



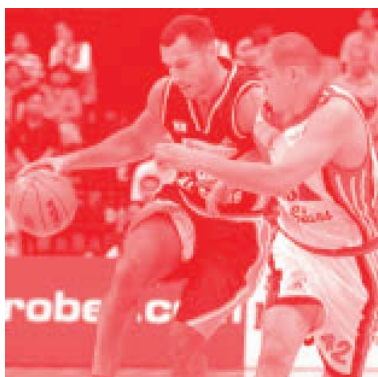
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3.1 COMPETITIONS



WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS CHAPTER?

Basketball Competitions Can Always be Improved

This chapter could be called “everything you need to know in order to run realistic, manageable and hopefully successful basketball competitions in your country”. It features hints on how to best connect the demand for basketball in your country with a competition structure that makes sense.

Most federations are already running their own leagues and so while this chapter does offer a clear, structured vision on how to create a perfect league it will also assist those of you who are looking to improve your existing competitions.

A league can always get better. Basketball competitions can always be improved. Ways to increase revenues can be found. The local communities could always be more involved. Very often, it is about making the competition structure more manageable and consistent with local needs. This is not an easy task.

This is why this chapter gives you some hints on what you should focus on in the different areas of running your competitions so that they become even more exciting, even more challenging, and watched by even more people.



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1. Introduction

In its early days, basketball was played purely for entertainment, to compete and socialize between communities as with other sports. As the sports and society developed, competition becomes more intense, advertising and promotion of the game followed in due course. Today, basketball is a commercial product and this creates its own problems.

In the beginning basketball players provided all the required equipment themselves and they were playing basketball as a hobby in their free time. Today basketball is played by physically and technically well trained players, in purpose built sport facilities. Their design has been the result of much research and development and they are filled with technically advanced equipment. Game times are arranged around the needs of television, often broadcasting to an audience on the other side of the world.

Basketball is a sport for everyone; the tall, the short, the thin, the fat, men and women, boys and girls. This is very important characteristic which must be remembered by administrators at all levels in our sport. For our sport to grow and continue to be popular it needs to get the attention of the public. It is not possible to get this attention only by practising, as in other sports. Intense competition with skilful play and a high excitement is needed to keep the supporter's attention. Therefore, for spreading basketball and keeping it contemporary basketball competitions are as important as the practices for the players.

2. Basketball Competitions

There can be many different motives for running basketball competitions such as; development of basketball and basketball players, creating an opportunity for the youth to play sports, arouse the interest of the public, bringing our sport to their attention and national promotion. The reasons for running competitions need to be clearly identified if we want them to fulfill expectations.

The goals and the purposes for organizing basketball competitions are;

- a) Improvement of the national basketball therefore the international profile of the country.
- b) Increase the popularity of the sport.
- c) Encourage young people to participate in sport.
- d) Improvement of the players, coaches and referees who will participate high level league activities.
- e) Arousing the public interest of the opinion and generating the necessary investments and providing the cash flow.

Taking the above into the consideration, basketball competitions can be classified as follows:





- a) High level (Division A) league competitions.
- b) Additional/mid level competitions.
- c) Division B and/or regional league competitions.
- d) Youth competitions.
- e) School activities.

To organize successful competitions which fulfil the goals and targets established, it is necessary to consider national and international circumstances.

Some national and international circumstances which should be taken into consideration in planning of the competitions are as follows:

- a) The country's land mass, the number of inhabitants and the distribution of the population.
- b) The transportation conditions between the cities or the regions.
- c) The economic balance between the cities or the regions.
- d) Climate conditions.
- e) Sport facility standards and their suitability for basketball.
- f) Number of clubs and the organization, administrative, technical structures, financial resources and sport facilities of the clubs.
- g) Number of players, their levels, abilities and training.
- h) Number of coaches, their levels, abilities and training.
- i) Number of referees, their levels, abilities and training.
- j) Interest show by TV in basketball.
- k) Sponsorships opportunities.
- l) Security.
- m) The calendar of the national team activities.
- n) The calendar of the international club competitions.
- o) The calendar of the basketball seasons of the countries where the foreign players are from.

3. League Activities

League activities, together with the national team activities are the indicators of the level of basketball in the country. Usually the national team activities do not cover an extended period and therefore do not stay in the focus for long. However, they are very effective in stirring national pride. On the other hand, league activities stay longer in the public focus longer, over a longer period of time and more regularly. Therefore, it is necessary to apply the perfect and the most ideal competition system for league activities and to try and satisfy the needs of the other parts of sport.

