

ARTICLE 4

Three Second Violation

Borrowed from World Basketball Seminar Clinic Book

Officials will probably agree that the most misunderstood rule by fans is the beloved 3-seconds in the lane. That being said, there are few rules in basketball demanding the understanding of the intent of the rule than the 3-second rule does. As officials, we need to be patient with the 3 second call and make sure that it is an appropriate call when we blow the whistle.

The basic rule is simple enough. A player may not remain in his/her free-throw lane (bounded by and including the lane lines, end lines and free-throw line) for more than 3 seconds while his/her team is in control of the ball in the frontcourt. 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 a foul occur.

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

The third and most 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 fewer than three seconds receives that ball and immediately moves to the basket (dribble for pivot) to try for a goal, the count is suspended to allow for the completion of the try. Remember, suspended, not ended. If the player does not attempt the try and either passes the ball or dribbles out of the lane, a three seconds call should be made. This allowance only applies to the player with the ball. Another instance of suspending a three second count is if the official sees that the player is making a serious effort to leave the area. Also, an official would suspend a three second count during an interrupted dribble. Use of these guidelines will assist and official in calling the three second rule appropriately and fairly.