

XIX. Anatomy of a Time Out

Time Out! So, what happens next?

Are your time outs organized? Do the players all understand the time out procedures? The following is the anatomy of a basketball 60 second time out sequence.

First 10-15 Seconds:

1. Players hustle to the bench. Get water, towels, etc.
2. Coaches huddle: assistant coaches feed the head coach information and discuss strategy.

Next 10 Seconds:

1. Head Coach gets in the team huddle. Bench players and assistants are standing behind the head coach.
2. The point guard should always be seated right in front of the coach, with two players – currently in the game – on his right and left.
3. Head coach does 95% of the talking.
4. During these 10 seconds of the huddle, the head coach motivates and gives positive reinforcement. Or rants and raves, etc. (If this is your leadership style)

Next 20-30 Seconds:

1. Discuss the main reason for the time out. No more than two reasons. Choose your words carefully.
 - Example: “Whatever you do, don’t foul the shooter and give the other team a four-point play.” (Strange things seem to happen) vs. “Make sure we play intelligent defense on the shooter.” You are saying the same thing without planting a negative seed.

**We videotape our timeouts to make sure everyone is following the proper time out procedures and are engaged in the process.*

Communication During Time-Outs

Verbal communication between coach and athlete plays an essential role in success for all sports. During time-outs from play, effective communication becomes even more crucial.

Recently a team of Czechoslovakian sport psychologists analyzed the communication that went on between coaches and players on volleyball and basketball teams during time-outs.

The results from the study revealed what was discussed during time-outs. 55% of the time was used to purely discuss strategy and tactical information. 22% of the time was used to give negative evaluations to players. 15% of the time was used in attempts to motivate or relax the team. 8% of the time was used to give out positive performance appraisals.

The Czech's found that there was a connection between the content of the communication and the subsequent performance of the team. Quality and quantity of the communication also

played a significant role in determining the effectiveness of the time-out.

Recommendation: 1. During time-outs, give only brief strategic or tactical instructions to your players. When involved in the heat of intense competition, players are under extreme emotional tension and are not ready for long, complicated instructions.

2. Don't give out any negative evaluations during time-outs. Save them for the following practice where problems can be worked on in an environment better suited for learning.

3. Never tell a team a victory is out of reach or that they can't win a game.

What to Say at Half-time or During Breaks

There are many stories about coaches who used a pep talk at half-time to rally their troops to facilitate a great comeback. But time for interventions in-between competitions is limited. Most coaches use these intermissions to mentally prepare their athletes for the challenge that lies ahead.

Recommendation: Here are some half-time/break time strategies to achieve optimal results in the later part of any competition: 1. Avoid concentrating on individual mistakes. There is little that can be done to correct mechanical failures. Reminding athletes about their mistakes at half-time only reinforces the poor behavior.

2. The main purpose of half-time is to allow athletes to "catch a breather". Make sure your athletes are relaxed during intermission.

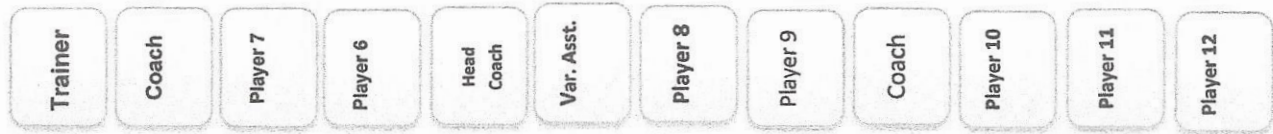
3. Briefly analyze what went wrong and give explicit instructions on how to correct the problem in the second half. Emphasize positive accomplishments.

4. Never express a lack of confidence in your team. Athletes are keenly aware of your feelings. Make sure they know you believe in them. All athletes must be convinced they are in a position to accomplish their aspired objectives.

P.S. While inspiring speeches may be occasionally effective, the best way to communicate at half-time is to remind athletes of skills they previously learned in practice and what they must do to execute the skills.

Erwin Hahn, Ph.D.
Bundesinstitut für Sport
Carl-Diem-Weg 4, Postfach 450247
5000 Köln 41 West Germany

Bench Organization



- Managers and Stats behind the bench.
- Player coming out of game hustles off the floor and sits next to Head Coach unless directed to sit next to one of the other coaches.
- Once the game gets going, seats 6, 7, 8 become interchangeable. This is determined by playing time and substitution rotation.

It is hard to get quality playing time for more than 8 players each game. So, we wanted those 3 players on the bench next to coaches for communication purposes so they are better prepared when they go in the game. We wanted an assistant coach towards the end of the bench with the rest of the players to keep them engaged with what is occurring on the floor.