

## For Coaches



# Villanova's Jay Wright on keeping your players confident and focused

1/7/2016

By Greg Bach

Youth basketball players at all levels are going to face adversity during games: Missed shots, mishandled rebounds, errant passes and untimely turnovers are all a part of competing.

But it's those players who are able to push aside what just happened and shift all their focus to the current moment that are going to be more productive and successful.

And have more fun, too.

"It's natural for young players to become frustrated because they care," Villanova basketball coach Jay Wright told *SportingKid Live*. "As coaches and teachers, it's important that we remind them that whatever just happened, it's over now."

At Villanova, where Wright has won more than 300 games and taken the Wildcats to a Final Four, it's all about teaching players to look ahead, not back. It's staying in the moment; not dwelling on a negative play that already happened.

Use Wright's tips and insight below to help your players stay positive, productive and dialed in to what is happening *now*.

## NEXT PLAY

"We use the expression *next play*," Wright says. "Adversity is going to strike when you compete and those players and teams that handle it well are usually successful. We talk to our guys about being positive during a game."

## CONTROLLING REACTIONS

Attitude has an enormous impact on players' performances, and as a coach it's imperative that you've got your kids in a positive frame of mind – all the time.

"There may be no word we use more in our program than *attitude*," Wright says. "We wear plastic bracelets with that expression on them when we are away from the court and repeat it every time we break a huddle on the court. That single term serves as a reminder to all of us – players, coaches and staff – that we can't always control what happens to us, but we do control how we react to it."

## SIDELINE SUPPORT

By teaching and encouraging a positive and supportive atmosphere you'll have all your players – both those on the floor and those awaiting their turn on the bench – exhibiting that crucial "next play" mentality.

"You can still help your team when things don't go the way you want, by staying positive and encouraging your teammates," Wright explains. "Some of the most important moments for our team come when things don't go our way and the guys who aren't in the game are up off the bench cheering and encouraging their teammates by shouting 'next play.'"

## USE 'NEXT PLAY' WITH YOUR TEAM – IT WORKS

"Perhaps the best example of our 'next play' approach came in the 2009 NCAA East Regional," Wright recalls. "We were leading Pitt by two points in the final 30 seconds and were inbounding the basketball. Reggie Redding always did a great job as the man inbounding the ball and he thought he saw his teammate, Dante Cunningham, open for a long pass. But he was amped up and overthrew the pass. Pitt scored after the turnover and the game was now tied. Everybody on our bench was shouting 'next play' and 'attitude' when we came to the bench.

"After the timeout, we again had the basketball under Pitt's basket. Reggie made a great pass to Dante on the inbounds play and Dante handed the ball off to Scottie Reynolds. Scottie dribbled the length of the court and made the basket that won the game to send us to the Final Four. Our guys kept a great attitude and by doing so, were able to execute a play at the most crucial moment."

[Coaching \(/sklive/search/?tag=Coaching\)](#)

[Basketball \(/sklive/search/?tag= Basketball\)](#)

[Positive \(/sklive/search/?tag= Positive\)](#)

[Attitude \(/sklive/search/?tag= Attitude\)](#)