



## Tips For Coaching

### **#1 We have the ability to sometimes be the only positive role model a child may have that day or beyond.**

We would hope that parents, a teacher, or role model of some sort is already a positive force in a player's life, but many times, there isn't. We serve as a role model whether we accept it or not and have control on it being positive or negative. Coaching isn't about winning or losing, or even the X and O's of day to day practice plans. It's about the way we emotionally touch players and shape their lives to create a positive self esteem and awareness for them, even if it's just a couple hours a week in practice, that they matter to us. For some reason, coaches watch professional sports and college sports, and even at the high school level and we see a coach screaming at a player. The assumption is that it's okay to do the same at the youth level. What do you accomplish by belittling a player in front of their peers, parents, or extended family members? Absolutely nothing.

### **#2 Every player can contribute and be a valuable asset to any team.**

Without exception, every single player on a team can serve a positive role on a team. It doesn't matter if they have ever picked up a basketball prior to your first tryout and practice. The great coach understands this and finds a place for a player to contribute and thrive. Many times in tryouts, I will intentionally select a less talented player that has an unnoticeable trait of work ethic or passion for the game, how they listen during drills or just a 'feeling' I have about a player. They don't care if they ever score or expect to even touch the ball much, but the love their teammates and have a passion I can mold into that special defensive player, great screener, or an animal on the boards every possession. Just as I know he is valuable to the team, he learns he is valuable to the team, and ultimately, that is all that truly does matter.

### **#3 The laws of learning.**

Seeing, hearing, and doing are such a valuable tool in any classroom environment, yet, ignored on the basketball floor. Each player learns in a different way, and it's imperative that the coach understands each player's preference of learning. Many times, the player won't understand it themselves, and it's up to the coach to figure it out and aid in the educational process beyond just the basketball court. Take

the time to find out if each player learns more from your demonstrating, or seeing it written down on paper, or actually doing it themselves through your verbal explanation.

#### **#4 Throw away the stat sheet**

One of the biggest mistakes a young coach can make is pay any attention to the stat sheet or scorebook as it pertains to individual player performance. The great coach throws out his own ego, and sets an example by acknowledging teamwork, winning and losing as a team, and discussing the reasons behind success and failure as it pertains to the 'game concept' vs. the number of shots we made, or who turned the ball over, or who scored the most points. I am extremely opinionated about this aspect of coaching youth sports that pertain to the pre-high school and college levels. Show me a coach that walks around the the stat sheet and communicates it with their team, and I honestly believe you will watch a selfish team play on the court.

#### **#5 If you aren't organized, your kids are lost.**

Start with your philosophy. What you are and believe in as a coach is a reflection of how your players will act on and off the court in practice and games. Build your overall plan of action, individual practice plans, and specific drills that you believe are essential to teaching the fundamentals and team concepts. Each grade level, and even gender has specific needs that need to be taught at each grade level. If you are a high school coach, a feeder system with a specific plan of action and road map is necessary in building a championship program where you 'reload' vs. simply having a good year because of one good class of players.

Write out your practice plans and follow them. Don't allow the 'flavor of the month' attitude dictate your coaching as you waiver from one practice to the next. Details and organization allows you to stay the course of teaching vs. worried about winning. A prime example is coaching a zone defense at the youth levels because it allows you to win games you otherwise wouldn't win, yet, as a player, they are learning very little about the game of basketball and fundamentals necessary to be successful at the high school levels and beyond.

#### **"Dad, who was the biggest influence and best coach you had growing up as a player?"**

When it's all said in done, be the type of coach to your players that when they are 35 years old sitting with their son or daughter at the dinner table talking about who made a difference in their lives, the answer is Mr/Mrs. **AND** your last name. Honestly, this is what coaching is about, and what your involvement in youth sports should be about. We don't remember wins and losses as the primary part of our youth experiences, and long after we put the trophies and medals in a box for storage, we remember our friends, the sacrifice, and the one coach that each time we were in their practice or games, they made us feel important.

