

Comments on the Rules

by Oswald Tower

The following statements supplement the rules by discussing some features in greater detail than is possible or desirable in the rules themselves. They do not replace or alter any part of the rules.

Suggestions to Architects

Although the rules specify that basketball courts constructed hereafter shall be not less than 42 feet by 74 feet, the Committee urges architects to bear in mind that these dimensions are not ideal for all purposes. If possible, the plans should provide for a court of maximum dimensions, 94 feet by 50 feet, with ample allowance for out of bounds and spectators. This permits the court to be subdivided crosswise for practice and for other indoor games, and makes it available to many more players than would be possible on the smaller court. The room should have a height of at least 20 feet, and more than this, if possible, for good ventilation.

Drawing Fouls

Everyone will agree that the average basketball game produces enough fouls without adding thereto those infractions which result from deliberate attempts to draw fouls. Some coaches maintain that it is "smart" basketball; yet an excess of fouls destroys interest, causes ill feeling, and places an additional burden upon officials. It is not merely unethical and contrary to the spirit of fair play; fundamentally, it is an attempt to simulate a foul when none has occurred, in the hope of profiting thereby; it is deceit rather than an honest plan of offense. No coach who is worthy of his position will instil that attitude in his boys.

Personal Contact

Although basketball is theoretically a "no-contact game," it is obvious that personal contact cannot be avoided entirely when ten players are moving with great rapidity over a limited playing space. For instance, the ball is free; two opponents start quickly for the ball and collide. The personal contact may be serious, yet if both were in favorable positions from which to get the ball, and were intent only upon getting it, an unavoidable accident, and not a foul, occurs. On the other hand, if one player is about to catch the ball, and an opponent behind him jumps into his back in an attempt to get the ball, the opponent commits a foul even though he is "playing the ball." In this case, as in "guarding from the rear," the player behind is usually responsible for the contact because of his unfavorable position relative to the ball and to his opponent. In short, if personal contact results from a bona fide attempt to play the ball; if the players are in such positions that they could reasonably expect to gain the ball without contact; and if they use due care to avoid contact: such contact may be classed as accidental and need not be penalized.

Blocking

A player is entitled to take any position on the court not occupied by another player, provided that:

(1) This position is not so close to an opponent (less than approximately three feet) that contact ensues when the opponent makes normal bodily movements, or

(2) This position is not taken in the path of a moving opponent so quickly that the latter cannot avoid contact.

In the foregoing cases, the player who takes the position described is responsible if contact ensues, unless other factors are involved.

A player who is attempting to screen is blocking if contact occurs when he is moving and if his opponent is stationary or retreating from him. In other cases of contact resulting from an attempt to screen when both players are in motion, either or both may have committed a foul, but in case of doubt, the greater responsibility is on the player who is attempting to screen.