

**New  
NFHS**

**Rule 9-9-1 EXCEPTION**

# Long Story – Short Version:

Back in '07 and again in '18 the NFHS issued a relatively unknown and obscure backcourt violation ruling, considering it an application of rule 9-9-1. Over the years, many officials who knew about this Interpretation disagreed with it. Feedback from many suggested that the NFHS retract that “Interpretation”, which would have solve the apparent problem. But instead of doing that, they issued this year an EXCEPTION added to rule 9-9-1, which effectively did the same thing. However, many who never knew the Interpretation to begin with are finding it hard to understand why this revision to 9-9-1 was even necessary. Frustration and confusion have arisen, not because officials today are not inclined to agree with this new 2018-19 ruling, but because few if any knew anything about the old Interpretation that went contrary to that ruling for the past 12 years.

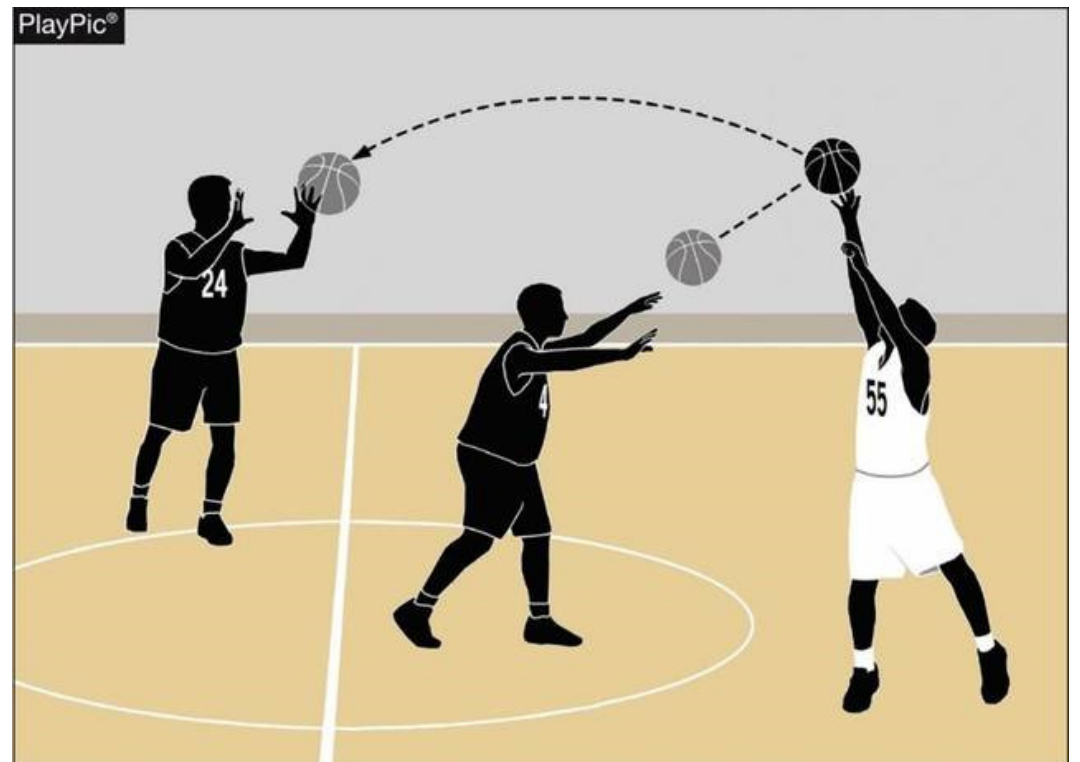
For the **Long Story**, click to the next slide and enjoy . . . . .

**Rule 9-9-1, the “Last to Touch/First to Touch” clause, has always been an integral part of the NFHS backcourt rule, and this has not changed:**

“A player shall not be the first to touch the ball after it has been in team control in the frontcourt, if he/she or a teammate last touched or was touched by the ball in the frontcourt before it went to the backcourt.”

