

Introduction

Every hoops player says they want to improve, they want to get better, they want to get more game-time, they want to make the starting line-up. The list goes on and on...

We all claim we want something or the other, but the players who succeed are those who take actions. They go out and get what they want.

In the below newsletter, you'll find interesting articles with tips on how you can improve and elevate your game to the next level, we'll share some success stories and keep giving you advise, how to make a team and what coaches look for. It's time for you to stop making excuses and do what you can with what you have.

In our first issue, we're going to share with you some success stories that were first brought to our attention by Alan Stein, owner of Stronger Team and world renowned Strength & Conditioning Coach of DeMatha Catholic High School.

"I don't believe in luck. Luck = Leaving things to chance and outside world. I believe in being harbingers of our fate, taking action and creating our own path and destiny in life. Your life is yours to create – Don't let others do it for you." – Celestine Chua

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Michael Jordan's Drive

1) During the end of the 1996-1997 regular season, **Tim McCormick** of the NBPA (National Basketball Players Association) had an opportunity to go watch a **Chicago Bulls** practice. The Bulls were pursuing their 2nd straight (and 5th overall) **NBA Championship** and had set an NBA record with 72 wins the previous season. As excited as he was to be there, he was a little disappointed because he assumed he wouldn't get to see **Michael Jordan** practice. After all, the Bulls just played 4 games in 5 nights and he assumed Michael Jordan would take a well-deserved day off. Especially since they won all 4 of those games and his Airness had scored something like 38, 42, 46, and 34 points (and played over 40 minutes each game). Much to his surprise, MJ showed up 45 minutes *before* practice. He began with some form shooting and then quickly moved to a variety of up-tempo shooting drills (using an assistant coach as a rebounder). He got up around 200 shots. He was focused and intense and was in a full lather of sweat by the time the rest of the team arrived. Sensing his team needed a light day; **Phil Jackson** told the team that practice was only going to consist of a scrimmage to 20 baskets. MJ proceeded to score 12 of his team's baskets and assisted on 3 others. He dove for loose balls and even took a charge! Needless to say, his team won easily. On a day when Michael Jordan deserved to take a day off and rest... he still outworked everyone and gave 100%. His commitment to excellence and his competitive fire never stopped. Michael Jordan wasn't great by accident.

Kevin Durant's Humility

2) **Sam Presti**, the Executive Vice President & General Manager of the **Oklahoma City Thunder**, shared these reasons as to why **Kevin Durant** is an NBA superstar:

- ***KD is a notable teammate.*** He has relationships with everyone in the organization. From the guy who sweeps the floor to the team owner.
- ***KD is an impressive practice player.*** As hard as he plays in games, he practices even harder. He knows that improvement comes from practice.
- ***KD is focused on the process and on the long term.*** He isn't in search of a magic bullet. He embraces slow, incremental gains. He knows greatness takes time.
- ***KD takes care of his body.*** He lifts weights year round, ices after games, eats well, and isn't a party animal. His commitment shows in his daily workouts.
- ***KD is the team's unofficial off-season leader.*** He organizes group workouts and pick-up games. Wherever he is, he is always setting up places to play and inviting (and encouraging) his teammates to join him.
- ***KD absolutely loves to play basketball.*** His passion is pure. He respects the game.

Chris Paul's Dedication

3) Steve Kostorowski, **Chris Paul's** long time personal trainer, sent an email with the subject line: **"Things CP does in the off-season before most guys are even out of bed!"**

- *Wakes up at 5:00am.*
- *Drives to the gym.*
- *Does a thorough warm-up.*
- *Does 30 minutes of injury prevention and corrective exercises.*
- *Does between 500-750 abdominal crunches.*
- *Lifts between 4,000-5,000 lbs. with every major muscle group (legs, chest, back, etc.).*
- *Does a variety of balance and coordination drills.*
- *Performs 1,000 reps of jump rope.*
- *Does 40 minutes of on-court ball handling and conditioning.*
- *Eats a nutritious breakfast (post workout meal).*

Kobe Bryant's Hunger

4) Shooting coach extraordinaire Dave Hopla had the opportunity to work with **Kobe Bryant** back in 1996, before he was drafted by the Lakers, and then continued to work with him for the first 4 years of Kobe's NBA career.

Here is a quick story about the first time they met:

Kobe called late one evening to set up a workout for the following day. The only time Coach Hopla had available was 5:30am because he was heading out of town around lunch time. Kobe said, "Sounds good, let's do it."

Coach Hopla arrived at the gym at 5:15am and saw that Kobe was already there... *preparing* for the workout to start at 5:30am. Kobe had arrived at 4:45am. He was in a full sweat *before* the workout officially started.

The first drill they did was a Half-Court Shuttle Drill:

- *You need 1 ball and 1 person to rebound and pass*
- *Set up a cone at mid-court and 2 cones at the free throw line extended (3 feet from side-line)*
- *Start at mid-court and sprint for a jump shot at the free throw line*
- *Sprint back to the mid-court cone, then sprint to either outside cone for another jump shot*
- *Sprint back to mid-court, then sprint to the other cone for a jump shot*
- *Lastly, sprint to mid-court, and sprint in to finish with a dunk or layup*
- *If you miss any shots, you continue until you make the shot from that spot.*
- *Record your best time. A good time is less than 21 seconds on an NBA court.*

In his first time doing the drill, Kobe moved at lightning pace and nailed his first three jump shots... but then missed the final dunk (pounded it off the back rim).

Without hesitation (or without complaining or pouting), Kobe sprinted after the ball (which bounced all the way past half court), picked it up, sprinted back... and took off from just inside the foul line and dunked it home. He then looked up and said, "What was my time?" Without prompting from Coach Hopla, he jogged to mid-court and began the drill again.

That was the first drill Coach Hopla ever took Kobe through. He immediately knew that Kobe was a special player and would go down in history as one of the greats. Over the next few years of working with Kobe, Coach Hopla made this observation:

"Kobe has a sense of urgency with everything he does. Every rep, every shot, every drill is important to him. He takes advantage of every opportunity to get better. Kobe is never satisfied with his game and is always looking to improve. That hunger is what makes him great."