**USCAA Boys Travel Basketball**

**Coaching Principles**

**2023-2024**

The USCAA takes the selection of coaches very seriously.  Each year, a number of hours are spent carefully evaluating and discussing coaches and coaching candidates.

All coaches are proposed to the USCAA Board of Directors for approval, and finalization of coaching staff is not complete until the Board approves.

All coaches must provide the USCAA with proof of required clearances in a timely fashion. Coaches who cannot provide such clearances are not permitted to coach.

A set of key principles is established each year for all travel team coaches to follow.  Coaching opportunities are contingent on an individual's willingness and ability to observe these principles.

Following are the key principles for the 2023-2024 Travel Basketball season:

* ***Maintain balanced playing time*** – Over the course of the season, you are expected to meet the requirements for playing time amongst all of the players.
  + 3rd and 4th Grade: Even playing time
  + 5th Grade: Closer to even then fair
  + 6th Grade: Closer to fair than even
  + 7th and 8th Grade: Fair playing time

Determination of fair playing time is to be determined by the Coach based on a number factors including, but not limited to: Attendance, Competitiveness, Safety and Skill.

We realize that this may not be possible in every game due to a variety of circumstances.  Nevertheless, you should substitute players during at least the first three quarters of the game and the entire game if possible.  It is advisable to assign an assistant coach the responsibility of helping track playing time.  In close games, if you are not be able to achieve equal playing time, you should make a note of the players who had less playing time and make it a point to give them more playing time during games that you are easily winning, or are losing by a significant margin. Also, you should consider starting different combinations of players for games and varying their positions periodically.

At a minimum, all players are expected to play in both halves of all games and for at least a quarter of cumulative playing time throughout all games.

* ***Develop the entire team***– Travel team coaches are expected to provide guidance to all the players on the team, not just the best players or those who you think have the most potential. Part of the development process should come through giving the girls the opportunity to play a variety of positions in practices and games. As you will see, things change as the boys get older. Interests, priorities, size, and skills are all variables that will come into play. Since none of us can predict the future, it is important to develop all the players, even though their advancement will occur at different rates and in different ways.
* ***Remain competitive*** –The USC Basketball Program has enjoyed a tradition of winning. Given the players selected for the teams, we are confident that they will be competitive and win games. Winning at all costs, however, is not the focus of the program – especially if it is at the expense of individual players, the team, or the Program.
* ***Exhibit sportsmanship*** – While winning is an important factor in our program, margin of victory is not. In fact, our experience shows that blowing teams out can eventually lead to problems. Opponents will begin to avoid scheduling games with you. Tournament directors will not allow you to enter their tournaments. Other USC teams may become the target of paybacks. Remember, one-sided games give you an excellent opportunity to even out playing time and experiment with new positions.
* ***Serve as a teacher and role model*** – Share your interest and knowledge of basketball with the team. Help the players develop not only their skills, but also an understanding and appreciation for the game. Treat the players, parents, other teams, and officials with respect. We have developed and earned an excellent reputation for our program. As one of our representatives, we are relying on you to uphold this tradition. **All technical fouls and/or ejections of a player, coach or family member must be communicated to the Commissioner. Failure to report the technical foul may result in suspension from the program.**
* Anyone receiving a second technical foul during the course of the season, is required to attend an in-person hearing with the USC Boys Basketball Commissioner and two of his/her designates, and will be subject to a further suspension.  This further suspension may include multiple games or may be for the remainder of the season.  **You must clearly communicate this policy to assistant coaches, players and their parents.**
* ***Monitor absences and enforce the attendance policy*****–** You should inform and periodically remind the players and their parents of the commitment to attend practices and games.  We have developed an attendance policy to help ensure that we have a reasonable and consistent process for dealing with players who periodically choose not to make this commitment.  This policy requires players to make USCAA travel basketball practices and games first priority over other elective activities.  The policy also requires players and parents to inform coaches of reasons for absences before they occur, if possible.

An *elective activity* is a sports, recreational, leisure or otherwise optional activity that a player could decide to attend instead of a USCAA girls travel basketball practice or game.  The following representative list of elective activities and examples are provided to further clarify this policy.

