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Coaches Helping Coaches

Advancing the growth and impact of Canadian basketball coaches at all levels through community building, career development, and advocacy.

Introduction

This edition features helpful tips for youth coaches but the Basketball Coaches of Canada organization is interested in helping mentor coaches at all levels, let us know how we can help you!



Profiles of Mentorship Coaches

COACHES!

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR BASKETBALL COACHES OF CANADA MEMBERS TO BE MENTORED BY SOME OF CANADA'S MOST EXPERIENCED COACHES!



ROY RANA – former HC Canadian National Team – World Championship Canada's U-19 Team – Assistant Coach Sacramento Kings – HC Egyptian National Team



STEVE KONCHALSKI – former HC Canadian National team – three time National Champion StFX University – winningest coach in USPORTS history (919 wins).



BRIAN LEE – Head Coach, Vancouver Sports Club – led St. George's School to BC provincial championship – National Championship point guard at StFX University.



ANDY WATERMAN – long time director and Head Coach of Ottawa Phoenix club team.



EDDIE POMYKALA – long time coach of Bishop's University – led Gaiters to 1998 National Championship (can mentor in both official languages).



MERRICK PALMER – director of Capital Courts Training Centre in Ottawa – led Capital Courts (F) to 2021-22 OSBA championship – National Champion at StFX University

To take advantage of this opportunity to learn from these great coaches just sign up on the [Basketball Coaches of Canada](#) website!

Tips at the Youth Level

From Coach Eddie Pomykala:

The last 6 weeks I have had the opportunity to referee many youth basketball teams from ages 12-16. The level of play has ranged from low level beginner to 'decent' but much work needs to be done. It's all about participation and DEVELOPMENT.

I have outlined key weaknesses that must be worked on so that the Youth Coach can have a better understanding of what needs to be addressed and worked on at practice.

Some of these will sound very simple- and that is exactly the problem! These fundamentals tend to be overlooked and taken for granted. So here it is... if I was a Youth Coach these are the things I would have my teams work on:

- **Develop hand and finger strength** so that you can catch it better and dribble better: Pre practice routine- squeeze the ball with your fingers like it's a 'bar of soap!' Slap the ball as hard as you can from hand to hand. Allow your hands to become 'familiar' with the ball. 10-20 times each.
- **Dribble Harder:** There are too many 'soft' dribbles. Try to pound the ball into the floor and at least practice using both hands. Drill : Bend down on your right knee, dribble the ball 10 ten times as hard as you can with your right hand no higher than the level of your left knee. Do the same bending down on your left knee, using your left hand. Repeat a second time.
- **Learn to stop and be on balance:** We have too many 'straight legged' players who slide instead of stop. The key is to stop after a dribble or a catch or a rebound and do so with a ONE BEAT STOP. Now bend your legs and be in an 'athletic position! **Drill:** line 6 players along the baseline all with a ball. Have the other 6 behind them ready to go next. On the Coach's signal, the first group throws out their ball in front of them about 10 feet. Run and secure your ball using both hands using a one beat stop, touch the floor with your ball (emphasizing being low and bending your legs). Repeat the length of the floor. Do 4 lengths of the whole floor.
- **Pass the ball with 2 hands (and catch it with 2 hands!):** there are so many drills out there to reinforce this. I really like the 'combo pass drill.' Line 6 players with a ball 15 feet from the other 6 players who all have a ball. Line A will make chest passes aiming at teammates' chin. Line B will make bounce passes. Do for 15 seconds and change chest to bounce and bounce to chest.
- **Eliminate soft, balloon beach passes:** A high, soft pass that one would make to a toddler at the beach is NOT a pass that should be done in basketball. Emphasize strong passes with good velocity, aiming at the chin (with slippage it will be a perfectly placed pass).
- **Eliminate bounce passes when inbounding the ball:** many turnovers result from this either from the ball hitting the sideline/baseline lines first or more often than not, the bounce pass gets intercepted or tipped by the defensive player. Coaches must communicate this to the players.
- **Pass the ball inbounds as quickly as you can!** Too many young players wait a long time and only see 1 teammate. Pass the ball to the first teammate you see and try to see 2 players at a minimum.
- **Play on the ball defense with a one arm's distance from the player with the ball!** Too many players play right up on their check causing a lot of reaching and body fouls. Keep your check IN FRONT OF YOU. Move your feet and keep your body in motion. Maintain a gap and don't get so close that you will easily foul and get out of position. Drill: My favourite drill of ALL basketball drills EVER is 'Guard the Dribbler'. A simple drill where you line your players up on the sideline. One player has a ball, the other is

