

THE OFFICIAL MECHANICS AND PHILOSOPHIES OF
THE MINNESOTA STATE HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE

MECHANICS BASKETBALL OFFICIATING ILLUSTRATED

2 AND 3
PERSON
HIGH SCHOOL
CREWS



FROM REFEREE AND THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SPORTS OFFICIALS

INTRODUCTION

Officiating any sport is difficult. Officiating becomes exponentially difficult when we lack experience or training in the areas of rules knowledge and mechanics. Gaining knowledge and experience in these areas requires us as officials to be intentional about seeking continuous development of our skills through focused effort in the rule book and the mechanics book.

To that end, the Minnesota State High School League Board of Directors authorized the Basketball Mechanics Committee to develop mechanics content for basketball officials that can be found in one place: Basketball Officiating Mechanics Illustrated for Two and Three Person Crews. This manual was developed for new officials and veterans alike with a goal of providing consistent messaging about positioning, mechanics and philosophies expected of officials who are officiating MSHSL varsity basketball games. Simply put, if it is not in this manual, it is not a mechanic. Hopefully, it will be easier to officiate when the expectations are clear and consistent for all basketball officials across the state.

Officials may never achieve consistency in judgment, but it is my firm belief that we can achieve consistency in positioning, mechanics and philosophy for officiating high school basketball in Minnesota by reading and applying the guidelines in this manual. Officiating is fun and it will be more fun when you are in the right spot to make the right call at the right time.

As Coordinator of Officials for the Minnesota State High School League, I have boundless appreciation for all of you who go out each night with a purpose of providing outstanding opportunities for young people in the great state of Minnesota!

Have a great season!

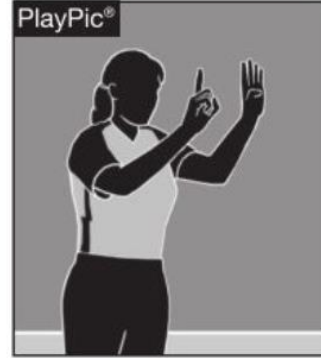
Jason Nickleby
Coordinator of Officials
MSHSL

Thank you to the following Minnesota Basketball Mechanics Committee members who devoted their time and expertise to developing the content in this manual:

Jim Erzar, Grand Rapids
Eric Gray, Minneapolis
Ted Krize, Stillwater
Steve Makowske, St. Anthony Village
M.J. Wagenson, Pine Island
Jim Weinzierl, Park Rapids
Frank White, Woodbury

SIGNAL CHART

Officials should report fouls to the scorer by using two hands to displays the fouler's number. The official's right hand will indicate the first digit (tens or "one" in the PlayPic example) and the left hand will show a second digit (ones or "four"), so it appears in a left-to-right sequence to the scorer. When reporting, the official should verbalize 14, not one-four.



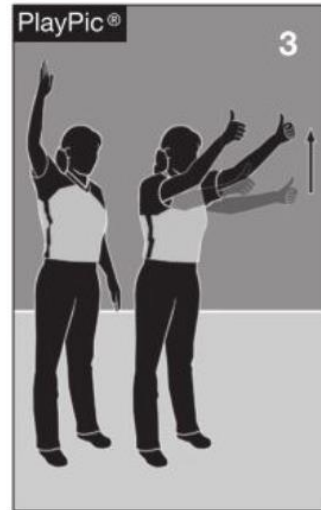
STARTING AND STOPPING CLOCK



Start Clock



Stop Clock



Stop Clock for
Held Ball

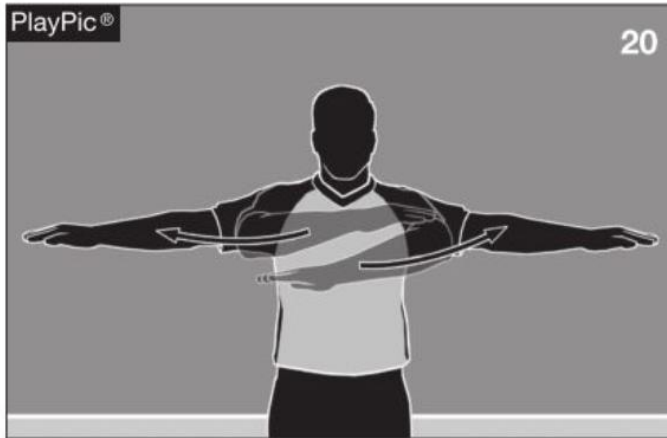


Stop Clock for Foul



Stop Clock for Foul
(Optional 'Bird Dog')

SHOOTING/SCORING



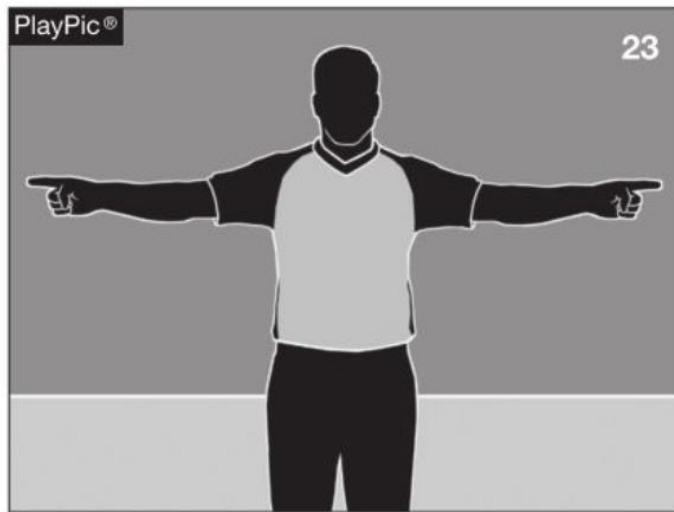
No Score



Goal Counts



3-Point Attempt Score
3-Point Attempt Made



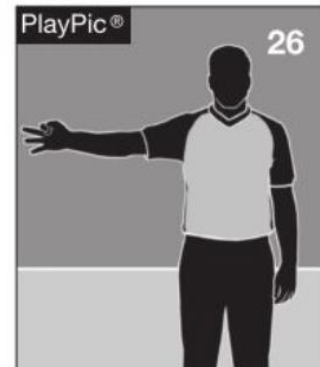
Bonus Free Throw



One Free Throw

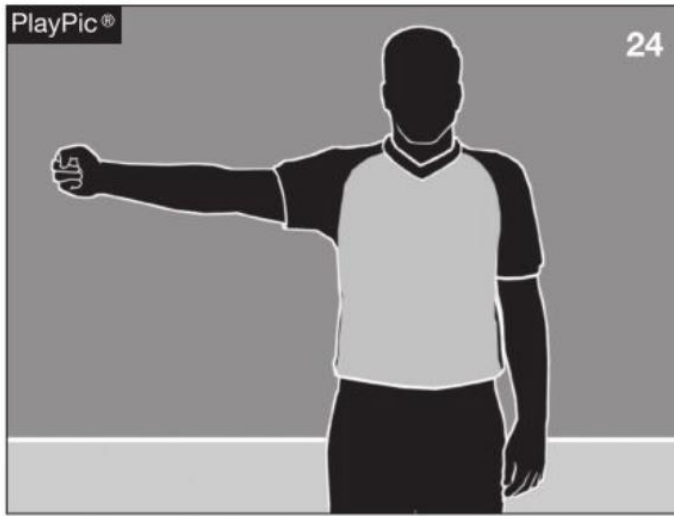


Two Free Throws



Three Free Throws

VIOLATIONS



Delayed Lane Violation



Traveling Violation



Illegal Dribble



Palming/Carrying Violation



Over and Back

VIOLATIONS (CONTINUED)



3-Second Violation



5-Second Violation



10-Second Violation



Excessively Swinging
Arm(s)/Elbow(s)



