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# FIBA RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND EDUCATION OF REFEREES

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# LANDSCAPE

Basketball is a highly popular world sport at all levels of the game with 213 National Federations affiliated with FIBA.

Officiating is important to all sports. A basketball game is impossible without referees but they are often forgotten. It is a difficult job and their skill, importance and commitment is not always appreciated. Referees do not have access to video replays for fouls or violations, they do not have substitutions, no rehearsals, no warning of what will happen in a game, no pause button to provide a considered opinion, no rewind button when a mistake is made and nowhere to hide when players, coaches and spectators demand a perfect performance.

None of this is new and is not unique to basketball. The enjoyment of any sport is affected by the performance of the referee. But how does any sport obtain

good referees? Like any skilled trade or profession it is necessary to:

- Recruit candidates
- Educate candidate by teaching skills
- Provide an opportunity to develop and practice their skills
- Provide them with incentives to improve

In summary, the recruitment, retention and the ongoing education and training of basketball referees is necessary to assist in their development.

**Recruitment is defined as the successful initial placement of a referee for the first time, either in a voluntary or paid capacity.**

**Retention is defined as successfully retaining the services of a referee from one season to the next.**

**Education and training is defined as the initial teaching of the skills of officiating while providing the practical instruction and tutoring to refine the craft of officiating.**





# INTRODUCTION





FIBA has embarked upon a program to assist and possibly standardize the way basketball referees are recruited and more importantly retained. FIBA, while acknowledging that national associations have many variations in organizing their officiating programs, are aiming to issue clear guidelines as to how referees can be recruited and retained. This requires a philosophy and a passion towards officiating for these guidelines to succeed.

The objective of FIBA is to ensure that every registered basketball game within the 213 FIBA Federations is officiated by an accredited basketball referee(s). There are a number of FIBA registered competitions existing around the world, ranging from Mini Ball, 3 X 3, through to the World Championships and Olympic Games. Each competition has a common requirement – using an accredited referee.

The organisation of referee programs can generally be categorized into three groups:

1. Grassroots Officiating:- local junior and senior competitions
2. Intermediate Officiating:- national junior and senior competitions
3. Elite Officiating:- international junior and senior competitions

This FIBA program aims to enhance the status and education of referees, whom all have a significant role to play in basketball officiating. Consequently, the main aim of this FIBA publication is to maintain and improve officiating from the grassroots level upwards, wherever possible. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the national federations to appoint reliable, well-educated accredited referees for all their basketball competitions.

# BACKGROUND

**“ THERE IS A WORLD CRISIS IN OFFICIATING! THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH OFFICIALS TO COVER THE EVER INCREASING NUMBER OF GAMES PLAYED AROUND THE WORLD! ”**

This was a modified quote from an article in the American Publication “Referee Magazine” (October 2001) written by the Referee Associate Editor, Jim Arehart.

Further studies across all sports indicate that the number of officials has declined around twenty percent in the last ten years. Basketball officiating is likely no different.

At a National Association of Sports Officials (NASO) conference, the topic of recruitment and retention of officials was investigated and discussed. The findings and the discussions are very relevant to basketball officiating for FIBA around the world.

Ninety percent of attendees surveyed responded that they have a shortage of officials. The survey then asked why. Is it recruitment or retention, or a combination of both? The results show there is a concern with both recruitment and retention. FIBA understands that it must improve recruitment, retention and

education of officials at the grassroots and intermediary levels to increase the quantity and quality of Elite referees.

The quality of officiating at the Elite level is lower when there is a lack of quantity of officials. The number and standard of FIBA officials is higher when the national federation nominate more officials.

# OBJECTIVES

In 2011, there were 1084 active FIBA Badged officials from five FIBA Zones, making up seventy-five percent of the registered FIBA Federations.

It is the goal of FIBA to have at least one active FIBA referee representing every registered FIBA Federation by 2018.

This FIBA publication will provide strategies and procedures to assist with recruitment and retention for grassroots, intermediate and elite officiating.

This document explains the minimum standards and best practices to referee recruitment and retention while focusing on the most significant aspects of basic education and training parameters that all Federations should consider.

The success of a recruitment and retention program is relies heavily upon an organized education, training and development program. FIBA has attempted to provide tools that are concise and comprehensive.