'one arm gap' away ready to play defense. Offense takes 3 dribbles in one direction and then switches hands and direction taking 3 dribbles in the opposite direction (Zig-Zag). The offense is not trying to beat the defense- it is a co-operative drill. The defensive player MUST keep one arm's distance at all times. It's all about moving their feet and maintaining good position.

- **Transitioning from offense to defense:** Teach your players to 'point' at who they are covering. Young players must learn to focus and concentrate on who they are covering. Pointing will help them understand what it is they have to do next!
- **Defending a fast break:** if an opposing player is driving the ball and you are the closest defender- it's ok for you to try to defend that player, even if that's not your check, by chasing them and getting in front of them. I have seen too many youngsters run beside a player with the ball and not try to impede them from scoring.
- **You cannot practice ENOUGH layups.** Forget about the fancy 3 player half court weaves into 2 on 1 transition while 9 other players are standing and watching. Dribble the ball, shoot the ball, pass the ball, and remember.... The backboard is your best friend!

Last tip and most important tip: ENJOY the game. Practice good sportsmanship and encourage your teammates. Coaches , teach your Players to LOVE the game!

Qualities of a Youth Coach

FROM A PARENT/COACH PERSPECTIVE

- 1) Make it FUN for the kids!
- 2) "Coach people, not players" – develop a relationship with ALL the players – show them that you care about them off the playing field as well as on. Treat your developing players the same as your more skilled players.
- 3) Put the emphasis on putting forth your best effort. "Success is a piece of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming" – Hall of Fame Coach John Wooden.
- 4) At all levels, emphasize SKILL DEVELOPMENT. Avoid specialization at the early ages as kids develop physically and mentally at different speeds.
- 5) Be POSITIVE! "Whisper criticism, yell praise".
- 6) Teach SPORTSMANSHIP as well as RESPECT FOR OFFICIALS and model it yourself.
- 7) Teach your players how to be a GOOD TEAMMATE.
- 8) COMMUNICATE WITH THE PARENTS your values, expectations and coaching philosophy early in the season, answering any questions they may have.
- 9) With older youth, challenge your more skilled players to succeed, giving them guidance preparing for the next level.
- 10) Create an environment where the players will be excited about wanting to continue to play next year!

Coaches Never Lose

A team can lose, any team can lose, but in a very real sense, a coach never loses.

For the job of a coach is over and finished once the starting whistle blows. He knows he's won or lost before play starts.

For a coach has two tasks. The minor one is to teach skills. The second task – the major task – is to make adults out of our youth.

It's to teach an attitude of mind. It's to implant character and not simply to implant skills.

It's to teach children how to play fair. This goes without saying. It's to teach them to be humble in victory and proud in defeat.

But more importantly, it's to teach them to live up to their potential no matter what this potential is.

It's to teach them to do their best and never be satisfied with what they are but to strive to be as good as they can be if they tried harder.

A coach can never make a great player out of a child who isn't potentially great. But he can make a great competitor out of any child. And miraculously, he can help make a child into a responsible young adult.

(Taken from "The Winning Edge" by Coach Stu Aberdeen)

High Five: an MVP Move



“I believe that the measure of a person’s life is the effect they have on others.” --Steve Nash

Introduction

With two MVP’s, 8 all star appearances, and 5 seasons as the assist leader, Hall-of-Famer Steve Nash’s career was nothing short of remarkable. Perhaps his most noteworthy influence on the game was not the numerous flashy passes or leading his team’s fast paced offense, but his touches.

