

easy shot, etc. Provide positive reinforcement for effort and attempts to do things correctly. Share your enthusiasm for the game with the kids.

8) PRACTICE TO PLAY

Make sure there is a clear link from practice to the game. Identify what you have been working on in practice prior to the start of the game, reinforce the "why of the how", so if and when that situation arises in the game, it may cue the correct reaction e.g. "Remember at practice we worked on protecting the ball, so if they are trying to get the ball off you, keep one foot still and pivot."

9) AVENUES OF LEARNING

* Talk to the substitutions about why events are happening so they can learn from observing.

* Berating players will not necessarily stop them from committing the same mistake again and again. Establish that they realize what happened was incorrect and provide a solution. If the situation arises and they show progress, acknowledge it with positive feedback.

* Allow players to make decisions. If you coach every action, they won't develop their 'game sense'. Facilitate this with questions and opportunities to improve.

It is very important that when we coach that we let our own personality dictate. No doubt we have all observed the different person as of our NBL/WNBL coaches, don't imitate them, be yourself and be aware that you are coaching very different athletes to them! Stay active throughout, again regardless of the score and always remember you are coaching a game - provide a positive and fun learning environment!

Previous Articles

1. Why kids play
2. Communicating with kids
3. Organising kids
4. Game coaching

Future Articles

5. Ball Handling / Pivoting / Stance
6. Dribbling
7. Passing
8. Shooting
9. Defence / Rebounding
10. Game Situations

For all previous editions and further information go to www.basketball.net.au or email matthewsp@basketball.net.au



BUILDING BETTER BASKETBALL

ISSUE No. 4

COACHING

COACHING JUNIORS – GAME TIME!!!

*How to ensure kids enjoy the most important event
... the game??*

Coaching Juniors is a series of informative articles to assist local coaches in the local competitions. The coaching series was written and compiled by Steve Jackson AIS Scholarship Coach 2002 for Basketball Australia and all States and Territories



In this issue, the 4th in our series on coaching juniors, we will be looking at game coaching. Again, it is important to remember that this series is focusing on coaching at the grass-roots level. Up to this point, we have discussed why kids play, the importance of this in relationship to our approach when coaching juniors, communication, group management skills and planning techniques. At the higher levels, your game coaching is often dictated by what you have achieved in your training sessions. With juniors, a great deal of teaching and learning is achieved through the actual game. We will discuss various aspects of coaching a junior basketball game.

1) REFEREES & SCOREBENCH

Junior basketball is the breeding game for our future players, coaches and officials. Be aware that many referees on these games are just starting out and, not unlike your players, are bound to make mistakes! As a coach you have to be aware of the bigger picture; taking advantage of beginner referees with intimidation is very unethical, remonstrating with them takes your attention away from what you are there for (to facilitate a fun, learning experience for the kids) and openly criticizing them will continue to drive referees away from the game - no referees = no game! Regardless of what level we play at, everybody makes mistakes; players, coaches and officials. If you have a genuine complaint, address it through the appropriate channels (ref supervisors, court controllers, committees, etc). If not, concentrate on what you have control over - yourself and the behaviour and performance of your athletes.

The score-bench is often manned by; parents, siblings or other players who, not unlike you, are there to help the kids. Treat them with respect, instruct your players to do the same. Ask politely for subs and time-out. Again if an error has been made, jumping up and down is unlikely to help your cause!

2) COURT TIME

It is my belief that if they all pay the same amount of money and train the same amount of time, then they all get the same court time! Kids notice everything so rotate the starting five from game to game. Give different kids a chance in the jump ball (for some reason this is important to them!), carrying the ball, in-bounding, etc. Rotate the five that finish games.

3) SUBSTITUTIONS

The more you become aware of your players strengths, look to make sure you have a balanced group on the court at all times, basically have a player who can secure possession (a defender/s and/or rebounders) and someone who can get the ball down the floor safely (a handler and/or scorer). Leaving weaker players on the floor with nobody to help them will not help your team or those players.

Give players feedback before and after subbing. Again the sandwich technique; a constructive criticism wrapped between two positive feedback statements, is good for this, e.g. "Nice effort Danielle, try and work on keeping your head up, it will be easier to pass because you can see your teammates and where the defence is coming from. W When you did that you threw some great passes! Well done, have a rest and a drink now."

3) TIME-OUTS

* Establish a routine so kids know exactly how to act when a time-out is called. Make sure that routine allows them to have a drink, recover, and get organized so that you have their undivided attention.

* When you are talking maintain eye contact with the athletes. If you are addressing one in particular, make sure you regain everyone's attention before you talk to the group again.

* Limit your time-outs to 1-2 points. Be clear and concise.

* Don't be afraid to tell them anything. They may not understand or be able to execute what you want straight away but plant the seed; it may come to fruition down the track.

* Provide solutions. Players are aware of problems, give them the means to avoiding the same mistakes!

4) BIG MARGINS

Players (and coaches) should learn to win and lose graciously. If your team is winning by a big margin, letting them goof off is patronizing and demeaning to the other team. Set them challenges for them e.g. no steals - only intercepts and/or rebounds, no shots unless everyone has touched it, pick up in the quarter court, no double teams, etc.

A similar approach can be used with teams losing heavily. Set target goals, e.g. "lets keep them to 15 this quarter". Task goals can be helpful in solving problems e.g. no lob passes. Regardless of the score we can make the game a worthwhile experience.

5) PARENTS

Involve them. Give them a job to do. If they are a 'yeller', give them cue words to yell out, so they can help, not hinder, the philosophy you are trying to instill. Whether it's filling water bottles, washing singlets or helping on the score-bench, take advantage of those parents offering their help.

6) VARIETY....

...is the spice of life so they say, and an important part in developing well-rounded basketball players!

* Multi-skill your players. Don't confine your big kid to playing 2 feet from the ring both ends, nor impart rules on who can and cannot shoot. Expose kids to all facets of the game. Down the track that little kid could end up 6'8".

* Mix up the styles of game you play e.g. you may play full-court pressure defence one week and 1/2-court containment the next.

* Give players roles and vary them regularly. You might be playing against a good team with a particularly strong dribbler. You may assign someone with the job of denying that player the ball. The next week they may be the main ball carrier.

7) CHEERING

You are the cheerleader. Acknowledge good play on both sides and good calls by the referee. Make a habit of congratulating players who make things happen. Whether it was a good block out to allow my teammate the rebound, or a nice pass that led to the