

## Game Time – Effective Communication and continuous Development

The game is the arena to put into action all of the skills and teamwork you have been developing. As a coach this is where you will see the development taking place, or where you will be taking notes on what requires development in future training sessions. At the same time, it can be a pressure situation as kids may become upset with the game not going their way. These pressure situations are also situations where a coach can make a positive impact.

It is important not to get too emotionally involved as a coach. The players will be looking to you to analyse the game, provide feedback and clearly communicate any changes required.

Some tips when coaching on game day include the below:

- Avoid commentating the game or giving too much direction
- Do not be loud or demonstrative
- It is OK to call out for reminders and positional information – finding an opponent in defence or moving to the right position on the court are examples here.
- Usually the best teaching is done during substitutions, time-outs or training sessions. It can be very hard to squeeze in development while kids are taking a side ball or moving around the court.
- It can be great to leave the kids to make their own decisions and mistakes, then work with them to evolve.
- Instead of always giving direction, ask the kids to talk you through their thought process and you might be pleasantly surprised that they are having the right thoughts even though the play may not have turned out as expected.
- Plan for even court time between players
- Encourage in all situations
- Teach respect for the other team and referees

The game can be quite fast paced so taking good notes might impact how much of the game you are seeing. Some quick mental notes during the game are great and then spending some time after each game noting down areas of the game that did not really go your way, or skills that need to be built on will assist in building your training plan. This process is always evolving and is the base of your team's continuous improvement journey.

Discussions with the parents after the game can help define your thoughts. Simple comments such as 'we had our chances' or 'they were just too quick', could lead you to build in more shooting drills to ensure the chance are made, or different defence to slow the other team down. Take all of these comments in, take down your notes and then use these to continue your teams improvement.

Remember the season is 16-18 games long and the most important game is always the last, never the first. Take your time, improve your team, and the rest will take care of itself!

For some additional ideas for your game and training session, please see the resources on the Vermont Vultures website – both external links and coaching guides.