BASKETBALL FOR YOUNG PLAYERS

GUIDELINES FOR COACHES

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION BASKETBALL COACHES

WORLD ASSOCIATION BASKETBALL COACHES
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book was written following the guidelines of the working group organised by FIBA with the purpose of developing the Young Coaches 2000 Programme.

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Mr. Avakumović, Dr. Buceta, Mr. Mondoni and Mr. Killik, experts in this field, were assigned to write the book and Dr. Buceta to edit it.

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Finally, FIBA would like to acknowledge the excellent contribution to this project of the European Association of Basketball Coaches.
As the twentieth century draws to a close, basketball can be seen to have spread throughout the world, becoming one of the most practised sports amongst boys and girls today. FIBA has 208 affiliated national federations, which means that hundreds of thousands of players are dedicated to the practice of our sport. Many of these young people are children and teenagers for whom basketball can be an excellent educational opportunity for their athletic, personal and social development. Among other things, basketball should serve to develop values that help make our future adults better citizens, stimulating the peaceful and respectful coexistence of the people and countries of the twenty-first century.

FIBA is aware of the enormous importance of basketball in the development of young people and of the fundamental role of coaches within this context, because it is the coaches who, by working daily with the players, must make the experience of playing basketball a beneficial one. For this reason, in collaboration with the European Association of Basketball Coaches, FIBA has set up the Young Coaches 2000 programme for the training of coaches working with players from mini-basketball to the junior category at the age of eighteen. The objective of this programme is for these coaches to understand and assume their responsibility, learning concepts and strategies that allow them to successfully develop this undertaking with the boys and girls who depend so much upon them.

Within this framework, different experts, chosen by FIBA, have formed a working group to elaborate this book. It is meant to be a powerful working tool for any basketball coaches clinic held around the world under the name of FIBA, Olympic Solidarity or a national federation. I hope that readers will appreciate the contents presented herein and that they will use these appropriately to enrich their working methodology with young players.

BORISLAV STANKOVIĆ
Secretary General of FIBA
To teach is more difficult than to learn. We all know this, but we often forget it.

Why is teaching more difficult? Not only because a teacher needs to have a far greater knowledge at all times, but also because teaching is essentially a more difficult task: it means teaching how and what to learn.

The World Association of Basketball Coaches (WABC) is honoured to be associated with this important step in the «teaching» of basketball coaching to young players, part of a programme initiated by FIBA.

Coaches’ clinics are held every other day the world over. Too few of these, however, concentrate on working with young basketball players. FIBA has recognised that these players will be the future of basketball as it enters the new millennium and has therefore decided to create this reference guide for basketball coaches worldwide.

Although only a European project at the very beginning, it clearly appeared that its value goes far beyond the geographical limits of Europe. This book can now be used everywhere around the globe, at every coaches’ clinic held under the auspices of FIBA.

We, the World Association of Basketball Coaches, as an officially recognised body of FIBA, will use these guidelines as a reference in all of our world activities.

We hope that readers, coaches and players will welcome this initiative and support FIBA, EABC and WABC in their efforts to spread this work throughout the world.

The future is in our hands.

CESARE RUBINI
President of WABC
For the European Association of Basketball Coaches (EABC), the advanced training of European coaches is an important priority. It is therefore a great honour that FIBA has approved the Young Coaches 2000 programme for the training of young coaches working with young players.

Coaches who work with young players cannot coach in the same way as coaches working with professionals, but should develop their own working style that takes into account the athletic and personal development of their players. Thus, it is important that these coaches acquire knowledge specific to working with children and adolescents.

The objective of the Young Coaches 2000 programme, and of this book, is not to substitute existing training programmes for coaches developed by the respective national federations, but to complement these. Thus, the programme and the book are intended for people who are already certified coaches in their countries and who therefore already have a broad understanding of the technical aspects of basketball. With this in mind, our aim is that these coaches expand their resources by means of specific training centred on the work of young players, highlighting those methodological points and contents that should predominate from mini-basketball to juniors.

This book is one more element of the Young Coaches 2000 programme, complementing courses to be held in coming years in different countries. However, it can be useful for any coach working with young players. The aim of the book is not to cover every aspect of basketball but to serve as a guideline for coaches who work with children and adolescents including aspects that the experts of the working group selected by FIBA consider most relevant. I feel that this book will be a valuable working tool for any coach.

ANTON MARÍA COMAS i COMA
President of EABC
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László Killik has a degree as a teacher of Physical Education from the Higher Institute of Physical Education of Budapest, Hungary. He has extensive experience as a basketball coach, including the Men’s Junior National Team and the Women’s Senior National Team of Hungary, and the National Teams of Egypt. He has worked at the Institute for Scientific Research in Physical Education in Budapest and has been responsible for the development of basketball coaches in Hungary. He is a recognised expert in developing élite young players.
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INTRODUCTION

The Young Coaches 2000 programme was created by FIBA to promote the training of young coaches who coach young players. This book was written as part of the programme, its purpose being to provide useful guidelines for coaches who work with boys’ or girls’ teams, from mini-basketball to juniors.

The book is made up of eight chapters and an appendix. The first five chapters were written by Jose María Buceta. They cover methodological contents and aspects specific to coaching young players of any age that coaches should take into account when working with these players. These aspects make up an area of work specific to coaches working with young players, different to that of a coach who works with professional teams. The main objective of these chapters, and of the whole book, is precisely for coaches who work with young players to accept that their task is different to that of a professional coach, to understand what that task consists of and to master specific concepts and strategies needed to carry out that task correctly.

As a starting point, Chapter 1 refers to the role of basketball in the educational development of youngsters, emphasising the importance that basketball can have in the athletic and human development of young players and stressing the importance of the coach in this process. The chapter points out how the practice of basketball, from mini-basketball to junior, can contribute to enhancing the health of young players, to developing personal and social values such as commitment, perseverance, responsibility, teamwork and respect for rules and others, to developing psychological resources such as self-confidence, self-concept, self-esteem and self-control, to providing the players with positive experiences such as having fun, feeling competent and receiving the appreciation of others and, of course, to the development of the basketball skills of the young player. In order to achieve all of these objectives, the coach must take advantage of the opportunities provided by practice sessions and games along the lines explained throughout the chapter, adopting a working style the principal characteristics of which are listed at the end.

Using Chapter 1 as a basis, Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 include specific strategies that the coaches can apply in carrying out their work. Chapter 2 concen-
trates on planning the overall basketball activity when working with young players. Chapters 3 and 4 refer to training sessions and Chapter 5 to basketball games.

Chapter 2 attempts to guide coaches who work with young players concerning the methodology they should adopt in planning their team’s activities: how to organise the team, what working periods to bear in mind throughout the season, the most appropriate goals, how to choose the most important contents, aspects to take into account in order to correctly control the physical and psychological workload of the activities, how to focus games according to the age of the players, and how to schedule the activities.

From there, Chapter 3 centres on the organisation of training sessions, and is divided into three sections. In the first, the principal characteristics of a training session are explained: its stages, goals, contents and working rules. In the second and longest, we discuss the principal characteristics that should be included in the session’s drills in order for these to be more efficient. In the third, some simple suggestions are offered for evaluating the training session. The objective of this chapter is for the coach to learn how to make the best use of available training time in order to obtain the maximum benefit from it.

Chapter 4 also centres on training sessions but in this case, on the coach’s behaviour in directing them. The aim of this chapter is for coaches to learn psychological strategies that they can incorporate into their usual working method in order for their players to achieve better performance and greater satisfaction. After properly planning the activities (Chapter 2) and organising each training session correctly (Chapter 3), the coach should develop the ability of conducting the training session as productively as possible, getting his/her players to assimilate the contents of the session and thus obtain the maximum benefit from their work.

The basketball activity of young players should not be limited to training sessions but should also include games throughout the season. For this reason, the coach must be prepared to manage games as beneficially as possible. Chapter 5 refers specifically to the coach’s behaviour before, during and after games, including strategies for preparing the game, controlling the players’ expectations of success, stimulating their concentration during game-time, making efficient use of time-outs and half-time, and achieving maximum benefit from the game as an educational experience.

To facilitate the study of these first five chapters, the book includes practical exercises and test exercises.

The practical exercises present situations characteristic of a basketball coach’s work, to which the reader should apply the contents of the book. The purpose of this is that, in this way, the reader can better assimilate the knowledge found in the book by reflecting actively in order to do the exercises.

The test exercises pose questions that the reader answers in order to check how well he/she has assimilated the contents of each chapter. The appendix
includes the solutions to these questions along with explanatory comments.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 include technical contents specific to each of the three age groups into which the experts have decided to divide basketball for young players: mini-basketball, 12 years and under (Chapter 6), passerelle, 13/14-year-olds (Chapter 7) and both 15-16 cadets/cadettes and 17-18 junior categories (Chapter 8).

The chapter dedicated to mini-basketball was written by Maurizio Mondoni. The first part includes general guidelines for working with three age groups: 6/7-year-olds, 8/9-year-olds and 10/12-year-olds, and the basic characteristics of the base-game, the starting point for a coach when teaching mini-basketball. Next, the two central parts of the chapter include numerous drills intended for the physical development of children who practise mini-basketball and for the progressive development of basketball fundamentals. These drills were previously published in another FIBA book, «From Mini-Basketball to Basketball», written by the same author. The final section of the chapter includes orientative plans for organising training sessions for mini-basketball teams.

Chapter 7 was prepared by Aleksandar Avakumović. It includes a list of methodological advices for working with 13/14-year-old players and twenty-four training sessions as examples of the type of work that can be carried out with players of this age group. For each session, this chapter specifies the principal goal of the session, its total length, the drills to be used in the session including diagrams to aid understanding, and remarks highlighting key aspects for the coach to keep in mind.

Finally, Chapter 8 was written by Jose María Buceta and László Killik. It is made up of four sections centred on coaching 15/18-year-old players. The first, very brief section, looks at the importance of considering the players’ individual needs in order to improve their resources. The second section explains the basketball fundamentals that should be given special attention at this age, such as movements without the ball, offensive rebounding and the mid/low post’s back-to-the-basket play. The third section deals with the development of tactical decision-making, including basic concepts and some examples. The fourth section centres on building team play, including concepts that young players should learn progressively. In many cases throughout this chapter, a distinction is made between 15/16-year-olds (cadets) and 17/18-year-olds (juniors), specifying the particular characteristics of the coach’s work with each age group. And, as in the first five chapters of the book, practical exercises are included to facilitate the study of the contents.

Overall, the book is an attempt to transmit a progressive working scheme for young players. During the mini-basketball stage, it is suggested that global standardised work be carried out with all of the children to help their physical and psychological development, making this a satisfying experience which will provide opportunities for the players to develop basketball fundamentals.

Later, with 13/14-year-olds, the work should continue to be predominantly
global and standardised, and at the same time, more detailed concerning the
development of the more basic fundamentals (passing, dribbling, etc.). During
this stage, multiple 1 on 1, 2 on 2, 3 on 3, 2 on 1, 3 on 2, etc. situations should
be practised in order to begin to develop the most basic tactical decisions, bear-
ing in mind the importance of strengthening the players’ self-confidence.

From the age of 15 onwards, work should be more analytical and individ-
ualised, taking into account what each player needs in order to continue pro-
gressing. At this stage, training time should be devoted to perfecting essential
details when performing basketball fundamentals. It is also important to work
more carefully on the development of tactical decision-making and to confront
progressive learning of team play, using more basic concepts with 15/16-year-
olds and more advanced ones with 17/18-year-olds.

This book is not a handbook that attempts to cover every aspect of bas-
ketball from the most elementary to the most complex, but rather a volume
intended for coaches who are already certified and who, therefore, have a tech-
nical understanding of the sport. With this in mind, the methodological ques-
tions which are considered the most relevant for working with young players
are explained, while looking more carefully at technical aspects that, although
very important, tend to receive less attention, emphasising the importance of
basketball fundamentals as well as specific training so that young players learn
to use these within the appropriate context.

Obviously, the purpose of the book is not to tell coaches exactly what they
have to do but to guide them by means of solidly based knowledge so that
each coach can then develop his/her own working methods.

With this aim, we have tried to keep the contents highly practical so that
coaches can apply them easily to their daily work. We have therefore included photographs, tables, practical examples and diagrams to complement the written text and to make it easier to understand. Some tables also include simple tools as examples to guide the coaches concerning the practical tools they can incorporate into their work when planning, scheduling, recording and assessing.

In short, this is meant to be a book to be studied, not skimmed, intended for coaches working with young players, both girls and boys. We hope that it will be useful for everyone studying it.

The book was edited by Jose María Buceta, following the guidelines drawn up by the working group chosen by FIBA for this project.
THE ROLE OF BASKETBALL IN THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNGSTERS

Jose María Buceta

1.1. RIGHTS OF YOUNG ATHLETES

1.2. HEALTH ENHANCEMENT THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF BASKETBALL

1.3. DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL VALUES
   - Commitment
   - Perseverance
   - Personal Responsibilities Within the Group
   - Team Work
   - Respecting the Rules
   - Respecting Others
   - Learning to Compete

1.4. DEVELOPMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL RESOURCES
   - Cognitive Development
   - Perception of Control
   - Self-Confidence
   - Self-Concept and Self-Esteem
   - Self-Control

1.5. POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

1.6. ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT
   - Mini-Basketball
   - 13-14 Year-Olds
   - 15-16 Year-Olds
   - 17-18 Year-Olds

1.7. COACHES’ WORKING STYLE
Children and teenagers who play mini-basketball or basketball may obtain multiple benefits from this experience; however, they can also experience problems that could do them harm. Basketball, like any other competitive sport, is a valuable tool in the educational process of young girls and boys but there are some requirements that must be taken into account, and it is the responsibility of organizers, parents and coaches to make sure that such requirements are met.

In this chapter, we will point out the purposes that basketball should have as part of the educational process of the young players, stressing the importance of the coach’s role within this process.

1.1. RIGHTS OF YOUNG ATHLETES

Coaches should not see their players as chessmen that they can move as they please. The young players are not the coach’s playthings. They are people: children and teenagers who have their rights, and the coach that works with these players should start by knowing, accepting and respecting such rights.

Nowadays numerous youth sport organisations acknowledge the following rights for young players:

- The right to participate in sports competitions.
- The right to participate in competitions whose level is suitable to the abilities of each child.
- The right to have a qualified coach.
- The right to play as a child or teenager and not as an adult.
- The right to take part in the making of decisions about their sports activity.
- The right to practise their activity in a safe and healthy environment.
- The right to receive appropriate preparation in order to be able to compete.
- The right to be treated with dignity.
- The right to have fun while practising sports.

1.2. HEALTH ENHANCEMENT THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF BASKETBALL

Health is one of the aspects in the growth of children that may be
enhanced through the practice of mini-basketball and basketball.

✓ Proper practice of mini-basketball and basketball contributes to the physical development of the players.

✓ It can also contribute to developing the healthy habit of practising sports.

✓ It provides the opportunity of developing healthy habits related to the practice of sports, which are basically: nutrition habits, hygiene habits and self-care habits.

However, one should be aware of the possible health risks that could be accentuated through the practice of basketball, in order to be able to prevent them.

• Inadequate planning may interfere negatively in the physical development of the players (for instance, a training strategy based on lifting weights as a means of developing strength may be damaging for players of mini-basketball).

• Inadequate planning may favour major or chronic injuries that in some cases may affect the physical development of young players.

• If the activity is very stressful or discouraging, it is very probable that the players will give up the practice of basketball, thus failing to take advantage of the benefits associated with this sport. Thus, it would also be more unlikely that the players consolidate the habit of doing physical exercise.

• In order to improve their performance and control the pain of their injuries, the players could end up taking doping substances, thus seriously harming their health. This behaviour could give rise to an addiction to drugs, given the high vulnerability of this young age.

Therefore, playing basketball alone, does not guarantee achievement of possible health advantages that can be provided by the practice of this sport. Only when done properly, guided by competent leaders and most of all by competent coaches, do mini-basketball and basketball
bring about positive effects. However, a lack of control on the part of the coach will increase the risk of negative results.

1.3. DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL VALUES

Basketball can contribute to the development of personal and social values that are very important in the educational process of the child and the teenager.

Commitment

Young players should get used to accepting and carrying out their commitments to others. A player must commit himself/herself to train certain days and to play some games during the weekends, and this commitment must be fulfilled even when the player, personally, does not feel like it. The commitment implies that sometimes the player will have to give up certain personal wishes and make certain sacrifices for the group. He/she will have to think about others and not just about himself/herself. He/she will have to develop the appropriate discipline that will enable him/her to carry out his/her obligations.

* For example: an eleven-year-old player does not feel like going to training and she does not go. Another of her mates does not feel like going either but she respects her commitment to her team and goes to training. Which of the two obtains more benefits from mini-basketball as an educational experience?

Nowadays, one of the most widespread problems in some countries is that of young people not carrying out their obligations because they behave following their personal short-term wishes. In this way, when they do not like something, they give up even if it is unfinished; when something turns out to be uncomfortable for them, they give it up; if something is too complex or requires a continuous effort, they do not do it.

Withdrawal and lack of accomplishment of projects that imply difficulties are two of the most serious effects of the lack of commitment. Mini-basketball and basketball teams are an excellent educational opportunity for children and teenagers to learn to accept and carry out obligations. This education can be relevant for their future as adults.

Perseverance
In life, it is very important to be persistent and basketball can help develop this quality: to be persistent, making the maximum effort.
* For example: John is a 14-year-old boy who gets enthusiastic about many things but soon gives up his projects because he is not persistent. On the other hand, his friend Nick, once he has started something, does not give it up and he always exerts himself in order to achieve his goals. Even when he is feeling down because things do not turn out the way he expected, Nick is able to follow through till he achieves his goal. Nick has played basketball since he was 10 years old and has learned to accept his commitments and to persevere.

The development of perseverance is especially important when the players go through hard times: if they make mistakes, play poorly, try things and do not obtain the results they wanted, etc… In their lives outside of sports, they also encounter adverse situations in which it is hard to persevere but basketball players can be prepared if this important aspect, perseverance, has been developed.

It is obvious that basketball can contribute to the development of perseverance if the coach working with young players rewards their continuous efforts regardless of their achievements, especially when they are going through hard times.

**Personal Responsibilities within the Group**

* A player has to defend 1 on 1 against an opponent. He must take on his personal responsibility in order to carry out his task successfully. The whole team relies on him. If the attacker succeeds in scoring the whole team suffers; if he does not score, then everyone benefits.

It is very important that young people learn to take on personal responsibilities for the benefit of the group. Basketball is an excellent school for developing this aspect.

Coaches should teach their players to take on personal responsibilities within the group as something reasonable that gives them pleasure and not as a heavy load, avoiding comments such as «you are responsible for our defeat»; «we rely on you to win this game». In this way, the coach is carrying out a relevant educational task that will be of great importance for the adult future of his/her players.

For this reason it is important that the players know what they have to do
and what is expected from them individually. The players have to understand the importance of their own contribution to the team. Equally important is the coach’s role in highlighting and reinforcing those lines of personal behaviour that are significant to the group, especially those that socially are less noticeable and are less emphasised.

* For example: in a team of boys between 15 and 16 years old, the coach emphasises the importance of blocking out the rebound in order to get hold of the ball, highlighting that it is a personal responsibility (each player must take on his own responsibility of blocking out an opponent) which will result in a favourable result for the whole team (getting the ball). Some players will undertake the task of blocking the rebound, allowing another teammate to catch the ball, and usually the credit will go to this one player but not to the others.

* The coach must reward those players who blocked out the rebound successfully if he wants them to continue taking on personal responsibility for the benefit of the group. In this way, he will help them to keep on behaving in that way and he will favour the performance of his team, but even more important is that he will contribute to developing this important aspect, accepting personal responsibility, in the personality of his players.
Practical Exercise

- Make a list with specific tasks that, in the same way as blocking out the rebound, can contribute to develop personal responsibilities for the benefit of the group.

Team Work

In relation to the above point, it is important for children and teenagers to learn to work as a team. Is there a better place to develop this quality than in a mini basketball team?

* The coach of a mini-basketball team organises a 2 on 2 drill. The offensive players cannot dribble, all they can do is pass the ball. They start at one of the base-lines and must cross to the other base-line controlling the ball. Logically, in order to do that, they must collaborate with each other.

This drill, like others of the same kind, teaches children about the importance of collaboration and team work. The games themselves are also very useful, because one player cannot win a game on his/her own. However, one does not learn to collaborate just by playing basketball (in fact many basketball players have not learned to work as a team) and that is why it is so important for the coach to highlight the importance of collaboration, and to organise the practice in a way that will encourage players to cooperate.

With this goal in mind, it would be very useful for the coach to keep track of the efficiency of the team in carrying out tasks that require players to collaborate; for instance: he/she may keep a record of the fast-breaks made by the team during the game.

Practical Exercise

- Make a list of collective tasks the efficiency of which could be registered in order to emphasise the importance of team work.
Respecting the Rules

Obviously, playing on a basketball team means having to respect several rules: internal duties, training rules and game rules. Thus, young people get used to not being able to do exactly what they want, but having to respect certain rules that foster their coexistence with others. This is one of the many valuable educational aspects of basketball as a competitive sport.

Respecting Others

We have previously mentioned that basketball is perfect for learning how to work as a team. Playing basketball is also a good way of learning to respect others: mates, opponents, coaches, directors, spectators and referees.

Young players must learn to respect individual differences within their own group, accepting and coexisting with teammates who, in some cases, may belong to a different social group, race, religion, ethnic group, country, city, etc... and who may have different ideas and ways. They will have to respect differences that come about while playing basketball, because some play better than others, some master certain skills better than others, some play longer than others, etc...

The everyday situations experienced by a basketball team, encourage players to become more respectful towards their teammates. They become more sociable. In fact, it is very common in basketball to bring together people that due to their differences may have been rivals in other contexts.

• The coach should promote mutual respect and an attitude of solidarity among the players of the team through his/her behaviour.

• The coach himself/herself must be a model, respecting all players in spite of their differences.

• The coach must promote a close relationship among all the players, because the more they know each other, the stronger their respect for each other.

* For example: the coach can encourage certain players to work together during training or seat them together on the
bus. He/she can also organise outside activities such as, for instance, a visit to the zoo, a trip, etc…

- The coach must also emphasise those norms of behaviour that promote respect and solidarity, eliminating those that promote the contrary.

* For example: the coach must reward those players who contribute integrating in the group those teammates who are different in some unfavourable way, and he/she must intervene when a player underrates another because he/she is different.

With regard to opponents (players belonging to opposing teams), it is obvious that the games offer the opportunity of fighting against another team in order to attain the same goal (a goal that can only be attained by one of the teams) while respecting the opponents as sportsmen and as people.

The coach must place special emphasis on his/her players being well-mannered towards their rivals: they should not insult them, they should help them to their feet if they fall down, they should speak to them once the game is over, congratulate them if they have won, etc… The coach must teach his/her players that their opponents are boys or girls of their age, that they are also playing mini-basketball or basketball, that they make efforts like them and that sporting rivalry must be friendly and cooperative.

Under no circumstances should the coach working with young players try to motivate his/her players by pitting them against their opponents, for instance making comments such as: «they have said we are a bunch of…», «last time they won because they were playing dirty», «they said that you are an idiot», etc…
This kind of strategy is *unethical* and it does not contribute to developing values as important as respecting one’s opponents.

A coach must not insult, ridicule or underrate an opponent team. On the contrary, being a model for his/her players, he/she must show the maximum respect towards any rival, regardless of his/her characteristics and of his/her level as a player.

* For example: in a mini-basketball game, one of the teams is superior to the other; in the third quarter the score is 35-2; the coach of the winning team must show respect towards the other team, avoiding comments that could be offensive.

Along the same lines, the coach must be a model in his/her behaviour towards the *referees*, thus encouraging his/her players to learn to respect them.

This is probably one of the educational aspects less developed in young basketball teams. For instance, it is often noticeable that coaches insult, underrate and ridicule referees, and that they blame defeats on referees’ decisions in front of their young players. This example, together with similar ones set by parents, makes it very difficult for children and teenagers to learn to respect the figure of the referee.

If this is the education that we are offering our children, how are they going to respect referees when they grow up? What kind of example will they set for their own children? What are the consequences if this lack of respect is transferred to other authority figures?

It is evident that the coach working with young players has enormous responsibility in this area of the educational process, and living up to this responsibility is essential if he/she wants to have a positive influence.

**Learning to Compete**

Life presents us with multiple competitive situations and we must be prepared to confront them. Competitive basketball is an excellent opportunity to learn to compete in a way that is both healthy and efficient, adopting a working method that can be very valuable for young players in and out of the sports life, and that can help them now and in the future.

All the values previously highlighted help young players to learn to compete. It is also important that they learn to accept in the same way victories and defeats, success and failure, good and bad performances, rights and wrongs.

For this reason, it is highly relevant to the teams of young players that they confront different experiences during the season: winning, losing, playing well, playing poorly, etc... and that these experiences be used to teach them
Test Exercise-1

- Answer the following questions by choosing one of the options, indicating to which degree you agree or disagree with the statement. Comments are at the end of the book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
<th>Partially agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Practising a sport is always beneficial to our health.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The injuries suffered by athletes are a matter of luck.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Playing in a basketball team can help players to develop healthy habits.</td>
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<td>4. Commitment is not good. Children should practise sports only when they please.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. The coach must help players to learn how to work as a team, accepting their personal responsibilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. It is important that players hate their rivals: «Rivals are only good when dead».</td>
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<td>7. If the referee makes an unfair decision, the coach must protest energetically so that his/her players can see that he/she is defending them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. When playing in a competition that the players cannot win, it is better to quit rather than fools out of themselves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. The coach must be a model, showing respect and solidarity to all his/her players, to the opponents and to the referees.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Basketball can be a very valuable learning experience for young players.</td>
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</table>
to confront *victories with moderation*, and *defeats with hope*.

Obviously, the players will be happier if they win than if they lose, showing that, like good competitors, they have tried their best in order to win. However, neither victory nor defeat should be highlighted by the coach. The coach should congratulate his/her players *for their effort*, regardless of whether they win or lose.

When the team has won, the coach must emphasise those actions that were correct (not because of results, but because of the behaviour of the players), and he/she must do the same when they have lost. Regardless of whether the team wins or loses, the coach must set new goals for the future, and use the experience to help players grow up.

**Summary**

Summing up, basketball can be a great school in which young players can learn how to compromise, how to persevere in their efforts, how to go on being persistent even when the situation is at its worst. Children and teenagers can learn to take on personal responsibilities for the benefit of the group, to work as a team, and to respect others. And furthermore, they must learn to accept victories and defeats as parts of the growing up process, without allowing these to stop them from pursuing the goals they have chosen.

Basketball is an excellent tool that coaches should know how to use for
the benefit of young players.
1.4. DEVELOPMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Apart from the values already mentioned, basketball can help young players, future adults, to acquire psychological resources that can be very useful, not only in basketball but also to their lives in general. The development of these resources can also be part of the growing up process of the children and teenagers that practise this sport.

Cognitive Development

First, mini-basketball (for the youngest) and basketball pose multiple situations that oblige young players to develop certain cognitive capacities.

Basketball players (mini-basketball players included) must learn to pay attention and to concentrate on different stimuli. Sometimes the stimulus is a single one, sometimes they have to focus on more than one stimuli at the same time, with more or less intensity, and for a longer or shorter amount of time. And depending on the situation, the players have to learn to change, increase, or decrease their attention at very precise moments. Not many activities provide children with this great opportunity of developing their attentional skills.

Likewise, basketball may help players to develop their skills of selecting and processing external information. From all the stimuli that they receive from their environment, they must select only those that are relevant and that can be associated with what they have already stored in their memory. And they must learn to make quick decisions too.

These cognitive processes: selection, association, storage, use of stored data, and decision-making can be developed better if the coach promotes them by making suitable demands depending on players’ capacity.

* For instance: if the coach of a mini-basketball team sets up a drill that demands from the players a great amount of attention (several stimuli at the same time), that may result in an information overload. This overload will complicate subsequent cognitive processes, and that will derive in deficiencies to the decision making process.

* Another example: if the coach of a team of girls between the ages of 13 and 14 wants her players to learn several new concepts at the same time, these concepts may not be associated and stored properly. In doing so she will not achieve her learning goal, and the cognitive efforts made by the players will not be worthwhile.
In the same way, if the stimuli offered by the coach are inadequate, this will not stimulate the appropriate cognitive processes of the young players.

* For example: monotonous practices that include unexciting drills, with contents that are too simple, without allowing the players to contribute with their own initiatives, do not lead to a better cognitive development of children and teenagers.

Perception of Control

People need to feel like they are in control of the things that concern them: that is, that they can work on them. This notion of control is the foundation of our self-confidence which constitutes a decisive aspect of our psychological strength.

On the opposite side of control is helplessness. A helpless person feels like he/she cannot work on the things that concern him/her, and as a result he/she comes to the conclusion that whatever he/she does, nothing comes as a result of his/her actions.

Cases of helplessness can be found in many children and teenagers. Helplessness prevents them from believing in themselves, making them suffer. Feeling helpless when involved in an activity leads to discouragement related to that activity and even undermines the self-esteem.

Therefore, when working with children and teenagers, whatever the field, it is very important to develop this notion of control instead of allowing them to feel helpless.

Lack of confidence, which is normal in children and teenagers, may be relieved by setting up situations of control instead of increased through setting up situations of helplessness.

Children and teenagers need to experience situations of control to believe
in themselves and become psychologically stronger. Basketball provides many opportunities for this kind of situations, although if they are badly used they can cause helplessness.

* For example: in a 1 on 1 drill the players can feel like they are in control of the situation using those abilities that they already master, or they may feel that they can control the situation by improving certain aspects. However, they may also feel helpless when they see that no matter what they do, they cannot control the demands of the drill.

If a coach proposes a drill with an appropriate level of difficulty and if the players know what they have to do, then the players will feel in control of the drill. On the other hand, if the difficulty of the drill exceeds their possibilities, they will feel helpless.

Unfortunately, many young players feel helpless because they cannot do as much as it is expected from them, or because they have not been told exactly what it is that they have to do.

* For example: László is 13 years old and he plays on his school team. In one of the games he made a shot and missed; his coach told him from the bench: «László, do not shoot so soon, the ball should move around a bit more». In another move, László was free close to the basket and instead of shooting he passed the ball to one of his mates, and that time the coach shouted: «László, shoot!». On a third occasion, the same thing happened but this time László shot and unfortunately he failed again. His coach criticised him once more: «László, how could you miss?, If you have no intention of scoring you should not shoot!».

László felt helpless, because he did not know how to react; he probably felt that it was impossible to do it right and please his coach. From that moment on he held himself back as much as he could and made only those decisions that implied fewer risks and where mistakes would be less noticeable.

**Measures to Improve Control**

All coaches, and especially those who instruct young players, must help their players to feel like they are in control rather than to feel helpless. With this in mind, they should consider measures such as the following:
Coaches should train players to increase their basketball skills, so that they will have more resources to control the requirements of basketball.

Coaches should establish attainable goals based on the level of their players.

They should introduce drills that their players can control.

Coaches should establish attainable goals based on the level of their players.

They should explain to their players what they are supposed to do, what their tasks are, and require that they perform only the assigned tasks.

The players should play games against rivals whose level is similar to theirs, so that they confront situations that they feel they can control. Even if the team has to play different kinds of games, against rivals that are superior or inferior to them, the coach should make sure that there are enough games in which players can control the demands.

Coaches should highlight the players’ actions rather than the results they obtain. When certain results stand out or need to be highlighted, they should be related to specific actions. By doing this, the coach will encourage in his/her players the capacity to see the relation between their actions and the results obtained, thus reinforcing their perception of control.

* For example: the team has won a game and the players are all very happy with this result. The coach should take advantage of this opportunity to relate the result obtained with the specific actions on the part of the players that could be repeated. In this way, the players will understand that they have the resources to control the demands of the game and thus obtain the results they want.

It is also important for the coach to continuously emphasise efforts made by the players in order to obtain results. Therefore, if the actions that are highlighted are those that mainly require a remarkable effort (running, blocking out the rebound, anticipating or helping in defense, etc…) it
would be enough to relate them to the results obtained. However, if the actions to be highlighted are those that mainly require accuracy (passing, dribbling, shooting, etc…) then, the coach should focus on efforts made to master those skills and to obtain the results:

* For example: «we have won this game (result) thanks to our defense moves (actions that mainly require an effort and that must be specified) and to the scores that we have obtained when playing 1 on 1 (accuracy skills). You have improved enormously on the 1 on 1. You have made a great effort during practices. When we do the drills you are very concentrated on what you are doing. You all work very hard (the coach focuses on the efforts that go into the mastering of accuracy skills) and this work makes it possible for you to make so many points when playing 1 on 1».

• The coach must appreciate the players’ decisions based on the circumstances that are present at the time when the decisions are being taken, and not based on the results.

* For example: a player is free close to the basket, and she has been told by her coach that this is a good opportunity to shoot. If the player decides to shoot, the coach should evaluate this decision in a positive way regardless of the result; that is, even if she does not score that time. This way, the player will feel in control of this situation and will know what to do on future occasions.

In the educational development of children and teenagers who play mini-basketball or basketball, developing their perception of control is of great importance. The players should understand that they can learn to control the things that concern them if they work on it. Developing this aspect is very important for young people, since they will feel more secure and more competent in any field of their lives.

Experiencing situations of control stimulates the players’ performance and is very rewarding. If basketball continues providing them with this kind of experience, it is more probable that the children continue practis-
Practical Exercise

- Make a list of the things that you, as a coach, can do to develop the perception of control in your players.

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is closely related to the perception of control. Self-confidence is the trust that the players have in their own resources to be able to achieve a certain goal.

However, self-confidence does not mean that one has to be confident «just because», or because «that is how one should be». The issue is not to make comments like «we are going to win for sure», «we are a bunch of winners», or «we cannot even think of losing», or pretend that one is sure of the victory by saying things like: «come on kids, we will recover in the second round».

Being confident is an inner process that implies having a real sense of both the difficulties of the result we want to achieve, and of our own resources to achieve it. Keeping all this in mind, one should base his/her confidence on the real chances that exist of obtaining the desired results.

Therefore, a player with self-confidence, in contrast to one that does not have it, knows approximately what his/her chances are, and what actions he/she must perform to make those possibilities come true. He/she also knows the difficulties that could prevent him/her from achieving the desired objective, and the actions that, in such cases, he/she should perform in order to neutralise those difficulties.

Self-confidence grows if the player feels that he/she is efficient when controlling the demands of practices and games.

Developing the self-confidence of the young players is very important for
their education as basketball players and as future adults.

- As a player, because self-confidence is the key to their progress. It will enable them to satisfactorily face the most stressful situations during games, and to keep on playing with the hope of achieving ambitious goals.
- As a person, because to be confident in ourselves helps us to face life with all its demands, and contributes to improving our self-concept and our self-esteem.

**General and Specific Self-Confidence**

A person’s self-confidence is not the same in every aspect of his/her life; for example, a boy may have more confidence while playing basketball than while studying mathematics. However, by reinforcing one’s self-confidence in a relevant aspect of one’s life (for example, basketball) this self-confidence may spread to other areas through the development of an objective way of functioning that includes the following elements:

- The realistic analysis of both the situations that need to be faced, and the person’s own resources to do so.
- Setting realistic goals and realistic plans to achieve those goals. This will lead to adequate expectations of one’s performance.
- Emphasis and control of one’s own behaviour, above all those things that do not depend on one’s own actions.
- The objective and constructive evaluation of one’s own experiences, thus controlling both success and failure to strengthen self-confidence.

We could make a distinction between specific self-confidence that works in specific situations, and more general self-confidence that would show the level of confidence in one’s own resources in any situation, known or unknown.

Good management of the practice of sports can help to improve the self-confidence that is specifically related to sports, so that athletes believe in their own resources when having to face the demands of practices and games.

Moreover, sports can contribute to developing an objective way of doing things that may not only help players to strengthen their specific self-confidence, but also stimulates their self-confidence in other areas of performance.
Thus, through the practice of basketball, young players can strengthen a psychological resource of great importance for the development of children and teenagers.

This matter is of special importance if we take into consideration that often children and teenagers have little confidence in themselves to confront challenges. These girls and boys, can improve their self-confidence and become psychologically stronger, thanks to basketball.

Controlled Success and Controlled Failure

In order to improve the self-confidence of children and teenagers, basketball should provide situations of control (see above). Good results as well as bad ones (that is, achieving or not achieving the established goals) may contribute to the perception of control if the activities are adequately presented and conducted.

- **«Controlled Success»** may take place whenever good results are obtained (when players accomplish their goals) and players associate those results with their own controlled resources.

- On the other hand, **«Controlled Failure»** takes place when the results are not the ones players wanted to obtain (they do not accomplish their goals) but the players still feel that they have controlled the process in trying to attain those results. In this case, they will learn from their experience of failure and they will apply this knowledge to future games.

The experiences of «controlled success» constitute the achievement of goals that were previously set thanks to players’ own contribution, producing balance between previous expectations and accomplishments that will strengthen players’ self-confidence.

The experiences of «controlled failure» contribute to developing tolerance to frustration and the capacity to react and persevere when confronting adverse situations. In these cases, subsequent success will help players to
learn to believe in themselves when they do not obtain the desired results and must continue to seek future results.

In consequence, alternating controlled success with controlled failure seems to be the most appropriate thing to do during the process of developing the self-confidence of the young players (that is, they should experience both), although it would be better for players to experience more success than failure, and also, that failure not be too far from the desired goal (in other words, even if they do not achieve their goal, players should be as close as possible to it).

To sum up, the procedure to obtain controlled success and controlled failure to improve self-confidence, should include the following features:

- Organise adequate competitive activities both in practices and in games (for example: competitive games that present attainable challenges, games against teams of a similar level).
- Set appealing goals that are also realistic, based on players’ performance (their own actions) and not on the results obtained on the game.
- Elaborate plans that are adequate for achieving the goals that have been set, focusing on players’ own personal efforts to achieve the goals.
- Use the correct criteria (criteria that is understood by the players) when deciding if the goals set have been attained or not.
- Analyse performance in an objective and constructive way, based on the criteria previously agreed upon.
- Do not judge the performance of the players according to results that can be due to other factors.
- Coaches should not reach general conclusions based on isolated experiences that have impressed them (for example: they should not arrive to the conclusion that the team has played poorly just because the game was lost in the last play).
- Avoid judging the players’ performance when the emotions are intense (for example: at the end of a game in which both teams ended up with very close scores).
As we can see, the way in which the performance of the players is evaluated constitutes a crucial element in the development and strengthening of self-confidence.

A general evaluation, that is ambiguous and arbitrary, based on criteria that are not known or are unclear, will have negative results. If the criteria used to evaluate do not correspond to the goals previously agreed upon, it will be very difficult to establish the precise relation between actions and outcome. This would create a damaging state of helplessness instead of perception of control that contributes to strengthen the self-confidence.

Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

Self-concept refers to the opinion that a person has of himself/herself; and self-esteem shows the extent to which that person likes that opinion.

In both cases, it is a global evaluation that is not specifically related to any activity in particular, but linked to the data that each person has processed about himself/herself, with those aspects that each person considers more significant in his/her life the most important.

With regard to children and teenagers, self-concept and self-esteem are very unstable values that fluctuate easily. Sometimes, self-concept and self-esteem change depending on their experiencing success or failure in certain aspects that for them are very important, for example basketball. In fact, the global evaluations that many young players make of themselves often depend on these experiences. Therefore, basketball experiences may affect young players’ self-concept and self-esteem.

In order to better understand the relevance of this issue, we will differentiate between three groups of young players, according to their level of self-concept and self-esteem.

In this first group are those players with adequate self-concept and self-esteem that do not depend upon their success in sports.

In these cases, the situation should be maintained, strengthening the players’ self-confidence and preventing them from associating their success in sports with their worth as people.
Nevertheless, coaches should pay special attention to those teenagers (from the age of 13) in whose lives basketball plays a major role (especially outstanding players who play in more important teams). In cases like these, it is possible that other sources of gratification, outside of basketball, may disappear, and many young players will be unable to put basketball into perspective and controlling success or failure correctly.

These players become especially vulnerable when associating their self-concept and self-esteem with their success or failure in sports. Under these conditions, basketball will turn out to be a very stressful activity that may harm the performance, health and development of these young people.
Test Exercise-2

- Answer the following questions by choosing one of the options, indicating to which degree you agree or disagree with the statement. Comments are at the end of the book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
<th>Partially agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The coach can not do anything to improve the psychological resources of his/her players.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Introducing adequate training drills may contribute positively to the cognitive development of young players.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Monotonous practices are the most appropriate for developing the attentional skills of the players.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. In order to develop a notion of control in young players, it is advisable for the coach to associate the results obtained with the actions of his/her players.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Controlled Success situations are those in which the players succeed just in those games in which they wanted to succeed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Controlled Failure situations may help improve Self-confidence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. The coach who carefully explains to his/her players what they have to do helps to develop the perception of control in his/her players.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. The coach who sets challenges that his/her players can attain, stimulates players' self-confidence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Self-concept and self-esteem should depend on success in sports, because young players will be more motivated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. The coach’s comments to his/her young players may have a great influence on both their self-concept and their self-esteem.</td>
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</table>
For example: Karl is 15 years old, and he has just joined the cadet team of a big club. Now, all he cares about is succeeding as a player. If he does not, he will feel like a failure. Karl is demanding a lot of himself and he is under a lot of pressure. Any negative comment from his coach affects him a great deal. His mistakes both during practice and games affect him enormously. In general he suffers a lot, and he does not enjoy himself anymore. Each game is to him a distressing test to prove himself. Karl is not playing as well as he can, and things are getting worse. Lately he has had two injuries that have prevented him from playing in several games. He is feeling very depressed and is considering quitting.

This case illustrates the experience of many adolescents who play basketball. They end up identifying their self-concept and self-esteem with their success or failure as athletes, and that can be extremely harmful.

The young players belonging to the second group are in a similar situation to the ones mentioned above. Their self-concept and self-esteem are characteristic of their age, but they depend too much on their success as athletes.

This situation makes them weak, and it is very probable that when going through hard times in their sports career they will suffer low points in their self-concept and self-esteem that will affect them negatively.

Furthermore, in cases like Karl’s, the risk of this happening turns practices and games into even more stressfull experiences, because young players are not only risking their performance as players, they are also risking their self-concept and their self-esteem.

In these cases coaches should try to approach the situation by clearly differentiating the sports success from the personal evaluation that the player may make of himself/herself. In order to do this coaches should act in two ways:

- On the one hand, highlighting those aspects in the life of the player, apart from basketball, that deserve notice.
- On the other hand, encouraging the players’ perception of con-
control over sports experiences in order to strengthen their self-confidence, preventing them from perceiving uncontrolled failure that could provoke a serious crisis to their self-concept and self-esteem.

The third group is made up of those young players with weak self-concept and self-esteem who could use the experience of basketball to mitigate the problem. In these cases, basketball can contribute to improving the self-confidence of these young players, (see the previous section on self-confidence) and thus their self-concept and self-esteem, although these two should not be associated to their success as basketball players, but to their efforts and their control of the situation in order to achieve such success.

**The Influence of Coaches**

The relationship between coaches and young players may have a decisive influence on the players’ self-concept and self-esteem. Thus, the coach’s behaviour in relation to players is crucial.

