

## Coaches' and referees' evaluation of the importance of the rules at the initiation stage of basketball

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### COACHES' AND REFEREES' EVALUATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RULES AT THE INITIATION STAGE OF BASKETBALL

KEY WORDS: Regulations, Basketball, Initiation, Coaches, Referees.

ABSTRACT: The rules and regulations affect sport practice tactics and techniques. Therefore, for a player to eventually master the game of basketball, the player should also understand its internal logic. In this study, the opinions of coaches and referees about the rules that they believe to be most important when teaching basketball at the initiation stage were assessed, and an analysis of the differences between these two groups was done. The study's sample was composed of 37 coaches and 40 referees. A questionnaire was utilised to measure the opinion about the degree of importance of teaching the rules at the initiation stage of basketball. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items, one for each rule, in which they evaluated the importance of teaching the rule from 1 (*Not at all important*) to 4 (*Very important*). A descriptive analysis of the data was done; further, to test the differences between the mean values given by the coaches and the referees, a student t-test for independent samples was utilised. The results demonstrate that the rules that should have most importance when teaching mini-basketball are: out-of-bounds (sideline and endline), grabbing/pushing, over-and-back, travelling, and double-dribbling. When comparing the values given by the coaches and the referees, significant differences were found in 11 of the 30 items, for which greater coordination between the two groups is suggested. The coaches gave more importance to travelling and double-dribbling, likely due to the repercussion in the teaching of the technique, especially of the player with the ball. The referees gave more importance to the rules related to personal fouls, probably in search of control of the game.

One of the big objectives that coaches have had in the sport world has been to find the way to teach sport to achieve the best learning by sportsmen; specifically, to define what to teach, and especially, when and how to do it. Along these lines, a special emphasis has been given to technical foundations, traditionally, focusing the attention of learning the skills before the understanding of the game (Alarcón et al., 2011; Cárdenas and Alarcón, 2010; Contreras, De la Torre and Velázquez, 2001). However, several authors (Cárdenas, 2001; Cárdenas and Pintor, 2001; Castejón and López, 2003; Castejón, Giménez, Jiménez and López, 2003) confirm that the tactical principles are what provoke the need for learning technique. In this sense, some authors (Cárdenas, 2003; Contreras, De la Torre and Velázquez, 2001; Graham, 2001; Rovegno, Nevett, Brock and Balarz, 2001) propose the teaching of sport by connecting it to game-like situations. Along these lines, Gréhaigne, Godbout and Bouthier (2001) believe that the game rules create the nature of each sport, determining the restrictions for its resolution and affecting the decision making and the specific motor skills, therefore affect the athletic practice (Hammond and Hosking, 2005). In this sense, Garoz (2005) points out that for a player to master the game of basketball, he or she should first become familiar with and understand the internal logic of the game, and the rules are the element that most gives the game its meaning. This vision assumes a coming together of the learning of the rules with a constructivist perspective (Cárdenas and Alarcón, 2010), getting the player to come closer to the game objectives as well as the

understanding of the shared objectives of everyone that participates in the game, and especially, to make the best tactical and technical decisions in the game situations that emerge during the development of the real game.

Regarding this topic, there is a certain interest in studying the modification of the game rules, by trying to adapt them to the characteristics of the participants (Arias, Argudo and Alonso, 2011; Giménez and Sáenz-López, 2004; Mitjana, 2007; Piñar et al., 2009). However, there are few studies about the importance of the rules at the initiation stage of basketball and, specifically, about which rules are most important in teaching mini-basketball (Ortega, Piñar, Salado, Palao and Gómez, 2012).

The mini-basketball stage seems to be a particularly important moment for becoming familiar with the norms that define the athletic practice, necessary actions, and procedures of this sport in order to be able to play it. Based on this, the present study tried to assess the opinions of both the coaches and the referees regarding the rules that they consider most important to apply and teach the players in the initiation to basketball. Further, the differences between the opinions of these mini-basketball coaches and referees were analysed.

### Method

The study's sample was composed of 37 coaches and 40 referees from in the autonomous community of Andalusia (Spain). They were chosen by intentional sampling. These

coaches and referees worked in the following divisions: (U-8, U-10, and U-12). The age of participants was between 16 and 42 years ( $M = 25.23$ ,  $SD = 7.61$ ), and 74% were males while 26% were females. The participants of the study had an average of 5.6 ( $SD = 6.01$ ) years of experience as coaches or referees.

