



TEAM GOALS

Team goals are very powerful! Team goals have the power to promote team unity, to create loyalty to the program and to the coach, to improve the intensity and quality of practices, and to create the mind-set that the team is bigger than any one individual.

Simply put, for programs to be successful over the long haul, the coach must set clear goals for himself and his team. These goals incorporate the coach's vision, his mission, and the foundation that his program is built on. Once written down, these goals will provide the coach and his team with a compass that points everyone involved with the program in the right direction. These goals also reveal the amount of hard work, time, and personal sacrifice everyone involved with the program must make in order for the team to achieve its dreams.

It is the coach's job to constantly sell these goals to his players and support group daily. Your ability to sell your vision (team goals) of where you wish your program to go, will eventually determine your success or failure as a coach.

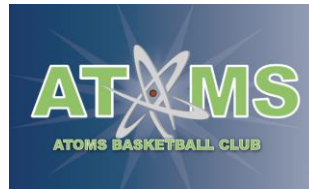
The best coaches make goals that are both long and short-term. Long-term goals give you something to shoot for. For example, "win the state championship."

Short-term goals help you keep on track and allow you to experience success and build confidence as you work towards your long-term goal: "We will hold our opponents to 12 or fewer points per quarter." Short-term goals are the building blocks in which you build your program and what you emphasize every day in practice... This is what you plan to be good at.

Goal setting requires some thought and serious effort. Take time to plan your success journey today. You'll be glad you did!

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE 15-20 POINTS UP

Now as a coach you will have times when your team is stronger than the opposition or just hits a purple patch and builds quite a lead a short time into the game. Some coaches look at this situation where the team is cruising and switch off, preferring to just make substitutions or worse try and totally crush the opposing team. Crushing an opposition team or not letting them score or even get shots up does little for the game of basketball. I am always looking for creative ways in which to help my players improve their game. Here are a few ideas and I'm sure as you get more into coaching, you will find many creative ways in which to challenge your players, and yet not send the opposition home feeling terrible after getting smashed.



1) Back your defense up to the half way line once your 15 points up and to the 3 point line once the margin hits 20. Now I demand all the players do this. Now young players find it hard to concentrate and this is a golden opportunity to help them focus and stay disciplined. Players who don't get back are substituted immediately. Now this may seem a little harsh but I never leave a player of too long as a matter of fact the very next opportunity to substitute will see them back on the court a far more disciplined player. The bench is a motivating factor as all players want to be on the court. If they repeat the episode of pressuring up the court then another quick substitution will ram home the message.

2) Now your players have backed off and are stealing the ball at will and the opposition cannot get any shots up. I have my players in this situation play hands on shorts defense, well near shorts rather than actually grab them. Now you might think this is belittling to an opposition team, having been on the end of several severe beatings I can tell you that your players will appreciate any chance to score a basket. With hands on shorts defense your players are still working on a vital fundamental which player's especially young ones have a hard time with which is footwork. Now even though we are playing hands on shorts, I demand players stay between their man they are guarding and the basket and can only raise them after the shot goes up. Under no circumstances are they to steal the ball. I would substitute players breaking this rule under the same guidelines as the previous backing up on defense rule. There is nothing worse than a team not scoring a basket it is a very sad and hollow feeling having nothing to show at the end of a game for all you teams efforts.

3) Now one of the hardest parts of the game to teach is the use of the opposite hand. When your team has a decent lead in a game make them play with only the opposite hand. At this point you have got to pose the question of what will your side really get out of a crushing victory other than some lay up practice. Your players will resist playing with their non dominant hand and again I would implement the quick substitution rule. Kids are amazing how quickly they pick things up and it will be quite challenging to them to force their brain to cope with this shift from the normal way of playing. A simple way to see they are actually playing with their non dominant hand is the use of a sweat band. Have your players bring these to the games where there are clear differences in the ability of both teams based on a previous meeting. As I continually preach to any players I coach, become a weapon, not a half player. The ability to use both sides of the body can never be understated.

4) Every player on the team must score before anyone can score multiple goals. This is extremely challenging to your players as most teams usually have only 2 – 3 dominant scorers. You will have a lot of fun watching your players resist the urge to score knowing that they have to help their team mates get a basket. It takes a fair amount of self discipline to give up making an easy basket to help a team mate get the same result. You as the coach will also have to help the players disguise the fact that we are trying to help a particular player score the next hoop. It's another simple way to give your team a focus when the game was basically over so far a result was concerned in the first half.



5) Make your team play a modified game. Now the previous points do this to some degree and still you can take this a little further by promoting different skills with various players on your team. Now I will often ban the dribble if I believe players are ignoring each other in making a forward pass or if our previous game was an over use of the dribble. I would also put this rule in to help these young players get vital practice in passing, leading and cutting. It really is a great way to promote team work and get every player involved on the offensive end. Now you can take this further by having different rules for each player. Now remember to keep it simple and just give each player one or two simple things to work on. Here are a few examples I am sure you can add a few extra.

- 1) No dribble
- 2) Only 1, 2 or 3 dribbles then you must pass.
- 3) Throw chest, bounce or over head passes only.

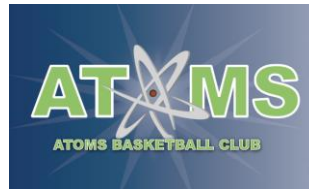
- 4) You must dribble (helpful for players who are reluctant to dribble).
- 5) Play with opposite hand only.
- 6) All the defensive rules above.

6) Now there will be times when some of the players on your team will barely be involved in the game. They will be timid or placid kids who are just happy to be on the team. They will run from foul line to foul line and hardly touch the ball or pick up a man. With this type of player I actually encourage them to try and steal the ball from their opponent and be aggressive. With some players you have to encourage them to foul and get used to being physical. Now I never would ask a player to go out and hit an opposition player as this a very cowardly act that should never be tolerated on any basketball court. It is important however, to get your players use to physical contact. The nature of playing a sport in a confined area will have players constantly coming into contact throughout the game and at training.

7) Now I have an equal court time policy with every team I coach during the regular season, and try and stick to this as much as I possibly can. I will however in close games go with the best kids I have for the final few minutes. Blow out games give you an opportunity to add some extra playing time for the kids who are struggling a little with their skills and concepts. In the tougher matches you can swing slightly the other way.

What to do when your 15 -20 points down

It is sad to see a once robust coach at the start of a game suddenly sit down and get very quiet once their team is down by quite a considerable margin. I am a firm believer in coaching out the game regardless of the score board. It is when the chips are down that your team really needs your support and more importantly your focus. A team will often feed off their coach and you being the leader will need to keep them motivated especially when things aren't going so well. This is the most challenging



part of coaching and not something to fear or dread as it happens to the best of coaches at some stage. The most important thing you can do as the coach is keep coaching. It will be a real test of character for your team and for you, and some coaches find it hard to cope especially when things have been going really well for the best part of the season. Now it is during this time that I start to look for players who are not hanging their heads and praise them for this. I also point out the things that the opposition are doing really well and use this as an example of what I would like players from our team to be doing. It is a great teaching point praising opposition players as examples of how you would like your players to play. It also breeds respect for the opposition teams as this is important to show your players their just like we are learning the game and enjoying competition.