However, the most crucial problem is identifying the perfect system. Due to the issues identified above, there is a good chance that a system which has been very successful in one country will fail in another. So, it is not possible to recommend a perfect model which can be applied to every country. The most correct and recommended way is to identify the best system for each country by taking the suggested



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examples into consideration and making the necessary changes due to the individual circumstances in each country.

3.1 High Level League Competition (Division A)

Since any failure of competition at this level will reflect directly on the country's basketball, the administrative areas and also have high spectator appeal. During the high level league competition seasons, international competitions activities have an influence on national circumstances because the players who play in the national team also play in the league and the teams of the leagues participate to the international club competitions. There should also be some extra activities during the games such as, show groups, mini concerts, contest, etc; in order to increase the interest of the fans and the competitions profile to the highest level. The competitions must be played in the best facilities available for basketball.

Number of Teams

Initially, it is needed to determine the number of the teams in the league, so that the best competition format can be decided. Try to make all teams in the highest level (division A) competition even

The imbalance between the teams would decrease the quality of the league.

(financially, administrative, technical staff and sport facilities). An imbalance between teams decreases the quality of games in the league. As a result, public interest will fall and the demand for sponsorships will reduce. Therefore, while planning the highest level (division A) competition, do not artificially increase the number of the

teams. Instead it is better to have leagues with teams of equal ability.

Period of the Season and the Calendar

To create an ideal league calendar, make decisions about how many weeks you want to play and when you want to start and finish your competitions. It is better to avoid schooldays and workdays if you want big game attendances and/or games to be watched at the TV. With this in mind, consider arranging games on the weekends when determining the period of the season. In some countries where there are more teams in the leagues, sometimes there are games after working hours during the week. In some cases, when some of the clubs in the leagues also play in international competitions this may cause delays in the league program. Such a situation creates another potential problem, when too many games lowers the performance of the players and decreases the quality of the league. Therefore it is recommended when determining the number of the weeks to count only the weekends.

While determining the length of the season, factors which should be taken into consideration are:

1. The calendar of the national teams (game & camp schedule).
2. International clubs activities.
3. The best climatic season for the basketball games.
4. The additional weeks in case the games are postponed because of bad weather conditions.
5. The holiday period.
6. Christmas, Easter, national holidays (the ones which may prevent games being played).



7. All Star Week.
8. Player's resting time.
9. Preparation time before the season.

Although there would be some changes due to basketball activities in different continents and countries, a general example could be:

Competitions and preparations period	30-36 weeks
National Team games and preparation period	10-12 weeks
Vacation	6-8 weeks

Competition Formats

The highest level (division A) league competition should be played in a system where all teams play each other with at least one home and one away game.

The ideal team number for this level would be minimum 10 and maximum 16. There is a possibility that in some countries, where the population is low or the basketball is not popular enough, there may not be enough evenly balanced teams. In this case, we recommend a 4, 6 or 8 team league organization as a start (for competitions with an uneven number of teams participating, we suggest the next even number shall be taken).

3.1.1 Competition with 4, 6, 8 teams

The teams would play two home and two away games, in total 4 games with each other. In addition to that, with a 4 or 6 teams system, the teams could play in a neutral city as a tournament for the fifth time.

When this system is applied the league timeframe would be as the table below.

Number of Teams	1st Round	Break	2nd Round	Break	3rd Round
4	3 weeks	1 week	3 weeks	1 week	3 weeks
6	5 weeks	1 week	5 weeks	1 week	5 weeks
8	7 weeks	-	7 weeks	2 weeks	7 weeks

Break	4th Round	Break	Additional Tournament	Total
1 week	3 weeks	1 week	1 week	17 weeks
1 week	5 weeks	1 week	1 week	25 weeks
	7 weeks			30 weeks

This system is given as an example out of necessity, in case there would not be sufficient number of teams. This system is not a system to be recommended in the highest level (division A) competition as a principle. There are advantages and disadvantages for the teams to play each other in a neutral city for the additional tournament as recommended.

Advantages:

- Can be like the finals (play-offs). Adds excitement to the system and increases public interest.
- The interest in that neutral city can raise and a team or a sponsor can be found.

Disadvantages:

- If the champion team is already known because of the results of earlier games, these tournament games will not create adequate excitement.
- There will be an additional cost for transportation, accommodation and organization for the teams.
- The champion team will not be able to receive the cup in the presence of their fans.

3.1.2 Competitions with 10-16 teams

The teams will play twice with each other when this system is applied; one home and one away game. After the games the champion will be defined with the points the teams wins. If there is a division B, the teams who are last will be relegated. The ideal numbers of teams are 12 or 14, because if there are 10 teams the season will end early and if there are 16 teams then the timeframe will be too tight.

The league timeframe could be as shown in the table below according the number of teams.

