

# Winning Isn't Measured in W's: Hoop Mechanix' Youth Basketball Guide for Parents



Stuart Kantor

Winning Isn't Measured in W's  
Hoop Mechanix' Youth Basketball Guide for Parents

by

Hoop Mechanix

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## Introduction

Basketball is a beautiful game. Both fluid and graceful, when well played, it's nothing short of poetry. Leonard Koppett, in his brilliant book *The Essence of the Game is Deception*, says this about basketball:

It is the best of games, it is the worst of games, it is a game of cleverness, it is a game of foolishness, it makes one a believer, it arouses incredulity, it swirls in one second from the Spring of Hope to the Winter of Despair, it inspires the Spirit of Light, it stirs the Forces of Darkness, it has everything before it, it has nothing before it, it takes us directly to Heaven, it takes us directly to the other place – in short, its world is so much like the present world that it is peculiarly at home in the America of the second half of the twentieth [and twenty-first] century.

'It,' of course, is basketball.

Frustrating, exhilarating, artificial, instinctive, basketball is the least describable of team games.

A thousand plays, both set and impromptu, woven into a tapestry so finely quilted that as a whole appear seamless from the discreet layers of fabric comprising the game. This is the beauty of basketball.

In *Winning Isn't Measured in W's: Hoop Mechanix' Youth Basketball Guide for Parents*, the staff at Hoop Mechanix wants to educate today's parents about this fascinating game from quite a unique perspective: your child's. As parents, we strive to provide all we can for our children, be it food, clothing, shelter, transportation, vacations, electronics, emotional and spiritual support, and academic encouragement. From an athletic standpoint, we shuttle our kids to practices and games, and we cheer when the going's great, and we console when defeat occurs. At Hoop Mechanix, we urge parents and players to keep winning and losing in perspective; to see the big picture, to understand that the famous sports writer Grantland Rice was correct when he stated, "When the One Great Scorer / Comes to mark against your name / He marks not whether you won or lost / But how you played the game." After all, winning isn't always measured in W's.

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## **1. The Great Game of Basketball**

Parallel to society, the game of basketball has undergone a plethora of changes in its 100+ years of existence. From Dr. Naismith's peach basket to literally playing within a wire mesh cage (hence the nickname "cagers") to the first big man to the 3-second rule to the shot clock to March Madness to high school phenoms turning pro, the game of basketball is a living, breathing, entity; it evolves as do red-blooded species and the English language. We are simply the latest link in the Hoops evolutionary chain. Yet, we are at its most exciting point. The game of basketball is a global highlight reel; kids from nearly every country on Earth enjoy the dynamics and fundamentals of a well-timed bounce pass or a softly floating three-point swish or a rim-rocking tomahawk slam.

Basketball, unlike any other team sport, has at its core the ability to be practiced and parts of its game perfected in solitude. A child can shoot 100 free throws per day in his / her driveway. Ball handling skills can be developed in the driveway or bouncing around the neighborhood. Proper defensive footwork can be enhanced on the same driveway where layups are perfected. Basketball is truly unique in its individual approach to the overall team concept.

This ability to hone one's skills on one's own or in 1-on-1, 2-on-2 and 3-on-3 competition is just a fraction of basketball's allure. The true greatness of basketball is in the synchronicity of 5 teammates with a single focus. Each aspect of a well-executed offense may be so subtle as to pass the untrained eye; of course, this is the goal of a beautiful offense put together through hours of arduous repetition. The crisp first pass, the screen away from the ball, the low post dropping to the short corner to open up space for the opposite guard to flash, who, when not receiving the pass, backscreens at the opposite elbow while the ball works its way around looking for the inlet pass to the man who eventually works his way into an advantage of either physical matchup or court location. Within the span of 5 to 7 seconds, a series of well-trained and well-timed maneuvers will occur, some planned, some improvisational, in reaction to the defense's alignment. Yet each player knows how to further react to his teammate's positioning on the floor, and when it appears seamless and a good shot has been taken and made, the beauty of the sport is evident.

When, on defense, 5 teammates form an impenetrable wall forcing its opponent into a poor shot and then get the rebound and fire an outlet pass to transition into offense; this is also the beauty of basketball. In this regard, basketball is much more like hockey or soccer in that the players are either offense or defense in a moment's notice. In stark contrast to football, when the clock runs in basketball, there is always action on the floor.

Basketball is a great sport for children because they learn many valuable maxims for life: (1) increasing one's skill level requires self-discipline; (2) increasing one's skill level requires hours of repetitious practice; (3) increasing one's skill level requires listening to one's coach (authority); (4) increasing one's skill level requires dedication and sacrifice; (5) increasing one's skill level requires learning to properly interact within a group setting; and (6) increasing one's skill level requires an immense amount of trust in the sincerity of others to see you succeed. Of course, improving one's physical fitness is also a wonderful byproduct of playing the game of basketball, and when one improves one's physical fitness, more often than not, one's emotional stability and outlook improves as well. This is what makes basketball a great sport.

## 2. Winning Isn't Measured in W's

As parents, we strive to see our children succeed. We wish nothing but all the success in the world for them. We pray that their lives are showered with all the material, emotional and spiritual good fortune they desire. What we often overlook is that failure builds character. This is also a life maxim: success is not a 100% guarantee every time a shot is taken, every time great defense is played. Success is not guaranteed in our adult lives. We wade through numerous setbacks every single day of our lives, and we have more training to expect success than our children. Yet we still fail to balance the checkbook or mix the ingredients correctly for dinner or take preventative measures in car maintenance or close the business deal we've been working on for months. This being the case, what can we expect from our children learning to play a sport that's difficult to master?

Quite simply – expect a great number of failures, but emphasize their successes. The fundamentals of any sports – especially basketball – take years to master, and even then, mistakes are plentiful. Kids will double dribble; they will travel; they will shoot the ball completely over the basket; they will unintentionally run over another kid on the floor; they will pass the ball into the stands; they will neglect to run back on defense; they will airball a free throw; they will hold the ball for what appears an eternity in hopes that every teammate who is open somehow gets more open; they will play defense standing straight up; they will forget to box out. But – they will make a really nice pass too. And they will shoot the ball properly at the basket and it may even go in. And they will set a pick to allow a teammate unimpeded access to the basket. And they will defend their opponent properly and get the rebound. And they will advance the ball up the floor using both hands without a double dribble and without a traveling violation. And for these little signs of progress, we should stand and cheer. They are learning, and learning isn't easy.

Consider how they are learning. They practice with only their teammates for hours a week. They shoot at home and practice ball handling right up until dinner time. And then they get to prove they've practiced – in front of a crowd! At work, we rarely have to perform in front of a crowd who will *oooh* and *aaah* with every instantaneous decision we make. Our pressure is a self-disciplined pressure. Your child's pressure is not only self-disciplined, but it's also magnified in front of what may be several hundred

people, for and against your child's – and his / her team's – success. It's no wonder that failure is a common occurrence in the game of basketball. In fact, it's acceptable.

Failure in basketball is a given. In any sport, it's a given. But failure is not the end-all. Failure in basketball is a minute obstacle. As soon as one child fails to throw a crisp pass, another child succeeds in stealing that pass. Within seconds, the child who threw the errant pass will have a chance to redeem him / her self. And he / she will. That's part of the beauty of this game. Before one can wallow in failure, a chance for success presents itself. We, as parents, must properly weigh the successes and failures and always deduce that success outweighs its counterpart. That's our job.

Our job is encouragement; our job is cheering and never booing; our job is to build self esteem and never to tear it down; our job is to emphasize our children's strengths and continue to help them overcome their weaknesses; our job is to teach them that in sports – as in life – there are winners and losers, and everyone experiences both ends of the spectrum. Our job is also to make them understand that winning is not always measured in W's.

### 3. Teach Your Child the Fundamentals of the Game

In a January 9, 2003 ESPN.com article entitled “America needs more ‘teaching’ from its coaches,” Jay Bilas chastised American basketball coaches for “over-coaching and under-teaching,” a phrase borrowed from legendary high school coach Morgan Wooten.

Bilas differentiates coaching from teaching: “Coaching consists of team preparation, the devising of game plans and schemes to defeat opponents.” Teaching, on the other hand, “consists of instruction and training of individuals in the fundamental skills of the game, and in teaching players how to play, instead of how to run plays.” There is no doubt that Crosby, Stills & Nash were right when they sang, “Teach your children well.” In basketball, the skills a player needs to succeed at any level are: footwork, ballhandling, shooting, and passing.

