

New rules take away game strategy?

Basketball coaches bemoan 83 rule changes



FILE PHOTOS

Mercy coach Larry Baker says the rule changes put into effect by the high school basketball rules committee won't improve the game.

"They just keep tinkering with the game. Pretty soon they are going to ruin it. It's like destroying a new car just to change the spark plugs."

— George Sommerman
By Chris McCooley
staff writer

AREA BASKETBALL COACHES aren't exactly enamored with some rule changes installed this year by the Michigan High School Basketball Rules Committee.

Teams will be allowed just two timeouts per half. Unused timeouts cannot be accumulated. Last season, teams were allowed five timeouts per game.

Also, if a player commits a charging foul after the shot, the basket is automatically disallowed. Last year, if the foul was committed after the shot, the basket was good.

These changes will have a significant effect on coaching strategies and philosophies. So what do the coaches think of the changes?

"I HATE it," said Our Lady of Mercy head coach Larry Baker.

"It's a tragedy," said Plymouth Salem head coach Fred Thomann.

"I don't like it at all," said both Tom Lang, Bentley head girls' basketball coach, and Phyllis Cunningham-Mulroy, Plymouth Canton head girls' coach.

"I'm pretty perturbed about it," said George Sommerman, John Glenn head girls' basketball coach.

No sir, the coaches aren't pleased. The girls coaches feel stronger against the timeout rule change than they do about the charge/block rule. They feel the charge/block rule will have a greater impact on the boys' game.

THOMANN WAS the most adamant against the charge/block change.

"It's really an injustice. As a coach, you take a lot of time training your kids to take the ball to the hole. Now,

basketball

all a defensive player has to do is lay in the bushes, so to speak, and they'll get a score. The offense is put at a real disadvantage and I'm not very happy about that," he said.

Apparently, the change was made to clear up vagaries referees may have had in calling charging fouls and also to reduce the threat of injury. Instead, the coaches said, the rule has been made more confusing, and the threat of injury has been increased.

"I really don't think the refs are going to try to call it," Sommerman said. "I think they really don't understand the rule. I think they are confused by it."

Baker foresees a potential increase in injuries. "I wonder if you won't begin to see more kids set up to take the charge. They know that the hoop will be erased. I see it as change that will invite more contact. There is a real reward now for a kid to take a charge."

THE CONSENSUS as to the charge/block rule seems to be that it won't make much difference on girls' basketball.

"I still feel the call is up to the officials' discretion. The coaches will still see it differently. It won't have much of a difference on the girls' game," Lang said.

Lang added, however, that if he still had a player like Kim Archer, who graduated last year, the rule would have a big impact on his team. "Kim liked to go to the basket a lot. If this rule was in effect last year, she would have gotten a lot of baskets taken away," he said.

But it's the timeout rule that really has the coaches scratching their heads in wonderment.

"I really don't even begin to understand the rationale behind it," Baker said. "I heard some of the officials try to explain their reasons for it, but I don't see it as a benefit to the game."

Baker said the rule has necessitated a change in his coaching philosophy.

"I HAVE TO train the kids to be more autonomous on the court. We are working on developing a set of signals to improve communication from the bench to the floor," he said.

The most common criticisms of the

rule are that it takes away some of the strategy from the game, and it will force the use of more unnecessary timeouts, especially in the first half.

"I never was one to use all of my timeouts," Mulroy said. "But it was nice to know they were there if I needed them. The intent was to eliminate unnecessary timeouts, and I can understand that, but there was a lot of good coaching going on during those timeouts."

Sommerman agrees. "It takes the strategy away from the game. I can't tell you how many college games I saw last year that were won in the final seconds because of intelligent timeouts," he said.

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George Sommerman, longtime John Glenn coach, makes several good points against the rule changes.

CC has the size and experience to bid for Class A championship

By Chris McCooley
staff writer

WHEN SEVERAL starters went down with injuries in the middle of last season, Catholic Central football coach Tom Mach was forced to rely on a bunch of untested juniors.

Those juniors led CC to a 7-2 season and a Catholic League A-B championship.

Those same juniors are back to lead the charge in 1983. CC returns 22 lettermen this season, half of whom were starters last year.

"These kids did a tremendous job last year," said Mach, who is entering his eighth season at CC. "We were hit hard with injuries, and they stepped in and took us to the championship."

