

Some people questioned me when I began questioning the officiating after I bought the Mavs. They asked why I was doing it. Didn't I know that there was nothing I could do to change the way the league runs things.

Personally, it wasn't about the officials. Certainly not them individually. They bust their ass to do the best they can. Like most of us do at work. But as in any business, there are things that can be done to put people in a position to succeed. When I got to the Mavs, I talked about putting the players in a position to succeed by hiring more coaches. After all, if we have a multimillion dollar investment in a player, it only made sense to me to provide that player with whatever individual instruction that was necessary to make them better. To put them in a position to succeed.

Of course I was ridiculed early and often. To Nellie's credit, he was supportive of it and I think it has paid dividends for the organization and has since been copied by other teams.

The same was applied to our marketing and sales staff. When I got to the Mavs, I wanted to accomplish as much as we could. To that end we let some people who weren't comfortable with that go. We basically amped up every interaction that the organization had with fans to a level where we hoped and tried that we would over deliver value to our customers and fans. We made it clear to everyone that we no longer sold basketball. We sold fun. That few people can remember jump shots, home runs and touchdowns, but everyone remembers the fun times they had a game and who they were with. Every parent remembers the first game they took their child(ren) to. Time after time I get emails about couples that met or went on a first date to a game. People never want to tell me how great a fast break, jumper or block looked. It's the personal things that they remember. The fact that we didn't let the focus of our fan experience be only the game, didn't and doesn't sit well with some to this day.

The same desire to see success I expect on and off the court from the Mavs, I expect from the league. I'm an equity partner. IMHO, good partners try to contribute to make things better. They don't just go along to go along. They raise issues and create discussion. Even if it may not follow tradition or protocol. I'm not a ["this is the way its always been, and thats the way it should be guy"](#)

I have questioned quite a few things about the NBA. Publicly and privately.

To Commissioner Stern's credit, he has always at least absorbed the commentary from me. Sometimes I'm right, sometimes not. At times, my approach may even be counter productive. I'm far from perfect when it comes to trying to elicit change. And when I'm wrong. I'm ok with that as well.

As a partner, I would rather offer up a topic for discussion and be told I'm wrong, or even ignored, then not present my perspective. You never know the impact if you don't communicate. It's usually just a short and simple email from me for someone in the NBA to read and respond to, or not.

One of the things I have felt that the league hasn't done as well as it should has been the way it has run the officiating group. I didn't and don't feel that the league puts officials in a position to succeed.

This isn't about officials and made or missed calls. It's about how the officiating group is organized and managed. My biggest fine didn't come from criticizing an official. It came from criticizing their boss. It took me a couple years in the league to really get a handle on it, but once you take a close look, it's very clear that it's not about the guys or woman blowing the whistles. They bust their butts every single night to do the job the way they think it should be done.

Recently, starting [with Coach Van Gundy](#) in our Rockets playoff series there have been [multiple coaches](#) accusing me of influencing the officials in one way or another. Don't I wish I could. But I can't.

The accusations they make have been that I "send emails and video to the league". Which of course is true. Every team does it.

We send emails to the league about officiating for three reasons.

1. To make sure we understand certain rules and how they will be called. How certain things are called can evolve over the course of a season. Knowing how something is being called can be helpful.
2. To understand if maybe an officiating crew just had a bad game, or if we had the wrong expectations on certain plays. In other words, did we think certain things were violations and they weren't or were they missed calls. This also can tell you about the tendencies of a given official. This isn't however something you can do every game. This year we have sent in a list of calls to get confirmation three times. Probably a lot less than other teams.
3. This is probably the most important reason. When a player appears to be routinely violating a rule and no call is being made. For instance, two years ago, we sent a long list of tapes showing Chris Weber of the Kings at that point, dragging his pivot all over the place to create passing lanes. It was never called. The league came back and said we were right. They would look at it and they did. And they also looked at it for our players and ended

it up calling it more on Antoine Walker than they did on CWebb. And you know what, thats ok with me.

We did the same thing with Shaq stepping over the free throw line. Which in reality was the real genesis of doing this. It was so obvious to everyone and anyone that watched a game that he was doing it. No one could answer why it wasnt being called. So we made a tape and turned it in. They started calling it.

Shaq stared at me a lot when we played them, but he fixed it and it was done with. Thats the important thing to note. Any of these things can be fixed. The players know when they are doing things that break the rules. They would stop a pickup game if someone did it. They know how to fix them as well. When it gets called consistently, they change. I consider that a big win for the NBA. Few things get under my skin more than emails from kids and parents asking why something so obvious isnt being called. I have no response other than "Im trying to get that changed".

Im a purist. The rules is the rules. I dont care if you call it on us. I expect our players to adapt and play by the rules. I also expect them to take advantage of rules violations that arent being called.

When I decided to do this blog, after reading the comments from [Sam Mitchell in Marc Stein's](#) article

saying that he agreed with Phil Jacksons comments that officials were nervous nellys in Dallas, I had our guys go through and do a quick run through of our last game and what we thought were calls that we could discuss and were there any issues we should address.

We are not going to send this into the league. Its just a sample. You can buy a copy of the game [here](#), and do your own analysis and send it to me. If its good, I might even post it. If its great, maybe I will hire you to do these for me :). And as far as issues that our guys thought we might be worth addressing with the league, we are looking at carrying the ball on drives to the basket. We want to see if players may be getting an advantage by taking multiple steps per dribble while the ball is still on their hand. If we can get enough examples, we will send it in. If we dont, it means it was in our imagination and we wont.

This is an example of an email we would send to the league. Its just a first pass, so it has some of the comments we make in review and its far from complete. Im sure we have missed a couple. But as i said, we are not turning it into the league. If someone out there thinks this could turn officials into nervous nellys when they come to dallas, well, thats an explanation i would be curious to see