

10-TIME CHAMPION SHARES 15 PRINCIPLES TO BUILD A PROGRAM

BASKETBALL COACH WEEKLY

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PUT POSTS THROUGH DAILY DRILLS

DEVELOP FOOTWORK, SCORING AT THE RIM

OPEN OFFENSE BY DEVELOPING POSTS WHO PLAY OFF THE BLOCK

CONDUCT 'JOB' INTERVIEWS TO SELECT CAPTAINS

PROVE A POINT:

HAVE PLAYERS HOLD PHONES ON DEFENSE



◀ HAVE PLAYERS EMULATE **TIM DUNCAN'S** SMOOTH GAME ON THE POST

WANT TO COMMUNICATE BETTER? USE 'NITE' TO CONNECT

'NITE' Makes Communication Matter



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Sideline Stories

Coaches preach communication. We want it from our players. We expect it from our staff. But don't just talk for talking's sake. Idle chatter, especially from coaches, does not make for effective communication.

Larry Doty, who coached 26 years at Division III Linfield College (McMinnville, Ore.) before retiring in 2013, says the best way to communicate with players is via the NITE philosophy. He broke down this idea at the recent Oregon Athletic Coaches Association annual basketball clinic.

“You’re dealing with a generation that has one eye on a screen at all times. They need more eye contact...”

N – Names. Rather than simply yelling, “Rebound!” into a crowd during a drill, find the person who needs the reminder and single them out. This isn't meant to put them down in front of the team but rather serve as an individualized reminder. It's more effective to address one player. Yelling into a group allows every player to think it's someone else for which the instruction is intended.

I – Information. Keep this short and sweet. Players' minds are racing during practice drills and within games. They can't handle a lengthy diatribe about all the things to improve. But, make sure the information is direct and provides a method

for success rather than just a command. “Paul, keep your butt on him through the rebound,” is much better than the aforementioned “Rebound!”

T – Tone Of Voice. Players pick up a lot with the way you to speak to them. Be direct and firm when giving an objective. If you don't treat the statement with pride and purpose, then the player certainly won't. Remember, if you scream about everything, then after awhile nothing you say elicits a sense of urgency for players.

E – Eye Contact. This is critical for today's players. Look directly at the player and state your directive. In the previous example, look directly into Paul's eyes so the sole focus is on what you are saying. Don't simply yell it from across the gym. Don't allow Paul to look away. You're dealing with a generation that has one eye on a screen at all times. They need more eye contact, according to Doty.

With practices just getting going, now is the perfect time to work on communication. Just like opposite-hand layups, breaking a zone press or executing a buzzer-beating quick hitter, it takes repetitions and practice.

Players typically follow the lead of the coach. Expect it in peer-to-peer communication as well. Don't let players get away with saying something under their breath about a teammate. If they have a directive or critique, be sure they use the NITE principle as well.



Michael Austin
Michael Austin
Editor-in-chief



Use a player's name and look directly into her or his eyes when communicating

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Kelly Graves-led teams have won 10 straight conference championships — he shares the 15 ideals of his programs

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The first 3 daily post-player drills focus on passing, moving and scoring at the rim with body control, soft touch

5 ADD COURT COVERAGE TO POST DRILLS

Shift players around the court so they become acclimated to moving through a free-flowing offense

6 INTERVIEW POTENTIAL CAPTAINS

Turn the process into a full-blown job interview to learn more about your players' ideas on leadership & prepare them for the real world

QUICK HITTER DIAL UP YOUR DEFENSE

Today's players don't talk anymore — they text. Instead of picking up the phone to call someone, or even to relay a message to a person in the same room, players send text messages. The art of vocal communication is suffering.

It extends onto the basketball court. Players simply do not talk as much anymore. Watch as one of your players gets leveled when a teammate doesn't call out a pick.

Washington State's Ernie Kent has a unique way of forcing players to understand the basketball court is an entirely different world than where players currently live.

If players aren't communicating on defense in practice, he has them pick up their phones. As the offense screens, passes and moves the ball, Kent wants defenders to text their teammates about who has to pick up the new ball

handler, cutter or shooter in the corner.

“I tell them, ‘Your phone does you no good right now!’ and that they have to talk on defense,” Kent says.

It's a unique, simple way to get players' attention on a level they can understand rather than just resorting to yelling “Communicate!” at them over and over again.

