

GETTING PLAYERS READY FOR SELECT BASKETBALL TRYOUTS

Beginning on October 1, Great Falls Select Basketball will hold tryouts for Boys and Girls teams in 5th through 8th grades. Basketball is a demanding sport, and if players show up at GFSB tryouts out of shape and are holding a basketball for the first time in months, the tryout process can be hard to enjoy. So below we offer some recommendations on how players can get ready for a great showing in October.

GET IN SHAPE (OR AT LEAST GET IN *BETTER* SHAPE)

In order to play competitive basketball, players should be able to sprint and change direction at top speed throughout a game, with only brief rests for dead balls, time-outs, and halftime. The only way to get in real “basketball shape” is to play a lot of competitive basketball, but players can get a head start by working on basic physical conditioning so that tryouts won’t be too much of a shock.

RESOURCES

The USA Basketball website (<http://www.ihoops.com/>) has a number of good articles and videos on basic basketball conditioning, tailored for both players and parents. Working with a jump rope, for instance, is a great way to improve foot speed and leg strength at any age and is something GFSB coaches will be emphasizing during the season. There are plenty of similar basketball training and skill development resources on the web, but we’d recommend staying away from most of what you’ll find on YouTube... the quality of instruction is very uneven.

Most players will require some structure and support to get in basketball condition, so you may want to look into doing some speed/agility training. As a program we don’t formally endorse specific training organizations, but two programs where Great Falls Select Basketball players have had good experiences are:

Explosive Performance, operating out of local Sport & Health clubs
(<http://www.sportandhealth.com/PersonalTraining/ExplosivePerformance.aspx>)

Max Youth Performance in Great Falls (www.maxyouthperformance.com)

PRACTICE SHOOTING AND BALLHANDLING

Competitive-level shooting and ballhandling require lots of practice and repetition in order to build effective skills that will hold up under game pressure. But GFSB teams get two 90-minute practices per week, so there’s a limit to how much time coaches can spend on these fundamental skills during the season. Players who invest time developing these skills in the offseason will have a significant advantage at tryouts.

In both areas, “practice makes permanent:” practice and repetition build muscle memory and habits that are hard to unlearn. So it’s important – especially with shooting – to establish sound technique and mechanics as early in the player’s career as possible.

ANY reasonably athletic player can learn to be an effective shooter, for instance, but most players’ practice habits can actually work against them. For instance, in youth basketball games, most baskets will be the result of lay-ups and shots near the basket, but most players will practice shooting by jacking up 3-pointer after 3-pointer.

Recreational players enjoy playing; competitive players enjoy improving.

RESOURCES

Again, the USA Basketball website (<http://www.ihoops.com/>) has a good selection of instructional shooting and ballhandling drills. Monkey See has some good videos also (<http://www.monkeysee.com/categories/161-basketball>). Smart players will make sure they’re spending some time on form shooting – with perfect form – every day.

For players who would benefit from more structure and support, this area is blessed with many high-quality basketball training resources. As a program we don’t formally endorse specific training organizations, but two programs where GFSB players have had good experiences are:

Evolution Basketball (<http://evoball.com/>).

One on One Basketball (<http://www.1on1basketball.com/>)

PLAY GAMES!

These days it’s not as common as it used to be for players to go to a nearby court and play self-organized pick-up games, but obviously players should take any chance they can get to just play live basketball games. Many local sport and health clubs (Gold’s Gyms, for instance) have a court where kids can play at some point during the day – ask the manager.