

*"In order to get real improvement, there must be a carefully crafted and planned process."- TJ Jones III*



**SKILL  
DEVELOPMENT  
PLAYBOOK**

Everything you need to know about skill development and how to create a program for individuals and teams.

**TJ JONES III**

# Copyright

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SKILL

# DEVELOPMENT

PLAYBOOK



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**CHAPTER 1**

# **MY LOVE FOR THE GAME**

## My Love for the Game

As a child I would spend countless hours playing basketball. I loved to play with my friends but I could play by myself all day long. I would imagine I was Michael Jordan, Tim Hardaway, Magic Johnson, Kevin Johnson, or a number of other players. When I was around the age of 12 I would watch the NBA on NBC. Shortly after the game I would rush outside with my ball and try to shoot and dribble like my favorite stars. I would imagine myself playing in the NBA finals against the best in the world and hitting game winning jump shot or dishing it off to the big man for the slam dunk.

I used my imagination all the time. Dribbling up and down the dirt road in front of my house. Playing in the driveway and shooting the ball on the roof pretending to play for my favorite NBA or college basketball team. When I couldn't play outside I would play in the house. I had a clothes hamper that hung up on my door that looked like a basketball goal with a long net that tied at the bottom. It was only a clothes hamper for a couple of months before I cut the net and played basketball in my room. I would do several trick shots off the wall, off the ceiling, and off the backboard. All types of dunks and lay ups. When I broke the rim from the backboard I wouldn't let it stop me. I would just put the rim in between the door and the frame.

My mom would constantly hear noise and banging coming from my room. Ball off the wall, ball off the floor, me running into the door and all other types of commotion. Beads of sweat would run down my face as popcorn texture fell from the ceiling and laid on the carpet from my intense 1 on none basketball games.

When I got older my imagination continued to grow. As a teenager I would go to a local college and play by myself or against whoever else would allow me to play with them. I knew starting lineups and bench players for several NBA and college teams. I would play full court games by myself. I would be all 10 of the players while commentating. If anyone saw me on the court they would probably think I was crazy.

I would dribble down and pretend to pass to a player for an open jump shot. Then quickly switch to that player. I would toss the ball, sprint to get it, and then shoot or make a move. I was just having fun. I didn't know I was working on my footwork or shooting on the move. I was just trying to imitate Reggie Miller or Eddie Jones coming off a screen. No constraints no rules just playing, exploring and having fun.

When I did practice I would do moves over and over and over again. Not until I hit a certain number of shots, but until the move felt right. I could hit 8 out of 10, but if it didn't feel good I would often keep shooting that same shot. I didn't want moves or shots to just be correct I wanted them to be automatic.

When I practiced with my dad I never considered it skill development. It was just going to the gym to practice. My dad was by far the toughest coach I had. A real old school mentality. We had an 8ft ceiling in my childhood home. He would often tell me to jump and touch the ceiling. When I was young I use to start down the hallway and then run into his room and jump as high as I could only to miss. Then I would get to where I could scrape the popcorn texture off the ceiling. My dad always knew how to get more out of me. When I started scraping the ceiling from running then I had to do it taking 1 step. Then we progressed to no step. His expectations were always high. When we did shooting drills I always had to make a certain amount in a certain time frame. Or I had to

hit so many in a row. It was never that's good enough we'll try again next time. It was always, "Do it again". No matter how tired I was he always pushed me to be better. I hated his practices as a kid, but loved the results. What some would consider "innovative" today, my dad had me doing over 20+ years ago.

As you can see I loved playing basketball. Even today as an adult I still enjoy getting on the court and reliving my childhood or reminiscing about what I used to be able to do. I know without a shadow of doubt that I was only able to achieve what I achieved through skill development. My skill development was the heartbeat of my basketball game. It's what kept me going. I graduated high school as a 5'7, 132lb point guard. That's soaking wet with boots on. My dad used to tell me I was, "Poor enough to ride a rooster". Or I was so skinny my back two pockets touched. Hey don't laugh at me, I eventually grew. I hit a grow spurt my freshman year in college. I'm now 5'11 or so and 170lbs. But I digress.

Skill development did so much for me as a player. There is a lot of information on skill development. Information on drills, teaching concepts, 1 on 1 moves, etc, etc. I wanted to contribute and give people information on how I was able to find my way in this profession. Over the past 16 years I have learned a lot. My philosophy has changed, my teaching has been tweaked, and my approach to running a business has greatly improved.

This book will share my experiences, both good and bad, on how I conduct skill development. I have learned from some great coaches during my journey. To all the coaches that read this book I hope you find the information here beneficial to your skill development program. For all the players and parents I hope you get a better idea of what skill development is and how to conduct your skill practices. I must inform you this is not a drill book. You will not get a bunch of drills for shooting, passing, dribbling, etc. There are plenty of resources for

that. This book will give a better understanding of how skill development should be conducted. I will explore ideas and concepts that may challenge your way of thinking.

And lastly before we dive right in. I don't claim to be a guru or a know it all when it comes to skill development. I am a coach that continues to learn from all coaches with a variety of experiences, knowledge, and background. With that being said I don't mind different philosophies, concepts, and ideas. I love to discuss the game with all coaches. So don't be afraid to email or connect with me on social media to discuss basketball or any concept or idea in this book. Being open to discussion helps the game grow. And I just want to give you something that could spark an idea to make you a better coach that will in turn improve your players and make the game of basketball better.



**CHAPTER 2**

**MY 1ST  
EXPOSURE TO  
SKILL  
DEVELOPMENT**

## My 1st Exposure to Skill Development

My college basketball career was over and I moved back home to finish school. Recently married, my wife was in the last year of school at a cross town college. I remember walking across the campus and I ran into the university's head men's basketball coach. We chatted for a little bit and he then asked if I would be open to helping out with the basketball team. I quickly got excited because I dreamed of becoming a college basketball coach and I thought this could be a huge opportunity for me. After telling him I would he said he wanted me to work with the team's returning point guard.

This request caught me off guard. I had no idea what to have the returning point guard do. This is the same point guard I played against the year before. We were associates. We had mutual friends, but we go at each other's throat on the basketball court. I suddenly had several questions in my mind. Would he be receptive to working with me? Will I be able to help him? What can I show him? I went ahead and agreed and we set up the first practice.

On the way there I had no idea of what we were going to do. I was clueless. I can't remember everything we did on that first workout, but I do remember saying to myself, "I'll just have him do the same drills I did". While there I showed a few of my "secrets" that made me a little more efficient on the court. By the time we were done I got a little excited. I showed him a few things and by then end of the workout he got better.

We worked out a few more times early in the school year, but I couldn't commit to helping the team. I started working nearly 32 hour a week at a video store and that left very little time to helping the basketball team when you consider I was a full time student also.

So let's fast forward 3 years. The year was 2004 and my wife's uncle was coaching a local AAU team. They were actually an AAU team. They had memberships and participated in AAU events. He asked me if I could come to practice from time to time and help him coach the team. I would show up and give my advice here and there. One day after practice he asked me what would I charge him to work with his son Corey? I had no idea. Other than briefly working with the college player years ago and volunteering here and there with some basketball teams, I hadn't given much thought about training anyone. So I told him \$20 and we can get something done. So we get some days scheduled and we end up working out over the course of the summer. Things went pretty well but I didn't really know how much I helped him.

Basketball season comes and Corey invites me to one of his basketball games. During the course of the season I would meet with Corey and he would share his frustration with me about his time on the team. The typical complaints. Playing heavy minutes 1 game and limited minutes the next. He was inconsistent with his play. He would play good 1 game and then not so good the next. So I go to the game and about half way through the first quarter Corey checks in. I'm in the bleachers a little nervous, because I don't know what to expect. Every basketball trainer knows that the players you work with are a walking billboard. They can make you look really good or make you look like you have no idea what you are doing. But I was impressed. Corey didn't go out there and score a lot of points, but he showcased his skills. He showed his ability to score out of triple threat, his footwork when shooting off the pass was on point, his ball handling was strong, and his confidence was high. Everything we had been working on I was able to see improvement from the summer.

Immediately following the game I called my wife. I was so excited. I spent several minutes telling her how he did and that I believe I can train other players too because no one else is doing it. On the drive home I began to think about training other kids, going to their games, having camps, clinics, and really just running a business. I said when the summer comes I'm going to put an ad in the paper and get a bunch of kids signed up.

**CHAPTER 3**

**THE BIRTH OF  
NOTHING BUT  
NET  
BASKETBALL**

## The Birth of Nothing But Net Basketball

It's late spring of 2005 and my wife and I are visiting her parents. Her sister Sheena was helping me come up with a design for the ad. As we were working on the ad my wife asked me what was I going to call my basketball training service. I had been brainstorming, but hadn't come up with a name just yet. I knew one day I wanted my own training facility. In my training facility I would have a designated area for shooting and it would be called Nothing But Net.

So we finished the ad, but I still hadn't decided on a name. So I just went with Nothing But Net Basketball. I told my wife I would change it and here we are 12 years later and the name is still around. To be honest I don't even like the name. That's why I shortened it to NBN Basketball.

The ad goes out and I just know my phone will be ringing off the hook with parents calling to get their kids signed up for some basketball lessons. As we get closer to the summer I still didn't have anyone signed up.

Finally, my phone ring. It was Mrs Smith and she was inquiring about getting some lessons for her daughter Sidney. We started off meeting one day a week and then quickly moved to two days a week. Next thing you know Mrs Smith is telling a few of her friends who have daughters that play basketball.

By the end of the summer I had a few players that I would give lessons to, but Sydney was the most consistent. Pretty much every week we would meet twice a week working on different things. I was starting to become a little more organized with our workouts. I was putting more thought into what we were doing. I began to research drills and techniques on what to teach.

I continued to work with Sydney for several years until her family moved. She was the first person I worked with that didn't know me. She was the start of Nothing But Net Basketball. You never know. If her mom didn't call my phone after seeing my ad, I might not of ever done anymore basketball training.

Over the years I have been blessed to conduct thousands of training sessions all over Arkansas and nearby states. I've had players travel several hours just to come train with me for a hour at a time. I once heard basketball trainer Mark Adams say, "The ball has magic". The ball does have magic. It can bring people together of all walks of life. The ball teaches life skills, critical thinking, team building, responsibility, commitment, and so many other life lessons. I hope this book has a little magic as you learn a little bit about my journey and skill development.

**CHAPTER 4**

**WHAT TO  
EXPECT**



## What to Expect

When I started doing skill development I had no clue what I was doing. I was basically having players do drills I had done in the past. I didn't know about progression and game like drills. I didn't know how to really develop players. I could run them through some drills and make them better, but the development was really lacking. Now that I'm writing this I can say I wasn't that great of a skills coach in the beginning. But that's ok because that shows the growth I've had over the past 12 years. I should be a little embarrassed at where I started.

As a coach we can't expect our players to get better if we're not doing the same. Majority of what I learned I learned on my own. I don't attend a lot of coaching clinics, I don't like watching DVD's, and I only attend a few local practices of coaches I think highly of and have a great deal of respect for. I've come to realize that a lot of the DVD I've seen in the past were filled with a bunch of drills and fluff. I've always felt that the drill is the easy part. When it comes to skill development there are several other components; teaching points, transitioning from drills, where to stand on the court, the mental part of the game, feedback, knowing how and when to make corrections, trust, getting players to buy in, creating your workouts or training sessions, developing relationships with your players. I could go on and on. The past 12 years have taught me it's not the drill that gets players better, it's what's being taught and emphasized. Anyone can go to a clinic, buy a DVD, or go to YouTube and get drills. But it's how you incorporate and teach that drill that can really develop players.

So this book is not a drill book. If you are looking for a bunch of drills then you have downloaded or purchased the wrong book. If you are looking for insight on how to create a skill development program as a business, organization, or team

then this is the book for you. If you want to learn more about skill development, then this is the book for you.

I want to give insight into how I developed my program and share some of the mistakes I made along the way that can help you. You will also learn about what I found over the years to be successful. I beg of you, please don't do everything like I do. Take what I do and make it better. That makes the game grow and evolve. Again, I don't claim to be some kind of guru when it comes to skill development, but I am an experienced coach with a lot to share that can help someone.

Also know there are several ways to conduct skill development training. Over the years I have learned, borrowed, and stolen from others. Throw what I've learned in a pot then add my flavor and VOILA, you have your own system that works for you.

You can be a parent of a basketball player and you want to help them improve their skills. You could be a skills coach running a business, a recreational league coach, elite AAU or travel team coach, middle school, Jr high, or high school coach. Even college and professional level coaches can find something useful in this book. I hope you enjoy it and better your skill development program.

**CHAPTER 5**

# **SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

## Skill Development

Let's talk about what is skill development? There's been a lot of talk about the lack of skill development at the grassroots level for American players versus players from places like Europe. Particularly when it comes to shooting and footwork, American players are said to be behind players from other countries. I don't totally agree with that statement. The game has grown globally so that means other countries have improved their skills.

I think a lot of parents, players, and even some coaches are confused about what skill development really is. Skill development, in my own words, is simply training for the improvement or enhancement of skills such as ball handling, passing, shooting, footwork, defensive technique, and basketball IQ. But in order to get real improvements there must be a carefully crafted and planned process for that to happen. Improvement doesn't happen by chance. When it comes to skill development there are those that train and those that workout. Let's look at the difference between the two.

### **Training vs Working Out**

There are a lot of coaches, players, and parents that believe skill development workout is the same as skill development training. Well that is not true. The two are completely different. They do not have the same meaning. There is a vast difference between training and working out.

About 3 or 4 times a week I go to my local gym to work out. When I get there I know exactly what I'm going to do. I run a mile on the treadmill, bike for 4 miles, and then lift weights for 30-40 minutes. I don't have a specific plan in

place. I just want to feel better and stay healthy. I don't have a goal in mind of losing weight (I only weigh 170lbs anyway) or gaining muscle mass. I typically hate doing legs and abs so I tend to not spend as much time on those areas of my body. I don't plan on being in any fitness or bodybuilding competition so what I'm doing is good enough to get me by.

Then you have those in the gym that are training. They have a specific plan in place. They know how many times a week they are going to train. They understand what body parts needs improvement and how they plan on improving those areas. They have specific exercises they are going to do, how many reps, how long their rest is in between those reps, and possibly how much weight they will be lifting. But it don't stop there. They even go as far as being real specific about their diet and supplements. They know how much water they want to drink, how much protein to intake, how many carbs, etc, etc.

You can clearly see the difference between the two. Majority of the people in the gym I go to just workout. There's nothing wrong with just working out. I do feel better, I'm healthy, and I'm in better shape than I was when I wasn't working out. I would often tell my wife I want to gain 15lbs of muscle mass. That was my initial goal. Did I ever reach my goal? No. Why is that? Because I never put together a specific plan to reach my goal.

**A GOAL  
WITHOUT A  
PLAN IS JUST A DREAM**

I see basketball players do this all the time. Typically younger players out of ignorance of not knowing how to train on their own. I believe when you train

you put together a specific plan for the skills you want to improve and follow a process to help get you better. Training is being detailed. You know what you are going to do when you go into the gym and how long you are going to do it.

I hear a lot of players say they want to improve their shooting. But saying you want to be a better shooter is not specific enough. What specifically do you want to improve with your shooting? There are 7 different shots I tell every player they need to work on. You have your spot ups, on the move, off cuts, in transition, off the dribble, finishes at the rim, and free throws. All those shots minus the finishes at the rim and free throws can be done inside or outside the three point line. Now that they know the different shots they should be drilling we can get more specific on an area they may want to concentrate on. So if a player wants to get better off the dribble we can put a specific plan together to help them with that. You can still drill the other shots, but you now have something you can work with. The player can write down specifically what they want to do when they get to the gym, how many reps, and where on the floor they want to shoot. After the drill they can now record their makes or document the number of shots it took for them to make a predetermined amount.

