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Today's Topic

Welcome back to the Coach's Corner!

One of the oldest 'cliché' sayings in sports is: Practice Makes Perfect!

I hate to be the person to break it to you, but this just simply isn't true. A much more accurate saying would be: Practice Makes Permanent! You can practice mindlessly for hours on end, but if you aren't practicing proper technique, effective strategies,

and preparing for what you will do during a competition, you aren't perfecting anything except bad habits.

I say this because one of the biggest mistakes we see in sports is ineffective practice. And this can mean a number of different things. Whether we are spending too much time practicing things that aren't applicable to game situations, or we are simply wasting time doing drills just to fill time and keep kids at practice for longer than necessary. Either way, we aren't getting the most out of our practices.

No matter what sport or level we are coaching, we want to use our practice time as effectively as possible because that time is quite limited in most situations. The entire purpose of practice is to prepare to perform come game time. We don't want to spend all of our time practicing just to practice, right?

Most coaches understand this and do their best to create practice plans that prepare their teams for upcoming opponents, but there are still some places that we fall short. I want to cover this topic of Quality over Quantity to give coaches as many tools as possible to devise effective practice routines and put their athletes in the best positions possible to show up and show out when it's game time.

The ultimate goal with practice should be to get as much QUALITY work in, in as little time as possible. Having a 4 hour practice doesn't automatically guarantee that we improved more than a team that only had a 2 hour practice. The quality of the work we are doing is far more important than the amount of work we are doing.

As coaches or athletes, most of us have had a bad experience with practice, where it felt like we just wasted a few hours of our lives and didn't get anything effective done. My own practice horror story came during my Sophomore year of college baseball... We had a 6 HOUR PRACTICE where we didn't touch a single baseball, bat, or glove. There was absolutely no way those 6 hours made me a better baseball player. All it did was make me resent my coaches, make me extremely tired and sore, and make me fear what practice was going to look like tomorrow.

With all this in mind, I hope in this newsletter I can provide you with some strategies you can use when creating your own practice plans to make sure they are as effective as possible and prepare your athletes to perform at their best.

How Can I Apply This?

As per usual, I want to present you with a few different topics to take into consideration when designing your practice plans. These won't encapsulate every aspect of your practices and these tips aren't the only correct way. But, hopefully they will lead you down the right path in creating the best practices you can.

1. Have a 'WHY' Behind What You're Doing

This concept of having a 'WHY' probably sounds familiar at this point because it has been involved in just about every installment of this newsletter so far. There is a reason for it, though... IT'S IMPORTANT!

Having a reason for what you're doing not only ensures that the practice is applicable to in-game performance, but it also allows your athletes to see the reason for doing a drill that they may not enjoy. If you can explain to your athletes exactly WHY you are doing something, then it is most likely an effective drill or practice.

When we are setting up what we want to do at practice each and every day, we want to make sure we are wasting as little time as possible and doing things that apply directly to the upcoming competition we are preparing for. This means implementing drills that correlate exactly to what our athletes will be doing during the game.

The idea of creating 'game-like scenarios' in practice isn't a new concept, but it can be used in more ways than we often realize. Scrimmages are often looked at as the 'realist' feeling practice we can get, and that's very true. But we can also

design our other 'skill-specific' drills to be as close to 'game-like' as possible. Emulating the way an opponent will defend us, or recreating the environment of an away game are different ways that we can make things feel as 'game-like' as possible.

Maybe you're a football coach and your team runs a high-tempo, no-huddle offense. You'd better be practicing at a high tempo and working on that conditioning that you are going to need to keep that pace up for the entirety of a game.

Along with creating 'game-like' situations for our athletes, we also want to make sure that we are never doing a drill just to do it or just to fill time. When these types of drills make their way into our practices, this is where we are likely to see athletes slacking off, or not taking it seriously. Not only is this wasting the precious practice time you have, but we all know the saying... 'You practice how you play.' If you are slacking in practice, you are likely to slack off during games.

