



THE ROLE OF THE FIBA NATIONAL REFEREE INSTRUCTOR



by Alberto Garcia

Alberto Garcia is Deputy Secretary General of FIBA Americas. A former FIBA referee and FIBA Instructor of referees, he officiated at the World Men's Championship in 1982 and 1990, and in more than 15 international qualifying tournaments in the FIBA Zone of the Americas.

Over the course of the past fifteen years, basketball has evolved on a global level, with a growth that has been both incredibly quick and unexpected. Wide media coverage has transformed the game to a point where it is now being practiced in an organized form in 212 countries throughout the world, with more than 450 million men and women playing the game.

Professional basketball has played an important role in increasing the game's popularity and also for enhancing the physical characteristics of the game. The advent of improved training techniques and strength-training has increased the speed and strength of individual players, and with it has come a noticeable change in playing style that has quickly been transmitted to all playing levels outside of the professional sphere. Accompanying this metamorphosis, coaches, for obvious reasons, have had to adapt different teaching methods and techniques to go along with the newly evolved athlete and the faster-paced game.

THE BASKETBALL REFEREE AND THE CHANGING GAME

Referees were initially not able to keep up with the faster-paced game. The officiating of a basketball game is very difficult and requires a game official with many abilities that are not typically found in one human being. The referee is a person that has to make decisions measured in tenths of a second in a fast-paced game. He or she works in a tightly-confined space, where 10 highly-conditioned players move quickly from place to place in dance-like movements, with a very limited time to shoot. The inherent beauty of the game of basketball relies on the physical flow of offense working against defense. Granted, there is a certain amount of physical contact in a game, with plenty of smaller violations occurring that don't actually impact the advantage/disadvantage continuum between offense and defense. Understanding this advantage/disadvantage balance is something that referees need to be better trained to recognize.

THE FIBA INTERNATIONAL INSTRUCTOR FOR THE REFEREES

FIBA began selecting former international referees in 1992 with the primary goal of transforming them into Instructors for the referees of the world. Eight FIBA Instructors were initially nominated and they began implementing a program of clinics that have been held on the five continents.

Their one single message: Make all referees aware of the correct and standard application of game rules and fully understand the spirit and essence of each one of them. The program has been a success. Change slowly started to come, thanks to



these clinics, and the the level and the quality of referees has increased since then.

Another positive move for the referees was when FIBA allowed these game officials to voice any doubts they might have regarding the application of various rules and the underlying philosophy behind them. As a direct consequence, there was now a better application of important game concepts and objectives.

Over time, the World Technical Commission studied the various changes, analyzed and interpreted the rules, and then transmitted each one of the objectives that had been pursued to the FIBA Instructors.

The Instructors then passed same message to the international referees through their annual clinics, held in the different countries of the five continents.

Although this improvement in application and interpretation of rules was significant and noticeable, much more was needed to be done. Time was a major factor. The referee clinics were only held once every four years, and this wasn't often enough. The game was quickly evolving and it was necessary to look for other ways to help the referees keep up with the fast pace of the game.

THE FIBA NATIONAL INSTRUCTORS

To meet the growing demand for better referees, FIBA began its program for the preparation of National Instructors in May of 1997. With National Instructors, each country would now have someone in charge of all the referees, at every level within the country. According to Lubo Kotleba, the FIBA Sports Director, each National Instructor would then become an extended arm of the World Technical Commission in each country, guaranteeing that all referees would receive the same instruction, no matter what continent, no matter what country.

