

# City of Kirkland Youth Basketball

## Player Manual



## Player's Guide: Introduction

### Dear Player:

Whether you compete in the WNBA or NBA, as we do, or in a local league in your hometown or city, we all love the game of basketball. You may be the best player on the team, or a beginner who is just learning the game, but either way, it's fun to play.

Though basketball is a team sport, it's ultimately your responsibility to develop as a player and teammate. You must work hard — both on the court and off — to contribute to your team's success. Attend every practice, work on your game at home, and always think about what you need to do to improve. Regardless of whether your brother, sister, parent or friend shows you the ropes and teaches you the game, probably the most important person in your basketball world is the coach. Show your coach the utmost respect and look to him or her for guidance and direction. If you listen, work hard and honor the team concept, you will be well on your way to becoming a complete basketball player.

As a member of the team, you will experience both winning and losing. Try not to get too up or down based on the outcome of the game. It's great to be happy after a win, but don't brag about it or make fun of your opponent. And if you lose, don't finger-point or complain about the coach, teammates or officials. Stay together and be a leader. As the saying goes, "you win as a team and you lose as a team." If you can accomplish that, you will be considered a winner no matter what the outcome of the game.

This Player's Guide will provide you with valuable tips on the game of basketball and how to make a positive contribution to your team. Use it as a resource to help you become a better player and teammate. Keep it with you to remind you what it is that you need to concentrate on when it comes to playing basketball.

Good luck!

**Ray Allen**  
**All-Star, Seattle Supersonics, NBA**



**Allen**

**Tina Thompson**  
**All-Star, Houston Comets, WNBA**



**Thompson**

## **Player's Guide: Section 1**

### **PLAY HARD HAVE FUN**

Playing basketball is a privilege. Being a member of a basketball team requires a commitment on your part. You have to WANT to play. But it's not hard, to play hard.

By not being afraid to fail, you will improve. By trying your best, you will never let yourself or your teammates down. By keeping a smile on your face, you will always have fun.

Basketball is a game of emotions. Lacing up your sneakers and heading onto the basketball court is exciting. Working together as a team creates confidence. Running, jumping and shooting gets your body revved up.

Making a shot with the defense all over you...feeding the perfect pass...grabbing an important rebound...coming up with a game saving steal — this is basketball at its best. There's no game quite like it, and it belongs to you. Just take control. Assume the responsibility. Give your best and enjoy it.

## Player's Guide: Section 2 Interacting With Your COACH

### HOW DO I FIND OUT WHAT MY COACH EXPECTS OF ME AS A PLAYER?

That's easy. Ask the coach and be specific: "Coach, how's my defense? What about my passing? Is there anything you want me to work on?" **Get a regular report card from your coach by asking questions.** Have the courage to find out what your strengths are as well as your weaknesses. You won't improve as an all-around player until you improve all parts of your game.

### WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT FROM THE COACH?

**Respect goes both ways.** Coaches and players should respect one another. That is, just as you respect the coach's decisions and demands, the coach will respect your hard work and effort. The same goes for the assistant coaches and parental volunteers. Remember, you are all working together toward the common goal — to be the best team you can be.

Your coach will expect you to be on time for practices and games. If there is any reason you can't make a practice or game, your coach will expect you to let him or her know as far in advance as possible. That is your responsibility and your coach will expect you to respect that responsibility.

The coach will also expect you to **be focused at practice and during games.** Coaches do not like to repeat themselves because a player or two are not listening. Stay focused on the coach and what is being discussed.

Finally, **learn to share your feelings with the coach.** Good coaches want to build a solid rapport with their team. Be sure there is an open line of communication between you and the coach. If you have a question or a concern, let the coach know. Coaches can make you better if you let them. Remember, coaches are on your side.

### DEALING WITH TEAM RULES

If you follow all the rules your coach puts in place, there should never be a problem with team discipline. That's the easy solution.

If you find yourself in the coach's doghouse for breaking a team rule, do the right thing: Apologize to the coach. Take your punishment and move on. **Problems only get out of hand when players begin to challenge the coach's disciplinary system.**

If, however, you feel you were unfairly singled out for disciplinary action, then ask to speak to the coach privately. Explain your side of the story. A good coach will listen to your argument before making a final decision. Sometimes the coach will decide not to discipline you after hearing your side. Either way, once you have had your say, let the coach make the decision and move on.

**The coach has the power to decide who plays and who doesn't.** In the long run you are always better off learning to adjust to the coach's team rules.

