



SOMT Basketball Competition Guidelines:

Meaningful Involvement:

All players should have meaningful involvement without any type of individual player dominance. Meaningful Involvement is an effort to **optimize participation by all team members** (athletes and partners) based on the principle that **every player should contribute to the success of the team**.

The composition of any team must include players with necessary sport-specific skills. Teams should **not permit players to dominate play, exclude other teammates from contributing to the success of the team, or present a health and safety risk on the field of play**. By permitting any player to dominate play, other players' roles and opportunities are greatly limited.

This violates both the spirit and intent of the Special Olympics Unified Sports rules and philosophy and will be addressed by the SOMT Sports Department.

It is the coaches' responsibility to make sure they are adhering to SO rules regarding meaningful involvement. If an official or SOMT Sports Department staff member determines that a player is dominating play, the official/SOMT Sports Department shall sanction the player and/or coach. Consequences for non-compliance are either:

- Specific Player Sanctions (encourage voluntary substitution, warning, technical foul, ejection)
- Sanctions will include warning the player and/or coach, citing the player or coach with unsportsmanlike conduct or removing the player or coach from the game.
- Team Consequences (forfeiture of game, disqualification from tournament)

Player Dominance:

The following is a list of, and is not limited to, what may be considered "player dominance":

- Players of higher ability only pass to one another.
- Players of lower ability are rarely involved in team play.
- In the last two minutes of competition, the participation of higher-ability athletes noticeably increased to the exclusion of lower ability teammates.
- Higher ability players (athletes or partners) consistently steal or block shots of lower ability players.

It is NOT "player dominance" when players have the opportunity to display their individual skills to the best of their ability. Opportunities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Fast break and layup after a steal
- Open shot
- Playing the point guard position,

It is not the responsibility of the officials on the field/court to monitor and determine meaningful involvement – it's the responsibility of the coach to do so.

5v5 Unified Competitive Model:

Teams with high ratings are not automatically playing under the competitive model. They may be competitive, highly skilled teams – but the competitive model references the set of rules to be used during competition. ***This is no modifications basketball.*** Teams needed to inform the SOMT Sports Department when registering about their intentions to play under this model.

The Competitive Model is not offered for 3v3 basketball. 3v3 teams should operate under Player Development Model rules. These can be found in the Games Registration Packet, Coaches Handbook, or on the website when both packets are released (www.somt.org).

Competitive Model vs. Player Development Model –

- Competitive Unified Sports: Comprises Athletes and Unified Partners of similar ability and age. **There are no restrictions placed upon the Unified Partners in this model.** Teams are eligible to advance to USA and World Games competitions.
- Player Development Unified Sports: Comprises Athletes and Unified Partners of similar age, but not necessarily similar ability. Unified Partners serve as mentors to assist athletes during game play, **players have defined roles on the court.** Teams are not eligible to advance to USA or World Games.

Competitive Model: No restrictions!

- A UP may shoot when open.
- A UP may steal the ball and lead into a fast break.
- A UP may take the ball up the floor and play point guard.
- A UP may rebound and pass to UP's and athletes.
- A UP may play defense against an athlete.
- A UP may block an athlete's shot.
- A UP may anticipate a pass and steal the ball from an opposing athlete vs. UP
- All Athletes and UPs should be involved when on the court and engaged in the game!

Player Development Model:

In this model – the purpose is for unified partners to play alongside athletes, mentor, and develop together. UPs should be allowed to play basketball – within the standards of Meaningful Involvement, that do not cross into Player Dominance.

A UP may:

- Shoot when open.
- Steal the ball on a pass and lead into a fast break.
- Rebound and pass to athletes and other UPs.
- Play point guard.
- Play defense against another UP.
- Block another UPs shot.
- Anticipate a pass and steal the ball from an opposing UP.

A UP may not:

- Bring the ball down court after a throw in – a mentor can accompany an athlete and provide instruction and guidance.
- Consistently block shots of lower ability players.
- Only pass to higher ability players – need to engage the entire team.
- Play in such a way as it crosses into player dominance and is not fun for the opposing team or their own team – taking all the shots, only passing to other UPs, aggressive/excessive rebounding and feeding their team for shots, stealing the ball excessively.
- Account for more than 50% of the teams' points in a game – this goes for athletes as well.

Example: The total UP points cannot exceed 50% of the total points scored by athletes on the roster.

Unified partners are encouraged to be involved in play – they may shoot when open, steal the ball, and play defense against the UPs on the opposing team.

It is not the intention to take opportunities away from athletes in unified play by encouraging UPs to be involved and engaged in the game. The purpose is to engage athletes and unified partners in team basketball **TOGETHER**, where all feel included and part of the game.

At any time, if it is observed by an SOMT Sports Department Staff that a coach is not following the principles of Meaningful Involvement or allowing Player Dominance, the SOMT Sports Department may intervene at their discretion.