

The Smart Take from the Strong by Pete Carril

1. Any athlete who is fundamentally sound and plays intelligently and hard will generally come out on top.
2. Whenever two players or teams of equal ability play, the one with the greater courage and intelligence will win.
3. Winnings bring out the best in people who are good, the worst in people who are not.
4. If the players want to lose, here is all they have to do: drink, smoke, lie, be lazy. I guarantee you the team will lose every time and you will have a team of characters.
5. It's my job to give my players the chance to have their character, their drive to win, determine the outcome.
6. I have always tried to be on the outside what I am on the inside.
7. When you teach basketball, it has its technical parts and its life parts. It has to be that way, because it's played by humans.
8. When you draw the X's and O's on board, you can change them around easily and predictably, but put a human being in there and the symbols won't predict what will happen.
9. This is what I mean when I talk about a life part. I don't know that you can teach it, but you must stress it. Stressing it is how you find out who has it. And sometimes those who don't seem to have it really do, but the circumstances of their life before you got them have been such they're never had to demonstrate it.
10. Any jackass can teach a Shuffle Offense or a zone defense, but the quality that makes the exceptional coach like Vince Lombardi is the ability to get the player to do what he does not want to, and do it well.
11. Ask any lawyer and he'll tell you that you learn more about law on your first case than you ever did in law school.
12. We shoot layups every day for eight minutes, and I insist that my players develop different ways of laying up the ball.
13. How do you account for that? You can't, but you have to recognize that.
14. When a coach picks a style of play, that style cannot be his, it has to come from what his players indicate they can do and can't do.
15. I want things to go right all the time every day. Winning is in the details.
16. I have always been alert to what has to be taught and watched and corrected.

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17. Because the basics remain the key to success on every level of the game, and you can teach them.
18. The truth about fast players. Wherever fast players go, there always get there faster than slower players.
19. The best situation of all is to be able to attract the best talent *and* be a teacher.
20. As a player, you want to be good at those things that happen a lot.
21. Michael Jordan can run like a deer and jump out of the gym; those are the two skills everyone notices, but they totally obscure the fact that he is fundamentally sound. He is good at all the things that happen a lot. So was Larry Bird, and so was Magic Johnson and so are all the players who are great because they are so skilled in those areas of the game.
22. IQ means what it always means.
23. EQ is energy quotient.
24. When the legs go, the heart and the head follow quickly behind.
25. RQ stands for responsibility quotient.
26. You are likely to do well those things you want to do. But there are also those things you may not want to do but have to do, and have to do well.
27. Why do we have to work so hard?
28. To make things easy.
29. They have their daily behavior to fall back on.
30. We are all creatures of habit and have to get into some kind of groove where our habits are good ones. Good habits are hard to break and so are bad ones.
31. Winning takes character and intelligence.
32. It is hard to teach things that take time to learn.
33. Passing takes the tension out of a game.
34. Passing makes everybody feel a part of the game, a part of the team.
35. No single aspect of basketball does more to develop good team play than passing, and conversely nothing destroys a team faster than a shooter who never passes.
36. Young players need to imitate great shooters more than they do because the quality of shooting is going down in the country.

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37. Remember that your team is never in trouble as long as you have the ball.
38. It's hard to be a pro if you can't make the hard shots.
39. The free throw is the only shot in basketball where it's okay to be greedy.
40. You try to get them to a level where they are not considered "missers." When a misser shoots, the whole team things, "He's shooting, get back."
41. If you're asking him to surpass the level of his talent, that will become clear after a while.
42. Losing requires absolutely nothing.
43. When a player is told what he has to do to become a better player, does he get mad at the coach, or at himself? If he gets mad at the coach, he'll never get better as a player.
44. Criticism is accurate and it's always honest.
45. I had a player who shot the ball every time he got it. He never noticed it and nothing I did could convince him to change his habits. So I had a meeting of everybody except him. I told the players that for the next couple of days I didn't want them to throw the ball to him. SO they didn't. The guy went crazy for two days: yelling, clapping, complaining, moaning. Finally, he came to see me and I told him the obvious: You never throw to them; now you know what it feels like.
46. When there are teamwork and understanding, you see the results on the floor; it doesn't need to be praised or mentioned in words.
(*Winning teams KNOW it's there, they don't have to SHOW it's there.*)
47. Player has to be selfish in the pursuit of the development of his skills, but he cannot be selfish when it comes time to blend them in with what is good for his team. (*Time for selfish!*)
48. Playing sports as a privilege.
49. Very important to do what you're supposed to do and not reduce your standards just because it's something you don't especially like doing.
50. Skill is a variable. Work is not a variable, not a skill; it's an attitude.
51. A guy who has long arms gets to the ball faster, and gets in the way of more passes.
52. All things being equal, you always want to pick the faster guy – if he has the desire.

