



Understanding The Reasoning Behind Player Cuts As A Parent

This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.

“I found out this morning that 3 kids were cut from the basketball team. One 9th grader, and two 10th graders. The 9th grader is pretty short, but I’ve seen him play. He plays hard and seems to be very positive and energetic. Also, I know of a kid about the same size that they kept. One of the 10th graders had never played. He participated in summer ball and fall league, in addition to weight lifting, yet was never given a chance to play. I’m unaware of circumstances of the other 10th grader. As a parent I am devastated that they would cut 3 kids. 3 kids is not an unmanageable addition of players in my eyes. I have never coached so maybe I am clueless. These coaches announced last year that there may be cuts this year. I really feel it was an awful and cruel decision to let only 3 kids go. What are your thoughts? My son was not amongst the cut, but I cried this morning after he told me.”

PCA Response by David Jacobson, PCA Trainer & Senior Marketing Communications and Content Manager

As a basketball coach having led teams from third grade through 10th grade, I can tell you that it is common practice to keep a high school basketball team to 12-15 players. I have seen coaches strictly adhere to that, and I have seen coaches carry up to 20 players. That decision depends on the values of the coach, athletic director and community at large in terms of what they hope to provide youth in the community through the basketball experience.

For example, if there is high value on engaging as many youth as possible, giving them an outlet for exercise, camaraderie, a sense of team, of purpose and “keeping them off the streets” then the coach would carry more players. If there is a high value on winning games and/or paying closer attention to each player to improve performance and pursue college scholarships, then the coach may need to carry fewer players.

There is also the question of playing time in balance with the desire to win and/or develop players to their fullest potential. It is much more difficult to strike that balance as more players are on the team. However, I

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also have seen youth thrive by being part of a team even if they get very little playing time. So, for example, a coach may have a rotation of 8-10 players who are relied upon heavily and any number after that, who rarely play, but who gain from the social-emotional benefits of being part of a team and practicing hard every day.

All of this is meant to provide perspective, not necessarily an answer as to whether it was “right” or “wrong” for those players to be cut.

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