



Mario's Top Teaching Points

1. Teach "mentality". Players need to learn to read the defense. Avoid drills on air. As much as possible use *guided defense*. This means a defender is directed in which way to play defense. It could also be a coach or manager. The offense learns to read the defense. When first learning give two options controlled by guided defense. For example go right or left. If you want players to learn the game you must teach it in every drill. By using guided defense the offense learns the reason for their actions. It gives them a target as to where they should be going. For example: Cut off the shoulder of the defender. It discourages actions that could not happen in the "real" game. For example chest passes to a post player. It also helps defense become smarter. The defender learns how his/her actions can influence offensive decisions.
2. If you have two options stay on offense three times in a row. Guided defense give you option one, option two, and a choice on the third. Add an option when the first two options have been consolidated.
3. Stay on offense or defense for *multiple repetitions* without changing positions. We so often rotate from offense to defense to a sub in many drills we do. This is easy for the coach, but it is not best for the athlete to learn. By staying on offense defense for multiple reps you get a chance to immediately learn from the rep before.
4. Add *transition* for conditioning and concentration.
 - a) Offense transitions vs. air i.e. 1 on 0, 2 on 0, 3 on 0 etc. (add a coach for guided defense)
 - b) Transition giving the offense an advantage i.e. 2-1, 3 on 2, 4 on 3
 - c) Offense and defense transition 1 on 1, 3 on 3
 - d) Defense transitions vs. new offensive with an advantage
1 on 1 on 1, 2 on 2 on 2, 3 on 3 on 3, 4 on 4 on 4
5. Teach offense the first 3 months, next 3 months 70% defense 30 % offense, last 2 months 40 % transition, 30 % offense, 30 % defense. Players need time to learn. By trying to teach everything at once it is very confusing for the athletes. The same idea can be used in training camps for teams that must come together for a short period of time. The first part of training camp should be offense with guided defense only. Play players are still playing defense and using transition during this time. It is just that the details are not being taught in drill situations.
6. "*Flying corrections*" – make corrections without stopping the drill. If one player is having problems pull this player out of the drill and correct. Have an assistant coach take the player and work on the problem and then insert the player back into the drill. The art of coaching is to know what mistakes need correction. A coach could stop the play on every single action. When do you stop the entire group? When do you coach on the fly? And when do you ignore the mistake? What are the important ones?
7. The coach makes the *players read* by giving signals that force players to react i.e. a number to keep head up when dribbling, an arm up to indicate which way to dribble, two hands to call for a pass, signals to indicate the type of guided defense.
8. *Continuity in practice*. It is hard for players to follow the flow of a practice if you jump from drill to drill with no logical progression. Practice should read like a book. Start with the introduction and proceed to chapter 1 then 2, 3 etc. You don't start at chapter 5, and then go to 1 then 7 etc. Ask your players at the end of practice how many drills they remember. They should be able to remember them all and the teaching points for each drill.
9. If you have a *shot clock* in the game must practice with one. Even if it is a 10 sec call by the coach. Players need to learn to adapt. What do you want to happen at the 10 seconds mark? You need to attack at about 7 seconds.