**Sometime prior to 2007, the NFHS was asked to clarify its ruling on a backcourt play that looked something like this:**

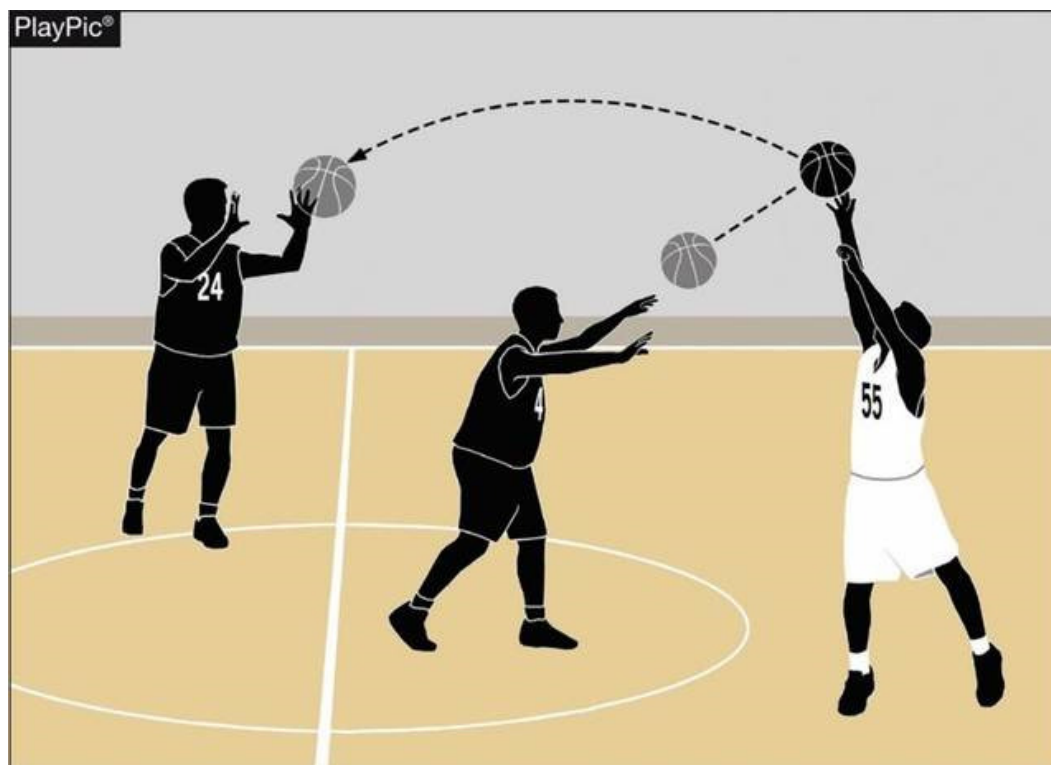
**They were asked by coaches and officials, “A play such as is pictured on the right here . . . Should this be considered legal? Or a 9-9-1 backcourt violation?”**



# In their 2007-08 Interpretations the NFHS stated this ruling to clarify that a play like this should be ruled a backcourt violation:

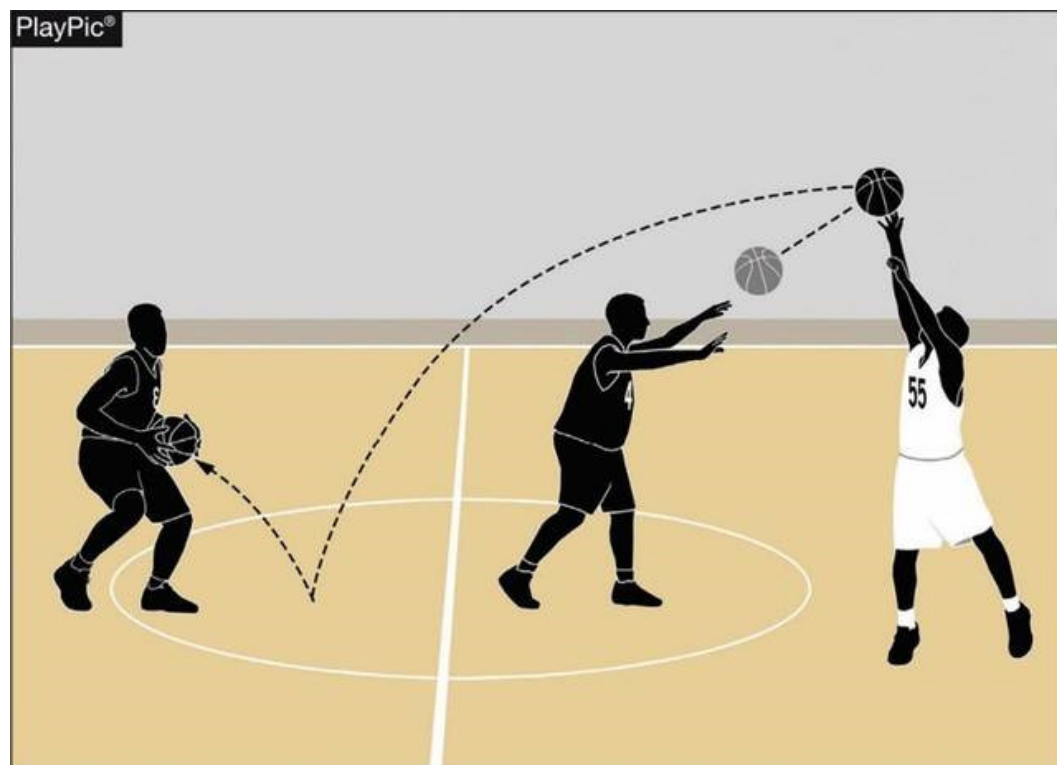
SITUATION 7: A1, in the team's frontcourt, passes towards A2, also in the team's frontcourt. B1 deflects the ball toward Team A's backcourt. . . . While the ball is still in the air over Team A's backcourt, but never having touched in Team A's backcourt, A2 gains possession of the ball while standing in Team A's backcourt.

