

THE BASKETBALL OFFICIAL SITUATION

By: William O. "Bill" Utley

Well fellows, its March again which under ordinary conditions would be about the time of year for spring fever to become prevalent. Certainly this is not true for basketball coaches, players and fans. It is really the time long awaited by these followers of the sperical pigskin game. The tournaments are well under way and soon a new champion will be crowned to replace last years basketball king, Brewers.

After three years of hibernation, this old "whistle tooter" has decided to cast all caution aside and from past experience and observation, try to answer the question which has been asked him by a number of coaches, "whats wrong with our officials this year and what can be done to improve the present set-up"?

I will now stretch forth my neck and gently lay my head upon the block. But before doing so, I must ask that you coaches be relieved of those instruments of torture, our good and efficient commissioner of that huge bkak jack and my fellow officials, of those rather sharp looking cleavers. If you refuse, I am still going to express my opinion because after some nineteen years officiating or I might say, trying; my neck is very tough and I am willing to risk same by writing this artivle. These are my own convictions and are not meant to ridicule anyone or in any way attempt to devise a plan that would work a hardship on either our young officials or those out of state "tooters" who are registered with the K.H.S.A.A.

Before proceeding further ,I want to present to those not too well aquainted with this writer, a thumb nail history of myself. In 1938 when the K.H.S.A.A. first instituted a system of registering and training officials, I became associated with them as an official of basketball. Prior to that time and through the 1945-46 season, I have had the privilege of officiating in over one thousand games. This includes a number of district, regional and four state tournaments. For the past eight years I have been certified and for six years have served the K.H.S.A.A. Employment Bureau of Officials as commissioner for the second region which comprises 31 schools. During the past three years I have not worked any games because ~~the~~ conditions beyond my control has prevented it but I have retained my certified rating by conforming with Div.4, Sec.4, Item C, of the by-laws of the K.H.S.A.A. I might add that my association with coaches, school men and players throughout the years were most cordial and I will always cherish those contacts.

This year, in my region, I have had more complaints¹⁴ and arguments relative to officiating than I have in all my six years as commissioner. I have secured officials for 23 games this season and I trust that the arrangements made were satisfactory. We have 491 schodls that are ~~members~~ of the K.H.S.A.A. and 1232 registered officials for the past season. Breaking the officials down I find that 1,102 are ~~from~~ Kentucky, Ohio⁵⁶, Indiana 53, Tennessee 7, West Virginia 6, Illinois 4, ~~and~~ California 2 and Missouri 1. This gives us better than two officials per game to each school in Kentucky even if they all played on the same night. This clearly indicates that we are not short on officials. Whats wrong, then?

It seems to me that the first thing that needs attention would be our system of registering the officials. Division 4, By-law 29, Sec.4, item 4, of the K.H.S.A.A. sets out how an official may become registered. Notwithstanding this, we all know that it is a very simple matter for anyone to become a registered official. All that is done now by anyone wishing to register is to have four of his friends sign a card and part with two bucks in favor of Commissioner Sanford. He immediately becomes a registered official. It seems that this condition might be improved by changing the present three classes of officials to four. The first group or beginners might be called Apprentice Officials. To become an apprentice that person should sign his card without any reccomendations. He should be required to pay a fee of #2.00 to cover the cost of his rule book and supplies. He would then be listed with the K.H.S.A.A. and in the official magazine as an apprentice official. Any official with this rating should not be permitted to call any games other than second team preliminaries. The next step would be the registered official. In order to become registered without previous experience, it should be compulsory that the applicant has served as an Apprentice Official for one year and officiated in at least 10 second team games. He would

then obtain his card for registration and have it signed by four coaches of the second team ball clubs for whom he had worked. This would entitle him to be registered. All endorsements should be made by coaches instead of school men, coaches and officials as is the present rule. After all, it seems that the coaches for whom that particular official had served would be in a much better position to know if that official was duly qualified to become registered. Steps three and four of becoming approved and certified seem to be adequate for the present.

The second thing that might help would be to make it mandatory for coaches to rate ALL officials and officials the coaches, schools, fans and players. Failure to comply with this rule would invoke a penalty of one years suspension of that school or official. When I say a rating, I do not mean because Jim is a good boy and a friend of mine I give him an excellent in all his games that he worked for me. Lets rate these things as they ARE. If they are bad, make it bad, if good, then good. This is the only way to get a true picture of just what is really going on.

Sanford

Third, I think that the State Board of Control should endow Commissioner ~~Johnson~~ with the authority to employ one capable man in each of the sixteen regionals to act as Assistant Commissioner. His duties would be to assign officials for all regular season games in his region; to assemble ratings on schools and officials; to compile these ratings and turn them over to Commissioner Sanford for records at the end of the basketball season. Each assistant commissioner being responsible to the State Commissioner. I might say that I have this plan worked out and I sincerely believe that it ~~WOULD~~ be satisfactory.

Fourth, (will some one be so kind as to hand me that straight jacket for "Ted"?) That all district and regional tournament sites be selected by the State Commissioner. That officials for all district, regional and state tournaments be assigned by the state commissioner. The officials for the district and regional tourneys shall come from registered and approved resident Kentucky lists. The officials for the state tournament shall be certified and residents of Kentucky. The state tournament officials should be selected on their ratings of the previous year and one to come from four different sections of Kentucky each year. No official to work the state tourney two years in succession regardless of rating. I feel that this would give our officials an incentive to try harder to improve and more a chance to reach the top.

Perhaps someone will think that I am unjust to our out of state officials. After all, it seems that the fellows that work our games all year should be good enough to officiate in our tournaments. I feel that we have as many good officials as has any of our neighbors. Why go to Ohio, Indiana or elsewhere to give the better jobs to outsiders? Does Ohio, Indiana or any of the other state associations assign any of our officials to their tournaments? NO, they do NOT. Incidentally, I belonged to the Indiana S.A.A. for ten years and I assure you that I ~~was~~ not ~~been~~ asked to work any of their games nor have I ever heard of any other Kentucky official being called upon. In other words lets keep our boys interested by giving them the honors.

Finally, it might be said that another of our troubles might be that a number of our registered officials are incompetent. This is because they are given tough games too soon. Many times this is done through error by a coach moving from one location to another and who has not been informed as to the ability or experience of the official before he is engaged. Then too, we still have the officials that can not yet distinguish blocking from charging or when a player is or is not in the act of shooting for a goal. The interpretations on these two rules seem to be causing the most trouble. I feel that the clinics that are being conducted by "The Flying Dutchman", Charlie Vettiner has really done much to improve our officiating and in a few more years under his capable leadership, we will have all these minor stumbling blocks ~~in officiating~~ removed.

There you have it fellows. Think it over coaches and if you decide that any of this constructive criticism is worth anything, then instruct your delegate to the annual meeting what you would like to see done. Keep in mind the thought of improving our set-up. Our basketball games are no better than our officials. Lets all work together for a better K.H.S.A.A. and a better understanding between coaches, school men, fans, players and last but not least OUR OFFICIALS.