

How to keep non-starters motivated?

I was asked this question by one of my former players (Nate James) who is now an assistant coach at Duke University recently. I thought that the question was very interesting and intriguing. This question has many different layers to it and the best way to answer it is to be as honest as I possibly can.

First and foremost, we must understand that the goals of the team come before and supersede the goals of the individual. I am a believer that once that has been established then we can start to address the wants and needs of the individual.

All “players” want to play. In fact, they want to play a lot! However it is the job of the coaching staff to assemble the best team, and play the best group of individuals that play well as a team. It is the job of the coaching staff to define roles. What the coaches know through experience is that roles can and do change throughout the course of a season. Coaches look at the season as a marathon and while the players sometimes look at the season as a sprint.

Here are a couple thoughts I have on How to keep the non-starters motivated?

1. You must recognize where the player is coming from emotionally and psychologically. They are coming from a “me” perspective.
2. You have to redirect their thoughts of their needs back to the overall objectives of the team.
3. You should illustrate to them that practice is available for them to prove they deserve to play more in the games. However they will need to judge themselves based on the criteria used by the staff and not the players.
4. You will need to build their self-esteem, their self worth, their value to the team and the ultimate goals of the team.
5. You will need to “sell” them on the idea of being a STAR in their current role.
6. The staff needs to recognize what the importance, the value and the responsibilities of the “non-starters” are to the overall success of the team.
7. You will need to cite examples of the value of “the 6th man award”. Past winners, teams that win championships often have great players that do not start.
8. You will need to make sure that the players are being honest with themselves.
9. You will need them to accept their roles. But not become satisfied in their roles.
10. They must “believe in”, “trust in” and then “buy in” to their role.

Role acceptance requires maturity. Role acceptance requires humility. Role acceptance requires sacrifice. Role acceptance requires a player to realize this is my role now, but roles can and do change.

Role acceptance is making yourself invaluable to your team.

The individual must understand the African proverb that says, “Every tree has its’ own time to bare it’s own fruit”. They must also realize that they should work and prepare themselves for THAT moment. Because if they are not, the moment will come and go.

The cheers after the game ends are louder than the cheers before the game begins. Translation: I would rather finish a game than start a game!

Written by Kevin Sutton – Assistant Coach at George Washington University

Often times, a new leader – weather a Coach, President, or CEO – will enter an organization and quickly state that it's essential they “change the culture”.

What does does “change the culture” really mean? We need to define” culture”. According to Wekipidia, “culture” is the beliefs, values, behaviors and material objects that constitute a people’s way of life. Culture can also mean the arts, customs, and habits that characterize a particular society or nation.

Before any cultural changes can or should occur, I feel that is important for the leader to clearly articulate – in their Vision Statement, Mission Statement and Value Statement – what the standards are for their program/company. Then, the leader must live them out through their actions on a daily basis.

Cultural changes reflect the personality of the person making them. Observers and followers of the team/business will be able to glean from the Cultural changes what is important to the coach/leader/CEO.

Cultural changes are often needed when there’s a failure to “believe in/buy in”. I am of the opinion that before you can have a “buy in” mentality, you must have a ”believe in” mentality first. The individual must believe in the new direction, philosophy or product then they will endorse and embrace it. However if the individual does not “believe in/buy in”, they need to get “BOUGHT OUT”.

Cultural changes often requires the leader to work with the “1/3 Rule”. The ”1/3 Rule” states that the organization, from the beginning, will be divided into thirds; 1/3 of the people will be in support the leader, 1/3 of the people will not be in support of the leader for varies reasons (often these reasons are personal based on resistance to change), and 1/3 of the people will be on the fence (neither supportive nor unsupportive). The fence-sitters are hopeful that the leader can truly do what they have been hired to do. This group is the most important group for the leader to win over, as doing so means it has gained 2/3 's majority of the support.

Defining moments are very important when the cultural changes are being made. These are those moments when the leader must act and show that they are, indeed, in charge. It is in these moments that their decisions and actions are being observed and judged by all persons whom have an interest. Defining moments can be positive, even filled with compassion in light of tragedy. They can also be negative, such as when a violation of the standards occur. In either case, the leader must show their leadership ability and therefore define themselves to their constituents.

Cultural changes do not have to always be dramatic to be effective, as they can be subtle as well. They must be rooted in intelligent thought, and not based on emotion. The overall objectives of the Cultural changes have to be:

- (1). What is in the best interest of the team/company? and
- (2) will this change make the team/company better?

I truly feel that change is necessary when a new leader comes on board. How that change is implemented will contribute to the ultimate success of the organization. Change is not to be feared, but to be embraced when it is implemented intelligently and fairly. Sometimes, these cultural changes can bring about a “freshness” and a new found enthusiasm for an already established team/company.

The Power of Effective Communication

The most successful teams, businesses and organizations do a great job of communicating in their respective languages their Vision Statement (a statement stating what they want to accomplish), their Mission Statement(a statement stating how they plan to accomplish it), and their Value Statement(a statement of what they value and stand for). In these three statements the reader can gain a great deal of insight into that team/business and organization.

The most successful teams, businesses and organizations communicate effectively through many different forms:

1. Social Media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc.
2. Their company website
3. Their companies blog site

These opportunities to communicate allow for the growing of brand identity and the connection with the public.

The most successful teams, businesses and organizations will also use Signage within their respective work areas to visually communicate their messages to their people to create and reinforce "Believe In/Buy in".

Another very effective way of communicating your message is to create a tagline/mantra/slogan. A tagline/mantra/slogan that is easy to remember, recite and repeat can eventually create brand recognition and brand awareness. Three great examples are: Cadillac – The Standard of World, Nike – Just Do It, and BMW – The Ultimate Driving Machine.

More prevalent in the sports world is the use of Acronyms to articulate, communicate, share the message of their team. Acronyms are when you take a word and use the letters of the word to spell out your beliefs, your standards, your philosophy. Acronyms are also a great teaching tool. Here are a few acronyms that I really like:

W – Willingness to become Successful
O – Opportunity to become Successful
R – Responsibility to become Successful
K – Knowledge to become Successful
H – Habits to become Successful
A – Attitude to become Successful
R – Relentlessness to become Successful
D – Driven to become Successful

H – Help
O – Other
P – People
E – Excel

D – Determination to follow your Dream
R – Relentless pursuit of your Dream
E – Effort given to reach your Dream
A – Anticipation of reaching your Dream
M – Mental toughness to fight for your Dream.

Sharing your vision, your mission and your values has to be a priority to you. The success of your team, your business and/or your corporation depends on the many effective ways that you communicate.

Big Difference Between a Pro and a Professional

A pro is a person who usually has the talent to be paid for the use of their talents, but they lack the intangibles to sustain their talent level over a long period of time.

The professional has the talent plus the intangibles to sustain their talent level over a long period of time. Thus they have a longer career.

The intangibles often are tied to their character or lack of character. Intangibles such as: integrity, honesty, dependability, trustworthy, discipline, responsible, work ethic, respect for their craft, attention to detail, preparation, desire to be successful.

A pro usually has a career of 1-3 years. A professional usually has a career of 1-12 years.

A pro has goals for the moment! Whatever and wherever that moment is. The moment is usually spontaneous, without thought, usually poorly planned and poorly executed.

The professional has goals that are multidimensional, goals that are divided into short term, mid term. And long term. Goals that drive them to be successful!

Another difference between a pro and a professional is based on education. Not just their academic education but also their education that comes through their life's exposure and experience. Especially in their formative years. Through Education, Exposure and Experiences the Professional learns what it takes to have a long career.

They learn the importance of making a "positive" first impression. They learn the importance of keeping a very small and tight "inner circle". They learn the importance of the term "perception vs reality". They learn the importance of never feeling like you have arrived/made it. The professional is always evolving, grow and STRIVING!

Dream of being a pro.....STRIVE to be a PROFESSIONAL.