Make sure that every single aspect of your practice has a reason behind it and helps prepare your athletes for their upcoming competitions!

2. **Practice to Perform**

As we've discussed already, the whole point of practice is to prepare to perform, not to simply put in some work for the day and check the boxes. When we take that into account, it can change the way we look at our practices. This means that our practices don't have to be perfect... Mistake are OKAY!

When we are practicing to perform instead of just practicing to practice, we can look at it as a process instead of a task. Throughout any process there are ups, downs, and everything in between, and that is exactly how we want to view our practices.

We can't expect our athletes to master everything we tell them to do the first time around, or even the second or third. It takes time to master any new skill and that's exactly what practice is for. Practice should be a time where it is okay to

mess up, okay to ask questions, okay to be unsure. These are actually good signs of progress in our athletes.

When our athletes are struggling with a new concept or drill in practice it means we have designed something that is pushing them past where they currently are in terms of skill or conditioning. If our athletes are asking questions in practice that means they are engaged and are willing to try something new and are motivated to figure it out.

Allowing our athletes to fail and make mistakes in practice also prepares them for when they make a mistake in-game. A few weeks ago we talked about Adversity and how to bounce back from it, and practice is a great chance for our athletes to practice how to handle adversity.

Practice is something that has and always will be a part of competitive sports. But just because it's there doesn't mean we can't improve it and make our practices even more effective. By viewing practice as a process and allowing our athletes to mess up, try new things, and prepare for competition we are getting the absolute most out of them for those few hours each day we get to practice each day.

3. **Too Much Practice?**

Is it possible to practice too much??

Yes... well, sort of.

We've talked about the idea of Quality over Quantity when it comes to practice, and that's the backbone of everything. In practice we can actually reach a point of diminishing returns, where we are no longer improving or growing and are possibly even hurting our own progress.

This can happen when our athletes get overly fatigued but continue trying a skill or technique. Once they reach a certain point of energy exertion they can no longer keep up the proper technique or mechanics that are required for their skills... And this is where bad habits start to form.

For example: A basketball team just had a 3 hour practice filled with loads of conditioning and a leg workout. Then the players are expected to go shoot free throws. This could possibly emulate the fatigue they are feeling in-game, but more than likely they have already surpassed that point of exertion and now it will impact their shooting mechanics. Since their legs are so tired, they can no longer use them properly during their shot and they could begin cheating and using their guide hand to push the ball toward the hoop. In turn negatively effecting their shooting mechanics and forming bad habits that could leak into their other practices and competitions.

This all ties back to the first point: Having a 'WHY' behind what you are doing helps you avoid overly-fatiguing your athletes and putting them in a position to form bad habits, and also avoids wasting time just to keep them at practice.

This point isn't something most coaches are going to run into, unless you really are taking it over the top in your practices (*my 6 hour baseball practice, for example*). As long as your practices are designed around preparing your athletes for a competition, you are unlikely to run into this problem.

As I said at the beginning, these aren't some hidden secrets to formulate the perfect practice plan. Nor are they the only things you should consider when designing your practices. What they are, are tips to keep in mind when deciding whether or not to add or subtract something from your practice plans.

Practice is such an important aspect of sports at every single level, so we want to make sure we get it right and provide the best possible scenario for our athletes to grow, progress, and prepare for competitions and games.

Practice to Perform. Don't Practice Just to Practice.

This Week in Sports

1. Terrance Gore is a Legend.

Tuesday night the Atlanta Braves closed out game 6 of the World Series by defeating the Houston Astros, winning their first World Series Title since 1995. I was thrilled to see the Astros fall and Freddie Freeman and Ron Washington finally get their rings, but possibly the most interesting story comes from a guy who didn't play in a single regular season game this year, but is walking away with his 3rd World Series ring.

