



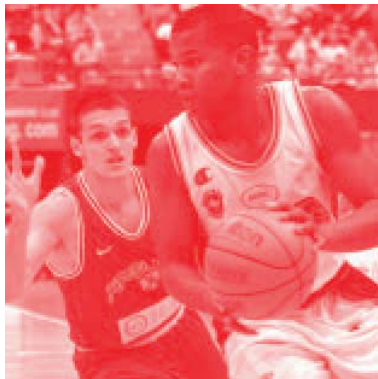
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### **3.2 GAME PREPARATION SCOUTING**



#### **WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS CHAPTER?**

### **Implementing Strategy on the Field of Play is the Key to Success**

Scouting is the culmination of many activities aimed at best preparing a team to beat an opponent. Offense, defense, master reports are today a must-know field for every coach.

But our worst enemy is very often ourselves. Planning a strategy for a team can be tricky, but it is a very similar process to what we have seen in the first section of this manual, Structuring.

In order to be successful, the structure of the team on the field of play, the way the best assets of each player are used to their full potential must closely follow the predetermined strategy.

The management of a basketball federation can learn from their very own teams: first you decide what your strategy is, then you put the structure in place to achieve your goals.



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## 1. Introduction

Scouting is an indispensable element in preparing the team both for an individual match and the competition as a whole. This task is usually performed by an assistant coach or a member of the expert board in charge of scouting. The basic principle of scouting is to know the philosophy of the head coach, the strength of your players, the team as a whole, and the philosophy of the opposing coach.

The scouting system comprises competition preparation and scouting of a particular opponent. The scouting result is the initial (working) report consisting of the offence worksheet, defense worksheet, statistical sheet and the scenario for making a videotape. The initial report is the basis of the master report which comprises the offence and defense report, the report on the individual player characteristics and habits and a videotape lasting 18-22 minutes.

**The basic principle of scouting is to know the philosophy of the head coach, the strength of your players, the team as a whole and the philosophy of the opposing coach.**

The master report provides guidelines to the coaching staff for creating a strategy for the following match and for informing the players of the opponents' philosophy and individual characteristics of their direct opponents. Very often, coaches have a problem in creating team tactics and preparing their team for a specific game. Each detail of the

team's game facilitates the way to victory. Information about the style of play and personnel on the opposing team are indispensable parts of the strategy. If we know our opponents well, our preparations for a match will be better and it will be easier for our team to set the style and pace of play our team in order to win.

It is necessary to develop the philosophy, system and technology of scouting. It is important to systematically gather and analyse information and present it to the team in a form which they can readily use. We should also practice individual and team tactics based on information from the scouting reports, during micro-cycles (between two matches).

## 2. Basic Principles in Developing the Scouting Philosophy

In order to make work model and scouting system model, the following principle should be respected:

1. Put yourself in the head coach's shoes.
2. Know the strengths, advantages and disadvantages of our own team.
3. Know individual qualities, habits and weaknesses of our own players on the team.
4. Gather information on the opposing players and their plays.
5. Be in the shoes of the opposing coach.

### 2.1 Being in the Head Coach's Shoes (thinking like the head coach)

The fact is that the assistant coach or the person in charge of information gathering is not the head coach. Therefore it is very important to understand the game system and philosophy of the head coach. It is necessary to know the methods he uses in order to present information in a way which he can understand and use. If the report is made in accordance with the terms of the head coach's philosophy, the preparation would be more efficient and tactics would be more easily understood.



This problem may be approached in two ways:

We can gather and select all information on our opponents that we would analyze together with the head coach. During our joint work we match all information with his philosophy and jointly simplify and reduce information to a number of details that could be practiced and implemented by our team.

We can analyze and select information ourselves, having in mind what kind of information the head coach would like to know about the opponent. In other words, what he thinks is important, and not important in our opinion. In time, with familiarity, this would become a natural process and you will automatically know what information the head coach needs to know in order to make preparations for a match.



### 2.2 Qualities of Our Team

In order to know how to help our team against a particular opponent, we should know our own team's strengths and weakness of our own team. This will help us focus on specific elements and phases of the game. We should be able to predict some moves of the opposing coach in relation to our team. We should simply know how to facilitate the play of our team (not to find ourselves in a situation to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to someone who twisted his ankle).

