

INTRODUCTION

Second Edition

From day one of the publication, over 10 years ago, of *The Basketball Coach's Bible*, I wanted to redo the book. I saw many things that could have been done better. Thankfully, with the continued support of basketballers, I have been able to focus on this project after the completion of our video series. And we spent more time on this second edition than on the first, so I hope you can see the improvements.

First, I wanted to improve and simplify the organization of the lessons. Now there are 23 major sections. The Topics in each Section contain the Lessons. There are over 200 lessons in the second edition.

Second, I wanted to write more understandable directions, especially for lessons involving the detailed mechanics of movement. Directing players that are right in front of you and writing clear directions when they are not, are entirely different. With writing, there is no way to demonstrate or answer questions or add directions when players are confused.

Third, I wanted to diagram every lesson so well that coaches would be able to understand the lesson even before reading the text. There are well over 500 diagrams in the book including a setup diagram for each lesson.

A fourth goal was to reduce redundancy and clarify the information in Part 1 of the book, the non-lesson part. This section is called Foundations and gives coaches a better understanding of the foundations from which the lessons came.

Despite my efforts to shorten the book by reducing redundancy, removing over 35 large cartoons, and sliming down the size of the Coach's Corner feature, the new edition is still about 75 pages longer. More detailed explanations and more diagrams account for the increase.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1, Foundations, has been dramatically changed and improved. The first chapter, Starting, gives essential concepts about coaching. The second, The Court, describes the court and many basketball terms. The third, Fundamentals, has been greatly improved with three new smaller flow charts showing the relationships between basketball skills. The fourth, Practice, has been greatly improved and expanded. The fifth, Planning, better explains the use of the Practice Planning Guide. Chapter 6, The Game, discusses many critical topics including walking into a new gym, game strategies, dealing with refer-

ees and locker room talks. "A Trip Down The Court" topic is added for those coaches who are not experienced players. Chapter 7, The Lessons, explains the organization of Part 2, the lesson sections, and features used in the text and diagrams.

The largest part of the book, Part 2, The Lessons, contains over 200 lessons in an organized step-by-step progression. The 23 sections are grouped in six major categories: 1) The Basics; 2) Shooting; 3) Offensive Skills; 4) Rebound/Screen; 5) Defensive Skills; 6) Team Skills. Part 3, The Appendices, contains a host of usable materials as well as a cool-down and a table listing every lesson in the book.

Acknowledgements

We all need to give a thanks to Bill Force, a volunteer coach, who went through every page in this edition pointing out omissions and suggesting improvements. Erin Howarth, my editor for the second edition, was incredibly helpful in more than just an editing capacity.

Some other folks deserve a note of thanks and appreciation. Lynn Fleischman, the editor of the first edition, helped shaped this mass of information into something more understandable. Many friends gave me encouragement and ideas including Eddie Brash, Skip Cost, & Dave Bower. Zillions of coaches chipped in formation and ideas. Many gave comments which can be found either in the front of the book or on my website. One group of coaches that are not mentioned elsewhere deserve a lot of credit for my basketball knowledge and interest. These folks coached me in various leagues during my junior and senior high school years. Stephen Kay, Paul Ward, Howie Turnoff, Mr Lieberman, & Bob Mlkvy are some names that I remember. I have great respect for these people.

First Edition Introduction

Why I Wrote This Book

My uncle Inky's (Inky Lautman) photograph appears a half dozen times in the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts. In the beginnings of professional basketball in the thirties, he was a high scorer for the Philadelphia SPHAA's. Even though his talent was not transmitted genetically, his interest in the game was. As a kid my only ambition was to play basketball for Overbrook High School in Philadelphia, where Wilt Chamberlain and Walt Hazzard, among other notables, once played. In ninth grade I inscribed Overbrook High School in big black letters on the back of several T-shirts. On others I wrote Hazzard or Jones (for Wally Jones) with a number below. In 10th grade, family problems led me to quit the cadet basketball team. In 11th grade, a chronic foot problem, still a mystery, prevented even a tryout. During my senior year, a