Let’s briefly discuss each aspect.

Footwork. It took me a while to realize this, but 80% of the time a player is on the court, he / she will not have the ball (offense) or will not guard the ball (defense). What an epiphany! After years of coaching, a concept so simple made me realize even more the value of solid, fundamental footwork. A player who cannot execute basic basketball moves because of poor footwork is severely limiting his value to his team while limiting his own future as a player in the game.

The importance of footwork is evident at both ends of the floor. On the offensive end, one must stay low with proper triple-threat-like footwork when receiving a pass; this way a player has options. He can shoot, pass, dribble, pump fake and drive; regardless of the option chosen, he always appears as a threat to the defense. On the defensive end, a player must stay **Low and Athletic**. The proper defensive stance enables the defensive player to be infinitely more efficient in his ability to guard his man, fight through screens, bump cutters, and box out. All coaches stress the defensive stance – sliding with feet roughly shoulder-width apart, back and shoulders straight and not forward over one’s feet to lose balance, showing one’s palms, one hand high and one low – but too many players resort to playing defense standing straight up, wasting valuable time to first get into a proper stance and then either fouling the offensive player or getting beat because he / she

wasn't ready for the offensive player's movement. Stay **Low and Athletic** as often as possible. You will be a better all-around basketball player because of it.

Ballhandling. All players, regardless of size and position, should be able to handle the ball. If "a player cannot handle the ball with either hand, he will get attacked and overwhelmed by the defense because he cannot go anywhere off the dribble." This player becomes a liability to himself and his team; his own growth is stumped while the team's options are limited. Teach your children how to control the ball with both hands.

Shooting. Proper footwork and heart are 2 basic ingredients of defense; shooting, on the other hand, is a necessity to score. As Bilas says, "If you cannot shoot the ball, you will always be able to get an open shot." After a player learns proper shooting form – "shooting hand under the ball", "elbow under shooting hand", the ability to jump straight up and not float while keeping one's eyes glued to the back of the rim or backboard – then it's repetition, repetition, repetition. Advance to proper foot and handwork to receive a pass and then shoot. Regardless, a player must pose himself a threat to score every time he touches the ball or the defense will never respect him. When practicing, shoot according to Bilas' mantra: "Game Shots, Game Spots, Game Speed."

Passing. A lost art. The most neglected skill. Few players realize "the quality of the pass determines the quality of the shot." Two-handed chest passes, overhead passes, bounce passes with both hands, entry passes into the post; work and perfect these. Passing the ball to an open teammate makes the defense react; making the defense react means the defense moves; the defense moving leads to an open shot opportunity, a chance to score. Dare to make the extra pass that leads to a great scoring opportunity. The player who cannot pass "has the ball die in his hands."

These fundamentals will allow your child to enjoy the game of basketball on any level, be it AAU, YMCA, rec. league, high school, college, or professional. With these skills, your child can perform admirably and achieve personal growth in a team environment. Without these skills, your child's growth in the game is like a flower's in winter – slow and laborious until it's nonexistent. He / she suffers and so does his / her team. Once again, "teach your children well" and let them thrive in a fantastic game.

#### **4. Avoid Living Vicariously Through Your Child**

The following article has been reprinted with permission of Dr. Ronald L. Kamm and his wonderful website Mind Body & Sports – [www.mindbodyandsports.com](http://www.mindbodyandsports.com). The article “Playing Fair” appeared on his website in March of 2000 and was written by Patti Martin of Asbury Park Press.

##### **Playing Fair**

Isn't it time for parents and coaches to remember what youth sports are really all about – having fun?

It used to be that when kids got the urge, they would get some friends together and play an impromptu game of baseball, soccer or basketball down at a local park or school field. No one really kept score and with all the good-natured fun going on, who won or lost didn't matter.

It was fun, and that was all that did matter.

But that was then. Increasingly, the fun has gone out of sports, especially organized youth sports.

Violent outbursts are now as common on youth baseball fields, basketball courts and soccer fields as they are on the set of “The Jerry Springer Show.”

##### **Consider, for example:**

- In Florida, a parent was arrested for swinging a bat at a coach.
- A Midget Football game in Pennsylvania turned into an ugly free-for-all that involved more than 50 player sand spectators.
- In Georgia, a fight between parents and coaches interrupted a baseball game - between 4 and 5 year olds.

“It's gotten out of control,” said Dr. Ronald L. Kamm, a sports psychiatrist and family therapist in private practice in Oakhurst, Ocean Township. “Instead of being enjoyable, for many children it has become an anxiety-filled experience.”

Whether the experience is enjoyable or anxiety filled is largely determined by two factors, according to Kamm – the quality of youth supervision and coaching, and the amount of pressure parents place on young athletes to perform.

“Youth sports can be a tremendous help to kids, providing opportunities for confidence – building, skill development and teamwork,” Kamm said. “But it can also be an area for verbal, emotional or physical abuse, depending on the attitudes of the adults involved.

“It is noteworthy that, in a discussion of the harm or benefit of Little League and youth sports, it is the actions of adults, not children, that are deemed critical,” Kamm pointed out. “It is unfortunate that the lessons that life is not fair and adults can’t be trusted are often first learned through Little League.”

Studies conducted by the National Youth Sports Coaches Association showed that nearly three out of four children in organized sports programs drop out between the ages of 8 and 13. The two most common reasons? The sport was no longer fun and players felt abused by their coaches.

“I’ve looked into the tear-filled eyes of far too many youngsters over the years,” said Fred Engh, president of the National Alliance for Youth Sports and author of the new book, “Why Johnny Hates Sports: Why Organized Sports are Failing Our Children and What We Can Do About It” (Avery Publishing). “Kids turn their backs on sports because someone said they weren’t good enough, or because they were scolded for dropping a ball, making a mistake or losing a game.

“Sports are the greatest tool we have in today’s society to help children develop positive character traits and life values. But when the focus shifts from what is best for young participants to what’s best for others, that is when major problems begin.”

Hiring coaches for young players is no longer unheard of. Sending youngsters to specialized sports camps is routine. Longer and longer practices – regardless of weather conditions – now seem part of the game.

“The problem today is that youth sports is no longer just a game, it’s big business that 30 million youngsters are playing,” said Southern California youth sports psychologist Darrell J. Burnett, author of “Youth, Sports & Self Esteem: A Guide for Parents” (Master Press), “And it’s the parents and coaches who are making it that way.”

Instead of helping a child improve his or her performance, parents become focused on winning, according to Kamm.

“They think success is winning,” Kamm said. Success is really giving one’s best effort and striving to achieve one’s goals and exceed one’s goal. Success is not surpassing others.”

But why?

“Some parents were athletes themselves and want their child to be at least as good, if not better,” Kamm said. “Some parents weren’t good athletes and they want their child to become what they weren’t. And in its worst form it becomes a syndrome called ‘achievement by proxy’ where the child is a little more than an extension of a parent and the parent totally lives vicariously through the child.”

And what of those over-the-top coaches?

“Unfortunately coaches get swept up in the professional model,” Kamm said. “They see the uniforms and the bats and the names like Mets and Phillies and subconsciously think of themselves as Bobby Valentine or Joe Torre. They begin to relate to the kids like professional coaches relate to their players.”

But there are changes being made.

Last month the Jupiter-Tequesta Athletic Association in Jupiter, Fla., held the nation’s first mandatory sportsmanship training program for parents. It outlined what is appropriate behavior so that parents clearly understood their roles and responsibilities in the youth sports environment.

“Parents are losing their perspective,” Jeff Leslie, president of the JTAA said at the meeting. “We just want to try to de-escalate the intensity that is being shown by the parents at these games.”

And there was bite behind the program. Children whose parents did not attend the event are not allowed to participate in JTAA programs.

“This type of program is way overdue,” Burnett said. “Guidelines are needed to spell out very specifically what is acceptable behavior – and what is unacceptable.

“The message that is given to player when guidelines are implemented is that we will treat you with respect and we will not humiliate you,” Burnett said. “When that happens, the game is given back to the players.”

To prevent what he calls “Little League Parent Syndrome,” Kamm said that parent’s and children’s motives should be aligned, and at the top of each agenda should be fun, skill development and making friends.

When it comes to coaches, parents should inquire whether their community leagues have review panels to assess complaints or incidents of abuse.

And if parents see a problem with a coach, they should address it immediately – in a non-confrontational manner.

