



AREAS OF EMPHASIS: GUIDELINES FOR COACHES

T16: Establishing a National Coaching System

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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INTRODUCTION

British Basketball's **Game On** strategy is the current guide to the immediate future of basketball in Britain.

A key group within the strategy, the Performance Management Group (PMG) has been established and set about consulting amongst the home nations and internationally to improve basketball's performance. Additionally, a Curriculum Driver Group (CDG) was also formed. Both groups have consulted widely in order to work towards a curriculum for basketball in Britain.

The consultation has involved world class coaching experts who have experience in both curriculum development in elite sport and basketball and an expert understanding of player development.

While the writing of a curriculum involves a complex consultative and collaborative approach, the need is not simply for a written document but also for an effective implementation. A comprehensive implementation through acceptance of these guidelines is most important for growth and progress in British basketball's playing and coaching standards. The Areas of Emphasis: Guidelines for Coaching is the first step in refocusing and co-ordinating basketball coaching in Britain.

It is only a part of the greater solution to better and more effective teaching and coaching in the UK. Combined with the establishment of a wider base of player development programs focused on teaching the basic skills and concepts, it will springboard British basketball to higher standards of player development and performance.

These Areas of Emphasis are the "what is important now" for basketball in this country. They are the immediate focus for coaching, teaching and development of British players for the future.

While there will be discussion, debate and further clarification of these areas of emphasis, there is no doubt that these guidelines are most important for our British players' future. At present the majority of our players have not been prepared and developed to their full potential within the UK. This is a point with which every basketball coach at any level in Britain should be most concerned. Through these guidelines and other British Basketball curriculum documents we have a great opportunity to improve playing standards at club, school and national level.

While our coaching efforts have been honourable, with good intent, they now need a sharper focus and more analysis. If we are successful the quality of both our players and our competitions will improve. Consequently our club, regional and national teams will all benefit. We could also set a collective and national goal of being a major basketball country in Europe.

Each and every coach must reflect on their coaching and set about improving their own teaching and coaching effort at all levels. If our players' learning is improved we will have all done our job well. Let's get started by using these guidelines to kick start our new teaching and coaching focus for the British game. We have a lot of work to do as part of British Basketball's Towards 2016 strategy. A good six years of improved attention to development of our players through better coaching lies ahead. Hopefully with this clearer focus from these guidelines we will be directed on a path and process to coach better-skilled British basketball players.

Warwick Cann
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHY DO WE NEED AREAS OF EMPHASIS?

Ongoing consultative work from each of the home countries' basketball governing bodies has revealed agreement among the basketball community on the need for a shared set of techniques, skills, concepts, coaching philosophies and language. Together, these constitute a constantly evolving set of knowledge often referred to as a "curriculum".

A curriculum must start somewhere. It must have a focus as it highlights its "themes" and "content". A curriculum must be relevant to all levels within the British system.

The curriculum is for clubs and national league teams whose primary focus is not only to play the game but also to teach the game and the fundamentals well. Junior programs like academies and anyone responsible for, or delivering a fee for service, should take particular meaning from these guidelines. This document is the guideline for the minimum standard of teaching and coaching basketball in the UK.

Development programs within the home countries framework will by their nature be primarily concerned with the implementation of these guidelines as British Basketball has now established a strategy for the 2016 Olympic cycle, Towards 2016 (T16).

Schools have always played an important role in the development and teaching of basketball. These guidelines and curriculum package are as relevant to schools as they are to coaches.

With London 2012 and a possible post-Olympics boom, schools will be faced with increased demand and the need for guidance for our coaches will also be most important for teaching and coaching the next generation.

Key areas have now been identified as needing urgent attention and are introduced in this document.

Even our very best players have common weaknesses that if addressed would significantly improve the performance of our club teams and the quality of our competitions as well as our national teams, allowing us to compete with the best teams in FIBA Europe Division A. The Areas of Emphasis also allow us to establish international best practice in key aspects of the game, which, in time, will result in skills being taught similarly across the nation from club to school to league to country. We want to be coaching well and focusing on the key aspects.

