

My limited experience with women's basketball begins with memories of my friend and me tormenting our teammate in the sixth grade for being the first to have to wear a bra. While the poor girl would go in for a layup, we would be snickering about her over-the-shoulder-boulder-holder.

In time, the discussions became much more mature, like in college when my sports geek co-workers and I conversed about the fundamental differences between women's and men's basketball strategy and the one Portland Power game I saw where another friend and I decided which players to have crushes on.

Beyond that classic pastime at any women's sporting event, with the help of Fire fan extraordinaire Esther Moe and the WNBA Web site, we've found 10 basics any decent spectator should know about women's basketball.

Although a women's basketball game officially has only two 20-minute periods (halves), with full timeouts, short timeouts, media timeouts, halftime, possible overtime and other clock-stopping plays (foul shots, etc.), be prepared to spend at least an hour and a half at courtside. (This offers ample time to decide which players to have a crush on.)

2. Women's balls are smaller than men's—usually by an inch or more. The WNBA uses the same "small balls" as

GETTIN' IT!

NCAA teams—between 28.5 and 29 inches in diameter. Smaller hands, smaller balls.

3. Dribbling is good. Traveling is bad. B-A-D. Bad. (We can all relate to getting in trouble for illegal dribbling, right?) If a player takes too many steps without dribbling or

(try not to glaze over on this one)

if she moves an established pivot foot in an illegal way relative to whether she's going to dribble, pass or shoot, then the other team will gain possession of the ball.

4. Another dribbling-related violation is over-and-back. This does not involve ex-girlfriends, I swear. Rather, once the advancing team passes the half-court line it cannot go back over it—unless the defense tips it back.

5. The advancing team can't take more than 10

seconds to get over that half-court line and has 30 seconds to get a shot off.



Kristin Folkl (right) and former Los Angeles Sparks guard Ukari Figgs

6. Foul shots: not something your friends buy you on your 21st birthday. Basically, if a player is fouled taking a shot and it counts, then they get to shoot one free throw. If they don't make the shot,

then they get to shoot two free throws. If they are fouled on a three-pointer and don't make it, then they get to take three free throws, and if they do make it, then they only take one free throw. If they are fouled while not taking a shot then they take one free throw; if they make it, then they get to take another. Got that?

7. There are a million (yes, a million) types of fouls called. There are fighting fouls, flagrant fouls, double fouls, offensive fouls, loose-ball fouls, away-from-the-play fouls, dribble screening fouls, conduct fouls, delay-of-game fouls, backboard/support/basket ring fouls and so on.

These are broken down into two categories—personal fouls and technical fouls. Not only are there a million (yes, a million) different kinds of fouls, there are also different ways

for the referees to handle fouls and, of course, refs are human and what they see and hear is often subjective.

For the specifics please see www.wnba.com/analysis/wnba_rules_regulations.html or just yell "booooo" whenever a foul is called on your team of choice, even if...no, especially if you didn't actually see the play for which they were penalized.

8. Each player gets to commit five personal fouls (that's on the court). On the sixth she is ejected from play for the rest of the game. Perhaps we should adopt this rule to relationships and driving.

9. In grade school we called it a "key," but the big kids call it an unromantic and professional-sounding "lane." The lane is from the free-throw line to the bottom court boundary (under the basket) and is 12 feet wide. An offensive player can only be there for three seconds at a time. If she is caught in a lane violation, the other team takes possession of the ball ("booooo").

10. Last but not least: five players on the court to play. Eleven players on the roster. Two leagues—the Eastern and Western Conference.

Eight teams in each league. The Portland Fire ended last season in seventh place of the Western Conference. This year, surely, it will be on top!

Now, if someone takes you to a game and this has not helped you out at all, the best thing to do is make up stories about the people sitting around you, give the players new names (such as the moniker my friend gave Scottie Pippen, better known to us as "Magic Ears"), make fun of girls in training bras or splurge on a \$5



Coach Hargrove: "We are willing to work harder than most"

Coors Light. Mmm. ☞

Production Assistant MELISSA SAYLER has given up her training bras for spandex undershirts.

FANS ON FIRE

JUST OUT ASKS PORTLAND FIRE FANS, "WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO AT THE START OF THE TEAM'S THIRD SEASON?"



DENI STARR
"Winning more games, seeing how DeMya Walker improves and seeing Lisa Leslie one more time."

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