Thoughts from the NBA Playoffs

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I. Play off basketball is different from regular season basketball. Why?

1. Stakes are higher
2. Pressure is greater
3. Mistakes are heighten
4. Execution of the game plan becomes even more important
5. It is all about adjustments
6. The best players have to be the best players

II. How important is the 2 nd. Unit?

- very important
- gives starters the ability to rest
- know their roles and play their roles
- never relinquish leads: either they build on the lead, maintain the lead, at worst they keep the scored tied
- must know the tempo/pace of the game.

IV. Great teams know how to close out:

- quarters
- halves
- games

V. When you attack in transition, good things can happen:

- you can score
- you put pressure on def
- you create fouls on opponents
- you are fatiguing your opponents

VI. Great players want to be coached.

VII. Coaching is confrontational at times and it should be. But it is never combative, demeaning or dehumanizing.

VIII. 10 types of screens:

- Pin down
- Back
- Cross
- Rub
- Butt

Staggered double
Flare
Double flare
Double ball screen
Ball screens:
-flat
-sprint
-side
-step out

IX. Great players:

- Great players take the 1st bus to the arena to get their work in. The 1st bus gets to the gym several hours early.
- Great players know when and how to take over games. They simply have a feel for the game, they make the proper play, they impose their will on the game and their teammates.
- Great players want and expect to be coached.

X. Do your job(nothing more and certainly nothing less). This will help us be successful.

XII. Playoff basketball is hard fought, it is tough, it is about competing at the highest level.

XIII. It is so important to get to the free throw line when you are in a scoring slump.

XIV. Good offense involves,

1. ball movement,
2. player movement,
3. rebound coverage,
4. uncontested shots by the player we want from the location we want
5. Screening
6. Element of inside/out or outside

XV. Early shot clock vs. Late shot clock can be the difference in the game:

- Early shot clock is about team play and late shot clock is about one on one play.
- Early shot clock can and often does catches the defense at a disadvantage. While late shot clock the defense is prepared/set which can and often does give the advantage to the defense.
- Early shot clock the defense is more man oriented and late shot clock the defense is more ball oriented.

XVI. Champions learn from their experiences

- The struggle is necessary
- The struggle is apart of the climb
- Teachable moments when kept in perspective helps the individual to grow, to learn and to improve.

XVII. Defining moments:

- Those moments that define your character.
- Those moments that stretch you.
- Those moments that can be difficult,hard,&uncomfortable
- Those moments that become lasting memories.

XVIII. Losing:

- always makes you uncomfortable
- is always emotional
- is difficult
- defines you, especially how the individual handles it
- is the culmination of mistakes. Mistakes are both mental and physical . Usually due to a lack of concentration and communication which lead to a lack execution

XIV: LeBron James' maturing into a true champion

- LeBron in several of his post game interviews alluded to the things that helped him mature into a "true

champion”.

1. Soul Search:

- he had to look himself in the mirror. To tell himself he had to be better both on and off the court.

2. Proper motivation:

- Use the disappointment of last year as motivation for this year.

- Accept the leadership role

3. Attack mentality:

- Go back to the basics.

- Be aggressive at all times

- Training during the off season was intense, grueling and hard.

Great Coaches and Leaders

Great Coaches and Leaders:

I. Know how to manage and lead different personalities well:

A. They create an atmosphere where opinions are welcome.

B. They allow for ownership of the team to be shared without sacrificing the whole for its parts.

II. Know that their egos must come last:

A. They understand the importance of the proverb “A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle, but creates twice the illumination.”

B. They know that when one person on the team has success, we all have success.

III. Are great at communicating:

A. They have an understanding of the many different forms of communicating: verbal, non-verbal, written, email, twitter, facebook, etc.

B. They have the ability to clearly and consciously articulate the mission, vision, objective and strategy of their program or company that will lead to success.

IV. Treat their staff, and everyone affiliated with their program, with respect and dignity:

A. They take the time to get to know their people on a personal level.

B. They foster a family atmosphere.

V. Have a thirst for knowledge, for learning and for teaching:

A. They are willing to learn different ways to do their job better and experiment with new methods, even if their old ways are proven to work well.

B. They are constantly asking questions.

C. They try to stay on the cutting edge in their profession.

D. They use every opportunity to teach. “Teachable Moments” are when they shine the brightest.

VI. Have a tremendous “feel” for their profession or craft:

A. They know whom to play, when to play them and for how long.

B. They understand and embrace “the moment.”

C. They respect the past, are “present” in the present, and are eager for the future.

VII. Are innovative thinkers:

A. They embrace “outside the box” thinking.

B. They have the ability to read the “tea leaves” and make appropriate changes while anticipating situations several moves ahead.

C. They are a part of governing bodies that are changers of their game, business, or industry.

VIII. Have a philosophy for their coaching and leadership style:

A. They develop philosophies over time through trial and error. The philosophies are created by years of experiences and through the observations of other programs and organizations.

B. They analyze the strengths and weaknesses of previous programs or organizations they have worked for to create their philosophy.

IX. Nurture and grow new leaders:

A. They create an environment where growth can and must occur.

B. They often will play “devil’s advocate” to teach a person how to define their belief on an issue, idea, or rule.

C. They don’t want all “yes men”, because they are confident enough to know that they are not always right. They understand that other people have great ideas too.

D. They understand the theory of “secure vs. insecure”. They understand you must share your knowledge freely to train the leader who will eventually succeed you (Moses trained Joshua, Elijah trained Elisha).

X. Build up instead of tear down:

A. They create a “safe environment” where asking questions to seek clarity is encouraged and taking risks to inspire growth is applauded.

B. They live by the proverb “give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime”.

Scouting – “The Great Chess Match” for Coaches and Players

I have always been fascinated with scouting. During my coaching career, I’ve enjoyed the opportunity to serve as scouting coordinator at the highest level of high school basketball during my 10-year tenure as an assistant under Coach Stu Vetter at schools such as Flint Hill Prep, Harker Prep and St. John’s Prospect Hall. During that 10-year run, we played in high-stakes championship games against opponents like perennial powers St. Anthony’s, Oak Hill, Mater Dei and many more.

As I moved on to become the head coach at Bishop McNamara, scouting took on an even bigger role while competing in one of the toughest leagues in America – the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference (WCAC). The league has traditional powers DeMatha, Gonzaga, St. John’s and Bishop O’Connell among others. To compete in this league night in and night out, you had better invest the time to scout your opponents and prepare your team to compete. It was through scouting, preparation and execution of the game plan that gave our teams the opportunity to be successful.

One of the greatest coaching experiences I’ve had is being selected as an assistant coach and scouting coordinator for USA Basketball’s Junior National U16 & U17 Developmental Team for two years. The position afforded me the chance to learn the international game and rules, and the different playing styles of each country we played. More importantly, it allowed me to become even more of a student of the game.

My USA Basketball coaching experience came on the heels of the “Redeem Team” – the U.S. Senior National team’s run at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. My access to that team through USA Basketball permitted me yet another unique opportunity to learn, understand and watch the international game up close and personal, thus making scouting easier, more efficient and more effective. The combination of our talent, preparation, understanding of the scouting report and execution of the game plan allowed our Developmental team to win two GOLD MEDALS!

Now in my first year as an assistant coach at George Washington University, I continue to enjoy scouting, or what I like to call “The Great Chess Match.” With as much technology and software available (Fast Scout, Fast Draw, Synergy, Sports Code, digital filming) to us at the highest level of college basketball, one must be careful not to get bombarded with information overload. Information overload can and does render players helpless because they have gone from an instinctual athlete to a player who is thinking too much and trying to process too much information.

Therein lies the dilemma for the coach doing the scout – how much information is too much information? I have come to realize that the answer to that question lies in four areas:

□ 1. The overall basketball IQ of your team.

2. The amount of information to be processed.
3. The amount of time to process the information.
4. How many different ways can we teach it: visually, written, verbally and kinetically based on different learning styles.