* For example: a coach may have a negative influence if he/she insults his/her players («are you an idiot?»); if he/she underrates them («are you making a fool of yourself as usual?»); making fun of them in front of their teammates («kid, the basket isn’t across the street!»); scolding them without an explanation or without giving them the opportunity to rectify in the future («you never get it right!, you make nothing but mistakes!»); or using expressions that could compare their worth as athletes to their worth as people («you can’t do anything right!, you’re a mess!»).

However, coaches have a positive influence by avoiding such behaviour, and applying the following strategies instead:
• Defining with clarity and precision the goals that the players must achieve.

• Helping players to achieve such goals and reinforcing them for their good actions.

• Differentiating actions that have to do with players’ athletic performance by referring to them specifically.

• Correcting players constructively, pointing out what they do wrong while making them understand where they make mistakes, and providing them with the opportunity to rectify.
Self-Control

For a basketball player it is very important to develop self-control: being able to control his/her impulsiveness and in general his/her actions in order to be prepared and give the best performance.

Basketball provides many situations in which the players must learn to control themselves. Let us think for instance about the adverse decision taken by a referee, about a mistake that must be corrected promptly, about the wrong actions of a teammate, or when a player goes to the bench.

* Helena is 11 years old and she loves mini-basketball. She is on one of her school’s teams. She trains two days during the week and plays on Saturdays. Helena is very involved and tries to do her best. That is why she wants her teammates to take it as seriously as she does. On several occasions, when a teammate has made a mistake she has got mad at her and has scolded her aggressively.

   Her coach has explained to her that she should not behave in that way, and Helena has made an effort to control herself. Now, every time one of her mates makes a mistake, instead of scolding them she either cheers them up or simply ignores them. She concentrates more on what she has to do. Her mother has said that she also seems less impulsive in other ways.

* Mario also plays mini-basketball. One day he complained to a referee because he had pointed out a personal foul that, according to Mario, did not exist. His coach did not allow him to play on the next game, explaining to Mario that his lack of self-control was the reason for this punishment. Since then Mario is capable of controlling himself.

These examples show the opportunities that mini-basketball and basketball provide to young players to learn to control themselves.

As in these cases, the opportunities must be properly used in order to profit from them, and for this purpose, the role played by the coach is of great relevance. In these examples, the coaches of Helena and Mario have made very good use of the opportunities, but in similar cases many coaches waste them.

The coach working with young players must be always alert in order to take advantage of those opportunities that might be of use in helping his/her players to improve their ability to control themselves.
1.5. POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

We have previously seen that basketball provides excellent opportunities to improve personal and social values and to enrich the psychological resources of young players. Likewise, because it provides players with positive experiences on a daily basis, basketball may be a very rewarding experience.

Positive rewarding experiences are important for everyone. In the case of children and teenagers, basketball may be one of the sources that provide them with more positive experiences. If the positive experiences surpass the negative ones, then it will be more likely that players keep on playing and obtaining more benefits from the practice of sports.

Positive experiences should occur every day through aspects such as the following:

- fun;
- skills mastery;
- achievement of appealing goals;
- social recognition from coaches and teammates;
- rewarding inner experiences (positive feelings, personal satisfaction, pride);
- feeling social support from coaches and teammates.
1.6. ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

Logically, one of the aims of the teams of young players is the athletic development of the players so that they eventually can become good élite basketball players.

However, this goal must be placed within the scope of overall development (not only athletic) as described in this chapter.

- First, because the great majority of young players of mini-basketball and basketball do not become élite basketball players. They can, nevertheless, benefit themselves as people while playing this sport for a longer or shorter amount of time. In this way, *basketball contributes to a better society*, with men and women who are better prepare to confront life with efficiency, with health and with a more tolerant and cooperative spirit.

- Second, because mini-basketball and basketball for young players must try to educate future coaches, referees, leaders, parents, sports journalists, experts in the sports sciences, spectators, etc… In the future, if all of them or at least the majority have been players of mini-basketball or basketball, and if their experiences have been positive ones, it is clear that basketball will benefit from it, and in that way we will be assured of having future generations of people associated with sport who are better educated.

- Third, because if we follow a work plan that stimulates players’ development physically, technically and psychologically, there would be more players who could become élite basketball players. By treating young players correctly while they are learning, we would avoid losing players whose level of performance could reach very high standards.

- Fourth, because those who become élite players, should not be «survivors» who «have made it after all», but players who are better prepared in every aspect, thus raising the human and athletic level of those working in professional basketball.
In general, it is important not to hurry things, letting young players follow their own path, channelling their sports formation progressively.

**Mini-Basketball Players**

Coaches must understand that some children improve faster than others, and should try to adapt themselves to this circumstance, treating each child like a «tailor» who is sewing «tailor made suits».

Coaches must follow a general working plan with all the children of their teams, but they must respect the individuality of each player; that is, making demands according to their characteristics, and helping each of them to develop their own talents.

At these ages, perfecting basketball fundamentals is not very important. It is enough for the players to know the most basic and to start mastering them.

Players should feel the need to satisfy the demands which appear when playing the game. They must develop the initiative of using basketball fundamentals even if they make mistakes. And they should have a reasonable number of positive experiences that will make them want to keep on playing.

Daily fun and the personal initiative of players are very important aspects to take into account when coaching mini-basketball.

**13-14 Year-Olds**

The coach of players of ages between 13 and 14 must realise that even if some of the players appear to be physically bigger, they are still young teenagers.

At this age they are going through a stage of great emotional vulnerability in which they need to vindicate themselves (for example: they would be inclined to abandon if they feel like they are not in con-
trol). Furthermore, many of these players are getting used to playing basket-
ball after having practised mini-basketball, which might make them feel inse-
cure and less competent than in previous years.

Coaches of these players must help them to adapt themselves progressi-
vively to this higher level of requirements. Coaches must go into more depth 
concerning the development of technical fundamentals and individual tacti-
cal decisions (the decisions taken on the 1 on 1, 2 on 2, 3 on 3, etc.).

However, they should try not to go too fast, because the players need to 
assimilate what they are learning, and they need to feel safe obtaining the 
reward of being in control.

At these ages, it is important not to limit the players. On the contrary, 
coaches should improve the possibilities of obtaining better results in the 
future by allowing players to do any kind of task (for example: they should 
all be able to fastbreak in any position).

The players will probably make many mistakes when doing things that 
they do not master, but the coach must try his/her best and combine those 
demands that they are weaker at with those that they already master so that 
they can get some satisfaction out of it.

While working with children of these ages, coaches must set up multiple 
situations that players can control and that will improve their self-confidence.

15-16 Year-Olds

When working with teams of 15-
16 year-olds coaches should maintain 
an overall perspec-
tive of the formative process of the 
players, but they 
should measure 
with a greater 
detail the particu-
lar needs of each 
player: what is 
he/she missing? 
what aspects 
should we work 
on to improve his/her 
resources?

At these ages,
**Test Exercise-3**

*Based on the information provided in this chapter, answer whether the following questions are True or False. The correct answers are at the end of the book.*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The attainment of attractive challenges is a positive experience that must predominate in the activities of young players.</td>
<td>True False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The players must know how to control themselves; if they do not succeed this time they will later.</td>
<td>True False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Having fun is a positive experience that must be taken into account only for mini-basketball teams.</td>
<td>True False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Young players must specialise as soon as possible in order to become part of the élite.</td>
<td>True False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The coach working with young players must imitate those coaches who coach professional teams, because they are the best coaches.</td>
<td>True False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In the teams of young players it is important that the coach should provoke many situations of control.</td>
<td>True False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The coach working with young players must treat all players with dignity and respect.</td>
<td>True False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The coach is a basketball technician, and his/her only goal is that of coaching basketball, because teachers and parents already take care of players’ education.</td>
<td>True False</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PLANNING BASKETBALL ACTIVITIES

Jose María Buceta

2.1. STARTING OUT
- What are my Responsibilities?
- What should the General Aims of this team be?

2.2. ORGANISING THE TEAM
- The Players
- The Players’ Obligations
- Internal Working Rules
- Resources Available

2.3. PLANNING ACTIVITIES
- How Far Ahead to Plan
- Periodisation

2.4. SETTING GOALS
- Outcome Goals and Performance Goals
- Advantages of Performance Goals
- Characteristics of Efficient Goals
- Choosing the Most Appropriate Goals

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2.7. PSYCHOLOGICAL LOAD
- Characteristics of the Psychological Load
- Deficient Psychological Load
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2.8. CONCERNING GAMES
- Mini-Basketball Teams
- 13/14 Year-Old Teams
- 15/18 Year-Old Teams
- Points to Consider

2.9. SCHEDULING
2.1. STARTING OUT

What team am I going to coach?

This is a key question that every coach should ask himself/herself before starting, using the following questions as a guideline:

- Is it a mini-basketball team? A children’s team? Is it a team up of promising young players? Is it a first-class élite team?
- What sort of organisation does the team belong to? Is it a school team? A club team? What sort of school or club?
- How good are the players? How long have they been playing? What is their potential?

The answer to these kinds of questions will help the coach to situate himself/herself within the corresponding context, thus avoiding errors that arise from not having a clear idea of the type of team he/she is coaching.

What are my Responsibilities?

Once the coach understands the type of team he/she will be coaching, he/she should ask himself/herself, «What are my responsibilities? Should I be contributing to the players’ overall development? Should I focus on helping them improve as players and as people? Should I be aiming to help them do their best in the short run? Which of these aspects are most important?».

Obviously, a coach who is training young players should assume the responsibility of contributing to his/her players’ overall development both in sports and human terms. He/she should never play at being an élite coach, interested only in short-term achievements.

What should the General Aims of this team be?

Taking into account all of the above, choaches should decide on their team’s general objectives.

* For example: let’s look at a coach training a mini-basketball school team. Some of the players will never have played before; some will have been playing for a year; in general, their level will be low. Such a coach’s main priority will be to contribute to the development of these children as people. His/her general aims could be that the children enjoy themselves, that they improve their physical development, teaching them certain values (such as team work, respect for others, etc.), while at the same time working on overall improvement of basketball fundamentals (dribbling, passing, etc.).
Practical Exercise

- Think about the sort of team you are training, what your responsibilities are and what the general objectives of your team could be.

2.2. ORGANISING THE TEAM

The next step is to organise the team. How many players are there on the team? What will their obligations be? What internal working rules will be established? What resources are available (facilities, baskets, balls, etc.).

The Players

This will depend on the number available and the maximum number allowed in each case. However, if we are talking about young players, the coach should bear in mind the following:

- anyone interested should be allowed to play; if necessary, two or more teams can be formed so that everyone has a chance;
- there should be enough players per team to allow the activities to be carried out in the right conditions, but not so many as to make it difficult for all the players to participate;
- the level of all the players on one team should be similar. This is much more beneficial for all the players than including players of different levels on one team;
- if possible, mini-basketball teams (and sometimes teams made up of 13/14-year-olds) should be made up of players who already share other activities (for example, children from the same class who usually play together, etc.).

The Players’ Obligations

Coaches should think about their players’ obligations and ultimately decide which ones they consider most important. During which months is the activity carried out? How many days a week will the team train? How many games will be played? Are the games to be held on weekends? Will the players have to travel? And so forth.
These are key considerations because in many cases, the players’ obligations are not made sufficiently clear or the coach establishes obligations that all or some of the players are not willing to fulfill. Sooner or later this will create a serious problem that will affect the way the team works.

The coach should establish obligations suitable to the team he/she is training rather than others that may perhaps be more appropriate for another type of team but not for his/hers.

**Practical Exercise**
- Considering the type of team you are training, think about what type of obligations would be reasonable for them.

One of the aspects of sports that is most important for achieving formative objectives when working with young athletes is that they accept and fulfill their commitments. The conditions of the commitment should be reasonable, based on the players’ age and other characteristics, but the most important thing is that, to a greater or lesser degree, the athlete makes a commitment and fulfills it.
For this reason, it is not appropriate to organise a team in which the players will train or play only when they feel like it or when they have nothing better to do. Neither should unrealistic obligations be established that cannot be met.

In many cases, it would be a good idea for the coach to talk with the players, involving them in the decisions to be made concerning the obligations they are to accept. *If the coach and the players decide on this together, the players will feel more committed.*

However, it is true that the coach can establish minimum obligations he/she considers essential, especially with teams made up of 13/14-year-olds and even more so with 15/18-year-olds. If, for example, he/she feels that the team should train at least three days a week and if he/she considers this feasible, he/she should propose this to the players and, as the case may be, to their parents, explaining his/her reasons, his/her purpose being that the players commit themselves to training on the days specified.

**Practical Exercise**

- Bearing in mind how important it is for the players to make a firm commitment to the team and to fulfill this commitment, think again about the obligations that would be appropriate for your players.

**Internal Working Rules**

Working rules are a key element in the organisation of a team. As with the players’ obligations, it is advisable that these rules be *few and very precise*; they should be *clearly defined* and should not give rise to doubts, arbitrary interpretation or conflictive situations when applied. Obviously they should be suited to the circumstances and level required of each team, keeping in mind the level of commitment undertaken by the players or the level that can be reasonably expected of them.

* For example: certain working rules can be established such as being ready to start the practice at the time agreed to, arriving one hour before the game properly dressed, taking turns collecting the balls at the end of the practice, etc.

Rules can also be set up for mini-basketball teams, related to participation in games. For example, a rotation system can be established so that all the children will play a minimum number of games throughout the season.
For these teams, it could also be appropriate to establish rules regulating the parents’ behaviour, explaining the reasons behind these. For example, they should not tell the children what to do during games or sit on the bench with the team.

**Practical Exercise**

- Decide which working rules you consider most appropriate, keeping in mind the characteristics of your team.

**Resources Available**

The coach should know what resources he/she has available (courts, balls, hoops, etc.) in order to make the best use of these, using his/her imagination to make up for shortages.

First of all, coaches should take advantage of all available resources. For example, if there are four hoops, it would be a good idea to use all four of them rather than just two.

Secondly, it is often the case when training young players that the resources are limited (few balls, little court time, only half a court available, outdoor courts, etc.). For these reasons, coaches in these categories have to use their imagination in order to make up for these deficiencies.

* For example: if only a few balls are available, circuits can be organised for different types of drills, combining drills with and without the ball, attempting to make drills performed without the ball especially interesting. Coaches should never simply resign themselves to a limited situation by lining up all the players in a long line to wait until they finally have a turn with the ball.

* This is the time to explore what other possibilities are available to make up for the lack of resources. For example, the team may only have the use of one court with two hoops two days a week. The coach could consider the possibility of training a third day on a field without hoops, taking advantage of this session to do drills that do not require them.
The fewer the resources available to the coach, the more important it is for him/her to look for and find imaginative solutions to make up for it. A coach who resigns himself/herself to working with insufficient resources will not be a good coach for young players.

Practical Exercise

- Think about the resources you have available and about how you can make up for any limitations or shortages.

2.3. PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Planning activities (practice sessions and games) is an essential aspect of a coach’s job.

Coaches who do not plan ahead tend to drift. At the beginning of the season, they are full of excitement, energy and «confidence», they have «great ideas» and they want to do many things at the same time. However, as they move further into the season, their excitement, energy and confidence wanes, they run out of new ideas and the practice sessions become routine and less beneficial.

Whenever there is an important game, they tend to once again feel their initial motivation and once again want the players to learn many things at once, correcting every error in just a few training sessions.

When the competition is even, the coach who has not thought ahead lives from day to day, thinking only of the next game and forgetting to carry out the work needed for his/her players to really progress.
On the other hand, if a coach maps out his/her work he/she will have a useful overall perspective that will help him/her to objectively evaluate which aspects are most important. From this perspective, coaches can make the right decisions and better organise the work that their team should perform.

Thanks to their planning, coaches find they have a goal and a clear idea of how to attain it; they know exactly where they want to go, the path they should follow and how to follow it, the problems they will encounter and how to overcome them.

**How Far Ahead to Plan**

A coach may plan for the long-term, medium-term and short-term, for several years, one season, from one to several months, for one or several weeks and, of course, each training session.

In a club made up of teams of different categories, it could be a good idea to make up a flexible, overall plan, covering several years for younger players (mini-basketball stage) and another or others for the older players (13 years old and up). This way, the work of each team’s coach will be defined within a general outline that will make more overall sense.

Whether or not a coach carries out this long-term planning system, anyone coaching young players should keep in mind what their possible course may be in the future so as not to lose sight of what their daily work should be.

**Periodisation**

Usually mini-basketball and basketball coaches work with their teams for a season that lasts anywhere from six to ten months. Therefore, they should plan for this amount of time, known as a *macrocycle* or *cycle*.

Then, depending upon the specific circumstances of their team and the activities initially foreseen, they should divide the season into shorter periods defined by specific characteristics. These periods are called *mesocycles*.

Later, coaches can consider one- or two-week blocks within each mesocycle. These are called *microcycles*.

And finally, they should consider the unit that represents each *practice session*.

Each of these periods (the season’s macrocycle, mesocycles, microcycles and individual training sessions) should be planned for in advance by the coach. Obviously, the outline for the longer periods should be more general and flexible in outlook than the more limited short-term periods.

In other words, the plan for the season will be more general than the plan carried out for each mesocycle, microcycle and training session. The plan...
Table 1. Example of periods across the season. The macrocycle is the whole season from September to May. There are five mesocycles, each divided into microcycles of one or two weeks.
covering a mesocycle will be more general than that covering the microcycles and training sessions. And the plan for each microcycle will be more general than that covering each training session.

Therefore, the specific plan outlined for each training session should be situated within the more general context of a microcycle, which in turn should be situated within the even more general context of a mesocycle, situated within the yet more general context of a full season.

In this way, coaches will be able to make each drill performed by their young players contribute more thoroughly to the overall goals of their improvement as athletes and their human development.

Practical Exercise

- Think about the team you are coaching right now (or the last team you coached) and define the mesocycles into which the macrocycle of the entire season can be divided.

2.4. SETTING GOALS

This way, by looking first of all at the more extensive period (the entire season) and then at each of the remaining periods (mesocycles, microcycles and individual training sessions), the first thing a coach should do is decide what goals his/her team should meet both collectively and individually within that period.

- What should our goals be as a team, this season? Within this mesocycle? Within this microcycle? Within this training session?
- What should each player’s goals be for this season? For this mesocycle? For this microcycle? For this training session?

The goals are the ones that the team and the individual players should achieve throughout the course of the season, thus defining the course of the coach’s work.

Outcome Goals and Performance Goals

In order to establish the goals for each period of the season, the coach should make a distinction between outcome goals and performance goals.
**Outcome goals** refer to collective or individual *results*, such as for example, winning the league, obtaining more points or reducing the number of personal fouls. These goals may be divided into two types:

- *intra-subject* or *intra-group outcome goals.* This refers to a player’s or the team’s results with respect to himself/herself or itself such as, for example, the number of points made by a player (intra-subject) or the number of points made by the team (intra-group)

- *inter-subject* or *inter-group outcome goals.* This refers to a player’s or the team’s results with respect to other players or other teams such as, for example, being on the starting line-up (inter-subject) or winning a game (inter-group)

**Performance goals** include team or individual *behaviour,* the way the players should behave in order to achieve the desired results. For example, improving a chest pass, dominating two-step stops, shooting more often from specific positions on the court, blocking defensive rebounds or playing with the low post.

Fulfilling performance goals does not guarantee outcome results but does increase the probability of achieving the latter and is the only possible controlled route for achieving them.

* For example: shooting more often from ideal positions (performance goal) does not guarantee that more points will be made (outcome goal), but does increase the probability of making more points, and only by shooting more often from these positions will the player be able to control how to make more points.

In general, outcome goals work better at enhancing the players’ interest, but performance goals are better at helping the players to understand that they can control the situations with which they are faced.

Both types of goals guide the coach’s work and help to strengthen the players’ motivation but outcome goals, especially inter-subject or inter-group outcome goals, can be very stressful (and therefore negative) for younger players.

In general, it is advisable to combine both types of goals depending on the players’ age group, keeping in mind the following:

- *inter-subject and inter-group outcome goals* are advisable basically for teams made up of 15/18-year-olds and, to a lesser extent, for teams made up of 13/14-year-olds. They are not advisable for mini-basketball teams.
• **intra-subject and intra-group outcome goals** are advisable for teams made up of 15/18-year-olds and 13/14-year-olds, and sometimes for older mini-basketball teams (10/12-year-olds).

• **individual and collective performance goals** are highly recommended for all teams.

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**Practical Exercises**

- Make a list of possible inter-group and intra-group outcome goals for the whole season, for 15/18-year-olds and for 13/14-year-olds.

- Make a list of possible collective and individual performance goals for a five-week mesocycle, for the following teams: 6/7-year-olds, 8/9-year-olds, 10/12-year-olds, 13/14-year-olds, 15/16-year-olds, 17/18-year-olds.

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**Advantages of Performance Goals**

Performance goals are extremely important for all young teams (as well as élite teams) for the following reasons:

- they emphasise the players’ behaviour rather than the results of that behaviour. This means that these goals are centred on what the players do, on what depends on them, rather than on the consequences of what they do that does not depend as much on them;

- they help the players to focus on their own behaviour, allowing them to adopt a more productive and rewarding working system;

- they allow a more realistic evaluation of the feasibility of the goals;

- they facilitate a simple and reliable assessment of output;

- they permit the players to use their own behaviour to measure their progress;

- they allow the players to establish useful contingencies between their behaviour and its consequences;

- they favour increased self-confidence and motivation.

For all of these reasons, and because outcome goals can be very stressful and negative for children’s teams, mini-basketball coaches training 6/7-year-olds and 8/9-year-olds should use only performance goals, avoiding the setting of outcome goals.
Mini-basketball coaches training 10/12-year-olds should also concentrate on performance goals but may include some intra-subject or intra-group outcome goals related to performance goals.

* For example: in order to work on the individual performance goal of improving lay-ups, the coach may establish an intra-subject outcome goal consisting of attempting to achieve a specific number of scored points in a test-drill.

For teams of 13/14-year-olds and 15/18-year-olds, the coach may incorporate outcome goals (more with older players than with younger players) being careful not to ignore performance goals. In fact, it is important to establish performance goals related to each outcome goal so that the players always know what they must do to increase the probability of achieving the desired result.

Furthermore, for these age groups and because we are talking about players whose work is long-term, the coach should establish some performance goals that may not be related with outcome goals attainable during that season but that can be achieved as the players progress, thus enabling them to opt for optimum results further down the line.

* For example: a coach may set the goal of improving low post moves (performance goal) which will not affect the present season’s results, but hopefully, this goal will increase the probability of achieving better results the following season (longer-term outcome goal).
Characteristics of Efficient Goals

In order to be efficient, goals should include the following characteristics:

- Closely linked final goals and intermediate goals should be established, defining the time limit for each.

Final goals should mark the final objective to be reached, while intermediate goals mark the stages to be covered in order to progressively move closer to and ultimately achieve the final goal. Both

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Test Exercise-4:

Following is a list of possible goals. Indicate whether these are inter-subject or inter-group outcome goals (Inter), intra-subject or intra-group outcome goals (Intra) or performance goals (PG). The correct answers are at the back of the book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inter</th>
<th>Intra</th>
<th>PG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Improve the team’s previous year classification.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Get 10 rebounds.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Dribble with left hand while moving towards the left.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Look at the hoop when catching the ball.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Make a chest pass in a straight line.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Be the team’s top scorer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Do not cross feet when playing defense.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Make 65% of the free throws.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Move quickly down the court to defend after losing possession of the ball.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Lift arms to block opposing team’s shots.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. PLANNING BASKETBALL ACTIVITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIOD:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEADLINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL GOAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERMEDIATE GOALS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Kind of tool to set outcome and related performance goals, both final and intermediate, for a specific period.
final goals as well as intermediate goals are necessary for maintaining high, stable motivation.

Attainment of intermediate short-term goals strengthens the players’ motivation to continue to progress. It is therefore important to establish short-term goals.

- Goals should be specific and clearly defined rather than general and ambiguous.

Examples of specific, clearly defined goals are: shooting with the left hand, dribbling the ball with the fingers or placing oneself in a specific defensive position enabling to watch both the ball and the opposing player at the same time. General, ambiguous goals are: shooting better or defending well.

- Goals should be attractive to the players but realistic as well.

Attractive goals are those that awaken the players’ interest, but this interest can only be maintained if the players see that the goals are realistic enough to be achieved.

An attractive but unrealistic goal enhances the risk of future problems, drastically decreasing initial motivation if the player feels that he/she cannot achieve what he/she has set out to do. However, if the player feels that he/she can achieve the desired goal, he/she will work harder in order to do so.

Once the goal has been attained, the players’ self-confidence and motivation will be strengthened when confronted with further goals. It is therefore important that the goals be attainable to the players.

- The goals should be challenging for the players at proportionate cost.

Goals that are too easy (requiring little effort) or that require too much effort, are not suitable. Goals should be challenging in such a way as to motivate the player; goals that are too easy, although attractive, are not challenging.

At the same time, a goal can be attractive, realistic and challenging but involve too high a cost for the players, in which case the players’ motivation will decrease. Thus, the cost should be considered by the players proportionate to the value of the goal.

- In team sports, both collective as well as individual goals should be established.

If only collective goals have been established, individual motivation can easily diminish. And in teams made up of young players, it is important that each player be allowed to progress at his/her own pace; therefore, individual goals are important.
Practical Exercise

- Think about the team you are coaching (or the last team you coached) and look at the following:
  ✓ Have you established outcome goals and performance goals?
  ✓ Have you established final goals and intermediate goals?
  ✓ Have you established short-term goals?
  ✓ Are your goals specific and clearly defined?
  ✓ Are they attractive?
  ✓ Are they realistic?
  ✓ Are they challenging?
  ✓ Is achievement of these goals proportionate in terms of cost?
  ✓ Have you established collective goals and individual goals?

Choosing the Most Appropriate Goals

Once the coach has decided which goals seem most appropriate, he/she must decide if these can be achieved within the coaching time available. In many cases, because of the lack of time, he/she will have to leave out certain goals that he/she considered initially interesting.

If this is the case (a common occurrence when coaching young teams), the coach has to choose which goals he/she considers most important, omitting the rest. In order to do this, he/she can use criteria such as the following:

- the importance of each goal, taking into account the type of team he/she is coaching and, based on this, the team’s general goals; obviously those goals considered most important will take precedence;

- the proximity of each goal with respect to the present. In general, if the degree of importance is similar, those goals that can be achieved first should take precedence.

- the relationship between different objectives, bearing in mind whether the attainment of one goal is essential to achieving others. In general, the simplest goals that facilitate the attainment of later, more complex, goals should take precedence.
## Table 3

Kind of tool to set performance goals for each player.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIOD:</th>
<th>PLAYERS</th>
<th>PERFORMANCE GOALS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DEFENSE</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>etc.</td>
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</table>
Along these lines, it is interesting for the coach to combine offense and defense goals (for example, improve offense 1 on 1 fundamentals and improve defense 1 on 1 fundamentals). Both on an individual level as well as on a collective level, the development of offense and defense should follow a parallel progression;

- the incompatibility or interference between goals (to what degree will concentrating on achieving a goal be incompatible or interfere with the attainment of other goals). Clearly, if the importance of goals is similar, those goals that are not incompatible or do not interfere with each other will take precedence;

- the cost esteemed necessary in order to achieve each goal, defining cost as basically the dedication and the physical and psychological effort necessary for the achievement of the goal. In general, those goals requiring lower cost should take precedence;

- the estimated probability of achieving each goal, because even though all of the goals considered are attainable, some will be more so than others. Logically, those considered more probable should predominate over those less probable.

**Practical Exercises**

- Decide upon the goals that you could set for your team as a whole and for each of your players for the entire season.

- Do the same exercise, but concentrating now on the first mesocycle of the season.

- Do the same exercise, but concentrating now on the first microcycle of the previous mesocycle.

- Focus on any of these three periods, season, mesocycle or microcycle (only one of them) and establish the time available for coaching your team during that period. Then, taking into account the time available, choose goals from among those discussed above that you consider most important, bearing in mind the criteria listed (importance, proximity, relationship with other goals, estimated effort and probability of attainment).
2.5. TRAINING CONTENTS

Once the coach has defined his/her goals, he/she should define the specific work to be carried out in order to be able to achieve those goals. For this, the coach should assess exactly where the players are in relation with the goals and, from there, decide what their needs are and what kind of work is most appropriate.

Examples of contents are: plays with or without the ball to improve coordination; drills to perfect dribbling, shooting or any other of the fundamentals; drills to improve individual decisions in 2 on 2 or 3 on 3 situations, etc.

Just as with goals, coaches should be very realistic when defining the contents to be covered in the training session, asking themselves questions such as the following:

✓ Are the players prepared for these contents?
  • Coaches should not expose their players to contents for which they are not prepared at the time.

✓ If they are prepared, are these the most appropriate contents for this type of team?
  • Although coaches may have already asked themselves this question with respect to goals, it is advisable to ask themselves this again when thinking about the contents.

✓ Is it feasible to work with these contents within the time available?
  • Here again, estimation of time available is crucial.

Practical Exercises

• Make a list of possible goals for a five-week mesocycle for a team of either 15/18-year-olds, 13/14-year-olds, 10/12-year-olds or 6/9-year-olds, training for an hour and a half, three afternoons a week. Then, based on this, make up a list of contents needed to achieve those goals.

• Based on the previous exercise, try to answer the following questions:
  ✓ Are the players prepared for these contents?
  ✓ Even if they are prepared, are these contents the most appropriate for this kind of team?
  ✓ Is it feasible to work with these contents within the time available?
Table 4. Goals and related contents may be distributed in three categories: defense, offense and others.
Choosing the Most Important Contents

As with goals it is likely that, considering the time available, the coach will have to decide which contents should be included in his/her training plan, omitting the less important.

In order to establish the priority of the contents, the coach may consider the following criteria:

- **suitability** of the contents. Clearly, the coach should only take into account the most suitable contents, omitting any that are not appropriate;
- **specifics** of the contents with respect to the goal; the most specific with respect to the goal should take precedence;

* This does not mean that, for example, a mini-basketball coach should emphasise specific training (for example, drills focused on improving chest passes) to the detriment of more general work (drills to improve different kinds of passes and other related fundamentals); rather, once he/she has defined the goal (more or less global), the contents should be specific with respect to that goal. In the former case, a mini-basketball coach could establish overall improvement of different fundamentals as his/her goal and therefore, he/she would choose contents that are specifically focused on achieving that overall improvement.

- **simplicity** of the contents: in principle, the simplest contents should take precedence over more complex contents;
- **immediacy** of the contents: in general, the contents considered more immediate to the achievement of the goal in question should take precedence;
- **relationship** with other contents: contents that facilitate the future development of later contents should take precedence over neutral contents or contents that may have a negative effect on later work;
• the integration of the contents into the overall framework to be developed; the contents that fit in best should take precedence;

• the cost in terms of dedication and physical and mental effort; contents with a lower cost should take precedence.

Therefore, in order to achieve the goals of the plan, the coach should select contents that are suitable and specific to the goal and, from those contents, select the simplest, the most immediate for the achievement of that goal, those which facilitate work with later contents, those which fit in best with the overall work plan to be carried out and those which involve a lower cost in terms of dedication and effort.

Practical Exercises

• Choose a goal that the players must achieve within a specific time period and make a list of contents to be worked on in order to achieve that goal.

• Using the list from the previous exercise, decide which contents should take precedence, keeping in mind the criteria mentioned (suitability, specifics, simplicity, immediacy, relationship with other contents, integration into the overall work plan and cost in dedication and effort).

2.6. PHYSICAL WORK LOAD

When planning training sessions, the mini-basketball or basketball coach should not only consider technical and tactical contents (passing, dribbling, 3 on 3 drills, etc.) or contents related with the players’ physical development (for example, drills to improve their coordination or speed)) but also the physical workload most suitable for each training period and session. The coach who makes use of the most appropriate workload can achieve the following benefits:

• improve the physical condition of his/her players, not only with the more specific physical work but also with the technical and tactical training which involve physical work (for example, when the players perform fast-break drills);

• help the players to better assimilate techniques and tactics, because they are performing in better physical shape;
• *avoid fatigue and burnout.* When young players are overtired, they no longer enjoy themselves, they learn less and there is a greater risk of injury; besides, given these conditions, they are more likely to perform poorly academically (an important aspect when working with young athletes). For all of these reasons, it is important that they be able to recuperate after every important effort;

• *help them to perform better during the games.* Although the most important objective of most young players’ teams is not their performance during the games, the players should play in good physical shape (even if the conditions are not the best) in order to perform and benefit from the experience.

Therefore, when planning training sessions, the coach should keep in mind the physical workload at all times.

**Work and Rest**

In the first place, the coach must understand that his/her workplan should alternate work and rest throughout each training period and session.

• on the one hand, he/she should submit his/her players to physical work (with or without the ball, more general or more specific, according to the goals) so that they will be fit.

• but on the other hand, he/she should allow his/her players to rest enough to permit them to assimilate the work performed and to be in good shape for do more.

To control the *balance between physical work and rest,* coaches should consider both the sports work of their teams as well as the work involved in other activities that the players participate in. In teams where the players are youngsters, it is likely that they have physical education class, participate in other sports or play basketball in their free time, apart from the work they do with the team.

A mini-basketball coach should *integrate mini-basketball into the players’ daily lives,* making it one more satisfying activity, not something that interferes with their other activities.

* For example: if the training sessions exhaust the children so much that they cannot do their homework, play with their friends or chat with their parents, this would be a serious problem.
So a mini-basketball coach should try to keep the workload in the training sessions from being excessive so that the players, considering all of their activities, have rest periods during the week and during the season.

Achieving the best physical shape for performing during the games should not be the main goal for either mini-basketball or 13/14-year-old teams. However, this could be a goal for some 15/18-year-old teams, if not for every game, at least for the key games of the season. In any case, it is a good idea that all of the players be able to perform acceptably in games, even if the main objective is not necessarily to win:

- in the first place, because for any minimally motivated player, playing a game is a very attractive situation in which he/she wants to perform to the best of his/her ability;
- in the second place, because those players who do perform well in the games (always adapting the criteria used to define «perform well» to each case) receive very positive psychological reinforcement from such an experience, strengthening their self-confidence and motivation;
- in the third place, because games make up part of the players’ training, it is important to take the maximum advantage of them. Thus, a game will be a much more positive experience in every way if the players are in good shape than if they are tired and can hardly perform at all.

For these reasons, it is important to keep in mind that the players should be rested before a game. So, when planning training sessions, the physical workload of the previous two days should be light.

It is also important to remember that games require enormous physical effort after which the players have to recuperate. Therefore, when planning training sessions for the day after a game, the players should either rest or have another light session.

The balance between work and rest should also be kept in mind during each training session. The players should perform a series of drills (work) and
then be able to recuperate from the effort by either resting or doing drills that require less physical effort.

* For example: after a drill series of full court 1 on 1 (intensive exercise) the players will need to rest or do low-intensity drills (for example, free throws).

In general, for young teams (especially mini-basketball and 13/14-year-olds) it is recommended that the players not perform intensive drills for long periods and that they have enough time to recuperate each time, even within the drill itself.

* For example: within a full court 1 on 1 drill, players may do defense and offense (work) and then 30-40 seconds of recuperation (rest) until the next 1 on 1.

Practical Exercises

- Organise a training session of basketball drills for a mini-basketball team or a team of 13/14-year-olds, suitably combining work and rest.

- Work out a general programme for one week, for a mini-basketball team or a team of 13/14-year-olds, combining work and rest, keeping in mind that twice a week the players have gym class and that on one of those days (Thursday) they also have basketball practice.

Volume and Intensity

When estimating the physical workload, a distinction should be made between volume and intensity.

Volume is the total amount of physical work performed by the players.

Intensity refers to the physical work that the players do within a unit of time.

* For example: a drill consisting of a series of thirty fast-breaks has more volume than a drill involving twenty series. And both drills will be more intensive if the series are made in five minutes instead of eight minutes.
An adequate balance between volume and intensity throughout the season is an important element in coaching 15/18-year-old basketball teams, less important for 13/14-year-old teams, and barely significant for mini-basketball teams.

Volume is considered the base which supports the rest of an athlete’s work and, upon that base, intensity acquires importance. For this reason, volume is key for young teams at the beginning of the season or after any period of inactivity.

Once appropriate volume has been achieved, intensity and rest are the key elements for reaching optimum physical shape. However, if for a prolonged period of time the player works only on intensity, he/she will probably lose in fitness. For this reason, volume, intensity and rest should be suitably combined for those teams that wish to carefully maintain their physical shape (top teams and, at specific periods, 15/18-year-olds).

Therefore, both the mini-basketball coach and the coach for a team of 13/14-year-olds should be basically concerned with volume rather than intensity, seeking the adequate balance between volume and rest.

This means that the most important factor for either a mini-basketball team or a team of 13/14-year-olds is to train in the appropriate measure (appropriate amount of workload), without considering their physical shape, for the purpose of adequately developing the players’ physical qualities, preventing exhaustion and burnout, and performing to an acceptable degree for the formative experience of the games.

However, the coach working with 15/18-year-olds should be more aware of the balance between volume and intensity.

In general, as can be seen in Figure-1, volume should take precedence over intensity during the first months of the season, but intensity should increase in the second half, as volume decreases, so that the players are at peak physical condition when they should be performing best at games (assuming that the most important games are played at the end of the season).

For these teams (15/18-year-olds), the main thing is that throughout the season they combine the formative work necessary at these ages with the tune-up work that is also important in order for them to perform better for the most important games of the season.

Thus, far from the most important games volume should be higher and intensity lower, and when approaching those games, volume
should decrease and intensity increase, being very important to decrease the whole physical workload (both volume and intensity) and to increase the periods of rest just before the important games.

**Practical Exercises**

- Organise a coaching session with basketball drills for a team of 15/18-year-olds in which volume takes precedence over intensity.
- Organise a coaching session with basketball drills for a team of 15/18-year-olds in which intensity takes precedence over volume.
- Along general lines, plan the tendency of volume and intensity for the whole season for a team of 15/18-year-olds who should work on improving throughout the year, but whose performance is especially important for two blocks of games: one at the end of February and the other at the end of the season. The season begins in September and ends in May.

*Figure 1. Example of Volume (—) and Intensity (—) loads during the whole season in a 15-18 year-old team.*
2.7. PSYCHOLOGICAL LOAD

Just as the coach should control the physical workload, he/she should also control the psychological load. In this way, the coach will help his/her young players to:

- make the best use of the training sessions;
- better assimilate the most complex technical and tactical concepts;
- deal properly with the extra physical workload involved in training sessions;
- recuperate properly between one practice and the next;
- be psychologically prepared for games;
- make use of practice sessions to develop psychological skills that will help them in sports and in life in general;
- not suffer mental exhaustion and burnout which leads to a decrease in motivation and attention, increasing the risk of injury, lowering their performance, worsening their health and, in many cases, increasing the risk of their giving up sports altogether.

Characteristics of the Psychological Load

The psychological load is related to such aspects of training as the following:

- the players’ commitment to their sport; the greater the commitment, the greater the psychological load;
- players’ participation in the drills; the greater their participation, the greater the psychological load;
- the novelty, variety and complexity of the tasks set during a session; the greater the degree of novelty, variety and complexity, the greater the mental effort required of the players;
- the general demand required of the players; the more required of them, the greater the psychological load;
- the degree of attention demanded of them; although any demand requires a psychological effort, those tasks requiring more intense attention include a greater psychological load than tasks requiring less attention;
- stressful competitive situations; exercises that pose stressful competitive situations (for example, playing a game with a time limit in which the winning team gets a prize) imply a greater psychological load;
• **evaluation of players’ performance**: evaluating the players’ performance during a training drill increases the psychological load;

• the **behaviour of the coach**: if the coach is on top of the drill, giving instructions, commenting, correcting, reinforcing, etc, the psychological load is greater. This is even truer if the coach’s behaviour produces stress (for example, if the coach aggressively recriminates the players).

**Practical Exercise**

- Organise a 1 on 1 drill with a low psychological load and another 1 on 1 drill with a greater psychological load.

**Deficient Psychological Load**

Without a minimum psychological load, the training session is dull and boring, except in those sessions right before a game when the motivation produced by the upcoming game tends to eclipse any deficiency of the practice session.

Under deficient psychological load, many young players lose their initial motivation. They go to practice and are bored, they go again the next day and are bored again, day after day. For many of them, mini-basketball or basketball is no longer a stimulating activity.

Therefore monotonous sessions (doing the same drills again and again) where the players participate little (for example, a long line of players waiting for their turn) with a low general and attentional effort required, no competitive drills, no evaluation of their performance of any kind, and in which the coach is not involved in their work, lead the players to a sense of boredom, a loss of interest in mini-basketball or basketball, the incapacity to take advantage of the practice session, the impossibility of assimilating anything (or very little) and, in many cases, quitting the sport.

**Practical Exercise**

- Make a list of measures you can take with your mini-basketball, 13/14-year-olds or 15/18-year-olds to keep practice sessions from being boring.
Psychological Overload

At the other extreme, neither should there be permanent psychological overload because, in that case, the activity will be overly stressful and, if not handled properly, will produce negative effects.

When considering psychological overload, the coach should bear in mind the quantitative overload (too many psychological demands) and the qualitative overload (stressful demands that force the players to make an extreme effort).

Productive Psychological Load

A distinction should also be made between productive load and unproductive load. Productive load can be beneficial if handled correctly. Unproductive load, on the other hand, has no positive effects and can even be negative.

* For example: a coach who poses a challenging drill that the players can master by making an important effort, will be using a productive psychological load.

* However, a coach who insults a player who has made a mistake, will be producing an unproductive psychological load that could even, as in this case, have negative results.

Productive psychological loads are excellent opportunities to help the players’ progress.
Their most important characteristic is that they provoke a \textit{psychological effort} on the part of the players which helps them to control a difficult situation that can actually be controlled.

\* For example: a mini-basketball coach divides her players into two groups and organises a shooting competition between them. If the players shoot from positions in which they can actually score and if the level of the two groups is similar, the drill will have a productive psychological load. The players will be concentrating on the task, they are faced with a competitive situation that they can handle, they will have to deal with the frustration of their mistakes in order to keep on trying, they will have to quickly assimilate successful shots in order to keep on shooting, and they will be faced with the success or failure of the final score (thus learning to control emotions related to success and failure), etc.

\* However, if the coach organises the same drill but with the players shooting from positions from which they can barely reach the hoop, or where one team is much better than the other, the psychological load will be negative. In the first situation, after several failed attempts, the players will not be able to overcome the frustration produced by their mistakes because they will perceive that they are not controlling the situation; they will see that, no matter how hard they try, the goal of scoring is beyond their reach and, in these conditions, both motivation and effort will diminish. In the latter case, the better team will have to make little effort and the inferior team will follow suit once they realise that they are at a clear disadvantage.

\textbf{Practical Exercises}

- Imagine that you are coaching a mini-basketball team: develop a drill with a productive psychological load and one with a negative psychological load.
- Do the same thing, but this time for a team of 13/14-year-olds.
- Do the same exercise, but this time for a team of 15/18-year-olds.

\textbf{Adequate Use of Psychological Loads}

Just as physical workloads should be suited to the players’ capabilities, psychological loads should also adapt to the players’ possibilities so that they can control them.
Therefore, in general terms, the psychological load for mini-basketball teams should be moderate, avoiding very stressful drills and a stressful evaluation of the players’ performance. In order to achieve an adequate load, the following should predominate:

- drills in which all of the players participate assiduously (thus avoiding situations where they are waiting a long time for their turn);
- simple drills which the players can easily assimilate;
- general contents that do not force the players to make a special effort to concentrate on very reduced stimuli;
- short drills to avoid the players’ loss of attention;
- competitive drills, carefully monitored by the coach in such a way that successes and failures are evenly divided;
- very rewarding drills.

