



# National Basketball Association

**TO: NBA OWNERS, GENERAL MANAGERS, COACHES AND GAME OFFICIALS**

**FROM: MIKE BANTOM**

**DATE: OCTOBER 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**RE: RESPECT FOR THE GAME AND REFEREE INTERACTION INITIATIVES**

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Last year, we made a concerted effort to ensure that teams were up-to-date on instructions we gave referees concerning the rules and their enforcement. Initially, our plan was to send memos simultaneously to teams and referees whenever we needed to update preseason instructions to referees. The memos were well received and we decided to send them more frequently, covering more general topics in an effort to further develop everyone's understanding of the rules.

We will continue that effort this year, sending a memo to teams and referees about once every two or three weeks. We thought it best to lead off with our Respect for the Game guidelines because of their importance and the potential for misunderstanding, and we also include an explanation of some new things we're doing with referees to further improve how they interact with coaches and players.

If you have any questions or suggestions for future topics, please reach out to me ([mbantom@nba.com](mailto:mbantom@nba.com)), Donnie Vaden ([dvaden@nba.com](mailto:dvaden@nba.com)), Bob Delaney ([bdelaney@nba.com](mailto:bdelaney@nba.com)) or Steven Angel ([sangel@nba.com](mailto:sangel@nba.com)).

## **Respect for the Game ("RFTG")**

First off, thank you for your continued efforts to uphold the Respect for the Game standards. These guidelines were implemented several years ago to reduce negative reactions to calls, which take the focus off the game itself.

Thanks to team efforts, we see many fewer instances of obvious RFTG violations, such as lengthy complaining, air punches, aggressive wave-offs, direct hand claps, and profanity directed at a game official, as well as a reduction in more subtle actions, such as wave-offs at referees before running back in transition, which are generally acceptable provided they are not done repeatedly or after a referee warning.

While the preseason video and the general guidelines sent by Rod Thorn on October 10 outline the RFTG guidelines, we thought it prudent to provide more detail.

Players are permitted to:

- Express disagreement with a call, so long as their reaction is not aggressive, overly demonstrative and dissolves quickly
- Approach a referee to ask a question, so long as it's done in a civil manner, and ended when the official has provided an answer

Here are two examples of legal acts that would not result in a technical foul.

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/vidoeurlredirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_RFTG\\_Legal\\_1](http://dmmx2.nba.com/vidoeurlredirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_RFTG_Legal_1)

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/vidoeurlredirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_RFTG\\_Legal\\_2](http://dmmx2.nba.com/vidoeurlredirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_RFTG_Legal_2)

However, these types of acts are deemed impermissible:

- Air punches, wave offs, aggressive or excessive motioning of the arms
- Aggressive hand claps directed at an official or showing resentment for a call or non-call
- Running towards or aggressively approaching a referee
- Shouting a reaction to a call or using profanity
- Extended or prolonged complaining about a call, particularly after being told to stop
- Frantically running away from play after a call or no-call that is not agreed with

Here are two examples of illegal acts that would result in a technical foul.

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/vidoeurlredirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_RFTG\\_Technical\\_1](http://dmmx2.nba.com/vidoeurlredirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_RFTG_Technical_1)

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/vidoeurlredirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_RFTG\\_Technical\\_2](http://dmmx2.nba.com/vidoeurlredirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_RFTG_Technical_2)

In addition, we have noticed an increase in players looking at and/or pointing to the jumbotron replay of a call or non-call. While not an automatic violation, if the act goes on too long, is overly demonstrative or appears to be done to mock a call or non-call, referees will assess a technical foul.

Here is an example involving the jumbotron that will result in a technical foul this year:

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/vidoeurlredirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_RFTG\\_Jumbotron\\_1](http://dmmx2.nba.com/vidoeurlredirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_RFTG_Jumbotron_1)

### **Use of Warnings:**

Lastly, recall that referees have been instructed to issue a warning to players, if possible, in situations like these:

- Continuing to discuss a call after the referee has responded,
- Holding his arms in the air following a call for a prolonged period of time,
- Attempting to demonstrate actions such as traveling, goaltending, etc., or
- Repeatedly asking questions, making comments, or gesturing throughout a period of time

In cases like these, the referee will attempt to issue a warning to the player although they are not required to do so. Persisting in any similar actions after being issued a warning will result in a technical foul.

## **Work with Referees**

Under the topic of appropriate player reactions to calls/non-calls, we thought it a good opportunity to mention some work we have been doing with referees to help ensure better on-floor communication and more effective approaches to managing disagreement.

In the preseason, we provided referees with several new training modules, including stress management and conflict resolution. The sessions were well received and referees are able to continue the training through sessions during the season.

Further, as you may know, we recently hired Bob Delaney full time and one of his responsibilities will be to work with referee's regarding on-court presence. Bob is a former NBA Finals referee and former law enforcement officer, who has also been providing training to all military branches, Special Operations Forces and federal, state, county and local law enforcement officers and agents throughout the United States, Canada and Europe in the areas of leadership, resiliency and operational stress. Bob is implementing a new program called Performance Enhancement Program ("PEP") designed to help referees with leadership, teamwork, mental conditioning and rehearsal, resiliency and communication – fundamentally – focusing on the strengths of individuals to improve things like conflict resolution.

We hope you see some immediate results stemming from these initiatives.