I believe that coaching staff's scouting reports should contain all the necessary information that fits the head coach's style. This is very important because it allows the head coach to become comfortable in developing a better understanding of the opponent. The head coach becomes confident in the game plan and better able to motivate and prepare his team to win.

The player's scouting reports, in my opinion, should be considerably smaller in size, simpler with quick-hitting key attributes/weaknesses, and clear do's and don'ts to eliminate gray areas. I also believe the scouting report and the presentation of the scout should reflect the personality of the coach in charge of it. This makes the scouting report that much more believable to the players.

Scouting is "The Great Chess Match" because it allows the coaches to compete and play the game mentally after their time to physically compete and play passes with time and age.

The "chess matches" continue as coaches get up early and stay up late trying to find anything they can to give their team the best opportunity to be successful. Basketball is a game played like checkers, but requires the thinking of chess!

Positively Impacting Kids Lives

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Written by Kevin Sutton

Assistant Coach at George Washington

Positively Impacting the lives of the Student/Athlete should be a primary focus of every coach. The role of the coach is to take an interest in the development of his players in the following areas:

1. Academically
2. Athletically
3. Socially
4. Spiritually

The constant challenging and encouraging of them to reach their full potential in all of those areas. Give them the opportunity and the platform to share their dreams, and their goals. Hold them accountable to do the work necessary to pursue and hopefully reach their dreams and goals. Through the relationship that is developed the student/athlete can become a positive representation of your program. A "living trophy" which is far more important than the trophies that sit in cases.

Team building will occur through constant communication in all forms. The clear articulation of the program goals; expectations, standards and affirmations that are vital to create the necessary "buy in" to be successful. The Head coach must develop individual relationships as well as collective relationships with the players so that they can develop an understanding, which will lead to trust.

The formation of the team will take place through shared experiences and the understanding that in time the program will be bigger than the individual and that they are apart of the something special.

A Fellowship of Believers will be formed through:

1. Shared ownership
2. Shared suffering
3. Individual responsibility
4. Team before self
5. Collective Pride
6. Holding teammates accountable
7. Acceptance of roles
8. Belief in the overall success of the program

The bible passage Act 2:42 says, all the believers were together and had everything in common.

Winning is the by-product of consistently doing the right things over time. Consistency is always about staying true to your core values and principals. How you lead your life should speak volumes to others as to who you are and what you stand for. Consistency is the cornerstone of all successful programs/organizations.

Abilities of a Player

The ability to play hard for a sustainable amount of time is what separates the above average players from the average and below average player. The things that make it possible for the above average player to be successful is:

1. Their ability to handle and deal with adversity
2. Their ability to compete at a high level with consistency
3. Their determination/drive to be the best
4. Their ability to deal with and conquer boredom
5. Their ability to play through lapses/lulls in the game
6. Their ability to handle early success
7. Their ability to handle failure
8. Their [work ethic](#) and attention to detail
9. Their preparation/approach to all task related to their game
10. Their WILL

The simplicity of the game becomes complicated when players:

1. Lose their focus – due to lack of concentration
2. Are confused ([information overload](#))
3. [Fail](#) to listen with their ears and learn with their eyes
4. Simply are not talented enough
5. Too selfish
6. Too stubborn – not coachable

Consistency can lead to compliance in others because:

1. Your effort is taken for granted.
2. Expectations start to become the norm
3. New people enter the picture with no [frame of reference](#) of what it has taken you to build your program. They also start to offer their opinions without respect of and for the past.
4. Perception growth becomes the reality that a change needs to be made.

Advice For Life

My advice to all of you is very simple:

1. Be true to yourself and your personality. Teach to those two talents.
2. Dream big, but set obtainable goals.
3. Write them down and place them where you can read them daily. Give them life by speaking of them to yourself and others.
4. Learn the art of networking.
5. Identify people you respect in your field and study EVERYTHING about them.
6. Read as much as you can and take notes on what you learned.
7. Develop your speaking skills and communication skills by using them.
8. Don't be afraid to fail.
9. Create your own opportunities
10. Stay focused through the good and bad times.
11. Share your ideas, thoughts and questions with people you respect.
12. Develop a relentless desire/work ethic to be SUCCESSFUL.

Basketball IQ the NEW Talent/Skill!

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- Have you watched a basketball game lately and the game just left you wondering what happened? Or why did that player take that shot? Or why didn't the team call timeout? or Why did they foul?
- Have you ever wondered why so many time outs are called late in the game to diagram a play? Why doesn't the team have a play for that situation?
- Why do games just end with no strategy employed?

For that very reason, I have come to realize that the new talent/skill in the game of basketball is BASKETBALL IQ! I define talent/skill as the ability to do something easily and quickly that sets you apart from others and makes you unique.

Examples of talent/skill in the game of basketball are:

- Dribbling skills - Chris Paul
- Passing skills – Jason Kidd
- Court vision skills - Steve Nash
- Shooting skills – Ray Allen
- Scoring skills – Kobe Bryant
- Rebounding skills – Kevin Love
- Defensive skills – Dwight Howard

I feel that basketball IQ is:

1. having the ability to process information at game speed
2. reading the flow of the game and determine if it needs to be changed
3. the understanding of the importance of time and score
4. the understanding of shot selection
5. the understanding of his teammates strength's and weaknesses
6. knowing and developing an understanding of the scouting report/game plan
7. developing a relationship with the coaching staff so to better understand the system
8. knowing your opponents
9. watching tapes of your team, of yourself, of the opposing team and the person you will defend
10. listening to knowledgeable people, reading about the game, studying the game.

11. having the ability to understand what was drawn/discussed in the timeout, execute it on the floor and being able to make the proper “basketball reads” if the play isn’t there. This is especially important in late game situations.

I really believe that college coaches need to place an emphasis on recruiting BASKETBALL IQ just as much as they recruit the other 7 skills that I have listed above. The teams/programs that find those players that have high basketball IQs are going to be the teams/programs that will consistently win the close games. When games are close a players basketball IQ thus becomes the real talent!

Rotation and Scramble

The difference between defensive rotations vs defensive scramble at all levels, is the team that commits to defensive rotation and executes the rotation the best, will win majority of their games.

The team that forces itself into scramble situation means that offense is in control and thus will have a better opportunity at winning the game.

Here are my thoughts on the difference between ROTATION and Scramble.

1. Rotations are organized, pre-planned movements that are predicated by the ball movement and what has been determined by the scouting report.
2. Scrambles are random movements by the defense in an attempt to defend the ball.
3. Rotations start with ball location. Often times the location of the ball determines which rotation coverage will be employed.
4. Scrambles start as a result of the defense being too man oriented. Often losing site of the location of the ball.
5. Rotations require communication(information given,received and understood) verbally and nonverbally.
6. Scrambles are a by product of lack of communication.
7. Rotations start and end with TRUST!
8. Scrambles are a by product of a lack of focus.
9. Rotations are an example of early recognition and early thought.
10. Scrambles are an example of late recognition and late thought.

12 Components of a Championship Team

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1. **They have balance on offense.** The points are spread around to several players vs a large amount to just one or two players. The balance in the offense also comes from ball movement and player movement. A balance of inside and outside productivity. A balance between the productivity of the starters as well as the nonstarters.

