

Coaching Induction Module “Athlete Development”

This resource will help you with:

- Better understanding of the needs and characteristics of the players you coach
- Your players learning styles
- Players motivation for playing sport
- Creating the best opportunities for your players to develop

Basketball specific areas covered in this resource;

- ✓ *Offensive and defensive stance.*
- ✓ *Ball handling and dribbling.*
- ✓ *Developing balance and vision.*



CHARACTERISTICS OF PLAYERS

As the Coach plays an influential role in the development of players, it is essential you are aware of who you are coaching – age, level, ability, development. Effective coaching through each of the basketball communities is necessary to ensure the future of our sport.

The following tables list characteristics of players according to different age groupings. For further information on Athlete Characteristics and Needs within various coaching communities, refer to Appendix 1 in the Coach Development Framework on SPARC's website www.sparc.org.nz

Table 1: aged 8 – 10 years

PLAYER CHARACTERISTICS	PLAYER NEEDS
Physical	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing motor co-ordination and fine motor skills. • Mainly use large muscles – developing strength and balance. • Begin to develop fine motor skills. • Hand eye co-ordination is mature. • Have bursts of energy and enthusiasm. • Learn best if physically active. • Develop at different rates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide variety of activities. • Rotation of roles. • Skill learning through games. • Frequent rest periods. • Focus on fundamental gross motor skills and begin to introduce more complex skills. • Modification of rules and equipment. • Progressive activities. • Full participation, 'on-task' involvement.
Social	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are becoming more independent. • Begin to identify with peers but still need and want support and guidance. • Like consistent standards. • Enjoy group activities. • Enjoy assuming leadership roles / responsibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making opportunities. • Lots of positive input. • Leadership opportunities. • The opportunity to have fun, participate and interact with others.
Cognitive	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are capable of developing leadership skills. • New ideas best understood when related to previous experiences. • Increased attention span. • Often rejects solutions offered by adults. • Like to share ideas. • Realise if work hard, will improve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities that maximize participation and decision making. • Simple instructions that sell. • Introduce one thing at a time. • Opportunities for creativity and exploration. • Learn through mistakes and creation of challenges.
Emotional	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to question parental authority. • Admire / imitate role models. • Like challenges, dislike public failure. • Need to feel accepted and worthwhile. • Easily motivated to be involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of role models. • An environment where everyone can experience success. • Praise to build confidence. • Lots of positive reinforcement, variety and enjoyment. • Positive input from parents. • Encouragement to take risks.

Table 2: aged 11 – 12 years

PLAYER CHARACTERISTICS	PLAYER NEEDS
Physical	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth spurts can occur. • Complex motor skills becoming more refined. • Hormones can affect body composition. • Capable of developing energy systems. • Have the maturity differences within and between genders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for sport specific development. • Individual training programmes. • Coaches who plan with goal setting based on needs.
Social	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searching for personal identity • Friendships formed – often sincere and long lasting. • Peer groups very important. • Role models are influential. • Learning to co-operate. • Starting to forward plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy – understanding the player as a person and an athlete. • Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) to enhance social co-operation. • Inclusion in decision making and planning.
Cognitive	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like to find their own solutions • Have longer concentration spans. • Capable of complex problem solving. • Have sense of invincibility. • Begin to value goal setting. • May lack understanding of their ability and talents. • Are capable of informed decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage ownership. • Mental and physical challenges. • Structure and firm but fair discipline. • Setting of realistic expectations of success. • Two way effective interactions and communication. • Provide decision making opportunities and allow to learn from mistakes.
Emotional	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of body image. • Hormones cause mood swings. • Want responsibility. • Internally desire success. • Vulnerable to criticism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value role models. • Lots of positive reinforcement, variety and enjoyment. • Lots of opportunities for success. • Encouragement to take risks and make decisions. • Positive support and feedback.

Table 3: aged 13 – 18 years

PLAYER CHARACTERISTICS	PLAYER NEEDS
Physical	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most reach skeletal physical maturity towards 16 – 18 years. • Have better posture and co-ordination. • Can achieve advanced levels in complex skills and movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport specific / position specific training. • Specific strength training as appropriate. • Increased precision in prescription of programmes and performance assessment.
Social	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have strong independent social needs and desires. • Want to belong to groups. • Can assume major responsibilities and leadership roles. • Engaged in making lifestyle and career choices. • Socially aware of own and others' needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making. • Lots of positive input. • Leadership opportunities. • The opportunity for fun, participation and interaction with others.
Cognitive	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are able to learn new skills and can relate to the past. • Higher levels of abstract thinking. • Make choices / solve problems / accept responsibility • Self evaluate / correct. • Motivation strong tool. • Can determine own plans, schedules and goals. • Capable of complex analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for individual challenge and to be intuitive in their approach. • Ownership and responsibility. • Decision making. • Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU). • Being stimulated, challenged and excited. • Consideration of both long term and short term development.
Emotional	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-identity becomes more stable. • Expect to be treated as adults. • Stable emotional responses. • Assume more responsibility with associated stress. • Feel the pressure of other priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want clear expectations defined. • Positive role models. • Leadership and the opportunity to be a leader. • Encouragement and support to remain involved.

