Special Olympics Ohio

Basketball Rules Manual (rev. 10/2026)

All Special Olympics Ohio Basketball games are run according to the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Rules. Any modifications to those rules shall be found in this manual.

State Competition format will be as follows:

- 4-Team Division
    - Traditional 4 team bracket with each team receiving 2 games.
- 3-Team Division
    - Round Robin, with each team receiving 2 games. Tie breaker will be the least points allowed total across both games.
- 2-Team Division
    - Best of 3 Games

All Special Olympics Ohio regional and state level competitions will enforce the participation regulations for athletes and Unified partners, of which is derived from Article 1 of the Special Olympics Sport Rules. This rule shall be that each team and/or individual athlete or Unified partner, must play all eligible and rostered team members in every game unless a player is injured or has been removed due to disciplinary reasons. Coaches must notify the competition management prior to each game if players on the approved tournament roster will not be playing due to injury or disciplinary reasons, and this needs to be approved by the tournament director. Failure to play all eligible team members in each game will result in forfeit and disqualification.

SOOH Rules Updates for the 2026/2027 Season

- Basketball uniforms must be compliant for the 2026-2027 season, following the guidelines in the uniform section below. No team will be permitted to participate in a Regional or State event with uniforms that do not meet the requirements.

SOOH Rules Updates for the 2025/2026 Season

- A revised basketball skills conversion chart has been replaced in Appendix B.
- For all basketball skills competition, a standard basketball (29 ½ inch or size 7) will be used for all Male Divisions. A smaller basketball (28 ½ or size 6) will be used for all School Aged and Women Divisions.
- For basketball skills competition, event #3 of Spot Shot, a revised set of instructions, as well as a new diagram for where the spots are located has been added. The measurements of the spot locations are slightly different than previous years.

SOOH Rules Updates for the 2024-2025 Season

- Level 2 Skills WILL NOT be offered in Ohio at this time.
- For School Age Division 1 (Ages 8-15): The effective date for calculating ages of athletes on a roster for a given season will be October 1st. Should an athlete on your roster turn 16 prior to

October 1st for that season, that athlete should be placed on a roster of another team in a higher division at the start of the season. If an athlete turns 16 during the season, but after the October 1st date, that athlete may finish the season on the 8-15 School Age Division 1 team.

- For School Age Division 2 (Ages 16-21): The effective date for calculating ages of athletes on a roster for a given season will be October 1st. Should an athlete on your roster turn 22 prior to October 1st for that season, that athlete should be placed on a roster of another team in a higher division at the start of the season. If an athlete turns 22 during the season, but after the October 1st date, that athlete may finish the season on the 16-21 School Age Division 2 team.
- If a T-shirt is worn under a basketball jersey, it should be a solid color and match others on your team.
- No protests may be filed as a result of a uniform violation. The competition director and officials will make the ruling if needed if a uniform is in violation.
- All game balls used will be dictated by the competition director. Teams may not decide on a different game ball to be used, even if they both agree to do so.
- For all divisions, your roster must consist of a minimum of 5 players and may not exceed 15 players. Games must start with 5 players. Should at any time during a game, a team not be able to field at least 4 players, even due to injury or illness, the team must forfeit the game.
- All players on your roster MUST PLAY in each game.
- If during the second half only, anytime a team is winning by at least 25 points, the clock will run without stoppage, unless there is an injury on court or a time out is taken. If the score differential drops below 20 points, the clock reverts to regular timing.
- For Unified Divisions: Games must begin with 5 players (3 athletes and 2 partners). If due to a personal foul or injury, and if a substitute is not available to replace the athlete/partner, the game may continue with 4 players. The allowable combinations are either 3 athletes and 1 partner, or 2 athletes and 2 partners. If a team is not able to meet these requirements, the team must forfeit the remainder of the match.
- For Level 1 Individual Skills Competitions: For the spot shot event, the attempts MUST be taken in the order marked on the diagram, starting with the number 1, followed by number 2, then number 3, etc.
    - Additionally, for the spot shot skill, athletes should alternate their attempts by using the following procedure: The first athlete takes their shots at spots 1,2,3,4,5 and 6 then sits down. Athlete #2 then follows suit and so on and so forth for the division. Once all of the athletes in a division go through their order once, they then repeat this for their second attempts at the spots above for their total of 12 shots.

