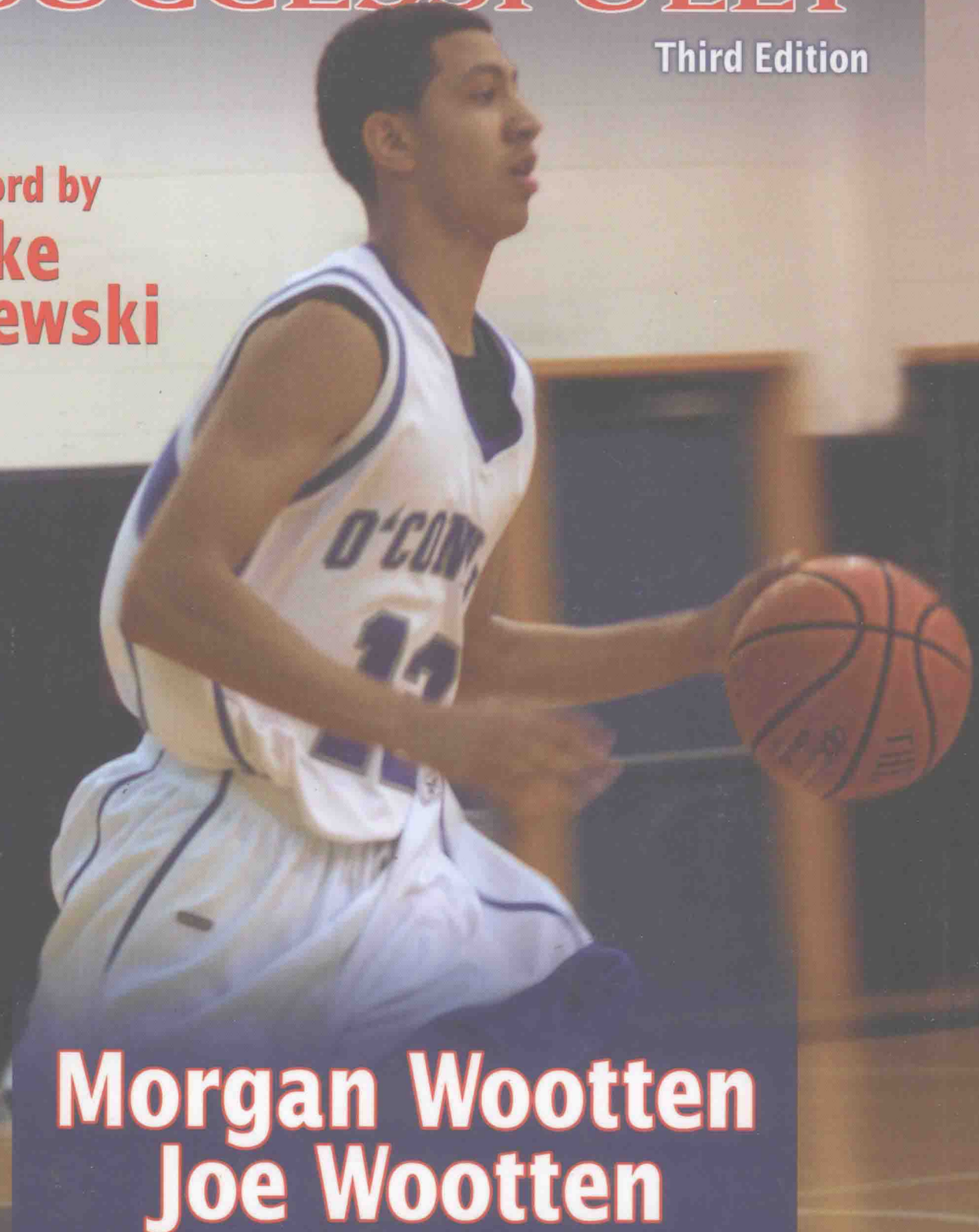


COACHING **Basketball** SUCCESSFULLY

Third Edition

Foreword by

**Mike
Kryzewski**

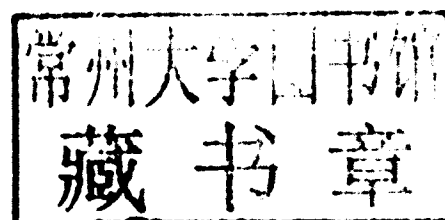


**Morgan Wootten
Joe Wootten**

Coaching Basketball Successfully

THIRD EDITION

Morgan Wootten
Joe Wootten



Human Kinetics

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On the cover: 2012 NBA first-round draft pick Kendall Marshall is shown here at an earlier stage in his career, playing at Bishop O'Connell High School under coach Joe Wootten.

We thank Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington, Virginia, for assistance in providing the location for the photo shoot for this book.

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This book is dedicated to my number one team of all time—my wife, Kathy; our children, Cathy, Carol, Tricia, Brendan, and Joe; our sons-in-law, Steve and Mike; our daughters-in-law, Elizabeth and Terri Lynn; and our grandchildren, who are adding quality depth to our team.

—Morgan Wootten

This book is dedicated to my incredible wife, Terri Lynn, whose support, love, and friendship mean everything, and to our wonderful children, Alexa, Reese, and Jackson, who make family time the most memorable time.

—Joe Wootten

FOREWORD

Two primary things drew me to coaching the game of basketball. One was a desire to teach and to play a role in the development of young people the way so many teachers and coaches had done for me in my life. Joy and satisfaction come with that, and, over the years, I have received more in the way of motivation and inspiration from my players than they could have ever received from me.

But another very basic reason I pursued a life as a basketball coach is that I love the game. To me, it is beautiful. Each year, I am excited to take the new group of individuals I have on my team and coaching staff and work with them to become the best team we can be when we face competition on the basketball court.

I have long admired Morgan Wootten as a pioneer in coaching, a family man, and a loyal friend. The time we have spent together over the years has made me a better man and a better teacher. His longevity in coaching speaks to the enduring nature of his values

and the universality of his coaching principles. He is an absolute legend of the game.

