



Planning a Season

Level I
Coaching Education and Training Program



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Craig H. Neilsen Foundation

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Level I Objectives

- Understand the role planning can play in crafting a successful season
- Understand the benefits of planning as it applies to systematically developing a season plan
- Know the four basic types of plans
- Be better prepared to properly organize your team and season for successful and safe competition



Benefits of Planning

- Keep your athletes engaged throughout practice.
 - Avoid drills and scenarios where athletes are stagnate
- Teach skills in the appropriate progression.
 - Fundamentals are the foundation for success
- Increase your confidence as a coach.
 - Always know your next move



In the injury prevention session we talk about appropriate progression, not just in conditioning, but in skill development as well. Proper planning allows you to take a critical look at what you are teaching, how you are teaching it and when you are teaching it.

Not to be overlooked, it is always good as the coach or program leader to know what is next. When you do the confidence that you have is born of being prepared and your athletes and participants will know it.

Types of Plans

- **Season Plan**
- Weekly Plan
- Practice Plan
- Game Plan



This session is about planning your season, not your training cycle. When you engage in a holistic training and conditioning program you need to plan for the off-season and the preseason accordingly and utilize the principles of periodization to ensure athletes do not overtrain and are properly prepared for the season. Here we are going to look at the components directly associated with preparing for competition.

Why a Season Plan?

- A Season Plan forces you to think about the BIG PICTURE.
 - If you fail to plan, you plan to fail!
- A Season Plan is your roadmap to success.
 - If you don't know how to get where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else.



Big Picture: You have to consider the season as a whole and how each piece works with the others

Roadmap: As you progress through your season you want to hit milestones. If you have accomplished everything that you intended by your milestone dates, you can move on to the next item. If you have not, you can adjust for areas of need.

Why a Season Plan?

- A Season Plan does not guarantee success, but it does increase your chances!

It's the little details that are vital. Little things make big things happen. - John Wooden



Some people make the mistake of failing to plan because they have already planned 10 successful seasons. Planning is never done and just like the stock market, past results do not predict future performance. Planning gradually becomes more significant from season to season as you build on what works, change what doesn't and make accommodations for changes.

Developing a Season Plan

- Before you can develop a Season Plan, you must:
 - Identify the skills your athletes need
 - Know your athletes
 - Analyze your situation
 - Set team and individual goals
 - Establish priorities
 - Select methods for teaching



Much of what we are going to discuss today is derived from the American Sport Education Program's course Coaching Principles and the text Successful Coaching. In that course, Ranier Marten's suggests that prior to developing a Season Plan, you must ascertain certain information such as:

Identify the skills your athletes need

Know your athletes

Analyze your situation

Set team and individual goals

Establish priorities

Select methods for teaching

Let's take a look at each of these areas

Developing a Season Plan

- Identify the skills your athletes need
 - Technical Skills
 - Tactical Skills
 - Physical Skills
 - Mental Skills
 - Communication Skills
 - Character Development



There are six skill areas that your athletes need to develop and you, as a coach, need to be able to identify the essential skills that your athletes will need in each area in order to be successful.

Let's take a look at each area.

Developing a Season Plan

- Know Your Athletes
 - What are your other hobbies or interests?
 - What is your favorite quote or personal motto?
 - What do you like about your sport?
 - What do you dislike about your sport?
 - What can the coaches do to help you better enjoy your sport?



The more you know about your athletes, the better equipped you will be to coach both the individual and the team. Gone are the days where athletes were required to universally adjust to a coach. Today, coaches must adapt to each individual and keep that athlete's profile in mind each time they interact.

At the beginning of each season I have each player fill out an athlete profile that asks the following questions:

Developing a Season Plan

- **Know Your Athletes**
 - Why they are playing the sport
 - Age
 - Physical, psychological and social maturity
 - Primary and secondary disabilities
 - Playing experience
 - Present skills
 - Capabilities or potential



Developing a Season Plan

- Know Your Athletes
 - What are three personal goals that you would like to accomplish this year?
 - What are three team goals that you would like to accomplish this year?
 - What are three personal goals that you would like to accomplish next year?
 - What are three team goals that you would like to accomplish next year?



Developing a Season Plan

- Analyze Your Situation
 - What are your resources and limitations?
 - How many practices per week?
 - How long is each practice?
 - What facilities and equipment do you have available?
 - How many athletes will you have?
 - What staff will you have?
 - How many competitions will you attend?
 - What funds do you have available?



This often becomes a challenge in disability sport. We spend so much time trying to secure our resources it can make it very difficult to plan for them! Utilize the information that you have and use good judgment for the rest. Don't plan on attending four competitions that require travel if you have never had the budget to make more than two trips and you have no reason to believe you will have increased revenues. Opportunities can always be found once additional resources are secured.

Developing a Season Plan

- Set Team and Individual Goals
 - Goals should have SMARTS
 - S Specific and positive
 - M Measurable
 - A Achievable
 - R Realistic
 - T Timely
 - S Self Determined
 - Once you determine what you want to achieve, you can determine what skills need to be developed in order to achieve those goals



In order to know what you need to work on you need to know where you are headed. This is done through team and individual goal setting. We will look at this in detail a little bit later.

