

Principle #1 Mindset

Practice with the mindset and manner of a champion

Having the right frame of mind is what separates the programs with great practices from all of the others. By whatever means you can, indelibly etch the following saying into the minds of your players:

EVERY TIME WE TAKE THE FLOOR, WE PRACTICE AND PLAY WITH THE TECHNIQUE, INTENSITY, TOUGHNESS, AND TOGETHERNESS OF A STATE (OR NATIONAL) CHAMPION.

1. Everyone in the program must believe that championship level practices every single day of the season are the key to success on game day. If they do not demonstrate that belief, then you must continue working to convince them that is true. Then collectively, the team members must roll up their sleeves daily and make that vision a reality. For practice to impact your win-loss record, the players must agree to be and want to be held accountable to and be coached to the highest standards in your class. Certainly, there is no way to measure what your competition is doing in practice. However, if the coach and the players have the mindset that your program's standards for intensity, execution, toughness, and togetherness are those of a state champion, and you go to work every day to earn the right to feel that you are succeeding, your practices will be exceptionally productive. Your players must believe that the coaches are not helping them if they allow anything less than the championship level.
2. Hard work is merely the price of admission into the competitive arena; it is no guarantee of success. If it is not present, then you can't even think about competing. But, consistently doing the right things, in the right way, and in the right frame of mind—all while working very hard—over an extended period of time, can lead to success. Hard work is not a victory in and of itself; it must be accompanied by technique and toughness. It is possible to be a hard worker with poor technique and no toughness.

"I have no individual goals. We play for one reason and that's to win the title. Practice is more important than the games, and I will practice when I'm hurt, when 95 percent of the players in this league would sit out. I expect all of you to do the same thing. You will follow my lead." ...to the Chicago Bulls. And follow they did.

--Michael Jordan

130 Great Ideas to Get a Lot More Accomplished in Practice

"My passion is to coach and do things to the best of my ability. I want our team to get better every day at practice. If we can do that, the other stuff will take care of itself."

-- Coach Mike Krzyzewski

3. Players must see and believe that the coaching staff is eager and excited for practice every day. A coach's enthusiasm for practice should be obvious to the players and assistant coaches. The coach's enthusiasm should be contagious. For practice to be great everyone needs to be enthusiastically involved. As classroom teachers, it always amazes us when we see and hear athletes cheering in response to an announcement that their practice has been cancelled. That is not the type of response that demonstrates an understanding of the importance of high quality practices.
4. Players will do in the games by habit what they learn, rehearse, and are held accountable for in practice. If a coach allows cutting corners in practice, that is what s/he will get in games. Don Meyer says that coaches can be demanding without being demeaning. We believe that type of interaction with players is imperative to success. For example, we believe that placing the ball under your chin after a rebound is an important fundamental. Therefore, in practice situations we blow the whistle and call a turnover if a player falls to chin a rebound. By consistently demanding that this fundamental be executed, you will begin to see it occur more frequently. We want to create the mindset that doing things properly leads to increased success.
5. The players' goal for each practice should be to improve themselves for the good of the team. A coach's goal should be to instill that goal in the players and plan practice to make it happen. Spend time making sure that your players see that as their goal.
6. Everyone involved in your practices must know the expectations that you have as a coach for the level of performance and effort. Frustration and conflict which lead to team turmoil are always present when players individually and the team collectively are being coached to a higher standard than they are currently able to reach. The tension can be reduced greatly when everyone knows what the expectations are and why those expectations are so high.
7. The practice court is a classroom. Practice is one of several classes that students attend each day. Like all classes, the students should expect to be taught something each day. Coaches should have clear objectives for the day and a well planned lesson designed to help the players achieve those objectives.

130 Great Ideas to Get a Lot More Accomplished in Practice

“Stop yelling, and start teaching.”

--Coach Bill Walsh

8. Coaches should enter practice with the mindset that if players are making mistakes, the reason they are making mistakes is that the coach has not taught them properly. Coaches need to make adjustments in how they are communicating their ideas. Yelling the same instruction louder does not facilitate the teaching process. Coaches must believe that everything that happens on the court happens as a result of their actions. A good coach is like a good teacher. If the student is not learning, the teacher must change the teaching methods.
9. Coaches must believe that they can win with their team, regardless of the team's shortcomings or perceived shortcomings. It does not matter whether the team is too short, too slow, too inexperienced or lacking in basic skills. Coaches must believe that they can overcome all obstacles placed in front of them. There are ways to play when your team is too slow and too short. Young players can be taught and skills can be practiced. If you do not believe that you can win, you will not.
10. Coaches must not accept excuses from themselves, their staff, or team members. By making excuses for player or team failures, one relinquishes control of their influence over the outcome.
11. Coaches should take pride in the design of their practices and players need to develop pride in the way they practice. Pride is an attitude that separates excellence from mediocrity. Mediocre practices produce mediocre results.
12. Plan your practice as if your career depends on it, because it does.

“Prepare for every practice like you just lost your last game.”

--Coach Don Meyer

The rest of the book is broken into the following principles:

The seven essential principles of practice success...

130 Great Ideas to Get a Lot More Accomplished in Practice

- Introduction.....**Practice**--the lifeblood of every successful basketball program
- Principle #2 **Efficiency**--Plan for the most efficient use of limited time and facilities
- Principle #3 **Habits**--Motivate players to habitually do the right things right
- Principle #4 **Competition**--Make practice as competitive as possible
- Principle #5 **Team Building**--Incorporate team and chemistry building
- Principle #6 **Game Planning**--Incorporate game planning
- Principle #7 **Thoroughness**-- Be meticulous and cover everything you do in games

Appendices

- Appendix A **Worksheet for developing your master plan**
- Appendix B **Player Practice Evaluation Form**
- Appendix C **Playing Hard Checklist**
- Appendix D **Sample Master Practice Plan**