For these teams, the total volume of psychological load can be similar in most of the practice sessions. During each session, either drills of a similar load can be used or drills with a greater load compensated by others of a lesser load.

* For example: if a drill requires the players to be especially focused on a specific point, it should be followed by others that require less specific intensive attention.

For teams of 13/14-year-olds, the psychological load can be greater and even more so for 15/18-year-olds although, in both cases, greater and lesser loads should be alternated in practice sessions and in the drills performed during each session.

Let us consider, for example, a one-week plan of four practice sessions for a team of 15/18-year-olds:

- the first day, the coach introduces new offense contents that force the players to make an important mental effort (medium-high load);
- the second day, the same contents are repeated, using non-stressful drills (medium-low load);
- the third day, the coach uses competitive drills related to those contents and other contents that the players have already mastered; some drills may be stressful drills (high-very high load);
- the fourth day, contents are repeated using non-stressful drills (low load).
In general, just as with the physical workload, the psychological load should not be high on days preceding games. When planning each period of the season, this should be kept in mind for teams of 15/18-year-olds and on certain occasions for teams of 13/14-year-olds.

**Practical Exercises**

- Organise a practice of one hour for a mini-basketball team, keeping the psychological load moderate.
- Plan a week’s training for a 15/18-year-old team within the first half of the season, using drills with different types of psychological loads (new contents, complex drills requiring intense concentration, non-stressful competitive drills, very stressful drills, etc.).

**Periods of Psychological Rest**

When planning the entire season, the mesocycles, microcycles and practice sessions, the coach should bear in mind the importance of psychological rest periods as well as physical rest periods, so that the players will be able to assimilate the work they have done and be in shape for new productive efforts.

It is therefore a good idea, during the macrocycle of the season, for young players, especially mini-basketball players and 13/14-year-olds, to have rest periods which involve taking a break from the basketball activity. It is advisable for them to divide their time between their sports activities and other physical, recreational and intellectual activities.

For example, the practice of an individual sport would be a good complement for a mini-basketball player already involved in a team sport at a formative age. This way, while developing qualities such as teamwork, inherent in mini-basketball, he/she can develop others such as assuming individual responsibility, inherent in individual sports.
It is also a good idea that, along with activities that require commitment on the part of the player, others are planned which require a less important commitment or none at all (excursions, days spent out in the country, etc.). Combining these kind of activities or others is a good formative experience for young players and helps them to rest from the psychological demands of basketball practices and games.

With 13/14-year-olds and 15/18-year-olds, this important aspect should also be taken into account.

* The coach of a junior team made the following mistake: the team travelled by bus for 3 hours for an away game after which, during the trip back, the coach made the players watch the video of the game. The coach considered that, since the players were seated, they could rest from the effort made during the game while watching the video.

It is clear that this coach did not take into account the psychological load of the game or the psychological load of watching a video of this type. A game involves a very high psychological load producing extreme psychological wear and tear, and requires a period of psychological rest so that the players can recuperate.

Under the conditions of psychological exhaustion that the player feels after a game, it is unlikely that he/she can make the mental effort needed to learn anything useful from a video. What is more, the effort of trying is highly unproductive and could even have a negative effect because, in a situation such as this, the players may reach erroneous conclusions, and they are being deprived of a needed rest period to be able to make further psychological efforts in future training sessions and games.

In this example, the coach should plan the video session for another time, respecting the psychological rest period needed by the players.

**Practical Exercise**

- Considering the macrocycle of a season, plan periods and activities of psychological rest for a mini-basketball team, a team of 13/14-year-olds, and a team of 15/18-year-olds for the entire macrocycle.
2.8. CONCERNING GAMES

Along with practice sessions, when organising their planning, coaches should not forget the games the team will be playing, irrespective of the importance they wish to assign each.

- First of all, games involve physical and psychological load that should be taken into account in the overall planning.
- Secondly, they involve technical and tactical contents that should also be taken into account.
- Thirdly, participation in a game is a highly attractive competitive experience for the players and full advantage should be taken of this experience.

Mini-Basketball Teams

For a mini-basketball team, the games should be seen only as a positive experience in the players’ sports and human development. Mini-basketball games should be considered an educational opportunity where winning is not the fundamental objective. The children should learn to be good sports, respect the rules of the game, respect the referees and the opposing team, try their best, compete fully, etc., and they should enjoy this magnificent experience.

For this reason, the mini-basketball coach should organise the season’s games in such a way that all the players have an equal chance to participate throughout the year.

They should divide playing time among all of the players who have reasonably fulfilled their commitment rather than allowing the best players to play the most and keeping the worst players on the bench.

Neither is it enough that all the players get onto the court. Participating in a game means that any player on the court should be able to express his/her initiatives, playing without restriction. For example, some coaches tend to let their best players have the ball and shoot while two or three other children are simply
«filling» up the court. Obviously, those children are not participating in the game.

The mini-basketball coach should plan all of the games of the season and each specific game, keeping in mind that all of the players should be able to participate sufficiently.

Moreover, the mini-basketball coach could use some game time to reward the players for attendance and punctuality at practices, for effort and even for positive behaviour at school or at home.

* For example: coaches could decide that the players who have attended the most practices and who have been the most punctual can play one period, and that the players who have done all of their homework that week can play another.

Likewise, it would not be a positive educational experience for a child who never goes to practice to play, in the same way as it would be very unreasonable to keep a child from playing if he has missed one day because he had to go with his parents to a family event.

Mini-basketball coaches should also try to make the games rewarding experiences rather than unpleasant ones, so it is important to present a game as just another day of activity rather than turning it into something overly important.

However, for 10/12-year-olds it could be interesting for the players to have a specific objective to aim for (this should always be a performance goal, not an outcome goal).

For mini-basketball teams, a game should not alter the educational training most appropriate for these ages but rather be part of this training.

Therefore, when planning the season, coaches should make sure that there is an adequate number of games (generally between 18 and 25) and if possible, against teams at a similar level or, at least, that not most of them be much better or much worse than their own team.
If there are not enough games, the motivating element of games that is important for the children will be missing and if there are too many, the psychological load involved would be unsuitable for players of this age.

In the same way, if the opponents are at a similar level or if the differences, both in favour and against, occur only occasionally, the experience of playing a game will be much more enriching.

Finally, mini-basketball coaches should integrate the games into the team’s overall training plan without adapting their plan to the opponents of a particular upcoming game or spending training sessions to prepare specifically for any one game.

**Practical Exercise**

- Make up a schedule of games for the whole season that you consider most appropriate for mini-basketball teams of 6/7-year-olds, 8/9-year-olds and 10/12-year-olds.

**13/14-Year-Old Teams**

In the same way, for teams of 13/14-year-olds, the games should not be overly important but be part of the players’ overall training process, although in this case, with more goals set (basically performance goals) than for mini-basketball teams.

The coach for 13/14-year-olds should also allow all the players who go to practice to play many minutes throughout the season, because otherwise, their motivation will decrease and it will be more likely that they quit the sport or make little effort.

With players of this age, the coach should use the games as an excellent test of the effectiveness of his/her work during training sessions. With this in mind, it is necessary to consider the following steps:

- before each game, coaches should establish the collective and/or individual performance goals (keeping them very realistic) that they consider most important for that game, taking into account the contents worked during that week or in preceding weeks;
- before the game, coaches should establish a simple procedure to evaluate whether or not those goals are achieved, and to what degree;
2. PLANNING BASKETBALL ACTIVITY

- during the game (or afterwards, if it has been recorded on video), the coach or a capable colleague should make note of the behaviours that constitute the performance goals;

- after the game, coaches should study the notes taken and assess what has occurred with the performance goals established before the game; this assessment will provide them with the information necessary to know how the players are assimilating the work done during training.

For example, the coach is working on screens during the training sessions and he/she wants to monitor how the players are assimilating these contents. In the next game, he/she establishes setting screens as a priority performance goal and draws up a worksheet like that shown in Table-5.

During the game, an assistant coach uses this worksheet to tick off each screen made by the team, noting down the player setting the screen and the player screened.

After the game, the coach can use this worksheet to see how many screens the team has set, which players set the most, which players were screened most often and which pairs of players set the most screens between them.

This information will be very useful in planning training sessions for the coming weeks. The coach could establish the same goal for the next game and use the same worksheet to see if there has been any improvement. Then he/she could do the same thing three or four games later.

Basically, the interaction between practice sessions and games, using the latter as test experiences, is a fundamental element for 13/14-year-old teams. The game goals established by the coach should mainly be performance goals because what he/she is interested in is observing the players’ progress in the basketball fundamentals that make up the contents covered during practice.

Practical Exercise

- Choose two possible performance goals for a 13/14-year-old team to work on during a game and design a simple worksheet for evaluating those goals.

15/18-Year-Old Teams

At this age group, especially for juniors (17/18-year-olds), the results of the competition may be important without losing sight of the educational perspective that should still be present. Therefore, there are two types of game:
Table 5. Example of simple tool to monitor the frequency of screening during games. Every time the team sets a screen, the assistant-coach may tick in the proper spot considering both the screener and the player screened.
• games in which the main objective is to win. This should generally not be more than 25% for 15/16-year-olds nor more than 40% for 17/18-year-olds;

• games in which the main objective is to consolidate the formative work carried out during training.

Games in which the main objective is to win, if used well, are also part of the formative work of young players, because they must learn to face the stress of such games. However, the existence of these games does not mean that the main priority of the training plan should be to prepare the team to win them (contrary to what happens with professional teams).

For these cadet or junior teams, the existence of games in which the main objective is to win should affect the training plan to a certain degree without altering the fundamental objective: the players’ advanced development.

Basically, this means that the players of such a team should not limit themselves to strengthening their best individual and collective resources for the specific purpose of performing better at key games in the season, but to work on improving their weak points, thus enriching the players’ repertory of resources, keeping in mind their future.

This way, perhaps in some cases the team’s performance will be lower in the short term, but the players will benefit more and the team will be fulfilling the formative task that should still predominate at this age.

Nevertheless, in order to get the most from the valuable experience of participating in a game, it is important that the coach take into consideration the opposing team and prepare for the game.

• If these are games in which the main objective is winning, the coach must prepare the players so that they have a better chance of achieving that goal and so that they can get used to such a situation, with all it implies.

• And for all other games, the coach must prepare the players so that they learn from them.
For example: if the coach knows that a certain opposing team uses full-court man-to-man defense, even if his/her main objective is not to win this game, it provides an excellent opportunity to work on contents related with offense against this type of defense. Therefore, when planning the training sessions, he/she should keep this in mind.

The procedure that a coach for 15/18-year-olds could use in planning the entire season and each of its periods could be the following:

- decide which goals and contents he/she considers appropriate for the players to significantly improve their level;
- establish the proportion he/she considers appropriate between games in which the main objective is to win and other games (25% and 75%? 30% and 70%? 35% and 65%?..);
- on the calendar, situate the games in which the main objective is to win and, based on this, establish the physical and psychological workload for the practice;
- keeping these games in mind, situate the goals and contents most closely related to them on the training calendar (from among the goals and contents previously established);
- then, situate all of the other goals and contents on the calendar;
- for those weeks in which games to win are to be played, the coach can devote one or two practice sessions to preparing specifically for those games. The rest of the time, the coach should not use practice time for preparing for games;
- whatever the main objective of the game, the coach should establish performance goals for all of them. For those games in which the main objective is winning, performance goals increase the probability of achieving this result. And for other games, performance goals related with the players’ individual or collective progress, help to achieve improvement.

Practical Exercise
- Think of a team of 15/16-year-olds or one of 17/18-year-olds and, following the steps outlined above, plan, in general terms, an eight-month season in which the team plays between 25 and 35 games.
Points to Consider

Whatever the team, coaches training young players should keep in mind two important aspects.

- First of all, they should think about what they require of their players during a game. Many coaches demand more than what their players can do, with the result that the games lose part of their formative value and become overly stressful and unproductive. However, those coaches who take into account their players’ real possibilities make much better use of the valuable experience provided by each game. Therefore, the coach should try to make each (or most) of the games rewarding experiences in which the players, whether they win or lose, perceive that they control or can control the different situations with which they are faced. Perception of control is an essential aspect in the development of a young player’s self-confidence.

Thus, the goals established by the coach for each game should basically be achievable and very realistic.

- The other aspect is that coaches training young players should not imitate coaches training professional teams. This means that they should not plan the season with the sole objective of maximum performance in games, limiting their goals and contents to winning the greatest number of games, devoting most of the practice sessions to preparing games, etc.

Professional teams have one purpose and young players’ teams have another objective; the coach should clearly understand this difference and plan the games and training sessions in consequence.

2.9. SCHEDULING

In each period of the season, the coach should schedule the goals and contents of the practices, taking into account, as the case may be, games, physical workload and psychological load.

As an example, see tools included in Tables-6 and 7.

In the first case (Table-6), the coach schedules the physical workload (volume and intensity) and the psychological load of training sessions for a five-week mesocycle, taking into account practice sessions available and games to be played. From there, the coach can suitably schedule the goals and contents of training sessions in that mesocycle.
**Table 6.** Example of tool to plan physical work load: Volume (VOL) and Intensity (INT), and psychological load (PSYCH) in a mesocycle of five weeks.
## MICROCYCLE PLANNING

**PERIOD:** FROM: 18-10 TO: 24-10

**NUMBER TRAINING SESSIONS:** 3  **TOTAL TIME AVAILABLE:** 4 h 30’

**NUMBER GAMES:** 1 (day 24)

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<th>WED</th>
<th>THUR</th>
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<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O T H E R S</th>
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</table>

**Table 7.** Example of tool to plan goals and contents in a microcycle of one week, considering time available, games, physical work load (volume and intensity) and psychological load.
In the second example (Table-7), the coach should schedule the goals and contents for a one-week microcycle, taking into account the practice sessions available, games to be played, the physical workload (volume and intensity) and the psychological load that he/she considers most appropriate for each training session.

Following the recommendations outlined in this chapter, coaches can schedule their team’s activity for the whole season and for each period. Then they will have to organise each training session, taking into account aspects covered in the next chapter.

Test Exercise-5

- Based on the information contained in this chapter, state whether the following are True or False. The correct answers are at the end of the book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When establishing the players’ obligations, the coach and the players should make joint decisions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Working rules should only be established when problems arise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Mesocycles are the periods into which the season’s macrocycle is divided.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Outcome goals are much more useful than performance goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Among other characteristics, goals should be both attractive and realistic for the players.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Controlling the physical workload is a key aspect that the coach should keep in mind when planning training sessions.</td>
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<td>7. In general, the intensity of physical work should predominate over volume during the first weeks of the season.</td>
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<td>8. The psychological load of a training session is not the coach’s responsibility.</td>
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<td>9. In general, short drills help young players to avoid attentional fatigue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. At the end of the week, every coach should adapt his/her training programme to preparing upcoming games.</td>
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</table>
3

ORGANISING TRAINING SESSIONS

Jose María Buceta

3.1. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAINING SESSIONS
- Stages of a Training Session
- Goals of the Training Session
- Contents and Drills
- Working Routines

3.2. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAINING DRILLS
- Explaining the Goal of the Drill
- Controlling Antecedent Stimuli
- Drills with a Simple Structure
- Specific Working Rules
- Varied Drills
- Related Drills
- Competitive Drills
- Enjoyable Drills
- Duration of the Drills
- Attentional Intensity of the Drills
- Players' Participation
- Test Drills

3.3. EVALUATION OF THE TRAINING SESSION
3.1. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAINING SESSIONS

After planning the whole season, the mesocycles and the microcycles, the coach must organise each training session.

The coach should plan and schedule the session, bearing in mind duration, physical workload and psychological load. Specifically, he/she must define the goals, the contents and the drills of the session and decide on the schedule, distributing the drills throughout the available time (see Table-8).

Stages of a Training Session

In general, a training session should be divided into three stages:

- In the first stage, the aim is to progressively prepare the players to be in top physical and mental condition when they reach the central stage of the practice. Here should be included warm-up drills without the ball such as running, stretching, etc., and simple drills with the ball (low physical and psychological load) that, little by little, require greater concentration and physical effort.

- In the second stage, the coach should incorporate the main contents of the session, those requiring greater physical and psychological effort, combining drills of greater and lesser intensity (physically and psychologically speaking) in the proportion he/she deems most appropriate.

- In the third stage, the coach should progressively reduce the physical and psychological intensity, although not necessarily simultaneously. Thus, in the first part of this third stage, he/she could include a physically intensive drill requiring low concentration (for example, running up and down the court to improve physical shape or playing a game in which the players are free to play as they please). Or he/she can organise it the other way around, a psychologically intense drill with a low physical workload (for example, a shooting contest). Then it would be appropriate to end up with exercises that require little physical and mental effort, basically stretching exercises.

Practical Exercises

- Programme a training session of an hour and a quarter for a mini-basketball team.
- Programme a training session of an hour and a half for a team of 13/14-year-olds.
- Programme a training session of two hours for a team of 15/18-year-olds.
### Table 8. Example of tool to organise single training sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>CONTENTS-DRILLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEFENSE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFFENSE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**SCHEDULE**

**COMMENTS**
Goals of the Training Session

The coach must decide what the main goals of the training session will be and, based on this, select the contents to be included and the most appropriate drills, taking into account the time available and the physical and psychological loads that he/she considers most appropriate at a given time.

The goals of each session should be few and very clear to the coach. Two serious mistakes are:

- trying to do too much in a single practice or a single drill;
- the coach not knowing clearly what he/she wants to achieve during the training session as a whole and with each specific drill.

In general, the goals of a practice session can be grouped into four main blocks:

- **learning**: the objective is for the players to learn or perfect new skills or skills they have not yet mastered, both technical fundamentals (passing, dribbling, shooting, etc.) as well as tactical decisions (1 on 1, 2 on 2, 3 on 3 decisions, etc.);

- **repetition**: the objective is to rehearse skills that players have already mastered in order to consolidate them, perfect them or favour physiological change, as the case may be (for example: shooting series of twenty shots or running and passing during ten minutes);

- **exposure to real game conditions**: the objective here is for the players to train under real game conditions (mainly stressful conditions) so that they get used to these conditions;

- **specific game preparation**: the objective is to prepare the team to confront specific rivals who present specific difficulties.

- For a mini-basketball team, learning goals should predominate and, to a lesser degree, repetition goals. It is not appropriate to spend training time on the other two areas.

- For teams of 13/14-year-olds, learning and repetition should also predominate but it is also a good idea, to some degree, for the players to practice skills mastered in non-stressful game conditions. However, it is not appropriate for this age group to spend training time on specific game preparation.
For teams of 15/18-year-olds, learning, repetition, exposure to game conditions, and specific preparation for games should be adequately combined.

Contents and Drills

Contents included in the practice sessions should correspond to the goals (perfecting foot movement in 1 on 1 defense; repeating passes already mastered, etc.) and should be chosen based on the criteria discussed in the previous chapter.

In general, it is a good idea for the coach to combine offense goals contents with defense goals contents, although he/she may decide to emphasise one or the other.

In order to work with all of the contents, the coach should design specific drills. For example, to work on 1 on 1 defense, the coach should design a drill specifically for this purpose.

The drills are essential for making the most of practice time. A session made up of good, well-coordinated drills will benefit the players much more than a session with inappropriate or poorly coordinated ones.

Later on, we will discuss the main characteristics of training drills, and examples will be given, in the corresponding chapters, of drills for each of the three age groups (mini-basketball, 13/14-year-olds, 15/18-year-olds).

Working Routines

Coaches should establish working routines that the players are familiar with. In order to do this, they should look at questions such as the following:

- How early should the players get to practice? When should they be dressed and ready to start training?
- How should the practice start out? Will the coach meet with the players in the locker room before going out on the court? Should the players go out when they are ready and start to train by themselves until the coach calls them? Should the players go out on the court and wait until the coach calls them before doing anything else?
• Who is in charge of the material needed for the practice? Who is in charge of the balls? Who picks them up after practice? Who has the key to the locker room? Who is responsible for the blackboard? etc.

• What happens if a player gets injured?; Who takes care of him?; What should be done?

Coaches should also establish simple rules when speaking to the players so that they pay attention to them.

* For example: they could use a whistle when they want the players to stop what they are doing and listen to them; and they could whistle twice for the players to go over to them.

* Coaches should also establish that when they meet with the players to talk to them, they should not be dribbling the ball, tying their shoes, talking to each other or doing anything else, but should look at them and pay attention to what they are saying.

Nevertheless, in order to keep the players’ attention in these situations, coaches should make sure that their explanations are short and very precise.

Coaches should also establish procedures such as requiring the players to ask permission to leave the practice session (for example, to use the bathroom), concerning the type of clothes they should wear, whether or not they can sit down or drink water between drills, the relationship they should maintain with each other during practice (for example, it would be a good idea to forbid them to make negative comments to each other), the relationship maintained with visitors (parents, friends, etc.) or related to any other aspect necessary for the training session to work well.

Practical Exercise

• Make a list of working routines that you consider interesting for the organisation of your team’s training sessions.

3.2. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAINING DRILLS

Explaining the Goals of the Drill

Before each drill, the coach should very briefly explain the goals of the drill to his/her players, what it is exactly that he/she wants the players to do.
This way, it will be more likely that the players concentrate on these goals and work better. And, if the goals are attractive and attainable, the players will be more motivated and will therefore concentrate harder.

*The explanations given should be very brief.* The players cannot be standing still for a long time, listening to the coach give them long explanations. Coaches need only tell them, clearly and briefly, what the drill consists of and what they have to do.

**Controlling Antecedent Stimuli**

*Antecedent stimuli* are those stimuli present in the drill (position on the court, participating players, balls, baskets, etc.). In order to control the players' attention and get the drill to achieve its purpose, the coach should make sure that all the stimuli relevant to the goals are present, eliminating those that are irrelevant. In general, the fewer the stimuli, the greater the concentration.

*Thus, for example, sometimes it would be a good idea to reduce court space, working with small groups of players and limiting the actions permitted.*

**Drills with a Simple Structure**

Drills with a simple structure help the players to concentrate better on the goal and the contents of the drill. Drills with a complex structure, on the other hand, force the players to devote part of their attention to adapting to the structure, in detriment to concentrating on the key aspects.

*For example: if the aim is to practise shooting, a simple drill will help the players to concentrate better on the task of shooting.*
Practical Exercise

• Choose an offensive fundamental and organise a simple drill to work on it.

Specific Working Rules

Drills can be complicated only, and never excessively, by adding *working rules* that serve to centre the players’ attention on their goal.

* For example: the aim is for the players to dribble using their weaker hand. Half-court 3 on 3 games are organised, the sole goal being to dribble with the weak hand. If a player dribbles with the other hand (the stronger one) his/her team loses possession of the ball (working rule). This way, the players will pay more attention to the goal of the drill, which is to dribble only with their weaker hand.

Practical Exercise

• Choose an offensive fundamental and organise a simple drill using a *working rule* that will help the players to concentrate on the specific behaviour that is the objective of the drill.

Varied Drills

Just as drills using a simple structure help the players to concentrate on the goal, using the same drill again and again leads to lower motivation and concentration. For this reason, it is a good idea to vary the drills by changing either the structure or the goals or both.

* For example: a different drill can be used to keep working on passing the ball in a straight line, or the same structure can be used but now to work on dribbling, or the coach can change to another type of drill to work on dribbling.
Related Drills

If after one drill, another one is done similar to the first in its goal and/or its structure, the players will be better prepared mentally to perform the second, especially if the level of attention required progressively increases. Let’s look at an example:

- The coach can begin with a drill with a single goal and a limited number of stimuli: in pairs, reduced space, with one ball per pair; the players should move without the ball and pass the ball to each other; the player receiving the ball should look at the basket while the player who is passing should immediately change position;

- the players continue with another drill having the same goal but with added stimuli: 2 on 2 situation, playing in a larger but still limited area; the offensive players should get free to receive the pass. If the defensive players steal the ball they change to offense and the offense changes to defense. The goal is still for the players to look at the basket when receiving the ball and change position as soon as they pass;

- the players now move to another drill, keeping a similar structure but with a different goal: still 2 on 2 but the goal now is to score using left-hand lay-ups;

- the players do another drill, keeping the same structure and combining the two previous goals: 2 on 2, the players should make at least three passes before the lay-up; the player receiving should look at the basket;
the player passing changes immediately to another position; players can only score using left-hand lay-ups;

• the players now change to another drill (change of structure) with the same goals but adding more stimuli: 4 on 4 half-court game; the players receiving the ball should look at the basket; the players passing should immediately change position; players must make at least five passes before doing the lay-up; they can only score using left-hand lay-ups.

**Practical Exercise**

• Organise a sequence of four related drills, changing the structure or the goal of each one.

**Competitive Drills**

Organising drills where the players compete among themselves or against themselves is a way to increase motivation and concentration, as long as they have enough resources to be successful. Here are some examples:

• divide the team into four groups, two at each basket. Organise a competition to see which group does more left-handed lay-ups in three minutes;

• divide the team into groups of three players each. Each group executes chest passes running from one basket to the other (at least three or four), ending with a lay-up. Each basket made is worth two points, with one point taken away for every pass not made in a straight line or not completed. The drill is to last five minutes; the point is to see which team makes more points. The second phase repeats the same drill but the aim is to see which teams can improve their first-phase score;

• two players play 1 on 1 (with specific working rules) until one makes three baskets;

• divide the whole team around all baskets available. The players work in pairs and shoot simultaneously (the player who shoots gets the ball and passes to the other player who is waiting, etc.). In three minutes, they have to make the maximum number of baskets. At the end of the time limit, the score is recorded. Periodically (once or twice a week) this drill can be repeated to see if the players can improve their top score and set a new record.
If used correctly (posing challenges that can really be achieved) and not used too often, these competitive drills increase motivation while incorporating into the practice sessions an important element in training young players, which is to get them used to competing.

Practical Exercise

- Choose an age group (mini-basketball, 13/14-year-olds, 15/18-year-olds) and organise two competitive drills: one between different players and another in which the players compete against themselves. In both cases, keep in mind that the goal of the competition should be attractive and attainable.

Enjoyable Drills

Having fun is essential, especially for younger players. In mini-basketball teams, the coach’s main objective should be that the children enjoy themselves while training. For teams of 13/14-year-olds and 15/18-year-olds, too, this is a very important objective because serious training is not incompatible with having fun.

Enjoyable drills should not be disorganised or unproductive. Quite the opposite; they compensate the psychological load of the training session and help the training process by making use of interesting contents that work better in this type of drill.

Therefore, doing enjoyable drills is not to be confused with letting each player do whatever he/she wants or making an effort only when he/she wants to. Enjoyable drills are those that are attractive to the players, in a relaxed, non-stressful setting that allows the player to feel at ease and have a good time, but they should also have a purpose, working rules and require a certain level of performance.

* For example: an enjoyable drill for a mini-basketball team might be the following: a group of players, each with a ball in the paint; they have to dribble the ball and try to get the other players’ ball away without losing their own. The last player wins.

In this type of drill, the players work in a relaxed setting and have fun, but the drill has a purpose, working rules and requires a degree of performance, making it doubly useful: the players have a good time and they are working on contents that are important to their development as players.
Duration of the Drills

When deciding how long the drills will last, the coach should take into account aspects such as boredom and psychological fatigue which lead to decreased concentration.

The drills should last long enough for the players to have enough time to understand and assimilate the contents, but if they go on too long, concentration decreases and, from that moment, productivity decreases as well. This is especially important for younger players.

In general, the more attractive drills can last longer while the less attractive, more routine drills, should be shorter.

Attentional Intensity of the Drills

Concerning attentional intensity, some drills require the players to concentrate more than others. If the coach programmes various drills that require
a high level of concentration together in a practice session, the players will
tire and their concentration will decrease.

For this reason, it is important to schedule *attentional rest periods* throughout the practice session by either planning complete rest periods or using drills that do not require a high level of concentration.

Practical Exercise

- Design three drills that do not require a high level of concentration.

**Players’ Participation**

The coach should design drills in which all of the players participate frequently. For example, it is common to see training sessions where the children are lined up in a long line to do lay-ups; the children have to wait more than a minute to have their five-second turn (sometimes longer if the coach stops the drill to correct someone). It is also common to see practice sessions where some of the players spend a long time sitting down while their companions play a game.

Even if the resources available are limited (for example, a single ball and a single basket), the coach has to use his/her imagination to keep his/her players actively involved during the entire session (with the intensity that he/she esteems appropriate in each case). The lack of resources is no excuse, simply a problem that the coach should compensate for as well as he/she can.

* For example: it is a good idea for the coach to divide the players into small groups, establishing specific goals for each group. If there are not enough balls or baskets, he/she will have to set up turns. This way, some groups can do drills without the ball and without a basket (defensive moves, fakes without the ball, plays without the ball, etc.), while others do drills with the ball. Then, the players switch.
The players should never be standing around except for short breaks to recuperate from an intense effort or if the number of players present makes this necessary.

If the number of players does not allow all of them to participate at the same time (for example, there are eleven players and the idea is to play a 5 on 5 game), the players who cannot participate should be the lowest number possible (in this case, one) and for a very short period, with the players rotating frequently.

**Practical Exercises**

- Organise a drill in which the thirteen mini-basketball players who have come to practice are actively involved; you only have three balls and one basket.
- Organise a drill in which the seven 13/14-year-olds who have come to practice are actively involved; you only have one ball and two baskets.
- Organise a drill in which the twelve 15/16-year-olds who have come to practice are actively involved, taking maximum advantage of the available means: five balls and three baskets.

**Test Drills**

If the goal of the training session is learning technical or tactical skills, the coach could include short test drills so that he/she can see how well the players have assimilated the work done.

Basically, these drills consist of incorporating more stimuli in such a way that the players have to concentrate on more requisites. If, when faced with this more complex situation, the players do not apply the skills that they have been learning, it would indicate that these skills are not yet sufficiently mastered and consequently, that the players still need specific work in a restricted setting.

*For example: let’s consider that, in a previous drill, the players had the goal of learning to take the decision of making left-hand lay-ups. They worked half-court in a 2 on 2 game during which they could only shoot using left-hand lay-ups.*
3. ORGANISING TRAINING SESSIONS

* Now, in the test drill, the coach organises a full-court 4 on 4 drill (more stimuli and consequently, greater demand) and watches to see if the players make left-hand lay-ups when they have the chance or if they continue to use their right hand. If the latter be the case, the coach may conclude that the goal of making left-hand lay-ups still needs more specific training.

**Practical Exercise**

- Organise a simple drill to work on a fundamental and then organise a test drill to check up to what point learning has been consolidated.

3.3. EVALUATION OF THE TRAINING SESSION

At the end of each session, coaches should make a brief evaluation of everything that happened in order to better control their team’s training process.

To do this, they could use a simple tool such as can be seen in Table-9, which permits them to compare their original plan with what actually happened during the practice and note down their most relevant observations concerning it. In this way, as soon as the session ends and before they forget anything, they can evaluate what took place and reflect on it in writing, in just five or ten minutes.

Obviously there are more sophisticated procedures for evaluating a practice session. But they will be totally useless if, because of their complexity, the coach forgets to use them or gives up after a few weeks. It is therefore more realistic for the coach to use a very simple procedure which he/she can easily incorporate into his/her daily duties.

The previous procedure can be completed with a more in-depth reflection at the end of each week. In this case, coaches could use a tool such as that in Table-10 to assess the work done during practice that week, dividing it into three categories: defense, offense and others. This information will help them control the week’s events and prepare the training schedule for the following week.
Table 9. After training sessions coaches may compare work planned before the session and work actually done.
### WEEKLY WORK RECORDING

WEEK: _______________________________
GOALS: __________________________________

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<th></th>
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**Table 10.** Coaches may record work actually done during the week.
**Test Exercise-6**

*Using the information from this chapter, mark the following statements True or False. The correct answers are at the end of the book.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Before the training session, the coach should decide on the goals, later improvising appropriate drills on the court.</td>
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<td>2. Enjoyable drills should not have any rules.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The antecedent stimuli of a drill are those which the coach uses to reward the players.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Drills should be varied in terms of goals but not with respect to structure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. In general, organising a training session around related drills helps make practice time more productive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Competitive drills can be set up between players or between groups of players as well as with a player or a group against himself /herself or themselves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. The important thing in competitive drills is to compete, regardless of the goal and the contents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. For mini-basketball teams, the goals related to specific game preparation should be almost as important as learning goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Attentional intensity should be high in all drills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Working with small groups simultaneously is not good because the coach cannot pay attention to everyone at the same time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Comparing the work done in a session that has just finished with the work scheduled previously for that same session helps the coach to control the team’s training process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. In general, it is a good idea to combine goals and contents related to offense and defense.</td>
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</table>
COACHING STRATEGIES FOR TRAINING SESSIONS

Jose María Buceta

4.1. CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE
4.2. LEADING DRILLS
4.3. MODELING
4.4. INSTRUCTIONS AND COMMENTS TO THE PLAYERS
4.5. QUESTIONS AND REMINDERS
4.6. RECORDING PLAYERS’ PERFORMANCE
4.7. FEEDBACK
4.8. CONTINGENCY MANAGEMENT
   • Using Reinforcement
   • Social Reinforcement
   • Token Economy
   • Using Aversive Stimuli
4.9. RECORDING COACH’S BEHAVIOUR
Besides planning and evaluating training sessions, it is also important that the coach manages the players’ work efficiently during each session. The following strategies can be used for this purpose.

4.1. CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE

In general, coaches should have a constructive attitude when leading their team’s practice sessions. Their job is not to reprimand the players when they do something wrong, nor should they be in a bad mood, and they certainly should not insult players, make fun of them or ridicule them.

During training sessions, the coach’s job is to help the players achieve the established goals, and to do this, it is essential that his/her constructive attitude be reflected in aspects such as the following:

• create a pleasant working environment in which attractive and achievable challenges and positive comments predominate;

• accept the fact that the players are not perfect and will therefore make mistakes;

• accept the fact that the players’ mistakes make up part of their training and that, therefore, there will always be mistakes;

• realise that one or several explanations will not be enough to get the players to do what they want. In many cases, showing players what they mean will be more appropriate and even then, a period of training will be necessary before the players assimilate and master the information they receive;

• understand that each young player learns at his/her own pace, and they must help each one, respecting that pace, without underestimating those who learn more slowly or with greater difficulty;

• always have a realistic perspective concerning what they can and should require of the players;
appreciate and emphasise the efforts made by the players more than the results obtained. If the players try, and the coach controls the training process, sooner or later he/she will see an improvement;

notice and highlight improvements rather than defects;

be patient when things do not turn out as expected and encourage the players to try again;

objectively analyse the players’ mistakes and difficult situations that arise during the training process in order to reach productive conclusions. Mistakes and difficult situations are excellent opportunities to know how things are going, what aspects have to be worked on or what should be modified;

always treat the players with respect and affection, no matter what happens.

This behaviour will allow coaches to win the respect of their young players and carry out their work more efficiently.

Practical Exercise

Think about how you usually lead your team’s training sessions and whether your attitude could be more constructive.

4.2. LEADING DRILLS

To lead training drills, the coach may follow a procedure such as the following:

explain the drill and its purpose to the players;

in some cases, give a practical demonstration of what is to be done so that the players can watch and better understand the goal;

establish the working rules of the drill;

at the beginning of the drill, observe if the players have understood what it is about; if they have not, stop the drill and explain again;

if they have understood the drill, leave them to do it for a while without correcting them. This way, the coach can evaluate the level at which the aim of the drill stands, as well as the players’ attentional level;
• this evaluation enables the coach to see if he/she has introduced too many stimuli at the same time, making it difficult for the players to concentrate on the aim of the drill. In this case, he/she should redo the drill, eliminating stimuli that can perhaps be reintroduced later on, once the players have assimilated key concepts;

• during the drill, the coach should not disturb the players’ concentration with his/her instructions and comments, but use these to centre their attention on key aspects of the drill;

• the coach should not act like a radio commentator, broadcasting minute-by-minute instructions to the players, but rather allow them to produce their own mental processes necessary for the development of the drill;

• the coach should talk to the players during breaks in the drill rather than while they are actively participating (for example, wait until the player has completed a fast-break before correcting him/her);

• the coach should use appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour (for example, look at the players when speaking to them, using the appropriate volume);

• the coach should ask the appropriate questions and make suitable reminders to help the players’ concentration;

• the coach should give the players feedback on their behaviour;

• if necessary, the coach may record the players’ performance;

• the coach must reinforce the players in order to strengthen the learning process and give them credit for their efforts.

Some of these strategies have been discussed in the previous chapter (explaining the purpose of a drill, establishing working rules). Others will be discussed in the following sections.

4.3. MODELING

Young players tend to observe the coach’s behaviour and that of other players, learning through imitation. For this reason, modeling is a very useful strategy for strengthening the players’ motivation and showing them what is to be learned.

Basically, modeling consists of presenting the player or the team with a significant model as an example to imitate, emphasising or demonstrating the specific behaviour to be imitated.
For example: the coach of a mini-basketball team (significant model) can show his/her players how to pass the ball so that they imitate him/her. This way, it will be easier for the players to understand what the coach wants them to do.

Another example: the coach of a team of 13/14-year-olds can talk to his/her players about other players who are significant to them (top-class players or 15/18-year-olds on a team in the same club) to explain that these players too had to do the defense drills that they are now doing. This way, the young players will be much more motivated for a task, defense drills, that at first was not very attractive to them.

A distinction should be made between two types of models: expert models and mastery models. Expert models are prestigious players or teams. Mastery models are players or teams closer to the players themselves who, although not yet recognised experts, have a higher level.

For example: an international player could be an expert model, while a player on a cadet team (15/16-year-olds) who was on the 13/14-year-old team in the same club two years earlier, could be a good mastery model.

The example of an expert model can be very motivating at first, but if it is a superior player who is too distant, the players may consider imitation of this model impossible. For this reason, it is a good idea to use expert models to increase the players’ motivation and at the same time, find mastery models that the players feel more identified with. In this way, interest in imitating the model is linked with the perception that it is really possible to imitate.

Young players tend to imitate any behaviour of the models they find attractive. However, it is important that coaches emphasise the behaviour they consider most relevant within the context of the training session. It is not a question of simply talking about the best players but rather emphasising their basket-
ball behaviours and hard work, making them an example for the players to imitate, and reinforcing these comments with examples of closer models.

* Thus, before starting a drill, the coach can demonstrate a specific movement for the players to imitate indicating, at the same time, that this is one of the fundamentals most often used by a famous player (as long as this is true). This strategy can be very useful for young players.

* Taking advantage of the players’ interest in a particular player, the coach can emphasise the specific behaviour that helps this player to be successful, demonstrating it himself /herself or getting an older player to demonstrate it.

Sometimes, models can be found within the team itself. In fact, many players learn by observing and imitating their teammates.

As we have already seen, the coach can also be an excellent model. The coach of a young team, especially mini-basketball and 13/14-year-old teams, should be able to demonstrate basketball fundamentals (passing, dribbling, etc.) so that his/her players can observe and imitate the correct movements.

Sometimes, as a complement, the coach can use videos showing expert and mastery models to be imitated.

### Practical Exercise

- Make up a list of fundamentals you can show your players, acting as a model yourself.

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### 4.4. INSTRUCTIONS AND COMMENTS TO THE PLAYERS

Instructions and comments made to the players during practice sessions should be short, clear and precise, avoiding long, ambiguous and vague instructions and comments. The coach should concentrate on what he/she wants to say, and say it clearly so that the players understand him/her and concentrate on the task at hand.

For this purpose, he/she should adapt the language he/she uses to the players’ level, avoiding the use of words or concepts that they have not mastered, or talking to them as if he/she were giving a clinic or taking part in a meeting with other coaches.
* For example: if, when explaining a 2 on 2 drill, the coach refers to faking, he/she should make sure that the players understand exactly what he/she means by this.

If the coach’s instructions and comments centre solely, specifically and clearly on the purpose of every drill, it is much more likely that the players will concentrate on the important aspects of the drill and thus perform better.

However, the opposite will occur if the coach interferes in the players’ concentration by giving them instructions and making comments related to other aspects.

* For example: if the purpose of a drill is for the players to move quickly to fast-break, the most appropriate thing during the drill is for the coach to refer only to this aspect, without suddenly deciding to correct or comment on other aspects of the game. This way, the coach will help the players to concentrate on the goal of the drill.

Along these lines, the coach should concentrate on the players’ target behaviours, not on results, because the coach should directly influence the sports behaviour (what the players do) and not the results (what the players achieve with their behaviour).

* For example: the players are doing a 1 on 1 drill. The coach should centre his/her instructions and comments on the decisions and/or the execution of the movements involved, not on baskets scored.

It is also useful for the coach to give instructions that are directly related with the attentional behaviour the players should use.

* For example: «Watch the player and the ball at the same time!», «Concentrate on the centre!», etc.

This way, the coach reminds the players of the attentional demands of the task and influences their attentional behaviour.

4.5. QUESTIONS AND REMINDERS

Usually, when a coach corrects a player, he/she should tell him/her what he/she has done wrong or what he/she should do to improve next time; in other words, the coach gives solutions that the player can assimilate to mistakes made.
In many cases, this behaviour is appropriate, especially when the players do not know the correct solutions and this is the only way for them to learn. However, if the players already know the solutions, an efficient strategy for centring their attention on the goal of the drill and make them assimilate the information is to *ask questions* so that the players themselves find the correct answers.

* For example: let’s take a lay-up learning drill for mini-basketball children. The coach wants them to step on their right foot when receiving the ball. A child does a lay-up and does not do this. Instead of pointing this out, the coach asks him/her, «What foot did you step with?»... «Which foot should you have used?»... «Are you sure?..., etc. This type of questions forces the child to find the answer himself/herself, thus leading him/her to pay more attention the next time.

Maybe the first time the coach asks the question the player will not know the answer because he/she was not paying enough attention, but his/her concentration will increase from then on in order to correctly answer successive questions. Besides, his/her teammates’ concentration will probably improve too, once they assimilate the fact that the coach may ask them questions too.

The questions system can be complemented by reminding the player what he/she has to do immediately before he/she begins («Remember that the aim is to step with your right foot when receiving the ball»). If the player has enough information, this *previous reminder* can also take the form of a question («What foot should you use when receiving the ball?»); in both cases, the players will centre their attention on the key aspect of the drill right before starting.

Both strategies, *questions* and *reminders*, are especially useful when dealing with unconsolidated skills requiring *more intense conscious attention*, or at specific moments when the coach perceives attention deficits.

The *questions* should follow the player’s behaviour as soon as possible (*immediately after* the player acts), and *previous reminders* (with or without a question) should precede the following actions *immediately before* the action takes place.
4.6. RECORDING PLAYERS’ PERFORMANCE

Recording of the players’ performance during training drills help them to concentrate on the behaviour recorded.

* For example: if the coach records, on a board or a sheet of paper, the times that each target behaviour is performed during a drill (specific passes, blocks, shots, etc.), the players will pay more attention to these behaviours and produce them more frequently. The same will occur if the coach accumulates records of the behaviours he/she considers more important.

In order to achieve this positive effect, the criteria to be used for recording should be very clear.

When dealing with *behaviours to be learned*, the criteria selected should refer to the players’ specific behaviour, rather than the results obtained.

* For instance: a record can be kept of the number of times 15/16-year-olds screen correctly (behaviour), regardless of whether the screen serves to make a basket (the result of the behaviour). In this way, the players will concentrate more intensely on the target behaviour of the drill which, in this case, is screening.

