



Wheel of Success: A Perspective on Player Floor Time

Imagine two bicycle wheels. One has all the spokes evenly distributed around the rim, with the tension equally balanced. As a result, the wheel turns true and performs effectively, ride after ride. The second wheel has the same number of spokes. However, the spokes are distributed unevenly around the rim and each spoke is tightened to its own specific tension. At first, the second wheel performs well, keeping its round and supporting the rider just like the first wheel. But eventually, the performance of the second wheel gives way to the lack of even support throughout the wheel and the competing tension from each individual spoke. The wheel begins to lose its round, becomes wobbly, and eventually it's unable to support the rider.

There are two competing philosophical approaches to building a basketball team:

- a) Identify the better players, give them more floor time, count on them to produce the majority of the offense and hopefully win for the team.
- b) Identify the strengths of all players, balance the floor time, and count on everyone to contribute their strengths in some meaningful way to achieve the successes of the team.

Plan "A" has been used successfully by the majority of coaches. Talented players have ample opportunity to shine and bear the majority of the responsibility for the success of the team. However, using this approach can limit the development of the less talented or slower developing players. It breeds competition between teammates and reinforces a lack of trust.

Plan "B" provides opportunities for every player to contribute to the success of the team. Individuals learn about their strengths and weaknesses and are encouraged to accept a role that matches their strengths while developing weaknesses. It promotes trust building within the team, between the players and the coaching staff. The process takes more time. However, all players have an opportunity to develop, understand the game at a deeper level, and take responsibility for the team's success.

While developing your season plan, consider the following strategy used by some coaches: Decide that all players will play equally for the first three quarters of the game. During the final quarter, give floor time to those individuals who have demonstrated growth, played really well and are tuned into the game. To support this decision, build a schedule that balances play against some weaker teams, some equally competitive teams, and some tougher opponents. Strive for a provincial ranking that represents the play of the whole team and not just the better players. Most importantly, while at practice treat all players as if they are starters.

We want our youth to:

- develop individual **and** team skills
- make a commitment to something bigger than themselves
- learn about themselves and others
- become good citizens
- develop their body, hearts and minds
- become decision makers and leaders