10. If you don't have a centre; don't play with a centre. Don't force players to fit a system that does not promote development. Coaching at the development level should be about producing players who have the skills need to play at the next level; not the number of games won. In school we teach skills so students can be promoted to the next grade. This is not happening in basketball.
11. The game continues to *evolve*. To be current coaches must constantly up date how the game is taught. We run many "old" offenses and teach "old" offensive concepts. Many pre-dated the shot clock, 3 point line and the new physical defense. We need to create problems for recovery by the defense. Spacing and movement are key. Making use of the contact by defense. We need to make use of penetration, movement off penetration, continuous picks or screens into picks. The chest pass is an "old" pass yet is the first pass many still teach. It is most used in drills where no defense is prevalent. Almost impossible to use in today's game.
12. Make use of your *assistants*. Give them specific things to do. Debrief with assistants before practice as to what will be done that day. Have assistants take notes in practice. What corrections they had to make. You want assistants to ask to do things rather than you tell them to do things. Make assistants think about the why. When they have a suggested should tell you why he things this is a good thing to do. Let players know which assistant will be working with them that day in practice. Who is in charge in each drill? Debrief with your assistants at the end of practice.
13. A *coaches' positioning* is crucial to the being able to "dominate" the practice. When drilling for offense the coach should stand under the basket. This way you can see all the players. For defense you need to stand at the top. If you position yourself under the basket the sagging defenders will block your sight lines. For full court drills stand at full court. The head coach is responsible to position the assistant coaches.
14. The coach must inspire the *creativity* of the players. Teach players to have imagination. Many players cannot picture what is going to happen in a game. In drills the coach must help the player see what will happen. Use guided defense, increase the intensity. It is very difficult to have imagination when you play 1 on 0, 2 on 0 etc.
15. *Teach the fundamentals* not the tactics. Coaches of young players should be more concerned with the number of player he/ she develops than the number of championships won. Championships can be won by taking advantage of the physical and mental limitations of young players. Using a zone defense that packs the key against mini basketball kids is an example. The children do not have the physical ability to shoot from long distances or the cognitive ability to read the number of defenders. When we teach tactics there is very often no carry over to the next level. Tactics that are affective at one stage of development often do not work at the next.
16. Evaluate the *attitude and behaviors* of the players not the outcomes. With young players we cannot get overly concerned with outcomes. Do the players have the right attitudes and behaviors should be your main concern. Over time with proper coaching the desired outcomes will occur.
17. Scouting. Who passes to the centre? What happens when the ball is in the post? What type of screens does the team run? What zone do they play? Who are the shooters?
18. A player is denied when the elbow of the defender is in the passing lane. A hand is not denying. Pass high outside and the offense will move to get the ball. Also a player can step through the hand to get the ball. Cannot step through an elbow.
19. Teach to teach. Be fussy. Make corrections. If you don't make correction when the players are young you will never be able to make them when older.
20. Keep the same drill and add to it. Instead of changing drill formation all the time. This allows players to concentrate on learning the concept not the drill.
21. Never pass back without penetration first. Must force the defense to help first. Dangerous pass without penetration.
22. Practices at tournaments – shooting, no running. 1 day before soft, 2 days before hard.
23. No easy 3 point shots. No help for a 3 point shot. It has changed the game. The more players who can shoot it the more dangerous your team.
24. The first dribble is the responsibility of the ball defender. The second dribble is helps responsibility.

25. Scouting reports – pro's watch video, juniors – scout players, Go through the types of screens you will see. Who passes to the centre? Be aggressive on that passer. Work mostly 2 on 2, 3 on 3 not 5 on 5. Too confusing.
26. National teams – invite assistant coaches from different regions. The national team coaches dictate what skills are to be emphasized.
27. You cannot cure details if you skip around in practice. One offense one defensive drill. Stay consistent. Finish the offensive book before you start your defensive book.
28. Don't teach dirty tactics
29. Reward good defensive players. Start them. Have good offensive players come off the bench.
30. Give quality reps to one or two players while others are working on reads and timing. North American we think about keeping everyone "busy" or active. Mario uses players just as passers or as guided defense. Their job is to help the others learn.
31. Start in odd formations and flow into a drill. Forces the players to move into positions, which is more game like.

European System

Categories

Mini – 8-9 years old
 Student – 11- 12 years old
 Cadet – 13 - 15 years old
 Junior – 16-18 years old
 U21 – 19 –20 years old

In all categories except mini play provincial, regional, national competition (final 8)

Yugoslavian – poor people – play basketball in order to get money

Start at 7-8 years old

7:00 – 8:30 practice

2:00 – 3:30 practice

Evening – Jr. team or pro team

Global basketball until you reach the junior level. Everyone plays every position. No specialized roles.

Three levels of coaches

Level 1, 2, 3

Every two years an examination to go to the next level

Level 1 – cadet and junior coach

Level 2 – 3rd division pro

Level 3 – professional

4th level – Federation instructor (Mario)

Teach the coaches how to teach the fundamentals and a written test. It takes two years minimum at each level.

Six National teams

Two Junior

Two U21

Two Cadets

1st team - 12 best players in all Italy

2nd team – 3 north, 3 south, 3 Middle and the 9 next best (carry 18 players)

Two assigned assistants with each team (12 in total) – 3 from North, Middle, South (+ three more deserving coaches)

This allows the coaching philosophy to be spread across the country. This cuts down on the politics and the old boy /girl system. Reward the good coaches who deserve to be rewarded.

Many years ago outlawed zones at lower levels. This was a mistake. Too much one on 5 offense, poor shooters, everyone looked to penetrate for lay ups. Now allow zones at all levels, but teach how to play.

Women's basketball is slowly increasing in Italy

Have combined many techniques learned from USA coaches with the mentality and motivation of the Yugoslavian coaches. Spain is also becoming a world leader.

Why? Good coaches who know how to teach the game. Every year meet to discuss what should be done in practices, concepts and tactics.

France – sport school system (CPEQ).

Analyze the fundamentals. You must be "fussy" about corrections. If you do not correct at the student level you will have problems at the cadet etc.

Mini level should be fun. Do teach spacing.

