

“Taking You Through the Season”

A Guide for the Volunteer Youth
Basketball Coach

By Michael E. May



PREFACE

The motivation for creating this manual comes from the desire to share knowledge and information with you, the volunteer youth basketball coach. Coaching young people is an exciting and rewarding way to be involved in this great game. However, it is no easy task and one can easily feel overwhelmed by it all.

The purpose of the guide is to provide a coaching plan that covers the entire season. It can literally take you through a typical season in a logical, step-by-step progression. It is also designed to save you precious time in carrying out your duties and responsibilities as a coach.

Having five young children of my own coming up through the ranks of youth sports gives me the opportunity to see the positive influence that you can have in this field. It is my sincere desire that you have success in all your coaching endeavors!

Michael E. May

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Michael E. May

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

Acknowledgments

STEP 1	HOW TO PREPARE YOURSELF TO COACH	1 - 3
	1. Developing a Coach's Philosophy	
	2. Maintaining a Standard of Conduct	
	3. Communicating with Your Players	
	4. Maintaining Proper Sportsmanship	
	5. Communicating with Officials	
	6. Knowing the Rules	
STEP 2	HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR TEAM	4 - 5
	1. Identifying Inside Players	
	2. Identifying Outside Players	
	3. Grouping and Ranking Players	
	4. Drafting Players	
STEP 3	HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR TEAM	6 - 8
	1. Holding the Player and Parent Meeting	
	2. Preparing the Player Packet	
STEP 4	HOW TO PLAN YOUR PRACTICES	9 - 13
	1. Benefiting from a Well-Organized Practice	
	2. Making Practices like Actual Games	
	3. Dividing Practice Time	
	4. Knowing What to Practice and for How Long	
	5. Writing a Practice Plan	
STEP 5	HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR STARTING LINE UP	14 - 16
	1. Determining Your Starting Five	
	2. Determining Player Positions	

STEP 6 HOW TO TEACH YOUR TEAM DEFENSE 17 - 47

1. What Defense is
2. Two Basic Types of Defense
3. Teaching Defensive Fundamentals
4. What to Teach
5. Presenting a Drill with Variations and Competition
6. Promoting Good Defense within your Team
 - (1) How to get back on defense
 - (2) How to guard the player with the ball
 - (3) How to guard the player without the ball
 - (4) How to help out on defense
 - (5) How to rebound on defense

STEP 7 HOW TO TEACH YOUR TEAM OFFENSE 48 - 83

1. Preparing to Teach Offense
2. A General Warm-up and Review Routine
3. Teaching Your Team an Offensive System

STEP 8 HOW TO GO THE EXTRA MILE TO BUILD YOUR TEAM
84 - 86

1. Identifying Characteristics of a Team that Plays with Vision
2. Creating a Team that Plays with Vision

About the Author

STEP1: HOW TO PREPARE YOURSELF TO COACH

This section is designed to help in certain areas that can directly contribute to success as a volunteer youth basketball coach. Many times it is the attention to the seemingly unimportant details that can be the difference in making coaching an enjoyable experience. It will cover the following:

1. DEVELOPING A COACH'S PHILOSOPHY
2. MAINTAINING A STANDARD OF CONDUCT
3. COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR PLAYERS
4. MAINTAINING PROPER SPORTSMANSHIP
5. COMMUNICATING WITH OFFICIALS
6. KNOWING THE RULES

1. DEVELOPING A COACH'S PHILOSOPHY

It is important for us to have a philosophy of coaching in which we basically define our purpose of why we are coaching. Many of us do coach because we have a son or a daughter in the program. Maybe it is because no one else wants to do it. If this is the case, it is important that we go beyond that notion and form a simple and meaningful statement that can be a guideline in our coaching.

Let me share with you my own philosophy of coaching that is the basis for all my decision making and action as a youth coach. I am coaching because I want to be a positive influence for personal growth and development in all areas of each individual's life that I may have influence over.

You may want to take some time to define your purpose and create a simple statement that can provide a foundation for coaching youth.

2. MAINTAINING A STANDARD OF CONDUCT

As coaches we are teaching continuously through both our words and actions. How we react in unfavorable situations speaks volumes to our players about who we are and what we are all about. There are two great questions I ask myself when evaluating my own conduct as a coach. The first one is "Would I want my own son or daughter playing for me?" and the second is "Would I want to play for a coach like me?" Our challenge is to keep it all in proper perspective, which is easier said than done. It is my belief that we can all be successful in our coaching endeavors and at the same time be positive role models for our youth.

3. COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR PLAYERS

Although we are communicating constantly with our players through our examples, how we verbally communicate can be crucial to our coaching success. Our ability to build a player's self confidence and self esteem along with properly teaching how the game is to be played is vital to success in coaching. A player's self esteem determines his ability to perform under the pressures of competition. Young players need positive feedback along with constructive criticism to help them improve. I always like to use the "sandwich" approach when correcting a player. I will always say something positive first, point out the error or mistake, and then finish with a positive statement. For example, if a player has just thrown a bad pass out of bounds and needs to be corrected, I could say something like this: "That's good that you saw your teammate open but you need to make a chest pass instead of an overhead pass. I have seen you make great chest passes before." That way I am able to get my point across and correct the mistake and at the same time the player does not feel embarrassed or belittled in front of his peers.

It is very important to establish open lines of communication with our players. This can be effectively done by holding brief one-on-one talks with players. These can be done before or after practice or a game. Asking about school, family, etc., can open up the conversation. We should take the opportunity to explain what the particular player's role is on the team. This is extremely beneficial because the player is receiving important information. It allows the player to know where he fits in the overall scheme of things. For example, if Eric is one of your taller and more skilled players, in your talk with him you may say something along the lines of "I think you can be a real leader for our team. I think you could probably get about 10 rebounds a game and score 12 points." You will also have players that are not very skilled and you need to be very honest with them. Focusing on what they can do to improve is helpful in explaining their roles. These talks can work wonders in terms of overall team morale and attitude and are well worth the time and effort.

4. MAINTAINING PROPER SPORTSMANSHIP

How we as coaches react to defeat speaks volumes about our inner character. It's a great feeling to walk over and shake the opposing coach's hand after our team has played well and won the game. It's a different story when we have just lost a closely contested game. Harder yet is when an official makes a controversial call to affect the outcome or the other team may have rubbed it in. These are difficult situations to deal with and definitely require the same amount of self-discipline and self-control on our parts that we expect out of our own players.

Clearly, we have a great opportunity to teach our team all about sportsmanship in both winning and losing. Being a gracious winner and never doing anything to intentionally embarrass an opponent will bring respect to any program.

5. COMMUNICATING WITH OFFICIALS

This is a very important area because it can affect coaches, players, spectators, and possibly the outcome of the game itself. Officials generally are conscientious and are trying to do the best they can. Just as we may make both good and bad decisions in our coaching, officials may also do the same. Can you imagine how you would feel if you made a coaching error and the official ran by your bench and yelled, "That was the worst coaching mistake I've ever seen!" There is a fine line where we must make a point to the official in such a way as not to attack him or her personally. No one likes to be personally challenged especially in front of a crowd. Just as playing and coaching abilities vary, the same holds true for officials.

An effective technique in communicating with officials is to ask questions. For example, if your player gets hit on the arm while shooting and no foul is called, ask the official, "Wasn't the shooter hit on the arm?" The official may or may not answer you but you have got him thinking about the call and he then may be more conscious of calling it a foul if it should happen later in the game to your player. It is also important to recognize when we have gone too far in objecting to an official's call and it is time to back off. We must always try to use good judgment and common courtesy when communicating with officials.

6. KNOWING THE RULES

It is essential that we as coaches have a basic understanding of the rules of the game. It is also important that our players know the rules. Taking time to study a few pages out of the rule book on a daily basis is a way of obtaining a basic knowledge. Teaching our players the rules should be done in practice as we instruct our teams. For example, when we are teaching players how to dribble, we should take the time to explain what double dribble is, carrying over, etc. Taking a few minutes each practice to teach rules will also give our players a general understanding of the rules.

STEP 2: HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR TEAM

Many youth leagues hold a player draft to form teams. All the players are brought together to participate in a tryout or evaluation.

The tryout generally consists of a series of drills to be performed by players to evaluate basic skills such as dribbling, shooting, passing, etc. It is followed by a scrimmage where players compete against each other. It can range from a one-against-one up to a five-against-five game-like situation. This period of time gives the coaches the opportunity to evaluate the talents and abilities of the players.