The instrument utilised for recording the data in the present study was a questionnaire. First, certain data were collected, such as: gender, age, division in which the participant coaches or referees, and years of experience. Next, it was focused on measuring the opinion about the degree of importance of each rule in the teaching of mini-basketball. The questionnaire was composed of 30 items (each one corresponding to a rule of mini-basketball) that followed the heading: "In my opinion, the degree of importance when teaching each rule at the initiation stage of basketball (mini-basketball) is:". The responses were scored with a Likert-type scale, from 1 (*Not at all important*) to 4 (*Very important*).

First, a descriptive analysis of the data was done. Next, to analyse the possible differences between the means of the coaches' and referees' opinions, a student t-test for independent samples was utilised. Significance was set at  $p < .05$ . The analysis was done with the SPSS 19 statistical package.

## Results

In Table 1, the opinions of the coaches and referees about the importance of each rule in teaching basketball at the initiation stage are recorded. It is seen that the rules that should be given the most importance in the teaching of mini-basketball, according to the interviewees, are related to: out-of-bounds (sideline and baseline), grabbing/pushing, over and back, travelling, and double-dribbling. Further, it was found that the rules that were considered least important when teaching basketball at this stage of initiation are: goaltending, interference, 5 seconds to shoot a free throw, and 24 seconds of ball possession.

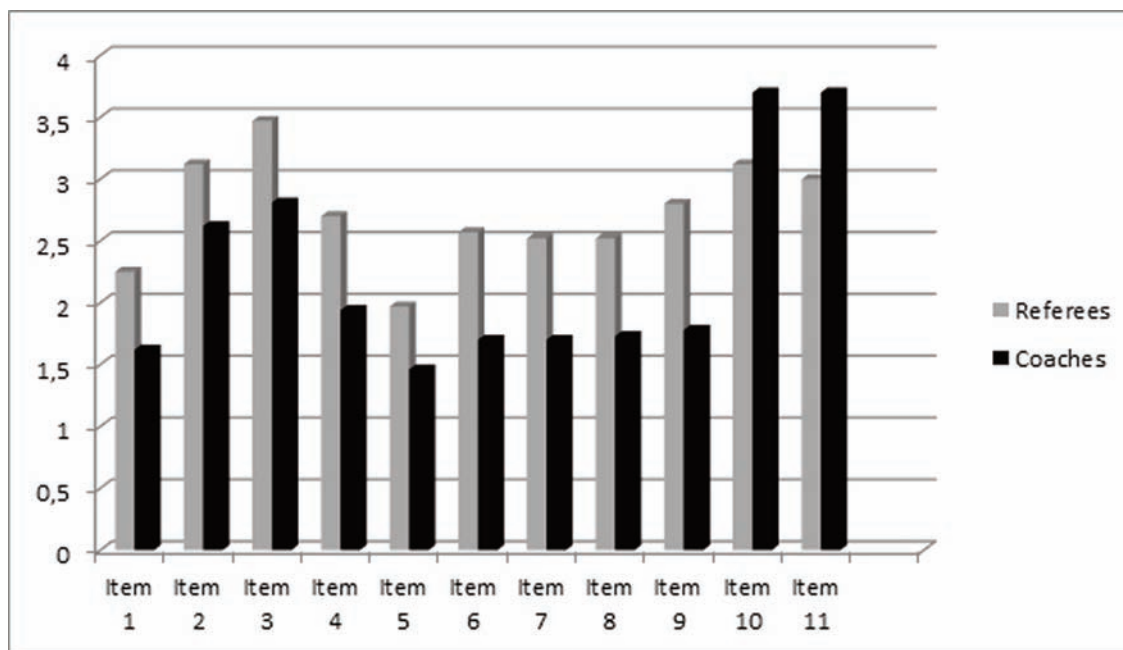
Variables	M	SD	Variables	M	SD
• 24 seconds of possession	1.93	.83	16) Illegal charge	2.17	.99
• 8 seconds to get to the front court	2.88	.84	17) Contacting an opponent illegally with hands and/or arms	2.83	.92
• 3 seconds in the restricted area (related to time)	2.48	.97	18) Illegal defence in post play	2.14	.87
• 5 seconds to pass, shoot, or dribble the ball	2.65	.96	19) Illegal guarding from the rear	2.31	.91
• 5 seconds to shoot a free throw	1.73	.70	20) Holding / pushing	3.52	.80
• Ball returned to backcourt (over and back)	3.40	.61	21) Travelling	3.40	.71
• Out-of-bounds (sideline)	3.65	.58	22) Double-dribbling	3.34	.72
• Out-of-bounds (endline)	3.60	.61	23) Fumble	2.17	.94
• 3 seconds in the restricted area (related to space)	2.49	.80	24) Illegal progression for a player who has established a pivot foot	2.90	.93
• Limit of 5 personal fouls	3.21	.92	25) Player rolls or attempts to stand up when holding ball	2.61	.83
• Offensive foul	2.34	.82	26) Carrying the ball	2.81	.84
• Jump ball	2.77	.81	27) Deliberate kick	2.78	.91
• Goal-tending	1.67	.82	28) Technical foul	2.77	1.16
14) Interference	1.72	.82	29) Unsportsmanlike foul	2.92	1.11
15) Illegal screen or block	2.03	.93	30) Disqualifying foul	2.78	1.19

