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Leadership, Communication & Basketball: A Case Study on the Differences and Similarities in Leadership and Coaching Styles Between a Collegiate Basketball Coach and a Professional Basketball Coach

Matthew G. Rose
Seton Hall University

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Thesis Advisor
Richard Dool

Leadership, Communication & Basketball: A Case Study on the differences and similarities in leadership and coaching styles between a collegiate basketball coach and a professional basketball coach

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Masters of Arts in Corporate and Public Communication
Seton Hall University
South Orange, N.J.

By: Matthew G. Rose

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Abstract

So you consider yourself a fan of basketball. You have a favorite college team and player as well as a favorite professional team and player. You've been to tons of professional and college basketball games in your lifetime, but have you ever stopped to notice the differences between the two? For example, why do college players foul out of the game after five fouls and pros after six? If a professional player behaves in a negative manner, he gets a fine. If a college player does the same, there's no fine, he gets suspended. Are the punishments equal? If you think hard enough, you'll come up with some things that you never took the time to notice before.

Here is one question that I've been wondering for a while. Why are some coaches always so active, excited and in-your-face, while others rarely leave their seat on the bench? What's the difference between the two and does it really matter if a coach is animated or calm and laid back?

The following study will investigate these questions and uncover some of the factors leading to a coach's behavior, choices, communication style and leadership.

Peters and Austin (1985 p. 326) had this to say about coaching:

“Coaching is face-to-face leadership that pulls together people with diverse backgrounds, talents, experiences and interests, encourages them to step up to responsibility and continued achievement, and treats them as full-scale partners and contributors. Coaching is not about memorizing techniques or devising the perfect game plan. It is about really paying attention to people ---really believing them, really caring about them, really involving them.”

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank God. Throughout my graduate studies I have realized that I truly can do ALL things through His strength.

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I want to give a very special thank you to my brother and best friend, Kyle. It's been a long and hard road bro, thanks for not getting tired of me. No matter where my life takes me after this, you'll always be my dude.

Finally, I want to thank my girlfriend Michelle. Thank you for believing in me, crying with me, crying for me, struggling with me and being there to pick up the pieces when I fell apart. I love you.

Laila, we made it!

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Dr. James Naismith is known world-wide as the inventor of basketball. He was born in 1861, in Ramsay Township, near Almonte, Ontario, Canada. The concept of basketball was born from Naismith's school days where he played a simple game known as duck-on-a-rock outside his one-room schoolhouse. The game involved attempting to knock a "duck" off the top of a large rock by tossing another rock at it. Naismith went on to attend McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Naismith wanted to create a game of skill for the students instead of one that relied solely on strength. He needed a game that could be played indoors in a relatively small space. After serving as McGill's Athletic Director, James Naismith moved on to the YMCA Training School in Springfield, Massachusetts, USA in 1891, where the sport of basketball was born.

If Dr. Naismith, the “father“ of basketball and first coach in history, were alive today, he would be amazed by the progression of the sport he has created. He would be astounded by some of the achievements, baffled by some of the new rules and disappointed by some of the low points. The sport of basketball has seen many changes since its inception in 1891.

Being the inventor and first to coach the game, I believe Dr. Naismith would be asking the same questions that I will try to answer in this thesis. I'm sure he too, would want to know why and how professional coaches and college coaches differ in style and communication. What started out as a local game that everyone could play has turned

into a global game with so many different levels of skill. I'm sure he would wonder why things have become increasingly more complex over the years as opposed to in 1891 when the game was invented. Why player and coach interaction has become such a vital part of a basketball team.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to pinpoint the differences between collegiate and professional basketball coaches. There are multiple techniques and communication styles used by coaches depending on competitive level, environment and personal characteristics. This study will identify those differences and ultimately uncover those techniques and styles that show to be more effective. To the common observer, the coach is perceived as the person whose primary job function is to implement the playbook, control the flow of the game and make important decisions relative to the success of the team. A coach is much more than that. Through this study, I will find prove that a coach is more than just someone on the sideline. I will prove that coaches on both levels have to have certain skills to succeed at their position. This study is important because coaching at the professional and collegiate levels are very different and require different traits, characteristics and mind-sets. It is important that the lay person understand this in order to understand why coaches do what they do.

The author's personal interest in this study began at the age of fourteen. Throughout high school, the author was exposed to a variety of coaching styles from freshman, to junior varsity and finally varsity. He noticed that there was some consistency in coaching but more variety than anything else. I then began to wonder if it

was the same on the collegiate level and professional level. Although I have never participated on a collegiate basketball team, I have spent a considerable amount of time observing players and coaches at that level. Currently, as an employee of a professional basketball team, I have been exposed to coaching on the professional level as well. Having a basic perception of coaching at different levels, I am now attempting to gain an understanding of what coaches are made of.

The Research Question

In an ideal world, you could go to a professional or college basketball game and see the perfect combination of player/coach cooperation. The coach would explain his vision to his players and they would not only go back on the court and accomplish that vision, they would do it perfectly and understand why they did it. There would be smiles, hugs, hi-fives and laughter. But that's an ideal world. The real world has seen professional players choking coaches, college coaches assaulting players, non-cooperation on and off the court between player/coach and an abundance of miscommunication between the two. Why does this happen? What are the factors leading to a break in union of coach and player?

This brings me to the main research question of my thesis. What are the differences in leadership, communication and coaching style between a collegiate basketball coach and a professional basketball coach? This case study will illustrate the differences between the two and reveal some efficient techniques leading to the accomplishment of goals by comparing and contrasting a professional coach and a collegiate coach. It will also shed light on the relationship between a coach and his players as well as communication between the two. Finally, it will seek to clarify and

explain some of the most common misconceptions regarding coaches, their specific styles, characteristics and techniques.

Subsidiary Questions

In order to completely understand my research question and understand the differences between college and professional coaches, I will dedicate time to answering the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between a player and a coach?
2. What is the coach's role on an athletic team?
3. Does the environment contribute to the way coaches and players interact?

The above mentioned thesis question and subsidiary questions will be answered through a careful analysis of past and present research regarding leadership, communication and the sport of basketball. Expert interviews will also be examined and implemented.

Limitations of the Study

This analysis is intended to study the differences in communication and coaching style of male collegiate and professional coaches. I realize that there are numerous differences in coaching techniques used by male and female coaches. Furthermore, I also realize that there are differences in the perspectives, goals and values of male and female

collegiate and professional basketball players. This study is not culturally specific and therefore will not analysis any specific race, religion, creed or values. These factors were not analyzed in depth and therefore not included in the research.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this case study, the author will refer to numerous terms that are basketball and coaching jargon. Below the author defines these terms as they will be used in the context of the case analysis.

1. **NCAA**

-National College Athletic Association

2. **NBA**

-National Basketball Association

3. **DI, DII, and DIII**

-Competitive levels of collegiate athletics, Division I being the most competitive.

4. **Coach**

-A person who trains or directs athletes or athletic teams.

5. **Coaching Philosophy**

-Beliefs or principles that help you achieve your major objectives.

6. **Sports**

-Activities involving physical exertion and skill that are governed by a set of rules or customs and often undertaken competitively.