According to Kamm, it’s always a good ideal to talk to the coach outside of practice and come from an “I’m feeling” stance.

“If you say, ‘I feel that Johnny is taking what you’re saying the wrong way, ‘you’re not directly criticizing,’” Kamm said. “In most cases, you can then have a dialogue with the coach.”

And at the very heart of the matter, Kamm and others said, is that youth sports is supposed to be a fun experience, a learning experience, a team experience.

“At the end of a season, a child should feel he has mastered some new skills,” Kamm said. “That’s what the 6 to 10 year old time of life is all about – learning and mastering new skills. Parents and coaches need to remember that.”

By Patti Martin  
Asbury Park Press  
Home & Family  
Thursday, March 30, 2000



Let your children play so that they enjoy the game. Basketball, at its core, is still a game. A game by kids’ standards entails fun, having a good time. Encourage their ability to have fun while learning the fundamentals of a wonderfully intriguing sport, especially through the early high school years. Living vicariously through one’s child is simply setting up both parties for unwarranted disappointment; once again, enjoy the moments that do present themselves without fretting over those beyond one’s control.

## 5. The Reality of Basketball Beyond High School

Basketball is America's favorite team sport. In a 2000 report published by the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA) entitled, "U.S. Trends in Team Sports," it states, "... by 1999 basketball clearly ranked as the most-played team sport and one of the most popular sports activities of any kind." The proliferation of basketball is truly nothing short of amazing.

But what of the reality of playing beyond high school? Is there a chance? With nearly 1,000 men's and women's collegiate basketball programs in the U.S. alone plus the blossoming junior college route, it would appear there is a chance. Yet heed these statistics provided by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in an article entitled "Estimated Probability of Competing in Athletics Beyond the High School Interscholastic Level."

### Men's Basketball

- Less than one in 35, or approximately 2.9 percent, of high school senior boys playing interscholastic basketball will go on to play men's basketball at a NCAA member institution.
- Less than one in 75, or approximately 1.3 percent, of NCAA male senior basketball players will get drafted by a National Basketball Association (NBA) team.
- Approximately three in 10,000, or approximately 0.03 percent of high school senior boys playing interscholastic basketball will eventually be drafted by an NCAA team.

### Women's Basketball

- About 3.1 percent, or approximately three in 100, of high school senior girls interscholastic basketball players will go on to play women's basketball at a NCAA member institution.
- About one in 100, or approximately 1.0 percent, of NCAA female senior basketball players will get drafted by a Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) team.
- Approximately one in 5,000, or approximately 0.02 percent of high school senior girls playing interscholastic basketball will eventually be drafted by a WNBA team.

Ascending the ladder in any endeavor is difficult; sports are no exception.

Parents: remain grounded. Keep your children grounded. There is more than enough pressure placed upon children today without the added weight of having to play college

basketball. Please understand that a child does not fail if he or she does not get recruited or obtains a roster spot by walking on. Yet, the basketball door as a collegiate player has closed, but not other opportunities to enjoy the sport.

In other words, cherish the moments you've been granted. Take pictures. Create a scrapbook. Take video. Always be thankful for the opportunities to have witnessed the spirit and innocence of 5<sup>th</sup> grade basketball and the fluidity and grace of well-played high school ball. And if a basketball career ends upon receiving one's high school diploma, that's okay. Take your son or daughter to an NBA or local college / high school game and enjoy the thrill together from a different perspective, for you, too, were a part of the tapestry of this great game.

## 6. In the Classroom

Basketball, like any other sport or extra-curricular activity is irrelevant if classroom accountability is not upheld. The staff at Hoop Mechanix is adamant about students' academic success. We are classroom teachers. It is imperative that students prepare themselves academically with the basic skills necessary to succeed in high school and then in college or perhaps a trade school.

Parents, please:

- ✓ Make sure all your child's homework is completed on time.
- ✓ Encourage your child to read for pleasure.
- ✓ Encourage your child to write for pleasure.
- ✓ Encourage your child to be involved in extra-curricular activities other than sports.
- ✓ Teach your child how to take notes on both lectures and from reading assignments to prepare for quizzes and tests.
- ✓ Meet your child's teachers and keep open lines of communication.
- ✓ Meet your child's principal.
- ✓ Know your child's counselor well; this person is the key to a successful academic career.
- ✓ Acquire tutors if necessary.
- ✓ If there's a chance your child can play basketball beyond high school, plot a course of action early to make sure he or she obtains all necessary core classes and test scores.

If the chance of playing beyond high school has the slightest bit of reality, then interacting with your child's counselor is vital. There are literally hundreds of guides for the prospective college athlete, and your counselor will know which is best depending upon the situation. One of the best is by Blackboard Media at [www.blackboardmedia.com](http://www.blackboardmedia.com). They produce *The Ultimate Sports Recruiting Guide for the High School Athlete*. Here's what the guide offers:

Each sports specific planner will offer comprehensive information regarding National Collegiate Athletic Association rules governing the recruiting of student-athletes, institutional requirements, marketing techniques, financial aid and alternative educational financing, up-to-date Division 1 contact information, scholarship availability per institution, and most importantly, the process of becoming a member of a college program. Our publication begins with a 12-month academic calendar,

giving students a month-by-month checklist of information and strategies needed to successfully prepare for college as a scholar and athlete. Our goal is to create a link that will help student-athletes better understand the college process, while offering relevant university and sports information  
(Blackboard Media website)

Beyond basketball or any other sport, education is your child's most important asset. There simply is no substitute for a well-rounded mind and spirit. An excellent education opens doors and attracts opportunities normally closed to the uneducated. Encourage your child to delve into those subjects that interest him or her. Developing the well-rounded student should be the ultimate goal of all involved. At Hoop Mechanix, the well-rounded student is important, for those athletes who can think, react to adverse situations, problem-solve, and think critically are athletes who have a great chance at succeeding in the game of life, and that's a game for greater than any basketball contest.

## 7. Individual Drills to Improve One's Game

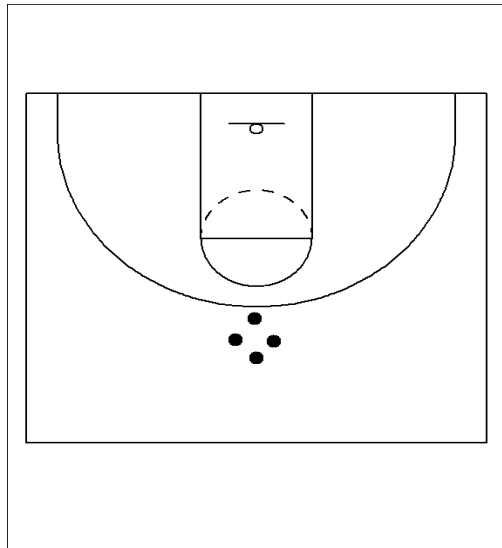
On the pages that follow, we'll supply you with individual drills and explanations of these drills to improve your game. Drills are not exciting; in fact, they're called drills because of their repetitious nature, but they have to be done ... and done ... and done ... to achieve near perfection. The skills one learns from drills must be done so well they appear to the fan, to teammates, to one's coach, as second nature.

Let's start with drills that do not require the ball.

Let's work on footwork.

### Footwork Drills

#### Drill #1: Dots



#### Explanation

There are 4 basic exercises in conjunction with the dots. If you're doing this drill in your driveway, use cement chalk to make the dots. It washes away easily. Notice that the dots are laid out like a clock at the 12, 3, 6, and 9 o'clock hours and are roughly 8 to 12 inches apart.

First, stand on the 6 o'clock dot with both feet and go around the clock in a clockwise manner, hitting all 4 spots ten times as quickly as possible. Keep both feet together at all times. You're striving for quickness around the clock, not height. Minimize the amount of energy being expended from all body parts above the knees. Then do the same thing, but in a counter-clockwise direction. Your goal is that clockwise and counter-clockwise will take the same amount of time. This will prove that you can move laterally to guard a defender or to cut off a screen after receiving the pass in either direction with equal ability.

Second, do the exact same thing as you've just done; however, this time do it on your right leg only. Go 10 times clockwise and then 10 times counter-clockwise.