Number of teams	1st Round	Break	2nd Round	TOTAL
10	9 weeks	2 weeks	9 weeks	20 weeks
12	11 weeks	2 weeks	11 weeks	24 weeks
14	13 weeks	2 weeks	13 weeks	28 weeks
16	15 weeks	2 weeks	15 weeks	32 weeks

The timing of the break can be determined by the organizing League depending on local conditions. The numbers given in this section are just an example. The base would be total number of weeks, determined by the organizing association for completing the league.

Since it is not necessary to win all your games during the league season, (except during the play-offs), interest in the league could be lower. In countries, where there is a strong public interest, the play offs system is organized after the regular season. Although having a low tensioned league seems like a disadvantage in the countries where high level basketball is played and the public interest is high; it may become an advantage for the countries which are just starting to organize their league activities.



Advantages:

- It is easier to manage the league since the number of the tough games will be less between the balanced teams.
- The games will be played in a long term and the ranking will be determined according to these games, therefore the adversities (e.g. short term injuries) the teams encounter, will not affect the general result much.

Disadvantages:

- When the champion team and/or the relegated teams are known weeks before the end of the season, the league would lose its excitement.
- There is a possibility that the teams, which can not be the champion nor relegated, do not attach much importance to the games. That may cause a decrease in the quality level of the league.

3.1.3 Play Offs Competition

It is a must to have a league competition, no matter in which format, with an extended season and a guaranteed number of games for each team, especially for the sponsors. However, if we know early before the end of the season the champion or relegation team the interest in the competition will decrease. Therefore, it is common to have play-offs after the regular season. A play-offs system means; a certain number of teams, proportional to the number of the teams in the leagues, play each other an elimination system. This is based on criteria announced before the season, with quarter finals, semi finals and final games. There are two important advantages of the play offs:

- a) All the games will be played as a final game and the champion will not be known until the last minute. This will keep public interest and the excitement at a very high level.
- b) Since the game results taken during the regular season will be used for the play off rankings and home court advantage, all games will gain importance.

It is obvious that the main target of the play offs system is to increase the importance of the regular season. To help that, some additional rules can be applied for all games played during the season, such as:

- a) The play-off match-up should be done according to regular season rankings. This ranking could be carried through into the further rounds. In this case finishing the season in an upper rank would be an advantage.
- b) The number of winning games required to advance to the next round in play-offs should be an uneven number (e.g. a team winning 3 games out of 5 or 4 games out of 7 will qualify for the





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next round). In this case, one team will play one more home game than the other, to reach the required game number to proceed to the next round. The advantage should be given to the team which finish the league with the higher ranking.

- c) It will increase the importance of the regular season games, if the results of the games played between the teams which match up in play-offs carried forward to the play-offs.

Example:

The team which had won both games during the regular season will start 1-0 ahead at the play-off match ups. In the case where each team had won 1 game the match up would be either 0-0 or 1-1 according to the organizer's choice. Having the match-up to start as 1-1 will result in fewer play-off games between equal teams, however, the length of the play offs will be shorter. On the other hand, having the match up start as 0-0 will result in more thrilling games played between equal teams and the length of play offs will be extended.

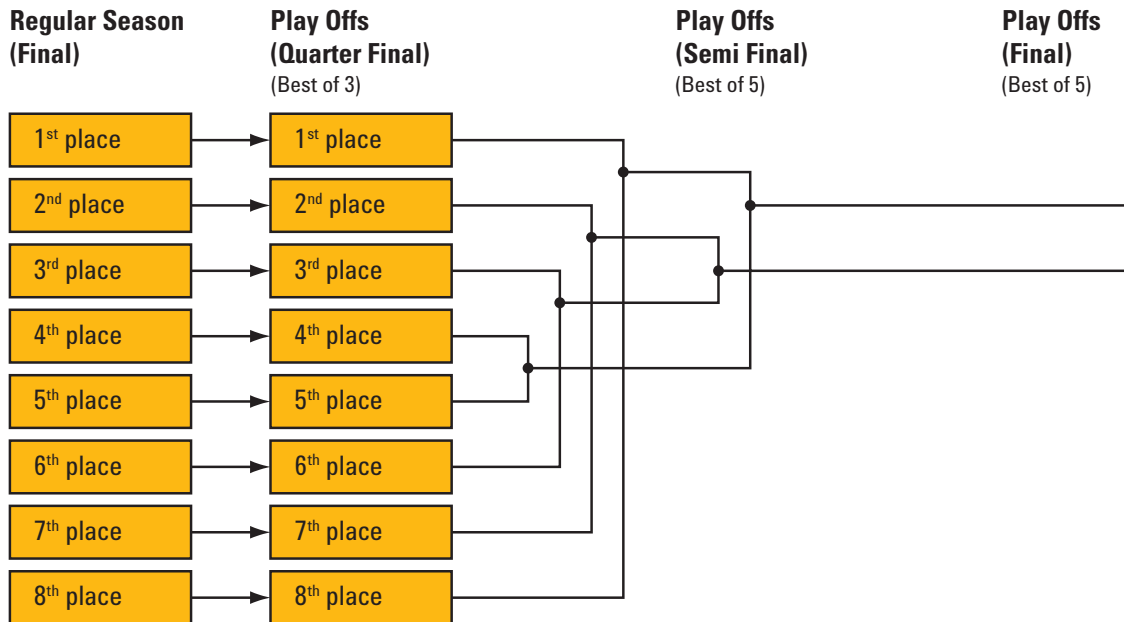
The number of teams for play offs is directly related to the number of teams in the league. Although having more teams in play offs would mean giving a chance to more teams, since teams which are not equally balanced would match up during the first rounds, public interest would be lower. On the other hand, if there will be fewer teams in the play-offs and the ranking of the regular season is clear, well beforehand, then the value of the remaining regular season games will decrease. The ideal number of teams for the play offs would be eight. It also could be six or ten depending on the number of teams in the league. The important points to be taken into consideration regarding the play offs:

- a) Play offs is a continuation of the regular season. It usually requires an additional time period of 6 to 8 weeks, depending on the number of teams, number of game required to qualify for the next round and frequency of the games to be played. This time period should be taken into consideration while preparing the league calendar.
- b) The teams should be required to stage the play offs' games every three days, even though, during the regular season, they usually play on the weekends. The deepness of the roster and the travel conditions of the teams should be taken into consideration while preparing the program.
- c) There will be more high interest games than during the regular season. Therefore, there would be more risky games which may damage basketball's reputation and keep fans away from the arenas. The required cautions should be considered and applied for the possible incidents.
- d) Since there will be many tense and hard games in a short period consideration should be given to prepare the required number and standard of referees.



EXAMPLE FOR THE REGULAR SEASON AND PLAY OFFS

Number of teams: 14
 Number of Play Offs contenders: 8



The teams who qualify to stay in the league next season:

- 9th place
- 10th place
- 11th place
- 12th place

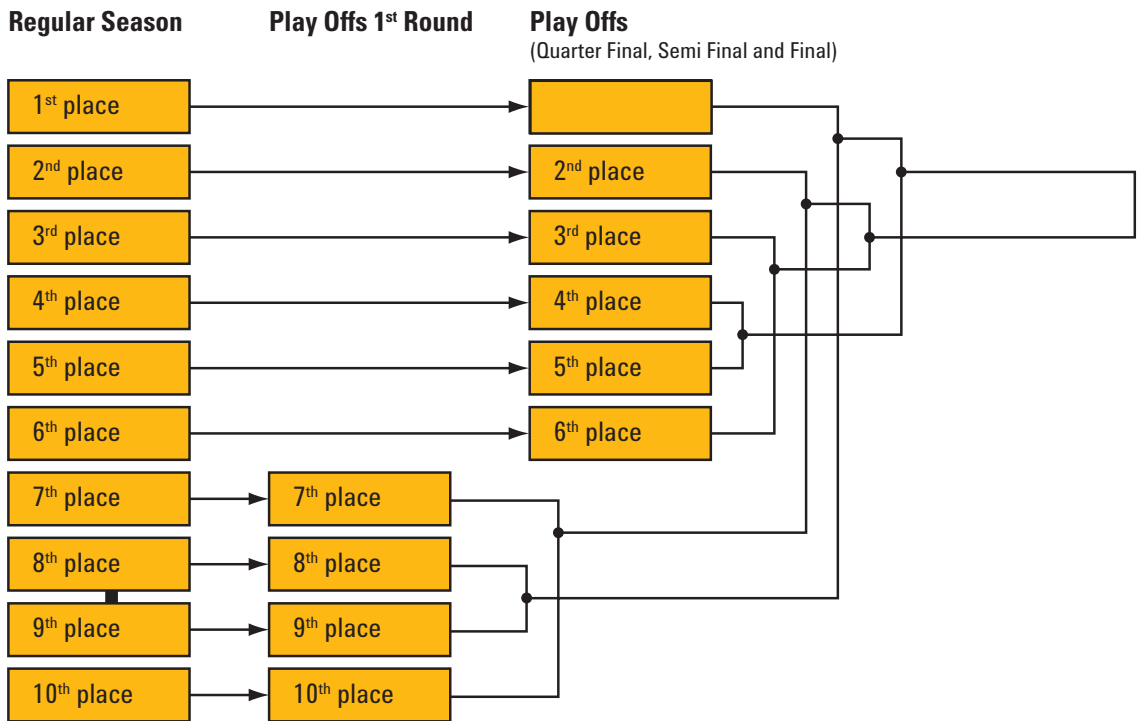
The teams who face relegation:

