

DISTRIBUTION OF COURT TIME IN CHAMPIONSHIP TEAMS

This is a statement of policy that the Championship Boys Committee wishes all coaches to adopt rotation of players practices which will give all selected players a good reason to feel part of the team.

The reasons for this policy are -

1. Players and their parents have to make a significant commitment to participate at this level and are entitled to have the opportunity to develop their abilities. This requires court time to implement what is taught at training. We note the special responsibility to develop all bottom age players.
2. It is unethical to use players to merely make up numbers at training. It is against principles of mutual obligation.
3. Failure to give players some opportunity to feel a significant part of the team is likely to sap the morale of the team. One or more players no longer feel enthusiastic about team achievements to which they have contributed very little. Friendship patterns within the team may spread the cooling of team spirit and embarrass players receiving a lot of court time.
4. Especially earlier in the season, it may prevent the dramatic emergence of a lower ranked player during the season. Such major improvements have occurred in teams where court time distribution allows it. Confidence is required for such improvement.
5. Injuries, illness and/or foul problems may well force coaches to rely on "bench" players in critical games. They and their team mates will not reach their potential if not used to playing together under fire.
6. Failure to use the full bench in critical games going awry is to miss the opportunity to turn games around by the special abilities of many players who may not be strong all round players. Lower ranked players may be able to stop an opposition run by intense defence on a key player, by being high risk players who may break a scoring drought, by infectious enthusiasm in competing for the ball, or by creating mismatches, fast on slow or tall on small.

The policy presented here is not one of equal court time, which is clearly inappropriate to most championship teams. Further, coaches should penalise in court time players who have displayed less commitment or failed to follow the game plan. Also, in particular games, there may be a justifiable case for giving one or more players little court time, especially in critical games at the end of a season. The policy refers to **average** court time over a number of games.

In these variations, communication with players about the reasons is critical for maintenance of morale.

Coaches are reminded that, with the "head to head" rule, it is exceptionally unlikely for overall percentage to determine position on the ladder. Consequently, games clearly won or lost by mid second half provide an opportunity to give lower ranked players a long run. In Grading Phase it is tempting to distort court time to reach a higher grade. While we approve of teams aspiring to reach the highest grade at which they are competitive, this should not be at the cost of having undermined the morale of some players before the real contest has started.

HOW MUCH COURT TIME IS REASONABLE?

This will vary according to the number in the team. In any team, an average of a bare five minutes per half in a 20 minute half (or about 25% of possible court time in games with different timing rules) is not likely to be enough. If a coach can sell a bare five minutes per half to players without morale and confidence problems arising, then he/she is a marketing genius.

At the other end, if there are nine or ten players in a team, any player expecting as average of more than eight minutes per half, (or 40% if possible court time) no matter what his relative ability, would be unreasonable. Somewhere in between is where coaches should be able to find a distribution of time which works best for them. In teams with fewer players, or of relatively even quality, the coach should be able to be more generous.

By expressing expectations in terms of halves, it is not intended to imply that court time should be evenly across halves. That depends on factors too numerous to mention here.

Following the policies recommended here will not make coaches immune from complaints about court time. Some players/parents do not understand the difference between championship and Saturday games, while others dispute their relative rankings. Coaches should be prepared to explain, but not to alter their resolve.

It is not the intention of the Championship Committee to "police" this policy. However, it is a policy which we request you to honour. Your feedback would be appreciated.

Boys Championship Committee.