

XIV. Organize your Season's Schedule

Dividing the Game Schedule into Thirds

Once the season's schedule of games begins, we divide the season into thirds.

FIRST THIRD:

The first third of the season is the pre-Christmas schedule 6-8 games. During this stage of the season the coaching staff gets some idea of what the team can or cannot do. Which players perform what roles the best and what player combinations play the best together. During Christmas, the coaching staff meets with the players individually about their strengths and weaknesses and their potential role for the rest of the season.

SECOND THIRD:

After Christmas is when many teams participate in four-way tournaments, holiday tournaments, county tournaments, etc. During this time teams get tournament experience and coaches and players learn what progress they have made towards becoming a championship team in a tournament environment. It is rehearsal time for the state tournament.

LAST THIRD:

In my opinion the last third is the key part of the season. It involves the last 6-8 regular season games. Some coaches and players make a big mistake looking at this time as the dog days of the season. Teams and players who at this point in the season maintain their focus and continue to improve, will be those teams best prepared to play their best basketball at tournament time. At this point of the season, in order to keep the legs fresh, the length of practice should be shortened. A few new drills, set plays, out of bounds plays, etc. may be added. A few new drills and strategies give the players some new things to work on and helps prevent staleness.

After this last third of the season, it's time for the state tournament. The state tournament becomes a whole new season. Once we see the draw and how many games we must play to become state champions that number goes up on the dry erase board in our locker room. For example, if we must play seven games to earn a championship the number 7 goes up. We know as a team our championship challenge is to get on a seven game winning streak. Every time we win a game during the tournament, the number on the board is changed. The seniors take care of this.

Typical In-season Weekly Game Plan

PUTTING A GAME PLAN TOGETHER FOR A TWO-GAME WEEKEND:

Sunday:

- Assistant coaches supply the head coach with all scouting reports and videos. We like to have at least three scouting reports by different coaches on each opponent and a couple of game tapes. We also look at tapes from last year's game.
- Coaching staff develops a game plan and prepares a cumulative scouting report for the players.
- Weekly practice schedule is prepared.
- Assistant coach finalizes stats from the previous week's games.

Monday:

- Assistant Coach updates game goals locker-room goals chart (red for negative, purple for positive).
- Bring closure to previous week's games.
- Discuss positive and negatives from game goals chart.
- Pass out individual and team awards.
- View edited video of previous week's games (15 minutes).
- Purpose of Monday's practice is to work on those areas of the game we performed poorly during the previous week's games.
- Coaching staff: view video of upcoming opponents and plan Tuesday's practice.

Tuesday:

- Hand out two page cumulative scouting report about upcoming Friday opponents.
- Go over report with players. Discuss game plan and match-ups.
- Drills emphasized in Tuesday's practice relate to helping players be prepared for Friday's opponent.
- Plan Wednesday's practice.
- Coaching staff views video.

Wednesday:

- Hand out two page cumulative scouting report about upcoming Saturday opponent. Go over report with players (15 minutes).
- Drills emphasized in Wednesday's practice relate to helping players be prepared for Saturday's opponent.
- Go over report with players.
- Discuss game plan and match-ups (15 minutes).
- Coaching staff view videos.
- Prepare Thursday's practice. (night before a game plan)

Typical In-season Weekly Game Plan (Continued)

Thursday:

- Pre-practice - view edited video of Friday opponent (15mins).
- Main point of emphasis in practice is Friday's opponent.
- May need to add some drills related to Saturday's opponent but don't make reference to Saturday's opponent.
- Start practice with pregame warm up to set the tone.
- Prepare keys to the game for Friday's opponent.

Friday:

- Have senior player write keys to the game prepared by the coaching staff for Friday's opponent on the dry erase board.
- Players write down the keys in their player handbooks.
- Coaches meet with team to discuss keys, game plan and match ups.
- Play the game.
- After the game, players shower and dress.
- When all players are ready, the coaching staff brings them together for some brief comments and then all players leave together.
- After players leave, coaching staff meets briefly to begin determining positives and negatives.
- Head Coach takes stats and game tape home.
- Grade game tape and finalize the positives and negatives
- Assistant Coach updates game goals on locker room goals chart; red for negatives/purple for positives.

Saturday:

- Players meet for no longer than 1 hour, 15 minutes Saturday morning.
- The team spends 10 minutes shooting and 20 minutes on free throws and walk through.
- Meet for 30-45 minutes in locker room. Briefly discuss positive/negatives from Friday's game and how well we accomplished predetermined game goals.
- Have a senior player write keys to the game prepared by coaching staff for Saturday's opponents on the dry erase board.
- Players write down the keys to the game in their player handbook.
- Coaches discuss with players the keys to the game/game plan and match ups.
- Play the game
- After the game, the players shower and dress.
- When all players are ready, the coaching staff brings them together for some brief comments and then all players leave together.
- After players leave, coaching staff meets briefly to begin determining positive and negatives.
- Head coach takes stats and game video home.
- Grade tape and finalize the positive and negatives.
- Get prepared to do it all over again for the next week.



