

Coaches – Please Take Your Seat!

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The Ohio High School Athletic Association has often been criticized for rules that never quite coincide with the feelings of high school administrators and coaches: From tournament basketball sites that always had insufficient seating to the football play-off that took ions to finally reach a level that allows a fair number of teams to vie for a state title.

Well, just when everyone thought that the OHSAA was reaching a level of respectable decision making, they have come out with a new basketball rule that has everyone in an uproar.

Fort the 1985-1986 season, no coaches will be able to leave their bench seat during any portion of the game, except of course during a time out and to the locker room at halftime. Other than that, the coaches better not stand up or a bench player either, or a technical foul will be administered.

It is called the “More Restricted Bench Rule – 10.5.”

As democratic as the OHSAA fails to be, all administrators were given a chance to vote on two items concerning the rule: (1) they can vote for a Coaches’ Box, an area along the bench the coach must stay in or (2) the Most Restricted Bench Rule.

As everyone figured, the voting was a landslide for the Coaches’ Box. But the OHSAA came back and decided the bench rule would be better.

It has been instated for “crowd control” and “coach control” according to the OHSAA headquarters. But area mentors feel it is anything but that.

“I don’t think we’ve had problems with coaches in this area,” said Ottoville head coach Mark Knott. “What it’s going to do is make it that much tougher for the officiating. There are only two officials and they now are going to have to keep an eye on the coach and an eye on the game. I don’t see how that is going to work.”

Without question it is going to make inconsistent calls on both the floor and the bench.

Area officials state that they will not enforce the bench rule, unless of course the coaches really get out of hand. But the OSHAA says that they will be sending enforcers to make sure the rule is enforced or the official could be reprimanded.

“I think the coach’s box would be more appropriate,” said Mike Recker, an area official. “The NCAA has adopted it. The bench rule is definitely going to make it tough on officials to call.”

Other states have used the bench rule for years, however, and with much success according to the OHSAA. They did not elaborate on which states that had it, however.

Columbus Grove Coach Jerry Stechschulte, never known as one that incites a crowd with his behavior during a game, will still feel the effect of the new rule. “I like to crouch during a game. I don’t think I’m doing anything to get the crowd going, but I guess I’m going to have to follow the rule. Maybe it will work out. I don’t know.”

It will hurt the players though all of them will be in the same boat. Inexperienced players that are not familiar with a new coach’s system will not be informed by a coach or bench player where to go on a newly inserted defensive scheme. It may sound trivial here, but quite a few games, especially early in the year, will be decided by defensive lapses that could have been avoided by a simple verbal or visual advice from the coach.

Ottawa-Glandorf Coach Dave Sweet states, “If the old rule would have been enforced properly we wouldn’t have to have a bench rule. Who’s to say this will be properly enforced as well?” That is a fact that will have officials really flustered.

“You will need a floor leader more than ever,” said Sweet. “And they don’t come around every year. Luckily we have the players who know what to do.”

Coach Don Coletta of Leipsic stated that “We’ll have to go with signs and numbers from the bench. It will be about the only thing you’ll be able to do.”

The other major change is a new jump ball rule. Only the tip-off to start a game, as well as any overtime, will be used. Possession control will decide all other jump balls.

The “Restricted Bench Rule” lasted one year. The coach’s box replaced it and is still in effect. The elimination of the jump ball was a major change also and has remained unchanged.