

Long Season For Them, Sometimes Long Season For You - Take Care of Yourself!

By: Jason Wolfard, Editor (Lindbergh High School)

First off, I am not sure how my predecessor got all of these issues out in a timely manner during the season. With everything going on, quite simply it is tough to find the down time. It has made me appreciate what a great job Shane Matzen did with the HCH in the past. So I apologize to those of you who have been at the edge of your seats waiting for this issue. With that said, I am going to work to have this issue and the next one up in the next two months, with the next issue being jam packed to help you.

We are now heading into the end of the regular season. Some of us are riding the ship as it cruises and some of us are trying to figure out how to re-direct that ship. Needless to say, out of all sports, this is the toughest and longest of them all. Four plus months over the holidays while dealing with the elements of Mother Nature quite a bit makes it seem even longer.

As coaches, I know we stress to our athletes to push through and take care of their bodies especially as we head toward the end of the season. From fighting fatigue and injury, to fighting the flu bug when it hits the program, the health of our players can take quite a toll on the team. But how are you taking care of yourself? After all, as much as the team needs the players, they do need you to help lead them. Hopefully most of you are already all over this and your health is well, but in a day and age where you hear stories of coaches suffering from exhaustion, it is good to take a moment and make sure you are taking care of you.

So in this short article, I would like to pose a challenge to all of our coaching staffs around Missouri. As you head into the post-season, try taking some time each day to help you and your staff take care of your health. We all want to finish strong with our teams, but you need to finish strong for you as well. From some general thoughts of mine to some thoughts shared by other coaches, here are some quick things to think about that can maybe help your staff finish the season strong:

Get or stay healthy

One thing I have been doing this season is losing weight and trying to get in better shape. Through the ups and downs of wins and losses, it has given me a little sense of accomplishment and I feel so much better at practice and games. I am probably in the best shape I have been since I started coaching. By following a program, I have given up my poor diet choices I make during the season and am actually resting so much better and am motivated to workout. You have to work on yourself at times too. Just like you tell your team that they have to decide to do what it takes, sometimes you need to make that decision for yourself to be healthier. Tons of resources out there to help coaches who live very busy lives - find one that works for you.

Another program that started up this year was created by Better Basketball and Alan Stein called CoachFit. It was a program designed for coaches to use for a quick workout before or after practice. Alan Stein, featured in our last issue, runs the workout and it is produced by Better Basketball, so you can view it on computer, iPad, tablet, or phone. Here is a brief description of the program.

Re-connect with your families

Date your wife - if you are married this is one of the best suggestions I ever received. Our wives are so supportive of us through all the ups and downs and they take care of the ship while we are out and about practicing, playing, scouting, and at meetings. It is a simple thing to do and it will strengthen your marriage (especially during the season).

Do your best to NEVER miss your kid's game - this is always a tough one to do in the age of youth sports scheduling, but it is so rewarding and fulfilling to see (and possibly) coach your own kids in their sports. My friends think I am crazy, but this year in addition to coaching my team I coach both my son's and daughter's basketball teams and it has been such a great time for me. It allows me to escape the pressure I feel at my job and just enjoy the sport and the smiles on the kids faces. Our goal, and what we say on every huddle - "Play Hard, Play Happy". You as a coach are also needed in youth sports. Having a coach who is willing to help young kids develop and have fun playing sports is more important than going undefeated in a church league or running the dribble-drive offense to perfection at 8 years old. More of us need to get back into it and help change the way youth sports, especially basketball, is taught.

Have a vacation night

If your brain is wired like mine, you think of basketball non-stop. Situations, new plays, watching games, strategies, dealing with players, etc.... It never shuts off at times. But you need to find that time to just shut it off. It helps. Some ideas...

Read a book - tons of short, motivational reads out there. I have read more during this season than any other. I also find time to listen to audio books.

Watch a non-thinking movie - sometimes putting that old comedy on TV or renting a new release gives you that 2 hours of down time.

Go on a mini-trip - if you have a few days off, cancel a Saturday practice and take the family on a short trip. Just staying in another city is a nice escape.

Get some rest - there are many things that have to get done in order to get ready for a game, but sometimes a simple nap works wonders. Maybe it's a Wednesday night and you don't play until Friday - go to bed early. Waking up with some new energy before a game or the next day changes your outlook on many things.

Visit with other coaches - On the court we are competitors, but we go through the same things at some point. Find some time to visit with friends that are coaches - share strategy, things that work, how to deal with specific types of players, etc... There are times that after we play a conference opponent and I know we won't play that team any more that I ask that coach to let me know what our strengths and weaknesses are - heck I have district coaches that I call at times that are scouting us and ask them what they see. You would be surprised how many coaches are willing to help out if you just ask. Remember, we are in this together.

