



# National Basketball Association

**TO: NBA OWNERS, GENERAL MANAGERS, COACHES AND OFFICIALS**  
**FROM: MIKE BANTOM**  
**DATE: JANUARY 21, 2015**  
**RE: POE MEMO #6: CLEAR PATH TO THE BASKET FOULS**

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## CLEAR PATH TO THE BASKET

Clear Path to the Basket Fouls (Clear Path fouls) typically occur when a defender stops an offensive player on a fast break opportunity. The penalty for a clear path foul is two free throws and possession.

While a simple concept, the factors involved in a clear path foul are rather complex. Therefore, the goal of this memo is not only to clarify the rule itself, but how it applies to various situations. All examples assume a foul is committed and the question therefore is whether a clear path foul has occurred or not.

To be a clear path foul:

- There must be clear possession at the time of the foul,
- The play must have originated in the backcourt (including on throw-ins),
- The ball and an offensive player must be positioned between the tip-of-circle extended in the backcourt and the basket in the frontcourt,
- There must be no defender between the ball and the basket, and
- The offensive team must be deprived of an opportunity to score.

Provided all of these elements are met, the foul is ruled clear path. However, while the illegal contact component of this rule is usually obvious, there are a few aspects concerning player location that can be confusing:

- If any defender (including a defender not involved with the foul) is ahead of the player with the ball being fouled at the time of the foul, there is no clear path foul if it is deemed the defender could have obtained a position between the ball and the basket had the play continued.
- If the defensive player who commits the foul was ahead of the player with the ball after that player entered the frontcourt (one foot in), but gets beat and then fouls the player from behind or the side, there is no clear path foul even though he wasn't between the offensive player and the basket at the time of the foul.

- If an offensive player is fouled after he passes the ball to a teammate ahead of him and is subsequently fouled with no defender between his teammate and the basket, a clear path foul is called (provided the timing of the call deprives the offensive team from scoring).

### **Examples:**

Here are some straight forward examples of clear path fouls by a defender behind/to the side of the offensive player:

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Clear\\_Path\\_04\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Clear_Path_04_Seq)

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Clear\\_Path\\_08\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Clear_Path_08_Seq)

Here are examples of plays that are not clear path fouls because the defender is in front of the offensive player with the ball at the time of the foul:

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Not\\_Clear\\_Path\\_02\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Not_Clear_Path_02_Seq)

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Not\\_Clear\\_Path\\_08\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Not_Clear_Path_08_Seq)

Here are examples of plays that are clear path fouls by a defender behind an offensive player who has, or is about to receive a pass from a teammate:

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Clear\\_Path\\_06\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Clear_Path_06_Seq)

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Clear\\_Path\\_11\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Clear_Path_11_Seq)

Here are examples of plays that are clear path fouls by a defender in front of an offensive player that has already released a pass to a teammate ahead of the play at the time of the foul:

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Clear\\_Path\\_02\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Clear_Path_02_Seq)

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Clear\\_Path\\_07\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Clear_Path_07_Seq)

Here is an example of a play that is not a clear path foul by a defender in front of an offensive player attempting a pass because the ball is not yet released at the time of the foul:

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Not\\_Clear\\_Path\\_05\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Not_Clear_Path_05_Seq)

Here are examples of plays that are not clear path fouls because there is a second defender in front of the offensive player with the ball at the time of the foul:

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Not\\_Clear\\_Path\\_11\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Not_Clear_Path_11_Seq)

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Not\\_Clear\\_Path\\_03\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Not_Clear_Path_03_Seq)

Here are examples of plays that are not clear path fouls because the foul is in the act of shooting as the offensive player has gathered the ball to shoot:

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Not\\_Clear\\_Path\\_06\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Not_Clear_Path_06_Seq)

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Not\\_Clear\\_Path\\_04\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Not_Clear_Path_04_Seq)

Here are examples of plays that are not clear path fouls because the offensive player with the ball is below the tip-of-circle at the time of the foul:

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Not\\_Clear\\_Path\\_14\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Not_Clear_Path_14_Seq)

[http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops\\_Not\\_Clear\\_Path\\_07\\_Seq](http://dmmx2.nba.com/video/redirect?&project=/bballops/bballops_Not_Clear_Path_07_Seq)