Kicking/Tripping

FOULS



Illegal Use of Hands



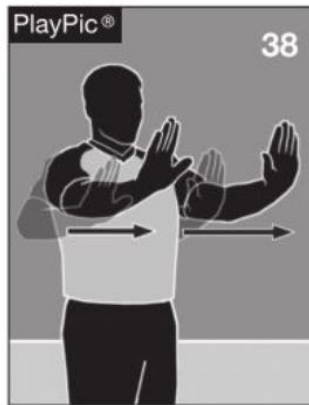
Hand Check



Holding



Blocking



Pushing



Team-Control Foul



Intentional Foul



Double Foul

FOULS (CONTINUED)



Technical Foul



Hit to the Head



Dislodging with the Knee



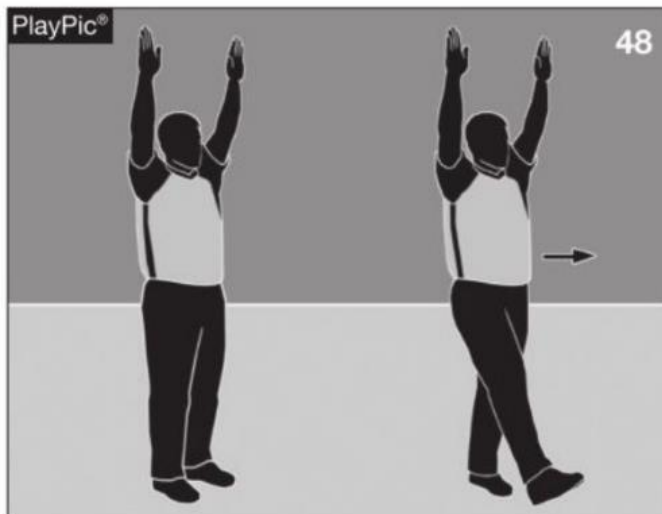
Chucking



Hook or Wrap



Arm Bar



Dislodging with Lower Body

POSITIONING



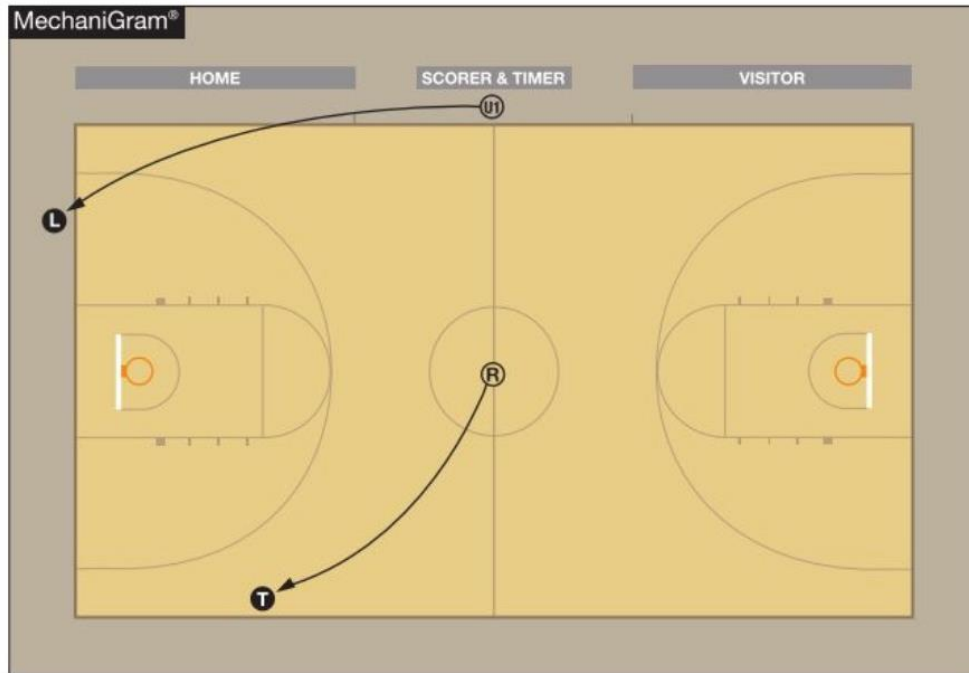
The umpire is positioned near the intersection of the sideline and the division line directly in front of the table. Before entering the center restraining circle, the referee makes eye contact with the umpire, who signals to the referee that table personnel and the umpire are ready to go. Both officials make sure the teams are facing the correct direction.

While still outside the circle, the referee notifies both team captains that play is about to begin. Tell the players to hold their spots to avoid violations. Blow the whistle with a sharp blast before entering the circle.

Before tossing the ball, you may want to use a bit of preventive officiating with the jumpers. Tell them to jump straight up and not into each other, and tell them not to tap the ball on the way up. Just before the toss, the umpire uses the “do not start clock” signal — raised open hand. The referee tosses the ball high enough so the players tap the ball at the apex or on its downward flight. The umpire starts the clock when the ball is tapped.

The umpire must maintain a wide field of vision while the referee administers the toss. The umpire is primarily responsible for the position and action of the eight non-jumpers.

JUMP BALL GOES LEFT

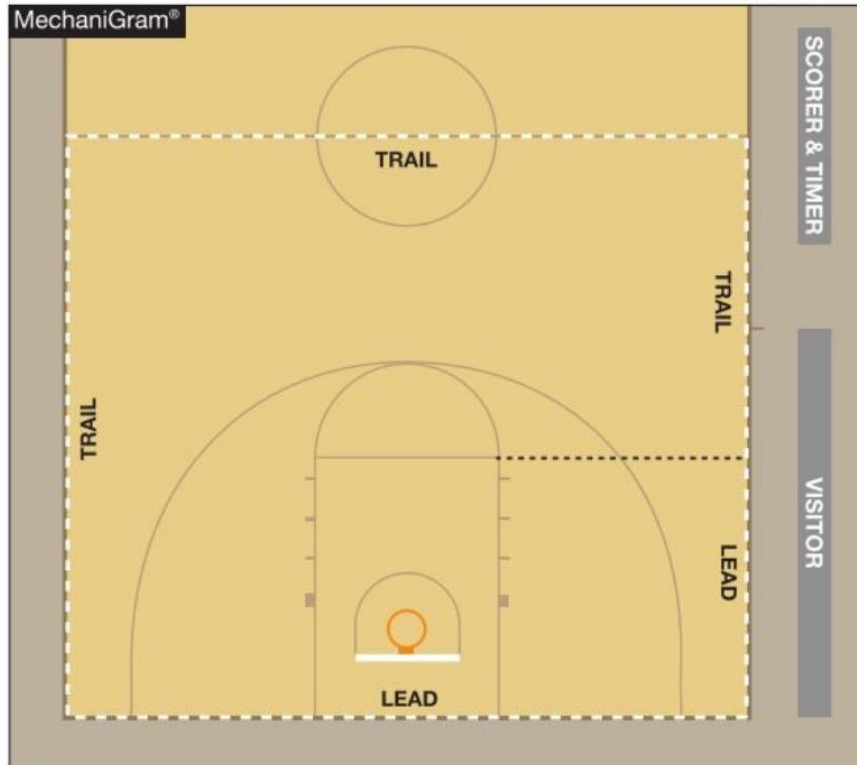


If the ball goes to the referee's left, U1 will move right and become the lead. The lead should be prepared to rule on a quick three-point attempt from anywhere on the court until the referee has cleared the players and begun to move into position.

The referee will hold momentarily and then will move to the trail enabling coverage of the sideline opposite the lead.

After the ball is possessed, the trail should glance at the alternating-possession arrow to make sure it is pointing in the right direction. If it isn't, wait for the first dead ball and correct it.

