

SELECTION ORIENTED TOWARDS THE FUNCTIONAL ROLES OF THE INDIVIDUAL PLAYERS IN BASKETBALL

Behudin Bajgorić¹, Danijela Bonacin² and Gordan Firić²

¹ Government of Kanton Zenica-Doboj, Zenica, Bosnia & Herzegovina

² Faculty of kinesiology, University of Travnik, Bosnia & Herzegovina

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Abstract

This essay examines the functional roles in basketball. It is mentioned that there are primarily five roles, and that we must take into consideration natural physiological demands stemming from the functional demands of the game. Although it seems that the number of roles could be determinate in a different manner, it is still a fact that five is a logical number, considering the structure of the game. We can create the players who do not fit the defined roles in this model, but their active participation will be limited to extreme situations, which are few and far between. The question is who would settle for that after 10-15 years of training? Or is there a child who would choose the role of a "wildcard" after the years of practice. It can happen that there is another model (sixth, seventh,...) in a profile of the basketball player, but those models are going to have hard time finding their purpose and role in the game, simply because the functional model of basketball is based on five roles called: functional roles of the individual players in basketball.

Key words: basketball, roles, selection

Introduction

Basketball is a sport in which five-men teams are trying to score as much points as possible by passing the ball through the hoop of the rivals, with the set of certain regulations. It was formulated by the Canadian James Naismith in 1891, when he made a set of basic rules and regulations. Although basketball is primarily an American sport, it soon became an international sport and today there is basically not a single country where it is not played. Basketball became an Olympic sport in 1936. This is a sport both for women and for men. It is played on a court 28 meters long and 15 meters wide, the height of the hoop is 3.05 meters, the hoop diameter is 51 cm, and the ball weighs around 650 grams.

The hoop is attached to a glass panel (180x120cm). Passing, handling and throwing the ball towards teammates is allowed. Only in some cases a player can cover the ground by carrying the ball, and only two steps are allowed. If the player holds the ball for more than five seconds, the ball is lost. Time for the offensive play is limited and it changed throughout the history. In today's European basketball the offensive play is limited to 24 seconds. When the ball is crossed over to an opponent's half (inside 10 sec), it cannot be brought back to your own half again.

Some contacts with the opponent are allowed (block, closing down), and in the case of the illegal contact, the team can be penalized with a foul, or even an intentional foul. In certain conditions free throws are awarded, and for that purpose a special position is marked on the court, and the team receives one point for each successful free throw.

The ball is thrown into play by a player who must stand outside the boundaries of the court, and it must be thrown to a player standing inside the court. The duration of the game varies, it is mostly divided into two 20 minute halves, or 12 minute quarters of the 'pure play', which means that when the ball is out of bounds, the time is stopped. There are usually 2 or 3 referees. There is a 'live' score sheet for each game. Modern basketball also has a three-point line, scoring behind that line is awarded with three points, and inside that line with two points.

Problem and Aim

The introduction explained that basketball is a complex sport, which by its definition and general classification is a multistructural, acyclic sport activity. The winning requires cooperation between the teammates.

As each complex human activity requires specialization, the same goes for basketball. Namely, seen that a number of individuals participate in reaching of the common goal, and there is the identical tendency with the rivals, it is obvious that teammates cannot have identical roles inside the team, because the activity would be inefficient. Therefore, since the early days, and in accordance to the interests and capabilities, the individuals are specialized for certain roles in the game. This specialization, in this essay, will be characterized as a definition of the functional roles in basketball. That is **the problem** and the goal of **this essay**, most easily expressed as an analysis of the functional roles of the individuals for the adequate cooperation in the team.

Structure of the basketball team

In every situation in sports, and especially in sports games, where several individuals work simultaneously, the basic question is asked: how many specialized roles should be defined in order to successfully implement a common activity? The minimum always equals one (1), which means that in that model all the players are prepared identically, and maximum always equals the number of players allowed on the court (5), which means that in this model different models of preparation are used, the players are prepared for their 'position in the game'.

The maximum can be more than 5 when we take into consideration bench players, in order to gain leverage in some segments of the game. Models of modern basketball game are used in accordance to various trainers' ideas, in which functional criteria have hierarchically different role and significance. That is expected, since some coaches put a stress on physical condition, some on technical preparation of the player, and some on tactical maneuvering in order to gain the advantage over the opponent.