Note.  $M$  = Mean;  $SD$  = Standard deviation.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation values for the degree of importance that the coaches and referees believe that teaching the rules has in basketball initiation.

In the Figure 1 the statistically significant differences between the coaches' and referees' mean scores are demonstrated. The referees found the following rules more important, as demonstrated by the differences in means: 24 seconds for possession (item 1), 8 seconds to get to the front court (item 2), limit of 5 personal fouls (item 10), charges (item 11), interference

(item 14), illegal screens/blocks (item 15), illegal charge (item 16), illegal defence in post play (item 18), and illegal guarding from the rear (item 19). On the other hand, the teaching of rules such as travelling (item 21) and double-dribbling (item 22) is more important for the coaches than for the referees.



Note. All the differences between the mean scores demonstrated in the figure were statistically significant.

Figure 1. Differences in the mean scores of the degree of importance given by the coaches and referees to the teaching of the rules in the initiation to basketball.

## Discussion

The objectives of the present study were to assess the opinions of basketball coaches and referees about the importance that each rule has in the initiation stage and to analyse the differences that exist between mini-basketball coaches and referees. The results demonstrate that the highest valued rules are those that are related to the court's out-of-bound lines, fouls (grabbing/pushing), and rules such as travelling and double-dribbling. It is observed that these rules are a key in the use of space and in the relationship with the opponent and with the ball. Authors such as Parlebas (2001) and MacPhail, Kirk, and Griffin (2008) pointed out that the rules that make the motor action emerge as the ones that establish the relationships with the object, with the other participants, and with the game space. These authors consider the rules related to time as secondary, the same ones that were given less importance in the present study.

Significant differences between referees and coaches are found in 11 of the 30 items. If learning the rules is important in mini-basketball (under-12) (Arias et al., 2011; Ortega et al., 2012; Piñar et al., 2009), it seems necessary for the two groups to be in

better agreement at this important formative stage; thus, we propose more technical meetings related to this topic. Coaches and referees have an important responsibility to teach the rules as elements that affect athletic practice (Gréhaigne, Godbout and Bouthier, 2001; Hammond and Hosking, 2005).

The rules about travelling and double-dribbling are considered more important by the coaches than the referees. These rules directly affect the teaching and learning processes of mini-basketball, especially in the relationship between the player and the ball (Arias, 2008; Hernández, 2000; Salado et al., 2011). The traditional interest of the coach for teaching the technical-tactical elements explains the need to teach these two rules to take on the joint technical actions of the player with the ball (dribbling, shooting, stops, etc.).

However, the referees focus their attention on the game situation and its control (Gimeno, Buceta, Lahoz and Sanz, 1998). Thus, they give special importance to the rules related to fouls (items 10, 11, 15, 16, 18, and 19). A mini-basketball game can be chaotic if the impulse of the defensive players is not controlled (Giménez and Sáenz-López, 2004). They also especially value a pair of rules related to time (items 1 and 2).