I'm talking about Terrance Gore, possibly the only man in the MLB listed with 'pinch-runner' listed as his position. Gore won his first World Series in 2015 with the Royals only playing in 9 games all year. His second in 2020 with the Dodgers playing in only 2 games. And his third with the Braves only appearing as a runner once this entire season, and not recording a single at-bat since 2019.

Terrance Gore's career stat line is the stuff of legends:

67 Career at-bats

0 Career Homeruns

1 Career RBI

2 Career Doubles

3 World Series Rings

Over his 7 year career he has won 3 World Series Titles, the last 2 of which happened without him recording a single plate appearance. You can't make this stuff up, and I am all here for it!

2. 25 Year Anniversary of Kobe's debut.

Wednesday, November 3rd marked the 25 year anniversary of an 18-year-old Kobe Bryant making his NBA debut fresh out of high school. Now, this may not be the most 'current event' type of thing I could put in this section, but scrolling through social

media and seeing all the homage being paid to one of the NBA greats was awesome for me.

Kobe Bryant and the Mamba Mentality he took toward basketball was a big inspiration for my pursuit of a career in sport psychology. Kobe was one of the greatest basketball players of all-time, not only because of his incredible skillset and athletic ability, but also because of his tireless work ethic, relentless mindset, and killer instinct on the court.

It is also hard for me to believe that it has been almost a year since he tragically passed away. I'm glad that people around the globe took to social media Wednesday to pay their respects and remember Kobe for what he was able to accomplish on the court, as well as the impact he had off it.

Rest In Peace, Kobe.

Mamba Forever.

Other Sport Psych References

1. [Sport Psychology Myths Debunked](#)

The field of Sport and Performance Psychology is still relatively young and quite misunderstood to the general public. When I tell someone this is what I do, it is often followed up with a number of questions, which I'm glad to answer. The thing that does bother me, however, is when people make assumptions about Sport Psychology and assume things before they even try to learn about the field as a whole.

This article from 'Transition Performance' does a great job of breaking down 4 of the most common myths or misconceptions that exist in this field. While this article may not answer every single question you have about what I do, it is a good place to start.

This article breaks down each of the 4 myths they cover and explains why they are untrue and how Sport Psychology can be

very effective for a much larger population than most people initially think.

As well as reading this short article, if you have any questions or inquiries about my work, please feel free to reach out as I would love to clear things up and help you in any way that I can!

[Check out the full article HERE.](#)

2. Calvin Ridley Takes a Stand for his Mental Health

This week, Atlanta Falcons Wide Receiver, Calvin Ridley issued a statement saying that he is going to step away from football for a bit in order to take care of his mental health.

In this article Ridley explains that the past few weeks have been very tough on him and he is really struggling with his own mental health and he has decided that the best plan of action is to take a short time away from the game and get his mental health back into shape before returning to the field.

This article also dives into many of the other instances we have seen where athletes are taking their mental health more seriously and taking time away from their sport in order to make sure they are at full health first and foremost.

I never like to see someone struggle with their mental health, but what I do like to see is some of the top athletes and most influential people in the world taking a stand to end the stigma that surrounds mental health. I hope that cases like Ridley's encourage others to speak up and seek help when they are struggling with their own mental health.

I wish Calvin Ridley the best of luck and I hope to see him get back to a place where he is able to compete at a high level once again, while also being able to enjoy his time doing it.

[Check out the full article HERE.](#)

Quick Quote



"We're talking about practice. I mean listen, we're sitting here talking about practice, not a game, not a game, not a game, but we're talking about practice. Not the game that I go out there and die for and play every game like it's my last, but we're talking about practice man."

(possibly the greatest interview rant of all-time)

-Allen Iverson

Check out Older Editions of the Coach's Corner at the Bottom of the Page Here:

<https://www.streckersportpsych.com/coachs-corner>

Thank you for reading and until next week, remember:

Today is a great day to change a life!

Cheers,

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