HALFCOURT BOUNDARY LINE



Covering boundary lines is among the most difficult tasks using a crew of two officials. By correctly placing so much emphasis on off-ball coverage for the lead, some boundary-line coverage sometimes gets sacrificed.

In the frontcourt the lead is responsible for the sideline nearest the lead and the endline. The trail is responsible for the division line and the sideline nearest the trail. While in theory that sounds easy, the actual practice is very difficult and sacrifices off-ball coverage in the lane area.

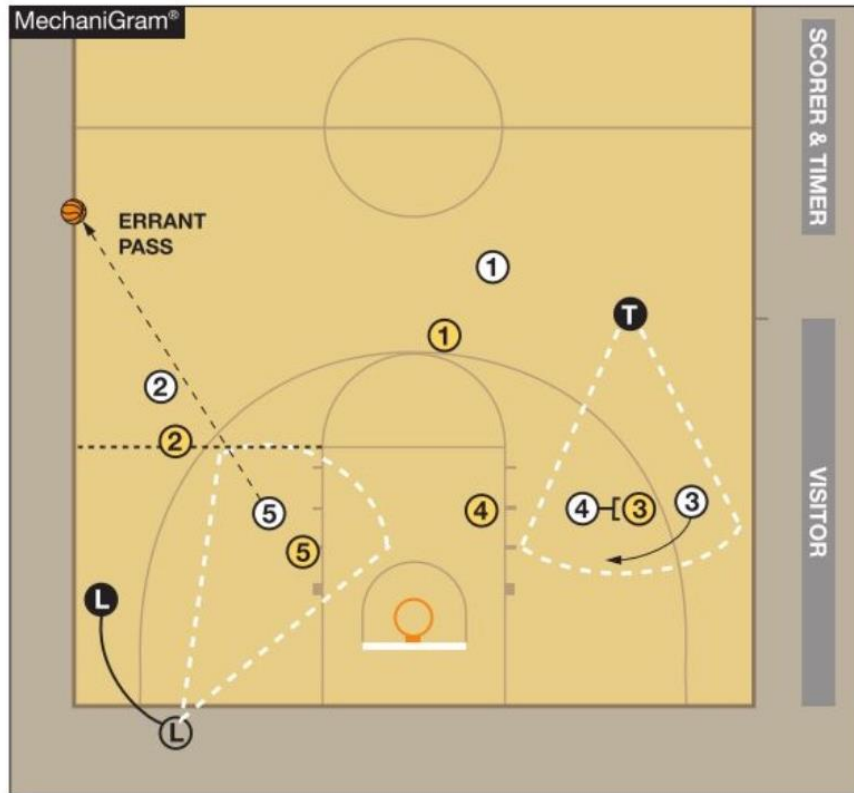
Here's an example. A trouble spot for two-person crews is a player who has the ball near the sideline above the free-throw line extended and opposite the trail. The trail correctly moves toward the center of the court to officiate the action on the player with the ball, such as fouls, traveling violations, etc.

If the lead has to look beyond the free-throw line extended to watch for a potential sideline violation and the trail has to watch for fouls, etc. There are too many off-ball problems that can occur if no one is supervising those players.

The MSHSL recommends that the trail may also have opposite sideline responsibility above the free-throw line extended if the lead is required to stay in off-ball coverage. Sometimes, the trail must move well beyond the center of the court to see an out-of-bounds violation. Stay deep (toward the division line) on the play to get a good angle.

Even with great hustle toward the far sideline, it is a tough look for the trail. The problem compounds if there's a swing pass back toward the other sideline. The trail must hustle back toward that sideline to get a good look there. Staying deep gives the trail a chance.

BOUNDARY COVERAGE

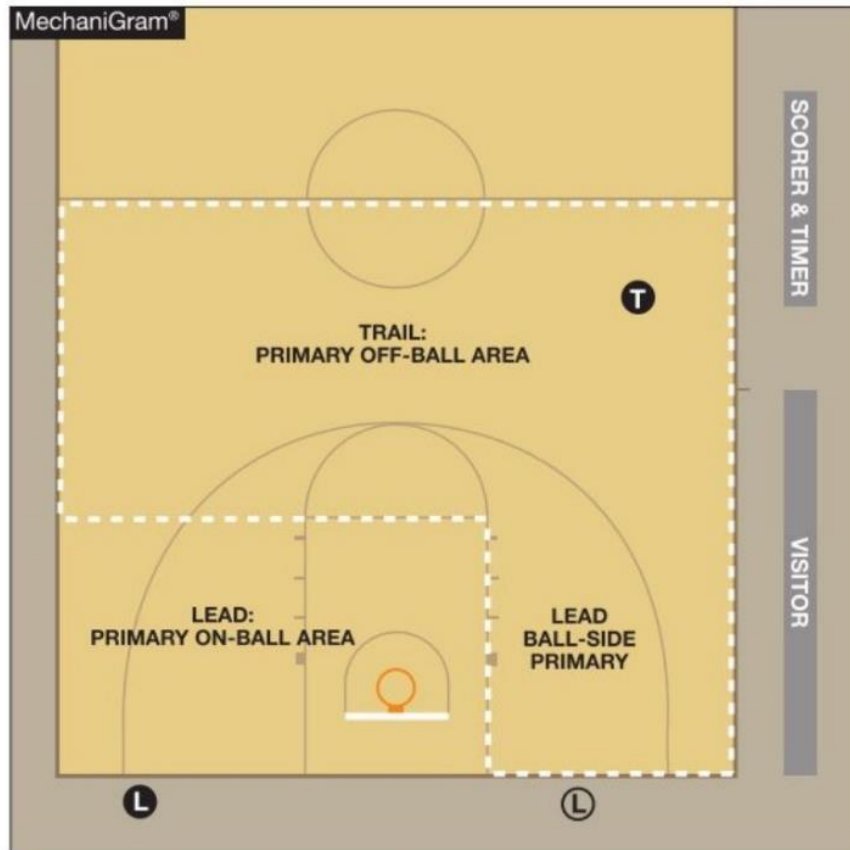


When the floor is balanced, the lead is on-ball and a pass is thrown from the lane to a player above the free-throw line extended, the lead has initial responsibility of the entire sideline.

In the MechaniGram, team A has the ball in the low post. The lead is on-ball. The trail is correctly watching off-ball, including screening. While the trail is off-ball, team A throws an errant pass. The ball goes out-of-bounds above the free-throw line extended.

Since the lead was watching the play already and the trail was watching off-ball, the lead makes that call by moving toward the sideline and getting a good angle on the play.

BASIC FRONTCOURT COVERAGE



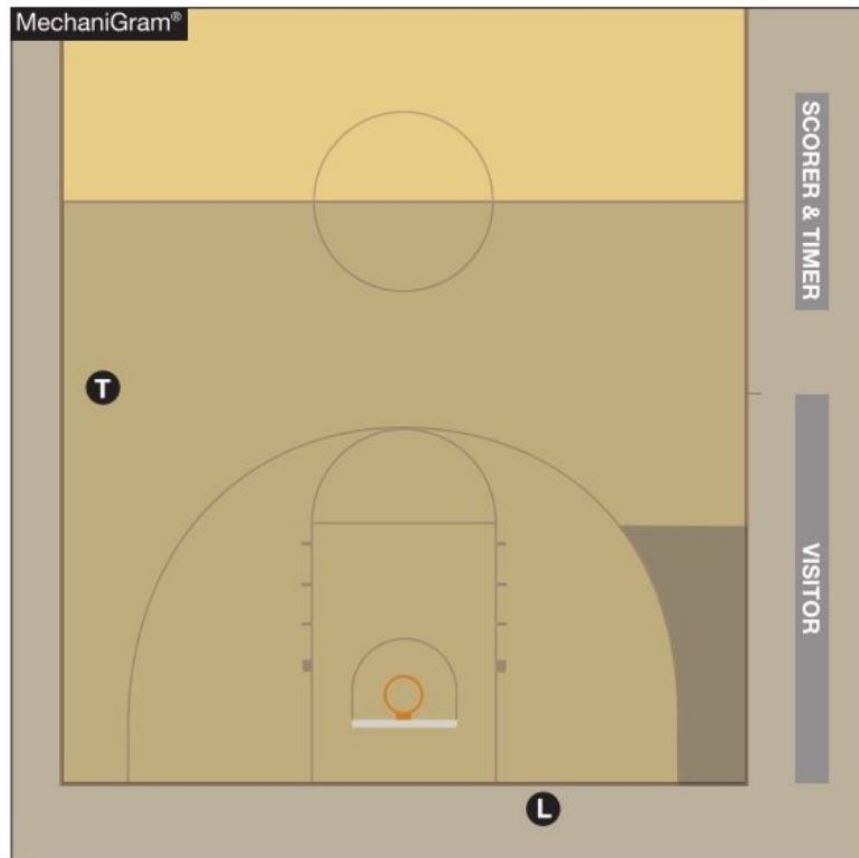
In the frontcourt, basic coverage shifts depending on which official is on-ball.

