

Note: This was written BEFORE the playoffs started. It wasn't posted till after I had presented this to the league. I stand corrected on the lack of 4 games in a night. There have been. That doesn't change the validity of the concept. Rather than using the playoffs as an opportunity to promote officials, it should be where only the very best officials work.

I have also turned off comments because as I feared, they end up being off topic.

Here is the post:

Refs miss calls. It's part of the game. Better refs that approach the game objectively miss fewer calls.

During the regular season new refs will come into the league and as might be expected, there will be ups and downs that come with new officials.

The playoffs are different. The playoffs are where teams and the NBA itself earn their money. It's where team profits are made, it's where TV ratings are made and when TV ratings are good, the league makes more money.

In other words, the playoffs are our money product. As with every business, the best people should be on the job with the money products. That's not the way the NBA does it when it comes to officials.

In the first round, the NBA reduces the number of officials eligible to officiate games from about 60 to 33 (give or take a couple). The first question is how did they arrive at that number? I don't know, but I can calculate how many officials are actually needed.

In the first round, there are 4 series in each conference or 8 series in total.

But the thing about the first round is that the games are spread out. There rarely if ever are 4 games in a single night. (It hasn't happened since I have been here). The most I have seen is 3 games in a night. 3 games in a night is 9 officials.

But when you look at the schedule further, you realize that because of time zones and TV needs, you never get more than 2 games in the same time zone. Which means that it's not unreasonable to ask officials to work games on back to back nights in the first round of the playoffs. They can travel to the next assigned game in the same or at worst adjoining time zone. Because of the spread out schedule, it's unlikely they would work back to backs more than twice in the first round.

So in the first round alone, the number of officials that should be assigned could be as few as 9, plus 3 alternates.

Would the officiating improve if the top 12 officials worked the games instead of the top 33 or so. There is absolutely no question about it.

Would it strain the officials more to possibly work a back to back? Yes. So pay them a bigger bonus for being selected for the playoffs. It's certainly no more a strain on the officials than it is the players and we have no problem asking players to work back to back.

The numbers get better for the 2nd round. 4 series, 2 games in a day. Sometimes 1 game in a day. That's 6 officials plus alternates. If the league was absolutely convinced we have 12 finals quality officials, then use 12.

But the NBA has a huge problem. It doesn't view the playoffs as a place where the very best of the best of officials go to work. It views the playoffs as part of a reward system for officials. You get promoted to the playoffs. It's not unusual to see an official work a single playoff game in the first round. In fact, if the info I have is correct, there are officials who haven't even been promoted to full time crew chief who get playoff assignments. How crazy is that?

That's also a huge, huge, huge business mistake. The playoffs are our most important, most visible product. They should never be used as a stepping stone for promotion.

Instead, the NBA should rank its officials, seed them if you will. Top 12 get playoff assignments. That's it. If an official does a great job and rises to the top 12, he or she gets the reward. If not, not.

Giving less qualified officials an opportunity to officiate playoff games as a reward gives the official a nice attaboy, but it risks the quality of our product.

It makes absolutely no sense to do it the way it is currently done. If the league wants the best officiating in every game, only use the best officials. Anything less cheats us all.