**WHEN THINGS AREN'T GOING YOUR WAY, WHO DO YOU TURN TO?**

Let's say you have struggled during a stretch of games. You aren't shooting well, some of your passes have resulted in turnovers, rebounds seem to be out of your reach, and the coach is playing you less and less.

What do you do? Talk to the coach! Ask the coach for an honest analysis of what you are doing right and what you are doing wrong. Ask the coach if he or she has any ideas to help you get out of your slump. You may be surprised —your coach might just give you a pat on the back, tell you to relax, and that things will get better. The coach also might have some ideas of how you can turn things around. But the bottom line is that the coach will be pleased to know you wanted his or her opinion and that you are working hard to improve. **Talk to the coach! Ask the coach for an honest analysis of what you are doing right and what you are doing wrong.**

## **Player's Guide: Section 3**

### **Dealing With Your PARENTS' Expectations**

**What if you get the sense that your parents EXPECT YOU TO BE THE STAR of the team? How do you deal with the disappointment your parents may have with you if you don't score a lot of points, or grab enough rebounds?** Maybe you are one of the lucky players whose parents are completely supportive of your decision to play basketball and don't make you feel as though they expect certain results. If so, then great. But the reality is that many young players have parents — no matter how much they love and support their own children — who add unnecessary pressure to their young player's basketball participation. Here are a few tips on dealing with this tough situation:

- **Make sure your parents read the Jr. NBA/Jr. WNBA Parent's Guide** that they should receive from your coach. After reviewing their own guide, your parents should have a better idea of how to deal with you as a youth basketball player.
- **If the guide doesn't help, talk to your coach.** Remember, good communication with your coach is a key element in a positive basketball experience for you as a player. Part of the coach's job is to make sure parents understand how hard it is for players to learn and play the game while trying to please Mom and Dad.
- If the problem persists, it's time to sit down with your parents and explain your feelings. Maybe something like, "Mom, Dad, I love you but I'm playing basketball because I like the game — not because you want me to play, or want me to become a star." Try not to confront your parents, just open up and let them know your feelings. You might find that they never really realized that they were putting pressure on you. If you don't address the issue, it will most likely never get better. Have faith that your parents will come to understand that it's your game, not theirs.

#### **DEALING WITH THE DREADED "P.G.A."**

P.G.A. stands for "Post-Game Analysis" and it refers to the detailed analysis some parents give young players immediately following a game.

Although most parents mean well ("I only want to go over the game while it's still fresh in your mind..."), they forget you just played the game. You might be a little tired, or you might not be very interested in rehashing something that just took place.

Here's a suggestion. If you become the victim of a P.G.A. from your Mom or Dad, as nicely as possible say "I'd like to hear your thoughts about my game, but can we discuss it later — maybe over dinner or before I go to bed?"

Don't worry. Your Mom or Dad will get the message and postpone comments for a later time when you're ready to hear them.

## **Player's Guide: Section 4**

### **Practice, Practice, PRACTICE**

**Let's start with your work habits. Practice does make perfect. And in basketball, the more you practice, the more you'll perfect your game.**

This means attending every team practice, listening and learning when your coach is instructing, and giving your best effort in every drill and scrimmage. It also means working on your game at home, when you can find the time between school work and family responsibilities.

#### **THERE'S A LOT MORE TO THE GAME THAN JUST SCORING**

You have to work on all aspects of your game. **That means you have to learn the basics — fundamentals — for playing defense, rebounding, passing, and shooting.** It also means learning the rules of the game. If you have never read the rulebook, spend a few minutes going through one before the start of each season. You'll surprise yourself — and your teammates — with your knowledge of the game.

One of the unique aspects of basketball is that you can develop your own style. But that can only happen after you have mastered the fundamentals.

#### **CONCENTRATE ON THE FUNDAMENTALS**

**From shooting a jump shot to throwing a chest pass, there is a fundamentally right way to do everything on a basketball court.** It's no coincidence that great shooters in the WNBA and NBA have almost exactly the same technique. They have mastered the fundamentals of shooting, which involve coordinating the fingers, hand, wrist, arm and body in one rhythmic motion. Over time, the technique becomes natural. When it does, good shooters can become great shooters. There are similar fundamental techniques to playing defense, passing, dribbling and rebounding.

