



5 Steps to an Effective Halftime

By Steve Pavlovic, Basketball Coaches Coordinator, St. Cyril and Methodius Catholic School
Lemon, IL

The halftime interval plays a major role in every kind of legitimate basketball game. It provides a meaningful break for the ballplayers and an opportunity for the coach to adjust his game plan as well as correct the mistakes being made on the floor.

To help both the athletes and the coaches to come out strong for the second half we have divided the halftime break into equal segments.

#1 MOVE YOUR TEAM INTO A QUIET AREA

The first step is to set yourself up in a quiet area, away from the fans, cheerleaders, and opponents. Most schools will have some kind of locker room they can use, and it will usually work out fine.

The more you have to cover, the more you want your team to focus on you and your assistant coaches.

#2 LET THEM CATCH THEIR BREATH

After playing an entire half, your team will need a few minutes to just rest and hydrate. Let them do this while you and your assistant coaches prepare your changes for the second half.

This will also provide a "cooling off" period for you and your team. You never want to come in and just start ranting and raving if your team is playing poorly. Use this resting period to give you the time to prepare and your team time to reflect. Believe me, your team will know before they walk into that locker room at halftime

whether they are playing well or not.

Make one coach responsible for keeping an eye on the clock, so that we know how much time is left before the 3rd quarter starts and we don't run out of time. There is nothing worse than being in the middle of an important explanation and being told you need to be on the floor NOW!

#3 PRESENT YOUR 2ND HALF-GAME PLAN

Let them know whether you are unhappy with their effort, but don't spend your entire time dwelling on it. Move along quickly to what your team needs to do to be successful in the second half.

Draw up a diagram or two to keep your players interested in what you want them to do. Talk about what has

been working and how they should continue doing those things.

To keep my players' attention, I stay with one area at a time. I focus on offense, then defense, then on our press break, etc. We don't start jumping from one area to the next because it becomes too easy to lose your players quickly. Our goal is to make the kind of changes that can improve our performance on the court in the second half.

#4 ASK IF YOUR PLAYERS HAVE ANY QUESTIONS

When you are done laying out your second half adjustments, make sure to ask for questions. The worst thing that can happen to you is to bring a confused team out onto the court with you. You don't want anyone playing man-to-man defense while the others are playing a zone!

Encourage your players to ask if

they need clarifications. Keep everyone on the same page. If your players see anything they'd like to add, this is the time for it.

As the players move on to junior high and then high school, they'll often be able to give you valuable input on things that the opponents are doing on the floor.

#5 SOME FINAL POSITIVE ENCOURAGEMENT

Before you send your team back onto the floor, give them one final dose of encouragement. Remind them that they are a team and need to work together. Build them up and let them know that you believe in them. Get your players to believe in themselves and believe that they can accomplish what you have set up for them.

At this point, you may have a few minutes left, so let your players do

some shooting on the court, or let them go to the bench and get ready for the 2nd half.

Your halftime talk is very important. It can spark your team if they are down, or keep them upbeat if you are winning. Remember to stay positive as you relay this important information to your players. Don't always be negative. It will have your players tuning you out. Keep your players focused and you will see it pay off in the second half of the game. ■

Steve Pavlovic has been a youth basketball coach at all levels from 4th grade through 8th grade. He is also the author of "Coach Steve Pavlovic's Score More Hoops", a self-published ebook series on basketball shooting, in addition to ebooks on defense, passing, dribbling, rebounding and advanced skills. You can visit his site at www.scoremorehoops.com