100 shot victory

I love offense and care about our game. Not “hot off the press” to those who know me and my passion for the game, follow me on twitter (@debbieantonelli) or read this column. To grow and develop our game, I believe strongly in developing and improving the PRODUCT (4 Ps of Basketball Economics Coaching Women’s Basketball May 2013). For 31 days in July, I MADE 100 15 footers every day. It didn’t take me long with muscle memory and all. I mean, I’m a shooter and I know how to shoot the ball. I’m not trying to brag but it’s my scouting report and a fact. I teach the proper way to shoot the ball to young players still. I learned how to shoot the ball in camp, a version of summer basketball that is quite different than the summer travel ball for today’s coaches and players.

I knocked out my shots in 10-14 minutes. On most days, no rebounder. I actually had to chase a few missed shots on my own, without a personal basketball trainer or access to “The Gun”. Who does that anymore? Sometimes I employed my portable toss back, my old friend that usually gives me a good pass back. It actually fits in the back of my car and occasionally I drove to a park or basketball court and set up my toss back to rebound and save time. This toss back has been a loyal and trusty friend since the day I “escorted” it out of Reynolds Coliseum at NC State never to return it (stealing).

The reason I chose the 100 shots a day challenge in the heat and humidity of summer in the south, not in an air conditioned gym, was because I can, wanted to prove I could and wanted to be a part of the solution in our game. We need more shooters. Bad shooters are always open. We need offensive minded players and coaches. AND, we need to enforce the rules to protect the shooter and open up the game so we can have more scoring. If I could find the time to make 100 shots every day in July, why aren’t the current players making 500 a day. I don’t know any college players that have the amount of responsibility I have with 3 kids, a mortgage, bills, a full time career etc. I bet Lin Dunn and Kelly Krauskopf would sign me to a 7 day contract (NOT) with all the injuries Indiana has suffered this WNBA season if all I had to do was stand in the corner and shoot, occasionally running the wing to create space (we know I don’t play D). I already have a Fever jersey with my name and number on it!!

What will it take to get players more efficient in the mid-range game, pull up and hit a shot in transition, use the backboard, make open shots, finish in the paint? One team out of 343 Division I teams shot 50% from the floor. That stinks! I already proposed an offensive incentive plan in the previously mentioned article (CWB May 2013 with Geno on the cover). A derivative of that incentive was included in Val Ackerman’s “White Paper”. Check this out! I talked a mid-major athletics department into putting offensive incentives in their coaches’ contract. That’s right, spoke to the lawyer who spoke to the AD and the President. They are on the cutting edge with incentivizing their head coach in Men’s Basketball! Wake up people and see the game for its true offensive merit. We have a great game but we need to move it forward. No one wants to see women bump and bang in the post, miss wide open lay ups, beat each other up off the ball. If you watched @ESPN #nineforIX series #branded, you saw why. We need to practice offensive fundamentals including the hardest skill to teach and learn, SHOOTING!

We need a commitment to become better offensive players and teachers. A scorer who can make plays in a tight space, catch and shoot, make plays off the bounce, create separation will always beat a good
It's a fact! Teams that play with offensive discipline, take shots they practice and pass the ball to uncontested jump shooters (like UCONN) win. It's a fact!

It was amazing to me, at my age, not picking up a ball every day, how quickly I was able to get into a shooters rhythm. Reasons why: muscle memory, technique and 3 boys with a hoop for 18 years in the driveway. I learned to shoot the ball at summer camp many decades ago. Shooting the ball is like “riding a bike” cliché for a skill you never lose. I didn’t play AAU because we didn’t have the option. I went to camp and learned fundamentals on offense, the shell drill and how to jump to the ball on defense and played against good competition because other kids like me were there for the same reasons. I learned how to set and use screens, how to create separation with the ball, how to play without the ball. In the 80s, the game wasn’t this fast but it was highly skilled, just check out the players already inducted into the @WBHOF. We played a 2-1-2 zone, not a match up and M2M. We played with the 29.5’ball and the 28.5’ because research showed it would help us shoot better and reduce turnovers (not sure the ball is the issue today).

When the strength and conditioning coach gets more time with the players than the basketball skill development coach we might have a problem. I conditioned on my own as a player. I ran outside on the road or track and lifted weights. There wasn’t cross training, plyometrics, body sculpting, whatever. We didn’t even get in the pool cause some of my teammates couldn’t swim (had to pass beginning swimming to graduate from NC STATE fyi ha). I also played 3 sports in high school in their traditional seasons. Volleyball in the Fall, basketball in the Winter and softball in the Spring. That was my cross training! I didn’t have a personal trainer, basketball shot coach or nutritionist. AND, I didn’t have to decide at 11 years old which sport I was going to specialize in! Ridiculous!! Makes me mad! As a parent of an 11 year old soccer/golf/basketball player I will not allow my son to succumb to peer pressure and choose now. I had offers to play all 3 sports in college and I loved playing those sports.

We are quick to blame entitlement and lack of accountability on our players yet we want to pay a stipend for scholarship players’ extra spending money instead of encouraging them to get a job in the off season which will help their resume in future employment pursuits. We want to blame our society for technological advances that affect our interpersonal communication. Conflict, disappointment and adversity still exist in the vocab but the remedies/solutions aren’t the same? Discipline, hard work and commitment will never become “old school” terms for our game or society to remain on top of the food chain. I hear winning coaches say it’s hard to stay at the top. When does discipline, hard work and commitment get easy? Not any stage of my life yet. Not if you are a competitor.

So the 100 MADE 15 footer shot challenge allowed me to accomplished personal goals and find an occasional “celebrity rebounder” (@catchin24, Tamika Catchings). The intangibles that drive me haven’t changed. If you want to make a difference, make a change. Doug Bruno, head coach at DePaul and his “ONE CHANGE” mission statement makes it seem simple because there is one thing each of us can do as players and coaches. Players practice and Coaches teach and officials officiate the rules the way they are written.
For the players, no matter how tired you are from all your studies, get in the gym. You have access to a free indoor, air conditioned basketball practice facility. You can stop by the trainer and grab a free Gatorade and post workout protein bar on the way. You can set up “The Gun” so you don’t have to chase the rebound and this will help you be more productive. You can also turn on the state of the art music system to get in rhythm while making your 500 shots. Why does that sound more like fun to me than work? Along the way, thank your coaches and administrators for the great resources you have to get better as athletes and in academics. However remember, your abilities to make shots will make a difference in the game and in your game. Play and have fun!