



For Immediate Release

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National Basketball Referees Association Responds to Van Gundy Diatribe

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 3, 2005 – Lamell McMorris, the official spokesman for the National Basketball Referees Association, today responded to Houston Rockets coach Jeff Van Gundy’s imprudent and baseless accusations regarding the integrity and fairness of the officiating in the NBA’s post-season games.

Yesterday, the National Basketball Association fined Van Gundy \$100,000 – the largest amount ever assessed against an NBA coach for misconduct – after he publicly accused the league’s game officials of inappropriately targeting Rockets center Yao Ming during the playoffs, and blamed Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban for causing the allegedly disparate and inequitable treatment.

According to published reports, Van Gundy laughed off the record-setting penalty. Those same reports stated that NBA Commissioner David Stern is furious at Van Gundy for claiming that league referees were looking at Yao harder because of Cuban’s prior complaints to the league. Stern apparently characterized the fine as an intermediary step, and said that further punishment could be warranted if Van Gundy continued to make such inappropriate and unfounded comments.

In response to these events, spokesman McMorris stated: “We applaud Commissioner Stern’s prompt reaction to coach Van Gundy’s groundless and regrettable outburst. There is absolutely no truth to Van Gundy’s suggestion that the NBA’s referees are treating certain teams or players differently than any others.”

When asked what led up to Van Gundy’s remarks, McMorris commented: “This season, Stu Jackson, the NBA’s Senior Vice President for Basketball Operations, and Ronnie Nunn, the NBA’s Director of Officials, have given the owners, coaches and players free and unfettered license – perhaps even encouragement – to criticize, challenge and second-guess the referees on their play-calling. When team personnel are unhappy or disappointed with their game

performance, it is much easier to blame the officials than themselves. The league has allowed this dreadful culture to develop, and the chickens have now come home to roost.”

“There have been numerous instances this season where coaches and players have taunted and threatened the referees both during and immediately after a closely contested game. We have complained to the league about these incidents, but no action has been taken until today.”

“The Houston Chronicle has been publicly reporting Van Gundy’s complaints about inequitable officiating directed against Yao Ming for at least the past year. These stories have even been picked up by the Chinese English-language papers.”

“Van Gundy is only the most recent and most egregious example of what the NBA sometimes permits in the way of intra-league dialogue. Mavericks coach Avery Johnson was reportedly fined \$10,000 by the NBA last week for his post-game harangue against referee Joey Crawford after the Mavericks’ loss to the Rockets in Game 1 of their playoff series.”

“Similarly, in a game between the Denver Nuggets at the Phoenix Suns on March 28, with approximately 42 seconds left on the game clock, Denver Nuggets coach George Karl approached a game official and unleashed a stream of unwarranted and unacceptable verbal obscenities and invectives. After being assessed a technical foul, Mr. Karl attempted to physically block and impede the official from advancing towards the scorer’s table, while letting loose a second series of even more offensive comments, insults, curses and profanities against the referee. Mr. Karl was ejected from the game, but never fined.”

“There have been many other incidents of this type, involving coaches or players, throughout the season.”

About the NBRA

The National Basketball Referees Association represents 62 active and 14 retired referees who officiate all of the games for the National Basketball Association.