



And we're off....another calendar year! January brings along with it a fresh start. As teams work their way through the continual evolution from **forming** to **storming** and into **norming** - some may already have reached the **performing** stage - I can't help but reflect on the journey. This winter season, and after a 3 year hiatus, I ventured back into coaching; helping out on my son's U18 boys team. My experiences thus far bring back great memories; seeing something we worked on in practice materialize on the game court, feeling the intensity of pressure situations. I realized that, just like it was in U11 and U13, coaching is a learned skill...mentally and physically. Furthermore, for me coaching takes practice and reflection. In this issue, I'd like to discuss situational awareness, muscle memory, optional homework, and reiterate my open door policy.

Situational Awareness: Keeping your eye off the ball is a coaching skill. While the points below may seem trivial, I can't overstate how often they can come up. I can attest to having several frustrating drives back from a game when my head was full of "shoulda, woulda, coulda." **Coach Tip:** Make it a habit to walk over and check the score sheet 3-4 times per game. Look for the number of player and team fouls on both sides; you may have an opportunity to drive on an opposing player who has 4 fouls and will naturally lay off. Alternatively, in the last 20 seconds of a tight game where you're in the lead, a timeout is called, and you don't have possession - you may have one or more team fouls to give. Knowing this will help you take crucial seconds off the clock after the inbound...inform your players.

Muscle Memory & Optional Homework: Practice, practice, practice...easy to say, hard to get players excited about. Practice time is zero-stakes and it's where your players should learn what to do. Coaches should try to create a practice regime that, at times, is physically challenging BUT NOT mentally challenging. Community sports rarely field the same team makeup year over year so we shouldn't expect players to know complex systems or to anticipate where their teammates should be as part of a Villanova 4-out offense. I think at any age group, keys to success are quickness, simplicity, repetition, and ultimately the development of subconscious know-how. This issue includes several play designs: offensive, press break, and zone press. Seasoned coaches will recognize many of them. If you're new to coaching, add them to your toolbox. The designs are quite basic...that's the point. Run them over and over again, in every practice and on every side of the court. Come up with different names, variations, etc. The goal is to have players memorize so they feel confident when asked to execute under pressure. **Coach Tip:** Some players respond well to visual instruction but many players do not. You likely have players who thrive on referring to and reading; almost all of them won't tell you. Consider emailing or printing out play designs with players so they can review at home. Humans learn differently.

Open Door Policy: I can't overstate this enough..if you find yourself stalled out, frustrated, dissatisfied with your or your team's performance, please feel free to reach out. Coaching basketball can be overwhelmingly rewarding. It can also be frustratingly demotivating. If you want to bounce ideas, ask for help, contribute to the Bow River Basketball Coaching Toolbox, or any other myriad of coaching & player development aspects...please reach out to me at CoachDevelopment@bowriverbasketball.com

Thanks for taking the time to read this issue of the Bow River Coaching Development Blog.

Coach Greg