Specific: What do you want to happen? Get faster? Down & back in less than 15 seconds.

Measurable: If you can't measure it, you can't attain it. See above.

Achievable: If you set goals that are too far out of your reach, you will lose motivation to continue to strive to reach the goal. Set goals that you can attain in a reasonable amount of time and then reset the goal.

Realistic: Set goals that you have the ability and resources to attain. Write them down and put them in a place that you will see every day.

Timely: Set a clear target date for the achievement of the goal.

Self Determined: The athlete should always be part of the goal setting process. No one should strive to achieve the goals that only other set for them.

Developing a Season Plan

- Establish Priorities
 - There are never enough hours in a day!
 - In order to achieve your goals, determine:
 - What **MUST** be taught to achieve the desired outcomes
 - What **SHOULD** be covered if good use is made of the available resources
 - What **COULD** be taught if time permits



There are never enough hours in a day and you will need to make some difficult choices in order to prepare your team for competition.

The first thing to determine is what **MUST** be taught. Fundamentals and rules are musts. We have all seen the videos of the t-baller hitting the ball and running to third base instead of first. Base your plan in teaching the fundamentals and rules first and build from there.

Next determine what should be covered if you plan properly and make good use of your facility, equipment, volunteers and staff.

Finally, determine what could be covered if your team develops ahead of schedule or you are blessed with extra practices. These are special plays that may include last second shots, out of bounds plays for specific situations, etc. Don't use precious time on scenarios that may never occur unless you have covered the situations that will occur multiple times every game.

Once you have established your priorities, stick to them!!

Developing a Season Plan

Once you have:

- Identified the skills your athletes need
- Gotten to know your athletes
- Analyzed your situation
- Set team and individual goals
- Established your priorities
- Selected your methods for teaching

You are ready to put everything together into your Season Plan!!



We have discussed all six skill areas and now we are ready to put together the season plan.

Developing a Season Plan

- Start with your goals and work your way backwards
 - Determine what you need to do in order to achieve your goals
 - Set your timeline for teaching skills
 - Build from the fundamentals up
 - Adhere to your priorities



All of the hard work is done. You know what you have to work with. You know your starting point and you know what your goals are. Now:

Determine what you need to do in order to achieve your goals

Set your timeline for teaching skills

Build from the fundamentals up

Adhere to your priorities, it is very tempting to jump ahead if you have a bad competition or to introduce a new skill before the foundation is built, but the season is long and the goal should be to play to the best of your abilities at the end of the season.

My season plan for my adult team focuses on the fundamentals of half court offense and defense until November. We won't even introduce transition until after our first tournament. This may cost us a game or two, but if we are not solid in our half court, we will not have the foundation on which to build the transitional game since the concepts are essentially the same, just expanded to cover the entire court.

Types of Plans

- Season Plan
- **Weekly Plan**
- Practice Plan
- Game Plan



Why a Weekly Plan?

- Use a weekly plan if you have more than one practice per week.
- Follow your season plan and the sequence of instruction for the sport skills.
- Adjust for areas of need.
- Plan for light practices before home games and days off after tournaments.
- Give individual skills as homework.



If you only practice once per week, then your practice plan will become your weekly plan.

Your weekly plan is simply a week by week stepping stone to accomplishing your season plan.

Planning your week allows you to tailor your practices to meet your needs; whether they be correcting deficiencies or planning specialized practices to accommodate for travel, competitions or special events.

If you do not practice five times per week, you can give individual skills as homework and develop a plan for that skill development, player by player, into your weekly plan.

Developing a Weekly Plan

- Elements of a Weekly Plan
 - Schedule
 - Practices
 - Competitions
 - Special events
 - Other programs
 - Summary of the goals you want to accomplish that week
 - Summary of the skills you want to develop that week



As you develop your weekly plan, first look at your schedule. How many practices will you have? Will you have any competitions? Will you be part of any special events; fund raisers, exhibitions, scrimmages? Are there any conflicts with other programs that will take away some of your players?

Once you have a handle on your schedule, determine what goals you need to accomplish each week to stay on track to achieve your season goals.

Once you determine what you want to accomplish, determine what skills need to be developed to achieve those goals.

Once that is done, you are ready to begin your practice plan.

Types of Plans

- Season Plan
- Weekly Plan
- **Practice Plan**
- Game Plan



Why a Practice Plan

- The Practice Plan is the document that summarizes what you are going to do on a given day in order to accomplish the goals of your Weekly and Season Plans.
- Developing a Practice Plan allows you to think about what you need to teach and how you want to teach it.



The practice plan is where you detail the process by which you are going to achieve your goals for the week and ultimately your season.

The practice plan is where you finalize your plan for teaching each skill area and determine how you are going to teach it.