#### **THE POWER OF REPETITION**

Becoming a dribbling, rebounding, passing, shooting or defensive expert doesn't happen overnight. All these skills take focus, effort, attention to fundamentals and practice — a lot of practice. And make sure the time you spend is spent wisely. Practice all aspects of the game. Even simple drills can provide remarkable results when done correctly and often. **Remember — practice won't help if you are not focusing on fundamentals. Spending long hours practicing poor technique will only reinforce bad habits.**

### **SHOOTING**

**Every great shooter starts with the same basic set-up whether they are shooting a free throw, or a jump shot. By getting into the proper position to shoot, your aim is improved and over time you will be able to shoot accurately from longer distances.**

**At the beginning, however, concentrate on executing the proper shooting techniques from close range.** One sure way to develop poor shooting habits is by taking long shots away from the basket. That's not practicing. That's fooling around. Practicing proper shooting form might be the most important fundamental in basketball because those techniques must become automatic before any player can become a great offensive threat. That's also why shooting, more than any other skill, demands repetition.

### **LIFT OFF**

Ray Allen has some of the strongest calves in the NBA. By doing thousands of toe lifts (see Home Training, page 30) when he was younger, Ray became one of the best shooters in the game because he gets one of the best "lift offs" on his jump shot.

### **THE FLAT BACK DRILL**

Lie down on your back and practice shooting the ball straight up into the air. If you use proper technique, the ball should come straight down. If it goes to one side or the other, check your guide hand. Make sure you are extending your arm straight up and snapping your wrist in a downward wave.

### **THE CHAIR SHOOTING DRILL**

Place a chair six to seven feet from the basket. Sit down and practice shooting the ball with one hand. By sitting in the chair you will be forced to fully extend your arm and follow through with a snap of the wrist. If you fail to use the proper technique, the ball won't make it to the basket much less go through the hoop.

**If you watch the best shooters, you'll notice that they stop, jump, and shoot — all in one fluid motion.** They don't have to think about what they're doing, or how they are doing it. That's because they have practiced the shooting motion for so long that it has become an automatic part of their game. That's the goal for you, too.

### **STEP-BY-STEP**

Get your body square to the basket with equal weight on each foot and bend your knees slightly. If you are a right-handed shooter, then your right foot should be slightly — not more than five inches — in front of the left foot, facing the basket.

### **HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE IN THE PROPER SET-UP?**

Have a teammate push your chest with one or two fingers. If you fall back, then you weren't in the proper position. Balance is critical to shooting because the power for a shot comes from your legs, not your arms.

- **Bring the ball into the "lock and load" position.** That means bringing the ball onto the fingertips of your shooting hand with your wrist back. In other words, hold the ball on the fingers of your shooting hand like a waiter holds a tray. Use your "off hand" as a guide and nothing more. Bend your knees with your head out over the ball.

- **Lock in on your target with your eyes.** Some players look at the back of the rim, others concentrate on a spot just over the front of the rim. Whatever you choose, lock in on that spot. Use your other hand as a guide. It's only there for the set-up and to help balance the ball in the proper position. Do not try to shoot the ball with both hands. If the off hand is too far in front of the ball, it will be difficult to shoot accurately. Practice each of these steps until they become automatic.
- **With your “guidance system” in order,** push the ball straight up toward the basket until your arm extends completely and your elbow locks. Follow through by snapping your wrist in a downward waving motion. Remember to keep your shooting elbow aligned with your body. That way your arm has to go straight up and down which increases your accuracy.
- **As you release the ball it should roll off your fingertips, producing backspin.** Your middle finger usually has the last contact with the ball. Remember to shoot the ball with your fingertips, not the palms of your hand. Practice using these techniques close to the basket. You want to keep the follow-through the same every time. That's why it's important to practice at close range in the beginning. When these fundamentals become automatic, you'll be able to bring the ball off the dribble or receive a pass from a teammate and immediately go into the basic set-up without thinking about each movement.

## **DRIBBLING**

**The better you can dribble, the more opportunities you and your teammates will have at the offensive end of the court.**

The goal is to be able to dribble with either hand without looking down at the ball. That means keeping your head up to see what the defensive players are doing and the location of your teammates. In the beginning, this can seem like an impossible task. Just maintaining control of the ball with one hand can be difficult. Remember to use your fingers and fingertips, not the palm of your hands, to control the ball as you bounce it down to the floor. And try not to let the ball bounce above your waist.

### **DEVELOPING YOUR FEEL FOR THE BALL WALL BALL**

Stand about three feet from a concrete or other sturdy wall and hold the ball over your head with both hands. Bounce the ball off the wall 10 times with your right hand and 10 times with your left hand. This might be difficult at first, but it helps develop the “feel” you need to handle the ball. Use your fingertips, not the palm of your hand.

### **LEARNING THE CROSS-OVER DRIBBLE THE WEAVE**

For more advanced players, there are a number of drills to help develop the cross-over dribble. One of those involves placing chairs, or some other obstacle, in a straight line down the middle of a court, playground or driveway. The object is to dribble down the line, weaving around the obstacles you have set up.

