

The Basketball Coach's 3 Most Costly Mistakes

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A player is not the only one that makes mistakes. Coaches make many mistakes every day, even though most of them are not noticed. A costly mistake by a coach can be the difference between winning and losing. It also can lead to an underachieving, dysfunctional team. The three most costly mistakes of coaches are highlighted in this article.

Coaching basketball these days at any level is a very difficult job. Many books are written about successful qualities of excellent coaches and leaders. Most coaches will not take a deep look into their own coaching ability to discover their weaknesses. If you are serious about your coaching ability, take an objective look at the factors that keep you from reaching your potential.

1. Coaching without Clarity--This is by far the biggest mistake made by coaches in basketball. This flavor-of-the-day approach has no base and leads to failure. The ultimate test of coaching clarity is defined by your ability to answer this question;

- What are your three areas of concentration in coaching?
- If your practice was observed for 30 minutes, would your Top 3 be easily identified?
- Why is this such an important part of coaching? Having a Top 3 given your coaching and your program the direction and clarity it needs. If your drills, terminology, practice, and daily focus are tied directly to your Top 3, your players will execute at a high level and time will be greatly maximized. If your coaching or your program are without a Top 3, you are like a ship in the ocean without a map, compass or rudder. You will try hard every day, but you will not consistently travel the path to success. The Top 3 is the key to successful basketball coaching, consistent winning, and program development.

2. Priority Imbalance--- I have yet to meet a coach that said his family, parents, or significant other was not his Number 1 priority in life. This commitment is repeated so much we all begin to believe it after a while! This is "coaching blindness" at its best. I call it the "Coaches Biggest Lie". Coaches confuse provision with priority. The paycheck that arrives home each month is important for all of us. This check, though, in no way means that by supporting our loved ones financially we have given them top priority in our life. We say they are important but rarely find the kind of quality time and communication needed, especially during the season. To illustrate this point, it is said

that time is the true test of our priorities. The things we spend most time on we value the most. It is a cut and dry proposition.

- Do you spend more time at work or with basketball than your family?
- Do you carry your job home with you and pretend to be present when your mind is elsewhere?
- Do you work as hard satisfying your wife's needs as you do preparing for practice or games?
- What do you do with your free time; spend it on selfish pursuits or with family or friends?
- How many hours a week do you watch television as compared to quality time with your family?
- Do you know the name of your children's teachers at school better than your next opponent?
- Do you feel that you have to watch tape at home at night?
- How often do you tell your loved ones why they are your loved ones?

3. Paralysis by Analysis--- Coaches are famous for analyzing the game to the point of exhaustion. Many times we are the only ones who truly understand what is being taught. The philosophy, "Keep it Simple Stupid" gets massive lip service from coaches. This is a tough battle for most coaches, including myself. Our insecurity often leads to a catalog of drills, offenses and defenses that stagger the mind of young players. We stuff file cabinets with thousands of keys, teaching points, and magic late game plays. The knowledge well gets bigger and deeper by the year. At this point it is very important to ask a question: What is the goal of coaching?

I believe the answer to this question is execution. Coaching is the task of getting your players to play the game and execute the way you want them to. At its purest level, getting players to execute what you have taught and drilled them is the key. Some have said that execution is doing what you are suppose to do, when to do it, and with the greatest effort. If all of this is valid, simplicity is the only way to success.

The Simplicity Test for players

- Do your players know your Top 3 as a coach?
- Do your players know exactly what they must do to get on the floor?
- Do your players know exactly what they must do to stay on the floor?

To do justice to your own coaching, ask your players these three

questions? The answers will provide a map for the future of your coaching. Are you a confusing coach to play for? If so, humble yourself and step back for a while. Carefully analyze your coaching approach and philosophy and get the opinion of assistants, administrators, and players. What seems like weakness can actually be the strength of your coaching! Congratulations to all coaches that take on this challenge. Please share your results with me and make next season your best one ever!

Most important thing you can do: BUILD and PROTECT your REPUTATION. Don't let competition bring out the worst in