2. **They play tough defense.** The tough defense that is being played is from both a individual defense standpoint and more importantly from a team standpoint. Close out defense enables a team to be in rotations instead of scramble situations. Proper one on one defense does not allow for dribble penetration (which can and does lead to short 2 on 1 's) or pass penetration (which leads to the team digging the ball out of the post or doubling it).
3. **They rebounding:** Is such a high component. The team that owns either glass or both usually wins a high majority of their games. Rebounding is a tone setter! Rebounding sends the message that the possession of the ball is so important! The controlling of the ball increase the number of possession that a team has. Subsequently the team that has more possession has increased their number of opportunities to score.
4. **They get productivity from their bench:** The productivity of the bench effects the team in a positive way. The productivity of the bench comes in all forms. Productivity must be positive. The minutes that the bench plays is a direct reflection of how productive their contribution is to the success of the team.
5. **They make their free throws:** First and foremost, they get to the free throw and then they make more free throws than their opponents. Free throws puts a tremendous amounts of pressure on the defense. By attacking the rim, the defense has to make adjustments, they often get the defense into foul trouble, it becomes a very easy way to score while not be defended. Finally, the close games come down to a "Free Throw Shooting Contest"!
6. **They make tough shots late in the shot clock:** These types of shot are demoralizing to the defense. These types of plays are energy boosters.
7. **They know how to close out games:** They have the confidence and belief that they will win. They never panic. They play with a sense of poise. Experience make these types of situation more managable.
8. **They know how to with stand runs:** They never panic. The game of basketball is a games of runs. The team that does not handle this type of adversity will find themselves in a deep whole. These runs can be momentum shifters. Composure is so important to both teams when dealing with a run. Believe it or not, an offensive run can be a negative thing. Because the shots are falling, it is invariable that the flow of the offense will suffer. Players will start to look for "theirs", take bad shoots, quick shots, stop doing the things that enabled them to get on the run in the first place.
9. **They make fewer mistakes than their opponents:** plain and simple. Championship teams do not beat themselves. Mistakes either forced by thopponent or not are not acceptable. The elmination of physical and mental mistakes increases the teams chances of winning.
10. **They impose their Will on opponents:** The imposing of the will of the team is so important. A great example of imposing will is dictating the tempo of the game. When to run, and when not to run. Another example if imposing a teams will is on the defensive end. Being "legally physicals" when a player cut through the lane.
11. **They get easy baskets:** In transition they run the floor, they get early post u, they move the ball(no ball stopping), they get shots off of their defense, they get second chance points off of the offensive glass.
12. **Best player has to show up:** Best player must show up and play like the BEST PLAYER! They have to make their teammates better. They need to rely on their teammates. Not many championships are won without the contribution of teammates.

High School Hoops – “The Move”

High School Hoops – “The Move”

Written by: Sean Russell Publisher FAAZ Magazine

Typically, the buzz in high school basketball is about player rankings and recruiting. The internet is abundantly filled with player highlights, tweets, status updates, posts, and articles. What players are doing and where are they going are the common topics.

A few weeks ago that all changed for a brief period in time. In a rare instance, the buzz went from player to coach.

A modest coach with a resume that includes an overall head coaching record of 226-61, 186-33 at his most recent program, one national title, 5 games broadcasted on ESPN, 15 years with Nike Basketball, 2 years as Assistant Coach on 2 Gold Medal USA Teams, Head Coach of victorious US Team at Hoop Summit, and over 50 former players moving on to the collegiate level and even a few pros.

So it's clear why word spread so quickly through the high school basketball community about the departure of nationally respected Coach Kevin Sutton from Montverde Academy. After all, he helped build a program from infancy to national prominence at a blazing rate. They finished the 2010-11 season ranked 13th nationally. Everything seemed to be ideal, so why the break? As rumors flew, the question still remained.

After all, nobody had really heard of Montverde Academy before Coach Sutton stepped onto the campus. So it seemed absurd, even arrogant, to think that an administration would dismiss a coach that helped bring a program from irrelevance to prominence. At the same time it did not make sense that a coach at his caliber did not already have something lined up.

People said there must be some LeBronesque type maneuver lurking somewhere. We had "The Decision" last year, so would this be high school's version? It could be referred to as "The Move."

"The Move" could potentially end up reshaping the look of the national power basketball hierarchy, launching the rise of another power, and possibly the beginning of the end of another.

I recently spoke with Coach Sutton regarding "The Move."

First of all, the pink elephant is in the room so we may as well get it out of the way. What happened?

"Change is inevitable and sometimes when there is a change in direction, there is a change in leadership. It was an amicable decision. A tough decision, but amicable.

Anytime you spend 8 years with someone or an organization, it's tough when it's time to move on. I am truly blessed and honored at the opportunity to have helped develop the program there. It is always an honor to be put into a leadership type position to help impact and shape the lives of individuals, especially youth. It is even more of a blessing when you get to do that in a platform that you love, and for me that's basketball."

What was delay in talking to media?

Timing is always the key and the timing to discuss it was not right. It took place at a time leading into the Nike Hoop Summit, and I felt it would have been would have been distracting to the players experience and their preparation to discuss it openly.

Based on the team's accomplishment and performance, combined with seeing the player's interaction together at the Hoop Summit, I believe it was the right decision to make.

Do you have something already in place? If not, what are your options, offers, and/or pursuits?

No, I do not have something "lined up".

Change has a way of showing the blessings and opportunities of a committed belief system and work ethic. It also has a way of quickly summarizing your past body of work and the relationships cultivated within that time.

I really could not be more blessed! I am truly humbled and appreciative by the outpouring of opportunities, including college assistant positions, high school head coaching positions here in the US & Canada, as well as positions coaching abroad in Germany or China.

The options are wide open right now and ultimately it will become a decision that is the best scenario for my family.

If you do stay in the high school coaching circuit, can you see the spawning of a new rivalry between your new program and with Montverde?

Rivalry, no. I work and coach my teams to have them prepared to perform their best and give them the best opportunity to be successful – on and off the court.

As that relates to basketball and wins, we prepare and work hard to win. Each game is as important as the next, and the one before.

What will you miss most from your time at Montverde, and what will you take away from the experience?

What I will miss most will be all the kids in the entire school – lower, middle, and upper school level. Definitely the kids! The diversity of the cultures there is incredible and offers the opportunity to make a global impact.

There is a great deal to take away from the experience there. The accomplishments all came as a byproduct of opportunity, preparation, and the consistency of doing the right thing over time. I am proud that my words and my actions were in line, stemming for my cornerstone pillars of character and integrity.

My biggest accomplishments are my “living trophies”, which are the lives impacted.

Many know Kevin Sutton as the coach, while others as the person. Regardless he is widely respected on and off the court for his knowledge of the game, compassion for his players, and his determination to prepare them to succeed.

I am fortunate to know Kevin Sutton, not only as the coach and the person, but also to be able to consider him a close friend. And for that, I am blessed.

USA Basketball Nike Hoop Summit

USA vs the World! Ten of the best seniors played against some extremely talented players from around the world. This was not another all-star game, it was an EVENT! From the first meeting until the final buzzer sounded, the game was a huge success. Everything was run in a first class manner. The players really came to this event with the proper mindset. They wanted to represent the USA and win this game. Just as important, they wanted to put the final period at the end of the sentence of their high school careers.

Eight of the ten members of this team had represented and won wearing a USA Basketball Jersey before. They know how special that feels and what special company they are a part of now. The focus of the team was evident from the very first drill in the very first practice. Their ability to focus while there were 100 's of spectators, media and NBA Scouts in attendance was amazing. Proving once again, that the team was Special.

One of the more important items of business that the team did was an outreach clinic for the young men of St. Mary's Boys School. This event was held right before our third practice. The students watched practice and then they were allowed to meet the team. The impact that the USA team had on the kids was so important. Impacting lives through the game of basketball is an important responsibility. One in which these young men did not take lightly. Proving once again, that the team was Special.

Another highlights of the event for me was when we took the team to see the Trailblazers vs the Lakers game. All though the game was exciting, seeing the players waiting after the game to see the NBA players come out. These very talented players were just as excited to see the NBA Players as anyone. Finally, when Kobe came out, he came right over to the team and told them to represent the USA and to beat

the World team. That simple statement was all the team needed. They had heard it from the "best player" in the game.

The USA Basketball NIKE Hoop Summit team did a tremendous job of executing the game plan. The team did well and won the game. Now they will move onto college. It has been said that this particular team might have 8-9 NBA Prospects on the team, and that one of the players could become one of the most decorated players in USA Basketball history. Who knows what the future holds? However the future of USA Basketball is bright!