7. **Athlete**

- A person possessing the natural or acquired traits, such as strength, agility and endurance, which are necessary for physical exercise or sports, especially those performed in competitive contexts

8. Motivation

- The psychological feature that arouses an organism to action toward a desired goal; the reason for the action; that which gives purpose and direction to behavior

9. Success

- The achievement of something desired, planned or attempted.

10. Burnout

- Physical or emotional exhaustion, especially as a result of long-term stress or dissipation.

11. Perception

- The representation of what is perceived; basic component in the formation of a concept

12. Mind-set

- A mental inclination, tendency or habit; a fixed state of mind.

13. Transfer

- A student who leaves one collegiate institution to attend another.

CHAPTER II

Coaching Styles

This section will primarily focus on and discuss the specific coaching styles used by both collegiate and professional coaches. According to Rainer Martens (2004), there are three coaching styles that most coaches lean toward: the command-style, the submissive style or the cooperative style. These three coaching styles accurately describe three common communication styles: aggressive, assertive and passive. These coaching/communication styles are referred to by different names in some places but they generally carry the same characteristics as the following.

Command-style communication is aggressive and includes ordering players to do whatever, often including an intimidating tone. There is a lot of talking down and domination in this style. Command-style communicators do most of the talking and little listening and when things go wrong, they accuse and blame.

Cooperative-style communication is straightforward, positive and confident, which encourages others to do the same. It encourages two-way communication and is based on mutual respect between coach and player. It is often believed to be the best form of communication and utilized in most situations.

Submissive-style communication allows others to dominate the conversation. People using this style of communication seldom express their viewpoints and tend to move toward agreement even when they don't agree, just to make everyone happy. This style includes uncertainty, distance and evasion.

The Command Style:

In the command-style of coaching, the coach is the primary decision maker. The coach assumes all responsibilities and leaves no room for decision making by the athlete, whose role is reduced to basically responding to the coach's commands. This role comes from the basic understanding that the coach has knowledge and experience and it's his job to give the athlete direction. The athlete's job is to listen to and follow direction.

During his coaching days at Indiana University with the Hoosiers, Coach Bobby Knight was often characterized as being a command-style coach. "Recognized as a master teacher and tactician of the sport, he is known for his pugnacity when disciplining his players. He insists that they follow his commands and is sometimes ruthless about leaning on them until they do." Martens (2004 p. 31). Unfortunately for Coach Knight, his highly controlling style of coaching and communicating often disagreed with the more open style of his players and resulted in the transfer of some talented players. Command-style coaches are often seen as dictators, giving orders and expecting them to be carried out, often having a "by any means necessary" attitude.

In his introduction to John Feinstein's 'A Season on the Brink,' Al McGuire's final thought summed up Coach Knight's style of coaching. "Bob Knight is unique. In another time, he would have been a superb general. He never made it past private in the Army, but he has proved himself to be a fantastic leader throughout his career. He may well be the last of the great coaching dictators.--The last of a breed."

The command-style is one of the most widely used coaching styles, mainly because it is the easiest way to establish authority. Rainer Martens states that "the

command-style can be effective if winning is the coach's primary objective, and if it's authoritarian nature does not stifle athlete's motivation." (2004 p. 32) He later goes on to explain how the coaching style can influence an athlete's motivation; basically, the athlete under a command-style coach plays for the coach's approval or to avoid being singled-out as opposed to being intrinsically motivated. I don't know if I necessarily agree with this theory. Being somewhat of an athletic person and having played for a number of coaches in my time, I believe that sometimes being afraid of your coach or seeking the approval of your coach can be one of the greatest motivational forces there are. I have had experiences where I out-performed my competition not only because I wanted to win, but because I wanted to win for my coach, in order to live up to his expectations of me. On the flip side, I've also out-performed my competition based on fear of what my coach would have said to me had I not.

The Cooperative Style:

The cooperative coaching style is often seen as collaboration between coach and player. It involves coach and player working together to make the important decisions. Coaches using this style are often referred to as teachers because they realize that the only way for the athlete to grow both as a person and a basketball player is if they learn to make their own decisions and learn from their mistakes.

Coach X, an assistant coach on an NBA team spoke on the cooperative style, saying, "It is one of the more popular styles in the NBA." In expanding on that thought, he then referred to Phil Jackson, current coach of the Los Angeles Lakers and one of the greatest coaches of all-time: "Phil Jackson was the kind of coach that rarely called a time-

out and let his players get into the flow of the game. Nowadays you see coaches calling time-outs if a drawn-out play is not run to perfection or if a player misses a couple shots. Then there are situations on defense where a player doesn't get a rebound or forgets to box-out his man. The thing about Phil Jackson is that he allowed his players to get into the flow of the game and make their own decisions."

Phil Jackson's triangle offense is a perfect illustration of his coaching style. In the triangle offense, all players handle the ball at some point and have to work together to score the basket. There are no drawn plays or set situations because the triangle offense allows players to make their own decisions and find a way to score. He believes that the players on the floor often have a better understanding of what's going on than the coaches do. Martens (2004 p. 32)

The primary challenge of the cooperative style is knowing when to direct the players and when to let them direct themselves. According to Coach Z of an NCAA Division I team, "there are often points in a game where there is a set play or something the head coach wants to focus on, but the athletes have something else in mind. It's often the difference between a win and a loss."

Through observations of my own, through televised games and live contests, I find more and more that the balance between player and coach decision making must be maintained in order for the team to be successful. Examples of coaches who have been extremely successful using this coaching style include Former North Carolina University Tar Heels Head Coach Dean Smith, Current Duke University Blue Devils Head Coach Mike Krzyzewski and legendary and hall-of-fame UCLA Head Coach, John Wooden. Finding the balance between the two is something that every coach using the cooperative style must be sensitive to.

The Submissive Style:

The submissive style is usually the first to be thrown out the door when a coach is determining what style to use. I see the submissive style as the “I’m just here because I have to be” style. The coach using this style serves as an observer more than anything else. He sits on the bench and makes sure nothing gets out of hand. According to Rainer Martens (2004 p. 30), “the coach provides little instruction, provides minimal guidance in organizing activities and resolves discipline problems only when absolutely necessary.”

Coaches who adopt this style often lack the knowledge necessary to give instruction or are too lazy to meet the demands of their coaching responsibilities. This coaching style is usually found in basketball programs with little competition levels.

See detailed coaching diagram (**Figure 1**) on following page

What is Winning	Judged by coach	Judged by athlete and coach	Not Defined
Athlete Development	Little or no trust in the athlete	Trust in the athlete	Trust not shown
Motivation	Sometimes motivates	Motivates all	No motivation
Training Structures	Inflexible	Flexible	None

Special Olympics (2006)

Special Olympics (2006)

Communication Styles

Much like the above mentioned coaching styles, there are three main communication styles that most people use: Aggressive, Assertive and Passive.

Aggressive communication always involves manipulation. Those using this communication style attempt to make people do what we want by inducing guilt or by using intimidation and control tactics.

Assertive communication involves working hard to create mutually satisfying solutions for each other. People using this communication style are able to communicate their needs clearly and directly. The focus and emphasis is to strive for a win/win situation and to value the relationship.

The Passive communicator thrives on compliance and hopes to avoid confrontation at all costs. This kind of communicator does very little, doesn't talk much doesn't question anyone. They just don't want to stir things up because they believe it is better to sit down and be quiet than to say something and be noticed.