Why a Practice Plan

- By developing an organized Practice Plan, you can:
 - Ensure that you are properly utilizing your facility and equipment.
 - Providing adequate time for warm up, stretching, water breaks and cool down.
 - Teach skills in a proper sequence.
 - Have a record of what instruction was given, what worked and what didn't work.



The process of developing your practice plan allows you to think about the facility and equipment that you have available and ensure that you are utilizing them to the maximum extent possible. The more equipment that you have, the more options you have.

By writing down your practice plan, you can ensure that you provide adequate time for warm up and cool down and water breaks. Make sure that your athletes actually take in water or sport drink during the water break. Younger athletes especially tend to neglect proper hydration.

When you put your practice plan to paper you can check to ensure that you are introducing skills and concepts in a proper sequence and building up from proper fundamentals.

One thing that is often overlooked in developing a practice plan is the evaluation. Take some time to write down a brief summary of the practice, what worked, what didn't and what may need reinforcing and keep your plan for your records.

Why a Practice Plan

- Elements of a Written Practice Plan
 - Date
 - Practice start time
 - Length of practice
 - Practice objectives
 - Equipment
 - Climate conditions for outdoor practices
 - Practice activities
 - Time of activity
 - Name of activity
 - Description of activity
 - Key teaching points
 - Evaluation



Obviously we are talking about basketball here and we typically do not practice outside, but if you are coaching another sport such as track and field, climate conditions can have an impact on performance and you want to be sure to note what the climate conditions are in those cases.

Practice Plan

Date: February 9th, 2008

Practice start time: 2 PM


Length of practice: 120 Minutes

Practice objectives: 1) Work on passing skills. 2) Work on ball handling skills.
3) Work on pick mechanics.

Equipment: 1 Full Court with 2 Baskets, 20 Basketballs

Practice Activities			
Time	Name of activity	Description/Purpose	Key teaching points
15 Minutes	Warm Up	Shark	
5 Minutes	Stretch	Wrists, shoulders, triceps, neck, trunk, back	Ten count, slow and complete
15 Minutes	Passing	2 Line, Full Court	Call out names, good passes, game speed
5 Minutes (40)	Drink	4-6 Ounces, Water or Sports Drink	
15 Minutes	Shooting	4 Corner Lay Ups	Angle, communication, outlet passes, game speed
15 Minutes	Ball Handling	Ball Tag	Good dribble, use both hands
5 Minutes (75)	Drink	4-6 Ounces, Water or Sports Drink	
15 Minutes	Shooting	Lay Up Team Race	Game Speed
25 Minutes	Scrimmage	3-3	Good Passes/Good Picks
5 Minutes (120)	Cool Down	Easy roll and stretch	Ten count, slow and complete

Evaluation:



Here is an example practice plan. As you can see, each of the elements of a proper practice plan is present. I like to break my practice plan down by minutes and put the total number of minutes in parentheses at certain points so I can do a quick check on time and see if I need to speed or cut something out for that practice.

Why a Practice Plan

- Wheelchair Sports
 - What needs to be added to the practice plan?

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Weight shifts!! Regardless of age, weight shifts should be called out in practice plans when working with athletes who use wheelchairs. It can easily be made part of the water break but it needs to be in the plan!! Based on your players, allowance for restroom breaks and personal care needs should also be planned for.

Types of Plans

- Season Plan
- Weekly Plan
- Practice Plan
- **Game Plan**



Why a Game Plan

- Developing a Game Plan allows you to think about what your team needs to do to be successful.
- A Game Plan will help you focus your athlete's attention on key elements of the game that will help to make them successful.
- A Game Plan allows you to concentrate your efforts on your team's strengths.
- A Game Plan allows you to exploit your opponent's weaknesses.
- A Game Plan can define success in terms of progress in learning and execution, not winning and losing.



One of the great things about a game plan in disability sport is the increased importance of roles as a result of classification systems. The game plan is an opportunity to focus athletes on their role and reinforce the importance of that role, even if it does not involve a large amount of playing time, you can focus an athlete on the things they can and need to do well when they are in the game.

For individual sports this can take the form of performance improvements.

Developing a Game Plan

- Elements of a Game Plan
 - Focus
 - Objectives
 - Threats
 - Special Notes



Focus: What is the team character for this game? Effort – Push Hard, Intelligence – Play Smart, Team – Play Together

Objectives: List 2-3 objectives in each area; Offense, Defense & Transition

Threats: List all opposing players and their strong hand, shooting zone, tendencies, etc.

Special Notes: Can include specific information about the opposing team; special plays, shooters near the end of the shot clock, etc.

If you are coaching younger athletes, your game plan should be focused on your team's strengths and what you want to accomplish in terms of gains in learning and execution.

As athletes get older, more and more consideration for the other team can be taken into account and the game plan can be focused on tactics that will improve the chances of winning. This will require scouting the other team and having a significant amount of information.

Summary

- Understand the benefits of having a Plan.
- Understand the need for knowing your athletes' skills, talents and needs before developing your seasonal plans
- Understand the need for having different types of plans:
 - Season, weekly, practices and game plans