IMPORTANT RULE CHANGE FROM THE PAST THAT IS STILL IN EFFECT:

- When in "Bonus", teams will shoot two free throws for common fouls, instead of the one-and-one scenario. This change eliminates the one-and-one and sets new foul limits each quarter for

awarding the "bonus" free throws. In addition to awarding two foul shots for all common fouls, teams will reach the "bonus" when their opponent commits five fouls each quarter. Team fouls will reset at the end of each quarter.

OFFICIAL EVENTS

Teams must be in a training program for a minimum of 8 weeks prior to the regional competition. The State Tournament is held during the first quarter of each year. Teams must qualify for the State Tournament by placing first in their division in an Approved Regional Qualifying Tournament for the given season. Individual Skills athletes must qualify for State Individual Skills competition by participating in an approved Regional qualifying skills competition during the given season.

Special Olympics Ohio provides a range of events to offer athletes of varying abilities the opportunity to compete. The following is a list of official events available in Special Olympics Ohio.

- Individual Skills Competition: Level 1
- Team Competition (5 on 5)
- Unified Sports Team Competition (5 on 5)

DIVISIONING

ABILITY is the primary divisioning factor in Special Olympics. An entry score from a prior competition or a preliminary event determines the ability of an athlete or team. The other two criteria used for divisioning are age and gender. Ideally, competition is enhanced when all divisions accommodate at least three (3) and no more than eight (8) competitors or teams of similar ability. In some cases, however, the number of athletes or teams within a competition will be insufficient to achieve this goal.

The range of choices for entry in Special Olympics Ohio's basketball competition provides a level of competition for athletes of all abilities. While no specific measures regulate placement of an athlete in an event, the following chart is a guide for determining the most appropriate selection. An athlete's skill, knowledge of rules, and physical ability are the primary considerations. Other considerations such as number of athletes in the program, interest/motivation of the athlete, previous experience, and opportunities, for local competition may influence selection of the most appropriate event of each individual. Women Athletes may compete in Male Divisions, however, Male Athletes may not compete in Women Divisions. Athletes who are ages 8-15 may compete in School Age Division 2, however, Athletes ages 16-21 may not compete in School Age Division 1. Once a team has won their designated division at the State Tournament, they will automatically be moved to the next division up.

Male Division 1

- No adaptations for this division. All five starting players have advanced and high level of understanding of rules and team concept, high stamina, and demonstrate high level of skill.

Male Division 2

- No adaptations for this division

- Four of five starting players have a good understanding of rules and team concept
- Players display above average skills; shooting, passing, dribbling, rebounding & defending
- Most players have the ability to dribble with few violations
- Most players know where to go and where to be
- Players have a good understanding of fouls

Male Division 3

- No adaptations for this division
- Three of five starting players have moderate basic skills; shooting passing dribbling, rebounding, & defending
- Players have a moderate concept of rules and team play, are able to understand plays.
- Players have the ability to dribble, but there are still violations called (less frequently than Division 4).
- No verbal cues needed
- Players understand fouls
- Teams in this division have 2-3 dominant players.