**RULING: Backcourt violation on Team A.** Team A was still in team control and caused the ball to have backcourt status. Had A2 permitted the ball to bounce in the backcourt after having been deflected by B1, there would have been no backcourt violation. (4-4-1, 4-4-3, 9-9-1)



# However, they ruled then that this situation would not be a violation of Rule 9-9-1:

SITUATION 7: A1, in the team's frontcourt, passes towards A2, also in the team's frontcourt. B1 deflects the ball toward Team A's backcourt. . . . While the ball is still in the air over Team A's backcourt, but never having touched in Team A's backcourt, A2 gains possession of the ball while standing in Team A's backcourt. **RULING:** Backcourt violation on Team A. Team A was still in team control and caused the ball to have backcourt status. **Had A2 permitted the ball to bounce in the backcourt after having been deflected by B1, there would have been no backcourt violation.** (4-4-1, 4-4-3, 9-9-1)



Before we continue, let's make sure everybody is clear on what the NFHS annual Interpretations are . . . . .

## The Nature of the Annual NFHS Interpretations:

Each year in late summer the NFHS publishes its "Interpretations." These situations and corresponding rulings are clarifications the NFHS wants to make in response to questions officials and coaches have forwarded to them.

FYI, here's a link to an archive of past Interpretations from 1996 to present. Copy and Paste This URL into Your Web Browser to View this Searchable Archive Online:

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1mplX\\_LsD720Y4fzWZpVcKCHg9v8jcYxA](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1mplX_LsD720Y4fzWZpVcKCHg9v8jcYxA)

Access these Interpretations when you have time and surf and survey the hundreds of case plays that have been officially issued over the past twenty or so years. They're informative and valuable because, unless made invalid and outdated by a subsequent rule change or later Interpretation, they clarify the correct ruling for many interesting and relevant plays not readily known from the rules book or casebook.

# The Significance of the Annual NFHS Interpretations

With each publication of its Interpretations, the NFHS includes this disclaimer:

***Publisher's Note:*** *The National Federation of State High School Associations is the only source of official high school interpretations. They do not set aside nor modify any rule. They are made and published by the NFHS in response to situations presented.*

Therefore, each Interpretation, until it is set aside by a future rules change or further Interpretation, stands as an authoritative ruling on the situation addressed.



# The **PROBLEM** with the Annual NFHS Interpretations:

Though the NFHS publishes its new Interpretations annually, the online posting on its website for that year is as far as any annual Interpretations go. The NFHS does not archive these anywhere. Few make it into the Casebook for permanent retention. Since they are not announced in any widespread fashion, nor are they distributed in any way, hardly any officials know anything about them. They aren't repeated or addressed anywhere else by either the NFHS on its website or by auxiliary sources like Referee magazine. Very few trainers have been taught to identify each year what the Interpretations are in order to teach the officials under their instruction. Therefore there are few if any officials who actually know what these rulings are.

In other words, the annual NFHS Interpretations tend to come and go and vanish like the wind.

## ***What Happened to Prompt a Change?***

Sometime after the NFHS issued the aforementioned Interpretation in '07 and repeated it again in '17, many officials aware of this Interpretation expressed their disagreement with it. The most popular objection seemed to be the criticism that, if the original rule 9-9-1 was used as the basis of the NFHS's Interpretation, it was quite illogical for A2 to be considered both the last to touch the ball in the frontcourt and the first to touch in the backcourt by the same touch.

