

Coach Jim's Helpful Hints for Players

I threw the following stuff together based on my experiences as a coach from 1981 to 2005. We have world class coaches in Delaware who run camps and clinics and who do such a fantastic job at teaching the game of basketball. Better than I could ever do. In attending these workouts, clinics and camps, it made me question my own abilities as a coach. After pondering the matter a good deal, I thought, "What, if anything, could I offer the girl players of Delaware that may not be gone over or discussed at these camps?" And what I came up with were the things that I, perhaps, excel at. The things around the periphery of the game. Things that are very important, but things that somehow never (or rarely) get talked about at the camps and clinics. So, with that in mind, here are my player tips:

Do Something, Even if It's Wrong

There is no worse crime in basketball than to stand around during the game and do nothing. And this applies, at one time or another, to maybe half the girls playing grade school ball and maybe a quarter of those at the high school level. If you are unsure what play or offensive scheme your team is running, then ask yourself, "Where can I be that will best help my team given that I'm not sure what we're running?" It sounds like a dead-end question, but really it's not. A good player always has a Plan B in their head. One idea might be, if on offense, to simply get under the basket and look to box out an opponent. If you're on defense and you have no clue what your team is in, or, if you're in man, you lost your player, then make a bee line to the middle of the key, actively defend anyone who comes into the key while scanning (or asking) your teammates what defense you're in and/or looking for the player you're supposed to be guarding. Basketball is a game of action, not inaction. Better to commit errors of *commission* rather than *omission*.

Attendance

So many kids today have personal schedules so overloaded that they cannot fully or properly commit to any one thing. Lots of grade school players miss practices. Some miss as many as half their team's practices. How can they ever expect a decent role on a team by missing practices? I once had a dad complain to me early in the season why his daughter wasn't starting. I broke out my attendance chart and pointed out to him that his daughter had missed 7 of the team's first 14 practices. Not only was she not prepared to play because of her poor attendance, but how could I in good conscience start her over girls that were there each practice? If you can't make 90% or better of your team's practices, then be happy that

you're on the team at all. If you really love basketball, then consider dropping other things that may be conflicting with your basketball practices.

Communication

Even grade school girls should learn and practice the responsibility of directly communicating with their coach instead of having their parents do it. If a girl has an issue with her role on the team, the coach will be a lot more impressed (and receptive) if he hears it from the player herself rather than her dad. Similarly, if a player has to miss games or practices, *she* should call the coach – not her parents. A girl should use her parents as her “right of appeal” if she has gone to her coach about an issue but had it resolve unsatisfactorily for her. Nine times out of ten, coaches will be disposed to work with the player on some plan to address her concern(s) if brought to the coach directly by the player. Also, never be afraid to ask questions. People tend to learn more through answers to their questions than from generic lectures and presentations.

Little Things Mean a Lot

Good coaches have their radar going all the time. They'll notice who the last girl off the court at the end of practice is, just as they'll notice who the first girl to take the court at the start of practice is. If it's the same girl, chances are that girl will start and maybe even be team captain!

If you're on the bench and you want to get in the game, try sitting *nearest* to the coaches instead of furthest away. When a coach suddenly needs a sub, he's not going to spend a lot of time on the decision. And often, he'll pick the first face he sees. Make that face be yours.

If you love playing point, but your new coach is using you as a post player, then make it your business to learn everything you can about playing post. You might not be very happy with your change of position, but chances are you're not the only girl on the team who isn't playing her favorite position. *Be flexible*. If you think to yourself, “Maybe if I do poorly at post, the coach will put me back at point”, you most likely will have that strategy backfire on you. Chances are he's decided on someone else at point and he needs you at post. If you do poorly, you'll probably end up on the bench. Show him you're a team player.

So, there you have it! My little contribution to helping players out. (Feel free to print these out!)

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