Male Division 4

- No Adaptations for this division
- Two of five players have basic skills; shooting, passing, dribbling, rebounding & defending
- Players have a LIMITED concept of rules and team play
- Players have ability to dribble, but will see frequent shuffles, double dribbles, etc. (A violation will be called when an advantage is gained)
- Players rely on limited verbal cues
- Teams in this division do not have more than one (1) dominant player.
- Players have a limited understanding of fouls

Male Division 5

- Players do not have an understanding of rules or team play
- All players have very LIMITED and very low basic skills; shooting, passing, dribbling, rebounding & defending
- These players are just above an athlete skill level of those athletes who participates in Individual Skills competition.
- Players need verbal cues on all aspects of the game
- No understanding of fouls
- ***If you have one good player who dominates a game, you could possibly be a division 4 team

Women Division 1

- No adaptations for this division
- All Players have a high to moderate understanding of skills; shooting, passing, dribbling, rebounding, & defending.
- Players have high to moderate concept of rules and team play.
- Players do not need verbal cues.
- Players understand fouls.

- Teams in this division have at least 2-3 dominant players.

Women Division 2

- All Players have a limited to very limited understanding of rules or team play.
- All players have very LIMITED basic skills; shooting, passing, dribbling, rebounding & defending
- Players need verbal cues on all aspects of the game
- No or very limited understanding of fouls

School Age Division 1 (Ages 8-15)

- All players in this division fall in the age category of 8 – 15.
- The effective date for calculating ages of athletes on a roster for a given season will be October 1st. Should an athlete on your roster turn 16 prior to October 1st for that season, that athlete should be placed on a roster of another team in a higher division at the start of the season. If an athlete turns 16 during the season, but after the October 1st date, that athlete may finish the season on the 8-15 School Age Division 1 team.

School Age Division 2 (Age 16-21)

- All players in this division fall in the age category of 16 – 21.
- The effective date for calculating ages of athletes on a roster for a given season will be October 1st. Should an athlete on your roster turn 22 prior to October 1st for that season, that athlete should be placed on a roster of another team in a higher division at the start of the season. If an athlete turns 22 during the season, but after the October 1st date, that athlete may finish the season on the 16-21 School Age Division 2 team.

Unified Division 1

- All Players have a high to moderate understanding of skills; shooting, passing, dribbling, rebounding, & defending.
- All Players have high to moderate concept of rules and team play.
- All Players do not need verbal cues.
- All Players understand fouls.
- Teams in this division have at least 2-3 dominant players.
- Please see Roster requirements below for additional specific Unified basketball regulations.

Unified Division 2

- All Players have a limited to very limited understanding of rules or team play.
- All players have very LIMITED basic skills; shooting, passing, dribbling, rebounding & defending
- Players need verbal cues on all aspects of the game
- No or very limited understanding of fouls
- Please see Roster requirements below for additional specific Unified basketball regulations.

UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT:

Uniforms

1. All players must wear numbered uniforms. Only digits 0-5 should be used with the highest possible combination number being 55. A team member list shall not have both numbers 0 and 00. Numerals 6, 7, 8 and 9 should never be used.
2. Teams must wear uniforms that have numbers on both the front and the back of the

uniforms. Uniforms should also comply with the Special Olympics Ohio branding regulations. Please ask your regional director for clarification.

3. If a T-shirt or other undershirt is worn under a basketball jersey, it should be a solid color and match the others on your team.
4. Starting with the 2026 Basketball Season, all teams must have uniforms which comply with these numeral and branding regulations. No team will be permitted to participate in a Regional or State competitions with uniforms that do not meet the requirements.
5. All players should wear flat gym, court, or tennis shoes.
6. All members of the team must wear the same color uniform.
7. No blue jean shorts or pants, or denim of any kind is allowed.
8. Headbands, wristbands, arm sleeves, knee sleeves, lower leg sleeves, compression shorts and tights are permissible. If worn, they shall be a solid color.
9. No jewelry is permitted by any athlete unless for medical reasons. In these cases, athletes should wear tape or a sweatband to cover it
10. Uniform Violation: A two-shot technical foul and loss of possession to begin the game if any player or players are in violation of the uniform standard. If both teams are in violation, the free throws will be shot, followed by a jump ball.
11. No protests may be filed as a result of a uniform violation. The competition director and officials will make the ruling if needed if a uniform is in violation.