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53. Speed narrows the court, makes it less long. The court is larger to a slower team.
54. Attitude, intelligence, and discipline. (AID)
55. I emphasize to my guys that anything we do in practice is not a drill.
56. I have to tell them what we're doing in practice is exactly what happens in a game.
57. Sports do not build character. They reveal character. They can help you realize who you are, what your potential is, and maybe what it is you have to change about your habits to realize your full potential.
58. I am a very demanding coach. Why? You start with premise that in general people would rather do something less difficult than something difficult. And certain kinds of extreme situations demand high levels of effort. People resist giving that high level of effort. There's a tendency to settle for less and you have to overcome that.
59. Self-esteem comes from accomplishment, not the other way around.
60. There cannot be competition for the ball.
61. The quality of your passing determines the quality of your shots.
62. Timing and execution are the keys to everything we try to do.
63. No matter what, the most important thing is who is doing it. You can make almost anything work if the right guy is doing it.
64. But if the game of basketball gets to a stage where there's no mental side to it – where it's all run and shoot and physical. *(To win championship, you have to have the mental as well!)*
65. Size is not the most important thing about rebounding. Knowing how to use your body, seeing where the ball is going, that's what counts.
66. The guy who jumps the highest gets the ball when he is all alone. Jumping in a crowd, that's another story.
67. One of the challenges of rebounding is not being afraid to rebound.
68. Guys who don't come from houses with three-car garages seem to have a desire to get in there under the boards and get smacked.
69. First, you need someone who is good at taking the ball out.
70. Second, you need a player who can advance the ball to the other end of the court.

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71. Third, you have to have a scorer at the end of the press, someone who knows what to do when he gets the ball.
72. Nothing makes attacking a zone more difficult than bad passing.
73. Try to put your man in between any two of theirs.
74. Try to make as many cuts as you can from behind the zone.
75. Move the ball and move yourself so that you make the zone "run."
76. Teach your team the slides used by the defense in the zone.
77. Some players are more adept at creating their own shot. Be careful to notice that, because sometimes a pick or a screen can get in the way of what your teammate is trying to do – you're trying to help, but you're getting in the way of his success.
78. Faking isn't something that only the offense does. The defense can fake, too.
79. Everything counts. Every little thing counts.
80. "Nonaggression pact" with your teammates.
81. There are so many ways you can feel it, and it's better to feel it than to hear it.
82. The camaraderie practically comes out of their bodies.
83. Another difference is that you spend a lot of time in college looking for good players. In high school, you spend a lot of time trying to make players good.
84. Doesn't give himself an excuse to fail.
85. The job of the university is not to make any student happy; that's the student's job. The university's job is to create a framework for learning, thinking, and studying.
86. It's what you do versus what you could do that counts.
87. You first look over the talent of your opponent to see how you're going to beat them.
88. Once the game starts, you can do a little bit of changing at halftime. But most of what the team does is what the coach prepared in

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practice; that's where you teach your players the generally philosophy of how to play that game.

89. There is not one single thing we practice that is not going to show up in a game, and anything new that does show up is my responsibility.
90. You have to take advantage of what you have.
91. Am I trying to teach this player instinct, or am I teaching him a skill?
92. Every year, I look at the films of the last season and try to see whether our breakdowns are because of poor teaching or sloppy execution. I want to know if I'm insisting on teaching something we just cannot do well.
93. The most important thing that you can do is to DO what you are doing well. The word "focus" does not carry.
94. Focus on what you are doing when you are doing it.
95. People told me I asked a lot from my kids, and I told them, Princeton kids have a lot to give.
96. No matter where you coached, the worms eat you at the same rate.
97. The hardest thing in the world to do is to do one thing particularly well for a long period of time at whatever standards you establish. Take the doctor who delivers his first baby – what a thrill! Does he, thirty years later, get the same thrill?
98. If you do something well enough you're eventually confronted with the challenge of sustaining your standard of performance over a long period of time.
99. An assistant coach's job is to notice things and try to help the head coach. He knew that the best perform their best in the face of pressure, not in the absence of it.
100. Every little thing counts. If not, why do it?
101. Bad shooters are always open.
102. On offense, move the defense.
103. Putting defensive pressure on the ball makes it harder for the other team to run an offense.
104. Keep your dribble. Use it when you're going to do something useful.

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105. A pass is not a pass when it is made after you've tried to do everything else.
106. A good player knows what he is good at. He also knows what he is not good at and only does the former.
107. You want to be good at those things that happen a lot.
108. When the legs go, the heart and the head follow quickly behind.
109. If you're teammate does not pass the ball to you when you're open and he doesn't say anything, then he did not see you. If he says "I'm sorry," he saw you and did not want to throw you the ball.
110. Whatever you are doing is the most important thing that you're doing while you're doing it.
111. Anyone can be average.
112. The Best tap into a power greater than themselves.
113. When he saw God as a relationship rather than a religion.
114. Because you have to give all of who you are to become everything you're meant to be.
115. Money might make you perform well in the short term, but it won't inspire you to be the best and strive for greatness over the long term.
116. Average players are motivated by the paycheck. The great ones are inspired to leave a legacy.
117. The Best leave a legacy.