

January 12, 2014  
Grade 7-8 division

PGMBA Coaches,

I hope everyone had a great Christmas break. I am excited to get working with everyone again in this new year.

Instead of sending out articles this week I thought instead I would send links to a couple of videos that I hope will allow us to generate some discussion this weekend. My experience as the coach of our U17 Provincial Boys Basketball Team has allowed me to travel throughout parts of the U.S. and coach against different American youth teams and watch a number of games involving children at the same age we have in our minor basketball system. The biggest thing that became apparent is how big the skill level/understanding gap is between our countries, especially at the younger ages. Below are links to videos of two grade 5 games in the states. The first is just a run of the mill game in Illinois and the second game is the AAU gr. 5 national championship (this game would include 2 of the top gr. 5 teams in the USA).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QICYtwHGebi>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vr69RbXI\\_YQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vr69RbXI_YQ)

I encourage you to watch a couple minutes of each of these games to see what grade 5's are capable of with a strong basketball culture and good instruction. You will notice a number of things about the kids in these videos...

1. The base skill level far exceeds that of most Canadian children at the same age.
2. The kids have a much deeper concept of offensive spacing, movement, defensive stance, etc. In both videos you will see evidence of the kids running some kind of basic offensive and defensive structures.
3. There are no restrictions on play. The kids are allowed to press, play zone defense, etc... The improved skill level is a major reason that they are able to do this. When I mentioned to my American player from Tacoma at UNBC that we don't let kids defend in the backcourt he was blown away.
4. The kids understand the concept of competing at a much higher level, especially defensively.

The point of this is not to discourage but instead to help us see what is possible. It also allows us as Canadians to ask a number of questions. What are the Americans doing differently? How is their environment/culture different from ours? How do we as Canadians change things to develop our kids at a higher level and potentially close the gap in the future. Is it important that we do? Should it be a concern? I look forward to discussing these topics a bit this weekend.

Cheers,

**Todd Jordan**  
**Head Coach Men's Basketball**