350 Lafayette, Suite 500 Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616.233.3480 • PerformanceExcellenceCenter.com • DrEddie@PerformanceExcellenceCenter.com

March 18, 2009

BearCats and Blue Devils Do Their Job

March Madness is upon us! Many of you may be excited to see our #2 seed Michigan State play Robert Morris or Michigan vs. Clemson. Maybe some are watching Illinois and W Kentucky or Ohio State vs. Siena. But I will have my eye on **Binghamton vs. Duke**.

In the spirit of full disclosure: I am a Binghamton alumnus. So it is exciting to see them make their first NCAA tournament. We were a Division III school back when I was there and called ourselves the Colonials. But, I love the underdog story and I do give them a chance. The best part of sport is that anything can happen. But to have a chance, the Bearcats have to be at the very top of their game in this exciting playoff environment.

All teams in the tournament are feeling pressure. Binghamton may also have the added distractions of their first bid, the excitement of the school, the newness of media, and the pressure of matching-up against #2 seed Duke - a successful program with a highly respected coach. **To perform their best, athletes must ignore expectations and focus on their job.** If I could talk to "my" team before they play tomorrow night – I would ask them these questions to narrow their focus on the essential:

- What is your job?
- How do you do your job?
- Can you do your job?
- Will you do your job?

What is your job?

Each player should choose 1-3 competition behaviors that they can control. These behaviors should be vital to success. They are usually the basic things like "give full effort on every play", "communicate with teammates", or "keep emotional control".

How do you do your job?

This is critical. Athletes must specifically define the behaviors above. An athlete may give full effort by "running hard on transition defense" or "fully extending my arms when blocking a shot". Communicating with teammates may mean "being vocal during time-outs about what I see" or "directing my teammates when they are out of position". Athletes might define keeping emotional control by "using the 4 F technique after mistakes" (those who have been in my workshops will remember this!) or "take a deep breath and focus on my job after a turnover". A coach can help you technically and tactically define your job.

Can you do your job?

Be sure you have the skills and knowledge to do your job. Your job should include only behaviors that you have already mastered and that are under your control. You can not control the total number of points you score, the media, or your coach's and teammates reactions. Therefore, they are not your job.

Will you do your job?

Take your time to answer this. In an emotional moment, you may not *feel* like doing your job, even if it will help you win. For example, if you are down by 10 points with under a minute to play you may not feel like giving full effort. Or if you cause a turnover, you may find it hard to put it behind you and focus on the current play. When you answer "yes, I will do my job" you are committing to these behaviors no matter the score or situation. It is that commitment to focus that will have you play your best.

Enjoy the tournament!

Eddie O'Connor, PhD