- Michael Austin

Kelly Graves knows how to rebuild a program — he has 15 ideals upon which to build a foundation

Photo by Eric Evans, Oregon Athletics

Building Your Philosophy & The Importance Of Post Drills

Head coach Kelly Graves has brought his unprecedented success from Gonzaga to Oregon and shares his ideas on a winning philosophy while also providing six post drills

Kelly Graves has been dominating the West Coast women's basketball scene for quite some time now and he's brought his incredible success to a national-caliber program by taking over the University of Oregon squad this year.

Graves previously led Gonzaga to 10 straight West Coast Conference titles and also has coached at St. Mary's College, served as an assistant at the University of Portland and started his career at Big Bend Community College in Moses Lake, Wash.

Graves recently spoke at the Oregon Athletic Coaches Association basketball clinic and shared his thoughts on team-building, then dedicated a great deal of time to post-player drills (six of which are shown on the next two pages).

Here are his 15 program belief statements. Read each with the words, "We believe that..." before each one:

- An aggressive, physical conditioning program is the foundation of strong mental and physical discipline.
- Discipline is the foundation of team morale and unity.
- Morale and unity are two major components of great teams.
- Communication is a vital component of our team concept.
- Trust, pride, caring and respect are cornerstones to our program's foundation.
- Great basketball teams have attitudes that are consistent and unselfish toward TEAM thinking and strive for unity of purpose and collective responsibility.
- Defense is a cornerstone of our team philosophy.
- A sound defense is impossible until each player is willing to make great personal sacrifices in many areas, including the physical, mental and emotional aspects, and is willing to lose her identity within the team.

- We control the tempo of the game. We will pressure the opposition both offensively and defensively for 40 minutes.
- We will never accept a moral victory.
- We conduct ourselves appropriately at all times. We will treat others and ourselves with respect.
- The actions of players on and off the court are relative.
- (In) academic excellence.
- The greatest satisfaction comes through team victory.
- A person cannot truly be whole until they become part of something that is bigger than themselves.

The six drills on the following two pages are part of Graves' Daily Dozen his post players complete at every practice. They are easy to execute yet are critical when developing proper footwork along with a strong presence yet soft touch around the rim.

Words by:
Michael Austin

Activities by:
Kelly Graves,
University of Oregon women's basketball

Posts Pass, Shoot On The Move

The first 3 daily post-player drills focus on passing, moving and scoring at the rim with body control and a soft touch

WHY USE IT

Timing and rhythm fuel a successful post player. Run through these quick drills everyday to sharpen the skills on your forwards and centers.