Apparently persuaded by this disagreement...

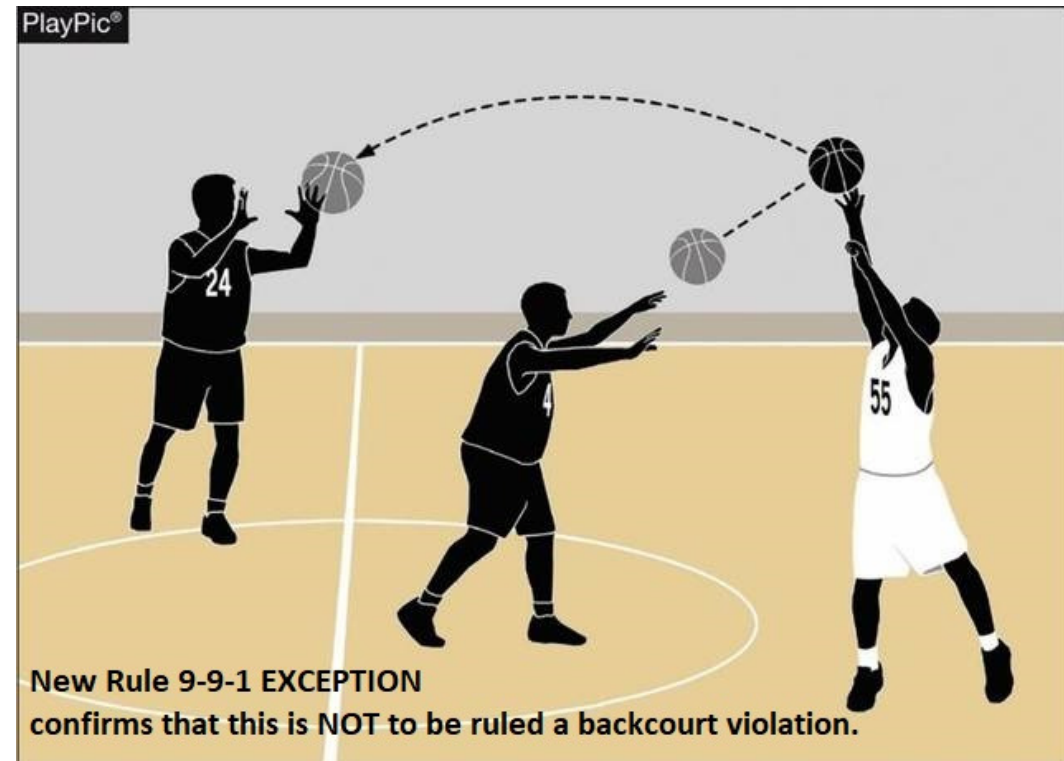
**In 2018-19 the NFHS effectively retracted that previously adopted ruling by adding this new EXCEPTION to rule 9-9-1:**

“A player shall not be the first to touch the ball after it has been in team control in the frontcourt, if he/she or a teammate last touched or was touched by the ball in the frontcourt before it went to the backcourt. **EXCEPTION: Any player located in the backcourt may recover a ball deflected from the frontcourt by the defense.**”