**Elective Activities Examples**

Recreational Interests Skiing, Snowboarding

Other Sports Teams Basketball, Soccer

Entertainment or Social Events Concerts, Movies, Dances

Music or Performance Groups Lessons, Recitals

Leisure Trips Florida, Seven Springs

Sporting Events Steelers, Penguins, college football or basketball games

This list is representative, not exhaustive.  It is meant to serve as a basis to help identify and determine an elective activity.

If a player is absent from a USCAA travel basketball game because of an elective activity, then that player may be required to sit out for the first quarter of the next game.

If a player misses two or more consecutive games because of an elective activity, then that player may be required sit one quarter for each game missed

For example, if a player misses two consecutive games, then the player may be required to sit for the entire first half of the next game.

If a player misses four or more games consecutively or throughout the season, then that player could be removed from the team.

If a player misses practice, the coach has the discretion to have the player sit for as much time as missing the same number of games.

Temporary exceptions to having players sit for missing games or practices may be made if the team has only five players for a game.  The policy will be applied, however, at the first possible opportunity.

Keep in mind that this policy only applies to elective activities. Often times, there are other things more important than travel basketball. Players can be excused from attending practices and games without losing any playing time for personal reasons such as illness or injury, religious services, schoolwork or events, and special family events like holidays, weddings or funerals.

We try to avoid as many conflicts as we can when we schedule gym time and games for our travel teams.  You should notify the Travel Commissioner of any known conflicts immediately. If you are aware of conflicts for players on the team, please let us know and we may be able to adjust the schedule to alleviate the problem.

We like to maintain an atmosphere that is fair, open, and honest. We encourage you to promote this viewpoint with your players and their parents. As with any guidelines or procedures, there may be occasions when specific circumstances need to be reviewed and judged. Please notify the Travel Commissioner if you encounter a situation that may be open to interpretation or challenge so that we can help you resolve it.

* ***Maintain a reasonable schedule***– As a general rule, you should limit team events (the total number of games, scrimmages, and practices) to a maximum of three per week.  During tournaments you may exceed this limit, but only to meet tournament game obligations.
* ***Observe with gym time usage and schedules*** – Please use all of the gym time that has been assigned to you. You should not request additional time through the township or school district.  You should not use any facility within or outside Upper St. Clair Township for any events in which you are considered the home or host team without our prior approval.  The exception to this is a tournament game in which you are designated as the home team.
* ***Become actively involved in the Program***– Travel team coaches must be able to devote a significant amount of time to attend practices and games, and to attend to team administrative responsibilities. We also need you to spend additional time on duties that extend beyond coaching the team. These duties include your personal and direct involvement with activities such as serving on USC Tournament committees. You also may be called on from time to time to participate in special projects, attend coaches meetings, or represent the Program in some capacity. All coaches are expected to fulfill these types of obligations.
* ***Involve all team members in basketball activities***– Travel team coaches are held to a higher standard than other parents. Any basketball activity that you organize, whether or not it is sanctioned by the Program, the Township, or the Athletic Association can be perceived as a team function. It is therefore important to invite all players and assistant coaches to participate, not just a select few. This may place an additional burden on you to contact everyone and issue periodic reminders, but this is the standard that you must consistently meet.
* ***Seek input from assistant coaches*** *–* You should name at least one, but no more than two official assistant coaches to help you carry out these principles.  You will find that their active involvement in practices and games will be a key factor in the team’s success.  We also encourage you to invite parents to help out with other responsibilities such as keeping the scorebook and operating the scoreboard.
* ***Have fun*** – Sports are meant to be fun, especially for younger players.  The enjoyment and increase in self-esteem that the girls derive from this experience will be important factors in their development, not only as future players, but also as teens and young adults.  Teams can have fun regardless of their records.  If you make it fun for the players and yourself, this will be an experience that everyone will fondly remember.

You may find that conflicts occur when trying to apply these principles. One of the strengths of a successful coach is the ability to resolve dilemmas. We expect this of all the travel team coaches. We strongly encourage you to call upon us to provide guidance and help in resolving conflicts and problems when they arise.