

## **MHSA BASKETBALL MERCY RULE**

For this year's Basketball Season, the Basketball Mercy Rule will again be used by all MHSA member schools. It will be used for all levels of play, (Varsity, JV, Sophomore and Frosh) in the second half only **(the clock must have started for second half to begin)**, once a team has a forty (40) point or better lead against their opponent, a running clock will ensue until the end of the game even if the difference in the score drops below the forty point margin. The only time the clock will stop will be between quarters, time outs, and when replacing an injured or disqualified player.

In the second half **(the clock must have started for second half to begin)**, of a basketball game, the official scorer and timer will be responsible for running the clock continuously once a team has a forty (40) point or better lead against their opponent.

1. Once the clock signals the end of a quarter or overtime period, the clock will be stopped until play is started for the next quarter or overtime period.
2. Once an official signals for a called time-out, the clock will be stopped until play is started following the time-out.
3. Once an official beckons or bench personnel come onto the floor to attend to an injured player, the clock will be stopped until play is started again.
4. Once an official informs the Head Coach that a player has been disqualified from further participation in the game, the clock will be stopped until play is started again.

The clock will be restarted when:

1. If a free throw is not successful and the ball is to remain live, the clock shall be started when the ball touches or is touched by a player on the court.
2. If play is resumed by a throw-in, the clock shall be started when the ball touches, or is legally touched by, a player on the court after it is released by the thrower.

Game management must inform the official scorer and timer of this MHSA Basketball Mercy Rule and the provisions of the rule.

MOA basketball officials should discuss this MHSA Basketball Mercy Rule with the head coaches and captains during the pre-game conference and with the scorer and timer before the start of the game.

The following are MHSA Basketball Mercy Rule Clarifications for the basketball season:

Free throws (including Technical fouls) are shot with a running clock once a team has a forty (40) point or better lead against their opponent until the end of the game even if the difference in the score drops below the forty point margin. The only time the clock would stop to shoot free throws would be when a player has been disqualified from further participation in the game, the clock would be stopped to replace the disqualified player and during the shooting of required free throws. The clock would be restarted in this situation (1) If a free throw is not successful and the ball is to remain live, the clock shall be started when the ball touches or is touched by a player on the court or (2) If the free throw(s) are made and play is resumed by a throw-in, the clock shall be started when the ball touches, or is legally touched by, a player on the court after it is released by the thrower.

**Question:** Once the Mercy Rule is in effect, if a player is fouled near the end of a quarter, does the athlete get to shoot the free throws if the clock runs out for that quarter?

**Answer:** The interpretation is dependent upon the quarter (period) in which the foul occurs. If the foul occurs near the end of the third quarter, the athlete would be allowed to shoot the free throws, because the foul is considered part of the third quarter. If the foul is committed near the

end of the fourth quarter or any extra period, unless the free throw points would affect the outcome of the game, no free throws shall be attempted after time has expired.

**Questions:** When the Mercy Rule is in effect, is the clock stopped for a Technical Foul? What if a player or coach is disqualified for any reason, is the clock stopped for a player or coach disqualification?

**Answers:** For a technical foul that doesn't cause a disqualification—the clock continues to run. If a player or coach has been disqualified from further participation in the game, the clock will be stopped until play is started again. The clock will be restarted when:

1. If a free throw is not successful and the ball is to remain live, the clock shall be started when the ball touches or is touched by a player on the court.
2. If play is resumed by a throw-in, the clock shall be started when the ball touches, or is legally touched by, a player on the court after it is released by the thrower.

**Question:** If in the second half, Team A reached the 40 point margin after they made the first of two free throws, does the clock start before the shooting of the second free throw or does it start after the results of the second free throw?

**Answer:** The clock would start after the results of the second free throw by following the below information:

1. If a free throw is not successful and the ball is to remain live, the clock shall be started when the ball touches or is touched by a player on the court.
2. If play is resumed by a throw-in, the clock shall be started when the ball touches, or is legally touched by, a player on the court after it is released by the thrower.

**Question:** The Mercy Rule is only acted upon in the second half of the game. What happens if (A): team A goes up forty points in the first half and after they come back from the intermission the score is team A – 60 and team B – 20? Do we begin the second half with the Mercy Rule? Or (B): team A goes up 45 in the first half but is only leading by 39 at half time?

**Answers:** The Mercy Rule is in effect only in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of a game. So in (A) if a team is up 40 or more points in the first half, the rest of the 1<sup>st</sup> half will be played with regular timing. If a team starts the 2<sup>nd</sup> half with a 40 point lead or more, once the ball is put in play and the clock has started, then the mercy rule regulations will be in effect for the rest of the game. In (B), the Mercy Rule is only used when a team is ahead by 40 or more points in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half so in this situation, the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter will be started using regular timing.

**Question:** Team A ends the 1<sup>st</sup> half leading by 41 points. During half time intermission, A1 dunks the ball and a "Technical Foul" is called on A1. At the start of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, B1 shoots the two free throws for the "Technical Foul" and makes both. Team A now leads by 39 points. Should the Mercy Rule be in effect since Team A has a 41 point lead before the two technical foul free throws were made?

**Answer:** The MHSA has interpreted that **the clock must have started for second half to begin.** The clock will start when Team B's division line throw-in touches, or is legally touched by, a player on the court after it is released by the thrower. When the clock is started, Team A only has a 39 point lead. The Mercy Rule will not be in effect.