

# FIRST YEAR COACHES MEETING 2025-2026

## Summary

Anthony McNeal welcomed attendees to the first year coaches meeting for the 2025-2026 season, emphasizing player development and outlining COBA's rules, including playing time guidelines, defensive regulations by grade level, and player eligibility.

## Details

- **Meeting Introduction and Philosophy** Anthony McNeal, the Director of COBA (Central Ohio Basketball Association), welcomed attendees to the first year coaches meeting for the 2025-2026 season ([00:00:00](#)). He emphasized that COBA's primary purpose is player development for middle and high school basketball, focusing on fundamentals in a competitive atmosphere rather than a "win at all costs" attitude. McNeal noted that coaches should keep in mind that the players are third, fourth, fifth, and sixth graders, and the league aims to provide them with the tools for future success ([00:13:23](#)).
- **COBA League Rules Overview** Anthony McNeal highlighted that middle school basketball rules, based on OHSA guidelines, apply to COBA's regular season games with some exceptions. These exceptions include a running clock in the second half if a team's lead exceeds 20 points, and specific rules for overtime and timeouts are covered in the [RULES linked here](#).
- **Defense and Ball Size Regulations** Full-court press, zone, and man defenses are permitted in grades five and six. However, for all grades, a 28.5-inch women's size basketball is used. McNeal stressed the importance of allowing an hour and 15 minutes for game scheduling to prevent delays ([00:16:55](#)).
- **Player Eligibility and Movement** Players are only allowed to play for one team per season, with transfers of schools requiring a signed document approved by both programs before January 15, 2025. Players are permitted to "play up" a grade, but "playing down" is not allowed unless approved by COBA, with no such approvals currently in place ([00:18:00](#)). Eligibility for divisions aligns with the sex assigned

at birth, with exceptions only if approved by COBA, to maintain consistency in boys' and girls' divisions ([00:19:14](#)).

- **Playing Time Guidelines** Anthony McNeal strongly recommended that all players receive 50% playing time in each game to gain valuable experience and foster development, citing that the team composition at younger ages often differs from high school levels ([00:20:11](#)). He suggested that coaches ensure fair playing time distribution, especially for players who may not be as competitive, by giving them more minutes in the second and third quarters ([00:22:01](#)).
- **Pressing and Trapping Rules** No team may press or trap once a 15-point lead is established, regardless of grade level, with violations resulting in a technical foul assessed to the coach ([00:22:01](#)). For third and fourth grade, the free throw line is reduced to 12 feet, and student-athletes may jump on or over the line during free throws ([00:23:03](#)).
- **Third and Fourth Grade Defensive Specifics** For third and fourth grade, only half-court man-to-man defense is permitted, with no zone or trapping defense allowed. Full-court man-to-man defense is only permitted in the last two minutes of the game for third and fourth grade. Fourth grade boys and girls may press the full game after January 5th, while third grade teams are not allowed to press at all throughout the year ([00:23:03](#)).
- **Double Teaming, Helpside, and Switching** **CLARIFICATION - PLEASE READ**  
  
*No double-teaming is allowed in third and fourth grade, but helpside and switching are permitted, with the interpretation left to the game officials. Coaches will receive two verbal warnings for zone or double-teaming violations before a technical foul is assessed, resulting in two foul shots and ball possession at half-court for the offense* ([00:24:03](#)) ([01:06:25](#)). Anthony McNeal emphasized the importance of coaches communicating with officials before each game to clarify rule interpretations, especially regarding helpside and switching versus double-teaming ([00:24:51](#)).
- **League Divisions and Team Structure** The league is structured into three divisions (Division 1 being most competitive, Division 3 least competitive) for third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade girls and boys school teams. Combined or open teams, consisting of players from different school districts, are subject to

league discretion for entry and placement. Anthony McNeal expects enough school teams for three divisions across all grade levels this year ([00:28:55](#)).