"If we keep doing what we have always done, we will always get what we have already got!"

Simply put, we need to refocus on coaching and highlight the areas of most need of emphasis. An improvement in these areas won't just impact those playing for GB, players across the pathway from club to national team will benefit by improving their basic skills in these areas.



WHAT ARE THE AREAS OF EMPHASIS; GUIDELINES FOR COACHES?

There are Eight (8) areas deemed to need immediate emphasis. They are:

1. Physical Fitness, footwork and movement.
2. ON-BALL Defence, including footwork
3. Shooting
4. Passing and Receiving, technically and tactically
5. Use of the Dribble
6. Offence, individual and team
7. OFF-BALL Defence, position, vision, tactics
8. Point Guard Play

WHAT ASPECT NEEDS MOST ATTENTION?

- The first area (physical, movement, balance and footwork) is about reemphasis of the physical attributes needed by players. It is also about the fitness, conditioning and physical preparation of our players. Importantly it is specifically about better coaching of movement, footwork and balance (including stance and body posture) in all that we do.
- ON-BALL defence is also about reemphasising balance/stance, footwork, movement and positioning. It is also about core strength (ability to squat) and physical endurance.
- Shooting and passing are about continuing to develop offensive individual skills with an emphasis on developing our passing and receiving as members of a team.
- Team offence and off ball defensive positioning are about tactical aspects of the game which require underpinning technical and physical techniques to support the team concepts.
- Finally, point guard play is about the tactical positional aspect to be reemphasised in order for British teams to be more competitive on the international stage. It also requires certain technical and physical underpinning techniques. It suggests a review of how our point guards are currently playing and a re-education in their technical skills and game understanding.

In these eight areas there are some aspects which combine “technical *and* tactical play” or “physical *and* technical skill” - they are often inter-related and dependent on the coach’s experience and knowledge.

WHAT ARE THE KEY STRATEGIC POINTS?

For administrators and governing bodies within the British Basketball family, the production of these Areas of Emphasis and the associated strategic and operational plans is part of a desire to improve the standard of basketball in the UK.

While the intention is to establish a meaningful “curriculum” for British Basketball, this new focus needs an environment to improve the quality of players that is the centre of the Areas of Emphasis.

Simplistically, in order to improve players we must also improve coaches. Additionally any plan needs successful implementation and resourcing. Our administrators and leaders will always be faced with the challenge to continuously improve and maintain a key strategic focus and successful implementation plan for coaches. The environment for coaching and player development is currently improving yet still evolving through the Game On strategy and home nations initiatives in these areas. As such this is another important step to improve standards but one which will require further resourcing for successful implementation.

The Areas of Emphasis will lead to improvements and better quality of player performance in the short to mid term but there are longer term needs for effective strategies in coach education, development, domestic player competition levels and full-time coaching opportunities in the UK.

In particular, to improve the quality and standard of coaches in our domestic competitions and programs will need a reorganisation into progressively higher level opportunities, and the creation of a sustainable system for full-time coaching at various levels in the national system.

This may involve a review of current competition standards and opportunities for coaches and players. Competition standards are directly linked to coaching and player standards. This is not only in the game sense but also in the training and preparation phase that underpins all player and team performance.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AREAS OF EMPHASIS

- Establish a roll out strategy for follow-up activities to regions and clubs and their volunteer coaches.
- Convene coaching conferences for the various levels of coaches working in the development pathway to discuss and ensure that the Areas of Emphasis are understood and that the recommendations are adopted.
- Publish the Areas of Emphasis on the British Basketball and home nations websites so that all coaches and clubs at all levels have access to the document.
- The home nations should coordinate full-time coaches of development so that the introduction of the Areas of Emphasis can be further discussed with a view to more successful implementation.
- Encourage the home nations to review competition levels and organisation with a view to increasing the standard of coach and player performance.
- Encourage the home nations to review the existing coach education system with a view to further improvement.