- 13th place
- 14th place



EXAMPLE FOR THE REGULAR SEASON AND PLAY OFFS

Number of teams: 14
Number of Play Offs contenders: 10



The teams who qualify to remain in the league for the next season:

11th place

12th place

The teams who face relegation:

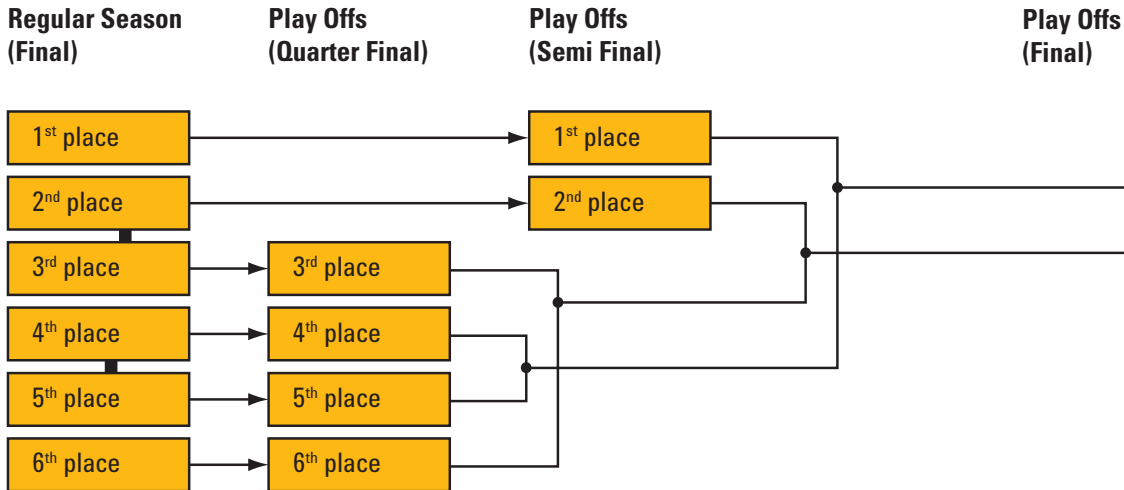
13th place

14th place



EXAMPLE FOR THE REGULAR SEASON AND PLAY OFFS

Number of teams: 12
 Number of Play Offs contenders: 6



The teams who qualify to remain in the league next season:

- 7th place
- 8th place
- 9th place
- 10th place

The teams who face relegation:

- 11th place
- 12th place



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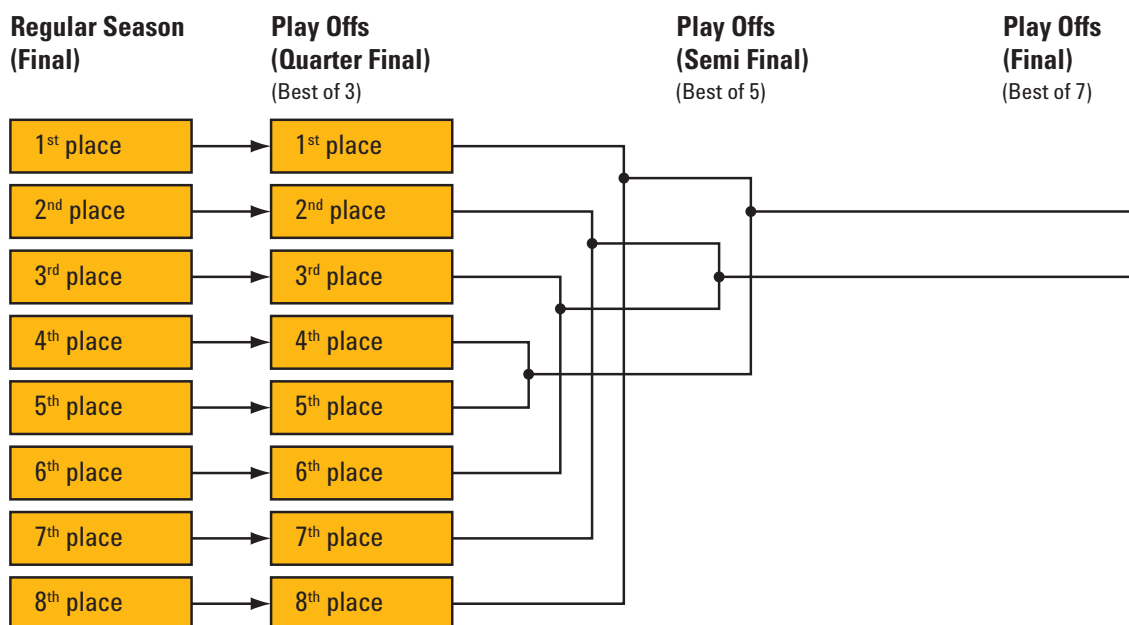
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EXAMPLE FOR THE REGULAR SEASON AND PLAY OFFS

