

Maine Association of Basketball Coaches



A Guide for High School Basketball Coaches

Leading Your Program

Established 2018



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Introduction

Dear Coach,

This guide has been designed as a resource to assist you in your role as head coach. One function of the Maine Association of Basketball Coaches is to mentor our high school basketball coaches. When veteran coaches think about the early years of their coaching careers, they realize how success can change drastically depending on the decisions made early in a career.

With that in mind, the MABC wants to provide some insights and suggestions as you strive to make good decisions.

1. Your integrity defines you.

You will be faced with challenging situations in this business and you must make the right decisions. It is essential that you make good decisions and NEVER knowingly compromise your integrity on these matters.

2. Show great leadership in your bench decorum.

Many eyes will be upon you in the coaching profession and how you conduct yourself on the bench will be the primary way people will get to know you. You never know who will be looking at you so show strong patience, calm and confidence. Also, remember that there are words that you do not have to be a lip reader to understand.

3. Strive to have a positive relationship with players.

You must build lasting and strong relationships with every player. Rules without relationships will lead to rebellion. Your players will run through a wall for you if they have a positive relationship with you. Having positive, healthy relationships with your players will allow you to become a much better coach and mentor. Remember that you are impacting them for a lifetime.

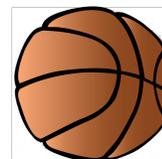
Also remember that every player will have an opportunity to speak about your program on their way out the door. Players will respect your decisions if you have established a strong relationship with each of them. What they divulge to your superiors and the community at large in terms of your rules, approach and ethical conduct could impact your coaching career.



that



4. Know



someone is always watching.

What you do and how you conduct yourself on and off the court is very important. You are special. You are a leader in your school and community whether you realize it or not. As a result, you will be held to a much higher standard in terms of your own conduct. Whether you are on the bench, in a restaurant, or at a family outing, you are representing yourself and your program. In this age of social media, a small error in judgment could end up on YouTube, Facebook or Twitter, and in a matter of moments, drastically change the public's perception of your character. Do not compromise in this area.

5. Put academics first.

Having players succeed in the classroom is just as important as your win-loss record. Demand strong academic performance from all of your players. Show them you care by knowing the courses they're taking, what their plans are after high school, and how you can help them achieve their educational goals. Consider the player beyond the basketball court.

6. Be honest and forthright with parents.

Be polite and honest with parents about the status of their son or daughter. The way you conduct your business every day affects the perception of your basketball program. Always set clear expectations and provide understanding of where their son or daughter fits within the program. Not everyone can be the star of the team, and it is important to not only make it clear to your players, but parents as well. Whatever the issue is, talk about it!

7. Think about your legacy.

Begin each season with the end of your career in mind. "What do you want people to remember about you long after you are gone?" Strive each and every day to positively impact those whose lives you touch. People will remember how much you cared long after they have forgotten how much you knew or how good you were at your profession. Leave behind a legacy you and your family can be proud of.



Top Ten Mistakes

A well-intentioned new coach may concentrate so much on “the big win” that he/she may overlook small details that can derail the effectiveness of their leadership.

Try to avoid the following mistakes:

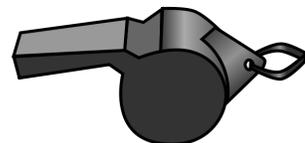
1. Choosing the wrong staff.
2. Poor practice planning and time management.
3. Not setting clear goals or vision for the program.
4. Not maintaining positive through “growing pains” of the program.
5. Not being yourself. Don’t try to imitate someone else.
6. Not being patient with your team; especially young players.
7. Trying to do too many different things at one time.
8. Not spending enough time with your team.
9. Not establishing a proper relationship with:
 - a. Administration
 - b. Teachers
 - c. Student body
 - d. School staff
 - e. Community
 - f. Media
10. Thinking that you know all you need to be successful. You can always learn more and continue to improve.

Choosing Your Staff

It is important to surround yourself with the right people. This doesn't necessarily mean personal friends; but rather individuals who want to help young people grow as basketball players and people. Work with those who do the hiring to find the right people for your program.

Preferred qualities for an assistant coach:

1. **Experience:** The ability to teach and coach.
2. **Communication:** The ability to share information whether it be good or bad and the ability to speak effectively while sharing your vision for the program.
3. **Leadership:** The ability to step up, take charge and make good decisions when needed.
4. **Loyalty:** The willingness to voice their ideas and perspectives while always upholding and supporting your decisions.
5. **Chemistry:** The personality and demeanor to fit in with the head coach, staff and players.
6. **Work Ethic:** Self initiative, motivation and a commitment to the hours and demands of the job.
7. **Adaptability:** The ability to relate to different types of people and adapt to different environment and situations.
8. **Character:** The ability to do the right thing even when it is difficult.
9. **Integrity:** Honesty, morality and truthfulness.



