COURSE TRANSCRIPT

MODULE 1

OVERALL PHILOSOPHY

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Overall Philosophy

Full course transcript. The spoken presentation has been preserved and lightly edited only for punctuation, capitalization, and readability.

01 / WELCOME, COACH

Hey coach, so excited to be here with you and to be able to share the game with you and so many things that have been with me for a very long time in coaching. We're not here to talk about right or wrong. We're here to be able to share a better way and a way that can make you more comfortable and confident. The goal is the same for your players as it is for you as a coach that you become more comfortable and confident the longer that you coach. And it's okay to be nervous. It's okay to be uncomfortable. It's okay to be unsure.

But this is a safe environment for all of us to be able to share and learn and grow and simply be able to add some ideas to help you be more effective as a sport parent coach. My background just real quickly, 17 year college head coach, started Basketball Immersion in 2014 where literally I've been able to share the game around the world. From every level from the NBA on down to local youth levels. And for me, my ideas are well founded because I've had a chance for about 30 plus years in coaching to be able to muck around with these ideas and try them.

Before I became a college head coach, I coached all levels, boys and girls, youth on up to professional level. And then as a college coach, I had a chance to be able to coach for 17 years. And then after college coaching, I had a chance to be able to coach in youth spaces and be able to watch my daughters who over last five years have been in youth basketball throughout the Los Angeles area. For me, again, it's a question of is there a better way? And for you as a sports parent, I would argue that there is. And it's a simpler way than a lot of us are approaching it.

And this is now well founded and well documented because I've done this with multiple coaches and multiple levels from them coaching new players that never played before to them coaching a little bit better teams, but I've been able to mentor a number of coaches and both the girls and the boys side at youth levels, all sport parents who are coaching. And in some cases, some wanted to coach and other cases, some had to coach because there was no one else to do it. And we totally understand that there's a lot of reasons why you're here.

And the benefit to you is that we're going to simplify the process throughout this course and be able to add value to your coaching so that you can do the best for your players.

02 / KEEP IT SIMPLE

There's a core mindset for parent coaches and that is to be able to keep it simple and simple is sophisticated and specifically to basketball. Then you're going to Keep this in mind throughout the whole presentation, which is you're going to play basketball to get better at basketball. And that's the key part to this approach. You can't mess it up. Now I say that you can't mess it up if you focus on all

aspects of your practices, whether you practice twice a week for an hour or you have more practices than that or less practices than that.

I cannot encourage you enough to be able to adopt and adapt these ideas around playing basketball in basketball practice. The reason is because you don't have a lot of time and also because there is enough evidence-based research, which I'll get into that here, that supports this notion that one of the best ways to be able to learn is actually by playing the sport that you're trying to get better at. This is very common sense for most of us as parents as we reflect back to some of the things that we learned in our life. Not everything was taught in this systemic way.

Predominant teaching method that exists for most basketball coaches in the youth spaces is to be able to teach technique first. The idea that players can't play basketball unless they can dribble, pass, and shoot first. This is categorically false. When you learned how to play tag, I understand that's a little bit simpler, less complex than basketball. When you learned how to play tag in the playground, nobody taught you technique. You just figured out how to play tag the best you could. And if you're competitive, you started to figure out advantages and to try and hide disadvantages.

This is the same goal for players by putting them in the game as quickly as possible and letting them play the game will increase engagement and entertainment, both key factors in the ongoing development of a player and the ongoing retention of a player in the sport, but will also ensure that the things that are happening in practice are actually helping them in a game. I'll give you a quick example. One of the things that will happen the most at the youth level as a parent coach is that there will be a high number of jump balls. This is because players are less skilled.

So jump balls happen because of fumble passes, missed dribbles, defense being ahead of the offense, all these different reasons why, but we know these things are going to happen. So we need them to happen as much as possible in our practices that we learn how to counter them and we learn how to adapt to them. And also we learn how to prevent them from happening as much as possible on offense and to make them happen as much as possible on defense. Both of those things can only be learned by playing the game and having these occurrences happen within your practices.

So if your players are playing basketball in practice, meaning they're making decisions, offense versus defense, whether it's guided or live guided practice means the defense is not live. But they are present so that there's some visual cues and some distracting information that also would be present in a game. It's very difficult to mess up their development if they get to play a lot of basketball.

And we'll get into it a little bit deeper, but one of the other main reasons why this is so important is that no matter where you play and where your players play, whether it's tournaments or you play in a league or you play games every week, they don't get enough repetitions in a game. To be able to accelerate their development and improve their development. And they definitely don't get as psychologically a safe space to be able to try things and make mistakes and struggle and learn and all the things that come from that. So we wanna make sure that they play a lot of basketball.

And if they play a lot of basketball, I can tell you 100% that your players will get better at basketball. Somewhere along the line with a whole bunch of drills and a drill culture and a whole bunch of training. Activities like training culture, where players do a high number of reps on air, meaning without defense, that we've lost the fact that playing basketball helps a player get better at basketball. So it's as simple as this. And I'm telling you this straight up.

If a player had never played basketball before and I was coaching a team as a parent, the first thing I would do throughout the whole bunch of first practices would, we would play basketball the way that we're going to play it in a game. Offense versus defense. I've coached them while they play. And we just literally play five on five, that's what you play. And it's going to be messy, it's going to be a ton of struggle. But I'm telling you, no matter what drill you do, no matter how good they get at any of your drills or any drill that you have, they're still gonna struggle when they play basketball in a game.

So we need to represent the game as much as possible at practice so that we know the things that they're experiencing in practice are helping them in the game. And this means increase the number of problems that they have to solve throughout your practices. So traditionally in parent coaches, there's a whole bunch of things to worry about. What are we gonna run? What am I teaching on offense? What footwork? Am I doing dominant pivot foot? Am I doing inside pivot foot? What about shooting mechanics? Should I spend a lot of time on shooting? Am I running the right drills? Am I calling the right plays?

