

The Freethrow

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Let's go to work! First, understand that in any given game freethrows make up 25% of the total score. Do you spend an equivalent amount of practice time on freethrows? If not, you can expect to see your team shoot under 70%, an unacceptable standard.

The following suggestions might assist in your team's improvement with freethrow shooting:

- 1) Get a philosophy.
 - a) Know how you want your players to shoot freethrows and insist that they shoot them a particular way (i.e. if they shoot over 80% then leave them alone).
 - b) Points of emphasis physically
 - 1) Legs - you shoot with your legs (i.e. every shot finished with player on tip toes).
 - 2) Follow through - elbow points to rim and hold gooseneck for count of two EVERYTIME.
 - 3) Eyes - on target at all times.
 - c) Points of emphasis mentally
 - 1) Breathing - teach your players that breathing is an important vehicle in relaxation.
 - 2) Visualization - the player should see himself making the shot before he steps to the line.
- 2) Get a system that you can incorporate into your daily practice.
 - a) Post a list of your players in the gym weekly. Require them to make a minimum of 25 freethrows before and after each practice. Each player must record how many shots it took him to make 25 shots; the players begin to take responsibility right from the first practice; the players can all quickly see the progress they are making; certain players will ultimately realize that they need your assistance.

- 3) Practice time allotment to freethrows must remain consistent.
 - a) Be committed to shooting freethrows for a certain time each practice; be committed to demanding absolute concentration as players and coaches have a tendency to relax during freethrow segments in practice; be committed to varying your freethrows, constantly competing against others and themselves, and have some freethrow games thrown in there so that your players have some fun.

- 4) Make a big deal out of freethrows.
 - a) Pick times during practice to stop everything and put a player at the freethrow line. Tell the team that there is no time on the clock, one and one, and your team needs to hit both in order to beat your biggest rival. If he should miss, make the whole team run a suicide. The team quickly understands that a missed freethrow hurts the entire squad.

 - b) Occasionally bring in a reward for the best freethrow shooter of the day. The point here is to spice up freethrow shooting while stressing its importance.

 - c) In your locker room you can post previous outstanding freethrow shooters as freethrow shooting should become part of your tradition.

We all have our own ideas about how a freethrow should be shot. All I am suggesting is that it is an area we can improve on with a little more thought, and certainly the rewards will be worth the toil. Regardless of your talent this is an area where a coach can have a tremendous influence and can steal a few extra wins.

Drills

As a coach you must teach your players how to concentrate and constantly challenge them. Hence, we set up drills that put them at a disadvantage or pressure situation.

Drill #1

- 1) 5 point game
 - a) 5 points for a swish (no rim)

- b) 4 points when ball hits any part of rim
- c) 3 points when ball hits both sides of rim
- d) 2 points when ball hits rim three times, rattles, ect.
- e) 1 point when ball rolls around rim or hits backboard
- f) 0 points for a miss

*Now the shooter must concentrate not only on making the shot but also on how he puts the ball through the cylinder.

Drill #2

2) The lap game

- a) Divide your team into two, three, four, ect. groups
- b) Each player gets one shot
- c) If the first player makes his shot and the second player misses, then the player who misses must sprint a lap
- d) If the first two players make their shots but the third misses then he runs two laps ... and so forth

*A good game because pressure steadily increases on the players as shots are made.

Drill #3

3) The basket game

- a) Each player must make a freethrow at each basket in the gym consecutively or he must start over (i.e. you can name any number you want).

* Breaks the routine of the shooter and forces the players to adjust.