



BASKETBALL COACHING NUGGETS

VOLUME 1

Important

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Introduction

What follows is a collection of tidbits, hand-outs, and notes I have gathered from some of the game's most brilliant minds. I am thankful to be a part of the coaching fraternity and want to do my part to spread quality information.

I am not the author of this material, but have gathered it from a variety of sources, and am just paying it forward.

If you did not receive this document directly from me (it was forwarded to you by a colleague), you can use the following link to register for future monthly editions:

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If you have any „basketball nuggets“ you would like to submit – please email them directly to me at:

Alan@StrongerTeam.com

I appreciate your support. Work on your craft every day and enjoy the journey,

Alan Stein

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Creating A Competitive Environment in Practice

By: Coach Mike McNeil | Comments By: Alan Stein

Some great stuff from Mike McNeil on ideas to make players more competitive in practice which translates into them going harder for longer period of times -- really good stuff from Coach McNeill -- thanks for sharing! I have put my thoughts after each one in *red italics*.

Many years ago I had the opportunity to ask Gary Williams, the Head Coach at University of Maryland, what was the most important quality he looked for in the players he was recruiting. I was thinking he was going to say something like size, quickness, shooting ability, or understanding of game, but instead he looked at me like I must be from another planet, and said "they have to be a competitor". As a coach you want to believe that every contest you go into you know your players will give it everything they have to perform well. The team may not shoot well, or they may turn the ball over but at least you know they will compete on every possession.

While many people believe you cannot make non-competitors into competitors, I disagree to a certain point. I think if you use proven strategies in practice you can improve the competitive fire in all your athletes. Are you going to make an infrequent competitor into a consistent, hard-nosed tough competitor? – I doubt it; but you can improve each of these athletes. Just like any skill you work to improve you can help each athlete compete harder and more consistently by using some of the strategies described below. It is your responsibility as a coach to help your athletes become the best competitors they can become. Therefore you must create a practice environment where competition is expected and embraced.

A critical aspect of competing is being in the present – not thinking ahead and letting the past go. Coaches must teach, preach, and demand that players focus on the present responsibilities each player has so they will compete better. The following is a list of strategies that can be used to teach your team to play hard and to compete every possession.

1. The coach is the only one to call fouls. The coach can then set the standard of play. While it is important to teach players to play without fouling it is equally important to teach players to play through fouls, to play physically, and to play aggressively. It is also important players not concern themselves with the officials.

We do this as well...when scrimmage against our male team; we will let them foul a little more than we allow our team...we want to be aggressive on defense without fouling.

2. There is no out of bounds! If the ball bounces out of the normal boundaries of the court the play is still alive. The players will then hustle after the loose ball to maintain possession. This will keep kids hustling after the ball. There are two arguments I have heard against this concept: 1) kids will get hurt – in 20+ years I have not seen it happen; 2) they will not be aware of where the out of bounds lines are – again, I have not seen this be a factor.

We have several drills where we utilize this principle...we don't do it all the time because we want them to know the floor as well.

3. Make every scrimmage or drill a competition; all competitions have either a score or a time standard. Examples, you must make so many lay-ups in a 3 player weave in 2 minutes or first team to five baskets. The consequences for losing are severe if the losing team did not compete very hard - set of lines, suicide, 60 seconds. If the losing team did compete hard make it a less severe penalty or no penalty.

We are very big believers in this one -- hold them accountable and have a penalty for the losing team. We do it in individual drills as well as team drills.

4. Play every drill, scrimmage, and breakdown until the defense gets the ball, i.e. if the offense scores and then recovers the ball from the basket they can score again. Our guideline for this is that we always want to convert as least one time (sometimes twice).

We might be working on our half-court offense but we are going to have one transition before resetting. The conversion game is very important to teach and it allows your team to play through all possessions.

5. Use overload situations, 3 vs 4, 4 vs 5, 5 vs 6. This places extra pressure on the out-manned team to concentrate and play harder to compensate for out-numbered situation and it also places pressure on the team with the numerical advantage because the expectation is to win. Give the team with the numerical advantage a slight score disadvantage to start each drill. We refer to these as "Disadvantage Drills."

We may play 5/4 with the offense getting an extra player to overload the work on our defense. We might play 4/4 with no dribble to place our offense in a more difficult setting. There are a variety of ways to "stretch" your team in competitive situations.

6. Use a rebounding bubble. Because no baskets are scored - score with stops, rating of shots and offensive rebounds. This will increase the hustle to secure the ball.

We use the rebounding bubble early in the season quite a bit. It is one of the most physically aggressive things we do. We tend to stay away from it during the season because of the possibility of injuries.

7. Give extra points for offensive rebounds. When you scrimmage or play any drill if a team gets an offensive rebound they get 2 extra points. Offensive rebounding is about desire and hard work – this should be rewarded!

We play "Motion Game" where we use points in a variety of ways. An offensive rebound is worth 1 point. A turnover is worth 2 points to the defense. In fact, you can utilize that drill in a variety of ways. Maybe you want to work on your low post defense so you give the offensive a point for a low post feed. A great imagination can make this type of scrimmage setting very effective.

