

## Let the flop policing begin

Written by Jon Krawczynski

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The Associated Press

It's not just the flopping that the NBA is trying to squash.

It's Reggie Evans looking like he was zapped by about 10,000 volts of electricity when Memphis guard Tony Allen's arm hit him while Evans — yes, Evans — was setting a screen.

It's Dwyane Wade trying to trick the referees by flinging his leg out on a jumpshot and falling to the ground when it makes contact with Celtics guard Mikael Pietrus.

It's Danilo Gallinari "flailing" and holding his face in a soccer-style, "gross over-embellishment" — the league's own words — after running into a screen by the Lakers' Pau Gasol.

Those were some of the examples the NBA used in a video sent to players and teams describing what exactly will be subject to fines this season in the first year of a new program aimed at curbing the kind of deceptive, and sometimes downright laughable, acting jobs that made Ray Allen's performance in "He Got Game" appear Oscar-worthy.

And the video didn't even include the hilarious attempted double dupe from Oklahoma City's James Harden and San Antonio's Manu Ginobili on the same play in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals last season.

Floppers beware. The league is coming for you, and your money, this season.

The NBA season begins today with three games — Washington at Cleveland, Boston at Miami and Dallas at the Los Angeles Lakers — and for the first time, the players will face the possibility of stiff punishment for trying to trick the referees into a foul that wasn't warranted.

Commissioner David Stern issued an edict that he hopes will make flopping go the way of the four-corner offense and the short shorts.

The tactic has been prevalent for years — Pacers sharpshooter Reggie Miller and Kings center Vlade Divac were among the more creative floppers of the previous generation — as players looked for any edge they could get to swing the outcome in their favor. At full speed and with bodies everywhere, determining which players were flopping and which were making good basketball plays in the blink of an eye proved to be incredibly difficult for referees.

The league is trying to give them some help.

Officials will monitor games and review plays that could have included an egregious flop after the game is over. Everyone gets one warning, but after that, the bills start piling up. The second offense will cost a player \$5,000, a third will go to \$10,000. Four flops and it's \$15,000 and a fifth will be a whopping \$30,000.

"I hope that they give the offensive floppers the same amount of time and dedication that they're going to to the defensive floppers," said Heat forward Shane Battier, who has been accused of flopping ever since his days at Duke at the turn of the century. "Because flopping's a problem. Flopping is a silent killer. It really is a silent killer. It'll be interesting to see how they administer that."

Some think it's been a long time coming. Miller pioneered the move that Wade used in that video, kicking his leg out as he released his jumper to draw contact and try to force a call from an official. Paul Pierce has attempted over 8,500 free throws in his career thanks in part to coercing officials into blowing a whistle as he drives to the basket. And Divac nearly led the

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Kings to an upset of the Lakers while hitting the deck every time Shaquille O'Neal even brushed against him in the paint.

"Back in the '80s, they didn't flop," said the Lakers' Metta World Peace. "Flopping is very stupid. It's not even basketball. I don't know who taught people to flop. It's ridiculous. Just make the right call. But it's not my league. I think it looks bad on TV, too. When you're in the playoffs and somebody flops, and there's all this money on the line, it's terrible."

While many players, coaches and fans have come out as vocal proponents of the new measures, it's still unclear how the process will work.

Which flops will be deemed worthy of punishment and which will be allowed to slide? Which types of flops will draw the most attention? Trying to draw charges on defense? Embellishing in hopes of getting to the free throw line on offense?

Everyone is about to start finding out.

"My fear is that they're going to find some fresh Harvard Business School intern in the league office to be the flop reviewer — flop czar, the flop czar! — fresh out of the HBS and his or her highest level of basketball probably will be intramural," Battier said. "And they're making some potentially lucrative financial decisions. So I don't know. I don't know how they're going to administer it."

The system will likely evolve as the season goes on, and players will adjust. But it will take some time.

"It'll mess up a lot of people's games," Kings big man DeMarcus Cousins said. "Maybe some of these All-Stars won't be All-Stars after that."

It certainly is a label that applies to some of the game's biggest stars, including a few on the Heat as they marched to the championship last season.

"I don't know how they're going to gauge what's a flop and what's not a flop," LeBron James said. "Sometimes it's obvious, but it doesn't change my approach, honestly. I think it'll be good in the paint, though. When you're posting guys up and guys know they're smaller than you, they just take one bump and they already know before you even touch them the next time that they're going to automatically fall."

With all this in mind, here are a few candidates who may have a little flop sweat, so to speak, as they prepare to play under these new guidelines:

—Anderson Varejao, F/C, Cavaliers: The big Brazilian has long been one of the league's most prolific floppers, letting loose with loud screams each time he's hit and falls to the floor. "I'm not flopping anymore," Varejao said with a smile on media day. "I used to flop a little bit."

—Harden, G, Rockets: Whether he was snapping his head back while hitting a screen on defense or flying to the deck on a drive to the basket on offense, the savvy Harden has quickly gained a reputation for flopping. Now that he'll be getting more minutes as a starter in Houston, will that equate to more flops? "It was bound to happen at some point," he said. "Obviously, the league got fed up with it and they put it in. I'm happy they did."

—Ginobili, G, Spurs: The Argentinian's roots in that soccer-mad country can be seen in his approach on the court, where the lefty flops every chance he can get.

—JJ Barea, G, Timberwolves: The diminutive spark plug has had to use any means necessary to succeed against bigger competition, and he knows that "absolutely" people across the league consider him a flopper. "I'm going to play the same way since I was a kid, so whatever happens, happens," he said. \_\_PUBLIC\_\_