

## Coaching Basketball is BIGGER than X's and O's

There are many instances, as part of general conversation and interactions with others, the question “What do you do?” is asked. On the surface, this seems like a very simple question. However, for myself and coaches alike, this question is one that is very loaded. Yet, we simply reply, we coach. The typical response is, “Oh, okay. That’s pretty awesome and sounds like fun.” Most people tend to think that the job consist of hanging around the gym all day, encouraging, yelling, and instructing players on how to put the ball in the basket. Again, on the surface that’s a very simple way to put it. The reality is, that coaching basketball or any other sport for that matter, is way bigger than X's and O's.

There are many aspects of coaching that happen behind the scenes. Today’s generation of student-athletes are more complex, thus requiring much more than skill development drills, structured practices, and games. They need healthier relationships, motivation, mental/psychological counseling, positively cultivated cultures, amongst other things. To better connect with today’s student-athletes, much of coaching has become more about learning and developing certain skill sets to help encourage these players. As coaches, we serve in different roles and wear different hats daily. We must possess the ability to be who our student-athlete need in that moment, i.e. parental figure, counselor, motivator, etc.

Professional organizations like the Women’s Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) provides a platform for coaches to connect with others in the profession to learn and grow our game. In a profession, where coaches are judged/evaluated on wins and losses, it’s important to surround yourself with others who understand the work behind the scenes. Learning and connecting with the best coaches in the world, taking away nuggets that will help us better serve our student-athletes. While we do share information on different styles of play and game strategy, a large majority of the sessions focus on how to engage and appeal more to today’s student-athletes. As coaches, we must also remain students of the game, continuing to learn innovative ways to better ourselves so that we may be better for our student-athletes. I’ve learned that it doesn’t matter how much you know about the game itself, if you aren’t able to appeal to the needs of this generation, it’s hard to be successful. I’m very appreciative for the opportunity to continually grow in my craft. And to the coaches in the profession who willingly share their knowledge and experience, I’m grateful. Coaching basketball is bigger than X's and O's. It takes a village.

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