Number of teams: 12

Number of Play Offs contenders: 8



The teams who qualify to remain in the league next season:

9th place

10th place

The teams who face relegation:

11th place

12th place



3.1.4 Play Out Competitions

In case there are huge differences between the teams in the high level league (division A) and the team(s) qualifying from the division B; with respect to administration, finance, facilities and organization, these teams cannot be promoted to the league they qualified for. To do so would upset the balance of the league. To avoid this condition there could be classification games between the last two ranked teams from division A and the first two ranked teams from division B. These games can be organized as a league or as a tournament in a neutral city. This system usually lowers the chance of the division B teams. They lower their expectations and because of that also their financial investment. For this reason the classification system is not very common.

If there is a need for a promotion/reglegation system because of the structure of basketball in the country, a fairer system would be the champion team of division B to qualify to the division A and the last ranked team of division A to be relegated to the division B. In addition, the next two ranked teams from each division (the last second and third last from division A and the second and third from division B) to play a four team classification tournament.

3.2 Additional Competitions

There could be competitions in addition to the league with different systems and names in order to enrich the country basketball activities, to set new goals in different areas.

The additional competitions could be; Presidential Cup, National Cup and Preparation Tournaments, although it may change according the country's basketball potential. It is important to organize them independent from the league activities and in the right conditions fitting the purposes of the organizations. During the competition which is organized in the name of the President of the country, it is important for the winning club and also for the coverage of the media that the President himself present the cup. However if the competition will not have the required support from the clubs, the media will loose interest in the event.

Organizing independent cup games between the teams regardless of the league in which they play has several advantages. During these competitions the teams usually play the first rounds as elimination system and the qualifying four or eight teams play the final in a different city.

Advantages:

- An additional excitement creates a different target for the clubs.
- The teams from division B get the opportunity to play against the teams from division A. This causes the teams to gain some experience and also fans living in these cities get the chance to watch the teams from division A.
- The additional games may be an additional income resource for the clubs.
- Since the chance factor plays a big role during the draw, there is the opportunity that sometimes some low budgeted teams may qualify for the next round instead of the favorite team.
- Having the final with the qualified four or eight teams (Final 4 or Final 8) in a neutral city will cause basketball excitement in that city and the fans will get the chance to watch the basketball stars. With interest, there might be the possibility of new basketball resources.



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Disadvantages:

- An additional cost for the clubs.
- The calendar of the league may get longer.

There can be some arrangements made for some teams to play some of their pre-season games before the season in the cities where there are no basketball teams for the same reason. The preparation plans of the teams, the accommodation conditions and the transportation conditions shall be considered while making such an arrangement.

3.3 Division B and/or Regional League Activities

In the countries where the population or the interest for basketball is sufficient to organize division B and/or regional leagues, this should be done.

The main purposes to organize these leagues are as follows:

- a) To spread basketball in the country.
- b) To more opportunities to play basketball.
- c) To create the chance for players, coaches and referees to develop themselves for the high level (division A) leagues.
- d) To give teams an opportunity and target to qualify for an upper league administratively, financially and organizationally.

In the countries where population is small and the basketball potential is limited, there are second (division B) leagues organized with the same number of teams as the high level (division A) league. It is recommended to have a similar structure for both leagues when the conditions are limited. It is fairer to determine the champion of the division B league with the ranking of the regular season instead of the play off system where the chance factor is higher, since the target of these teams is to qualify for the upper (division A) league.

It is recommended to organize the low level (division B) leagues as wide as possible and regionally in the countries where there are no limits as the population and the potential of basketball. The criteria below, should be taken into consideration while forming the structure of these leagues:

- a) The system should allow the teams to play maximum number of games.
- b) The chance factor should be minimal.
- c) The teams should be evenly matched.
- d) The regional geography of the country and the travel conditions should be taken into consideration while forming the groups.
- e) As emphasized in the previous sections there should be various rules for all games having an importance.

Example:

The game results taken during the group games should affect the teams which qualify for an upper group and the teams will play against the teams which qualify from the other group

- f) There should be some applications for the development of the players.



