

2PO & 3PO OFFICIATING

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE USE OF
TWO-PERSON OFFICIATING AND
THREE-PERSON OFFICIATING

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INTRODUCTION

FIBA mechanics provide for two systems of refereeing: two-person officiating (2PO) and three-person officiating (3PO).

There is a growing belief that 3PO is the better system, with many advantages, especially for top-level basketball, however there are some limitations and disadvantages with using 3PO, especially if 3PO is poorly applied by referees who have not been properly trained in 3PO mechanics or who have not developed the ability to accurately call the game.

THE FOUNDATION OF 2PO

Properly learning 2PO is a fundamental of refereeing, particularly with regard to understanding the importance of court coverage and areas of responsibility. The ability to properly apply 2PO mechanics is a core competence and referees need to have a strong experience of 2PO before learning 3PO.

REFEREEING ABILITY

Referees should have developed to the point where they can demonstrate a good understanding of the contact criteria (cylinder principles, legal guarding position, verticality, judging the effect of contact) and the principles of court coverage, areas of responsibility and refereeing the defence before learning 3PO. Adding a third referee does not improve the quality of the refereeing if the referees are not at a standard to be able to cover their areas correctly and make correct calls.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ASSOCIATIONS

Associations are recommended to use 2PO for their local competitions and only use 3PO on their top-level competitions if:

- there are enough experienced referees available, with a solid 2PO foundation and the ability to accurately call the game, who are able to referee that level of basketball; and
- the referees have been properly trained and are up-to-date with correct FIBA 3PO mechanics.

TWO-PERSON OFFICIATING

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A smaller pool of quality referees is needed. • The cost is lower with fewer referees needed to cover the competition. • Achieving consistency is easier with a smaller pool of referees. • There are reduced chances of rule or interpretation variations. • Education, training and monitoring of the referees is easier with a smaller pool. • By using 2PO, referees learn techniques such as the need to adjust to the play, “sandwiching the play” and refereeing the defence. • Does not have the complication of lead rotation in 3PO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a higher fitness level and more movement by referees on each play. • Physical and mental fatigue can be greater during a game. • More calls need to be made on the run. • There are areas of the court that are blind spots in coverage. • Three-point line coverage can sometimes be vague. • There is a difficulty in surrounding 10 players with two referees. • Experienced referees can be lost to the game earlier than with 3PO. • There are reduced opportunities to expose inexperienced referees to higher level competitions.

THREE-PERSON OFFICIATING

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 10 players are surrounded by three referees. • The referees get a better view with more angles covered. • There is stronger on- and off-ball coverage. • There is better coverage of trapping and pressing situations. • There is better three-point coverage. • If 3PO is done correctly, no incident should go unobserved. • Fewer calls are made on the run. • There is more accuracy in the calling due to the positioning of the referees. • Players are aware of the increased coverage and this acts as a deterrent. • Foul counts are reduced. • The third official aids communication with the score table and team benches. • There is better team bench control. • The increased height and athleticism of the players is better coped with. • Physical and mental fatigue levels are reduced. • There are more opportunities to introduce rookie referees to higher levels of competition. • Experienced referees stay in the game longer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It requires a greater depth in the quantity and quality of referees needed to cover the competition. • A shortage of referees with the ability to referee at the level of the competition can lead to inexperienced referees being used to the detriment of calling of the game. • There is extra cost to the competition due to the increased number of referees needed. • Achieving consistency is harder with the greater number of referees. • There is more work in the education, training and monitoring of a larger pool of referees. • If referees do not understand the correct use of 3PO, coverage of the court can actually be diminished. • Under-performing referees can hide in 3PO. • When it is poorly applied, it can cause increased foul counts. • If 3PO is not properly taught, the advantages are not realised.



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