# GRASSROOTS RECRUITMENT

## A) ASSUMPTIONS

- It is difficult to find appropriate candidates interested in becoming accredited referees
- It is a constant challenge to supply an adequate number of qualified and experienced officials for the number of games and competitions over a season

## B) REASONS TO BECOME AN OFFICIAL

- For financial reward
- Out of necessity because there is no one else
- Frustrated spectators who believe they can do a better job
- Parents become involved because children are playing
- Former players who still have an interest in the sport
- Teachers who are required to have the skills for their profession
- People who are interested in the sport and have a genuine interest in officiating
- Students who are required to gain officiating accreditation
- People who like the idea of being in a position of power
- Injured players forced to retire from playing
- Desire to give back to the sport
- Means of becoming fit and maintaining fitness

## C) STRATEGIES TO ASSIST GRASSROOTS RECRUITING

- Commitment by the Federations to invest in referee development
- Federations appoint specific Referee Development Officers who have the skills and personal attributes critical to coordinating, recruiting and orientating individuals to officiating
- Word of mouth – current officials encourage friends and acquaintances to take up officiating
- Develop relationships with educational institutions to provide opportunities for students to study officiating in entry level courses
- Advertise in various local publications (newspapers, bulletins, school publications)
- Identify groups who may be interested in officiating given their experience in basketball (recently retired players, coaches and managers)
- Approach players unable to continue playing because of injury
- Promote the advantages of becoming a basketball official
- Focus on the fun and enjoyable aspects of officiating
- Promote the opportunities available to basketball referees
- Build a stronger and more positive image of officials
- Emphasize the positive concepts of basketball officiating



# GRASSROOTS RETENTION

## A) ASSUMPTIONS

There is a high rate of attrition (those referees who stop officiating) at two points in the development of the new official:

1. After an understanding of the training requirements required for a basketball referee
2. After officiating for a season or over a twelve month period

## B) REASONS FOR CEASING OFFICIATING AT THE ENTRY STAGE

- Finding they are not suited to the role of an official
- Difficulties and the realities of facing up to abuse from players, coaches and spectators
- Limited skills to be able to cope with conflict
- Pressure to perform with a high level of proficiency from the start
- External pressures such as the media with its negative portrayal of officiating and a constant analysis and comment focusing on errors made by high profile referees
- The changes in society toward authority
- The physical, health and lifestyle demands needed to succeed
- The onset of injury and or recurring injuries
- Diminishing elements of fun
- Poor support mechanisms in place to nurture and educate officials
- Limited access to facilities and resources
- Poor integration of officials within the operation of the overall organisation
- Not as financially rewarding as initially thought
- Personal circumstances change impacting on available time to remain officiating (students finish studying and commence full time employment)

## C) STRATEGIES TO ASSIST GRASSROOTS RETENTION

- Ensure first officiating experiences are realistic but positive
- Provide a designated individual to assist and support beginner referees
- Provide a clear indication that the basketball Federation cares about officiating, even at the grassroots level
- Provide local resources including designated referee change rooms and relaxation rooms ensuring referees feel welcome
- Provide appropriate and adequate remuneration for officiating
- Provide Beginner Referee Courses that include dealing with stress and conflict resolution strategies
- Have an awards program that recognises officials in a similar way as the players and coaches
- Provide rewards for good service (theatre passes) and achievement incentives
- Identification program to inform players, coaches and spectators that the referee is a trainee or a beginner (eg. different colored shirt)
- Distribute programs, posters and communications to explain the beginner identification program
- Implement a formal mentoring program with beginner referees assigned to experienced officials
- Create an environment where officials enjoy coming to apply their craft
- Encourage social events and opportunities to create new friends and to feel part of a team
- Do not overly pressure inexperienced referees ensuring the enjoyment factor does not fade
- Promote and foster the new skills officiating develops, such as communication, diplomacy, confidence, tolerance, how to deal with conflict, problem solving, decision making
- Focus on the reduction of abuse towards officials from players, coaches and spectators. Consider a zero tolerance policy and the enforcement of codes of behavior
- Distribute letters, memos, and advertisements prominently displaying and explaining the expectations of coaches, players and spectators toward officials
- Provide accurate and honest feedback on a regular basis regarding referee performances
- Promote the importance of referees to the basketball organization by clearly displaying the support of the Federation.
- Personalized follow up to establish why officials decide not to return

# GRASSROOTS EDUCATION

## A) ASSUMPTIONS

- Education and training are essential components for the accreditation of officials
- Irrespective of the level of competition, players, coaches and spectators have high expectations of the knowledge and ability of the referees to interpret and apply the rules
- The performance of grassroots officials is generally assessed by “customer satisfaction”
- Participants (ie. non experts) judge the performance of the referees, along with limited referee evaluations

