

Coach Bob Starkey is an assistant Women's Coach at Texas A & M. He has an outstanding coaching blog that you should definitely add to your regular reading list: [Hoop Thoughts](#). This post was originally posted on that blog.

High School coaches won't be able to apply all of the points, but will still have some takeaways.

## Tips for Assistant Coaches

by Bob Starkey

Two of my favorite people in the world of coaching (and two of the people in my coaching circle of influence) are Felicia Hall Allen and Greg Brown. Felicia has been a game changer for our profession with the development of A Step Up Assistant Coaching Symposium for men and women's basketball coaches. She also is an amazing motivational speaker and excellent team builder. We utilized her at LSU and she made such an impact in our program that we annually voted her a recipient of our Final Four rings. Greg Brown is someone I have known for years in large part because of my relationship with Don Meyer who Greg worked for. In fact, I often tell people that Greg worked for Coach Meyer and Pat Summitt when they were the winningest coaches in all of college basketball. Greg is an excellent teacher and continual learner.

The two of them combined for this post this morning. Greg had sent this list from an article he read to Felicia and she then emailed out to her contact list. It is an outstanding list and I wanted to share it on our blog:

### TIPS FOR ASSISTANT COACHES

1. Ultimately, your job is to make your head coach look good. Being a head coach is much more about being a CEO than an Xs and Os strategist. Yes, the head coach will get most of the credit, but they will also get all of the blame. Their job is to win, have a detailed vision and to be the leader. Your job is to help them execute their vision. It's not your show, it's the head coach's show.
2. Understand and teach the game inside and out. Know how to attack opponent weaknesses, win with the players you've got, teach fundamentals and research and teach the best drills to prepare your position group.
3. Traits head coaches are looking for in assistant coaches: loyal, hard-working, reliable and trust-worthy. Being a great recruiter can help you get and keep a job.
4. Not everyone on the staff will get along—there will always be jealousy, personal differences, age differences but in order to win you must be able to put that aside to work with each other!

5. Coaching is a family—build your network. Outside of your head-to-head competitions, consider other coaches as your co-workers, not enemies. Build a strong network. You will rely on them heavily throughout career.
6. Best way to move up from where you are today into a new position? Be the best at your current position! Treat your role and current school as your dream job, and work like it's where you've always dreamed to be.
7. Assistant coaches on your staff (or your opponents) can be in the position to hire you one day—you are building a track record with not just your head coach, but assistant coaches and opponents. Keep it professional and courteous.
8. Always bring a great attitude to work, even if you are having down days. Keep your personal issues to yourself, the team would never accomplish anything if every coach and player brought their personal issues to the facility or complained about all of their problems. Manage your personal life, address problems, get counseling if you need to!
9. Your players will mirror you. You want them to do it right and pay attention to detail—you must take the lead and see that you take the little details serious, too. Do what you say you will do. Follow through!
10. It's never "I," "me" or "mine," instead use "we," "us," and "our."
11. No detail is too minor for the head coach. If they want to be kept up-to-date on an issue, keep them in constant communication with a quick text, call or email.
12. Your position group, recruiting efforts and off-field responsibilities need to be your top priority. Do not get distracted by the fluff that goes along with the job. Focus on what you are being paid to do: develop players, graduate players, win games, represent the university and sign new players. If you feel like you can handle it, ask to take on additional responsibilities or create a new job responsibility that falls into one of those categories that will ultimately help your team win.
13. Become a great evaluator of talent—you need to learn how to find the hidden gems who aren't gracing every recruiting Top 100 list. You need to be able to "find" great players before every other coach. Find the players who fit your needs, who have raw talent, who can be developed reasonably quickly, and who have great attitudes and toughness.
14. Remember—you are ALWAYS representing your boss and university.

15. Understand and value that EVERYONE in program has a role. Everyone has different strengths, everyone can contribute something different and critical: coaches, players, trainers, doctors, academic counselors, marketing staff, interns, students, boosters, maintenance staff, housing.

16. Think ahead, anticipate what's next. What will your head coach need today/this week?

17. Self-evaluate and scout your team and position group. What weaknesses are returning? Evaluate top teams at those skills—how and why are they successful? What do they do exceptionally better? What drills can you use to help your players improve?

18. When evaluating players it's critical you rule out players who will be a waste of time in terms of leading you on a wild goose hunt. Don't spend all of your time recruiting players who will never get enrolled into your university, who won't finish, who won't be happy too far away from home, etc. If you know problems will arise down the road, it's best to find other players who have less off-field issues. The risk isn't often worth the reward.

19. Nothing is beneath you—all hands on deck. Be wise with your time and put most urgent priorities first! Develop players, graduate players, win games, sign new players.

20. Appearance is important—never know who you will run into. Your days will be long, the stress will be high—being in shape will help you fight the mental and physical battles. Be well groomed, well dressed and energetic.

21. How can you separate yourself—what value can you add to a staff? What can you become indispensable at? Scouting, recruiting, relationships with prep coaches, developing players, leadership?

22. Scout opponents as if your job depends on it—at some point, it will! The smallest of details can make the biggest of difference when it comes to game planning and having your players prepared.

23. Keep a daily to-do list with the same key areas that need your daily attention: situations to monitor (class attendance/study hall/grades of your players), things to do, people to call. Repeat, repeat, repeat with the attention that you expect of your players with their fundamentals.

24. Be organized—organization brings direction to chaos! A prepared player never flinches, nor do prepared coaches!

25. If needed, help communicate for your head coach. You may have to return calls for them, take on delegated responsibilities. Remember—your job is to make their job easier and to make them look good.

26. With recruiting—it's not about what YOU want in a player, it's about what your boss wants in a player. Can the recruit play for and be successful under this head coach? Will they clash or flourish? Recruit players who will fit your head coach's personality and style.

27. If you lack experience or talent, you can overcome your weaknesses by being hardest worker who brings relentless energy—in the same way that you teach your players that "Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard."

28. Be who you are and believe in who you work for.

29. Never doubt the head coach in front of players or other members of the staff. When the negative talk begins internally everyone's job is in trouble. If there is an issue with the head coach, approach them directly.

30. Most head coaches are excellent in three areas—on-field teaching, off-field preparations and recruiting. Most assistant coaches are only good at one or two of these areas, sometimes just masters of one. You must develop strong skills in all three areas to become a successful head coach.

31. Help your players do something that's never been done before, even if it's a small accomplishment. Bigger accomplishments will come after you begin achieving smaller, more manageable goals.

32. Develop a good relationship with your player's parents—communicate! They need to be your allies, not your enemies! Deal with issues before they become unmanageable.

33. Have a 'no gossip' policy with your spouse—they shouldn't be the town gossip about team issues. Like you tell your players, 'What happens in the locker room stays in the locker room.' If they can't keep issues quiet, limit what you share with them.

34. No money talk amongst other coaches—your salary is what you have agreed to and signed for. It is a cancer to constantly discuss money with other coaches on staff.

35. What would a scouting report on your own team/unit look like? Be brutally honest with yourself on which weaknesses your players need to improve on. Build on what they are really good at, show them how to get better!

36. Get to know your Athletic Director and Associate/Assistant Athletic Directors, they could be in position to hire you one day or give you a key recommendation.

37. Get to know athletic department staff—at some point you will need their help, they are ambassadors for your program! Their jobs are important, get to know everyone and let them know you appreciate them.