank you is something that, though common, is slowly disappearing. Consider putting something personal in it for each staff you interacted with i.e. ‘I will take ‘x’ away from your presentation on ‘x’ and ‘I will try to implement the ‘x’ you provided in dealing with coaches’. People appreciate a genuine and personal thank you. As well, it will help you clarify and reinforce what you are taking away.

Take the time immediately after the camp to review things while still fresh in your mind. Review your video game tape (if provided), evaluations and feedback and any camp notes. There is no time like the present to start being our own career manager. Take personal ownership of your development. The camp has just provided you with tools to do just that. Organize the information, observations and evaluations provided into categories such as Mechanics, Foul Calls, Violations, Game management, and/or Positioning. Then, within each category prioritize the points. This provides the basis of your personal development plan to systematically address the points. Look to approach this in two ways. Work on a couple of easy points, things you know that you can correct quickly with a little focus. This is the principle of immediate gratification, success breeds success. For example, “make eye contact with the scorer every time when reporting” is something that is relatively easy to focus on/remember immediately and master. The biggest ‘bang for your buck’ though, comes from addressing the ‘big ticket’ items that will propel you in your development. Positioning may be one or handling coaches or game awareness. Better positioning results in better looks and the best chance to officiate the game correctly. If you were given three items with respect to Lead work, then plan to address them systematically. There may be specific phrases that were identified which you want to use dealing with coaches. Game awareness is a large item made up of individual components. Identify each. Work at something until mastered and comfortable. If there is something in your notes, feedback or evaluation that you want clarified, contact the camp staff if possible, to get the clarification while still fresh.

**Take the time to reinforce the connections you made at camp. Foster the new friendships and work at establishing that peer support network. Life is about relationships. One of my favourite songs (Joe Cocker version) is ‘With a Little Help from My Friends’.**

**Take the time before the fall season starts and review your evaluations, notes and tape/DVD from camp. Review the personal development plan you put together and revise as necessary. If you haven’t done it yet, make one. Establish goals for next season. Establish some timelines and build in check points. Besides consistently gauging your progress, schedule times for a more detailed or formal review. Pick a couple of points during the season to either have someone come observe/evaluate you and/or have yourself taped and then compare and gauge your improvement.**

**Let those who have a hand in your development and progression at the local board level know that you went to camp. If they don’t have it, consider forwarding your evaluation to the person(s) who looks after evaluating officials on your board and your assignor. Involve them in your development plan and goals.**

**Wealth comes from wise investments. Invest in yourself before, during and after camps and earn the highest rate of return from them.**

**(Note: I would appreciate any feedback on this article and all tips that you may want to pass along that could be incorporated into a future version of this article. I can be reached at [timlaurain@rogers.com](mailto:timlaurain@rogers.com))**