THE PHYSICAL

1. Physical

1.1. Physical Fitness and Conditioning

- Better coaching and understanding of physical fitness at the Junior level
- Plan for the physical components in training sessions
 - *Cardiovascular fitness*
 - *Muscle memory (movement patterns)*
 - *Strength*
 - *Speed*
 - *Power*
 - *Endurance*
- Test the physical components of basketball
- Conduct better warm up and cool down phases for training and playing
- Emphasise nutrition and physical education
- Understand recovery and nutrition
- Use qualified professionals to assist with the physical aspects

1.2. Footwork and Movement for Basketball

- Recognise the need to coach efficient movement
- Better planning / teaching / rehearsing of good footwork and balance
- Confirm the value and advantage of the triple threat position
- Recognise that pivoting is the basis for offensive techniques

2. ON-BALL Defence, Movement and Footwork

- Change our attitude to defence, particularly ON-BALL defence
- Understand the differences and interrelatedness of “containment” and “pressing” or pressure defence
- Coach and develop a full court defensive mindset and capability
- Routinely provide more one-on-one drill situations in training sessions



3. Shooting

- Create more time in training dedicated to shooting and regular testing
- Practice shooting within game situations
- Practice under pressure
- Use the Free throw to help develop shooting form
- Develop a variety of finishing moves close to the basket

4. Passing and Receiving

- Passing as a skill and technique is a movement sequence from feet to hands (coach all the detail)
- Coach passing and receiving under game-like pressures
- Ensure players pass out of stance
- Commit to coaching a game style with better player movement without the ball
- Coach the detail of footwork for the lead
- Teach players how to move the defence with fakes

5. Use of the Dribble

- Deliberate and situational dribbling practice is needed at all junior training sessions
- Players will have to commit to additional individual dribbling practice
- Master the speed dribble technique and phase in the full court
- Master the control dribble phase and dribbling techniques in the half court
- The dribble has situational use which requires different techniques



6. Offence

- Reaffirm the concepts and principles of the British game style:
 - *Spacing*
 - *Ball Movement*
 - *Movement without the ball*
 - *Vision and Timing*
- Prepare players to execute under pressure
- Coach game context awareness
- Stress the 'ready' and 'triple threat' positions
- Teach 'sealing', 'leading' and 'receiving' as part of individual offence

7. OFF-BALL Defence

- Positioning with vision in stance
- Moving and repositioning as the ball moves
- Helping teammates to defend the ball
- Rotating and recovering to a different player

8. Point Guard Play

- Define the attributes we seek in British Point Guards
- Use these attributes as the basis for identification and development of Point Guards
- Coaches must be prepared to develop the Point Guards
- A clear understanding of offensive capability
- A clear understanding of defensive capability



IMPORTANT THEMES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE AREAS OF EMPHASIS AND GUIDELINES

There are also very important themes that have emerged from the consultation and analysis of our current British playing skills:

IMPROVED PLANNING FOR PRACTICE (AND DEVELOPMENT)

Increasing the time dedicated to development – This demands increasing the proportion of team practices spent on individual skills, plus finding time and facilities outside of normal team practice.

While this normally means individual practice by our individual players working on their individual skills, as happens elsewhere in the world, there also is an additional challenge for British basketball.

This challenge is to find time in the basketball calendar for development activities to take place given facility access is limited and costly.

The ratio of playing games to training and teaching the skills becomes an important issue. While players want to play they must also be given the tools to play the game successfully at all levels. It will require junior coaches, clubs and schools to analyse their coaching and time allocation to the basic skills.

Therefore this will require not only coaches to modify their approach to training by scrutinising content in the context of this document but also the need for administrators and leaders at all levels of the British game to be creative in their planning and to create more opportunities for player and coach development without conflict with competition and scheduling.