Also: Check out the article below <http://www.slamonline.com/online/news-rumors/other-news/2011/04/usa-beats-world-select-team-in-nike-hoop-summit/>

March Madness!

March Madness is here! The greatest time of the year as far as I am concerned. There are several reasons why this time of year special to "basketball nuts" like me:

Reason 1: Great competition.

Reason 2: The opportunity to see so many different styles/philosophies.

Reason 3: Great opportunities to learn.

Reason 4: Great coaches and players rising to the challenges on the biggest stage.

Reason 5: The realization of a DREAM!

Reason 6: Enjoy watching the Alumni of my program play.

In this years post season play (ncaa,nit and D2 playoffs), Montverde Academy will have the following:NCAA's(4):

Dashan Harris – Texas A & M

Jamail Jones – Marquette

James Bell – Villanova

Steve Tchengang -Vanderbilt

NiT(2)Marcus Capers -Washinton State

Ugo Okam – HarvardD2 – (1)

Franck Ndongo-Augusta St.

During our Post-Season workouts, I am constantly speaking/teaching/preaching and discussing with my players about not just "watching the game, but seeing the game, hear the game and studying the game". By doing this, it will help them improve their Basketball IQ. A player with a high basketball IQ will help their ability to be recruited. It has become a TALENT!

My final challenge to players today was a simple one: "dream BIG dream at night, but Stay a wake and work to turn those dreams a Reality"!

Team Mental Exercise

Coach Bobby Knight said it best when he said, "Mental is to Physical as 4 is to 1". He further went on to say that you must motivate the mind 4 times as much as you body. I totally agree with Coach Knight. With that in mind, throughout the year I am always challenging/motivating my players 4 times as much mentally than I am physically. This past week I gave to my players the following documents, which were a three part assignment:

* **Part One** – we had them complete a pre-season self evaluation and character assessment then tally their score and rate themselves. We also had them do the same assessment after the season, so that they can hopefully grow and develop.

* **Part Two** – we gave them 15 words that we felt were the most important "one word philosophies" that define our program. Then with the words they had to place them in a 15 block pyramid with the most important words making up the foundation. Then as a team we discussed and comprised our own collective "Pyramid of Success".

* **Part Three** - they had to rate their teammates in 10 basketball related categories. They had to pick the top 5 on the team in each category. The purpose of this exercise was to help define roles and also give them an accurate depiction of how they are perceived by their peers.

Kids rarely focus on the mental aspect of any physical activity that they participate in. It is our job as coaches to make them aware that it is as important to train mentally as it is physically.

Below is the character assessment we use.

Montverde Academy Men's Basketball Team Character Assessment

Read each of the qualities and explanations listed. Rate the degree to which you believe you possess that quality by circling a number from 1 to 10. 1 being the lowest score and 10 being the highest score. At the end of the season, you can mark the survey again, using a different color pen, and see how you've grown.

QUALITY EXPLANATION RANGE

Drive Highly motivated 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Perseverance Sticking to tasks or goals 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Risk Taking Willing to take chances 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Organization Life and school in order 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Confidence Sure of yourself 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Persuasiveness Able to convince others 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Honesty Open, Truthful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Competitiveness Eager to win 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Adaptability Coping with new situations 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Understanding Empathy with others 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Discipline Able to stick to schedule 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Vision Able to think long term 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Players Name: _____ Age: _____ Grade: _____

Date of first self rating: _____ Total Score: _____

Date of second self rating: _____ Total Score: _____

These 15 words represent the building blocks upon which this program is built. Much like the great pyramids through history no one block can stand alone. With strategic placement of these blocks the success of our program is dependent. Embrace them and allow them to become apart of the fabric that is you. For each one of you help to define the success of OUR program.

Exercise: Draw and 15 Block Pyramid and Place the 15 words into the Pyramid where you think they should go to ensure that the Pyramid is most stable/successful.

1. Collective excellence
2. Team Accountability
3. Respect for program and self
4. Unselfishness
5. Maturity
6. Integrity
7. Commitment to Development
8. Poise
9. Honesty
10. Trust
11. Loyalty
12. Responsibility
13. Open lines of communication
14. Success
15. Academic Commitment

And the rating system we use:

Montverde Academy

BASKETBALL

WHO ARE OUR BEST?

Write down 5 names for each category.

- I. Shooters
- II. Passers
- III. Screeners
- IV. Rebounders
- V. Defenders
- VI. Listeners
- VII. Workers
- VIII. Teammates
- IX. Free Throw Shooters
- X. Leaders

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9. Honesty
10. Trust
11. Loyalty

12. Responsibility
13. Open lines of communication
14. Success
15. Academic Commitment

Organization

As most of us begin our official practices this week, organization will be so important. In this blog, I want to share with you my thoughts on what I think about the importance of Organization:

1. Organization I believe allows you to build confidence and confidence allows for you to be more successful.
2. Organization allows for your thoughts to be clear and thus allowing a higher level of productivity.
3. Organization allows for the coach to wear multiple hats, primarily because we do not have the man power to accomplish all of things that we would like to make our programs the best. However, we do have the brain power!
4. Organization is an indicator that careful, though and intelligent planning has taken place.
5. Organization may not win you a game, but a lack of organization sure as heck can lose games for you!

Here just a few ideas that my staff and I use to keep ourselves and our team Organized:

1. The coaches keep a running notebook that consist of: all the handouts, 3 monthly calendar of the season, and weekly and daily calenader.
2. Also in the notebook are the practice schedules, game schedules, travel schedule, transportation schedules, documentation of our players and communication sheet of important numbers: families of players, coaches and administration of the school.
3. The players also keep a **"Basketball Notebook"**. Everything in this notebook relates to basketball. The players are required to have their Basketball Notebooks whenever we meet.
4. I assign an assistant coach to be the Director of Communication. His job is to **cultivate, maintain and grow** all communicative relationships between: 1. The coaching staff, 2. The players, 3. Administration, 4. Parents, 5. The media both locally and internationally, 6. The school community.
5. Checklist for your program (area that you need to teach). **Below is the checklist for my program as an example.**

To quote Steve Lavin of St. John's, " *managing your time and being well organized are very important ingredients to being successful!*"

Montverde Academy Eagle Basketball System Checklist

- I. Introduction:
- II. **Defensive philosophy/system:**
 - a. Terminology
 - b. Defensive goals
 - c. Man to man
 - d. Zone
 - e. Presses – both man and zone

- f. Transition defense
- g. How to defend screens and handoffs

III. **Transition/Early Offensive philosophy/system:**

- a. Terminology
- b. Transition Offensive Goals
- c. Alignments
- d. Name of Actions
- e. Different Actions on Makes and Misses

IV. **Man Offensive philosophy/system:**

- a. Terminology
- b. Man Offensive Goals
- c. Motion
- d. Pattern offense
- e. Quick hitters/shot clock plays
- f. Naming of the actions

V. **Zone Offensive philosophy/system:**

- a. Terminology
- b. Zone Offensive Goals
- c. Motion – Gaps and Gaps motion
- d. Pattern offense
- e. Quick hitters/shot clock plays
- f. Naming of the actions

VI. **Out of Bounds play philosophy/system:**

- a. Terminology
- b. Goals
- c. Naming of the actions
- d. Under

e. Side

VII. Late game situation philosophy/system:

a. Terminology

b. Goals

c. Naming of the actions

d. Use of time outs

e. When and how to foul

VIII. Bench and Sub Philosophy/system:

a. Terminology

b. Goals

c. When a sub comes out of the game.

