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Reshaping the Halftime Speech

We've all been there. Your best guard is dog-tired, turning the ball over left and right, your big is taking shots from too far out, you're in foul trouble, and you're losing the rebound war. It's all reflected in the score. But when the clock runs down on the first half, you need a detailed snapshot of what it will take to turn the game around.

Coaches often intuit most of this information, maybe with the help of a stat-sheet in chicken scratch of dubious accuracy. But mobile scorekeeping is reinventing the way coaches can approach halftime, at least for the four coaches covered here.

Matt McDuffie, student assistant coach at Montclair State, likes to update his head coach on team and individual stats that "tell the analytical truth about what's going on in the game." One key tool for enabling quick, accurate recording and compilation of those stats is GameChanger a free app for iOS devices that can be uploaded via gc.com and administered by up to three people so teams of assistants can collaborate on sharing and interpreting data.

Intuitive menus that walk users through every possession and substitution deliver with just a tap such data as heat maps, timeouts taken and foul totals – plus stats for opponents too.

James Puliatte, assistant coach at Fort Lee High School boys' basketball team, also relies on a mobile app to shape his team's approach to halftime. "I project the splash screen right onto the whiteboard," he said. During one game, the heat map showed his team going right too often and scoring at a good rate when attacking left; using that data persuaded players to adjust.

Similarly, McDuffie and his colleagues sometimes tailor Montclair State's second-half defense in response to the opponent's heat map and use other data to "decide which plays to run at times and who we want shooting the ball in last-second situations," he said.

Brice Crowther, head varsity girls' basketball coach at Sangre de Cristo, keeps advanced stats turned on, utilizing True Shooting Percentage to detect which players seemed to force their first-half shots.

But does all this data actually impact second-half results? For Brendan Mann – JV boys' coach at Phoenix's Central High School – the answer is yes. During a playoff game last season, an opposing player lit up Central in the first half, and the shot showed "the entire right side of the court was dotted, indicating that's where he was most comfortable shooting," Mann recalled. "After halftime we focused on pushing him left, and he only had nine points the rest of the game, and seven of those were free throws."

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Reshaping the Halftime Speech, continued

As your season progresses, mobile apps make it easier to review stats and notice trends. In that sense, by "half-time" of your season, you may find yourself no longer using half-time of a game to plead with players to make corrections. Instead, you might just be making minor adjustments and calmly reinforcing what your players are now doing right in response to the data you have presented.

This article originally appeared on The Season*, GameChanger's amateur sports resource blog. Learn more about GameChanger by clicking* here*.*