Leaders of our game and administrators are also faced with a facility access issue of both availability and cost. Increasing the training time to implement this curriculum implies taking on increased costs.

Our challenge is to find ways to minimise this cost, especially to assist lower socio-economic and disadvantaged groups in our community, who find basketball a regular and attractive sport to play, and more importantly, to train for development.

However, for the main purpose of this document, initial improvement lies in reorganising the time that we already have and supplementing the costs for development through better planning for practice and training. This will create time to implement these guidelines in the short term.

ENHANCED TEACHING AND COACHING FOR UNDERSTANDING

We need to have a greater understanding of WHO(M) we are coaching and at what level, as well as a better teaching of the technical skills (WHAT) and knowing HOW to teach the concepts, principle, techniques and skills. In this document these terms are not to be confused with Coach Education terms of HOW (general coaching skills i.e. demonstrating, analysing, coaching methods) and WHAT (sports specific content).

This will require using varied coaching methods (HOW) at the appropriate stage of development (WHEN), most importantly teaching our players better understanding of the game and its skills.

The WHAT, HOW, WHEN and WHY are our teaching foundation for our British players to have better understanding.

The WHY and WHEN a skill is used should always be discussed and debated with players in order to increase their understanding at the junior club and school level. This is best reinforced through repetition, including better use of breakdown drills and constrained scrimmage games. Coaching for greater player understanding must include reinforcement with appropriate feedback and more review through video analysis and other off-court learning activities.

The use of “controlled”, “conditionally restrained” or modified games/drills and scrimmages leading to tactical and conceptual repetition will reinforce the WHEN and the WHY of these areas of emphasis. Showing and demonstrating team concepts through setup replay and walkthroughs are examples of the HOW.

In summary, our coaches for future generations must teach and coach the individual skills well so that players leave the programme knowing and understanding the skills and key game concepts. We will be able to measure what they *have* learned, not what they *can't* do.

- Teach the player WHY the skill is important.
- Teach the player HOW the skill is performed. How does it look? How does it feel? How do you perform the skill?
- Teach the “breakdowns” and use whole/part/whole teaching with effective coaching cues.
- Teach the player WHEN the skill is best performed and is most important.

Remember, teach doesn't always mean “tell”, and not everyone learns in the same way. Explore the use of other coaching methods to get the most out of your players.

WHAT DO WE TEACH?

- Individual skills most appropriate to a group programme or team. The recommendations in these guidelines are the curriculum map for the concepts, principles, skills and techniques. A checklist of concepts, principles, skills and techniques will be provided as part of the new curriculum, as well as the perspective offered in this Areas of Emphasis document.
- All future teaching / coaching should be referenced against the British Basketball Master Checklists of concepts, principles, skills and techniques. Additionally, the Areas of Emphasis, along with the Club Skills Guide (a stage two roll out), will provide the necessary guidance. We must also understand the need to teach offence before defence. Create it then stop it. Develop it further then refine it against increased pressure.

After establishing the detail of HOW, teach WHY the skill is important and WHEN to perform it in a game or playing situation. This will result in better game understanding by our players.



EXCEED AT DEVELOPING PRESSURE IN TRAINING:

Coping with defensive or speed and time pressure – increasing players' capacity to execute skills when under pressure, and exposing players to pressure by increasing the defensive intensity at all stages of the pathway, as well as developing pressure through better game context drills and execution.

The coaches' challenge will always be great in leading and managing training and development in training sessions at school, club, regional, and performance levels.

To create pressure at training requires good planning and even better management. Coaches must establish training standards not only in player behaviour but in terms of ethos and application.

How does a coach create more "pressure" at training? By pressure we mean intensity of effort and generating constraints through time, space and situational reaction. However, we also mean improving offence, then improving defence to in turn improve the level of offence again.

How do we improve and create more pressure at training?

