

# COACHING NOTES FROM COACHING CULTURE



## EPISODE 79 HOW WE THOUGHT THROUGH ADVERSITY: A RETROSPECTIVE ON NATE'S SEASON

### Challenge #1 - Responding to Players Who Quit

During the first two weeks of the season, Nate lost three upperclassmen who decided to retire from basketball. How did we respond?

- Create space for the team to talk about how they were feeling and help them process the their teammates leaving. Creating that space to share and be vulnerable helps build trust and brought our team together.
- When people are experiencing emotional distress - what they need most is connection.

One of the challenges when players leave is that their story is told repeatedly on the team, and outside of the team. In other words, the stories told about our program in the aftermath were all about why these players no longer wanted to be part of the program. We attempted to counter that by having some of our leaders tell their stories of times when they struggled during the basketball career, but chose to stay. We wanted our players to hear stories from those who persevered through adversity and were thankful that they didn't give up.

### Challenge #2 - An Uncertain Rotation

Our inconsistent rotation was stressful for the players whose minutes varied throughout the year. We attempted to address that by

- Being as clear as possible about what we expected, or what we were looking for, in each role.
- Having an ongoing conversation with the entire team... "Here's what we are looking for..."
- Having an ongoing conversation with the affected individuals... "Here's exactly what you can do to earn more time in that role..."
- As the postseason approached, we made some definitive decisions to establish a more predictable rotation so everyone knew what to expect. We explained this to the entire team so the players understood where everyone was at moving forward.
- When playing time changes - transparency is critical.

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### Challenge #3 - Learning How to Win

After winning just three games in Year One at Linn-Mar, we started to turn a corner this season after a 17-point road loss. We realized that we weren't that far away from competing with the ranked teams in our league. We needed to learn how to win. What was the difference?

- Offensively, we left points on the floor by not finishing possessions with made shots.
- Defensively, we gave points away by not closing possessions with rebounds.
- We showed them a video of our missed opportunities you can view [HERE](#).
- We emphasized the process - the exact basketball behaviors we needed to improve. This became an important emphasis for us in practice moving forward.
- We continually reinforced the notion that winning was within our reach.
- It wasn't an issue of *wanting to win*, rather we needed to teach them specifically *how to win*.

### The BEST Thing We Added to Our Process This Season

One thing that has been a challenge for me throughout my career is having open and honest conversations with our players. This year we decided to be intentional about scheduling meetings with them throughout the year.

- **Meeting #1** - A discussion of their Summer Grade and the role they want to compete for during the season (one-on-one during the first two weeks of the season).
- **Meeting #2** - We facilitated two-on-one conversations to have players discuss their roles with one another. They discussed what their challenges and what they enjoyed about their roles.
- **Meeting #3** - We facilitated three-on-one conversations to have players share a mid-season review of how their experience was going as a team and as individuals.
- **Meeting #4** - A discussion with individual players to fine-tune their role and our expectations for them as we approached the end of the year. We tried to clear-up any miscommunication and asked if there are ways that we could coach them better.
- **Additional Meetings As Necessary** - If a specific player was struggling with something, we might facilitate a two-on-one meeting with a teammate who went through something similar before.

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Most of these meetings happened during road games on the bus or in the bleachers during the JV games so that we weren't adding even more time to our players' schedules.

Ultimately, we created opportunities for players to have the conversations that needed to happen. Sometimes things were brought to light in these scheduled conversations, and other times the players talked with one another because they felt more comfortable sharing during our meetings.

Those conversations didn't necessarily always have to happen with me, but they had to happen with someone.

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