

# HARDWOOD HUSTLE EPISODE 640

## COACHING LATE-GAME SITUATIONS

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### Key Takeaways

- Late-game prep is a season-long decision, not a last-minute add-on. Younger teams may need more time on core habits early, then shift toward late-game execution as postseason approaches.
- Many late-game moments are scenario-specific. One or two seconds changes everything, so clarity beats complexity.
- “Tricks” and gamesmanship matter: lane violations, matchups on shooters, and understanding what the opponent must do can tilt odds in your favor.
- When protecting a lead, the biggest emphasis is often inbounding under pressure. Great defenses don’t always get a stop, but great teams still secure the ball.
- When trailing, you need preset answers for need a three, need a quick two, and the exact cutoff for when to foul or ramp up pressure.
- Analytics can help, but late-game decisions must match your personnel (free throw shooters, box-out ability, composure, decision-making).

### Reflection and Application Questions

1. How much time do you currently spend on late-game situations per week, and how should that change as postseason gets closer?
2. What are your team’s 3 most common late-game mistakes (fouling, spacing, inbounding, shot selection, awareness)?
3. Up 3 with a missed free throw coming: what is your exact plan for matchups, rebounding, and defending the perimeter?
4. Do your players know how to intentionally miss a free throw and execute the tip-out? Have you practiced it this season?
5. When defending a last shot, what is your rule for when to send a second defender and how you rotate behind it?
6. What is your “magic number” (seconds remaining) that changes your strategy when up 3, up 4, or down 4?
7. In the final minute, how do you decide between fouling, trapping for turnovers, or playing it straight?
8. Who are your top 3 in-bounders and top 3 free throw shooters, and how do you get the ball to them under pressure?
9. Do your players know the timeouts, possession arrow, and fouls to give in real time? How will you train that awareness?