

100 things I've learned from coaching at the college level

By:

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Coaching:

- 1) NEVER-EVER forget who has been a positive influence on you, and helped you get to where you are today...continue to thank them, and then DO THE SAME FOR SOMEONE ELSE!
- 2) BE DETAILED!...with everything!
- 3) "Don't coach for the name on your business card" -Larry Shyatt. Coach for your team, players, and head coach
- 4) Great question to ask yourself everyday; "What does my team need right now?" -Herb Sendek
- 5) Have an edge, even when you win a few in a row
- 6) Treat wins like losses and losses like wins
- 7) It's hard to be a young assistant. You have to earn players respect. Be careful about putting yourself on their level
- 8) Keep practices short 2nd semester. Make them want more, keep them hungry
- 9) One bad apple can spoil the bunch ... chemistry is vital
- 10) It's not a good feeling to have a quiet team; need energy and enthusiasm
- 11) "Never lose a chemistry guy" -Doc Rivers
- 12) Care about the players that aren't playing a lot. It's hard for them to stay motivated late in the year
- 13) Be careful what you tell your head coach; "don't make something out of nothing"
- 14) Keep your players together; they can be mad at the staff, but they have to stay together
- 15) Tell players something positive or good job more than you already do
- 16) "If you wanna win the race, you gotta feed the horses" ... feed them well and get them what they want on the road
- 17) Sometimes it is best to "flush" a game after a bad night and start new the next day. You can't make a habit of it though - maybe 1 a year
- 18) Rebounding wins games. Always have one assistant watching/coaching rebounding.
- 19) If you stat it, chart it, or emphasize it, it will be important to your team (deflections, charges, turnovers)
- 20) Keep scouting reports specific and simple; players don't remember half of it anyway
- 21) Make time to exercise, it keeps you sane
- 22) There are plenty of great coaches out there willing to help you if you just ask
- 23) Most people want to coach college because they want to do the big things (be on TV, recruit on the road, have input on game day) but the ones who are willing to do the little things (sweep the floor, check classes, open the gym late) are the ones who keep a job and move up
- 24) "Entitlement vs. Investment" -Kevin Eastman...be ready when you get the call! Prepare for your next position, you have to be ready to produce
- 25) "Let mad go" -Chuck Daly... it doesn't bother the players as much as you
- 26) It is vital that you double check everything (especially for travel and video)
- 27) Good assistants take care of the minor stuff so the Head Coach does not have to worry about it; (players on time, ankle braces, gear etc.) Allow him to worry about coaching the team and that's it!
- 28) Find at least 20 minutes a day to spend on yourself: personal development, phone calls to friends/family, networking, favorite reading websites
- 29) Don't trust players when you ask them about academics. You will never get the whole truth

- 30) “Thoroughly study the game!” -Kevin Eastman...you will earn players respect by knowing the game and knowing your system ... worst feeling in practice is when a player asks you something and you have to reply, “I don’t know”
- 31) Assistants do a better job when they are involved more. Give them specific responsibilities.
- 32) Let assistants or strength coaches take care of “in-season” weight training. Coaches need to be away from the players, and players need to be away from the coaches.
- 33) It’s better to make friends than enemies, everyone remembers the guys who screwed them over, the guys who don’t return a call, or the guys who won’t help out...TRY TO HELP EVERYONE!
- 34) If you have extra game tickets to give away...GIVE THEM AWAY! People love college athletics and players love fans at their games.
- 35) Find time to read during the season. It’s a great way to find messages/stories/examples to give to your team...it keeps you thinking!
- 36) Appreciate your job and the opportunity you have. Your head coach probably gets over 100 emails a year asking for an opportunity to be on his staff. You are lucky to be called “coach”
- 37) “If you really like something another coach/team does, Steal It!...but give credit” -Tom Izzo. “If you steal something, make sure you can TEACH it” -Hubie Brown

Team:

- 38) Toughness is one of the most underrated characteristics of good teams! You need speed, talent, athleticism, and skill but toughness gets you through the year
- 39) Winning plays show true toughness of your team, and really do WIN GAMES
- 40) Teams that win on the road have a “Tough, Together, and Aggressive Mindset”
- 41) Make sure your best players are your hardest workers, best leaders. The other players follow their example.
- 42) Your team leader doesn’t have to be the most energetic, or outspoken person, but he has to be the most competitive, and constantly leading by his example. Ex: Jason Kidd
- 43) Your two best players have to be “Buy In” guys. Get them to buy in and believe in what you and your program is all about...toughness, togetherness, sharing the basketball, competitiveness. All the other players will follow if they do!
- 44) Your team can only play one game at a time and win one game at a time...especially at the end of the year when standings are close, or in the playoffs/tournaments, only goal is “Win your next game”

Players:

- 45) It’s more important to have your players mind right than their legs on back to back nights
- 46) Players like powerades/waters/granola bars/fruit...try to keep them healthy
- 47) Players want to be pushed, they will take having their butt chewed when you’re telling them how good they can become
- 48) Players are around each other all the time (practice, class, road trips, roommates) they have to like each other and respect each other
- 49) Players love hearing about the “next level”. Study and research what the great players do and have info, articles, examples for them. This helps get your point across.
- 50) Players look at the other team’s stats, standings, and schedules more than you think. *Keep them focused on their standings, their schedule, and their performance ...*“There is not enough time to worry about what you can’t control!”