Have fun with your team - this time of year you want to keep your practices fresh, but as much as the monotony and mistakes can get to you, it can get to your kids as well. Take the team bowling, to play paintball, play a dodgeball game in the middle of practice. Remember that even though we want them to be the best and be highly competitive athletes, they are still kids and need to remember how to have fun.

Keep being a teacher - as much as we would like to think we are in this position for basketball only, remember that you were hired as a teacher. Don't let the "stereo-type" of a coach first happen with your colleagues. Stay on top of your players grades and don't neglect the classroom.

I hope you find something in the bullet points that helps you as a person and coach. All of you do an amazing job, but remember to keep yourself happy and healthy. Best of luck as you finish the regular season and head into playoffs!

Keep Working Hard,

Jason Wolfard
Lindbergh High School

MBCA Membership - What It Means To You

You'll be a part of a group larger than yourself, your program, your school, your conference or your district.
A vast wealth of knowledge, experience and ideas just waiting to be tapped
A chance to share ideas and be a mentor to other coaches in addition to learning from others
The opportunity each fall to be a part of one of the nation's largest and fastest-growing clinics
Choice of submitting dues by P.O., mail or online for membership, clinic or our traditional, money-saving membership/clinic combo
Sponsorship of great events for our state
Norm Stewart Classic @ Columbia College
Gary Filbert Classic @ Mexico High
Missouri Challenge All-Star Showcase @ Drury University
MBCA Academic All-State Mr & Miss Show-Me Basketball Banquet @ Drury University
Automatic membership in the NHSBCA (National High School Basketball Coaches Association)
The many opportunities to honor our players
Mr & Miss Show-Me Basketball
Players-of-the-Year in each class (new for 2012)
All-State squads
Academic All-State squads
Curtis Kerr Student-Assistant of the Year
All-District squads
The many opportunities to honor our peers
MBCA Coaches Hall of Fame
Century Club (honoring coaches each year who attain career win 100, 200, 300, etc)
Class level Coach of the Year
Cub Martin Assistant Coach of the Year
District level Coach of the Year
Eligibility for the NHSBCA Coach of the Year Award
Your voice via MBCA member seated on the MSHSAA Basketball Advisory Committee
"The Hard Court Herald" The country's most comprehensive coaching association-sponsored newsletter
Most of all...it's about PROMOTING BASKETBALL IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI

Q&A with the Difference Makers

For this issue of our Q&A, Shane Matzen, former head coach at Marquette and past editor of the Hard Court Herald joins us to give some insight to what he misses being on the sideline, things that his new position entails, and advice to current coaches.

HCH: Being off the sideline now, what things do you miss that maybe you took for granted when you were a coach.

SM: Being as I had enough years in, I had gotten to the point where I wasn't taking anything for granted. Having had a chance to have my son on the floor my last year, coach 100s of great kids over the years and a chance to ride the wave with some great teams made me realize how fortunate I was. What I do miss is practice. That, to me, was when a coach got to coach. There's so much over-dramatization on television and social media with the "adjustments" coaches make during games and at halftimes. If you do your job (which not only included coaching and teaching but developing relationships) at practice and time away from games, the games for the most part took care of themselves. We always liked the term at Marquette "the hay's in the barn" on game day.

HCH: What is a "tough" thing for an athletic director that maybe as a coach we never realize happens?

SM: The time involved is above and beyond anything anyone can even begin to realize. The amount of things that ADs take care of for their coaches that coaches never know about is also something that I was fortunate to know going in when I officially started on July 1 (because I had three months to work with my predecessor, Mark Linneman, before he retired). The other thing that is really hard is that decisions are made so very often with information that just can't be readily given out to coaches and staff. That's really difficult because there are so many parties involved in decision-making and things aren't nearly as black-and-white as they used to be when I worked out of my Driver Ed office and thought I could solve all the world's problems in one fell swoop. This is a very, very "gray area" job often times. If I could give any advice to coaches out there, give your old AD just a LITTLE benefit of the doubt when he/she decides something you don't necessarily agree with. They want to be there for you, but can't please you 100% all the time for reasons you never thought of.

HCH: Is there anything you look back on now and wish you would have done differently when you were coaching?

SM: I wish I would've started understanding that it's about relationships sooner. When you're young, you get so wrapped up in Xs and Os and the administrative part of the job, you forget that your staff and players need YOU more than they need your coaching performance. I still wasn't as good at this part of the job at the end than I wanted to be but I realized how important it was. It took a very special player that I cared a lot about to come to me after the end of his junior season and say "Coach, I'm just not having fun." It was a bucket of cold water in my face that he, someone who I thought I never had to worry about, was not enjoying playing for me. I'll forever be grateful to him for having the guts to come to me and say that. Having said all that....young guys rarely listen to older guys and their "war stories." It's like the hot pan on the stove and a little kid, they have to touch it to realize it burns you. We're all wired that way I think.