Example:

1. Limitation on the number of the foreign players.
2. Limitation on players older than a certain age.

An illustration for a division B league, while taking into consideration the above mentioned purposes and targets can be seen below. First of all, a pyramid system from bottom to top should be considered where all teams have equal opportunities and chances. The number of groups should be divisible by two (2, 4, 8 etc.) and there should be minimum 8, maximum 12 teams at each group.



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EXAMPLE – 1

12 teams 2 groups

Total 24 teams

Group A

1	Team
2	Team
3	Team
4	Team
5	Team
6	Team
7	Team
8	Team
9	Team
10	Team
11	Team
12	Team

Group B

1	Team
2	Team
3	Team
4	Team
5	Team
6	Team
7	Team
8	Team
9	Team
10	Team
11	Team
12	Team

1st Round Games: 22 weeks

1	A gr. 1. Team
2	A gr. 2. Team
3	A gr. 3. Team
4	A gr. 4. Team
5	A gr. 5. Team
6	A gr. 6. Team
7	B gr. 1. Team
8	B gr. 2. Team
9	B gr. 3. Team
10	B gr. 4. Team
11	B gr. 5. Team
12	B gr. 6. Team

Final and clasification Group games:
12 weeks
Each team will carry the games they played in their own group to the next round and only play with the teams from the other group.

Classification Group

1	A gr. 7. Team
2	A gr. 8. Team
3	A gr. 9. Team
4	A gr. 10. Team
5	A gr. 11. Team
6	A gr. 12. Team
7	B gr. 7. Team
8	B gr. 8. Team
9	B gr. 9. Team
10	B gr. 10. Team
11	B gr. 11. Team
12	B gr. 12. Team



EXAMPLE – 2

10 teams 4 groups

Total 40 teams

Group A	1	Team
	2	Team
	3	Team
	4	Team
	5	Team
	6	Team
	7	Team
	8	Team
	9	Team
	10	Team

Group B	1	Team
	2	Team
	3	Team
	4	Team
	5	Team
	6	Team
	7	Team
	8	Team
	9	Team
	10	Team

Group C	1	Team
	2	Team
	3	Team
	4	Team
	5	Team
	6	Team
	7	Team
	8	Team
	9	Team
	10	Team

Group D	1	Team
	2	Team
	3	Team
	4	Team
	5	Team
	6	Team
	7	Team
	8	Team
	9	Team
	10	Team

1st Round Games: 18 weeks

Semi Final Group (1)	1	A gr. 1. Team
	2	A gr. 2. Team
	3	A gr. 3. Team
	4	A gr. 4. Team
	5	B gr. 1. Team
	6	B gr. 2. Team
	7	B gr. 3. Team
	8	B gr. 4. Team

Semi Final Group (2)	1	C gr. 1. Team
	2	C gr. 2. Team
	3	C gr. 3. Team
	4	C gr. 4. Team
	5	D gr. 1. Team
	6	D gr. 2. Team
	7	D gr. 3. Team
	8	D gr. 4. Team

Classification Group	1	A gr. 9. Team
	2	A gr. 10. Team
	3	B gr. 9. Team
	4	B gr. 10. Team
	5	C gr. 9. Team
	6	C gr. 10. Team
	7	D gr. 9. Team
	8	D gr. 10. Team

Semi Final Group games: 8 weeks
Each team will carry the games they played in their own group to the next round and only play with the teams from the other group.

Final Group	1	Semi Final Gr. (1) 1. Team
	2	Semi Final Gr. (1) 2. Team
	3	Semi Final Gr. (1) 3. Team
	4	Semi Final Gr. (1) 4. Team
	5	Semi Final Gr. (2) 1. Team
	6	Semi Final Gr. (2) 2. Team
	7	Semi Final Gr. (2) 3. Team
	8	Semi Final Gr. (2) 4. Team

Final Group games: 8 weeks
Each team will carry the games they played in their own group to the next round and only play with the teams from the other group.



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4. Youth Competitions

It is a well known, and indisputable fact, that youth organizations are the main vehicle for spreading and promoting public interest in basketball. For this reason, the NF needs to take care to plan and realize these competitions.

Where are age groups are based in youth competitions:

- | | |
|-------------------|----------|
| a) Junior | Under 18 |
| b) Cadet/Cadettes | Under 16 |
| c) Paserella | Under 14 |

The competitions for these categories should be planned based on a system which is closer to league competitions at the age group for U18 and a system where the basic fundamentals of basketball are taught for the younger age groups such as U16 and U14. No matter which target has the priority, the aim at these categories should be to produce quality players for senior competitions and to have games played between balanced teams.