Dribble toward the first obstacle as if it were a defensive player. As you near the obstacle, quickly change hands and go around it. Do this from right to left and back again, all the way down the line, concentrating on moving quickly while maintaining control of the ball. Remember to keep your head up and the ball low — no higher than your knees — as you bounce it from hand to hand. The faster you can execute this move, the more difficult it is for the defensive player to react.

## **PASSING**

**A team with five great shooters will always be easy to defend if those players don't know how to pass.**

### **PASSING CREATES OPEN SHOTS**

Great offenses pass well and often. All five defenders can monitor an offensive player dribbling the ball. They can see where he or she is going. But a team of good passers can pick apart the biggest and best defenses because **a pass almost always moves faster than a defender.**

While there are a number of different passes, they all require the same basic fundamentals. Like dribbling and shooting, players should use their fingers and fingertips, not the palms of their hands to execute a pass. There are two passes every player must master to become a good passer: The two-handed chest pass and the two-handed bounce pass. The fundamentals are exactly the same with each of them. Keep the ball on the tips of the fingers and push off with both hands.

### **TARGET DRILL**

Pick out a spot on a wall and practice throwing a two-handed chest pass to that spot. Remember to step into the pass and to snap your wrists outward. Do the same drill using a bounce pass with the ball bouncing about three quarters of the way between you and the wall. The ball should not hit the wall at a height above your waist.

### **TWO-HANDED CHEST PASS**

Spread the fingers of each hand on either side of the ball. Push the ball out from your chest, fully extending your arms. Snap your wrists outward so that the back of your hands are facing one another. By snapping your wrists outward you will get rotation, or backspin, on the ball, which makes the pass easier to control for your teammate who is receiving the ball. Remember to step in the direction of the player you are passing to and to follow with the palms away from the body.

### **TWO-HANDED BOUNCE PASS**

Follow the same motion as the two-handed chest pass. The only difference is that you should locate a spot on the floor about three quarters of the way between you and your teammate. Try to hit that spot on the bounce. To make the bounce pass even more accurate, step toward the spot and the player you are throwing to. The bounce pass should be received by your teammate about waist high. A pass below the knees or over the waist can be difficult to handle for your teammate. Also, a bounce pass that bounces too high is much easier for a defensive player to steal.

## **REBOUNDING**

**Many coaches believe that REBOUNDING is THE KEY to WINNING games.**

On offense, grabbing a rebound after a missed shot gives your team a second chance to score. On the other hand, when pulling down a defensive rebound, a player is limiting the opponent to just one chance at a basket. **Those “second chances” can be the difference between winning or losing a game.**

Good rebounders are not necessarily the tallest players or best jumpers on the court. Sure, bigger players and those with great jumping ability have an advantage, but just like playing defense, position and fundamentals can make any player an effective rebounder. In fact, if you use proper technique, you can keep any player away from the basket and out of rebounding position.

### **THINK MISS**

Always assume the shooter is going to miss. No matter who is shooting or where the shot is coming from, be prepared to rebound a missed shot. Remember, even great shooters miss half their shots.

### **STARTING [AND ENDING] THE BREAK**

The best way to begin a fast break is by grabbing a defensive rebound and making a quick outlet pass to a teammate. Remember not to hold onto the ball and stand there. Instead, immediately look up and fire the ball to an open teammate running up the court and then start running yourself. Trail the fast break and get yourself into position to grab the offensive rebound on the other end of the court if your team's shot is missed.

### **PRACTICE THE OFFENSIVE PUT-BACK**

Stand two to three feet from the basket and toss the ball off the backboard. Step toward the ball as it comes down and lock on with both hands. Remember to keep the ball up, out and away from your body. Keeping the ball in this position, come down and immediately go back up to put the ball in the basket.

### **BLOCK OUT**

As soon as a shot is headed for the rim, you need to get into position for a rebound. Get in front of the player you are guarding and turn toward the basket staying between your opponent and the hoop. You can use the “reverse pivot,” to move in front of your opponent if your back is to the basket when the shot goes up. Spin, or pivot on one foot when the shot goes into the air. For example, plant your right foot on the floor, turn on that foot and bring your left leg across your body so you are facing the basket. This allows you to get into rebounding position while keeping your opponent behind you. Make contact with your opponent so you can move with him or her. Stay balanced by keeping your legs wide apart and your knees slightly bent.