As an example, Table-11 includes a tool that can be used to take note of the players’ target behaviours.

However, when dealing with the *repetitive practice* of behaviours that have already been mastered, it might be more appropriate to record the *results of such behaviours*; these should always be results that depend on the behaviour that the players are working on.

* For example: during a repetitive shooting drill performed by a team of 17/18-year-olds, made baskets can be recorded. This way, it is more likely that the players will concentrate on the drill and not shoot carelessly.

**Practical Exercise**

- Devise a worksheet to record the frequency of a target behaviour in a practice drill.
Table 11. Example of tool to record the frequency of the behaviour «passing and moving away» in three drills during one training session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAYERS</th>
<th>DRILL-1</th>
<th>DRILL-2</th>
<th>DRILL-3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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</table>
4.7. FEEDBACK

Feedback is the information the players receive concerning what they are doing. For example, a player decides to use a specific pass to a teammate and the coach comments on that pass. In this case, the coach is providing the player with feedback on the pass used.

Feedback is an important element in maintaining and strengthening the players’ motivation, and in helping them to learn. This way, a player or a team that is motivated for a specific goal (for example, improving their fast-break) and that is making the effort to achieve this goal, needs precise information on their behaviour in order to strengthen their motivation and make the goal more attainable.

Feedback allows players, even very young ones, to control their own progress towards the goals established.

- When feedback is favourable, it is rewarding, indicating that the action performed is correct and that, therefore, it should be repeated, thus strengthening motivation to continue making the effort.
- When it is unfavourable, it helps the player to know which specific behaviour should be improved and how to do it; it also motivates him/her if he/she perceives that improvement is within his/her reach. Unfavourable feedback should include information the players need to know in order to improve in successive attempts.

Players may receive feedback from different sources. For example, by means of results obtained, by watching a video, through comments made by others or by their own feelings. However, to apply it as a technique means that the coach should control it properly, avoiding or minimising incorrect indications that the players may receive.

Basically, the coach can use verbal feedback, videos (properly controlled), appropriate objective recording of performance, and any other procedure that provides immediate information on the target behaviour.

* For example: in order to improve precision in passing, the coach can place a target at a specific distance (a mark on a wall) and establish the goal of «hitting the target». The result of each throw (hitting the target, getting close, throwing to one side, etc.) will be excellent feedback for the players taking part in this drill.

* Another example: the coach wants the players to keep their shooting arm elbow at its side when shooting, so he/she places them parallel to a wall, with their shooting arm next to it. From there, they must shoot into an imaginary or real basket. The player who sticks out his/her elbow will hit the wall, while the player who keeps his/her elbow in the proper position will not. In both cases, the players are getting excellent feedback.
Using a video to film certain parts of the practice that are especially important can also be used, basically with 15/18-year-olds. Later, the coach revises the video, choosing certain parts to show the players.

The viewing session should be set up before the next practice in which the players will again be working on the aspects filmed. In this way, the players will receive information on one or several behaviours that they will have to perform on the court immediately afterwards. These viewing sessions should not be long (in general, between five and ten minutes) nor frequent. If they are short and sporadic, they will be more meaningful to the players and therefore more valuable.

*For example: the coach of a junior team (17/18-year-olds) feels that it is important to provide feedback to his centres on their movements on the high post. He sets up a drill for this purpose and an assistant coach films it. Later, the assistant coach selects some parts of the video.

Another drill to work on this same aspect has been programmed for two days later. Before the session, the centres meet with the coach or his assistant coach and watch the selected images for five minutes. The coach takes advantage of the moment to comment on what they are seeing and invites the players to air their doubts and make suggestions.

When the meeting ends, the players go out onto the court and join their teammates. Later, when the coach organises drills to work on high post movements, the players will be focused and their performance will improve.

**Practical Exercise**

- Think of three examples of procedures that may provide immediate feedback to the players of a mini-basketball team or a team of 13/14-year-olds during a training session.

### 4.8. CONTINGENCY MANAGEMENT

The use of *rewarding* or *aversive stimuli* contingent on players’ behaviour (that is, as a *result* of this behaviour) is a very efficient strategy to enhance or reduce target behaviours.
For example: the coach can congratulate a player, in which case he/she is making use of a rewarding stimulus, or he/she can decide that a particular player has to pick up the balls after practice, applying, in this case, an aversive stimulus.

The principal purpose of the psychological techniques undertaken by this strategy is to contribute to learning relevant behaviours.

- If the purpose of the learning process is the acquisition or perfecting of behaviour (for example, improving shooting technique), as soon as possible after a player produces proper behaviour, either a rewarding stimulus should be applied (positive reinforcement) or an aversive stimulus should be withdrawn (negative reinforcement) in order to reinforce the behaviour so that the player will repeat it.

- In the same way, if the aim is to eliminate a certain kind of behaviour (for example, protesting to the referee), when the player produces this behaviour an aversive stimulus should be applied (positive punishment) or a rewarding stimulus should be withdrawn (negative punishment) so that the behaviour will be less likely to be produced in the future.

In both cases, rewarding and aversive stimuli should only be applied contingent upon the athletes’ behaviour, never on their results (that is, behaviour
will be reinforced or punished, not the results of that behaviour). Several examples follow:

* A 13-year-old player makes a decision that the coach considers correct in a 3 on 3 situation. The coach immediately congratulates her (rewarding stimuli), applying positive reinforcement so that the player will repeat the decision in the future.

* The players of a team of 17/18-year-olds are carrying out a very intense defense drill and they are tired. A player performs a defensive help that the coach wants to develop. As a reward, the coach allows the player to rest for a few minutes. In this case, the coach is withdrawing an aversive stimulus (performing such an intense drill when the players are tired), applying negative reinforcement so that the player will repeat the defensive help.

* The coach wants a 17-year-old to defend without making personal fouls. Besides showing him the corresponding technique, he sets up a drill in which the player gets a point every time he makes a foul. At the end of the practice, the player will have to stay on for a three-minute defense drill for every point accumulated.

  In this case, the coach is using an aversive stimulus (the point given and having to stay on to do defense drills) as a means of applying positive punishment to help eliminate the behaviour of making personal fouls.

  At the same time, every time the player defends without making a foul, the coach reinforces him by saying «well done!» to strengthen correct defensive behaviour.

* The coach of a team of 15/16-year-olds organises a half court 3 on 3 game in which she does not want the players to use their right hand when they should use their left. Every time a player uses her right hand when she shouldn’t, her team loses possession of the ball.

  This way, the coach is withdrawing a rewarding stimulus (the ball), applying negative punishment to eliminate the behaviour (using the right hand).

  At the same time, when the players do use their left hand, the coach applies social reinforcement («well done!») for the purpose of strengthening this correct behaviour.
As can be seen, reinforcement is used to strengthen desired behaviour and punishment is used to eliminate undesired behaviour. Also, when punishment is applied, it is very important to reinforce alternative behaviour to substitute the undesired behaviour at the same time (in the previous examples, defensive behaviour without fouling and using the left hand).

Mainly, it is better to work with reinforcement to strengthen behaviour rather than punishment to eliminate behaviour, especially with younger players. However, properly applied punishment can be very valuable in the training of young players.

### Practical Exercises

- Think of a way of reinforcing behaviour you wish to strengthen. Clearly define the behaviour, the stimuli to be applied contingently and the means of applying these stimuli. Remember that the stimuli should be applied as soon as possible.

- Think of a way of punishing behaviour you wish to eliminate. Clearly define the behaviour, the stimuli to be applied contingently and the means of applying these stimuli. Remember that, at the same time, you should reinforce alternative behaviour to substitute the behaviour to be eliminated. Define this alternative behaviour and the stimuli to be applied contingently in order to reinforce it.

### Using Reinforcement

Frequent reinforcement helps the players obtain a high level of gratification. This is a valuable benefit which strengthens their motivation to the sport and helps them learn target behaviours. This is why it is so important for coaches to use reinforcement frequently.

Stimuli used to reinforce are called reinforcers, with a distinction being made between social and material reinforcers.

- **Social reinforcers** include respect, recognition, approval and the coach’s attention; for example, the coach appreciates the effort made by a player to recuperate the ball, «Well done!», «That's the way!», «Good!».

- **Material reinforcers** are tangible objects that should be important to the players; for example, rest periods, being able to skip a difficult or boring drill, choosing the drill they want to do, winning a cup, etc.
Both types of reinforcers are compatible and can be perfectly combined.

* For example: the coach of a junior team (17/18-year-olds) can recognise the players’ efforts in a very intense drill (social reinforcement) and simultaneously end the practice early (material reinforcement).

Reinforcers should not be applied arbitrarily but rather as a consequence of the players’ behaviour. In fact, the key to reinforcement is that the players perceive that they are obtaining something thanks to what they are doing.

This way, they achieve very valuable personal gratification and will know how to achieve it again in the future.

And, as has already been pointed out, the most valuable reinforcement is that which is given immediately after the behaviour which is being rewarded is produced.

For all of these reasons, the coach should apply the reinforcement as soon as possible, stating the reason for which it is being applied in order to avoid any confusion.

* For example: after a good fake by a player, the coach could say, «Good, Peter, that was a good fake!».

Social Reinforcement

As with material reinforcement, social reinforcement should be applied immediately after the behaviour which the coach wishes to strengthen.

* For example: the coach wants the players on a mini-basketball team to look at the hoop every time they receive the ball; whenever this behaviour is performed, the coach says aloud, «That’s the way, good!».

Social reinforcement should not be applied indiscriminately but rather as a consequence of the behaviour that has improved (even slightly) in the personal progress of each player.

* For example: a mini-basketball player who does not usually go down to defend runs back at the same time as her teammates during a particular play. This is an excellent opportunity for the coach to apply social reinforcement with this player: «Well done Julia!». 
It is important for coaches working with young players to be alert to opportunities to apply social reinforcement. This way they will be correctly using a very efficient tool.

During training sessions, social reinforcement is very valuable for three reasons:

• it provides the player with information on his/her behaviour (feedback);
• it is very rewarding, because the player appreciates the coach’s recognition;
• it contributes to the creation of a positive atmosphere within the training environment.

For these reasons, social reinforcement influences the players’ motivation and concentration, making it a work tool that the coach should use generously.

Social reinforcement is especially important for children’s teams and in fact, those coaches who use it frequently make the experience of sports more satisfying and productive in every sense for the children.

Social reinforcement also helps children to learn the target behaviours programmed; therefore, their sports performance improves significantly when this strategy is used.

Practical Exercise

• Watch a children’s coach and note down the number of times he/she uses social reinforcement with his/her players. Take note too of the chances he/she has to use this strategy but doesn´t.

Token Economy

On one hand, we know how important it is to apply reinforcement as soon as possible. But on the other hand, the coach cannot continuously stop the practice in order to apply reinforcement. The technique known as Token Economy solves this problem.

Every time the target behaviour is produced, a point is given. The points are added up and allow the player to obtain an attractive reward later. Thus, each point reinforces the target behaviour.
* For example: the coach wants 15/16-year-olds to pass the ball more often to the post from specific positions on the court, and he organises a 4 on 4 half court game for this purpose. He establishes that, every time a player passes the ball to the post from those positions, the player’s team gets a point. At the end of the game, which lasts ten minutes, the team that has made a minimum of seven points will have a five-minute break.

* Points will have to be noted immediately after each time the behaviour of «passing the ball to the post» is produced. To do this, every time the ball is passed from the established positions, the coach should yell out, «point!», and note down the corresponding point, if possible on a board visible to the players.

To make this technique work, the following aspects should be taken into account:

- The reward should be attractive.
- For example, it would be attractive for the players to be able to rest during an intense training session or play a game where they can pick their teammates. Meeting the challenge posed by the drill (in the previous example, achieving a minimum of seven points) would also be attractive.
To make this strategy more valuable, the coach should take into account the age of his/her players and what he/she knows about them (what do they like?). He/she should consider that, in general, an infrequent stimulus will be more attractive to them than a frequent one; for example, it will be more attractive for them to play a game with no rules, in which they choose their teammates, if they do not often do this than if they have already played several games like this during the same practice.

The total number of points needed to obtain the final award should be attainable in the time allowed and under the conditions of the drill.

In the previous example, there should be enough time so that, under the conditions set for this drill (space in which the game is played, number of players, specific rules) the players have the opportunity to pass to the post as often (and more) as the points needed to achieve the goal.

The precise behaviour and the antecedent stimuli necessary to obtain points should be made very clear.

In the previous example, the behaviour is to «pass the ball to the post» and the antecedent stimuli are the areas established by the coach (and no others) from which the ball should be passed. Only when the behaviour is produced under these antecedent stimuli will the point be granted; that is, only when the ball is passed to the post from those positions on the court.

Before starting the drill, the players should know exactly what the time limit and the goals are, and the conditions of the Token Economy programme; that is, the target behaviour (including antecedent stimuli) by which they can obtain points, the final reward and the number of points necessary to obtain it.

The concession of each point should be immediate.

For this, without stopping the drill, the coach or assistant coach assigned to this task should yell out, «Point!» as soon as the target behaviour is produced, without waiting for the result. In the previous example, the coach would yell, «Point!» as soon as a player passes the ball to the post from the established positions and preferably before knowing the result of the action (for example, before noting if the post took advantage of the pass to score).

Sometimes, to clarify the relationship between the behaviour and the point, it would be a good idea for the coach to call out the point and the reason it has been given; for example, «Point for passing the ball!».

It is advisable to use a scoreboard or blackboard that is visible to all of the players for registering points. If a scoreboard or blackboard is not available, the coach can note down the points on a piece of paper and
every once in awhile, whenever there is a pause, indicate to the players the number of points they have accumulated.

**Practical Exercises**

- Design a Token Economy programme for a mini-basketball training session.
- Design a Token Economy programme for a training session of 13/14-year-olds.
- Design a Token Economy programme for a training session of 15/16-year-olds or 17/18-year-olds.

**Using Aversive Stimuli**

We have said that a coach who is working with young players should predominantly apply reinforcement, but the psychological technique of punishment can also be useful and educational, as long as it fulfills the following conditions:

- it should be proportionate in value and basically symbolic;
- it should be previously established, defining as clearly as possible what it involves and why it is being applied (rather than having the coach decide arbitrarily);
- it should serve the purpose of increasing the players’ interest in challenging goals related to avoiding the punishment;
- avoiding the punishment should be within the reach of the players’ performance capabilities;
4. COACHING STRATEGIES FOR TRAINING SESSIONS

- at the same time, reinforcement should be applied to strengthen alternative behaviour.

* For example: before starting a 3 on 3 game, the coach could establish that every time a player dribbles with the wrong hand she gets a negative point and that, at the end of the game, the team with the most points will have to carry the other team on piggyback.

Avoidance of this basically symbolic aversive contingency will increase the players’ motivation towards the goal of the drill and will help them to concentrate on not dribbling with the wrong hand. At the same time, the coach can use social reinforcement («Well done!») every time a player uses the correct hand.

Therefore, the importance of punishment is not to penalise the players to make the coach look «tough» or show that he/she is strict, but rather to provoke that avoiding punishment constitute a motivating challenge for the players, getting them to concentrate particularly on the behaviour to be eliminated.

4.9. RECORDING COACH’S BEHAVIOUR

Recording the behaviour of the coach leading the training session is an interesting exercise. A trusted observer can do this or the practice session can be recorded on video for the coach to later watch. For this purpose, a tool like that shown in Table-12 can be used.

This type of observation is useful for the coach to know how he/she trains and to think about changes he/she should adopt to improve his/her methods.

Using this or other procedures, it is important for coaches to periodically assess their behaviour if they want to perfect their working methods and improve their performance as a coach.

Practical Exercise
- Observe a coach during a training session and record his/her behaviour, using a tool similar to that shown in Table-12.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COACH’S BEHAVIOUR DURING TRAINING DRILLS</th>
<th>TRAINING DRILLS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Explains the goal of the drill</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>2. Explains the drill’s working rules</td>
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<td>3. Looks at the players when speaking to them</td>
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<td>4. Acts as model to demonstrate the target behaviour</td>
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<td>5. Centres his/her verbal behaviour on the goal of the drill</td>
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<td>6. Gives clear, unambiguous instructions</td>
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<td>7. Gives precise, to-the-point instructions</td>
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<td>8. Uses appropriate tone, volume and speed of voice</td>
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<td>9. Centres on the players´ behaviour, not their results</td>
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<td>10. Highlights the relevant antecedent stimuli</td>
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<td>11. Uses questions when the players already have the information they need</td>
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<td>12. Makes a distinction between decision and execution</td>
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<td>13. Provides immediate, constructive feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Correctly uses social reinforcement</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Correctly applies reinforcement and punishment</td>
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<td>16. Uses objective performance recording</td>
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<td>17. Encourages the players</td>
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<td>18. (Other)</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. (Other)</td>
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### Test Exercise-7:

Based on the information contained in this chapter, state whether the following are True or False. The correct answers are at the end of the book.

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1. Ridiculing a player in front of teammates is a good motivating strategy.
2. Once the coach has explained to the players what they have to do, they usually do it immediately.
3. The coach should assess and emphasise players’ behaviour more than their results.
4. When a star player is used as a role model, it is important to highlight specific behaviour that young players should imitate.
5. While the players are doing drills, the coach should correct any mistakes he/she sees.
6. Players learn more quickly if the coach is constantly telling them what they have to do.
7. Recording of performance during training drills helps the players to concentrate on the behaviour recorded.
8. Feedback allows players, even very young ones, to control their progress.
9. Positive reinforcement helps to acquire or perfect behaviour, and negative reinforcement to eliminate behaviour.
10. Reinforcement should be applied as soon as possible after the behaviour which the coach wants to strengthen is produced.
11. Coaches who work with young players should be generous in their use of social reinforcement.
12. Token Economy should only be used with 15/18-year-olds.
13. The purpose of punishment is for the players to get used to discipline.
14. When applying punishment to eliminate behaviour, reinforcement to strengthen alternative behaviour should be applied simultaneously.
COACHES’ BEHAVIOUR AT GAMES

Jose María Buceta

5.1. COACH’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS BASKETBALL GAMES

5.2. COACH’S BEHAVIOUR BEFORE THE GAME
• Preparing for the Game
• Kind of Comments

5.3. COACH’S BEHAVIOUR DURING THE GAME
• Periods of Active Participation
  • Helping Players’ Concentration
  • Kind of Comments
• Pauses
  • Pauses in Game Time
• Time-Outs
• Half-Time

5.4. COACH’S BEHAVIOUR AFTER THE GAME
In a previous chapter, we said that coaches should understand the function of games within the context of their team’s activities and consequently, programme games to fulfill this function.

It is also important that coaches control their own behaviour during games. The coach is not a fan and should not behave as one. The coach is an expert who should control his/her behaviour to make the games, whatever their function, a valuable experience for his/her team.

5.1. COACH’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS BASKETBALL GAMES

As with training sessions, coaches working with young players should have an objective, constructive and positive attitude towards basketball games:

- **Objective**, because they should objectively assess what their players can do (before the game), what they are doing (during the game) and what they have done (after the game).
- **Constructive**, because whatever happens during the game, coaches should use it so that their players, both individually and collectively, obtain benefits that will influence their athletic and human development.
- **Positive**, because, without losing objectivity, the game is not the moment to make an in-depth analysis of mistakes but to emphasise the players’ positive behaviour and to encourage them to do things without being afraid of failing.

Coaches should be very clear as to what they can realistically expect from their players and not demand more from them; they should assume that the players will make many mistakes which are natural considering their obvious limitations and also the following facts:

- the best players in the world, during their best games, have missed shots that seemed easy. How can a coach get angry with young players when they miss shots that seem easy?
- the best players make mistakes when passing and lose balls. How can a coach get angry with young players when they make mistakes passing and lose the ball?

Many coaches who work with young players lose the appropriate perspective and the self-control that they should have during games when their players make perfectly normal mistakes, and instead of concentrating on aspects that should be made taken advantage of, they stress the players by making unproductive comments that increase their insecurity, turning the game into an aversive experience.
In fact, many young players who start out enthusiastically playing mini-basketball or basketball lose this enthusiasm and, in many cases, quit, because games become very stressful experiences that they cannot deal with. The coach’s behaviour is an essential element in avoiding this problem and in getting games to be positive, whatever the result.

Therefore, the coach should establish realistic goals for the game and realise that certain aspects will not go well:

- some because this is normal considering the players’ level, since they will not be able to do more than what they are capable of;
- others because this is normal bearing in mind that, in this sport, there is an inevitable margin of error that has to be accepted; that is, no matter how well prepared the players are, mistakes will be made in areas of the game that they have mastered, as occurs with the best players.

So coaches should be prepared to tolerate their players’ mistakes and continue to coach the game without letting those mistakes to affect them emotionally.

Coaches should also be prepared to make constructive use of the experience of the game, whatever it may be:

- on one hand, reinforcing positive aspects so that the players will repeat them;
- on the other hand, observing what goes wrong and what can realistically be improved, in order to work on it in later practice sessions.

Games are not the appropriate environment for correcting serious mistakes (that is what practice is for) and, therefore, it is useless for the coach to waste his/her energy on this; furthermore, by doing this, the coach will only harm the players’ performance.

During a game, coaches should concentrate on positive aspects, reinforcing them so that they will be repeated, and limit themselves to correcting details that can realistically be changed.
Nor should coaches spend too much time on past plays (this can be done later, when they analyse the entire game) but concentrate on the present and the future of the game.

The important thing is not what has already happened and cannot be changed, but what is happening right now or what could happen during the rest of the game.

* For example: what is important is not that the opposing team has scored several baskets using fast-breaks, but to use this experience so that this will no longer occur from that moment on.

* Therefore, the coach should not worry about baskets scored by the opposing team or recriminate his/her players because of this, but rather give them constructive instructions with contents that the players have mastered in order to correct or reduce this problem for the rest of the game.

This objective, constructive and positive outlook is very important in order to efficiently lead young players’ teams in every aspect.
5. COACHES’ BEHAVIOUR AT GAMES

Practical Exercises

• Think about how mistakes made by your players affect you and remember your reactions.

• Reflect on what you expect from your players during games. Do you establish realistic goals? Do you simply demand of them what they can realistically do? Do you accept that they will make mistakes?

• Consider whether you use the experience of each game in such a way that your young players continue to progress regardless of the score and of success or mistakes made. Do you take advantage of games that generally went well? Do you take advantage of games that generally went badly?

5.2. COACH’S BEHAVIOUR BEFORE THE GAME

As we have already said, before the game the coach should decide on the goals of the game and have realistic expectations concerning his/her players’ possible performance. What can I expect of them? Is this realistic? What can they really do?

Preparing for the Game

As an example, Table-13 provides a tool that could be useful for the coach in preparing for a game:

• first of all, coaches should specify the goals and plans for the game (obviously bearing in mind their teams’ characteristics and general objectives);

• secondly, coaches should anticipate the most likely problems to arise during the game (for example, a mini-basketball coach could anticipate that his/her players will lose the ball when the opposing team pressures them);

• thirdly, coaches should decide what they will do to offset these problems (in the previous case, for example, tell the players not to worry and encourage them even when they lose the ball).

By anticipating possible problems, these will not take the coach by surprise, so he/she will not get angry at the players and he/she will know what to do when difficulties arise during the game.
Table 13. Example of tool to prepare for games. Coach should establish goals and plans, anticipate possible difficulties and be ready when the difficulties appear.
By deciding what to do if problems arise, the coach can prepare a strategy (for teams with more resources) or prepare the strategy that he/she will use when coaching the game.

The previous example shows what can happen with a mini-basketball team. It would be absurd for the coach to try to prepare a basketball strategy to offset the negative effects of a possibly press defense on the part of the opposing team, because it is unlikely that his/her players will be prepared to assimilate it. However, it is appropriate that the coach know beforehand what he/she will do in his/her role as coach when this problem arises to make the game a positive experience in any case.

Depending on the level of the players and the type of difficulties, basketball strategies can perhaps be prepared for older basketball teams but, in any case, it is important that the coach prepare the strategy that he/she will adopt in his/her role as coach directing the game.

Practical Exercise

- During your team’s next game, prepare yourself beforehand, following the guidelines set out here: decide on your team’s goals and plans for that game; anticipate the most likely problems; and decide what you will do if these problems arise.

Kind of Comments

Coaches should also be careful of their behaviour with respect to the players. What does the coach say to them? How does he/she control their expectations? How does he/she avoid the players making the game more important than it is? Let’s look at some suggestions:

- in general, it is important for the coach to maintain a balanced attitude around the players, with respect to the games;
- it is not a good idea to talk too much about the game beforehand, nor refer to the possible score, especially using stressful comments such as, «We’ve got to win next Saturday»;
- the coach should remind the players that the important thing is for them to enjoy themselves and do the best they can;
- the coach could also tell the players that, whatever happens, it is important for them to continue to improve, so they should concentrate on what they have to do and forget about the score («Whatever happens, we do our thing.»).
At such moments, it is important for the coach to strengthen the players’ perception of control. To do this, he/she should avoid referring to aspects that they cannot directly control (the final score) and concentrate on controllable aspects, basically own behaviours that they have mastered.

Thus, the team’s goals before a game should be only performance goals, and the coach’s instructions and comments should be centred solely on the players’ behaviour.

Also, right before a game, the coach should keep in mind that the players tend to be nervous, anxious for the game to start, and that under these conditions their attentional capacity is very reduced, so he/she should avoid trying to transmit too much information or complex information.

At times like these, coaches should limit themselves to reminding the players of three or four key aspects of the game, briefly outlining the specific behaviour that they consider essential and which the players have mastered.

Practical Exercise

- Using the contents discussed in this section, think about what you should tell your players before the game.

5.3. COACH’S BEHAVIOUR DURING THE GAME

During a game, the coach’s behaviour can decisively influence the players’ performance, either positively or negatively. How should the coach behave so that his/her players do their best and make the game a beneficial experience?

Following are some suggestions, differentiating periods of active participation from pauses:
• periods of *active participation* are those during which the players are playing;
• *pauses* are those other periods when play is stopped (after a personal foul, time-outs, half-time, etc.).

### Periods of Active Participation

During periods of active participation, the coach’s behaviour can interfere negatively with the appropriate performance of the players.

* For example: the coach who, from the sidelines, recriminates his/her players or gives them instructions during these periods, may make them more nervous or distract their attention from the game. Thus, he/she will favour players’ mistakes.

For this reason, it is better for the coaches to talk to the players during pauses and not during periods of active participation.

In any case, if they feel that they should speak to them during the periods of active participation, they should refer to what the players should do at that moment, not to aspects that have already occurred and that may be important later on but which right then are not relevant.

* For example: let’s think of a player who made a mistake while playing defense, allowing the player he was guarding to score. The coach gets angry and gets up from the bench to recriminate the player for what has happened, warning him to pay attention next time. While this is happening, the team is attacking: the players have rapidly taken the ball and they are now moving forwards to get a good shot. Hearing the coach, the player who made the mistake gets nervous and distracted, so when he gets the ball he makes a wrong decision and loses it.

What happened? Although perhaps the coach was right in telling the player off, he did it at the wrong time, and this had a negative effect on the player’s performance in the following play.

### Helping Players’ Concentration

Continuing with this example, even if the coach had not recriminated the player for his mistake, simply by referring to an aspect that *is distinct from*
what is happening at the moment, he will have favoured a division of the player’s attention between two very different types of stimuli:

• on one hand, the player has to listen to and assimilate what the coach is telling him concerning the defensive error;

• on the other hand, he has to observe the stimuli that are key in executing the offensive task at hand.

The coach’s intervention would have been more efficient if, instead of acting impulsively, he had mastered the skill of using his comments to positive effect.

* For example: it would have been more appropriate not to say anything at that moment, allowing the player to concentrate on the offensive task at hand, and make a constructive comment on the defense immediately before the next defensive play.

This way, the coach would not have altered the player’s concentration while he was participating in the offensive play, and the coach’s comment would have been much more efficient in avoiding another error if it had been made at the right moment.

Therefore, if the coach transmits instructions during periods of active participation, these should be related to the task that the players are performing at the moment at which they receive them (not the other way around).

Because basketball is a sport in which defense and offense situations alternate, coaches should be careful to give, during these periods, instructions concerning defensive aspects when their team is defending, and instructions concerning offensive aspects when their team is attacking.

Practical Exercises

• Watch a coach directing a game and note down how many times he/she addresses his/her players during periods of active participation and how many during pauses (without counting time-outs or half-time).

• Watch a coach when, during a game, he/she address his/her players during periods of active participation and note whether his/her comments are related to the task being performed by the players at that moment or if they refer to different aspects.

• For both exercises, a tool such as that shown in Table-14 can be used.
Table 14. Example of tool to record frequency of comments from coach to players during periods of active participation and pauses.
Kind of Comments

In general, during periods of active participation, the players should be allowed to act without the coach giving them instructions, with his/her intervention being limited to very relevant moments.

This measure is especially important for teams of young players, because it allows them to show initiative, take on responsibility and develop their talent instead of waiting for the coach to tell them what to do.

Likewise, the coach should avoid insults and derogatory remarks, adopting a positive and constructive style in order to help the players.

Therefore, more than recrimination and correction, it would be more appropriate during these periods for the coach to prompt or reinforce the individual or the collective behaviour he/she wants to consolidate.

- In the first case, the coach could make a comment such as, «Tommy, go get the ball!» (prompting) exactly in the situation and at the moment when the player can perform this action.
- In the second case, when the player gets the ball with or without prompting, the coach could say, «Good, Tommy!» (reinforcement) exactly after the action is performed.

Prompting should be used infrequently because the point is not to tell the players what they have to do every minute of the game but to remind them of certain behaviour at very specific moments. This can be especially appropriate to centre the players’ attention after an error.

* For example: a player misses a lay-up and the coach tells him, «Alex, move down quick to defend.»

However, reinforcement should be generously used, especially with mini-basketball teams and 13/14-year-olds; the coach should take advantage of every deserving opportunity to reinforce his/her players.

When coaching their players during periods of active participation, coaches should concentrate on reinforcing correctly executed actions, including efforts made.
5. COACHES’ BEHAVIOUR AT GAMES

Practical Exercise

- Using a tool such as that shown in Table-15, observe a coach and note the number of times he/she reinforces his/her players when they execute an effective action.

Apart from verbal behaviour, a coach should be careful with his/her *non-verbal* expressions (his/her attitude on the bench or on the sidelines, his/her gestures, etc.) because this also affects his/her players’ performance.

In the same way, the coach should control comments made within ear-shot of the players sitting on the bench, avoiding insults and derogatory expressions made about the players on the court or any comment that shows his/her lack of control over the game (for example, «This is a disaster! I haven’t got the slightest idea what to do!»).

Comments such as these lead to rejection and a lack of confidence on the part of the players, both those not playing who overhear them as well as for their teammates when they find out.

In general, when coaching the game, coaches should avoid making gestures of disapproval, anger or discouragement respecting the behaviour of their players, maintaining a *relaxed attitude* which will help both the players as well as themselves to perform better.

**Pauses**

The activity of both the coach and the players during pauses is essential. If properly used, breaks in the game can be a great help for the players to recuperate physically (as far as possible) and prepare themselves to perform better during upcoming periods of active participation; but if the pauses are poorly used, they can be very negative because the players have time for negative thoughts or images or they can be influenced by external elements that alter their optimum per-
Table 15. Tool to record frequency of reinforcement from coach to players during periods of active participation.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAYER</th>
<th>DEFENSE</th>
<th>OFFENSE</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>WHOLE TEAM</td>
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formance (things happening around them, comments made by the coach or their teammates, etc.).

In basketball, pauses can be divided into three categories: during game time when the referee stops the game (when calling a personal foul, when the ball goes out, etc.), time-outs and half-time.

**Pauses in Game Time**

The behaviour of the coach during pauses in game time could benefit from the following recommendations:

- his/her comments to the players should be very clear, specific and concise;
- the principal purpose of his/her comments should be to centre the players' attention on key aspects of the upcoming period of active participation, without stopping to analyse what has already occurred in previous plays;
- he/she should not speak or yell without a specific purpose; if he/she is nervous or angry, he/she should use another procedure to calm down, but not speak to the players if it is not necessary;
- he/she should not continually address the players to tell them how to act; they need autonomy and they cannot be constantly dependent on the coach. Besides, many players feel uncomfortable if the coach corrects them frequently, and this increases their anxiety, causing them to perform even more poorly; often, these players disconnect and ignore what the coach tells them;
- the coach can use pauses to reinforce efforts made by his/her players on less showy tasks (for example, defense behaviour, helping teammates, running back, etc.) or suitable actions which he/she feels he/she should insist upon even though these have not yet produced a positive result;
For example: a team of 13/14-year-olds is trying to execute Fast-Breaks, following the coach’s instructions. After an attempt ending in a bad pass that goes out, the coach reinforces her players, saying «Good, that’s the way. Keep working on the fast-break!».

- the coach can also use breaks to encourage the players after their errors, getting them to concentrate on tasks during the next period of active participation;

For example: a player has lost the ball and then made a personal foul. The coach tells her, «Go on, Sally, forget it and defend your player».

- just as in periods of active participation, the coach should avoid derogatory, disapproving or discouraging gestures and comments;

- when working with young players, the coach should not use this time or any other to insult or question the referee, but should be a model of behaviour for his/her players, accepting and respecting the referee’s authority and his/her work.

**Time-Outs**

These same guidelines can be applied to time-outs and half-time although, in these cases, because there is more time available, the coach should establish a working routine.

During time-outs, the coach could follow suggestions such as the following:

- get the players used to moving quickly to the sidelines or the bench;
- allow fifteen seconds for the players to drink water, dry off the sweat and relax a little while the coach decides what he/she wants to say to them;
- establish that the only person to talk during time-outs is the coach; not the assistant coaches nor the players, only the coach. Otherwise, the players’ attention will wander and they will not be able to concentrate on the comments that the coach has decided to make;
- do not try to say too much, especially to younger players;
- do not speak too quickly; speak energetically but without getting «wound up». Use full sentences, give clear and precise instructions, use words and phrases that are understandable to the players;
• when addressing the players, in the first place, if the last play or plays have been unfortunate, make a brief reference to this so that the players forget about it and concentrate on other aspects (for example, «Forget that run of mistakes, let’s concentrate on what we have to do from here on»);

• then, briefly reinforce the correct behaviours that he/she considers most important (for example, «We’re doing a good job moving quickly down to defend. Keep it up.»);

• if the team has had a good run just before the time-out, the coach should reinforce the effort and concentration related with this («You’re making good passes, keep on looking for unguarded teammates.»);

• after briefly reinforcing the previous principal actions, the coach should centre atten-
tion on actions that should take precedence during the next period of active participation (for example, «You´ve got to move faster to get the ball»; «Max, try to play 1 on 1 when you get a pass», etc.);

- finally, the coach should say some words of encouragement (for example, «Come on, boys, go out and have a good time», «Go on, keep fighting»);

- in general, it is appropriate that the coach divert the players’ attention from the scoreboard and centre it on what they have to do (for example, «Forget the score», «Play as if the scoreboard isn´t there», «Just focus on what you have to do»).

Time-outs are great opportunities to educate the players, helping them to improve both individually and as a team. Do not waste them, but use them efficiently.
### Test Exercise-8

- Think about how you behave during time-outs and answer the following questions choosing one of the three options (Usually, Sometimes or Almost Never). You will find a comment on your answers at the end of the book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do your players move quickly to the sidelines or the bench?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do you give your players time to drink water and relax a bit before starting to talk to them?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Are you the only one who talks during time-outs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Do you tell your players off for mistakes made during previous plays?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Do you reinforce good plays that you want the players to repeat?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Do you speak quickly so that you have time to say a lot?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Do you try to centre the players’ attention on the most important behaviour for the upcoming period of active participation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Do you remind your players that they should think about winning?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Do you make fun of a player when you want him to react and play better?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Do you run out of time to say everything you want to the players?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Do you tend to say something encouraging just before the players go out onto the court?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Half-Time**

Half-time is the longest pause and therefore, the moment when the coach can intervene directly in the greatest measure.

Half-time should be used for the players to rest, go to the bathroom, drink water, adjust their equipment or bandages, apply ice to alleviate the pain of a blow, etc., and for the coach to talk to them about improving their performance during the second half.

This is precisely the objective that coaches should have when they address their players during half-time, to help them improve their performance during the second half, leaving for another moment comments about what happened during the first half that are not relevant to achieving this objective.

- In the first place, just as with time-outs, the coach should establish a working routine for the half-time, including all activities appropriate to this period. This way, he/she will make the best use of available time.

- Before talking to the players, the coach should briefly meditate on what he/she wants to tell them instead of acting impulsively, without any type of strategy. The half-time break is very valuable and should not be wasted on improvisation dictated by the coach’s mood. Even though there is little time, the coach should decide what his/her goals and strategies should be in order to make the best use of the half-time break.

- When giving instructions the coach should follow the guidelines that usually predominate for a game: the instructions should be few, precise and very clear, centred on the specific behaviour that the players should produce during the second half.

Briefly, the coach should remind, correct or reinforce actions from the first half, as long as these are relevant to the second half, finishing up with very specific instructions for the second half.

The kind of behaviours from the first half that the coach should reinforce so that they will be repeated during the second half should be:
5. COACHES’ BEHAVIOUR AT GAMES

- effort behaviours (anticipate in defense, run fast-breaks, block rebounds, etc.);
- concentration behaviours (quick reactions when playing defense and offense);
- control behaviours (handle the ball well, not make personal fouls by lowering the arm, etc.);
- cooperation behaviours (play with the post, pass to unguarded teammates, talking in defense, defensive help, etc.).

However, it is not a good idea to highlight sporadic abilities (for example, a flashy shot).

This way, the reinforcement will strengthen the players’ self-confidence by highlighting behaviour that depends mainly on them.

In any case, the coach should finish his/her talk by specifying the main performance goals for the second half, and transmitting an optimistic message to encourage the players.

### Practical Exercise

- Using the previous information and the tool in Table-16, think about what you usually do during game half-time and note down aspects you can improve.

5.4. COACH’S BEHAVIOUR AFTER THE GAME

Once the game is over, the coach should adopt a balanced attitude regardless of what has occurred. He/she should neither be euphoric when his/her team wins and the players have played well nor be depressed when they lose and play badly.

A coach working with young players should remember that games are a unique educational experience, with the most important moment coming at the end of the game. It is then that young players have to learn to tolerate the frustration of defeat or of having played badly and also to place victory and a good game in the proper perspective.

A young players’ coach is a role model who, at such moments more than any other, should demonstrate the proper behaviour that the players will imitate, and the same should be said of parents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT DO I USUALLY DO IN HALF-TIME</th>
<th>WHAT ASPECTS MIGHT I IMPROVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</table>

**Table 16.** Half-time self-assessment.
When the game is over, it is important for the coach to control his/her feelings and teach his/her players to congratulate their opponents and the referee in a relaxed, sportslike manner.

The game has finished and there will be time to analyse it later. What is important now is that the coach **show his/her support** for his/her players. It is not necessary to organise a talk or, for example, try to convince the ones who are sad that losing is not important. It’s enough that the coach be there with them, that he/she say a few encouraging words (without going too far) and that he/she take leave of them optimistically until the next practice.

This is not the moment to analyse, explain or correct anything. The players **need time to live their emotions in peace**, because this too is something they can learn from basketball.
**Test Exercise-9**

- Answer the following questions, choosing one of the four options (Usually, Sometimes, Almost Never or Never). You will find comments on your answers at the back of the book.

When you coach your team in a game...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you tend to see the negative aspects of your team more than the positive ones?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do you get angry when the players make mistakes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Do you reinforce the players when they try to produce the correct behaviour, even if they are not successful?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Do you encourage the players when they make a mistake and try to centre their attention quickly on the task at hand?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Do you assess your players’ performance based on the final score: if they win, you think they have done almost everything right; if they lose, you think they have done almost everything wrong?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Do you constantly tell the players what they have to do?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Do you insult or make fun of the players?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Are you capable of coaching the game objectively, regardless of the scoreboard?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Do you insult or protest to the referees?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Do you tend to transmit positive messages to the players?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Do you spend most of the half-time recriminating the players for mistakes made during the first half?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Do you make disapproving gestures or comments to your players?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Do you congratulate the coach of the opposing team after the game and teach your players that they should do the same with their opponents?</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Just after losing a game, do you organise a talk with the players to tell them what they did wrong?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
MINI-BASKETBALL

Maurizio Mondoni

6.1. GENERAL GUIDELINES
- 6-7 Year-Olds
- 8-9 Year-Olds
- 10-11-12 Year-Olds
- The Base-Game

6.2. DRILLS FOR PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
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- Shooting
- Dribbling and Shooting
- Passing
- Dribbling, Passing and Shooting
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6.4. ORIENTATIVE PRACTICE PLANS
- 6-7 Year-Olds
- 8-9 Year-Olds
- 10-11-12 Year-Olds
6.1. GENERAL GUIDELINES

In previous chapters we have explained many concepts to be applied when coaching a mini-basketball team. In this chapter, we pinpoint some specific suggestions and explain appropriate drills with mini-basketball players.

6-7 Year-Olds

At the age of 6-7 children’s sensory-perceptive abilities, motor and postural patterns and motor abilities need to be trained and developed by playing with the body, small props and larger equipment.

The more gestures and movements are introduced the more a child’s motor skills will improve.

Drills and games must be presented in a general form, asking to the players questions like «Let us see who can...?»

The practice must be held in a tranquil, relaxed climate. Children must make their own «guided» discoveries (music helps a lot and facilitates learning).

The analytical teaching of basketball fundamentals should be avoided at all costs at this age, proposing instead the performance of motor patterns in a playful form:

- running
- jumping
- throwing and catching
- etc.

8-9 Year-Olds

At this age, it is necessary to continue training and developing basic motor patterns (perfecting techniques) so that they can be (gradually) transformed into specific motor abilities through the training and development of motor abilities (especially coordination capacity, joint mobility capacity, as well as conditional capacities).

Children must play doing dribbling, passing, shooting, defending; all of these activities should be presented by the coach in a general form, taking as his/her starting point the playing rules of mini-basketball.

However, before analysing mini-basketball «playing rules», it is important to make children able to understand:
• the movements they can perform in space and time;
• the space available to play;
• what they must do when playing offense;
• what they have to do when playing defense;
• the rules of the game.

When a child is «ready», playing rules can be presented, from which basketball fundamentals can later be drawn:

✓ «You cannot walk or run while holding the ball; so in order to move on court you must dribble».
✓ «To win the game you must score more baskets than your opponents; therefore you have to shoot in the opponent´s basket».
✓ «You cannot always play alone against everybody, but having teammates; you need to pass them the ball».
✓ «The opposing team must not score more baskets than your team; therefore you have to defend your own basket». 
From the base-game (global training), which is not only 1 on 1, 2 on 2 or 3 on 3 (global form), but can also be any drill-game or pre-sporting game, the coach can observe what is happening on court, assessing the players’ progress.

In this way the coach will work more on what has not been properly learned or understood (analytical form), using drill-games to improve incorrect situations, before returning to the global game to verify whether playing ability (individual and team) has improved.

* For example: during the 1 on 1 drill, the coach observes that the children do not know how to dribble. He/she will work on dribbling, proposing «ad hoc» drills, and then return to 1 on 1 situations to verify whether dribbling has improved.

10-11-12 Year-Olds

At this age the work to train and develop motor abilities continues; basketball fundamentals are perfected and corrections become more analytical in nature.