## Three Seasons

I believe players should spend more time practicing to improve their fundamentals versus playing games (unless we're talking about small sided games). The key to improving a player's skill set is through spending countless hours on the practice court. Before you can take the test you must spend time in the classroom studying, doing your work, and preparing. I also believe skill development should take place year round. Typically new skills are introduced during the off-season in the spring and summer months of April through August. Skills are continued to develop and enhanced during the pre-season months of September and October. Then the skills are maintained during the in season months of November through March.

During the summer months or the off-season, you typically want to pick 1 or 2 skills the player wants or needs to enhance. Don't get caught up into thinking only on their weaknesses. Their strengths need to continue developing also. Once those skills are identified, a plan will need to be put in place so their progress can be measured and evaluated. This is the time to really focus on the individual skills. No matter what offense or defense you run, your players must be able to execute certain skills to make your offense and defense effective. Sit down with each player and discuss what skills need improving. They need to know what they can do to get on the court if they had limited playing time. Or they need to know what skills are needed to contribute more to the team. After they are aware of what is needed to be done, now a plan must be put in place to get them where they need to be.

During the pre-season the player will need to enhance those developed skills. If they added new layers to their game, they should continue enhancing those abilities throughout the pre-season. You want your player's skills as sharp as

possible heading into the season. Pre-season can last anywhere from 6-8 weeks before the season. During this time we know a little more attention will be paid to team drills and strength and conditioning, but we can't neglect individual skill development. The amount of time spent on individual skill development may decrease but it can't be forgotten. Getting those players in 2-3 times a week should be plenty to maintain and sharpen any skills gained from the off-season.

Once the season gets here skill development is still needed. Players attention goes from individual development into more team development and concepts, but they must stay up to speed. But to maintain their progress they must find time on their own, with a coach from their team staff, or a skills coach to help them stay on the right path. If you coach a team, it's a must to find time to schedule some skill development with your players. It doesn't have to be longer than 20 minutes, but it must be done. Again, the players skills make the offense and defense work. If players can't pass with their left hand on time and on target then the player receiving the ball may not get that shot off. If you are the head coach then you may have to schedule certain players to do an extra 20 minutes of skills before or after practice with yourself or one of the assistants. If push comes to shove and you can't make time to schedule it into your practice then you must find a skills coach that you trust and refer your players to them.

## **Core Values and Philosophy**

I think it's really important as a coach to develop your core values and philosophy when it comes to skill development. Your core values could include, but not limited to, commitment, respect, responsibility, perseverance, or motivation. Your core values could be any of the above mentioned that you want to instill in your training sessions that will help your players on and off the



court. Basketball can be used to teach so many life lessons and your core values can be the driving force to teach those lessons.

A lot of times our personal core values are taught to us from our parents, guardians, mentors, pastors, coaches, or any other individual that has had an influence on our life. You may have been taught as a young man or woman that responsibility is very important and you want to inject that core value into your players. This can be done throughout the training session by stressing the responsibility the player has on the court and off the court to represent their team, coaches, organization, school, family, and themselves. You can stress how it's their responsibility to work just as hard in the classroom as they do on the court because they are a part of a team that is depending on them. There are several resources on the internet to help you determine your core values if you are not sure what your core values are.

Your skill development philosophy is different from your core values, but they should work together. I've been doing skill development for 16 years with 13 of those years being a business. During this time my philosophy has changed. When I first started doing skill development I was doing things my way with my own flavor. It was going really well and then I saw a video clip of Ganon Baker. He was so intense and energetic. I have to be honest, at first I laughed. I said why is this dude grunting? I continued to do more and more research and I realized that's how he conducted his training. His philosophy was to be intense and energetic. He didn't want the players to become bored. He wanted to get their attention and respect by being able to demonstrate the drills. Often times better than the players themselves. So I started doubting what I was doing and I tried to do the same thing. I was intense, energetic, running all over the place and trying to make the players go faster and do things quicker. But it just didn't

feel right. I wasn't being true to myself and I definitely wasn't being true to the players I was training.

There are some coaches that have a philosophy of being really into the workout or training sessions. They do all the demonstrations, they are real intense, and actually get out there with the players. There are others that have a more laid back approach. They demonstrate when they can, but they know when to be intense and when to kick it up a notch. My opinion is this. Your philosophy should be about getting the player better. Don't get caught up trying to do exactly what another coach or trainer is doing. You'll only be second best doing that. Be true to yourself, work hard at your craft, and the players will respect you and give you their best effort.

My philosophy is to keep it simple and focus on one thing. I don't worry about being innovative on the basketball court. I'm not trying to reinvent the wheel. There's nothing wrong with those that believe that, but for me I just want to keep it as simple as possible. With my philosophy I also believe in really teaching the game. I don't worry about having the coolest drill that will give me a bunch of likes on Instagram, retweets, or views on YouTube. My main objective is to make the players I work with better. If that only includes a ball and a hoop with simple drills then so be it. To me it's all about the player learning. You often hear coaches say you should teach in sound bites, but that's going to depend on the playing level and experience of the player you are working with. If I'm working with a 10 year old kid I may have to explain in detail exactly what I want him to do. The explanation may need specific instruction that's lengthier than a soundbite.

I also believe in plenty of reps and not being afraid to stop and correct. Depending on the experience, ability of the player, and how long we have been

working together I may not correct every single time they make a mistake. I like for the player to have a feel and see if they can autocorrect on their own. If I see the same mistake for multiple reps then I may say something real quick without stopping the flow of the drill. If they continue to make the mistake then we can stop the drill and address it.

As you can see my philosophy is pretty simple. Nothing complex. I like to keep it simple, make sure to teach the game, give the player gets plenty of reps, and stop and correct. It took me some years and trial and error to develop my philosophy. Over the next few years my philosophy may be tweaked or changed a little, but my philosophy is my philosophy.

## **Important Key Terms & Language**

Basketball has it's own language. There are a lot of terms to describe different actions, areas of the floor, and skills. I enforce to the players I train to use basketball terminology when on the court. If I ask them a question I need a basketball answer. Don't point to a spot on the floor, you must call out the area by name. Terminology can be based on the level you coach or play on. It can be determined by the part of the country or what part of the world you live in.

As coaches we must teach players our terminology and language and hold them accountable. When I was in high school my varsity coach gave us a test on different areas of the floor. When he said short corner, he expected everyone to be on the same page and know where the short corner is.

If you are a skills coach your terminology maybe different from other coaches terminology. So you have to be able to adapt. Ask the players what terminology do they use to describe an area of the floor or a certain action. Then try to use

the same terminology with them. Some players are familiar with diagonal screen, but don't know it's the same as wide pin down.

When it comes to conducting skill development sessions I have a few terms I think coaches should know. I'm going to share a few I like to use while training my players. These terms you may have heard of or you may call them something different.

#### *1. Decision Making Drills*

These are my favorite drills. I tell players my job is to make it tough for them. When doing decision making drills the players have to react to the coach's voice or movement. It could be something as simple as running to a spot and on the catch they have to decide whether to shoot or pass. They could read a close out from the coach and either shoot or drive. I like to do decision making drills after the player has learned a new technique. For example, if we drill shots at the elbow off a pin down I would then do the same drill, but now with decision making attached to it.

#### *2. Progression*

As I work with a player I like for there to be some type of progression throughout the training session. Progression can be done a variety of different ways. If teaching a new skill to a player there will be some type of progression. When teaching a player a new skill I like to go through the following stages of progression:

##### *a. Exposure*

First I want the player to be exposed to the new skill. This can be done through demonstration by a peer or teammate, coach, or by showing video.

*b. Put it into Practice*

After the player has seen the skill, I like for them to attempt to do the drill. I hate wasted time. Time is one thing you can never get back. So I really see no point in having player walk through a drill or go half speed if they can skip over those steps. After a few reps I then determine if we need to break the skill down more or move on to the next step.

*c. Walk through it with or without a ball*

If a player shows no ability or very little ability to execute the skill I will have them go through the technique at a very slow pace with or without the ball. Younger players sometimes struggle with certain moves that involve feet and hand movement and pivoting if their coordination is an issue. So I like for them to walk through it very slowly and methodical before we move on to attempting the skill  $\frac{1}{2}$  speed or  $\frac{3}{4}$  speed. This is a great time to give them teaching points about why this is important and when this particular skill will come into play. Also, be very encouraging. A lot of people like to quit something if they can't do it. I tell players it's ok if you mess up. It's ok to make mistakes. We just want to have a little progress before we move on. As long as you take 1 step forward, no matter how big or small, you're on the right path to success. This removes any pressure of having to do it perfectly.

*d.  $\frac{1}{2}$  speed -  $\frac{3}{4}$  speed*

Once I see the player can start doing the skill without a ball or with a ball while going slowly we move on to half speed and try to work up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  speed. We ultimately want the player to be able to go full speed with a defender and then make the move or skill automatic, but you must know this can take several training sessions before this happens. As the player begins to move faster they may make mistakes and get frustrated. Don't be afraid to tell the player to slow down. If they are going  $\frac{3}{4}$  speed and they revert back to using incorrect

footwork or their balance may be off, then have them go  $\frac{1}{2}$  speed. Let them get a few reps at that speed before moving them back to  $\frac{3}{4}$  speed.

*e. Full speed with no defense*

Once the player demonstrates they can execute the skill we go into full speed with no defense. Again, they may not progress to this stage until after a few sessions. Some players can get to this stage in the same session you introduced the skill to them. When they are at this stage the player should know how to do the move correctly and be able to autocorrect their mistakes. Give them the opportunity to feel when they did the skill incorrectly. Allow the player to make adjustments on their own. This is what it will be like in a game. I'm a skills coach and I can't be at every game of every one of the players I train. Even if I was there they shouldn't be looking to me in the stands asking questions or seeking advice. They should be engaged and paying attention to what their coach wants. If you coach the team of the player you are doing skill development with you should leave that to your assistants. As soon as there is stoppage in play or a timeout allow your assistant to give those quick soundbites about the player's skill or technique that needs adjustment.

*f. Full speed with defense*

Being able to do it correctly is great, but you want your player to be automatic with the skill or technique without having to think about it. A lot of times players can do it correctly, but when you apply defense or pressure they make mistakes or go back to their old habits. Sometimes they just forget how to perform the skill. You see this a lot when teams are practicing plays. The coach will show 5 players a set play, they drill it for a few minutes and then throw a defense out there and the offense doesn't know where to go, who to screen, or who to pass to. So I want the skill to be automatic not just correct. In this stage

the defense is not forcing any reads. The defense is there to give the player a feel of making the move with a defender.

*g. Game situation*

Once the player shows they can execute the skill or technique against a defender they must now demonstrate it in a game situation. I do a lot of 1 on 1 skill development so I sometimes can't put the player in game situations. But I add decision making to some drills to see if they can make the correct read. I don't expect it to be perfect or look good. I want some mistakes. I want it to look ugly at times. I feel this is how a player learns. If they are in a small group I can put the player in a certain action or situation that will make them have to apply the skill we have been building. If we have been building their footwork and reads off a pindown then the player will be put in a situation where he is receiving a screen and has to make the read.

I once read somewhere a few years ago the above stages are very similar to what Kobe Bryant did as a player. When he saw a move that he wanted to learn he would go through that move countless times without a ball just working on the footwork. Then Kobe would move on to working on the move on the court with a ball going about  $\frac{1}{2}$  speed to  $\frac{3}{4}$  speed. After he became comfortable with the move he would go full speed and then add a defender later. After all this he would then attempt the move in a game, but only after hours and hours of practice.

You could also progress through the training by building on what was drilled in the beginning of the session. You may have the player make some 1 on 1 moves in the half court with some different finishes at the rim. Then progress them into making a move and using one of the finishes at the rim over a live defender.

Or progress them into live 1 on 1. I just think of it as taking them from 1 step to the next trying to apply it as close to a game situation as possible.

### *3. Continuous Action Drills*

Continuous Action Drills are drills when a player has continuous or non-stop action in a drill that can utilize both sides of the floor or just one side of the floor. Continuous action drills not only drill 2 or more specific skills, it also has a conditioning element added to it. This type of drill can be run for a set amount of time, reps, or makes. An example of this could be a guard executing an on ball screen with a finish at the rim, into a pin down for an elbow jumper on the opposite side of the floor. Or the player could execute coming off a ball screen into an elbow jumper and then fades to the corner for a catch and shoot or drive to the basket. Continuous action drills are great for when you want to drill 2 different skills or techniques simultaneously.

### *4. Multi-Shot Drills*

Multi shot drills are very similar to continuous action drills in the sense that the player will get multiple shots from multiple locations. When I think of multi-shot drills I don't necessarily think of any particular action. A multi-shot drill could be as simple as a player getting spot up jumpers from 4 different spots on the floor. When I have players do multi-shot drill I like for them to work on different types of shots. This could be a pin down into an elbow jumper, fade to the corner, sprint to half court and back for the catch and shoot the 3 on the wing, and the last shot for a 1 dribble pull up. After those 4 shots the player can repeat or do the drill on the other side of the floor. This is a great way to get random shots in for players. You can really mix it up doing multi-shot drills. You can have players simulate cuts, screens, post ups, penetration, or any other skill you want to incorporate. These types of drills are great because if you have a group of players, you can have both groups going at the same time on both



sides of the floor. Your session keeps a good flow, there's no lag, and everyone is engaged. Players sprint hard to get in their 3 or 4 shots and then get a short rest period before repeating. If you are training with just 1 player I would suggest using multiple basketballs. Preferably 2 basketballs. Now your player can get at least 2 shots off before you have to chase down a rebound. Of course this will all depend on the types of shots you have them taking.

#### *5. Multi-Skill Drills*

Multi-skill drills, or mix skills as I have heard them called, is when the player takes multiple skills and they are incorporated into a single drill. So instead of having a player do stationary ball handling for the first 10 minutes of practice and then transitioning into layups, you would have the player make a predetermined set of stationary dribble moves before driving to the basket for a layup. I have really limited the amount of stationary ball handling drills I do, I'll discuss this later in the book, and have incorporated more multi-skill drills for my players.

#### *6. Offensive & Defensive Breakdown*

When I work with players during their basketball season I feel it's important to know where on the floor they will be, what their role is, and when will they have the opportunity to score. To do this I must know the offense they run. I often ask players about the team's offense, what they do during the play, what are they looking for, what's their first, second, and third option, and any other information I can get from them. By doing this it gives me a great feel for how much they understand their offense. Some players just memorize the offense, put their mind on autopilot, and become a robot. So when I ask them questions they often hesitate and are unsure on how to answer. Every player I work with is not the first, second, or even the third option to score. I tell a lot of my players for them to get an opportunity to score they have to be a great offensive

rebounder, learn how to move without the ball (especially on penetration), be an energy guy and run the floor hard, or set great screens and hope the defense leaves them open for a jumper or cut to the rim.

Once I get an understanding of what they are doing in the offense I then breakdown the offense into drillable actions. So if I'm working with a post player and they have to set a wide pin down then we drill it. I share with them how to set the screen and what their options are after the screen is set. If you're a skills coach or parent you have to be very careful here. You don't want to give your player any information or encouragement to do something they are not allowed to do on the team. So even if I'm working with developing a post player's perimeter skills, I'm not going to tell them after the screen look to receive a pass on the perimeter and make a move out of triple threat if the coach hasn't given them the green light to do so. But the goal of breaking down the offense and drilling it in a skills session is to make the player as comfortable as possible. This will be where you drill your game shots from game spots.

Defensive breakdown is the same as the offense. From an individual standpoint you can keep it simple and just drill techniques like slides, box outs, close outs, and help and recover. Being a skill coach you have to know what the team likes to do on defense and how they defend. If you are the coach you can take the time to really fine tune some things in a smaller setting. You can also add a shot to the drill.