These communication styles can directly relate to the three coaching styles.

Obviously, the aggressive communication style is similar to the command coaching style. The assertive communication style is similar to the cooperative coaching style and the passive communication style is similar to the submissive coaching style.

The chart (**Figure 2**) on the following page shows some of the traits and tendencies associated with the three communication styles.

Figure 2

	pitied by others. Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Definition	Communication style in which you put the rights of others before your own, minimizing your own self worth	Communication style in which you stand up for your rights while maintaining respect for the rights of others	Communication style in which you stand up for your rights but you violate the rights of others
Implications to Others	my feelings are not important I don't matter I think I'm inferior	we are both important we both matter I think we are equal	your feelings are not important you don't matter I think I'm superior
Verbal Styles	apologetic overly soft or tentative voice	I statements firm voice	you statements loud voice
Non-Verbal Styles	looking down or away sloped posture, excessive head nodding	looking direct relaxed posture, smooth and relaxed movements	staring, narrow eyes tense, clenched fists, rigid posture, pointing fingers
Potential Consequences	lowered self esteem anger at self false feelings of inferiority disrespect from others	higher self esteem self respect respect from others respect of others	guilt anger from others lowered self esteem disrespect from others feared by others

Heffner (1997)

Coaching Philosophies

Martens (2004 pg. 6), suggests that a coaching philosophy consists of major objectives (the things you value and want to achieve) and your beliefs or principles that help you achieve your objectives. A common emphasis in most effective philosophies is more on personal growth, teamwork and learning as opposed to winning.

Coach Mike Krzyzewski of Duke University is a strong advocate of not overemphasizing winning and making it a part of your philosophy. "Never set a goal that involves number of wins, never. Set goals that revolve around playing together as a team. Doing so will put you in a position to win every game." (2001 p. 64)

Most coaches use good ideas, other philosophies, discipline techniques, motivational strategies and other information from those that coached them and use that as the groundwork for their own personal coaching philosophy.

The following are some of the thought-out and implemented philosophies of collegiate and professional basketball coaches.

**Mike Krzyzewski, Head Coach, Men's Basketball
Duke University Blue Devils**

"When it comes to my philosophy surrounding teamwork, I have a simple, straightforward saying that I pass on to anyone who will listen: Two are better than one if two act as one. And if you believe that two acting as one are better than one, just imagine what an entire team acting as one can do." (2001 p. 83)

Coach K's on the court and off the court philosophy has been centered on teamwork and responsibility for each other since he began his coaching career.

Krzyzewski (2001 p. 82) illustrates his team philosophy in a short story:

"Suppose several kids on our basketball team are at a party at two o'clock in the morning on a Saturday night. Suppose there's some drinking and all of a sudden some drugs come out. Maybe one of the kids has a moment of weakness and is tempted. But if the others notice what's going on (and they should if they're a true team), they can be strong for their friend and

say, 'No that stuff's not for us, let's get out of here.' And even if a kid is alone in a situation like that, just knowing that he's a member of our team will make him stop and think twice because he knows there are others depending on him."

One of Coach K's goals in establishing teamwork is always to get the team believing that they are part of something bigger than themselves and that will ultimately make them a great basketball team.

**Dean Smith, Former Head Coach, Men's Basketball
University of North Carolina Tarheels**

Charles Shaffer, UNC Class of 1964 and former player of Dean Smith, had this to say about Coach Smith's philosophy (2004 p. 80):

. "Coach Smith could coach a game as well as any coach ever, but his ability to teach the game to his players in practice was truly extraordinary... He was patient, thorough and confident, with an uncommon ability to communicate and get his points across, which in turn gave his student-players confidence. Four distinct principles marked Coach Smith's philosophy: defense, physical fitness, the passing game and good shot selection on offense and unselfishness."

Coach Smith's philosophy was centered on teaching to the point of understanding as opposed to teaching to just to perform. In his book, he also points out honesty, integrity, discipline, fairness and caring as some of the important foundations in leadership.

**Phil Jackson, Head Coach
Los Angeles Lakers**

Phil Jackson's philosophy/system centers on the power of awareness and selfless teamwork to achieve success on the court and to cultivate mindfulness in everyday life Jackson coaches and teaches his players with the philosophy of mindful basketball and how its principles can be used to promote a deeper understanding of life. He taught his players to think of themselves as part of a greater whole but also allowed them to be individuals at the same time.

Phil Jackson's philosophy is one of cooperation. Further illustrated by his complex "triangle" offense, his philosophy encourages the team cooperating and working together to accomplish the common goal. Much like the triangle offense, Jackson's philosophy never allowed himself or his team to focus and rely on one part of the team or specific player, it involved full cooperation of the team in order to succeed.

**John Wooden, Former Head Coach, Men's Basketball
University of California, Los Angeles**

The following is John Wooden's clearly thought-out philosophy of coaching as he communicated in a back-to-school letter he sent to his players just before the 1972-73 season:

"For maximum team accomplishment each individual must prepare himself to the best of his ability and then put his talents to work for the team. This must be done unselfishly without thought of personal glory. When no one worries about who will receive the credit, far more can be accomplished in any group activity.

You must discipline yourself to do what is expected of you for the welfare of the team. The coach has many decisions to make and you will not agree with all of them, but you must respect and accept them. Without supervision and leadership and a disciplined effort by all, much of our united strength will be dissipated pulling against ourselves. Let us not be victimized by a breakdown from within.

You may feel, at times, that I have double standards, as I certainly will not treat you all the same. However, I will attempt to give each player the treatment that he earns and deserves according to my judgment and in keeping with what I consider to be in the best interest of the team. I know I will not be right in all of my decisions, but I will attempt to be both right and fair.” (p. 237-238)

Everything that a head coach does is dictated by his personal philosophy. Coaches aren't born with an organized philosophy, but it can be built from the ground up over years of experience. Some of these experiences come from the coaches that he played for in high school, college and maybe professionally.

Professional and Collegiate Coaching Themes

In the world of coaching, whether basketball or not, most coaching philosophies focus on the same underlying themes. Depending on the coach and his particular style, one or more of these themes may be emphasized in a philosophy. Horwood (1997) illustrates this by saying, "Though there are probably as many philosophies as there are coaches, all are steeped in basic truths and verities that affect the success of the coach and his program." The following are some of these basic themes of coaching that can be found within any coach's basketball philosophy, professional or collegiate.

✓Trust

"In my opinion, the "T" in the word team has to stand for trust. When I ask a player to do something on or off the court, I have to trust that they will get it done."

—Coach Z of a Division I collegiate basketball team

✓Teamwork

"When a team is working well together, when the members are clinched tight like a fist, a moment of weakness by any individual will be compensated for by the rest of the group. When one finger is weak, the other four stay firm and hold the weak link tight. And I'm not talking about only when you're in competitive situation, I'm talking about all situations." —Coach K (2001 p. 82)

✓Motivation

“If you understand what your athletes’ needs are, and you are able to help them fulfill those needs, you possess the key to their motivation.” Martens R. (1987 p.121).
Motivation can be defined as getting people to do things that they would normally not do. An example of this might be getting a player to wake up early on an off day and lift weights or go running. Most argue that motivation and coaching go hand-in-hand and also agree that being a great motivator can only boost your success as a coach.

