

# Canada Basketball Super Clinic

May 28-30, 2021

## Nick Nurse—Fire Side Chat hosted by Paul Jones (pre-recorded)

Canada Basketball SMNT—Toronto Raptors

Coach Nick Nurse experiences:

He has coached about 1000 official games and has coach at least 1000 unofficial games.

He believes that the Core of Coaching is **Teaching**.

Coach Nurse had to streamline his philosophy early in his career. He had to learn how to teach quickly because of the constant turnover on many of the teams he coaches. He had to motivate players to learn so learned how to do this.

With the Canadian national team, he has a small window of time to prepare. Therefore, he has to streamline his teaching. He employs the philosophy “less is more”. He has to zero-in on the aptitudes of his players and what his players are capable of.

85% of his coaching has nothing to do with the X’s & O’s. Only 15% has to do with technical and tactical preparation. Nick believes that coaching success has a lot to do with being an expert on technical and tactical knowledge.

Coach Nurse believes the same holds true for all coaches—you better become an expert in the 15%!

Coach Nurse was asked by Paul Jones what some of the characteristics are that have defined his career? One of the things Nurse mentioned was a coach has to be fearless—to not be afraid to try new things, fearless to take chances (be bold).

For example, in the NBA he tried a ‘box-and-one’ defence against Steph Curry—that approach was unheard of in the NBA. It is used often in college basketball and extensively in high school basketball but this often-referred-to gimmick defence just isn’t effective at the NBA level.

Coach Nurse employed a ‘box-and-one’ vs. Curry and it worked. Boom, instant buy-in by his players and a great example of following your gut and to not be afraid to try something new.

Coach Nurse was also asked what a full season looks like and feels like. His response highlighted how he was constantly asking, “What can we do better?” He studies the league. He studies opposing players. He studies and gets to know his own players. He is a constant and consistent learner and is always looking to find new ways to do things. He’s not afraid to be creative. He views every season as a learning season.

Coach Nurse also accentuated the value of a learning curve. As a coach he always wants to be prepared and ready. Interactions are so important—with his players, with his staff, with the media and with other coaches—Interactions and connections are critical for success.

He believes that **Less is More**.

As a head coach you don’t have all the answers, therefore, do your research and find out what you don’t know.

Nick believes in being supportive of others. And one of his biggest philosophies is, “What’s the next best play?”

*Some coaches have often referred to this as, “What’s your NBA (Next Best Action)?”*

Paul Jones asked Nick what mistakes wouldn’t you do again when it comes to coaching?

Nick hesitated for a bit and then answered by stating sometimes he would share more in private. Sometimes when you share publicly you might embarrass somebody or call someone out unnecessarily. You need to pick and choose your battles. Know the dynamics of your team and those around you—this will help you tremendously when it comes to communicating with others. He went on to say “Be prepared!” Know all facets of the game and don’t be afraid to share with others.

In Nick’s entire career most of his success or his area of expertise has been to find ways to get buckets. He fully knows that defence wins games but he loves to find ways to get buckets.

Paul Jones then asked Nick Nurse his philosophy of developing all-round players—which has been referred to as developing the **Global Player**. Nick’s take on this was interesting and understandable for all levels. There are so many trainers today that have been hired to develop individual skill packages and tool boxes.

Coach Nick’s approach is to then build team rhythm, style of play, and freedom. Nick supports having the trainers and players themselves build individual skill packages. Nick then focusses on the many facets of building the team.

Nick was asked, “What contributes most to coaching effectiveness?” Nick suggested that rest, nutrition, recovery and hiring good staff and professional personnel are keys to his success. He could never do this alone and he makes sure he takes care of himself, takes care of his body, takes care of his mind and surrounds himself with great people.

One point that he did not want to miss was he emphasizes that players need to be well-versed in the team’s **Style of Play** and in the various **Scenarios** that could present themselves in a game. He wants his players to be prepared, he needs his players to be prepared, and he makes sure his players are prepared.

“What are your suggestions to building a coaches toolbox?” Coach Nurse says to learn more, become an expert in some areas, experiment, keep it simple, and put an emphasis on **Finishing at the basket** and **Making free throws**. Nick believes that finishing at the basket and making free throws will make you look like a great coach—players play, coaches coach.

Another area that Nick supports is when the rhythm isn’t right, change the rhythm. After all, what do you have to lose?

Coach Nurse was asked, “What’s the biggest thing to consider with the shift from the NBA to FIBA?” Nick’s response was he has far less time to prepare with our Canadian national team. The FIBA game is much more physical—you have to be able to hold your line. For example: when setting a screen, you cannot get pushed off your line—you have to be tough and stand your ground. With the FIBA game, it’s more of a clutch and grab game—things that aren’t allowed in the NBA.

With the Canadian national team, Nick has to know his personnel—he has to know what each player is capable of. He’ll consider length, speed and athleticism. He’s going to build from the defensive end first. He’s going to be making sure there’s plenty of changing defences in his repertoire because that’s how he believes the FIBA game is best played. And because of the short window, he has to keep it simple.

Canadian players on our national team are better than ever! There are going to be some good players who are going to be cut. All players have to ‘show up’ when it’s time for tryouts. There are no doubt going to be some surprises when it comes to players who make the team and some who do not. The coaching staff will have some difficult decisions to make and will have to make these decisions in a very short window. The goal for the Canadian national team is to win the tournament in Victoria and to then advance to the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

In conclusion, Coach Nick Nurse mentioned a few things that have contributed to his ascent to the top of the mountain:

1. Every season is about learning.
2. Always be prepared and ready.
3. Care for your players.
4. Work with your players by establishing mutual goals.
5. Less is more—keep it simple.