



THREE OF A KIND

Course 01: Coach Ettore Messina

Lesson 16: The Practice

Language: English

THE PRACTICE – COMMENTS

The practice is usually dedicated to fast break drills and to organize the team defense and offense. To stop the practice too many times to correct details and individual mistakes will slow down the rhythm of the workout and the intensity, especially if there is an high number of athletes on the court. As years go by thanks to the opportunity to discuss with other colleagues and with the many excellent assistants I had the privilege to work with, I have strengthened some opinions about how to run the practice.

1. Practice is not the game
2. Let them make mistakes
3. What and how should we correct
4. Give spaces to the assistants
5. If it doesn't work, it doesn't

Practice is not the game

On one side it's true that in some moment of the week the practice must be physically harder than the game. At the same time you have to consider that the mental pressure is not the same and it is not worth to push the

players to the “perfect workout”. Many times after a practice where mistakes took place but the team worked properly to correct them you will have a good game. On the contrary is not uncommon that after a perfect practice you have a nervous and low level game probably caused by a sense of overconfidence. Only your own experience and sensibility can tell you if it is the case or not to accept the quality of the workout the team offered you in the practice.

Let them make mistakes

I have never been enough tolerating of the mistakes and I hardly learned in many years that it's important to let the players make mistakes so that they can understand and improve from that. If it is true that coach must always push to receive maximum effort, on the other end the players usually know if and why they committed a mistake. It is necessary, sometimes, to be able to look forward without becoming too much negative. I'm not very good at that, but I'm trying to get better. A proper relationship with the mistake, the ability to find it out, to analyze, to correct and, eventually, to implement a new idea is fundamental to make useful the daily workout.

What and how should we correct

I really worry about the “mental mistakes” caused by superficiality, lack of attention to the instructions or poor effort. On the contrary I do not get crazy about mistakes in the execution, as a wrong pass or shot, if I consider correct the reading of the situation and the decision taken by the player. Players must have clear the difference between these two kind of mistakes: mental mistakes are very difficult to overcome, technical mistakes are part of the game even if, obviously, we work hard to minimize them.

Give space to the assistants

I always experienced a lot of autonomy by the head coaches I served to as an assistant and thanks to their attitude towards me I got my chances as an head coach at a young age. At the same way I try to offer the same autonomy. They lead part of the practice, they have the possibility to talk even stopping the practice to give explanations they consider important or that we agreed, they have a lot of responsibilities during the game. It's not charity: simply four or six eyes see better than two and after a brainstorming the decision taken is always stronger. At the same time to speak less during the practice let the coach give a strong impact whenever he will make a comment or a statement. If you constantly talk, scream, correct, you soon or later end up as the Gemini cricket of the Pinocchio's tale: hit by a shoe. Don't forget: the players respect the assistants as much as the head coach respects them.

If it doesn't work, it doesn't

Even if coaches do not like to recognize that, there are times when a drill or even a practice is not working well; the harder you work to do it better, the

worst it comes out. Sometimes if something is not working it's better to move to the next topic, forget it for a while and in case try it another day. It's clear that if you feel a lack of attention or effort you can not let the team to give up facing the first difficulties: if simply mistakes take place regardless the effort and tension is poisoning the atmosphere of the practice is probably better to call an imaginary time out. It's always very important to stay focused on the primary goals of the workout even if some details are not cared as you would like.

THE PRACTICE – EXAMPLES

As we already said the contents, the duration and the intensity of the practice are different depending on the moment of the season.

Here we have three different practice plans.

The first one is the plan of a practice during pre season training camp in September, it lasts about two hours and for great part is based on building the defense. After a first part where fast break concepts are introduced, about forty minutes are dedicated to defensive drills: one vs one on the ball, defensive stance, boxing out, and four vs four recreating game situation. In this moment of the season at least twenty minutes before the practice are dedicated to individual instructions to the players.

The second practice refers to a day very close to an Euroleague game. In the morning the team has lifted weights and has had a shooting session. As you notice the practice still lasts about two hours, but includes a video session to introduce the next opponent to the team. After the warm up and the fast break session the focus is on learning how to defend the main offensive tendencies of the next opponent and on the concepts to use to attack them.

The third practice is related to the preparation of the 2008 final game of the Euroleague Final Four. It lasts 90 minutes including the video session and the stretching. Warm up is very concentrated and immediately the focus is on the defensive and offensive concepts that we want to emphasize. As you can image, it is not requested a high level of physical intensity, but maximum concentration even on the smallest details is required by the players. The same kind of practice can be organized during play-off time or, generally speaking, towards the end of the season.

As for the video session, I do not believe that the team can pay attention for more than 15-20 minutes. For this reason after a general introduction of our next opponent I prefer to ask my assistants to prepare some video clips that can easily draw the attention of the players in the second session. I also think that stretching before and after the practice is very important to prepare the body of the players and helps to prevent injuries.

You will notice that the practice time reduces towards the end of the season, not only to save energies but also for the warmer temperature.

PRESEASON PRACTICE

Date: Wednesday 4th September
Time: 1730-1930
Location: Brunico

Notes: Morning – rest; Holden, Zizic, Siskauskas & Planinic weights in the morning
First practice with transition

1730 Stretching
1745 5v0, Look at 5v5 again, insert 4
1800 2v1 to 3v2, 3v1 to 4v3
1810 Defense, Zig Zag & Recover, stance, box out, 4v4 & transition with defense already in
1850 5v5 Make & Take
Running it back: 1

INSEASON PRACTICE (02 20 08)

Date: Monday 27th October
Time: 1700-1900
Location: Madrid

Notes: Morning – weights & shooting
Video
Reyes not in practice (Injured)

1715 Stretching
1730 3 Man Weave
4 Man Weave & 2v1
5 Man Weave & 3v2
1745 Defense, 1v1 Guard Zipper, 1v1 Point Guard Flash HP / LP, 4v4
12" Pick & Roll, 4v4 Double High
1815 5v5 Offense, 1 Side, 5 Side, 5 Down, 5 vs Zone
Running it back: L Side, Try 2, Try Jaric playing the 1

FINAL FOUR PRACTICE (02 20 08)

Date: Saturday 4th May
Time: 1830-2000
Location: Palacio de los Deportes

Notes: Maccabi Video
Maccabi Pick & Roll Video
Offensive Situation Meeting

1845 Stretching
1900 Position Shooting
11 Man 3v2 Continuous
1915 Defense vs. Maccabi
Transition Pick & Roll
5 Side
Single

L16 EM The Practice ENG

Pick & Roll 5 / 4 / Double

Our Offense: 5 Down, 1 Turn, 1 Down, 1 Side, 5 & L
specifically looking for 1v1