- Train with intensity particularly at the specialising and investment stages. That is, mid to late teens and youth and pro levels.
- Plan challenging sessions and drills but demand proper technique and execution within the more pressurised training environment.
- Select appropriate drills but emphasise the detail of execution within all drills.
- "The drill is not the drill. The drill is how well we do the drill". It's the detail, reaction through time and space and quality of performance by the player.
- Control/constrain drills and game situations to get better outcomes (plan and analyse).
- Demand better execution: "perfect practice makes perfect".
- Use shorter sessions focusing on effort rather than longer sessions with too much talking by the coach. Measure training through better timing of drills to create maximum efforts and then allowing for recovery time.
- Measure our training, simply by counting/recording turnovers at training by the team and/or individuals. Record other effort areas like hustle plays (offensive rebounds, effective block-outs, deflections, sprinting man ahead)
- Demanding great defence always at every level. Make the defence repeat a possession to improve its execution and not just rotate through the drill without any consequence for playing poor defence.



BETTER FOCUS ON DEFENSIVE PERFORMANCE IN GAMES AND TRAINING:

Defence must always be a focus when we come together as a team or squad at all levels.

It is normally accepted that players progress from the sampling years (beginner) through the specialising years (prioritising basketball as preferred/only sport) into the investment years (20 or more hours per week). Most of this time is spent with an offensive focus. However, defence should not be neglected through these same stages. Coaches should encourage and teach offence first and then teach the same players and groups how to stop the offence. Only by improving levels of defence can we raise the level of offensive skill execution. This is the cycle of development.

- Basketball is essentially an offensively orientated game. Quick movement, limited time and space all combine to make basketball the most offensively-minded sport on the Olympic calendar. Being a team game with individual skill allowing all players to score in the normal course of a game places it above most team sports in terms of offensive action. However the key controlling aspect in competition is ultimately the ability of a team to play effective defence.
- The battle of the single ball versus a defensive team of five players is an aspect that ultimately determines standard. New moves are created and new tactics and combinations of different combinations of cuts, dribbles, passes and spacing continually reinvigorate the basic game. Defence has to learn to deal with this progress.
- Offence leads, defence follows.
- The secret is to advance defence to a level that it can neutralise and then disrupt any individual and team offence.
- The need to defend in a game of shooting or scoring percentages is obvious.
- In developing our players we must concern ourselves with defence as well as offence.

The British game needs more attention to defence in training and team preparation.

- The slide in and from stance to stop dribble penetration in the half court.
- The teaching of run-slide-run footwork and concept of positioning for full court defensive execution.
- Defensive positioning on and off ball: the flat triangle of ball-you-man to build effective half court defence.
- Player vision and the need to deny passes but also help.
- Hedging and recovering from the flat triangle position. Anticipation.
- Helping and recovering against dribble penetration, but every player being more effective in shutting down their opponent.
- Closing out (footwork and understanding). Closing out shorter to contain the dribble drive.

Attention to all these components will advance our current level of defence.

All coaches must know how to effectively teach man-to-man defence in order to improve pressure at training.

WORKING TO A NATIONAL PLAN

After use of the curriculum for planning, the link between programmes and these Areas of Emphasis and the subsequent training is most important. A curriculum is only as good as the programmes in which it is implemented. Additionally, the programme relies on the quality of the coaching.

A curriculum will work with any programme if the teaching and coaching is focused, and committed to improvement.

However it must be consistent in its emphasis and be specific and detailed when required. Once the coaches embrace British Basketball's Areas of Emphasis, the home nations will provide both the pathway and content needed to maximise the teaching of the curriculum to clubs and schools. Hopefully this will maximise player potential through their development programmes. A system of player and coach development is currently underway and must continue to grow and improve.

Much has been said about the perceived limitations that are limiting British basketball at the club level and above.