✓Leadership

“I believe it’s accurate to say that the most effective leaders have these things in common: the talent to create a sound strategy for their teams or businesses; knowledge of the importance of recruiting good people who wish to improve their personal skills and believe in the companies’ or teams’ philosophy; understanding that whether they like it or not, they lead by example; belief in the importance of being light enough on their feet to adapt to changing conditions; and take responsibility for their failures.” –Dean Smith (2002 p. 4)

Coach Mike Krzyzewski relates leadership to basketball:

“Leadership, like basketball is a game of adjustments. If a leader is too structured, he’ll be unable to adjust quickly, unable to seize the moment with decisiveness and creativity.” (2001 p. 173)

Vince Lombardi was once quoted as saying that leadership is not an inborn quality; rather it is a learned skill. The personality of the coach is responsible for whether the athletes accept the coach as their leader.

✓Encouragement

Pat Sullivan, UNC Class of 1995 and member of the 1993 NCAA championship UNC team, had this to say about Coach Dean Smith's attitude toward encouraging his players:

“Standing for a teammate was Coach Smith's way of showing a player that his work was appreciated. It made the player feel important and appreciated. I was a role player at North Carolina. SportsCenter didn't make players like me feel good, but Coach Smith did. We didn't make ESPN's highlight reel, but in our team meetings Coach Smith went out of his way to praise us for setting good screens, making good passes to the post or helping teammates on defense. He recognized the little things we did to help the team.”

Holbrook & Barr (1997), state that enthusiasm is an integral part of any happy, successful life and certainly is an essential quality for any athletic coach. A coach must always stay enthusiastic about his team and players. An essential quality of a coach is the ability to convince his players that they are making a difference as individuals. Horwood (1997) suggests that enthusiasm is more important than technical knowledge and is the single most important part of coaching.

✓Discipline

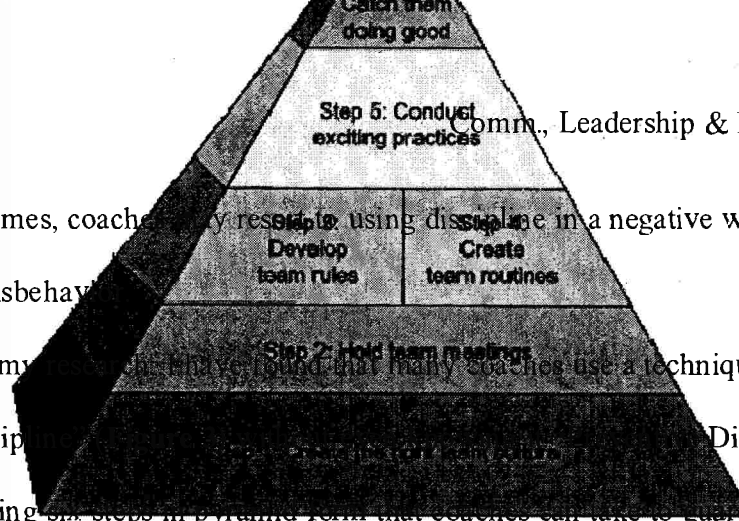
To most of us, the word discipline implies something negative or a punishment. If you make a mistake, you get yelled at, punished or disciplined. To most coaches however, the word discipline means something else. According to Martens (2004 p. 143), discipline as coaches look at it should be a three step process; Instruction, Training and

Correction. At times, coaches may resort to using discipline in a negative way when confronted by misbehavior.

Through my research, I have found that many coaches use a technique called "Preventive Discipline." Preventive Discipline is a technique involving six steps in pyramid form that coaches can take to guard themselves and their team against disciplinary problems that may arise.

*Adapted from Martens, R. (1987) Coaches guide to sport psychology
Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers (p. 146)*

Figure 3
The six steps of
Preventive discipline.



Adapted from Martens, R. (1987) Coaches guide to sport psychology.
Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers (p. 146)

Players and Coaches: Relationships & Perspectives

Wang, Chen and Ji (2004), state that In collegiate athletic programs, coaches and athletes have to closely work together to achieve common goals as athletes are the people who play the games and score the points; yet, coaches' game plans and team strategies also need to be implemented by the athletes. In the world of professional and college basketball, the relationships between coaches and players have changed over the years.

A former professional athlete recalls his experience as a professional and collegian:

“When I was a player in college, my coach not only told me what to do on the floor (court), but he advised me in life as well. I was like I worked closely with him as a ball player and as a person. Nowadays, it's almost the same with college players but in the pros, you couldn't tell a player to tie his shoelaces off the court.”

Sean Deveney (2003) says this about the college basketball coaching compared to professional basketball coaching:

“Their jobs, too, involve personal forays into players' personal lives, and those can be even more difficult. If a college player is in danger of flunking out and has nothing to fall back on, that situation is more important than dealing with a multimillionaire who is pouting because he wants a contract extension. The point is not whether one is more difficult than the other – just that the two levels have become so vastly different in terms of the type of communication needed.”

Tangled in all the dealing between players and coaches is the true role of the head coach. Some have offered that the coach is there to serve as a teacher. Many believe his role is primarily the director, making the analogy of a conductor in an orchestra. While the musicians are the one playing the instruments, it is the conductor that tells them when to play. Others argue that one of the coach's main responsibilities is to serve as a second

father figure to his players. A professional coach once said, “I don’t care what they do off the court, as long as they show up to practice and play their hearts out in the game.”

Chelladurai (1984b) classifies leadership as “the behavioral process of influencing individuals and groups toward set goals, is interpersonal in nature, entails a high degree of direct interaction with the athletes, and bears directly on the motivation of the team members.” (p. 329)

A Coach’s Role

The role of the coach on an athletic team is something that has long been a debate in the world of sports. According to Coach Z of an NCAA Division I basketball team, “It is impossible to define the role of a coach on a team because that role changes time to time depending on what the team needs.” While some agree with this coach, I on the other hand believe the role of a coach can absolutely be defined. Many coaches college and professional coaches have made their own definitions, some of which are similar and some completely opposite.

Pete Carril (1997 p. 25) notes that: “A coach’s job is to put his team where it can function effectively and win...His other main job is to make each player better than the man he is playing against.” While Duke University Coach Mike Krzyzewski (2001 p. 184) states that a leader’s job is to remove any obstacle that can negatively impact his team’s performance. Coach K is saying that the responsibility of the team’s performance lies within the leadership of the team as opposed to the coach himself.

Assistant Coach X of an NBA team stated that the environment of the coach plays a big part in determining his role on the team. “Sometimes you need to be creative, sometimes you need to be the enforcer, sometimes you need to be a friend and most times

you simply need to teach.” Coach Z of an NCAA Division I basketball team agrees saying that “the role of a coach is an ever-changing thing; It depends on your philosophy and the beliefs you’ve instilled in your team.”

Relationships

The relationship between a coach and his players is vital to a team’s success in reaching their goals. These relationships can differ depending on what kind of communication style the coach has implemented.

The command-style coach will not have the type of relationship with his players that include much give but no take. His players will most likely fear him and as a result, there will be no communication from the player to the coach. The command-style coach is seen primarily as a disciplinary figure rather than a teacher and nurturer.