A meeting of all coaches is then held under the direction of the league administrators to form teams. Players are selected in rounds with each coach choosing one player per round. The following is a list of important points to understand when choosing your team:

1. IDENTIFYING INSIDE PLAYERS
2. IDENTIFYING OUTSIDE PLAYERS
3. GROUPING AND RANKING PLAYERS
4. DRAFTING PLAYERS

1. IDENTIFYING INSIDE PLAYERS

It is helpful to categorize players into two main groups: inside players (commonly known as post players) and outside players (referred to as perimeter players.) Player evaluation on the high school, college, or professional level can be more complicated and involved but is based on these two main groups. The following is a list of characteristics used to identify inside, or post, players:

- A. Players who are tall
- B. Players who are slow
- C. Players who are aggressive and not afraid of contact
- D. Ability to rebound effectively
- E. Ability to play close to the basket effectively

2. IDENTIFYING OUTSIDE PLAYERS

- A. Players who are shorter
- B. Players who possess speed and quickness
- C. Players who handle the ball well
- D. Players who are effective outside shooters

3. GROUPING AND RANKING PLAYERS

When evaluating at the tryout, each player should be categorized as an inside or outside player. You will then have two groups of players who need to be ranked according to their abilities. This will enable you to know who the best available players are to pick for your team.

4. DRAFTING PLAYERS

You now have a list of ranked players to use when participating in the player draft. As players are chosen, be sure to cross off their names from your list. You need to know who the best players available are when it's your turn to choose.

STEP 3: HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR TEAM

I. HOLDING THE PLAYER AND PARENT MEETING

The importance of being prepared in coaching cannot be overemphasized. It's very important that you hold a player-parent meeting before the first practice. Schedule the meeting as soon as possible and ask that both parents attend. There are many benefits that come from this meeting. It's preferable that the meeting be held at the coach's house. I'm a firm believer that meetings should be as short and to the point as possible. You should hold the first 10 minutes with the players and the parents together. You can then have the players go to another room and possibly watch a basketball video or something to keep them occupied. The rest of the meeting time should be used to discuss pertinent information about the upcoming season. The following is a suggested agenda for the meeting:

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION
2. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING
3. BRIEF COACH'S PREVIEW
4. PLAYER PACKET PREVIEW

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Make sure you introduce yourself and any other parents that may be helping you as assistant coaches. Ask players and parents to introduce themselves.

2. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

Explain that the purpose is to let everyone get to know each other and to discuss important information regarding the upcoming season.

3. BRIEF COACH'S PREVIEW

Take a few minutes and talk about how excited you are about coaching the team and what some of your expectations are for the season. For example, say "We are going to play as hard as we can; we are going to learn and improve," etc.

4. PLAYER PACKET PREVIEW

Make sure that each player and parent has a copy of the player packet. Go over it together to inform players and parents of all information pertaining to the season.

5. REFRESHMENTS

This gives all the parents an opportunity to mingle and get to know each other. A good idea is to assign each player's parents to bring some type of dessert to insure their attendance.

II. PREPARING THE PLAYER PACKET

The purpose of the player packet is to insure that each player and parent receives information that is necessary to help the season run smoothly. I realize that you may not have the time to prepare everything mentioned here. The more you do, the farther ahead you will be in your preparation as a coach. The following is a list of information that should be included in the player packet:

1. TEAM DIRECTORY
2. INFORMATION CARD
3. MASTER CALENDAR
4. ORGANIZED PHONE CHAIN
5. MAPS
6. TEAM RULES AND REGULATIONS
7. COACH'S PHILOSOPHY AND EXPECTATIONS

1. TEAM DIRECTORY

Include your own address, phone number, and those of any other coaches. This information can be obtained from the league registration records or by calling each player's home. Also include all players' names, parents' names, home addresses, phone numbers, and any other pertinent information you feel should be on the list. Include emergency phone numbers in case of a player injury during practices or games.

2. INFORMATION CARD

I like to find out information such as birthdays, favorite professional player, favorite food, etc. It helps you get to know your players better. It also helps if you want to do something special for a birthday, etc. You can use a blank 3"x 5" card and have the player bring it to the first practice filled out.

3. MASTER CALENDAR

This should be a printed calendar with all scheduled practices and game dates and times, locations, and also any special activities planned such as team get-togethers, etc. This is extremely helpful for parents in planning their schedules.

