

Act Locally, Think Globally

It was with a sad heart that I heard of the death of David Pecaut this morning. It was through his work with Canada Basketball's Board of Directors that I met him. Reading the many stories today in the newspapers made me realize what a legacy he has left. Building a strong community was one of his great passions. Reading this got me thinking about the slogan I heard on the CBC last night, in reference to the global warming conference in Copenhagen. **Act locally, think globally.** David Pecaut wanted to see the city of Toronto as one of the leading cities in the world. This would only happen if it started locally. This led me to thinking about global warming and what we in the basketball community can do to help reduce global warming. The more I thought about it, the more "green basketball" fell in line with many of the issues we have been discussing in Canadian Sport for Life. In most cases, the green solution was also cheaper and built on the sense of community.

Act locally

One of the biggest ways we can reduce green house gases is by reducing the uses of cars and airplanes to travel to games and practice, especially at the Fundamental and L2T stages. At these stages there is no reason for children to be traveling long distances to play games and practice. Playing in the gym or play ground where the child could walk or take public transportation (with proper adult supervision) would solve many of societal problems:

- It builds a sense of community, You get to know the people who live in your community. You get to meet people in the gym, on the walk or in public transportation.
- It gets people active. By walking we promote activity that may reduce obesity in our children and the parents who walk with the child. Walking also give time to talk with your child.
- It reduces the need for cars to take children to activity.

If driving was needed it could be done in a car pool. There is no need for each parent to individually drive their child too and from practices and games. When children are developing into independent adults they go through many phases:

- At first it is all about "me".
- Next they come to recognize that they exist in a "family".
- Finally they need to learn that "me" and the "family" also fit into something called a "community".

Too often we shelter children on this journey from being dependent to independent. It is ok as a parent to miss practices and games. As the old African proverb says;"It takes a village to raise a child." My parents never saw me play basketball and only saw me play high school football once. It was the provincial championship game at the old Wanders Grounds in Halifax. My mother had no idea what was going on and had to keep asking my brothers where I was and what I was doing. My father didn't like the crowd and skipped out from the game to go to the Nova Scotia Museum. I never once felt that they did not love me. They showed it in many other ways. They also allowed my teachers and coaches to have a hand in raising me.

At the physical literacy stages we should eliminate the adult 5 on 5 game. By playing 3 on 3 or 4 on 4 many positive things occur:

- The players actually get to touch the ball. This is how they develop the basketball and decision making skills they require.
- Individually each child is more active and therefore receiving a bigger fitness benefit.
- You can have more children active at one time. This raises the efficiency level of the facility.
- You do not require parents and fans to come and cheer them on. Since you are playing cross court there is no room for spectators. The children can learn in a safe positive environment. Each parent does not have to drive.
- You do not require officials. The players learn to officiate their own games or have the coaches teach/coach and officiate at the same time.
- When you practice you can learn to share the gym. Why only have one “team” of 12 players in a gym at one time. By changing the definition of a team to a group of players you can have more players being active at one time.

All of the above also reduce the number of cars required to drive people to the gym. It also makes more efficient use of the gym. You also build community because people get to know the other parents who will be involved in their child's life.

Building the Canadian basketball community

The myth exist that:

- I will have a better experience in basketball if I leave Canada
- The further the game is from my home the more valuable the experience;
- The more games we play at the tournament the better the games;
- The more “stuff” we are given the better the tournament or team we play on.

It is not a myth that we have seen a steady increase in the number of players who feel they have to be exported to play the game of basketball. It used to be only at the L2W (university) stage. Now we are seeing it happen at the T2C (High school) stage. If we do not solve this issue it will soon be down into the T2T (junior and middle school) stages. Should we export our raw materials to other countries so they can build the finished product? We don't want to do it in manufacturing so why should we do it with our most valuable resource, our children. We need to build a basketball community where all players feel welcomed and that they can achieve their needs. The amount of money invested by parents who have children making these trips is incredible. It is not a free ride as many are lead to believe. I am waiting for someone to show me the positive numbers on how this current method of exporting players is working.

Reduce the number of games

At the T2T, T2C and L2T stages reducing the number of games will reduce the number of planes trains and automobiles required to transport players, parents, fans and referees This is mostly because of the lack of practices and over abundance of games. The elite player in theses stages often goes year round without a single break. Simply by reducing games we greatly reduce the number of cars needed to transport people to the gym.

Some other things to consider at the Develop the Game stages of CS4L:

- League vs. tournament

Leagues mean local. Local means less travel. Also the dollars being spent are local. The amount of money being spent on gas, hotels and meals on weekends on youth sport is staggering. What if this money could be invested back into developing more local community facilities. These facilities are a legacy for the community.

- Tiering

Done on a local level, communities can help find the niche for each and every participant. Children who do not make a high level team can be directed to the local community league that provides an opportunity for the child to continue to grow and develop and not be excluded. Also those who may not be able to participate can become involved in helping out. This is one of the great strengths of the European club system. It is the local place where adults and children alike grow up.

- Billets vs. hotels

When I was a player in High school we used to be billeted rather than stay in hotels. Not every experience was great, but we learned a lot about the other players and came to see them in a different light. Somewhere in growing up children need to get out of comfort zones. Where do they get to experience cultural growth. If it is not with a billet what about sleeping together in the gym with sleeping bags. Anyone who has ever attended the Coal Bowl in New Waterford, Cape Breton know what I speak about. It is a cultural building experience.

The purpose here was not to have all of the solutions, but to get people to think. Change is inevitable. Why not be a leading sporting nation that builds a truly green basketball community. I know it is something of which David Pecaut would be proud.