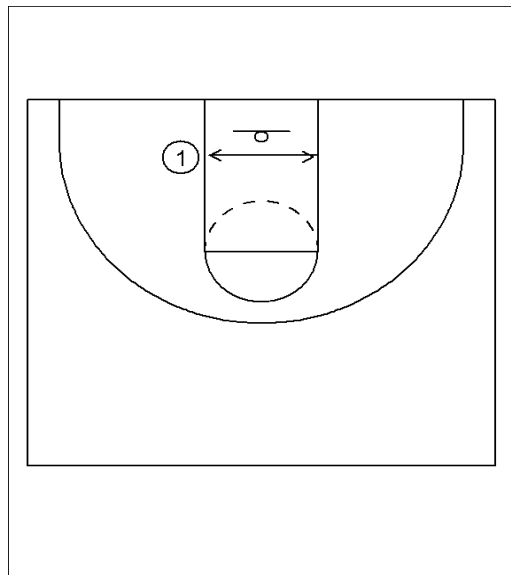
Third, switch to your left leg and go 10 times clockwise and then 10 times counter-clockwise.

Fourth, stand at the 6 o'clock spot with both legs again. This time, however, you pitter-patter (2 quick steps – “boom boom”) in each of the 4 spots 10 times clockwise and 10 times counter-clockwise.

The Dots are a fantastic drill for improving one's footwork. The entire digression may take 5 – 6 minutes, but this is valuable time spent. Defensive pressure demands excellent footwork; it demands that your feet be quick to give you the best opportunity to put solid pressure on the ball and to deny cutters the lane in front of your face.

Offensively, quick feet are valuable when taking that first step toward the basket after a ball fake or head fake. Quick feet are vital when, after receiving the pass off a screen, you change direction to break the defender's momentum.

### **Drill #2: In-the-Lane Slides**

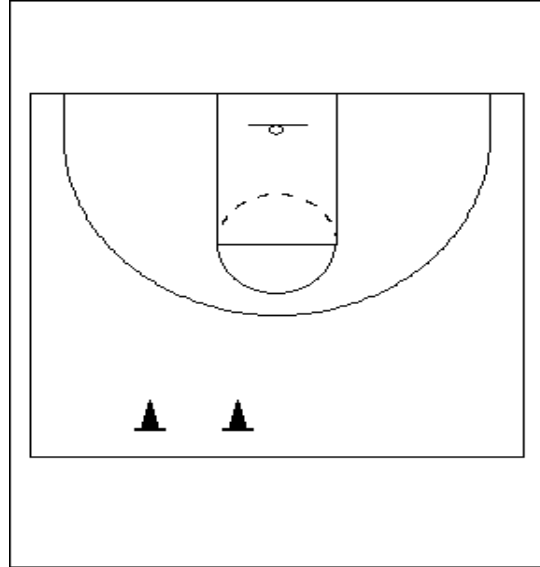


#### **Explanation**

In a beautiful defensive stance, stand with your inside foot next to the lane and your outside foot outside of the paint. For a count of 15 seconds, continue sliding back and forth across the paint, touching the lane with your fingertips. Take a 15-second break and repeat 3 more times. This will be one minute of excellent defensive stance work. Build up to 4 repetitions of 30 seconds each. Your emphasis here is to stay low and athletic as you cross the paint from lane to lane, making sure your fingertips touch the floor each time you reach the opposite lane. The defensive stance is the key to a successful man-to-man defense. As often as possible, work on your stance; staying low mixed with those quick feet and lateral movements developed in the Dots drill will increase your playing time. All coaches love tough a defender who can shut down an opponent. This drill also gives you the opportunity to work on pivoting and pushing your momentum in the opposite direction quickly at the same time your fingertips stretch to touch the lane. Stay focused when you build up to the 30-second repetitions; you want to

make sure that those last few seconds are as efficient as the first few. Remember: excellent defense comes from the heart.

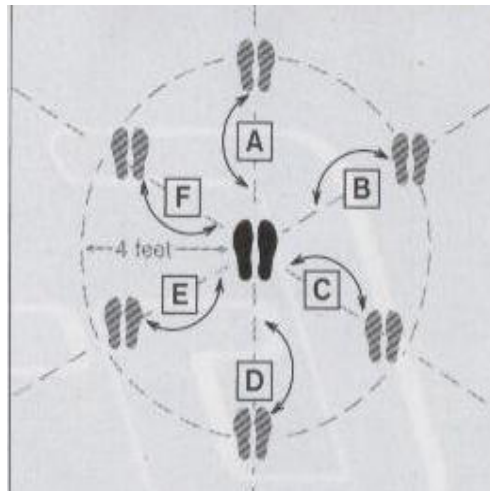
### Drill #3: Cone Drill



#### Explanation

This exercise comes from *Men's Journal*, July 2003, page 36. This is a wonderful drill when considering that most “first steps in sports don't start from a dead stop.” The 2 cones are 10 inches tall and spaced 12 to 16 inches apart. “Stand to the left of the cones and hop laterally over each, making sure to keep your feet together. When you hit the ground after the second cone, immediately break into a 10-yard sprint.” On the court, we've placed the cones just inside half court. When you land after the second cone, immediately break into a sprint to the baseline.

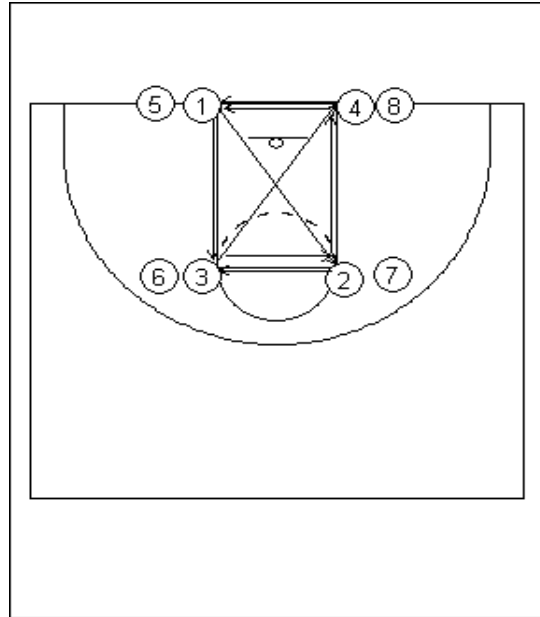
### Drill #4: Circle Drill



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“Use chalk or tape to mark off six four-foot spokes of a wheel at 60-degree intervals. Place different colored beanbags at the varying distances between A, B, C, D, E, and F. Stand facing beanbag A; jump over it and back, keeping your feet together. Still facing A, jump over B and back, and so forth, until you’ve done all six. Rest 15 seconds. Turn to face B and repeat the drill. Do one circuit clockwise and another counterclockwise.” {*Men’s Journal*, July 2003, page 36.}

### Drill #5: Around the Lanes



#### Explanation

Start on the baseline (1) and sprint diagonally to the elbow at the free throw line. Break down and slide (2) across the free throw line to the opposite elbow. Sprint diagonally (3) to the baseline, and then slide (4) across the baseline to where you began. Next, slide (5) up the lane to the same side elbow. Sprint across (6) the free throw line; then slide down the opposite lane (7). Sprint across the baseline to where you began.

This exercise is fantastic for lateral movement and change of pace from sliding to sprinting in different directions, which is so often the case in basketball.

As stated earlier, staying **Low and Athletic** is incredibly vital to a player’s and team’s basketball success. The above drills are a great way to start on the pathway to success.

Okay, footwork is improving. Now let’s put a ball in our hands and begin improving one’s ballhandling skills. Perhaps your goal is to dribble like Iverson or one of the Harlem Globetrotters, or maybe you simply need to keep the defense at bay. First and foremost is your ability to dribble with both hands. Nothing fancy, but you must be

able to control the ball effectively with both hands – without looking at the ball or floor. Purchase goggles designed to help with ballhandling; they really work. The drills that follow assume you can control the ball with both hands. Let's get started.

## **Ballhandling Drills**

### **Drill #1: Pistol Circle**

One of the game's great ball handlers developed and popularized this drill many years ago. An amazing player he was, he practiced tirelessly to perfect the art of dribbling. His name is *Pistol* Pete Maravich, and this is his drill. It's incredibly simple, and that's the beauty of it. All you need is a basketball and a circle drawn or taped out on the floor roughly 7' to 8' across.

For two minutes, you dribble anywhere inside the circle at game speed using every move you have: between the legs, behind the back, cross over, hesitation or change of pace, spin or reverse, and anything you've got that's legal. Do not leave the circle and be sure to attack all parts of the circle at game speed. This is vital. You want to be able to control the ball in a confined area at top speed.

