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Fouls of Equal Gravity and the Cancellation of Equal Penalties

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This document has been prepared for stakeholders to facilitate their understanding of the rules involving fouls of equal gravity and the cancellation of equal foul penalties when fouls are committed during the same stopped-clock period.

Question: What is meant by “fouls of equal gravity”?

Answer: Fouls of equal gravity are fouls in which the penalties for the foul are equal, as determined by the awarding of free throws and whether the offended team is also awarded the ball for a throw-in following the free throws. The ejection component of a disqualifying foul is not considered when cancelling equal foul penalties. Administrative technical fouls (excluding a technical foul for an excessive timeout) carry a penalty of one or two free throws and resume play at the point of interruption. Intentional fouls, disqualifying fouls, player/substitute and bench technical fouls, and a technical foul for an excessive timeout all have the same penalty of two free throws and a throw-in awarded to the offended team:

Foul Type	Penalty
Administrative Technical Foul (excluding excessive timeout)	One or two free throws
Intentional Foul, Disqualifying Foul, Player/Substitute, Team , and Bench Technical Fouls, and Excessive Timeout	Two free throws plus the ball for a throw-in

Play 1: While A1 is dribbling the ball in her backcourt, A2 and B2 commit:

- (a) personal fouls
- (b) player/substitute technical fouls
- (c) intentional fouls
- (d) disqualifying fouls
- (e) A2 commits an intentional foul while B2 commits a disqualifying foul.

Ruling 1: In (a) A2 and B2 have committed a double foul. The fouls are charged to both players and play is resumed at the point of interruption. The shot clock is not reset. In (b), (c), (d), and (e), A2 and B2 have committed fouls of equal gravity, as the penalties for the player/substitute technical, intentional, and disqualifying fouls are two free throws plus possession of the ball. These foul penalties cancel, and play is resumed at the point of interruption. The shot clock is not reset. In (d), both A2 and B2 are ejected. In (e), B2 is ejected.

In (a) through (e), the point of interruption is based on the location of dribbler A1 when the fouls occurred.

The same applies when opposing players commit fouls, but not against each other.

Play 2: While A1 is dribbling the ball in her backcourt, A2 fouls B3 and B2 fouls A3 at approximately the same time. A2 and B2's fouls are:

- (a) both personal fouls
- (b) both player/substitute technical fouls
- (c) both intentional fouls
- (d) both disqualifying fouls
- (e) A2's foul is intentional and B2's foul is disqualifying

Ruling 2: In (a) A2 and B2 have committed simultaneous fouls. The fouls are charged to both players and play is resumed at the point of interruption. The shot clock is not reset. In (b), (c), (d), and (e), A2 and B2 have committed fouls of equal gravity, as the penalties for the player/substitute technical, intentional, and disqualifying fouls are two free throws plus possession of the ball. These foul penalties cancel, and play is resumed at the point of interruption. The shot clock is not reset. In (d), both A2 and B2 are ejected. In (e), B2 is ejected.

In (a) through (e), the point of interruption is based on the location of dribbler A1 when the fouls occurred. The shot clock is not reset and Team A receives a new 10 seconds to gain frontcourt status.

Fouls with unequal penalties

When opponents commit fouls at approximately the same time and one foul is technical, intentional, or disqualifying, both fouls are penalized.

Play 3: While A1 is dribbling the ball, A2 and B2 commit fouls against each other. A2's foul is personal and B2's foul is intentional.

Ruling 3: Both fouls will be penalized. When Team B is in the bonus, B2 will be awarded two free throws with no players in marked lane spaces. After B2's free throws, any member of Team A will be awarded two free throws for B2's intentional foul. Play will resume with a throw-in awarded to Team A at the division line opposite the scorers' table. The shot clock is reset to 30 seconds. When A1 is dribbling in their team's backcourt, Team A receives a new 10 seconds to gain frontcourt status.

When Team B is not in the bonus, the only free throws attempted will be for B2's intentional foul. When free throws are attempted for both fouls, the free throws for the intentional foul are attempted last.

Cancellation of Equal Foul Penalties

When play stops for an infraction, multiple fouls may be committed by both teams during the stopped-clock period following the infraction. Before the 2017-18 season, officials had to determine whether or not any fouls committed by opponents occurred at approximately the same time. At times, this may have been difficult to ascertain, and the foul penalties may not have been adjudicated consistently; free throws being awarded in some cases, not in others. Now, when

opponents commit fouls in the same stopped-clock period, and before the ball again becomes live, these fouls are to be considered to have occurred at the same time. Fouls committed by opponents which carry the same penalty will have the penalties cancelled in the order in which the fouls occur.