And I'm gonna tell you this, forget about all of that. We're gonna focus on a number of principles of play. Three, they are, spacing, we're going to teach spacing, we're going to teach advantage, what is an advantage, how do I leverage an advantage, and we're going to teach shot selection. A shot at the rim is called a gold medal, an open shot is a silver medal in range in rhythm for a player, and then a bronze medal or no medal is a contested shot or a shot versus two defenders. So these principles of play will guide everything that we do throughout this course and throughout your teaching of your players.

I really feel that you could go into a practice, have them play basketball, and if you just coach those principles of play, and we'll show you how to do that, that your players will get better and you won't mess them up. By that I mean literally, if we go in and do a whole bunch of technique-based training, we teach them, this is the exact way to do a layup, this is the exact way to play defense, this is the exact way to do this, that number one, we will limit them rather than afford them. What does that mean?

Well, as soon as I explicitly tell them, this is how to do a layup, What do you think a young player is going to try and do? They're going to try and do it exactly that way. They're going to try and replicate the technique that I teach them. Right, left, up, bring the ball from your hip to your chin. Sure, there is technique that has an impact on a player, but not at the level that we're talking about. And what's most important is that a player experiences the game and they start to come up with their own solutions. And we'll talk more about this. So, I'm a youth parent coach.

I'm gonna make sure that from day one in practice, the first practice, and every practice after, my players are gonna play offense versus defense, and I'll show you some games to be able to do that. And then all I'm going to focus on in terms of what I'm gonna teach, I'm gonna teach my players baseline inbound, probably two plays, sideline inbound, press break entry, and just a defensive coherent system of saying how we're going to play defense and we'll talk about that but it's going to be very conceptual as well.

But those first three things baseline inbound, sideline inbound and press break entry, those can be set plays and if you need some set plays for this don't hesitate DM me, email me on social media or on email or on the Basketball Immersion contact page or on the parent coach contact page and I will be happy to send you some very simple things to be able to do. But yes, you should be trying to score

on baseline inbound and you should be trying to get the ball in securely on sideline inbound and press break entry. And these things will help your players do that. But the rest of it, it's possible.

I've done this with many coaches now. One program in particular has gone three years without ever putting in a basketball offensive play. They play conceptual, they play with space, they play with advantage. And they focus on all of their players being the best version of themselves, meaning all players get a chance to be able to dribble, pass and shoot. And we'll talk about that again as we shape that through Principles of Play. But we spend way too much time as parents or parent coach thinking about, I need to get this perfect offense. I need to teach this offense. I need to get these drills.

I need to teach these drills. Players need to get good at these drills. You know what? The only thing they need to get good at is they need to get good at playing basketball. And a lot of these things, and this is why I say you can't mess it up if you play basketball, a lot of these things like these three man weaves and these zigzag drills and these very rote learning type of drills where they're very scripted, it's almost like going to a dance practice and having a dance recital, that these things actually take away from a player's development and not add to it.

And we'll keep talking about that as we go throughout this first part of the course.

03 / START WITH THE GAME

The central philosophy, as I said, start with the game. Start with the game. You can't go wrong if they play basketball in practice. And again, the hardest thing to overcome is other people's perception of what this is. Oh, you can't start with basketball. You can't play basketball if they don't know how to play basketball. I'm like, well, how do they learn how to play basketball if you don't play basketball? Because you're going to play basketball games at some point. That's one of the parts of youth basketball. Also, the other part is like we've said this already about entertaining and engaging.

I want my players to want to come to practice. Want my players to enjoy practice and they're more likely to develop as players the more they enjoy coming to practice. Players don't want to come to practice and do a whole bunch of drills versus come to practice and play a whole bunch of basketball games. Real simple, as soon as players come in the gym, they start to self-organize and play basketball. That's been the foundation of kind of all the programs that I've worked with. Essentially this, if you want to think about it this way, one player comes in the gym, they can go shoot as soon as another player comes in the gym.

This is not coach led after the first time you set this up. After you set it up, the players self-organize and they do this, that they start playing basketball. So if there's two players there, they play one on one. As soon as another player plays, they play one on two, two on one, and then et cetera, et cetera, and it builds up to five on five or seven on seven. It doesn't matter. We just want them immediately to connect with the fact that the joy of playing a game is playing the game. And the start of practice is we're playing basketball.

We do not have to wait to the end of the meal to eat dessert in basketball practice. We can start with dessert and dessert for a player is getting to play basketball. And if you really reflect on this, if you played and reflect back on some of your sport experiences, particularly your basketball experiences, Hey, did you love doing five on O inbound? Did you love doing three-man weave? Did you love doing

shell drill? Or did you love the 10 minutes that your coach lets you play basketball and practice? Well, how about if we make that 10 minutes an hour and a half of practice? Think about the benefit for your players.

I know this goes against some survivorship bias and some traditional thinking, but if you really think about it, what would a player enjoy about your practice? They'd enjoy knowing that they're coming every day to practice and they get to start with the game. They get to learn from the game. And they get to prioritize their development over winning. And that will keep coming back to over and over again. If your goal is to win, you can cut this short right now. Here's how you win in youth basketball. You give the best player on your team the ball, you ISO them as much as possible or bring a high ball screen for them.

You make sure that they score a ton and handle the ball at time. And then you press and you play zone. And if you do those things, you will win. So I'm telling you, you can win. You can go win. Even with not having a ton of talent, if you can find that one player and you can get your team to be able to play full court and trap and you can play zone. But what is the goal ultimately? Is the goal retention of a player in your sport, basketball in this case, is the goal that your players every day notice that they're getting better and that they're feeling more comfortable and confident just like you are as a coach.

