CIF SAC-JOAQUIN SECTION
BASKETBALL 3-PERSON OFFICIATING CREWS PRESENTATION

NCOA’s Understanding of School’s Concerns:

We understand that the schools wish to eliminate 3 person basketball officiating crews completely during section playoffs, including all second week neutral and/or championship sites such as Power Balance, UOP, Galt, Tokay and Consumnes with the following reasons brought forward to the NCOA:

1. Officials commenting during a game that “It is not my call”.
2. Lack of System whereby a Coach or Athletic Director can Evaluate Officials
3. One Official not issuing a report in Section playoff game after ejection which had an appeal overturned
4. Technical foul for face-guarding in a section playoff game last season.
5. Too many post season officials assigned by tenure (Seeing the same old faces).
6. Officials appeared to be letting a lot of little things go.

Our Intention Today:

A. Provide some brief historical and national perspective(s) as to 3 person officiating versus 2 person officiating.
B. Talk about the NCOA officiating training programs.
C. Address each of the above ‘Concerns’ with specific answers.
D. Speak to the future of the 3 person crew process ….. And…..
E. Answer any or all of your questions.

Perspective:

From Hank Nichols, former NCAA men’s coordinator of men’s officials:

“The game has evolved; you now have 90-foot pressure, the size and speed of the players has grown and the game is more sophisticated. There have been justifiable concerns that there would be too many whistles and the game would be slow and chopped up but studies have shown that the average number of fouls called per game has remained nearly the same as in 1960. (This actual study showed that 3 person crews called 1.1 less fouls per game versus the 2 person crews) Games had gotten to the point where two man crews had too many dead spots, too many plays that just weren’t seen.”

From Michigan High School Athletic Association Executive Director Jack Roberts:

“We have come to believe that the interscholastic game not only tolerates but requires a higher level of supervision. 3 person officiating crews grew in popularity in the mid 90’s a year after we had more sportsmanship-related problems than we thought appropriate.’”
From John Reigar, State Commissioner of Arizona Intercollegiate Association:

“Three person crews are absolutely, unequivocally the only way to go if we’re going to do justice to these kids. There is not a better system for officiating basketball. We watch game films and can see the difference between two and three person crews- and the three person crew is like the difference between night and day. Three officials take the guessing out of the game. When you put two on the strong side and one on the backside no one has to make a call based on something they heard but didn’t see.”

From Terry Rasmussen, CIF Northern California Norcal Committee Representative:

“In general, the pace of the game with it’s 30 and 35 second shot clocks has rapidly increased, therefore officials are constantly on the move more and therefore the angles at which they call plays is greatly diminished in a 2 person game. The game has become a more slash to the basket/motion type of offensive game. In a 3 person game, the Center official typically has the best looks at those plays and review of games in which 3 person mechanics are used indicates that 35% of the calls come from that official.”

“The ability to ask for help on a typical out of bounds call is dramatically increased as each official has a line and can lend a helping hand on secondary lines. Officials in a 3 person crew have much better looks at plays because they do not have to officiate as many players.”

And additionally from Terry Rasmussen:

“In the 3 person game, the new Lead official will beat the play to the baseline almost every play, whereas in a 2 person game that percentage drops. Because of rotations, officials in a 3 person crew reach their basic position faster and are better able to concentrate on their primary areas. In a 2 person crew officials many times miss getting an accurate look at the feet during a 3 point attempt especially in a fast transition game. And in a 3 person crew, officials have to cover less distance; therefore they are able to be in a better position to call plays correctly.”

From Mike DeLois, Assignor for Central Maine area:

“Studies over consecutive years were done and the results were that the 3 person crew called 1.5 less fouls per game than the 2 person crew. I believe there are two reasons for this. First, players behave better when they know they’re being watched. Second, officials working two-person crews sometimes have to take educated guesses on calling action, particularly fouls. In a two-person crew the officials doesn't always have the best look that is needed.”

And from Andrea Osborne, NCAA Big West Conference - Coordinator of Officials:

“I am so disappointed on several levels to hear that a proposal has been made to change the high school basketball championships back to two person crews.

As a Division One assignor in women’s basketball for the Big West Conference, I have been an avid supporter of three person crews for high school. We dig deep into the high school ranks to mentor officials and assist with development of officials through to the collegiate ranks. This is the training ground for officials that lays the foundation for them to experience games that build integrity, interpersonal skills and gives them opportunity to hone their officiating abilities into a service worthy of our student athletes and coaches efforts.

As the dialogue begins to review this proposal it is critical to analyze what our sense of purpose was in going to three person crews.

It seemed as the game developed in both speed, strength and accuracy combined with club sports having a presence, more demands were made on the officiating crews. It should be remembered that two person crews were no longer in position to see the plays in their entirety and handle the coach’s demands on the side line. The court needed to be viewed with a different perspective: primary on ball responsibility from the front and back of a play and, off ball
responsibility that covered screens, post ups and cutters being re-routed.

It is very important that the officiating programs keep pace and provide an appropriate service as we see the standard and skill of athletes and coaches increase. The question becomes - what is an appropriate service? We, officials are the guardians of the game working diligently to support the ethics and integrity of the game. In that vein I ask you to dig deep and consider the ‘problem’ in the big picture so that we might problem solve together. Could it be that it is increasingly more difficult for athletes to gain advantages when three sets of eyes overlap high density areas of plays. Is it more challenging for coaches to gain an edge when three officials close ranks showing fidelity to the governing bodies application of rules and mechanics to the game. Are the officials sufficiently educated in three person mechanics.