It is even more important at this stage, to start from a global situation (1 on 1, 2 on 2, 3 on 3-free situations) before going on to an analytical work and then returning to the global situation. However, specialist roles must not be established, gestures and movements must not be extremely technical yet, the game must be in a free form, the playing ideas (in offense an defense) presented by the coach should be simple at the beginning.

The final aim should be that of bringing children to play 5 on 5 in a slightly more organised way.

The Base-Game

The base-game (1 on 1, 2 on 2, 3 on 3, 4 on 4, 5 on 5) is the ideal starting point for a coach when teaching mini-basketball after having built up a strong multilateral motor base.

1 on 1 Base-Game

The 1 on 1 base-game may be used in a simple manner with children in the 8-9 age group and in a more complex fashion with children in the 10-11-12 age group.
At 8-9 years, the coach must accept that children cannot be expected to perform over-complicated gestures and movements, he/she must be patient and carefully observe players’ behaviour on court.

At the age of 10-11-12, more difficult gestures and movements can be expected, since the motor experiences of children have significantly increased and are therefore stored in the children’s minds.

The 1 on 1 base game constitutes the initial situation from which mini-basketball can be taught to children aged 8-9.

The following indications can be provided to children for the 1 on 1 situation:

- you cannot run while holding the ball;
- you cannot leave the court;
- you cannot dribble again after catching the ball;
- the player in possession of the ball must try to go where there is no opponent (explain how) and must decide immediately what to do, but must also change his/her plan if what he/she expected is not happening;
- the player in possession of the ball must seek to prevent his/her opponents from taking it away from him/her (sheltered dribbling, turning back);
- the player in possession of the ball must attempt to beat his/her opponents;
- offensive players not in possession of the ball must try to become unmarked;
- defensive players should not be beaten and must stand in front of their offensive opponent, whether he/she has the ball or not.

The coach must carefully observe children’s behaviour during the base-game, and from the different situations arising on court he/she must infer what children cannot do or cannot do well, proposing drills and games useful for solving the problem.
For example: he/she may have observed that the child in possession of the ball does not know how to dribble in order to move on court, that he/she leaves the playing area, he/she does not change hands when dribbling, he/she cannot choose what sort of dribbling to use, he/she does not have good control of the ball, he/she does not have the correct perception of his/her body and space, or he/she is unable to take quick decisions.

The coach may on the other hand observe that the child defending commits too many fouls when trying to regain possession of the ball, he/she is uncoordinated, he/she possesses little balance, he/she does not perceive distances, or he/she is unable to disassociate the action of arms and legs.

At this point the coach must decide the needs to be attended first to help the children resolve the problems mentioned above.

The coach should propose useful drill-games to solve the problems, try to correct the main errors in performance (in doing so secondary errors may disappear) and must provide the children with simple but essential tips, that would help them understanding the game (logic applied to movement).

In order to do all this, the coach must know and apply the proper exercises.

After the analytical work, the coach must re-apply the 1 on 1 base-game and verify whether the work performed has been productive.

In the 1 on 1 situation the child must gradually understand that dribbling helps to:

- move from defense to offense;
- beat one’s opponents;
- move nearer to the basket (enter, stop, pass and shoot, shoot);
- improve the passing angle (when playing with teammates).

The 1 on 1 situation is practically a duel, the two contestants are both the offensive and the defensive player, being important for the players to change mentality (from offense to defense and the opposite).
Progressively players will must be able to know or understand when they need to change hands, direction or speed, when it is better to pass rather than dribble, and when it is better to shoot and how.

All of this is called «anticipation and decision ability», which in the initial stages causes children to commit many mistakes when judging the situations and making the subsequent decisions.

Only after the child has understood «what» he/she must do, can he/she begin to work on «how» (performance technique) to obtain a better result.

It is possible to play 1 on 1 full-court, half-court or close to the basket.

The coach may function as a referee, running the game and stopping it in the event of rule violations, teaching the rules and being tolerant with younger children about their mistakes.

2 on 2 Base-Game

In the 2 on 2 base-game we have both a 1 on 1 situation with the ball and a 1 on 1 situation without the ball.

This base-game may be used with children from the age of 8 using different methods and techniques according to the age group.

In the 1 on 1 base-game seen previously, the offensive player had only one possibility, that of beating his/her opponent by dribbling or shooting, while the defensive player sought to become an attacker by trying to regain possession.

Now in the 2 on 2 base-game the offensive player with the ball has more possibilities; in addition to dribbling and shooting, he/she can also pass the ball to his/her unmarked teammate, while in defense one player still defends the ball handler while the other defends the player that is not in possession of the ball.

The player in possession of the ball must decide what to do, that is whether it is better to dribble, pass or shoot (according to the distance from the basket and from the defender).

* For instance: if the ball handler has no defender in front of him/her, he/she may decide to move closer to the basket by dribbling and if the defender counters such strategy, he/she may attempt to beat him/her by changing hands, direction or speed.

If this player cannot shoot by driving in, stopping and shooting, or by taking one step and shooting, he/she may pass the ball to his/her teammate that is free.
The initial action conceived by the child (dribbling and shooting) undergoes changes (defender in front of him/her), meaning that the child must modify his/her plan of action (try to beat his/her opponent or pass the ball to his teammate).

To do all this, he/she must be endowed with technical resources that he/she can make use of every time different situations arise during the games.

The player who has not the possession of the ball must attempt to become «unmarked», going where there is no direct opponent to receive the ball and occupy the empty spaces.

He/she must move quickly on court, because if he/she does not move it would be easier for the defender to intercept the ball in the event of a pass (he/she should make dummies and point out where he/she wants the pass). Adding together the two situations, 1 on 1 with ball and 1 on 1 without ball, we have a new situation of 2 on 2 in offense and defense (collaboration play).

In the 2 on 2 base-game, it is very important from a didactic point of view to initially limit the number of dribbles while holding the ball, obliging the player with the ball to pass the ball more often (passing is quicker than dribbling).

It is very useful to propose outnumbering situations (2 on 1) in a playful form (in a large or a small area) to make children understand that it is better to pass the ball to an unmarked teammate rather than continue dribbling.

Often the player defending an attacker not handling the ball forgets about his/her opponent and goes towards the ball, leaving his/her opponent unmarked. This leads to the following situations:

- the player handling the ball is marked by two defenders;
- the attacker that is not in possession of the ball is unmarked, but he/she cannot receive the ball because the ball handler is in difficulty;
- the player that is not in possession of the ball goes towards the ball handler to recieve the ball;
- the ball handler finds it difficult to dribble or pass.
It would be a good idea to tell the player who is not in possession of the ball *not to come too close to the ball handler*, because in doing so, he/she could also bring his/her defender closer to the ball (thus impeding the movements of his/her teammate).

This becomes possible only when the ball handler is in difficulty and shouts «help», in which case his/her teammate can move closer to receive the ball (either to receive a pass or to get the ball directly from his/her teammate’s hands).

The use of the «pivot foot» in these cases must be explained and the player should understand it without making the technique automated.

The 2 on 2 base-game may be used obliging children to pass the ball without dribbling, then one can introduce dribbling and finally the possibility of shooting. The game can be points- or time-based.

The coach may function as referee, running the game and stopping it in the event of rule violations, teaching the rules and being tolerant with younger children about their mistakes.

The coach must observe how children play and single out the problems that occur, working on them before returning to the base-game (2 on 2-free) to verify whether the corrections made have led to improvements.

The situations to be proposed are 1 on 1 with ball, 1 on 1 without ball, 2 on 1, 1 on 1 with the coach´s support, 2 on 2 full-court, 2 on 2 half-court and 2 on 2 close to the basket.

As they play, the children will undoubtedly improve, trying out real-play situations (which they will later come across in games) and at the same time further developing their creativity and motor imagination.

Deep analytical work of gestures and movements should be avoided at all costs, but it is important to make children aware of «what» they must do during the game «in both offense and defense», and the coach must help them to solve problem situations that arise while playing.

### 3 on 3, 4 on 4, 5 on 5 Base-Game

In 3 on 3 base game, it is important to make children capable of managing available space, first over the full court, then over half-court, then close to the basket.
In this situation there are two children who are not in possession of the ball, and the ball handler must decide to whom he/she should pass the ball (to the player that first becomes unmarked).

In connection with this, real outnumbering situations must be introduced (3 on 1, 3 on 2 and 2 on 3) so that the ball handler may decide whether to dribble, shoot, dribble and shoot or pass the ball.

Obviously, defenders must defend both the ball handler and the other players.

At the beginning the defense will be face to face, then will lay off more, then anticipate.

The ball handler, seeing all defenders go towards him/her, must try to pass the ball to an unmarked teammate. If defenders defend only players that are not in possession of the ball, the ball handler must go towards the basket and shoot.

If the player handling the ball is confident, he/she must try to beat his/her direct opponent by dribbling; otherwise he/she must pass the ball to his/her teammates.

This work requires a considerable amount of time; drills must be introduced in a playful form, and the method to be used is similar to that used in the 2 on 2 base-game.

From the 3 on 3 base-game one can gradually move on to 4 on 4 and 5 on 5 base-games through the presentation of the outnumbering situations (4 on 1, 4 on 2, 4 on 3, 5 on 1, 5 on 2, 5 on 3, 5 on 4).

The main thing is for children to play as much as possible without the coach interrupting the game too often. Only in this way it is possible for the players to discover the best solutions themselves. They will be more creative, have more fun and will not be forced to do only what the coach wants.

If players cannot shoot in 1 on 1 situations, they will seek alternative solutions, namely passing the ball to a teammate and playing with him/her (give and go, give and follow, give and change place).
From the 4 on 4 and 5 on 5 situations, the coach will take what he/she has observed and he/she will organise more specific drills that will help improve children’s playing abilities, and afterwards he/she will return to the 5 on 5 situation in a more global way.

The coach must direct the game, teach the rules, handle fouls and violations, teach referee signalling, not whistle too often and attempt to explain the «globality» of the game to the children.

6.2. DRILLS FOR PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

In this section we explain a number of drills for the physical development of mini-basketball players.

Body Pattern Development

1. Invite children to get to know their body and the movements they can perform with each part of their body (standing still, on the move, with and without the ball). Suggest in turn the movements they are not yet familiar with.

2. All types of walking (on hells, tip-toe, on the inside and outside of foot).

3. Walking forward or running forward, reverse walking, sideways, around or in the middle of the court, holding the ball high, low, behind the back.

4. Run, kicking backwards, holding ball behind back.

5. Run with knees high holding ball in front.

6. Walking or running, pass the ball around the head, the trunk, lower limbs, push it forwards, upwards.

7. Walk or run in the middle of the court holding the ball, with a musical background. Suddenly stop the music and watch the behaviour and reactions of the children, then start the music again.

8. The same game-drill as above, dribbling freely in the court.

9. Walk holding the ball with the hands, roll it without letting go around body, squeeze it, throw it.

10. Walk holding ball between ankles.

11. Jump holding ball between ankles.
12. Crawling: carry ball between ankles, under tummy, roll over ball.
13. Game-drills for breathing training.
14. Sitting down, raise legs and pass ball under knees.
15. Lying on ground, pass ball under knees.

16. Lying on back, hold ball between ankles: lift ball to touch the ground behind head and return back.
17. Bend arms to touch chest with the ball and back.
18. Hold ball between ankles: raise lower limbs and sitting down, move ball to right and left.
19. Lying on tummy, dribble with right and left hand.
20. Squeeze ball with two hands for about 5 seconds.
21. Standing up, legs apart, hold ball high: bend waist and touch right foot and left foot with ball.

22. Lying on back, ball above ankles, raise legs and roll ball towards chest.
23. Ball on ground: try to «lift» it by tapping with one hand.
24. Dribble ball with feet, knees, head.
25. Raise ball high, let it drop and bounce on ground, touch it with head, shoulders knee, foot.
26. Ball held between hands: rapidly change hand position.
27. Roll ball around feet moving in the court.

![Diagram](image)

29. Place one hand on ground and use other to dribble and move.

![Diagram](image)

30. Bounce ball on ground with fist, side of hand, back of hand, palm (standing still and on the move).

31. Same game-drill as above with two fists, two sides, two backs of hand.

32. In pairs pass ball sitting down twisting trunk.

33. In pairs lying on back: «A» holds the ball between ankles, raises legs and passes to «B» who receives with hands, repeat.

![Diagram](image)

34. In pairs: «A» with ball between ankles raises legs and passes ball to «B» who is standing; repeat and then change positions.

![Diagram](image)
Body Orientation in Space and Laterality

1. Game-drill exploring basketball court (side-lines, end-lines, circles), walking, running, jumping, dribbling.

2. Throw ball towards side-lines and try to catch it before it goes out of court; same towards end-lines.

3. Walk in the court with one eye closed and one open, both eyes closed, dribbling, jumping and dribbling.

4. Dribble following court lines, circles, lanes.

5. Walk in court passing ball under legs.

6. Dribble standing still with preferred hand, walking, running.

7. Dribble standing still and jump with feet together, jump on one foot, with open legs, crossed legs.

8. Standing still dribble, with one hand and jump on corresponding foot.

9. Dribble against wall with one hand, two hands.

10. Dribble high, very high, low, very low.

11. Dribble sitting down with one finger, two, three, four, five fingers.

12. Dribble a “tam-tam” with ball.

13. Throw ball very high and catch with same hand, with opposite hand, with two hands (standing, kneeling, sitting, lying with back on ground).

14. Dribble and jump in a straight line.
Spatial-Temporal Perception

1. Roll ball in court with one hand, two hands, with feet, dribbling, trying to avoid objects scattered in court.

2. Walk, throw ball forwards and grab it immediately after it has touched ground.

3. Walk, throw ball backwards and immediately retrieve it; repeat.

4. Throw ball very high and catch it after having clapped hands several times in front, behind back, in front and behind, under legs.

5. Same game-drill as above, after having touched ground with one hand, both hands, after having turned around in a circle.

6. Throw ball against wall and catch it.

7. Throw ball against wall, clap hands in front and catch without dropping: repeat clapping hands behind back, touching ground, turning around.

8. In pairs hold hands and dribble (standing in place and on the move).

9. Roll ball, run and catch it before it reaches an established mark.

10. Roll ball and turn around it.

11. Throw ball high and clap hands every time it touches ground.

12. Same game-drill jumping with feet together, same on one foot.

13. Throw ball as high as possible and as far as possible.


15. Back against wall, throw ball against wall, turn and catch ball.
16. Throw ball high in air and try to pass under it as many times as possible.

17. Bounce ball on floor and pass one arm around it.

18. Same game-drill with hands together, feet together.

19. Walk holding ball behind head, let it drop and catch it before it touches floor.

20. Spin ball on one finger.

21. Walk passing ball from one hand to the other.

22. Legs apart, bounce ball on floor between legs, turn and grab ball.

23. Standing with legs apart, ball held between legs with one hand in front and one behind: quickly pass from hand to hand.
Balance

1. Throw ball high and turn foot around (count the number of times the child manages to turn foot around ball).
2. Dribble jumping on one foot (in place and on the move).
3. Roll on feet without losing balance.
4. Walk on tip-toes, on heels.
5. Standing still, hold ball, legs apart: jump, turn around completely and land in same position (in one direction and then the other).
6. Dribble with eyes closed.
7. Jump on and off a bench without losing balance.
8. Run around court and stop immediately at a signal.
9. Same game-drill, dribbling.
10. Run around court, stop at a signal, jump high and turn around, then start to run again.
11. Reverse walking.
12. Reverse walking on a bench, walk forwards.
13. Same game-drills dribbling.
14. Dribble throughout court, at the signal roll on ground, stand up, grasp ball and start to dribble again.
15. Roll ball forwards, somersault on carpet, grasp ball again and dribble or shoot or pass.
16. Walk on a bench, catch a ball thrown by a teammate and pass it back immediately.

17. Dribble in court and at the signal stop still, standing on one foot.

18. Dribble, around, inside and outside of circle, alternatively.
19. Shoot inside a circle held by the Instructor.
20. Shoot at a basket from an unbalanced position.
Coordination

1. Roll ball and try to hit a target (ball in movement, circle, clubs, numbers drawn on the wall, inside the squares of wall bars, etc.).
2. Run, with one arm forward and the other above.
3. Throw ball and try to put it through a circle held by a teammate.
4. In pairs (one ball each): try to touch back, knees, ball (the one who manages to touch the other most times in a certain period of time wins).
5. Same game-drill in threes, fours and fives.
6. Dribble in place with two balls alternatively.
7. Same game-drill, running.
8. Reverse walking, dribbling with two balls.
9. In pairs dribble with two balls and at the signal exchange balls.
10. Same game-drill in threes, fours and fives.
11. Dribble a figure «8» with legs apart.
12. Dribble figure «8» in pairs.
13. In pairs, «A» dribbles towards «B» (legs apart and extending arms) passes under, turns around, returns to starting position, stops, turns and passes the ball to «B» who then repeats the same game-drill.

14. Standing up, ball held-in front with straight arms: let it drop, clap hands behind back and grab ball.

15. Same game-drill holding ball behind back: clap hands and grab ball again.

16. Same game-drill with ball held in front of knee.

17. Dribble simultaneously with three balls.

18. In pairs (one ball each): «A» dribbles advancing forward and «B» dribbles moving backward; at signal change.

19. Same game-drill sideways.

20. In pairs, one ball each: «A» bounce passes to «B» and «B» two-handed chest pass back to «A».


22. In pairs: two-handed chest pass, bounce pass, side pass, side bounce pass, hand-off, bowling pass, baseball pass, two-handed overhead pass.

23. In pairs, back to back: pass ball above head and below legs.

24. Same game-drill, passing the ball sideways right and left.

25. In pairs facing each other: «A» rolls the ball to «B» and «B» passes at same time with feet.

26. In pairs, sitting facing each other, one ball each: exchange balls rolling, bouncing, throwing.

27. Aim and throw ball against a target.

29. In pairs ball between backs: walk forwards, backwards, sideways, trying not to drop the ball.

![Diagram of two people with balls between backs]

30. Same game-drill with ball held between foreheads.

![Photo of two people with ball on forehead]

31. In pairs lying on tummy, one ball each: pass balls.

32. In pairs: «A» passes the ball to «B» and «B», before receiving it, must clap hands.

33. In pairs: «A» throws the ball high in the air and «B» throws own ball trying to hit it.

34. Same game-drill, rolling the ball.
Respiratory Education

1. Blow balloons, blow through straws, make noises.
2. Inhale and exhale with a single nostril, closing the other.
4. Inhale through nose and count aloud without exhaling; same thing counting mentally.
5. Sitting down, lean on hands behind back: inhale in one count and exhale in two counts.
6. Standing up, holding ball between heels: inhale in one count extending arms out and lifting them, exhale in one count, simultaneously bending legs (hug knees).
7. Lying on back, ball on chest: inhale and exhale watching the movement of the ball which goes up and down.
8. Same game-drill with ball on tummy.
9. «Blow» paper cups, following an established path, without knocking them over (competition).
Endurance

1. Race dribbling 15-20 meters.
2. Race running in a slalom while dribbling.
3. Relay races and dribbling races.
4. Game-drills for rhythmic ball handling.
5. Tic-tac in 2, 3, 4, 5 only forwards, forwards and return, in time.

7. Competition jumping, keeping rhythm.
8. Same game-drill dribbling at the same time.
9. Timed shooting competition: see how many shots can be made in a certain period of time.

10. Same game-drill, checking how many baskets can be made in a certain period of time.
11. Timed passing (2, 3, 4, 5 players in teams): see how many passes can be made in a certain period of time.
12. Timed simple circuits.
Rapid-Strength

1. Dribble and jump at same time.
2. Competitions in dribbling, shooting, passing, standing still and on the move.
3. Drills in pairs in offense and defense, opposition and resistance.
5. Jump inside and outside of a circle.
6. High jump, long jump, jump backwards, low jump.
7. Throw ball forwards, backwards, sideways, sitting down, kneeling down, lying on back, lying on tummy.
8. All types of relay races.
9. All types of circuits (stimulating jumping strength, throwing strength).

Speed

1. Dribble running in court and change speed at a signal (whistle, voice, lines of court, etc.).
2. Dribble starting from different positions (standing, sitting, kneeling, lying on back, lying on tummy, etc.).
3. In pairs (one ball each), dribble and try to touch the other’s ball, knee, back; untie shoe-laces, etc.
4. Races and relays dribbling (different signals).
5. Very easy circuits.
6. Game-drills of reaction to signal (visual-audio-tactile).
Joint Mobility

1. Game-drill for ball-handling or handling other equipment.
2. Rotation, twisting trunk, extension of lower limbs, extension of upper limbs, holding ball in hands.
3. Very easy circuits: passing under a bench, inside the wall bars, under a curved ladder on the floor, upside down.
4. Game-drills for mobility of trunk, hip, with tests to check.

Spatial-Temporal and Dynamic Differentiation

1. Walk and run fast, slowly, jump slowly or fast.
2. Same game-drill dribbling.
3. Dribble slow, fast, bouncing ball high, low, very high, very low.
4. Dribble two balls in alternate ways (in place and on the move).
5. Dribble in place running, changing hands, direction, speed, reverse walking (at a signal).
6. Dribble at different paces.
7. In pairs, imitate the other’s speed of dribbling.
8. The Instructor beats a rhythm and children try to imitate it with their hands, feet, with the ball.
Mobility Learning, Adaptation and Transformation, and Mobility Control

1. Game-drills always different, with different starts and stops.
2. Game-drills: individual, in pairs, in groups (with ball blown hard, soft, rough, shiny, heavy, light, small, big), with small gym props, backwards, with accelerated rhythm, with different signals (voice, hands, whistle, tambourine, music).
3. All types of dribbling, shooting, passing and combinations.
4. All situations from 1 on 1 to 5 on 5 (both for offense and defense).
5. Game-drills with uneven number of players.

Anticipation and Choice

1. Passing in pairs with a defender in the middle.
2. Same game-drill in groups of three and five (with one, two defenders).
3. Games 1 on 1 in all positions of the court.
4. Games with uneven number of players on each team.
5. From 1 on 1 to 3 on 3 with support.
6. Game of defensive help (trains).
6.3. DRILLS FOR BASKETBALL FUNDAMENTALS

In this section we explain a number of drills to develop basketball basic fundamentals.

Dribbling

1. Dribbling standing still, on the move, around the court, following the perimeter of the court, in the middle of the court.

2. Dribble in the middle of the court responding to different signals (voice, whistle, tambourine, hand clap), change speed, direction, reverse walking, change hands, etc.

3. Dribble in the court following a previously prepared path.

4. Dribble with two balls, in place and on the move.

5. «Statue Game»: the children dribble in the middle of the court (one
ball each) and at a signal from the Instructor they must stop (those who do not stop lose a point). This teaches how to stop (jump stop and two-count stop).

6. **«Playing Catch»**: the children (one ball each) dribble in the court trying not to be touched by the child who is «It». The child who is touched becomes «It» in turn. In this way the children learn to change hands, reverse walk, change direction, speed while «playing» to reach an objective (not analytically).

7. The same game, with the difference that the child who is «It» must try to touch as many children as possible in a set period of time.

8. The children dribble following the lines of the court, and when they meet another child they must change hand, reverse, change direction.

9. **«The Jack-Hammer Game»**: all of the children dribble in the court, imitating a jack-hammer (dribbling high, low, slowly, fast).

10. **«The Car Game»**: all of the children (one ball each) are scattered throughout the court and imitate an automobile. In basic position when the car is still, dribbling when the motor is turned on, starting the dribble when the car starts, dribbling throughout the court (forwards, backwards, right and left) as the car moves, stop dribbling when the car stops at the streetlights (the Instructor shouts «red light»), start dribbling again moving forward (when the
Instructor says «green light»), returning to the starting point (jump stop).

- This teaches the different ways of starting to dribble, dribbling in its different forms, jump stop, and dribbling.
• From these initial situations, following a rough presentation of the different fundamentals, there will be a gradual shift to more precise representation and then to the stabilization of movements and their availability at need.

11. «The Tail Game»: one child without a tail (handkerchief) dribbles throughout the court and for a certain period of time tries to grab the tails of the other children who run away dribbling in the court. The child who manages to grab the most tails wins.

12. Free dribbling throughout the court and at a signal stop and turn towards a basket, the side-lines, the end-lines (depending on the instructions of the Instructor). This teaches to use the pivot foot.


14. «Dog and Hare Game»: divide the children into two teams (one ball each), giving each child (dog) a child to touch (hare). The dogs stand in the central circle and the hares in the middle of the court. When the Instructor gives the go, the dogs dribble and must try to touch the hares. Those who are tagged must stop and sit. The child who manages in a set period of time to touch the most hares is the winner.

15. «The Wolf and Sheep Game»: put the children (sheep) in the three circles of the court (one ball each) and one child (wolf) outside of circles (with the ball). When the Instructor says «The wolf isn´t here», the sheep can move freely throughout the court (the wolf can move too, but cannot touch the sheep). When the Instructor says «Here comes the wolf», the wolf can touch all of the sheeps that are outside of the circles (the sheep in the circles are safe). The sheep who are touched outside of the circle become wolves and the game continues.

The game aims to teach the children not to look at the ball often and to use the different types of dribbling depending on the situations that arise during the game.

16. «The Fisherman Game»: all of the children (fish) stand in a line behind the end-line (one ball each), while one child is at half-court (fisherman). At a signal from the Instructor, the children must dribble and try to reach the other end of the court (beyond the end-line), without letting
the fisherman touch them. Those who are touched become fisher-
men.

At the beginning of the game, it is not important to pay too much
attention to violations. Playing will teach speed, anticipation and
choice of dribbling.
17. «Run and Chase Game»: the children are divided into two teams (one ball each) and are lined up at half-court (one team faces one basket and the other faces the other basket); they stand back to back. Each team is given a number (one or two), a color (black or white), and is either the sun or the moon. Every time that the Instructor calls a number, or a color, the team which is called starts dribbling towards the end-line and, once near the end-line, starts to dribble and tries to touch those who are running away (each child can only touch the child who was back to back with him or her).

Those who reach the end-line are safe, while those who are touched must raise their hand (no one is eliminated). The team which manages to touch the most children in a set period of time wins. The game may be played from a standing position, kneeling down, sitting, lying on the back or tummy.

18. «The Four Corners Game»: the children form a square (one ball each) and one child in the middle tries to occupy a free corner. At the signal the children at the corner must change place while dribbling and the child who is «It» must try to occupy a place. The child who remains without a place becomes «It» and the game begins again. It is important to establish the direction of movement (clockwise-counterclockwise or free) at the beginning of the game.
19. **Free Tag Game**: the children (one ball each) run dribbling around the court and one child («It») tries to touch them. The children who are touched stop and stretch out an arm, waiting to be touched and freed by the other children.

20. **Game 1-2-2 Star**: the children (one ball each) stand in a line behind the end-line and one stands at half-court (with a ball). The child at half-court (with his or her back to the other children), after shouting «1-2-3 Start», turns around and tries to guess which children have not stopped dribbling (the children start dribbling when the child at half-court begins to shout «1-2-3 Start»). Those who are seen to move return to the starting position (they may continue to play). The first to reach half-court without being seen by the child who is at half-court is the winner of this game.

21. **The Signal Game**: the children (one ball each) stand in a line facing the Instructor. When the child begins to dribble, the Instructor indicates the direction where the child must go (to the right, to the left, forwards, backwards, etc). If the Instructor keeps his arms low, the child may dribble past on either side, if he raises his right hand, the child passes to the left (and vice-versa). If the Instructor raises both arms then the child must reverse walk dribbling.

22. **Relay Dribbling Races**: there are many types of relays (forwards, forward and backwards) without the ball (running, jumping), or dribbling, with one ball each or one ball per team. At a signal given by the Instructor, the first of the line starts and follows the path (slalom, running around markers, around the three circles of the court). The child then returns, stops in front of the second in line, touches the ball and the game continues. The team which arrives first after having completed the path is the winner.

23. **Relay Race with Pins**: divide the children into two teams (one ball each) and line them up as shown in the diagram. At the signal, the first children of each line start and dribble with one hand while with the other they must try to knock down the pins along the path, and then come back dribbling quickly to let the second in line start. The second starts and while dribbling with one hand must try to stand the pins up again (the game cannot continue if the pins are not standing) and so on. The team which arrives first is the winner.
25. Dribble following the perimeter of the court and change direction, speed, hand, as indicated by the Instructor.

26. Dribble in the court and exchange ball with the other children while continuing to dribble (do not interrupt the dribbling).

27. Place the children in groups of three, four or five along the baseline and set markers in the court at the two free throw lines and at half-court (other markers can be set in the court). At a signal given by the Instructor, the first in line starts. At every marker they will do the following:

- change hand;
- reverse;
- change speed;
- pivot dribble;
- jump stop;
- reverse, change hand and dribble forward;
- change direction.

28. Teach dribbling drills (start, dribble and stop, with change of hand, reverse, change of direction, pivot, ball protection, behind the back, faking pivot and pivot, with hesitation, etc.
Shooting

1. Throw balls of different weights and sizes in containers, circles, baskets at different heights (from different distances).

2. Shooting-free, at the basket.

3. Shooting at the basket from a bench.

4. Shooting into the squares of wall-bars, against numbers drawn on the wall, in circles placed on the floor, or held by another child.

5. Shoot balls trying to knock down pins, hit other balls, different objects (in place or moving).


7. Shoot at different-size baskets without backboard.

8. Shoot at basket from different positions (facing, sideways at right, sideways at left).

9. Shooting at basket: competition with different scores depending on
the results (two points for a basket, 1 point if the basket rim is touched, half a point if the backboard is touched). The team which manages to reach a set score first wins.

10. Shooting competition in front of the basket, shooting freely (one point for each basket). The team which manages to score the most baskets in a certain period of time wins. The competition can be carried out from different distances, sideways to the
11. Free throw competition (individual or teams).

12. «21 Game»: divide the children into two teams and line them up at the two free throw lines. At the go, the first child in each line shoots (2 points for a basket, otherwise the child must go for the rebound and shoot again, getting one point if he or she scores a basket). The second child begins to shoot when the first has either made a basket or used up his or her two available shots. The team which first scores 21 points wins the game.

13. «The World Game»: mark several shooting positions around the area (numbered progressively) and begin the game near the basket. If the child makes the basket he or she moves to the different positions (or stops after a mistake). The child who first manages to reach the end of the circle wins. (Those who miss have three shots from each shooting position and if they miss they can still move on to the next position).

14. «The Triangle»: divide the children into two teams (one ball each) and line them up as shown in the diagram, under the two baskets. Mark three shooting positions (to the right, from the half-circle and to the left) and start the game when the Instructor gives a signal. The child cannot move on to the next position until he or she scores a basket
Method-I

- run holding ball, count «1-2» and before the «3», throw the ball forwards high, or above a string tied to two poles or in a circle;
- run, pick up ball from ground and throw it after having counted up to two (without stopping to run);
- start dribbling until a marker on the ground, «stop» the dribble, run towards the basket holding the ball and shoot (it does not matter if at the beginning the children take more than two steps and make many rule violations);
- same drill with the ball held by the Instructor in the free throw line;
- dribbling and three-count entry (from right and from left, with right and with left hand).

Method-II

- from under the basket holding the ball, make a step and shoot;
- start further back, dribble, stop, one step and shoot;
- start even further back, two or more dribbles, stop, one step and shoot;
- start dribbling and go for basket.

Method-III

- from under basket, lift one knee and shoot (from right lift right knee and from left lift left knee);
- from one step back, make a step and shoot;
- from two steps back, make two steps and shoot;
- dribble and shoot on third count.

Table 18. Example of progressive methods to teach lay-ups.
The team which passes through all three shooting positions and first reaches the final position wins. It is not possible to shoot from a position if all of the members of the team have not made a basket from the previous position or have not used up all of the shots available to them.

15. All of the shooting game-drills may be performed with two hands, one hand, two-handed jump shots, one-handed jump shot.

16. Throw the ball high, catch it and shoot.

17. Facing the basket, throw the ball high, pass under, turn, catch the ball and turn around again (use of pivot foot) and shoot.

18. Shoot at the basket with one eye closed and one open.

19. Children stand around free throw line (one ball each), back to basket. At the signal, the children pivot (front or reverse) and shoot.

20. Children face the basket, ball on ground. At the signal they quickly grasp the ball and shoot.

21. Children face basket, ball behind them. At the signal they throw the ball from behind forwards (between legs), grab it and shoot.

22. Children face basket, holding ball between ankles: at the signal they jump, letting go of the ball with their feet, catch it with their hands and shoot.

23. Shoot standing on one leg.

24. Three point shooting competition.

25. Roll the ball towards the basket, stop it (one hand in front and one hand behind) and shoot.

26. Shoot at the basket from standing (both legs).

27. Throw the ball against the backboard, go for the rebound and shoot.

28. Shoot in pairs from all positions.
29. Teach shooting drills (position of feet, load, correct succession of pushes, flexing wrist, release, extension of arm) with analytical correction.

30. Competition shooting hooks from under the basket.

31. Competition of «passing and shooting» after the stop, from right and from left, with right and with left hand.
Dribbling and Shooting

The combination of dribbling and shooting enables children to distinguish different situations during the game (near the basket you must shoot immediately, far from the basket you dribble to get close).

1. «All Together to the Basket»: divide the children into two teams (one ball each) and have them stand (back to back) in the middle of the court (as shown is diagram). At a signal from the Instructor, all of the members of the two teams begin to dribble simultaneously towards the basket of the opponents (which they are facing). Those who
score a basket dribble back quickly to the starting point, while those who do not score immediately have three chances to do so. If they do not score after their three chances, they return to the starting point anyway.

The team which finishes the game first and has all of the children sitting down wins. The game can also be started from a sitting position, kneeling down, lying on back or on tummy, and the
2. The same game, but with an initial pivot (front or reverse) at the signal. The children dribble and then shoot towards the opposite basket from their starting points.

3. **Relay Race with Dribbling and Shooting:** the children are divided into two groups (one ball each). At the signal, the first child of each team begins to dribble, stops and shoots. If the child scores a basket he or she quickly returns to the starting point, otherwise the child has three tries to make a basket. After the three tries have been used up, the child returns to the starting point. The team which manages to score the highest number of baskets in a set period of time wins.

4. The same relay race may be played allowing only one chance for each child to shoot. (The second child starts when the first has shot).

5. **Dribble Slalom Relay Races:** divide the children into two teams (one ball
6. **“Circle Game”**: divide the children into two teams (one ball each).

7. **“Game of the Three Circles”**: divide the children into two teams.

8. **Slalom Relay Race from half-court**: divide the children into two teams
(one ball each). At the signal, the first children of each team start and dribble between the pins, reach the basket, stop and shoot. The second of the line starts when the first catches the rebound. The team which manages to make the most baskets in a set period of time wins.

9. **Parallel Relay Race**: divide the children into three or four teams (one ball each) and line them up behind the end line. When the Instructor gives the go, the first of each line starts and dribbles towards the opposite basket, stops and shoots (three shots available), then returns after getting the rebound, and touches the second of the line who then starts. The team which manages to score the most baskets in a set period of time wins. The shots may be a stop, step and shoot, lay-
10. Dribble from half-court, change direction and go for a basket from the right and from the left, with the right and with the left hand.

11. Dribble from half-court (different openings, self-passing, stop and starting dribbling) and shoot (jump stop and shoot; jump stop, step and shoot; lay-up; reverse lay-up, etc.).

12. Dribble from half-court, pivot and shoot.

13. Combination of different types of dribbling and shooting from end-line and half-court.

14. Start dribbling (choose from time to time a different type of start) and shoot.

15. Teach technique of lay-ups (depending on the age of the children) (see Table-18).
Passing

1. In pairs, one ball each, exchange balls (standing, kneeling, sitting, lying on tummy).

2. Same game-drill in groups of three, four and five.

3. In pairs, side by side, a figure «8» around legs, then exchange balls.

4. In pairs, one ball each, pass ball using all the possibilities.

5. Same game-drill in groups of three, four and five.

6. Like previous game-drills, gradually reduce the number of balls until there is one ball for every two, three, four and five children: pass ball and count how many passes can be made in a set period of time.

7. In pairs, (one ball each pair): the first of the pair walks and hands-off to the child following; repeat (without making any step violations).

8. Same game-drill in groups of three, four and five (walking and running).

9. In pairs facing each other: pass the ball, faking a shot.

10. In pairs, «skip» pass (raise one hand to signal a teammate to pass the ball and move sideways to catch it).

11. In pairs, side by side: pass the ball with one hand behind the back.

12. In pairs, run around a circle, pass the ball; at a signal run in opposite direction.

13. Divide the children into two teams (one ball for each team) and line them up. At the go, the first in line rolls the ball between the legs of team members, and the last retrieves the ball and dribbles to the front of in the line. The teams in which the child who began the game returns to the front of the line first wins.

14. Same game sitting down.

15. Same game with lateral twisting of trunk (standing and sitting down).

16. «The Train Game»: like previous games, with the variant that the ball
starts from behind and at the signal is passed in front (the passer must run to front of the line to allow the ball to «slide» forwards). The team which first manages to reach a set marker with the ball wins.
17. **Zig-zag Passing Game:** divide the children into two teams as shown in diagram. At the go, the children begin to pass the ball and count how many passes in a row they can make in a set period of time.

18. **Star Passing:** position the children as shown in diagram (one ball each team). At the go, the children begin to pass the ball. The team which makes the most passes in a set period of time wins. The children cannot pass the ball to the closest team member.

19. **Double Star Passing:** like the previous game-drill with two teams (and two balls) passing the ball at the same time.

20. **Pass and Move:**
• two lines facing each other, pass the ball and go to the bottom of the other line;

• two lines facing each other, pass the ball and go to the bottom of own line;
• “Pass and Run” (in groups of four), pass the ball and change place with another child;

• one child passes the ball to the child in front and moves to receive the return pass;

• children in a circle with a passer in the middle. The ball is passed from outside to the centre (with change of position after pass);
• children in a square, pass the ball and change position (clockwise and counterclockwise) and at the signal change direction;
• children in a square (with two balls), pass the ball crossing passes (at the signal change direction);
• same game-drill, changing place after passing.

21. Two lines: pass the ball and move towards the next player.
22. Two lines: pass the ball and go to bottom of own line.
23. Two lines: pass the ball and move to the right; the receiver passes and moves to the left;
24. Game-drill in progression to teach passing on the move (Tic-Tac in two, three, four and five):
   • in pairs (one ball each pair), walk sideways and pass the ball;
   • in pairs, same drill, running sideways;
• in pairs, pass the ball, running forwards (with feet pointing forward). It is important not to pass the ball backwards, or too high, too low, too fast (tell children that when they have possession of the ball they must pass immediately).

• in pairs, run and pass the ball in all directions.

25. Game-drills of Tic-Tac in twos to the left, to the right, in the middle of the court (with changes of direction at a signal of the Instructor).

26. Tic-Tac in twos: count how many passes the pair manages to make before reaching the end-line. While working on passes, it is useful to finish all game-drills by shooting or with a lay-up.

27. Tic-Tac in pairs with objects placed in the court (training peripheral vision).

28. Two lines at end-line, without a ball. The Instructor throws or rolls or bounces the ball forward and the pairs run to retrieve it. The player who catches the ball does Tic-Tac in twos.

29. Same teaching progression used in Tic-Tac in pairs is used for Tic-Tac in groups of three, four and five.

30. Tic-Tac in threes with two balls.

31. Tic-Tac in twos, in threes, in fours, in fives starting from a rebound.

32. Weaving in threes, fours, fives (wide, narrow, with a dribble).
Dribbling, Passing and Shooting

1. Dribble freely in the court and at a signal exchange the ball with the other children, then continue to dribble.

2. In pairs, one child stands with legs apart and stretches arms. Another child with the ball stands at a distance of 3-4 meters. At the signal, the child with the ball starts to dribble, passes under the arms of the child standing still, circles around the child, dribbles back, stops, pivots (front and reverse) and passes the ball to the other child who repeats the drill.

3. In pairs, one child with the ball and the other at a distance of 3-4 meters. The child with the ball starts to dribble and stops in front of the other and gives a hand-off pass. The other child starts to dribble while the first child reverse walks back to the starting point and the exercise is repeated.

4. The same game-drill in threes, in fours and in fives.

5. In pairs, side by side (one ball each), dribble and at a signal from the Instructor, change place and dribble with the other child’s ball.

6. The same game-drill in threes, in fours and in fives.

7. The same game-drills walking, running in a line.

8. In pairs, one child dribbles simultaneously with two balls and at a signal passes them both to the other child, who dribbles in turn. The same game-drill may be performed walking and running.

9. Repeat the didactic progression of the Tic-Tac in groups of two, three, four and five, introducing the dribble (dribble, stop, pass). Remind children to dribble with the right hand on the right hand side and with the left hand on the left hand side.

10. Relays with dribbling, jump stop and passing in twos and in threes.
11. The same game-drills, dribbling without a stop.

12. Line up the children at the four corners of a half-court, one ball for each team. At the signal, the first child of each team starts and dribbles to the half-circle, stops, turns, passes the ball to the second in line and runs back. The team which in a set period of time makes the most passes wins.

13. The same game-drill, passing to the left and following to the left.

14. The same game-drill with the difference that after the stop the child must pass the ball to the line in front and follow the pass.

15. Tic-Tac in twos (in the form of competition and teaching drill).

16. Tic-Tac in groups of three, four and five (one way or forward and back).

17. Give and go in pairs (pass the ball and go to shoot near the basket).

18. In pairs, one shoots and the other goes for the rebound and passes the ball out (three shots each, then change).

19. The same drill but with the variation that the child going for the rebound passes the ball to the other who has moved outside the lane to shoot.

20. Tic-Tac in groups of two, three, four and five from a rebound, a shot by the Instructor, etc.
21. Weaving in threes, in fours and in fives, one way or forward and back.

22. Two lines behind the end-line, one child rolls the ball forward, the other runs to retrieve it, passes it to the first child who in the meantime has entered the court and plays a give and go (from right and from left, with the right and the left hand).

23. Tic-Tac in twos, in threes, in fours and in fives with dribbling, jump stop, pass and shooting (all types of shots changing positions). The progression follows the work done initially for the Tic-Tac in twos.

24. Tic-Tac in threes starting from a rebound, passing to the player who is in the middle of the court and who dribbles to the other basket, stops and passes the ball to the «cutter». It is practically a fast-break, dividing the court into three parts (centre, right and left).

25. Game-drills dribbling, passing and shooting with variations:
   - Tic-Tac in threes with two balls;
   - hand-off passing and receiving, then dribble;
   - dribble, pass to support and shoot;
   - pass to a teammate, follow to receive the ball and pass to the teammate who has gone for the basket;
   - two lines from half-court, pass the ball to a teammate, follow and receive, dribble to get close to the basket and then pass the ball to the cutter.

26. «Four Corners»: place the children in the four corners of the court (two balls). At the signal, the two children in possession of the ball start, dribble up to the half-circle of the opposite basket, stop, pass the ball and go to shoot receiving a return pass. This may be done from the right and the left, with the right and the left hand.

27. Combination of different types of dribbling, passing and shooting; passing, dribbling and shooting; shooting, dribbling and passing, etc.

The combinations of dribbling, passing and shooting must be explained to the children so that they understand their significance, the right moment to try them, how to choose the most appropriate, etc.

As can be seen, during mini-basketball lessons a large variety of interesting, amusing and fun game-drills may be used.
Defense and Combination with Dribbling, Passing and Shooting

When playing, sometimes a team defends and sometimes it is in an offensive position. Therefore, if a player has the ball he or she must try to defend it (understanding the movements of one’s own body, good ball-handling, knowledge of space and time, etc.).