Is the goal that these players progress through the youth basketball system. Not every player is gonna be a Division I player, and not every player is gonna be a great high school player. That's not the goal of youth sport and youth basketball. The goal of youth basketball and youth sport is that they have a great experience getting better. So what is fun for these players? Fun for these players often is seeing themselves get better, competing, and being part of a team. And not every player has all three of those goals when it comes to playing a sport. Some just love being a part of the team.

They're playing because their friends are there. Some love achievement and really want to improve. So they want to notice that they're getting better and they want you to help them with that. Some players just love competing. They love the sensation of playing the game. But generally speaking, no youth player immediately has a goal of saying, I want to play division one basketball or I want to play professional basketball. You know, they may dream it and that may be in the back of their mind. But the reality is they just in moment to moment want to have fun, notice themselves getting better, compete and be around friends.

And that's a huge part of this experience for them. So don't lose sight of that. And I feel that by playing basketball in practice, high amounts of basketball in practice, you will account for those three things without having to do anything special.

04 / PLAYERS LEARN BY DOING

So foundationally players learn by doing. So there's no other way to learn. Like I can lecture them. I can run them, I can do all these traditional things in practice, but literally they learn through physical practice. They learn through physically playing the game. They learn by doing. So we want to maximize, if it's an hour practice, hour and a half practice, we want to maximize the amount of time that they're physically practicing basketball in a practice.

So if I'm running a whole bunch of drills and I'm talking a lot and I'm getting into all these technique based details, then I'm taking away from opportunities where players get a chance to actually explore and learn. So we want to maximize the amount of decisions because every time they catch a ball, every time they defend the ball, every time they defend off the ball, every time they play off the ball in a basketball game, they literally have to make decisions. If you think about it right now, get your hands ready. I'm going to pass you the ball. Ready? I'm going to pass you the ball. Okay, I pass you the ball.

What do you start with? Do you start with technique? You don't. The first thing you start with as I pass you the ball is you start with what's called perception. Perception relative to basketball and relative to most team sports is simply an understanding of whether I have space or no space relative to my teammates and relative to a defender, whether it's an on the ball defender or off the ball defender. So I perceive Whether I have an advantage, whether it's a big advantage or a small advantage or no advantage. The second thing I do is I make a decision based on that perception. Oh, I have space. I can shoot it.

I have space. I can drive the space. I have no space. I need to pass the ball as quick as I can or I need to attack to be able to attack a defender that's pressuring me. The third thing you do is actually execute the technique, the technique of passing, shooting or driving. Or moving off the ball or moving to the ball if it's a defensive closeout, moving from a position of help to a position of on the ball, a closeout. All those things that happen in terms of techniques are preceded by perception and decision.

And then the fourth thing is obviously you get feedback on what happened, whether it's feedback to self or feedback from a coach or feedback from a teammate. Something happens that gives you feedback on whether you did the right thing or not. And that feedback, that problem solving process is paramount to development. If we remove that in practice, then players aren't experiencing what they need to experience in a game, which is as I pass you the ball, you first perceive and then you decide and then you execute. And again, I've done this with players that have never played basketball before.

And there are a few players that have played before, but by and large, the whole team is a group. At a fifth, sixth, seventh graders at a lower middle school. And they played basketball. And they played basketball and practice from the get-go, five on five, with me on the court coaching them and explaining situations, hold, means hold the ball, no extra shot, no extra dribble, ask a question or teach, and then let them play from that spot, follow the feedback with action.

And we continually do that to be able to help them understand the rules, help them understand some of the tactics, help them understand why some techniques are important for them to be able to develop. For example, why do they need to get better at dribbling? Why do they need to work on dribbling on their own? Put on one song on their phone or some type of music device and play that song and work on your dribble at home. Why do they need to do that? Because it helps them solve these problems. And I want to constantly teach, connect and transfer. Teach, connect and transfer. I'm going to teach something.

So they're playing the game. Something happens. I'm going to teach something. I'm going to try and connect it to this as something that they can improve. This is something that happens in the game. This is something they need to be aware of. This is something they can develop. And then I want that understanding or that tactic or that technique to be able to transfer and transfer to the game. So I see

that happening. What's happening in practice is happening in the game. Intuitively, you know that and common sense wise, you know that that that helps a player get better at basketball is by playing basketball in practice.

It helps them play better basketball in games. So we want them to be able to play, experiment, we want them to be able to fail, we want them to be able to adjust, we want them to be able to solve problems, and then we want them to be able to compete because all those things happen. No matter what drill I do in practice, if it's just this dance recital type drill, which is like repeat this 2- 1-0 passing, pass back and forth for five minutes, focus on this perfect chest pass technique, step to pass, arms extend, thumbs down. Etc.

And focus on that, then this is not an example of them getting to experiment, them getting to fail, them getting to adjust, them getting to problem solve, and definitely not them getting to compete. And those are the things that we're trying to shape for the player because those are the things that ultimately help them in youth basketball. So practice can look nothing like basketball.

Like literally I been to so many practices in my lifetime, in terms of over the last five years with a big focus on the youth space with my work with the NBA and with Nike and traveling around the world and experiencing practices at all levels. I see so many players just not enjoy practice because they're standing around, they're listening to a coach talk, they're running and doing things that aren't basketball related activities and they're using cones. There's predetermined patterns. There's things they have to do where the coach is mad at them.

And then there's no defense and there's no offense if it's a defensive drill. And then they already know the answer. That means the coach has already told them the answer. So they're just supposed to go to a game and replicate this. Well, we know the sign says that you can't do that. You can't memorize something in a practice, this perfect technique or this pattern of play, and then go completely replicated in a game because you're playing against an opponent. That's actively trying to prevent you from doing that.

So what we want practice to look like is offense versus defense, real decisions, real problems, real consequences. Well, what is the consequence of turning the ball over? It's not me yelling at a player. It's not me making a player run. The consequence is that you lose possession of the ball. That is a natural consequence that happens. So teaching that and having players understand that, hey, one of the reasons we want to take care of the ball is that somebody gets to shoot. Isn't it fun to shoot?