### 2.3 Qualities of Our Players

If we know the individual qualities and habits of our players, when playing offence as well as defense, we could easily predict our strengths and weaknesses in individual offensive or defensive situations. Having this in mind, we should pay more attention to certain aspects of the opponent's game. Our aim is to reduce the amount of information and provide all our players with the same, clear picture of how to play the match. If everyone has the same understanding, our team will play better.

We don't want each player to pick three out of ten pieces of information. We want all players to choose the same three pieces of information, even if they are of secondary importance for the opponent's play. Therefore, it is useful to test your team, during preparations, how much information they can absorb and process, regarding offence and defense (four in offence and four in defense is an excellent result).

### 2.4 Gathering Information on our Opponents

When we have adopted the previous three principles, we shall have a clear picture on how to observe the play of our opponent and their players. Information we gather on our opponents, will pass through three filters and become clear during analysis, selection, presentation and practising play against the opponent we scout.

### 2.5 Being in the Opposing Coach's Shoes

When we are in the shoes of the opposing coach, we begin to understand his philosophy and methods. We have to know and anticipate his moves in certain situations. We must grasp the very



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essence of his philosophy and thus know his intentions after our or their time-out, how he begins the quarters, what type of defense he likes to use in crucial situations. We shall not be surprised by certain changes of defensive tactics (type) or offence (combinations of five players and what type of offence he intends to apply with the five players). Our team will be ready for changes, it shall not lose its tempo and it shall maintain its own style of play and method.

The scouting – master report should be focused on the opposing coach and not the teams against which we play, since the coaches rarely change their philosophy. They can complement or improve

**The scouting-master report should be focused on the opponent coach – coaches rarely change their philosophy.**

their philosophy, but they do not wish to change it. Thus we create the database on the opponent coach's philosophy and individual characteristic and habits of the opposing players.

As a result, we obtain all the necessary information on our opponent. Even though you play against a team for the first time, the information you are presented with, will make the opponent team familiar. In time, and with the experience acquired through observing the course of matches, controlling the implementation and efficiency of your tactics, we will be in a position to anticipate all moves of the opposing coach during a match before he actually makes those moves. You will be one step ahead and your own team's play will be facilitated. It is crucial not just to observe the opponent, but to try to anticipate what he will do in relation to our team.

### **3. The Scouting System**

Everything that is done in training should be incorporated in play and its purpose explained. Accordingly, the scouting system should be included in the play requirements – it has to be highly structured. The system must support the head coach's philosophy. We cannot use every good idea, but select the ideas that will support our own programme in the best way, or in other words, choose what you need and not what you like.

The first thing to be included in the system is preparation for a competition.

### **4. Preparation for a Competition**

Within the preparations for a competition it is necessary to make:

1. A schedule of our matches, friendly and official.
2. A schedule of the opponent's friendly and official games.
3. A file of each opponent.
4. A monitoring plan for our immediate opponent.

The opponent's file consists of the following elements:

The team roster including:

- name and surname of the coach name and surname of each player with basic details (number of the player's uniform, position, height, weight and year of birth)
- The outline of the head coach's philosophy (if we have it in our database)



- If we have already played against the coach, the brief analysis of our matches; analysis of our preparations and results as well as the analysis of their preparations and results
- The individual player characteristics and habits from the database
- The schedule of all matches with basic details (date, time and place of a match, whether there was a TV broadcast or not)
- The statements made by the management, coach and players in the media before our match, since we can get some details on the teams and we can use some statements for better psychological preparation of our players.
- Medical reports, which might help predict our opponent's line up.

The next step is to make a monitoring plan for our immediate opponents:

- The schedule of matches (in case the opponents are the ones with whom we play the first three official matches, we monitor the friendly matches).
- We plan to record the matches (from TV or using a camera) and if possible to attend the matches.

The best way to comprehend all the details of the opponent's play is to watch their matches on videotape as this gives the opportunity of slow motion or frozen picture. This way we can watch the details many times. However, the report will not be complete until we see our opponent in the flash – attending their match. On the videotape we cannot see them warming up, communicating with one another or with their coach, and we cannot see whether there are some problems within the team. Some phases of the game will be more complete if we watch the whole game and not what is selected for TV broadcast.

### 5. Scouting a Particular Opponent

We begin with the tapes we have collected. We watch the last three matches they have played before our match, and the last four matches for obtaining the statistics of individual player characteristics and habits. If we attend a match, we should have previously prepared reports from matches (from the team's file) and which includes:

- The team roster.
- The coach's philosophy.
- The analysis of previous matches.
- Analysis of our preparations and results.
- Analysis of their preparations and results.
- The statistics of individual characteristics and habits from the database.
- The schedule of matches.
- The media statements.
- The medical reports.

