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Basketball coaching resources for all levels

FINDING A DIFFERENT WAY TO PLAY...What every player should read.

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I was going through some notebooks today and ran across this article written by a current NBA player. It has relevance for players at all levels. I think it is GREAT.

The NBA is a league of roughly 450 players of different sizes, backgrounds, ages, skill sets and abilities. There are guys in the league who will make \$200 million over their careers and become Hall of Famers. There are guys who will get one 10 day contract and \$38,000. Everyone has their own journey and their own challenges. And at some point, the

question every player has to answer is: “What is my role in this league?”

The players who can consistently help their teams win games are the ones who stick around, so every player has to figure out what it is he does well enough to help his team win. Otherwise, the new crop of young players who enter the league every year will replace them.

The NBA is currently enjoying a group of some of the most talented players the planet has ever seen. The game is evolving, and the athleticism is at an all-time high. Certain rules-like no hand checking on the perimeter, and defensive three seconds, which moves help defenders further away- make it almost impossible to shut down the most talented offensive players. They are going to get their shots and their numbers. They have earned this position because they have proven that when they get the ball and try to score, good things usually happen for their team. These guys are rare and are valuable and are paid accordingly.

So what about the rest of us? Players like, well, me.

Before most of us entered the League, we were one of the main scoring options on our college teams. Offenses were designed to get us the ball. We got features in the media and received all the accolades. When you make an NBA roster, that all changes. All of a sudden, you find yourself on a different level of the totem pole, and you have to adjust. Each team may have three to five guys who consistently find themselves creating their own shots. The other ten guys on a roster have to learn to play off of those guys and find ways to create value for themselves. You create value for yourself by doing enough positive things to make your coach keep you on the floor. The guys who have success in the league and stick around are the ones who understand how to make themselves valuable to an organization.

You do this by embracing your role and focusing on things other than scoring. Sure, you’ve spent your whole basketball life developing and displaying your offensive game, but suddenly you aren’t getting those scoring opportunities in games. You take thousands of shots in the off season, you work on your shot before and after practice, yet you may go weeks without taking a jumper in a game. But you can’t dwell on it, because there is so much else you can do out there to help your team win. If you can become really good at things like screening, passing, defending pick and rolls, communicating, boxing out and rotating defensively, you can have a huge affect on your team winning a game. If those parts of your game become a habit and you develop consistency, you are going to be valuable to your team and have a long career.

The hard part is being able to have focus to do it over and over again, knowing you aren’t going to get a lot of credit. Doing a great job of talking on defense won’t get you any high-paying endorsement deals. Nobody is making a YouTube mix of all your badass screens with a Rick Ross track playing over it.(I’m not saying I would complain if someone did this for me.)

A lot of guys can’t or won’t do these things because they don’t see the value in it. Some people look at it as sacrificing

you own game for the greater good. This is true to an extent, but you just don't play this way because you are a nice guy and you are willing to let other guys shine. You do it because you want to win, to be part of a championship team, and you do it because you want to create value for yourself. If you are a bench guy and you start to take more shots, to take your scoring average from six points a game up to eight points a game, not many people are going to take notice. You are doing the same things, just in a more inefficient way.

On the other hand, if you average only five points a game but defensively you can blow up a pick and roll and take that option away from the opponent, you are going to be able to play a long time and make a lot of money over your career. At the same time, your play will have more of an effect on winning than it would otherwise. The goal is to try to make it very difficult for your team to replace you, so that they have to do what it takes to keep you around. That's how a player creates value for himself.

Sometimes it's difficult to take a back seat when you are capable of showing more than what your role allows. It can be frustrating to play without getting shots you want, and to see your numbers dip. Most fans won't appreciate the things you do well. This is where a little perspective and being secure in yourself can go a long way. If you have perspective, you will realize that your job totally rules. You get paid a huge salary to play basketball. You will be part of the 1%. You will get your summers off. You will be encouraged to take naps most days.

Think of the millions of guys who started playing basketball because they loved it. but for whatever reason didn't get a chance to play at this level. Be secure enough to not listen to your friends and family, who say you should be getting more time than the guy paling ahead of you. Learn to chuckle when writers or people on twitter make snarky comments about what a stiff you are. None of that should really matter if you take pride in your work and you can take care of your family.

When you look at your job for what it is, and what kind of life you live, you will realize you really aren't sacrificing anything. You are just figuring out a different way to play.

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