Inky Lautman circa 1934



Overbrook HS Varsity Basketball

sprained ankle just before tryouts doomed my chances. At less than 50% mobility, I played with great pain, only to be cut. I was dazed. My childhood dreams came to an abrupt end. Years of practice, often 3-5 hours a day, culminated without earning a big O (for Overbrook) or even a fair shake at a tryout. The next day I decided to tell the coach, Paul Ward, about my injured ankle. I asked if I could try out a week later when the ankle was better; I regularly played with the guys on the team, and I felt I was as good as any of them. He gave me the chance. Thirty years later I still have my orange and black warm-up jersey that came with big black letters already printed on it — OVERBROOK HS VARSITY BASKETBALL.

In college my thoughts of basketball lessened even though I continued to play in all my spare moments. Theoretical engineering, my course of study, required over 20 hours of class each week. I always needed a part-time job as well. I played on some independent teams and made the all-star team at the Ogontz campus of Penn State. After college I played on many independent teams, often head-to-head against current college players or professionals-to-be.

Several years after I graduated with a degree in Biophysics, a colleague at Columbia School, a private school in Philadelphia, asked for help with the men's basketball team. After a few practices and games, he saw that I knew what I was doing and let me run the team. After a few more games we won the championship.

My next coaching experience was at a public high school with the girls' junior varsity team. I was not prepared for this situation. The girls had zero skills and very different attitudes than guys. The layup, the dribble, and every other skill seemed too advanced for most of the players.

I didn't have a clue. I wondered, "Where do I start teaching? What and how do I teach?" I thought that you couldn't teach layups and dribbling as well as many other skills. Other coaches only reinforced this idea: kids need to possess some natural talent. My game demeanor was as clueless as my practices. I thought if I yelled loudly enough that players would get the idea. The yelling during my first season helped; it helped the other team. We lost seven of seven close games. My other mistakes are too numerous and embarrassing to mention.

Coaching skilled players is kid's stuff compared to teaching unskilled novices. My learning started abruptly that first day at practice. During the next seven years of coaching, I read everything I could find about basketball. Most books started where I wanted to end up. They assumed players knew the basics or they thought an explanation of the basics, without any methods to ac-

comply with them, was all that was needed. As a gag, a revered men's coach gave me a 20-year-old book about women's basketball. The women on the cover were wearing old-fashioned uniforms with skirts and shoulder straps (tunics I am told). This coach and the other gym teachers watching this presentation didn't expect me to read it, but I did. Even though not detailed nor explanatory, it did give me an idea where the beginning was. I remember best the six or seven types of passes described, most of which we never bother to teach.

I attended many basketball (as well as volleyball and one ice hockey) clinics. Often the top basketball coaches that were invited offered more general information than definite detailed advice. One women's volleyball coach, who at the time seemed old, short, and unathletic, did impress me at one clinic. She had known nothing about volleyball when she started, but quickly learned how to teach the basics. Year after year she beat all the teams in the area. She thought her teams won because her teaching methods were better. The other coaches disliked her, especially the men. She offered free clinics so the other teams could do as well. Few, if any, took her up on it. Her attitude was so refreshing. I even attended an ice hockey clinic hoping to pick up some related tips. The Czech national team practiced three-person fast breaks off ice with a basketball, believe it or not.

I watched the basketball practices of many college, high-school, and other teams as well as talked to many coaches. Each night I often spent hours planning practice. I began to realize that teaching the skills was a puzzle that I could unscramble. To find more effective ways required study, planning, and innovation. I realized that with limited practice time, a coach can only teach the most basic skills. Coaches need to identify and then teach the more dependent individual skills first. Lessons need to focus on one thing at a time, not impart many skills at once. This was both the key to teaching and the biggest impediment to learning. Some skills took years to figure out. Others, like learning that yelling at players during games did no good, took only one season. (Players echo your nervous state, so be calm. I remember losing only one other close game, when the score was tied in the last minute, during the next six years.)

While I worked on my puzzles, the program developed at our high school, West Philadelphia HS. With the varsity coach, Bernie Ivens, we transformed a women's program that had no respect, no uniforms, and no facility (at first I used the school hallways for part of each practice) or equipment. In five years the result was a public league and city championship as well as a victory over the best of New York's five boroughs in a tournament.