Recruitment Of Your Players

As college basketball continues to become more and more competitive, so does the recruiting process. Having a strong relationship with your players and their parents is important so you can help guide them through this process.

Here are some tips:

- 1. It's not about you:** Remember this process is about your players and their family, not you. Don't look to promote yourself or push your player to any particular college program. The process is about what is best for the player and their family.
- 2. It's about more than basketball:** You can help them realize that their decision affects the next four years of their life. Players and parents need to consider more than just basketball.
 - Distance from home
 - Academics
 - Social aspects
 - Would you go there if you didn't play?
- 3. No special treatment:** Don't treat players differently because they are being recruited. This will more than likely lead to animosity and problems within your program.
- 4. Integrity:** Be mindful of NCAA compliance rules and careful of coaches who break them. Is that the type of program you want your player in?
- 5. Respect:** Treat all involved in the process with respect. Understand that this is a major decision for your player and their family. Your relationship with the college coach involved may also be important to future recruits. Keep all doors open.

Communication

As coaches, we ask our players to be great communicators. Likewise, a head coach must make a commitment to being a great communicator, both on and off the court. Make your expectations clear and communicate those expectations every day. Your team will be better and your players will be even more prepared for life after graduation if you communicate effectively.

Best Practices

Establish a culture of honesty and respect:

1. Be very candid in dealing with your players -- let them know whether they are meeting expectations on the court, in the classroom, and in the community.
2. Thoroughly define behavioral and classroom expectations.
3. Communicate team rules and individual expectations -- constantly remind players of them.
4. Operate with an "open door" policy. You have to make yourself available to your players.
5. Meet with your players individually throughout the year. Talk about their progress as a basketball player and methods for their improvement. Also take the opportunity to speak to them about their career ambitions, educational pursuits, and other interests off the court. Get to know them on a personal level.

Communicating with Parents;

1. Have a meeting to thoroughly define expectations of your program and answer any questions regarding academic expectations, recruiting, team rules, etc.
2. Be approachable and make yourself available to parents. Be clear that you are willing to speak about their son or daughter, but no one else. Be frank and honest in your evaluation. Parents will appreciate your honesty.

Your first meeting of the year:

1. Review program expectations - what do you expect from players on a daily basis.
2. Thoroughly communicate your goals and ambitions for the upcoming year - don't be afraid to set the bar high.
3. Take the opportunity to reinforce your commitment to integrity and team rules.

In-season communication:

1. Every practice is an opportunity to teach and communicate your goals and life lessons to your players. Plan wisely for each time you meet with your team.
2. Prepare your key messages. Avoid speaking "off the cuff".

Post-season meetings:

1. Team Meeting - Review the season and share key statistics in objective terms. Speak frankly about where improvement can be made as a team.
2. Individual Meeting - Provide an honest assessment of performance from the past season. This may include statistics, but try to be subjective in your evaluation. Discuss specific areas for improvement. Discuss academic progress during the past season. Set goals for both academic and athletic performance.

Pitfalls

1. Not being honest and upfront with your team can lead to mistrust between players, parents and the coaching staff.
2. Not providing clear expectations for players leads to confusion.
3. Not encouraging open communication between the coaching staff and players leads to speculation and can breed rumors.
4. Not developing positive relationships with your players and their parents will keep all involved at a distance and you will miss opportunities to teach some valuable life lessons.

Networking

Networking is defined as developing relationships that intersect with other relationships. In business, it means forming meaningful relationships that can help you grow professionally, keep you abreast of current trends or ideas in your business, or help you be aware of other job opportunities while expanding your list of references. It brings to mind the old saying, "It's not what you know but who you know."

In basketball there are so many advantages to developing a vast network of contacts:

1. Receiving help from other coaches on job opportunities.
2. Receiving help from other coaches with scouting reports.
3. Receiving information from other coaches on upcoming clinics and camps.
4. Coaches that are in your network may speak favorably to college coaches about one of your players.
5. Some coaches go on to become administrators later in their careers; you may meet them again on the other side of the desk.

The following are some ideas on how to network and expand your contacts:

1. Be cordial before games to opposing coaches. Be sure to do more than just shake hands - try to get to know your fellow coaches.
2. After games always be humble in victory and gracious in defeat. Remember that games are for and about the players, not a competition between you and the opposing coaches. You will see them again.
3. Speak to other coaches when you see them while scouting. Speak to them before or after the game if you get the chance.
4. Make use of e-mail or phone messages to communicate with fellow coaches. Congratulate them on a big win, winning a championship, milestone victories, or awards and coaching honors. Congratulate them on personal events such as weddings, birth of a child, child's graduation, etc. Don't be the coach who only reaches out when you need something.
5. Work summer camps. You really get to know people and develop collegial relationships with them when you spend a week working together.
6. Attend clinics. You'll meet lots of coaches, plus you might learn something new.
7. Share things that work for you with others. Don't just be a taker - give to others as well.
8. Be willing to visit other coaches' practices (both high school and college). It says a lot about your respect for another coach when you want to watch them practice.
9. Get involved and stay active in coaching organizations - most notably the Maine Association of Basketball Coaches.
10. Make an effort to stay connected with other coaches even if you change schools.