One shining example of Coach Wootten's legacy is *Coaching Basketball Successfully*. This third edition of his classic book is a terrific aid to anyone interested in becoming a basketball coach or improving as one. Morgan, with valuable assists throughout the book from his son Joe, scores key points on every subject. From teaching players the fundamentals and the Xs and Os to handling game situations and many essential off-court coaching duties, this is a complete manual for running a championship high school program. But what stands out most to me throughout the book is the concern for developing the players as athletes, as teammates, as students, and as people.

That focus—helping each player to be his or her personal best and getting those athletes to commit fully to the team—is the essence of coaching. And it's what I love most about being a basketball coach.

Mike Krzyzewski

*Head Men's Basketball Coach
Duke University*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not begin this book without acknowledging the deep debt I owe so many people for so many reasons:

All the fine young men I have had the privilege of teaching and coaching.

Rochelle McCoy, who gave me and six other people the gift of life by being an organ and tissue donor, and her husband, Ray, and children, Randall and Ray Jr., for honoring and supporting her choice.

The teams at Johns Hopkins and the University of Maryland Medical Center, especially Drs. Thulavath and Gelb.

The great coaches who have coached both with me and against me.

That special group of coaches who gave so much of their time and wisdom to teach me the game of life as well as basketball: John Wooden, Red Auerbach, Joe Gallagher, Jim Kehoe, Vic Bubas, Dean Smith, Ken Loeffler, Bud Millikan, John Ryall, and so many others.

My mother, for passing on to me her intense drive and love of competition; and my father, for teaching me to tell the truth and to be myself—always.

My sisters, Clare and Helen Lee, and my brother, Angus, who all helped me in so many ways.

My late Uncle Jack and my Uncle Robert, who were like second fathers to me.

Physicians and friends Dr. Hanley, Dr. Berard, and the late Drs. Gaffney, Sullivan, Scalessa, and Lavine.

The parents of all the young men I have had the privilege of teaching and coaching.

All of the great men and women who were my teachers from the first grade on.

