



Selecting a Basketball team

This resource will provide you with guidelines and suggestions on methods and strategies of basketball selection. In all team sports the selector will have to make the tough decisions between choosing the best individual athletes and the best combination of athletes that can complement each other to achieve their ultimate goal.

There is no prerequisite course to complete this resource and is available to anyone who is filling the role of selector or coach or simply keen to learn more about the decisions and processes in selecting a squad or team.

Selection Policies

What are they?

Simply put they are the explanation of the set of processes that selectors will use to deliver an enjoyable and rewarding experience to their basketball community by offering the correct opportunities to players of all ages and skill levels that helps them to participate and perform.

Review the bolded titles below for examples of the main elements that should be contained in a selection policy.

Objectives

What is the outcome/end goal of the team/squad that is being selected? Make sure these are SMART.

EG: "To select a team from the athletes for [team, competition, event] who have consistently displayed they are able to compete competently at the level of competition they are being selected for and demonstrate the required levels of competencies."

The most common questions asked about selections are often simple logistical ones. Outline them clearly from the outset.

EG:

"X number of players will be chosen to represent In the competition."

"Selection decisions will be made by a panel comprising of (number) selectors."

"These selectors will be chosen due to their ability to be successful follow the attached position description."

Selection procedure

Within the policy include a section on how the final decisions will be made and the steps to reach there. Ensure there is also clarification on both how decisions will be conveyed to both successful and unsuccessful parties.

EG: "Selection meetings will be undertaken at (enter time and if appropriate venue) and decisions will be communicated at (enter time and method).

"The selection panel will observe games and athlete performances during (enter window)."

Selection Criteria

As a selection committee ensure before the process begins everyone is aware of the competencies and qualities for the athletes, the positions and the team combination.

EG:

"Technical and tactical ability – sound quality of technical skill and consistency of performance; incorporates flair and innovation in their game; etc".

"Physical and mental – strong work ethic; discipline; demonstrates team qualities; etc".

Selector responsibilities

As a group or individually the selectors need to ensure they are able to give each athlete an equal amount of time both to be considered and also discussed prior to making decisions. This will require planning both in terms of the selection window and subsequent discussions. This is true regardless of the standard or age of the player, full opportunities to show their worthiness for selection must be provided.

Pre –

Comprehend and accept the Selection Policy

Understand the expectations of the team being selected and the challenges that await them.

Be clear on the roles and responsibilities the final group selected must be capable of. E.g., position requirements etc.

Ensure all players trialling meet eligibility criteria

During –

Continually refer to the selection policy to stay on track.

Be present and focused on the role.

Ensure as a group if possible, each player is looked at by 2 different sets of eyes.

Use stats and other information to support or challenge your initial opinions and ideas.

Post-

Have a clear opinion personally about every player before discussing them as a group to ensure one person's opinion is not considered reflective of the whole group.

Be prepared to have in depth discussions about your thoughts and as a group ensure notes are kept in the event of questions being asked.

Making mistakes

Like players and coaches in a game selectors can make mistakes. Often they don't even know they are doing it and even more likely they are not being done through any malice or unfairness. However the end result can be the same, inappropriate selections.

Listed below are some common selection mistakes.

Contrast effect – This happens when players are compared to each other regardless of position. E.g. comparing a centre to a guard rather than considering them on the basis of what their position requires. This problem can be negated by evaluating large numbers of athletes at the same time or waiting until all individuals have been evaluated before comparing them for positions.

Halo or horns effect – We can all think of an example when a player has done something spectacular or conversely made a significant error. This effect refers to when those stand alone events have a significant favourable or unfavourable effect on selection rather than their output as a whole. To avoid this effect, ensure multiple selectors have looked at a player at different points.

Averaged ratings effect – This is the most common issue where selectors have too many players they believe could go either way and can't "get off the fence" This can happen even with a number of protections in place as there can be negative or positive leniency: When athletes are assessed too easily or too hard, which averages their ratings. To avoid this effect; if any athletes don't have a range of ratings, investigate for central tendency or leniency.

First impression – As the old saying goes the first impression can be the most important but when selecting you have to be able to go beyond that and remove that bias. First impressions of an athlete, wither favourable or unfavourable, often create bias. A first impressions may be inaccurate of the athletes ability, and may influence later judgement. To avoid this effect; reserve all judgements regarding an athlete until all observations have been completed.