Equipment

1. Special Olympics Ohio basketball, calls for the use of NFHS standard basketball equipment including the regulation basketball, baskets and basket heights. The use of wheelchairs or walkers is not permitted for safety purposes.
2. A standard basketball (29 ½ inch or size 7) will be used for all Traditional Male Divisions. A smaller basketball (28 ½ or size 6) will be used for all School Age and Women Divisions. All game balls used will be dictated by the competition director. Teams may not decide on a different game ball to be used, even if they both agree to do so.

GAME ROSTER

1. All team members must be listed on the Official Team Roster submitted to the State Office. Each roster must consist of a minimum of 5 players and may not exceed 15 players.
    - Games must start with 5 players. Should at any time during a game, a team not be able to field at least 4 players, even due to injury or illness, the team must forfeit the game.
2. Only players and coaches listed on the roster shall sit on the bench.
3. At least ten (10) minutes prior to the start of the game, the coach shall submit a line-up card to the scorer listing the uniform number, names, and starting line-up. Failure to do so will result in a technical foul.
4. Both teams should be prepared for play at game time. Should a team not be present, the games director will try to contact the team. At this point a ruling will be made on if that team will need to

forfeit.

PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTES

- A team must have five (5) players to start the game.
- Substitutions may be made any time the referee's whistle is blown to stop play and during time-outs, or prior to the beginning of a quarter if the substitute reports prior to the warning buzzer.
- A substitute who desires to enter shall report to the scorers, giving his/her number.
- During multiple free throws for all fouls, substitutions may be made before the final attempt in the sequence and after the final attempt has been converted.

GENERAL TEAM RULES

- Prior to any tournament competition, which includes Regional qualifiers, each team must play at least three (3) games against three (3) different opponents during the regular season that are from accredited local programs. These teams must also complete at least 3 coaches rating sheets and turn them into their regional director by the set deadline.
    - Coaches rating sheets must include a copy of the scorebook that shows both the home and visiting team information.
        - Exception: School Age and Women's Divisions need only complete at least (1) rating sheet by the set deadline.
    - For games to count towards this requirement, games must be:
        - Against teams in same classification (Traditional or Unified).
        - Against teams in the same age group (School Age Specific),
        - Against teams in the same gender group (Male or Female - coed teams play in the Men's competition)
            - Exception: Teams should be playing opponents either "up" one level or "down" one level for games with coaches rating sheets. For example, a Division 3 team should be playing against a Division 2 or 4 team, but not a Division 5 team.
- All players on your roster must play in each game. Local Coordinators need to enforce this Special Olympics rule. The rule is as follows from SOI Sports Rules Article One:
    - 2.6 - Statement of Participation - 2.6.1 - Each team is recommended to play all eligible team members in every game unless a player is injured or has been removed due to disciplinary reasons. Coaches must notify the competition management prior to each game if players on the approved tournament roster will not be playing due to injury or disciplinary reasons. Failure to play all eligible team members in each game will result in penalties, up to and including forfeit and disqualification.

THE GAME

Timing

1. For all Divisions, games will consist of four (4) periods, each being 8 minutes long.
    a. The clock will stop for all dead ball situations.
2. There will be a 1-minute intermission after the 1st and 3rd quarters and a 10-minute

intermission between halves of all divisions.

3. All games and extra periods (overtime) start with a jump ball in the middle circle.
4. If during the second half only, anytime a team is winning by at least 25 points, the clock will run without stoppage, unless there is an injury on court or a time out is taken. If the score differential drops below 20 points, the clock reverts to regular timing.

Overtime

1. All Divisions - Overtime will be 4 minutes in duration. The clock will stop for all dead ball situations.

Time Outs

1. Each team is entitled to three 60-second and two 30-second timeouts during a regulation game. Unused time-outs accumulate and may be used at any time. Each team is entitled to one extra time-out during each over-time period. When calling a timeout, coaches will need to inform the official on the court as to what kind of time-out is being used. If no signal is made, they will automatically be charged with a full time out.