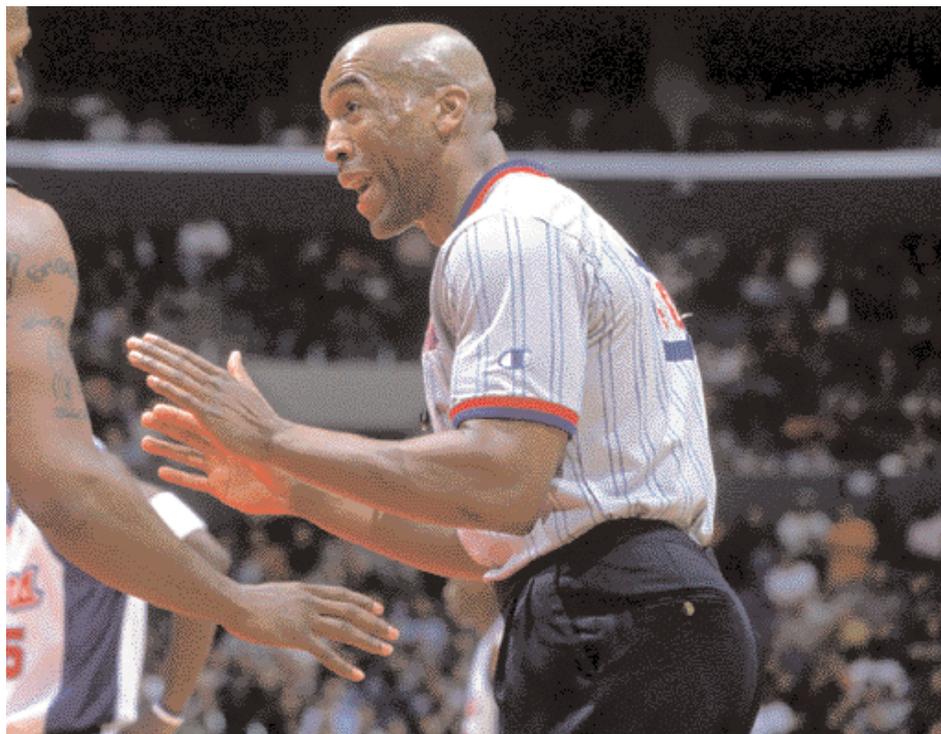
Referees would be trained and prepared in a similar fashion and their activities and progress would be monitored throughout the year.

This new program was a success as evidenced by better officiating at the most important World Tournaments. Underlying this success was a new corps of referees who had a better understanding of the game and the philosophy of the rules. And with this came a game that was more dynamic and exciting for all involved, particularly to the spectators around the world.

THE JOB OF A NATIONAL INSTRUCTOR

Since FIBA began its National Instructor program, the quality of the officiating in all tournaments has been greatly enhanced. What skills do these highly-trained officials possess: Here's what FIBA looks for in a National Instructor:

1. Knowledge and understanding of the basketball game.
2. Knowledge and understanding of the philosophy of the game.
3. Knowledge and understanding of the FIBA official game rules.
4. Knowledge and understanding of the FIBA officiating mechanics.



5. Knowledge and understanding of the philosophy of the FIBA officiating.
6. Knowledge of the referee evaluation.
7. Ability to teach.
8. Ability to motivate.
9. Communication and human relationships skills.
10. Public speaking skills.

Each National Federation has a minimum of one National Instructor. Once the candidate is recognized as National Instructor, this person will be responsible for:

1. Working within the technical schemes of his National Federation.
2. The process of training new referees.
3. The process of improving referee skills at all game levels.
4. The process of selecting FIBA referee candidates and the referees for the rest of the national categories, approving their candidacy and signing the respective forms.
5. Supervising, in conjunction with their local Federation, the annual written and physical tests of the active FIBA referees.
6. Maintaining permanent contact with the technical management (administration) of the FIBA Zone.
7. Acting as Assistant Instructor in National and/or International Clinics whenever summoned to do so.

We know that a three- or four-day referee's clinic, held in each country once every four years, can be of enormous benefit. But we also understand that this is not enough.

Referees, especially the novices, need regular training sessions and supervision for each one of their performances.

In this regard, the Instructors should implement within their programs an annual evaluation of each referee that tests game knowledge and uses videotape for practical evaluations, with review of the tape to bring about improved performance.