We want to connect as many behaviors and practices as possible to players getting to play more basketball in practice and that these behaviors help a player play better basketball in game. So we want to connect those things back and forth. Hey, this is happening in the game and this is what we worked on in practice and those things and being able to say this, that's what we worked on to a player is one of the most powerful development tools you have. And I would do this from practice to practice. Would go, Okay, hey, do remember last practice? We worked on this. Well, that's what we worked on.

And here is you getting a chance to be able to apply it or here's where you could have used it or you did a great job applying something from you learned from the last practice that has helped you here. Helping them understand those things helps speed up and accelerate development. So what does playing basketball mean? I'm sure you're sitting there going, what is he talking about? Well, I'm literally talking about five on five basketball from the get-go. We can reduce it, obviously small side

games. Understand that those increase decisions. So if we played three on three, it's better for decision-making.

But to start with, if your team has to play five on five at some point in a game or a tournament, then I would start from five on five and get them to understand the game. And then from there, I would spend a whole bunch of time on a drill like the 4-on-4 Fast Break league, which I'll show you here. But the 4-on-4 Fast Break league is a way to be able to keep flow going in practice.

So players get a high degree of offense versus defense, continuous basketball, time on task, active learning time where they're playing basketball, learning by doing, and you get a chance as a coach to be able to coach game situations that happen. One last player on the floor improves spacing. It improves opportunities for players to be able to be brave, to be able to be fearless, and to be able to develop some of these concepts that we want them to be able to develop.

Particularly within that and within the five and five I'm talking about, we talk to players about being able to find space, being able to attack advantages, being able to make decisions, being able to recover from mistakes. No matter what drill I use, there's nothing better than actually failing and succeeding playing basketball, offense versus defense in a competitive environment to help with mindset training. Players need to learn how to win. They need to learn how to lose. They need to learn how to succeed. They need to learn how to fail. They need to learn how to adapt.

Adaptability is more important than repeatability. No matter how many times I get a player to repeat the same layup with the exact same footwork, with the exact same ball pickup, with the exact same release in an on-air drill, meaning no defense, that simply is not the reality of the example I said when I passed you the ball and then you're going in for a layup and you first have to perceive whether you have an advantage or no advantage based on space or no space. And then you have to decide based on that whether you can shoot a layup or not and what type of layup you need to shoot. And do I need to evade the defender?

Do I need to see my teammates? Do I need to see an extra defender coming over? The complexity of that is something that may seem like that's too challenging for a player, but honestly, the more they experience those situations and it's going to be a struggle early, I'm telling you, it's not going to look good. There's going to be a high degree of struggle. But figuring it out and struggle, figuring it out and struggle, and then getting a little bit better, going from okay to a little bit better, that's part of the learning process. And you can't skip that no matter what you do.

So let's put them in the game and let them have them experience it. And then obviously communicating and competing hand in hand. If you're playing basketball, those things, I don't have to create a drill to get them to communicate. We can continue to highlight the importance of communicating and how it actually helps them. Because they're in the situations that they need to experience communication with. An example to be able to reduce your talking time, reduce your teaching time, reduce your instruction time. Again, players don't want to go to practice and listen to you talk.

And I still see examples like this all the time. I was at a practice recently where a coach talked for over 20 minutes on zone offense and all the players did the whole time was stand there. And we know that science tells us this, learning science tells us this, this is not an effective way to learn. It would have been far more effective for that coach to literally say, defense and zone, offense, you're running

zone offense, okay, you get three possessions, outlet to me in between possessions, go. And let them try it. Okay, now let the other team try it.

And then after they've experienced it, what I call exploration phase, once they've explored, then we can use some explicit instruction and we can talk about, now let's go, where should we be here? Relative to space, relative to the defender. Okay, what are some advantages here? You caught the ball in between two zone defenders. What is the advantage? Well, that's a great time to be able to attack because you can drive space. So different things like that become clearer because we're putting them in the actual situation. So what do I mean by teach the drill before the skill?

Literally any game, whether it's a small size game, it's 4-on-4 Fast Break, or it's a drill, you want to use a traditional drill. Again, just saying is there a better way? It's not about right or wrong. Then all I say is that instead of teaching a whole bunch of tactics and technique with the drill, teach the drill first, teach the game first. So there's an example that I have online, which is literally I got a team that I'd never coached before. In 48 seconds, I got them into 4-on-4 Fast Break, meaning they understood the drill. They started to play the form for fast break. I monitored it.

I made sure they were doing the drill right. Of course they weren't. There were people that didn't quite understand yet or people that struggled with it. Of course. We'll coach that, we'll coach that, we'll coach that. Once they understood the game, the 4-on-4 Fast Break game, then I could start to stop it or I could start to instruct about specific tactics and those tactics were always relative to principles of play. Okay, where are the spacing spots? Here are some spacing spots, corner, slot 45, blah, blah. We'll put them in these situations.

So this traditional method of technique first is countered by the fact that Well, the third thing you actually do is apply a technique. The first two things you do is you first perceive and then you decide and then you execute a technique. So we're skipping the technique first approach. We want to start with the game. The other thing is these traditional methods actually delay your players getting to play the game because you're doing all these things that don't actually happen in the game.

No matter what you want to say about three man weave, I'm just using it as an example, an avatar of all these other types of drills that we traditionally do. But three man weave has no decisions. It does not have game like movements and it's scripted and it's memorized. And no matter what we do with three man weave, we all, we're going to go two on one back or we're going to add a time constraint or they've got to complete a certain number of passes. No matter what we do with it to make it a little bit more engaging. It still doesn't happen in the game. So don't do it. Don't do it. It's fluff. Get rid of all the fluff.