- Reward the team with extra points whenever there are hustle plays such as diving on the floor or drawing a charge.

One thing we demand our team to do (until it becomes habit) is when a player dives for a loose ball or takes a charge and there is a stoppage of play, we want the entire team to run over and assist that player in getting up. It shows a team's appreciation for the effort.

- Have one of your players wear a designated jersey during practice. If this player secures an offensive rebound his team gets bonus points. The defending team must then focus on keeping this player off the boards and the designated player will focus on and feel pressure to get to the boards.

We utilize a red jersey in practice in a variety of ways. We may have that person as a designated scorer and if they get a shot off we will penalize the defending team. We may also have them as a designated driver and if they get to the paint off the dribble there will be a penalty. We have used the rebounding angle before -- but we will next year!

- Use the "next basket wins" games during practice, even if one team is up by several points, this will bring the competitive nature in your athletes out. The team ahead will know they have been thrown an injustice and will try to show you they are not going to be denied and the team behind will recognize their opportunity for victory and compete hard.

This is a great way to make a possession count and put teams on a great competitive alertness. There are great stories about how Doug Collins use to do something similar this with Michael Jordan in Chicago. Jordan's team might be up 8-2 in a game to 10 and Collins would put Jordan on the team with two to challenge him to find a way to win (which he often did).

- Time and score scenarios during practice bring a high level of interest and focus. Here is an example "Blue is up 65-62 with a 1:30 to go and both teams are in bonus. Red ball under the basket." The players usually will be quite focused to execute properly to win. We do this but often talk as a staff that we don't do it enough.

We actually have talked about next year doing one scenario every practice.

Twenty Ways to Get Mentally Tough

From the book "Training Camp" By: Jon Gordon

1. When you face a setback, think of it as a defining moment that will lead to a future accomplishment.
2. When you encounter adversity, remember, the best don't just face adversity; they embrace it, knowing it's not a dead end but a detour to something greater and better.
3. When you face negative people, know that the key to life is to stay positive in the face of negativity, not in the absence of it. After all, everyone will have to overcome negativity to define themselves and create their success.
4. When you face the naysayers, remember the people who believed in you and spoke positive words to you.
5. When you face critics, remember to tune them out and focus only on being the best you can be.
6. When you wake up in the morning, take a morning walk of gratitude and prayer. It will create a fertile mind ready for success.
7. When you fear, trust. Let your faith be greater than your doubt.
8. When you fail, find the lesson in it, and then recall a time you have succeeded.
9. When you head into battle, visualize success.
10. When you are thinking about the past or worrying about the future, instead focus your energy on the present moment. The now is where your power is the greatest.
11. When you want to complain, instead identify a solution.
12. When your own self-doubt crowds your mind, weed it and replace it with positive thoughts and positive self-talk.
13. When you feel distracted, focus on your breathing, observe your surroundings, clear your mind, and get into the The Zone. The Zone is not a random event. It can be created.
14. When you feel all is impossible, know that with God, all things are possible.
15. When you feel alone, think of all the people who have helped you along the way and who love and support you now.
16. When you feel lost, pray for guidance.
17. When you are tired and drained, remember to never, never, never give up. Finish strong in everything you do.
18. When you feel like you can't do it, know that you can do all things through Him who gives you strength.
19. When you feel like your situation is beyond your control, pray and surrender. Focus on what you can control and let go of what you can't.
20. When you're in a high pressure situation and the game is on the line, and everyone is watching you, remember to smile, have fun, and enjoy it. Life is short; you only live once. You have nothing to lose. Seize the moment.

Fifteen Tips to Get the Most Out of your Bench Players

Contributed By: Kevin Reilly

1. Establish roles for your players (i.e. defense, passing, three point shooting.)
2. Try to get substitutes in end of first quarter and during second quarter
3. Reward players for their efforts in practice with more playing time.
4. Getting players in the game early gives them confidence if they are needed later.
5. Getting players in early gives you one less thing to think about down the stretch of a close game.
6. Matchup your substitutions with your opponent's substitutions.
7. Establish positive relationships between first stringers and reserves.
8. Work with second team in practice.
9. Get kids ready to play.
10. Use different combinations and different starting lineups.
11. Take kids out of a game on a good note, if possible
12. Don't yank kids out of a game after a bad pass, missed layup, etc., if possible.
13. Make all kids feel involved in the game and practice.
14. Give kids opportunities to see for themselves why they are not getting more time or playing with the first unit.
15. Talk and explain substitution process when possible.

Building Your House

Author Unknown

“A carpenter was fixing to retire and tells the company he works for he was through building houses. They ask him to build one more before he retires. He agrees and through the process of building this last house he begins to cut corners, uses cheaper materials, doesn’t use the same precision in which he used to and basically built an inferior home. When he’s done he gives the keys to his boss and says here you go I’m done. The boss returns the key and says thanks for all your hard work and dedication to this company. This home is yours and we appreciate you. Obviously, had the carpenter known he was building his own house he would not have cut corners. You are building your house every day and you don’t even know it.”