

## **How to Run a Basketball Practice....or a Business Meeting**

In the 70's I was a young man in my twenties not yet sure what I really wanted to do with my life. I had begun the decade in college on a basketball scholarship and loved the game. I became deeply immersed in what I saw as the science of basketball. I studied what was then an evolving theory associated with human kinetics. I focused on successful coaches in the professional game dominated by the Boston Celtics at the time. Most importantly I discovered the true genius of winning leadership demonstrated by John Wooden.

Coach Wooden, like many others who thought they could coach the game, understood the importance of strategy, tactics, game coaching and recruiting. Unlike others however, he paired that knowledge with a deep understanding of psychology, disciplined principles, and the realization that everything good that would be demonstrated on the basketball floor during a game was the result of "everything" he did in practice! This knowledge, lost on many coaching hacks who muddled their way through mediocrity, was not only a core concept of winning on a basketball floor but a core concept of winning in business.

As it was, I got into the business world and never could afford to return to coaching basketball. The lessons I learned about winning in basketball became key principles which I applied to my business career. Now nearing the end of my executive career, I am often asked to speak about leadership principles so I thought I would share excerpts from a 1973 Coach Wooden basketball bulletin I have long possessed. If you are a coach in any sport you should know these simple rules are a part of a winning system. If you are a leader in any endeavor or want to be, replace the word practice with meeting or seminar. Replace the word coach with leader. You may be surprised to learn the difference between what you do, and how to win at what you do.

### **The Daily Practice**

*Success or failure of coaches will be in direct proportion to their ability to devise practice drills to meet the needs of the organization, and then properly coordinate them into a daily practice plan. Knowledge is wasted unless it can be successfully taught.*

*Each practice must be carefully planned and organized to prevent a waste of time. There must be a specific purpose for every drill AND every drill must be placed in the most advantageous time during a practice period. A drill used at an improper time is about as useless as a drill that has no concrete purpose at all.*

*The daily practice should never be planned in a hurry, but at a time when the coach can consider all relevant factors and then develop a program for the day. Both the past and future should be taken into consideration as well as personnel, physical condition, morale, facilities and other related elements. A record of past practice sessions, and notes related to the effectiveness of each drill, should be kept for reference when planning future practices. The coach must be aware of the following:*

- 1. Once practice starts the plan must be followed. If not enough time was allowed for a drill, it must not be continued past the designated time. Neither eliminating something else or running over time is advisable.*
- 2. Start each practice with warm up drills devised to loosen players up. They should be progressive in intensity.*
- 3. Drills must be varied from day to day to prevent monotony, though some may be used every day. This is true of warm up drills as well as others.*
- 4. The purpose of every drill should be explained before it is used the first time.*
- 5. The same drill should not be continued too long. More drills with the same purpose is advised.*
- 6. Physically different drills should be followed by more pleasurable drills, and vice-versa.*
- 7. Drills should be as competitive as possible and simulate game conditions.*
- 8. New drills should be presented early in practice before players have become too tired and their learning process has slowed down.*
- 9. Players should be conditioned for game competition and drills should be divided for that purpose.*
- 10. Individual fundamental drills should take up at least 50% of each practice, and a much higher percentage of time early in the season.*
- 11. Analyze each practice while it is still fresh in your mind, and make notes.*
- 12. Combine fundamentals in many drills even though emphasis may be on one. Do not permit a player to develop a bad habit in one fundamental just because your emphasis is on another.*
- 13. Use small organized groups to teach fundamentals. You must remember and accordingly understand that each player does not need the same amount of time on each fundamental.*
- 14. Offense and defense should be emphasized on alternate days.*
- 15. Close each practice with drills that leave the players and coaches in a pleasant, optimistic frame of mind.*

Those coaches and business leaders who wander into practices or meetings with 5 minutes of random preparation demonstrate exactly the opposite of what they want their players or employees to demonstrate in competition. They waste time and teach behavior by example which should never be replicated. On the other hand, those who follow the basic Wooden principles, and understand their game or industry, have a chance of winning and more importantly teaching others how to win.