In the MechaniGram, the lead's on-ball responsibilities include the area below the free-throw line extended to the far edge of the free-throw lane line (away from the lead) when the lead is opposite the trail and the floor is balanced. If the lead is ballside, the lead's area of responsibility grows. It includes the area below the free-throw line extended to the three-point arc.

When the lead is on-ball, the trail's off-ball responsibilities include the area above the free-throw line extended to the division line and the lane area from the free-throw lane line (nearest the trail) to the sideline nearest the trail. The trail's off-ball area of responsibility decreases when the lead is on-ball, ballside. It is the area above the free-throw line extended and outside the three-point arc.

Officials are responsible for a five-second count within their primary coverage area. If the ball moves out of the official's primary area, that official should remain with that count until it is ended. Once the count has ended, return to your primary coverage area.

THREE-POINT RESPONSIBILITIES



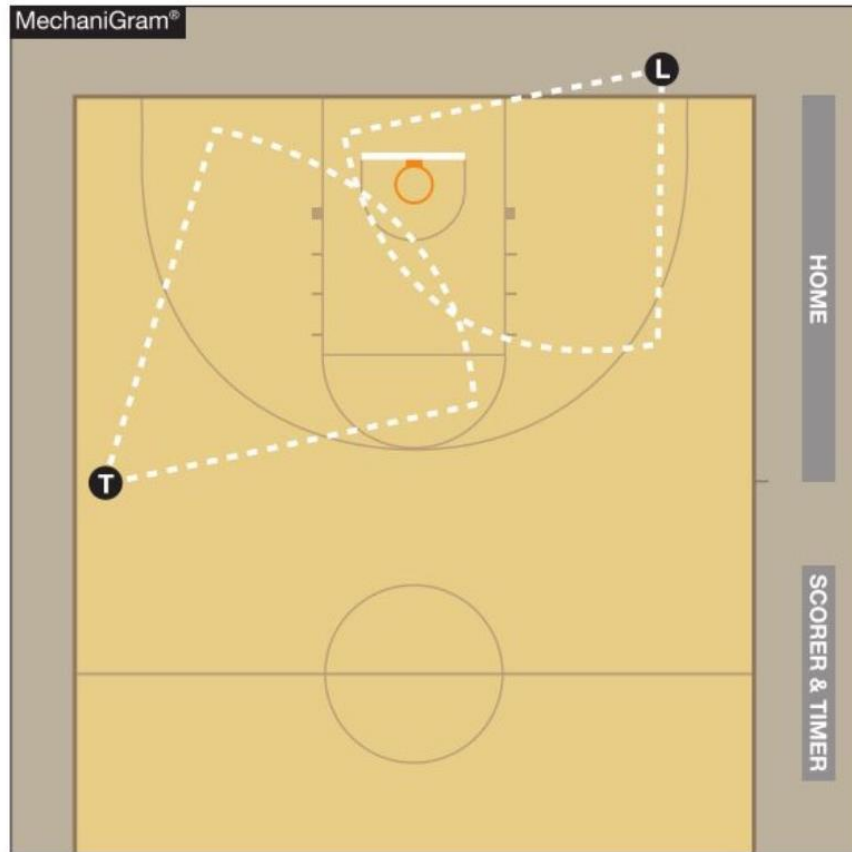
In the frontcourt, the trail is responsible for the majority of the three-point arc. The trail's coverage of a three-point try extends to the free-throw line extended opposite of the trail's current position. The lead is responsible for any attempt below the free-throw line extended on the lead's primary coverage area of the court.

On three-point tries, only the covering official should indicate the attempt. The indication should be made with the arm closest to the center of the court so the table personnel can see it better. Extend one arm above head level with three fingers extended. If successful, the covering official will signal by extending both arms over the head with palms facing.

If the trail official signals a successful three-point shot, the lead official shall not mirror the successful signal. If the lead official signals a successful three-point shot, the trail official mirrors the signal. There is no need to mirror an attempt signal.

The lead should be ready to assist the trail on a three-point attempt in transition.

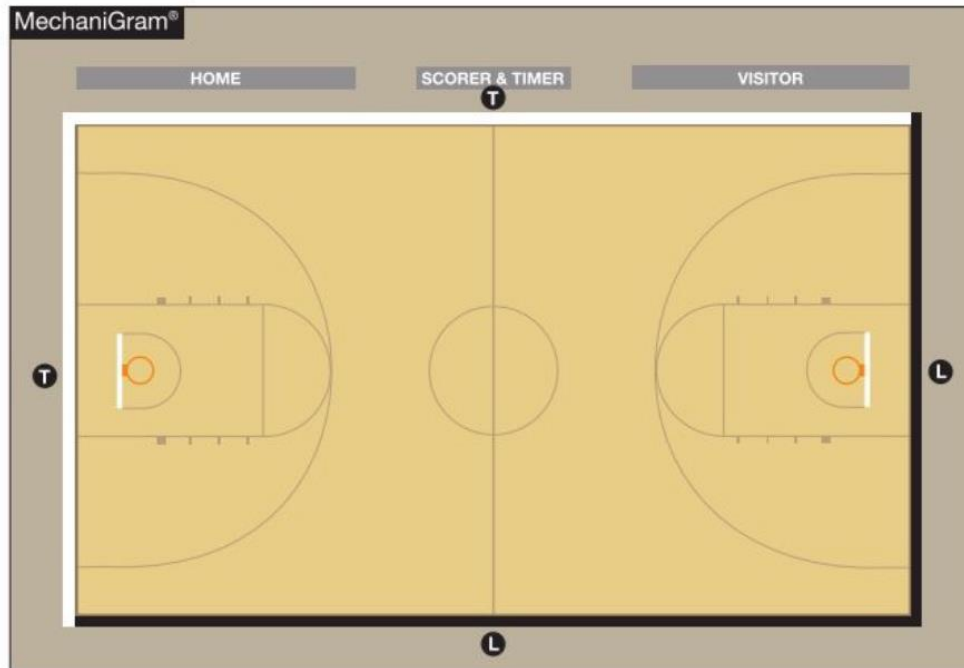
REBOUNDING AREAS



Rebounding coverages are divided and fall into primary and secondary coverage areas. If a shot is taken near the trail, the trail has to make sure the shooter returns to the floor without illegal contact. It's imperative to also watch the rebounding action on that side of the court. The lead will watch on his or her side of the court and extend that coverage into the lane area.

In a two-person crew, getting fouls on rebounds is all about obtaining the proper angle on the play. Many times, the trail official will have the best opportunity to determine a shove in the back. The lead might be closer but not able to see through so many players in a congested area. The lead should close down to assist in opening up this line of vision.

