

## **MY VIEW and THOUGHTS on PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

For me PLAYER DEVELOPMENT is part of basketball training and a process of making players better, more skilled and smarter to make better decisions, and making players mentally tough.

In this article for **Sport Coach** I will break down some basic concepts and approaches to the process, I found very beneficial and effective.

For me PLAYER DEVELOPMENT is workout based on individual approach but is not necessary individual practice. Number of players at the workout could be from 1 to 6 (even 8), depends on the goal of the practice.

Most of the time in player development practice we spend to develop offensive skills but it is necessary to focus also on defensive skills.

I divide process into GUARD's, FORWARD's and CENTER's development but we can combine multiple positions in single workout.

Before we start with PLAYER DEVELOPMENT we must make analysis and set goals. Then we build a plan ( time, place, goals, methodology...) and monitor the process, analyze all the time and adjust and reset things if necessary.

It is absolutely »MUST« to collaborate with head coach, sport's director, strength&conditioning coach and physiotherapist.

I divide PLAYER DEVELOPMENT in three basic groups:

- Youth players from 12 – 16 years old
- Young players from 17 – 22 years old, which are the most important group, since these are the age where players build their status and make foundation for their careers
- Older professional players (23+ years old) which still need to develop and get better, adding technical and tactical things to their game

Another question is WHEN we do PLAYER DEVELOPMENT. Most of the time we do it in OFF – SEASON but for young players we must find the time to develop also during the regular season / competition period. We must sacrifice some time, especially in morning workouts, but also in team practices (team player development drills during warm up) where we can develop some skills and interaction between players.

### **4 segments of player development:**

- **Basketball skills**
- **Decision making**
- **Video analysis**
- **Mental development**

Development of basketball skills is foundation and basic to move on to decision making. Better skills we have, the easier and more effective decision making will be.

**Word or two on decision making and building basketball IQ.** We must give players options, offering them solutions to »solve« problems. We must teach them WHERE, WHEN and HOW to attack to be successful.

In general coaches use three different methodology to develop decision making:

- Drills without defense, but using players imagination
- Drills with »dummy« defense and guided defense
- »Live« game situations from 1:1 to 4:4

My humble opinion (and way I develop) is that drills with »dummy« defense (using players or coaches as »passive« defenders) and guided defenses (showing players vocal and hand signs) are not beneficial. I don't believe in such methodology and don't believe that you can make a progress and develop basketball IQ with such drills for simple reason: watching coach showing you signs and

vocal instruction (and players must react) is something not even close to things that happen in real game.

On contrary using imagination and anticipation in 1:0 – 4:0 drills is closer to real game situations. Nevertheless I am big believer on working 1:1 to 4:4 with »live« and aggressive defense while developing basketball IQ and decision making. Learning through mistakes is the best way to grow and once players recognize proper solutions / decisions against »live« defense, the basketball IQ grows. Let players make mistakes, let players create, let players find what is right and what is wrong. Your job as a coach is to give players options, to guide them through problems but players must face problems and issues, and see by themselves how it looks when something is right versus wrong.

**Another segment of PLAYER DEVELOPMENT is video analysis.** Players must see their situations and situations of some high level players. There is very simple reason for that: players don't believe when you tell them what they did wrong, but once you show them, they don't have excuses anymore. Players admit mistake and grow when they see video, other than that they have alibis and excuses. And watching video is also big part of developing players' imagination.

**The last but not least – even if we are successful in all three previous segments, we won't be successful if we won't develop mental toughness, especially with younger players.**

There are not many players so mentally tough and ready to play on senior professional level as Luka Dončić, Ricky Rubio, etc. With most of the players we must talk about problems and encourage them, teach them about rules of life and preparing them to live in the world of »hyenas«.

We must teach them that MENTAL TOUGHNESS separates!

Teach them how to become a professional, have healthy life, eat healthy food, taking care of body and importance of hard work and discipline.

We must work towards goals and have vision for the future.

We must teach them how to deal with problems and to have responsibility, to focus on important things that can be controlled..

But three most important things in PLAYER DEVELOPMENT (and also in life in general) are:

- To have NEVER GIVE UP MENTALITY
- To have NO FEAR OF FAILURE and
- KEEP PLAYERS out of COMFORT ZONE.

This is only my view on the player development process and things that I learned in years of working with players and watching them grow.

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