### *7. Skill Stacking*

Skill stacking is a term I use to describe when a player “*stacks*” multiple skills together. They are skills that complement each other. So take a player that is known as a shooter. They are great at shooting the ball off spots ups or on the move. Opposing teams will try to take away the shooter's ability to catch and

shoot. The defense may not help off the shooter, switch on screens, or be physical and try to force them off the screen. But if that player adds the ability to be effective off the dribble, they can now stack the skill of dribbling and shooting together. Even though the dribble is actually only one skill the player has just added more skills to their repertoire. With the ability to dribble they can now attack the rim more, create their own shot, and make plays for other teammates. Now this player is more valuable to his team and more of a threat to the opposing team. I always try to keep this in mind when working with players. Ask yourself what skill can I add to this player's game that will open up additional or bonus skills that will make his game more valuable to his team. Traditionally coaches and players think they have to add a bunch of skills to make a player more valuable, but you really don't as long as the skills complement each other. A player that's great off the dribble and can get to the rim will need the ability to shoot. The shooting skill compliments his ability to attack off the dribble. The ability to shoot the ball will allow him to be a threat off screens, in the mid range, and even from the 3pt line.

**CHAPTER 6**

**SKILLS**

## Skills

When it comes to teaching skills it should always be based on the individual's skill level. I've had players in the past that were only 5th or 6th grade and their skill level was high enough to train with high school players. That doesn't mean they were just as good as those players, but when it came down to just doing skills they could perform those skills just as good or even better than some of the high school players.

In this section I have a few skills that I will be discussing. There are a ton of skills that can be taught in the game of basketball. Those that I will discuss are some of the more typical skills that are taught.

### Shooting

There are a ton of books and videos on shooting. In this section I just want to share my thoughts and some concepts to consider when you are teaching shooting. Shooting is probably the most debated skill development topic in basketball. There are those that believe that shooting should only be done a certain way. Whether it's a 1-2 step or a hop step. It could be ten toes to the rim or a slight turn. Everyone has an opinion on how you should shoot a basketball. So these are my thoughts on shooting.

I believe no matter what your philosophy is when it comes to shooting, whether you prefer 1-2 step over the hop or the turn vs ten toes to the rim, I believe it's safe to say the player shooting the basketball wants good balance and a good follow through. Those are the two aspects of shooting I like to concentrate on. In my opinion ten toes to the rim or a slight turn comes down to what the

athlete prefers. What's most comfortable to them. If I'm working with someone for the first time and they have a slight turn and they have no issues I make no adjustments. If they have ten toes to the rim and they have no issue I make no adjustments. I let the player decide what is most pleasing to them. Arguing one technique over another or forcing a player to shoot how you want them to shoot is not good skill development. I typically only make adjustments if their technique is a detriment to their shooting. Some players have too much turn and they need to be adjusted. Others have ten toes to the rim and need to have a slight turn. So as a skill development coach I have to learn to read the player and understand why they are missing and how they are missing. Then I have to be able to determine what adjustments need to be made to improve the players shooting.

Look at some of the best shooter to ever play the game. Reggie Miller, Larry Bird, Ray Allen, Steph Curry, Klay Thompson. They all shoot the basketball different. Not one of them shoot the ball the same way. When I work with players on shooting I tell them this. I could line up 25 players along the baseline and give them all specific instructions on how to shoot the basketball. Everything from the eyes, to the grip, to the elbow, down to the feet. I guarantee you I would have 25 different shots. Some will shoot better than others, but there are a few factors that play a part in that. It could be their strength, coordination, age or the experience the player has.

## **Game Shots from Game Spots at Game Speed**

Game shots from game spots at game speed. We have all heard that phrase before. Since I was a kid I've had numerous coaches tell me that's how you practice if you want to become a great shooter. So I would rep over and over and over again. Shot after shot after shot from game spots at game speed. I even did

the same thing with the players I would train. I would preach to the same message to them.

Coaches typically stress game shots from game spots at game speed because they want their players to get comfortable and be able to shoot a high percentage from areas of the court they will get shots in a game. I can't argue with that theory. If I was coaching a team I would want the same thing. I still believe in this concept. I just don't believe in the typical way of doing it. Rep after rep after rep from the same location is not game like if that's your objective. If you want players to get better for the game this mentality must change. If you want your player(s) to get high reps or they are working on some mechanics, this is the way to go. This is your typical block practice format. I like to use the term "*autopilot*". When players are just shooting shots from the same spot and doing the same movement over and over again, they can go into "*autopilot*" and mentally checkout. Their mind can begin to wonder. They lose focus on the task at hand. They coast through the drill and are not challenged mentally. In basketball the game is so complex. There are a number of things going on at one time.

In the past I would have players train with me and make strides in their shooting. Their mechanics would improve and they would shoot the ball better, but it wouldn't transfer to the game. I would usually tell them they have to continue to develop their in game confidence. But how can you develop in game confidence if you are not getting properly prepared in practice?

You prepare for your test before test day. You confidence in being able to pass the test is based on your preparation. The better you prepare the higher your confidence can be. So I had to look in the mirror and ask myself what can I do to

better prepare my players. They needed more game like reps. The standard block shooting is not going to always cut it.

There are so many variables that take place in a game that we could almost never mimic in a skill development session. During a game I have never seen a player take multiple shots in a row from the same spot. Does that mean you shouldn't get in multiple reps from one spot on the floor? No. I just want you to evaluate your skill sessions when you have your players getting up shots.

When I have players that come to me for the first time I typically can tell right away how they practice their shooting. Usually they stand in one spot, mom or dad rebounds and throws them the ball, they stand still catch and shoot. Shoot 10 and rotate to a new spot. They usually do this at 7 spots two times around and then repeat behind the three point line. Add in at least 20 free throws and you have over 300 shots. The question you should ask yourself is does this really transfer to a game? How often does a player stand in one spot and shoot the basketball? This may happen at best a few times a game. Most shots come off some type of movement. If we know this is true why not replicate this more?

## **Block Shooting vs Random Shooting**

Now I want you to understand there is nothing wrong with block shooting. Block shooting is necessary at times and can help improve a player's mechanics and confidence. But after many years of skill development training and thinking about all the players I have trained that have struggled with in game shooting I realized there had to be a better solution. I watched videos, read blogs, purchased books, and listened to podcast (The Skill Development Playbook Podcast is a good one) to learn as much as I could about shooting. I soon discovered that I needed my players doing more random shooting drills to



mimic a game like environment. Like I said before, no matter what you do in practice it is really difficult to mimic a game situation in practice. The environment, players adrenaline, referees, your opponent, and the unpredictability of how the game is played can almost never be mimicked in practice.

So just to make sure we are on the same page block shooting is when you have a player practice the same shot or skill over and over again until there is some improvement. This could be a player starting in the corner with his left foot forward right foot back and they work on stepping into the shot on the catch. They do this for maybe 10 reps and then move to another area on the floor and repeat the same shot. Random shooting would be taking that same shot from the corner, but after they shoot they relocate to a different area of the floor for another shot. This shot could be catch and shoot, a drive to the basket for a lay up, a pull up jump shot or any other shot you want the player to take.

Whenever I work with a player I make sure to warn them about making progress during block shooting drills. Players and parents get excited when they see their little boy or girl starting to make shots. Ahh, little Johnny is making baskets. Our trainer is so great. Whoa! Wait a minute. I appreciate the love, but it's very unlikely these makes are going to transfer to a game. I typically use block shooting when I'm working with a player that is learning how to shoot, correcting mechanics, or if we just want to get in a high volume of shots. I think of block shooting as a starting point. My more skilled players may start with some block shooting, but we go on makes and then right into some random or decision making shooting drills.

## Game like Shooting Drills

When it comes to game like drills with shooting I want players to have to concentrate on what they are doing. They have to be mentally checked into the training session. I don't want any player to just go through the motions. I want my players challenged physically, when necessary, and mentally.

When teaching a player how to shoot we often discuss the technical aspects of shooting. We could demonstrate, show video, or even use peer to peer teaching. We then follow up how with why we want them to shoot a particular way. We explain why they need to be on balance, why we want good footwork, or why we want our elbow in. But to apply those techniques, players must understand when to shoot the ball. I've had several players in the past not understand this concept. Part of the reason is they are not ready to shoot when the ball comes to them therefore they can't get their shot off in time. The other reason was they weren't drilled on when to shoot. Majority of the time when I first started training that was my fault. I thought block shooting was sufficient enough to get them game ready. Again, with block shooting players can go to "autopilot" and just catch and shoot the ball without visualizing a defender closing out on them. To make this hit home I want players to understand they need to be shot ready on the catch and be ready to shoot, pass, or drive.

Now let me state my disclaimer. I tell all my players that I work with my job is to make them the best player they can be. Every player I work with has a different role on their team. So they must understand their role and expectations the coach has for them. I never ask a player to do anything their school coach doesn't want them to do. When it comes to their AAU or travel team I view this a little different. They still need to respect the coach's decisions and expectations, but the player should also have the freedom to work on some

skills they need to improve to be ready for their school team's season. So I encourage the players and parents to speak with their AAU or travel team coach about those possibilities.

Players often understand how to do something. With a good coach they will understand why they are doing something. A lot of players struggle with when to do something. I see it a lot with the Euro step. The offense could be driving the ball to the basket with a defender on their right side and the offense will Euro step left right into the defender and end up missing the shot. So if a player knows how to shoot the ball the correct way and they understand why they want good mechanics you would think that's all they need to be a good shooter. They also must understand when to do something. When do players shoot? When do I drive vs shoot? When do I pass vs shoot? These are aspects of the game that are often overlooked during skill development.

This is where a coach that has experience in training players can help a kid better than the average parent. Cause here's a bonus tip. Most players gauge success on makes and misses. If it goes in they think, "I was success because I made the shot". It doesn't matter to them how the shot goes in. Doesn't matter if their footwork is off or if their elbow is out or if they were off balance. All they want to see is the ball go through the hoop. But as a skill coach I have what I call "*good misses*" and "*bad makes*". I don't judge a good shot on whether the ball goes in or not. Because I know in the beginning there maybe more misses than makes and that's ok. It's all part of the process.

If I'm working with a player on their shooting and we are focusing on their footwork, then I want their footwork to be correct. I can care less in the beginning if the ball goes in. You can miss 100 shots in a row. Can you execute the proper footwork? I know in the long run you will be better off if you get your

footwork down and miss some shots today versus not having good footwork or bad mechanics and being a streaky shooter for the rest of your career. So if a player is learning how to shoot or making adjustments to their shot and they are doing it correctly, but are missing shots I call them “*good misses*”. Those are ok. If a player is shooting the ball incorrectly and they make them, I call those shots “*bad makes*”.

One thing I constantly have been stressing to my players the past year or two is playing at a good rhythm and at their own speed. I don't want players shooting at a turtle's pace, but I don't want them rushing their shot either. You often hear coaches say that a player needs to develop a quicker shot. And I feel there are things you can do to get a quicker release, but at the same time I don't want a player trying to shoot so fast they compromise mechanics and form just to get a shot off. I want them to shoot with a good rhythm. If a player doesn't get his shot off maybe it has nothing to do with him having a slow release. Maybe they weren't open and needed to pass or drive the ball instead. Maybe there was hesitation on their part and that allowed the defense to get there in time. I often tell players to think shot on the catch. It doesn't mean they have to shoot it every time, but it gets them ready to shoot and takes away any hesitation.

If you are like me when I heard that for the first time then you probably think it's crazy. I read a blog I believe a few years back by Brian McCormick and he talked about this very thing. He said think shoot, shoot, shoot. I thought to myself man that's crazy. It took a few years, but I've come to realize this really helps the players I train. I have no issue with the triple threat position. All players must learn it and understand it. But there is only a few players in the world that get to hold the ball in triple threat position, isolate their defender and go 1 on 1. And those players are in the NBA. So I soon realized that some of the players I typically train are not athletic enough, skilled enough, or have the

IQ to be effective vs a set defense and be able to score the ball under 3 dribbles. This is why I have taken the approach of making a quick decision or read on the catch. Think shot and if the defense takes it away now we look to drive or pass.

So what are game like shooting drills? Some may argue, but I believe a game like shooting drill is a shooting drill where a player has to make a decision or determine if they should shoot, dribble, or pass. When we think about game situations players are in they sometimes have a split second to decide what to do with the ball once they catch it. Usually when someone thinks of a game like drill they think of the intensity of the drill. Game speed. Sprinting to a spot on the floor. Those can be involved in the drill, but I truly believe you have to make the player make a quick decision when it comes to shooting game shots.

Since I do a lot of individual private sessions I have to be pretty creative to come up with game like drills. I tell my players if I have 4 sessions back to back I won't have the energy to be a defensive player for each session. So I have to make players think in unconventional ways. One way I do this is force players to make reads. Instead of having players just catch and shoot or dribble to a spot and shoot. I add a decision that needs to be made. Typically I start with 2 decisions and incorporate more decisions as we progress. The decision could be as simple as catch and shoot or catch and drive. So let's say the player is cutting from the block to the elbow. I stress to them to get in their mind to catch and shoot. By thinking shot on the catch this gets the player ready to shoot. I want no hesitation no second guessing. Also, make sure the player understands rhythm and playing at their own speed. I don't necessarily teach the player to try to shoot the ball quickly. If you catch the ball and can't get your shot off, you don't necessarily need to try to get it off quicker, you need to pass it or drive. Unless of course it's the end of the quarter, half or game.

The read could be off my close out. If my hands are down raise up and shoot. If my hands are up drive to the bucket. My goal in doing this to confuse the player. You will have some players that do very well with this type of drill and then you will have others that struggle. If you have a player that is doing really well you can add another layer to it. Maybe if they drive you can force them to make a secondary move or work on finishes at the rim. Again, we're just trying to engage them as much as possible.

You'll notice the players that struggle always try to guess what you will do. If you start going in a pattern they will pick up on it. Sometimes I like to throw curve balls at them. I may make a correction and tell them what to look for and say do it again. Then when we go again I may do something totally different. I do this to keep them on their toes. So, back to the example I used above. If I closed out and my hands are down and they tried to drive, after the rep I would explain to them why they should have shot it. When we go again I may put my hands up to see if they are actually trying to make a read or just going through the drill.

Here's something that's very important. When it comes to drilling that involve decision making, I tell players there are no absolutes. If they make an incorrect read, they shot it instead of attacked the basket, I don't want them to think it's wrong. I stress to them there maybe a more efficient way to do it. There are a lot of things going on during the game. The offense is occupying different areas of the floor, defense could be rotating, and the read the player with the ball makes can be determined by more than the on ball defender. So depending on the situation I may never tell a player that something was wrong, but I may tell them that's not what I want at this particular moment in this particular drill.

Chris Oliver of Basketball Immersion has a ton of drills on his site that focuses on Basketball Decision Training. He uses hand signals and player movement for the player with the ball to make reads. I have used a lot of his concepts and added my own flavor to make the drill my own. I highly recommend going to his website and getting a membership. His website information can be found in the resource section of this book.

## **Teaching How to Shoot**

I know you looked at this topic and said I thought you weren't going to teach any shooting techniques. I'm not, but I have to touch on how to teach shooting. Not what to teach. There are several different concepts, beliefs, and thoughts on shooting and it can be confusing at times. So I have 9 concepts to keep in mind when teaching someone how to shoot.

### *1. Keep It Simple*

No matter what concepts you believe in you must keep it simple. Whenever I teach during my skill sessions I want to break it down to its simplest form. Kind of like fractions. Always assume the player you are working with has no idea on how to shoot. This way you cover all your bases. But be careful, too much detail and your player will think too much. The last thing you want is a basketball player that thinks too much on the court, especially when it comes to shooting. I like to start with a demonstration. I can still shoot a little bit. So when I make shots it makes the player a believer. I typically can hit 15-20 shots in a row around 15-17ft out while talking to them about form and mechanics. This intrigues them because they want to be able to do the same thing. So in that moment they want to shoot the ball like Coach TJ.