The cooperative-style coach has beneficial relationships with his players because he is a people-oriented person and relies on a mutual communication to be successful. He encourages active and positive communication between members of his team and is seen more as a mentor and teacher. He is more likely to communicate with his players in a more relaxed and friendly manner. Holbrook and Barr (1997 p. 203), noted that “The coach who uses this approach must be certain that he does not forget, and that the players do not forget, that he is the ultimate authority—the boss.”

The ultimate result in this type of communication style is not only reaching your team goal, but making a lasting personal connection between player and coach. Coach Dean Smith (2002 p. 64) describes his relationship with his players as a family type saying, “The relationship I had with my players while they were at Carolina led me to

stay in touch with them after they left. It wasn't something I planned; it just evolved over the years." When former NBA player Michael Jordan spoke of his former Coach, Dean Smith, when he was at North Carolina, he often referred to him as his "second father," having taught him not only the game, but lessons about life.

Through my research, I've found that the one problem many coaches face when building relationships with their players is losing respect for their authority somewhere in the process. This usually happens when the coach becomes more of a friend than a teacher and mentor. Professional and collegiate coaches, past and present, offer solutions and advice to remedy this situation. In his book "Leading with the Heart", Duke University Head Coach Mike Krzyzewski (2001 p. 49) addresses this issue and sums up the advice of other professional and collegiate coaches by saying, "Leaders instill respect for authority by having a caring attitude, by being direct, by communicating regularly and by being honest." He then goes on to state that the reason most coaches lose their authority is because somewhere along the way to building relationships, they forgot to do one of the above mentioned characteristics.

Player Perspectives: The Ideal Coach

“When I played ball, I played for not only my team and myself but most of all, for my coach. Every time I stepped on the court, I wanted him to know I was doing my best and playing my heart out.” –A Former NBA player and All-Star

Because basketball is a sport in which player and coach interaction is a major aspect of the game, players and coaches must have the ability to get along. In order to gain a player perspective on the ideal coach from a college player’s point of view, I conducted six interviews with players from a division I basketball program. The following bullets are the views and perspectives regarding the “ideal coach,” from those six collegiate basketball players.

- He should be available and approachable to all of his players
- He should show his players the same respect that he demands.
- He should be open to different ideas and viewpoints.
- He should be a strong leader. He should be firm, but fair.
- He should be sensitive to each individual’s different problems
- He should be able to relax and have fun sometimes
- He should be fair and not play favorites with his attention

In order to gain a player perspective on the ideal coach from a professional player’s point of view, I conducted six interviews with players from a professional basketball team. The following bullets are the views and perspectives regarding the “ideal coach,” from six professional basketball players.

- He should be available and approachable to all of his players

-He should show his players the same respect that he demands.

-He should be able to recognize and reward individual efforts.

-He should be fair with playing time.

-He should allow players to exploit individual talent.

-He should be know when and when not to get involved on a personal level.

Expecting varied responses to the overall “ideal coach” question, I was surprised to observe much consistency in the answers I received from the professional and collegiate players.

Coaches Perspectives: The Ideal Player

“Coaching is never easy. Not only can you *not* control the outcome of the game, sometimes you can’t control the players either. The players as individuals directly affect the overall team performance.” -Coach Z, of an NCAA Division I College Basketball Team

Coaches create a game-plan and players play the game. The outcome of the game is directly affected by a player’s ability to listen and understand his coach in all situations. In order to gain a perspective on the ideal player, I conducted four interviews with assistant coaches and head coaches from collegiate and professional basketball teams.

The following bullets are the combined views and perspectives regarding the “ideal player,” from two assistant coaches from an NCAA Division I basketball team, an assistant coach from a professional basketball team and a head coach from an NCAA Division III basketball team.

- Players should understand that there is only one coach
- Players should trust the coach with their problems
- Players should trust the coach to make the right decisions
- Players should accept discipline and show respect to the coach and other players
- Players should give their best efforts and demand that of their teammates
- Players should understand that criticism is a part of the learning process

These coaches also agreed that the most important characteristics that must be dominant in a player to make him the “ideal player” are his love for the game and his willingness to learn.

CHAPTER III

Research & Methodology

As a result of this study, the author will note those characteristics, styles and actions that differentiate professional coaches and collegiate coaches. The author will also analyze the distinct differences and offer explanations of why they are effective for the particular environment that coach is in. I will accomplish the above mentioned tasks by utilizing literature review, expert interviews and observations.

Expert Interviews

Expert interviews will be utilized to obtain primary knowledge from professionals in the appropriate fields in the world of coaching. These professionals have years of experience and bring much validity to the subject of coaching. I will ask questions surrounding or pertaining to their particular style of coaching and their views on the coaching profession and its evolution. The interviews will provide in-depth information and up-to-date coaching techniques and styles used by many coaches, professional and collegiate.

Lawrence Frank

Head Coach, New Jersey Nets

CAREER COACHING

YEAR	TEAM	REGULAR SEASON			POST SEASON		
		WINS	LOSSES	PCT	WINS	LOSSES	PCT
2004	New Jersey	25	15	.625	7	4	.636
2005	New Jersey	42	40	.512	0	4	.000
TOTALS		76	65	.539	7	8	.467

Frank became the Interim Head Coach of the New Jersey Nets on January 26, 2004 after serving as an assistant coach with the team since the 2000-01 season. Frank spent three seasons as an assistant coach for the Vancouver Grizzlies under Bill Hamel. Frank's responsibilities with the Grizzlies included scouting upcoming opponents as well as practice and bench coaching duties.

Prior to joining the Grizzlies, Frank served as an assistant coach at the University of Tennessee for three seasons under Head Coach Kevin O'Neill. Frank first worked with O'Neill as a staff assistant at Marquette in 1992 and during his tenure, helped lead the Marquette Warriors to two NCAA tournament berths and a Sweet Sixteen appearance in 1994.

Frank earned his B.S. in education from Indiana University in 1992, where he spent four seasons as a manager for the Hoosier basketball team led by Bob Knight. He also holds an M.S. in education administration from Marquette.

2004	New Jersey	42	40	.512	0	4	.000
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ohn Morton

Assistant Coach, Seton Hall University Pirates

John Morton, one of the great players in Seton Hall basketball history was a four-year starter for the Pirates from 1985-89 and scored 1,621 points in 131 games. He averaged 12.8 points in 1987-88 while helping lead Seton Hall to its first NCAA Tournament berth, then led the team in scoring with a 17.3 average in 1988-89 during Seton Hall's memorable run to the national championship game. He went on to win the Haggerty Award as the top player in the metropolitan area. In the overtime loss to Michigan in the title game, Morton poured in 35 points. He currently ranks 11th all-time at Seton Hall in career points.

Following his collegiate career, Morton was selected in the first round of the NBA draft by the Cleveland Cavaliers. He played for Cleveland for two seasons, and then spent a year with the Miami Heat. In three NBA seasons, he averaged 4.8 points per game. Morton played a year with the Rapid City Thrillers of the CBA before playing professionally in Spain from 1993-1999.