HCH: You have had experience getting to the Final Four like me. What advice can you give coaches on not only what it takes to get there and prepare your team, but after you look back on it what the greatest things were?

SM: I wrote on this for the newsletter before so I won't rehash the entire story again, but it's probably about trying LESS hard to get there is what I found was the key. We all, when we were young, had that special girl in school you wanted to date but if you tried too hard, she would up getting tired of your act and wanted nothing to do with you. I tried TOO hard to make win a district and conference (let alone the Final Four) for so many years and when we didn't make it, I put the weight of the world on me. Once I just started worrying about what was next and enjoying the journey with my guys, things started taking care of themselves. Oh yeah, and it doesn't hurt too to have pretty good players.

HCH: From an AD's point of view, is there anything that as basketball coaches we need to work toward or fight for in our sport?

SM: I don't know if coaches need to necessarily "fight" for anything but the simple act of communication to me makes all the difference in the world. And by that, I mean with your parents and fellow staff members who maybe aren't coaches. People see the hard work you put in and the fact that you're trying to do good things the more they hear from you in a positive way (and that can be about negative things too). The simple recognition of the effort and caring you put in and have for young people goes a long ways towards their empathy towards your job and job performance.

HCH: How has the "crazy parent" issue changed as an AD compared to being a head coach?

SM: We just want our parents to be a 1/3 partner in what we consider to be what it is to "be a Mustang". No more, no less. If we expect players and coaches to conduct themselves with class and dignity, parents have to be a part of that equation too. Once one of those three groups drops the ball on their end, it affects everyone else. When a visiting fan, opponent or official leaves a game that Marquette has participated in, we want them to walk out of that venue with respect for what we are all about (both on and off the field or court). Emphasizing those points is the same for the "sane" and "crazy".

HCH: With the end of season approaching and the openings of jobs happening, what advice would you give to a young assistant coach or someone with no head coaching experience going into the interview process?

SM: Do your homework on the school you're applying for. That says a lot about your interest level. Sending a template cover letter with another school's name in it is a recipe for not getting an interview. I would also say that for most schools, your conversation and degree you care about being a teacher is a pretty big deal too. Schools want great teachers, coaches and role models for their kids. The big picture that you want to develop as a school atmosphere around your program goes a lot further than the fact that you were County Coach of the Year or was an assistant for that award-winner two years ago.

COACHING NUGGETS

This is a new addition to the Hard Court Herald. Each issue will have small contributions from various basketball sources around the state of Missouri and the nation. The goal of this section is to provide coaches with small pieces of basketball knowledge that can help them in the upcoming season.

Burn Your Goals - By Josh Medcalf

A couple months ago one of my golfer's sent me her goals in a text message, and I responded.
"I want you to burn those."

I knew my response was harsh, but I had reached a breaking point.
EVERYONE WANTS TO WIN.

No one is sitting around at the beginning of the season saying
"our goal is to finish last place in the conference"
"we want to have the worst shooting percentage in the country"
"we want to have mediocre season"
You never hear this!

I think goals are like wishes.
The beauty of sports is the parameters of sports define winning and losing for us,
THEREFORE we need to spend ZERO time on them.
I believe 100% of our energy should be on the process, controllables, and more
specifically our commitments.

So, I told my golfer, "Burn your wish list. I want to see your commitment list. I want
to know what you are committed to sacrificing and doing with your 24 hours a day
to close the gap between where you are at, and where you want to be."
Remember, one of the greatest coaches ever, John Wooden, won 10 National
Championships, and he NEVER talked about winning. He focused on the process.

He started with the basics. The first day of practice he showed the freshmen how they should put on their socks, and tie
their shoes. It worked out pretty well for him both in terms of results, and more importantly in his relationships with his
players long into their lives.

Three weeks later my golfer blew out the field and won the tournament with the
person in second finishing 5 strokes behind her. The next tournament she didn't
play as well, but she is starting to understand you can't control goals, but you can
control your commitments, and paradoxically by letting go of the results you can
actually play better.

I know that for many of you removing goals is like taking away your training wheels
or your 'blanky', but it's long over due. At some point your training wheels are more
of a hindrance than a help. You can't go off a cool jumps, and you have a very limited experience with training wheels
on.

Here is what I've found. Consistently giving your very best, every single day, is a
much higher standard than arbitrary goals. Some coaches have said, BUT some of my players need that carrot to chase
after. If that is how you feel, I would encourage you to revisit your mission in coaching.

Most coaches tell me their mission is something along the lines of training and
equipping their athletes for life. If that is the case, then it is our job, and I would go
as far as to say, our responsibility, to do what we believe is best long term for our

athletes.