The file should also include the official statistics of the previous or current competitions as follows:

- Cumulative
- Cumulative (away matches)



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- Cumulative (home matches)
- Statistics of the matches we watched live

If we make a report on the opponent against whom we play the first three matches, we should use the statistics of the friendly matches we have attended. Analyzing all the data on the team we have on file, we should know how to watch the opponent and how to relate its plays to our team. The videotape should be watched with a clear focus on what we are looking for. With the help of the report of the match we attended, we can make the initial or working report.

The greatest value of videotape above all other scouting methods, is the opportunity to make a highlights videotape to present to the head coach and the players. This method of presenting information is more impressive and efficient than other methods. The weakness of this method is that sometimes the speed and team plays of the match are not clearly seen.

### **6. The Initial (working) Report**

The working report consists of the following elements:

- Offence worksheet.
- Defense worksheet.
- Statistics worksheet.
- Scenario for making a video tape.

Before analyzing each sheet, it is necessary to explain the method of data entering in the sheets and their coding. While watching a match from the videotape, the following elements should be entered:

- Basketball diagrams.
- Observations and comments.
- Basketball statistics.
- Numbers from the timer of the video recorder's.

When we have finished watching the match, all data to be entered in the master report is already there. The master report consists of the following elements:

- Offence diagrams and statistics.
- Defensive philosophy and dynamics.
- Players' individual characteristics and habits and observations on the players.
- Videotapes.

The videotape consists of clips of certain phases of the opponent's play. If we have a computer and software that supports visual processing, our task is simpler and the presentation is more efficient. While watching a match, video clips are recorded on the hard disc. Once they are in the computer, it is easy to process them, arrange them by phases of the game, and thus we save time in making the videotape recording which lasts 18-22 minutes. In this case, we enter only diagrams and basketball statistics in the working report.



### 7. Offense Worksheet

The purpose of using the offence worksheet

From the offence worksheet we obtain the following information:

1. Diagrams and statistics of the opponent offence against man to man defense from which we obtain the answers to the following questions:
  - Which opponens are the basic players for picks
  - Which players are the main scorers
  - Who plays with his back to the basket
  - To what extent are the screens efficient and which players are inactive after setting a screen
  - When do they use special situations
  - Which players are not involved when playing offence
  - What type of offence do they use in the last 10 seconds of their offence, when their offence break down or when they have shotclock problems
2. Diagrams and statistics of out-of-bounds plays:
  - From the baseline
  - From the sideline
3. Diagrams and statistics of the offences against zone defense and combination defenses
4. Diagrams on how they solve special situations
  - Jump ball situations
  - Free-throws situations (who are the best and who is the worst free-throws shooter)
5. Diagrams of the offence against pressing defenses
  - Who inbounds the ball
  - The starting line-up
  - Which players are not involved, do not see the ball and do not participate in the offence
6. Transition
  - Primary fastbreak
  - Secondary fastbreak
7. Offensive rebound
  - Who goes for a rebound and who doesn't
  - Which players follow the ball after a shoot
  - When and how they assume their position for rebound



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## 8. Defense worksheet

The reason for using the defense worksheet

By using the defense worksheet we can learn everything about the defense of our opponents, paying more attention to those parts affect our play. We shall pose some questions that the defense worksheet should answer:

1. Regarding the individual defense:

- What is the intention of their play when making the screen?
- Do they channel the player with the ball and in what direction?
- How aggressively do they pressure the passing lane?
- Do they allow a return pass?
- What is their defense against the mismatch?
- What types of defense they play:
  - on the player who shoots?
  - on the player with his back to the basket?
- How do they play on the help side?
- What is their defense from the screen with the ball (pick and roll or hand off)?
- Who are the best and who are the worst players on defense?

2. Regarding the zone defense and combination defense.

- What is the defense type and how far does it extend?
- Do they use a classic zone defense or they try to adapt the line up or certain moves of the offensive players?
- How do they defend the corners, who goes out and do they double-team?
- Can we attack the “short corner”?
- How do they recover and at what speed?

3. Regarding pressing defenses:

- What types of pressing defense they use?
- Do they use them all the time or from time to time?
- When do they like to use pressing defense (after free-throws, after time-out, after the first defense in the quarter, etc)?
- How do they defend the mid-court?

Also we want to know everything about the defense movements since it establishes the game pace. The types and tempo of defense are recorded by quarters, types and moments of change.