Pressing

1. Full court pressing is allowed.

Three Point Goal

1. Three (3) points shall be credited for any shot made from beyond the three-point line (19'9" from the basket).

Players fouled in the act of a three-point goal attempt shall be awarded three (3) free throws (unless the attempt is good, in which case one (1) free throw is awarded.

VIOLATIONS

Violations, such as over and back, 10 seconds, free throws, throw-in, and three second lane violations, will be called in accordance to NFHS standards.

1. During frontcourt throw-in, ball can be thrown directly into backcourt.
2. Five second closely guarded count only in the frontcourt.

FOULS

Fouls will be called in accordance to NFHS standards

1. Each player will be allowed five (5) fouls per game. The fifth foul will result in removal of that player from the game.
2. When in "Bonus", teams will shoot two free throws for common fouls, instead of the one-and-one scenario. This change eliminates the one-and-one and sets new foul limits each quarter for awarding the "bonus" free throws. In addition to awarding two foul shots for all common fouls, teams will reach the "bonus" when their opponent commits five fouls each quarter. Team fouls will reset at the end of each quarter.

Free Throws:

1. The free throw shooter shall release the ball within 10 seconds from the time it is placed at the shooter's disposal by one of the officials.

Intentional Foul

1. If an intentional foul occurs, the penalty is two (2) free throws and the ball out of bounds at the spot nearest the foul.

Technical Fouls:

1. Technical fouls will be assessed for unsportsmanlike conduct by any coach, player, team attendant or follower. Technical fouls committed by a player shall result in two (2) free throws. If the technical foul is committed by bench personnel, the offended team is awarded (2) free throws. If the foul is flagrant (violent, vulgar or abusive), two (2) free throws shall be awarded and the offender shall be ejected from the game. Any third technical for above reasons is considered a flagrant foul and shall be treated as such.
   If at any time an athlete or player is ejected from a game for any reason, the following shall occur:
   - 1st offense: Sit out team's next game.
   - 2nd offense: Sit out team's next two games.
   - 3rd offense: Receive a year suspension from the sport

OFFICIALS AND THEIR DUTIES

1. Referees shall have the power to make all decisions on any point not specifically covered in the rules.
2. The referee shall toss the ball just above the heads of the two centers at the start of the game and any Overtime periods only. All other jump ball situations will be administered with the alternate possession rule, beginning with the team that failed to control the jump ball at the start of the game. The official scorer is responsible for keeping track of alternate possessions.

UNIFIED TEAM RULES

1. Roster
   a. The roster shall contain a proportionate number of athletes and partners, which is three athletes and two partners to start each game.
   b. Games must begin with 5 players (3 athletes and 2 partners). If due to a personal foul or injury, and if a substitute is not available to replace the athlete/partner, the game may continue with 4 players. The allowable combinations are either 3 athletes and 1 partner, or 2 athletes and 2 partners. If a team is not able to meet these requirements, the team must forfeit the remainder of the match.
2. Line-Up
   a. During competition, the line-up shall never exceed three (3) athletes and two (2) partners at any time. Penalty: Forfeit.

3. Coach
    a. Each team shall have an adult, non-playing coach responsible for the line-up and conduct of the team during competition.
    b. The game shall not start until the coach is present on the sideline.

INDIVIDUAL SKILLS COMPETITION

Level 1 Individual Skills

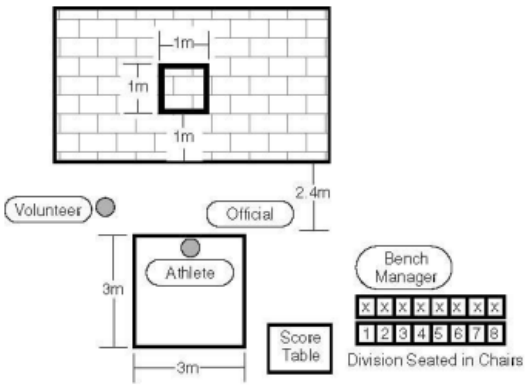
Three events make up Level 1 Individual Skills Competition: Target Pass, 10 Meter Dribble and Spot Shot. The athlete's final score is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of these three events. Athletes will be pre-divisioned according to their total scores from these three events. Each event is diagrammed with the suggested number and placement of volunteers who will administer them. It is also suggested that the same volunteers remain at an event throughout the competition so that consistency is provided.

