

Sports

FREE THROW SHOOTING THE 15-FOOT SHOT WITH NO DEFENSE

Story by Conor O'Neill
Reporter
Photos by David Wells
Photo Editor

It's an old adage that seems to be reiterated in every game on TV: "Free throws win basketball games." Even those who are tired of the saying cannot deny the validity of the quote.

If a team is winning late in a game, its players will be fouled and sent to the free-throw line in an attempt to put away the opponent. By contrast, the team that is losing sends opposing players to the line in hopes that the players will miss 15-foot, uncontested shots, which happens a lot more often than it should.

But is there too much work that goes into a free throw? Today's players, from professional to recreational, sometimes put more effort into a pre-shot routine than into the actual shot. Washington Wizards guard Gilbert Arenas can be seen taking the ball around his back and dribbling once for every person close to him before attempting a foul shot.

Elon senior forward Adam Constantine, sophomore guard Josh Bonney and head coach Matt Matheny walk us through the difficulties of shooting a free throw.

ROUTINES

BONNEY:
"Take a deep breath, try to calm myself down. When you're running up and down the court for three or four minutes, sometimes you need to settle down. The deep breath helps if it's a late game situation with a lot of pressure. Dribble twice and spin the ball back against my hand, then shoot."

CONSTANTINE:
"It's all about getting into a routine. I just keep it simple with one hand behind my back. One thing I do is make a hand gesture of 'I love you' in sign language to my grandmother, who has cancer."

SIZE DOESN'T MATTER

BONNEY — WHO IS SECOND ON THE TEAM BEHIND CONSTANTINE — ON HOW HE GETS TO THE RIM AS OFTEN AS A GUARD: "Just being aggressive and always attacking the rim. Our system is designed for guards to attack. Coach Matheny is always encouraging us to drive to the basket because good things happen, and most of the time, they're going to hit you."

TOO MUCH?

CONSTANTINE ON WHETHER SOME ROUTINES ARE TOO EXTRAVAGANT:
"Some people certainly do it for show. But if your free throw percentage is high enough and you can back it up, then I guess you can do whatever you want."

THE FUTURE

MATHENY ON PHOENIX FREE THROW DIFFICULTY:
"Our biggest obstacle is simple: We just have to make more. We're a good free throw shooting team. If you combine our early practices with our exhibition games, we were shooting about 85 or 90 percent as a team. In practice we changed our free throw shooting routine so that it's not monotonous. And we really try to treat every practice free throw that we take as a game-like situation."

THE STEPS TO NOTHING BUT NET

JOSH BONNEY
SOPHOMORE GUARD



THE PHOENIX PLAY AT WAKE FOREST 2 P.M. SATURDAY. IT IS THE FIRST ACC OPPONENT FOR THE PHOENIX THIS SEASON

481 U4 42
02/03/12 33708