What's your community?

Player characteristics can be generally classified according to age development. Understanding how these characteristics influence the needs of your players, will help you to run a more effective programme.

Be aware of:

- Not only the physical needs of your players, but also their social and emotional needs.
- Pitching your coaching approach to suit the cognitive level of your players.



HOW PLAYERS LEARN

Understand that all players are individuals – different personalities, different motives for involvement, different body types and abilities, often coming from differing cultures. As individuals they will all have a preferred way of learning. The Coach should cater for a variety of learning needs when taking a team talk or practice session.

VARK is a simple learning preference tool that defines how players learn;

V = Visual, players learn best by looking at a demonstration or seeing it on a video.

A = Aural, players learn best by listening to the Coach or another person.

R = Reader / Writer, players learn best by reading about the topic and taking notes.

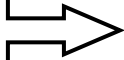
K = Kinesthetic, players learn best through doing the activity.

In the following three activities, decide which learning preferences are catered for, during the activity.

Activity One	Activity Two	Activity Three
Players are gathered around the coach in a large semi-circle. Coach instructs the players on dribbling the basketball.	Each player has a ball and watches the coach give a poor example of dribbling. Coach poses a couple of questions, before the players practice.	Coach divides the players into three groups – dribblers, defenders and catchers.
Sequence One	Sequence Two	Sequence Three
Coach instructs the players: "There are two critical points when dribbling a basketball. The first is court vision. I must be able to see my team mates. I must be able to see the basket."	Coach tells the players: "We are going to develop our dribbling skills, but I guarantee if I let you loose, most of you will dribble like this!"	Coach sets up the activity with the following parameters: 1. We are playing in the half court only, dribblers must have the ball live at all times. 2. 'Defenders' can guard the 'dribblers' only. 3. 'Dribbler' gets a point every time they can pass the ball to a 'catcher'. Upon receiving the ball the 'catcher' throws it straight back. 4. Play!
A player is asked to stand in front of the coach, as a defender. Coach pretends to dribble.	Coach dribbles all over the place, hunched over and staring at the ball.	Coach intervenes: "Rotate roles, 'dribbler' to 'defender' ; 'defender' to 'catcher' ; 'catcher' to 'dribbler'."
Coach instructs the players: "If I watch the ball, I can't see defenders or team mates. If I turn my back on the defender I can't see the court. Secondly, I must protect the ball with my body."	Coach asks the players: What is wrong with dribbling like that?	Halfway through the activity the coach calls a time out and asks the following questions: "What do you need to do to see when the catcher is open?" "How can you stop the defender from getting to the ball?"
Coach instructs the players: "If I go to the right of the defender, I dribble with my right hand. If I go to the left of the defender, I dribble with my left hand. My body protects the ball."	Coach dribbles in the stance, head up, looking around, changing hands. Coach asks the players: "What is different to the first example?"	Players have another go at the activity in each role.

Players now practice in a controlled 1 vs 1 environment.	Players each have a ball and progress through a series of dribbling tasks. Coach asks them to call out the name of any player with their head down.	After training, players are asked to write down, in their training note book, the two most important focus points to develop when dribbling.
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Coaching Tip



“Use multiple learning methods.”

- Match visual and aural cues.
- Reinforce kinaesthetic learning with verbal discussion.



PARTICIPATION AND MOTIVATIONS

Young players are motivated to participate in sport for a variety of reasons;

- ✓ To have fun
- ✓ To learn / improve skills
- ✓ To get fit
- ✓ To achieve goals
- ✓ To be with friends / make new friends
- ✓ For the thrills, challenge and excitement, and / or
- ✓ To win

Most young players have not one but several motives for participation.

What do young players tell adults about sport?

