

Former and Present Coaches Testimonials

Coaching in the NYBL has been a deeply rewarding experience. The league offers a great balance of opportunity and competition, and it's built around the right values: teamwork, sportsmanship, athleticism, and fun. Each season, we've focused on helping our players grow their basketball skills and IQ, build confidence, and leave every practice and game with a smile. We've emphasized "PHIT" - Positivity, Hustle, Improvement, and Teamwork - and it's been incredible to watch the boys take ownership of those values and define success in their own words: working hard, supporting teammates, improving, making new friendships, and having fun. We discourage "hero ball" and instead teach the importance of unselfish, team-oriented play - the kind of basketball that wins games as they grow, while also imparting values that will help them succeed off the court. I've also loved spending time with my son and his friends - they're only kids for a little while, and this was a chance to truly savor that fleeting time together. Just as meaningful, I've really enjoyed getting to know and become friends with so many fellow coaches and player parents. The time commitment has been manageable, thanks to strong support from the Board and a genuine sense of community throughout the league. It's a great and meaningful way to be part of something special in Needham

-Matt Arnould

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- **Demonstrates Deep Investment:** Coaching your child's team sends a powerful message—you're not just watching from the sidelines, you're actively investing in their growth, friendships, and passions. Even if they don't say it, they feel it.
 - **Strengthens Parent-Child Connection:** Sharing the court builds a unique bond. It creates shared experiences, richer post-game (and practice) dialog, and moments of pride that deepen your relationship beyond the usual parent-child dynamic.
 - **Models Leadership and Teamwork:** By coaching, you model what it means to lead with empathy, communicate effectively, and support others—skills your child and their peers will carry with them for life.
 - **Creates a Ripple Effect of Encouragement:** Your presence uplifts not just your child, but the entire team. It shows every player that adults care about their effort and potential, which boosts confidence and motivation.
 - **Leaves a Lasting Legacy:** Years from now, your child may not remember every game score, but they'll remember that you showed up, guided them, and believed in them. That impact lasts far beyond the season.

-Priya Gore

NYBL can be the most fun and rewarding opportunity to coach youth sports in Needham. I've coached other sports and competitive travel and tournament teams. There is just something about NYBL, from watching kids cheer for buckets by their less experienced teammates to rolling along in March Madness. By far, NYBL offers the best mix of easy-going fun and competition among friends. I coached in NYBL for 5 years and am saddened that it's over.

-Barry Pollack

I have had the privilege of coaching in the Needham Youth Basketball League (and its predecessor Saint Joseph Basketball League) for over 10 years in both the girls and boys divisions. I've also coached other sports leagues in town and can honestly say the NYBL is the most fun, most competitive, and most organized of all.

By far it's the kids from Needham — the players — that make coaching in this league such a positive experience. They come from different schools, and their talent level can vary widely, but above all else they come to play. It's great to see the players' effort and determination improve over the course of the season as many who never met before learn to work together as a team. Watching a player develop their basketball skills, knowing you had a small part in that, is so satisfying. With pride, I have seen several players from my teams go on to succeed at the high school basketball level and beyond.

A few other points for potential coaches to consider:

- Multiple coaches: It's a good thing!

Particularly for new coaches, pull in a friend or ask to be paired (or tripled or even quadrupled) up with other coaches. It's much easier to split off responsibilities that way because no one coach has all the answers. And when you can't make it to a practice or game, having other coaches around to cover is a big help.

The league also implements a great program where Needham High School students (typically Rockets players) can intern as assistant coaches on your team. I would definitely recommend this as these kids are just a few years older than your players and are coming in with current basketball playing experience.

- Time commitment:

The season runs from November to March and ends with an exciting March Madness-style tournament, but there's plenty of breaks built in as we follow the school calendar. There's typically two or three meetings a week (practices or games), on weekdays and weekends, with more practices in the first half of the season and more games in the second half.

You will also need time for team communications and making the game lineups in advance!

- Communication with the team:

As a head coach, you're expected to keep the players and parents informed throughout the season, typically over direct email or through the Demosphere app. The frequency and level of detail is up to you, but from experience, the more the better for the parents! I tend to go into detail in my communications for no other reason but to save getting questions from parents later.

Get the parents in the habit early of RSVPing for everything! The app is key for this. The league strongly recommends making the game lineups in advance and I fully agree! Having every player's status for the games makes this much easier. The games move pretty fast and there's very little time to adjust your lineups on the fly.

- Working with fellow parents in Needham:

Coaching in the NYBL is a great way to meet other town parents! My kids primarily attend Saint Joe's and other private schools in the area and coaching gives me the chance to interact with other parents whose kids go to different schools. The games can get a little intense so be sure to introduce yourself beforehand!

- Support from the league:

Lauren Fryberger and her staff do an outstanding job of navigating A LOT of school schedules, play schedules, vacation schedules, Metrowest schedules, coach schedules, and hundreds and hundreds of players' schedules, to ensure that the various Needham gyms are ready to go when we need them. They have nurtured excellent relationships with the schools and school leaders over the years and it is important as coaches/parents that we help to keep it that way!

-Chris Kochenboch

If someone had told me five years ago that I would coach basketball for three years, I would have laughed at that person's prediction.

The last time I had played organized basketball was when I was in 7th grade on a town team. The ball was a hot potato in my hands, and I couldn't pass it to the "real" players fast enough. It was a great experience, though, and I gained some skills and knowledge, but my life as a spectator was solidified.

So in August of 2022, when NYBL was seeking coaches, I just swiped to my next email. The thing is though, NYBL was still looking for coaches in November. At that point I began to grapple with the idea. I didn't want teams to be too big because that would reduce playing time for each kid. Ugh! With an abundance of self-talk and my oldest son's commitment to help me, I reached out. Twenty-four hours later I was paired with an assistant coach who had played basketball in college. What luck...but not really... more deliberate, because Lauren Fryberger, League President, knew my concerns.

With all the information in the world at my fingertips, I hit YouTube and recorded drills in my new notebook. And I reminded myself that it's a recreational league, a place where kids want to have fun, make new friends, play ball with old friends, and learn some skills while experiencing healthy competition. It's not a high stakes atmosphere. That year our team went to the finals, where we came in second place out of 18 teams.

My co-coach and I are entering our third year of coaching together. Having a co-coach means that we have each other's backs if one of us cannot attend. Karin, my co-coach, has done most of the skill training, but I have gleaned enough of her expertise (and watched a lot of YouTube as well as used the drills posted by NYBL) to be confident in my own right. My biggest role besides showing up is to create all the lineups, write all the emails, post scores in the Demosphere App. and carry "the big bag of balls" back and forth.

My son has loved having me as a coach. My one regret is that I didn't coach my older son when he played NYBL. I have read the testimonials of other coaches, and I echo their sentiments. This experience adds a special shared bond to our relationship. I am invested in him, I am invested in the community, and I am invested in his peer group. And I am willing to do things that aren't in my comfort zone. This experience has been extremely rewarding. I can include it in my ***Top 10 Best Things I've Done in My Life.***

- Ann Earthrowl