239 touches per game; not the amount of times he touched the ball, the number of times he touched his teammates. During the season 2009-2010 NBA season, the Phoenix Suns had an intern count the number of high fives Steve Nash gave during an average game, and he counted 239.

These simple, seemingly meaningless gestures may be the catalyst for individual and team success.

NBA Touch Study

In a study done at UC Berkeley, an early season game for each of the 30 NBA teams was coded for touches. The prediction was physical touch would predict performance because it promotes cooperation, and soothes in times of stress through warmth and increased trust.

Touching and Trusting

At birth, touch is the most developed sense we have. Physical touch is a need, right behind food, water, and rest; our brain does not develop properly without it. Touch is a powerful enabler of trust. We experience trust and many other human emotions in a part of the brain called the insular cortex. When we are touched, the insular cortex lights up. This part of our brain is activated with a simple high-five. Even the warmth of our body is powerful. Just the physical sensation of a hot cup of coffee makes people more willing to trust.

Touch is vital for trust, cooperation, and group functioning. Touch reduces feelings of threat.

Touch reinforces that teammates are operating for the good of the group and not playing selfishly.

Touch determines how well teams cooperate which determines how well they perform.

Measuring Behavior

During this study, 12 distinct types of touches were recorded: high fives, fist bumps, chest bumps, leaping shoulder bumps, chest punches, head slaps, head grabs, low fives, high tens, full hugs, half hugs, and team huddles.

Cooperation, in the form of unselfishness and efficiency, was also measured. These interdependent behaviors included talking during the game, passing to a teammate who is less closely defended, helping other teammates on defense, setting screens to get teammates open, and other displays of relying on teammates even at the expense of individual performance.

In contrast, behaviors that display lack of trust were also measured such as taking closely defended shots, not passing to an open teammate, and other self-reliant actions.

Finally, performance and success were measured by gaining possession of the ball, scoring efficiently, and winning.

Results

The predictions were accurate.

Touch predicts individual and team performance.

Just by looking at the number of team touches during a game at the beginning of the season, the researchers predicted which teams would have the best records at the end of the season. They were right. The best NBA teams were always getting into tight huddles, high-fiving, and chest-bumping. Inevitably, they played like they trusted each other. They found the best shots on offense, helped each other on defense, talked more, and of course, won more games.

The worst teams in the NBA barely touched and had terrible body language. As a result, they consistently made selfish, inefficient plays, and their record showed it.

Players who touched the most, performed the best.

Teams that touched the most, performed the best.

How can this be explained? Cooperation.

Touch causes cooperation, which leads to efficient play, which determines how well a team plays.

Teams that touch more, win more.

High fives simply promote a greater team commitment.

Be a Great Teammate

Steve Nash had only 1 scholarship offer out of high school. Standing at 6'1, he looks more like a soccer player. Yet, he was able to play basketball at the highest level for 18 years.

How? He made himself extremely valuable by being the best teammate. He got his teammates involved, encouraged them, acknowledged them, earned their trust, and his team followed his example of unselfish play.

Not only did this earn Steve Nash a legacy of being the ultimate teammate, he *won more games* because he was a great teammate. Being a great teammate helps your team win.

Steve Nash was successful at every level because he was intentional about always giving his best. He gave his best effort to his teammates in the way he treated them, and he gave his best effort in every workout, practice, warm up, and game.

When the leader gets better, everyone gets better.

High fives are a predictor of team *and* individual success. Not only did the players who touched more perform better, they also earned more playing time.

Be enthusiastic and be engaged, because giving your best for your team will always bring something good for you.

It's hard to quantify exactly how much a great teammate can influence the game, but if the difference between winning and losing is 239 high fives, I'd start giving a lot more high fives.

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