### 9. Master Report

Information gathered from the working report will be arranged and simplified in order to find the essence of the opponent's philosophy and their method of play. The master report consists of the following elements:

1. Offense report
2. Defense report
3. Report on individual player characteristics and habits
4. Videotapes

At the team meeting, we give our players the first three reports, the official cumulative statistics, and the videotape is watched.

### 10. Offense Report

In the offence report the diagrams of the opponent offence and basketball statistics are recorded. The offence is classified by its purpose (pick-and-roll, plays for inside players, plays for the shooters, etc.) i.e. the attacks that constitute the essence of their offence are entered first. The offence report consists of the following elements:

- Basketball statistics diagram
- Scoring structure

Diagrams and basketball statistics

On the first page of the report the offenses against man-to-man defense are entered.

### 11. Defense Report

In the defense section of the master report, the defense worksheets are used, and in it, comments, conclusions and principles of the opponent defense play are entered. We always try to find the weaknesses and the strengths of their defense in order to know how to play against them.

It is necessary to find the answers to the questions – who are the weak players:

- When guarding the player with the ball.
- On the ball side.
- On the help side.
- Against players with their backs to the basket.
- In the team defense.

Such data is very useful for the preparation of our offence as well as for the psychological preparation of the players for a match.



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## 12. Individual Player Characteristics and Habits

With this report we inform the coaches and players on the opposing player's individual weaknesses and strengths. We use the worksheet in which we enter the numbers.

The report on individual characteristics consists of the following elements:

1. Report on the individual players characteristics and habits
2. Supplements to the previous report (observations and on the defense used against particular opponent)
3. Starting fives and substitutions



In the report on the starting five and the substitution system, we pay attention to the changing on-court combinations and the result thereof. For example, position 4 is taken by the player from position 3, the other playmaker is coming into play, etc. The sheet is the same as the sheet for entering the combinations in the working report, with additional comment and remarks on changes in the line-up.

## 13. Videotape

In the scenario worksheet we have the numbers from the timer of the video recorder timer which mark the beginning of the video clips we wish to record on the tape and the order of recording. The duration of the tape should be 18-22 minutes. The players cannot concentrate longer. During the meeting freeze frames should be used as well as erasable marker for drawing on the TV screen in order to underline specific phase in the opponent's play. Out of 18-22 minutes, the opponent defense should cover 6-8 minutes, while the remaining time is to be devoted to their offence. Sometimes the playmaker's habits must be highlighted, but that may cause a problem with the time limitation of the tape.

The problem may be solved in three ways:

- By holding two meetings, showing the analytical part at one and the highlights during the other
- While showing the analytical tape, pay attention to conspicuous habits of the individual players
- If we have a computer, highlights of the players' habits are not a problem, and the recording could be distributed to players so that they can watch the recording themselves.

In practice, before watching the analytical videotape it is useful to give to the players copies of the individual characteristics and habits of the opponent players as well as the official cumulative statistics. Thus they will know how to watch the analytical tape. It is necessary to say that slow motion is useful, but not too often, since it can prolong the period of tape watching. For example, from 4 to 5 examples of one offensive action. During the first recording, we slow down the film at the moment when our opponents use screens.



#### 14. Keep in Mind

The game of the basketball is evolving and improving very rapidly. The number of high-quality players and teams is increasing. In high-level competitions, there are no teams that can count on the definite victory before the match. A good preparation for matches makes difference between the average and best results. Scouting is an important and indispensable element of such preparation.

The scouting elements cover not only players of the particular teams and the team play, but also the coaches philosophy. Therefore attention should be focused not only on the method of collecting and recording the data during the match (watched on TV or attended), but on the method of data processing and data presenting to the players of our own team.

A video recorder, paper and a four-colour ball-point pen are used. This method is good for performing tasks, although it requires a certain level of practice by the scout. Modern technology facilitates the task, but also leads to some new opportunities. Using professional video equipment and computers systems, it is easy to enter and process data and provide multimedia presentation of the report on any segment of the play. The drawback of this method of work, is the high price of program support (software) for this work method.

It is certain that in the near future, timely and relevant information on opponents shall be instantly available to coaches and players, and therefore the prediction of future actions of the opponent and the reaction to the tactics of our team will be much easier. We should not be concerned that such procedures will prevent an individual from expressing their creativity and talent. On the contrary, mutual knowledge of the tactics of your opponent will make creative and unpredictable actions of an individual and of the team even more remarkable.