

Toughness drills build team character

From June Daugherty, former head women's coach, University of Washington

Hustle and toughness for your team can be improved through hard work in practice and an emphasis on what it takes to be mentally and physically tough. The following drills can help you build a tough team that's ready for battle on game days.

Rip Drill

To begin the drill, have a coach or manager standing at the elbow. Players form a single-file line from half court. Each player, one by one, makes a pass to the coach, then runs to ball and rips the ball from the coach's hands. After the player has secured the ball, the player makes a power move to the basket and stays on baseline.

Roll Drill

After all players have performed the Rip drill, the coach or manager turns around to face the players on the baseline. The player makes a pass to the coach and the coach rolls the ball out along the baseline. The player has to run out to the ball, pick it up, then make a power layup.

In both the Rip and Roll drills, get your players in the habit of calling the coach's name with each pass. These drills are great when used with blocking pads or shields. Have additional coaches or managers standing in the key to hit and bump the players as they make their power moves to the basket on rips and rolls.

90-Second 3s

Players partner into groups of two, while a coach or manager keeps track of the time. There are five spots on the floor. Players choose any spots on the floor they wish. Player 1 has to hit three consecutive 3-pointers before they can move to the next spot while player 2 rebounds. The goal is to see how many of the five spots the player can clear before the 90-second time limit expires. Players then switch positions after the first 90 seconds.

Besides shooting, this is also a rebounding drill. The rebounding player should go hard for rebounds and make good outlet passes.

Weave Shooting

Players form three lines at half court with the ball in the middle. Players do a three-player weave and, after the second pass, the shooter shoots (our team usually takes all 3-point shots in this drill, but depending on your personnel it may vary for you). The other two players become rebounders and crash the boards to secure the rebound before the ball hits the ground. Don't allow the rebounders to camp underneath the basket! If the shot is missed, the rebounder puts it back or can pass it to the second rebounder if he or she has a better shot.

If the ball hits the ground, or the offensive rebounder misses the put back, the score resets and those three players run to the end of the line. Managers keep track of points — put backs are worth one point. Put three minutes on the clock for this drill, and set up varying goals. After the ball hits the ground a few times, and that group's score resets, you'll find that players naturally begin to get on each other. This is a great shooting rebounding and focus drill.

Skip "O" Shooting

Players line up in three lines at half court, with guards and wings on the outside lines and post players in the middle. The ball starts in one of the outside lines. The first pass can go to either the middle or skipped to the opposite wing. The player shoots a 3-pointer. When the shot is taken, the other two players must crash the boards and put back the offensive rebound. If the ball hits the ground, the score is reset. Use the same scoring system as in the previous drill, and put three minutes on the clock.

Bounce Drill

This is a two-player drill. Player 1 is positioned outside the key, midway to the free-throw line. Have either player 2 or a coach bounce the ball hard so that it goes above the head of 1. After the ball hits the floor on the initial bounce, 1 may react to the ball. 1 grabs the ball out of the air simulating a rebound, squares up to the basket, and makes a step-through move and scores.

1 may not dribble, and the move has to be made on either the right or left side of the basket — not down the middle. Repeat this drill five times on each side, and finish with two free throws. If 1 misses a shot, the drill starts over.

3-on-0 Rebound Drill

Have a coach or manager on both sides of the basket outside the key and three players in the middle of the key. A coach throws the ball off the backboard, and the three players in the key battle

for the rebound and offensive basket. There's no dribbling, and anything goes. The first player to make three baskets wins. Emphasize boxing out, going hard to the offensive glass and following shot on offense.

Charge Drill

Partners start on the baseline under the basket opposite one another. Player 1 rolls a ball toward free-throw line. Player 1 runs out to get the ball and begins to dribble toward the basket. Player 2 steps in and takes a charge.

Loose-Ball Drill

Partners start on the baseline under the basket opposite one another. Player 1 rolls the ball toward the free-throw line. Player 2 dives on the floor for the loose ball, secures it, and makes a pass to 1 while still lying on the ground. 1 scores the basket. Repeat, switch or alternate each time.

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