

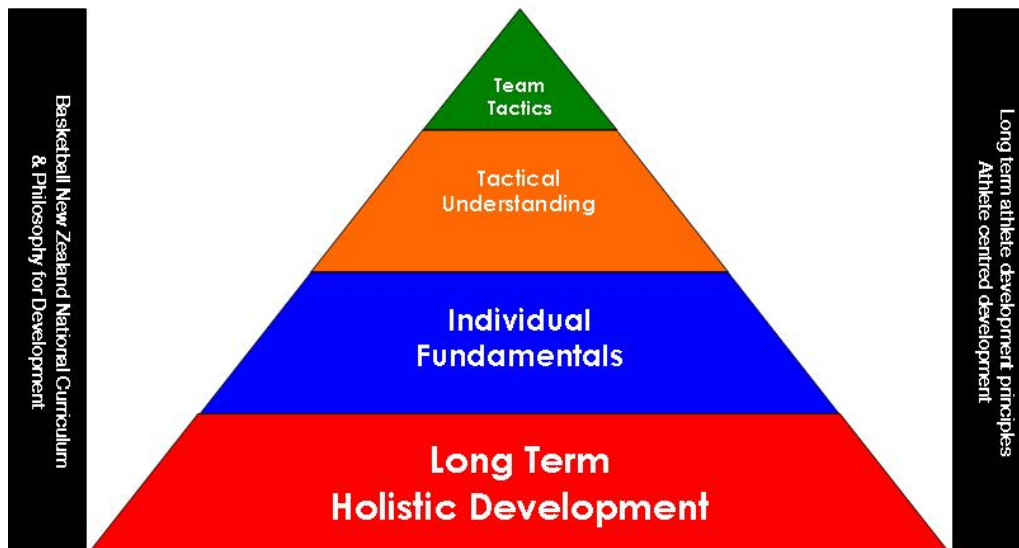
Individual v Team Development

A common issue faced by coaches at all levels and especially the developmental and amateur level is the limited contact time they have with athletes. This dilemma often forces a decision between spending time developing individual athletes or working on team concepts and tactics. Often the balance will depend on a coach's goals (team success v player development), phase of the season (early v late) and age of the athletes (youth v senior athletes). Unfortunately most coaches will sacrifice time devoted to individual player development for more time to work on team tactics.

This balance can often be problematic because for any aspect of 'team' basketball to be successful it needs to be underpinned by the players' holistic development, their ability to execute the individual skills of the game and their understanding of the sport's tactics. For example, if a coach spends a significant amount of time working on an offence that requires players to cut off a screen on the left hand side of the floor, unless that coach also assists the athlete to develop, or at least maintain, their ability to shoot lay-ups, pass and dribble with their left hands (individual skill development) and read the defence when cutting off a screen (tactical understanding), that offence will not be as effective no matter how well the team can follow the pattern of the offensive play. Likewise if a player's mental and physical preparation is not addressed, the athlete, and in turn the team, will not reach their potential.

This athlete-centered approach to coaching recognises that empowering athletes to improve all elements of participating in the game, relevant to their stage of development, is as important as implementing aspects of team tactics. Taking this approach expands the coach's remit to include teaching technical, tactical, physical and holistic aspects of the game. For example, a coaches focus could be as broad and diverse as weak side defensive rotations players must understand to play a particular defensive alignment; technical elements like improving athletes' jump shot mechanics; the physical competencies required to play in the post area and supporting athletes' holistic development by facilitating education in improving time management skills or understanding sport nutrition. These elements may traditionally have been outside a coach's remit but, as they significantly affect a team's performance, are an important part of the coaching process.

Fig 1. Diagram of the coaching process underpinning this philosophy



As such, there is potential to suggest that a coach's philosophy, planning and practice should not only be focused on developing team play, but empowering athletes to develop aspects of their physical competency, fundamental skills base and tactical understanding of game while also assisting athletes' positive, holistic, long term development. Given limited contact time between a coach and athlete this may seem an impossible task, however, through innovative planning, multi-dimensional practices and designing creative drills a coach

can help empower athletes to develop these aspects while also working on improving team play. Coaches do not need to treat these areas separately, simply make practice time more effective.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Coaching Goal : A team able to better defend dribble penetration

Team Tactics	Middle Denial Defence
Tactical Understanding	Channeling On-ball, Off-ball Defensive Concepts
Individual Fundamentals	Defensive Stance, Defensive Slide, On-ball Containment
Long Term Holistic Development	Physical competency drills(Squat Matrix, Lunge Matrix, Core Stability); Practice recovery food (Nutrition); Use of training diaries (Athlete Time Management)