

## Multi-tasking in Youth Sports Drills Creates More Learning

Let's continue with the series on how coaches can have more effective and efficient practices ... By the way, a big thank you to all of you who responded to last week's article. It was great that so many were able and willing to identify this need in their coaching style and are going to now make the necessary adjustments!

A quick recap: Last week we looked at the importance of having enough balls and/or equipment for every kid. This will enable more activity, more repetitions and more time for other drills and teaching.

This week, I want to help you be more creative in your drills. In the creation and development of your drills, keep this point in mind: Each drill needs to incorporate several different skills as well as fine and gross motor skill development.

I was in a gym a few weeks ago and saw a coach putting the kids through a basketball rebounding drill. The content was great. The kids were really learning how to get good position and how to develop the timing to go up and get the rebound. What would have made this drill better would have been to:

- Have the kids play some defense first. This would have given them a more realistic idea of how to get position when the man you're guarding is moving around.
- Pass the ball to an offensive player to let him/her shoot the ball to create the rebound. So often the coach will shoot the ball to create the missed shot and rebound. This now allows at least one player to practice his shot, it allows the coach also to teach the defensive player to yell out "shot" when his man shoots the ball.
- Teach the players how to rotate their bodies to the outside for an outlet pass, keeping the ball up and away from any defenders.
- Finish the drill with a fast break. Now you are teaching fast break positioning, passing, lay-ups, outlet passing, etc.

I like to do a work search on the internet and find several drills for the skill I want to teach. I then do three things: First, I try to combine the drills I like into one drill. Second, I try to come up with the movement that occurs before these drills so the kids will learn sequence and the natural game flow. Third, I have the drill flow into what would occur next in the game. Again, sequence and natural game flow is important.

You can use this style of drill creation with any sport. Instead of just dribbling the soccer ball up the field and back, you can add a few passes on the way, a shot on goal, a center pass, etc. Your only limitation is your inability to be creative.

Let's go back to the basketball rebounding drill. Look at the time you have saved, allowing you more practice time to work on other things. Instead of doing three drills of 10-15 minutes each, you have accomplished three different skills, situations and movements in one 15-20 minute drill. Furthermore, the drill was more effective in teaching realistic game flow, sequence and true situations. Also, think of all the time you save from the transitions of going from one drill to the next. Explaining the drill, lining the kids up the way you want, and the demonstration can take up valuable time between drills.

I know that there are, however, times and situations when a practice drill needs to focus on one isolated skill. This is evident in the earlier stages of a practice season and more appropriate with younger kids. But when I have summer basketball camp with a lot of kids in the gym, a limited time frame and a huge teaching agenda, these are principles that I use to make practice time more efficient.

And then, you can have time at the end of practice to play games and have fun!