- **Roster and School District Confirmation** School teams must submit a school district confirmation document, filled out by a principal, athletic director, or varsity coach, to verify that student-athletes attend the school they represent ([00:30:02](#)). Additionally, a roster verifying date of birth and school attendance is required ([00:31:08](#)). All student-athletes also need a waiver. These documents will be accessible to coaches in a Google Drive folder starting October 20th ([00:32:22](#)).
- **Third and Fourth Grade Conferences** Voluntary conferences are available for third and fourth grade boys and girls programs, consisting of four to six teams grouped by proximity, home gym availability, and division ([00:33:27](#)) ([00:56:23](#)). These conferences will be round-robin style, with teams playing each other twice (home and away), resulting in six to ten matchups. COBA will provide the matchups, but coaches are responsible for arranging game times and locations ([00:34:48](#)). TO LET COBA know if your 3rd or 4th Grade team would like to choose to be in a Conference this year, [CLICK HERE](#).
- **Tournament Format and Scheduling Meeting** The tournament format will separate teams into divisions for pool play, with the possibility of separating Division 2 as well, depending on numbers, potentially leading to gold and silver brackets in each division ([00:36:59](#)). A mandatory in-person scheduling meeting is set for Sunday, November 2nd, at Just Hoops in Powell. At this meeting, coaches will finalize their schedules and receive a coaches binder with important documents, including a score reporting document ([00:37:56](#)).
- **Scheduling and Communication** Coaches should not finalize schedules until October 20th, when 95% of programs have completed tryouts and gained facility access ([00:39:09](#)). ***Anthony McNeal stressed the importance of accurate and specific information when submitting schedules, including team names, grade, gender, exact facility names, addresses, and opponent details to ensure proper entry into the [Ohio Youth Basketball app](#) ([00:41:25](#)).*** Programs are recommended to play at least eight to nine games, with 12 to 15 games being a good middle ground ([00:44:29](#)).
- **Contact Log and Gym Space** A contact log, organized by grade, gender, and division, will be provided to assist with scheduling, displaying head coach contact information, selected division, and home gym availability to help teams find compatible opponents ([00:45:30](#)). Anthony McNeal also offered assistance with

finding additional gym space if programs are struggling with availability during the season ([00:47:20](#)).

- **Score Reporting and Preview Dates** Score reporting is crucial for team seeding at the end of the year, and coaches are responsible for submitting scores regularly using a provided score sheet with a QR code ([00:47:20](#)). The COBA preview dates are November 15th and 16th, featuring five-minute warm-ups, 20-minute running clocks, and one timeout per team. During the preview, the clock only stops in the last minute for free throws and timeouts, with non-shooting fouls resulting in the ball out of bounds ([00:49:11](#)). The preview is not scored and serves as an opportunity for teams to get reps and coaches to reinforce rules ([00:50:10](#)).
- **Additional Competition and Key Dates** COBA teams receive discounted entry to [Ohio Youth Basketball tournaments](#), which offer additional competition opportunities throughout the season, including a school team state championship in February ([00:53:05](#)). These tournaments, often hosted by COBA partners, support local youth programs ([00:54:13](#)). Key COBA dates include the returning coaches meeting on November 2nd, the COBA Previews on November 15th and 16th, the COBA Holiday Tournament on December 27th and 28th, and the COBA Championships on February 7th, 8th, 14th, and 15th ([00:55:14](#)).
- **Official Fees and Tournament Registration** Programs are responsible for setting up officials for regular season games, with COBA paying \$35 per official per game through their assigners ([00:57:37](#)). For the COBA holiday tournament, teams that registered and selected participation are automatically entered ([00:58:38](#)). Anthony McNeal can provide contacts for official assigners if needed ([00:59:30](#)). Tournaments hosted by Ohio Youth Basketball or COBA-partnered teams will automatically count towards a team's record and do not need to be manually submitted by coaches ([01:01:28](#)).
- **Defensive Rules Clarification** Anthony McNeal clarified the rules regarding switching and hedging in man-to-man defense, emphasizing that while players can switch, there should not be a lasting double team after a screen. clarity on whether players could "help and recover," to which Anthony McNeal confirmed they could, further explaining that officials have discretion in interpreting "help" ([01:07:21](#)) ([01:09:26](#)).
- **Communication with Officials** Anthony McNeal stressed the importance of communication with officials before games, advising coaches to establish a

connection to discuss rules and their interpretation, particularly concerning developmental aspects for third and fourth graders

- **Defensive Positioning in Man-to-Man** Chris Randall and Curtis Thompson raised concerns about players standing in the paint during man-to-man defense, which could resemble a zone defense and hinder development. Anthony McNeal acknowledged this, stating the goal is to teach players proper ball-man-you principles to avoid static play and encourage movement ([01:10:20](#)) ([01:12:26](#)).
- **Administrative and Scheduling Inquiries** Anthony McNeal provided information about the holiday tournament, scheduled for December 27th and 28th, with locations in Berlin, Big Walnut, and north Columbus facilities ([01:11:19](#)). Heath Rittler inquired about the minimum number of conference games for a blend of third and fourth-grade players, and Anthony McNeal advised aiming for four home and four away conference games ([01:15:29](#)). Ryan Yzenski requested that emails be sent to JD Walters temporarily due to an issue with their email, and Anthony McNeal agreed to facilitate this ([01:16:45](#)).