Similar to me – If a selector sees themselves in a player either visually or technically that can have a positive effect on their perceptions. To counter this effect, you should ensure there is a diversity in background on your panel.

Sequence effect- If a poor performance (in a selectors opinion) is then followed by another player having a strong performance (in the selectors opinion) then when compared next to each other it can have an unfair result. To avoid this effect only compare athletes once evaluations are made.

OBSERVATION

In all the areas above we have referred to observation as a key period in the selection process. Selectors need to ensure that whilst they are in this period they are conscious of factors they might not know in the moment as well. Examples of this are injury history or personal events. Whilst this doesn't change the prime focus of skills, attitude and behaviour on the day, if they believe they are witnessing a negative outlier they should note this in their observation to remain open and transparent.

Quiz (scroll to the end for answers)

You should always declare a conflict of interest – True or false

Which two of the following are principles of selection.

1. Be open and transparent

2. Do not speak to other selectors until after the selections
3. Maintain confidentiality
4. fill in all the forms

The selection procedure of a selection policy should include

1. How the selection process will be conducted
2. Where the selection process will be held.
3. How long the selection process will take.
4. All of the above.

Before the selection session you should :

1. Know if there is a requirement of players for each position.
2. View all teams at least twice.
3. Participate in detailed discussions about the athletes.
4. All of the above.

How can you avoid the common error of halo or horns effect ?

1. Complete individual evaluations prior to discussions about the athlete with other selectors.
2. Evaluate athletes multiple times in different games and ideally by different people.
3. Use a selection panel of selectors from different backgrounds.
4. Use a selection panel of selectors of a wide age range.

Looking at the Athlete

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

It is important that selectors consider not only the physical development of the player currently but also their potential ability in line with their developmental age. This can be done by making the following notes next to a player when observing them.

Consider each athlete's:

Age
Relation to onset of puberty
Physical stature.

For example, a very tall player who is still quite young and has not yet hit puberty may demonstrate a lack of coordination and balance on the court, but may show potential to further develop their physical coordination to be a fine player.

Review the headings below to find out more.

Relative age effect

Relative age effect is a phenomenon when maturity can be mistaken for ability. Athletes born in the same year only months apart may display vastly different levels of physical development and skill/capacity. Relative age effects are based on a concept that demonstrates how youth athletes who are born at the beginning of a (bi)annual age group (e.g., under-16, under-18, and under-20) are

more likely to be selected and/or participate in youth sport compared with their relatively younger peers

Onset of puberty

Onset of puberty is variable, generally between 11 and 13 in males and 15 in females, so even athletes who are grouped by age and born in the same half of the year may have different physical potential and abilities.

Height

You can't coach or train height, that's all genetics but other physical characteristics such as speed, power, agility, balance and co-ordination can be positively affected with focused coaching and training. It is important that selectors remember a player who is undergoing physical changes may be compromised in short term performance as they become comfortable with their changing bodies.

Fitness

Playing basketball requires rapid acceleration and rapid changes in direction, with bursts of highly intense speed. This is combined with jumping and leaping movements. A successful basketballer requires high levels of aerobic and anaerobic fitness.

It's therefore important that physical fitness be taken into consideration when selecting athletes and their conditioning be assessed so that they are able to meet the demands of their playing position.

Skills

Regardless of level the primary selection criteria is always going to be a player's skill level. A skilful player though is often not good enough on their own and it has to be in conjunction with an acceptable level of fitness. If the fitness is an issue the panel needs to be clear, are they looking for the skilled / unfit player or the unskilled / fit player?

Each selection panel should have a skill matrix of some variety and the selectors need to be watching for each of these during the selection process.

The list of skill areas could include:

- Movement / footwork
- Passing
- Attacking
- Defending
- Shooting
- Decision making.

General elements to look for:

- Good footwork and change of direction
- Acceleration and deceleration
- High work rate
- Balance and control without the ball



- Balance and control with the ball
- Speed, agility, endurance and elevation
- Athletic ability, body control and coordination in relation to body type.

