

## Coaches Corner:

### Using the bench;

Using the bench through the game offers an outstanding opportunity for coaches to teach their players in real time. Yet at a domestic level it is probably the worst utilised resource we have. How many of you when making a sub say well done, grab a drink and pretty much leave it at that.

Ok so how do we get more out of using the bench, firstly throw away things like substitution rosters or preconceived ideas about how you will sub throughout the match. Coaches need the ability to utilise their players as needed at any given point in time be it proactive or reactionary.



When delivering a message establish eye contact and engage them in the conversation, you need to break their focus on the game and have them focus on what you are telling them and unless they are speaking to you, you cannot be sure the message is getting through.

When a player is subbed off have a message for them based on something they have just done and it can be either positive or constructive, and regardless of which, you should look to begin and finish with a positive statement. For example

'Steve, that was terrific that when we got the rebound you took off hard and called for the ball, that sort of hard running will create a lot of opportunities for quick goals for us. But mate you know when you're dribbling the ball down the left hand side of the court you need to use your left hand. So keep that hard running going and have faith in your skills, you do it at training so time to bring it into the game.'

In an instance like this it is important to then get that player back onto the court quickly. The last thing we want are players seeing the bench as a punishment, better to deliver the message and get them straight back out there. If however the same issue continues then continue to sub the player off and reinforce the message each time.

Do not be afraid to make constant substitutions throughout the game, as well as having the benefit of being able to deliver more messages to players it keeps the players fresher and stops others 'going cold' on the bench. It also has the benefit of making it far tougher for parents to 'time track' how many minutes their kids are getting.

Time outs, be they yours or the oppositions it is important to have something to say, let the kids get a drink whilst you collect your thoughts and then demand their focus. At the domestic level keep the messages fairly simple and look for positives. If you are wanting to give team directives limit it to one offensive and one defensive, too much information and nothing will sink in. Never be critical of a single player at a time out, it can very easily fracture a team and be very embarrassing for the player concerned.

Finally game time, It is of course very tempting to give out best players a lot more court time than our weaker ones, but we need to remind ourselves this is domestic basketball and everyone pays the same fees and is entitled to similar court time. However that doesn't have to be the same in every single match! So when your team is well in front or well behind then use these opportunities to maximise the court time of your weakest players. What you will be doing is banking court time for your better players in future matches when their presence may mean the difference between a win and a loss.