Recruiting:

- 51) Do not trust anybody...everyone wants players!
- 52) Recruit high character kids...bad kids will be bad kids
- 53) Don't take a player you can't coach, or isn't about what your team is about just because he is more talented than the next guy, you will hate coaching him all year
- 54) Have your assistants use "we" instead of "me" in recruiting
- 55) Know the recruiting rules...if you're not sure about something you better ask!
- 56) Always have kids on the list to recruit in case you get caught in desperation mode when looking for a player. This is when you take a guy that doesn't fit or is a bad player because you were not prepared.
- 57) Don't jump to conclusions on recruits, make sure you have the right evaluation, and take the time to do exactly that...EVALUATE!
- 58) If you recruit junior college players: be prepared to give them TIME to adjust to your level, learn your system, and gain confidence. Don't lose hope...be patient

Shooting:

- 59) Recruit shooters and shot makers...it's hard to win w/guys that can't shoot
- 60) It doesn't matter what you run if you can't shoot
- 61) You can never have enough shooters. Teams are hard to guard when 4 out of 5 guys on the floor can shoot it
- 62) Shooters have to shoot! (Extra shots, extra reps) the great players shoot everyday
- 63) Extra free throws will help player's rhythm/stroke during the season and will save their legs. Great place to get eyes on the basket, and regain focus.
- 64) Have shooting games/competitions before and after practice to help motivate to get extra reps in (Celtic 50, around the world, 7-Up, etc)
- 65) During shooting workouts w/players emphasize WHERE they should be shooting from. Game shots, from game spots, at game speed...especially shots they get in your offense.
- 66) NEVER over coach shooting! Keep it simple! Kevin Eastman only coaches "perfect feet, perfect follow through". Find out what's most important for your shooters and leave it at 1 or 2 things.

Basketball:

- 67) It's hard to make time to work on situations but always keep your last second plays the same and have them rehearsed regularly
- 68) Keep your ballscreen defense simple. Have a game plan, but be ready to adjust
- 69) When you plan to "hedge" ballscreens, bigs want to "hide" behind the screener and then jump out to hedge -- teach "*inside hand to screeners outside hip*". This allows bigs to show chest and not be late on the hedge
- 70) Have a plan for free throw blockouts. Where you put each guy and which side you double with.
- 71) If you play man and zone during games and you're not sure which is best, ask players how they want to guard - it keeps them aggressive, and it puts it on them! They buy into guarding more!
- 72) Penetrate and kick is the best offense in college basketball
- 73) If you are a set play team and do not want to "dummy" every set during practice then emphasize A) Great pace and B) Great Screening
- 74) If your post players aren't great at scoring at the block: "cut and fill" instead of "stand and space" ... keeps the help defenders occupied w/movement

- 75) Do not let players throw back on a 2on 1...most times it ends up as a charge!
- 76) Take 2 to 3 minutes to emphasize a core principal when warming up. We closeout, and stay down on shot fakes before we shoot in post/perimeter EVERYDAY.
- 77) In scouting: players care more about opponents personnel than the actions the team is running. They will remember other player's tendencies because they want to be better than that player! Be detailed about this.
- 78) Practice "bluffing" or "stunting" (quick/fake help) every week in a variety of ways/situations. Players will start to see more opportunities to do this during live action.
- 79) Some of the best UOB actions have multiple options once the ball is thrown in (double screen, single double, etc)
- 80) It's important to drill defensive principles/defensive actions **every day!** "Practice what you emphasize"
- 81) 3 keys to be in every game: transition defense, rebounding, turnovers!
- 82) Work on transition defense everyday...our mindset is: "we run-they don't"
- 83) "Simple plays are great plays"...you don't need a homerun to be successful
- 84) Work on blockout situations: it is the end of the shot clock and bigs have had to help on penetration, who blocks out who? (Situations: scramble mode, switching screens, transition, etc.)
- 85) You have to DRILL "help the helper" all year long. It has to become habit and instinct. Drill it in a variety of ways.
- 86) Teach players every detail for your sets. They need to know exactly what you want, when you want, and where you want! (screening, cuts, passes, operational areas, timing)
- 87) Going for shot fakes will result in points or fouls almost 90% of the time.
- 88) "Shooting Passes" against a zone are a must. Make sure players are throwing passes players can shoot off of, you can't have a poor pass take a guy out of a shot.
- 89) Look for common "themes" in scouting opponents. Use this for team prep. Players understand it better, and will identify the "giveaways" ex: dribble lead to wing: screen under/screen down, a guard sitting at the block: stagger screen action, last 15 seconds of shot clock: random ballscreen
- 90) When guarding motion: tell players to engage in the entire action, not just guarding their man
- 91) Post players need to be "active defenders". Do more than one thing in a possession! ex: hedge ballscreen, recover to man, bluff help on penetration, discourage post entry pass, then box & rebound!
- 92) Rebounding - the more you chase the more you get.
- 93) Post Players can not just watch the shot go up while getting back in transition defense, teach them to box the players running into offensive glass-this is where we give up a lot of offensive rebounds!
- 94) Teach "ready for the next play" - do not let players "stand after passing, SPACE for the "next play". This is harder to guard, and gets players more shots.
- 95) Find common terminology for your entire staff and players to use. Different terms/teaching points can result in confusion.
- 96) Have a counter play or 2nd option for your best play
- 97) Make sure to have a "come from behind" plan. Even if you are not a pressing/trapping team, you have to have something for the last 2 minutes if you are behind.
- 98) Individual workouts: It's a great time to send the same message your head coach tries to send to specific players. Ex: driving the ball more vs. shooting more, shot selection for shooters, finishing w/the weak hand etc.
- 99) Practice and emphasize "game changing plays". Ex: Taking a charge, Offensive rebound kicked out for 3, chasing down a wide open lay-up, offensive rebound at the FT line. FIND momentum changers!!!
- 100) Always look for a new "competitive" drill (keeping track of time or score) late in the season. It helps keep practice fresh and players look forward to it.