## 2. *Focus on 1 thing*

When working with a player on shooting I like to focus on 1 thing. Usually younger players struggle with their follow through. They don't want to snap their wrist. This is where I like to start. That doesn't mean you have to start there. I have a trainer friend out of Pennsylvania by the name of Jeff Sparrow, who I interviewed on my podcast, and when he works with a player on shooting he likes to start with the feet. We both concentrate on something different, but we are focusing on 1 thing. Once they have improved enough to move on then we pick something else to put all our focus into.

## 3. *Get players to feel*

Players have to be able to feel the difference between shooting the ball the correct way and the incorrect way. I can make corrections or offer suggestions, but ultimately that player has to feel the difference. The player must understand during a game their skill coach, team coach, mom or dad won't be able to tell them what was wrong with their shot every time they shoot it. They have to know what caused them to miss. If the shot felt good and you missed, no big deal move on. If the shot is off because they were off balance or their elbow was out then they must be able to make the adjustment on the next shot. In the beginning the player may not be able to feel the difference. So when they shoot the ball how you want them to you must make it a big deal. If they snap their wrist or get their footwork down you must celebrate in some way. Give them a big high five, have a certain handshake, fist bump, or something.

## 4. *Don't "change", "enhance"*

The word "change" is dangerous. Think about it. You're at work and you have a meeting scheduled for 10am. Then at 9:45am you receive an email saying the meeting time has been changed to 2pm. Now you have to adjust your day around an afternoon meeting. Change can be difficult, frustrating, and hard.



When I first starting working with players I would use the word “*change*” all the time. Your shot is ok, but let's change a few things. I would get looks of doubt and apprehension. They would automatically think “*change*” is uncomfortable. So instead of using the word “*change*” I now use the word “*enhance*”. If the player has bad mechanics then I tell them I’m going to show you something that will “*enhance*” your ability to shoot the basketball. I get the typical head nod. They are more open to it because the word “*enhance*” means to increase, strengthen, or boost their ability to shoot the basketball. Now what I’m about to show them they are more open to and willing to try with less resistance.

#### *5. Encourage through misses*

In the beginning the player will more than likely miss more shots than they make if they are learning to shoot the basketball correctly for the first time. I tell them this. “I know this is going to sound crazy, but I really don’t care if you make a shot or miss a shot as long as you...” Then I finish that statement with whatever we are focusing on. They could miss 100 shots in a row. I don’t care as long as they are focusing on the 1 thing we are trying to “*enhance*”. Like I mentioned earlier I prefer “*good misses*” over “*bad makes*”. In the long run they will be better off learning how to shoot the ball the correct way now versus being a streaky shooter down the road.

#### *6. Know when to correct*

This is one thing you must learn from having a feel for the player you are training. Correcting too much too often can lead to anxiety. Every time they miss they will look to you for an answer for why they didn’t make the shot. I sometimes let a player go several shots before offering a suggestion. What I don’t want is for a player to think everytime they miss something is wrong with their shot. Sometimes you just miss. What I really like to do is see if the player can feel the difference in their shot if they are not shooting correctly and see if

they can make the adjustment themselves. To me that's how it's going to be in a game. During competition, typically their team coach is only concerned about how the ball goes in the basket. They're not going to be breaking down the player's shot every time they shoot. So they have to be able to diagnose their own shot. When you do correct and offer suggestions use keywords or terms. If their elbow is out just call out "elbow" so they know they need to adjust their elbow. If it's their footwork I typically say, "pay attention to your feet" or "balance" and they will know how to adjust. Even though I said be careful when it comes to correcting a player, you can't be afraid to correct. During skill development that's what we do. We find and solve problems.

#### *7. Reference NBA players*

Most of the time players will have a favorite NBA player. Every once and awhile I get a player that doesn't even watch basketball. That makes no sense to me at all, but anyway. When a player tells me their favorite player is Steph Curry and they want to shoot like Steph Curry I use him as an example. The kid I'm working with could have a bad habit of sticking his elbow out. So I'll ask him if Steph Curry shoots that way. I'll then ask how does Steph Curry shoot? Or more specifically does Steph Curry shoot with his elbow out? I may even get my phone out and go to YouTube and show a few clips of Steph Curry shooting. I'm teaching them a couple of things here. I don't want them to just watch the game as a fan and look for highlights. I also want them to be able to study the game. Look at his footwork, his follow through, his separation, etc. If they want to shoot like their favorite player they must be able to study their favorite player.

#### *8. Be truthful*

The truth is needed, but the truth also hurts at times. Every player that comes to me sees themselves in a certain light, but after talking with me that light sometimes becomes dim. I don't believe in tearing a player down to build them

up, but I do believe in being honest and forthcoming with my players. Some players I train just can't shoot the ball. Simple as that. They think they can, but when I have them go through certain drills they see they are not as good as they thought. After I am truthful with them and their parent/guardian I give them some drills to do at home and then tell them my plan. Part of being honest is holding the player accountable. I'm just a coach. I have no magic drills that can make them the next Steph Curry. I can give some tips, advice, techniques, and drills that can help them along the way. At the end of the day the player must understand they must put in the work to be the best shooter they can be. When the player and the parent hears the plan they feel better about the situation. I tell them what's wrong with their shot and what needs to be "*enhanced*". They are also informed on how we plan to improve their shooting. Once they know you will be honest with them for their development, they buy in and give you the commitment needed to improve their shooting.

#### *9. Record them shooting*

There are a lot of players that have not seen themselves shoot recorded on a cell phone or tablet. There are some apps you can download that can do some cool things, but their not necessary. Recording a player shooting the basketball gives the player that "aha moment". The light comes on quicker and they have visual of what they are not doing or should be doing. Plus, it gives them a reference for their improvement. A month or two down the road you can go back and look at where they started to measure their progress.

## **Ball Handling**

When it comes to dribbling the basketball I have seen a lot of different techniques and equipment that claim to improve ball handling. I've seen players and coaches dribble with a plastic bag around the ball, toss tennis balls,

dribble two or three basketballs, use medicine balls, racquetballs, use specially made goggles, gloves, and other equipment. There are even basketballs with special grooves on them to make it more difficult to handle the ball. I've also seen basketballs that use technology and track your handle through an app on your phone or tablet. I'm not trying to bash any of those techniques or pieces of equipment. I'm guilty of using a few of those mentioned above myself.

There are a plethora of dribbling drills and workouts on the internet. You can go to YouTube and search basketball dribbling drills and there are literally 483,000 search results when I was writing this book. You can find dribbling drills for kids, how to get nasty handles, you can get Stephen Curry full dribbling workout routine, how to get crazy handles, how to dribble like a pro, and so much more. YouTube can be a great source for basketball players and coaches. You can find a lot of great information, but it also has a lot of not so great information.

When I first starting doing skill development training I would spend nearly 20 minutes of the training on ball handling and dribbling. About 10 minutes would be stationary and then the other 10 would be on the move. I would use 1 or 2 balls. I would have them toss and catch tennis balls or use goggles. They would dribble around cones, chairs, or trash cans. This was my way of developing a player's confidence and skill of handling the basketball.

Just like with shooting I have grown in how I teach and conduct skill development training when it comes to ball handling. I no longer do the 20 minutes of ball handling and dribbling like I did years ago. I've had players dribble up and down the court with 2 balls, do all kind of 1 ball and 2 ball combo moves stationary and on the move, but when they get in the game and as soon

as pressure is applied they couldn't dribble to save their life. Well, that maybe a little drastic, but they did struggle at times.

Now it's tough to do certain ball handling drills in a 1 on 1 session because I like I said before I can't guard everyone I train. Players need ball handling and dribbling drills. This is a fact. I see more and more players not dribbling anymore. I mean just going outside and dribbling the basketball. When I was younger I hardly did ball handling drills. I believe the first time I really did 2 ball drills was in college. Other than a few camps when I was younger I never dribbled 2 basketballs. I never thought I need to go outside and do ball handling drills to improve my handle. I just took my basketball everywhere I went. If I went to check the mail, I would dribble to the mailbox. I went to my friends house, I would dribble down the street. When I finished my homework and could go outside I would dribble in the driveway or in the grass.

When it comes to doing ball handling drills you have to remember, typically the player you work with will have the ball in their hands a lot. They usually have the ball in their hands more in the training session than they would in an actual game. So they really don't need to do 20 minutes of ball handling drills. They can get plenty of reps throughout the training session when shooting off the dribble or dribbling to a certain spot on the floor.

Dribbling is a means to an end. Players should use their dribble to pass or to shoot. I think we all can agree on that. No player or team has ever scored points just by dribbling. When the ball is dribbled it either leads to a shot for the player with the ball or a pass to a teammate. When it's time to drill we should remember this. After the dribble is there a pass or a shot? But we see a lot of dribbling in skills training that don't lead to either one. The player dribbles in

the same spot or up and down the court doing multiple moves and there is no pass or shot. It's just a dribbling drill.

I have now split my dribbling drills into 2 different categories. One being my form or repetition drills and the second one is my game like dribbling drills. I don't think I can stress this enough. Skill development is about knowing your players and what they need to work on. Every player is different. There will be players that need a lot of form dribbling drills in the beginning and that's ok. They may have to start with stationary dribbling for the first 5 minutes or so of practice. I just think anymore than that can be a bit excessive.

My form or repetition dribbling drills consist of my control dribbling drills and my change of direction drills. My control dribbling drills really help the player with their hands manipulating the ball and their footwork. Players must understand that their hand must move and control the ball from different sides and angles of the ball. So stationary pound dribbles, V dribbles, 1 hand side to side, and figure 8 are the drills I like to do. If the player controls the ball pretty well then we can do something like combine V dribbles and 1 hand side to side to give them more of a challenge. As simple as those drills are it tells you a lot about how the player can control the ball. Their hands has to move and manipulate the basketball from all different angles of the ball.

Your hands and feet in basketball must work together. I've seen too many players make great moves, but get off balance and end up out of control. With younger players you'll see coordination is an issue at times when it comes to their hands and feet. Having a player do a drill as simple as dribble and jab with the opposite foot is sometimes difficult and awkward. You will see the player stomp their foot like they are stepping on a spider. So I want the player to drill being in a good athletic stance with their eyes up as much as possible. They

need a good wide base, hips dropped, knees bent, and chest up. While pound dribbling I may have the player take different jab steps with the opposite foot or with the ball side foot. I could even have them dribble jab and then work on taking the first explosion step to drill more footwork. After that we will then progress from stationary to on the move and then into a lay up or pass.

The stationary change of direction dribble moves the player does is nothing fancy. We drill crossovers, between the legs, in-and-out, and behind the back. When doing this drill we take 1 or 2 pound dribbles and then make the change of direction dribble. The player goes for a set amount of time with both hands before switching to another change of direction move. The feet are important when attacking off the dribble. So there is a progression of drills that I like for the player to do that work on the takeoff and coming to a stop. I believe players need to be able to make a change of direction move and attack off either foot. So what I mean is, if a player does a crossover right to left they should be able to attack with the left foot stepping first as well as the right foot. This is something we will drill. We also add coming to a stop. This footwork is a quick hop or a 1-2 step. We drill this coming to a quick hop of the left or right foot. We also drill coming to a 1-2 going left-right and right-left.

If I do those dribbling drills mentioned above, we may go for 5-6 minutes max stationery. That's usually all the stationary ball handling drills I do. Do I think there is a place for tennis balls, medicine balls, 2 balls, and other equipment? Yes. I just don't like to rely on them. I sometimes use tennis balls if I see a player have a bad reaction to having to do stationary ball handling drills every time they come in the gym. So I give them a different challenge. Show them a few drills to re-engage them and they might not see those tennis balls again.

When it comes to doing dribbling drills on the move everyone knows the cones, chairs, and trash cans don't move. They are stationary and they are easy to dribble around. Again, I use cones for reps and as a tool to teach form and footwork. To help improve players ability to dribble on the move I really focus on their feet and balance. Can they be efficient off the dribble? Can they attack and be on balance? Can they change speeds?

If I want to drill dribbling on the move and we are not focusing on reps or form I add a pass or a shot to the drill. The drill could be as simple as crossover through cones going down the court and then finish with a lay up. Or the player could crossover through 3 or 4 cones, pass ahead to a coach, receive the pass back and finish with a lay up. If there are 2 or more players in the training session they could be stationary and make quick dribble moves and then pass to each other.

## **Passing**

Passing is a skill that can go under ball handling. I've seen several videos on YouTube, Instagram, and other social media sites and passing is often overlooked. I see a lot of dribbling and shooting drills, but not so much when it comes to passing. And when it comes to passing to the post, forget about it. You hardly ever see that.

Players have to develop the ability to pass with either hand, off either foot, and off pivots. When I was a kid going to basketball camps and playing for different coaches I was taught to never make 1 handed passes and never jump to make a pass. I view these 2 passing sins a little bit different today. I don't encourage players to make unnecessary 1 handed passes or jump passes, but I drill them on how to make those passes. We can pretty much credit Steve Nash with changing



this concept. It was often viewed that 1 handed passes were bad passes. But we soon realized that 1 hand passes can be the best solution at times.

During my training sessions we often only make 1 handed passes. I tell the players I work with that by learning to make accurate 1 handed passes it could increase their ability to make accurate on time passes when they add their other hand. As a skills coach I believe in adding tools to the player's tool belt. Their coach may not allow 1 handed passes and that's cool. The 1 handed pass can be a tool they may need later in their playing days. But when the time comes they will be able to use that tool. With enough practice and attention to detail you will be amazed at how players can learn to make on target 1 handed passes.

There are several 1 handed passes we drill. Players should learn the 1 handed bounce pass, 1 handed push pass, the 1 handed over the shoulder pass, and for a bonus the 1 handed behind the back pass. Don't be afraid to have players work on skills they may not get to use in a game. A player may only make 1 behind the back pass their whole high school career. I don't spend a lot of time teaching a player how to make a behind the back pass, but we may throw it in every once in awhile to mix it up.

The jump pass is a bad pass if the player jumps first and then looks for a solution. This is how players get caught in the air with nothing to do with the ball. But if a player sees an open teammate and the best way to get them the ball is to jump to pass then I believe that's ok. This is something that has to be taught and drilled. Players must understand driving baseline and jumping out of bounds when they make pass to the opposite corner will keep them from getting a charge. They will need to know when to jump and how to jump when making a cross court jump pass.

When giving teaching points to players about passing they must know the 5 passing windows: 1. Left ear 2. Right ear 3. Left hip 4. Right hip 5. Top of the head. These are the areas they want to make passes if possible when being defended. If being pressured you want to escape the defender's pressure by getting to the outside of the defender's body. To do this players must learn to pivot first against pressure and then pass.

During skill development you don't have to necessarily isolate passing drills unless you are working form and technique or wanting players to get some reps. Passing can easily be added to any drill. Players can drive and kick and then relocate for a jumper. Players can pass into the post with your teaching points on post feed and then relocate for a shot or drive to the basket. There are several different ways to drill passing. It comes down to how you want to drill it and the ability of the player.

## **Basketball IQ**

I often ask players a lot of questions during our skill development session. It's easy for me to give them all the answers and keep it moving, but I'm doing them a disservice if I don't force them to think and learn the game. My dad used to always tell me, "Son, basketball is a thinking man's game, but you can't think". Basically he was telling me you have to play the game with your head. You have to develop strategy. Think ahead. Have counters to what the opposition is trying to do on offense and on defense.

I have encountered a lot of players that don't think about the game. They play but they make moves like they are playing checker instead of chess. Chess players have to strategize before they make a move. They know what could happen if they make a certain move. They predict how the opposition will

counter and then make a move they can capitalize on. Chess players are always thinking ahead. Checkers is a little bit different. It's more in the moment when compared to chess. One move doesn't necessarily relate to another move they may make in the future.

There are a lot of basketball players that play like checker players. They don't truly understand the game and how strategy is such a big part of it. So part of skill development is to improve a player's basketball IQ. This can be done in a variety of ways. If the skill session has a group of players then the players can go live and drill certain situations. In a 1 on 1 training session this is a little more difficult because the player has to learn to use their imagination of other defenders and teammates on the floor.