BACKCOURT BOUNDARY



In the backcourt, the new trail is responsible for the backcourt endline and the sideline opposite the new lead. The new lead is responsible for the frontcourt endline. That's the easy part. Who's got the sideline opposite the new trail and who's got the division line?

The sideline opposite the trail in the backcourt is a shared responsibility. Simply stated, when the new lead is looking in the area where the sideline violation occurs, the new lead makes the call. Actual practice can be a bit of a challenge though.

Proper coverage is necessitated by good eye contact and a "feel" for where the new lead is looking. One general rule of thumb: If you were on-ball immediately before a play near the sideline, you've likely got sideline responsibility. (One notable exception is when the new lead is helping with backcourt pressure, is positioned on the sideline and the ball goes out-of-bounds near the new lead. It would be odd to have the new trail make an out-of-bounds call from an appreciable distance when the ball went out-of-bounds in close proximity to the new lead.)

If the new lead is already looking in the area (on-ball or off-ball) where the out-of-bounds violation occurs, the new lead can make that call. If the new lead is running into the frontcourt watching players in transition (off-ball) and the play happens behind the new lead, the new trail has sideline responsibility.

Help each other out. If the new lead whistles an out-of-bounds violation on the new lead's sideline but doesn't know who caused the violation, blow the whistle, stop the clock and look for help from the new trail.

With a transition play near the division line, the new lead has initial responsibility until the new trail is in position to get a good look at the division line. Eye contact and a feel for where your partner is watching play an important role in who has division line responsibility.

THROW-IN: BACKCOURT WITH PRESSURE



When play moves from one endline toward the other, the trail has primary responsibility in the backcourt and must be behind the ballhandler/dribbler. However, when there's defensive pressure in the backcourt, sometimes the lead must help.

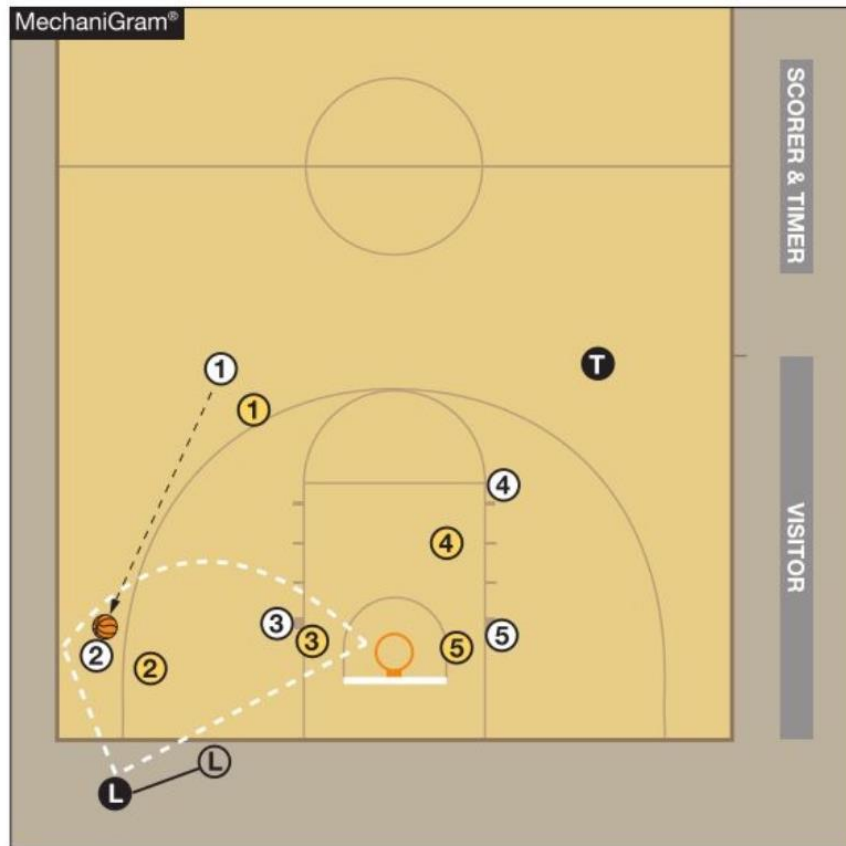
There is a general rule when the lead helps the trail in the backcourt. If there are four or fewer players in the backcourt, the trail works alone there. More than four players, the lead helps.

When there's more than four players in the backcourt, the lead is positioned near the division line. If all the players are in the backcourt, the lead may move closer to the backcourt endline for better angles. If some players are in the frontcourt, however, the division-line area is the best position.

When near the division line, the lead must stay wide and constantly glance from backcourt to frontcourt. That "swivel" glance allows the lead to help the trail with backcourt traffic plus watch players in the frontcourt.

The lead should be ready to help on out-of-bounds calls, long passes and possible infractions involving the division line. The lead will also cover quick breaks and long passes, keeping the players boxed in.

MOVEMENT TOWARD SIDELINE

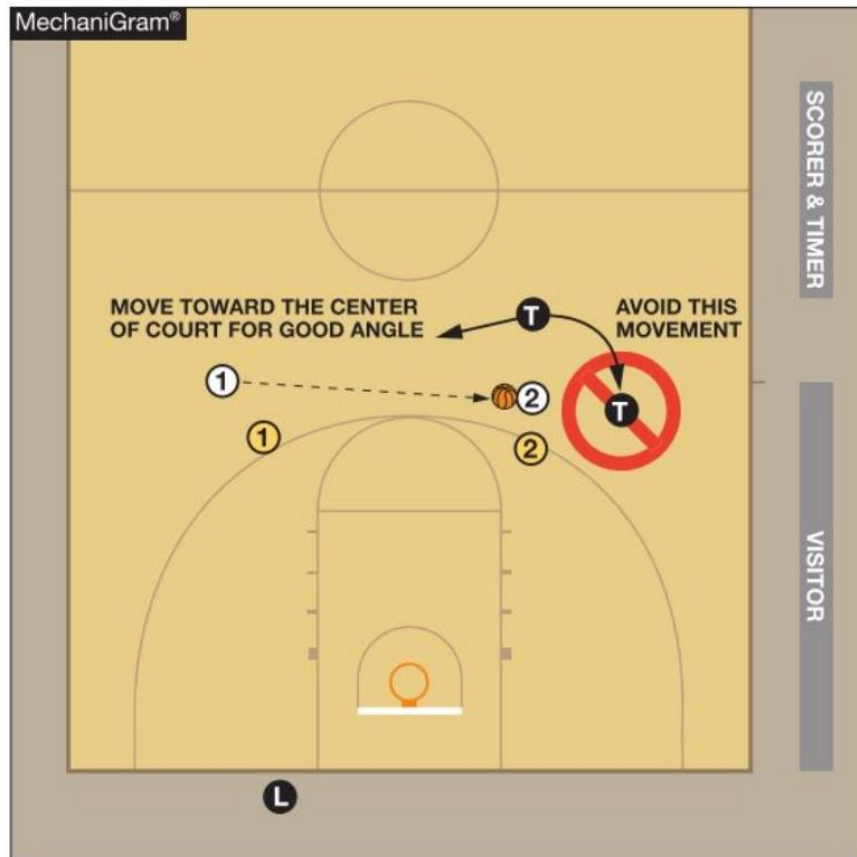


When the ball drops below the free-throw line extended on the lead's side of the court, the lead has two responsibilities: Watch the post players on the near low block and watch the perimeter player with the ball. It is difficult to see both areas.

To improve your angle, step away from the endline, while moving toward the sideline. Your shoulders should open up to the court, but not so far as to be parallel to the endline. Angle them slightly; that movement increases your field of vision and gives you a chance to see both areas. Be sure to open while moving to the wide position, so that you do not have to look over your shoulder to see the play. This increases your field of vision for better court coverage of both areas.