The fluff takes away from your players development and playing basketball helps players get better at basketball. So our approach, start with the game, learn through the game, refine as needed. And we'll explain that even more. Yes, of course it's going to be messy and you got to be uncomfortable with that at first. For sure. You're going to be uncomfortable. Gonna leave you a little bit uneasy.

You're gonna leave questioning whether players are gonna learn anything or they are learning anything and I'll I gotta say all great businesses all great leaders all successful people in all walks of life Come back to one thing stick with it miss You've got to be relentless in your belief and your understanding that if they're play basketball basketball transfers to basketball So playing four and four playing five on five playing three on three offense versus defense even if you're not coaching it,

and this is an argument that I'll put forward for you, even if you're not coaching it, they will get better at basketball because they are playing basketball and it transfers.

Just like when you played tag, you got better at tag. Nobody did a lecture on tag. Nobody did this whole, okay, let's sit in the classroom. Let's talk about this. Let's stand on the playground. Let's explain the rules. Let's explain this. Somebody explain the rules as fast as possible and then you're on your own to figure it out. And this is what we're replicating in a much more structured environment, but this is what we're trying to replicate for players. So it's going to be messy. Yes, turnovers, missed shot, bad decisions, forgotten spacing, missed open teammates.

One team I worked with started working with them three years ago. They adopted this philosophy completely, totally bought in, buy in from the get-go, but they were getting beat in games early on. By 20, by 30, sure they won some games here and there, but they were by and large not very good as a group and as individuals. Thankfully, the coaches stuck with it. They believed in this. They believed in the methodology. Three years later, this team is the best team in their area and one of the best teams in their whole state. It's not even comparable. And I would argue they're now seventh graders.

And I would argue that there's probably five or six of them that have a real shot to continue to develop up the pipeline. And be very impactful players at their next level. And then probably the other group of them is going to be retained in basketball and be a part of the team and contribute to the team and have a great experience playing basketball wherever they are, because they understand how to play the game. Their limitation is a limitation for all players. The best players work on their game on their own. That is player led development. What we're talking about here, by and large, is coach led development.

Coach-led development means that they come to practice and I'm leading practice and I'm leading what's happening to them. I create the environment for them. And that environment, as we said, is a basketball playing environment. When they're on their own and they're developing, whether they're working on their own by themselves in their backyard, at the playground, et cetera, or they're working with you as a parent or a parent, or they're working with a trainer, that is player-led development. That's a time for them to be able to develop their individual technique.

Relative to tactics and I'm not really talking about that much throughout this yet, but that is a part of the learning process and that's something that we want to inspire and we want to develop and encourage, but that's by and large not happening in team practice. A player does not need to come to team practice to do 1-on-0 dribbling stationary. They can do that on their own and we want them to do that on their own. In practice, you as a parent coach, can put them in a better environment where they get to explore offense versus defense and start to figure out solutions.

Even if you played one-on-one every practice for a whole practice, players would get better because they'd learn how to solve a problem. If they can't do something yet, they would try something, they'd explore something, and the best players, as I just referenced with that one team, are the ones that go lead themselves. So the five, six best players on the team are the ones that have done the most amount of player-led development on their own, whether that was parent-led at first or player-led in terms of getting that environment created for them to work one-on-one or one-on-one or whatever it may be, that's them.

The other players who didn't get as good as those players but are still really good and still a big contributing part of the team because they played so much basketball in practice, they just haven't done the player-led development piece yet. And we'll talk more about that as we go through. But messy doesn't mean ineffective. I've had it phrased to me before, but I've done this for 30 years. I'm very comfortable in the mess. I understand you won't be as comfortable in the mess and that's okay. That's okay. But the mess does not reflect your success as a coach or your players development.

The mess is something that is going to be inevitable. If I start practice with teaching my players a play, a set play, a pattern play, five on oh, the greatest play in the world, no matter how good the play is. And we spend 20 minutes every practice for four weeks. Learning this pattern, memorizing this pattern, being fast and crisp with this pattern, as soon as I add defense, no matter how much I practice that five on zero, as soon as I add defense, it's going to get messy because the defense is actively trying to stop us from being able to run that pattern.

So I am saying literally, why not just start five on five because it's going to be messy anyways. And let's speed up the learning. Through small sided games, three on three, four on four, and five on five, or a high amount of one on one, two on two, et cetera, with a player development focus or team concept focus in terms of tactics. But real growth happens when players have to figure out how to manage, navigate, solve problems in the mess. The beautiful thing about struggle is proven throughout positive human psychology is that struggle is necessary for learning. There's no way to avoid it.

If you think about anything you've learned in your lifetime, there was struggle first. Now, like, oh, I'm an expert at this now. Of course, like, oh, I, you know, I didn't struggle. Well, yeah, you did. The first time you learned to do anything, you struggled. And that's natural. There's no one time learning type of thing. And if you can do it one time, that's not even learning. Learning means you can, it's a permanent change in behavior. So it's something that's retained over time. It's not a one time performance.

So me being able to do a proper layup once doesn't mean I learned it because I got to be able to apply it and transfer it and put it in different or novel new situations. So struggle is visible. Yes, of course it's going to be visible. But progress comes from this struggle. Players will see the improvement. Players will feel the improvement. Players will own the improvement. Their confidence will grow. Their motivation will grow and their development will last because they're experiencing this development and this growth within the game context.

And then this will help you as a coach too, because as soon as you experience this, whether it's from the first practice to the fourth practice, you'll see certain players doing something a little bit better. Remember learning doesn't happen like this. We don't go from bad to great. We go from bad to less bad to a little less bad or, and we move into good and then we don't just jump to great. There's this whole continuum and this continuum is non-linear. It's not this linear, oh well I did this practice so I'll be this much better next practice.

Nope, you'll see them go up and down all around and anyone that has kids since you are a parent, you know this, you know this.

