

Basketball Off-Season Planning and Skill Development

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Philosophy and Introduction

Off-season basketball varies drastically from one school to another. One of the most important aspects of off-season basketball planning and skill development is to know what fits your situation best. Knowing your kids, your gym availability and the use of other coaches in your basketball off-season will maximize your drill time. I believe that our off-season program not only builds skills and improves conditioning, but it DAILY reinforces the culture of “Being Great Today, Having Fun, and Working for Each Other” that we want to build in our athletic and basketball program. I want to break our off-season program into three aspects. In this article, I will be discussing individual offensive drills. In an article to follow, I will focus on what I think is our best off-season section; individual defensive drills and conditioning. Lastly, I will converse over the Whitewright Hoops philosophy on off-season team play via tournaments, shootouts, leagues, and open gym.

Individual Offense and Shooting

Ball Handling

Individual offense is our main focus in our off-season program; especially in the spring. I believe in the Dean Smith philosophy of the off-season being about improving the individuals and in-season being all about the team. We want to keep all of the drills fresh for our players without overlooking the key skills we want to improve on. For example, when we are focusing on ball handling we will alternate between 2 ball drills, tennis ball drills, and cone drills. The focus stays the same but want news drills to emphasize the same skill set. This also gives the opportunity for our players to try and master these drills on their own. Below is a section of our practice plan dedicated to improved ball handling skills:

| | |
|---|---------|
| 2 ball Dribbling-full court | - 4 min |
| Alternate, pound, zig zag, cross over, behind the back, between the legs, retreat | |
| Tennis Ball Bounce | - 3 min |
| Long step when tennis ball bounces- cross over, behind the back, between the legs, double cross, double behind the back | |
| Cone Stack Series | - 5 min |
| Big Cone Series | - 3 min |

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Guard/Post Breakdown

Our guard/post breakdown drills are very specific to the type of offenses we run against man and zone defenses. We want players making game moves at game speed from game spots. This gives the players a familiarity and connection with what we do in practice 1 on 0; then 1 on 1 that will translate to the games.

The guard drills are more advanced for the upperclassmen and scaled back for our underclassmen. For example, we may expect our varsity players to practice a step-back jump shot and floater, while we focus on pull up jump shots and layups for the sub-varsity athletes. Once they have shown a mastery of our pull up jump shot form and power layup then they will begin more advanced guard drills.

The post drills are very fundamentally based. We want them to know these drills by heart by the time we get to Christmas. After Christmas, we modify each of our post drills to fit the skill set of each player to keep it fresh and more specific for each player. Below is a drill and time breakdown of our individual guard and post segments:

Guards:

Ball Spin Series - 6 min

*Inside Pivot, Inside Pivot direct drive, Inside Pivot cross over step, Inside Pivot shot

*Pro Pivot direct drive, Pro Pivot crossover step, Pro Pivot shot

4 second Rips - 3 min

*One defender pressures the ball for 4 seconds.

*The offensive player uses strong pivots and drives to the basket to beat the pressure

Dummy Dribble Weapons (vs. no defense) - 5 min

*hesitate, hesitate & cross over, in & out, in & out cross over, double cross over

Live Dribble Weapons (vs. 1 defender) - 5 min

*use the moves from Dummy Dribble Weapons to beat a defender 1 on 1

Posts-All drills are done with a partner

Wall catches -2 min

Power Dribble/Power Fake - 1 min

Lane Slide & Chin Drill - 2 min

POGO shooting - 2 min

10 inside shots - 3 min

Hi/Low Positioning Drill - 2 min

7 post moves - 8 min

1. Power dribble half hook 2. Power dribble up & under 3. Turnaround jumper

4. Reverse pivot –power dribble finish 5. Reverse pivot-counter 6. Face-up jumper

7. face-up pump fake and go

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Conclusion

The individual skill development section of our off-season program (especially in the Spring) can be invaluable to your basketball programs. The drills and plans that were previously discussed are to fun and to challenge our players in a way that they will work on these during on their own time. Remember, each drill you do needs to have carryover into what you do offensively. For instance, if you run primarily ball screens, then you would want to work on individual offensive drills that highlight that portion of your offense. Everything we work on has a purpose. If we plan and practice with purpose, our players will buy into our culture and team. Later articles will view the two other segments of our off-season program; individual defense/conditioning and team play.