## B) ISSUES WITH GRASS ROOTS EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Players, coaches and spectators expect perfection, with no mistakes and consistency from referee to referee and from game to game
- Society is now encouraged to question authority at all levels, including sporting contests
- Poor role models, such as parents and coaches who set bad examples in front of children, unknowingly encouraging young players to copy this behavior
- Limited resources to assist in the education and training courses required for new referees
- Lack of appropriately qualified educators available to conduct new referee programs
- Current courses have limited focus on the non-tangible skills of communication, game management and dealing with stress and conflict
- Lack of clear explanation on what is required to be successful and how to advance as a new referee
- It is expensive for most new officials to pay for courses, training and equipment

## C) STRATEGIES TO ASSIST GRASS ROOTS EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Ensure first officiating experiences are realistic but positive
- Ensure the message about possible career paths for new referees is explained simply and is readily available for entry-level referees
- Create a formal education and training program that gives the new official every opportunity to succeed
- Provide quality and unified educational course material, including current audio visual resources
- Ensure that the areas of game management, dealing with stress and dealing with conflict are included in the course
- Identify referee educators to provide regular and consistent feedback to help develop new officials
- Provide entry level courses and minimize associated costs by the basketball organisations
- Employ experienced or even retired officials to work with new referees
- Provide the beginner referees with an understanding of what is expected of them as a referee through the eyes of a coach, a player, a spectator and an administrator



# INTERMEDIATE RETENTION

## A) ASSUMPTIONS

- There is a gradual rate of attrition (those referees who cease officiating) which occurs to officials as they elect to quit officiating after a period of initial service

## B) REASONS FOR CEASING OFFICIATING AFTER THE INITIAL ENTRY STAGE

- Finding they are not suited to the role of an official at the next level
- Unable to tolerate abuse from players, coaches and spectators
- Insufficient skills to be able to cope with conflict and lack of desire to learn the skills to deal with this conflict
- Pressure to perform with a perfect level of proficiency for every game officiated
- External pressures, particularly with constant analysis and comments focusing on errors from management and administrators
- Increased exposure to challenges and criticism from experienced players and coaches as the referees move into more competitive and serious contests
- Increased physical demands and associated health and lifestyle changes needed to succeed
- Onset of injury and or recurring injuries with the increased physical demands of higher level games
- Lack of enjoyment as the competitions become more serious
- Lack of support mechanisms in place to nurture and educate officials
- Personal circumstances change impacting on availability as there is an increased demand of time with an increased number of games

## C) STRATEGIES TO ASSIST WITH INTERMEDIATE RETENTION

- Maintain a culture that is consistent with the officiating experience being positive
- Provide designated qualified personnel to implement a program for intermediate level referees
- Provide clear indications that the basketball Federation cares about the development of intermediate referees
- Provide resources including specified referee facilities to ensure referees feel welcome
- Provide appropriate and adequate remuneration for intermediate officials
- Provide specific education sessions to prepare referees to cope with stress and to arm them with conflict resolution strategies
- Create an awards program that recognises officials similar to the players and coaches
- Provide rewards for exceptional service (theatre passes) and achievement incentives to promote the development beyond the intermediate level
- Distribute posters and communications to explain the intermediate identification program
- Develop a formal mentoring program with intermediate referees assigned to elite officials
- Create an environment where officials enjoy coming to apply their craft – encourage social events and opportunities to create new friends and feel part of a team
- Promote and foster the new skills officiating develops, like communication, diplomacy, confidence, tolerance, how to deal with conflict, problem solving, decision making, leadership and maturity
- Focus on the reduction of abuse towards officials from players, coaches and spectators
- Consider a zero tolerance policy and the strict enforcement of codes of behavior for players, coaches and spectators
- Display letters, memos, and posters prominently explaining the behavior expectations towards officials
- Provide consistent, regular and objective evaluations of intermediate referees with a focus on becoming an elite official
- Follow up survey to establish why officials decide to retire

# INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION

## A) ASSUMPTIONS

- Education and training is an essential component for the accreditation of officials at an intermediate level
- Irrespective of the level of competition, players, coaches and spectators have high expectations of the knowledge and ability of the referees to interpret and apply the rules
- The education of intermediate officials is generally done through education sessions and referee assessments. Referee evaluators/supervisors evaluate the referees and work on developing their skills

