

## MVC Officiating Statement

*The Missouri Valley Conference receives numerous e-mails each week regarding basketball officiating. Typically, these comments/questions increase as the Conference race heats up and/or in response to particular contests or particular circumstances that arise. In an effort to convey consistent information to our constituents, address several frequently asked questions and respond to various criticisms/suggestions, the MVC has developed the following summary:*

The quality of officiating in the MVC is a high priority for the Conference and its administrators - which include campus personnel, coaches, the coordinators of officials and the Conference office staff. A great many financial and personnel resources are devoted to a diligent effort to continually improve the level of officiating in the MVC.

The MVC officials are aggressively trained and are held accountable for both their performance and their judgment. Contests are carefully reviewed via a number of devices, including videotape, coaches' reports, referee reports, on-site observations, etc.

Evaluations of officiating mechanics, rules interpretations and implementation, game management and judgment are conveyed to the appropriate parties within the Conference infrastructure via established administrative procedures. To protect the integrity of the process, these evaluations are not made public (except in the most extreme circumstances). While perfection and consistency are always the goal, some errors are inevitable. Those corrections that need to be addressed are handled through appropriate channels. At the same time, effective and accurate officiating decisions/actions are reinforced through the same vehicles.

The MVC's officiating program compares favorably with that of every other Division I conference in the country. MVC officials are regularly selected to work NCAA Tournaments. Certainly, officiating is a very subjective science, which incorporates a myriad of difficult elements and involves human effort and judgment. There are any numbers of varying viewpoints as to what constitutes good or bad officiating, not to mention the number of divergent opinions on a particular game or particular call(s). In most cases, a person's point of view is heavily influenced by their affiliation with a particular institution or conference as a booster, coach, alumni, administrator or fan. The outcome of the contest in question (i.e., whether their team won) is also a strong contributing factor.

Historically, officiating complaints around the country become more frequent when conference play begins, rivalries heat up and post-season berths are on the line. Fans from various conferences nationwide criticize the officials in their league and claim that those in other conferences are better or more elite. Ironically, because of the independent contractor status of basketball officials, it is often the same individuals officiating in multiple conferences. So, claims that the officials in Conference XYZ are better than those in the MVC don't hold much

water - it's the same folks! For example, many of the "top-rated" officials on the MVC rosters also work in the Big XII, Big 10, C-USA (not to mention several other conferences).

Finally, while officials absolutely do and will make mistakes, any accusations of favoritism, premeditation or impropriety are both inaccurate and inappropriate. Such statements unfairly question the integrity of the individual officials and the Missouri Valley Conference. Not only would any such activities be readily apparent and result in the immediate end to the official's career, they are virtually impossible in a practical sense. Most officials work many games in a week and are part of a very fast-paced game. They must immediately blow the whistle and call what they see - there isn't time to stop and think which teams are playing, what conference this is and who they might want to take care of in that particular instance.

And, to debunk a popular myth, the number of fouls called against one team vs. the number called against the other indicates nothing other than how many fouls each team committed. There is no NCAA rule that requires they be balanced and a larger number for one team is not an indicator of inherent bias. The circumstances of the game (e.g., style of play, fouling to get back into the game) can also have a dramatic affect on the totals. All parties need to do their best to be objective about officiating and its role in athletics at all levels.