30 minutes – fundamental

Shooting games

Dribble games

Passing games

Mentality – don't be afraid to make mistakes

Players need to learn to receive the ball inside and outside. Play guards inside posts play outside.

Defensive pick up points

Student – 1st year - inside the 3 point line, 2nd year – ½ court

Cadet – 1st year – ¾ court, 2nd year – full court

Also the intensity changes as you move through the different categories.

Periodization

Student – 100% offense – do not teach defense – learned through the offensive skills

Cadet – offense / defense no transition

Junior – offense / defense / transition

First three to four months – only offensive skills with GUIDED defense

Second three to four months – 70% defense / 30% offense

Last 2 months – transition / offense / defense

Conditioning is done through the drills

This allows the players to keep concentration on the skills being learned. If you jump around players are not aware of the concepts being learned. Players cannot remember from one day to the next.

Weight training

Students – no weight (body)

Cadet – 60-70 % weight
Junior – 100 % weight

During Xmas vacation lots of time for work. Have development camps
Also during the summer run a 12 day long camp for the top players.

Warm up

Use drills that reflex the game. Mario does not like weaves or dibble zigzag. It teaches bad habits.

Yugoslavian Shooting philosophy

Come off the bench shooting cold. Start practice with a shooting drill. No shooting in the middle of practice. End practice with pressure shooting must make certain amount of shots in a certain amount of time. Do not leave until the goal is reached.

No soft shooting drills.

Two styles a) form b) pressure (especially when mentally and physically fatigued)

50 baskets in 2 minutes – 3 point shots – YUGO

Experiment with team – how shots or time to make 10, three pt shots

Passing needs to be done with guided defense. Too many “old” passes are used when no defense is around.

80 % of passes 1) side – top to wing 2) inside 3) bounce 20% crazy

The game must be fun. Other sports will steal players if we lose this from the game. Offense is fun.

In each drill add transition. Players like to run, also a good conditioning. Start with a pass to a coach who returns the pass to the offense.

Stay on offense for a number of reps in a row. It allows players to learn better. This helps concentration. Can immediately apply what was learned from last rep.

No sitting down in practice. Force players to concentrate.

Each day 10 minutes on what each player needs to individually work on. Work on what will most impact your game.

Force players to practice things while waiting in line. Ball handling etc. No standing on the sideline.

Practice should flow. Don't waste time retrieving and putting balls away. Not 10 balls – 1 ball – 10 balls. It should read like a book. Not chapter 7, 5, 1, 4, too confusing for players.

Evaluate players 5 on 5. In the scrimmage add rules to help evaluate skills

- a) No dribbling – who can move without the ball, who sees the floor.
- b) 1 dribble – catch and make one dribble- who uses left and right hand – what do they do with the dribble – who can pass once they have gone dead.

Give assistant coaches the names of players who they will be working with each day. By each drill on the practice plan put the names. Post these so players know where they will be for each drill.

Training camps

Day 1

1. Guided scrimmage

You need to find out what the players can already do.

- a) Play 5 on 5 with no centre. Have the defense mix it up between aggressive and passive.
- b) Play with a centre (4 out 1 in) – must get the ball inside. This helps you determine who can pass to the centre and do you have any post players.
- c) Play 5 on 5 must penetrate (must put the ball on the floor). Need to determine who can penetrate and make decisions, who can play off of penetration
- d) Play 5 on 5 vs. zones.

2. Questionnaire – distribute a questionnaire to the players at the end of the session. They must complete it before they leave and hand it to the head coach. The player's answers will be held in confidence.

- a) Who is the best shooter?
- b) Who is the best scorer?
- c) Who is the best defender?
- d) Who is the best passer?
- e) Who is the best centre?
- f) Who is the best dribbler?
- g) Who is the best leader on the court? Off the court/
- h) Who gets frustrated and will let the team down late in a game?
- i) who should start?
- j) Who should be on the floor at the end of a game?
- k) What is the best kind of defense to play?
- l) What is the best offense to play?

Day 2

1. Discuss with the players the results. Do not want the influence of assistant coaches. Very often have favorites.
2. Practice – put in the offense that best fits the team – need an offense that can;
 - Make use of penetration
 - Create one on one situation for best scorer
 - Create one on one for best centre
 - Attack zones

10 day training camp

Day 1 -3 – all offense with guided defense

Day 4-6 – 70% defense – 30% offense

Day 7 -8 – 40% fastbreak / pressbreak 30 % defense, 30 % offense

Day 9 -10 game prep (special situation), play

One month training camp

1st week - offense

2nd week - 70% defense – 30% offense

3rd week - 40% fastbreak / pressbreak 30 % defense, 30 % offense

4th week - Play