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It's showtime, even on bad days

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It's showtime. The July evaluation period is only a month away and the courts will soon be lined with college coaches looking for the solution to their program's next step forward. You've done the work in the gym, the weight room and the classroom. This is your time, your opportunity, the moment you've been waiting for ... or not.

What happens when one of those nightmare games makes an appearance at the absolute wrong time? You know the ones I'm talking about. Anybody who has played the game has had them. The ball won't drop, your legs feel like lead and your turnovers make you seriously think that you've gone color-blind.

With only 26 days in the calendar year to evaluate nonscholastic (club) basketball and 20 of those coming in July, recruiters are moving from court to court, gym to gym and event to event like a shopaholic at the Mall of America. When you consider the number of players, teams and tournaments, the opportunity to be seen and evaluated for a prospect may come down to a single game or two in the course of the entire summer. If you have one of "those" games while the coaches are sitting courtside there are still things you can do to catch their eye.



When shots aren't going down, you can always impress by playing a little defense.

Show them that you can still defend.

Even on your worst days you still can get in a stance and stay in front of the ball. Rotate effectively on penetration and, for Pete's sake, take a charge! Sprint back defensively after makes and misses even if your matchup is jogging the floor like she's on a Sunday stroll. If you're going to have a bad game make sure your opponent does, too.

Show them that you can always rebound.

This also should be a constant for good days and bad. Finish your defense and limit the second looks the person you're covering and her teammates get. At the offensive end, create more opportunities. If your buckets aren't going down, follow your shot, go get it and hope that a few stick-backs find their way into the nets. They count the same as the first shot you took.

Show them that you won't overreact.

Starting the game 0-for-5 from the field doesn't mean that you stop shooting. If it was a good shot to take five minutes ago, it's a good shot to take now. At the same time you can't warm up a cold stroke by firing away every time you get your hands on the ball. Shooting your way out of a slump may be a good way to shoot yourself in the foot as well.

Show them you can learn over the course of the game.

Just like shooting, you can't force things with passing. If it didn't get there the first time, don't throw the exact same pass again because you're bound and determined to "get it there." Read the defender better, set it up with a fake or reverse the ball and allow the pass come from another angle.

Show them that you have reading and math skills.

On the break, see the floor and read the defense. If the numbers aren't there, make smart choices with the ball. Not many recruiters are looking for point guards who think two-on-four situations are a good time to attack. There aren't too many looking for players taking 3-pointers when it's two-on-one either. Do the math.

Show them that you understand time and clock management.

If you've got a small lead and only a few minutes remaining, good shot selection and taking care of the ball can be more impressive than jacking up bad looks, even if they go in. Score and possessions are important as well. If your team is down by four or more, demonstrate that you understand that the quick two-pointer may be the way to close the gap rather than forcing shot after shot from 3-point range. Do some more math.

Show them that you've got focus and the right attitude.

Falling apart because things aren't going your way probably isn't going to make college coaches want to catch another one of your games. Don't let what happened at one end of the floor have an impact at the other. Make sure your teammates and coaches don't have to pat you on the back and pump you up because things aren't going your way. College coaches are looking for players, not babysitting projects.

Show them that you can communicate on the floor.

Bad days often lead to players shutting down. Nobody is looking for a cheerleader but coaches want players who will continue to talk on defense and make sure their teammates know what they're running offensively. Keep giving feedback to your coaches and make eye contact even if they're taking a piece out of your backside. Your on-floor interaction should be the same on your worst day as it is your best.

There's not a coach out there who isn't aware that players have off games. Even if the ball isn't going in they can see if you've got good form and they know that even Kobe and LeBron dribble off their foot once in a while. The important thing in a challenging situation is that you show them that there's more to your game and that you know how to contribute even when it's not your day.

Of course these suggestions aren't just for your bad days. In the end, you'll still have to have the talent and potential that recruiters are looking for, but if you can show them that you've got something to offer every time out, they're going to take a closer look. And if you do all these things on your best day, just imagine what they might be thinking when they leave the gym.

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