**Please see the appendices A, B, and C below for Level 1 Skills scoresheet, conversion chart, and scoresheet instructions.*

Event #1: Target Pass

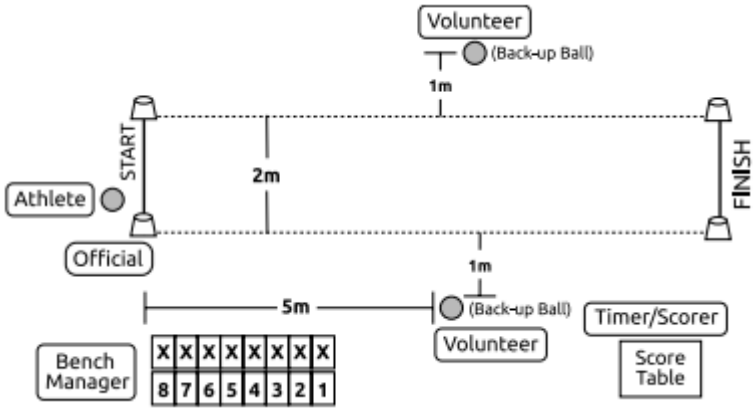
- Purpose: to measure an athlete's skill in passing a basketball.
- Equipment: Two basketballs (For all basketball skills competition, a standard basketball (29 ½ inch or size 7) will be used for all Male Divisions. A smaller basketball (28 ½ or size 6) will be used for all School Aged and Women Divisions.), flat wall, chalk or floor tape, and measuring tape.
- Description: A 1-meter (3 ft. 3 1/2 in) square is marked on a wall using chalk or tape. The bottom line of the square shall be 1 meter (3 ft., 3 1/2 in) from the floor. A 3-meter (9 ft., 9 in) square will be marked on the floor 2.4 meter (7 ft.) from the wall. The athlete must stand within the square. The leading wheel axle of an athlete's wheelchair may not pass over the line. The athlete is given five passes. Athletes should complete all 5 attempts in succession before moving onto the next athlete in the division.
- Scoring:
    - The athlete receives three points for hitting the wall inside the square.
    - The athlete receives two points for hitting the lines of the square.
    - The athlete receives one point for hitting the wall but not in or on any part of the square.
    - The athlete receives one point for catching the ball in the air or after one or more bounces while standing in the box.

- The athlete receives zero points if the ball bounces before hitting the wall. The athlete's score will be the sum of the points from all five passes.



Event #2: 10 M Dribble

- Purpose: to measure an athlete's speed and skill in dribbling a basketball.
- Description: The athlete begins from behind the start line and between the cones. The athlete starts dribbling and moving when the official signals. The athlete dribbles the ball with one hand for the entire 10 meters (32 ft. 9 ¾ in). A wheelchair athlete must alternate, taking two pushes followed by two dribbles for legal dribbling. The athlete must cross the finish line between the cones and must pick up the basketball to stop the dribble. If an athlete loses control of the ball, the clock continues to run. The athlete can recover the ball. However, if the ball goes outside the 2-meter lane, the athlete can either pick up the nearest back-up basketball or recover the errant ball to continue the event.
- Scoring:
    - The athlete will be timed from the signal "Go" to when he/she crosses the finish line between the cones and picks up the basketball to stop the dribble.
    - A one-second penalty will be added every time the athlete illegally dribbles (e.g., two-hand dribbles, carries the ball, etc.).
    - The athlete will receive two trials. Each trial is scored by adding penalty points to the time elapsed and converting the total to points based on the Conversion Chart (Appendix B). All of the athletes in a division should each attempt their first trial before starting the second trial round.
    - The athlete's score for the event is his/her best of the two trials converted into points. (In case of a tie, the actual time will be used to differentiate place).