Build up time in the circle. After a few two-minute exhibitions, increase the time to 3 minutes, then 4 and finally 5. This drill is undoubtedly tiring, but its value can't be overstated. Ball control is an invaluable skill; the players who possess this skill will always receive playing time.

### **Drill #2: Figure 8**

Every coach in the world probably uses this drill at some point; this shows the greatness of the drill. Control your dribble low to the ground and then dribble in and around your legs in a Figure 8 shape. Force yourself to keep total control of the ball as you pick up speed around your legs.

Next, pick the ball up, bend over and pass the ball from hand to hand and around your lower legs in a Figure 8 shape. Control the ball and get it moving quickly. Finally, with one hand behind your leg and one in front of the other, hold the basketball in the middle of your legs a few inches off the ground. Drop the ball and catch it immediately after it bounces, but switch hands so that the hand that was behind a leg is now in front and vice versa. Do this quickly and get those arms moving efficiently. Do it again, but don't let the ball bounce!

These are four wonderful drills for ball control and hand-eye coordination one can do without even moving out of a single spot. You can literally remain stationary the entire time all four drills are executed.

### **Drill #3: Attack the Chair**

This is a fantastic drill for attacking and then escaping a defender. Place the chair between the free throw line and the three-point circle. Stand with the basketball near half court, and then at game speed, dribble straight toward the chair – the defender. As you

approach the chair, break down and perform a cross-over dribble to your left, making sure the cross-over is low, is swept from side-to-side quickly and that when the ball gets into your left hand, you accelerate for one dribble. The first 15 times through, you take one dribble toward the basket for a pull-up jump shot. Then perform the exact same move with one dribble to the right, sweeping the ball across with the left hand and accelerating when the ball is in the right hand.

You've now performed 30 crossovers, 15 to the left and 15 to the right. Now it's time for between-the-legs. In the exact same manner as the cross-over, attack the chair at game speed; prior to picking up a charge, get Low and Athletic, and sweep the ball between your legs from your right hand to your left and accelerate with one dribble that gets behind the defender and into the paint. Do this 15 times. Do the same move to the right side 15 times.

Next it's time for behind-the-back. Same concept; attack and accelerate into a pull-up jump shot fifteen times from each side. After behind-the-back, move to a spin or reverse dribble 15 times from each side. This is a solid 120 shots, all executed properly: staying low, avoiding the charge, accelerating when the ball gets switched to the opposite hand, and taking one strong dribble into a pull-up jump shot behind your defender. Cycle 1 is over. It's time for Cycle 2.

Cycle 2 asks you to repeat all four dribble moves again 15 times from each side, but this time you take 2 dribbles and get all the way to the rim, or as close to the rim as possible and hit either a layup, a reverse layup, or a short jump shot deep into the paint. At the completion of this cycle, you will have taken 240 shots in a fairly short period of time and worked on 4 very important moves that are relevant to the game.

The ability to perform these moves efficiently is certainly not an invitation to be fancy at the drop of a hat; it's always more efficient to dribble straight ahead with no move if the defense will allow it; since defenses rarely do allow straight-ahead progress, these basic moves are necessary.

#### **Drill #4: Running with Scissors**

This one's a lot of fun but awfully frustrating when first learning. Stand on the baseline with a ball in one hand and then run to the other end of the court, passing the ball between your legs every step of the way. Make sure you keep your eyes up and focused on what's ahead of you; if you look at the ball, you'll trip. Once you and a couple of teammates are accomplished at making it to the opposite end of the court and back, it's a great way to race, and it's a fantastic way to develop a blind faith in your ability to control the ball without looking at it.

#### **Drill #5: Cones**

Dribbling between and around the cones is as old a ballhandling drill as there is, and that's the reason it's included here: the classics just keep proving worthy. Set up a series of cones around the gym floor or driveway or alley way. First set them up in a straight line, say 12 to 15 of them. {If you're using a court as opposed to the street, have the last cone end in a position where you can execute a layup at the end. Grab your own rebound and then come back through.} Start on the right or left side of the first cone and

then, at three-quarters game speed, practice staying low and controlling the ball, dribbling around the cones, using both hands. Bringing the ball from one hand to the other is not a cross-over move; it's simply pushing the ball from left to right and vice versa. Stay low at all times. Go through the cones 10 times.

The next 10 times you go through the cones are with a cross-over move at each cone. Make sure the cones are spread far enough so that you won't be on top of the subsequent cone after you accelerate. The next 10 times employ a between-the-legs move, then follow it up with a spin or reverse move.

Next, arrange the cones 1 big step outside and around the center-court circle. Practice simple ball control switching hands moving between three-quarter to full speed.

These are five basic ballhandling drills that will enhance one's ability to control the ball and be an effective team player regardless of position played. Once you've mastered these drills, continue to do them along with more advanced drills. There's never a substitute for fundamentals.

By now your footwork has improved as have your ballhandling skills. Let's move on to the next stage – shooting. Here are 5 great individual shooting drills.

## **Shooting Drills**

### **Drill #1: Form Shooting**

The key word here is BEEF.

B = Balance

E = Eyes

E = Elbow

F = Follow Through

Let's examine each letter as the drill is set up. Take the ball in your shooting hand and stand almost underneath the basket, approximately 4" to 6" away from the front of the rim. B = Balance. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, toes pointing forward with a comfortable bend to your knees. If you're right-handed, your right foot should be a few inches behind the mark of your left foot. Place the ball in your shooting hand and your guide – or off – hand behind your back. Make sure your shoulders are squared to the basket. E = Eyes. You're balanced and your shoulders are square; you have the ball in your shooting hand and your guide, or off-hand, behind your back. Now glue your eyes to the rim. There are several theories on where your eyes should focus. Hoop Mechanix endorses the theory of focusing on the back part of the rim for a couple of reasons: 1. it's great training for bank shots since the focus is the backboard, located beyond the front of the rim, and 2. most coaches prefer players to miss their shots long

rather than short. Missing long allows for a long rebound, often an offensive rebound, and missing long usually indicates a player still has his legs under him.

E = Elbow. You're perfectly aligned with the first two letters; it's now time to get the shooting arm aligned. The ball is resting in your shooting hand ready to be propelled off of your fingers tips toward the basket. In order to make sure your release is perfect every time, it is necessary that the elbow of your shooting hand be directly over the thigh-to-knee area of your shooting leg, and that the elbow itself is at a 90-degree angle. F = Follow Through. At this point, you're aligned and ready to shoot. In one graceful and fluid motion, bend your knees and then shoot, rising onto the balls of your feet, remaining squared to the basket, and most importantly, releasing the ball with a nice, high arc that slides off your fingertips as your wrist is extended way above your head. Your fingers should remain in the direction of the rim in such a manner as though they look like they're searching for cookies in a cookie jar on the highest shelf in the pantry.

This fundamental shooting motion is called Form Shooting. Notice, you're not leaving your feet like a jump shot. You are simply rising to the balls of your feet honing your technique, from footwork and bend of the knee to shoulders squared to eyes focused on the back of the rim to the proper release and hold of your hand to the rim.

1. At a distance of 4" to 6" from underneath the basket, shoot for 5 minutes making as many swish shots as possible. Since you're almost underneath the basket, work on perfecting a great arc.

2. Step back a foot and form shoot for another 5 minutes. The angle's now a slight bit different since you're not underneath the rim. Make sure you work on retaining a nice, high arc.

3. Take another step back and continue perfecting your shooting form. As you move back from the basket, your form's perfection becomes more vital because there's more margin for error. You'll bend your knees a little deeper and you'll extend with a bit more force. Retain the arc and extended release.

4. Form shoot until you reach the Free Throw Line and end with 10 made shots from the line using perfect form shooting. You're now ready to move on to shooting drills that move.

### **Drill #2: Bounce!**

Tiring and fun! But it's an incredible workout for any player at any position, and all of it happens inside the paint. Just as big guys need to be able to handle the ball, guards need to be able to maneuver inside the paint. This drill accomplishes that, and so much more.