ORGANIZATIONAL TIPS FOR COACHES

By Dr. David Hoch

Conducting practice sessions, calling plays and changing defenses during a game, and scouting are the fun parts of coaching. However, there is much more that is involved. For many, one of the most difficult aspects is taking care of all of the paperwork and administrative tasks that are associated with coaching.

While the exact details may vary throughout the country, most coaches have to submit eligibility reports at the beginning of the season, issue uniforms and equipment, complete tournament entry forms and submit end-of-the-season awards lists. While this is not an all-inclusive list, these are a few examples of the tedious tasks that have to be completed, and they usually involve a deadline.

Not surprisingly, missing a deadline or an important meeting can cause problems. At the bare minimum, if these responsibilities are not met by the due date a coach will draw the ire of his or her athletic director. In Maryland, for example, if you are late with your state tournament entry, the school faces a \$100 penalty fee. Therefore, there are ramifications if you don't meet the necessary deadlines.

While these are not exciting tasks, they are necessary and will affect a coach's position when consistently late or done improperly. The following are some ideas to help with these sometimes tedious responsibilities.

- Write the due date for eligibility reports, tourney entries, awards lists or anything else that has to be completed and returned to your athletic or tournament director on a calendar. Also, list on this calendar all of the required meetings that you will have to attend. These would include league meetings, staff meetings, pre-season parents meetings, awards banquets, all-league selection meetings and anything else in which you are expected to attend due to your coaching position.
- Don't wait until the night before the forms or entries are due to start completing them. Give yourself a little "wiggle room" and start several days ahead of time. Actually, plan on having the task completed a day early. In this manner, it gives you a little leeway in the advent that an unforeseen problem arises.
- Ask questions if you don't understand how to complete a form. This also needs to be done ahead of time, because as the deadline gets closer, the person who should receive these documents will also become busier and may not have the available time to answer all questions.

Collect all permission, medical and emergency forms from your athletes and place them in labeled file folders or large manila envelopes. It would be helpful if you, a student manager or an assistant coach would also sort and place them in alphabetical order. In this manner, they are in order and ready for you to complete your eligibility form, which most likely will have to be completed in alphabetical order. Also, it is easier to check these forms against a team roster or list to see if any athlete is missing any of the required forms.

Label and maintain a binder in order to keep all directives that you receive from your athletic director, league director or state association. When you are involved with your season, it is easy to forget much of the information contained in these documents. This binder will provide you with an easy form of reference and help you to avoid making mistakes.

It is also helpful to use a three-hole punch with these pages of directives and place them immediately in your binder. When you merely put them on your desk or in a desk drawer, it increases the possibility that they will be lost or misplaced.

Use this same binder technique for all forms and entries that you must complete. Never mail or return one without first making a photocopy and keeping it on file. Should these documents be lost in transit or by the person to whom you have submitted them, you don't have to start from scratch. You merely have to make another copy and you are covered.

Save all copies of your eligibility form, roster, schedule and all documents that you routinely use on your computer. Not only will you have a backup should you need it, but you also have a good starting point for the following season.

With your roster, for example, you can simply delete last year's seniors, add the new players and you are finished. This can be done whether you used an Excel or Word document and is so much easier than starting from scratch. If you use this technique, you will also save time.

Create a simple Excel document in order to record the uniforms and equipment that are issued to your athletes. By using this method, you can always add new players later and this new information can very easily alphabetized. This is done by highlighting the entire

document and going up to "Data" on the toolbar and then click on 'Sort' in order to complete the process.

Mark all new uniforms – those that don't actually have an existing number on them – when they arrive with an indelible permanent marker or laundry pen. A good system to employ is to start with the year purchased followed by a sequential number. For example, in the waist band of shorts, you would write 06-1, 06-2 and so forth. The "06" represents 2006, the year of purchase and each number represents one of the total ordered.

By using this marking system and recording the number of the uniform item that each player received, you can easily track who did and did not return all of their uniform parts at the conclusion of the season. In this day of limited resources, this approach is a very important financial and practical responsibility for all coaches.

Create a distribution list of all your athletes' e-mail addresses. In this manner, you can quickly and efficiently contact your team with any changes or with emergency information. In some high school settings, it may also be possible to post notices on a Web site to quickly communicate with parents and athletes.

If this technique is impossible in your setting, at least develop a phone tree to easily communicate with your team. Year to year, delete the seniors and enter the new players and you are all set.

Next to dealing with parents, poor organizational skills may be the biggest undoing of many coaches. While many of these tasks are time-consuming and unexciting, they are part of the coaching responsibilities and must be completed. The better system and handle you get on this aspect of coaching, the more problem-free and, hence, enjoyable the season may be. **Q**

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