

Wisdom of a Wednesday (on a Monday)

March 29, 2021

I hope this WOW finds you and your loved ones doing well. Now that the men's season has finished and the women's season is in full swing, I wanted to take this opportunity to remind us all about free throws and their importance.

Let's Talk Free Throws

Rule 5, Section 10. Free Throws—Where Taken

A free throw shall be taken at the location of the ball, except:

a. If the foul is committed by a defending player within the defender's 2-meter area, the free throw shall be taken outside the 2-meter line; or

b. Where otherwise provided for in the rules.

A free throw taken from the wrong position shall be retaken.

Under the new rules, referees no longer need to move the position of the ball as frequently for free throws.

Scenario: The ball is at the center position about 3 meters away from the goal and center cage. An exclusion occurs on the perimeter around 6 meters. The ball is to be put in play **AT THE LOCATION OF THE BALL**, or in this instance, at the center position. **THERE IS NO NEED TO MOVE THE BALL TO 6-METERS TO START PLAY.**

There are a few exceptions provided for in the rules with definitive free throw locations that referees must remember:

- A foul committed within the defender's 2-meter area
- Goal throw
- Corner throw
- Timeout re-start

Rule 5, Section 11. Free Throws—Time Allowed

The time allowed for a player to take a free throw shall be at the discretion of the referees; it shall be reasonable and without undue delay. It shall be an offense if a player who is clearly in a position most readily to take a free throw does not do so.

The referee administering the free throw shall point with the arm held horizontally in the direction of the attacking team and will drop the arm to a vertical position when the ball has been put in play.

As stated above, the time allotted to take the free throw is to be reasonable and WITHOUT UNDUE DELAY. A reasonable amount of time should include allowing the player taking the free throw to gain control of the ball after the foul and quickly attempt a shot or a pass. Should the player decide not to pass or shoot quickly, they then must immediately and CLEARLY put the ball in play.

Rule 5, Section 12. Free Throws—How Taken

1. The ball must be put in play by demonstrating a clear separation of ball, hand, and water as in passing the ball, picking up and dropping the ball, tossing the ball in the air, swimming with the ball, or transferring the ball from one hand to the other hand above the water.
2. The following moves are not considered putting the ball in play:
 - a. Spinning the ball;
 - b. Mere act of picking up the ball; or
 - c. Hard ball fake.

The player taking the free throw may quickly attempt a pass or a shot and then change their mind. However, after the attempt, the ball MUST be clearly and immediately put in play. There must be a CLEAR separation of the hand from the ball and the ball from the water. The player taking the free throw may also swim with the ball and it is considered in play.

Scenario: a player is fouled on the perimeter. They gain control of the ball and start to pass the ball to the center position but see a defender starting to head that way to steal the ball. The player taking the free throw does not pass to the center. At this point, the ball must immediately be CLEARLY put in play.

Rule 7, Section 4. Interfering With Throws

To interfere with the taking of a free throw, goal throw or corner throw, including:

- a. Intentionally to throw away or fail to release the ball to prevent the normal progress of the game;
- b. Any attempt to play the ball before it has left the hand of the thrower; or
- c. As a defending player who committed a foul, not moving away from the player taking the free throw before raising an arm to block a pass or shot.

Note 1: A player is not to be penalized under this rule if the player does not hear the whistle as a result of being under the water. The referees must determine if the actions of the player are intentional.

Note 2: Interference with a throw may take place indirectly when the ball is hampered, delayed or prevented from reaching the player who is to take the throw, or it may occur when the execution of the throw is interfered with by an opponent blocking the direction of the throw (Fig. 11) or by disturbing the actual movement of the thrower (Fig. 12). For interference with a penalty throw, see also Rule 7-16.

The referee must be sure to observe the free throw while also paying attention to their other duties. The defense will be excluded if they interfere with the taking of the free throw. Once the ball is in play, the referee should drop their horizontal arm as an indication to the clock operator and the field of play that the ball is in play.

NCAA players, coaches and referees have not been required to put the ball in play in this manner for quite some time. We are all learning together, and will improve together to make sure we all get free throws right.

As always, more to come...

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