If the opponent takes the ball away, then the team must be able to get possession of it again (without making fouls, therefore with good balance and coordination) and must also be able to defend the team’s basket.

These concepts are not clear to children in the beginning, so the Instructor must propose logical game-drills, which are motivating and help children to understand:

- that the ball must be defended (ball protection);
- that if you are guarding against the player with the ball you have to do more than try to take it away;
- that if you are defending the player without the ball, you must stop him/her from receiving it (children instead try to grab the ball).

It is also important to help children understand in which basket they must shoot and which basket they must defend.

1. 1 on 1, one ball each, try to touch the back of the opponent, the legs, the ball (the first to reach a previously set score wins).

2. The same game may be played in groups of three, four and five (increasing the difficulty of the game: peripheral vision, coordination, etc.).

3. The same game may be played as a «Free for All» to be played full court (whoever loses the ball is eliminated: if the ball goes out of the court, the child is eliminated, etc.).
TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Aleksandar Avakumović

- Methodological Advices
- Session-1: Teaching Dribbling Technique
- Session-2: Passing Technique and Individual Tactics
- Session-3: Practising Fast-Break Fundamentals
- Session-4: Defensive Fundamentals
- Session-5: Practising Screening
- Session-6: Practising Fast-Break
- Session-7: Practising Defense
- Session-8: Teaching Screens
- Session-9: Practising Defense
- Session-10: Practising Fast-Break and Set Offense with Screens
- Session-11: Basics of Faking to Receive the Ball, Passing, Using Screens and Disadvantage Situations
- Session-12: Defensive Tasks: Blocking out, Rebound, Double Team and Positioning According to Ball
- Session-13: Teaching the Passing Technique
- Session-14: Continue Teaching of Passing with Stopping and Pivoting. Defense: Distance and Positioning
- Session-15: Elements for Organised Fast-Break
- Session-16: Practising Defense Elements
- Session-17: Moving Around the Court and Practising Fast-Break
- Session-18: Defense Positioning
- Session-19: Teaching Fundamentals of the Fast-Break
- Session-20: Defense and Flashing
- Session-21: Cooperation in Offense
- Session-22: Practising Fast-Break, and Contest Drills
- Session-23: Transition and Fast-Break Drills
- Session-24: Fast-Break and Contest
Methodological Advices

- Forget about tactics until your players have learned the technique because knowing the tactics without having the technique turns out to be a bad basketball product.
- Always ask for a full commitment, high concentration and discipline from young players.
- The teaching process starts with simple tasks that gradually become more complicated.
- Details must be stressed, demonstrated and demanded in the execution.
- A maximum of a 25% of new elements can be incorporated in every practice.
- Offense and defense must be trained parallel.
- Drills must be executed in a small area first, and then in a bigger one.
- You can influence the speed by expanding the space and decreasing the time.
- Tall players must work on the same drills as the smaller ones in order to learn the basic techniques.
- Exclusively individual defense must be trained.
- Special attention must be placed on stopping and pivoting.
- Stress the balance of the player’s body, positioning of the feet, arms and body.
- «Triple threat» (ball ready to either shoot, dribble or pass) is crucial in offensive play.
- When scrimmaging insist on a fast game with simple actions between two or three players at the most.
- Be strong when criticising and loud when supporting players.
- Allow players to ask when they do not understand something. Your explanations must be short and clear.
- Maintain a high working level and a high concentration level among your players.
- Demand from the players a complete mental presence.
- Do not forget: a good game is the result of hard practices, more mentally than physiologically.
- Do not try to find «gifted» children, they will show up if you work well.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagram</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>player with the ball</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>offensive player without the ball</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>coach</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>coach with the ball</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>defensive player</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>new position of the defensive player</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>movement of offensive player without the ball</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>defensive movement</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>pass</td>
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<td>dribbling</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>one-count stop (one-step stop)</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>two-count stop (two-step stop)</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>count leg (step leg)</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>pivoting</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>flight of ball</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>jump shot or lay-up</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>step-step</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>feigned shot</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>advance step</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>delivering the ball</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td>screen</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 19. Legend to follow the diagrams of this chapter.
Session-1 120 minutes

Goal: Teaching Dribbling Technique

Drills:

- warm-up: ball handling drills (drills for handling the ball in movement); (10 minutes)
- dribble, step-fake with left foot, continue with roll dribble with right hand, pass to teammate for a cut and double pass (work on both sides); (see Diag.-1)
- offensive player dribbles sideways, changes hands in one dribble and two wide steps, and then passes and cuts for a double pass with loose defense. Passer is in «triple threat» position before the pass; (see Diag.-2)
- after passing to coach and stopping in two steps, back pivot with right foot and penetrate to the left side with crossover step (work on other foot and other side); (see Diag.-3)
- dribble back and forth using same-foot-same-hand technique with change of pace in the penetration (stronger); (see Diag.-4)
- left-handed dribble to middle, stop on right foot, drop step with left foot, right-handed shoulder pass to next player in line counter clockwise. Passer goes to the end of his/her line (work in both directions); (see Diag.-5)
- 1 on 1 half court. Dribble starts with cross-over step after combining front and back pivot. Defense does not try to steal but follows the offense sliding in correct defending position;
- free throws: 2 times 2 shots made in a row.

Remarks:
- dribble is executed without looking at the ball;
- it is compulsory to dribble to the left side with left hand and to the right side with right hand;
- it is useful to start dribble with weaker hand so that the player can save the stronger one for more difficult situations;
- dribble should be made using the hand furthest from the opponent.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 1
15 min.

Diag. 3
20 min.

Diag. 2
15 min.

Diag. 4
20 min.

Diag. 5
15 min.
Session-2  120 minutes

Goal:  Passing Technique and Individual Tactics

Drills:

• warm up: ballhandling drills in movement; (10 minutes)
• receive the ball in two-count step and then pass with one-hand shoulder pass; (see Diag.-6)
• after passing to coach, receiving is made in two-count step, then after back pivot, pass to coach. Finish with a cut for a return pass and lay-up; (see Diag.-7)
• getting open for the pass by moving in a triangle with two balls; (see Diag.-8)
• one hand pass and move; (see Diag.-9)
• 2 on 2 half court, passing after pivot and cut for a return pass, complete action without a dribble; (20 minutes)
• practise timing for a pass when defensive player is coming from the opposite side, then pass from a back pivot and cut for a return pass with a loose defense; (see Diag.-10)
• jump shoot after double pass with one-step stop; (see Diag.-11)
• free throws: 2 times 2 shots made in a row.

Remarks:

• when passing two-step balance is very important;
• when back pivoting protect the ball with elbow above the shoulder;
• all passes should be sharp and made in straight line.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 6 10 min.

Diag. 7 15 min.

Diag. 8 20 min.

Diag. 9 10 min.

Diag. 10 20 min.

Diag. 11 10 min.
Session-3  120 minutes
Goal:  Practising Fast-Break Fundamentals

Drills:
• warm up: stretching and ballhandling drills in movement; (10 minutes)
• crisscross drill with 5 players, 3 on 2 in return. When return shooter and passer are on the defense; (15 minutes)
• 1 on 1+1 on 0; last pass to a player who stops in two-count step and then drives to the basket (work on both sides); (see Diag.-12)
• 2 on 2 Fast-Break situation; (see Diag.-13)
• 1+2 on 2; Fast-Break with «man to man» principles. The players on the first and second pass are closely guarded. In return players change roles; (see Diag.-14)
• 4 on 0; (see Diag.-15)
• free throws: 3 foul shots made in a row. Player who misses is out. Continue playing until you have a winner (15 minutes).

Remarks:
• players without the ball should try hard to be ahead of the ball;
• when running, player should have head turned towards the ball at every moment;
• when offense and defense are running side by side, offense should come out in front of the defensive player presenting a better angle for receiving the ball.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 12
20 min.

Diag. 13
20 min.

Diag. 14
20 min.

Diag. 15
20 min.
Session-4 120 minutes

Goal: Defensive Fundamentals

Drills:

• warm up: ballhandling drills in movement; 10 min.

• a)-offensive player steps to one or the other side. Defensive player slides in front of the possible penetration; (see Diag.-16)
  
  b)-same as previous but offensive player throws ball to one side for two step stop. Defense protects drives; (see Diag.-17)

  c)-step out after flashing and receiving the ball from a teammate (see Diag.-18)

• 1+2 on 2; player with ball in point guard position dribbles side to side with wing players trying to get open. Defensive players are in open or closed stance according to ball position. After receiving the ball play 1 on 1; (see Diag.-19)

• 3 on 2 half-court; after shooting, shooter plays defense and defenders play offense (2 on 1) to the other end of the court; (see Diag.-20)

• 1 on 1; defense against cutting: setting the body to a line of the offensive movement. Player with ball tries to pass from a dribble. After the shot, offense goes to defense and plays 2 on 1; (see Diag.-21)

• 5 on 5 scrimmage; offense: no dribble, use pivoting; defense: pressure with special attention to the ball; (20 minutes);

• free throws: 2 times 3 shots made in a row.

Remarks:

• when offense is stepping out, defense should be in front with half of a body width to a ball;

• on ball side take closed stance, and on help side open stance;

• when setting 3 on 2 defense, second defender in vertical order always goes for the first pass and front player goes to middle of the paint;

• player with ball is guarded in almost parallel stance.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 16 8 min. Diag. 19 20 min.

Diag. 17 8 min. Diag. 20 20 min.

Diag. 18 9 min. Diag. 21 20 min.
Session-5 120 minutes

Goal: Practising Screening

**Drills:**

- **warm up:** stretching and ballhandling drills in movement; (10 minutes)
- **a)**-2 on 0; leading to a pick with a dribble and picker roll-off to a basket; (see Diag.-22)
  - b)-1 on 1+1 on 0; dribble lead to a pick; pass to a picker after roll-off toward the basket; (see Diag.-23)
- **a)**-3 on 0; screen away and cut, leading to a screen; (see Diag.-24)
  - b)-screen away with defense on a screened player; (see Diag.-25)
  - c)-defensive player on a screener pops out and stops screened player; (see Diag.-26)
- **1 on 1+1:** sliding defense in front of the screen. Player dribbling passes to the screener after roll-off to the basket; (see Diag.-27)
- **3 on 3 full court both sides. Offense:** no dribble, only pivot. **Defense:** press; (20 minutes)
- **jump shot** after passing to coach. Defense loose; (15 minutes)
- **free throws:** 3 times 3 shots. Player who makes three in a row finishes.

**Remarks:**

- player who will be screened leads defense to screen level;
- to have successful screen, screened player at the moment of changing direction should not be too far or too close to the screen;
- screener, when rolling-off, must see the ball whole time.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

- **Diag. 22**: 10 min.
- **Diag. 23**: 10 min.
- **Diag. 24**: 10 min.
- **Diag. 25**: 10 min.
- **Diag. 26**: 10 min.
- **Diag. 27**: 20 min.
Session-6

Goal: Practising Fast-Break

Drills:

• warm up: ballhandling drills in movement; 10 minutes
• receive the ball in a fast-break with two-step stop and after a step forward pass to the player at the other side who also stops with two counts and then drives to the basket; (see Diag.-29)
• 3 on 2; starting the fast-break. One defender is coming from disadvantage position; (see Diag.-30)
• 3 on 0; fast-break with two passes; (see Diag.-31)
• 3 on 3 in both directions. Offense: no-dribble game; (see Diag.-32)
• fast-break 4 on 4 with outlet pass to a side line. Defense just «follows»; (see Diag.-33)
• scrimmage game. Offense uses short passes to a first open man and dribbles only for penetration. Defense: fast transition and play aggressively on player with ball; (20 minutes)
• 3 times 3 free throws.

Remarks:

• players in front of the ball should always have head turned towards the ball and at the moment of passing be ready to receive it;
• when stopping to catch longer passes feet should be in full contact with ground.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diagram 30  20 min.

Diagram 31  20 min.

Diagram 32  10 min.

Diagram 33  20 min.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session-7</th>
<th>120 minutes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal:</td>
<td>Practising Defense</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Drills:**

- warm up: ballhandling drills in movement; (10 minutes)
- 2 on 1; defensive player defends offensive player with ball. Offensive player with ball pivots and passes to the teammate, then changes position. Player who catches the ball also pivots and returns the ball to the first player; this player penetrates against defensive player. Defense follows the ball from one offensive player to another; (see Diag.-34)
- catching the offensive player from a disadvantage position; (see Diag.-35)
- 1 on 1; offensive player is stopped while cutting and after that flashes away from the ball. After pass, player from other side sets a screen to let him drive; (see Diag.-36)
- 1+2 on 2: against the screen on a help side. Creating the space for defensive player 2 so that he/she can avoid the screen; (see Diag.-37)
- 3 on 1; two defensive players act from disadvantage position; (see Diag.-38)
- defensive player meets the offensive player in the dribble. Then offensive player passes to a teammate and receives the ball back for a jump shot. Defense follows the ball from one offensive player to another; (see Diag.-39)
- 2 times 3 made free throws.

**Remarks:**

- in disadvantage situations teach defense to find good positions and to be very strong in that;
- when cutting, defensive player must use his body to stop movement in that direction;
- when leading to a pick with a dribble, defense must slide in front of the set pick.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 34 15 min.

Diag. 35 10 min.

Diag. 36 20 min.

Diag. 37 20 min.

Diag. 38 20 min.

Diag. 39 15 min.
Session-8  120 minutes

Goal: Teaching Screens

Drills:
- warm up: stretching an ballhandling drills in movement; (10 minutes)
- vertical movement using a screen with roll-off of a blocker; (see Diag.-40)
- back door cut on the help side; (see Diag.-41)
- leading to a screen away from the ball; (see Diag.-42)
- involving a third man in pick and roll; (see Diag.-43)
- scrimmage game. Offense: setting and using screens, 2 on 2 and 2 on 2+1 game;
  Defense: defending with sliding in front of a pick and helping with body in front of an offensive player and body-checking the screener; (20 minutes)
- 2 times 3 free throws.

Remarks:
- angle for setting a screen is related to the angle of the player wishing to use that screen;
- at the moment of leading to a screen or a pick, player should change pace of his movement.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

- **Diag. 40**
  - Duration: 20 min.

- **Diag. 42**
  - Duration: 20 min.

- **Diag. 41**
  - Duration: 20 min.

- **Diag. 43**
  - Duration: 25 min.
Session-9  120 minutes

Goal: Practising Defense

Drills:
• warm up: stretching and ballhandling drills in movement; (10 minutes)
• defense from a disadvantage situation after a pass, then pass to coach and cut; (see Diag.-44)
• 2 on 1: overplay on a player without ball. After faking, receive the ball and return it to a free teammate. Defense follows ball and one of the offensive players executes a jump shot; (see Diag.-45)
• double team drill with transition to opposite side; (see Diag.-46)
• 3 on 3: after inbound pass from the side line, defensive players 3 and 1 double team while defensive player 2 plays defense on offensive player X2. After inbound pass X3 cuts. Double team is executed with a player who can see position of the ball; (see Diag.-47)
• 1 on 1 game using 1/4 of the court until 5 made shots. First ball goes to the player winning free throw competition. Winner ends drill. Other players out of bounds waiting for their turn; (see Diag.-48)
• 2 times 3 free throws.

Remarks:
• player in a dribble should be forced to play in a smaller area;
• at the moment of holding the ball, another defensive player approaches to carry out double team;
• double team is always executed with a player who can see position of the player receiving the ball.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 45 20 min.

Diag. 46 20 min.

Diag. 47 20 min.

Diag. 48 25 min.
Session-10 120 minutes

Goal: Practising Fast-Break and Set Offense with Screens

Drills:

• warm up: stretching and ballhandling drills in movement; (10 minutes)
• 1 on 1 + 1; back door (15 minutes) (see Diag.-49)
• a)-3 on 0, 3 on 3; offensive player X2 passes to X3 and sets a screen for X1 who cuts. If he does not receive the pass, X3 passes to X2 and screens X1 at low post. X1 uses this screen for a jump shot from wing position. After screen X3 roll-off to the basket for a pass; (see Diag.-50)
  b)-continuing X3 sets a screen for X2 who cuts (work with and without defense); (see Diag.-51)
• a)-fast-break 5 on 0 and secondary fast-break; (see Diag.-52)
  b)-continued movement from secondary fast-break; (see Diag.-53)
• scrimmage game (4 teams contest - direct elimination): offense uses only one dribble for a drive, using fast-break and screens in two-man game. Defense forces to side line, overplays the pass and passing lanes; (30 minutes);
• free throws: 3 foul shots made in a row.

Remarks:

• when executing back door, stress longer leading movement so that defense comes further away from the basket;
• screener always waits for teammate to use the screen and then rolls-off;
• depth in setting the players in final phase of fast-break allows easier cutting and transformation to secondary fast-break.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 49 15 min.

Diag. 52 10 min.

Diag. 50 15 min.

Diag. 53 15 min.

Diag. 51 15 min.
Session-11  120 minutes

Goal: Basics of Faking to Receive the Ball, Passing, Using Screens and Disadvantage Situations

Drills:

• warm up: stretching and ballhandling drills in movement; (10 minutes)
• 1 on 1; offensive player without the ball flashes in movement along the court. Coach holding ball at his side passes to offensive player who returns the ball and proceeds to the next coach. When third ball received, offensive player plays to score; (see Diag.-54)
• 2 on 2; two man game with screens. Screens are set on off-ball side; two coaches help; (see Diag.-55)
• disadvantage drill 4 on 5; offense with quick passes creates free lanes for a drive. After penetration offensive player with ball passes to an open teammate.

After the shot defense plays offense on other basket against 3 defensive players (4 on 3) using same principles. First shooter goes to one side and waits for next offense.

After completing 4 on 3, new 5-man team is created with two new players from the side; (see Diag.-56)
• 2 on 2 contest using pick and roll. On each half court two pairs play for the same amount of time to 5 made shots. At the end winners play for champion; (15 minutes)
• free throw contest. Player is eliminated if he does not make three in a row.

Remarks:

• in disadvantage situation, rotation in defense is executed;
• after passing to coach, offense should spread out moving from the ball for the next action;
• when leading to a screen, change pace.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 54 20 min.

Diag. 55 20 min.

Diag. 56 25 min.
Session n. 12

Goal: Defensive Tasks: Blocking Out, Rebound, Double Team and Positioning According to Ball

Drills:

- warm up: stretching and ball handling drills in movement; (10 minutes)
- 2 on 2; after drive, defense plays help and recover: offense must spread when defense helps. Full court; (see Diag.-57)
- 4 on 4; four corner drill: Offensive players pass. When the ball is received, «triple threat» position is a must (ball ready to shoot, dribble or pass). After pass, cut. If is possible, pass to cutter. Defense overplays. (see Diag.-58)
- 3 on 3 half court, after shot defense blocks out, rebounds and runs fast-break. On other half court, 4 defensive players wait and double team the ball. When offense finishes, coach points to the worst defensive player who stays in defense while the rest go to offense on other basket; (see Diag.-59)
- scrimmage game contest (four teams-direct elimination): Offense: use one dribble for penetration, fast-break and pick and roll. Defense: aggressive to player with ball, double team the ball, block out and rebound; (35 minutes)
- free throw contest. Player is out if he does not make three in a row.

Remarks:

- offensive player along a baseline is guarded keeping the ball in sight while not losing control over the player;
- double team is executed when offense picks up ball or when area for handling the ball is small.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 57
15 min.

Diag. 58
25 min.

Diag. 59
25 min.
Drills:

- warm-up: ball handling drills (drills for handling the ball in movement); (10 minutes)
- a)- one-hand pass with cross-over step using both hands;
  b)- two-hand chest pass with continuous movement to the ball. (see Diag.-60)
- toos the ball, stop and catch, pivot combination (back and front pivot), one-hand pass; (see Diag.-61)
- move towards the thrown ball to the floor, stop and catch, one hand shoulder pass to the coach. «L» cut and after receiving the ball lay-up. (see Diag.-62)
- one-hand stationary pass with a step forward; two-hand chest pass from the movement and lay-up after receiving the ball. (see Diag.-63)
- 1 on 1 defensive sliding. Change roles on coach’s signal.
  a)- without the ball;
  b)- with a dribble move. (see Diag.-64)
- pivot, pass, flash and cut. Defense follows. (see Diag.-65)
- fast-break 2 on 1 situation; (see Diag.-66)
- game contest: Offense: two-hand chest passes and one-hand shoulder passes. Play with only one dribble for the penetration. Pass to closest teammate. Must pivot upon stopping. Move after every pass.
  Defense: create responsibility for your own man. Be aggressive with the ball. Get the best position to see your man and the ball.
- free throws: make 3 in a row

Remarks:

- complete follow up with one hand at pass;
- elbows should not be too far out when holding the ball;
- pass must be strong and fast;
- moving is compulsory after a pass, and very recommendable before receiving the pass;
- one step stop must be executed in full balance (knees and hips semi-bent);
- pivoting wide and in balance (body weight equal on both feet).
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 60
5 min.

Diag. 61
5 min.

Diag. 62
10 min.

Diag. 63
10 min.

Diag. 64
15 min.

Diag. 65
15 min.

Diag. 66
15 min.
Session 14 120 minutes

Goals: • Continue Teaching of Passing with Stopping and Pivoting
• Defense: Distance and Positioning

Drills:
• warm up: ballhandling dribbling drills. (10 minutes)
• pass, move, one step stop, back pivot and chest two-hand pass (front pivot); (see Diag.-67)
• one-hand shoulder pass, one step stop, shot fake, back pivot, front pivot and lay-up to the left (right) side; (see Diag.-68)
• dribble, one step stop, back pivot, one-hand shoulder pass and move after the pass; (see Diag.-69)
• 2 on 1 continuous from both sides. Shooter becomes defensive player in the next action. One hand passes from the dribble. Offense must stay at same level. Defense runs from one offensive player to another; (see Diag.-70)
• two-man team: players receive the ball after the move and stop, then one-hand pass and movement again. Combine front and reverse pivoting; (see Diag.-71)
• a)-1 on 1: defense of offensive player with ball. 1 on 1 defense of offensive player without ball in ball or help side; (see Diag.-72)
  b)-1 on 1: defense of offensive player without the ball (see Diag.-73)
• 5 on 5 on 5 Defense is waiting on half court line. Offense uses only one dribble for the penetration. Stress the pivoting and passing. Scoring offense stays in offense on the opposite side. If miss, goes to defense;
• Free throws: 2 times 3 shots in a row

Remarks:
• when pivoting protect the ball further from the defense and hold it on a far hip. Elbows in front of defensive player;
• in defense player always has responsibility for guarding his man but at the same time must see position of the ball;
• distance between defensive and offensive player depends directly on distance of the ball;
• as the ball gets closer, defense is closer and more aggressive on a player and viceversa.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 67  5 min.  Diag. 71  10 min.

Diag. 68  2 x 5 min.  Diag. 72  10 min.

Diag. 69  10 min.  Diag. 73  10 min.

15 min.
Session-15 120 minutes

Goal: Elements for Organised Fast-Break

Drills:

• warm-up: ballhandling in movement. (10 minutes)

• two-step stop after the dribble, front pivot around pivot foot, one step forward (left foot) and one-hand pass to teammate; (see Diag.-74)

• 2 on 0 fast-break situation one way; and return 1 on 1; (see Diag.-75)

• 1 on 1 offensive player rools the ball and chases it, followed by the defensive player; when offensive player catches the ball, pivots, passes to teammate and changes to defense. Drill repeated on the other side; (see Diag.-76)

• fast-break 3 on 0: on return shooter runs to the free throw line and plays defense against teammates (2 on 1); (see Diag.-77)

• return pass after the dribble, then stop and jump shot; (see Diag.-78)

• jump shot to end fast-break; (see Diag.-79)

• 2 on 2 on 2: flash, going into «triple threat» position while other player also flashes. After the pass players cut to the basket. Defense goes to offense on the other side of the court. Basic principle is flashing and cutting for the pass; no dribble; (see Diag.-80)

• offense changes direction in dribbling and stops in front of the defense for jump shot over the defense; defensive player stands with arms up; (see Diag.-81)

Remarks:

• in fast-break players without the ball should be in front of the ball;

• for successful fast-break depth and width of movement are important;

• good timing when passing the ball is half of good offense;

• final pass before the lay-up usually is bounce pass.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 74

5 min.

Diag. 75

15 min.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 78 10 min.

Diag. 79 10 min.

Diag. 80 30 min.

Diag. 81 10 min.
Drills:

- warm up: players are divided into two teams. Using passes only, try to approach opposite players and hit them with the ball; every hit counts as a point;

- passing and moving drill into the hexagon; two-hand chest pass is used. Drill is executed with two balls and in two directions; (see Diag.-82)

- 1 on 1 position: offensive player dribbles back and forth using crossover dribbling, then passes to teammate and cuts for the ball. Defense only guards, without trying to steal or intercept the ball; (see Diag.-83)

- defense in disadvantage situations; (see Diag.-84)

- 1 on 1 without ball: offensive player cuts from the help side to the ball side. Defensive player always stays in front of offensive player; (see Diag.-85)

- 1 on 1 without ball; (see Diag.-86)

- 3 on 2 in triangle; offense may pivot and fake. While one defensive player is aggressive on the ball, the other positions himself between two offensive players. If defense touches the ball, play 2 on 1 to the opposite basket against offensive player who made the mistake; (see Diag.-87)

- 2 on 1: defensive player defends player with the ball and after the pass runs for the other offensive player who returns the ball to his teammate. This player plays 1 on 1 against the defensive player. (see Diag.-88)

- full court game; defense: full court pressing; offense: Fast-Break, no dribble game.

Remarks:

- aggressive defense on player with ball in parallel stance;
- in defensive stance use sliding and running;
- never cross legs while moving in defense;
- always be prepared to approach the player at the same time as he receives the ball;
- good balance in the stance allows quick change of position and easy retrieving backwards.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 82 5 min.

Diag. 86 15 min.

Diag. 83 10 min.

Diag. 87 15 min.

Diag. 84 10 min.

Diag. 88 15 min.

Diag. 85 15 min.
Session-17 120 minutes

Goal: Moving Around the Court and Practising Fast-Break

Drills:

- **warm up:** - ballhandling drills in movement (10 minutes)

- **passing in movement:** two lines from different sides set into a cross-position. One line uses direct one-hand shoulder pass and the other uses bounce pass with one-hand from the shoulder; (see Diag.-89)

- **dribble,** moving backwards and using continuous step, dribble the ball diagonally from one side of the court to another using the width of the court; (see Diag.-90)

- **sliding drill** - offensive player moves in different directions, using change of pace and direction. Defensive player follows aggressively in a close position trying not to let offense change sides easily; (see Diag.-91)

- **after receiving the pass** dribble and perform one-hand shoulder pass to teammate who uses two-step stop from full speed and then penetrates with cross over lay-up (drill is used from both sides); (see Diag.-92)

- **fast-break situation:** 2 on 1 with help from disadvantaged defensive player. Continuation in transition game 2 on 2 on the other side; (see Diag.-93)

- **3 on 0 fast-break.** In opposite direction transition 2 on 1 with shooter going to defense; (see Diag.-94)

- **2 on 2 game with two balls** (one ball on each side of the court). Ball is used for pivoting, give and go game with a coach, and cutting. After playing offense on one side, move to defense on the other side; (see Diag.-95)

- **give and go with coach and execution of close jump shot with one count stop.** Defense follows loosely. (see Diag.-96)

Remarks:

- **above all pay attention to details:** stopping, reception of the ball and protection of the ball;

- **balance when moving, and good timing are always necessary.**
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 89
10 min.

Diag. 90
5 min.

Diag. 91
5 min.

[Diagram images]
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 95

Diag. 96

20 min.

15 min.
Drills:

- warm up: «touch» game with a ball. Two teams playing on time with counted score;
- flashing on 1/4 of the court and playing 1 on 1; (see Diag.-97)
- 2 on 2 flashing, two man cooperation with double pass, penetration and assisting.
  Defense on player without the ball sets up help and follows both the position of the ball and his player; (see Diag.-98)
- give and go with loose defense and cutting to the basket; (see Diag.-99)
- a)-3 on 0 cutting after the pass. Player with ball is in the «triple threat» position. After a few cuts, Fast-Break on other basket; (see Diag.-100)
  b)-same drill; on the other side three defensive players are waiting for the Fast-Break. Drill can be organised in 3 on 3 on 3;
- 3 on 2 on half court; (see Diag.-101)
- scrimmage game.
  — Offensive tasks: continuous movement without the ball in the open spots, cutting with return pass, quick defense-offense-defense transition.
  — Defensive tasks: getting used to being towards the ball on help side; aggressive play on the ball;
- free throws: two-shot contest (should make both; if player misses, he is out).

Remarks:

- defensive players should always see the ball;
- distance between defensive player and the player without the ball always depends on distance from the ball;
- player should always be alert and ready to react, even when not close to the ball.
7. **TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS**

- **Diag. 97**: 10 min.
- **Diag. 98**: 15 min.
- **Diag. 99**: 15 min.
- **Diag. 100**: 20 min.
- **Diag. 101**: 20 min.
### Session-19

**Goal:** Teaching Fundamentals of the Fast-Break

#### Drills:

- warm up: ballhandling dribbling drills (10 minutes)

- after the pass offense fakes and «V» cuts toward the basket. Defense follows in loose position. Drills executed from both sides; (see Diag.-102)

- 2 on 1 in fast-break. Defensive player always with same offensive player. Player defended passes and runs to other side of the court. Teammate dribbles to the other side, then looks for the pass. Drill works as a transition in two directions: when return, former defensive player dribbles and former shooter goes to defense; (see Diag.-103)

- defense plays against fast-break in a disadvantage situation. Offense is free to get open; (see Diag.-104)

- defensive players cover space, trying to disturb the offense. Offensive players fast-break, using free space; (see Diag.-105)

- offense flashes using change of pace and direction. Passes to coach after a pivot. Ball can be passed only to coach. Defense should watch ball and man, trying not to permit cuts to the basket; (see Diag.-106)

- 3 on 2 continuous game. Players on one side with defensive players at the opposite side. Shooter goes on one side, two other offensive players go to defense; (see Diag.-107)

- change of direction with cross-over dribble. Retrieve one step back and execute the jump shot from one count stop after dribbling forward. (see Diag.-108)

#### Remarks:

- offensive players without ball must move towards free spot for the ball;

- players without ball must be in constant movement in front of the ball;

- good timing and precision in passing the ball are important for successful fast-break.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 102 10 min.

Diag. 103 15 min.

Diag. 104 15 min.

Diag. 105 20 min.
Diag. 106
20 min.

Diag. 107
20 min.

Diag. 108
10 min.
Table 20. Tool to record good passes, bad passes and balls lost during fast-break drills.
Session n.20  130 minutes
Goal:  Defense and Flashing

Drills:
- warm up: ballhandling skills in movement; (10 minutes)
- 1 on 1+1: flashing from guard position; (see Diag.-109)
- flashing from forward position; (see Diag.-110)
- open a spot for a cut under the basket; (see Diag.-111); after these moves transition to opposite basket.
- two balls and two coaches: 1 on 1 flashing, catch the ball with two step stop, dribble and jump shot. Defense loose, no blocking; (see Diag.-112)
- scrimmage game; offense: Fast-Break, passing the ball to closest teammate and cutting in front of the ball. Use dribble only for lay up. Defense: aggressive on the ball, watching the ball and the player;
- free throws: 3 shots in each round; after the first round those with no points are out; after second round those without two points are out; after third round those who did not make all three shots are out. Continue until one winner left.

Remarks:
- defensive player must see ball and man in every position;
- on ball side player is guarded in a closed position;
- on help side player is guarded in open position;
- flashing is successful if move is made in sharp angles.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

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*Table 21. The coach may use this kind of simple tool to assess players’ performance in training sessions.*
Session-21  
120 minutes

Goal: Cooperation in Offense

Drills:
- warm up: ballhandling in movement and stretching (10 minutes)
- cut with a return pass; (see Diag.-113)
- flashing to opposite side and, after return pass, reception of the ball with right hand, back pivot with left foot, shot fake and penetration with a cross over step on right side, dribble and lay up (practise from both sides); (see Diag.-114)
- two-man game after hand-off pass and flashing for return pass; (see Diag.-115)
- 2 on 1; defensive player on offensive player without ball; after flashing and shot, defensive boxes out and gets rebound. After rebound outlet pass to the shooter and 2 on 1 game to the opposite basket; (see Diag.-116)
- 2 on 2: help and recover on a penetration splitting the offense. Fast transition to opposite basket; (see Diag.-117)
- return pass with coach; jump shot after one step stop; (see Diag.-118)
- three consecutive free throws (players that misses is out).

Remarks:
- after hand-off pass player must roll so as to see the ball for the whole time and be ready to catch it again;
- when defense helps, offensive player should go wide and find proper angle to receive the ball.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 115
20 min.

Diag. 116
20 min.

Diag. 117
25 min.

Diag. 118
15 min.
Session-22 125 minutes

Goals:
• Practising Fast-Break
• Contest Drills

Drills:
• warm up: handling skills in movement, (10 minutes)
• 3 on 0; organised fast-break; on return 2 on 1: shooter goes to defense; (see Diag.-119)
• 1 on 1: offensive player may use the coach; (see Diag.-120)
• 3 on 2, 3 on 3 continuous drill. After 3 on 2 shooter goes out, and two other offensive players play defense. Two defensive players with a player from the side play offense; (see Diag.-121)
• 1 on 1 contest from half court. Each player gets five attempts. Winner stays in the game;
• 3 on 3 full court to 5 made shots (20 minutes)
• free throw contest. Player not making 3 out of 3 shots is out.

Remarks:
• patience and concentration are key elements for good results in contests;
• in fast-break concentration and reaction speed are important elements;
• in the game players must play until the basket is scored or until they gain possession of the ball in defense.
FREE THROW CONTEST RESULTS

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Table 22. Example of tool to record the results of free throw contests.
Session-23 120 minutes

Goal: Transition and Fast-Break Drills

Drills:
- warm up: ballhandling skills in movement; (10 minutes)
- return pass with the coach after pivoting; loose defense; (see Diag.-122)
- 2 on 2 full court. Offense: as wide as possible. Defense: help and recover; (see Diag.-123)
- a) 4 on 0; b) 4 on 2 continuous drill; two players from side go to defense and two defensive players with two offensive players play on opposite basket. Shooter and passer move to side; (see Diag.-124)
- 1 on 1; loose defense. Offensive and defensive rebound after the shot. Change roles on the other basket; (see Diag.-125)
- 3 on 3 on 3+ free players; team stays in offense if they make shot. Player responsible for the basket goes to one side and new player comes; (see Diag.-126)
- three free throws made in a row. If player misses, he is out.

Remarks:
- when blocking out in defensive rebound player can not turn his head and follow the ball; first must make contact with an offensive player and stop him from moving closer to the basket;
- fast-break passing must be fast and sharp;
- try to avoid long passes on width of the court;
- dribble in fast-break is used only for quick conquest of the court.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 123  20 min.

Diag. 124  25 min.

Diag. 125  15 min.

Diag. 126  20 min.
Session n.24 120 minutes

Goal: Fast-Break and Contest

Drills:
• warm up: ballhandling skills in movement, (10 minutes)
• 3 on 0 one way and 2 on 1 in return: shooter goes to defense; (see Diag.-127)
• 1 on 1: offensive player may use the coach; (see Diag.-128)
• After completed offense on one side, three defensive players and shooter attack other basket. Three new players from side go to defense and three offensive players go to side; (see Diag.-129)
• 1 on 1 contest from half court. Each player gets five attempts. Winner stays in the game;
• 3 on 3 full court to 5 made shots;
• free throw contest. Only those who make 3 times 3 free throws in a row stay in the game.

Remarks:
• in contests make sure opponents have similar basketball skill level;
• praise players for their effort.
7. TRAINING SESSIONS WITH 13-14 YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Diag. 127
15 min.

Diag. 128
15 min.

Diag. 129
20 min.
8

COACHING 15-18 YEAR OLD PLAYERS

Jose María Buceta
László Killik

8.1. CONSIDERING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

8.2. IMPROVING INDIVIDUAL FUNDAMENTALS
- Moving Without the Ball
- Offensive Rebound
- Low Post Moves

8.3. DEVELOPING TACTICAL DECISION-MAKING
- Criteria for Making Tactical Decisions
- Some Examples

8.4. BUILDING TEAM PLAY
- Team Defense Concepts
- Zone Defense
- Press Defense
- Advanced Defense Strategy
- Fast-Break and Transition
- Man to Man Offense
- Zone Offense
- Press Offense
- Other Aspects
8.1. CONSIDERING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

When the players reach the age of fifteen, they already have basketball experience, although there are remarkable individual differences among players. Some players master basic fundamentals better than others, some have developed physically better than others, etc. Coaches working with 15-18 year-olds, should understand these differences, assessing the particular resources and needs of each player (their stronger and weaker points) to decide the goals and the contents of training.

As we have seen in previous chapters, in mini-basketball and 13-14 year-old teams, training should be more global and standarised for all players. However, with 15-18 year-olds, training should be more analytical and individualised. At this stage of players’ development it is important to consider their individual needs to widen players’ resources, making sure that training helps every player to improve appropriately.

Following this pattern, coaches should consider that physical preparation is an important aspect of training with these players. With 15-16 year-olds it is important to prepare them for confronting, progressively, higher loads of physical work. Thus, when players are older (17-18 year-olds) they will be capable of assimilating more sophisticated training, lowering the risk of injuries that may occur when the demands of training exceed the players’ capabilities.

Obviously, endurance, strength and speed are key aspects of the physical work to be considered, but coaches should also take into account flexibility and coordination. A common mistake is to underestimate the importance of flexibility and coordination; and many players limit their progress due to deficiencies in these aspects.

Players’ physical individual needs should be assessed; then, with the help of experts in this field, coaches should devote part of the training programme to developing physical aspects.

Likewise, players’ technical individual needs should be assessed, so that coaches know how their players master basketball fundamentals and what they need to improve.

* For example: the coach may assess his/her players’ shooting technique in depth; then, he/she should organise analytical training to improve individual deficiencies.

Following this example, a simple tool such as that shown in Table-23 may help coaches to assess players’ individual needs with regard to basketball fundamentals.
Table 23. Example of tool to assess individual needs, in this case related to shooting.

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<td>MOVE TO SHOOT</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARM THROWING THE BALL</td>
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<td>HAND JUST AFTER THROWING</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARCH OF BALL’S PATHWAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>BALL SPINS</td>
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<td>BODY STANCE AFTER THROWING</td>
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8.2. IMPROVING INDIVIDUAL FUNDAMENTALS

Besides analytical individualised work to improve basic fundamentals such as passing, dribbling or shooting, coaches should take into account other fundamentals which are usually given less importance during previous years. As an example, we will comment on «Moving Without the Ball», «Offensive Rebounding» and «Low Post Moves».

Moving Without the Ball

In offense, only one player has the ball whereas the other four must play without it. Therefore, moving without the ball is an essential part of the game. Coaches should emphasise this issue from mini-basketball onwards, and coaches working with 15-18 year-olds should spend time improving all the fundamentals involved.

Offensive players without the ball may move with one of the following purposes:
• to favour their teammate with the ball to play 1 on 1 against his/her defender by moving away from the ball, bringing with them their own defenders (Diagram-1);

• to have a free passing lane to receive a pass from the teammate who has the ball (Diagram-2);

• to get open in a position to receive the ball and shoot, sometimes taking advantage of screens (Diagram-3);

• to set screens for the teammates, either for the one with the ball or for the other three without the ball (Diagram-4).

• to go for the offensive rebound (Diagram-5).
Key aspects of moving efficiently without the ball are: appropriate body stance and balance, convincing faking, good footwork, proper speed, adequate running, and good stopping. Coaches working with 15-18 year-olds should assess their players in all these aspects and help them to improve deficiencies.

**Body Stance**

Basketball body stance is a basic position that allows players to perform. It is not a natural bodily position and, therefore, players need to be taught details such as the following:

- legs spread, a bit more than shoulder width; feet parallel;
- knees and hips slightly flexed, keeping the body’s centre of gravity low;
- head up, being able to see the ball and the basket (do not look at the floor);
- upper body slightly flexed;
- body weight equally balanced on both feet, slightly on the toes;
- hands ready to receive the ball, with arms held close to the chest.
The proper position of the body is important before moving because it favours quicker action. And it is also important during the move because it enables the player to both catch the ball in a better situation for shooting, passing or penetrating, and to stop firmly for setting a screen or gaining the spot for the offensive rebound.

Concerning stance, the players must learn to differentiate when they should fully face the ball (this is, a stance facing the ball completely) and when they should face the basket while keeping their waist or neck turned to see the ball, ready to get it. As in other aspects, coaches must observe how their young players master these issues, and correct them if necessary.

**Body Balance**

Body balance relies on the basic position described above. However, players should learn to shift the degree of inflection of their legs, their weight from one leg to the other, and the inclination of their upper body to perform effective moves without the ball.

* For example: the player may flex one of his/her legs more than the other, stress his/her body weight on this leg and incline his/her upper body in this direction, so, he/she will be able to move his/her opponent to this side before he/she changes direction to the other side.

**Faking**

Convincing faking makes the defensive player pay attention and react in a way that will favour the purpose of the faker’s next action.

* For example: a player who wants to take advantage of a teammates’ screen may fake moving to the opposite side of the screen to provoke his/her defender’s reaction to that side; then, he/she will move to the screen with a better chance of achieving his/her purpose.

Faking is a very important means of distracting the attention of the defender and to make him/her react contrary to the true intention of the faker.

The proper use of body balance and gestures, as well as change of speed, are crucial elements of convincing effective faking.
• Thus, in the first phase it is important that the faker use resources such as the inflection of his/her legs, bodily weight more stressed on one leg, upper body inclination, gestures with the head, the arms and the hands, and even facial expressions, to convince his/her defender of something that in fact is the opposite of what he/she actually wants to do.

• In the second phase, once the defender has reacted to the fake, change of speed will be important, so the player performs the subsequent action quicker and explosively.

**Footwork**

The importance of footwork is obvious. If players cross their feet or do not pivot properly, they will not be able to move quickly and effectively. Although this aspect should be well developed at this age, it is advisable that coaches be alert, helping players who fail due to footwork basic deficiencies.

Footwork also includes using shorter or longer steps (and combining both) to beat the defender.

* For example: a player may use short steps while moving to the paint and then use a longer step at the same time he/she pivots, changes direction and increases speed to get the pass from a teammate (Diagram-6).

As it is shown in this example, footwork is essential for changing direction, one of the most important moves without the ball.
**Speed**

The speed of the players’ moves without the ball is a crucial aspect. Sometimes, these moves require maximum speed whereas at other times they need a slower pace. In many cases, they will benefit from a change of speed, such as the above faking example.

Maximum speed is «compulsory» when the players run the Fast-Break until they reach the other side; then they need to adjust their speed to get the adequate timing with the teammate handling the ball. Set offenses also require maximum speed for specific moves, although always using the proper timing.

Proper change of speed is one of the main resources of many great players. However, many élite players do not master this valuable fundamental because their coaches did not emphasise it enough when they were youngsters.

To develop change of speed it is not enough that the coach occasionally tell his/her players «change speed», «you have to change speed», etc. Furthermore, players must work on this aspect specifically.

With this aim in mind, coaches should organise drills which allow their players to *compare their own sensations when performing at different degrees of speed*. This will increase the players’ awareness regarding their own speed, being the first step in controlling this aspect.