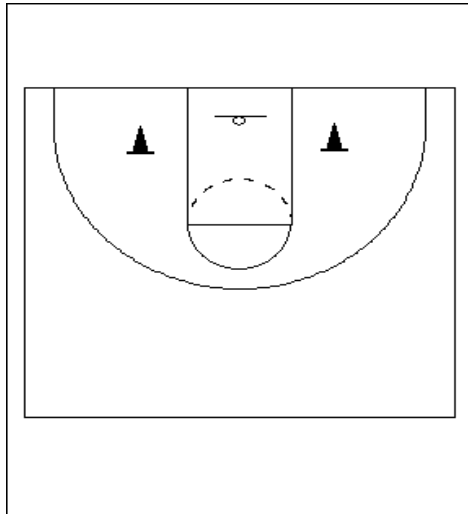
Standing inside the paint, bounce the ball high and away from you by a few feet. Attack the ball at the top of your jump and come down with it as one does with a power rebound; in other words, bring the ball strongly to your chin and get your elbows out. Now you have options: jump shot, up-and-under, pump fake with 1 dribble that takes you to the basket, etc. Whichever move you make, make it quickly and deliberately. Attack the basket at least 50% of the time; this gives you 50% to work on short jump shots and short bank shots.

As soon as you rebound your made shot, bounce the ball once again toward another spot on the floor, and repeat all steps: strong rebound and deliberate move with no more than one dribble. For the first 5 – 7 minutes, limit yourself to just one dribble. This will not only force your creativity at getting to the basket or putting yourself in a position for a short jumper, but it will also accelerate the pace at which this drill starts off.

There is no hesitation for a solid 5 – 7 minutes. Attack your missed shots and put them in; attack your made shots quickly from the net and Bounce the ball again. Five to seven minutes with 0 or 1 dribble allowed is a tremendous workout. After 5 – 7 minutes, spend the next 3 – 5 minutes bouncing the ball nearer but within the three-point line. Now you get two dribbles after coming down with a strong rebound.

Work on all your moves. Make them strong and deliberate. Attack the basket 50% of the time while devoting the other 50% to short jumpers and layups. It's a tiring, but worthwhile drill.

### **Drill #3: The Bank is Open**



A consistent bank shot requires practice and patience. In this drill, you start in the position of one of the cones, just outside the paint and at an angle to the backboard. For the next 50 shots, 25 at each side, you will: 1. shoot a beautifully arced bank shot that kisses the backboard on the way down into the net; 2. retrieve your made or missed basket and hurry to the other cone where you'll; 3. quickly align your body so that you can shoot a bank shot from the opposite side. This is a continuous shooting drill for 50 shots. Make a solid effort to get to the opposite cone under control with your dribble.

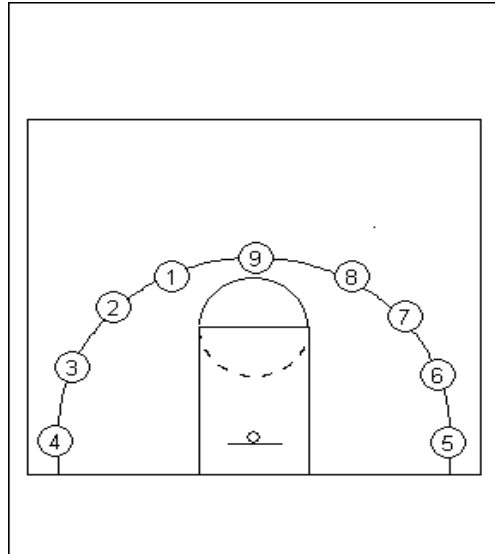
For the next 50 shots, move the cones out toward the three-point line a foot. Then move them again for another 50 shots until you reach just inside the three-point line. Few people practice banking in three-point shot, so shooting beyond the three-point line is self-defeating, but within the three-point line, it's a beautiful shot and a high-percentage one at that if the angle's good.

### Drill #4: Spin & Shoot

To make the most out of individual shooting drills, it's important that you duplicate as much of what can happen in a game as possible. When by yourself on a court, a great way to get shots with movement is simply to spin the ball out in front of you so that it bounces back into your hands. As the ball bounces toward you, you take your natural movement into the pass with hands and feet properly positioned to release a soft jump shot. Take 15-20 shots each from several comfortable locations on the floor. Take 15-20 shots again from the spots employing a ball or head fake.

Spinning the ball so that it comes back to you is also a great way to work on post moves. Get yourself positioned at the high post or the block, spin the ball, catch, and hone moves or create new ones.

### Drill #5: 9-Spot Layups



Few things rile a coach's blood like missed layups. Other than a dunk, a layup is as close to the rim as one can get; it's expected that 100% of these shots should be made, although reality says probably 85% - 90%. This drill will definitely help to keep one's layup percentage near 100%. It's executed in three stages from the 8 of the 9 spots identified. Only spot #9 will have just 1 stage. Since this spot is directly down the center of the court, practice laying the ball right over the front of the rim. This is an angle you hope not to have to shoot from, especially if you can't dunk, but it's one from which you must be prepared. The three stages are:

1. Straight
2. Jump stop
3. Reverse

Starting at spot #1, drive hard at game speed and complete a standard layup. Dribble out to spot #1, drive hard and perform a layup from a jump stop. Emphasize

power on your way up to the basket. Jump stops are valuable when going up for a layup in a crowd. Finally, at game speed, drive hard and complete a reverse layup from spot #1. The value in a reverse layup is not in its flash, but rather in its ability to use the rim as another defender. {It certainly doesn't hurt however when the home crowd cheers for the athleticism you've been working on for hours.}

Continue to perform all three layups from spots #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7, and #8. Emphasize the following:

- ✓ Drive at game speed.
- ✓ Use the proper hand to attack the basket – right hand from the right side and left from the left side.
- ✓ Project strength and power when exploding from your jump stop.
- ✓ Make sure both feet land together on your jump stop to avoid a traveling violation.
- ✓ Keep your eyes up.
- ✓ Use the glass.

## **Passing Drills**

### **Passing Drill #1: Rapid Fire Stationary**

All a player needs for this drill is a ball and a wall. Stand 10-12 feet from the wall and practice chest, bounce, wrap around, and over-the-head passes to a designated spot on the wall. Proper release, proper leg work into the pass must be emphasized. Keep your eyes focused on your target. Make 25 chest passes, 25 bounce passes, 25 wrap-around passes from both sides with both hands, and 25 over-the-head passes, then step back 5 feet and repeat. Complete this cycle and step back 5 more feet to complete another cycle from approximately 20 feet away.

### **Passing Drill #2: Rapid Fire Slide**

In similar fashion to the above drill, the Rapid Fire Slide requires a ball and a wall. The distances from the wall are the same as are the types of passes completed and the repetitions. What makes this drill different is that you slide 15 to 20 feet to your right and then back, all the while completing your repetitions of passes. The added degree of difficulty – movement – makes for a better passer come game time.

### **Passing Drill #3: Relax!**

This drill is called Relax! because players get to lie down and stare up at the ceiling. With a player on his back and a ball in his hands at the chest, practice the proper release of a chest pass a few feet toward the ceiling. Repeat 20 times. The next repetition should increase in height, and keep going until you lose the consistency of the ball returning straight to your hands. {This is also a wonderful drill to practice the proper release of one's shot.}

### **Passing Drill #4: Backspin Mechanix**

You'll need strong wrists for this drill. Catching the pass properly is a skill greatly overlooked, and one that when perfected, will open many more offensive opportunities to any player. We know what you're thinking: "I know how to catch a pass." Do you? Receiving the pass in basketball is more than simply stopping a ball coming in your direction with your hands. Receiving the pass in basketball means being in proper position with your entire body – from head and eyes to feet – so that you give yourself the best opportunity to be a threat to the defense.

Toss the ball at eye level a foot or two in front of your body with as much back spin as possible. As the ball bounces back toward you, you must pretend you are receiving a pass from a teammate. Are your hands extended to receive the pass? Are you practicing landing at a jump stop, thus allowing either foot to be your pivot foot? Are you practicing squaring up perfectly to the basket in a beautiful triple threat position so that you appear as a threat to the defense every time? Are you waiting for the ball to come into your hands, or are you meeting the basketball in mid-flight? { You want to meet the ball; this cuts down chances for a defender to steal the ball. } How's your peripheral vision? When you break down into a triple threat position, can you see the whole court ahead of you where your teammates will be?

It is vital that you be able to receive the pass properly to increase the amount of opportunities you'll have as an offensive player. Catching the ball standing straight up and not breaking down into a triple threat position with your focus toward the basket is a waste of another player's pass to you. Your reception of the pass has accomplished nothing, and this should always be avoided. Make yourself a threat each time you receive the pass.

