

Players need to learn how to catch and pass, catch and shoot, catch and dribble. They need to be able to do this in all situations: in rebounding for scenarios, in transition, on the perimeter and playing inside.

### **PASSING GAMES**

Again there are countless passing drills that you will be able to access from your coaching resources. Here are some fun drills you can also play. To facilitate passing and catching in a fun environment:

**"Baseball"** - Designate a batting and fielding team. The batters have to throw the ball into the field (no home runs although you may need to designate out of bounds areas) and run for home (can't stop on a base). If the fielding team can catch it on the full, the batter is out. If not the fielders need to make a set number of passes and get the ball back to home (can include a made basket to increase difficulty) before the runner to get them 'out'. Passes have to include a new person to involve everybody.

**"Tag Pass"** - Used by many sports. Designate players to be in. They may not run with the ball, they have to pass between themselves and try and tag those not yet in. Can play in teams or can play build-ups. Teaches players to think ahead of the play, because it is easier to box people in corners or trap them between passers rather than chase them.

**"Captain Ball"** - An oldie but a goody!

**"Relays"** - Races that incorporate different passes.

**"Passball"** - Where the value of a made basket is decided by the number of passes preceding it. Can set a pass limit of passes before a free shot is allowed.

**"Circle Pursuit"** - 2 players start back to back with a ball, opposite a player in the circle. They have to make their way around the circle passing to each player and try to catch their opponent or be first around the circle. You can do this with one or two balls.

Promote the value of good passing and catching in your practice and your games. Emphasize its importance, value the assist as much as a score. Acknowledge good decisions and executions. Teams that pass well not only achieve more, they also enjoy playing more - and that's what we are hoping



## **BUILDING BETTER BASKETBALL**

### **Coaches No.7**

## **Passing and Catching**

Passing promotes team play  
Passing contributes to the excitement of the game  
All players are potential receivers – be ready to catch!!

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



Hello and welcome to the Building Better Basketball Coaching Series, in this issue we are discussing passing and catching. Perhaps the most pressing issue is to make sure our beginners understand the value of both of these skills and integrate them into their games. Typically most beginners are happy to receive the ball but less inclined to give it up! We want to develop a 'team' mentality and the best way to do this is involve everybody and passing can achieve this. To quote Tom Pottenger (junior coach from Shoalhaven Tigers, NSW) "Kid, if you want to be No.1 by yourself - go play tennis - now pass the ball!"

### **PASSING**

A learning experience I like to use is to pick the fastest runner in the group to race against the ball. I dribble the ball to the top of the key and back while he/she runs. The end result is usually close. Then we race again, but this time I put another person at the top of the key and I pass the ball and they pass it back while the opponent runs - the end result is anything but close! I do this to emphasise how much easier and quicker it is to move the ball using a pass.

Here are key areas to cover in relation to passing:

- Pass away from the defence. See the whole receiving area, where is the receiver's defender, where are the help defenders? Teach your players to make their decision on when and where to pass based on that rather than their own predicament or the receiver's insistence. Possession is vital!
- "Fake to make" In this context 'make' means to create. If you don't have a safe pass, use a shot/drive or pass fake, shift the defence and 'create' a passing lane.
- Pass to a target. Using the above rules, learn to pass to a target, it might be a receiver's hand, it may be a spot on the floor. Understand we want to pass for our teammate not just to our teammate. Pass the ball so the receiver is in a good position to execute the next part of the game. The quality of your pass affects how quickly (if at all) and how well, they can shoot, pass or dribble. If the player is on the move, pass it in front so they can move onto the ball and continue.
- Don't teach passing in isolation. Teach players how to pass off the dribble, pass on the run, pass and cut, pass after pivoting (in a stance of course). It's a dynamic game - teach it that way!
- Ball in the air is anyone's ball - passes must be sharp. The big muscles in your legs and a sharp wrist snap will speed the ball through the air.

- To get the ball past the on-ball defender use one of the five safe zones; directly above their head, by their ears or by their hips. It is difficult for the defence to stop the ball especially if the offence uses a fake first and/or passes away from their hands.
- Players should be able to execute passes with either hand. This change of hands can improve the passing angle, reducing the risk of a deflection by the on-ball defender and an intercept by an off-ball defender.
- Again, your coaching courses will give you greater technical content but players should be shown the
  - Chest
  - Bounce
  - Push (including bounce)
  - Curl
  - Baseball
  - Overheadand the when/why to use those passes.

### **CATCHING**

"What do you call a boomerang that doesn't come back? A stick!" Similarly, a pass is only complete when it reaches its destination. The receiver must share the responsibility in regards to this. It is a dangerous assumption to make that our players can all catch. Basketball would not be alone in under-teaching this vital skill. The sequence of catching is "Eyes, feet, hands." Use your eyes to track the ball, move your feet to 'meet' the ball and then, using 10 fingers (especially for beginners), catch the ball. By using this sequence, we put our body in a better position to execute the next skill.

Players should move to meet the ball to reduce the air-time of the pass, decreasing the risk of a turnover. If you stand and wait or fail to move onto the ball, a defender will shoot the gap and steal it! This movement need not be predicated on a pass, offensive players should be constantly adjusting to improve their position in relation to the ball and the defenders.

Receivers should communicate both verbally and visually when and where they want the ball. The call and body language used should be assertive. Beginners tend to call for the ball because they want it, regardless of the defence or their own position. Teach them to call for the ball when it will help the team, not themselves!

Beginners may want to dribble without catching the ball. This is one of my pet hates. Firstly they do not get proper control of the ball. Secondly they have reduced their options to one, eliminating a chance for a shot or pass. Finally, that dribble tends to be on the spot, rather than being made into a better position. Show the advantages of making the catch.