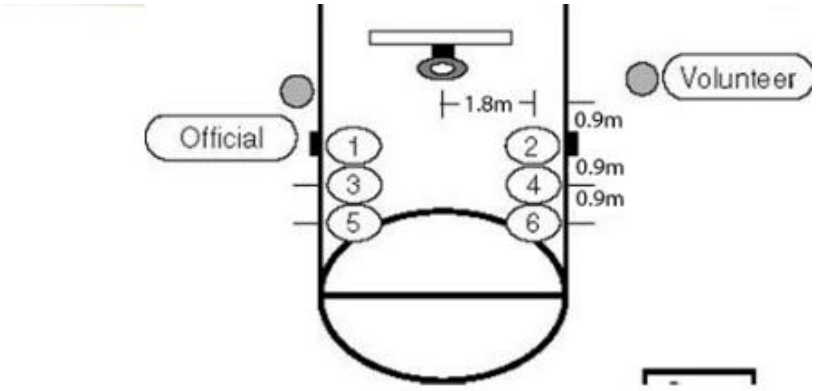
Event #3: Spot Shot

- Purpose: To measure an athlete's skill in shooting a basketball.
- Equipment: Two basketballs (For all basketball skills competition, a standard basketball (29 ½ inch or size 7) will be used for all Male Divisions. A smaller basketball (28 ½ or size 6) will be used for all School Aged and Women Divisions), floor tape or chalk, measuring tape and a 3.05 meter (10 ft.) regulation goal with backboard (for junior division competitions, a 2.44 meter [8 ft] goal may be used as an alternative).
- Six spots are marked on the floor. Start each measurement from a spot on the floor under the front of the rim. The athlete attempts two field goals from each of six spots. The attempts MUST be taken in the order marked on the diagram, starting with the number 1, followed by number 2, then number 3, etc. The spots are marked as follows:
    - #1 & #2 =1.8 meter (5 ft., 9 in) to the left and right plus .9 meter (2.95 ft) up the key to the block.
    - #3 & #4 =1.8 meter (5 ft., 9 in) to the left and right plus 1.8 meter (5.91 ft) up the key to the next hash mark.
    - #5 & #6 = 1.8 meter (5 ft., 9 in) to the left and right plus 2.7 meter (8.86 ft) up the key to the next hash mark.
- Scoring
    - For every field goal made at spots #1 and #2, two points are awarded.
    - For every field goal made at spots # 3 and #4, three points are awarded.
    - For every field goal made at spots # 5 and #6, four points are awarded.
    - For any field goal attempt that does not pass completely through the basket but does hit either the backboard and/or the ring, one point is awarded.
    - The athlete's score will be the sum of the points from all 12 shots.
    - The athlete's final score for the Individual Skills Contest is determined by adding

together the scores achieved in each of the three events.

- Additionally, for the spot shot skill, athletes should alternate their attempts by using the following procedure: The first athlete takes their shots at spots 1,2,3,4,5 and 6 then sits down. Athlete #2 then follows suit and so on and so forth for the division. Once all the athletes in a division go through their order once, they then repeat this for their second attempts at the spots above for their total of 12 shots.

Conversion Chart			
Seconds	**Points**	**Seconds**	**Points**
0-2	30	10.1-12	12
2.1-3	28	12.1-14	10
3.1-4	26	14.1-16	8
4.1-5	24	16.1-18	6
5.1-6	22	18.1-20	4
6.1-7	20	20.1-22	2
7.1-8	18	22.1 & Over	1
8.1-9	16	If not completed or fail to dribble	0
9.1-10	14		



Appendix B