d. When you are subbed into the game

e. When you are on the bench

f. Timeouts

IX. Roles of Assistant Coaches:

a. Terminology

b. During the practices

c. Before the game

d. During the game

e. After the game

X. Scouting Philosophy/system:

a. Terminology

b. Goals

c. Scouting of opponents

d. Presentation of the Scouting Report to our team

e. Self-Scout

XI. Statistical Philosophy/system:

a. Terminology

- b. Goals
- c. Stats for every game
- d. Divide stats into 8 categories:
 - 1. Team offense
 - 2. Team defense
 - 3. Positional
 - 4. Effort
 - 5. Starters
 - 6. Non-Starters
 - 7. 1st half/2nd half
 - 8. Overall
- e. Stats must be broken down after every 4 games
- f. Cumulative stats must be keep on team and each player

XII. Practice Procedure Philosophy/system:

- a. Terminology
- b. Goals
- c. Gear for coaches
- d. Gear for players
- e. Gear for managers
- f. Routine
- g. Filming practice
- h. Statistical Charts

XIII. Travel Philosophy/system:

- a. Terminology
- b. Dress code for coaches
- c. Dress code for players
- d. Use of Electronics

- e. Buddy system
 - f. Handling of legal Documents
 - g. After the game
- XIV. **Media Philosophy/system:**
- a. Terminology
 - b. How much access?
 - c. Time frame for access
 - d. Seminars for dealing with the media
 - e. Website updates/stories

Visit from Mentor

This past Monday my team, my staff and I a visitor come to our workout. The visitor was one of the greatest basketball minds in the game today. His name is Tates Locke and I am blessed that we have developed a relationship, lasting friendship and he has become a tremendous mentor to me in this coaching profession. Coach Locke is “giver” he gives his time, his energy and his knowledge to any and everyone whom is willing to listen to the many suggests that he shares about the game and about life. My team, my staff and I have not stop talking about Coach Lockes visit on Monday. It was truly an honor to have him here and spend such quality time with all us. He is so very passionate about teaching the game of basketball “the right way”.

The workout was divided into different drill segments:

- I. Agility Warm Up Drills
- II. Dynamic Stretching Drills
- III. Ball Handling/Weak Hand Development Drills
- IV. Attack Scoring Drills – a. Turn the corner layups b. Four chair dribble moves
- V. NBA Moves – a. Kobe b. Jordan c. Billups d. Pierce
- VI. Positional Work a. Post b. Perimeter (Ball Screen Series)
- VII. Post and Perimeter 3 on 3 games

After each one of the sessions, Coach Locke took the time to share his insight about the drills, the players understanding of the drill, their ability to perform of the drill and he also shared how the individual and the team could get better. As a coach, this type feedback was invaluable. Especially from a master teacher like Coach Locke with his keen eye and understanding of the game. Here are some for of the many “nuggets” that Coach Locke shared with us:

- **In high school you learn to play with your hands. In college you learn how to play with your feet and hands. In the NBA you learn how to play with your head, your feet and your hands.**
- **You must learn to practice with imagination.**
- **Learn the importance of your shoulder. Play the game from low to high.**
- **When playing ball screen basketball, 90% of the work must be done by the dribbler not the screener. If the dribbler does his part, the screen will set the proper screen, at the proper angle at the proper time. Which allows for more successful ball screen basketball.**
- **Ball must always be second.**
- **Nash is one the best in the game today at playing the point guard position, because he beats more talent, more athletic and more skilled players at his position with his head, his vision and his work ethic.**
- **How much negative influence will you allow as a coach?**

As you can imagine, the day at Montverde Academy was truly a great day. Coach Locke thank you again for your time, you knowledge and your mentoring.

Post Skill Development

When I teach post skill development I use the following terms to help me teach:

1. Run for scores – trying to get 4 pts on lay ups and dunks.
2. Run on the rim – straight line from rim to rim.
3. Fist fight for position/foot fight to score – must battle to get open and then use proper foot work to score.
4. Own the mid line – area of the paint directly in the middle of the paint.
5. Leverage – low man wins most battles.
6. Legally physical – plays hard as the referees allow.
7. Clean hands – soft hands
8. See the ball into your hands – eyes first/hands second
9. Deep post ups- close to the basket as possible
10. The paint is property – own/lease/rent.

The characteristics that I look for/desire from a good post player and try to develop are:

1. They run the floor on both offense and defense
2. They have good feet
3. They are legally physical
4. They establish and maintain post position
5. They are relentless rebounders
6. They have good hands
7. They defend their position without help
8. They are good free throw shooters
9. They score vs. contact and finish plays
10. They demand special defensive attention.

Everyday during post skill development, I use an outline that will incorporate the following drill format:

1. Catching the ball drills
2. Warm up drills
3. Foot work drills
4. Scoring on the move drills
5. Scoring after you establish post position
6. 1 on 1 games
7. Finishing with Free Throws

The development of the post player requires patience from the coach. They often develop later than their perimeter counterpart.

ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN YOUR TEAM

As basketball season starts to move into high gear, most all of us are starting to develop our teams. By that I mean starting to determine who the leaders are, what your potential make up of your team is going to be, how you would like to play, development of chemistry etc. One thing that is so very important for me in this process is **ACCOUNTABILITY**. **ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN YOUR TEAM** is a paramount! Everyone being held to the Standards and Expectations for which your program/team has develop to help them become the most successful.

This week I gave my players a handout for their basketball notebook. The article was from Kevin Eastman - assistant coach of the Boston Celtics. The topic of the article was Personal Accountability. I am always interested in knowing and listening to what my players think about the handouts. So in this blog, I want to share with you two short essays from two on my Seniors whom have been apart of my program for 3 and 4 years respectfully. Both DeForest Carter and Steve Mondu-Missi are quality examples of what my program is about. They both are Honor Roll Students, Tremendous men of Character and Outstanding basketball players. Both are being recruited by outstanding schools: Carter – Florida Tech, Embry- Riddle and Tampa. Steve – Harvard, Brown, Princeton and Iowa.

Personal Accountability by DeForest Carter

Personal Accountability is having the self-awareness of one's actions. He knows that whatever he does, he is accountable for it. He knows that there is a consequence for any wrong that happens. So, he has the ability to take it upon himself to be held accountable, but he also holds his team accountable for their actions. To have the strength and will to hold yourself and your accountable is a wonderful thing. Now you have a team of players who are held accountable for their actions by everyone else on the team. They also make sure that some of the coaches are even held accountable. The whole team now understands that it is up to them to push each other to achieve greatness.

Personal Accountability by Steve Mondu- Missi

Personal Accountability is a quality that only a few players have on a team. Those players take care of themselves. They do their job and help the team the best they can. The players who hold themselves accountable do not make excuses, they always do what they have to do and even more. In fact, they push the other players to do the same thing. They are conscious of the important role they play on the team and take it seriously. They always try to find a concrete solution to the problems of the team. Indeed, they analyze things quickly and come up with a solution right away. They make things happen, they are active members of the team. The accountability starts with them and is filtered throughout the team. Always focusing their collective efforts toward the teams' success.

ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN YOUR TEAM, is achieved through daily reinforcement, redirecting, educating and communicating of the standards and expectations of the team!

How did you build successful basketball programs

As I enter into my 8th year at Montverde Academy, I am often asked two very interesting questions?

1. Why would you leave a "basketball hot bed" like the Washington DC area, one of the best conferences (Washington Catholic Athletic Conference) to come to a "football state" like Florida?
2. How did you build your basketball program into one of the top programs in the country in only 7 years? Interestingly enough I followed the same format with all three programs that I built: Montrose Christian – 1999, Bishop McNamara – 2001-2003 and now Montverde Academy – 2003 to the present. In this blog I will describe the process I used in the terms of Phases.