The three men who coached me in high school and college: Reno Continetti, Tony Crème, and Frank Rubini.

The Holy Cross nuns who gave me my start as a coach.

The Christian brothers, who gave me my start as a teacher and enabled me to advance my career as a coach.

The Trinitarians and all of the DeMatha family. The Trinitarians saw something in a young man who dreamed of being a coach, and they hired me and stood beside me my entire career. There were so many great brothers and priests over the years from this terrific order, but I especially must recognize my great friends, Father Damian and Father James, our rector.

DeMatha continues to flourish under the leadership of the incomparable principal Dr. Dan McMahon.

And the many people, too numerous to mention, who touched my life and inspired me to touch the lives of others.

And God, for allowing me to be a teacher and a coach.

Morgan Wootten

Basketball allows us to meet so many great people and build so many great relationships. I would like to thank a few people who have had a profound impact on me:

My mother, whose passion, compassion, selflessness, and kindness not only inspired me but made our family go. For this I am eternally grateful.

My father, whom I have coached with, played for, been a business partner with, and who above all has been a role model for me and taught me how to compete in all that I do.

My brother, Brendan, and my sisters, Cathy, Carol, and Tricia, who made growing up a lot of fun.

All the young men I have had the privilege to coach and work with as both a head coach and as an assistant coach.

Joe Cantafio Sr., who gave me an incredible opportunity as a Division I assistant at a young age. I learned so much from him.

The late Jack Bruen and Mike Brey, who always had time to share a word or two with a young coach.

Mike Gielen Sr., who coached me in grade school, worked me out as a player for over 10 years, and is still a good friend.

Al Burch, the principal who hired me as a 26-year-old and gave me an opportunity to be a head coach.

Katy Prebble, O'Connell's president, for her outstanding vision and leadership.

Joe Vorbach, O'Connell's principal, for his leadership and for being a good teammate on Sunday night hoops.

Terry and Kay Bogle, my in-laws, who have been at 98 percent of the games I have coached and have been supportive every step of the way. They are family.

All of the great faculty and staff whom I am privileged to work with at O'Connell every day.

All of the great coaches whom I have had the opportunity to work with at O'Connell and as an assistant at DeMatha.

All of the great coaches whom I have worked with at our camp over the years. The friendships have been great!

Joe Wootten

INTRODUCTION

Nearly 20 years ago, when I wrote the first edition of this book, I explained the primary purpose for doing so:

What convinced me to go ahead with the book was my desire to pay at least some portion of the debt that I owe to the game of basketball, which has been such a big and rewarding part of my life . . . I figured if I could play a part in other coaches' lives the way that so many coaches have played a part in mine, it would be worth it.

Since then, more than 120,000 copies of the book have been read by coaches all over the world, and I've heard from many of them. The comments, questions, compliments, and suggestions I continue to receive confirm the merit of the first edition. And that input has also helped me determine that this new edition of the book needed to be even better and more useful than the first two editions.

Coaching is an investment. But rather than showing a financial gain, a coach's balance sheet is full of intangibles with dividends that cannot be measured. What about wins, you say? Though my DeMatha teams won 1,274 games, I can assure you that the value of those victories comes nowhere near the satisfaction of witnessing the development and achievements of the hundreds of young men I was privileged to coach over the course of my 46-year career.

The great Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne was once asked this about a just-completed season: "How do you think the season went?" To me, his answer embodies the true spirit of coaching. Rockne told the questioner to check back with him in 10 or

15 years. Then, he said, he would know what kinds of young men he had produced and what kinds of citizens they had become. Only at that point and judging by that standard, said Rockne, would he be able to evaluate his season.

Records and honors also pale in comparison to the great relationships built during a coaching career. Within a staff, among competing peers, and at all levels of basketball, coaches can and should have a mutual respect—an appreciation of the time, talents, and teaching they've put forth in their role.

Two greatly admired friends have passed away since I wrote the second edition of *Coaching Basketball Successfully*. Red Auerbach and John Wooden had a lifelong influence on my coaching career. They are the legendary coaches considered to be the best-ever pro and college coaches, respectively.