- ✓ We want to have fun
- ✓ Don't yell at us all the time
- ✓ Teach us new skills
- ✓ Teach us well
- ✓ Let us all try to have heaps of turns
- ✓ Help us
- ✓ Make us feel good
- ✓ Give us variety
- ✓ We like to win but?
- ✓ It hurts (if they are doing too much)

For further information on Athlete Participation within various coaching communities, refer to the Coach Development Framework on SPARC's website www.sparc.org.nz

Motivating Techniques

If players enjoy participating and experiencing success the outcome will be positive. Coaches have a great influence in motivating players to play.

Some ways of motivating players are to;

- ✓ Be enthusiastic.
- ✓ Be positive in your approach to both the activity and the players.
- ✓ Be prepared to involve yourself occasionally as part of a group activity.
- ✓ Praise appropriately as often as you can.

- ✓ Be well prepared so you are confident about what you aim to achieve.
- ✓ Present skills in parts so the players can experience success at their own level.
- ✓ Monitor their progress so you can decide whether or when to move on or to simplify the skill.
- ✓ Minimise player anxiety by being very clear in your instructions and realistic in your expectations

The example below shows a prepared training session for young players, working on pivoting and dribbling skills. Different motivating interventions are illustrated in the column beside each drill.

Training Activity	Motivating Intervention
<p>Pivoting with the Ball Players learn to switch the ball from side to side, using multiple pivots.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a defender to try and steal the ball away. • Create a challenge – on the whistle the ball carrier must try to dribble past the pressure of the defender.
<p>Progressive Dribbling Players learn dribbling technique by dribbling while sitting, then kneeling and finally standing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach gets involved by stealing a ball off the dribbler, to start a game of pirates.
<p>Slalom Dribbling Two rows of cones are set up, for players to dribble around, but players aren't protecting the ball very well.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace the cones with defenders, who try to steal the dribblers ball, but they must keep one foot on the spot.
<p>Five versus Five Full court game, first team to score twelve baskets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reinforce the skills developed in the session, introduce a game rule that you must dribble the ball before you pass or shoot it, unless you catch the ball inside the keyhole.

What's your community?

Regardless of the community you coach in, providing a source of motivation will encourage quality involvement from the players. Performance and elite communities should show higher levels of self motivation.

Be aware of:

- Simple targets or modifications to make training activities more productive.
- Using goal setting and performance goals in the development, performance and elite communities.



CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ATHLETE TO DEVELOP

Time on task

Coaches need to provide maximum time on task for optimal learning to occur. A practice that spends a majority of the time with setting up drills, the coach talking and players waiting for their turn, does not create an environment for the athlete to develop. To reach a high level of skill, players must have performed that skill or game situation hundreds if not thousand of times. Let them get on with it.

When planning training sessions or reviewing how a session went, consider on how much time the players are involved in the activity? Have you allowed them an opportunity to improve their skills?

The table that follows shows the same skill being taught using two different set ups. Read through the table then reflect on how much time each athlete is involved in practising the designated skill.

Both activities aim to develop passing skills, spacing and awareness of defenders. Ten players are participating in each of these situations.	
<i>Activity Set Up: One</i>	<i>Activity Set Up: Two</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One player selected to be a defender. • Other players are asked to form two lines. • One ball for the entire group. • Passing only, two players attempt to pass the ball through the width of the court without the defender getting it. • After about three minutes the coach changes the defender. • Activity continues until everybody has had a turn as the defender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players are divided into two groups of five. • Each group has a half court to work in. • One defender in each group. • The other four in each group form two pairings. • A ball each pair. • Passing only, attempt to pass the ball through the width of the court without the defender getting it. • After a pair has made it to the other side, they wait for the next pair to come over, then the activity continues going the other way. • Defenders are changed once each pair has gone through twice. • Now each group becomes three versus two defenders. • Three turns before the defenders change.
<i>Time taken – 30 minutes.</i>	<i>Time taken – 30 minutes.</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How much time has each player spent on the skills? 2. What would be the waiting time in between turns? 3. Will the athletes be focused on the task, when it is their turn? 4. What pressure is being put on the defenders? 5. Does this set up allow for a progression of skills? 6. Is the coach likely to have any problems managing the players in either session? 	

Athlete Centred Coaching

The underlying principle of any coaching session, regardless of the community involved, is developing skills and understanding of the athlete. A traditional Coach-Centred approach can often lead to slow development, inconsistencies in results and a lack of team unity. An Athlete-Centred approach helps to develop athletes who understand the game and can take responsibility for their own learning.

The table below highlights the practices that characterise the Coach-Centred and Athlete Centred approaches.