Your Program & Others

Administration:

1. Each athletic program is expected to operate as an integral part of the school. The head coach of any program must know the mission and goals of the school and consistently convey them to his/her staff and players.
2. Taking the time to understand and support the mission and vision of the school will help you find ways to incorporate that mission and vision in the basketball program. An open and trusting relationship between the principal, the athletic administrator, and the head coach is essential to the success and progress of the team. Relationships and trust take time to build, but are vital for future growth and support of the basketball program.
3. Above all, your program must operate with integrity and a firm commitment to academic achievement, athletic achievement, and the personal development of the players. Take the time to emphasize and communicate your commitment to these ideas.

Athletic Administrator:

1. Establishing a trusting and strong relationship with your AA is vital to your success. There will inevitably be challenging times and the relationship you have with your AA must be built on solid ground in order to overcome these challenges.
2. Invest time in developing a strong relationship with your AA. Get to know his/her priorities and look for ways to support him/her. Your AA will in turn look for ways to support you and your program.
3. Don't allow your AA to be surprised. Blindsiding an AA with bad news or a crisis is something you must try to avoid. Communicate with your AA so that they are apprised of all news involving your program, whether it's good or bad.
4. Find ways to spend time with your AA both in their office and outside the office.
5. If a minor issue arises, do whatever you can to deal with the issue and propose a solution to alleviate unnecessary burdens on your AA. Every problem has a solution.
6. A great program consists of everyone being on the same page and working together toward a common goal.

Basketball Staff:

1. Make certain your staff and everyone connected to your program understands your goals and philosophies. Never assume that people know your priorities. State them clearly and often so that everyone is clear.

2. Inform your staff that they must keep you updated on significant areas of the program. The buck stops with you as head coach, and no one wants surprises.
3. Establish clearly defined roles for your staff so that everyone on your staff and in the athletic department knows who is responsible for specific duties.
4. Establish a solid relationship with your staff and everyone involved with your program. Having a good relationship with everyone involved makes things run smoothly and allows problems and issues to be resolved quicker.
5. Take the time to thank people around you and recognize their contributions to your program. That would include scorekeepers, statisticians, bus drivers, managers, and custodians.



Quick Hitters

1. Always show a great deal of gratitude to all those who support your program. This includes players, coaches, parents, fans, teachers, support staff, and administrators. *“It’s nice to be important, but it’s important to be nice.”*
2. Keep your finger on the pulse of the community to know the reputation of your program. If it is anything other than positive and respectful, take the necessary steps to change it.
3. Make sure you are developing a balanced off-season program that focuses on skill development, physical conditioning, and team chemistry. Take this opportunity to help them develop on a personal level. All the while, be respectful of their other commitments.
4. Encourage your players to be involved in other school activities and activities in the community. Think about what you would like people to say when they talk about you, your players, and your program.
5. Be involved around school yourself. Support the other sports and activities at your school. You want their support. Lead by example and give them yours.
6. When you make a mistake (and we all do), own it. Sooner or later, you will misjudge a player or say something inappropriate. We all make mistakes - act quickly to correct the situation. Alert your athletic administrator of your misstep. It is better coming from you.



Why Join the MABC?

Promoting Maine Basketball

“Promoting Maine Basketball” is the motto of the Maine Association of Basketball Coaches. Each year the MABC is looking for new ways to promote the state’s most popular sport. The MABC is comprised of boys and girls coaches from all areas of the state representing all classifications and levels. Visit the MABC website at mabc1.org.



Activities currently being sponsored by the MABC are:

- Maine McDonald’s All-Star Weekend
- Academic All-State Teams
- Foul Shooting Contest
- MPA Basketball Committee Representation
- Maine State Basketball Commission Representation
- MABC Website
- Outstanding Coaching Achievement Awards
- MABC Media Award
- Bob Brown Contributor Award
- Fall Showcase/Clinic
- MPA Rules Interpretation Webcasts
- Membership in the NHSBCA (National High School Basketball Coaches Association) (nhsbca.org)
- MABC New Coach Manual

MABC Executive Committee

The MABC's primary method of communication is via e-mail. It is important that you get your contact information, particularly your e-mail address to the MABC's executive secretary.

If you have any questions or concerns throughout the basketball season, please feel free to reach out to any of the members of the MABC's executive committee.

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