Film is also a great resource to have. Players can see situations and then they can be discussed for a few minutes off the floor when practice is over. Film doesn't have to be of college or NBA players. It could easily be of situations from their games. Or if you can you can record the live portion of the training session if you have a group of players and then go back and view different parts of it.

When improving a player's basketball IQ I want them to understand terminology, defensive schemes and rotations, different reads, knowing who to pass to, when to pass to them, and what type of pass to make to them. Those are just small portion of what you could cover with basketball IQ. I always tell the players I train that I don't want you to memorize drills, I want you learn techniques and skills. The understanding of why you are doing something is more important that just getting through a drill.

## **Footwork**

Players like Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, and Hakeem Olajuwon had excellent footwork. They could move and pivot in a way that many others idolized, but couldn't duplicate. I constantly stress to the players I work with the importance of footwork. A player's feet are involved in everything they do on the court. You want to be a good ball handler and be able to break down the defense? Then you must have good footwork that will give you balance. You want to give yourself a greater chance at making shots? Then you must have good footwork. If you want to be a good defender then you must have good footwork.

Being able to start, stop, and pivot all while being on balance can give the player a greater chance at success as a basketball player. Footwork is the cornerstone of skill development. Players want to exhibit the ability to move gracefully on the court. Solid footwork can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of a move. It can give you advantages and put the offensive player in position to be the most successful.

When it comes to training I want the player's feet to have a mind of their own. I don't want the player to have to think about what to do with their feet. Their feet should be able to adjust to any situation they are put in. There are some that have a preference when it comes to footwork. I believe all players should be able to perform all different types of footwork skills. Doesn't matter if it's a 1-2 step, jump stop, quick hop, starting a move, coming to a stop, or any combination of pivots.

When teaching footwork I have a starting point when it comes to incorporating footwork into the training sessions. I like for players to step 1-2 into the catch if they are moving towards the basket. I prefer an inside foot pivot if they are moving parallel to the basket. These are my preferences and what I teach if I am teaching the skill to a beginner, but I believe it's good to be able to execute

different foot patterns also. As the player gets more skilled with those foot patterns we then switch it up and work on catching off a quick hop when going toward the basket or a dominant foot 1-2 step (step right left for right hander). They will also drill a dominant pivot foot when moving parallel to the basket.

The main focus is for the player to be able to make a move or a combination of moves and not have to think about their feet. How can the player set their feet to put them in a position to be on balance and be the most effective?

There are some that spend a lot of time on the agility ladder to improve a player's footwork. The agility ladder can improve coordination and foot speed, but I like to really mimic foot patterns players will do in the game to improve their footwork. To be able to drill the different foot patterns you have to think of what different movements players will do in the game. Below I have some different situations and foot patterns I like to drill players on to improve their footwork. Before I get into that, let's look at different types of footwork and pivots.

1. *1-2 Step*

This is when the players stops left right (for right handers) or right left (for left handers) on the catch. When it comes to stopping off the dribble I want the players to be able to stop right left and left right.

2. *Jump stop*

This type of footwork is usually the easiest to learn for young players. The jump stop allows players to come to a stop while landing on both feet. I stress to players the jump stop is good for covering ground. I use the word jump stop if I want the player to cover ground when attacking off the dribble. Pay attention to the player's hips and knees. Some players will not drop their hips or have a bend

in their knees when executing this move. Also, keep an eye on the ball. Players will sometimes not pick the ball up and jump stop while dribbling causing a high dribble.

### 3. *Quick hop*

A quick hop is my preference when catching the ball on the perimeter, shooting off cuts or shooting off the dribble. I consider this the quiet version of the jump stop. Quick hops should be a small hop that makes relatively no sound when landing. Players that do this are trying to get their feet underneath them quickly so they can be set to pivot or shoot.

### 4. *Strong side step*

Strong side step is when the player steps forward with their swing foot or their non-pivot foot. So if the player's left foot is their pivot foot they would step to their right with their right foot.

### 5. *Crossover step*

A crossover step is when the player steps with their non-pivot foot or their swing foot across their body. So if the player's left foot is their pivot foot they would step with their right foot across their body to go left. Be sure to pay close attention to the player's hips. Some players will execute the crossover step and their hips will be facing the sideline if they are making the move from the top of the perimeter. I call this "closed hips" and I inform them to keep their hips open to make their drive a little more efficient and effective. This keeps them driving in a straight line toward the rim and going north-south instead of east-west.

### 6. *Pivots*

- a. *Outside pivot* - If the player catches the ball off a quick hop and they pivot away from the defender, this is considered an outside pivot. An outside pivot is good to use if the defender is arms length away from the offensive player.
- b. *Inside pivot* - An inside pivot is when the offense catches the ball off a quick hop and they pivot toward the defender. This is commonly used when the offense is being pressured and they want to create space. By swinging their leg toward the defender they can create a little space from the defender.

When shooting off the catch players can drill several different foot patterns to improve their footwork. There are not too many opportunities for players to stand in one spot and shoot the basketball. Especially with the pass coming from underneath the basket. So to work on improving footwork players should constantly be on the move when shooting. Checkout a few of the foot patterns I like for players to do when shooting off the catch.

1. Sprint into 1-2 step or quick hop
2. Sprint, backpedal into 1-2 or quick hop
3. Sprint to a spot, shuffle into 1-2 or quick hop
4. Backpedal, shuffle into 1-2 or quick hop
5. Shuffle, sprint into 1-2 or quick hop

There are a number of foot patterns you can come up with to help drill a player's footwork. Those I mentioned are just a few. You can also add shots off the dribble. Players could catch the ball and then get into a 1 or 2 dribble pull up jumper or different finishes at the rim. Another tip is you can make it where the player will replicate a more game like situation. The player can start with the ball and drive and kick out to a teammate or coach, then relocate for a catch and

shoot or pull up jumper. On the drive don't be afraid to add different types of jump stops, 1-2 steps, or pivots to challenge the player.

Players also have to drill footwork when shooting off the dribble. Again, there are a number of different foot patterns or different types of footwork skills players want to be able to execute. You have your 1-2 step, jump stops, quick hops, up and unders, outside pivots, inside pivots, step backs, etc, etc. The really good players not only can isolate those moves, they can combine them and execute them with precision. A player with excellent footwork can drive to the basket execute a outside pivot and into an up and under all while maintaining their balance and composure against a closely guarded defender.

When drilling footwork off the dribble I want to make sure the player has balance, balance, balance. I can't stress that enough. So when they attack off the dribble I have to make sure when the player comes to a stop they not only can shoot, but be able to pivot and pass if the defense takes away the shot.

## **Defense**

Defense is a skill that is often overlooked when it comes to skill development. It doesn't have to be drilled for an extended period of time, but it should be a part of the skill session. If you are a skills coach, players can learn proper technique on defensive stance, close outs, box outs, or help and recover. Coaches have different philosophies when it comes to man to man defense or zone defense so I would suggest staying neutral.

For coaches of teams this will be a great time to tweak or improve on some techniques, schemes, and defensive situations. The team's terminology for defense and forcing the players to communicate can also be included. Again,



this doesn't have to be for an extended period of time. You could dedicate 5-10 minutes toward defense and your players will get better. You could even add a shot into the drill.

If you are doing any 1 on 1 or any other small sided games don't forget to coach the defense. Little teaching points on how to contain the dribble, how to get through screens, how to defend on ball screens, or how to take away an offensive player's strength can be taught here. Skill coaches that are not part of a team can teach general concepts unless they know exactly what a particular player's coach wants them to do on defense. A skill coach for a team or an assistant coach can implement the team's defensive schemes and concepts into the training session.

## **Other Skills that need Development**

- *Screening*

There are several screens that players will need to drill in a skill development session. There are narrow pin downs, wide pin downs, flare screens, on ball screens, cross screens, and any other screens a team may use. When drilling screening I want the players to know the proper technique of getting a wide base, knees flexed, and how to protect themselves. They should know the advantages of sprinting to set the screen and how they can be a threat after setting a good hard screen on the defense. They should also know their options after the screen is set. You can really drill this in a group setting by having the players screen each other in the drill, but in a 1 on 1 setting you just want to make sure their technique is on point. Screening can be added to just about any drill and can include relocation for a shot.

- *Cutting*

A lot of young players like to stand and watch the player with the ball. They will pass and just sit there like a spectator. What I have learned over the years is that players struggle with this because as soon as a player start playing basketball they are quickly told what to do by being told to memorize a play. Players must learn there are 3 reasons to cut: 1. Cut to space 2. Cut to score 3. Cut to screen. In your skill sessions you should drill all three of those different scenarios.

- *Rebounding*

When someone says “rebound” they are usually talking about the post player. But rebounding is a skill that all players should learn. Learning how to block out and the footwork that goes with it, how to get your hands above your shoulders, and how to pivot once the rebound is secured are all important aspects that need to be covered. You could drill rebound to score, rebound to outlet, or rebound to reset on offense. Rebounding drills could even lead into 1 on 1 or 2 on 2 drills.

- *Weak Hand Development*

Players that can only play with their strong hand is handicapped in basketball. Players must eliminate their weak hand. Weak hand development means having the ability to dribble, pass, and finish around the rim. The player may prefer their dominant hand, but they should develop the confidence to use their weak hand when needed.

- *Playing vs pressure*

All players should be able to play against pressure. When a defender is in their air space and crowding their body they must be able to make plays. This could be when they have the ball or off the ball. That player must be able to separate from the defender to come tight off the screen. They must also be drilled

different techniques to use when being pressured with the ball. Drills should be designed to help players play against pressure and still be successful.

## **Position Checklist**

As a skills coach I have developed a checklist for skills I believe are important for players to have. These are skills I believe each player will need no matter what offense they play in. If they have the following skills they should be able to adapt to any role their team or coach needs them to play. For any coach of a team your checklist could be different. It should match the skills needed for your team to be successful and to help your program win.

### Point Guard Checklist

- Dribbles with a purpose and attacks in a straight line to draw other defenders.
- Uses pass as a weapon. Makes sure pass to be on target.
- Can shoot mid range off dribble or off screens
- Has great vision. Not only sees their defender but know where help and rotational defenders are. Finds open teammates and can see plays develop before they happen.
- Can finish at the rim over defenders and through contact with either hand, off either foot, on all 3 sides of the rim (front, left, and right sides).
- Great leader that communicates well
- Effective when attacking off the pick n roll. Can find player rolling, popping, or shooters on weak side. Understands different ways to attack on ball defensive schemes.
- Can feed post and then cut effectively
- Can defend other team's point guard

- Has good footwork on offense and defense
- Great endurance
- Great decision maker
- High basketball IQ
- Shoots well from free throw line

#### Wing Player Checklist

- Can shoot mid range at high percentage
- Can shoot the 3
- Can shoot off cuts, off screens, off the dribble, and in transition
- Great finisher at the rim
- Has good footwork on offense and defense
- Can post up and be effective
- Effective out of triple threat
- Can get open without a screen using various cuts
- Can create off the dribble in under 3 dribbles
- Good at attacking closeouts
- Can guard post, on ball, and screens
- Shoots well from free throw line

#### Post Player Checklist

- Is effective at all 3 post positions; low post, mid post, and high post
- Can finish with either hand around the basket
- Set solid screens
- Runs floor hard
- Ability to rebound on both ends of the floor
- Effective out of on ball screens
- Controls the paint on the defensive end by blocking/altering shots and rebounding

- Can make 15-17 ft jump shot from short corner and elbows
- Can hit trail jumper in transition
- Shoots well from free throw line

**CHAPTER 7**

**HOW TO  
CONDUCT  
SKILL  
DEVELOPMENT  
TRAINING**

# How to Conduct Skill Development Training

When it comes to actually conducting a skill development session there are several things that play a part. One of my biggest pet peeves is when someone believe skill development is just a bunch of drills you find on YouTube or any other website. If a skills trainer is being paid for skill development and they are just gathering random drills off the internet, they are not conducting real skill development. Coaches that do that are not doing their team any benefit at all either. Skill development involves more than just drills. I've said for years that getting the drills is the easy part. It's great to have an extensive library of drills for every situation or skill imaginable, but the drill does not make the player. A shooting drill that's complex does not mean the player will get more out of that drill than a simple catch and shoot drill. Just because Kobe Bryant is filmed doing a drill doesn't mean it will make your kid the next Kobe Bryant. So let's take a look at how to conduct skill development training.

## Keys to Skill Development

Let's start with some keys to skill development. When I'm preparing for a skill development session I want to make sure the following are included.

1. *Have a plan*

For every player a coach or trainer works with they must have some type of plan for that individual. We discussed earlier the difference between training and working out. You can see improvement when it comes to working out, but training takes careful planning. Write out what you want the player to accomplish and how you will guide the player to his or her preferred destination.

## *2. Game like drills*

There must be some element that prepares the player for game situations. As players learn skills and techniques they will need more game like drills or situations to help better prepare them for competition. Again, these drills don't have to be complex or very pretty. You have to know what skills they use in a game, the different actions they execute, and then develop a way for the player to drill that skill and action in a way that mimics what they will face in competition.

## *3. Footwork*

You can't do anything in basketball without footwork. The feet play such an important role in a player's game. Balance on the shot, the dribble, the pass, the closeout, the rebound, etc. Footwork drills should be included in every training session. It's the cornerstone of skill development.

## *4. Conditioning*

This is a bonus key. When I say conditioning that doesn't mean you have to make the player get on the line and run line drills or sprints. It's not even about trying to make the player tired or worn out. I do believe if you have a good pace and flow to the training session the player will get some additional conditioning in. But this also depends on what your objective is for the session. If you are teaching a kid how to shoot for the first time then there may not be a lot of movement and running.

## **Adding Competition**

Before adding competition you want to make sure the player is ready for it. Players learning technical skills in the beginning could lose confidence if they



are competing and not being successful. Allow the player to make some progress before throwing them into competition if possible. But by adding competition it keeps the players engaged. Here are my 4 tips on having players compete in a skill session.

1. Have players compete against clock, the drill, or themselves.
  - a. When competing against the clock players can try to make a certain number of shots in a certain time frame.
  - b. They can compete against themselves. Keeping track of a player's score or record and then have that player try to beat their best score.
  - c. Players can also compete against the drill. They may have to complete the drill in a certain amount of time.
2. In a group setting players can compete against each other. This can be 1v1, 2v2, or 3v3. Give the losers a quick punishment like 3-5 pushups.
3. Coaches and trainers need to understand the standard for competitive drills are based on the player's skill level and ability. A college player may be asked to make 10 3 pointers in 60 seconds where a kid in 8th grade maybe asked to only make 5. It all depends on the player and their talent level.

### **3 Teaching Principles**

1. *How*

Players will be introduced to new skills either by demonstration and/or explanation.

2. *Why*

Players must understand why they are learning a new skill or technique. This understanding allows them to have a better basketball IQ and more understanding of the game.

### 3. *When*

After players know how and why they perform a particular skill they must then learn when to execute that skill. There are a lot of players that know how to make a move (ex. Euro step) but they don't know when to execute the move. Players will get plenty of reps perfecting when to execute a particular move.

## **4 Stage Process for Players to Learn**

### 1. *Players must be taught how to learn*

When it comes to teaching someone how to learn, you want them to develop the capability to learn. You want the player to acquire the skills needed to be successful on the basketball court. This can be done by giving the player strategies to help them learn how to learn. They could learn how to study film and what to look for, discuss basketball strategies and concepts with coaches and players that have more knowledge and experience than they do, ask themselves questions and do critical thinking to come up with an answer, or they can spend time reviewing a skill or technique they don't understand on their own time.

### 2. *Players must learn how to train*

As a skills coach, majority of the players I work with I see once a week. It would be great if I could see them all 4 or 5 times a week, but that's not going to be possible. So players must learn how to train on their own outside of any organized practice time. If they are able to work with a skill development coach they will still need that personal time of their own to develop skills. They may get limited individual attention when it comes to team practices so it's imperative they spend some time working on their individual game. For those individual practices to be effective the player must understand how to practice in an effective and efficient manner to get the most out of their time.

