

The Coaches' Meeting.. ***Brian M. Pete***

The following conversation between three basketball coaches (the Varsity Coach, the Assistant Coach, and the Freshman Coach) illustrates the difference between process-driven and results-driven solutions.

Varsity Coach: I have been looking over the stats for this year and comparing them to last year. You know what I see?

Assistant Coach: We were better last year.

Varsity Coach: Yes, but do you know why?

Assistant Coach: We won more games last year.

Varsity Coach: Brilliant observation . . . I know we won more games last year, but I noticed something else in the statistics. Something besides wins and losses.

Freshman Coach: I think what you mean is rebounding. We out-rebounded the other team in every game we won.

Varsity Coach: Exactly, rebounding. This year we are not rebounding. Get rebounds and you get the wins, it's that simple.

Assistant Coach: We had taller players last year. Rebounds come off the rim, the rim is high, tall players have an advantage. Tall players make better rebounders. You tell me how to get kids to grow and our rebounding will improve. When our rebounding improves, we'll win more games.

Freshman Coach: But, when you look deeper into the statistics, you see that our big guys always rebounded about equal to the other team's big guys. It was our guards who got the rebounds in the

victories. The short quick players get the rebounds that matter.

ASSISTANT COACH: I'd like to see who got the rebounds in the losses, and I would also like to see how other teams rebounded against us versus how they rebounded against other people.

FRESHMAN COACH: OK, sure, and then I could go back a couple years and compare those numbers to the numbers of the best teams in the state, by running an analysis on a spreadsheet program on my computer.

VARSITY COACH: Now, wait a minute. We want to improve our win-loss record. I don't think we have to crunch numbers like Price Waterhouse to do that. I have been coaching for 18 years, you about 13, and you 10. If, between us, we can't figure out how to improve our team, we are in sorry shape.

ASSISTANT COACH: What do you mean, Coach?

VARSITY COACH: Let's look at the numbers that tell us when we rebounded well and when we didn't. Let's look at our practice schedule and see when we worked on rebounding. If we do not emphasize rebounding in practice, how can we expect the kids to do it during the game?

FRESHMAN COACH: Last summer, at the state coaches clinic, I learned a great drill to teach technique, and the kids can do the drill on their own. It teaches the skill of "blocking out" which is key for smaller quicker players.

ASSISTANT COACH: I think if we tell the kids what we want them to do, really make it clear why it is important to the team . . .

VARSITY COACH: Until they understand, let's have them set some goals. Every kid has to get five rebounds a game.

ASSISTANT COACH: In the next game?

VARSITY COACH: OK, maybe too much, too soon. How about, three games from now every kid will get at least five rebounds a game and we, as a team will out-rebound every opponent the rest of the season.

FRESHMAN COACH: Well, we said rebounding leads to victories, so this seems like a plan.

ASSISTANT COACH: If it doesn't get the results we want, then we'll try something else.

The next day the three coaches meet in their office.

FRESHMAN COACH: Hey, remember what we were talking about yesterday? About, how we were going to work on rebounding in practice?

ASSISTANT COACH: Work on rebounding with all the players, not just our big guys.

VARSITY COACH: Yeah, what about it?

FRESHMAN COACH: I went back through my files and I found the handouts that I got at the coaches clinic.

ASSISTANT COACH: I can't believe you found it in that trash heap you call a office.

FRESHMAN COACH: I'll send copies to both of you and we can underline the key parts, the parts that I think get the best results.

VARSITY COACH: Let's find time this week to sit down and look at this together. We have to really come to agreement on what we are trying to teach and how we are trying to teach it.

ASSISTANT COACH: Like a book study?

VARSITY COACH: Call it a book study, call it a professional learning community, call it three old coaches trying to learn some new tricks. Let's just agree to make time to work on this one goal.

ASSISTANT COACH: I have everything but time . . . can we talk online?

VARSITY COACH: Excuse me?

ASSISTANT COACH: I am getting many of my CPDU's online. I take the courses, post questions, join chat rooms. My instructor can monitor my progress . . . online is where it's at for some of us.