SET UP

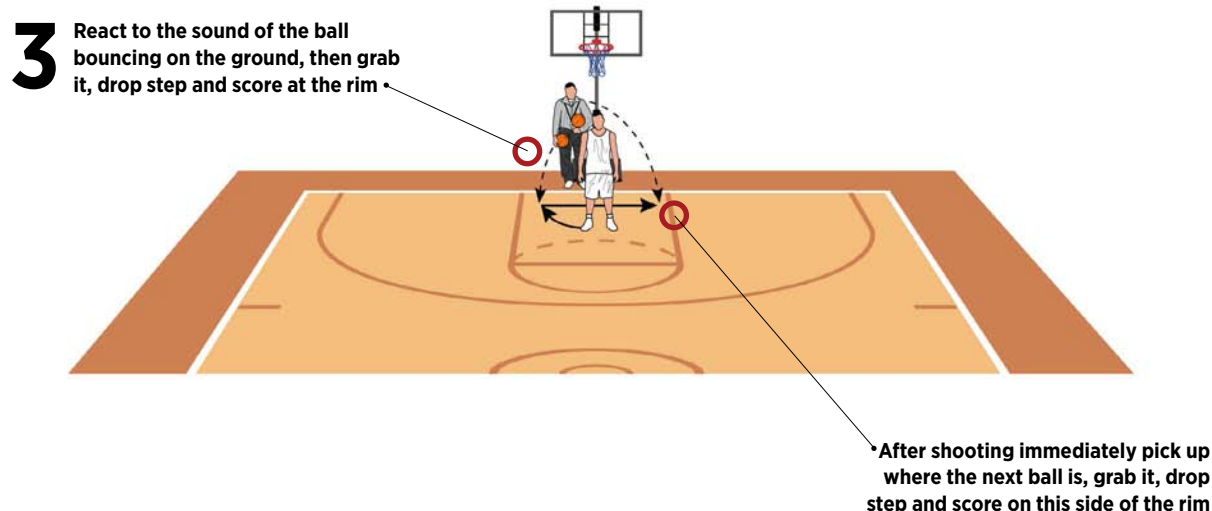
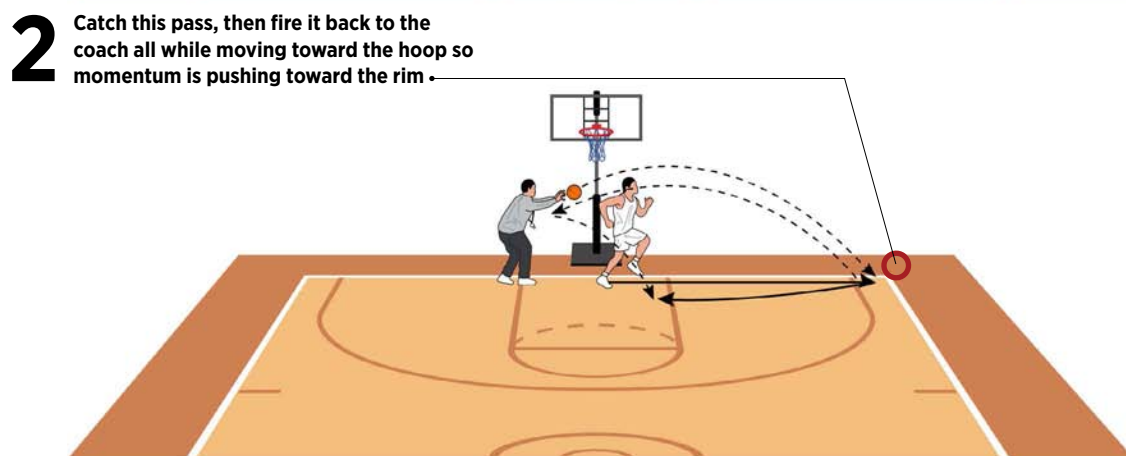
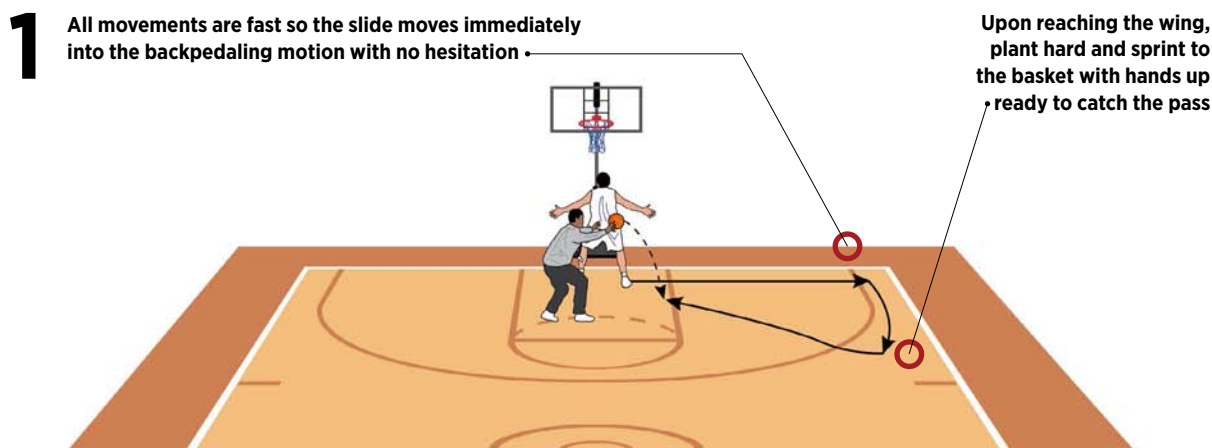
A coach and post player are positioned at a hoop.