05 / THE STRUGGLE IS NECESSARY

The struggle is real and the struggle is necessary and the lessons from the struggle are really important which means that you can overcome it. The most powerful word in all of learning is yet. Use this high mountain in your practices, yet. Okay, Suzy you can't do this yet, but you can do it. I'm not teaching you anything that you can't do. Hey Bobby, I know you're still struggling with this and you can't do it yet, but you will be able to. These different things are part of learning process is normalizing struggle, normalizing that you can't do something yet, but you can do it, but you gotta work at it.

There's gotta be deliberate practice, there's gotta be intent, and there's gotta be a desire to get better. Well think about motivation. How motivated is a player? Okay, I dribble. Into the defense and I turn over the ball. I dribble into the defender and the defender takes the ball from me. I dribble into the defender and the defender ties up the ball and is a jump ball. Motivation is like, hey, if you figure out a solution here, you're going to have more fun because you're not going to turn over the ball. And experiencing that struggle helps them understand why they're working on something.

And that obviously increases motivation. Oh, why am I working on my dribble on my own? Why am I playing these one-on-one advantage starts? Why am I playing these dynamic starts to small-sided games? Why am I playing 4-on-4 fast break league and coaches always encouraging me to be a ball handler? Because that's going to help me develop and that is going to help me grow. And that struggle is necessary for that whole process. This is the part you've got to sell to your parents, you've got to sell to yourself, but there should be no ego tied to winning and losing. It's nice to win, I'm happier when we win.

It doesn't matter the team I've coached, we're happier when we win. Parents are happier, players are happier, we're happier. But man, youth basketball games come so fast and in some tournaments you'll play four or five times in a weekend, the next game's coming, the next game's coming, the next game's coming. Man. You don't have time to worry too much about losses and nor should you. At the end of the day, the evaluation for your players and for your team are, are we better this practice than we were last practice? Are we better this game than we were last game? And again, this is nonlinear.

It's not going to be this process of, we got better last week, so we better this week. Man, there's ups and downs and all around. As soon as you think one of your kids has figured something out. They'll probably struggle again with something. And that's part of it. That's always learning. There is no perfect and there's no perfect learning. It's all filled with this struggle. So when we focus on development and we create a learning environment that focuses on development over winning, and when we approach games from a development perspective, players enjoy the game more. It builds their confidence.

They make better decisions. They understand spacing. They recognize advantages. They play with more freedom. Go back to that example, get your best player, give them the ball, isolate them. Talk to me about how the other players are developing. The other players aren't getting touches. I can say this with 100% conviction. Every player on your team needs to handle the ball. You have more fun when you touch the ball and you get more development opportunities when you handle the ball. Well, some players are going to be more advanced than other players.

As soon as you designate one player as the primary ball handler, and that's what they do, you are taking away from the development of your other players. And I've seen this with my daughters. I've seen this with other youth programs is that every player needs to be able to handle the ball. Means every player should be developed as a point guard. Every player should be developed as a wing that

can attack. Every player should be able to develop as a forward that can attack off the dribble. The dribble at the youth levels pre probably U12, pre U13. The dribble is the most important thing.

It helps a player become more confident and comfortable and they have more fun the better they can dribble. So putting them in a ton of dribble situations and a ton of protection plan or escape situations where what happens if you're in trouble? What happens if you get double teamed? What happens if you've got a really good defender on you? And how can you account for that? How can you counter that? How can you be better in those situations? So if you commit to development over trophies, your players will get better. And this comes back to those things.

Play more basketball in practice or play basketball in practice and focus on development over trophies. Your players will get better. As soon as you start worrying about what practice looks like and doing perfect drills and focusing on technique. And as soon as you start worrying about winning and losing, you're not going to develop your team or your players as much as you should because you're literally going to cheat the development to be able to win. And if that's your goal, then that's your goal. Go for it. But at the end of the day, we want players to develop over their progression.

The goal is what do they look like as a 16 year old? No matter what level they start, no matter where they start with you, whether boys or girls, my goal is that they're having a ton of fun playing basketball when they're 16. And if they're doing that, then you've done a great job as a coach. And that is really a long-term view of it.

06 / DEVELOP PLAYERS, NOT POSITIONS

As I said, there should be no more point guards. This just creates a specialist mentality. The tall player we put in the post, yeah, they're gonna dominate. Yes, you're gonna win, but that doesn't help them. I'll make a tall player the point guard, hey, you're the point guard this weekend. And we'll make a small player play out of different locations on the floor. Everyone will play every position. That's why we play conceptual. That's why we play with spacing spots, a template for spacing rather than positions. I want every player, and you can ask this to your players. You can say, hey, what position are you?

Some of will have answers, some of them will say they're a point guard, some them will say they're a forward post, whatever. They'll be a one, two, three, four, they'll give themselves a number, whatever it is. But here's the answer that you want to support them with, and that's when I ask you what position you are, or if somebody ever asks you what position you are, you answer basketball player. I'm a basketball player, and that's the goal, that everyone's a basketball player, and beautifully, that's the game now. Every player, no matter their size, their starting point.

Everyone's a basketball player and that's the beautiful thing about basketball is that every player on the floor, all five players on the floor, if you're on offense, has an equal opportunity to be able to score. And we want that, we want that approach to be able to help them develop. Specialization and role identification and stuff like that, that's as they approach and they go into high school more and college. That doesn't need to happen in the youth basketball space. The youth basketball space should be about development and development means everyone. Plays every position.

And it's not positionalist in the sense that there aren't necessarily spots on the floor or positions where players go. It's that everyone plays in every position and then every player develops the same

type of skill set. And that is technique and tactics. They develop the same type of technique and tactics. We want every player to be able to dribble. We want every player to be able to pass off the dribble. We want every player to be able to catch a ball. We want every player to be able to pivot, et cetera, et cetera. We want this. This is not exclusive to just one position. So technique, technique, technique.