Focus on the trajectory of the ball and try to pay attention to the angles. With your man behind you, it's easier to move toward the ball quickly. When the ball comes down, go up strong. That means keeping your legs wide so you can stay balanced as you jump into the air. Go up with both hands and as soon as your fingertips

touch the ball, lock onto it. Come down with the ball in the same motion you went up. Protect the ball immediately so opponents can't slap it away and quickly look to pass the ball or go up for a shot.

## **DEFENSE**

**Defense might not be the most glamorous part of basketball, but it is every bit as important as offense. One of the myths of great defense, however, is that players must be fast and quick to be effective defenders. In fact, the best defense is played with anticipation and awareness of what's going on around you, good body balance and basic fundamentals. Great defense also demands great effort.**

### **WANT SOME EVIDENCE?**

Former Boston Celtics star Bill Russell is considered one of the greatest defensive players of all time. Russell didn't score much and he was only 6-feet-9, but he is considered the primary reason the Celtics won 11 championships in 12 years. Russell was so dominating as a defensive player and rebounder that he didn't need to score a great deal of points for the Celtics to dominate as a team.

### **THE PROPER SET-UP**

To keep yourself balanced and ready to move, stay on the balls, or front, of your feet. Do not stand flat-footed or get caught on the heels of your feet. You cannot move quick enough to stop anyone if you are not on the balls of your feet. Keep your feet as wide apart as your shoulders and bend your knees slightly with your trunk, or backside low. If your feet are too close together, you will not be able to move quickly in either direction.

### **USE YOUR HANDS AND FEET**

**Once you are in position, defense is generally played with your hands and feet.** When the offensive player is dribbling, keep one hand low on the ball and the other hand high to guard against a shot or pass. When the offensive player has stopped his or her dribble, you should lift both hands up. The same is true when the offensive player you are guarding doesn't have the ball (two hands up to deny the pass).

**Focus on the waist of the offensive player in front of you,** particularly if that player has the ball. Why? The waist doesn't move. The eyes, head, shoulders and arms all can move before the player decides to pick a direction. But, the waist must remain in place until the player moves. If you watch the other body parts, it's easy to get faked out of position. The offensive player can fake all he or she wants, but that player isn't going anywhere unless the whole body moves. So keep your eyes on the mid-section.

**Move with the offensive player by sliding side to side without crossing your legs.** Your feet should remain the width of your shoulders and your weight should be on the balls of your feet. Do not allow your feet to touch each other while sliding.

Be aware of everything that's going on around you. If the player you are guarding doesn't have the ball, then drop back a couple steps and keep one eye on the rest of the action.

**Always stay between your player and the basket.** Also, study the player you are guarding. Does he or she like to dribble in one direction all the time? What hand does the offensive player favor? Young players almost always prefer to dribble with one hand over the other. Try to force that player to go in the opposite direction, or to use the weaker hand.

## **OFFENSE**

### **BASKETBALL IS A TEAM GAME**

You can be a great shooter, dribbler, passer or rebounder, but it takes more than individual skills to achieve success — it takes a group effort. **On offense, your team will need a well-coordinated effort to score enough points to win.**

All successful teams practice offensive plays which give a team organization on the court. Practicing planned movement on offense will prepare you and your teammates for the reactions to your plays from your opponents. Once you have learned your moves, as well as the probable reactions of your defenders, your team will be in great position to get open shots and score points.

Your team will develop their coordination at practice as you run through set plays over and over until you run them perfectly. When you and your teammates have mastered a few offensive plays, your team will become much more difficult to defend.

**Plays such as the “pick and roll” and the “back door” are common sets that your coach may teach to your team. In addition, you will most likely work on the “fast break” as a method of putting points on the board.**

**The fast break puts tremendous pressure on the defensive team, and is the best way to get an easy shot at the basket.**

### **FAST BREAK**

**The key is to move the ball quickly up the court after your team gets a defensive rebound following a missed shot or free throw by your opponents.**

To be successful on the “break,” your team must win the numbers game first — you need a greater number of offensive players than defensive players as the play moves up the court. After an initial quick outlet pass after the rebound, the ball should be passed or dribbled to the center of the court while offensive players run the lanes on either side of the court. The ballhandler (preferably the point guard) dribbling up the middle of the court should stop near the foul line and either pass to one of the players running the side lanes, or shoot it if there is no defender covering.

## **SETTING A PICK**

One of the most successful plays a team can run is the “pick and roll.” The key to this play is the “pick,” otherwise known as a screen. When a successful “pick” is set, **the offensive player who sets it effectively screens a defender from another offensive player.**

This allows the offensive teammate to get free and run to an open spot on the floor so they can receive a pass and take an uncontested shot, or if they have the ball, get by a defender for an open shot at the basket. To set a pick, you need to anticipate where a defensive player will move to before he or she actually makes their move. Once in position, **plant your feet wide apart, keeping your hands and elbows close to your body — and just stand still.** If you move, and/or put your hands out to help block the defensive player, you will be called for an offensive foul. Once you are able to set a good pick, your teammates will have a much easier time scoring.