## **The NFHS explained their rationale for this 2018-19 change by issuing this COMMENT on the rule change:**

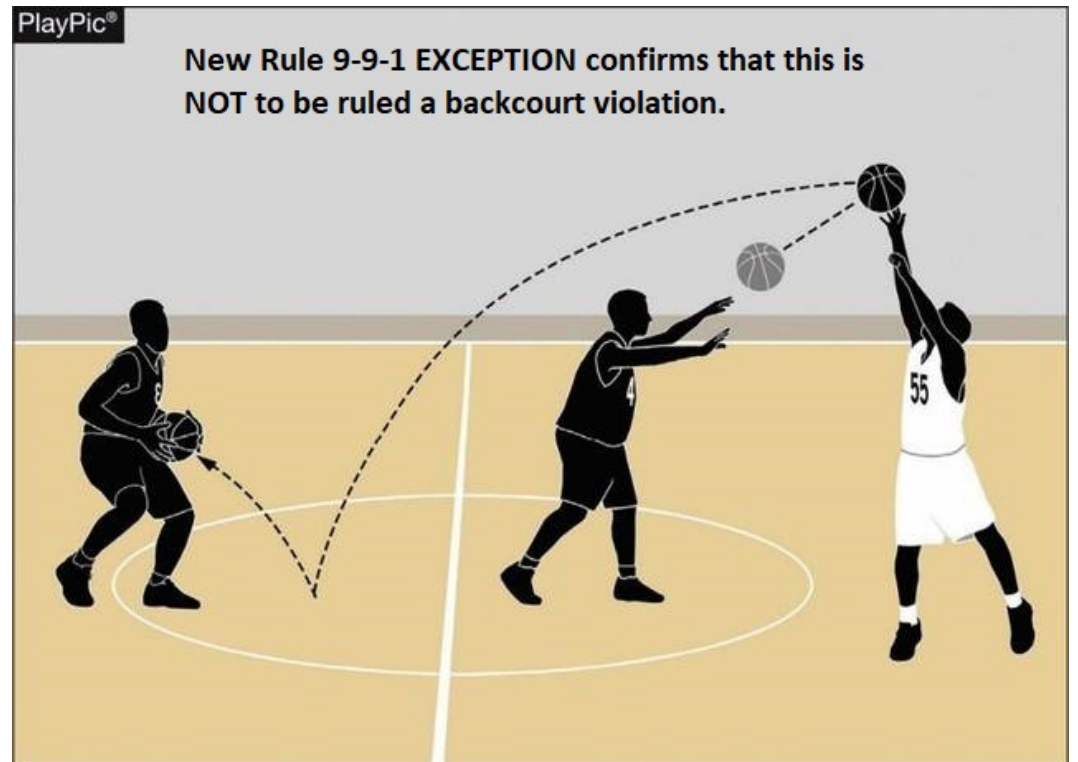
“An EXCEPTION added to the backcourt violation (9-9-1): To ensure that an offensive team is not unfairly penalized when the ball is deflected by the defense from the frontcourt to the backcourt. This exception allows the offense to recover the ball (that still has frontcourt status) in the backcourt without penalty. This also makes the play situation on the deflected pass consistent with other codes with very similar team control and backcourt rules.”

# Teaching resource illustrating what the NFHS intends to clarify with new Rule 9-9-1 EXCEPTION:



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## 9-1 EXCEPTION:





**By new Rule 9-9-1 EXCEPTION, it is confirmed that this is NOT to be called a backcourt violation**

Click Anywhere on the Video to Play. Or . . . . .

Copy and Paste This URL into Your Web Browser to View this Video Resource Online:

<https://iaabo.org/BackCourt/index.html>

**By new Rule 9-9-1 EXCEPTION, it is confirmed that this is NOT to be called a backcourt violation**



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Copy and Paste This URL into Your Web Browser to View this Video Resource Online:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1eN1snj0bkgAtUzc2Pmxpmvey6zUpbD5u>



# Referee Magazine, August, 2018

This issue featured an article describing this 9-9-1 rule change. It gave credit to NFHS's Theresia Wynns for verifying the accuracy of its content. The explanations and case plays included in that article reinforce that all the NFHS really wanted to do with this 9-9-1 EXCEPTION was to retract that relatively unknown Interpretation mentioned issued in '07 and '17. They are not intending to go as far as the NCAA-M did with their backcourt rule change last year.

## The 2018-19 NFHS backcourt rule change should not be confused with the new backcourt rule the NCAA-M adopted last year:



Art. 4. A player shall not be the first to touch the ball in his backcourt (with any part of his body, voluntarily or involuntarily) when the ball came from the front court while that player's team was in team control and that player or his teammate was the last to touch the ball before it went into the backcourt. (Exception: See Rule 9-12.5) Art. 5. A pass or any other loose ball in the front court that is deflected by a defensive player, which causes the ball to go into the backcourt may be recovered by either team even if the offense was the last to touch the ball before it went into the backcourt.

Click Anywhere on the Video to Play. Or . . . . .

Copy and Paste This URL into Your Web Browser to View this Video Resource Online:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgAaJ-bObAQ>

## **New Play Situation in the 2018,19 NFHS Casebook:**

**9.9.1 SITUATION F:** A1 is holding, dribbling or passing the ball near the division line in the frontcourt. B1 deflects the ball into the air in the backcourt. Prior to the ball touching the floor in the backcourt, the ball is (a) caught by (b) touched by (c) touches A2 who has backcourt status (or is located in the backcourt). RULING: Legal in a, b and c. (9-9-1 EXCEPTION)

***Therefore, by both rule and casebook citation, the previously issued Interpretation is hereby retracted and the correct ruling for this admittedly rare situation should be clear.***



Thanks!