## B) ISSUES WITH EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF INTERMEDIATE OFFICIALS

- Players, coaches and spectators expect perfection, with no mistakes and consistency from referee to referee and from game to game
- Society is now encouraged to question authority at all levels, including sporting contests
- Poor role models, such as parents and coaches who set bad examples in front of children, unknowingly encouraging young players to copy this behavior
- Limited resources to assist in the education and training courses required for intermediate referees
- Lack of appropriately qualified educators available to conduct intermediate referee programs
- Current courses have limited focus on the non-tangible skills of communication, game management and dealing with stress and conflict
- Lack of clear explanation on what is required to be successful and how to become an elite referee
- It is expensive for most new officials to pay for courses, training and equipment

## C) STRATEGIES TO ASSIST EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF INTERMEDIATE OFFICIALS

- Ensure officiating education and training experiences are positive, realistic and beneficial
- Ensure the education and training is relevant to the level of the developing or intermediate referee
- Create a formal education and training program that gives the developing official every opportunity to improve
- Provide high quality and unified educational course material, incorporating all variations of teaching mediums
- Ensure that the areas of game management, dealing with stress and dealing with conflict are included in the course
- Identify referee educators and mentors to provide regular and consistent feedback and education to help develop the intermediate officials
- Readily available accredited intermediate level courses
- Utilize experienced or even retired officials to work with developing referees
- Clearly identify and distribute information of what is expected of them as a developing referee through the eyes of a coach, a player, a spectator and an administrator



# ELITE RECRUITMENT/ IDENTIFICATION

## A) ASSUMPTIONS

- Unrealistic expectations amongst young officials of rapid advancement to elite levels within a few years
- Realization that a high level of commitment is required to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to be an effective official and to move along the officiating career path
- Ongoing education and training is an essential component for the advancement of elite level officials
- All referees have an expectation to have the opportunity and the exposure to reach their ultimate goals
- There is a formal talent identification program in place for all referees

## B) REASONS FOR BECOMING AN ELITE OFFICIAL

- To achieve the ultimate goal to represent your country at an international event
- To realize the aim of reaching the pinnacle of your sport as a referee and to experience the associated benefits of being an elite referee
- To have the opportunity to officiate at the highest level of competition requiring them to demonstrate all the skills of leadership, decision-making, fitness and management.

## C) STRATEGIES TO ASSIST RECRUITING ELITE OFFICIALS

- Recognition by Federations to invest in high performance referee development
- Recognition by Federations as to the benefits of having elite level officials within their organization
- Federations appoint High Performance Referee Officers who have the skills and personal attributes critical to identifying, coordinating, and training both potential and identified elite officials
- Use of elite officials to provide role models for the promotion and development of elite officials
- Access to high performance educational research and technology similar to that provided for athletes be available for elite officials
- Promote the opportunities and advantages of being an elite basketball official
- Set direction by providing realistic goals and paths for elite officials



# ELITE RETENTION

## A) ASSUMPTIONS

- There is a high rate of attrition (those referees who cease officiating) which occurs to officials as they elect to opt out of the fabric of the officiating fraternity
- The physical and mental requirements of an elite official create a natural rate of attrition

## B) REASONS FOR CEASING ELITE OFFICIATING

- They cannot provide the necessary time and commitment to remain as an elite official
- Frustration with the real and perceived lack of opportunity and recognition
- Inability to cope with the stresses of being an elite official
- Pressure to perform with a perfect level of proficiency for every game officiated and to cope with intense accountability and assessment process
- External pressures, particularly with constant analysis and public criticism of elite performance both internally and externally
- Increased exposure to challenges specific to elite officials
- Increased physical demands and associated health and lifestyle changes needed to succeed
- Onset of injury and or recurring injuries with the increased physical demands of higher level games
- Personal circumstances change impacting on availability as there is an increased demand of time with an increased number of games

## C) STRATEGIES TO ASSIST RETENTION OF ELITE OFFICIALS

- Maintain a culture for elite officiating by always aiming for perfection by demanding dedication, commitment and professionalism
- Provide designated personnel who elite officials can use as mentors
- Provide clear communication that the Basketball Federation cares and supports their elite officials
- Provide resources and opportunities for elite officials to continue to develop and improve
- Provide appropriate and adequate remuneration to the elite officials
- Provide specific elite education sessions to assist referees to cope with dealing with the stresses of being an elite official
- Create an awards program that recognises officials similar to the players and coaches
- Do not place unrealistic expectations on experienced referees ensuring they are able to remain as an elite official
- Manage commitments and burnout of elite officials
- Provide managerial support of elite officials across all aspects of administration
- Provide regular accurate and honest assessments by qualified personnel regarding officiating performances and their true position within the elite system
- Counselling and interview to discuss the reasons why officials decide to retire.
- Use of technology to assist referees to self-evaluate, and identify strategies for improvement