Primary coverage is on-ball; secondary coverage is off-ball. With that improved position, the lead has a chance to see both in his/her field of view.

WORK THE ARC



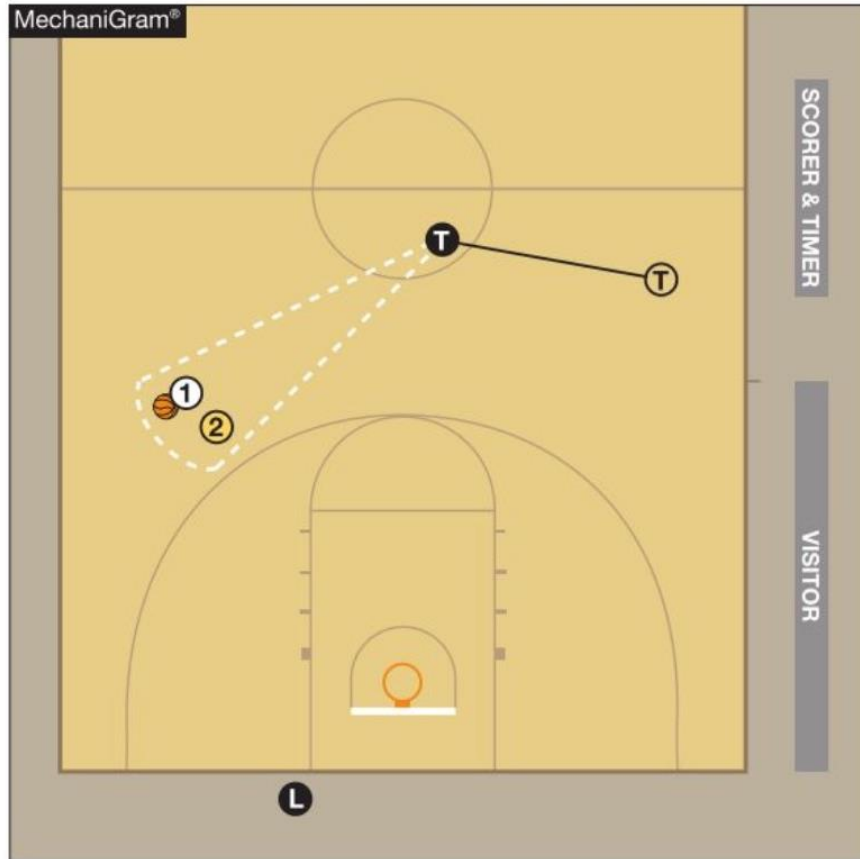
With a crew of two officials, the trail official often has to get off the sideline and move toward the center of the court to officiate action on the far side of the floor. When that happens, the trail can get caught in the middle on a swing pass from one side of the court to the other. Move to improve your angle and view of the play.

When a swing pass moves from the sideline opposite the trail across the top of the key to the near-side wing, the trail can get straightlined because of the position off the sideline. When a quick swing pass straightlines you and gives you a poor angle, you must move to improve the angle.

A simple one- or two-step adjustment toward the center of the court gives you the proper angle.

After adjusting one or two steps toward the center to improve your angle, watch the entire play from there, including a jump shot follow-through and landing. After you've taken care of that responsibility, you can move to your original position and close down, working for your next good angle on rebounding action.

MOVEMENT OFF SIDELINE TO WORK THE ARC



Effective court coverage requires significant movement by the trail.

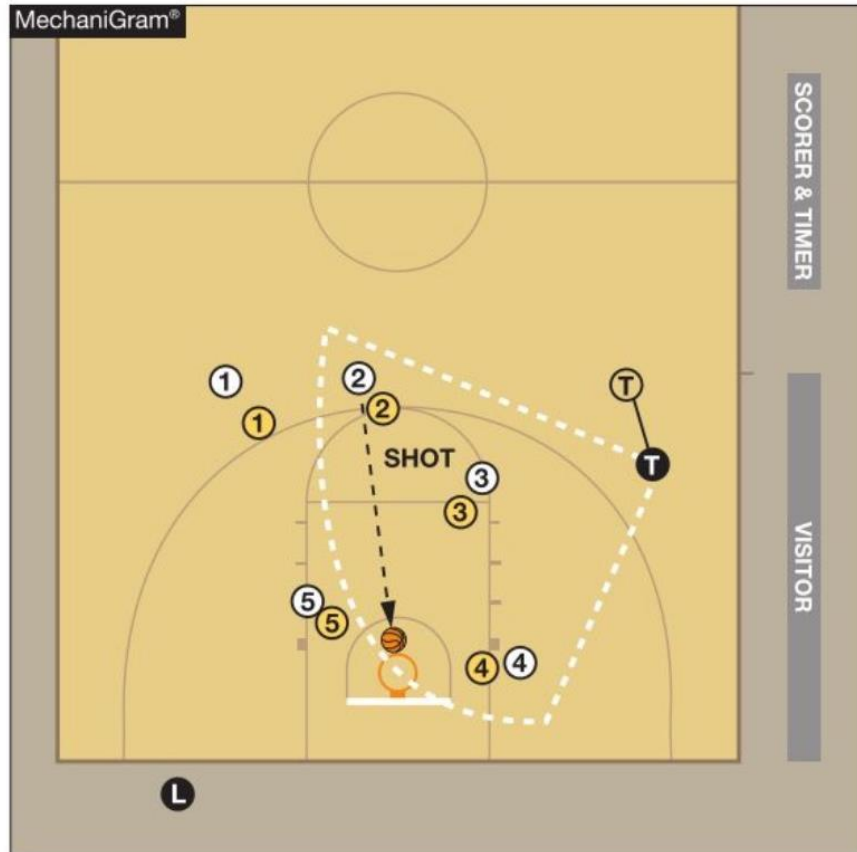
When an offensive player has the ball on the side of the floor opposite the trail, the trail must move away from the near sideline and get proper angles. By staying too close to the near sideline, the trail cannot effectively see action near the ball and must make judgments from a distance.

In the MechaniGram, the player with the ball is far away from the trail official — though the player is still the trail’s responsibility — and there’s defensive pressure. To see the play well, the trail must move off the near sideline and work to get a good angle.

Avoid moving straight toward the play: You could interfere with the play by stepping into a passing lane. Take an angle toward the division line to decrease your chances of interfering with the play. In extreme cases, you may even position yourself in the backcourt.

By moving off the sideline and angling toward the backcourt, you’re in a much better position to see the play.

COVERAGES AND CLOSE DOWN ON JUMP SHOT



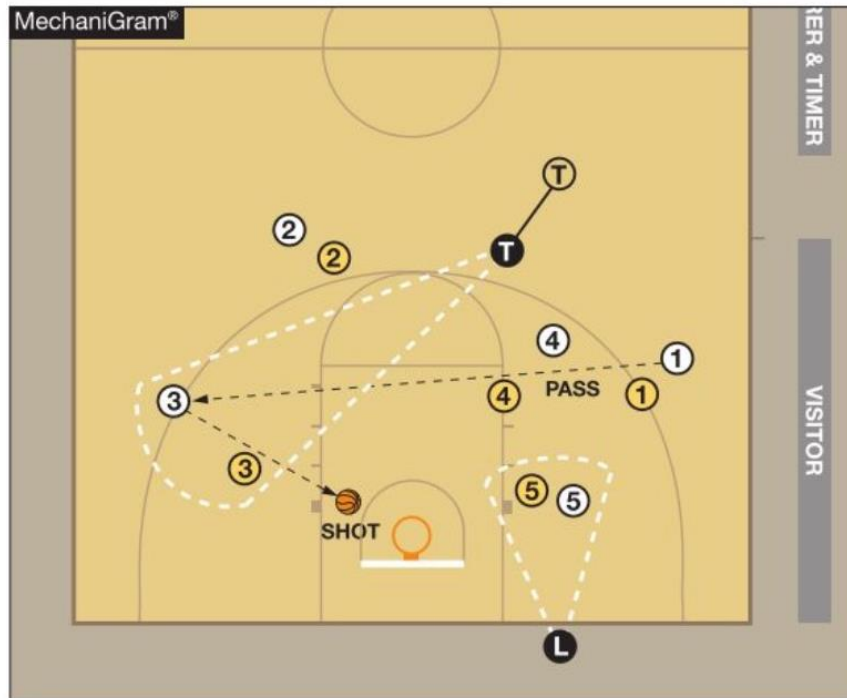
The trail has more responsibilities than simply watching the shooter.