Phase One: Crawl before you walk:

In this phase, it is very important that you do INTROSPECTION. Look inside yourself and at yourself. Here is the list of things that I did to help me successfully build all three of my programs:

1. I had to define myself as a coach. My principals, my beliefs and my expectations. What I would and would not compromise.
2. I had to define what Success was to me. "I feel that success is the byproduct of doing right things, making good choices and decisions consistently over time".
3. I asked myself, how important is longevity? Did I want my program to be a "flash in the pan" or a program that was good "year in and year out".
4. What are the criteria I look for in a prospective student-athletes?
 - a. They must be serious about THEIR academics. They have to want to be educated.
 - b. They must be young men of Character and not boys who are characters

- c. They must be passionate about the game of basketball
- d. They must be a good teammate
- e. They must be coachable

Phase Two: Walk before you run:

After my initial Introspection, I started to develop my plan of action to help me fulfill my dream of building my programs:

1. I developed my Mission Statement. A statement that says who we are and what we stand for.
2. I developed my Vision Statement. A statement that says where we are going and how we are going to get there.
3. I developed by Mantra (tag line if you will) for my program: Luke 12:48 – To whom much is given, much is expected.
4. I developed my three year plan for success. This plan became my road map to which I follow. This gave me tangible things that were important and essential to us becoming a successful basketball program.

Phase Three: Run before fly:

This phase is so important. Everything that you do in this phase is a direct reflection of your ability as a leader/mentor and coach. During this phase your every move will be under scrutiny by the administration, by the parents, by the players, your fellow educators and your opponents. This is the phase where you must do the following:

1. Select your staff
2. Make hard decisions
3. Carry yourself with professionalism
4. Internally and externally within your school community you must develop and maintain relationships
5. Become the salesman of the program. Create “buy in” and excitement.
6. Change the “culture/mentality”
7. Start to develop your talent
8. Start to develop your talent pool, feeder program(s) varsity jv. freshman, middle school
9. Start to develop your philosophies/identity as they pertain to the teaching and running of your system(ex. transition game, man and zone offenses etc)
10. Start to put things in place that forces others to take notice of what you doing.(ex community service.

Phase Four: Fly before you are able to SOAR!!!!

In this phase perceptions/opinions and labels will start to be thrown around about you as the head coach, your staff, your players and your program. You will have successfully navigated your way through the first three phases. The following terms will be helpful to set you apart as a head coach from the masses:

1. accountability
2. responsibility
3. flexibility
4. teacher
5. communicator
6. visibility
7. tough minded
8. fair
9. caring
10. trust worthy
11. knowledgeable
12. winner....

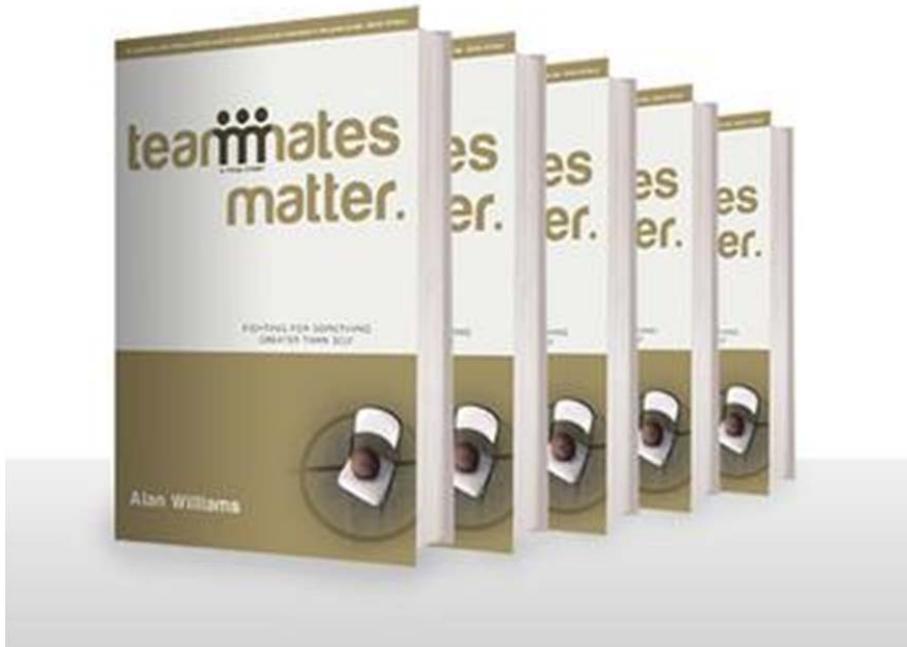
..... with consistency and time your program will become SUCCESSFUL!

“First come thought; then organization of that thought into ideas and plans;

Then transformation of these plans into reality. The beginning, as you observe, is in your imagination” – Napoleon Hill author of Think and Grow Rich

What steps do you take to build a successful program?

Teammates Matter



I have just finished reading a great book called Teammates Matter by Alan Williams. As an avid reader, I am quite fond of this book. However, this is not just a book in my opinion, it is a message that needs to be preached and taught to our coaching staff and players.

That is exactly what I have done. My staff is currently reading the book and my team will start to read the book soon. Reading the book is not enough, I am requiring everyone (Staff and Players) to write two essays: 1. What is the message of the book? 2. What did I learn about myself from the book? I am so excited about this book and what it is going to bring to our team.

I asked my staff to come up with 5 of the best quotes from the book showing what a true teammate is. Here are the 5 quotes:

“Teamwork is the ability to have different thoughts about things; it’s the ability to argue stand up and say loud and strong what you feel. But in the end, it’s also about the ability to adjust to what is the best for the team”. – Tom Landry - Former Dallas Cowboy Coach

“If you want to know what the head coach is all about, don’t ask the star of the team.... ask the guy that sits at the end of the bench who doesn’t get to play. He will tell you what he’s really like”. – Tom Konchalski – Founder of HSBI (one of the finest people I know).

” The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy” – Dr. Martin Luther King

“The Glory of sports is witnessing a team perform as a single unit striving for a common goal and ultimately bringing distinction to the jerseys the players represent.” – Dick Vitale

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less” – C.S. Lewis

Alan Williams has set the bar high with his book TEAMMATES MATTER. Now it is our job as coaches to continue to impact the lives of our players. Teaching them how to be **” a good teammate”**. One of the greatest gifts we can give to our players. The total commitment of oneself to something bigger than oneself is the beginning of being a teammate who matters. **“Our job as coaches is to love you. Your job as players is to love each other” – Joe Ehrmann.**

Teammates Matter because they.....

Reflect the coach that cares.

Model the expected behavior.

Hold each other accountable.

Understand that the **collective goals of the team** are more important than individual goals.

The International Game



I really hope that all of you are glued to your televisions to watch the FIBA World Championships in Turkey for our USA Basketball Senior National Team. Actually, I will challenge you to watch every game you can. What you will find is what I found by being an assistant coach/director of scouting the last two summers for USA Basketball World Champions u16 and u17 teams. **The International Game!!!**

Our USA Basketball Senior National Team is giving the world some truly great basketball. What could be better? It has:

Great individual talent playing TEAM basketball

Excellent Coaching

The Globalization of basketball

Incredible atmosphere

Players representing their countries

A DIFFERENT BRAND OF BASKETBALL

In this blog post, I want to share with you my thoughts and observations that I learned while scouting and coaching against international competitors.

- **Faster game**
- **More possessions** because of the 24 second shot clock
- **Most all plays start as misdirection's**, because with 10 seconds on the shot clock they are going to run late shot clock play. Which involves the proper players they want. This also enables the other players to know when and where to best rebound the shot.
- **The international players penetrate for others and not for self.** They look to drive and kick out vs drive and finish at the rim.
- **Spacing** is outstanding on offense. Players maintain floor balance well. They are always looking to be 12' -15' feet apart. They are always moving in the line of vision of the passer to designed spots.
- **Paint touches:** either with pass penetration (post feeds) or dribble penetration, both are VERY IMPORTANT.
- **Fouls Drawn** is an actual statistic that is kept. To me this was an interesting stat/concept. Especially when your player who draws the most fouls is a good free throw shooter. This puts a lot of pressure on the defense. For our U17 team, this guy was Micheal Gilchrist. He was very tough to guard/defend.
- **The game is actually played in 5 minutes intervals.** The score is kept in 5 minute increments. This too was an interesting stat. As the quarter is 10 minutes long, the coaches had tangible information to share with their team. The game is played in runs, so it was important to gain control of the game as early as you can.
- **Transition Defense is poor.** They do not like to get back on defense. They will often jam the rebounder. They will take a foul to stop transition offense.
- **Depth and quality of depth** is so important. Bench productivity is where often the control of the game is determined.
- **Rebounding, especially offensively** is another huge part. Consistent/relentless offensive rebounding puts a tremendous amount of pressure on the defense. Offensive rebounding is yet another area where control of the game can and does happen.

