

Top 10 Mistakes of a Young Coach

- 10) **TALK TOO MUCH.** Meetings last two hours and coach repeats the same information over and over again using different words and examples. Repeatedly call team into circle for pep talk or scolding. Use phrases like “When I played, I.....” “What is your boss going to say when you have a job and you.....” “I would do anything to trade places with you.” None of those examples are relevant because none of your players can relate. They weren’t there when you played, they don’t know what it means to have a job, and you won’t have the opportunity to change places with them. A matured coach says all he needs to say in very few words.
- 9) **TOO MANY RULES.** Far too many coaches live by their ‘rules’ instead of setting a standard. If you are late.....If you miss a lift or individual instruction session.....If you miss class.....etc. The key is not to punish these actions, but to stop them from happening. Build an atmosphere in which players take pride in not doing these things. Make it “the way we do things”. Many coaches that fall back on their rules are either afraid to make tough decisions, or simply do not like confrontation. Rules are for managers, standards are for leaders.
- 8) **FOCUS ON WINNING.** Many young coaches take over and immediately talk about winning league titles or championships of some sort. The danger in that is the possibility that you just might not win. Focus on the process. Focus on teaching, learning, improving, coming together. Make those the goals, and ultimately the thing that you talk about most. How are WE, not simply did we win. Constant talk about wins and losses leads to a team on a rollercoaster with many highs and lows. Make the process your focus.
- 7) **DON’T SET THE EXAMPLE.** The old adage of “do as I say, not as I do” is for hypocrites. If you want your players to work hard, then you work hard. If you want your players to conduct themselves in a professional manner, you conduct yourself in a professional manner. How many coaches rant and rave on the sideline, but get upset when their players over-react on the court? Who is setting the example? This old adage still holds true – the team will take on the personality of its coach’s ‘coaching personality’.
- 6) **DON’T DELEGATE ENOUGH.** Many young coaches try to do everything on their own. They don’t trust their assistants (the people that they hired) to recruit, scout, teach, etc. Related to #10, many young coaches want to do all the teaching in practice, do all scouting reports on their own, do all the criticism and motivation, etc. What are you doing for your assistants? Ask yourself – would you like working for you?
- 5) **BEND ON THEIR OWN RULES.** Young coaches often will not bite in proportion to their bark. Team rules are repeatedly breached or tested, and the line keeps getting moved back. These coaches often threaten players with these words: “One more time.....” “If I have to address this again.....” “The next time one of you.....” Related to #10, the more you talk, the less you say. Who is setting the example – and how?
- 4) **DON’T STAY THE COURSE.** Any decision made out of panic is the wrong one. If you have put the time in to come up with a game plan, a way of doing things, or even a list of team rules – then don’t change in midstream. The only thing more destructive than a bad plan is one that keeps changing. Young coaches are often heard to say these things: “This year, we’re going to.....” “From now on, we’re going to.....”
- 3) **TRUST IN TALENT.** Yes, talented players are an essential ingredient for any sport. But, it is very uncommon for the team with the best talent to win the championship. Look at all sports. More often, the team that is more committed will beat the team with the most talent. Young coaches will look the other way on character and integrity, believing that talent will overcome those things. Rarely they do. Even the teams with outstanding talent have to work hard, stay together and execute a game plan.
- 2) **OVER WORK.** Young coaches will often have their team in mid-season shape by October 15th. Why? The first game isn’t until mid-November! Young coaches often lose sight of how long and mentally grueling a season will be. The preseason should be used for skill development, and a gradual build up of conditioning. If your team is in tip-top shape by October 15th, what will you have left in March? Have you ever heard a coach say “We won this year because of our conditioning in September.”
- 1) **DON’T LISTEN.** Like all of us, when a young coach becomes a head coach for the first time, things will be done his way – and they will be done now! Young coaches simply don’t take the time to listen to others that have been there and simply ask: What has worked for you? What are some of the things that you might do differently? Typically, young coaches are intent on showing how much they know that they forget what the goals really are. The Lord gave us one mouth and two ears for a reason. Stop being so eager to prove yourself and show everybody who is in charge, and simply listen. You’re really not that smart.