The trail must help with rebounding action. When a player takes a jump shot within the trail's coverage area, the first responsibility is to watch the airborne shooter all the way back to the floor to ensure there are no offensive or defensive fouls. While watching that action, the trail should be closing down a couple of steps toward the endline.

Once everything is OK with the shooter and surrounding action, the close down allows the trail to help the lead by watching rebounding action. A step or two to improve your angle is all that's necessary to successfully watch rebounding action. Avoid going more than a step below the free-throw line extended. The trail is likely to see an offensive player pushing (or crashing into) a defensive player from behind — something that is difficult for the lead to see from the endline.

As the trail, assure the rebound is secure, or the ball goes through the basket and the teams are moving to the other end of the floor, before moving down the court to become the new lead.

TRAIL PICKS UP SHOOTER



In two-person mechanics, the lead official may move to the ballside of the lane when the player with the ball is below the free-throw line extended and a potential post pass is evident.

Though ball-side mechanics are effective for controlling post play, one weakness is coverage of a skip pass to the opposite wing player for a quick shot. A skip pass is a quick pass from one side of the floor to the other, designed to take advantage of a sagging defense.

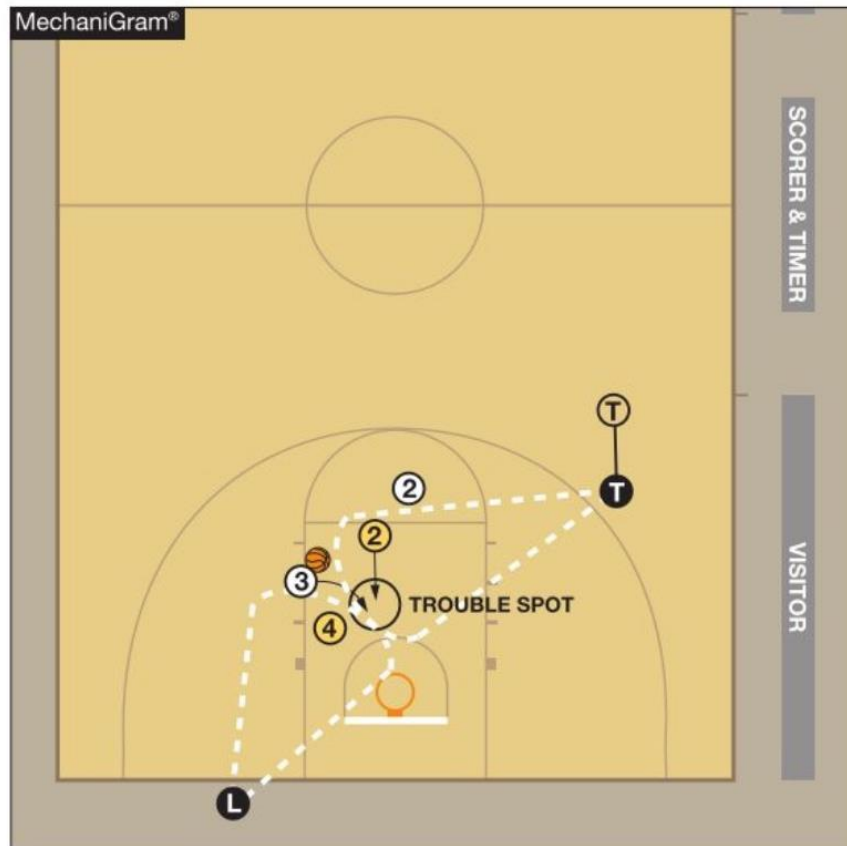
Though the opposite wing player is primarily observed by the lead official (even though the lead moved ballside), when a skip pass occurs the trail should adjust a step or two toward the wing player (to the center of the floor) and get a good angle to rule on three-point attempts, fouls and possibly obvious out-of-bounds infractions. The lead needs to recognize trail's coverage and switch to off-ball coverage.

If there is no quick shot and the lead can adjust back to the other side of the court without haste, the lead then picks up the ball (assuming it is below the free-throw line extended) and the trail moves back toward the sideline, getting good angles to watch off-ball. The lead must continue to watch off-ball in the lane area (primary coverage area) while moving until completely across the lane and in a good position to pick up the player with the ball.

In the MechaniGram, the lead has gone ballside to help, however, this now requires the trail to work the arc to cover the skip pass and next potential play. If this play is a repeated offensive tool, it is recommended the lead move to a close down position and assess the potential skip-pass play, to better cover this play if the pass occurs. If the play stays strongside, the lead can easily rotate to the strongside to assist the trail as needed.

Pregame this coverage.

TRAIL HELPS IN LANE



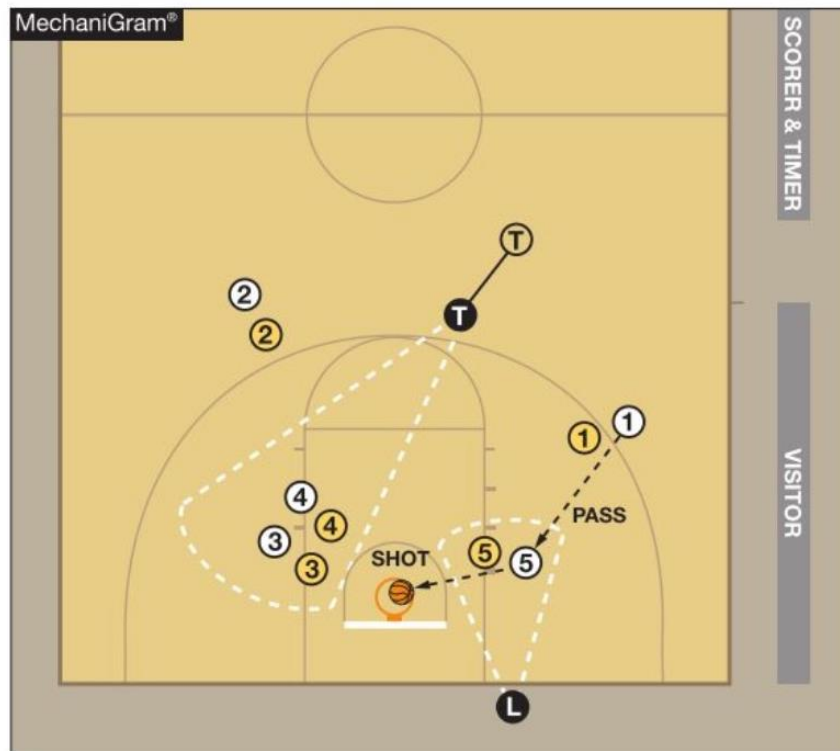
A trouble spot for the lead develops when a player with the ball on the low block spins toward the middle of the lane away from the lead. The quick spin move often leaves the lead straightlined and without a good look on the play.

Many times, a defender near the free-throw line will drop down into the lane and challenge the move toward the basket. That's when you'll likely see that defender slap at the offensive player, trying to poke the ball away. That steal attempt is sometimes a foul — one that goes unseen by the now-straightlined lead.

