

## King of the Court



Behind every elite sports person is a dedicated and talented coach, and Basketball Queensland's High Performance Director, Leonard King, is no exception.

As High Performance Director it is King's job to identify male and female athletes who have potential, and nurture their talent.

"At Basketball Queensland we offer intensive development programs that are flexible and designed specifically for the individual

athlete's needs," says King. "In addition to developing some of the top players in Australia, we have established ourselves as producing some of the top college players in the USA, and there's an absolute desire by American coaches to recruit Australian talent.

"Queensland and Australian athletes are seen as being 'low maintenance' by American coach— the kids want to fit in with the team concept, they're all very skilled players and their basketball IQ is very high."

"We have a whole host of college and even high school players from Queensland who have already been identified as having potential. When you start putting together that body of work it's obvious we're doing some very good things in Queensland, and Australia."

A key example of this is Brisbane's Kristy Wallace, a product of the High Performance Program. In 2014/15, her first year of playing college basketball at Baylor University she's been awarded Freshman Player of the Week a number of times in one of the top college conferences in the USA.

With seven Australian NBA players at the moment, two of which are from Queensland, it's clear that basketball in Australia is of an exceptionally high standard, even more evident by the rate at which US Colleges are vying for our young players.

As a former European league and New Zealand NBL player, King's own experience, knowledge and basketball IQ is just as high, and he's a sought after coach and speaker.

In fact, in October last year King was invited to speak at the Point Guard College/Glazier Basketball Clinic in Dallas, Texas. Glazier and Point Guard College provide camps and clinics for athletes and coaches and are one of the leading US providers in coach and player development education.

“The invitation came about through a relationship I had developed with Point Guard College (PGC) over the past few months. I had attended a Professional Development weekend with PGC in June, and as a part of those discussions I ended up being invited to speak at the October clinic, with about 350 local coaches in attendance,” says King.

“It was a huge honour, it was completely unexpected but I think they recognised I had quite a bit to share. To be honest, it stretched me a bit when you consider it is the home of basketball and you’re coming in to advise the experts. Australia is leading the world in the sports technology industry, but I think we are underestimated in terms of coaching expertise. We have some of the world’s leading coaches on our shores, and we are striving to continue that trend in Queensland.”

In his four years with Basketball Queensland, King has seen hundreds of young basketball players go through the ranks to go on to play in US colleges, the national leagues (the NBL and WNBL) and for Australia.

“Coaching development is another big part of my job, and in some respects is just as important as player development,” says King.

“Coaches create the right environment for a team and the players, and if the kids aren’t in the right environment they won’t develop. Their primary responsibility is guiding a player through development, and having up to date knowledge of technique analysis and feedback is vital in the role as a coach.”

“Leonard works extremely hard to source top coaching experts from around the country and the world in order to provide the best opportunities to Queensland coaches of all levels,” says Basketball Queensland CEO, Graham Burns.

“It was a real coup finding Leonard,” says Burns. “The future of basketball in Queensland has never looked better.”

#### **More information or interviews:**

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