The players in junior, cadets/cadettes and paserelle categories are in the education system, therefore while planning the competitions of these categories, the school program has to be taken into consideration. The youth competitions should start regionally and at the weekends during the school time and after that, there should be tournaments organized covering the whole country during the weekends and school breaks.

Accordingly the organizational calendar could be planned as follows:

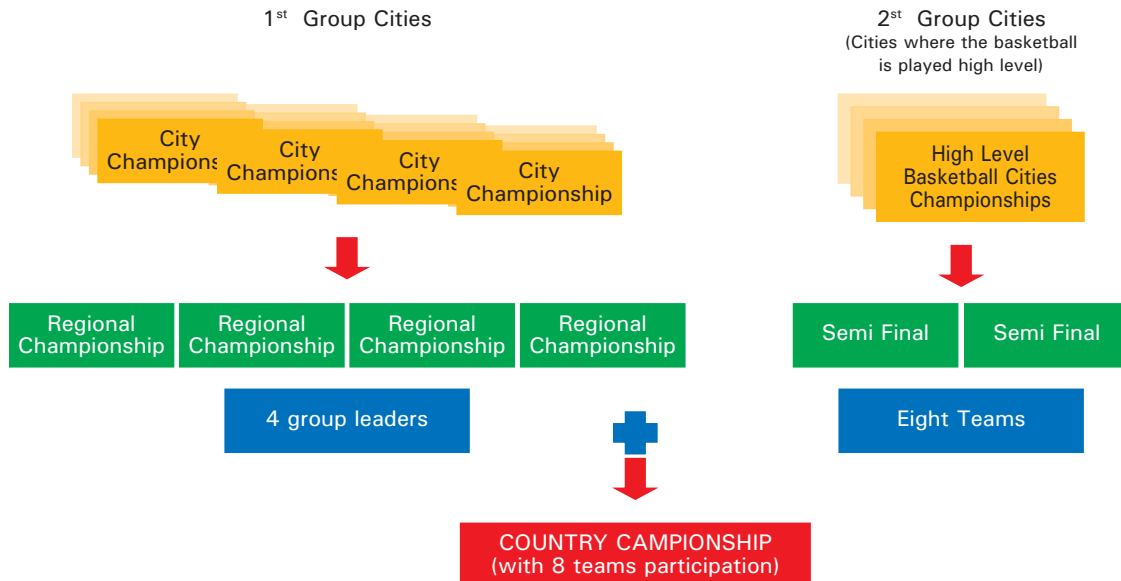
- | | | |
|---------------------------|----------|------------------------------|
| a) City championships | 6 months | Parallel to schools starting |
| b) Regional championships | 1 month | |
| c) Semi finals | 15 days | |
| d) Finals | 15 days | |

The simplest form of these competitions would be first city championships, then regional championships with the participation of the city champions. A certain number of regional champion teams with the highest ranking, would first participate in the semi finals and then the finals. There could be finals without the semi finals according to the country's land area, population ratio and the number of teams. The city champions participating equally in the national championship may seem a fair method but if the basketball distribution of the country is not balanced then this may affect the final stage negatively. In this case, the unequal teams will participate in the national finals and this will decrease the quality level of the organization and more importantly the young basketball players may lose interest in basketball when they lose by a big margin. Therefore, in countries where the basketball strength is regionally not balanced there should be some arrangements in the system to avoid this negativity.

The national championships in these categories could be arranged with 8 to 16 teams although it may change according to the land area, basketball potential and population distribution of the country. (It is recommended to have fewer teams at older ages and more teams at younger ages). The accommodation opportunities and the number of sport facilities of the city where the organization will be organized will be very important for increasing the team number.



A sample system for the youth organizations considering the above mentioned purposes and targets could be as below.



This system is to give an idea of the organization flow. A different flow system can also be formed as categorizing the cities where basketball level is high. The main purpose would be the need to have the teams which participate in the national championships, reasonably balanced.

5. Keep in Mind

The goal of all persons responsible for managing basketball, is the same in all countries where basketball is played and loved. To raise the level of basketball and to represent the country in the best way possible. The most ideal system should be formed and applied on every stage to reach this goal. The key words for success are to form the ideal system and to apply it. Unfortunately there is not one description for the ideal system. The system used for the successful progress in one country may fail in another one. The ideal system would be different in each country according to the country's unique conditions.

The goal of this is not to create a role model to be applied at all countries, and here we tried to pass the experiences of the successful examples of competitions and leagues. It is possible that some failed experiments could be successful in another country because of special conditions. We have full confidence that you will have an idea about the systems mentioned here and create the ideal system for your own country while taking your country's conditions into consideration.