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# THE IMPORTANCE OF JEWELRY RULES

BY PATRICK ROSENOW

Question: Recently a partner of mine thought we should overlook earrings worn by a player since she had just gotten them pierced and didn't want to miss the game. How can I make it clear to that official that jewelry rules should be followed no matter what?

Answer: This issue comes up again and again at all levels. A couple of months ago, I was the chief referee for an international women's tournament played under FIBA rules. We had a number of players with tape over various parts of their ears. There was some disagreement over whether the referees should be concerned with what might be under that tape. Of course, everyone anticipated that the tape was covering jewelry. If you watched the Olympics, you saw players with taped ears, so you know how they decided to handle it in Rio.

Our rules say no jewelry. The reason the rules say that is to protect players. Moreover, referees are specifically given the authority to stop players with jewelry from participating. Consequently, officials have at least some responsibility to keep players with earrings off the court. As a practical matter, it may be fairly or even highly unlikely that someone will get hurt if you let the newly pierced ear and its ring on the floor. You could do it a hundred times and nothing will come of it. But when it does get caught on an opponent or even a teammate, and it eventually will, the officials are going to be legally liable, particularly when they didn't just miss seeing the earring, but intentionally let it pass.

Your partner may try to tell you that the odds something will happen are so low and chances of serious injury so slim that it's worth the risk to be the voice of reason and let it go. That might sound good, but it's just wrong. The rules don't give us that option. He may be willing to ignore rules related to player safety because of his independent view that they don't make sense in this game, but that's not his call.

Tell him that if he wants to work this game, he needs to follow these rules. The teams are entitled to consistency and get frustrated when the rules change from game to game. The can take that frustration out on the officials. There's nothing worse than trying to enforce a rule and being told that "the refs last week let us do it." Your partner needs to understand that by deciding that he's going to allow the earring-wearing player out on the floor, he is making life harder for the other officials who do follow the rules. If he's convinced he is right and everyone else is wrong, have him send his suggestion to the NCAA or NFHS. At the very least, he should bring up the subject at your next association meeting and explain why they need to do it his way.

It may be difficult to convince your partner that the legal risk in this game is enough to tell her to take the earring off. However, the NFHS isn't worried about just one game; it's worried about thousands, if not millions of games. If he can't follow their rules, he shouldn't be doing their games.

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