## **Player's Guide: Section 5**

### **WHO PLAYS WHERE**

On successful teams, everyone has a specific role. Your coach will assign you to the appropriate position. Try to get familiar with every spot on the floor as you never know when you may be needed to play a position you have not played before.

#### **The Point Guard**

This player handles the ball as the team moves up the court and into its offensive plays. The point guard is much like the quarterback of a football team. Point guards must be excellent ballhandlers who are able to see the whole court — that means being able to dribble without looking at the ball. A talented point guard who can also make a jump shot and drive to the basket is essential to a team's success.

#### **The Shooting Guard**

While this player has solid ball-handling skills, he or she is usually the team's best shooter and top scorer. This player is also referred to at times as the "off guard." The shooting guard is normally the team's most athletic player on the floor.

#### **The Small Forward**

The small forward is usually the most versatile player on the court. This person plays both an "inside" and "outside" game. He or she must have the skills to shoot and dribble the ball well, while using his or her size and strength to battle near the basket for rebounds. Don't be fooled by the name: Small forwards need to be big.

#### **The Power Forward**

This player normally is the team's primary rebounder at both ends of the court. On defense, power forwards can start a fast break by grabbing a rebound and making a quick outlet pass to one of the guards. Big and strong, the power forward may not be the most graceful player on the team, but his or her presence is always felt.

#### **The Center**

To be successful at any level, a team usually needs a talented big man in the middle. Traditionally, the center is the tallest player on the team. The center's job is to anchor the team's defense and rebound the ball at both ends of the court. Additionally, the center is the team's primary low post scorer.

## **Player's Guide: Section 6**

### **The Importance of TEAM PLAY**

**Don't worry about how many POINTS you score.**

**If you think the most important thing you can do on the basketball court is to score points, think again.** Playing together as a unit and maximizing your team's ability to score points is the key (along with trying to keep the opposing team from scoring). Chances are, everyone on your team wants to make a lot of baskets and be the star. But that will not work when you are trying to be a team.

If the coach determines that the best way for your team to play is for you to take a large number of shots (and hopefully make them), then that's what you should do. But the coach may want you to concentrate more on playing tight defense on the opposing team's top scorer, or to try and pass more to your teammates to give them a better chance to score. The point is, **whatever is asked of you by your coach is what you should do.** Working together as a team and achieving success as a group is always better than scoring a lot of points in a losing game where your team plays selfishly.

#### **ASK THE COACH WHAT ROLE YOU SHOULD PLAY**

If you are confused as to what your role on the team should be, just ask the coach. He or she will be happy to tell you, and even happier to know that you understand what playing on a team means. Also, do a quick self-analysis of your game. What do you do well and what do you need to work on? Maybe you are a great passer and dribbler, but you have not yet become a good outside shooter. Or your strength may be as a rebounder and defender. **Together with your coach, you can determine what the best way is for you to contribute to the team.** And remember, nothing is forever. The role you play today may change as your game improves and the coach sees how you can help the team in other areas.

## **Player's Guide: Section 7**

### **Practicing Good SPORTSMANSHIP**

The way you carry yourself both on and off the court will go a long way toward defining what type of player you are. No one is impressed by a talented player who treats opponents, officials, coaches and even his or her own teammates disrespectfully. Very simply, there is a right way and a wrong way to behave at practice, and before, during and after games.

Winning and losing are fundamental elements of basketball. It is unacceptable to use defeat as an excuse for acting irresponsibly. Blaming an official for a bad call (even if you truly believe that your team has been treated unfairly) or complaining about the coach or your teammates is no way to act when things are not going your way. These are the times when you need to gain control of your emotions. Even in victory, good sportsmanship is important. Bragging or making fun of an opponent is not appropriate behavior.

#### **THE GOLDEN RULE**

Treat teammates, coaches, opponents, and officials the same way that you would like to be treated — fairly and with respect.

#### **WHAT ABOUT THE OFFICIALS?**

Smart players treat the officials as friends, not foes. An official's job is to ensure that the game is played fairly. Like anyone else, officials can make mistakes, but it is never in an attempt to help one team over another.

