

Case Study 1 - NBA refs

Part 1

- Just the facts
 - NBA has 74 full-time referees and eight other non-staff referees in line for this season
 - Refs are held accountable for bad officiating but it is done in private according to NBA Commissioner, Adam Silver.
 - NBA players get fined for publicly criticizing refs
- Background
 - Tension has grown between NBA players/coaches and the refs:
 - Jan. 9: Toronto Raptors coach Darko Rajaković ripped the refs officiating against the Lakers. Claimed possible conspiracy about Lakers needing a win. Upset about the lack of foul calls for his young star Scottie Barnes.
 - Jan. 11: Portland Trail Blazers coach Chauncey Billups ejected for unsuccessfully calling a time out. Refs missed his call for a timeout during the last 20 seconds of the game. The Portland Trail Blazers filed a protest with the league for the game against the Oklahoma City Thunder.
 - Jan. 14: Sacramento Kings coach Mike Brown stormed out to defend his players and exploded on the official at mid-court for a questionable no-call during the fourth quarter. Coach Brown was ejected. In his post game interview, Coach Brown spoke on an imbalance in officiating between Milwaukee and Sacramento that spanned most of the game. Coach Brown was fined \$50K.
 - Feb. 1: Minnesota Timberwolves guard, Anthony Edwards fined \$40K for his negative remarks on the refs officiating.
 - Raptors HC, Kings HC, Blazers game protest, Anthony Edwards, Lakers
 - Fans negative responses on social media (Twitter/X, Instagram, Facebook) in the comment section when a fine is announced or during gametime coverage.
- PR Issue
 - NBA coaches, players and fans are upset with the current state of referring in the NBA and their legitimacy is in question. Transparency issue between the NBA organization and the players, coaches and fans on poor officiating.
- The tactics used to address the issue?
 - The NBA has released statements on social media and fined players that have spoken negatively about referees.
- Observed successes/failures?
 - Successes: Quick at providing responses to stakeholders via press releases and official statements from NBA Communications.

- Failures: Lack of transparency of how the NBA is dealing with the poor officiating from referees.

Part 2: Analyze

- **Opinion**

- I understand that questioning the referees is a risky game but there is no transparency due to the NBA dealing with referees privately. From a public standpoint it looks like the NBA is condoning the referee's game decisions and punishing players/coaches who speak up. Most of the time it is well known, star players so the fines do not impact them in a negative way. These fines give the appearance of the NBA taking action but in the wrong way.

- **SWOT**

- **Strengths:** NBA is quick to provide a response to communicate with its stakeholders when announcing a fine towards a player or coach.
- **Weaknesses:** Lack of transparency, consistency, and accountability,
- **Opportunity:** Gain public trust back, gain viewership for fans that have given up on the NBA due to the refs, develop positive relationships with NBA players and coaches.
- **Threats:** Loss of viewership, negative fan engagement on social media and at live games,

Part 3

Recommendations and Suggestions - How does the organization move forward?

The NBA needs to be transparent and make changes to develop public trust. The NBA needs to acknowledge the issue and create a better system for referees that officiate games poorly. This should be done so through a public lens where refs attend post game conferences and interview them. Releasing statements via press releases is important for transparency to stakeholders. Interviews can provide accountability towards refs judgment calls and improve the relationship between NBA players, coaches and fans.

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