Rule 7-4.13: In the same stopped-clock period that follows an infraction, special situations may arise when additional foul(s) are committed:

- a. All fouls shall be charged, and all penalties identified.
- b. The order in which all infractions occurred shall be determined.
- c. All equal penalties against opposing teams shall be cancelled in the order in which they were ruled. Once the fouls have been reported and penalties cancelled, they are considered as never having occurred.
- d. The right to possession of the ball as part of the last penalty shall cancel any prior rights to possession of the ball.
- e. Once the ball has become live for the first free throw or for a throw-in penalty, that penalty can no longer be used for canceling any remaining penalties.
- f. All remaining penalties shall be administered in the order in which they were ruled. Play shall resume as if the last committed single intentional foul, single disqualifying foul, single player/substitute technical foul, single bench technical foul, or single administrative technical foul for an excessive timeout was the only foul committed.
- g. If, after the cancellation of equal penalties against the teams, there are no other penalties remaining to be administered, the game shall be resumed at the point of interruption.

If a single foul causes the stopped-clock period, that foul's penalty may not be used to cancel the penalties of any fouls committed afterwards.

In previous seasons, when fouls occurred after the game clock stopped, officials had to charge all of the fouls to the offending individuals, identify the penalties for those fouls, and determine the order in which the fouls occurred. Sub-articles .a and .b of the rule are no different.

For .c, once the officials have determined the order in which the fouls occurred, they will cancel equal foul penalties in the order in which fouls occurred.

1. Any administrative technical fouls (excluding an administrative technical foul for an excessive timeout) committed by the opposing teams are charged to the offending teams and the foul penalties are cancelled in the order in which the fouls occurred.
 - When the opposing teams commit an equal number of administrative technical fouls, the foul penalties cancel and there will be no free throws administered.
 - When the opposing teams commit an unequal number of administrative technical fouls, following the cancellation of all equal penalties, there can be only one team awarded free throws for the remaining foul(s).
2. Any intentional, disqualifying, player/substitute and bench technical, and excessive timeout technical fouls committed by the opposing teams are charged to the offending individuals/teams and the foul penalties are cancelled in the order in which the fouls occurred.

- When the opposing teams commit an equal number of these fouls, the foul penalties cancel and there will be no free throws administered.
- When the opposing teams commit an unequal number of intentional, disqualifying, player/substitute and bench technical, or excessive timeout technical fouls, following the cancellation of all equal penalties, there can be only one team awarded free throws for the remaining foul(s).

Play 4: Following a violation, fouls are committed by the opposing teams in this order:

1. Team A intentional foul
2. Team B disqualifying foul
3. Team A disqualifying foul
4. Team B player/substitute technical foul
5. Team A player/substitute technical foul
6. Team B bench technical foul

Ruling 4: The fouls are all charged to the offending individuals/teams and their penalties are cancelled in the order in which the fouls occurred. In this play, all fouls carry the same penalty (two free throws plus an awarded throw-in to the offended team). Since there were an equal number of fouls assessed to each team, all foul penalties cancel, and play will resume at the point of interruption.

Rule 7-4.14.d states that “the right to possession of the ball as the part of the last penalty shall cancel any prior rights to possession of the ball.” This is similar to the old false double foul rule when play would resume as if the last foul were the only foul committed.

Play 5: A1 commits an intentional foul against B1. After the whistle, B2 commits an intentional foul against A1.

Ruling 5: Any member of Team B is awarded two free throws for A1’s intentional foul, followed by any member of Team A being awarded two free throws for B2’s intentional foul. Play resumes with a throw-in by Team A at the division line opposite the scorers’ table.

Rule 7-4.14.e states that once the ball becomes live for the first free throw or throw-in penalty, that foul’s penalties may not be cancelled against any remaining foul penalties. Once the ball becomes live for a foul’s penalty (see Rule 6-2.1.b and .c for how the ball becomes live in this situation), that foul’s penalty may not be cancelled against any subsequent technical, intentional, or disqualifying foul.

Play 6: A1 travels. After the whistle, B1 commits an intentional foul. After the ball has been placed at the disposal of A1 for the first free throw for the intentional foul, A2 commits an intentional foul.

Ruling 6: Because A2’s intentional foul was committed after the ball became live following B1’s intentional foul, these foul penalties do not cancel. A1 will attempt the two free throws for B1’s intentional foul, followed by any Team B member attempting two free throws for A2’s intentional foul. Play will resume with a throw-in by Team B at the division line opposite the scorers’ table.

Play 7: A1 travels. While the ball is at the disposal of B1 for the throw-in, A1 commits an intentional foul against B2. After the whistle, B2 pushes A1 and is assessed an intentional foul. The officials rule that these are fouls of equal gravity. Are the officials correct?

Ruling 7: Yes. The intentional fouls committed by A1 and B2 are committed during the same stopped-clock period. Following the cancellation of the equal foul penalties, play resumes at the point of interruption – Team B's throw-in following A1's traveling violation.