While in Spain, Morton enjoyed a tremendous stint, leading the prestigious ACB League in scoring in consecutive years with a 26.0 average one season and 23.5 the next, finishing in the top three in the league four out of six years. He was a five-time All-Star. Morton also played professionally in the Philippines, scoring 50 points in his first game in the league.

Morton has spent the last three years as a part of the Seton Hall University Men's Basketball Program and has had a positive impact on the many players that he has worked with through the years. His experience brings him credibility among the players he coaches and allows him to relate to the players from their point of view. He describes himself as the player's coach and holds strong to his coaching values and philosophies.

Player Interviews

Player interviews will be utilized to obtain knowledge and data for the literature review. The information gained as a result of these player interviews will provide a first hand account and inside perspective from the players pertaining to their coaches and the interaction they have with their coaches. These interviews will be conducted with both collegiate and professional basketball players.

Procedure

The participants were interviewed using an in-depth interview. The interview consisted of a variety of questions that asked coaches to describe their coaching style and then describe the impact it had in developing their players, cohesion and unity for the team. Questions were asked to provide specific examples from the respondents about the impact of their coaching behaviors and strategies. The answers to these questions were the primary focus of the following analysis. Once the interviews were completed, the interviews were transcribed and then analyzed.

CHAPTER IV

Review of Purpose

As I stated in Chapter III, I used a thorough literature review, expert interviews and observation to provide an answer to my research question. Before providing the results and analysis of those interviews and observations, here is an overview of the purpose of this study as well as the research question.

The purpose of this study is to identify the differences in leadership and communication between a college coach and a professional coach and furthermore, to pinpoint those styles and techniques that are more effective in reaching team goals.

The following are the results of two interviews taken to gain actual expert knowledge of the subject matter as well as notes taken via observation in practice sessions with both coaches and their teams. I was very fortunate to have started this project as an intern with the New Jersey Nets and as a result, I was able to sit in on a practice session with the team from start to finish as a contribution to this thesis project.

The observation sessions served primarily as a way to see communication, leadership and coaching as they are used in real practice.

Expert Interview

Sample #1

Q: Do you have a coaching philosophy and if so, what is it?

A: One of the things I emphasize the most with my guys is defense. Anyone can score a basket but the key is how well you can stop someone else from doing that. Overall my coaching style and philosophy encourages my guys to play hard. If there is one quality that I try on a daily basis to instill in my players, it's hard work. If you can go out on the court, play for 30 plus minutes and come back to the bench knowing and feeling like you gave it your all, then I'm happy with your performance. While I do care about winning and feel that it is important for team morale and after all, that is the reason we play and get paid to play, I want my players to play each game to the best of their ability.

Q: What is the main difference between collegiate and professional coaching?

A: I think there are lots of differences between the two. I mean, at this level (professional) you have a primary objective – to win games. Day in and day out, that's what's expected of you at this level. Whether you're a professional coach or player, the higher-ups in the team organization expect you to produce results. Coaching basketball is my job, playing basketball is a job. And when you have a job, you're expected to do your job no matter what or you may lose that job. At the college level however, there is an understanding that the player is not just there to play basketball. I commend the many college coaches today. As an assistant coach under Kevin O'Neill and working with Bobby Knight, I experienced coaching on the college level. College coaching is different from professional coaching in that winning is not the primary objective. The emphasis is

put on player development. Not only do coaches try to turn an ordinary player into a stand-out athlete, but they also try to better that player as a person as well.

Q: What are the values you hold most important when it comes to coaching?

A: There are plenty of values that are important to me when I'm coaching. I think maybe they're all centered on respect. I find that if my guys respect me and I respect them, we get more accomplished as a team. I love the idea of accountability. I respect my players enough to know that when I ask them to do something, they do it out of that same respect for me.

Q: What do you think are the characteristics of the "Ideal Coach?"

A: The ideal coach is a person who's available to his players. He has the respect and attention of his players as well as gives them the same. On the court, he's fearless and has a passion for the game. I think the most important characteristic, on and off the court, is that he's a great communicator. Lots of times in this league (NBA), you come across a player and coach who are feuding with each other and more often than not, it's because of a lack of communication or a misunderstanding. The ideal coach is someone who can relate to his players and allow them to be themselves while executing your game plan.

Also, the ideal coach will have a vision for his team. I think having a vision is something that will take you a long way in the pros. You have to know what you want to do out there and how to make your team buy into it. He has to be the leader of his team in more ways than just telling them what to do on the basketball court. With that said, I think the last trait of the ideal coach is his motivational skills. If you can get a player excited about

the game and excited about going out there and hustling his behind for you every night, then you're doing something right as a coach and mentor.

Q: What do you think are the characteristics of your ideal player?

A: My ideal player is that guy that goes out on the floor and gives me every thing he's got. If a play a guy 15 minutes and for those 15 minutes he gives me his very best, he is the epitome of my ideal player. My ideal player is someone who wants to play, loves the game, is coachable and never gives up on the team or his teammates.

Nowadays, many players are just about how many points they can score or what their stats are on a particular night. My ideal player plays to his maximum potential no matter what the circumstances.

Q: What kind of reaction do you have when a player has a personal dilemma?

A: I think when a player has a personal situation that they're dealing with, I try my best to be there for them and make them feel like they can talk to me or any member of my coaching staff. I believe that sometimes, these professional athletes are dealing with a lot and as a coach, the head coach at that, it's kind of my responsibility to be there and offer my advice or help if needed. I don't necessarily hang out with the players or try to be their best friend but as the man they see all the time, sometimes more than their families; I try to support them as best I can.

Q: Is the reaction similar in a collegiate setting?

A: College is a whole different ballpark in terms of personal problem. I've been there and it's something that you have to take very seriously as a head coach on a college

team. As I mentioned before as a professional you try to be there for your players and support them but as a coach on the college level, it's your responsibility to deal with your players on and off the court. You have to be sensitive to their needs and struggles. More on a college level than on a professional level, you share in the responsibility of turning these guys into men and leaving them with a lasting impression. When guys come to you on a professional team, you don't have the time to be following them around with a tissue wiping their tears. They should be mature enough to handle their own affairs. These guys have wives and kids. As a coach on the college level, it's your job to prepare these guys to hold their own whether they make it to the pros or just go out into the world on their own.

Q: Are there challenges professional coaches are faced with now that didn't exist in the past?

A: I don't even know where to start with this question. Obviously if you look at pictures from the past and records of the past, you'll see where the major differences are. I mean, look at the increase in the popularity of the sport. As the sport becomes more and more popular, it attracts talent from many places. I think one of the major problems that coaches today are faced with is unsatisfied and disgruntled players. If a player shows up at your desk one day unhappy with his playing time, or his contract or his teammates, it becomes a very complex situation. As salary caps increase, you are bound to get those players who believe their worth is more than that of any other player on the team. You're also bound to get that player that is unhappy with his playing time or feels like he should be starting over another player. The hard thing is keeping your team happy. If one player is disgruntled, all it takes is him opening his mouth and then it can spread like

wildfire. Keeping your team happy involves being able to keep each player happy individually. A way to do that is to recognize these players individually and reward them when necessary.

Q: Do you think environment plays a role in player/coach interaction?

A: Yes.

Q: Why?