"We have a good nucleus to work with this year. I'd say that over the last couple of years, this is one of our better teams."

THE STRENGTH of the team this year, Mach said, will be its defense. The average size on the defensive line is 6 feet 1, 208 pounds, and it is backed by two potential All-State linebackers: Matt Burns and John Nissen.

"It is going to be real difficult to run against us," Mach said.

If you doubt it, look at a look at this front five: senior tackle Don Bailey, 6 foot 3, 230 pounds; senior nose man Mark Messner, 6-foot-4, 220; senior end Joe Urso, 6 foot, 180; junior end Tom Erbasmund, 6 foot, 180; and fighting for the right tackle spot are sophomore John Forsythe, 6 foot 1, 230; sophomore Nick Varajan, 6 foot 2, 225; and senior John Connor, 6 foot 1, 200. Connor may also play some at end.

The only potential weakness on the defense will be the secondary. Senior Scott Ronan is the only defensive back with experience. He will be joined by seniors Tom Gottschalk, John Murphy and junior Ron Wanzel.

Offensively, CC is no slouch either. In fact, Mach said his offense will be downright potent.

"WE LOST a good back in Jeff Gatt last year, but we should have a good running game. We have one of the smartest lines we've ever had. They know how to read the defense, trap, and they get off the ball real well," Mach said.

"It doesn't get easier, you know. You'd think that after eight years things would start to go smoother. We are better. But how much better are the other teams in the league? If we stay healthy we could make it to the playoffs. Once we get in, then maybe we can win it, but our problem has always been getting in."

— Tom Mach
Catholic Central head coach

Quarterback Matt Wilczewski, along with tight end Messner, flanker Ronan, and split end Wanzel, give the CC offense an added dimension: a passing threat.

"Our passing attack will hit in many different ways. Matt can roll out, bootleg, drop back, he can hurt you all ways," Mach said.

In the backfield with Wilczewski will be a pair of seniors, Dave Green at tailback and Mark Renkiewicz at fullback. Like on defense, the offensive line will be big. Nissen and Connor fill the tackles. Dan Collins, a 5-foot-10, 183-pound senior, and Rocco Ferrara, a 6-foot-1, 210-pound senior, will be the guards. Junior Ed Turek, 6 foot, 185, will be the center. Chris Colbeck, 6-foot-2, 235-pound senior, also will see line duty.

TOM RICE will handle the kickoff and long field goal tries for CC. Mach said his range is about 35 yards and in. Either Chris French, Connor, or Rice will kick the extra points, and Nissen will do the punting.

CC looks very much like it has the horses to challenge for the Class A state crown this year. But Mach believes it's too early for such talk.

"It doesn't get easier, you know. You'd think that after eight years

things would start to go smoother. We are better. But how much better are the other teams in the league? If we stay healthy we could make it to the playoffs. Once we get in, then maybe we can win it, but our problem has always been getting in," he said.

Mach said that Birmingham Brother Rice and Warren DeLaSalle will be two of the toughest teams this season. He also said Redford Bishop Borgess and Harper Woods Notre Dame will be greatly improved.

It won't take long for Mach to gauge how good his team is. CC's first three

games are against Traverse City, Ypsilanti and Dearborn Divine Child.

REDFORD CATHOLIC CENTRAL'S 1983 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Sept. — 10, vs. Traverse City at Pontiac Silverdome (8 p.m.); 16, at Ypsilanti; 24, vs. Dearborn Divine Child at Livonia Clarenceville.
Oct. — 1, vs. Redford Bishop Borgess at Livonia; 8, vs. Harper Woods Bishop Gallagher at South Lake; 16, vs. Birmingham Brother Rice at ECU's Hymerson Stadium (1 p.m.); 22, at DeLaSalle at Livonia Clarenceville.
Nov. — 4, Catholic League championships at Pontiac Silverdome (time to be announced).
— All games start at 7:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted.



Senior quarterback Matt Wilczewski was pressed into service last year and guided CC to a Catholic League title. He will try for a repeat performance in 1983.

Photos by ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Scott Ronan, Catholic Central senior, will see two-way duty this season, playing in the defensive secondary as well as at flanker. He is the only member of CC's secondary with varsity experience.