

interaction between referees and players/coaches. Perhaps too much? Regardless, draw a line in the sand (different coaches will have different levels of leniency) and appropriate penalties.

These may seem trivial but putting in routines can help the game flow and establish good habits that can stay with players for the rest of their basketball and personal lives.

No doubt through your involvement we have all seen those kids who can just play. We have all had those kids who are technically sound but unfortunately can't seem to get it done in the game. Hopefully through the way we coach, the way you train, can help you produce more players with great fundamentals, a good understanding of the game and with the right attitude. A more enjoyable experience for all involved is sure to follow.

I hope that you have found this series helpful. My wish is that it has initiated both thought and discussion. Ideally I would encourage you to share these and your own ideas with other coaches (including myself). Together we can improve the quality of coaching and ultimately elevate the level of enjoyment for children in our great game. Thank you also, to Basketball Australia for such a wonderful initiative. Best of luck with your future coaching!

Past Issues

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BUILDING BETTER **BASKETBALL**

ISSUE NO. 10

COACHES

GAME SITUATIONS

Coaching children takes commitment, good hearing, a quick eye, a ready shoulder, a soft heart, a strong mind and a sense of humour.



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Welcome to the final edition of the Building Better Basketball Coaching Series. Our final installment looks at Game Situations. As a coach of juniors you have a great responsibility for not only teaching and instilling fundamental skills but also to initiate your players ability to make good decisions, to read and understand the game. Great players are effective, because they can transfer excellent skills and apply them to a game.

Throughout the series I have often discussed the importance of the 'why of the how' when teaching our skills, so kids begin to develop an appreciation of how skills are applicable in the game. At all levels I have seen some excellent shooters who are not prolific scorers, because they practice shooting at a slow pace, or without a defender (imaginary or actual), don't move well off the ball, can't create a shoot with a dribble, etc. We need to improve their ability to play the game. Here are some strategies to assist you:

- Encourage free play. Whether it's 1 on 1, 2 on 2 or 5 on 5, 'scrimmage' can be a great teacher. Especially if the group is going to challenge their skills, lift their intensity and provide an environment that 'forces' learning i.e. sink or swim (within reason).
- Create the game at practice. Rather than just using drills, design a breakdown, a portion of the game you feel needs improving. E.g. To improve player movement off the ball set-up 3 on 0 and show where players can run on penetration. Add a defender and tell them the things to look for, as a passer and a receiver. Then add a second and third defender. Again the key is giving them cues to work with; "Did the player defending you turn his/her head? If they did, run to this position." Etc
- Back to back drills. Basketball is incredibly dynamic. Players should be ready to move. They need to think one step ahead. They need to develop the ability to react quickly. A score or a turnover can happen instantly forcing you to change from offence to defence (or vice versa). Have drills that mirror this. You may have a great rebound/block-out drill. Well now extend it (and your athletes) by adding a fast break/transition component to it. The game is free-flowing except for the occasional substitution and time-outs. Practice should reflect this. I often like to play until there is 2 scores. Ideally if the team/player has done everything correctly and forces the opposition to score over them, they should block out, use their inside position to secure possession and score themselves. If the same team/player scores

twice, a small penalty is given. The idea is not the punishment but to keep both offence and defence switched on - play does not end when someone scores in a game - so why do it at practice!

- Advantage/Disadvantage. A lot of basketball play involves situations with a numbers difference. Players need to learn to recognize such instances and to either take advantage or minimize the effect of them before the opposition recovery. It might be on the break, or a dribble penetration, it may be rebounding. A common drill used for juniors is the 3-man weave. A good game situation extension is to use two colours in each group (there will always be 2 of one colour, and a remaining person in the other colour). Start the 3-man weave and on the coach's call/whistle make one more pass, the receiver of that pass is on offence and so are other any other players in a like colour. The drill returns to this basket from which it started and will either be 1 on 2, in which case you can trap the handler or 2 on 1, where you can run the break. This can be extended to 5-man weaves (2 on 3/3 on 2).
- Routines. Put in place structures and routines that will avoid delays and indecision.

SUBSTITUTIONS - Teach how to ask for subs, where to sit waiting for them, waiting for the referee to call you on, calling off the sub, exchanging information ("you're marking number 6, he's a left-hander"), the sub running off, talking to you, getting their water bottle and sitting down.

TIME-OUTS - Demonstrate where you want them to sit/stand, should they drink first or last, can they say anything, if yes when?

FOUL SHOTS - Have players develop a routine that they stick to for their free-throws. It should involve breathing, mental focus and physical preparation.

PASSING - I instructed players that they couldn't pass until completing a 2 count in their head. They had to count the offence as 1 and that player's defender as 2, only then they could pass it in. I found this made them more aware, and as they got older/better they had to count higher (see more of the floor, more team-mates and read the defence).

REFEREES - Put in place strategies for your players and the team as a whole with dealing with judgement calls that have gone against them (that's as diplomatic as I can put it). Basketball is one game where there is a lot of