Red Auerbach orchestrated the most dominant dynasty in NBA history, but what I'll remember more is his engaging personality and his astute assessment of basketball talent. Tuesday lunches with Red and the gang at China Doll restaurant were some of the best moments of my life. I never stopped learning from Red. Among the many great lessons I learned from him, I always kept in mind his most important rule: When it comes to discipline, *there are no rules*. Rather than using a fixed set of rules for discipline, Red always made sure to address each issue in such a way as to enforce discipline, improve the individual, and strengthen the team.

And, of course, John Wooden set the standard for how to comport oneself as a teacher and a coach. The principles by which he lived and that he taught to his players, along with

the pearls of wisdom he shared on topics ranging from proper work habits to precise execution of an offensive play, generated even greater regard for Coach than his unmatched number of NCAA championships. It is why I was so humbled when, in the foreword to this book's previous edition, Coach had these kind words for me:

It has long been my expressed opinion that Morgan Wootten was one of the finest coaches in the sport of basketball. And he might have been the best.

I always said that when I spent time with Coach, I came away feeling as though I had been to the mountaintop and received the Word. It is hard to pick just one example of the many words of wisdom he shared with me, but one of the greats was this: "I have noticed that really good teams do only a few things, but they do those few things really well."

Though I no longer coach, I will always remain close to the game. Not only is it the most exciting sport around, but I have so many former players and assistants to root for. Plus, my son Joe has become a very successful coach in his own right at Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington, Virginia.

Joe played on some outstanding DeMatha teams in high school and early on showed interest and aptitude in coaching. After college he returned as an assistant for me and soon demonstrated a knack for coaching that he would later apply to turn O'Connell into a top program.

It was in 2006, after Joe had been with O'Connell for seven seasons, that he performed a deed that far surpassed any number of wins or championships on a coaching resume. On October 11 of that year, Joe donated a kidney to me that I wouldn't have survived long without. His sacrifice on my behalf will always be one of the true highlights of my life.

This third edition is extra special because Joe agreed to coauthor the book with me. His insights on the challenges of coaching today, innovative approaches to managing

a program, new Xs and Os, and interesting stories add a current perspective you're sure to appreciate. Joe is also O'Connell's athletic director, so he places great emphasis on the development of the student-athlete.

The challenges in making a positive impact in classrooms and on basketball courts today are many. Societal and institutional changes have placed even greater responsibilities on coaches. Yet, in every generation, educators and coaches have faced some type of adversity. The teaching and coaching job I accepted at the age of 24 wasn't exactly easy. I would have one coach, Buck Offutt, help me work with every sport on all levels (freshman, junior varsity, and varsity) at a 10-year-old school named DeMatha that was so noncompetitive it had to drop out of the Catholic League. Formerly a school for seminarians, DeMatha was at a transitional point as it was becoming established as a school for all young men. Today DeMatha is a world-renowned powerhouse in sports. More important, it is a two-time Blue Ribbon school of excellence, a top-ranked school for music, and a legendary educational institution. It is hard to remember those humble beginnings. It does prove to me what I have long believed is true: Facilities do not make a school or an athletic program. It is the *people* who are key.

At DeMatha I was fortunate to be surrounded by great individuals: Reverend Lou Amica and the Trinitarians, great coaches, and top educators. I really believed it was possible, with the support of the administration, faculty, and community, to build a program that would not only produce winners on the court but also build young men into solid, Christian citizens. And so we did.

Coaching Basketball Successfully contains all the principles and practices essential to achieving and sustaining a top-notch program. It covers both off-court and on-court measures to ensure a winning approach—one that develops people, not just players.

After all, the real game we are preparing our athletes for is the game of life. And it's the one game they can't afford to lose.

