

Starting good...

The jump ball is the essence of basketball! Individual: fighting to win the ball; team: 'just tapping it' to a teammate. The Euroleague has decided to ennoble this moment of the game by putting it back into its rules, not only for the start of the game, but perhaps it is the first one that hides the biggest pitfalls.

Do not be fooled by the television bar information, we are at the beginning of the match, the Crew chief toss the jump ball: 43red jumps and with his arm hits the elbow of the 22white, he's able to tap the ball but it ends out of bounds. The call by Umpire 2 awards the possession to the red team. The disappointment of the poor 22white is visible. The match doesn't start well!

Let's enter the regulation perimeter and then make some considerations. The arm of 22white is high but legal (in his cylinder) and is lifted vertically. When the ball comes out of the referee's hands the ball becomes live and the match has started. The contact caused by 43red causes damage to 22white and an advantage for the red team: a foul must be called (by one or both umpires).

From some time many players have been positioning themselves at the jump ball as 22white, the high arm certainly makes more difficult to toss the ball. It's normal that the arms of the players may touch, generally without making foul contact, but it is also true that in some circumstances the contact may create damage or bring an advantage. The referee's skill lies in reading the contact, assessing its nature and deciding on the correct penalty. I would like to remind you that even though it is a jump ball the foul does not have to be necessarily an UF.

The contact by 43red is evident and deserves a referee's call. At this point the question you may have asked yourself is: is

the foul PF or UF? Is the contact made by 43red a normal attempt to play the ball? Or is the player not interested in playing the ball and just plays the opponent's arm? In normal view (real speed) how it happens, at least a PF call would have allowed for a possible IRS review for the upgrade to UF. Certainly a trained and above all concentrated eye, should have detected the infraction committed by 43red. The foul is clearly UF and falls under the first criterion of Article 37.1.1. Once UF has been called, the game would have resumed with 2 free throws for 22white (APA exposed when the ball became live on the first free throw, in the direction of the red team attack direction), white ball possession at the throw-in line in frontcourt with 10:00 on the clock.

The jump ball, especially in EL, often finds referees unprepared, as they are not used to handling it in their national championships, and only once per game. The posture of jumpers like 22white needs a different throwing technique: from higher up and with only one hand, a sort of shot with an imperceptible parabola; small or older referees will certainly have more difficulties. Another aspect to be taken care of, but this is before entering the circle, is that of the position of the players, who, in order to "steal" a millimetre and create an advantage for themselves, arrange themselves in the most disparate way, often intertwining feet, legs and arms! Last but not least, allow us a consideration: the game begins before the start of the clock, so the brain must be on and working, missing a call at this moment denotes lack of attention and concentration.