



A COACH'S INFLUENCE

AAO BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A BETTER TEAM AND LIFE

SKILL

"The knowledge of and the ability to properly and quickly execute the fundamentals of the game,"

Coach John Wooden

More than anything else, our job as coaches is to develop the necessary skills and fundamentals in each of our players. A skillful player knows exactly what to do and is able to execute the needed fundamentals to accomplish the task at hand. Great players have a sense of timing and the ability to quickly perform the skill. So, how do we develop these foundational skills in our players?

Well, the simple answer is through hard work and hours of repetition. But let me offer this as a possible guideline for teaching your players the "skills" of the game. Learning a skill typically goes through three phases of development:

Knowledge Phase

You have to educate players as to what the skill is and how it's performed. They have to know how and when to apply it. This is especially true in shooting, ball-handling, passing, offensive moves, and individual defense. As much as possible, visually educate your players with demonstrations, videos, or on-line resources.

Mechanics Phase

You have to teach them the proper movements and mechanics of the skill. This is the most difficult and frustrating time for the player and the most challenging for the coach. When a player is first learning a skill the mechanics will feel awkward and almost robotic. Break the skill down into smaller individual parts. For example, in shooting you may first work on getting their feet properly balanced, then work on hand and elbow alignment, then the proper release. Finally you put all the parts together into one continuous motion.

Speed Phase

Once they have learned the proper mechanics they gradually work on increasing their speed and fluidity. It takes a tremendous amount of repetition to be able to perform BKB skills at a fast pace. This is what is referred to as building muscle memory —programming the muscles of the body to instinctively perform this movement without thinking or hesitation. In other words it becomes intuitive.

Finally, choose 2 – 3 skills that are most important for your team's development and focus on them. Remember, our excellence in life is determined by how well we develop our God given abilities and talents. Each of your players possesses a measure of talent, some more than others and your job is to help them develop whatever amount they have to their fullest measure.

"Do you see any truly competent workers? They will serve kings rather than ordinary people."

Proverbs 22:29