### *3. Players must learn how to play*

I believe there are those that play basketball and there are those that know how to play basketball. There is a big difference between the two. Players that know how to play basketball understand concepts and strategies. They play a smart game that compliments their skills. The smart players or the high IQ players know how to apply their skills to a game situation. They have developed the knowledge needed to be successful at playing the game.

### *4. Players must learn how to compete*

The focus here shifts to performance. Players are now training for competition. While in this stage player must take their preparation more serious. In addition to technical skills the players must also be aware of mental training, nutrition, injury prevention, and rest and recovery. Players are learning to combine their skills and strategy during competitive conditions during their practices and training.

## **Additional Tips for Skill Development Drills**

### *1. Keep them moving*

Keep players moving and involved. The more players stand around the less interested they become. I've seen too many skill development sessions where one player is shooting and 3 or 4 players are just standing around watching or rebounding waiting their turn. If players have to wait in line, try to keep the lines moving and keep players from having to wait too long for their next rep.

### *2. Be prepared with practice plan*

Know what you are going to do before you get to the gym. Being organized will help your drills flow and make practice more effective and efficient. Pulling drills out the air can disrupt the training and make the session unorganized.

3. *Use variety in drills*

To keep players interested you should vary your drills to keep players engaged. Using multiple drills to work on the same skill will make things fresh and new.

4. *Use as many basketballs as possible*

The more basketballs in practice the more reps each player gets.

5. *Use multi-skill drills*

To get more done in a small amount of time there could be multiple skills in a drill. The drill could include passing, cutting, and shooting for example.

6. *Breakdown your offense in skill development drills*

To improve offensive production and execution, coaches should break down their offensive sets into actions and include them into their skill development. If you're a skills coach, be sure to ask the players about their offense and their role in the offense. You can then break it down and create drills to help the player be more successful.

7. *Remove competition when teaching new skills*

When a player is learning a new skill they should not worry about competition. The most important thing is trying to improve on the skill they are learning. As they improve their skills they can be exposed to more competitive drills.

8. *Keep drills short*

The longer you stay in a drill the harder it is to keep your players attention. 5-8 minutes per drill is ideal. Don't be afraid to cut a drill short if your players pick up a skill or technique pretty quickly.

### 9. *Simulate game situations*

Put players in situations they will face in the game. This help them prepare and build confidence for what they might face.

### 10. *Provide lots of positive feedback*

Feedback from coaches must be often and positive in skill development. Players can't always see where they are going so it is up to the coach to provide that positive feedback to keep them motivated.

The following are some training variations that should take place during a skill development session:

1. Limit the number of varied practices for beginners. Someone that's learning for the first time needs a lot repetition
2. After players have been introduced to a skill and that skill has started to develop, the practice condition should match a variety of possible competitive scenarios. I mentioned different ways to develop competition earlier in the book. Players can compete against themselves, the drill, or their peers.
3. Don't be predictable with your training sessions. I usually see a lot of training sessions that start with they typical stationary dribbling drills. Next, they get into dribbling on the move and 1 on 1 moves. You want to change up the order of your drills from time to time. This fights boredom for the players, it keeps the players excited, and it can make it more fun. If a player is always doing ball handling drills in the beginning of a training session they will eventually get used to doing those drills. By moving the ball handling drills to the middle or end of the training session the player can experience a different challenge.

4. Also, you want to vary the drills, time spent on the drill, reps, recovery time, and other aspects. By doing this you keep the players on their toes and challenge them in different ways. Instead of doing regular stationary 2 ball drills, you may add a pass to drill. Or you could have the player shoot 2 free throws in between drills instead of making a certain amount.

## **How to Teach During a Skill Development Session**

You must understand that coaching is teaching. Specific instruction should be provided for players to gain knowledge on different concepts and skills that will allow them to be successful. Skill development is not just a bunch of drills thrown together that players run through for an hour. Players should get explicit details and instruction that will allow a better understanding of how to play the game.

When it comes to teaching the game of basketball keep the following tips in mind:

1. *Words and actions*
  - a. Know the game and be intelligent. Speak directly to players.
  - b. Take time to connect with your players. Know what music they listen to, what they like outside of basketball, other interests they have, or other sports they play.
  - c. Make sure they understand WHY they are doing something. Don't drill for the sake of drilling. Have purpose for everything you do.
  - d. Give plenty of encouragement. This is especially true when they are learning a new skill. They must understand that with skill development sometimes you have to take a step back before you can take 2 steps forward.

- e. Give a demonstration. Coaches don't have to look like an NBA player to do this. Giving the player a visual will get their attention and keep them engaged. The demonstration doesn't have to just come from the coach, it could be in the form of video or another player.
2. How you speak
- a. Show your passion and speak with confidence. Give the players assurance that you have what it takes to make them a better player.
  - b. Be clearly defined with certain teaching points. Players can sense if you don't know what you are talking about. Study the game and be a lifelong learner.
  - c. Look them in the eyes when communicating. By looking the players in the eyes you can read whether or not they understand the message you are relaying to them.
  - d. Give examples and stories to motivate. Stories from your personal playing days or players you used to coach can help motivate players. Personal stories can hit a lot closer to home versus stories you have read or heard about.
3. How you say it
- a. If at all possible you want to keep it short and sweet. Too much talking can disrupt the flow of the training session. Also, you want to keep a good pace to the session which will help with the player's endurance.
  - b. Coach on fly during drills and live action. Try to find ways to coach players through mistakes and teaching points without having to stop the drill. There will be times when this is unavoidable, but not having to stop the drill to give corrections keeps the players engaged.
  - c. If you have no choice but to stop the drill then try to give the player the synopsis. Your more inexperienced players may have to get longer

versions of explanations to understand what you want from them. But with the more experienced players you want to get right to the point, speak in short sentences, and try to stay under 30 seconds.

## **Training Environment**

### *1. Game like*

The smaller the gap between competition and your skill sessions the more effective your training sessions will be. Put players in game like situations to drill to prepare players for competitive environments.

### *2. Drill with pressure*

Put players in pressure situations and train them how to react. The more prepared they are for pressure situations the less likely they are to react negatively when pressure occurs during games.

## **Teaching Steps**

### *1. Demonstrate/Explain*

Show or tell the player(s) what you want them to do. This can come through video or by the coach demonstrating.

### *2. Imitate/Interpretation*

In this step we want the player to demonstrate the skill or technique that was just shown or explained to them. Before they demonstrate, make sure they understand what you want them to do and the expectation.



### 3. *Feedback*

After the player demonstrate or while they are demonstrating, give the player feedback on their performance. This feedback can be correction or affirmation.

### 4. *If there is correction, have the player repeat the skill*

When you are at this step and correction is needed, go back to step 1 and step 2. Re-explain or demonstrate the skill and have the player reattempt. If needed the player can slow down their speed and concentrate on getting the technique correct before trying to go game speed.

5. *If affirming the player's skill or technique, you want to reinforce the technique –*  
This is done through repetitions.

Like I said earlier, coaches are teachers. We have to teach players the game of basketball and how to execute certain skills and techniques. There are a few things coaches need to pay attention to when teaching:

1. Give lots of instruction and correction. Don't drill just to drill. The players need to be challenged not only physically, but mentally. They should have to think so they can understand the game and have a high basketball IQ.
2. When training use cue words. These cue words can be reminders of what the player need to adjust from a previous explanation given by the coach. So if a player is performing a shooting drill the coach may call out "wrist" to remind the player to snap their wrist on the shot.
3. Try to limit detailed instruction until after the conclusion of the drill. Use short phrases, cue words, or bullet point teaching during the drills. Also,

don't be afraid to instruct the player on the importance of having things like energy and focus if they are lacking in those areas.

## **Feedback**

All coaches and players have a certain level of expectation to meet when it comes to performing in a practice setting or competition. Communicating with players through effective feedback is an important component of coaching. Feedback is information about a task or performance delivered to another individual (or team) that can be used for future improvement. Feedback is typically based on previous information given to a player or performance of a skill in a practice setting or competition setting. When someone mentions feedback people usually think of extrinsic (feedback from an outside source), but players must learn intrinsic feedback (comes from within) for practice and game settings.

During skill development sessions players should constantly receive feedback on their progress throughout the training. Giving players feedback can let players know how they are performing, what needs to be improved, or motivate.

When giving constructive criticism you have to be careful. When I was a kid the sandwich method was the preferred method to give criticism. The sandwich method is when you sandwich criticism in between two positive comments. I even used this method when I first started coaching. The following tips have worked for me and the players I have worked with.

Tips on giving constructive criticism:

1. *Know your players*

You must really know the player's personality. How do they typically respond to criticism. You can get a good idea by watching how they interact and respond to their parent or guardian. If their parent or guardian don't criticize them for mistakes, then ask them about their team coach. You can get a better understanding for how they take criticism when you understand your player(s).

2. *Establish a relationship*

When you establish a relationship there will be a certain level of trust. The player will know you have their best interest at heart and you are not criticizing to be demeaning, but to be helpful.

3. *Speak with authority but don't always yell*

This is a new generation. When I was a kid and did something wrong on the court the coach would yell and scream at me. It was that simple. It was expected and everyone got coached that way. Today's generation is different. You have to use different methods to get your point across and sometimes raising your voice isn't needed.

4. *Ask questions*

A lot of times players know when they make a mistake. When it comes to criticising players sometimes you can just ask them questions about what they did, why did they do it, and what they should have done. Most of the time they have all the answers, but for some reason or another they just didn't do what was expected.

5. *Try not to punish for mistakes*

This is a personal pet peeve of mine. During skill development we know players are learning and trying to improve their skills. There will and should be mistakes. Coaches should be encouraging players to get outside their comfort

zone, but understand outside their comfort zone is where mistakes live. If a player is trying to improve their ball handling and they lose control of the ball, I hate when a coach punishes a player and makes them run or do push ups. This is not the type of feedback you want your players to receive. Now they will associate mistakes with punishment which in turn can cause anxiety and force players to stay inside their comfort zone. Which we know there is limited improvement in your comfort zone.

*6. Praise them as quick as possible*

After criticising a player I always try to find something to praise them about. This praise doesn't have to resemble the sandwich method, but I try to quickly give them some type of praise. I don't want my players to think I only speak to them when I have to criticize or critique them. So after the criticism I try to find something they are doing well and make sure to praise them. It could be their effort, energy, or correcting the mistake they made earlier. Praise can be by mouth with words or by touch with a high five, pat on the back, or giving the player a fist bump.

*7. Encourage them and then give recommendations on how to improve*

Criticism doesn't have to come off in a negative way. Criticism of a player's skill should be encouraged to get better because players often doubt themselves if they are struggling with improvement. Sometimes it's not about what you say, but how you deliver the message. Don't be general when giving constructive criticism. Make sure your are specific.

Checkout the tips below on giving effective feedback.

1. Giving relevant feedback after practice or competition can increase learning and performance.

2. There is intrinsic feedback which comes from within the player. They can self-evaluate their performance and know and understand adjustments or improvements that need to be made. This could be something as simple as a player shooting a jump shot and understanding that they were off balance and need to improve their footwork the next time they shoot.
3. There is extrinsic feedback which comes from an outside source like a coach or trainer. The coach or trainer gives the player additional information on how they did, what actually happened, and how they can improve.
4. Use video and point out specifics that you want the player to pay attention too. Too much information can become overwhelming and lose player's focus.
5. During skill sessions try not give feedback after every attempt. Allow the player to learn on their own and process mistakes. This allows players to not be totally dependant on the coach or trainer.
6. Define exactly what it takes for the player to improve, especially in the beginning stages of learning. Help them recognize wrongdoing and deliver cues on how to correct them.
7. Allow athletes to give their own feedback, both good and bad, on their performance. Clear communication encourages the player to problem solve when their opinion differs from the coach's viewpoint.

**CHAPTER 8**

**INDIVIDUAL  
SKILL  
DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAM**

# Individual Skill Development Program

Now we have come to the section of the book where I will discuss how to put together a skill development program. I felt it was good to lay a solid foundation on what principles and concepts to consider when conducting skill development. Now it's time to put everything together and create your own program. In this section I will discuss skill development programs for individuals. When discussing this I want you to keep an open mind to how you could put together your program. You may have something similar to what I discuss or you may have something totally different. My goal is not to make you completely change your program or how you do your skill development. My goal is to have you think and evaluate your program to see if there is any way to improve what you are doing. I evaluate my program all the time and continue to tweak, add, subtract, and change different areas of how I do skill development.

## **Skills for the individual**

In this section I am going to discuss how to put together a Skill Development Improvement Plan (SDIP) for a trainer or coach that's not part of a team or organization. This is for any parent that trains their child or a coach or trainer that does skill development for a living.

To develop an individual you must know what you are going to teach, how you are going to teach, and when you are going to teach it. Getting organized is a very important step to developing a skill development improvement plan. To get organized I suggest every coach create a Skill Development Curriculum. In your curriculum it should detail your philosophy, thoughts, concepts and teaching methods on ball handling, shooting, passing, footwork, position play,

defense, and a variety of other skills. You can also include drills, your philosophy on film study, nutrition, camp/clinic structure, and strength and conditioning.

This is your map, your guide to how to take players from point A to point B and beyond. You don't have to go to your curriculum every time you train a player, but it's there to be a guide on how you want to train your players.

Your curriculum can include information and teaching points from a variety of sources. You go to a coaching clinic and pick up some great information on skill development, you can add it to your curriculum. You watch a video on YouTube and the coach shares some great coaching nuggets, you can add it to your curriculum. I constantly add to my curriculum. If I see anything by any coach that I believe can improve my skill development program then I will try to include it in my curriculum. I do add drills from time to time, but I prefer adding information on how to teach and how to structure my skill sessions.

## **Evaluation**

When I meet with a player for the first time I like to evaluate them. I have to establish a starting point so I can know what I'm working with. So for the first session I like to evaluate the player. This gives me an idea of where their skills are. My evaluations are not the typical skill sessions. We do a little more block practice than normal because I'm evaluating the player's skill level. Before working with a player for the first time you want to try and collect as much information about them as possible. I try to learn about where they play on the floor, their role, and some of their strengths and weaknesses. Typically coming from parents their thoughts on their kids abilities are subjective. You won't



truly know their abilities until you get them on the floor and checkout their skills.

I've had parents tell me their kid is really good with great skills and then I get them on the court and they can't walk and chew bubblegum at the same time. On the other hand I had a parent tell me her daughter wants to play basketball in college, but the mom didn't think she was good enough to play. When I get to the gym I see she's a 6ft ninth grader that can play multiple positions and can shoot the 3. Well today that young lady is playing is major D1 basketball.

When I do my evaluation there are certain skills I like to evaluate with each player. This gives me a chance to see where their skill level is at and I can assess their basketball IQ. Before we get started I like to go over a few things with the player I'm working with. I have 3 rules they must abide by:

1. *Don't worry about mistakes*

I tell them mistakes are good in this environment when we are learning. I encourage them to make mistakes because that can tell me if they are living outside their comfort zone.

2. *Don't be scared to communicate*

If the player doesn't understand what I want them to do or they don't understand a concept they must speak up and ask questions. When explaining something I always have the mindframe the player I'm working with doesn't know anything about basketball. This way I will be less likely to leave out any details. It's also good to demonstrate your instructions. You don't have to go full speed or actually run, but walking through what you want the player to do can make your instructions more clear.

3. *Let me know if you need a drink or need to catch your breath*

I typically ask the players every 20 minutes if they need a drink. Which you think 2 water breaks in a 60 minute session is plenty. Sometimes you have players that will come to train and they are conditioned to standing in lines and waiting their turn to shoot or participate in a drill. But in a 1 on 1 session there are no lines and the player is always next. So the pace sometimes can be a little fast and they can tire quickly.

After we go over the rules we typically start with some stationary ball handling so I can see how they control the basketball. We do the typical pound dribbles, side to side, push pull and figure 8 drill with 1 basketball. Despite the simplicity of those drills you can see fairly quickly the amount of control the player has over the ball from a stationary position.

