

10 TIPS TO GO FROM LAST PICK TO LEADING SCORER

As a youth I was far from a marquee player. I was cut in 6th grade. Rode the bench in 7th grade. Came off the bench in HS up until Senior year. Earned a Division 2 scholarship as an undersized post player. Still I was not a big name. Hell, even now this could very well be your first time hearing about me. I did not score 1000 points in High School or College. I have never made 1st or Second team in any conference. So how did I become a versatile swing guard, the leading scorer in Proliga Portugal and now the Most Improved player New Jersey has ever seen?? Well it wasn't just a growth spurt and watching Kobe Bryant highlights on YouTube. Here are 10 TIPS TO GO FROM LAST PICK TO LEADING SCORER.

1. Don't listen just learn!

I have played for many coaches, some great and some not so good. I owe each of them a lot of credit for my high basketball IQ. What most kids don't understand is that a coaches purpose is to win games. Within that task coaches are not going to coach you through your transition from a role player to "go to guy". So as a player you cannot become hypnotized with HOW you are being coached. I have always been coached as a rebounder, or a defensive stopper and even a spark off of the bench, which is totally fine. But you cannot be glued to your role if you want to become an all around superstar player! So LEARN what they are coaching you but do NOT LISTEN to HOW they are coaching you because as you grow in basketball you will grow out of what you are being molded to be at that time.

2. Work for self not for coach

If you find yourself constantly looking at your coach during drills or games then you are looking in the wrong direction for reassurance. Often times when we want to move up the ladder as a player we look to the coach to notice our work or improvement. We go harder if we know coach is watching. This mindset usually ends up psyching us out in the end. That's because we should not be developing our game for anyone but ourselves. We should be going hard 100% of the time no matter who is watching. It takes 1 person to get YOU better and that's YOU!

3. Everyone is competition

The team/family atmosphere in basketball is truly a beautiful and special thing. In younger years basketball acts as a social mixer as well where often everyone who is playing are friends off of the court coming together to have fun on the court. This is great, but when trying to go from a role player to the best player you have to be prepared to pass your friends. In 7th grade I was the last player off of the bench on a 16-0 team. By 10th grade I had passed half of them and it changed the dynamic of our friendships. It would have been detrimental to my development if I began to play below my ability in order to make friends comfortable. Make your teammates accept that you worked hard for your improvement and you deserve to be ahead of them on the bench. Because once you pass them there are bigger fish to fry!

4. Never get comfortable

Most times when players begin to see improvement and start to pass players they get comfortable leveling out. "Well Jimmy was the star in Junior High and I didn't make the team but now Jimmy got cut from JV and I made Varsity as a freshman so my work is complete". Wrong, your work has only begun! Now it's time to prey on the players you once looked up to! This is where all the fun begins..

5. Be your biggest critic

Don't take it easy on yourself! Family can push you, coaches, trainers, motivational speakers etc. But no one can push you like you can push yourself. I repeat, **NO ONE CAN PUSH YOU LIKE YOU CAN PUSH YOURSELF!** Do not compare your skill level to what it was in the past; compare it to where you want to be in the future. Set goals and be hard on yourself until you reach them, and once you reach them set new and higher goals! Watch film on yourself in games, in drills. Critique yourself, fix your techniques in your head first and then go perform them.

6. Be your biggest fan

Along with nitpicking yourself you also have to praise yourself to even things out. This helps you keep confidence. After all, if you don't believe in YOU then who else will?! When you experience success in a game or in a drill replay it on film or in your head to become familiar with the feeling of success. After you critique yourself you must lift yourself up after. Let's say you struggle shooting and you critique your form and practice it in the gym. Your new form is struggling to adjust and shots aren't falling. After putting a bunch of time in working on an area you struggle in, spend a few minutes doing something you are good at before you leave the gym. Do a cool dunk or a move you know no one else can do. Count down out loud and hit a fade away buzzer beater. And praise yourself while you do it! This keeps basketball fun and also boosts your confidence.

7. Be honest/real with yourself

Set short-term goals that you know you will reach. If you are a junior in high school and dress JV then don't go around thinking a few hours in the gym will get you a scholarship to Kansas. This sounds crazy but believe me I have had teammates who live in that fantasy world. Take baby steps and be honest with your progress. Keep tabs on other players (past and present) progress and path to greatness. If Chris is the leading scorer on the number 1 team in the state and only has a scholarship to a Mid-Major Division 1 school and you are an off the bench player on the second worst team in the state then it is probably unlikely that you will achieve that Kansas scholarship you are looking for.

8. No excuses just results!

Players who make excuses stunt their own growth. Making excuses are the easiest thing for an athlete. It's super easy to compare yourself to someone else. Or blame your injury from last year, or blame the coaching staff. If you eliminate those excuses and overcome your obstacles you will grow to learn not to even see any obstacles! Don't let excuses become bad habits. Focus on the end result and make it happen by any means.

9. Bounce back, understand the process

Understand that failure will come. Everyone fails. It's all about how you bounce back. I used to spend hours in the gym alone and then not even try the things I worked on in a game. You cannot be afraid to fail. By the time I became comfortable enough to translate my game from the cones to game I found myself failing over and over. Understand the process of developing your game. There is no teacher like experience. Preparation + Opportunity = Success! This doesn't mean the first opportunity. Be prepared to fail but do not become discouraged. It is all about how you bounce back!

10. Work, work, work!!!

Well all of these tips are pointless without this one. This last tip goes without saying! If you are reading this then that means you are willing to go further than most to improve your game. Well that means out working everyone!! Good luck.