Let's come back to it, because again, this is a struggle for many of us, and I'm sure you're thinking about this as well. Well, what about passing technique? What about layup technique? Look, I've done it. I've done it with my daughters. I've never taught either of them how to do a layup. Both can do a layup. Why? Because I put them in a situation where they have to figure out how to do a layup. Now, if you want them to do, replicate the exact type of footwork that we traditionally teach in a layup.

Outside foot, inside foot, jump up, bring the ball from your hip to your chin, extend it high up on the backboard, then I'm not sure either my daughter could do that when you just tell them to do that. But you know what they can do? They can finish with both hands, they can finish off both feet, they can finish off two feet, they can finish at different angles. Because we simply say, hey listen, you have a gold medal shot, that's a shot at the rim, an open shot at the rim, versus one defender or versus no defender, you can solve that problem any way you want. But you gotta lay up, so take a lay up.

I've never once seen a coach stop the game and say, wait a minute, you didn't execute my layup technique that I taught you. Basket doesn't count, referee take away the basket, other team, we didn't score. No, but we coach that so much in practice where we care about things that we don't care about in the game. We don't have to care about what type of release or whether they shoot off the wrong foot or inside foot. None of that matters. They shoot with two hands, they shoot with one hand. None of that matters. Are they shooting the right shot should be your obsession.

Are they shooting a gold medal shot, a shot at the rim, which they're more likely to make? Are they shooting an open shot, which is a silver medal, right? If we're shooting a whole bunch of contested shots, that means the defender's in my space and I'm shooting, or shots versus two defenders, I drive it, I drive two defenders and I shoot it still, then you're shooting bad shots and you're less likely to score. And we always connect this back to behavior for the player or development for the player. And we go to the player, it's like, if you're gonna do this, you're not gonna score as much as you wanna score.

And I want you to score more. I'm doing everything possible to help you score.

07 / TECHNIQUE EMERGES FROM THE ENVIRONMENT

So technique is a byproduct of experiencing the environment. Once they experience the environment, then they will develop techniques that solve the problem. But the environment is the key. And that's why we start with the environment, put them in the environment, let them explore the environment, and then give them explicit instruction as needed. Well, traditionally coaching, as I said, starts with, oh, okay, we're going to do this pivot drill. I'm going to teach you exactly how to pivot. You jump stop, you pivot on this foot, you get all the way around, you pass to this player right here, and then you follow your pass.

Okay, no defender, no decision. How about if we put them in a situation, a game situation, okay, we're gonna play three on three, drive the ball, jump stop, you're dead. Now figure out how to get in

trouble with your teammates and figure out how to get out of trouble. A technique's gonna evolve from that. Because eventually the player, instead of standing forward and having the defender take the ball from them, they're gonna learn not to be a statue when they stop, and that's our exact phrasing. Don't be a statue when you jump stop. Pivot. Pass the ball to a teammate and get out of trouble. Don't wait for perfect.

They can play the game without technique. They can play the game right away. Increased decisions, increased development. Increased decisions, increased development. Again, when players play like runtime, 25 minute, two halves, they play four times on a weekend and there's 10 players on your team. Let's say, I know it's not just an equal playing time, but even if was equal playing time, your son or daughter's playing probably at most 20 minutes of that game time. They're not getting as many decisions as they need.

And that's why we need the hour, hour and a half practice to be continuous basketball play where we keep lectures short. We don't run them for mistakes. If running fixed problems, we'd have no problems. So we don't do that. We just put them in situations where they got to play basketball and figure it out. Imagine if you just went and played pickup and many of us are older. I'm older. I played pickup. You just want to play pickup. There's no coach telling you what to do. The environment informed you what to do.

If I'm playing with a really good player, and I shot a bad shot, that good player probably told me, hey, don't shoot that shot, we're trying to win here in some way. The environment informed me and that's what happens all the time. If I shoot the ball from too far from the rim and I can't get it to the rim, the environment informs me that I shot it too far from the rim and I need to shoot it closer, for example. So we wanna increase these decisions so that basketball IQ evolves. Hey, if players understand the game, they're gonna develop more. They're going to understand what to work on on their own.

They're going to understand what they're working on with their trainers. Basketball IQ comes from making decisions, not listening to basketball speeches.

08 / SAFETY, BELONGING, AND CONFIDENCE

Build safety and belonging. We've said this a little bit throughout already, but learning requires vulnerability. Learning requires me admitting I'm not good at something and being okay that I'm not good at something. So create that environment where it's okay to not be good at something yet and then help them get better. So on my practice plan, belonging is a huge part of it. I want to go into practice, whether it's beginning of practice or throughout practice.

And I want to make sure every player knows that I'm happy they're there and that their work is leading to them improving and being a more important part of this team. With that goes psychological safety, which is me telling players, hey, listen, outstanding, you're safe here, just like you are listening to the seminar, you're safe to disagree with it. But at the end of the day, our only goal is that you are getting better and you're having more fun playing basketball because you are getting better. Skill equals confidence. The more skilled the player will be, the more confident they'll be.

So the more skilled they'll be, the more confident they'll be. So we want to include that in everything that we're doing.

09 / WHY 4-ON-4 FAST BREAK

Okay, 4-on-4 Fast Break, I've mentioned it. Why do I recommend it? Well, one, it reduces a player, takes away a player, so as soon as we remove a player, we create a little bit easier environment for players to be able to see decisions, but we don't remove too many players that it becomes too easy and unrepresentative of the game. For example, having a help defender always present. If you play through on three or two on two, sometimes there's not a weak side defender, for example. Well, the weak side defender is almost always there, whether they're intentionally there or not at youth basketball.

