

RECRUITING OF NEW YOUNG REFEREES



by Edvard de Jager

Edvard de Jager was a FIBA referee from 1985 to 1993. He became a FIBA National Referee Instructor in 1997 and the next year a FIBA Commissioner. de Jager has been a member of the Netherlands Basketball Federation Referee Committee since 1995.

I was asked by the Netherlands Basketball Federation in August 2002 to form a new group of 12 good, young referees. We found the financial funds through our referees' sponsor and started working with a staff of six very good and experienced tutors and myself. Two of these tutors were our most experienced FIBA referees and they would "coach" the candidates by officiating games with them.

How did we select these young referees? We looked at their rankings from the previous season, noted their potential for the future, as well as their age and gender.

This group also had to meet special FIBA requests. They had to be younger than 34 years of age with a good knowledge of the English language, a very good knowledge of basketball rules and the mechanics of refereeing, and they had to be readily available to work. In addition to having excellent interpersonal skills in working with other people, they also had to be in excellent physical condition, non-smoking, and not overweight.

We explained our goals to our little group, demanded that they be eager and ready to work for the season, and highly motivated to achieve the best possible results. The young referees agreed to our proposal.

TIME-SCHEDULE.

We divided the year into five phases:

training sessions in August and September 2002

- personal mentoring and criticism during these two months with the aid of the tutors, videotape review, and individual advice.

1 In November 2002 we had individual sessions and, based on their results, we divided the group into those who could possibly go on to the FIBA clinic and the others that could try to become a first division referee.

1 In December 2002 this potential FIBA referee group took English exams and were then assigned to referee tough games in the Netherlands Men's First Division, while paired with one of the experienced Dutch FIBA referees. The other group had exams on the rules, psychological aspects, and mechanics of refereeing, and were then asked to referee in the Netherlands Women's First and Promotion divisions. This phase ended in May 2003.

1 Everyone involved in this project, both referees and tutors were evaluated.

1 The last phase started at the beginning of May 2003.

To date, four referees have been nominated as candidates to become FIBA referees. If they are able to maintain their positions, we shall send them to the FIBA-clinic in June 2003 in Amsterdam.

HOW WE PROCEED

To make a program successful like ours, you need to have a solidly-organized federation, enough qualified and experienced tutors with good ideas, financial backing, and international tournaments where you can put the young referees under more game pressure than they are regularly used to.

It worked out well for us this year in the Netherlands because we had Harlem Basketball Week, the Ricoh Cup, the Military Championships, and the Dutch Men's and Women's Final Four Cup. We paired our new referees with very experienced referees in many of these tournament games and afterwards they were fully evaluated by their tutors.

In order for referees to make improvement on any scale, it's a must that they get to see themselves on videotape. Thanks to the videotaping that we did, the referees were able to see for themselves the many mistakes that they made during the games, from the small ones to the big ones.

Behind every successful referee there is usually a good instructor. People learn mostly by sight and hearing but to be successful, the instructors need to combine these two factors in their work with long conversations with the young referees and through the use of videotapes. This can occur after a game, with lessons on the court, or during a video session.

EVALUATION AND EDUCATION

For the referee's evaluation during normal competitions, we use eight commissioners and eight evaluators. In addition we use two judges, who are the only people to give a figure to the referees and commissioners.

They only evaluate while the commissioners do accompaniment/mentoring.

Thanks to this unique evaluation set-up, we have developed a ranking system, which is objective, as much as it can be, and which is useful for the playoff games to help us select the best commissioners and referees.

The judges themselves don't do the commissioner's work anymore. This system has been effect for one year in our men's first division and everybody is enthusiastic about it. The eight



other evaluators are used in all other lower divisions, except the men's first division. They work as observers and they are obliged to give figures to those referees.

The commissioners also have to evaluate referees working in games in the lower divisions.

This is an advantage for both referees and commissioners; the referees are getting better quality evaluations and the commissioners continue to stimulate young talented referees. They have been specially trained to work with younger referees, pointing out to them how to work hard and become better at their jobs.

How can you motivate a 24-year-old referee? We are confident that our veteran commissioners are able to do just that. After this season, we will evaluate the system of judges. Are we happy with what they have accomplished so far? Are we satisfied with the job they have performed?

Do we have the finances to continue with our work?

We probably need two or three more judges. Who is going to train them and who can become a judge? For the playoff

games, we have temporarily appointed two extra judges for the women's playoffs and one extra judge for the men's games. We want to have a judge at each single playoff game. This is the person who decides which referee continues and who is eliminated for upcoming games. This is also applicable for the commissioners during the playoff games.

Of course, the final decision depends on our referee committee.

All above-mentioned topics will be discussed and argued about with the referee committee this summer.

SPECIAL TRAINING

We run four training-sessions mostly in Amsterdam. They are conducted by our professional tutors from the end of May until the start of the new season.

We offer mental training and media training sessions and do physical fitness and body testing. Finally, we offer a lot of personal advice for each individual so they can stay in shape and be ready for the start of the new season.