



Size 5 Basketballs in Under 12 Competitions

June 2021

Grant Wallace – GM High Performance



Agenda

1. Overview

2. Issue

3. Proposal

4. Benefits

5. Road Blocks

6. Worldwide Examples

7. Implementation

A recommendation paper was presented to the Basketball Victoria Board by the Basketball Victoria High Performance and Pathways Department, which was endorsed at their June 2021 meeting.

The paper provided background and details on how and why Basketball Victoria must implement a mandated use of a size 5 basketball in all Under 12 years and below age groups of competition and training across Victoria

The following slides are summary notes from this paper.

The recommendation was to implement the use of size 5 basketballs for all Victorian Under 12 and below competitions.



Overview

- Currently U12 basketballers in Victoria play and train on a full size basketball court, with a regulation 3m high (10 ft) ring and use a size 6 basketball. For the female junior athletes, this is the same as not only senior women's basketballers, but also Olympic and professional athletes.
- This creates a situation where it is difficult for our female and male athletes to succeed, as they acquire inappropriate skill acquisition and muscle memory from their formative years, that is thereby detrimental to their long-term basketball pathway, and ensures athletes have a less enjoyable experience overall.
- Proportionately, the average 8yr old female/male athlete playing on a 3m (10 ft) ring, is the equivalent to a 183cm (6 ft) tall fully developed adult athlete playing on a 4.2m (14 ft) ring.
- Ideally, athletes from U12 years of age should play on smaller dimensioned courts, with a recommended 2.43m (8 ft) high ring, have the 3pt line removed from the floor surface, use size 5 basketballs and consist of 3on3, or 4on4, person competitions.
- Due to the large and varying types of venues, equipment and competitions found across Victoria; the majority of these ideals are not practical, or possible, immediate solutions.
- However, the one ideal solution recommended that we can control as competition managers, is that in all competitions that BV oversee, that will assist with best skill acquisition of the athlete, is the basketball size used.



Issues

- Shooting the basketball is the “**Master skill**” of our sport.
- To have the best chance of acquiring the necessary skills to play, at any level, you must be able to shoot the basketball well. Exceptional shooters will have long and successful careers because of their shooting ability at a high level.
- Shooting has always been a staple skill recognised of Australian Basketball, with Eddie Palubinskas, Andrew Gaze and Shane Heal all having been world tournament scoring leaders, as they have excelled at this one skill.
- In our HP programs, we are continually unsuccessfully trying to correct shooting techniques in 13-18yr old players who have developed poor techniques from an early age, and in almost every case, the muscle memory of these athletes makes it impossible to correct and create the best shot.
- Poor techniques, are achieved from young athletes trying to project a heavy item high into the air as part of our game. They do not have the core strength, leg strength and/or upper body strength to complete this task, without using incorrect technique. The use of a size 5 ball would alleviate this impediment.
- Jeff Haefner of the respected USA website breakthroughbasketball.com advises; *“If you spend a little time watching youth games, practices, or pick-up games in this country, you'll see that most young players use the wrong size basketball. And using the wrong size often leads to bad shooting habits.”*



Issues

Recommendations from the experts at Breakthrough Basketball as tabled

- As a sport we need to prepare our athletes for the best platform for success and retention in our sport, and this can be achieved by the implementation of this recommendation to use a size 5 basketball in all U12 year competitions throughout Victoria.
- The benefits of this recommendation are not just in improved shooting skills, but also with improved capacity for dribbling and passing skills for the player.
- BV's HP&P Dept have developed our Shooting Philosophy and Teaching Points for your referral. Much debate is had in coaching circles on different points of emphasis, however this Philosophy highlights the many key areas the Department believes necessary to develop world shooters and teach the fundamental skills required for the Master Skill of our great game

Size	Circumference	Weight	Recommended basketballs by Breakthrough Basketball for
Size 7	29.5" or 74.93cm	22 ounces or 0.62 kilograms	Men and boys ages 15+. This is official size for high school, college, and the pros.
Size 6	28.5" or 72.39cm	20 ounces or 0.56 kilograms	Boys ages 12-14. Girls and women ages 12+. This is the official size for women's high school, college, and pro basketball.
Size 5	27.5" or 69.85	17 ounces or 0.48 kilograms	Boys and girls ages 9-11 years old.

Proposal

- The proposal is to implement the use of a size 5 basketball in all U12 years and younger competitions within Victoria from July 2021.
- With any change, there is always natural reluctance from long standing stakeholders to make a shift without evidence of success. To help with “the sell” of the benefits to our clubs and associations, who we forcefully encourage to follow suit, a staged and aggressive implementation approach is suggested beginning with events that are under BV’s direction, starting with the BV managed U12 Skills Days and Jamborees.
- We will gather data from these events, and witness firsthand the known benefits of the proposal.
- Upon speaking with a large number of our affiliated domestic associations, some already use the size 5 ball, but most are all unwilling to move to a size 5 basketball whilst BV competitions are still using a size 6.
- This is a great opportunity for BV to not only lead within the state, but also across the Country.