Kids want to have dessert before dinner. It is a parents' responsibility however, to make sure that doesn't happen, because I think we all can agree that would be very long term detrimental if that were the eating strategy a child was equipped with. So, what do we do instead? We develop a compelling vision for our life of who we want to become as a person and a player. We then create a commitment list of what we are willing to sacrifice and do with our 86,400 seconds per day to close the gap between where we are at, and where we want to be.

This isn't semantics. When we were young, we didn't know the difference between lust and love. The older we get, we start to realize these two words are worlds apart. When we were young, we didn't know the difference between happiness and fulfillment. The older we get, the more we start to realize the two words are leapeyears apart.

The difference between being goal driven and mission/vision driven is MASSIVE! I think goal driven coaches have a much greater likelihood of being transactional, and mission/vision driven coaches have a much greater likelihood of being transformational.

I encourage you.

Take off the training wheels.

Put your blanky in storage.

You can't control the results anyway.

Fall in love with the process.

Focus on your commitments.

Focus on giving your very best, treating people really well, having a great attitude, and unconditional gratitude, REGARDLESS of your circumstances. It's a much higher standard, and much like bicycles with no training wheels, it's not for the faint of heart.

But those who take them off are in for an incredible ride!

Josh Medcalf

Follow on Twitter - @joshuamedcalf

www.traintobeclutch.com

CoachingU Podcast feat. Josh

Mental Training App

Practice Habits of a Great Team - Drew Hanlen, Pure Sweat Basketball

Strategic Planning with Flexible Ways

Great coaches know exactly what their team needs to accomplish each day at practice and write a strategic practice plan to ensure that those things get accomplished. Saying that, coaches are not afraid to shorten or extend drills, or even add a drill here or there if their team is not accomplishing what they need to.

The goal is practice is to improve, so my advice is don't stop the drill when the time runs out, stop the drill and move on to the next when your team has accomplished what you want from that drill. Also, players LOVE when you cut drills or practice short. Reward them if they're giving you what you want and accomplishing what they need to by sending them home early. This will also keep them fresh and energized throughout the long season!

Purposeful

If you follow me on Twitter or have ever seen a workout of mine, you know that "purposeful" is my key word. There are more bad drills in the basketball world than good ones, so as a coach it is your job to create or find drills that help improve the things that your team needs to improve. As a teacher of the game, your biggest task is eliminating the fluff

and getting the most out of every second of practice. Make sure if your player ask, “Why are we doing this drill?” or “When will we see this in a game?” that you have an answer. If you don’t, cut the drill out of your practice plan. Every drill MUST serve a purpose!

Energy

All great teams have great energy, whether that is in practice or games. Their team is fired up and is feeding off each other. Make sure you and your coaching staff brings and demands energy at practice every day. A quiet and boring gym is a losing gym!

Toughness

My high school (Webster Groves) slogan is “Toughest Team Wins.” As a freshman, my personal slogan was, “Get Buckets” and I spent time on the bench because I wasn’t a willing defender and wasn’t as tough as I needed to be to play for WG. I bought in my sophomore year and went on to have a successful career.

Two things can be made out of this:

1) Coach Blossom demanded toughness. He didn’t waver and let me play because I was talented offensively. He forced me to become tough and buy in, which is why he is a great coach. He knew the programs values were more important than any player or personal agenda.

2) He stressed it every day. What you see on the court is either what you teach or what you allow, and Coach Blossom never let us get away with being soft. This helped us a ton when we played in physical games, because we were used to playing through fouls in practice.

No Bad Practices

When it comes to workouts and practices, I have a simple mantra: “If we’re in the gym, we might as well get better.” Great teams don’t take practices or even drills off. Get in, get better and get out of the gym. That’s what great teams do!

I would wish y’all the best of luck this season, but I’m not a believer in luck. The teams that get the most out of their practices, grow and improve throughout the season, buy in and become a family will have successful and fun seasons. As a coach, your job is to ensure that those things happen. My best advice:

Check your ego at the door, make your players do the same, lay down expectations and demand that each player meets them everyday and don’t let anything or anyone get in the way of y’all’s goals for this season!

Book Recommendation - Mindset by Carol Dweck

World-renowned Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck, in decades of research on achievement and success, has discovered a truly groundbreaking idea—the power of our mindset.

Dweck explains why it’s not just our abilities and talent that bring us success—but whether we approach them with a fixed or growth mindset. She makes clear why praising intelligence and ability doesn’t foster self-esteem and lead to accomplishment, but may actually jeopardize success. With the right mindset, we can motivate our kids and help them to raise their grades, as well as reach our own goals—personal and professional. Dweck reveals what all great parents, teachers, CEOs, and athletes already know: how a simple idea about the brain can create a love of learning and a resilience that is the basis of great accomplishment in every area.