

See the basket. See the ball.

Now, wasn't that easy?

On the theory that sporting rules are oftentimes (heck, let's face it, most times) turgid reading and that too few fans really understand the fine points, the National Collegiate Athletic Association has kindly put together a set of read-easy rules for football and basketball.

The football read-easy guide came out first, met with success, and has now been reprinted in a handy-dandy little pamphlet that is yours for the asking at 10 cents a copy (to cover handling) from the NCAA at 349 East Thomas Road, Phoenix, Arizona 85012.

The newer basketball guide (see excerpts below) is available only in the 1970 Official Basketball Guide at \$1.50.

On court dimensions and markings: "It's 9 to 5 you aren't going to build one, but the ideal playing surface should be 50 feet wide by 94 feet long . . ."

On baskets and backboards: "The modern goal at each end of the court represents tremendous architectural progress since Dr. Naismith started it all with a bottom-less peach basket . . . You even have a choice of two types of backboards . . . Its upper edge is 10 feet above the floor and, naturally, parallel to the floor."

On the officiating staff: "The game is supervised by four or more officials, of whom more than half often remain seated during play. (Editor's note: Use of personnel in this manner should be protested to the National Labor Relations Board.)"

On the referee: "The Referee's assigned chores range from inspecting and approving all equipment 10 minutes before the game's starting time to approving the final score. In between, besides racing up and down the court at alarming speeds, he is responsible for notifying each Captain three minutes before each half is to begin and deciding matters of disagreement among the Officials."

On officials' signals: "All that arm waving following an Official's whistle blast is not a personal idiosyncrasy."

On scorers and timers: "Scoring a basketball game is no job for anybody who has to use his fingers and thumbs to count up to 10."

On number of players: "You can't start a basketball game, legally, without five players on each team. But if one of your five guys has to go home

after the game begins, it's perfectly legal to continue without him. It isn't recommended, of course, but that's beside the point."

On jersey numbers: ". . . It won't surprise you that players of a team may not wear same numbers, but chances are you never noticed this one: numbers 1 and 2 are illegal, as is any number with a digit greater than 5 . . . That's because most Officials have only five fingers on each hand, with which to signal to the Scorer the number of the player who committed the foul, and 1 or 2 fingers indicates the number of free throws."

On the language gap: ". . . A Throw-In doesn't refer to the towel, Traveling and Hitch Hiker have nothing to do with taking a trip and basketball's Bonus is neither cash nor green stamps . . ."

Definition of a flagrant foul: "A violent or savage unsportsmanlike act or a non-contact, vulgar or abusive display; not necessarily intentional."

On the live ball: "A live ball is simply a ball that is legally in play. Without this distinction, however, all those goals poured through the baskets during pre-game warmups would count on the scoreboard, or a player could attempt a field goal instead of a throw-in from out of bounds . . ."

On the dead ball: "To know how many times the ball becomes dead during a game, you can come close by counting the Officials' whistle toots. Better still, watch for the Officials' arm-overhead signal for stopping the clock . . ."

On free throw procedure: "When a free throw is awarded, the Official takes the ball to the free throw line of the offended team. After reasonable time for the players to take their positions (and the boos to subside if it's against the home team), he places the ball at the disposal of the free thrower, who then must make his throw within 10 seconds."

On violations and penalties: "The relationship between a violation and a foul in basketball is roughly comparable to that of a parking violation to a speeding ticket. The penalty for the former usually is less severe."

On the winning team: "As you might guess, the winner is the team with the most points when the game ends — except in one rare forfeit situation. If a team refuses to play when instructed to do so by an Official, the other team wins . . ."

Thus endeth the lesson.