Next, we get into change of direction dribbles with a pass. When we do this drill I want to see if they keep their head up, I pay attention to how high they dribbling on the change of direction, can they perform the rhythm of the dribble (pound, pound, cross) without a lot of extra body movement, and I checkout their hand placement on the ball. As they are passing the ball I pay attention to how they load up the ball quickly to make a pass, if they have to put their hand underneath the ball when they pass, are they snapping their wrist, and if they can step on the pass and remain on balance.

After we do our stationary drills we go into some ball handling on the move. I like to use a drill I stole years ago from Mike Lee of Thrive Basketball. I place 4 cones in a straight line with each cone about 3-4 feet apart. The player will then do 1 dribble change of direction moves through the cones. They start with crossovers down and back and then between the legs and finish with behind the back. There are a few things going on that I like to pay attention to.

## **Crossovers**

### *1. Footwork*

The cones are close so I can check out their footwork. Players that struggle with their feet on this drill typically will step with the foot opposite the ball before they crossover. I want the ball to change directions first and then step with the foot.

### *2. The dribble*

I also pay attention how low and quick the player is dribbling. The higher the dribble the more room for error. Players should have a low crossover with a quick pound dribble.

### *3. Rhythm*

I look for how fluid the player can get through the drill. Are they herky jerky going through the cones? Or is there a nice fluid motion doing the crossovers.

## **Between the legs**

### *1. Footwork*

Players that can't perform this drill will struggle with their hip movement. I believe in efficiency. Don't add any extra movement if it's not needed. When players go between the legs they must turn their hips and point their toes. There will be some that will go between their legs without any hip movement and then turn their hips in the direction they want to go. I want the player to turn their hips as they are going between their legs.

### *2. The dribble*

Hand placement should be on top of the ball with the ball being forced between the legs. Once the ball changes hands make sure the player doesn't put their

hand underneath the basketball. By doing this it can allow the ball to continue to go up and have a higher dribble.

### 3. *Rhythm*

Once the player goes between their legs I want to see how explosive they are into their next dribble. Can they get the ball down quickly into a pound dribble and then between the legs again? Their footwork and dribble can determine the rhythm of their dribble.

## ***Behind the back***

### 1. *Footwork*

A lot of beginners or inexperienced players will struggle with the footwork of going behind the back. When doing this particular drill of going behind the back through the cones the player will sometimes step to the other side of the cones and then go behind the back. For this drill I want the player to go behind the back and then step through the cones.

### 2. *The dribble*

The behind the back dribble is very similar to the crossover dribble. It has to be quick and low. I like for the dribble to be a hard pound dribble and not for the player to wrap the ball around their back. This allows them to be a little quicker when dribbling in tight spaces and when being pressured.

### 3. *Rhythm*

Just like the crossover and the between the legs dribble the player wants a good rhythm when performing this dribble.

After we are done with the dribbling on the move we get into some half court finishes. I have the players start near half court and make different change of

direction dribbles at the wing and finish at the rim. We try a variety of different finishes that could include lay-ups off 1 foot or 2, floaters, reverse lay ups, up and unders and inside hand lay ups. I follow that up with passing on the move. I have players drive baseline or middle and make a kick out pass to me on the wing or in the corner. The player will then relocate for a return pass and either catch and shoot or drive to the basket. During this drill I make a few quick suggestions on their shot, but I don't get too specific because shooting is not my main focus. For this drill I am focusing on the player's ability to pass on the move and their footwork on the pass. Also, I want to see if they can make strong on target on time passes with their left and right hand.

Once we are finished with passing on the move we quickly get into shooting. I explain the 7 different shots a player needs to drill (finishing at the rim, free throws, spot up, off the dribble, transition, off cuts, and on the move). While doing this I demonstrate those different shots (except the finishing and free throws) while explaining the proper way to shoot the basketball. Again, this is an evaluation so I don't do a whole lot of correcting during this session. Only because I want to see how they can execute certain skills. After they do a certain skill I will tell them where they need to improve.

Filming the player's shoot has been a valuable tool for me. A lot of players have never seen themselves shoot on film before. They may have seen themselves shoot on game film, but that is different. So I film the players and use it as a resource for future reference. As they make progress we can go back and look at it to see the improvement. It can be an instant confidence booster. So while they go through their shooting drills I film certain parts of it and show them on my phone or tablet.

After we have gone through all the drills and I have taken notes, I have an open discussion about what I see with the player and their parent(s). I tell them what skills I feel they need to work on, where they are compared to other players I see, what are some of their strengths, and how often I feel they should meet with me. Most importantly I tell them what we will be working on and how I plan on getting them to where they need to be. Parents and players have to know where you are taking them. If they know you have a plan they are more likely to buy-in and trust the process. But the player and the parent have to have a say in the process. Let the player tell you their goals and ambitions.

## **Road Map**

Now that you know where the player is and where they want to go or need to go, you can begin your journey on the skills road map. To get where you want to go you have to know where you are starting. That way you put the proper steps together to get to your destination. So both the player and their parents know what skills the player is lacking or exceeding in and what needs to be done to reach their goal. After this is determined and shared with the player and parents, you must now carefully craft a plan to put in place. Understand, this plan is only as good as the player's commitment. If training is scheduled only 1 day a week the player must get in the gym and work on their skills on their own time with a parent, sibling, or team coach. Either way the responsibility is on the player to do the heavy lifting and the skills coach to assist or be a spotter.

To start, pick 1 skill to focus on that will add bonus or additional skills to the player's game. This is skills stacking that I briefly discussed earlier in the book. Again, a player that can shoot and adds the ability to put the ball on the floor can now be more of a threat to the opposing team. They can now develop the ability to create off the dribble for themselves or teammates, score off the

dribble, draw more fouls by attacking the rim, and help handle the ball against pressure.

Once you know where you want to start and where you want to take your player, you then begin putting everything in place. There's no rush to get the player to reach their goal. True skill development is a process that takes time. In today's world people want microwave results. They want it quick, fast, and in a hurry. To get the best results you have to sometimes let things marinate in a crockpot. Don't cut corners or look for shortcuts. Some skills players will learn and develop quickly and other skills may take some time.

## **Skill Development Improvement Plan**

When it comes to your skill development improvement plan you want to be organized and prepared. By doing this you know exactly what to do, can keep a good flow and pace to the training session, and keeps you on track. It also shows the player(s) you gave their training session some thought. On my podcast I got the pleasure of interviewing Mark Adams who has trained Brandon Ingram of the Los Angeles Lakers. Mark talked about how detailed he is when preparing his skill development plan. He mentioned how he writes down every drill they are going to do on a index card that he keeps in his pocket.

I on the other hand don't write down any of my drills unless I'm working a camp or clinic. This doesn't mean I don't know what we are going to do or that I'm not organized. I have a hard time going through my drill database and finding the drills I want to do. It takes me too long to create my skill development plan. So instead of writing out every drill I want the player to do I create a skeleton for the training session. Here's what I mean. When the session starts I know what skills we are going to drill. This could include ball handling,

footwork, shooting on the move and finishing. I like to do this because there have been a lot of instances where a player struggles with a particular skill and we have to break it down or I have to re-introduce the skill. So what I do is break my session down into blocks that total 60 minutes. By doing this I don't get overwhelmed with trying to put together training session with a bunch of drills. See the figure below to get an example.

<b>Sample Skill Development Practice Plan</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Skill</b>	<b>Emphasis</b>
5 Minutes	Warm up	Mimic basketball movements
10 Minutes	Shooting	Random catch and shoot while on the move
10 Minutes	Shooting & ball handling	Making stationary change of direction dribbles focusing on quick dribbles and clean ball pick up. Player will shoot from random spots on the floor.
10 minutes	Half court drives	Change of direction dribble on the move while making read against defender (defender backs up shoot jumper, defender holds ground attack and finish at rim).
10 minutes	Drive and kick	Make on target 1 hand passes, relocate for shot or drive
10 minutes	Multi shot drill	Pick 3-4 different shots for the player to go through and shoot. Ex. transition catch and shoot, fade to corner, sprint to elbow, run to half court and back for 1 dribble pull up.



The example above is only for 55 minutes, but you will have to leave time for free throws and explanation of drills, techniques, and concepts. So a few of those drills may not last for 10 minutes. Keep an open mind and don't be married to your skill development plan. It's ok if you don't get through it. If I see the player is struggling with their footwork on the pass during the drive and kick drill, I can't just let them get away with it. I must stop the drill and breakdown the footwork. If we don't get to the multi-shot drill then that's ok.

## **After the Session**

After the session is over you will need to communicate with the player what they did well and what they need to continue to improve on. This only takes a few minutes, but it's very important for the player to know how they did and if they are going in the right direction. I also give the player some homework to do on their own. I think it's important for the players and their parents to know you don't have to spend 2 hours in the gym to get something done. Depending on the player, their age, skill level, and if it's the off-season, in-season, or pre-season, they could just spend 20-30 minutes of doing extra work on their own to get better. Have drills players can do on their own in their driveway, backyard, in the gym, or in the house. Always keep drills they can do with or without a basketball.

For example I tell players when they need to work on their ball handling they don't have to do stationary ball handling drills. A lot of times in the beginning they just need to dribble the basketball up and down the street, from the house to the mailbox when they check the mail, or they could listen to their music while they just dribble in place not doing anything in particular. So I tell a lot of players to put a basketball by the garage door or front door. If they have a few minutes before they leave the house they can grab their ball and go outside and

dribble for a few minutes. When their parents say it's time to go they can put the ball up and leave. Those few minutes can make them better. They do that consistently over time and they can see great improvement in their ball handling.

Also you'll want to take notes on the player. With technology today this is pretty easy to do. The notes should include whatever you feel the player should improve on or just your thoughts on the training session. It doesn't have to be very detailed. It needs to include information that will help prepare you for the next training session. It could mention what skills the player drilled and how they performed. It can also tell you if there are skills that need attention next time there is a skill session. This builds a profile on the players and you can see where they were and how much they have improved.

From here you just continue to build your program for the individual. Keeping track of their progress, having open communication, and making sure you stop and correct during the training sessions should help your player improve and get to where they want to be or need to be.

As time goes by, this will have to be determined by you, you will want to do another evaluation on the player. Maybe not so much like the first evaluation, but it could come in the form of a game or scrimmage the player may participate in. By doing this you will then compare where they started to where they are at that particular moment. After that evaluation you sit back down with the player and their parents and give them an update on the player's progress. Then another Skill Development Improvement Plan can be created and developed for the player to follow.

**CHAPTER 9**

**SKILL  
DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAM FOR  
TEAMS**

# Skills Development Program for Teams

When you are doing skill development for teams there are a few more things to consider. If there is a coach that is the designated go to person for skill development, they have to be on the same page as the head coach and other staff members. There are a few more people involved so communication must be open and data must be shared among everyone involved. If the responsibility of skill development is shared among the staff then the assistants can be assigned a position to work with.

## Components of Skill Development

When it comes to skill development people typically think of on-court skills. This could include ball handling, passing, footwork, shooting, basketball IQ, etc. On-court skills is very important. It's the meat of your skill development program. There could actually be 4 other components to consider when talking about developing a complete basketball player. Those components include performance training (strength and conditioning), mental training, nutrition, and film study.

With each of those components there will be several elements that help make up each component. Those elements could include teaching players how to practice on their own, proper diet, getting proper rest and knowing how it can affect you mentally, and how to watch film without a coach present. The elements dive deeper into each of the components that make up your skill development program.

You may not have the resources for all those areas so you may have to encourage your players to receive those services outside of the team. If you don't have access to those type of resources or the training to be effective, it would be a good idea to have a working relationship with someone that can come in and provide those services for your team. As a coach you don't necessarily have to do be the expert in all the areas, but being able to point your team in the right direction is huge.

For your players to develop into the best version of their basketball selves, you as the coach, must determine which components will be included in your skill development program. You may include all 5 of the above mentioned components or you may decide on only 2 or 3. There could be other components you want to include that I didn't mention. Knowing these components will help you organize your training so you can put your players in the best situation to develop and reach their potential.

## **What type of player are you developing?**

This is the first question you must answer. You have to know what type of player you are trying to develop. Are you developing your point guard to be a great on ball defender with the ability to knock down open three's? Does your wing players need to be able to post up? Do you run a lot of pick n roll/pop with your post players?

Earlier in this book I discussed some general skills for players that play different positions. When it comes to skill development for teams, every team should have a skill set they would like to see their players have. Then you should spend time on those skills to help your player be successful in your system. You would like for every player to be able to contribute. Try to find that 1 skill that each

player can develop to get playing time. If you need a 3 point shooter to stretch the defense, then try to develop a wing or point guard to be able to deliver that for you. But be honest with your players about their development. Let them know what is needed from them to be able to get on the floor and contribute to the team.

### **3 Seasons of Skill Development**

After you determine your components of skill development you want to create a program for your team. Skill development should be broken down into 3 seasons: 1. In-season 2. Off-season 3. Pre-season. During each segment you want to decide what your focus will be during those segments. Which component will have priority over the other components? This will be determined by the season you are in. Obviously having a plan of what will be the focus, how often you will train, and how long you will train are important answers to have to building a strong skill development program. Let's look at each segment a little closer.

#### *1. Pre-season*

Communication is key. Pre-season for basketball is during the same time as football and volleyball. Since most high school gyms and arenas are shared between the basketball and volleyball teams, you must communicate with other coaches about scheduling gym time. Typically the in-season team has first dibs on the court. You want to make sure you still get practices and skill sessions scheduled for your team. Pre-season for basketball is usually about 6-8 weeks before the season begins. During this time you will spend more time on strength and conditioning and team drills vs individual drills. Despite putting more focus on the team you still want to have a plan and set aside some time for your players to get some individual attention.

## 2. *In-season*

Once the basketball season starts a lot of coaches just do away with skill development. This is very dangerous. Don't spend time during your pre-season and off-season developing a player only to no longer make it a priority during the season. I know it can be difficult to get some individual time when you have to prepare for your opponents, develop your team's offense, and create defensive schemes. But always remember your team's offense is only as good as your individual player's skill level. That floppy quick hitter is not going to be effective if the screener doesn't have the right technique, the shooter can't come off the screen correctly, and the passer can't deliver the pass on time and on target. Again, it's about getting organized and setting aside some time for individual work. This could be 15-20 minutes before, during, or after practice. You could even have players come in before school. It doesn't have to be an everyday commitment. Players could get extra work in 1-2 days a week.

## 3. *Off-season*

The off-season is when you spend most of your time on skill development. You really want to develop your players. In a perfect world you would like to get with your players at least 3 times a week. In the off-season you are heavily committed to individual work and performance training with little time spent on team drills. This is the time to really push your players and add skills to their game and get them better.

So when it comes to your 3 seasons of skill development think about your components of skill development. Each season should have each component broken down by percentages of the amount of time you want to spend.

## **Individual Program**

Now that you are organized and know what you will be doing during the different segments of skill development and what skills the players will need to develop, you can now develop an individual program for each player. To put together an individual program the staff must sit down and discuss each player's strengths and weaknesses. The plan must go in line with the head coach's vision for the team and what he or she feels is needed out of that particular individual. The player should then sit down with the head coach and/or the coach that will be conducting the skill development and be told what areas of their game are strong and what areas needs further developing. Give the player goals that are attainable and have them focus on 1 or 2 skills that will help the team.

Skill development should be taken serious in your program. Players should be held accountable to make it to their sessions on time and remain focus throughout the practice. Develop a known culture of players coming in to get better and working hard. Set rules and expectations for each individual. Players should know those that put in the work will be rewarded and those that don't could find themselves on the bench during the season.