* For instance: using the same move described above in Diagram-6, the players must approach the paint and react to getting the pass using different speeds. To facilitate this task, three speeds may be established: *high*, *medium* and *low*. Utilising these labels, the coach indicates the speed required each time, both for approaching the paint and for reacting to getting the pass.

  For example: «low-high» would mean low speed to approach the paint and high speed to react. At the beginning it is advisable to keep the speed of one of the two moves constant (for example: always the same speed when approaching the paint). Later, the coach may use all possible combinations (low-low, low-medium, low-high, medium-low, etc.).

Following this method, the players will learn to differentiate among levels of speed, and thus controlling change of speed.
Running

Some young players may need to improve their poor running technique. If this be the case, this aspect should be included within the priorities of physical work.

Besides this, many young players need to be taught how to run when they move in offense without the ball. Three common mistakes are: losing sight of the ball, running sideways and running through wrong pathways.

- The players must learn to run while turning their necks to see the ball.
- They should also learn when it is appropriate and inappropriate to run sideways. For example, it may be appropriate when the player enters into the paint cutting to the ball to get the pass. In this case, by running sideways he/she will prevent the defensive player (behind him/her) from intercepting the pass (see Diagram-7).
- Likewise, they must learn to run using the right pathways. For example, it would be inappropriate to run the Fast-Break without respecting the lanes, or to cut to the basket surrounding the screener too much (thus giving room to the defender to pass through) (see Diagrams 8 and 9).

Changing Direction

When facing a good defense, the players have to change direction often. It is a difficult fundamental requiring powerful legs, a high degree of coordination, good body balance and proper footwork.

There are two techniques to changing direction: frontal and backward.
The \textit{frontal change of direction} can be made with or without pivoting. In the first case, the technique includes the following aspects:

- the foot furthest away from the new direction is the one to be used for the last step in the current direction and the first step in the new one; this will be made by pivoting with the other foot (the one nearest the new direction);
- the last step in the current direction may be shorter; the knee should be bent, stressing the body weight on that leg and pushing the floor hard; faking by using upper body inclination to that side and head gestures may be also very useful to emphasise this move;
- the first step in the new direction requires rapid pivoting, shifting the body weight to the other leg, using a longer step (although not so long as to slow down the motion) and changing speed (from lower to higher speed).

In the second case (without pivoting), the last step in the current direction should be performed with the foot furthest away from the new direction, but the first step in the new direction should be performed with the other foot (the one nearest to the new direction).

- In this case, when the player stresses his/her body weight on the leg making the last step before changing, he/she has the other leg free to move to the other side with a longer powerful step. Shifting body weight and changing speed are also part of the move.

The technique to performing the \textit{backward change of direction} is similar.

- In this case, the last step in the current direction should be performed with the foot nearest to the new direction; then the player pivots backwards with this foot and changes direction; again, shifting body weight and changing speed are important.
- A common mistake is to turn the body in the new direction while performing the last step. The player must use the last step to \textit{emphasise that direction}, so that the defender will react to that move and be beaten when the player changes the direction. Otherwise, the defender will be able to control the change of direction and this will be inefficient.

Other common mistakes during the process of learning to change direction are the following:

- running preceding the change may be inadequate because instead of running normally, the player tends to shorten the final steps. The player should run normally and \textit{only shorten the last step};
- players may lose balance because they keep their centre of gravity too
high; instead they should keep the centre of gravity lower by bending their knees;

- the move is made as a curve and not as an angle; instead, the players should describe an angle, shifting body weight and taking an explosive first step to the new direction.

**Stopping**

After moving, stopping is a key aspect to screening teammates and, obviously, to receive the ball in a good position to shoot, pass or penetrate.

To stop, players may use either a one-count stop or a two-count stop. In the first case, both feet touch the floor at the same time, whereas in the second case one foot will touch the floor first and then the other. In both cases, the most important thing is to keep the body balanced with an appropriate body stance.

Players of 15-18 years of age should master stopping. However it is common to observe relevant deficiencies.

The most important deficiency is lack of balance; basically this occurs because the players do not flex their legs (or leg) sufficiently when they stop, they do not stress their body weight properly, or they do not spread their legs to get the basic basketball stance.

- If the players use a one-count stop, the body weight should be equally distributed between the two legs, whereas if they utilise a two-count stop it should be initially stressed on the leg used to stop until the other leg touches the floor. In both cases, the stop must be done with the knees (or knee) well bent.

- Likewise, the distance between the two legs should be a bit wider than shoulder width, with both feet parallel, keeping the basic basketball stance. Players should avoid placing their legs either too close together or too far apart.

**Moving and Receiving**

Good stopping is essential to receiving the ball in good conditions to shoot, pass or penetrate dribbling.

- When using a one-count stop, players should stop with both feet at the same time, just as they receive the ball.

- When utilising a two-count stop, they should place the first foot on the floor just when they receive the ball, then place the other foot. As a general rule, when using a two-count stop, it is advisable that the player’s first step be with the foot which is nearest to the ball, especially when the
player needs to turn to face the basket.

Either with a one-count stop or a two-count stop, the player should face the basket when he/she stops, unless he/she is playing backwards at the paint.

Therefore, in general terms, a one-count stop may be more advisable than the two-count stop only if the player is able to stop facing the basket. Otherwise, to stop facing the ball and then pivot to face the basket would be too slow.

Thus, when the player needs to turn to the basket, the two-count stop is preferable. In this case, the player receives the ball while he/she performing the first step with the foot nearer the ball, bending that knee to gain balance and be able to pivot to face the basket; thus the second step will be placed at the end of the turn and the player will be already facing the basket with the ball ready to shoot, pass or penetrate.

Another important aspect is timing. Players should understand that good timing is more important than maximum speed. Correct timing gives the teammate with the ball the possibility to pass at the right time and at the right place. Many young players need to work specifically on this important aspect.

At this age, coaches should assess the ability and the technique of their players to receive the ball when stopping. Probably, they have developed the habit of stopping in a specific way (for example, one-count stop, or two-count stop always placing the same foot for the first step) and they strongly rely on this automatic move, which is difficult to change. However, unless the coach considers that this habit is efficient and does not limit the player’s progress, it is important to take into account that these players are still young, so they may and should learn to increase their resources as basketball players.

* For example: a 16 year-old player always uses a two-count stop placing his left foot on the floor as the first step. He is very efficient when he gets the pass from his left side, but he is not so efficient when he receives the ball from his right side. At this age, he manages to solve this deficiency and his present performance may be considered positive. However, what will happen a few years later when eventually he has to play against better defenders? Will he be able to shoot when he receives the ball from his right side? Most likely he will not, because he will lack the proper technique to stop, receive and shoot quickly.

Coaches of 15-18 year-olds should think carefully about the long-term consequences of their decisions about either maintaining or trying to change their players’ technique. Many times they only consider short-term performance, without attempting to change habits that today may be efficient but which will limit the future possibilities of the players.
Screening

Stopping properly, keeping the basketball basic stance, with good balance, protecting the chest with the arms, and not moving are the keys to set a good screen.

Basically, there are two ways to set a screen:

• moving to the position of the defender and setting the screen there (Diagram-10);
• standing in a specific spot on the court and leaving the teammate to be screened to move his/her defender to the screen (Diagram-11).

In both cases, the most common mistakes of 15-18 year-olds are the following:

• *setting the screen in the wrong spot.* The players must understand where the proper spot for the screen is in order to set it exactly there. If they move to the position of the defender to set a side screen (remember Diagram-10), they should stand so that the shoulder of the defender is in line with the middle of their chest, leaving the defender’s leg in between the two legs of the screener;

• *setting a deficient body stance with bad balance:* incorrect positioning of legs (usually too close) and centre of gravity too high (knees not bent enough). It is important to correct these fundamentals in order to perform good screens;

• *pushing the defender* (sometimes due to deficient balance), instead of letting him/her to make physical contact. Young players must understand
that the role of the screener is only to establish a powerful position that
serves to block the defender’s move, being the defender (and not the
screener) the one who makes physical contact when he/she can not
move through the screen;

- **moving to make contact:** in a similar way, some young players change
their first screening stance to make contact with the defender when
he/she is overcoming the screen successfully. Thus, they move their
feet, their waist, their shoulder or their arms to stop the defenders’
move, leading, in many cases, to a personal foul.

- **avoiding contact:** some young players screen «with their eyes closed»
and narrow their body width or move slightly away to avoid contact
with the defender. Obviously these deficiencies should be corrected by
the coach.

**Execution vs. Decision Making**

As we have emphasised in previous sections, it is important that coaches
working with 15-18 year-olds assess their technical level in all fundamentals
related to moving without the ball to correct deficiencies. However, many
times the issue of a faulty performance of these fundamentals is not the qual-
ity of the execution, but the **lack of decision** concerning performance.

Thus, the problem of a player who does not set screens may not be lack
of mastery of the screening technique, but a lack of decision to set screens.
This problem is common in all basketball actions that usually have less social
recognition (screening, blocking out, helping, running back, etc.).

Therefore, as well as considering assessment and correction of technique
(execution), coaches should consider improve the decisions of their players
related to the appropriate performance of all offensive moves without the ball.

With this aim, coaches may use strategies such as the ones discussed in
Chapter-4.

* For example: the players of a female 15-16 year-old team have
practised the technique of changing speed (execution) and they
master it quite well. Now the coach wants to improve the decision
of changing speed. He explains to his players the precise situations
in which they should change speed, and then he organises a 3 on 3
drill to practise this decision.

The 3 on 3 game, on one basket, with twenty seconds of posse-
sion time, will last for ten minutes. The goal of the drill is to change
speed in the situations explained. Every time a player changes
speed in those situations, her team gets a point. At the end of the
ten minutes, the team with most points will be the winner and the
prize will be three minutes rest while the other team does a series
of moves changing speed.
By using drills of this kind coaches may influence their players’ decisions, developing the habit of making the proper decisions. This is especially relevant regarding offensive moves without the ball.

Nevertheless, coaches should always differentiate between decision and execution, remaining alert to the latter even if the young players have reached a reasonable level of mastery. Thus, it may be possible that, for example, some players (or just one player) show a «technical recession» when they perform change of speed. In this case, the coach should organise the appropriate drills to help these players improve their execution of changing speed (such as the drill explained above in the section dedicated to changing speed), instead of assuming that they will improve this aspect through drills aimed at improving decision making.

**Practical Exercises**

- Considering all the aspects mentioned above, check the execution of 15-18 year-old players when they move without the ball.
- During a basketball game, choose two 15-18 year-old players to observe and record how many times they change speed to get the ball when playing set offenses.

**Offensive Rebound**

From their earliest experience in basketball, players hear how important it is to go in to rebound in defense and offense, being encouraged by their coaches to perform this task. However, many players, even tall players, do not develop their rebounding ability due to a lack of specific work on this aspect. At this age, coaches should work on this with their young players.

**Going to Rebound**

Offensive rebounding, in the first place, requires the players to be there; that is, to be in a position where they can actually fight to get the ball. Many
young players just do not move to be there and so they lose their chances to rebound.

Thus, the first thing for those players is to work on the decision of going for the rebound, setting the goal of being in the correct position and rewarding them if they are, regardless of whether they get the ball or not.

* For example: Boris is a tall 16 year-old boy who plays centre. Although he stands around the paint when his teammates shoot, most of the time Boris does not go for the rebound. His coach has decided to establish a special training programme to overcome this problem. Every time a game drill is organised in training (3 on 3, 4 on 4, or 5 on 5), Boris has the individual goal of going for the rebound. Each time he does, regardless of whether he gets the ball or not, a positive point is recorded.

For every drill he has to reach a number of positive points previously established. If he achieves this, he can rest with the rest of the team in between drills; on the contrary, if he does not, he has to spend some extra time practising going for the rebound on his own. This way, Boris’ attention is more focused on going to rebound and thus, this behaviour will become a habit.

Anticipation

Secondly, it is important to teach the players to anticipate. In fact, many young players go to rebound but they arrive late because they do not anticipate the shots of their teammates. Thus, it is important that young players learn to anticipate their teammates’ shots, so that they move for the rebound just before the shot is made.

To develop this skill, the coach should consider offensive rebounding as a part of many drills in training, so the players may learn when they should go for the rebound.

* For example: the coach organises a 4 on 4 drill to practise screening. Usually, he will be concerned with screening and shooting from screening, and as soon as a player shoots the action will end and a new one will begin and so on. However, if he also stresses offensive rebounding and allows the play to continue until the basket is made or the defense controls the ball, there will be opportunities for the players to learn while their teammates shoot.

Thus, coaches should provide opportunities for the players to learn this important aspect. Furthermore, it is crucial that they teach the players the cues to consider; that is, the signals that indicate to the players: «go now!».
When these signals are clear, coaches may set the goal of going for the rebound *exactly when the signals appear*, neither sooner nor later, recording the players’ behaviour both in training and games.

* For instance: continuing with the example of Boris, the next step for this player would be to reward him with one positive point only if he goes for the rebound exactly when the appropriate signals appear; this is, when he anticipates the shot and goes for the rebound *just before* the shot is made.

Likewise, it is important that coaches include offensive rebounding within their offensive moves, instead of considering them only as an appendix. This means that the offensive moves should not end with the shot, considering offensive rebounding as an independent aspect, but with the rebounding positioning of the players who have been assigned this task.

Thus, the coach may prepare a strategy for the rebound just as he/she does for the rest of the play, explaining to his/her players what their positions are to go in for the rebound and the pathways that they may use to reach those spots from every possible shot of the offense. This way, the players will consider rebounding as part of the offense and they will learn the right signals to anticipate in every possible shot; further, they will have a guideline concerning the correct rebounding spots.

* For example: in Diagram-12 the coach has drawn one of the plays to get a shot, ignoring (as usually happens) the offensive rebound. However, in Diagram-13 the same play has been drawn but now includes the moves of the players to go for the rebound. The latter favours a better rebounding attitude, helps the players to learn the signals to anticipate, and allows organisation of rebounding positions for each player of the team.

When moving in for the rebound, players may fake to one side and move to the other side to beat the nearest defender and have a better pathway to the rebounding position.
Getting the Spot

The next stage is getting the correct position for rebounds. Although very important, it is not enough to go for the rebound anticipating shots; further, it is crucial that players move to the right spots and reach those spots ahead of the defenders.

In Diagram-13 we have shown that a little team strategy may be organised to assign possible spots among the two or three rebounders of the team. This will help the players to choose the right spots to get rebounds. Nevertheless, the players should learn three rules:

- they should not be just underneath the basket;
- a missed shot made from one side goes most often to the opposite side;
- long distance shots rebound longer than short distance shots.

Players should be especially alert when their defensive player goes to help; this is a very good occasion to anticipate and get the spot to rebound.

They should learn to see the free spots that they can reach, considering the positioning of the defenders. So, as soon as they start moving they must look for those spots instead of looking at the balls’ pathway.

When the player anticipates and reaches the proper position, he/she is in a good situation to get the ball; however he/she still has to fight against the defenders. Now the task of the offensive player is to reach the spot by preventing the defenders from getting there.

With this aim in mind, he/she should use his/her body to contact powerfully with the defender in order to reach the spot. This needs good body balance achieved by bending both knees, and a proper use of the back, shoulders and elbows.

Summing up, the rebounder has to move to the basket anticipating his/her teammates shots; then, instead of looking at the ball, he/she should look for the free spot and also for the nearest defender to make sure he/she
gets the spot; then, he/she will be ready to look for the ball, jump and catch it.

- A common mistake for players going in for the rebound is to turn their heads up to look at the shot, instead of using this time to look for a spot and get it to rebound. Coaches should work to overcome this problem.

Many young players just go for the rebound without considering any of these aspects. Obviously they get some rebounds because there are many chances throughout the game; however, would they get more rebounds if they developed these aspects? Undoubtedly many of them would improve their rebounding ability.

**Jumping, Catching the Ball and Shooting**

These aspects are the ones that coaches work on more often through different drills. The following points are important:

- the player should be in a balanced position before jumping, then jump as high as possible with his/her arms up to hold the ball or tip it;

- *timing* is crucial; players must learn to jump at the proper moment to catch the ball as high as possible;

- players should learn to jump and move their arms to catch the ball *without fouling* the defenders;

- when players come down to the floor they must bend their knees for a balanced stance, protecting the ball with their body which should be between the ball and the defenders;

- finally, the rebounder should jump and shoot; sometimes he/she may use faking before shooting; in any case, he/she should *turn his/her head to see the basket before shooting*. Many players miss these shots because
they only look at the basket at the last moment, just as they are throwing the ball;

- players should practise these shots surrounded by defenders as they would be in a game.

**Rebounding Own Shots**

Young players, especially tall players, should also learn to rebound their own shots. In fact, many players who shoot do not go for the rebound, or go late, or go to the wrong spot.

In this case, the player shooting cannot move to rebound as quickly as with his/her teammates’ shots, since his/her first priority is to make a good shot. However he/she should move as soon as he/she touches the floor.

In this case, probably he/she will not be able to fight for the correct spot, but he/she will have a better perspective of the ball. So, as soon as the player touches the floor, without losing sight of the ball, he/she should move to the spot where he/she guesses that the ball will go. As in other cases, players must learn this habit through the appropriate practice.

**Some Drills**

The following are some simple drills to practise offensive rebounding.

- One player under the basket. He/she throws the ball to the backboard and jumps to catch it, then jumps to score. Five times non-stop, switching sides.

- Same drill: now player tips the ball.

- A line of three or four players. The first of them throws the ball to the backboard, and runs to the end of the line; then, the second player tips the ball to the backboard, then the third and so on. Every player goes to the end of the line after tipping the ball. After a number of tips the ball has to be scored.
• Player out of the paint. Coach throws ball. Player goes to rebound and scores. Then, he/she goes back out of the paint and coach throws a second ball, and so on with a third, a fourth and a fifth ball in a row.

• Two players fight for the offensive rebound. Both out of the paint. Coach throws ball. First task is to reach the spot, then catch the ball and score.

• Same drill with three players (Diagram-14).

• Same drill with three pairs: one pair plays for the rebound while the other two rest a few seconds until their turn.

• 1 on 1: coach throws ball; offensive player tries to get offensive rebound; defensive player blocks out. From different positions (Diagrams-15, 16 and 17).

• Same drill; now 2 on 2 or 3 on 3 (Diagrams-18 and 19).
• Same drill: 2 on 2 or 3 on 3; now 2/3 outside players move ball until they shoot (Diagram-20); then rebound.

• Outside players play 1 on 1 or 2 on 2. Inside players only rebound. Inside defenders should move to help. Offensive rebounders should take advantage when their defenders go to help (Diagram-21).

• 3 on 3, 4 on 4 or 5 on 5: game situation; emphasis on rebound.

**Practical Exercise**

- Considering the information above, assess how 15-18 year-old players perform in all aspects of offensive rebound. You may use a tool such as that shown in Table-25.

**Low Post Moves**

At this age, players should learn to play backwards from the low post (the same from the midpost). And *this is a task for all players* except very short ones. It is obvious that tall players need to develop fundamentals to play backwards, but forwards and big guards may take advantage too. In fact, one of the most valuable team strategies consists of placing at the mid/low post (just low post from now) the player who can take advantage of a height mismatch with his/her defender. This player may be either a centre, a forward or a guard, provided that he/she be able to play backwards as a low post.

**Before Receiving the Ball**

The first task of a low post player is to be able to receive the ball in that position. This is not easy because the defense will be very alert to stopping the pass.
### Table 25

Example of tool to assess individual skill in offensive rebounding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAYER:</th>
<th>DATE:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED</strong></td>
<td><strong>COMMENTS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>GOING TO REBOUND</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANTICIPATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>GETTING THE SPOT</td>
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<tr>
<td>JUMPING AND CATCHING THE BALL</td>
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<td>SHOOTING AFTER REBOUNDING</td>
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<tr>
<td>REBOUNDING OWN SHOTS</td>
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</table>
• The player must have a passing lane to get the pass. This means he/she must be between the ball and his/her defender. To reach that position, he/she may use all kinds of moves.

* For example: moving away from the ball (to move the defender with him/her) and then change direction and speed to come back and reach the passing lane.

Faking, changing direction and changing speed in a limited space are very important aspects, as well as timing, stopping and a balanced body stance.

• Sometimes, the passing lane is not free, but might be as soon as the ball changes to a different teammate. This concept is very important for low post players. If they can not get the pass from one position, instead of fighting for that pass, they may *fight for the next pass* anticipating that situation; thus, they can take advantage of the defender stopping the present pass to reach the position for the next pass; so as soon as the ball goes to the next teammate, he/she will be ready to receive the ball.

* For example: in Diagram-22 player-1 has the ball. The passing lane to player-4 (the low post) is not free because the defender is there. Player-4 may work for the next pass taking advantage of his defender’s position. He may block him with his shoulder and his arm, when the ball is still in that position; then, when player-1 passes to player-3, he will have a free passing lane from player-3.

Thus, when low posts are not free, they should not follow the movement of the ball by playing «behind» it; on the contrary, they should *anticipate* where the ball will go to work on getting the next pass.

• Then, when they finally have a passing lane free, it is important to hold up the defender until they get the ball.
A common mistake for young players is to hold up the defender only until they see their teammate passing the ball; then they move their body to catch the ball, leaving the defender free, and the defender takes advantage of this move by intercepting the ball in its pathway.

Instead, players should keep a good stance, with their knees well bent, holding up the defender with the shoulder and the arm, using the opposite hand as a target to receive the pass. They should be able to stop the ball with this hand while still holding up the defender, and only then catch the ball with the other hand and use the free pathway to the basket.

When the defender is behind the post, the passing lane will be free, but the defender might be able to anticipate and intercept the pass, so the post must make sure he/she has the defender under control.

In this case, the post should make contact with the defender using his/her lower back, with a good balanced stance (making him/her as big as possible but without losing balance), knees well bent, upper-body slightly flexed forward, and arms and hands well extended forward asking for the pass. Making good use of his/her body, the low post must create as much room as possible between the defender and the position where he/she will grasp the ball.

Thus, the player must hold the ball with his/her arms extended, not near his/her chest as many young players do incorrectly. Then he/she should open his/her elbows and bring the ball back to the chest well protected. Sometimes it will be useful to step towards the ball as it comes to the player, so it will be more difficult for the defender to intercept the pass. However, this does not mean that the low post should receive the ball out of the proper position. He/she must get the ball where he/she can be dangerous.

**Playing With the Ball**

Once the low post has the ball, there are two options: if he/she have a free pathway to the basket, he/she should move quickly to shoot. If not, he/she should turn his/her head and take a quick look.

Two common mistakes of young players are: dribbling the ball as soon as they receive it; and moving their heads down, losing perspective of what is going on.

By taking a second to have a look, the post can observe the position of his/her defender as well as the moves of the other defenders and the positions of
his/her teammates. Thus, he/she can see the weaker side of his/her defender, if the other defenders help, and if there are teammates open to get a good pass. This broad perspective of the picture is crucial to the low post’s game.

- **Passing** is a very important skill for a low post. Therefore, from a general passing ability that all players should develop, at this point it is important to build a *specific passing ability* from the low post’s position. This will include short one-hand passes to players cutting to the basket, one-hand quick passes to teammates at the perimeter, and even jump-passes to overcome help. Players should learn to pass in a «jungle» of arms and hands trying to intercept the ball, so they must find the proper pathway in order to pass and perform a quick good pass which will allow a teammate to shoot.

Therefore, coaches should spend training time developing this specific passing ability through appropriate drills.

* For example: a 3 on 3 set: two perimeter players and one at the low post. The latter gets the ball and the two defenders of the perimeter go to help. The post must pass the ball back in good condition for a shot. Sometimes one of the perimeter players may cut to the basket whereas the other stays outside; then the post will have the option of passing to the cutter or passing to the perimeter shooter.

- Post players must learn to make the decision of either passing to a teammate or playing to score. This will depend on the actions of the defenders. If they help, the best option will be to pass to the teammate who is free. If they do not help, the low post should play against his/her defender to score.

**Specific Moves**

As an example, the following are some specific moves for the low post to play against his/her defender.

- fake to one side (for example the right side) turning the waist, shoulder and head slightly but quickly; then slide the opposite leg (left leg) to the basket while turning to the left, shifting body weight to that leg;
at the same time, bounce the ball with a short quick dribble between legs; then, turn to the hoop while catching the ball and stepping with the other foot (right foot); jump with knees bent (they must be bent all the time), and then shoot.

- same fake; now after sliding the opposite leg (left) and bouncing the ball between legs, do not turn to the hoop; instead, stay backwards, slide slightly the other leg (right) and catch the ball while stepping with this foot (right); then move the other foot (left) rapidly, while turning the head to see the hoop, and jump on this foot for a short hook-shot.

The ball should be protected all the time. Do not extend the arm out to perform the hook. Bring the ball straight up the shooting side with both hands and make a full extension directly over the ear. Use the other arm for protection from the defense.

- same move; now after the last step, instead of jumping for the short hookshot, fake this shot by moving head up slightly and then turn back, pivoting around the back foot (right), then jump and shoot.

Obviously there are other possible moves but the ones mentioned above give an idea of how the players can perform. In all moves, one important aspect is to look at the hoop before shooting, so the player can see the target in advance and so be more accurate. Many young players see the hoop right when they throw the ball; this is a big mistake which explains many failed shots.

**Drills**

Many drills can be organised to practise low post moves. Some of them should be limited to practising separately each of the three aspects mentioned above: moves before receiving the ball, passing, and playing with the ball to score. Others should combine just two of these aspects: receiving and passing, receiving and playing to score; passing or playing to score. And others should include all three: receiving and either passing or playing to score. The following are some examples.
• **Goal:** practise specific moves to score. The players start with the ball at the low post and practise different moves. The coach explains, demonstrates and stops to correct. No defense. Later, same drill including a defender.

• **Goal:** catch the ball and play to score. Same drill but now a teammate passes from the perimeter. No defense. Later, same drill including a defender (Diagram-23).

• **Goal:** improve catching technique. One low post. Two teammates at the perimeter, each with one ball. The low post practises catching the ball; he/she gets the ball and passes it back, then he/she gets the other ball and so on. The coach demonstrates and stops to correct. No defender. Later, same drill including a defender.

• **Goal:** working to get a free passing lane. One low post and one defender. Two perimeter players. The low post tries to get a free passing lane; the defender tries to stop the pass. The perimeter players try to pass the ball inside through a free passing lane (Diagram-24).

• **Goal:** deciding between passing and playing to score. 2 on 2 or 3 on 3. The low post receives the ball (the defenders can not intercept this pass) and then he/she has to decide between passing or playing to score depending on the presence or absence of help from outside defenders (Diagrams 25 and 26).

• **Goal:** playing under normal game conditions. 2 on 2 or 3 on 3. Perimeter players try to pass to the low post, who must fight for a free lane, try to receive the ball and decide between passing and playing to score; then use proper passes or moves.
8.3. DEVELOPING TACTICAL DECISION-MAKING

One of the most important aspects of training 15-18 year-olds is the development of tactical decision-making. That is, learning to decide according to tactical knowledge.

Many coaches do not train this aspect specifically, assuming that players will learn just from working on moves included within the set offenses. However, a relevant problem of many young players (and later of professional players too) is that they do not know why they decide one way or the other. Coaches should consider this problem and work with their young players to improve their tactical decision-making.

Young players develop simple tactical decision-making if they have the proper training during mini-basketball years and at 13-14. At those stages they face 1 on 1, 2 on 2 and 3 on 3 situations, as well as 5 on 5 regular games, which require multiple decisions. For example, a 13-14 year-old player who plays 2 on 2 must decide between passing to his teammate or shooting himself, driving to the hoop or waiting for a screen, etc.

By «trial and error» with some guidelines from the coach, mini-basketball players may discover some of the stimuli that are relevant to making decisions while playing. Later, with the 13-14 year-olds, the coach may be more direct, teaching some important concepts. Now, with the 15-18 year-olds, the coach should design a training programme focused on developing decision-making. As in other aspects, the programme should begin by assessing the level of the players concerning decision-making, in order to detect their resources (strong points to be strengthened) and their needs (deficiencies to be improved).
Criteria for Making Tactical Decisions

In order to make the right decision, the players must understand the key criteria for making those decisions. For example, in a 2 on 1 situation the player with the ball has to decide between passing to his/her teammate or continue dribbling to the hoop for a lay-up. What is the criterion (or the criteria) for making this decision?

In this case, it would be mainly related to the action of the defender; for instance, if the defender moves to stop him/her from dribbling, the best decision would be to pass to his/her teammate, but if the defender stays in the middle leaving enough room to reach the hoop, the most appropriate decision would be to keep dribbling for the lay-up. Understanding this criteria would help the player to make the right decision.

Throughout their previous basketball experience, many 15-18 year-old players have automated basketball habits, relying mainly on the aspects of the game that they master best. Thus, if we observe players playing 1 on 1, it is very likely that they use the same moves repeatedly, regardless of the convenience of those moves; and the same would happen in 2 on 2, 3 on 3, 4 on 4 and 5 on 5. Most of the players would use their stronger resources regardless of whether these be most appropriate to the present circumstances. For example, a player who is a good perimeter shooter would tend to shoot even if a teammate is in a better position under the basket.

Therefore, the process of learning tactical decision-making at this age begins with the coach deciding, and then explaining to the players, the key criteria that the players should take into consideration in order to make the right decisions.
These criteria should be clear, and the key the coach uses to judge and correct the players’ decisions. As has been discussed in previous chapters, coaches often lack clear criteria; so they judge and correct players based on the result of their decisions.

* Thus, for example, if a player decides to pass and the pass is successful, the coach would tend to judge the decision as correct, whereas if the pass is intercepted, the coach would judge it as an incorrect decision.

In this case, the only criterion is the result of the action, but this is a wrong criterion to strengthen the process of learning to make decisions. Why? It is likely that the player who got bad results (for example, losing the ball when passing) will stop making those decision. In fact, this is the reason why many players limit themselves so soon; they do not attempt to make decisions that may lead to bad results.

Therefore, the criteria to decide if a decision is correct or incorrect should be present before the decision is taken. These criteria should be related to the basketball conditions that are present when the player makes the decision.

The criteria for the decision must include clear **key signal stimuli** which must be recognised by the players while they play. For example, the move of a defender in one direction or another, may be the **key signal stimulus** to making either one decision or other.

Thus, while playing, the players must learn to focus their attention on the **key signal stimuli** to produce the correct decisions.

**Practical Exercises**

- Think and write down some criteria with which to judge players’ correct decisions in the following situations: 1 on 1; 2 on 2; 2 on 1; 3 on 2; and 3 on 3.
- Then decide the key signal stimuli on which the players must focus their attention while playing.

**Some Examples**

Once the criteria are clear, the coach must organise the appropriate drills to develop correct decisions. Basically, these drills should include all the conditions that make up part of the criteria, with many opportunities for the play-
ers to make the decisions.

As an example, we will consider some tactical offensive decisions within a 3 on 3 framework. The difficulty of the drills should increase progressively, from drills with simple demands and simple functioning, to more complex drills as the players master the previous concepts.

**Passing to the Low Post**

**Decision:**

- The first decision of this example is the decision of the perimeter players to pass to the low post.

**Criteria:**

- The pass should be performed from below the extended free throw line (Diagrams 27 and 28).
- The defender of the low post must be either behind him/her (Diagram-27) or playing a three-quarter fronting defense on the opposite side of the passer (Diagram-28).

This means that, according to these criteria, the correct decision would be to pass the ball to the low post when the passer is below the extended free throw line (as is player-3 in Diagrams 27 and 28) and the low post’s defender is either behind him (Diagram-27) or playing three-quarter fronting defense on the opposite side of the passer (Diagram-28).

Therefore, at this point of the learning process, passing the ball to the low post under different conditions (for example: above the extended free throw line, or with the low post’s defender playing defense in front) would be an incorrect decision.

![Diagram 27](image1.png)  
![Diagram 28](image2.png)
Drill:

- 3 on 3 competitive drill on one basket; ten minutes; the team which scores keeps playing offense; the winners rest for two minutes; the losers run sprints.

- **Rules**: they can only score if the low post receives the ball because of a correct decision (passing from below the extended free throw line, etc.); all players can score by shooting and rebounding, but only after the correct decision of passing to the low post is made. When a team scores without passing to the low post, the score does not count and the ball goes to the other team.

- To increase the opportunities of making the correct decision, two rules are established at this stage: the defender of the low post must play only behind him/her (later behind and three-quarter fronting); and the defenders of the perimeter players can not intercept the pass inside.

Comments:

- This drill forces the players to make the correct decision, linking the criteria established by the coach to the decision. It is important to begin with a restricted drill such as this, so the players get used to making the correct decision.

- The coach does not need to constantly tell the players: «pass the ball to the low post», «pass the ball to the low post», «don’t pass from above the extended free throw line», etc. The rules of the drill will favour that the players centre their attention on all relevant issues (the decision and the correct criteria).
Low Post’s Decisions

Decision:

• The next step would be to develop the low post’s decisions when receiving the ball. He/she may learn to decide between playing 1 on 1 against his/her defender to score, or passing the ball to his/her perimeter teammates (remember the section dedicated above to low post moves).

Criteria:

• The low post has received the ball. His/her defender is behind him/her.
• The key signal stimuli will be the actions of the perimeter defenders:
  ✓ if they help, the correct decision would be to pass to the teammate who gets open (Diagram-29);
  ✓ if they do not help, the correct decision would be to play 1 on 1 to score (remember Diagram-26 in page 294).

Drill:

• Same 3 on 3 competitive drill on one basket; ten minutes; the team which scores keeps playing offense; the winners rest for two minutes; the losers run sprints.
• Rules: they can only score if the low post receives the ball from below the extended free throw line, etc.
• Furthermore, every time the low post makes the correct decision (passing or playing to score depending on the criteria established), his/her team will get one extra point added to their score (maximum two points every play). On the contrary, every time the low post makes the wrong
decision (according to the criteria established) his/her team will lose one point.

- To increase the opportunities for making decisions, two rules are maintained from the previous drill: the defender of the low post must play only behind him/her (later behind and three-quarter fronting); and the defenders of the perimeter players cannot intercept the pass inside.

- Likewise, if the coach observes that the defenders always react in the same way (either helping or not helping) he/she might establish another rule: the defenders will lose three/five points if at the end of the drill the difference between the two options (helping or not helping) occurs more than three times. Thus, the coach will write down what the defenders have done each time, letting them know the overall situation every three minutes.

This will keep the defenders’ attention focused on the behaviour (helping or not helping) which is the criterion for the decision of the low post. Thus the coach will control the presence of the two key signal stimuli (helping and not helping) favouring the training of the low post’s decision.

Comments:

- These drill rules provide many opportunities for the low post to make the correct decision.

- The drill is related to the previous one, so the perimeter players work on the decision of passing to the low post as well.
Perimeter Players’ Decisions

Decisions:

Using the same framework, the next step might be to develop the perimeter players’ decisions.

- First, when the low post receives the ball and the perimeter player’s defender moves to help, the decision of moving to a spot where he/she can get a good pass back (Decision-1).

- Second, when the perimeter player receives the ball back from the low post, the decision of either shooting or driving inside for a lay-up or a jump shot after one or two dribbles (or passing to the open teammate if his/her defender rotates) (Decision-2).

Criteria:

Decision-1:

- The player’s own defender moves to help inside.
- The key signal stimulus will be the defender’s position. Depending on this position, the perimeter player should move to a spot where there is a free passing lane from the post (Diagram-30); this is the correct decision.

Decision-2:

- The ball comes back from the low post. The perimeter player catches the ball with his/her feet well placed, facing the basket, positioning the ball ready to shoot.
- The key signal stimuli will be the actions of his/her defender (who went to help when the low post received the ball):
✓ if the defender does not come back, the correct decision will be to shoot;
✓ if the defender comes back, the correct decision will be to fake the shot slightly and drive inside for a lay-up or a jump shot after one or two dribbles (Diagram-31).

• Later, another key signal stimuli may be added: the actions of the other perimeter player:
✓ if he/she rotates to stop the shot, the correct decision will be to pass the ball to the teammate who is open (Diagram-32).

**Drill:**

• Same 3 on 3 competitive drill on one basket; ten minutes; the team which scores keeps playing offense; the winners rest for two minutes; the losers run sprints.

• **Rules:** they can only score if the low post receive the ball from below the extended free throw line, etc.

• Furthermore, every time the perimeter players make the right decision (either Decision-1 or Decision-2) their team will get one extra point added to the score (maximum three points every play). On the contrary,
every time the perimeter players make the wrong decision (according to the criteria established) their team will lose one point.

- To increase the opportunities for making decisions, two rules are maintained from the previous drill: the defender of the low post must play only behind him/her (later behind and three-quarter fronting); and the defenders of the perimeter players can not intercept the pass inside.

- Moreover, the defenders of the perimeter players (at least one) have to go to help when the low post receives the ball; if they do not, their team will lose one point, and the offensive team will have the ball again.

- Likewise, if the coach observes that the defenders always react in the same way to the low post’s pass (either coming back to stop the shot or not coming back) he/she might establish another rule: the defenders will lose three/five points if, at the end of the drill, the difference between the two options (coming back or not) occurs more than three times. Thus, the coach will write down what the defenders have done each time, letting them know the overall situation every three minutes.

This will keep the defenders’ attention focused on the behaviour (coming back or not) which is the criterion that the perimeter players should use for Decision-2. Thus the coach will control the presence of the two key signal stimuli (coming back and not coming back) favouring the proper training of this decision.

Comments:

- In this drill, the low post only has one option open (passing to the perimeter players), although he/she has to recognise the key signal stimuli (which of the two defenders is coming to help?) to make the decision of passing to either one teammate or the other. Therefore, he/she gets used to discriminating between the stimuli and linking them to the correct decision.

- However, the emphasis of the drill is upon the decisions made by the perimeter players, so the coach’s attention and comments should be focused on these decisions.

- As in previous drills, the rules favour many opportunities for making both Decision-1 and Decision-2.
Low Post and Perimeter Players’ Decisions

Decisions:

- The next step might be to work on both the decisions of the low post (either passing or playing to score) and the decisions of the perimeter players (passing to the low post and both Decision-1 and Decision-2 when the post receives the ball).

Criteria:

- Same as used in previous drills.

Drill:

- Same framework and same rules as used in previous drills.

- The defenders of the perimeter players should combine both helping and not helping. To assure this, the coach may maintain that they will lose three/five points if, at the end of the drill, the difference between the two options (helping or not helping) occurs more than three times.

- Likewise, the defenders of the perimeter players should combine both coming back to stop the shot and not coming back. To assure this, the coach may maintain that they will lose three/five points if, at the end of the drill, the difference between the two options (coming back or not) occurs more than three times.

Comments:

- The coach must concentrate hard to control this drill, focussing on the defenders’ actions (to write them down) and the offensive players’ decisions (to reward or to punish them according to the rules of the drill).

- The demands and the functioning of this drill are complex, so the previous drills, which are easier, should be mastered earlier.
Some Variations

The same drills (same decisions, same criteria, same rules) may be organised with some variations.

- The perimeter players may use a teammate or the coach to pass the ball and switch positions (Diagram-33).

- The guard (Player-1) may dribble below the extended free throw line and the forward (Player-3) cut behind the post to replace the guard (Diagram-34).

- The forward (Player-3) may move to screen the post (Player-5) to switch positions with him/her (Diagram-35).

- The players may be allowed to pass the ball to the low post from above the extended free throw line if the ball comes from below this line and the defender of the low post plays either three-quarter fronting defense at the baseline side or full fronting defense. Here, these positions of the low post’s defender would be the key signal stimuli to pass the ball from the wing (below the extended free throw line) to the guard (above this line) and then to the post (Diagram-36).
Creating the Situation for Decision-Making

An important aspect to be developed with young players is that they be able to create the situations in which the tactical decisions have to be made.

With this aim in mind, the coach may establish rules that favour the players’ creativity. This way, he/she can observe how the players perform in this task. Later he/she may give the players more information in order to enhance possible options; and he/she may establish the rule that the players must use two, three or four different options throughout the drill. The following is an example.

**Goal of the Drill:**

- The players must create the appropriate situation to make tactical decisions playing with the low post.

**Drill:**

- 3 on 3 competitive drill on one basket; ten minutes; the team which scores keeps playing offense; the winners rest for two minutes; the losers run sprints.

- *Rules:* they can only score if the low post receives the ball from below the extended free throw line, etc.

- Instead of beginning the drill with the appropriate alignment, as in previous drills, they begin at the middle of the court; then they must move and get organised in order to be able to carry out the rules. Diagrams 37, 38 and 39 represent some of the possible options that the players may choose from.
Later, the beginning of the drill may be more complex. For example, all six players are placed in the middle of the court. During two-five seconds, they run around (slowly) or do defensive footwork; then the coach passes the ball to one of them and his/her team has to play offense, with this player in charge of bringing the ball upwards. Then the three players have to move to create the offensive situation following the rules of the drill:

- they need a low post;
- they need someone below the extended free throw line to pass the ball to the low post.

The players may use different options to create the situation required by the rules of the drill (remember Diagrams 37, 38 and 39). The coach may influence these options (making the drill easier or more difficult) by establishing additional rules such as the following:

- the players can not use the same option twice in a row; if they do not respect this rule, they lose the ball;
- they can not use the same player as the low post twice in a row; if they do not respect this rule, they lose the ball;
- they can not play at the same side two/three times in a row; again, if they do not respect this rule, they lose the ball;
- they must include specific aspects: for example, they have to set a screen, the dribbler can not dribble below the extended free throw line, etc.
8. COACHING 15-18 YEAR OLD PLAYERS

Comments:

- Using this kind of drills, young players will increase their *basketball knowledge* and their *creativity* to build up tactical situations in which tactical decisions can be made.

- This drill may be complemented with the rules of previous drills concerning low post and perimeter players’ decisions. For example, specific rules may be added to work on the low post’s decision between passing or playing to score.

Practical Exercise

- Using a basic structure of 2 on 2 or 3 on 3, design a series of drills to improve offensive tactical decisions.
8.4. BUILDING TEAM PLAY

Building team play is an important aspect with 15-18 year-olds. However, coaches should understand that this is a progressive process throughout these years, rather than something that can be done just in few weeks.

Building team play should be closely linked to improving individual fundamentals and developing tactical decision-making, so that players learn to interact using the appropriate individual resources.

Team play development should combine defense and offense. Both aspects should be built up simultaneously, providing reciprocal benefits.

In general, team play at these ages should cover aspects included in the following sections.

Team Defense Concepts

Basic Positioning

Considering the position of both the ball and the offensive players, basic positioning is the first step of a team defense. Probably in previous years some of these aspects were taught in 2 on 2 or 3 on 3 situations, but now players have to understand the complete defensive picture.

- Coaches should take a decision: What technique will be used to defend players who are one pass away from the ball? Denying? (Diagram-40) or Floating (also called sagging)? (Diagram-41).

- Will it depend on the side of the defender?: denying if he/she is on the strong or ball side, and floating if he/she is on the help side? (Diagram-42).
• When the ball is below the extended free throw line, how will the players defend the pass back to the guard? Denying? (Diagram-43) or Floating? (Diagram-44).

• These are key decisions to be made by the coach, since he/she must teach the players one system or the other without confusing them with ambiguous or contradictory messages.

• The next stage should be that the players learn all possible options, so they can use the alternative most appropriate to each specific situation.

