



Coach's Corner

For this Newsletter I would like to touch on two topics: Court time and zone defence

Court Time

Basketball is one of the few sports that can have as many or more players on the bench as out on the court, with 10 and sometimes 12 players in a team, and only 5 on the court at any one time. Netball usually has a team of 12 with 7 on the court and Football has 22 with 18 on the field with a few variations depending on the age. This means that the time spent on the court, especially in junior basketball, can be a major issue. Not all players are created equal and when winning is part of the equation, which it often is, the difference between players court time can be dramatic even in domestic basketball. The two extremes are coaches playing their star player for extended minutes and others rotating 5 on and 5 off to ensure equality.

Neither of these coaching tactics have great outcomes for the players. The best player should get the most court time but not to the detriment of all other players; and five on, five off, halts the momentum of the team and restricts the combinations that might actually work best. In representative basketball (WABL, State Teams etc) all players should hit the court during every game but the amount of court time should depend firstly on the ability of players and secondly on how the team is going when a particular group is together. Coaches should also have continuing discussions with players to let them know how they are going, and the areas they need to improve on to stay on the court longer.

In domestic basketball the difference in court time between players should be reduced to next to nothing, however rotating players evenly is very difficult and needs constant attention.

Zone defence

Since the mid nineties, zone defence has been outlawed in junior basketball (under 14 and under). Brett Brown the current Philadelphia 76'ers coach played zone with the North Melbourne Giants in the NBL to great effect, which brought on an a wave of zone defence throughout Australia. The issue was that most zones stood in the keyway with the biggest kid in the middle, and no one learnt how to defend.

I have noticed that a number of teams from WABL to domestic are playing traps that finish with two players back clogging up the keyway and no one really picks up a player. This will result in short term success, but doesn't teach the basic defensive skills of find a player, help and recover, weak side help and contain your opponent, especially for the bigger kids who are stuck in the "paint". These are essential skills that need teaching and repetition through game play. We are doing our players a major disservice by not teaching basic man-to-man concepts and allowing them to "surf" around looking to steal the ball.

The flip side of this is that when players and coaches move into Under 16 and above, they have not played zone or been exposed to zones at all. This is an area, particularly offensively, that really needs development. Teaching the inside movement, dribble penetration, screening the zone and finding the gaps is difficult and a lot of zone offence comes down to throwing up 3's. There are some really good offences on the Internet but basically if you screen the bottom of the zone and get the ball to the high post you can get inside the zone rather than pass the ball around the perimeter.

The other key to playing against zone is to run transition and get the ball down the court before the zone gets set.

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