KEY TO DIAGRAMS

All diagrams

————→ = Path of player

- - - - -→ = Path of ball

~~~~~→ = Dribble

————| = Screen

## Offensive diagrams

① = Point guard

② = Shooting guard

③ = Small forward

④ = Power forward

⑤ = Center

① = Offensive player with ball

X = Defensive player

## Defensive diagrams

X<sub>1</sub> = Player assigned to 1

X<sub>2</sub> = Player assigned to 2

X<sub>4</sub> = Player assigned to 3

X<sub>3</sub> = Player assigned to 4

X<sub>5</sub> = Player assigned to 5

○ = Offensive player

○ = Offensive player with ball

## Drill diagrams

C = Coach

C = Coach with ball

M = Manager

M = Manager with ball

## General situations:

○ = Offensive player

X = Defensive player

## Specific situations:

Numbers used when perimeter vs.  
post distinction is made

Example:

② = Perimeter offensive player, perhaps the  
shooting guard

X<sub>4</sub> = Post defensive player, perhaps the power  
forward

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**PART I**

**COACHING  
FOUNDATION**



## CHAPTER

# 1

# Developing a Basketball Coaching Philosophy

**A**s father and son, we share many similar views about coaching, especially on a core set of issues. There is no more rewarding, satisfying, or fulfilling job than working with young people on the basketball court. Whether at DeMatha High School in Hyattsville, Maryland; Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington, Virginia; or the school where you coach, the development of the student-athletes on that team must be the coaching staff's primary objective.

Forming a coaching philosophy is the first, and perhaps most important, step toward becoming a successful basketball coach. Without a philosophy, you will lack the road map and direction necessary to achieve your goals. This is true in any endeavor that you undertake in life.

## Philosophical Foundation

People who become coaches typically develop a love of the game and develop ideas about the role of a coach at an early age when they are athletes. Other facets of the philosophy emerge through the years and are

incorporated through personal experiences and educational pursuits.

Though a coach isn't required to have played competitive basketball, most coaches do have personal experience as a player. Your philosophy starts forming the first time you pick up and dribble a basketball. It expands as you participate in games and observe them in person and on television. And it will continue to grow as you learn more about the game and how to work with players.

The sum of your experiences as a player, the information you've gained through observing games, the lessons you've learned through reading, and the ideas you've picked up by listening and asking questions at clinics, in combination with your personality, constitute your unique coaching philosophy. But

## THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

---

*If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything.\* –Malcolm X*

\*The thought for the day is a great way to teach your players about the value of teamwork, dedication, preparation, hard work, and proper values. For a more detailed explanation of how I use the thought for the day, see chapter 6.



### **Morgan Wootten's Big 5 in Coaching**

Over nearly 50 years, I concluded that these five principles supersede all others when it comes to fulfilling one's coaching duties:

1. Our goal must be to provide a wholesome environment in which young men or women can develop themselves spiritually, socially, and academically.
  2. As coaches, we should be the kind of coach we would want our sons or daughters to play for.
  3. We must never lose sight of the fact that basketball is a game and it should be fun. We should never put winning ahead of the individual.
  4. Because basketball is a great teaching situation, we must use this opportunity to educate the young men or women on our teams. We must prepare them for the many decisions they will be making that will have long-range effects on the quality of their lives.
  5. As coaches, the underlying question that we all must strive to be able to answer affirmatively is this: Did we make our players' sport experience as rewarding as possible?
- 

don't be misled; simply playing, observing, reading, and listening more does not guarantee you'll have a better coaching philosophy. The quality—not just the quantity—of your experiences and how you implement your philosophy are equally important in determining your success.

At the heart of every sound philosophy is a set of important and unchanging beliefs called the philosophical foundation. We, for example, share the core views that a coach should emphasize the fundamentals, that practice is where most teaching and learning occur and where habits are formed, that proper physical conditioning is essential, and that players and the coaching staff must treat one another with a high level of respect.

### **Joe Wootten's Big 6 in Coaching**

These are the core elements of my approach to coaching. Notice the overlap in principles with my father:

1. Use basketball to teach players the intrinsic value of hard work, as well as what this type of effort makes possible. Teach players to always outwork the opposition.
  2. Teach players to embrace adversity. When challenges are met head-on, this fosters growth. Teach players to come back stronger than ever after being knocked down.