HOW TO PLAY

The post faces the baseline and slides (feet not crossing) to the corner. From the corner, the player backpedals to the wing, then cuts hard to the hoop. Pass the ball and the post scores at the rim [1]. The second drill starts with the post running to the corner, receiving a pass and passing back. The post then cuts hard to the hoop, secures another pass and scores at the rim [2]. Now, have the player stand in the middle of the lane facing away from the baseline. Stand behind the post with two basketballs. Drop a ball. The post turns quickly, finds the ball, executes a drop step toward the baseline and scores. Drop the other ball as the first shot is taken and the same movements are completed [3].

TECHNIQUE

Do not allow dribbling. When a post is this close to the hoop, a dribble only invites a smaller defender to steal the ball in a game. Teach going strong to the rim, protecting the ball and finishing tough.



Player movement → Ball movement - - - → Dribble ~~~~~ → Shot →

Add Court Coverage To Post Drills

The next 3 daily post-player drills feature shifting your forwards and centers around the court so they become acclimated to moving through a free-flowing offense

WHY USE IT

Today's game isn't built around anchoring the tallest player on the post. Move your forwards and centers around the court to open space, passing lanes and scoring opportunities at the rim.

SET UP

The first drill requires two coaches (or teammates) while the second and third just need one coach and one player.

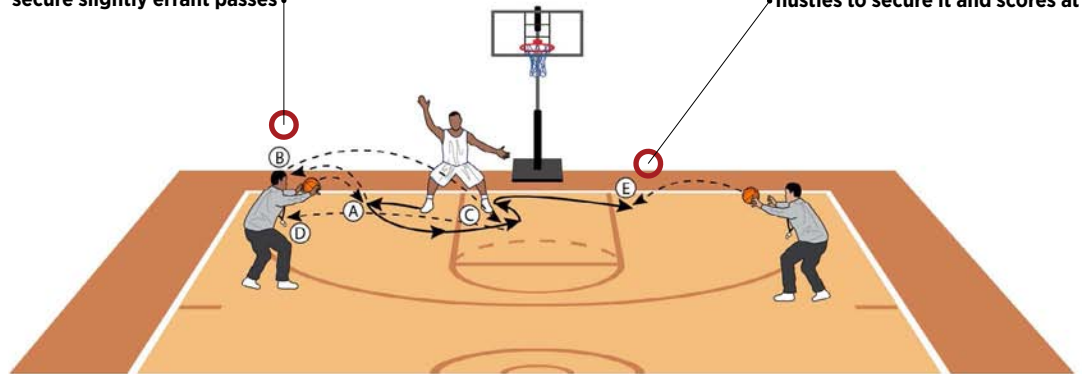
HOW TO PLAY

Stressing possession over position, make post passes not directly to the player, forcing him to come off the block to get the ball. The player returns the pass. Do this several times then the coach on the opposite wing yells "Go!" and the player comes across the lane, receives a pass and scores [1]. For the second drill, the post player runs at you, touches the ball you are holding and runs to the glass. Toss the ball off the backboard. The post rebounds and scores [2]. The final drill has the post running to the wing, cutting to the hoop, catching the pass and scoring a layup. He then banana cuts outside the lane for a mid-range jumper and curls to the baseline for a long jumper [3].

TECHNIQUE

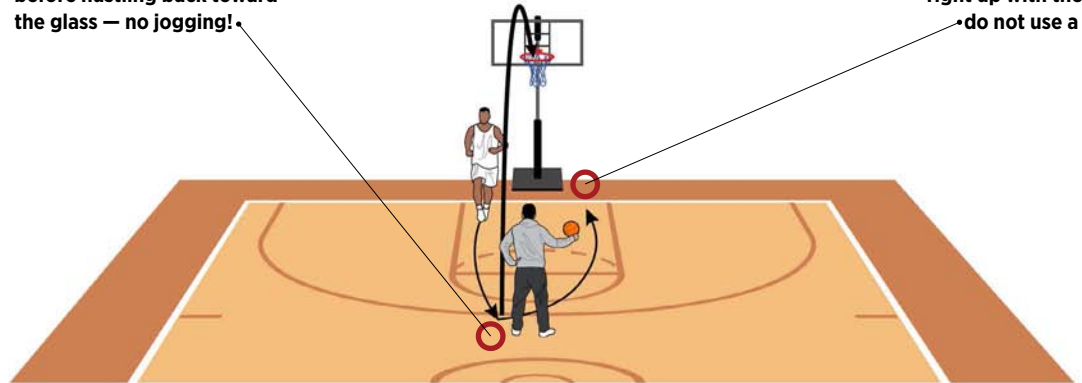
Again, there is no dribbling here — it's all rhythm — catch and shoot.