Clubs are often competing not only on the court but off it as well. Unfortunately sometimes this becomes competing not through striving to be better or maintaining focus but by demeaning the performance of others. Pulling other clubs or programmes down by criticising is not the answer. Working collaboratively for basketball will improve the success of basketball in the UK.

It can't be "us against them" (or me vs. we) at a number of club, school or academy levels.

- Understanding that basketball as a sport is competing in a national sporting landscape in the UK is more important.
- Basketball cannot compete within through negative gearing, but must collectively promote basketball against other sports such as football and netball. It is a big enough challenge without demeaning other basketball clubs or national bodies, through public criticism or through our key clients such as players and parents.
- It is setting our sport to be devalued by those who need to value it most.
- The WE is BASKETBALL, not just a single club or school team.
- Successful countries internationally have strong club competition, but have a sense of national purpose and collaboration that makes their countries' basketball superior to what we currently have.
- WE have the same potential but our focus needs to become more collaborative in a development and coaching sense in order for our players to gain from all coaches and from the best training environment for each player and family.
- Often this means sharing a player with their school, club, region or country and making sure that everyone is on the same page with the player's best interests at the forefront in any decision.
- Players will move in search of opportunity and we should not hold our emerging talent back through small-mindedness or selfishness. The player's growth and progression is all-important. Loyalty will come from quality coaching and the ability of a club or school to develop players and pass them progressively through a club pathway.
- Communication and information sharing is the cornerstone of collaboration between clubs and competitions and national bodies.

- For British basketball to improve at all levels we must become more focused on individual players' development needs and assisting the player and their parents along the performance pathway.
- The number of national team players developed through a club or school, as well as the satisfaction of all players with playing for a club or school, are measures of quality - not just the number of games won by teams.
- Any plan requires good implementation and resourcing as well as a belief in the future, not the past.
- The new generation of British coaches must leave club loyalties and egos behind as they seek better collaboration while engaging each other to learn. They will become better through improving shared knowledge opportunities, or observing opposition coaches coach and then challenging each other on and off the court with respect.



THE AREAS OF EMPHASIS GUIDELINES ARE OUR STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PLANS.

Eight supporting resources and complimentary strategies have been identified to implement our plan to improve players.

1. A WELL-DEFINED PERFORMANCE PATHWAY

The British Basketball Performance Pathway will continue to be better defined over the next three years. This will present a great opportunity for coaches to collaborate better, creating a coaching fraternity or 'community of practice'. Further clinics and opportunities for coach development will become fundamental to coach development in the UK.

2. BRITISH AND HOME NATIONS NATIONAL TEAMS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

British and home nation's national teams and the respective development programmes will work to a specific curriculum of competencies as well as these areas of emphasis.

3. THE BRITISH CURRICULUM IS THESE AREAS OF EMPHASIS GUIDELINES AND CHECKLISTS

The British Master Checklists will provide a reference guide to the WHAT we have to teach. The National programmes will be open for all club coaches to observe and learn.

4. GLOSSARY OF BASKETBALL TERMS

The British Basketball Glossary of Terms is a unique blending of current European and World basketball terminology to help establish a common communication vocabulary.

5. MASTER CHECKLISTS OF CONCEPTS, PRINCIPLES, TECHNIQUES AND SKILLS

Checklist of skills, concepts, principles and techniques will be produced as a guide to develop the key skills and understanding in all players. This will be available to further help coaches understanding in line with these Areas of Emphasis

6. NATIONAL SHOOTING COMPETITION

A National Shooting Competition will be introduced highlighting the importance of shooting to young players and their coaches.

7. AREAS OF EMPHASIS NATIONAL DRILLS

A series of drills chosen by leading coaches will be offered as an additional resource. However it is not drills that improve players; it is the detailed teaching and emphasis within a drill's context that improves performance.

8. A CLUB SKILLS GUIDE

A Club Skills Guide will provide a basic checklist of techniques and skills for age and stage of player development to help age groups coaches' understanding in line with these Areas of Emphasis.

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