In accordance to the initial logical position in the game, quality of the available players and the tactical knowledge, the game plan is defined, and functional criterion is incorporated and strengthened throughout the training sessions. However, seen that basketball has been analyzed and monitored for a long time, experts have differentiated 5 positions which are recognizable and applicable in modern basketball.

There are some discrepancies for the above mentioned reasons, but that does not change the general image, which is general even by its basic definition. Players' roles cannot be viewed separately from the general purpose of the game, so it is not difficult to identify some principles which simply should be understood as they are.

Point guard

The court is large enough, and our opponents are trying to prevent **passing the ball to their own half**, and closer to the basket. That task can be achieved in two ways: a) passing the ball and b) dribbling. It is obvious that with the passing comes the danger of interception of the ball, but it is also the fact that it is the fastest way of moving the ball. On the other hand dribbling is much safer because the player with excellent ball handling skills can easily control the ball and win space, but this technique takes much more time than the first one.

As we cannot be certain if we are going to be able to conduct easy and accurate passing, because the opponent will see it as a great danger, and will try to stop it; starting five must have a player who is specialized in dribbling and ball handling in order to secure safe transition. That role of guarding the ball while taking it to opponent's half has a point guard, usually marked as '1'. The basic task of this player is to guard the ball until an opportunity for the efficient attack is presented. In order to fulfill that role, the point guard must have a good overview of the situation on the court, and ideally that player is at the back of the attacking formation, in order to have the option of passing the ball to teammates who are ideally in front of him.

His role does not end with just that task; he is also in charge of **ball distribution** according to the situation on the court, and to the possibilities which are intentionally created by his team. This in any case does not mean that point guard should not try to score. On the contrary, in every situation when the teammates are well covered, this player systematically tries to gain advantage, especially in counter-attacks and semi counter-attacks, when the opponent is defending with an incomplete defense formation.

Guard

Since the basket is elevated to a certain height, it is clear that taller players will have an advantage over shorter players, and in many cases height advantage is decisive. So coaches always try to assemble a very tall team, and in the early days they select the children for whom is evident that they will be very tall. However, height difference is less important in the in-field play, as seen with the point guard who relies on other qualities rather than on height. As a support to the point guard, who can be isolated from the active play, we must have an alternative solution, and this player is marked as "2".

This mark comes from the defensive play where these two players create the first line of defense. If the game is functioning properly, the role of the guard is not a ball-transfer, but it is **creating the space around the basket, making himself available, and ultimately scoring**. As there is at least another seven players besides him in that space (his guards and three more pairs of players) it is obvious that there must be a player capable of long-range shooting. This is one of the key roles of the guard, **long-range shooting**. There is also the realization of quick counter-attacks if possible. Guards are in most situations the best and the most efficient players, which brings us to conclusion that their main purpose is scoring.

Small forward

In order to be efficient both in the attack and the defense, and especially to establish dominance in the rebound area, we must have very tall players in our team, the players that cannot be dominated in efforts to get the ball after the miss. We can set the play so all of the players are good rebounders, and we will surely dominate that area of the game. But what if the entire game is different than we anticipated? What if there are a lot of slow attacks, with plenty of pre-arranged plays which take time develop, and the opponent has shorter and faster players? Then it is possible that there will be greater efficiency in scoring, with fewer shots, so our tall players will have nothing to fight for under the hoops. In that case the center of play is shifted inside the field (preparation of the attacking plays) where we need faster and more skilled defensive players, and in the attacking plays we need less static and more explosive players, still able to dominate under hoops.

These are the characteristics of the small, marked as "3". According to the functional description, small forward must be **tall but agile**, the player that can participate both in the **in-field play** but also in the game **in paint**. Since the defensive rebounds are not his primer goal, and defensively he guards the opponent of the similar characteristics, he is in a good position to realize **quick counter-attacks**.

With the organized attacking play, he is able to break through the defense with quick dribbling movements, and from the distance of 5-6 m in two-step movement crush the opponent's defensive lines and score. This is much more difficult for the first two players, simply because they have different tasks, and they are generally positioned much farther from the basket, so it is easier to stop them. This player is naturally moving sideways to the defense, which immediately threatens it, because it tends to deform it, no matter what type of defense is chosen. One of the desirable qualities is shooting accuracy, at least from the 4-6m distances, which is in today's training easy to achieve.

