

What it takes to win

It takes a really good team, some luck along the way, and then a great attention to detail by coaches and players to get through a season with more wins than losses. It really is a marathon and not a sprint and every day players need to be reminded and re-trained to what it takes to be a successful team game in and game out.

I think there are some items that have to be stressed every day because if you allow too many of any one of the items to happen in a game, you probably are going to lose. The better the competition the more that is true. I am talking about what really happens in a game, I am not talking about preparing for a game etc., I am assuming that coaches do that.

The other item that is taken out of the picture is that if the other team is just bigger, stronger, faster and more talented than you are, most of the time you will lose that game. The bigger, stronger, faster, teams don't always win, but if you are a betting person, it is still the best place to put your money.

I am talking about things that have to be taken care of during games where level of skills are somewhat equal and if you have the bigger, stronger, team and don't take care of these items then you are probably going to lose in the upset.

It has been my experience that the team that makes the fewest mistakes has the best chance to win, so my number one thing that leads to a loss are turnovers and bad decision making.

Number two would be "bad shot" selection; number three "lack of defensive pressure," number four "not blocking out and not rebounding," and number five "offensive to defensive transition," number six "stupid fouls," and number seven "failure to play as a team."

Turnovers are killers no matter how you look at it. Too many teams do not "value" the ball. As long as you have the ball your team has an opportunity to score and the other team doesn't. That increases your chances of winning greatly. Your team is not going to score on every offensive possession, but you can still set goals for being productive with each possession.

Probably the second biggest thing that can kill your chances of winning is bad shot selection. Bad shot selection can be when you shoot, how you shoot or the time and situation of the game when you shoot.

Players have to understand that if you are going to be successful on a regular basis when you shoot the ball is important. It used to drive me crazy to have our team transition from defensive to offense and then throw one pass and someone jack up a shot, unless it was a lay-up.

Part of our offensive philosophy was to make the defense stretch from sideline to sideline and then vertically from the baseline towards the mid court line. The idea being the more times you made the defense move, the more chances you had that they would make an error on their coverage.

A lot of teams, especially those who did not spend a lot of time on defense in practice, might only be able to play 20 seconds or so and then they might break down physically or mentally in what they were doing.

The first sign would be when they started to stand with "knees locked" and when they did that in order to move, they would have to get back into a defensive position and that takes time, not much, but enough to get around them on offense. Basketball is a game of quickness and

standing straight up takes away some of your quickness.

We used to tell our players the only time we wanted them to be in a knees locked position was when the band was playing the National Anthem.

Sometimes even if you make a shot, it doesn't make it a good shot. Time and situation come into play here. There are many times when running seconds off the clock gives you a better chance at winning than getting a basket. That is hard to get across to some players but it is still true.

Not having any one ready to rebound is another problem when a player just grabs a pass and fires one at the basket. Then how you get the shot off. Most of that problem is having someone playing out of control and they are going 100 mph when 50 would do and then the shot goes up at about 250 mph and starts the first break for the other team as it bounces to mid court off the boards. Been there with this one, seen it done and got the t-shirt, it can happen.

We used to have standards we liked to meet on offense when it came to shooting. Usually these were percentages we thought certain positions could handle plus overall team shooting percentages.

We thought the post players should shoot a minimum of 50 percent, guards and wings should be over 45 percent and three-point shooters over 35 percent and we wanted our overall team shooting to be at 50 percent for field goals, 70 percent for free-throws.

If we got all of those things in a game we were usually in pretty good shape at the final buzzer. Most of the things that cause you problems are fairly easy to understand, but sometimes hard to get across to players. You can yell at them, which some will say I did, you can make them run, which some will say I also did, but one of the most effective things you can say to them is "SIT." Players concentration sometimes returns much faster if they are sitting beside you on the bench.

We used to talk a lot about "Play Smart", "Play Hard", and "Play Together." If you did that you increased your opportunities to be successful a great deal. Some things don't change that much from year to year or from player to player.

Perkins Co. Teams

Both the boys and girls teams at Perkins County have put together a start of a run which is good. With the boy/girl schedule that is left, they only have to play one of them on the road and that is Cozad. A little run right before sub-districts isn't too bad a time to gain some confidence and play well each and every time you get on the court.

See you at the games!