1 Value possession over position so come off the block and secure slightly errant passes



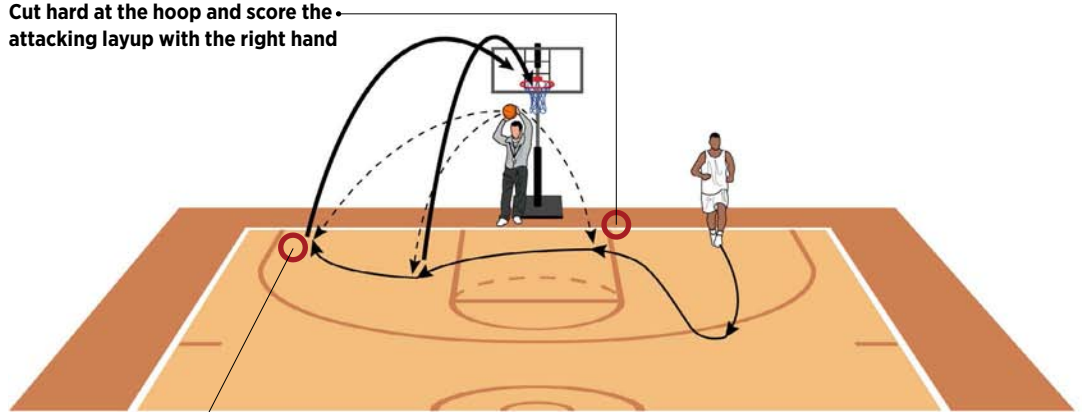
On the "Go!" command the second coach fires a pass to the block so the post player hustles to secure it and scores at the rim

2 Sprint and touch the ball before hustling back toward the glass — no jogging!

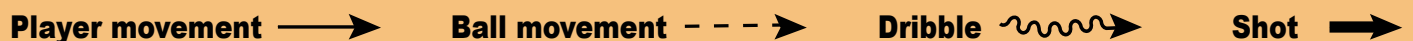


Grab the rebound and go right up with the shot — do not use a dribble

3 Cut hard at the hoop and score the attacking layup with the right hand



Get hands in a shooting position so it's easy to catch the ball and shoot in one rhythm





Find out who are your true leaders (beyond seniority and playing time) by developing an application process for captains

Interview Potential Captains

Turn the process into a full-blown job interview to learn more about your players' ideas on leadership while preparing them for the real world

Great leadership makes or breaks a basketball season. A player-led team is much stronger than a coach-led team, and picking captains is critical when it comes to establishing the leadership on your squad.

Captains must be an extension of the coaching staff, a person who goes between the players and coaches and is “on” every day without excuse.

Selecting captains varies within the coaching ranks with some allowing players to select while others pick with no player input. This year, we decided to change things and allowed players to apply to be a captain (an idea we took from author Jeff Janssen). By doing this, we expected to see who truly wanted this responsibility and to gauge how important it is to the players.

To start, our players submitted a formal

letter of interest to the coaching staff just as if they were applying for a job. They then were called for an interview. We emphasized being a captain has nothing to do with being a senior, a starter or even someone who gets a lot of playing time — it's about leadership qualities and work ethic. We had five players apply including two seniors, two juniors and a sophomore.

The interview process was treated like a job interview. Candidates dressed up. The hour-long interview took place with the coaching staff first where we peppered them with questions about their leadership history and had them discuss potential problems and their solutions.

From there, candidates met with our athletic director and women's basketball coach for 10 to 15 minutes and discussed leadership with them.

Being this was our first year with this system, we are happy with the results. Players grasped the responsibility and learned a real-life lesson about how to be professional when applying for post-college jobs. It showed them it's more than just sending out resumes — it's writing a unique cover letter, interviewing with many people and thinking through answers.

The process also started the candidates to think about leadership and why they wanted to be a captain, rather than it just being something to add to their resumes.

As a coaching staff, we conveyed our ideas and viewpoints to the players so they could see our position on certain topics. Plus, we took players out of their comfort zones to learn more about their positions on leadership and how they handle themselves off the court.

Words by:

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