

TRAIL OFFICIAL: GET AWAY FROM THAT DIVISION LINE – YOU CAN'T SEE FROM THERE!



Posted on September 4, 2018 by Gary Holt

What do you think you can see in the frontcourt standing at the division line and beyond? I'll tell you, not too much. Better yet, the better question is, who in the world is gonna believe you blowing from the division line? As the trail official you want to work from about the 28-foot mark and down.

If there's pressure being applied to the ball handler near the division line, you should be in a position to officiate that. Otherwise, in most cases, you want to be nearer to the three-point arc than the division line.

This is a noted big problem. Officials are working way too close to the division line. What makes it worse, some are even blowing their whistle from there when they think they see something in the lane.

Positioning is half the battle. To make proper rulings, you have to be in a position on the court to see between the players. If you're consistently near the

division line, you need to get much closer to the action.

The three main reasons that officials work too high as the trail official are:

- 1 They don't want to get beat in transition
- 2 They're too lazy to move much
- 3 Ignorance: They just don't know any better

These are the three points I will touch on in this post.

Every Trail Official Gets Beat – So What

When you're the trail official and there's activity in the frontcourt, you should also be in the frontcourt covering your primary coverage area. Your base starting point should be at about the 28-foot mark. This is not where you plant yourself like a statue, it's just a point to start from.

Action on the perimeter (the trail's PCA) is usually changing rapidly. You want to move as needed based on the players and their movements. That means if you need to move as low as the three-point arc or lower to get a good angle then do it.

When play begins the other way via a quick steal, you more than likely will get beat. It happens. On the other hand, if there's a drive to the goal or a jump shot, **you should never back out heading towards your new** lead position too soon. Likewise for the center official in three-person mechanics.

The proper mechanic is to stay, or better yet take a step or two down toward the basket to maintain a good angle.

The goal is to:

1. Get a better angle on drives on your side
2. Improve your positioning getting under the shooter (during jump shots)
3. Help out on seeing anything illegal as far as rebound positioning and

possible goaltending and basket interference action.
If you're at the division line you're out of position to make accurate rulings.
Bailing out and going to your new position too soon leaves your partner(s) with too many players to officiate. Don't assume.
It's ok for you to hustle to your new position only after Team B secures the ball and heads up the court.
Just remember to handle what's happening presently before you head to your new position and you'll be fine.

Move Down Lazy

The lazy officials may feel like there's less running or moving if they plant themselves at the division line when in the trail position. They see it as going from end line (sometimes) to division line. Walking or trotting back and forth.

So these officials may know better. They just choose to be lazy and in essence cheat the game. This very act can have a negative effect on the whole crew. It gives off the perception of not only being lazy, but it also looks like they think they're above the game and don't want to be there. The bad thing is when one official is slacking he/she makes the crew look bad.

Spectators will usually group us together instead of singling us out. They'll say 'the refs were lazy and didn't want to be there...'

Being lazy is a choice. The lazy official has told themselves they are not going to give a full effort. This, in turn, makes you look bad as well.

If you're ever in a game with this official, you might want to mention this to them in a nice way. Tell them you really need more help in the frontcourt, can you move down a little more... All you can do is try.

Be sure you're always giving an honest effort and get away from the division line when you're the trail official. Ok, my rant on lazy officials is over. Well for now anyway. Lol...

Last Time You Can Claim Ignorance

If you didn't know that the trail official shouldn't work from the division line or beyond when the ball is in the frontcourt, you know now. Check the diagram within and check your mechanics manual as well.

It is possible that the officials you see hanging out at the division line don't know any better. Help them if they seem to be receptive. Especially if you're working with this official. In that case, you have no choice, you need their help. You're in the game together getting paid the same, so let them know. You can't make them do anything, but approach them in a friendly manner and express yourself.

Conclusion

The trail official is just as important as the lead or center official. The trail position is unique because there's more area to cover and the action on the perimeter is a little more fast-paced as opposed to low post play. So the trail official may have to move a little more to maintain good angles.

Be mindful of your positioning and if you find yourself hanging out anywhere close to that division line when play has settled in the frontcourt you should know what to do. Move down!

You want to make sure you cover this topic in your pregame. This will alert the lazy ref right away what kind of official he/she's working with. Don't allow partners to go unchecked for being lazy. But always approach in a conversational and friendly way. Your goal is not to make an enemy or have a heated back and forth.

Officials should be working as a team. No one official should be working considerably harder than anyone else. If you're allowing your partners to get away with this without even mentioning it, then you hold some of the blame as well.

So tell me, are you a division line standing trail official?