Now, I would like to site three areas of the game that will help me illustrate to you the difference in the International game:

TRAPEZOID LANE:

- Post players must improve their post position with the use of the dribble
- If there is no help defender then the post will play one on one
- If there is a help defender then the post will kick out to a spot up shooter and/or cutter
- Post players run for layups. They post up on the block to shoot short jumpers, dribble drop step or face up game for their post moves.

8 SECONDS TO GET THE BALL ACROSS HALF COURT:

- Not a lot of time to make several passes in the back court
- Requires “deep” outlets on both makes and misses
- Requires pt. guards to call play earlier
- Most teams initiate their offense as the ball cross half court

3 POINT LINE:

- Is closer than NBA Line
- Is further back than High School and Colleges
- Allows for there to be an actual “mid range” game
- The line serves as a frame of reference for spacing

Another area (in my opinion) that makes the international game interesting is that the rules of the game are applied at all levels. This allows the players to learn to understand the game at an earlier age and it enables for more consistency in teaching. For example, most high school players do not play with a shot clock until they get to college. Then they learn how to play with it. Also, the Three point line is different in college and in the pros. Lastly, the International game is a combination of the College game and the NBA Game. It has the atmosphere of a college game with the rules and strategies of an NBA Game.

What do you think about international games? Do you watch any?

TALKING VS COMMUNICATING

All coaches in all sports at all levels want, demand, and preach to their players to talk. We (coaches) all know how important it is in so many areas of our respective sports.

First and foremost there is a big difference between **talking and communicating!**

In my opinion talking is defined as: the giving of information without the need of a response. Where communication is defined as: the verbal and nonverbal exchange of information that requires a response.

So as you can see, it is better to have **COMMUNICATION over just talking.**

Here at Montverde Academy, we are International School with over 40 different countries represented. Within my basketball program in any given year I can have 10 different countries represented. While we embrace our diversity, it can become problematic and difficult if we do not learn how to **COMMUNICATE!**

As I enter my 8th year, I remember back to third year when my staff and I first came up with the definition of **COMMUNICATION**. We defined **communication** in three parts: **information given, received and understood**. This came as a by product of our team running drills unsuccessfully because they were just talking (often in their native language) and not effectively communicating. They could not understand one another.

Thus, the staff had to stop the drill to point out to the players the reason for them not being successful. **Effective communication** leads to **SUCCESS**, and in order to achieve this:

1. You must have a common language

2. You must have a clear understanding of what is being communicated

3. You must acknowledge that you understand what has been communicated to you. (**Information given, received and understood**).

Here are a couple of concepts that I use at Montverde Academy to help our players to become better communicators:

- In all passing and catching drills – they must call teammates name.
- When a command is given – they must “echo” (repeat)
- Early on we will play the old kid game of “telephone”, where you give information at the beginning of the line and it must be passed down the line. We use this game as an illustration of **“effective communication vs ineffective communication”**. **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STARTS WITH ACTIVE LISTENING!**
- Teammates must give positive affirmations to each other during practice. Either verbal, “great job”, “keep working”, “don’t quit” or nonverbal – high fives, hug, finger point, pound(knuckle touch). Never let a teammate pass you without acknowledging their effort.
- Must make eye contact with the speaker.
- When introducing themselves they must: say their first and last name, what country &/or state they are from, and what grade they are in at Montverde Academy.
- At the end of practice we do **“CIRCLE OF COMMUNICATION”**. I adopted this from Don Showalter (head coach of the World Champion USA Basketball U16 & U17 Developmental National Team). All players gather in circle and then I pick a topic for the players to communicate with each other. For example, pick a player to your right and let them know what they did well in practice today. They must say the teammates name. This exercise has been tremendously helpful in the development of our players ability to:

1. Communicate
2. to be secure vs. insecure in giving and receiving a compliment.
3. Help grow a teammates self-esteem.

Remember talking will help you win games. COMMUNICATING WILL HELP YOU WIN CHAMPIONSHIPS!

Leadership and Followership

My father was my first coach and he would tell me quotes and saying all the time to help teach me. One of his best quotes on leadership was, “A good leader can step on a person shoes without messing up their shine”. That quote has always meant, that a leader knows how to motivate and get their teammates to perform, without demeaning their self-esteem.

Leadership and Followership go hand in hand. They are interdependent. In order to have great leaders you must have great followers.

Leadership as we all know comes in many forms: Vocal, lead by example and I would like to add “combo leader”. The “combo leader” is the person whom is both vocal and leads by example. I believe that all successful teams and business have these 3 type of leaders which makes them successful.

I also believe in instilling in my players that leadership is an “ALL TIME thing”. Not a “some time” thing. For example: I will lead tomorrow, or I will lead on the court.

A true leader is a leader all the time and everywhere, unless it is their time to” follow” when the roles have clearly changed and have been articulated. In which case they now must become a “follower”.

A leader must realize and accept that BEING RESPECTED is more important than being liked or popular. This is not easy!

How are LEADERSHIP and FOLLOWSHIP developed?

1. Rotating your leaders throughout different activities (weights, stretching, drills etc). The coach gives all of their instructions/expectations are given through our leaders of those activities. The success and/or failure will be determined by the leaders performance and his ability to motivate his teammates.
2. Challenge your student/athletes to join clubs and take leadership positions in the clubs and school. Ex, student government, Kiwanis.
3. When we travel we have “room captains”. It is the job of the room captain to make sure everyone is his room is: on time, keeps the room clean, makes curfew, is properly dressed etc. At the end of the trip the coaches decide who has the best room. A handsome prize is given to the winning team.
4. Everyone is given the opportunity to lead and to follow. This allows the staff the ability to select the best leaders for our team.

During my coaching career, over 15 alumni have gone on to become CAPTAINS of their college teams.

Remember, don't take LEADERSHIP and FOLLOWSHIP for granted! Preach it, teach it, model it and develop it!

If you are a player, does getting leadership roles make you work harder? As a coach, how do you help your players learn the importance of Leadership and Followship?

Creating “Buy In” Within Your Team

As a coach we are always looking to find out different techniques/ideas that people use to create “**buy in**” within their team. First and foremost, creating “**buy in**” is not easy. It is ,however, so very important to the success of your team.

Here are a couple of my thoughts:

- Definition of “**buy in**”: The surrendering of yourself for the greater good of the teams'/organizations' success.

-It has to be preached from the top/down and the behavior has to be modeled from top/down (head coach/boss).

- “**Buy in**” occurs most often and is most successfully implemented when the teams best player/leader or hardest worker buys in first.

- I have learned during my coaching career that “**buy in**” must be communicated in many forms, from motivational handouts to public praise when desired behavior is performed. Written words such as text messages or notes works as well. Also, it is important that the communication must occur often when appropriate.

- “**Buy in**” has to be non-negotiable! My dad told me, “you either buy in or you get bought out”!

- “**Buy in**” occurs when a coach/boss allows the team/organization to create a culture where the players are apart of the process/formulation of what you want the team to “**buy in**” too. (expectations/standards)

- Finally, “**buy in**” is more than cute quotes (big we, little me, etc). “**Buy in**” is a mentality, it is a belief; it is the core and fabric that allows great things to happen collectively.

What methods have you used to create “**buy in**”?