

ARTICLE 17

Things We Need to Do Better — Part III

Cleaning Up Post Play: Impeding, Holding, Pushing

Jim Dixon

The game isn't two minutes old, and you and your partner(s) find you have two big post players pushing and shoving and can't tell who started it. Now what do we do?

Two person mechanics is the hardest

If you have worked basketball very long, you know you can't see and call everything. That is especially true for a two-man crew.

So set your mind to look for a lot of illegal post play early in the game — at least in the first quarter — and set the standard by which you and your partner will continue to work the game. The players are supposed to adjust to the officiating, so make them do it. Give up a little on the *other* infractions, and hit 'em quick and hard on post play if you have to.

What are we looking for? When we see moments like the one captured in the photo at the right, that should be a big yellow flag. There are certain steps to consider as we clean up post play, so look at the following.

Get the first foul

Look at the action photo. Who has position? If you can tell based on this photo, you are one step closer to getting the first foul. We can't really say that White is trying to front up on Blue because he is attacking from the side. Yet, how did this situation present itself? Who created the initial shoving contest? Did Red elbow White out to the side to prevent him from defending? Or did White start leaning in from the side and Red was just holding his position? It sort of looks like the latter, but you have to see the whole play and then judge. It does matter. We want to clean it up, and we want to do it similarly on both ends of the floor; so if all else fails, get defensive fouls on both ends of the floor. Of course, try to see who *first* initiates the contact and be sure you don't make up calls.

Judge verticality

Verticality is something we often apply only to rebounding and shooting, but it is a principle

that applies to every player everywhere on the floor. When you are having problems in the post, make your calls based on verticality. Those are easy push fouls, and we need to make a statement about them early in a game just to clean up post play. Concentrate on defensive players who are impeding the offensive post player from positioning either in or out of the lane to receive a lob or bounce pass. The offensive post should be allowed to stand and receive a pass and should not have to be leaning against the defense in order to hold his position. Also, you can use the 3-second call to clean that up a little, but be sure you are not penalizing the offense when the defense is really at fault. Concentrate on offensive players who are impeding the opposition in their attempts to defend. That is one area we often overlook. The offensive post cannot back down the defense into the lane to gain a closer position to the basket to score. That post player also cannot elbow or push with a straight or bended arm (or elbow) to force the defense away from the basket, thereby opening a lane for a pass and an easy lay-up. If you are unsure what that is, look at the action photo. That is the beginning of the situation I described in the first sentence of this paragraph.

All kinds of ways to hold

There is the close in (and nearly invisible) holding of the jersey. There is interlocking of arms. There is the more subtle stance that includes one arm up (as if to receive a pass) while the other arm reaches around the backside. It may be the offensive player trying to pin an arm, leg, or body to control positioning of the defensive player who is really trying to move in front to bat the ball. It may also be the defensive player preventing the offense from moving through the lane to run to a new position. All of those are holding, and they *must* be called.

Post play screens

One final area where we need to do better involves post play screens. When a team runs any kind of weave pattern or "figure 8" that involves a lot of criss-crossing of players through the paint, look for a quick screen of a cutter's defender. Even look for an illegal elbow to the gut or throat of the cutter by a defender! If the screens are legal, make sure that the defender isn't pushing through the screen. That occurs during weave patterns, but it also occurs during inbound plays on the end line.

Rough play: Continue to emphasize it

You may have worked on this early in the season, but now is not the time to stop. Rough post play can be controlled, and when we tag it early in a game, it is surprising how easy the rest of the game gets when we have set a high standard and maintained it.

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