Foreword by Dale Brown

If you've ever wondered, "How can I get my players to shoot better?" or "Will I ever learn how to teach a player to dribble well?" this is the book for you. Nowhere else will you find a book that takes the basic skills of basketball as its end point, not its beginning.

This book really IS about basketball fundamentals. I say this because, although many books purport to focus on fundamentals, aside from repeating the adage about how important the fundamentals are, these books quickly move on to more "glamorous" aspects of the game—such as preset offensive plays—without once taking a step back to explore and demonstrate the skills players need to have mastered before they can execute the plays. This book stays with the fundamentals, explaining them in ways coaches, players, and parents at all levels of the game can understand and benefit from. This is not to say that the fundamentals are simple to understand and acquire.

Why should you bother to read a book about the fundamentals of basketball? Acquiring the fundamental skills of basketball is similar to the process of developing any healthy habit, say eating well. We might think such acquisition is "natural," that is, we are born with the knowledge that we need to choose a healthy diet. But most of us need to be taught (and many of us need to unlearn unhealthy habits!). We need knowledge about good nutrition that is broken down into step-by-step changes we can manage; we need the opportunity to practice making healthy food choices; and we need a coach who will guide and encourage us (sometimes we are our own coach). In basketball, we coaches sometimes fall into the habit of thinking that the fundamental skills are "natural" and players either have them or don't. We can use this as an excuse not to focus on the fundamentals—or we can recognize that we can develop these skills at every level and therefore we should teach them at every level.

The problem is, even if we recognize the need to focus on fundamental skills, what kind of teaching resources do we have available to us? In his introduction, Goldstein has detailed the difficulty he had finding information about basic skills. As he says, most books began where he wanted to end. Perhaps part of the problem is a loss of focus on the process of teaching itself.

The premise of this book is the same one that informs good teaching of any sort: to learn something we need knowledge of the topic, instruction in breaking down the topic into manageable parts, and time to master the components and integrate them. With these tools, EVERY learner will progress—though not at the same rate or to the same degree.

So then, this book is different from other books about playing basketball.

First, it assumes we can teach basketball. That is, all players, of either gender and at whatever age, level of play or expertise, will get better if they understand and practice the fundamental skills of the game. Although the book obviously acknowledges the existence of natural talent and the advantages of predetermined physical characteristics, it does not assume that just because you are a good basketball player (that is, you score points, can dunk the ball, have moves, etc.) that your fundamental skills are sound and not in need of any improvement. I certainly have had experience with stellar players who were nonetheless lacking in certain fundamental skills, which at critical times could, as they say, come back to haunt them and the team. Nor does the book assume that just because you do not appear to be a good player that you cannot become good (or at least much better) once you have mastered these fundamental skills. In other words, it assumes that fundamental basketball skills and techniques can and should be taught—though they rarely are—to everyone who plays the game.

Second, the book does not assume any particular level of understanding or expertise. Instead it identifies the fundamental skills needed to play the game effectively, and breaks these skills into components that are teachable and learnable. It walks you through the parts, puts them back together, then shows you how to build upon them in increasingly complex ways.

Third, the book assumes that if you focus on teaching and learning, and not on winning, you will win games anyway. If you are a player focused on learning these skills, you will play better ball and contribute more to the team effort. If you are a coach focused on teaching these skills, you will produce better players and better teamwork. If you are a player, coach, or parent working your way through this developmental process, you will better understand how the parts relate to the whole, and, in the end, basketball will simply be more fun.

One other noteworthy characteristic of this book: Goldstein deals not only in skills fundamentals, but in attitude fundamentals. In an era of big-time basketball as glitz biz, Goldstein's book returns us to the notion of playing and coaching basketball for the love of it. He clearly respects not only the game, but also the thousands of people—coaches, players, parents, officials—putting in hour after underpaid hour, sometimes forced to make do with inadequate equipment and confined to cramped, dingy gyms. And they put up with all of this for no tangible reward beyond an occasional “thanks, coach” or a pat on the back. This book is a return to our roots.

Dale Brown, LSU, January 1995