• However, at this point they should learn just one way. Coaches have different opinions about the way to begin. Many agree that is better to start with the moves that demand more physical effort and risk (such the ones in Diagrams-40 and 43).
However, it is advisable to choose a system that includes both denying and floating (in different positions), so the players will work on both fundamentals (for example, such as in Diagram-42).

- To develop basic positioning, 4 on 4 drills with all the offensive players open are highly recommended.

Help

Help is an essential aspect of team defense. Basically, the players should learn to help in the following situations:

- dribbling penetrations;
- passes inside the paint;
- screens;
- post defense.

Help to Defend Dribbling Penetrations

Help and Recover

The players should learn and practise the fundamentals to help and recover; this means to help his/her teammate stop the dribbling penetration of his/her player, but without losing sight of his/her own player, so they can recover to defend his/her own player as soon as the ball’s player catches it to pass.

Help and recover drills should be practised both from denying and floating, and also from different places on the court (according to the basic defensive positioning):

- from denying the pass, in different parts of the court (Diagrams-45, 46 and 47);
• from floating, also in different parts of the court (Diagrams- 48 and 49);

• inside players, from floating at the help side (Diagram-50) and from denying at the ball side (Diagram-51).

**Helping the Helper**

The players should also learn to *help the helper*. This means being alert to help a teammate helping a dribbling penetration. This teammate may recover a little bit behind the ball, so the task of the second helper is to stop his/her teammate’s player until he/she recovers. This second help should also be performed without losing sight of the own offensive player, since the helper has
to recover quickly to defend his/her player.

- A 4 on 4 framework is very appropriate for practising help to the helper (Diagram-52). One of the offensive players penetrates dribbling and forces the nearest defender to help and recover. The ball’s player passes to the open teammate and forces the next defender to help the helper, and so on. Offensive players should move away when their defenders go to help, making recovery difficult.

**Rotation**

Players should learn to rotate, especially to stop dribbling penetrations to the baseline (Diagram-53). When a player penetrates to the baseline, help must come from the nearest defender at the other side. This player should try to help stop the dribbler as far as possible from the hoop. He/she can not think on recovery, but should focus just on helping and stopping the dribbler. Rotation is needed to defend the helper’s player in a very dangerous position at the other side of the basket.

- The defender who rotate (the nearest above) should be prepared to cut the pass to the open offensive player near the basket and, very important, to block out the rebound, since it is very possible that the dribbler shoot.

- Defenders who rotate to take care of players near the basket, must be prepared to block out the rebound to taller players than them.

- Defenders above the extended free throw line, as soon as an opponent player penetrates to the baseline, may move to the paint to protect this area from offensive players cutting or rebounding.

- 4 on 4 drills are very appropirate to practise rotation (Diagram-53).
Help to Defend Inside Passing

Help is also important to stop inside passing, both to perimeter players when they cut, and to post players. We will refer to post players later.

- A relevant offensive play which needs defensive help is the backdoor (Diagram-54). The defender at the baseline on the help side must be alert and anticipate the intention of the player with the ball. Then he/she will be able to react and either intercept the pass, force an offensive foul (by standing in the proper place, since the receiver will be just watching the ball) or defend the receiver tightly as soon as he/she gets the ball, forcing him/her to either walk or shoot badly.

- The teammate who is nearest on the help side, should rotate down to take care of the offensive player left by the back door’s helper (Diagram-54).

- Help may also come from defenders who are floating one pass away from the ball. For example, in Diagram-55, the player defending the guard who is one pass from the ball at the strong side is floating. He/she should be placed in a position that makes difficult the inside pass; he/she should also anticipate whether the player with the ball intends to pass inside, by watching both the player’s eyes and the ball.

Help to Defend Screens

Defensive help is crucial to defend screens too.

- In the on-ball screens (screens to the player with the ball) it is important to work with the two defenders directly involved in the screen (the screened and the screener’s defenders) to improve their fundamentals to stop the screen. Nevertheless, it is also important to develop a team defense through appropriate help from teammates.

Help may be directed at stopping the dribbler just after the screen (Diagram-56), or to stopping the pass to the screener (Diagram-57). In either case, helping to the helper or rotation may be needed from other
defenders, so all five defenders must be alert when the offensive team sets an on-ball screen.

- In the off-ball screens (to players without the ball) the screener’s defender may help his/her teammate either leaving him/her room to pass through, denying the passing lane until he/she recovers, or stepping into the pathway of the screened player (Diagrams 58 and 59). Sometimes the helper will also need help from another teammate.

**Low Post Defense**

Although post players have their own defenders, post defense must be considered a team responsibility, so young players should develop this.

In the first place, team defense to defend the low post will depend on the way the post is being defended by his/her own defender.

- If the low post is defended from *behind*, help from teammates should be in front (Diagram-60). In this case, the helper should anticipate the pass to the post, either to prevent it, intercept it or to complicate the post’s reception of the ball.
If the post receives the ball, the defenders of the perimeter players should be ready to help. This help may be «full help» (double-team help) or «mid-help».

When the perimeter defenders *double-team* the post, he/she will tend to pass the ball to his/her open perimeter teammate; then, *rotation* of other defenders will be needed to stop the open perimeter offensive players (Diagram-61).

When the perimeter defenders play «mid-help» they will be in *mid-way* between the post and their perimeter offensive players, seeing both, ready to react either way (Diagram-62).

Thus, if the post passes the ball back outside, these defenders should react to defend their perimeter players; on the contrary, if the post decides to play 1 on 1 to score, they should fully help inside. In this case, if the post dribbles they should try to deflect the ball. They must help inside without fouling, for the purpose of either stealing the ball or, in most cases, to complicate the post’s shot.

If the low post is being defended *three-quarter fronting* or in front, then the help must come from...
the teammates on the help side (Diagram-63). In this situation, if the attacker at the wing is not strong playing 1 on 1, the defense may deny the pass to the guard, so the wing may be forced to perform a lob pass to the low post.

- In this case, help-side players should be alert in order to anticipate the lob pass.
• Usually, help should come from the defender nearest the baseline, and rotation will be needed to defend his/her attacker (Diagram-64).

• To prevent this help, some offenses do not place a player at the opposite low post spot; team defense should be prepared to defend despite this.
For example: defense may play as is shown in Diagram-65. The defender of the high post stays half-way between his/her player and the low post, so he/she can react in either direction. He/she must learn to anticipate the intention of the player with the ball, and react as soon as possible either to help the pass to the low post or to defend his/her player if he/she receives. Likewise, the defender of the guard above the extended free throw line, may help the possible pass to the high post by covering the passing lane, so he/she will be helping his/her teammate to help the low post.

Talking in Defense

This is a very important aspect in building team defense. Unfortunately, many coaches realise this so but do not work on developing this aspect.

Talking in defense is essential for defenders to communicate concerning relevant points, such as screens, cuts, helps, shots, etc. However, it is not enough to tell the players they must talk.

The coach must specify the situations in which talking should take place, decide the precise words to be said, and specify who should be the player to say those words.

Players can not use long sentences; instead they need short key words, meaning of which should be understood by the whole team. For example: «left screen!» may be enough to alert a teammate to this situation.

Afterwards, key words should be included within practice as one of the performance goals to be achieved.
For example: the coach may design a 4 on 4 drill to practise team defensive concepts. He/she should include not only the correct moves, but also the key words significant to that drill. He/she may even utilise a reward system to reinforce the use of key words. For instance, every time a player uses the correct key word at the right situation, his/her team gets an extra point.

**Practical Exercise**

- Make a list of key words that you might include within your defense, specifying the precise situation for those words to be used and the player responsible for saying.

**Zone Defense**

15-18 year-old players have to learn to play zone defense too. At 15-16, it will be enough to start with one simple alignment (2-1-2, 2-3) to teach the players how to adapt the defensive fundamentals to a zone structure.

At this age, 2-1-2 or 2-3 are the most advisable alignments for three reasons:

- they are very simple, so players can assimilate basic moves very quickly;
- they have the same structure (four outside players) as the one recommended for developing team defense (remember all 4 on 4 situations mentioned above), so the players can easily apply all the defensive concepts;
- they are the most common alignments, so the team can use them to improve both defense and offense.

**Key Points**

At this age, the most important thing is that young players
understand that playing zone defense does not mean making less effort or having less individual responsibility.

Thus, the role of the coach is not just to teach the basic moves in the zone, but to clearly point out the specific responsibilities for each position.

- Who should stand in front of the player with the ball?
- Who should stop the penetration of the dribbler from every position?
- Who should help and recover?
- Who should help the helper?
- Who should rotate?
- Who should cover the inside passing lanes in every position?
- Who should help inside if the high or the low post get the ball?
- Who should stop the attackers from cutting from every position?
- Who should stop each shot?
- Who should block out the rebound?

These questions should be answered by the coach and then made clear to the players. Furthermore, the coach should observe the individual functioning of each player to detect individual deficiencies and correct them.

**Specific Concepts**

The task of the coach when teaching zone defense is to adapt defensive concepts to a zone structure. Nevertheless he/she must work specifically on the following aspects.
• Players defending in front of the zone must decide *who gets the guard with the ball*, since probably this player will stand in the middle of the two defenders (Diagram-66).

• Then, the defender behind the one who goes to stop the player with the ball must be very alert and move slightly forward, since probably the pass will go to his/her side (Diagram-66).

• The coach has to establish the limit between the area in which the offensive player at the wing must be defended by the defender in front, and the area in which this player must be defended by the defender at the back.

* For example: the coach might establish this limit as an imaginary line from the top of the dotted semicircle of the paint (Diagram-67). Above this imaginary line, the defender in front would be the one responsible for stopping the wing player; below this line the one responsible would be the defender at the back.

• This means that, if the pass goes to a wing player who is *above* this line, the back defender should help until his/her teammate arrives, and then recover his/her position, whereas the defender in the middle helps the helper, and the other front defender covers the inside pass to the high post area (Diagram-68).

• Thus, while the two defenders at the strong side are playing wide (the front defender to reach his/her new position coming from the top to the wing; and the back defender helping his/her teammate) the *defender in the middle* and the *help-side front defender* must cover the inside passing lanes (Diagram-69).

• On the contrary, if the pass from the guard to the wing goes *below* the line established, then the back defender should take care of that player, and the front defender should move backwards to cover inside passing lanes (Diagram-70).

• When the ball returns from the wing to the top, there are two possibilities:
  ✓ if the back defender is with the wing, then the front defender at the strong side, should be the one to move out (Diagram-71);
✓ if the front defender is with the wing, then the other front defender should be the one to move out; in this case, the front defender who was with the wing player must move quickly inside to cover the inside passing lane (Diagram-72).

- The players have to learn to anticipate the next offensive pass, so they are ready to move as soon as the ball leaves the hands of the passer.

- The players should always remember to move with the ball instead of behind it.

- The players should learn to move using the proper footwork, always looking at both the ball and the offensive player who might be their next responsibility.

- When they move from one position to another, it is important that they learn to use their arms to cover possible passing lanes, since most of the dangerous passes take place while the defenders are moving. This way they will manage to delay passing until they are settled.

- This is especially important for the defender who comes out to defend the player with the ball; and also for the player who moves back from defending the ball to cover the inside passing lanes. The coach should be especially alert with the latter, since young players tend to move back late.
• The player defending the attacker with the ball is responsible for stopping this player’s dribbling penetrations. Teammates next to him/her are responsible for helping if this happens.

• Help-side players should learn to stop cutting by placing their body in the pathway of the cutter, so the cut will not be carried out in the best pathway to receive the ball.

• The defenders at the back should front the low post (not stay behind). They will take care of the low post’s cutting until the middle of the paint; then the other back defender will take care of the low post. The defender in the middle will cover, as much as possible, the passing lanes to the low posts, and will help his/her back defender teammates when necessary.

• The defender at the middle and the two defenders at the back should block out the rebound at the positions near the hoop. Front defenders should block out at the high post area, blocking out the high post player every time they can.

Drills

All these concepts should be progressively developed through appropriate drills, using a whole-part method of teaching. That is, combining drills in which the whole zone is played (5 on 5) with drills in which just a part of the zone is practised.

• For example: a drill to practise the moves of the two front players (Diagram-73). The offensive wings should move between both sides of the limit line. They can neither shoot nor penetrate if they are below that line. Offense cannot shoot until they give at least four passes. Front defensive players should move according to concepts explained above.

• Another drill, now to practise the moves of the front and the back defenders (Diagram-74).
• The next drill also includes the help-side front defender (Diagram-75).

• The next drill includes the four outside defenders (Diagram-76).

• A drill with the strong side front and back defenders, and the defender in the middle (Diagram-77).
• 5 on 5 drills to practise whole zone defense.
All these concepts may be properly developed during the 15-16 year-old period; then, at the 17-18 year-old period, they should be improved. Likewise, at the 17-18 year-old period, coaches may teach other zone alignments such as 1-3-1, 1-2-2 or 3-2, match-up zones, and mixed zones such as «box and one», «diamond and one» or «triangle and two».

**Press Defense**

In general, at these ages, coaches should not spend much time on developing specific press defense.

Working with 15-16 year-olds, the coach may practise «man to man press» using basic team defensive concepts (help and recover, rotation, etc.) and, of course, basic individual funda-
At this point, the coach can not take time from other basketball contents which should have a higher priority, so it will be enough to use «man to man press» as an opportunity to develop defensive skills, without spending time improving specific aspects.

Later, working with 17-18 year-olds, these specific aspects may be worked on specifically.

**Positioning and Moving**

The coach may organise drills to improve positioning and moving of all players. He/she should pay special attention to the players far from the ball (Diagram-78).

- In this case, the **player’s back should be oriented to the middle vertical line of the court** (imaginary line; see Diagram-78), so he/she can see both the ball and his/her offensive player.

- Likewise, **the further the player is from the ball, the longer the distance between him/her and his/her attacker.** Thus, this distance should be reduced as the player with the ball approaches (Diagram-79), although at a lesser speed, so at some point the defender might be able to jump onto the player dribbling (Diagram-80).

- Defenders far from the ball must be ready to react to a long pass to their attackers, so they can intercept the ball or, at least, be there to defend the player. They should also learn to **anticipate long passes and run quickly backwards**, without losing sight of the ball, as soon as the ball leave.

- These defenders should learn to change their position every time either the ball or their attacker changes.

- It is important as well that they anticipate the move of the ball to be ready to **help and rotate**.

- They should also practise **stopping their attacker cutting to the ball**, since this may be an offensive strategy.

**Double-Team**
The coach may also work on double-team technique and strategy. Who should double-team? How should he/she double-team?

* For example: if the dribbler’s defender stops him/her, the double-team may come from behind the dribbler (Diagram-81), but if the dribbler have overcome his/her defender slightly, the double-team may come from the front (Diagram-82).

- When the two players set the double-team, they must make sure that the dribbler does not pass through the middle, so they should work to develop this skill.

- Likewise, players should learn to double-team without fouling (a common mistake of young players is fouling while they double-team).

- Once the dribbler picks the ball, the purpose of the players making up the double-team should not be to steal the ball, but to force a bad pass or a five-second violation. Thus, they do not need to touch the attacker, just to cover passing lanes with their arms, so that passing is difficult.
• The other three defenders should learn to rotate, to take advantage of their teammates’ double-team (Diagram-83).

Other Aspects

• The coach should also decide, and work on, what the players will do if the other team uses screens. In general, switching is a good strategy at the front court, and sometimes also at the back court. Whichever is used, the players should work on this through specific drills.

• Furthermore, the 17-18 year-olds’ coach may decide to include specific press defenses, such as «run and jump» or zone-press defenses at different places (full court, half-court, etc.).

Obviously he/she should assess if his/her players are ready to perform those defenses, and if they are not, it would be a waste of time working on them instead of developing the defensive concepts that the players need.

In any case, it is not advisable for the coach to try to build up different kinds of press defenses, since this will probably confuse the young players.

Advanced Defense Strategy

With 17-18 year-olds, the coach should continue to strengthen basic defensive individual fundamentals as well as the basic concepts of team defense. Furthermore, if the team is ready, he/she can work on more complex aspects of defense, such as press defense, mixed zones, etc., and also defensive combinations that make up part of advanced defensive strategy.

* For example: he/she might develop different ways to defend one-pass away from the ball (denying versus floating) and teach his/her players to use each alternative depending on the global defensive strategy of the game.
* The same thing might be done regarding post defense. If players develop different ways of defending the post, they may learn to combine these, depending on the circumstances. Thus, the coach might decide to play a game with players defending the low post behind, and then change at half-time or in a time-out, to defending in front.

* The coach may also teach his/her team to use alternative defenses; this is switching from man to man defense to zone defense, from zone to man to man, from one kind of zone to another kind, etc. For example, he/she may work on switching to a 2-1-2 zone after shooting a free throw or to defending out-of-bounds plays.

This kind of learning should be part of the 17-18 year-old players’ basketball development. However, it is obvious that this will be a very difficult objective if the players have not gone through the appropriate progressive learning process in previous years.

Therefore, the coach of 17-18 year-olds has to make a realistic assessment of his/her team’s current capabilities in order to decide the extent to which the players are ready to work advanced defensive strategy. He/she will probably need to spend most of his/her time to improving and strengthening basic individual and team defensive concepts, and in some cases he/she will be able to spend some time working on complex aspects related to advanced strategy.

Fast-Break and Transition

Basketball players should play fast-break from the beginning. Coaches should not prevent young players from fast-freaking, since this is fun for the players and helps them to develop most basketball fundamentals.

During the 15-18 year-old period, fast-break fundamentals should be assessed by the coach, who should work to improve all deficiencies that he/she may find. The following are some of the aspects that usually need to be improved.
Outlet Pass

The coach may find problems such as the rebounder turning incorrectly to the sideline (using a wrong or unbalanced position of his/her body, or wrong position of the ball) or the guards opening late or badly to the sideline (wrong area, wrong body position).
• The **defensive rebounder** must *turn to the sideline on the same side* from which he/she got the rebound, facing the nearest corner of the court; he/she should turn slightly in the air as he/she moves down, so that he/she lands in the right position to quickly perform the outlet pass. A balanced stop when landing from the rebound is crucial to performing a good pass.

Young right-handed players usually have problems turning properly at the left side (since the outlet pass should be performed mainly with the left hand), and the opposite happens to left-handed players.

• The rebounder should *land with the ball well protected*, far from offensive rebounders. By extending his/her arms, he/she should find a *free passing lane* for the outlet pass.

• The **guard** should *move to the proper spot* at the sideline just as he/she sees his/her teammate catching the ball in the air. The coach must decide on the spot he/she wants for the outlet pass. A common idea is the extended free throw line. Some young guards tend to approach the rebounder to get the ball. This reduces the chances of the fast-break, since it is important to gain some meters with the outlet pass.

• Thus, the guard should move to the extended free throw line, with his/her *back to the sideline*, and wait there for the pass. Only if there is no free passing lane can he/she move to the baseline or to the middle to get the pass.

Specific drills may be designed to develop all aspects involved in the outlet pass. First without opponents. Later, with a defender on the rebounder (Diagram-84). Later, adding a defender on the guard.

### Guard’s Play

Some young guards need to improve their skills when receiving the outlet pass. Two common mistakes are: turning to face the sideline, thus losing sight of the whole court; and bouncing the ball as they catch it without looking ahead first (some guards look ahead while bouncing the ball).

• Guards must learn to *turn with their backs to the sideline*. As they turn, they should *move their heads up* to have a wide view of the whole court, so they can rapidly assess the situation and decide whether to pass forward to a teammate who has a clearly advantageous position, dribble quickly to the middle lane, or stop the Fast-Break.

• This rapid assessment should be made *without bouncing the ball*, just taking one second to look around and decide.
• When dribbling to the middle, they should learn to use a long bounce to begin with, using the hand furthest from the sideline (many young guards only use their stronger hand, losing opportunities to fast-break when this hand is not the appropriate).

Obviously all of the guards’ skills should be assessed and improved when necessary. For example, their dribbling and passing ability while moving to the front court, the decisions made at the end of the fast-break, etc.

**Rebounder Dribbling the Ball Forward**

This is a valuable resource to be developed with young players, so that when they get a long rebound, or they see the middle lane open for them, they can dribble forward rapidly to begin the fast-break.

Coaches need patience to develop this skill, since tall young players may make many mistakes at the beginning. However future benefits make this investment worthwhile.

**Running the Fast-Break**

Many times, young teams do not run the fast-break because the players do not start out at the right moment. A common mistake is to wait until the guard catches the outlet pass, but by then, it is too late to run.

• Players who are neither catching the rebound nor guarding, must run forward quickly, as soon as they see their rebounder teammate catch the ball. First of all they should run quickly to the nearest free lane without watching the ball, then, at about half-court, turn their heads to see the ball.

• In general, they must take the nearest free sidelane. If the nearest is not free, they must take the other sidelane; if this is not free either, they may take the midlane in front of the guard (obviously the last point will depend on the fast-break structure that the coach has designed for his/her team).
End of the Fast-Break

The coach must decide how he/she wants his/her team to end the fast-break, and work on this with his/her players.

- 15-16 year-old teams should have simple endings, easy situations of superiority (1 on 0, 2 on 1, 3 on 1, 3 on 2, 4 on 2, 4 on 3), keeping the players in their own lanes (Diagrams-85 and 86).

- 17-18 year-old teams may develop more complex transition moves to link the fast-break and the set offense (as an example see Diagrams-87 and 88).

Fast-Break from a Steal

Many fast-breaks begin with a steal of the ball. Therefore, it is important to organise and to practise this situation.

- If the player stealing the ball is in an advantageous position, he/she should dribble rapidly to the other end.
- If he/she is not in an advantageous position, he/she may take a second to move his/her head up to assess the whole picture; then decide either to pass to a teammate, dribble forward, or stop the fast-break.
- The other four players must move rapidly. The guard should find a free passing lane while moving to the sideline nearest to the ball. The other three, should run to take the free lanes of the fast-break.

The coach may use many defensive drills to practise fast-break after a
steal. He/she may also organise specific drills.

* For example: 3 on 3, 4 on 4, or 5 on 5; all players at one end, placed as decided by the coach at the ball and the help side. The coach makes a wrong pass or throws the ball to the floor. The defenders must play a quick fast-break.

Practical Exercise

- Organise three drills to practise specific aspects of defense and fast-break when the defensive team recovers the ball.

Man to Man Offense

The team offense, both man to man offense and zone offense, should be closely linked to the development of offensive tactical decisions and offensive individual fundamentals. A very common mistake of coaches working with 15-18 year-old players is that they teach their players a series of set offenses that the players learn as automatons. This means that the players know where they should move, but do not master the tactical decisions and
technical fundamentals involved in each move, thus performing these badly.

The result of this is, for example, a 15-16 year-old team with a nice set offense that includes screens, but players unable to perform those screens properly (incorrect stopping, unbalanced body stance, moving and fouling, wrong decisions, etc.). Or a 17-18 year-old team with a beautiful set offense to play with the low post, but players unable to see and to successfully perform the inside passes needed.

All this seems very obvious; however many coaches still spend most of their training time teaching set offenses that their young players are not able to perform correctly.

Therefore, keeping this in mind, coaches should decide what kind of offense may be more appropriate for their teams. As an example, some ideas will be explained in the following paragraphs.

**Basic Offense for 15-16 Year-Olds**
With 15-16 year-olds, it may be appropriate to set an offense with four outside players facing the basket and just one inside player playing backwards. Furthermore, it is advisable that no player is limited to playing backwards, so all can play facing the basket and some of them (if possible all except the shortests) can also play backwards. Why?
• All players need many opportunities to play facing the basket, so they can develop all basic offensive fundamentals. At this age, they are just beginning to learn how to play backwards, so less opportunities are needed for them to practise this position.

• Further, they need enough room to drive inside for lay-ups as well as enough room inside to play with the post without too much traffic.

• Using this pattern, players will also have many opportunities to develop basic tactical decisions.

• To build up team defense, a 4 on 4 structure of outside players is excellent at this age. Therefore, an offense with 4 outside players will help to build up team defense and will benefit from better defense as well.

As an example, Diagrams-89 and 90 show a pattern that may be appro-
ate for 15-16 year-olds. As we can observe in Diagram-90, this pattern develops 3 on 3 play with a low post, and off-ball screens, as well as other options that may be added progressively (for example, pick and roll).

A few rules may be established to favour the options of this play.

- Every time a player at the position of one of the guards passes the ball to either side, he/she will move away to screen all the outside players at the other side (Diagrams- 91 and 92).

- Later, another option could be added: when the guard opposite to the post passes to the wing, he/she will screen to the post; then his/her teammates will replace him/her (Diagram-93).

- Every time a player at the guard’s positions can not receive the ball because he/she is well defended, he/she must move away to screen all the outside players at the other side (Diagram-94).

Because of these rules, the positions and the moves of the players provide many options that should be developed through specific work on decision making and individual fundamentals.
• The wing player at the post’s side may use the post to get open (Diagram-95). The wing player at the opposite side may try to play back door if his/her defender denies the pass (Diagram-96).

• Players may use change of direction with change of speed to get good passes (Diagram-97).

• Off-ball screens provide many opportunities. For example, in Diagram-98 the player who is screened (player-5) fakes a move to the basket to move the attention of his/her defender away from the screen; however, he/she sees the opportunity to change speed and then to receive the pass near the hoop.

• Another example may be seen in Diagram-99. In this case the screener (player-5) takes advantage of a defensive switch: he/she pivots and steps into the paint to get the pass.

• As in the last example, if defense switches to defend off-ball screens, players may learn to take advantage of this depending on the mismatch produced by the switch. Thus, players with a height advantage may learn to post, whereas players with a height disadvantage may learn to move out.

• These moves provide many opportunities for 1 on 1 plays, so the players can develop 1 on 1 decisions and fundamentals.

• These moves also provide the opportunity to play against help and recover defense. Thus, every time the dribbler penetrates and gets help from another defender, he/she may learn to look for the open teammate.
**Advanced Concepts for 17-18 Year-Olds**

With 17-18 year-olds other concepts may be introduced. At this age players can learn to play with two inside players (either two low posts, two high posts, one low post and one high post). As an example, these players may work on plays that include concepts such as the following.

- **Screen for the Screener** (Diagrams-100 and 101). In this case, the player who screens is then immediately screened by another teammate, so the player with the ball has two consecutive options to pass.

- **Series of Screens for a Shooter** (Diagrams-102, 103 and 104). These are two or three screens in a row to allow a shooter to get free and get the pass to shoot or play 1 on 1. The screeners may learn to ask for the pass themselves if the defenders switch or help. The screened player must learn to «read» the defense, so as to take advantage of the situation.

- **Double Screens** (Diagrams-105, 106 and 107). Two players stand side by side to set a screen. They must learn to «read» the defense, so they can ask for the pass when their defenders help or switch.

- **Blind Screens** (Diagrams-108 and 109). The screen comes from behind the defender, so he/she can not see the screener. This screen is efficient for screening defenders whose attention is so intensively focused in front of them, that they are not alert to the screen. For example, to screen defenders of players who have just passed the ball (Diagram-108) or defenders denying the pass (Diagram-109).

- **Pick and Roll with a triangle at the help side** (Diagram-110). Players should already know how to play pick and roll. Now they can play pick and roll with a triangle at the help side. The two players at the pick and roll (players 1 and 4) can play this with plenty of space. If help comes from
the help side, the ball may be passed to the open teammate. This set makes defensive help very difficult, but offensive players have to master all the decisions and fundamentals involved in this play.

• **Cuts off the High Post Screens** (Diagrams-111 and 112). Guards may cut off the high post just after the ball goes below the extended free throw line, before the defenders move to float. Timing is very important, especially if the cutter comes from the help side (as in Diagram-112). These cuts may provide two passing opportunities: one to the cutter, and one to the high post if he/she steps out slightly.

• **1 on 1 plays** (Diagrams-113 and 114). In this case, one player has plenty of room to play 1 on 1. He/she must play to score himself/herself. However, it is likely that help will come from other defenders, so he/she should be alert and ready to pass the ball to the open teammate.

In the same way, teammates should learn to get open when their defenders move to help. If defense helps using the inside defenders, and moves the outside defenders to help the helpers, inside offensive players (4 and 5) may screen outside defenders to prevent them coming back; then there will be a good chance to pass to the perimeter players (1 or 3) (Diagram-115).

Obviously, it is neither necessary nor convenient for the coach to teach all these moves to his/her 17/18 year-old players. Rather, he/she should only choose some of them to increase his/her
players knowledge, taking into account the number of contents that players are able to assimilate. Coaches have to keep in mind that it is not enough to memorize moves, but that players should understand their meaning, master all the decisions and fundamentals involved, and practise enough to be able to perform each move efficiently.

**Zone Offense**

The same philosophy should be applied in the case of zone offense. At the age of 15-16, players should develop some team concepts to attack the zone, mastering the decisions and fundamentals involved. Later, at the age of 17-18, this learning process may be completed by working on more concepts. The basics to attack the zone are summarised in the following paragraphs.

**Moving Defenders Out of their Position**

This is a basic concept that should be taught to the players in first place.

- The guard with the ball should move to a spot where he/she force one of the front defenders to move out of his/her zone position (Diagram-116).
- Then he/she should take advantage of this situation by passing the ball to the wing on the same side (Diagram-116).
- The wing teammate should stand in a spot that force the defender at the back to move out of his/her zone position when the wing player get the pass from the guard (Diagram-116).
- The low post should move to a spot that force the defender in the
middle to *move out of his/her zone* to help the defender at the back (Diagram-116). Some teams, especially 15-16 year-olds, may decide to play with a *false low post*; thus, the player initially placed in that position would open to the corner as soon as the back defender moves up to stop the teammate at the wing.

- These moves will provide good chances for the wing and the low post to shoot the ball unless the defenders move out of their positions. If this happens, there will be good opportunities to *pass the ball inside* to the player at the high post. This player should learn to *move down to find a passing lane* to receive the ball (Diagram-117).

- A common mistake of young players at the high post is cutting down as automatons, so that they have no chance to get the pass. Instead, they should *step to the proper spots* (the free passing lanes) to get the ball.

- Likewise, the players at the wing and at the low post (and also the guard when the ball returns) should *learn to see*, just before they receive the pass, if a defender is coming to take them; if not, they should look for their own shot; if a defender comes, they should know which side he/she comes from, to focus on *attacking on that side*.

- Also, *just before receiving the ball*, outside players should *look for* the possibility of passing the ball inside, since the best opportunities to pass inside come when the defenders move from one position to another. By doing *pass inside* as soon as they receive the ball, before the defense is set in the new position.

A common mistake of young players attacking the zone is to move and to move the ball without thinking, not provoking defenders to move out of their positions, not passing according to the weak points of the defense, and not looking for the opportunity to pass the ball inside.
Penetrating Inside

Another common mistake against the zone is not using dribbling to penetrate inside. However, this is a valuable resource to be developed with young players.

- Players may learn to penetrate when the defender who is moving to stop them comes late, especially when the ball has changed from one side to the other (Diagram-118).

- Then, they should learn to decide according to the defenders’ reactions. Sometimes, they should just dribble once or twice to stop for a jump-shot at the border of the paint before the big defender in the middle can stop them. Other times, if they attract help from other defenders, they may look for a pass to a teammate who is open (Diagram-119). This move could provide good opportunities for outside shooters.

Playing With the High Post
We mentioned above how outside players should be alert to pass the high post when he/she cuts inside. Likewise, it is interesting to use the high post player while moving the ball, to create problems for the zone defense. Two examples.

- In Diagram-120, the guard dribbles to the wing, thus bringing with him/her the front defender on that side. Then the high post opens slightly and receives the pass. He/she can shoot unless a defender comes to stop him/her. In this Diagram, the help-side front defender takes the post, so the post can take advantage of the weakness of the defense on that side by passing the ball to the wing.

- This will provide the wing with the opportunity to shoot unless either the back defender or the front defender (this defender moving very quickly) is able to stop him/her. If he/she cannot shoot he/she may take advantage of the defenders’ moves to either pass to the low post, pass to the high post as he/she cuts to the free passing lane (Diagram-121) or penetrate dribbling (remember Diagram-118).

- The second example is in Diagram-122. The player at the wing (here, player-3) may look for the pass to the high post when he/she is defended by the front defender. In this case, the high post must learn to move to the corner of the free throw line to complicate help from the other front defender. Then, as soon as he/she receive the ball he/she may shoot or, if a defender comes to take him/her, pass to the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>In general, practising sports is a healthy activity, but not necessarily. Sports can be harmful if practised incorrectly. For this reason, the coach’s role is essential in making the practise of sports beneficial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There will always be injuries, but the coach can reduce this risk if he/she programmes and directs his/her players’ sports activities correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Basketball provides young players with the opportunity to develop healthy habits; for example, good eating habits, hygiene habits and self-care habits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The acquisition of a reasonable commitment is essential for sports to have educational value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Basketball provides an excellent opportunity for young players to learn to work as a team and accept their individual responsibilities within the context of the group. The coach should take advantage of this opportunity by strengthening both aspects: team work and individual responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Basketball should help young players to learn to respect their opponents. The coach should never allow his/her players to develop feelings of dislike or hostility towards rivals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Young players should learn to respect referees and the coach should be their role model. Therefore, it is not appropriate for the coach to protest the referee’s decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Competition is an educational tool that should be used accordingly. The players should learn to compete, win and lose. If a competition cannot be won and the coach decides to withdraw, he/she is throwing away an excellent educational opportunity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The coach is a highly significant model for his/her young players; therefore, he/she should behave accordingly. The coach should show respect and solidarity towards all of his/her players, their opponents, and the referees, because this sets an excellent example for his/her players.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Without doubt, basketball can be a very valuable educational experience for young players but in order to be so, it is essential that managers and coaches behave appropriately.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TEST EXERCISE - 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The coach can significantly improve his/her players´ psychological resources if he/she keeps this in mind when organising and directing his/her team´s activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Young players´ cognitive development will benefit from an appropriate presentation of basketball training drills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In general, monotonous training sessions do not provide sufficient stimulation to develop the attentional capacity of young players. For this reason, the coach should avoid this type of training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The perception of control is essential in the formative process of young players. Among other measures, the coach can develop the perception of control related to the results that his/her players achieve by their behaviour. This way, the players perceive that they can control the results of their own behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Experiences of «controlled success» are produced when positive results are attributed by the players to their own controllable behaviour, instead of to external factors or to behaviour over which they have little control. Such experiences are especially important in strengthening self-confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Experiences of «controlled failure» are produced when the results obtained are not favourable but the players perceive that, with their behaviour, they have controlled the process of attempting to achieve the desired results; besides, they have learned something valuable for the future. Combined with experiences of «controlled success», experiences of «controlled failure» can be very valuable in strengthening young players´ self-confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Understanding what has to be done enhances the perception of control. Therefore, by explaining exactly what the task is, the coach will help his/her players to increase their perception of control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Posing challenges that the players consider attainable helps build enough self-confidence to attempt to achieve these challenges. By meeting challenges, the players strengthen their self-confidence for the future. Therefore, it is very important for the coach to pose challenges that the players can achieve in order to strengthen their self-confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>When a young player´s perception of himself/herself (self-concept) and self-esteem depend, to a large degree, on his/her success in sports, he/she will be extremely vulnerable emotionally. Under such conditions, it is likely that sports activities will be very stressful for the players, increasing the risk of low performance, injury and occasionally, other negative effects on their health and psychological development. For this reason, the coach working with young players should do whatever he/she can so that his/her young players´ self-concept and self-esteem do not depend on their success in the field of sports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The coach´s comments can influence his/her young players´ self-concept and self-esteem; therefore, he/she should be very careful in this respect, avoiding comments that weaken the players´ self-concept and self-esteem, and using others that strengthen them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TEST EXERCISE - 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>CORRECT ANSWER</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>Meeting attractive challenges is one of the most rewarding experiences for young players. Therefore, this should be used quite frequently in their sports activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Some players have more self-control than others, but all of them can improve this capacity if the coach takes advantage of opportunities that arise during training sessions and games. The coach should try to bring about an improvement in his/her players’ self-control instead of assuming that they will improve by themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Having fun is a very positive experience for any basketball team, not just for mini-basketball teams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Early specialization does not increase a player’s chances of making top-class professional teams in the future. In fact, in most cases it limits the players’ possibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Coaches working with young players should not imitate top-class coaches but adopt their own working style, bearing in mind the formative aims these teams should have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>Control experiences are very important for any player but especially for young players. Therefore, a coach who works with young players should provoke many control experiences for his/her players.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>A coach working with young players should treat all of his/her players with dignity and respect, never insulting them, underrating them or making fun of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>A coach is a basketball expert, but when working with young players he/she should assume his/her educational responsibilities, which are complementary to those of teachers and parents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## TEST EXERCISE - 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>CORRECT ANSWER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Intra-group Outcome Goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Intra-subject Outcome Goal if for one player or Intra-group Outcome Goal if for the whole team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Performance Goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Performance Goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Performance Goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Inter-subject Outcome Goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Performance Goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Intra-subject Outcome Goal if for one player or Intra-group Outcome Goal if for the whole team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Performance Goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Performance Goal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## TEST EXERCISE - 5

<table>
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<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>CORRECT ANSWER</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>If the coach and the players jointly decide on the players’ obligations, players learn to accept responsibility and their commitment is stronger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Working rules should be established from the outset because they favour the proper working of the team and avoid many problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>The season’s macrocycle should be divided into various periods called mesocycles. These, in turn, should be divided into one-or two-week periods called microcycles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Outcome goals and performance goals should be correctly combined in order to maximize the benefits that can be achieved by establishing goals, so both are important. However, performance goals are more useful because they refer to the behaviour of the players themselves, and therefore, are more easily controlled. Besides which, performance goals are the only way for the players to influence outcome goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>Goals should be attractive so that the players are motivated to achieve them, but at the same time they should be realistic so that the players perceive that they can achieve them and, in fact, they do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>When planning the training session, the coach should take into account the most appropriate physical load for that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>In general, volume should predominate over intensity during the first weeks of the season.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>The coach should control the psychological load of the training session, just as he/she controls the physical workload or the technical and tactical contents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>Short drills prevent young players’ attentional fatigue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>For teams made up of young players (mini-basketball and 13/14 year-olds), the coach should not adapt his/her training programme to preparing for an upcoming game, nor is this appropriate for teams of 15/18-year-olds for many games of the season.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX: SOLUTIONS AND COMMENTS TO PRACTICAL EXERCISES

### TEST EXERCISE - 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>CORRECT ANSWER</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Before the training session, the coach should decide on the goals for that session as well as the contents and drills that are appropriate for achieving those goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Having a good time and following rules while doing drills is not incompatible. In fact, the use of appropriate rules helps a drill to be enjoyable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>The antecedent stimuli of a drill are those which are present in the drill. They are present before players’ behaviours appear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>When working with young players, both the goals and the structure of drills should be varied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>In general, related drills help make better use of practice time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>During training sessions, competitive drills can be set up between players or groups of players as well as between a player or a group against himself/herself or themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Competitive drills should not be done aimlessly; it is important to control the goals and contents of the drill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Learning drills should predominate in mini-basketball teams; specific game preparation is inappropriate in mini-basketball training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Attentional intensity should not be high during all of the drills done during a practise session. The coach should combine drills of greater and lesser intensity throughout the session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Working in small simultaneous groups is a good strategy because the players participate more and they can assume greater individual responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>Among other procedures that can be used to control the training process, comparing work done in the recent session with work previously programmed is simple and efficient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>In general, it is a good idea to combine offense and defense goals in order to make the most of the training session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTION</td>
<td>CORRECT ANSWER</td>
<td>COMMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>A player should never be ridiculed in front of his/her teammates. Besides, this is not a good strategy for motivating the players.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>In many cases, it is not enough to explain to the players what they have to do for them to do it. It is necessary to show them for them to understand better, and to develop a training programme so that the players learn to do what they should.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>The coach should assess and highlight players’ behaviour more than results obtained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>Élite players can be good role models for young players if the specific behaviour that they should observe and try to imitate is emphasised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>During training drills, the coach should concentrate only on the goals of that drill; therefore, he/she should correct only those mistakes that correspond to those goals and ignore the rest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Players do not learn more quickly (or better) because the coach tells them constantly what they have to do. The coach should use appropriate strategies so that the players become mentally involved in the drills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>Performance recording is a very useful tool to help the players concentrate on their behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>Feedback is a very valuable strategy in the learning process. Among other things, it allows players, including very young ones, to control their own progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Reinforcement, both positive and negative, serves to acquire behaviour. Negative reinforcement is not to be confused with punishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>Reinforcement should be applied as soon as possible after the behaviour that the coach wants to reinforce is produced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>Social reinforcement is a very powerful tool when working with young players. The coach should take advantage of every opportunity to use it generously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Token economy is a highly efficient and appropriate strategy for teams of any age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>The aim of punishment strategies is to eliminate inappropriate behaviour such as, for example, protesting the referee’s decisions or recriminating a teammate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>When applying punishment to eliminate certain behaviour, reinforcement to strengthen alternative behaviour should be applied at the same time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## TEST EXERCISE - 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It is a good idea for the players to move quickly to the sideline or the bench.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It is a good idea for the players to have a few seconds to drink water and relax a bit before the coach starts to talk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In general, the coach should be the only person to talk during time-outs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>In general, telling the players off for mistakes made in previous plays is not productive. Time-outs should be used constructively to prepare the future of the game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reinforcing effective actions that the coach wants the players to repeat is a good strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>It is not a good idea to speak quickly in order to say a lot. The coach should accept that he/she cannot say everything. Therefore, he/she should select the most important messages and transmit them without rushing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The coach should try to centre the players´ attention on the most important behaviour for the upcoming period of active participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>In general, it is not recommended that the coach remind the players to think of winning; rather, he/she should distract their attention from the score and centre it on behaviours that they can control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>It is not a good strategy to make fun of a player in order to provoke a reaction and get him/her to play better. Besides, the effects of this measure, beyond the game, can be very negative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>If the coach finds that he/she does not have enough time to say everything he/she wants to the players, it is because he/she wants to say too much and has not selected the most important things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>It is advisable that the coach end the time-out with a few words of encouragement to his/her players.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**TEST EXERCISE - 9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The coach should have an objective, positive and constructive attitude during the game. If he/she tends to notice negative aspects more than positive ones, it would be a good idea for him/her to think about this and change his/her attitude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A coach who tends to get angry when his/her players make mistakes should think about this. Mistakes are part of the game and the coach must learn to tolerate them and handle them with the objective, positive and constructive attitude that should predominate when he/she directs a game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The coach should reinforce the players when they attempt correct behaviour, even if they are not successful. This way, they will keep on trying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>During a game, the coach should encourage players when they make mistakes and get them to centre their attention quickly on the task at hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A coach cannot assess his/her players’ performance based on the final score.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The coach should let his/her players play without continuously telling them what to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The coach should not insult or make fun of the players.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>For reasons of strategy, the coach must take the score into account, but he/she should also be capable of directing the game objectively, regardless whether the score is favourable or unfavourable to his/her team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The coach who insults or protests to referees is a bad example for young players.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>It is a very good idea for the coach to transmit positive messages to his/her players when directing a game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Half-time should not be used to recriminate players for mistakes made during the first half but to help them improve their performance in the second half.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The coach should avoid making disapproving comments and gestures to his/her players while coaching a game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The coach should set an example to his/her young players by congratulating the coach of the opposing team at the end of the game, and he/she should teach them to do the same with their opponents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>At the end of the game, the players are not prepared to assimilate the coach’s comments. Therefore, it is not a good idea to organise talks right after a game. Two or three days later, when everyone is more relaxed, would be a better moment to explain whatever he/she feels is important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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