

The Sixth Man, or Role Player

At all levels of basketball, the sixth man has become something of an elite figure. He is the guy who has set aside his ego so that he can come off the bench at a moment's notice and fall right into the flow. He's able to do whatever is necessary to help his team win.

Sometimes his role calls for him to score, play exceptional defense, or a combination of the two. Sometimes, he is meant to add rebounding strength.

Whatever he's capable of doing, the sixth man is an important component to the game. He satisfies his coach's quest for an advantage, particularly when the game is close. He's a spark plug, capable of picking up the tempo when play gets sluggish.

Since he doesn't start the game, the sixth man must study the game tempo and prepare himself mentally so he is able to adjust to flow of the game the moment he steps on the floor. More than anything else, he gives his team quality minutes when he plays. His coach, then, must know the sixth man's capabilities and limitations. Furthermore, he must know how long the sixth man can deliver these quality minutes before losing his effectiveness to the team.