The downside

If every now and then the shooters try to steal a foul by spreading a leg and looking for an improbable failed contact, much more problematic to handle is the situation where the defender goes to occupy the shooter's landing spot, recently renamed as "landing foul". We have dealt in the last post rights and duties of players who take their feet off the ground and fly back to where they jumped or are entitled to land on a spot that was free at the time of the jump. If in the "spread off leg" situations players can fall after touching each other in the air, the "landing foul" situation presents much more risks and injury possibilities for the players: than finding or landing, on a regular and flat surface such as parquet, they ends up "tripping" on one or both feet of the defender. Anyone who has played basketball will have experienced how painful it is to twist an ankle, even if only on the playing court, but landing on an opponent's foot can be much more dangerous and injuries as well as ankle or can affect all joints and even the back.

Clip 1 – 15red dribbles near the two points line, he stops and shoots, 22 yellow jumps to counter the shot but ends up under the feet of the opponent. The referee sanctions a foul on the shooter: 3 free throws.
Clip 2 – 14 white dribbles and stops for a 3pt shot, 10 black jumps to counter the shot and falling back goes to hit the opponent. The referee sanctions a foul on the shooter: a valid 3pt basket and 1 additional free throw.

In the first clip the defender, clearly late, arrives with one foot under the right foot of the shooter who has not yet returned with both feet on the ground, the basket is not made. The defensive movement could become dangerous for the shooter also in relation to the fact that the defender rotates on

himself going to invade the opponent’s cylinder.

In the second one the defender, besides being late, is also out of balance, the failed contact occurs when the shooter has put both feet on the ground, the basket will still have to be awarded, but the sanctioned foul will result in a white throw-in because the AOS has now ended. If the black team had been reached foul penalties in the fourth quarter then the foul would have penalized with two free throws.

In both situations, the contacts are part of the game and the delay of the defenders; unfortunately there are some plays in which the defender “walking” gets right under the point of relapse and the consequences of the foul are dangerous. This type of action is configured in the criteria of the unsportsmanlike conduct or expulsion foul, depending on the manner in which it takes place. Curiously, the FIBA has included this criterion not in article 37 or 38, but in article “33.6 Player in the air”: creating in fact the sixth criterion for the assessment of an unsportsmanlike foul.

This type of contact must be sanctioned consistently, and its abuse by defenders must be limited, especially in conditions where the contact could cause a serious injury to the opponent. Players are the primary asset of basketball and must be adequately protected (by referees), but respect for opponents must be a dogma for any player!