We must have a compelling sense of purpose to accomplish results in a way that builds trust. This ‘paradigm shift in officiating has changed the way coaches see and think about the game. I wonder if we have spent sufficient time on educating all vested members of the basketball programs in understanding why the changes were effected. Every interaction is a moment of trust when we are working towards behavior shifts for more positive outcomes. Organizational trust aligns structures and systems with core values and behaviors. I believe we should reflect on this area when looking for solutions.

We should study what the game needs for effective presentation and meet those needs. It is not the time to lose sight of why we effected change but to trust all parties to evaluate our growth to move forward. Trust is a function of two things: character and competence. It is time to do the right thing by showing your character and get the right thing done in showing your competence!

I offer my comments to you in the hope that you can pass them on to those involved in discussions on this issue so we can look for growth not reaction or regression. That they will recognize that their actions will impact many stakeholders at many levels.”

Other potential byproducts that come from the use of 3 person crews are:
- Straight-lining (players directly in the way of officials) is much less likely to occur.
- Screening away from the ball coverage is much improved.
- Rebound play coverage is much improved.
- The field of vision of each official is greatly enhanced.
- Tends to improve crowd control and sportsmanship – an official is always right there (This concept comes from a report from school administrators and athletic directors that verified this)
- The entire concept of Fair Play and accurate results is greatly enhanced. (Teams that thrive on physical and pressure (helter-skelter) play obviously do not endorse the use of 3 person crews because their tactics are more readily penalized in a 3 person crew. 2 person crews sometimes just cannot see all of the back picks, screen jostling, etc).

Training Programs:

Officials nowadays are like players, most work at their craft year round. Officials are going to camps each summer in the off seasons to become better. Locally, the NCOA North and South provide preseason classroom training and on-court training amounting to over 18 hours of testing/seminars/classrooms and quizzes.

Officials also work tournament games each December in 3 person crews as well as the Common Good tournament games on Martin Luther King Day. Internally, the NCOA has evaluation and development programs whereby officials are mentored based on game reports, etc.
Responses to Concerns (Items 1-6 listed above):

- Allow me to address item #2 from above firstly. The NCOA is currently working on implementing an evaluation system for coaches, administrators, etc.

- Items #1, 3 and 4 don’t appear to be 3 person crew-specific. In other words, all of those items could have occurred in a 2 person crew game. Each concern/issue appears to be a judgment type of issue. A face guarding technical foul could have been called whether or not it was in a 2 person crew or a 3 person crew. A face guarding technical foul is merely an individual judgment and rule call by a singular official. Cancelling the use of 3 person crews because of these three items would not be valid. Instead further education of officials, coaches and players as to the rules around each instance would be a better approach. The judgment of an official is just that…. That official’s perception of the play before them at the time and is based on many things as we all know – rules knowledge, positioning, posturing of players, etc, etc. (We have all sat in the stands and see what we believe to be a foul or not, but what we can’t do is see thru the view of the official that did or did not call the foul because we are not seeing from their position.)

- Our response to Item #5 above is as follows: Last season the NCOA North and South used well over 150 officials for the first week of playoffs alone.

- Item 6 above is difficult to assess without more information. We just cannot fairly comment on the “little things” without knowing from the source of the comment what the “little things’ are.

The Future/Moving Forward:

We have not addressed Concern Item #1 specifically because this presentation revolves entirely around its concept. We would like to answer any and all of your questions involving 3 person crews and also ask you to provide us with any more specifics around this issue because as you can see by the listed concerns, we are at loss to understand why you would be considering changing backwards to a 2 person crew from a 3 person crew in the playoffs.

In the NFHS High School Rule Book, Rule 10, Section 6 – Article 1 reads: a player shall not push, hold, charge, trip, or impede the progress of an opponent by extending arm(s), shoulder(s), hip(s) or knee(s), or by bending his/her body into other than a normal position, nor use any rough tactics… Rule 10 Article 3 …a player shall not use his/her hands on an opponent in any way that inhibits the freedom of movement of the opponent acts as an aid to a player on starting or stopping. The NFHS has dictated in the two cited rules above that contact should be penalized.

Based on the cursory glance at the studies cited herein and many other studies and opinions from Basketball professionals across the country there is no contrary argument to the ability of a 3 person crew to effectively control and see the game better than a 2 person crew.
We would be the only section of 10 in the state to officiate high quality basketball with less people. Games could quickly develop into physical brawls not basketball (please reference commentary aforementioned in regards to bigger, quicker players and action). For those teams that make the Norcal and State Championship games, they will be officiated by 3 person crews. 3 person crews can do a better job of managing/seeing the game more fully especially with regards to safety items (Concussions, etc).

The sheer ‘liability’ factor of knowing that a 3 person crew does help ‘see’ more plays clearly makes the decision to keep 3 person crews in the playoffs a non-starter. In this litigious society in which we live, we would not like to be the only section in the state not using 3 person “tested” mechanics.

In any form of competition, the accuracy of rulings is a vital factor in determining the outcome. Placing an official in a position to increase accuracy is what the mechanics of a Crew of Three accomplishes. Think about the 90 foot court and high tempo up and down game with only two officials attempting to keep up. There will be times when there is only one official in an area to see a play while in full sprint with eyes bouncing around as he/she runs to try to get to a good spot to see a potential crash/bang play. Now picture that same up and down type of game with the additional 3rd official who would sliding along in the center of the floor seeing the other side; the calls become clearer because the amount of area an official needs to see is minimized. This makes for better calls. This makes for better and safer games.

Conclusion:

In today’s very often hectically played game, a Crew of Two does well to just survive. The Crew realizes this even prior to going onto the court to work. The game today needs the services of Crews of Three officials.

Thank You……… Questions?