

Article of the month

Competition Lessons

By Steve Witty (Executive Director of the Indiana Basketball Coaches Association)

1. The most athletically talented teams are not always the most successful. The teams that work the hardest, play fundamentally well within the team concept more often than not are most successful.
2. Consistently successful programs play the toughest schedules they can. You only get better versus good competition.
3. Spectacular play attracts attention but fundamentally spectacular play, making the extra pass for the better shot, blocking out, following your shot, etc, wins championships. Pay attention to fundamental details. It's the little things that make the big things happen.
4. Wins and losses, which team scores the most points, is not the only way to determine success. If a team gives its best effort and at the end of the game they have fewer points than their opponent, the team with the fewer points didn't lose, they just ran out of time.
5. On successful teams there is no such thing as a MVP. Every one on the team is valuable because they must perform their role to the best of their ability in order for the team to be successful.
6. The practices all week are the classroom. The games on Friday and Saturday night are the tests to see how well the lessons were learned in practice. If you haven't worked it out in practice, don't expect to see it happen in the game.
7. Beware of roller coaster basketball. Roller coaster basketball is when teams play really hard versus the good teams then they compete just well enough to win against the weaker teams. This mentality will never win championships consistently. If a team's goal is to play to their potential and not to the level of their competition, roller coaster basketball is not an issue.
8. With recognition comes responsibility. The more success a team experiences and the more recognition a team receives the bigger target they become. Every opponent will raise their level of play when they meet to compete. The successful team players must accept the responsibility to be mentally prepared to take everyone's best shot, game in and game out.
9. It's an interesting phenomenon. Teams and players seem to learn more from their losses than their wins. Why does it take a loss to learn a lesson? Why does it take a loss to get a team's attention?
10. Beware of games of vengeance. Revenge is a dangerous emotion. When a team loses to a team they know they will face later in the season, a team should never use revenge as motivation. Instead from the first loss to the next game, challenge the team to see which team has improved the most since the last meeting. Successful teams never play to get even; they play to get better.
11. Beware of the big game mentality. When a team is focused on the goal of becoming the best team they can be, every game regardless of the opponent is a big game because it's an opportunity to get better.
12. Beware of the disease of me. Team success leads to individual recognition. Sometimes superstars can get caught up in their own self-importance. Basketball is a team game. Everyone has a role to perform. No superstar including Michael Jordan ever won a championship without his teammates performing their roles to the best of their ability.
13. Beware of becoming a victim of your own success. Sometimes consistently successful teams become satisfied and forget or take for granted all the hard work and sacrifices they had to make to attain that success.
14. In the World of Basketball competition, individual recognition comes about as a result of team success
15. Dealing with adversity or failure in the heat of a competitive battle is always a challenge. Successful team players, when things are not going well, don't complain and don't point fingers; they work just that much harder to find a way to get it done. Successful team players make positives out of negatives and believe that whatever the adversity, that some how, somehow, somebody will make up for it.
16. Truly confident players and teams never feel pressure, they only see challenges.
17. In this competitive world we live in, the quickest way to get things you want is to help everyone else get what they want.