FRESHMAN COACH: I can handle some emails but we have to schedule a meeting about teaching rebounding. We have to come to an agreement and put it into action.

VARSITY COACH: So, we agree to meet and you agree to show us this rebounding drill.

ASSISTANT COACH: OK, but do you mind if I print off a couple things from my online course? I have something that I'm sure will help?

FRESHMAN COACH: Every little bit helps.

VARSITY COACH: I think we all agree that we have to leave nothing to chance if we are going reach these kids.

ASSISTANT COACH: When we meet, let's take time to put our "heads together" and share whatever drills we know that might work. You know we all have our own "bag of tricks" and we probably need to share our ideas more than we do.

Two days later the three coaches meet in their office.

FRESHMAN COACH: Did you guys get the emails I sent? I attached a PDF that explains the Relay Rebounding drill I learned it at that Coaches Clinic last summer?

VARSITY COACH: I got it and I like the Relay Rebounding drill. It's competitive and it's something the players can do on their own. Groups of 4 players can pair up before or after practice and work on their rebounding skills.

ASSISTANT COACH: I think it will be effective because they have to keep score of who gets the most rebounds and that will keep their interest.

VARSITY COACH: Now what was this contraption that you brought in here.

The Varsity Coach is holding two wide, round metal frames.

ASSISTANT COACH: This is another idea that I think we could use to help the kids work on the skill of rebounding. They're called the Rebounding Rims. What you do is put them over the rim to cover the baskets. They prevent shots from going through the hoop. That way, 100% of the shots will come off as rebounds and the kids will have every opportunity to work on their "blocking out" technique. They will learn to anticipate where the ball may go and they will

become better at grabbing the ball with two hands.

FRESHMAN COACH: This is a good drill because then we can really focus on these sub skills that are all part of the skill of rebounding.

VARSAITY COACH: I do like both of these ideas but I am a little older than you two guys so I tend to rely on more traditional methods.

FRESHMAN COACH: What do you mean coach?

VARSAITY COACH: Well, I think that the drills we currently do to teach rebounding are effective drills but we have to approach them in a different way.

ASSISTANT COACH: If we do the same drills how are we going to get different results?

VARSAITY COACH: I think we have to look at using statistics in our practices just like we do in the game. I think we should track rebounds in every drill, in every scrimmage. Let's make rebounding a priority throughout practice and let's have one of our student managers keep track of who is getting the most rebounds in practice.

FRESHMAN COACH: I'm hearing you, but I don't think I understand.

VARSAITY COACH: I'm saying that at the end of each practice we could post the rebounding stats. This Stats Contest shows the kids who are getting the rebounds and who are making the most improvement.

FRESHMAN COACH: OK, now I get it. If the stats are helping us understand what is happening in the games, then we should do the same for practice. Keep track of vital statistics like rebounding during

practice so that we can make informed decisions about our practice procedures that will impact how we do in the games.

ASSISTANT COACH: I think the first thing we need to do is agree about what we are going to do to improve our rebounding skills. Let's decide on the drill or the combination of drills we will do.

VARSITY COACH: I would like to try all three during the week.

ASSISTANT COACH: I like that idea, too.

FRESHMAN COACH: Me, too. But let's have a specified rotation that we will follow.

VARSITY COACH: Stats, every practice! Rebound Rim, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; Scrimmage Relay Rebounds, on Tuesday and Thursday. How does that sound?

ASSISTANT COACH: Okay. Right on! Then, we need to make sure we all know exactly how we will do the drills. Let's run through the drills tomorrow.

VARSITY COACH: Then we need to take these ideas from the coaches office to the basketball floor. And if all goes according to plan the players will take what we have taught them, from the practices to the game.

ASSISTANT COACH: And if we do what we say we'll do differently, if we stick to our new, revised practice plan, with fidelity, we should see a difference.

FRESHMAN COACH: And we will win more games. After all, that is what it's all about . . . success for all.