Catching and Dribbling skills

- Good basic ball handling skills under pressure
- Two hands
- One hand control – both hands

Distribution skills

Athletes should demonstrate efficient technique in:

- Accurate execution of passes
- Variation on timing of release of pass
- Consistency on placement of pass
- Using a variety of options under pressure

Attacking skills

Athletes should demonstrate efficient technique in:

- Shooting
- Drives
- Change of direction and pace
- Cuts
- Screens.

General elements to look for:

- Ability to make appropriate decisions
- Effective use of space
- Timing
- Vision.

Defending skills

Athletes should demonstrate efficient technique in:

- Defensive footwork
- Body control and re-positioning
- Adjusting body position as ball approaches
- Intercepting



- Sagging
- Communication skills
- Working together.

General elements to look for:

- Good one on one defending
- Defence of pass.

Shooting Skills

Athletes should demonstrate efficient technique in:

Shots

- Variation on timing on release of shot
- Screens
- Rebounding
- Work rate and shot
- Communication skills

General elements to look for:

- Shot technique
- Work rate

Decision making and strategy skills

Athletes should demonstrate efficient technique in:

- OOB and SLOB – attack and defence
- Key - defence

General elements to look for:

- Court craft; ability to read the game
- Flair and creativity
- Ability to combine
- Involvement in the game
- Knowledge of rules and adjusts to referees
- Position specific skills
- Accuracy of shot.

Character

If an athlete displays strong character tendencies it can be an indicator, they will be more comfortable rising to an elite level.



General elements to look for when assessing character:

- Consistency of performance
- Temperament, aggressiveness, competitiveness, intensity
- Ability to concentrate
- Coachability – understanding and application of coaching direction
- Ability to accept responsibility of actions
- Does the player listen?
- Do they react?

These are not easy metrics for a selector to judge, here are some suggestions for areas selectors could observe to support these areas during the selection process:

Watch how the athlete responds to other players and their own performance, for example, is it generally positive or negative?

Listen to how the athlete speaks during and after play, for example, do they accept responsibility for their own mistakes or do they blame others?

Quiz (scroll to end for answers)

Relative age effect is a phenomenon when maturity can be mistaken for ability. True or false?

Your primary consideration when selecting an athlete is their level of aerobic fitness. True or false?

Which of the following are general elements to look for when assessing character? Select all that are correct.

1. Consistency of performance
2. Commitment and reliability
3. Higher chronological age
4. Ability to concentrate
5. Ability to accept responsibility of own actions
6. Catching skills
7. Footwork

Team Selection

This will be the stage you reach once you have got your squad selected. This section involves a lot of questions and considerations of those individuals back against your selection policy and key decision factors.

Some of the common questions:

Every player is important as at some point in the competition they will be expected to fill a role.

- Is it a development team/squad or a team to win?



- 'What if' a player suffers injury or illness or both? Will the other players you're considering be able to cover for them?
- Is each position covered at least twice, if not three times?
- How long does the coach have to prepare the team/squad or work with an individual on something they could improve and therefore be valuable?

Parents

The younger the player the more involvement and communication there needs to be to the Parents/guardians along with the athletes. All information must be shared with both parties so parents/guardians can ensure the athlete is aware of the process and able to support them at the most suitable times and ensure they are prepared to perform to their best when required. This does not mean making special considerations for parents at any point and the expectations on them and from the selection panel to them should be clearly conveyed in a selection policy if relevant.

Some things that should be called out;

- How they can ask any questions or communicate with the selection panel if at all.
- How feedback will be conveyed and in what format and if there will be a consultation process available after selection.
- During the selection period what they are allowed to do or interaction they are allowed to have.
- How they can communicate any information they believe to be relevant prior to selection.

Quiz 1

You should always declare a conflict of interest – True

Which two of the following are principles of selection.
Be open and transparent , Maintain confidentiality

The selection procedure of a selection policy should include
All of the above.

Before the selection session you should :
All of the above.

How can you avoid the common error of halo or horns effect ?
Evaluate athletes multiple times in different games and ideally by different people.

Quiz 2

Relative age effect is a phenomenon when maturity can be mistaken for ability.
True

Your primary consideration when selecting an athlete is their level of aerobic fitness.
False

Which of the following are general elements to look for when assessing character? Select all that are correct.

Consistency of performance, ability to accept responsibility of own actions, ability to concentrate.