  3. Demonstrate and emphasize to players that if you give more than you get, you will get more than you give. Gain great satisfaction from helping others reach their goals.
  4. Teach players to focus on the task at hand. Notice and take care of the little things.
  5. Nurture the following values in your players: belief, trust, honesty, and collective responsibility. Developing these values will help players in the game of basketball, and more important, it will help them in the game of life.
  6. Are you the kind of coach you would want your son or daughter to play for?
- 

This is where you establish a value system as a coach. What do you emphasize—winning a basketball game or winning in life? What priorities do you have regarding the development of your athletes as people, not just as basketball players?

### **Be Yourself**

In determining where your philosophical foundation rests, keep in mind that you must be yourself. You can't be John Wooden, Red Auerbach, Mike Krzyzewski, or Dean Smith—you have to be you. It's all right to adopt certain ideas from other coaches, but if you try to be

somebody you're not, you'll be inconsistent in your thoughts and actions, your players and assistants will question your honesty, and you will not be as successful as you could be. If you try to be someone else, the best you can do is only second best.

One of my favorite sayings is "I am me, and I want to be the best me that I can be." If all of us try to be the best we can be, we will be successful.

My favorite definition of success comes from John Wooden, the coaching legend from UCLA. He said, "Success is a peace of mind which comes as a direct result of knowing that you did the best you could to be the best you are capable of becoming."

My coaching philosophy benefited from the positive influence of a number of other coaches. My philosophical development got off to a great start with the help of my high school coach, Tony Creme. He was an excellent coach who stressed fundamentals and communicated well with his players, almost like a father figure. Later, in my first coaching job at St. Joseph's Orphanage, I was fortunate to meet Ken Loeffler, the brilliant former head coach at LaSalle University. He was 25 or 30 years ahead of his time in many areas, including the development of the 1-4 offense, which we started using at DeMatha in 1956.

Another man who influenced me greatly was Red Auerbach, the legendary coach and general manager of the great Boston Celtic teams. He taught me the importance of having the feel of the game—of observing closely and knowing what was happening out on the court rather than just being a spectator from the bench. He was also influential in the development of my conviction that each player has a certain role on a team, and that the ideal team consists of players who understand and fulfill their roles.

John Wooden was a dear friend for many years. He unselfishly shared many, many hours with me, all the while helping me determine where I was, where I was going, and how I should get there. I've often said that when Dr. James Naismith invented the game of basketball and perhaps dreamt of the perfect coach, the dream became a reality when John Wooden came along.

## Coaching as a Career

I was working at my father's day camp after my freshman year at Maryland, and quite honestly, I had never contemplated getting into coaching as a career. I heard that the JV coach at my father's school was taking a head coaching job and that my father was going to move the freshman team's head coach up to coach the JV team. So I went to my dad and asked him who his freshman assistant coach was going to be. He said he had not decided, and I told him that I would like to do it. And that is how I started coaching. I then coached the JV summer league team and absolutely loved the connection with the players. From that point on, I knew I wanted to coach, but I also realized that I had to develop my coaching philosophy.

The many hours that North Carolina coach Dean Smith spent with me were some of the most valuable for expanding my knowledge of the game of basketball. Trapping defenses, four-corner offenses, foul line huddles, and changing defenses are just a few elements of the game that he helped me with by sharing his ideas. In addition to considering Dean a great friend, I also consider him one of the greatest coaching innovators the game has ever known.

Many other people helped me at different points in my career, and not all of them were basketball people. Jim Kehoe, the long-time athletic director at the University of Maryland, taught me the importance of discipline, of getting things done ahead of time, and of doing things well and doing them wholeheartedly. It was Coach Kehoe who told me, "If you don't have time to do it right the first time, you better make sure you have double the time to do it the second time."

Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski, "Coach K," has also been a great help to me. Mike is a good example of a coach who has adopted much of what he learned from others, then adapted those teachings to fit his own special style. Bob Knight, former Indiana and Texas Tech coach whom Krzyzewski played for and coached under while at West Point, has