

BASIC OFFICIATING - THE TRAVEL RULE

One of the most abused rules in high school or college level basketball is the travel rule. Most of the time, the act of "illegal movement of the pivot foot" happens so quickly that the official either doesn't see the movement or sees it but is reluctant to call it because he/she is not sure.

The first step in understanding "travel" is to study carefully the wording of the rule itself. When this has been accomplished, it will become quite obvious that the rule can be reduced to a series of assumptions, followed by a number of restrictions.

Assumptions

1. A player cannot travel unless that player is holding a live ball. This immediately rules out traveling during a dribble or fumble.
2. The act of traveling involves "moving a foot or the feet ... in excess of prescribed limits." A more appropriate paraphrase would be to say "moving the pivot foot in excess of prescribed limits."

Therefore, to judge "traveling," three questions must be addressed: a) which foot is the pivot foot? b) How much legal movement may the player initiate? c) What movement would be considered "in excess of prescribed limits"?

Which Foot is the Pivot Foot?

Which foot is the "pivot" foot is totally a matter of where the player was (relative to a position on the floor) when that player gained control of the ball or ended a dribble.

- 1) If a player receives the ball or ends a dribble with both feet on the floor, either foot may become the pivot. Once the foot is lifted, the other foot is the pivot foot. If a player gains control or ends a dribble while moving, that player may stop and, in doing so, establish a pivot.
- 2) If both feet were off the floor, and if that player lands both feet simultaneously, either foot may become the pivot. Once one foot is moved, the other is the pivot.
- 3) If both feet were off the floor, and if that player lands on one foot followed by the other, the first foot to touch the floor would become the pivot foot.

(The RuleBook recognizes that momentum may prevent a player from coming to an abrupt stop. For this reason, provision is made for someone who, having landed on one foot, leaves the floor and lands again on both feet simultaneously. In this instance, the player may not pivot. Movement of either foot beyond the limits, outlined later in this article, would constitute traveling.)

- 4) If one foot is on the floor when that player gains control or ends a dribble, two legal means of coming to a stop are possible. The player may either bring the second foot to the floor (and thereby stop), or momentum may cause the player to jump off the foot that is already on the floor and land on both feet simultaneously. In the former case, the foot, which was on the floor, is the pivot foot. In the latter instance, no pivot is allowed.

Legal Pivoting

Now let's consider those elusive "prescribed limits" of movement. These limits may be summarized in four statements.

1. Once a pivot foot has been established, a player may lift the foot to shoot or pass, but the ball must leave the player's hand before the pivot returns to the floor.
2. Once a pivot foot has been established, a player may begin a dribble provided the ball leaves his hand before the pivot is lifted.
3. Where no pivot is allowed, the player may lift a foot or feet to shoot or pass, provided the ball leaves the hand before one or both feet return to the floor.
4. Where no pivot foot is allowed, the player may legally begin a dribble provided the ball leaves the hand before either foot is lifted.

POINTS OF FINAL EMPHASIS

Remember that:

1. It is impossible for a player to travel during a dribble.
2. A player who falls to the floor while holding the ball has traveled. If a player falls to the floor while dribbling and is able to continue dribbling legally, no violation has occurred.
3. A player who gains control while lying on the floor and then rolls or slides, this is legal provided an advantage is not gained. Otherwise, it is traveling.
4. At no time may a player who has gained control, as in the previous situation, be allowed to get to his or her feet while holding the ball. A player who has gained control while on the floor may shoot, pass or start a dribble prior to getting to his feet.