Young players can even learn from talking to the officials. Sound funny? Watch players in the NBA and WNBA and you'll notice that the players are constantly chatting with the officials. **Although the officials don't care which team wins or loses, many of them will make helpful on-court suggestions to young players.** If nothing else, exercising common courtesy with officials can make the game experience even more enjoyable.

## Player's Guide: Section 8 HEALTH AND FITNESS

### EATING RIGHT BEFORE GAMES AND PRACTICES

**One of the most important ways to prepare for a game or practice is to eat properly.**

Ray Allen and Tina Thompson understand that to move well on the court, you need to eat well off the court. That means eating lighter foods that don't slow you down. Try to stay away from dairy products close to playing time. Another tip is to remain consistent; if you find something that you like and your body responds well after you eat it, stay with that same meal each time you eat before playing. When you finally need a change, try and find a new favorite pre-game or pre-practice meal. Finally, eat at least a few hours before you take the court so your body can digest the meal properly.

#### RAY'S SAMPLE MENU

- Fish (not fried) or chicken (grilled)
- Caesar Salad
- Carrots
- Baked potato

#### TINA'S SAMPLE MENU

- Pasta with red sauce
- Broccoli, cabbage and/or asparagus
- Fresh fruit

#### DEALING WITH BUMPS AND BRUISES

Expert Advice from TAMARA POOLE,  
Head Athletic Trainer, Charlotte Sting

For the vast majority of bumps, scrapes, and so on, ice is always the best approach. Ice the injury immediately for 15 minutes, and if necessary, keep using the ice sporadically over the next day or two. The RICE approach is the best: R for Rest; I for Ice; C for Compression — that is, wrap the injury with an Ace bandage overnight (snug but not too tight); and E for Elevation. That means you want to lift the injured limb higher than your heart. For example, you want to prop up your ankle so that it's higher than your heart.

For most of the common basketball injuries such as jammed fingers or turned ankles you'll find that 24 hours after the injury will usually tell the truth as to whether they are getting better. In other words, if you are still in pain a day after the injury, then call the doctor.



**NIKE FEET FIRST!**

In basketball more than any other team sport, a number of injuries, near and long term, can be traced back to the sneakers players wear. The demands of the sport -- extreme linear and lateral movements -- put particular pressure on the feet that in turn can affect ankles, knees and the lower back. Indeed, if one or more of your players experiences foot pain, multiple ankle turns or sprains, pain or pressure in and around the knee, or complains of lower back pain, it's possible his or her sneakers are responsible. Blisters on the feet are also an indication the player's shoes are either too big, too small or have insufficient support around the foot and ankle.

## • FILL IT UP!



Athletes can have the best coaching and equipment available and still fall short of their potential due to poor nutrition and inadequate hydration. There are a number of signs that can alert coaches to a player's nutrition and hydration during practice and games. Dehydration is the most common cause of early fatigue during exercise. While water is a good fluid, many research studies show sports drinks are optimal for rapid delivery of energy and absorption of fluids. The carbohydrates in sports drinks are important not just for endurance sports, but for sports such as basketball. Look for these warning signs of dehydration:

- Loss of energy and performance
- Muscle cramping
- Light-headedness, dizziness

## Player's Guide: Section 9

### HOME TRAINING

#### Expert Advice from GREG BRITTENHAM, Asst. Coach/Player Development, New York Knicks

Taking care of your body away from the court will greatly improve your performance on the court. **Plyometric** exercises are one way that can help. When performed correctly they are safe, fun to do, and go a long way in helping basketball players develop their quickness, speed, agility, and jumping ability.

The purpose of performing plyometric exercises is to increase a player's explosive power. The best part of these drills is that they're easy to do and require very little equipment. When performing the drills concentrate on speed and quickness rather than on how high you are jumping. . Here are a few drills to get started. The entire plyometric session shouldn't last more than 15-20 minutes.

**Jump Rope** — Skipping rope is actually a low impact plyometric and a great way to introduce your muscles to the quickness required when performing the drills correctly. Jump rope for about 5-7 minutes to get loose. Remember to stay on your toes.

**Box Run** — Use a small sturdy wooden box or a stair step, no more than 10 inches high. Start with your right foot on the box / step and the left foot on the floor. Jump and simultaneously switch your feet so that the left foot is now on the box and the right is on the floor. Immediately repeat (without stopping). Perform 10-20 'switches' then rest for 1-2 minutes. Do this drill 3-5 times. This is a good drill to develop sprint speed and jumping ability.