### **Passing Drill #5: Against the Wall**

Passing drills are obviously best accomplished with at least two people, but when by oneself, this is another good drill because of its emphasis on developing strength in the wrists. Stand two-to-three feet from the wall with a ball at chest level or slightly above, and with a good flick of the wrist, fire the ball to the wall. Have your hands ready for the ricochet; as quickly as possible with as little arm movement as possible, fire the ball back to the wall using just your wrists. Continue for 1 minute. Rest for 30 second. Repeat for two minutes. Build up to 4 or 5 minutes utilizing your wrists only. You'll be surprised at the speed and efficiency of your passes as your wrists and accuracy develop.

## 8. Conditioning

For any athlete in any sport, conditioning is of prime importance, for the ability to last the entire contest gives the individual or team a chance at victory. One maxim among coaches is that the best conditioned team will win a close game in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. This means taking care of one's body before, during and after working out. This includes the foods and liquids one eats and drinks. There's so much information about nutrition that we won't pretend to be nutritionists; do your own research; perhaps consult our friends at SportSpecific.com and design meals and snacks that both taste good and are great for the athletic body.

As for basketball conditioning, always perform dynamic stretching prior to taking to the floor. By dynamic, we mean stretching that moves the whole body as opposed to simply sitting on the floor and stretching. Dynamic stretching tends to get the blood flowing a lot better allowing for a more successful athletic performance. Here are a few dynamic stretches:

- **High Knees:** Walk for 20 yards, lifting each knee high to one's chest each time a step is taken. Don't lift lazily; power the knee toward the chest like an exaggerated march.
- **Heel-Toe:** Also for 20 yards, walk heel to toe and be deliberate in each step to stretch the muscles in your legs.
- **Jog in Place:** 1 minute ... rest for 30 seconds ... jog for 1 minute.
- **Jumping Jacks:** Everyone remembers these from calisthenics class 100 years ago, but they are dynamic and they do help stretch the muscles while inviting blood flow. Do 50.
- **Pendulum Kicks:** Put your hands against the wall or a fence or the bleachers and swing one leg from right to left in front of the body. Do this 20 times nice and high, and then switch legs.

One of the greatest exercises an athlete can do is jumping rope. Incredible cardiovascular workout. Time yourself for a minute. Work up to 5 minutes of continuous rope jumping. Sprints are also a great exercise for basketball players. Mark off 10 yards and 20 yards and 30 yards and practice sprinting all out. A basketball court is 94 feet, a tad over 30 yards, so building up to 30-yard sprints is all that's necessary.

It's also a great idea to practice 10, 20 and 30-yard sprints by turning and sprinting backward each time you pass the halfway mark. Basketball is a game of

tremendous body control, and it often requires the ability to go forward and then backward in the blink of an eye.

Since basketball is also a game of explosive moves, it's a good idea to practice explosive jumping exercises, be they standing broad jumps, or exploding straight up as high as one can jump, or jumping onto a wooden box that's high enough off the ground to pose a challenge.

There are numerous books and websites (including [www.hoopmechanix.com](http://www.hoopmechanix.com)) that detail incredible conditioning drills for basketball players – both individual and team drills. We barely scratched the surface in these two pages, but we feel it necessary to emphasize how important conditioning is to the finely tuned athlete. Check out our website or any of the hundreds of great books available and make sure your son or daughter is in the best physical condition of his or her life. They'll thank you for it.

## 9. Quotes, Basketball Truths, Life Truths

\* \* \*

### WHAT IT TAKES TO BE NO. 1

by

Bill Russell

[former Boston Celtic and NBA Hall of Famer]

The first part's easy. You arrange to be born with a lot of tools. In my game that means a good pair of hands and a good set of reflexes. Coming on at 6' 9" doesn't hurt you too much, either.

But that's only the beginning. Because to get to where you want to go, you've got to drive and push yourself relentlessly. You've got to want to win so badly that the thought of coming in second is simply intolerable. And you've got to pay the price of winning.

Paying the price, in anything you do, is spelled "work." Days and nights and years of work. And it's too bad that many men – men who are born with the talent – think of "work" as a dirty word.

But there's another angle of being No. 1. Getting there is tough enough. Staying there is something else. It is, in fact, a lot like being a gunfighter. Day after day ... 80 grueling games a year ... another hot young hand comes on to try you. He's watched and studied you ever since he was a kid. And he thinks he's ready to take you. And the fact is that if you let up for a moment, he'll do it. You lose that fine, competitive edge, mentally or physically, and you're dead.

Forget about luck. You make your own luck. A year or so ago, a prominent coach put it pretty well. He said, "There's only one thing I believe in about luck ... it's unlucky to be behind at the end of the game." And that's what it's all about.

\* \* \*

### WHAT IT TAKES TO BE NO. 1

by

Rocky Marciano

[former undefeated Heavyweight Boxing Champion of the World]

There is no doubt that man is a competitive animal. And there is no place where this fact is more obvious than in the ring. There is no second place. Either you win, or you lose. When they call you champ, it is because you don't lose.

A professional prize fight can last forty-five minutes. That's a long time to keep going. You have to be physically prepared. And you have to be mentally prepared. That means you have to understand pain. There is pain in training. In running the extra mile, when your legs feel like logs. In the dull monotonous grind, at the light bag and the heavy bag. But there's a reason for it. The moment you step into the ring, you know it was worth it. If you've pushed your body into its best shape, there's one less thing to worry about. Maybe it will give you one minute's more strength. That minute can win you the fight.

Then there's the fear. That's always there. You're not in the ring to demonstrate your courage. You're in there to win the fight. So you handle the fear, maybe even use it. It's out of sight, somewhere behind you, but if you're not completely prepared, it pops up in front of you and then you're finished.

To win takes a complete commitment of mind and body. When you can't make that commitment, they don't call you champ anymore.

\* \* \*

## **A Parable**

anonymous

Two horses are at the starting gate. Each has been training for months in preparation for this moment. Each has had perfect conditions leading up to the race. Weather, facilities; everything has been perfect. It appears that neither horse has an advantage. On the day of the race, both horses are stunning to behold. Shiny coats, ripped physiques. Surely, no one would be surprised if these two glorious horses tied for the lead.

When the bell sounds, both horses sprint and attain a full gallop within seconds. Beautiful to behold, powerful and graceful, they kick up clouds of dirt and dust while steams bursts from their noses. In their eyes, utter determination to finish first.

They round both corners and head down the back straightaway dead even. The winner of the race is to be awarded \$1,000,000; the loser, \$100,000. The jockeys whip the horses' hindquarters in an effort to gain an inch of ground. Beads of sweat fly off the foreheads of not only the jockeys, but also the horses.

As they make the last turn, the crowd's cheer is boisterous, yet neither jockey can hear it. Their focus is too great. Only the finish line matters. When the photo finish is examined, it's determined that victory is achieved by an inch.

Moral: The will to prevail by merely an inch can be worth ten times the reward.

\* \* \*

## **INDISPENSABLE**

Sometime, when you're feeling important,  
Sometime, when you're ego's in bloom,  
Sometime, when you take it for granted,  
You're the best qualified in the room.

Sometime when you feel that your going  
Would leave an unfillable hold,  
Just follow this simple instruction,  
And see how it humbles your soul.

Take a bucket and fill it with water,  
Put you hand in it, up to the wrist;  
Pull it out, and the hole that's remaining  
Is a measure of how you'll be missed.

You may splash all you please when you enter,  
You can stir up the water galore,  
But stop, and you'll find in a minute,  
That it looks quite the same as before.

The moral in this quaint example,  
Is do just the best you can,  
Be proud of yourself, but remember,  
There's no indispensable man.