A: I think the best way to answer this question is to give you a sample situation. On a professional level, when I see one of my players walk into the gym, I saw “hey, how’s it going, how are the wife and kids.” In a college setting, when a coach sees his player, he automatically wants to know if he’s being a good student-athlete. He wants to know and needs to know that you’re going to your classes and handling your personal struggles comfortably. The environment changes the type of communication you have to use with your players. As an NBA coach, I find that the best way to interact with my players is to talk to them and let them talk to me. Open communication is often what’s best with professional athletes. I communicate what needs to be done and how I would like to do it and in turn they tell me what issues they have and offer suggestions. You have to respect their autonomy and allow them to make decisions on their own. On the college level, as I said before, you have to do a little more force feeding. You might have to tell them what you want, how you want it done and that’s it. Because of their maturity level, you may have to be more of a nurturer and parent figure, whereas on a professional level, you’ll rarely if ever play the “parent” role.

Expert Interview

Sample #2

Q: Do you have a coaching philosophy and if so, what is it?

A: Well one of my coaching philosophies is to go out there and out work the following team. You do that by preparing the day, the week, the year before. You put the time in the gym, executing and doing everything to prepare yourself for the challenge of the upcoming year. So it doesn't start the day before, it starts the year before.

Q: What is the main difference between collegiate and professional coaching?

A: I think the main difference is that at the college level, you have to teach more. Guys are coming straight from high school and many high schools today are not teaching the kids how to play basketball. They are just letting them freelance and do whatever they want. Then when they arrive on the college level, it's like you have to break them down and teach them the process of playing the game of basketball all over again. On the professional level, hopefully at that stage they're young men, they've learned much throughout their college years and are prepared for the professional level. Guys should be at their most advanced stage when entering the professional level.

Q: What are the values you hold most important when it comes to coaching?

A: One value that I definitely learned from Coach Lenny Wilkins back in the days was respect. Treat players and treat everyone with respect, the same respect that you would have them treat you with. That goes a long way in the business.

Q: What do you think are the characteristics of the “Ideal Coach?”

A: I believe the ideal coach is nowadays called, “a player’s coach.” That means that guys just love to play for you so they’ll go out and just leave it on the court and do whatever it takes to win a game for you. There has to be a balance when you’re a player’s coach. On one hand, you want the guys to believe in you and go out there and fight for you. But on the other hand, you don’t want them to think of you as an authoritative figure. You want to be there for them, show them that respect and you want them to give you that respect back. At the same time, you have to be an authority figure and let them know that “hey, I’m in charge, this is the way I want to do it, this is how we’re going to do it. I respect you guys so go out there; play hard and you will be rewarded.” It’s a give and take situation but at the same time you have to give them that respect and they definitely have to respect the authority of your position.

Q: What do you think are the characteristics of your ideal player?

A: My ideal player is a person that we call a coach’s player. That’s the kind of guy that can maybe go out and play different positions but do everything that the coach asks him to do and probably try to do even more. At the same time, he’s a guy that’s liked by his teammates. Again, that’s where respect comes in. He has to have the respect of his teammates to be that ultimate player. So the ultimate player will have the respect of his coaching staff, teammates and peers.

Q: What kind of reaction do you have when a player has a person dilemma?

A: That’s a tough situation but something that comes along every now and then on a team. When you assume the responsibility of bringing this guy to the university and even

more so onto your team, you owe him the responsibility of making sure everything is ok on the athletic stage as well as the personal stage. You definitely would like to give young guys advice on and off the court. You also have to involve that player's family. As a coach, I try to give my players a sense of unity between the coaching staff, teammates and their families. That way, the player can get advice from me as well as those around him and handle the problem head on.

Q: Is the reaction similar in a professional setting?

A: On the professional level is the highest level of the business of basketball. In the business, the top man (head coach) might not have time to worry about personal problems. I think at that level players should be more advanced. Hopefully they went through four years of college and learned how to deal with life on a more advanced level. You're paid to play on a professional level. You should be at that point where you're being paid at your profession now so all your responsibilities fall upon you. There's no one calling you for a wake up call, there's no one giving you information or checking up on you. It's "here, do this or do that." If you do it, you're ok. If you don't do it, you might lose your job. I think the responsibility on that level is taken more highly than in college where everyone still pampers you and does things for you. In the pros, you have to handle your own affairs. Though I may share my emotions with you and feel for a situation you're going through, it's not my main responsibility as head coach to jump on it and stay on top of it like I would a college student.

Q: Are there challenges collegiate coaches are faced with now that didn't exist in the past?

A: I think there are a lot of changes in that the world of basketball continuously evolves. Basketball is recognized globally as one of the most popular sports. The NBA and other professional leagues have attracted players globally to go to colleges and universities because these players see school as the first step to the professional level. College coaches are faced with the difficult task of getting these guys into school and keeping them in school. It becomes more of a process of recruiting players that can be more helpful to your program as opposed to someone who's going to come around for one year and then you're out repeating the process over again. I think a big issue coaches are faced with today is that kids today are more spoiled than in the past. In the past, guys had to work for everything they had; today they want everything handed to them. In order to correct that, we have to take away some of those things so they can better prepare themselves as men going into the real world. Things are a little different when you graduate from school and you have to be out there by yourself. I think that's one of the key roles in college coach criteria. You have to be able to build this young boy into a young man and send him out into the world. You have to prepare him by being hard on him and just staying on him and after him. I think that's where college coaching has a more of a challenge nowadays of dealing with the young men that we have coming to us.

Q: Do you think environment plays a role in player/coach interaction?

A: Yes.

Q: Why?

A: If you grab a kid that wasn't in a great environment growing up and he's coming to a program that might be in a new city he's not used to being in, the whole process is a trying process. He has to deal with a new authority figure that he's not used to and maybe didn't have before. It takes time and good communication to overcome this obstacle. There are some coaches that are forceful, aggressive and loud. In my experience, those are the kinds of coaches that kids don't react well to. Rarely do you see that kind of program prosper on the college setting because kids are not mature enough to handle that kind of communication. You have to come at them with a more laid back approach. On the professional stage, it is totally different. You have a job to do and you have to do it whether the coach is your best friend or worst enemy.

Recap

The following are the key points from my interview with Sample 1, New Jersey Nets Head Coach Lawrence Frank

- His coaching philosophy emphasizes hard work. He cares about winning but mostly encourages his players to play to their best ability.
- He believes that the difference between collegiate and professional coaching is that professional coaches have to win games, while college coaches are responsible for player development and character development
- He says that respect is the one value he holds most important when it comes to coaching. He feels that if he has the respect of his team and they respect him, the team will accomplish many goals.
- His idea of the ideal coach involves the following: availability, passion for the game, fearless on the court a great communicator, has a vision for his team and is a great motivator.
- His ideal player is one that plays hard all the time, listens and is coachable.
- In the case of a player that is dealing with a personal problem, he feels it is responsibility to be available to that player and support them as best he can. He also believes that on the collegiate level, it is the head coach's responsibility to deal with your players' problems on and off the court. He says that college coaches are also responsible for preparing their players for life after basketball.
- He believes that one of the problems coaches are faced with now is dealing with disgruntled players. He sees the difficult part as keeping the team happy with those players on it at the same time.

- He encourages open communication among his players and says that college coaches have to be more a parental figure.

