

NBA referee Rodney Mott challenges suspension

by Richard Burton

Last week, a Portland fan accused NBA referee Rodney Mott of directing an "obscene gesture" and "inappropriate comment" toward him following Portland's 93-90 home victory over Miami on Sunday. The league conducted a cursory investigation, immediately suspended Mott for three games, and promptly issued a press release to publicize the reprimand.

Mott claims that the fan's allegations are untrue, and is appealing the punishment to Commissioner David Stern. As an NBA referee, Mott is not able to rebut the charges publicly without risking additional sanctions. He will never be able to tell his side of the story to those outside of the NBA.

"The league is singling out Rodney because they want to send a message that they can and do punish referees," stated Lamell McMorris, official spokesman for the National Basketball Referees Association. "Rodney did not do what they said he did, and the league is using him as a scapegoat and poster child to distract the public from other battles."

"One thing the Duke lacrosse team case in North Carolina should teach all of us is that you shouldn't rush to judgment," observed McMorris. "Often, accusations just do not hold up under careful scrutiny. Meanwhile, if you publicize events recklessly without taking the time to learn all the facts, you can ruin the reputations of good people in an unwarranted and very serious way. There are at least two sides to every story, and those who rush to judgment sometimes trip along the way."

Mott is in his ninth season as an NBA official.

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