The trail must help out and watch the area in the lane when a post player spins away from the lead. The trail has a much better look at the play after closing down a step for an improved angle.

In the MechaniGram, the post player has the ball on the low block in front of the lead. That player spins toward the middle of the lane and drives toward the basket. The defender drops down and attempts the steal. The lead watches the post up action and the initial spin move. The trail closes down toward the endl ine to get a good angle and to watch the perimeter defenders on the play.

TRAIL LOOKS WEAKSIDE



There are many benefits of the lead moving ballside for post action. One potential problem, however, is weak-side rebounding action. With the lead on the same side of the floor as the trail, the lane area opposite both officials can present problems.

With the lead ballside and already watching post play near the closest lane line, it is difficult for the lead to watch players away from that area in the lane. First, primary concentration is — and should be — on the post play. Second, it is difficult for the lead to see the opposite side of the lane because the lead is looking through lane congestion and is easily straightlined.

When the lead moves ballside, it is the trail's responsibility to observe weak-side rebounding action. Though somewhat of a long-distance look, with the proper close down toward the endlane to get a good angle the trail can effectively watch weak-side rebounding action.

In the MechaniGram, the trail watches the perimeter player deliver a drop pass to the post player, who has effectively posted up on the low block. The lead already moved ballside anticipating the play. The post player seals off the defender and pivots strongly to the basket. The lead watches the post-up action.

Anticipating the play, the trail adjusts for a good angle and looks opposite. From that spot, the trail can look through the lane and watch the players battle on the weakside for rebounding positioning.

If you're the trail and you see a foul on the weakside, close down toward the lane and sell the call. By moving into the lane area aggressively (roughly around the intersection of the lane line and the free-throw line), the trail will cut the distance. Perception is important. If you look like you're close to the play and in good position, your ruling has a better chance of being accepted.

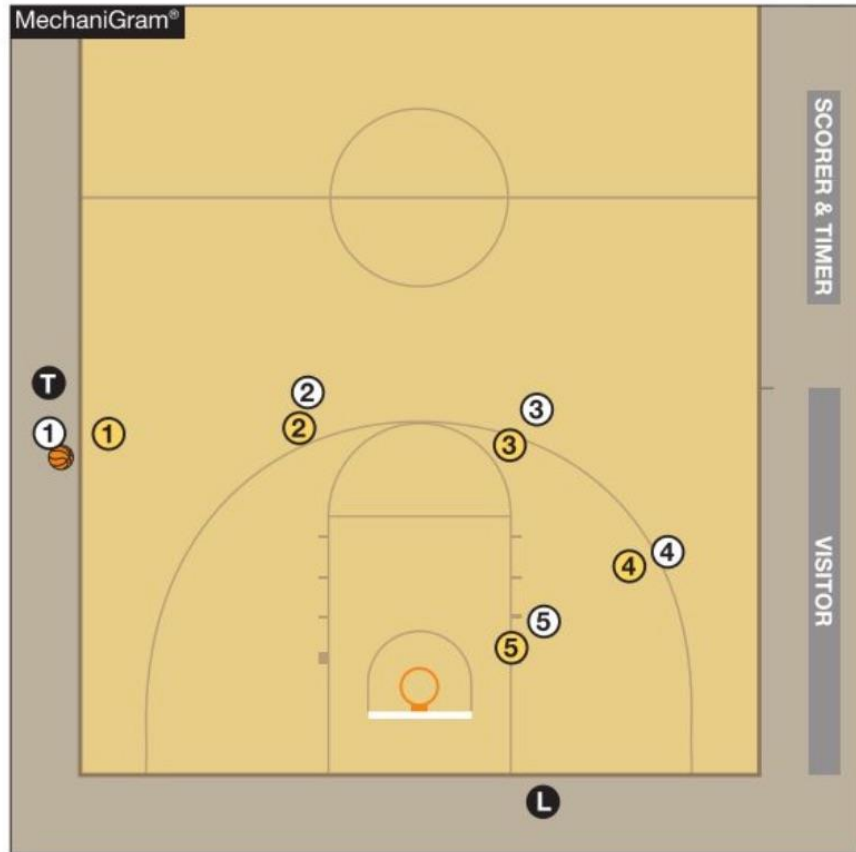
BOXING IN: LEAD ADMINISTERS FRONTCOURT



The lead administers all throw-ins on the frontcourt endline. All throw-ins shall be made with the thrower between the administering official and the lane line extended. The trail is positioned between the free-throw line extended and the division line, opposite the lead, to ensure both sidelines, both endlines and the division line are covered. The trail is also responsible for mirroring the chop of the lead on frontcourt throw-ins only).

The lead should always blow the whistle when handing the ball to the thrower on the endline for frontcourt throw-ins.

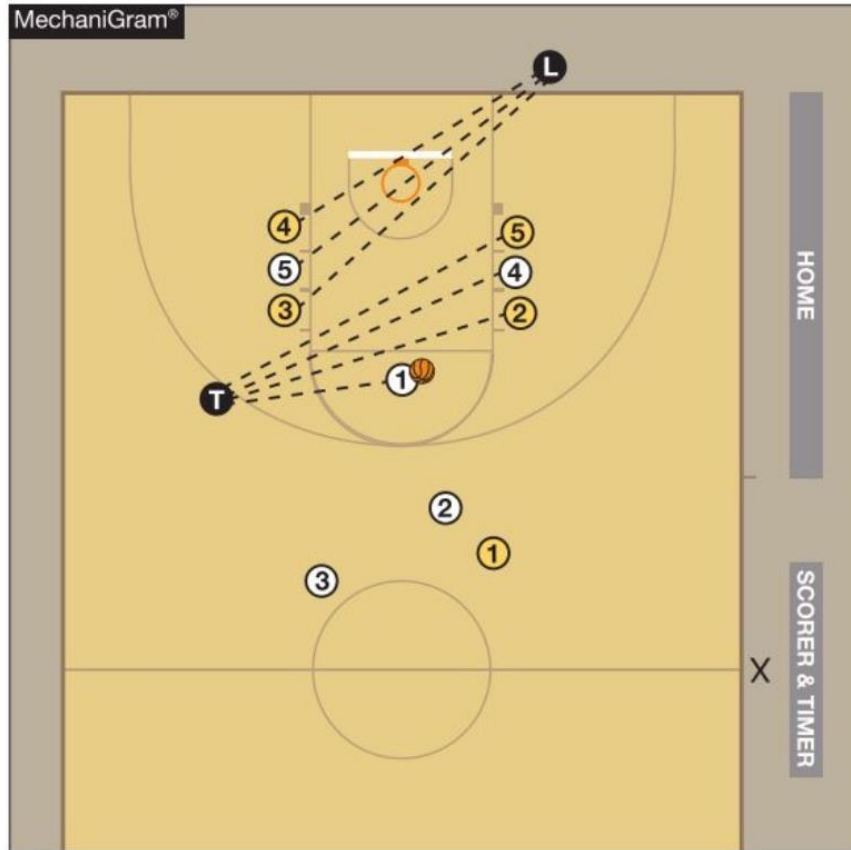
BOXING IN: TRAIL ADMINISTERS FRONTCOURT



When the trail administers the throw-in, the thrower is always between the trail and the frontcourt endline. The lead is positioned on the endline opposite the trail to ensure adequate coverage.

**CREW OF TWO
FREE THROWS**

COVERAGE



The lead watches all players on the opposite lane line (closer to the trail) for potential violations, etc.

The trail watches all players on the opposite lane line (closer to the lead) and the free thrower.

As shown in the MechaniGram, the trail will be facing to the table. The trail should watch for late-breaking substitutions toward the table or timeout requests, prior to administering the free throw.