The following are the key points from my interview with Sample 2, Seton Hall University Assistant Coach John Morton.

- His coaching philosophy is to be prepared in advance. For no matter what the challenge, his key is to be ready in order to out work the other team.
- He believes that at the college level, coaches have to team more as opposed to the professional level where players should be prepared for that level.
- He holds respect as the most important value when it comes to coaching.
- His idea of the ideal coach is a coach that guys believe in and will do whatever it takes for. One that shows the same respect to his players that he asks for himself.
- His ideal player is one who brings a lot to the team. One who listens and does everything coach asks of him. He will have the respect of the coaching staff and his teammates.
- In the case of a player with a personal problem, he believes that it is the coach's responsibility to make sure that player is all right on and off the court. He says that professional coaches don't have to stay on top of their player's personal problems because at that level all the responsibility lands on the player.
- He says finding players that can help your program is a problem that college coaches face today. He also said that a big problem was dealing with spoiled

players who are used to having everything given to them and turning them into young men.

- He says the environment plays a part in that a player's background may affect the way they react to the coach.

CHAPTER V



Introduction

When I started this project, my objective was to pinpoint those things that set professional and collegiate coaches apart from one another. In the process I uncovered effective coaching philosophies, techniques and themes. Although they differ in that professional coaches want to win and collegiate coaches want to teach, they are the same in their underlying principles and teachings. Duke University Head Coach Mike Krzyzewski, who has also coached USA Basketball as well as received numerous offers to coach on the NBA level, proposes that “There are five fundamental qualities that make every team great: communication, trust, collective responsibility, caring and pride. I like to think of each as a separate finger on the first. Any one individually is important. But all of them together are unbeatable.” (2001 p. 65)

Conclusion

Most coaches base their philosophy their own on beliefs, values and experience. As their careers go on, they figure out what works and what doesn't work. They learn more about their players; what they respond well to and what they don't. Through my research, I've come to learn that coaching styles continuously change over time. Coaches, professionally and at the collegiate level, must constantly adapt their style, philosophy and communication style to deal with the different players they come in contact with.

Through the literature review, expert interviews and player interviews I have come to some conclusions to answer the research question I posed in the beginning of this paper. The following are the differences in leadership and communication between a professional basketball coach and a collegiate basketball coach.

Leadership –

The leadership of a college coach is that more of a father figure. In the professional ranks, the leadership of the head coach is seen as more of a “boss” or employer role. College coaches have to nurture their players and are responsible for their overall development as a person, not only as a basketball player. They must be able to lead their players on the court, in academia and be able to guide that player into becoming a young man. I have found in the interviews that I conducted that both coaches agreed on the college level being the developing stage. The both said that players should be at a high maturity level when advancing to the professional stage and that is largely in part because of the leadership and guidance of their college coach.

Communication –

In the pros, communication is a key factor in the success of the team. Through the information gained by the player and coach interviews, I have concluded that communication is the biggest factor in player/coach interaction. The coach creates the game plan and the player has to follow it. The professional coach also has to listen to his players and respond to their feedback. A constant in the player and coach interviews is the value of respect. Both coaches and players agree that there has to be a mutual level of respect in the relationship between coach and player for the two to do their jobs. If this is

not done, an unstable environment may arise. On the college level, communication is a big factor, but in a different aspect. My research has shown that coaches must befriend their players and be actively involved in their lives. Communication is more on an interpersonal level in college coaching. It requires coaches to interact with their players in other realms of life other than basketball. While some professional coaches do, it is not their responsibility to dive into their players' personal lives. Furthermore, college coaches have a responsibility to develop their players as young men and prepare them for the world and life after college basketball whether it is a professional league or everyday job.

Coaching Style –

While they do employ some of the same techniques, philosophies and themes, professional and collegiate coaches differ in that professional coaches have a bottom line. That bottom line is to win games. They hold their players accountable for themselves on and off the court while on the collegiate level the team as a whole, as well as the coach, have to hold each other accountable. On the professional level, the coaching style doesn't involve as much teaching as it does on the collegiate level. In the pros, players are expected to perform at their maximum capability because it's their job. Coaches are paid to win games and the athletes are paid to play them. On the college level, coaches are faced with the challenge of creating the complete basketball player.

Through my research, I have concluded that coaching on both levels has boiled down to the following: Professional coaches are paid to win and their players see them as their "boss." They are expected to open to their players but not responsible for any

interaction or communication off the court. On the collegiate level, coaches are seen more as father figures and teachers and are pinned with the responsibility of not only winning but teaching, nurturing and preparing their players for their futures.

The role of the coach changes at each level. At the college level, the focus isn't so much on winning and money, but on player development and character development. On the professional level, the bottom line is to get the victory while player/coach relationships are seen as not necessary.

There is one truth that will remain a constant through the evolution of coaching styles and communication styles in the sport of basketball. That truth is the concept of guidance vs. independence.

Limitations to the Study

As is the case with most research papers, I ran into my share of complications. To the nature of the topic of my paper, I had to deal with the difficulties of getting interviews with coaches. Because of those difficulties, I was only able to get two interviews. My results may or may not have been different if I had a larger number of interviews. Further more I was only able to survey six professional players and six collegiate players. Although the information they provided was useful, it may have been more beneficial to have the complete team perspective as opposed to individual players. I also limited myself to college and professional coaches yet I ran into a surplus of information regarding high school athletics.

Recommendations for Future Research

This project contains useful information that can be used to gain a better understanding of coaching on both the college level and professional level. If someone were to take this study and expand on it, there are a few recommendations I can offer.

First, I would make the study a little broader. I would include high school basketball as a third point next to collegiate and professional. I would use high school basketball as a starting point for understanding player development. I would also create a survey to give to players on all levels in order to get more accurate player perspectives on all aspects of basketball including their coach, individual feelings and experiences. Had time allowed me to, this is something I would have definitely tried to do.

Much research has already been done about the psychological state of the athlete but maybe an area for study would be that of a basketball coach. This study gives a view of the coach's communication, leadership and coaching style. A future study may use this information to do a psychological study on a coach's mind.

Finally, on a more grand scale, I would expand this study to include the leadership, communication and coaching styles of coaches in all sports as opposed to just basketball. Had I more time and resources, this is something I would have definitely liked to see happen. There could potentially be many more coaching styles in sports because of the varying nature of different sports.

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Appendix A

Master's Project Interview Questions

The following are interview questions directly related to the Master's Thesis Project of Matthew G. Rose. The subject of this project is "Differences in Communication & Leadership between Professional and Collegiate Basketball Coaches." Any information gained through this interview will be used solely for the purpose of this project.

The author would like to thank you for your cooperation and participation in this project.

1. Do you have a coaching philosophy and if so, what is it?
2. What is the main difference between collegiate and professional coaching?
3. What are the values you hold most important when it comes to coaching?
4. What do you believe are the roles of players and coaches?
5. What do you believe are the characteristics of an ideal coach?
6. What are the characteristics your ideal player?
7. What kind of reaction do you have when a player has a personal dilemma?
8. Is the reaction similar in a collegiate/professional setting?
9. Are there challenges professional/collegiate coaches are faced with now that didn't exist in the past?
10. Do you think environment plays a role in player/coach interaction?
11. Why?