**Box Jump** — Stand with both feet on the same box / step. Your toes are on the edge of the step (your heels are hanging over the edge). Step off backward and land on the floor simultaneously with both feet. Immediately jump back to the top of the box. Concentrate on how quickly you can jump off the floor and back up onto the box. Rest for a second or two and then repeat 10-15 times to complete the set. Rest for 1-2 minutes between sets. Perform this drill 3-5 times. This drill will help your vertical leaping ability.

**Towel Hop** — Spread a towel out on the floor. It will form a rectangle. Start at one corner of the towel and perform a double leg jump around the towel's edges touching all four corners of the rectangle. Perform 3-8 complete 'roundtrips' (a roundtrip is one complete revolution touching all four corners) then repeat in the opposite direction for 3-8 roundtrips. Rest 1-2 minutes. Do this drill 3-5 times. This drill will help improve your agility.

**Lateral Jumps** — Now take that same towel and roll it up to form a tube shape. Put a piece of tape around it to hold it in place. Lay the rolled up towel on the floor and stand sideways to the towel. Jump 'laterally' (sideways) over the towel. The instant your feet touch the ground on the other side of the towel immediately jump back to the starting position. Repeat back and forth jumping until you have performed 6-10 'roundtrips' (a roundtrip is over AND back).

## **Player's Guide: Section 10**

### **WARMING UP**

**A proper warm-up routine is one way to reduce injuries such as pulled or torn muscles.** Warming up is designed to raise the body temperature and induce a slight sweat. A short jog around the floor, or some of the full-court passing drills can suffice. However, the warm-up should include stretching, particularly stretches that concentrate on the Achilles, groin, hamstring and quadriceps.

#### **GROIN STRETCH**

Sitting down on the floor, bring the bottoms of your feet together. To the extent possible, bring your knees down toward to the floor. As with all stretches, never force the knees to the floor or use quick movements. The idea is to slowly stretch the inside of the legs near the groin.

#### **HAMSTRING STRETCH**

Lie on your back with one knee bent and your foot on the floor. While keeping the other leg straight, lift the leg into the air. Reaching up with both hands, grab the back of the knee and slowly pull the leg toward the body as far as possible without straining. Then repeat with the opposite leg.

#### **QUAD STRETCH**

Face down on the floor with the right hand under the right ear, take the left hand and reach back to lift the left leg. The foot of the leg should pull back towards the left buttocks. Repeat with the opposite leg by turning the head to the right and placing the left hand under the left ear. Reach back with the right arm to grab the ankle of the right leg and pull toward the right buttocks.

#### **CALF STRETCH**

Facing a wall, lean forward placing the palms of both hands on the ball. Put right foot slightly in front of the left shoulder length apart. Lean into the wall keeping the right foot flat. The heel of the left foot should be slightly raised, which allows the thick band behind the ankle – the Achilles tendon – to stretch. Repeat stretch with the other foot.

## **Player's Guide: Section 11**

### **GETTING YOUR MIND READY FOR THE GAME**

The **KEY TO** giving your best physical effort is your **MENTAL** preparation.

Preparing yourself mentally is like going through a pre-game check list. Virtually every NBA and WNBA player goes through a mental and physical routine prior to a game. Skipping that preparation process is like walking into a classroom for an exam that you haven't studied for.

**HERE ARE SOME WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN PREPARE YOURSELF FOR COMPETITION:**

- **RESPECT YOUR OPPONENT** -- If you're playing the best team in the league, then you already know you're in for a battle. It's easy to respect that team. But you should have the same level of respect for a team that may not be as good. Once you start taking teams for granted, you have laid the foundation for a loss.
- **CONCENTRATE ON YOURSELF** -- At the same time, concentrate on yourself and how you want to play. Regardless of the opponent, get into the habit of preparing yourself emotionally to play a great game.
- **VISUALIZE YOUR SUCCESS ON THE COURT** your success on the court. Lay down in a quiet space and close your eyes. Imagine a highlight reel of your performance. See yourself making shots, grabbing rebounds, executing the offense, playing good defense. See yourself in the game as though you were watching yourself on television.

While this "visualization" process might seem strange, many NBA and WNBA players practice visualization techniques before playing games. By seeing yourself doing well over and over, you're forcing your brain to respond to certain physical and psychological cues – all of them positive. Also, after a 15-minute visualization session, you'll find yourself refreshed and refocused.

- **PREPARE FOR THE CROWD** -- The crowd usually consists of eager parents who want to see their son or daughter perform well. That's fine. Occasionally, however, a parent or two might become loud enough to affect the game.

Prepare yourself to stay focused on what you are doing on the court, no matter what is said from the stands. While you will no doubt be aware of the crowd, it's usually not difficult to ignore sounds coming out of the stands, if you have prepared beforehand for what to expect.