Power forward

We have two more players to describe, one of them must be very tall in order to establish dominance in the defensive and offensive rebounding. The other one could be slightly shorter and quicker, the player which will give us certain agility and speed. The problem occurs when an opponent has a very tall player who is also accurate from mid-range distances (up to 5m). this player will naturally be positioned towards the outer positions, and as a consequence our tall player will follow.

If there is only one really tall player in our team, it means that we do not have any tall players in paint and we will lose the dominance under the basket. That being said, it is clear that we must have two really tall players, disregarding the fact that this will cause the loss of agility in the team, but on the other hand we will gain leverage in rebounding section. Also we want to put two tall players in the attacking plays in order to secure attacking rebounds, or to create actions so the can score easily. However there are two reasons why this is impossible. The first reason is that if two players stand close to each other, it is easier to guard them, and there forms a cluster of players making it difficult to create opportunities.

The other reason is so-called "three second rule", the rule that states that while attacking, the player can stand in the opponent's paint for only three seconds. This rule is created in order to prevent the tall players to "camp" under the hoops, which would ruin the game. The fourth player will be very tall and less agile than the small forward, and his basic goal is defensive play, defensive rebounds, and supporting the attacking plays. Such support can be: blocking, ball transfer, switching places with the small forward and the other tall player. The classic position of this player at the beginning of the attack is somewhere around the free-throw line, which means that he creates a connection between the guards and the forwards, but it also means that he must be accurate from the ranges of up to 4m, help with the rebounds both defensive and offensive, and moving towards the positions on the wing.

Center

This player is already mentioned in this analysis, and we already know that this is an extremely tall, strong player, which provides the team with the defensive rebounds, and possibly attacking rebounds, too. It is obviously a functional role realized with a lot of body contact, because none of the teams will allow free movement of a tall player under the basket, without exerting the

pressure, and trying to move him away from the basket. This means that our fifth player, usually called center ("5"), should be flawless in the execution of free throws after the fouls.

Conclusion

Functional roles in basketball have their logic, genesis, and purpose. The above mentioned model should not be considered final, because different solutions are needed, depending on a development of the game. It is not uncommon to have 4 fast players, when we want to steal the ball from the opponent, which weakens the rebound, but it is seen as necessary in given situation.

On the other hand, if the opponent's accuracy is low, or a lack of tall players, we can introduce three, or even four tall players. Finally if we want to indeterminate the game, we will introduce up to three small forwards, because they are a functional universal players, capable of creating unexpected solutions, which can surprise and confuse the opponent.

Generally the players will be prepared for one of the 5 roles mentioned, and as a team has 10-12 players signed up for the game, the selection of the starting five will be a tactical decision, and not up to functional roles, because there is still five of them.

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SELEKCIJA ORIJENTISANA PREMA FUNKCIONALNIM ULOGAMA POJEDINIH IGRAČA U KOŠARKAŠKOJ IGRI

Sažetak

U ovom radu se razmatraju funkcionalne uloge u košarci. Obrazloženo je da je broj tih uloga načelno pet, te da je u modelu sportske pripreme košarkaša potrebno posebnu pozornost usmjeriti na prirodne funkcionalne zahtjeve proizišle iz funkcionalnih ciljeva same igre. Iako se čini da se broj mogućih uloga može drugačije determinirati, ipak je činjenica da je taj broj logičan obzirom na strukturu same igre. Može se u procesu sportske pripreme „stvarati“ i igrače koji ne odgovaraju definisanim ulogama u ovom modelu, ali će njihovo aktivno sudjelovanje u igri biti ograničeno na ekstremne situacije, kojih je u regularnim sportskim takmičenjima jako mali broj. Pitanje je koji bi se igra nakon 10-15 godina sportske pripreme s tim zadovoljio? Ili koje bi dijete sa 10 godina izabralo ulogu da nakon 10-15 godina bude tek „joker“ za ograničenu upotrebu? Može se dogoditi da u nečijem profilu košarkaša egzistira i drugačiji (šesti, sedmi,...) model ali će takvi modeli jako teško pronaći svoje mjesto i ulogu, jednostavno zato što je funkcionalni model košarke, opisan u ovom radu definiran s pet pozicija nazvanih: funkcionalne uloge pojedinaca u košarkaškoj igri.

Ključne riječi: košarka, uloge, selekcija

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Correspondence to:

Behudin Bajgorić, MSc

Kanton Government

Kanton Zenica-Doboj

Zmaja od Bosne bb, 72000 Zenica, BiH

Phone: +387(0)61 105 066

E-mail: behudin.bajgoric@hotmail.com