

Coaches Corner 4:

Goal settings (for the outclassed)

What do you do when you have a player that struggles. I mean really struggles, or you have a team that appears so far out of their depth that there is no prospect of ever winning a half let alone a match. The answer in both instances is appropriate goal setting and I will deal with the scenarios separately.

The first thing to do when you have a player that seems to be hopelessly inept, is to remind yourself that in a generation of computer games and childhood obesity it really is a great thing they are getting out and having a go. It is also important to acknowledge in domestic basketball the kids all deserve similar court time (although not necessarily on a match by match basis). Ok so what now? We need to set this type of player very achievable goals. Typically, one when in offence and one when in defence. To build some confidence that will allow them to move forward and tackle the next thing. For example in offence you may say to the player I want you to run to the left hand side block and then cut constantly from the left hand side to the right hand side. By doing this you are giving them a job that they can achieve regardless of their ability to play basketball, meanwhile you hopefully tie up a defender. If they do it well, heap on the praise, if they don't do it bench them and reiterate what they need to do. Never however set the goal as a result outcome based objective. For example if you tell a player they need to make at least one basket all you are doing is setting them up to fail, which further reduces confidence and makes your job harder. Rather you could say if you get the ball inside the key you must take a shot don't worry about the outcome. In this instance the choice to shoot and therefore achieving the goal is up to them rather than up to fate.

Goal setting for teams has the same underlying principle, that is to say they need to be achievable and not based around an outcome they don't have ultimate control over.

With every sporting competition there are always teams at the bottom of the ladder and in many cases the likely outcome is known from very early on. So it becomes crucial to ensure that success is measured in ways other than wins and losses. Again like individuals, teams should have offensive and defensive goals. In defence for example you may say regardless of the score the opposition should not score any points without having a defender within a metre of them. By doing this you are focusing not on the oppositions superior skill but on your teams level of effort and effort is something your players can control. Similarly in offense you may say at least 50% of passes must be made to a moving player.

During the game and at its conclusion reflect heavily upon the positives particularly in relation to the goals you set. Coaches and players can be frustrated when they are constantly losing but it doesn't have to be the case when the team or a player is also constantly improving, where goals are being set and achieved and skills and work ethics are being laid for the games and seasons ahead.

Finally if you are in this position and feel you need help or some ideas about specific goals, then ask.