



# WORK OF THE TABLE OFFICIALS: TIME-OUTS AND SUBSTITUTIONS



by Valentin Lazarov

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Over the last few years, we have witnessed substantial divergences in the way on-court officials and table officials have been applying the authorized rules for time-outs and

substitutions. With the following practical examples, I will try to illustrate the need for a more realistic, not literal or dogmatic, interpretation of the rules in these areas. Legal Prescriptions from the Rulebook:

**Art. 27.3.1.** A coach or assistant coach has the right to request a charged time-out. He shall do so by going in person to the scorer and asking clearly for a time-out, making the proper conventional sign with his hands.

**Art. 28.2.1.** A substitute has the right to request a substitution. He shall do so by going in person to the scorer and asking clearly for a substitution, making the proper conventional sign with his hands. He shall sit on the substitution bench/chairs until the substitution opportunity begins.

**Situation 1:**

Is the coach allowed to request a time-out directly from his team bench area instead of going in person to the scorer?

**Interpretation:**

Actually, this current practice is very common with the majority of coaches. In similar situations, the scorer shall be tolerant and inform the officials of the request by sounding his signal at the first time-out opportunity.

Many times, however, the scorer is often concentrating intently on the game and, not having peripheral visual contact with the coach, does not recognize that a charged time-out has been requested.

In such a case, a clear verbal communication between all table officials would be advantageous. Nevertheless, coaches must be aware that they run the risk of not having the time-out granted if the scorer does not hear or see their signal coming from the team bench area.

**Situation 2:**

While the ball is dead and the game clock stopped, coach A, from his team bench area, requests a charged time-out directly from the closest official. Shall the time-out be granted?

**Interpretation:**

The official shall not grant the time-out but instead of restarting the game, he shall cooperate and either personally transmit the request to the scorer or direct the coach to the scorer. Should the scorer approve the coach's request, the time-out should be granted.

**Situation 3:**

During a substitution opportunity for team A, the official is about to hand the ball to the player to throw in the ball and restart the game. At that moment, substitutes A10 and A11 come from the team bench area and move towards the scorer's table, requesting a substitution.

**Interpretation:**

Since the substitution opportunity has not yet ended, the scorer shall cooperate and indicate to the officials that a request for substitution has been made by immediately sounding his signal.

It would be beyond the intent of the rule to sound the signal only when the substitutes have reported to the scorer in person and are seated on the substitutes' bench.

**Situation 4:**

Team A is granted a substitution. Player A10 who was seated on the substitution chair has already entered the court. At that moment, four more players, two from each team, leave their team benches for the scorer's table, evidently requesting a substitution.

**Interpretation:**

Since the substitution opportunity has not yet ended, the scorer shall cooperate and indicate to the officials that a supplementary request for substitution has been made by immediately sounding his signal again. It would be too literal and beyond the intent of the rule to sound the signal only when the replacement players are seated on the substitutes' chairs.

**Situation 5:**

During the substitution for team A, the official insists that:

**1.** The substitutes shall enter and the players leave at the center of the court, just in front of the scorer's table.

**2.** Players who are substituted shall leave the court at the same time as the substitutes enter the court.

Is this procedure correct?

**Interpretation:**

The procedure is wrong because it unnecessarily delays the restarting of the game.

- Players who have been substituted do not have to report to either the scorer or the official and are permitted to leave the court immediately and at any point.
- The substitutes shall remain outside the boundary line, until the official beckons them onto the court.

After establishing visual contact with the scorer's table and the substitute(s), the official may give the beckoning signal from his present position on the court. It is not necessary for him to stand in front of the scorer's table.

The important duties for the official and the scorer during the substitution process are:

- To be sure that the number of players leaving the court equals the number of substitutes coming back on the court.
- To complete the substitution process and restart the game as soon as possible.

**Situation 6:**

The substitution or time-out opportunity has just ended when coach A runs to the scorer's table, loudly requesting a substitution or time-out. The scorer reacts erroneously and sounds his signal. The official whistles and interrupts the game.

**Interpretation:**

Because of the official's whistle, the ball becomes dead and the game clock is stopped, indicating a possible substitution or time-out opportunity. But as the request was made too late, a substitution possibility or time-out is not granted and the game is immediately resumed.

**PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE**

Under the present circumstances, all problems connected with table officials are now left to the national basketball federations to sort out. The consequences of these decisions have led to a lack of unification and a great diversity of instructions, prescriptions, and working styles around the globe. My firm personal opinion is that the time has come for FIBA, as the confirmed leader of basketball in the world, to immediately take charge and organize a new body called "FIBA Table Officials," providing it with the same structure as already exists in other official bodies, including FIBA-Officials and FIBA-Commissioners. To achieve this, the following must be accomplished:

- Elaborate and publish an official FIBA manual detailing the work of the table officials.
- Prepare a unified program for the formation and education of the table officials throughout the world.
- Organize clinics for table officials and schedule examinations to test their knowledge base.
- Require licenses for all FIBA table officials with annual membership fees.