## **Breakdown Offense and Defense**

You now have your skill set you want each player to develop. Now they have to be able to demonstrate those skills in your offense and defense. Every team's offense can be broken down into actions and made into drills. If a team runs a lot of side pick n roll, then the point guard have a few skills they need to be able to execute. They should be able to get to the elbow and knock down the jumper,



hit the screener on a roll or pop, finish at the rim, or deliver the pass to the weak side shooter. Depending on the player's abilities they may need to really break down those skills so they can be effective out of the pick n roll. So if the perimeter player is struggling with shooting off the on ball screen they may need some work on their footwork off the dribble. I would then spend some extra time with them on this aspect of shooting.

When you break down your offense you can split your players up by position. The perimeter players can work on different actions like coming off screens, creating off the dribble, relocating off penetration, or perimeter shots. Your post players may drill setting screens, posting, relocating off penetration, and any other skills needed for your offense. If both positions are having skill sessions at the same time, you can bring them together toward the end of the practice and have them go through the actions together. Adding a defense can make it more game like and you can drill defensive schemes at the same time. You can also get into 2v2, 3v3, or 4v4 focusing on the actions you just drilled.

## **Competitive Games**

To bring it all together and see what the players have not only learned, but retained, you want to get into some competitive drills and games. At the end of the training the 2v2, 3v3, or 4v4 games can start with a particular action that was drilled during the practice. If you drilled side pick n roll then you can start each possession with a side pick n roll before players are able to freelance. The defense can mix up coverages to give the offense different looks forcing them to make reads.

Building in rules and restrictions can force players to think and overcome challenges. An example could be every time a player puts the ball above their

head it's a turnover. Another could be the offense can be limited to a certain number of dribbles. A really good way to to enforce restrictions and rules is to let the players play and you will then see bad habits like dribbling as soon as they catch and not going anywhere or players passing and not cutting. When you see theses things happening you must stop the drill and add your rule or restriction. Every time a player breaks a rule or restriction it's an automatic turnover. Depending on the player's age and skill level you build in rules for the game as they play.

These small sided games are a great way to teach players the game of basketball. Remember players need to be told and taught how you want them to play. If you want your players to cut to the basket after they pass it must be drilled. You can't work on 1 on 1 moves all practice and then the last 10 minutes you do 3v3 and get upset because players are standing and watching. Or you get frustrated because there is no ball movement. Breakdown the skills you want players to learn, drill it, correct, and then put them in competition at the end of the training session to see how much is understood and retained. Be sure to emphasize, emphasize, and emphasize some more what you want from them. Let your expectations be known. It's going to look ugly in the beginning, but if you continue to stress your philosophy and how it can make them a better player and the team better, they will eventually get it.

**CHAPTER 10**

**MY FINAL  
THOUGHTS**

## My Final Thoughts

Skill development has evolved into an emerging business and profession. You can search basketball skill development and you will get a ton of results. Everything from articles to coaches to drills and other information. I have been blessed to be in this business for nearly 16 years at the time of publishing this book. I have seen a lot and learned a lot about myself and basketball. I don't just consider myself a coach or a skills trainer. It's much more to it than that. I get the opportunity to build relationships that will last past the skill session. I get the opportunity to impact a young person's life in a different way than their parents or friends. I describe being a skill development coach as improving a player's confidence by giving them the tools necessary to be successful. This doesn't just include basketball, but also in life.

There are a lot of other details I didn't get into in this book, but I have a few more thoughts I would like to share. These are just some things I'm passionate about when it comes to skill development.

When conducting skill development sessions always remember it's about the player. The coach should have the player's best interest at heart and want to see that player succeed. If you are a trainer or a coach and you have a hidden agenda it will get exposed eventually. Do what's right for the player and everything should work out for the best.

Try not to tell a kid they can't do something, but be honest about their odds. I try not to tell a kid they can't achieve something. The reason for this is because when I was younger I was told by different people I couldn't achieve or reach my goal of playing college basketball. This doesn't mean that I'm dishonest or misleading to any of the players I work with. What I do tell them is the truth

about their chances of achieving whatever goal they want to achieve. For example, if a player comes to me and wants to get ready for high school varsity basketball tryouts and they have very little experience I will tell them the chances of making the team is very slim. At this point they must know they are starting behind the 8 ball. I will then tell them all the skills they need in order to be able to make the team compared to the skills they have.

Establish relationships with school coaches. This maybe hard at times, but it's best for the game of basketball. There has been and there still are some bad skill coaches that don't know what they are doing. Giving players bad information on how to play, not teaching correctly, and speaking badly about their coach in front of them. So when a coach hears a story from a colleague about unacceptable behavior of a skill coach, they become apprehensive when they find out players from their team is seeing a skill development coach. But by having open communication with coaches it helps on both ends. The skill coach knows what the coach expects from the player and the skills they need to be working on. The team coach can now feel a little better knowing the skill coach is working on the things his or her player needs away from practice.

Speaking of relationships with team coaches, never talk bad about a coach in front of your players. This is a great tip for not only skill coaches, but parents also. You may not agree with or even like the coach, but talking bad about them in front of the player can cause major problems. Keep those type of comments to yourself and try to keep things positive. As adults we have to learn to deal and work with individuals we don't care for. So we have to teach the youth how to handle those types of situations.

Skill development coaches are here to stay. The NBA has accepted skill development coaches as an important part of the coaching staff and their

organization. Colleges and universities have started hiring coaches to come in only to focus on skill development. Just like any other profession you will have some bad apples. So we must work together as skill coaches and team coaches to make this work. There are some really good skill coaches out there that really want to see players develop and get better.

Get to know your players outside of basketball. Knowing your players on more of a personal level can help when it comes to development. You should find out what makes them tick. What are their pet peeves? What are their favorite and least favorite subjects in school? Are they involved in any other sports? Do they have a boyfriend or girlfriend? When you get to know the player they know you actually care about them. You develop a bond with them and they will truly believe in what you are teaching them and buy in to your program.

And finally have an iPhone level impact. Over 2 years ago I wrote a blog about having an iPhone level impact on your players and community. The blog was originally posted on my website, but you can read it below.

The iPhone. Millions of people all across the world has arguably the best mobile phone on the planet (I beg to differ. I prefer the Samsung, but I digress). Whether you prefer the iPhone, Samsung, or any other mobile device, you can't argue that the iPhone changed the way people live, do business, and entertain themselves. The impact the iPhone has made on society is second to none. They were ahead of the curve and set the trend that many companies are trying to duplicate today when it comes to technology. Companies, moms, coaches, kids, teachers, and many others have or is using an iPhone or another smart device to improve their way of living.

Ok, so you maybe saying to yourself, "What does this have to do with skill development or coaching?" It has everything to do with skill development or

coaching. If you are a coach of a team or a skill development coach, you want to have an iPhone level impact on the game. What can you contribute to the basketball world that will have an everlasting effect? Now understand not everyone, including myself, will be able to impact the game globally. On a personal level I try to impact my community through the game of basketball. I try to have an iPhone level impact on the kid that doesn't think that scholarship is possible. I try to have an iPhone level impact on the game by using basketball to teach life lessons.

Every coach or skill development trainer can have an iPhone level impact on the game of basketball within their reach. Whether you are traveling the world like Ganon Baker or training and coaching players just in your city or state, have an impact on the game that people will not forget.

Below I have three ways the iPhone have impacted the world and how we as coaches can use the iPhone as an example do the same for basketball.

#### 1. *iPhone Influence*

The iPhone has been a major influence on the way we do things today. This to me is the biggest impact it has had on society across the world. The influence the iPhone has inspired people and businesses to complete task more efficiently, think outside the box, and try to achieve levels they never thought possible. We can do the same thing in basketball. You want to have such a positive influence and be such a leader that people are dying to follow you. They hang on to your every word, trust you, will go through walls for you, and have your back. Personally, I want to be able to influence players, parents, and coaches in a positive manner to improve the game. No hidden agenda, not trying to get anything from anyone, just improve the play, coaching, and all other aspects of the game.

## 2. *iPhone Technology*

When the iPhone first came out it blew people away with their technology. It had apps that could allow you to do things quicker and more efficiently. The technology was like non other on the market. What I really like about what the iPhone continues to do is reinvent itself and keep pushing the boundary. Coaches must do the same. We sometime get to a certain level and become complacent with our knowledge of the game and refuse to reinvent or continue to learn and push the boundaries. By doing this, it holds the game back. We're cheating the game, players, parents, and other coaches. Use the iPhone as an example when it comes to technology. Apple continues to find ways to improve their product to make it faster, more efficient, and better performing. Do the same and continue to push your knowledge.

## 3. *iPhone Community*

The iPhone has a very large community. This community believes in the iPhone. There are communities that help other iPhone users whether they are beginners or advanced users. They share tips and problem solving techniques to help users get the most out of their iPhone. In the coaching community I believe we need to do more of this. I'm not talking about visiting a site like this one and reading a blog or subscribing to a website for drills and plays. I'm talking about getting with other coaches in your community or across the world and talking basketball. Talking about how to deal with parents, other coaches, players, motivation, bad attitudes, and everything else that goes on in the game. I believe there are several coaches out there that would love to share the game and their experiences with other coaches. There are also coaches that would love to pick the brain of more experienced coaches.

Those are the three areas I believe we as coaches can have an iPhone level impact on the game of basketball. I truly believe this is a very important message for all coaches, parents, and players to hear. If you enjoyed this blog



and agreed with some of the points I made please tweet, put on Facebook, or any other social media platform you are a part of. Use #iPhonelevelimpact and lets change the game.

I appreciate you taking the time to read this book. I hope that you found some beneficial information that will help you have a better understanding on skill development. This book also comes with a free 7 day skill development course and additional files for you to download. For access to the course and the additional documents the link is below.

## Resources

In this section of the book I have several resources I would like to share from coaches, websites, social media sites, and technology that can help make your skill development program run smooth, improve your coaching and act as a resource to help improve your players. These are some sites I often refer to get inspiration, drills, and teaching concepts that challenge me and push me to become a better coach and teacher of the game of basketball.

### Websites

[www.nbnball.com/blog](http://www.nbnball.com/blog) - My blog has some older post that talk about a variety of basketball topics. Not all are on skill development, but you will find some useful information there.

[www.nbnball.com/podcast](http://www.nbnball.com/podcast) - My podcast has over 20 episodes from some really great guest that held nothing back and shared some great information on skill development. We discussed everything from how to get prepared to how to get organized for team skill development.

[www.basketballimmersion.com](http://www.basketballimmersion.com) - This is a membership site that has a ton of information. Coach Chris Oliver does an excellent job of keeping the website updated with blogs and videos of drills, plays, and concepts. Coach Oliver was on my SDP podcast and I got a chance to speak with him about his philosophy and coaching style. You will greatly improve as a coach by checking out his website.

[www.mikeleebasketball.com](http://www.mikeleebasketball.com) - Mike Lee Basketball is now known as Thrive Basketball has some great blogs on their website. Their Facebook page has some great information and videos also.

[www.learntocoachbasketball.com](http://www.learntocoachbasketball.com) - This is a blog by coach Brian McCormick. He has a very non-traditional way of thinking when it comes to coaching the game of basketball. Which is why I love reading his post and thoughts so much. He also has a Hard2Guard newsletter that has great information on skills and performance training.

[www.jymratt.com](http://www.jymratt.com) - This blog is by Coach Dave Severns. Coach Severns is a former NBA assistant and Nike Skills Academy coach. The site is not updated too often but he does have some great info on basketball.

[www.mensbasketballhoopscoop.com](http://www.mensbasketballhoopscoop.com) - This is a blog that has ton of basketball information. You can find all types of clinic notes and drills on this website. They have videos for sale as well as downloadable documents of basketball information from various coaches at different coaching clinics around the world.

[www.fastmodelsports.com](http://www.fastmodelsports.com) - Fastmodel Sports website is a great resource for coaches of all levels. They have an extensive play bank with a ton of plays and drills that are categorized. If you have a subscription to their FastDraw you get access to the plays and drills that can easily be shared to your software with the push of a button. If you click on their blog you will get article topics on everything coaching tips to skill development.

[www.hoopconsultants.com](http://www.hoopconsultants.com) - Mike Procopio is one of my favorite coaches to follow. He has a no nonsense approach when it comes to skill development. He likes to keep it simple. Get straight to the point and he doesn't worry about what's innovative or the most popular trend. He just wants to get players better. His website has recently been revamped and will now be doing webinars. He offers drill packets and when he has time he'll engage in some skill development discussions on his Twitter account.

I know there are many other websites that contribute to the game of basketball and offer some great tips and information for becoming a better coach. These are some of the sites I have found to be beneficial to my development as a coach.

## **Social Media**

When it comes to social media there are plenty of coaches, trainers, and companies that have a strong presence on the internet. The social media sites I often frequent are Twitter and Instagram. I have found some great coaches to follow to pick up some great basketball nuggets.

- *Twitter*
  - Coach TJ Jones @nbnbball/@coachtjjones
  - Mark Adams @markadamsbball
  - Mike Procopio @hoopconsultants
  - Bball Coaching Tools @bballtools
  - Brandon Rosenthal @coachrosenthal
  - 180 Shooter @180shooter
  - Jon Giesbrecht @jandgies
  - Radius Athletics @radiusathletics
  - Coach Mac @bballcoachmac
  - Dave Love @coachdavelove
  - Michael MacKay @mackaymj michael
  - John Leonzo @john\_leonzo
  - Share the Game @bballimmersion
  - Jason Oates @jasonoates
  - Brian Williams @brianwwilliams
  - The Basketball Trainer @teohnconner
  - Half Court Hoops @halfcourthoops
  - Mike Dunlap @coachmikedunlap

- BreakthruBasketball @breakthruball
  - Bballbreakdown @bballbreakdown
  - Eric Musselman @ericpmusselman
  - Gordon Chiesa @gchiesaohmy
  - Chris Oliver @chris\_oliver
  - Mens Bball Hoop Scoop @coachpeterman
  - Kevin Eastman @kevineastman
  - Mike Lee @mikeleewhois
  - Thrive3 @thrive3
- *Instagram*
    - NBN Basketball @nbnbball
    - Basketball Player Development @pq\_results
    - Dave Love @coachdavelove
    - Coach Bo Bell @bobellbasketball
    - Chris Brickley @cbrickley603
    - Jeremiah Boswell @jbosnbaskills
    - THRIVE3 @trainthrive3
    - Joey Burton @coachjoeyburton
    - School 4 Hoops @school4hoops
    - Pure Sweat @puresweat
    - Basketball Immersion @basketballimmersion
    - Mark Adams @markadamsball
    - Point Blank Period @point.blank.period
    - Teohn Conner @thebasketballtrainer
    - Real Basketball Training @realbballtraining

## Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank all the players, coaches, parents, and everyone else that has read this book. I hope that this book has shed some new light on skill development and have sparked an idea on how you can become a better coach, teacher, or trainer in the area of skill development.

I would like to also thank my family, friends, mentors, and all the players I have had the opportunity to work with. Your support over the years have been huge in keeping me focused and driven to become a better coach.

Also, I would like to thank the coaches and parents that took the time to preview this book. Your thoughts, feedback, and information means a lot to me.

Lastly, I would like to give a special thank you to my lovely wife and my mother. My mom planted the seed of me writing a book and my wife supported me every step of the way encouraging me to continue to write and pushing me to finish.

## About Coach TJ



Coach TJ Jones is the owner of Nothing But Net Basketball, LLC. Coach TJ began training in 2004 and he uses the hard work and dedication that was instilled in him by his father as a young boy in his training today. With the training and experience gained over the years, Coach TJ brings valuable knowledge of extensive work with elite high school, college, and professional players.

Coach TJ is also the host of his very own podcast, The Skill Development Playbook. The weekly podcast interviews some of the world's best trainers and coaches and get their thoughts on skill development.

Coach TJ's burning desire, passion, dedication, and forward thinking training techniques sets him apart from other trainers. He is a member of the Point 3 Basketball Alpha Program, a skill development content contributor to world known websites such as HoopsUInsider.com, BreakthroughBasketball.com, Stack.com and he has been featured in dimemag.com. Coach TJ has also consulted for several minor league teams in the ABA and AAU/travel teams.