In conclusion, the most important rules in basketball initiation according to the interviewees are those related to the utilisation of space as well as the relationship with the opponent and with the ball. The coaches valued higher the teaching of travelling and double-dribbling than referees, while the referees highlighted the

rules related to personal fouls. In regard to the teaching of the rules, there is a need for greater coordination between the two groups as well as further research that looks more in-depth at this process.

#### VALORACIÓN DE ENTRENADORES Y ÁRBITROS DE LA IMPORTANCIA DE LAS REGLAS EN LA INICIACIÓN AL BALONCESTO

PALABRAS CLAVE: Reglas, Baloncesto, Iniciación, Entrenadores, Árbitros.

RESUMEN: Las reglas condicionan la práctica deportiva táctica y técnicamente. Por tanto, para que un jugador llegue a dominar el juego de baloncesto debe entender la lógica interna del mismo. En este estudio se trató de conocer la opinión tanto de los entrenadores como de los árbitros acerca de las reglas que se consideran más importantes a la hora de enseñar el baloncesto en la iniciación, así como analizar las diferencias entre ambos colectivos. La muestra del estudio estuvo formada por 37 entrenadores y 40 árbitros. Se utilizó un cuestionario para medir la opinión sobre el grado de importancia de la enseñanza de las reglas en la iniciación al baloncesto. El cuestionario estaba constituido por un total de 30 ítems, uno por cada regla, en los que se valoraba de 1 (*Nada importante*) a 4 (*Muy importante*) el grado de importancia a la hora de enseñarla. Se realizó un análisis descriptivo de los datos y para comprobar las diferencias entre las puntuaciones medias de los entrenadores y de los árbitros, se utilizó la prueba T de Student para muestras independientes.

Los resultados mostraron que las reglas que deberían tener más importancia en la enseñanza del minibasket son: fuera de línea lateral y de fondo, agarrar/empujar, campo atrás, pasos y dobles. En la comparación entre la valoración de los entrenadores y los árbitros, se encontraron diferencias significativas en 11 de los 30 ítems por lo que se propone mayor coordinación entre ambos colectivos. Los entrenadores valoran más los pasos y dobles, seguramente por la repercusión en la enseñanza de la técnica, especialmente del jugador con balón. Los árbitros valoran más las reglas relacionadas con las faltas personales, probablemente para buscar el control del partido.

#### AVALIAÇÃO DOS TREINADORES E ÁRBITROS DA IMPORTÂNCIA DAS REGRAS NA INICIAÇÃO AO BASQUETEBOL

PALABRAS CLAVE: Regras, Basquetebol, Iniciação, Treinadores, Árbitros.

RESUMO: As regras condicionam a prática desportiva táctica e tecnicamente. Portanto, para que um jogador chegue a dominar o jogo de basquetebol deve compreender a lógica interna do mesmo. Este estudo procurou conhecer qual a opinião tanto dos treinadores como árbitros acerca das regras que são consideradas mais importantes no ensino do basquetebol na iniciação, assim como analisar as diferenças entre os dois grupos. A amostra foi composta por 37 treinadores e 40 árbitros. Utilizou-se um questionário para medir a opinião sobre o grau de importância de ensinar as regras na iniciação ao basquetebol. O questionário foi constituído por um total de 30 itens, um por cada regra, nos quais se avaliava de 1 (*Nada Importante*) a 4 (*Muito Importante*) o grau de importância quanto ao seu ensino. Foi realizada uma análise descritiva dos dados e para testar as diferenças entre as pontuações médias dos treinadores e árbitros, foi utilizado o teste T de Student para amostras independentes. Os resultados mostraram que as regras que deveriam ter mais importância no ensino do minibasket são: perdas de bola pelas linhas laterais e de fundo, agarrar / empurrar, transporte, turnovers, passos e dribles. Na comparação entre a avaliação de treinadores e árbitros, foram encontradas diferenças significativas em 11 dos 30 itens propondo-se como tal uma maior coordenação entre os dois grupos. Os treinadores valorizam mais os passes e os dribles, provavelmente por causa do impacto sobre o ensino da técnica, especialmente do jogador com a bola. Os árbitros valorizam mais as regras relacionadas com as faltas pessoais, provavelmente para manter o controlo do jogo.

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