

FUNDAMENTAL TEACHING

The first concept to remember while training a basketball team is that it does not matter what the coach knows, but what they can teach the players. There is a need to individualize the training to match the needs of each player. The coach is responsible to assist each player to grow in three areas:

1. MENTAL GROWTH

- Stimulate the players to grow up as responsible people and players. It is necessary to stimulate their mental growth by teaching them how to listen, how to concentrate and how to communicate, to name a few. Coaches must develop their own philosophy in regards to this topic.
- Give players problems to solve. The answer is not always obvious. Challenge them to expand their thinking and stay away from creating robots; the players need to think for themselves.
- Ask them questions to help them recognize the tactical or technical situation. They need to understand why they are doing what they are doing. This will lead to a deeper understanding of the game.

A young person was struggling in his relationships with other people. He had a tendency to fly off the handle when things did not go his way. In an effort to improve himself, he went to see his mentor for advice. The mentor suggested that every time the young person felt like lashing out at someone he should hammer a nail into a board. The young person followed this advice and it seemed to work. Instead of being harsh to his colleagues he would go back and hammer a nail into the board. After a week he returned to his mentor, because he had a problem. The board was completely full and there was no more room for any more nails. His mentor recommended that instead of hammering in a new nail, each time he felt critical of others, remove one of the existing nails. Again he followed his mentor's advice. At the end of the week all of the nails were removed. He approached his mentor and said: "Mentor, I have followed the advice as you instructed. In the last two weeks I have become less callous to my colleagues, but they are still cold to me. Why have they not accepted that I have changed?"

The mentor responded; "Think of the board as colleagues. You have driven in nails and then removed them, but has the board remained the same?"

"No," replied the young person, "It still has all of the holes in it."

"Exactly," answered the mentor. "When you are harsh to people it is like driving a nail into the board. It hurts. When you decide to put the nail back with an apology or simple gesture of kindness there is still a scar lefty from the first deed. It takes time for things to heal."

(As told by Coach Renato Pasquali)

2. TECHNICAL GROWTH OR IMPROVEMENT

- Teach the players the ability to play any type of basketball. The intent is to develop the “global” player who has the ability to make use of all of the fundamentals skills and concepts of the game.
- The main job as a coach is *not* to restrict the skills the players use, but to expand their repertoire of skills. The coach should not be the reason why a player cannot play at the next stage of the game.
- Do not neglect working on the fundamentals and constantly teach and refine the basic fundamental skills of the game; stance, stops/starts and pivots, shot form, pass form, dribble form and dynamic one-on-one (from both an offensive and defensive perspective). Players must learn to be lifelong learners who love to train.
- Help the players to grow-up strategically and tactically. By constantly talking the game, encouraging players to watch and allowing them to ask questions to help grow their basketball IQ.

3. ATHLETIC GROWTH

- Build athletes first and basketball players second. If players do not acquire the proper fundamental movement skills, these skills become the limiting factor in performance later on. For example; if a player cannot move from a lunge to a one-foot balance they will not be able to properly execute a one-footed layup.
- Agility and Coordination. Coaches must spend time working to increase the player’s ability to change direction and move in a synchronized manner. Players need to have the ability to use both hands and feet. This will greatly enhance their technical ability.
- Balance. The more effective a player’s balance, the quicker they will be able to move. In order to move with control, one first must find their balance. For example, if a player has their head too far forward in their defensive stance, in order to move backward, they must first get their head over their body before they can push backward. This costs valuable time.
- Speed needs to be trained every day. Players must constantly work to improve the speed at which they execute their skills. The speed at which to execute skills should never be faster than the vision, balance and co-ordination. For example, if a player is dribbling as fast as they can but their head is down, a problem is about to occur. This player will not be able to see open teammates or if defenders are in their path.
- By improving their strength, players will:
 - Know how to use their bodies. This is essential for the correct execution of skills. For example, players who have developed upper body strength can use their forearms to prevent the screener from getting to their feet. Players who have core strength can cut at speed; therefore they are better able to utilization open space when it quickly appears and have superior timing in their cuts.
 - Be able to increase the intensity of their game, both defensively and offensively. As the games becomes more intense there is more physical contact.

It is necessary to train the players to have the ability to play any type of basketball, not only the systems of play. Do not neglect working on the fundamentals with all player. The intent is to teach them how to play, not plays.

For every fundamental that is taught, do not underestimate the value of teaching the appropriate footwork. Fundamentals start with the feet.

TEACHING PROGRESSIVELY

Practices should be delivered in a progressive manner. Otherwise, it may hinder the development of the players. It is not necessary to teach to the players everything but follow a correct teaching progression, step-by-step. These progressions take the players through the stages of skill development. It not only allows the players to master the technique, but the decision making that goes along with the skill. In the final stage, the players are able to use the skill in competition without consciously thinking about their execution. Very often a coach progresses too quickly; from introducing a skill to using the skill in a competitive situation. This is a prescription for poor performance.

PHASES OF TEACHING

Note: Phase C and D cannot be developed if phase A and B are not developed.

- **Phases A – Initiation and Acquisition** – In this phase, players require a good demonstration of what the skill looks like. They also need to understand where it fits into the overall scheme of the game. When first introduced, players should be given plenty of time to wobble; they need to figure it out for themselves. The drills are done one-on-zero. As the player progresses, the coach can add more technical teaching. The final component is speed.
- **Phase B – Acquisition and Consolidation** – During this phase the coach guides the offence by acting as a guided defender. This builds the player's decision making capacity. The coach is able to give the players an exaggerated look that makes it easier for the player to make the right decision. If players are used, too often the read given by the defence is incorrect or too subtle for the player to correctly read. For example, when guarding a player cutting to get open, the coach denies the player (gives the player a clear indication to cut back-door).
- **Phase C- Consolidation and Refinement** - The player needs to be able to use the skills against live defence, usually in a one-on-one situation. It is sometimes best to give the same player multiple repetitions before switching roles.
- **Phases D – Refinement and Consolidation** – In the final phase the players must be able to demonstrate competence in using the skill in a game-like situation. A coach knows a player has achieved mastery when they perform the practiced skill in a game-like situation without being consciously aware. For example, a player drives and scores using a left hand layup. It is not until the coach brings it to the player's attention that they are aware of using this skill.