

Coaching: It's Behavior!

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The air was thick with cheers, and popcorn filled the bleachers. The fans, screaming and cheering, were on their feet. The basketball game was down to its final seconds. Playing for the home team, I looked up, the clock showed 12 seconds remaining. Down by one point, with sweat rolling down my face, I closed my eyes.

Opening my eyes, I saw my coach, his lips were moving. His voice was muted by the crowd, the band, and the noises in the gym, so I could not hear him say, "just like practice." Hearing the buzzer, I stood up, my jersey moist from the game and my legs tired. All the players positioned on the court, waiting for the whistle. The referee put the whistle in his mouth.

Hearing the whistle, I darted across the court and positioned myself near the hoop; the guard sprinted up, received a pass, and turned. As the guard turned toward me, I placed my hands in front, waiting for a pass. Blocking my defender, the guard passed the ball to me. I gripped tightly as I stepped into the middle of the lane, turned to face the hoop, and shot as the buzzer echoed throughout the gym.

In that gym, days earlier, I had practiced the same shot. My coach had provided many instructions and much yelling after bad moves, but little modeling, practice, or praise after good moves. Did such practice work?

At the end of the game, as I stepped into the middle of the lane, the ball held tightly in my hands, I jumped up. When my arm extended into the air, I flipped the ball off my fingertips. As I

landed on my feet, I saw the ball roll around the rim, heard the buzzer sound, and watched the ball fall off the rim. I had missed the shot; we had lost by one point.