A comparison of characteristics of athletes who are coached by athlete-centred and coach-centred coaches	
<i>Coach-centred athletes often:</i>	<i>Athlete-centred athletes often:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have their goals set for them. • Feel as if they don't have a say in any direction. • Lack enthusiasm. • Are treated as a means to an end. • Make no decisions. • Talk back when they've had enough. • Compete 'robotically'. • Display anger and stubbornness. • Listen to the coaches way. • Have a disrespectful attitude. • Are defensive when challenged. • Get easily frustrated. • Are not listened to. • Feel that there is no respect or trust from the coach. • Are encouraged to be individuals and therefore show uncooperativeness. • Lack confidence and competence to make informed decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set their own goals and have an intrinsic desire to reach them. • Enjoy their sport. • Show enthusiasm. • Develop self-efficacy and confidence in their ability and are enabled to control results produced by their skill and effort. • Understand that they contribute and take responsibility for their learning and direction. • Are accountable for their actions. • Are resourceful and innovative. • Feel that they are important because of coaches' actions in understanding the athlete (e.g. listening, empathy). • Understanding that there is a mutual trust and respect. • Cooperate to enhance mutual goals and directions. • Are more coachable because they have freedom and choice. • Are highly committed to achieving levels of excellence. • Are willing to engage totally in what they believe.

Adapted from Kidman, L. and Davis, W. (2006), Empowerment in Coaching, In J. Broadhead and W Davis (Eds), *Ecological Task Analysis Perspectives on Movement*, Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

To put "Athlete-centred coaching" in perspective, the following table suggests a situation, then presents possible outcomes. Think about not only the short term outcome (performance in this activity), but also the long term effect (player development and response to game situations).

Scenario – Coach is running a four versus four game in the half court. Jeremy who has just had a growth spurt, lanky and a bit uncoordinated, shoots a three point shot and misses by a metre.	
<i>Coach-centred approach</i>	<i>Athlete-centred approach</i>
<p><i>Possible response;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach defines the shot taken as a bad action. • Restricts the players actions by ordering him not to shoot perimeter shots. 	<p><i>Possible response;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach helps player to recognize shot selection. • Allows the athlete to explore a solution or better options within the same situation.
<p><i>Probable outcome;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeremy won't take perimeter shots even when unmarked. • He won't have confidence in his ability to make a perimeter shot. • For this team, Jeremy may fulfil a role that his coach wants (e.g. inside shooting and rebounding). 	<p><i>Probable outcome;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeremy will still have confidence when catching the ball on the perimeter. • In a similar situation he may either receive the ball in a closer position or attempt to commit the defense on the dribble (closer shot or pass off to team mate). • May develop a wider range of skills to contribute to his team.
<p><i>To consider;</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How will Jeremy perform in this situation for the rest of the training session. 2. As the team competes during the season, how much will a player like Jeremy contribute? 3. What skill level can Jeremy develop over the course of a season? 4. If Jeremy has the attitude and desire to take his game to an elite level, what skills will he require? 5. When Jeremy finishes growing, what playing position is going to suit his body type at the higher level? 	

What's your community?

Really young or inexperienced players will find it harder to come up with solutions and answers. Players however in all communities, should be taught an understanding of playing the game and self awareness while performing skills.

Be aware of:

- Allowing plenty of activity time for players to "learn how" to play the game.
- Pitching questions at the right level for players to be able to understand.

Teach

Every time you run a training session, focus on your role to teach the game. Develop the building blocks to enable your athletes to compete within the various communities. Teach concepts that can be applied to the game as a whole rather than spend too much time on isolated skills that players find hard to relate to the game situation.

An example would be understanding the principles of balance, which applies to all facets of the game (shooting, pivoting, boxing out, defending . . .) Balance can relate to skills performed at the same spot (static balance) or skills involving movements from one spot to another (dynamic balance). Let your players find out what balance is all about.

Fundamental Principles of Balance	
Static Balance	Dynamic Balance
<i>Core Components</i>	
Base of support Centre of gravity Point of release Opposing forces	Ground contact points Movement or flight path Centre of gravity Core strength Limb control
<i>Applications</i>	
Shooting Static Passing Static Dribbling . . .	Defending Rebounding Stopping and changing direction Lay ups . . .

Now if the players understand the fundamental principles of balance, like widening their base of support (feet apart) and lowering centre of gravity (bend your knees), then they are more likely to respond to simple cues. For example, "get your feet set on balance before you shoot." The same thing applies to actions requiring a more dynamic type of balance. A player attempts to steal the ball; "What part of your body made contact with your opponent?" , "How can we still get our hand to the ball without shifting our head forward?"



Decide which illustration above shows the defender in the best defensive position. Look at the defender's head relative to the centre of her base of support (mid point between her feet).