

BENCH DECORUM AND HANDLING COACHES

In the history of basketball, bench decorum has always been a controversial subject. It is a topic that is always discussed at clinics, camps and official's meetings.

Over the years, several modifications have been made regarding bench decorum (R10-5) from the "seat belt rule", to the present coaching box, to indirect and direct technical fouls, to severe penalties from schools when coaches are ejected, to monetary fines for multiple ejections.

The bench decorum rule has never been popular with coaches or officials, due to the fact that confrontation always occurs when the rule is enforced.

Most coaches could "care less" about our mechanics as long as officials are in good position when making the call and seeing the "whole" play.

What they do care about are:

1. What kind of physical condition is the official and can he/she keep up with the play?
2. Did the official get the play right?
3. Does the official understand the block/charge and blocking out interpretation?
4. Does the official have "intestinal fortitude"?
5. How far will the official let me go?
6. Is the official approachable?

Many officials interpret bench decorum with **their own personal interpretation**, which leads to inconsistency with different coaches and their own fellow officials.

Some officials have been known to say "I am not going to call bench decorum tonight as I don't have time to watch the coaches". What kind of position does this put the working partner in?

There have been blatant violations of the coaching box rule, and in many cases, unsporting remarks to the officials **with no penalization**. Some officials feel that if they penalize improper bench decorum, that they will be "red lined" from that school in the future and are afraid of **possibly not receiving a coach's tournament vote**.

Let's face it, some veteran officials can "get away" with things in regards to conversation with a coach that a younger official cannot. Veteran officials that do not call bench decorum properly, is not a good role model for the younger official. **Too** many officials are making excuses to **justify** why they **do not enforce** the bench decorum rule.

The coaching box was put in place to help the head coach to be able to stand and move within the confines of the box. It also helps the official when the head coach has the box instead of being restricted to the bench at all times with exceptions. The box gives both the coach and the official a certain amount of leeway when the rule is followed properly. However, too many times, a coach will meet the calling official at the scorer's table complaining about every call and is **not penalized**. The coaching box is for **coaching and not there to make unsporting remarks to officials**.

The only time a head coach may **leave** the confines of the **coaching box legally**, is to go to the table to request a time-out regarding a correctable error, to prevent or rectify a timing or scoring mistake/error, an alternating possession mistake or when beckoned on the floor by the official(s) to attend an injured player. **Assistant coaches** are not authorized to go to the scorers' table at any time to seek information. Such information must be obtained by the **team manager or statistician**.

Points to remember:

1. All a coach wants from an official is **an acknowledgement** – accommodate the coach – make a statement such as “Coach, I hear you” or Coach, I’ll watch for it”.
2. Use the “open hand stop signal” when you have heard enough from a coach.
3. **Never tell a coach to “shut-up and set down”.**
4. At the appropriate time – tell the coach in a professional manner that you have heard enough.
5. Never **embarrass a coach** – If you have to penalize, call the “T” with dignity.
6. The coach needs to know the limits – too much latitude causes inconsistency from game to game.
7. An official can **never win with the last word in a coach/official confrontation.**
8. Do your job and **quit worrying about ratings and state tournament votes.**
9. An official has to leave a game with self respect- did I do the right thing/? – did I have courage?

Preventative Officiating:

1. A **kind word** has saved many a game.
2. **Lend an ear** – don’t be a **“tough guy”**.
3. If an assistant coach is out of line, ask the head coach to control his/her bench.
4. When a coach continually “chips”, tell him/her that you are working hard for them and hope that his/her “chipping” will not take the game away from the players.
5. If the head coach is barley out of the box, the official can tell the coach as he/she moves past the bench, “Coach – don’t forget the box”.

Summary:

1. Every time you blow the whistle – you irritate a coach. Study your game to see where you can reduce the irritants. Look for your weaknesses – not your strengths.
2. Officiate **realistic and not legalistic.**
3. Use preventative officiating and good common sense.
4. “Out nice” the coaches.
5. Stay away from the table as much as possible after a “T” has been called on a coach.
6. Hustle – Hustle – Hustle.

Finally – Don’t Sell Your Soul For A Bowl Of Porridge