Benefit – #1

Ability for athletes to correctly focus on shooting technique, which helps with long term skill development and acquisition

- In a 2019 study conducted by Gorman, Hendrick, Renshaw, McCormack and Topp from the International Journal of Sport Science and Coaching "*If the ball fits...*", using a principled anthropometric approach (hand span of a child versus hand span of an adult) to determine the appropriate age matched equipment to be used.
- This research paper was prepared in conjunction with the Queensland Uni of Tech, the Uni of the Sunshine Coast and Griffith Uni.
- They determined in their research that athletes gained the most success, acquired more skills and ultimately enjoyed the sport more using a size 5 basketball. This can not only lead to an increase in skill base and shooting percentage, it can also lead to an increase in participation, particularly in female athletes.
- SA Basketball have for many years had the policy of U12 competitions playing on a 2.43m (8 ft) high ring. They continue to use a size 6 basketball. This allowed all their athletes to develop correct and appropriate shooting technique based on the strength and abilities of the athlete's age. Prominent thereafter, South Australian U20 teams and indeed SA athletes at NBL/WNBL level were excellent shooters as their shooting technique and fundamentals were outstanding.
- The ability to correctly teach shooting technique and have the young athletes experience success, (i.e. making the successful basket), will help with the long term shooting ability and skill set of athletes by not engraining an incorrect technique.



Benefit – #2

Encourage more young girls and boys to experience success in our sport, encouraging them to continue participation

- Kids at all ages, but in particular their formative years, want to enjoy their sport, and the most exciting part of the sport for the younger athletes, is scoring. By modifying the rules of the games to help create success, we are increasing the player's enjoyment and ultimately limiting the reasons for kids to drop out of the sport.
- Furthermore, our athlete's size, length and athleticism is increasingly, and rapidly, making our game faster and more difficult for the offence. The 'old school' chest pass, for example, where athletes *pass from their chest, with two hands, step forward, extend arms and flick thumbs down*, is gone. The pace of our game does not allow this skill to be effective anymore. The size 5 basketball will increase the athlete's ability, and success, to use a one handed push pass.



Benefit – #3

Improved creativity and game style for youth athletes

- Athletes are exposed to numerous stimuli in a game, and when challenged in a game sense by defence, go into self-preservation mode. This consists of many different decisions players will make in games such as:
 - Being pressured by defence and over dribbling the ball, rather than trying to make a pass, or
 - Taking an ill-advised shot with incorrect technique due to the ball size.
- By using a smaller basketball size 5, the game style will closer replicate what the under 12 years of age players see on their television screens, phones and tablets from professional players and encourage them to have more fun playing the game as they are capable of things that their heroes and idols are doing.
- This in turn helps our coaches to focus on the correct areas of basketball at training sessions and games, rather than just trying to find ways for the kids to survive.



Roadblocks

- Change to anything in our world always creates natural human resistance.
- Apathy, non-recognition of the issue and/or the natural resistance to implement any change for continual improvement by the administration tiers within Victorian Basketball community will be the major roadblock.
- The expected roadblocks of this implementation will be similar to that experienced at the original Metro Showcase held at Werribee in 2018. Participating coaches and parents had doubts about the validity of using a size 5 basketball for their athletes at this event. This was because it did not help them win today, when playing in competitions that use a size 6.
- By changing our statewide guidelines as per the proposal of this paper, we are able to focus on the skill technique, rather than the “win now” approach.
- Another roadblock of this proposal could be there will be additional expenses over time for both Associations and families, who will need to purchase a different size basketball for their competition and child. However, with Aussie Hoops currently already using a size 5 basketball as a part of their participant pack, this removes an area of concern for parents and kids and potentially helps encourage associations to adopt the Aussie Hoops program.



Worldwide Examples

- In 2008, USA Ice Hockey witnessed a decline in participation and retention. This sparked a review, with the main recommendation to make the game more age appropriate for their youth players to make the sport fit the players, not the player fit the sport. One area they changed was to make a smaller sized rink, and a bigger goal for players to taste success. Their participation rates have subsequently increased, and is directly linked to this policy change.
- Spanish Basketball has been using the size 5 basketball in their U12 trainings and competitions for many years and have seen quantifiable results. Spain are often the worldwide benchmark for athlete skill, flare and shooting ability.
- Every sport will change the way it is played for youth athletes. For example;
 - AFL play on smaller grounds with a smaller footballs for younger age groups.
 - Soccer use a smaller ground size, with reduced team player numbers, and.
 - Cricket play on a smaller oval with adjustable bat and ball sizes.
- Basketball has the same rules and parameters for all players throughout, with the only shift being a size 6 basketball, to a size 7 basketball for boys when they move from Under 14's to Under 16's and older. We have acknowledged that it is best for males to not use a full sized ball in their formative years, but we expect females to have to make it work.
- Bendigo, McKinnon and Wyndham basketball associations have already implemented a size 5 basketball in their domestic programs for U10's and below. Whilst we will not see the benefits of this recommendation for possibly 3-5 yrs, it proves that this is something that our associations should and would be open to considering.



Implementation

To implement the proposal, the following aggressive rollout is suggested.

- At the 2021 U12 BV Skills Days, x80 metro and x80 country bottom age athletes (x40 boys and x40 girls each) are selected to participate in a new Academy style program.
- At the 2021 BV Jamborees, we will again collect and collate data to prove the use and benefit of the size 5 ball by comparing athletes within the program, with those outside of the program. This data will assist in the education process of clubs/associations on why this is an important step for basketball in Victoria.
- To do this, in conjunction with BV's Coach Development Officer, we will hold a Coaching Conference at each event where we show video and statistical comparisons of the events. BV's HP Coaches will also present on the necessity benefits of the change using athletes from the program and hold a general coaching clinic.
- September 2021 – implement into 2021/22 VJBL (Spalding balls available early in 2022)
- Monitor data over next 10+ years – shooting percentages, assist/turnover ratios, retention rates





Size 5 Basketballs in Under 12 Competitions

Thank you

Grant Wallace – GM High Performance