There's someone usually taking away your space. The goal of the defender is to be able to take away space. The goal of offense is to be able to create space. Basketball is a game of opposites. I want to create space on offense and the defense wants to take away space. Those are opposite goals. Fortunately, they don't have to learn that much because as soon as I talk about spacing, players know that on defense we want to take it away on offense, we want to create it because we're going to constantly talk about that. And I even joke with players that the answer is always space.

So if they don't understand anything I'm talking about, just always reflect back on space or answer space, because that's always the answer. In 4-on-4 Fast Break, advantages are more obvious. Because we're playing fast, we're not worrying about out of bounds, we're not worrying about inbounding the ball, and we can include those things later. You can add those as constraints. But initially, we just want to get up and down the floor as fast as possible. You get two trips, you get a trip on offense, you get a trip on defense, and then...

You get a ton of opportunities to be able to see whether you have an advantage or not, and I get a ton of opportunities on the ball and off the ball to be able to perceive and decide and then execute a technique. Shot selection becomes very obvious here. If you draw one and you're driving to the rim, we want you to shoot, that's a gold medal. If you draw two as you're driving to the rim, then we want you to pass because you've created an advantage for your teammate. Drawing two defenders is an incredible skill, and that's something that should be celebrated. Because that's really good basketball.

If I'm driving and I draw two defenders, then I create an advantage for my teammate. It's not always about shooting. It's also about understanding advantages relative to one or two defenders or in some cases, no defenders and no defenders is obviously the biggest advantage. So in 4-on-4 Fast Break, if I get the ball and I pass it to a teammate and they're already behind the defense because the defense didn't get back fast, then that player can go in for a layup 1-on-0. That's a big advantage.

If I pass that player and there's a defender beside them, but they have the ball and they can attack that defender one on one, then that's a small advantage. Or for some players, that's a large advantage. But if I pass the ball to the player and four defenders are back and they're one on four, then that's no advantage. So understanding those situations in the full court and the half court is a big reason why we recommend 4-on-4 Fast Break. And also at the youth level, the game is transitioned. As I said, people are going to press whether you want it or not.

So understanding that it's a full court game and our ability to be able to play full court and get the ball in and play fast and want to play fast because we want to get more touches. We want to have more decisions. We want to increase development. If we walk the ball up the floor and hold the ball, then

players aren't developing. The more decisions we can create in a practice or in a game, the more development that's going to happen. So we want to play as fast as possible. So 4-on-4 Fast Break builds that culture. And then obviously decision-making and teamwork. Man, there's team, there's...

Active participants on your team are your teammates. They're actively trying to help you be better at basketball. But in some cases, your teammates take away your space. In some cases, your teammates take away your advantage on a drive. In some cases, your teammates are playing defense on offense, meaning they're in the wrong spacing spot. All of those things, again, this is why I keep coming back to the answer is always space, because you can see almost all of that comes back to space and recognizing and identifying space.

10 / THE PARENT COACH'S JOB

Okay, so your job as a parent coach. Your job is not to make your practices or your games look professional. You should not have plays that look like, Oh my God, that was a great play in the history of basketball. Because then you've kind of cheated their development by having them run a play and the play solved the problem. We don't want the play to solve the problem. We want the player to solve the problem in a game situation. Sure. The player can help them, but that's a later in development type of mentality. It's not your job to always have. All the answers and that's why you're here.

You're being vulnerable being here. You don't have to have all the answers nor should you have all the answers. I've coached for 30 years. I don't have all the answers. It's okay. You don't have to come across as a coach talking professional coach, NBA, WNBA coach talking professionally to the media and try and portray themselves as having these answers. We don't also need to impress the adults. This is not what this is about. This is not trying to look impressive for the adults. This is about the kids. So our job is to help kids feel safe, help kids feel involved, and helps kids get better.

And honestly, if you take care of the first two, probably the last one's gonna take care of itself. And that's a big part of kind of why we're explaining this here and getting this chunk out of the way. Keep them playing. You can stop to teach while they play. We don't need a drill. We can just stop and teach. Okay, they're playing four and four, five and five, whatever it is. Hold, okay, hold your position. Oh, hey. Billy, did you see this situation? Hey, what do think you could have done differently? What's another possibility? Oh, okay. All right, ready? We're gonna play from here. Let's see what else comes from this.

Go. So we stop occasionally to teach. We recreate teachable situations. We ask questions, and then we encourage players to explore. We want them to explore. I don't want them always to just do my answer. I have an answer. My answer might be right, but how do I know they don't have a better answer? And often just putting them in situations where they figured out players will develop these understanding these ideas. Celebrate the decision regardless of outcome obsession leads to wanting to win and it leads to less development. I want to focus whether they made the shot or missed the shot.

You're going to hear it constantly in a practice of mine bronze silver gold medal. I'm just going to if we shoot a shot, I don't have to stop it silver medal gold medal. Those are good situations. That means we had a positive outcome on the possession, regardless of whether it went in. Bronze medal means we had a bad possession. We didn't have a positive outcome, regardless of whether it went in or not.

Even if it went in, it mean it was a good shot for development and for our future. Again, we want to shoot better shots because it leads to scoring more. That's the idea. Measuring growth is ultimately what we talked about.

That's what we worked on. So you can see something happening in a game that you worked on in practice. Notice that, normalize that, celebrate that. And then trust it. Just trust the process. This is 30 plus years. This works. Playing basketball helps players get better at basketball. And then everything starts here. Play basketball to get better at basketball. And then everything in this course grows from the foundation that I just shared with you. I can't wait to share more with you. We will go extensively and deep.

But even if you just took a few things away from that and said, at practice, we're going to play basketball. We're going to play five on five. I'm going to stop in coach situations. Without knowing the rest, your players will get better and you won't mess them up by doing a whole bunch of techniques and a whole bunch of drills and a whole bunch of plays and a whole bunch of stuff that doesn't actually help them get better over the span of their basketball career.

PLAY BASKETBALL TO GET BETTER AT BASKETBALL.