SMU BASKETBALL

\* \* \*

- ✓ Do not foul a jump shooter.
- ✓ When playing defense in the half-court set, do not let the offensive man cross in front of your face in an effort to gain shooting or rebounding position.
- ✓ Players are made during the off-season. Great teams are made during practice.
- ✓ When crossing either sideline or baseline, your mindset must be 100% business.
- ✓ Know and understand your role, your limitations and your strengths.
- ✓ When a coach or player is talking, listen. “No one ever learned anything from talking.” – Lou Holtz
- ✓ Stop the ball on all breaks.
- ✓ Give up no lay-ups.
- ✓ Give up no easy points on inbounds plays.
- ✓ Stay mentally disciplined at all times.
- ✓ Get a good shot at the basket on every possession. A good shot is defined as an unimpeded view to the basket.
- ✓ Free Throws in the first quarter are as valuable as Free Throws in the fourth quarter. Team Goal = 75%.
- ✓ Defense starts with offense. Good shot selection is vital for solid transition defense.
- ✓ Talk on defense; it is the most important intangible to a team’s success.
- ✓ Sprint in transition.
- ✓ Special Teams are vital: make them worth at least 6-10 points per game.
  - Jump Ball
  - Second chance after missed Free Throw
  - Baseline out of Bounds (BLOB)
  - Sideline out of Bounds (SLOB)
  - Set play after Time Out
- ✓ Whoever is the guard furthest from the basket when the shot goes up must get back to stop transition.
- ✓ An inside game includes the ability to get inside the paint off the dribble.
- ✓ Let the referees do their job.
- ✓ The ball moves faster than players. Move the ball quickly and with precision.
- ✓ When coming off a teammate’s screen, come off shoulder-to-shoulder to force the defenseman to make a decision on how to cover.
- ✓ Great players have superb court awareness.

\* \* \*

“A prudent team creates cushions as insurance against adversity. Average teams lean on those cushions. Great teams use the cushions as springboards to attain the next level of greatness.” – Pat Riley

“Rebounding is not a democratic situation. Everyone rebounds.” – Jim Calhoun

“Defense is only as good as your box outs.” – Matt Doherty

“Shooting makes up for a multitude of sins.” – Hubie Brown

PREPAREDNESS YIELDS INTENSITY → CONFIDENCE →  
SUCCESS → SELF ESTEEM → PRODUCTIVE PLAYERS AND  
CITIZENS

“Good, better, best. Never let it rest. Until your good is better and your better best.” – Tim Duncan

“The difference between an extraordinary player and an ordinary player is that little extra.” – Michael Burks

“Basketball is like photography; if you don’t focus, all you have is the negative.” – Dan Frisby

“The smaller the detail, the greater the value.” – Doug Johnson

“Basketball is a game that gives you every chance to be great, and puts every pressure on you to prove that you haven’t got what it takes. It never takes away the chance, and it never eases up on the pressure.” – Coach Bob Sundvold

“If I was given eight hours to chop down a tree, I would spend seven hours sharpening my ax.” – Abraham Lincoln

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” – Henry Ford

“Everyone can’t be a professional player at sports, but everyone can be a professional sport as a player.” – Upward Basketball

“I learned early that if I wanted to achieve anything in life, I’d have to do it myself. I learned that I had to be accountable.” – Lenny Wilkens

“Keep it simple. When you get too complex, you forget the obvious.” – Al Maguire

“First master the fundamentals.” – Larry Bird

“Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” – Henry David Thoreau

“Blame is the coward’s way out.” – Elvin Hayes

“You would rather your team be too aggressive than have too much knowledge.” – Coach Jerry Wainwright

“Too many people overvalue what they are and undervalue what they are.” – Malcolm S. Forbes

“What I do best is share my enthusiasm.” – Bill Gates

Do's and Don'ts for Shooting (Coach Jerry Wainwright, University of Richmond)

Do ...

- Know your range.
- Know what a good shot is.
- When receiving a pass for a shot, step into the pass to get the shot off more quickly.
- Provide passers a target as a receiver.
- Use shot fakes to be the defense.
- Lift the elbow, follow through, reach for the basket.
- Get power for the shot from the legs.
- Practice shooting as if you are in a game.

Don't ...

- Take giant steps. Don't pass up an open 12-footer to get a contested 8-footer.
- Leave the off hand on the ball too long.
- Fade on the shot.
- Follow the flight of the ball – keep your eye on the target.
- Dip or hitch. Catch the ball, get it into shooting position, and shoot.

“Everything in life can't always be flowery. You have to be strong enough to take the attacks, to roll with the punches. Facing adversity and overcoming is part of being a champion.” – Don Shula

*The ABC's of Great Man-to-Man Defense* by Sam Santilli, Girls Basketball Coach Euclid (OH) High School, *Coach Magazine*, April 2002

**A**ggressiveness and intensity are musts in practice and games.

**B**ox out properly to limit opponents to one shot.

**C**lose out on the perimeter and contain the dribbler.

**D**eny all cutters and flashers into the key.

**E**liminate dribble penetration.

**F**ight through picks and force the ball to the sideline for bad shots.

**G**et back on defense quickly in transition. Stop the ball first and then match up.

**H**elp and recover if a teammate is beaten.

**I**f the ball is ahead of you in transition, sprint after it and flick or fill the passing lane.

**J**am the rebounder to slow down the potential fast break.

**K**eep the ball out of the key and use some kind of double down if the ball does get in there.

**Locate the ball and your man at all times. Point to both as a constant reminder whenever you're off the ball.**

**Move on the pass, not on the catch.**

**No uncontested shots should be allowed.**

**Out-hustle your opponent to all loose balls and rebounds.**

**Pressure the ball at all times and take pride in your defense.**

**Quick hands and feet are a must. Play on the balls of your feet, not on your heels.**

**Read the passer's eyes and shoulders. Anticipate the pass so you can deflect or steal it.**

**Stay low, shuffle and slide your feet when playing on the ball.**

**Talk on defense; call out cutters, screens, picks, skip passes, and shots.**

**Use defensive fakes to force bad passes and shots.**

**Visualize yourself in a flat triangle between the ball and your man.**

**Weakside defenders are responsible for back-door cuts, cross-court passes, and lobs to the post.**

**X marks the spot to get to in beating your man and drawing the charge or at least stopping the drive.**

**Yell "SHOT!" after opponents' shots to remind teammates to box out and rebound.**

**Zap all opposing layups is the rule at all times.**

## 10. Further Reading

1. *The Essence of the Game is Deception* by Leonard Koppett.
2. *Cages to Jumpshots* by Robert W. Peterson
3. *Loose Balls: The Short, Wild Life of the ABA as told by the Players, Coaches, and Movers and Shakers Who Made It Happen* by Terry Pluto
4. *Wooden* by John Wooden
5. *They Call Me Coach* by John Wooden
6. *Knight: My Story* by Bob Knight and Bob Hammel
7. *Sacred Hoops: Spiritual Lessons of a Hardwood Warrior* by Phil Jackson and Hugh Delehanty
8. *Five Star Basketball Drills* by Howard Garfinkle and Will Klein
9. *Basketball: The Complete Handbook of Individual Skills* by Robert A. Fox
10. *The Encyclopedia of Defensive Basketball Drills* by Burrall Paye
11. *Drive: The Story of my Life* by Larry Bird and Bob Ryan
12. *Smooth Moves: Juking, Jamming, Hooking & Slamming: Basketball's Plays, Players, Action & Style*: Derek Gentile.

The above list is in no particular order, not even alphabetical. These 12 books cover a great spectrum of the game, from drills to philosophy to anecdotes and biography. Please read about the history of the game and the people who make it great. Many of the drills in books 8, 9 and 10 can be done on an individual basis. Help your children succeed; work with them, play with them, keep them grounded, and always be realistic. Most importantly, let them have fun both playing and reading about this wonderful game. So go ahead, pick up 1 or 2 from the list and start a fantastic relationship with the game your child loves.

Feel free to e-mail us with books you love so we can add them to future lists. E-mail us at [hoopmechanix@hotmail.com](mailto:hoopmechanix@hotmail.com)

## 11. Parent Do's & Don'ts

Do ...

- ... encourage your child to enjoy the great game of basketball
- ... teach your child the fundamentals
- ... go outside and play basketball with your child, and we do mean 'play' {quit instructing; go out and have some un-pressured fun}
- ... take pictures and films of your child; the memories are priceless regardless of athletic level attained
- ... encourage good sportsmanship in your child and his / her teammates
- ... be the role model of good sportsmanship for your child and his / her teammates
- ... educate your child about healthy and nutritious eating habits

Don't ...

- ... discourage your child from enjoying the great game of basketball
- ... deny your child the fundamentals of the game
- ... neglect having fun playing basketball with your child
- ... embarrass yourself or your child by yelling at referees
- ... yell "SHOOT" from the stands every time your child touches the ball {your child is trying to play within a team atmosphere and knows or is learning the appropriate time to shoot the ball}
- ... ever get into shouting matches with fans of the other team

Always remember the words of Grantland Rice:

*For when the one Great Scorer  
Comes to mark against your name  
He marks not that you won or lost  
But how you played the game.*

Let's make sure our child develop this attitude about sports, that Winning Isn't  
Always Measured in W's.