# ELITE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

## A) ASSUMPTIONS

- Education and training is an essential component for the accreditation of officials at the elite level
- At the elite level of competition, players, coaches and spectators have sometimes unrealistic expectations of the knowledge and ability of the referees to interpret and apply the rules in elite competitions
- The education of elite officials is generally done through experience, education sessions and referee evaluation and coaching. Referee evaluators/supervisors assess the performance of the referees and work to modify and improve their skills as an elite official

## B) ISSUES WITH EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF ELITE OFFICIALS

- Players, coaches and spectators demand perfection from elite level referees
- Limited advanced resources to extend the training of elite referees
- Lack of appropriately qualified educators and mentors available to implement elite education and training programs
- Current elite courses need to have a greater focus on the intangible skills of communication, game management and dealing with stress and conflict
- Lack of defined paths and expectations for elite officials to reach the pinnacle of officiating
- Reduced opportunity for progression because of the longevity of experienced officials and the narrowing opportunities at the top
- Limited high level competitions available to expose developing elite officials and to gain experience at the elite level

## C) STRATEGIES TO ASSIST ELITE REFEREE EDUCATION

- Ensure officiating education and training experiences are specific to elite officials
- Create a formal Talent Identification Program where potential elite officials are identified, educated, trained and mentored
- Create a formal education and training program that gives the elite official every opportunity to improve
- Provide high quality and unified educational course material, incorporating all variations of teaching mediums
- Ensure advanced training and education in game management, dealing with stress and dealing with conflict are mandatory courses
- Identify referee educators and mentors to provide appropriately consistent evaluations and subsequent feedback to improve performance
- Utilize experienced and retired elite officials to mentor and advise the current elite officials, providing working role models
- Clearly identify and communicate information of what is expected of elite referees through the eyes of a coach, a player, a spectator and an administrator, along with referee administrators
- Ensure elite referees are included in as many aspects of the elite player development program ensuring opportunities for gaining elite game experiences
- Exposure to elite competitions internationally

# CONCLUSION



There is no perfect solution which will address the issues of recruitment, retention, education and training of officials. This presentation only serves to pose the question: Are there changes that can be made to improve the development of officiating at all levels?

These suggested strategies will have little or no impact without:

- Genuine commitment by Federations to address the issues
- Designated personnel to drive the programs
- Allocation of resources to adequately attack the issues
- Appropriate support structures to be in place
- Most importantly, a clear message from the Federations that they care about the recruitment, training, education and promotion of their officials

In summary, this material suggests that in order to address problems in the recruitment and retention of basketball officials a number of strategies ought to be implemented. These are:

1. Federations should attempt to build a stronger and more positive public image for their officials;
2. Federations should consider the adoption of a tougher stance on abuse that moves beyond the usual banter of the competition;
3. Federations at all levels should be encouraged to increase their recognition of officials;



**IN ORDER TO ADDRESS PROBLEMS IN THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF BASKETBALL OFFICIALS A NUMBER OF STRATEGIES OUGHT TO BE IMPLEMENTED**



4. Federations at all levels should work together to implement structures to improve officiating;
5. Clearer and more transparent career paths should be developed and communicated for officials who have interests and aspirations to officiate at elite levels;
6. Federations should be encouraged to develop and implement reliable systems to monitor the recruitment and retention of sports officials at all levels;
7. Performance evaluation systems and resources should ensure that officials at all levels receive regular and appropriate feedback on their performance;
8. Federations should be encouraged to appoint officials' coordinators at their local level;
9. Federations should consider adopting more flexible approaches to the nominations of officials to enable healthy work life balance;
10. Federations should develop opportunities for experienced officials to ease into retirement through roles as mentors, coaches, evaluators and part time officiating;
11. Training for officials should be designed to include hands-on conflict resolution sessions and coping mechanisms for dealing with the trauma of abuse and harassment; and,
12. Coach and player education should include modules on working with sport officials to minimize incidents of abuse together to implement structures to improve officiating;

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# EXCEPTIONAL PLACE TO WORK

## SELF-FULFILLMENT

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