4. ORGANIZED PHONE CHAIN

This is helpful for you as a coach in the case that you have to communicate with your players about a sudden change in the schedule, game time, etc. Make sure that the parents are aware that their son or daughter is responsible for calling a certain player. This saves time for you as a coach.

5. MAPS

This is helpful especially with the younger players. It also can give parents the opportunity to organize carpools for transportation to practices and games. You can include on the map your house and also the locations of practices and game sites.

6. TEAM RULES AND REGULATIONS

This is extremely helpful in establishing consistency with regards to player conduct and behavior. It is important for every player and parent to have a copy to refer to.

7. COACH'S PHILOSOPHY AND EXPECTATIONS

You may want to include a copy of your coaching philosophy and what you expect from this particular team. You can also include a simple motivational story or message. I always include a handout entitled "Who You Are!" This is a description of how I envision each player performing. For example, if your team name is the Rockets, you could write something like the following: "A player on the Rockets is dependable. He works as hard as possible. A Rocket player will dive on the floor for a loose ball. A Rocket player will play smart," etc. It gives each player an idea of what your expectations are for him. A team plays up to the coach's level of expectations. Players must know what you envision them doing and becoming.

Coaching is like painting a picture. There are certain guidelines to follow but the majority of the picture comes from the artist's vision and imagination. You as a coach can use your imagination to improve upon and add to any specific concept in this Coaches Guide. The player packet can be as simple as a calendar and player information sheet, or it can include the other materials suggested in this section. Remember that being prepared saves you precious time in the long run. You will find that this meeting will be of great benefit to you and is well worth having. Plus fun too!

STEP 4 : HOW TO PLAN YOUR PRACTICES

One of the keys to being an effective coach is preparation and planning. How your team performs in a game is a direct result of how they perform in practice. If practices are unorganized and unstructured, that is what carries over to the game. In order to have your team play a specific way, you must plan your practices in such a manner that you obtain the results you want on game day. You must have a vision of how you see your team ultimately playing and then work backwards. A builder already has in his mind and on paper a rendition of the house he is going to build. He then makes specific daily plans in a step-by-step manner to eventually come up with the desired end product. This also holds true for a coach. Well-planned and organized practices will bring about the desired results. The following is a list of important points to be discussed in planning your practices:

1. BENEFITTING FROM A WELL-ORGANIZED PRACTICE
2. MAKING PRACTICES LIKE ACTUAL GAMES
3. DIVIDING PRACTICE TIME
4. KNOWING WHAT TO PRACTICE AND FOR HOW LONG
5. WRITING A PRACTICE PLAN

1. BENEFITTING FROM A WELL-ORGANIZED PRACTICE

Planning an effective practice does take some time but there are many benefits. You will have more confidence in practice because you have prepared ahead of time. You will also minimize discipline problems that can arise as a result of poor organization in practice. Players need to be kept working constantly in practice, especially the younger ones. If the coach is trying to figure out which drill he is going to do next, then there is lag time. Players will become restless and they will also sense that you are not prepared. This can lead to goofing off and discipline problems. It is very important to design practices with as much player participation as possible.

Other benefits are that the flow of practice will go much smoother and practices will be more productive. Players practice sharply and with more intensity when drills are kept short (five-ten minutes maximum) and when there is a variety. You will maximize your practice time (which you are already limited on) when you are organized.

2. MAKING PRACTICES LIKE ACTUAL GAMES

I believe in making every minute of practice count. I prefer shorter and more intense practices than long and drawn out ones. It's important that practices be like a game as much as possible. A high school game is 32 minutes in length and the college game is 40. However, the pace of basketball is intense and constant. What we are talking about here is more quality than quantity. I would prefer a very intense one-hour practice as opposed to a two-hour "going through the motions" practice.

You must train your players to go from one drill to another quickly to maintain the type of pace that exists in an actual game. Make sure you are teaching the players the names of all the drills. This will allow them to organize themselves quickly which saves time. Your goal is to be able to call out the name of each drill during the course of a practice and have players respond appropriately.

2. DIVIDING PRACTICE TIME

You can divide your practice into five- and ten-minute segments. Remember that it's important that you don't stay on any one thing more than 10 minutes. This keeps things hopping. However, let's assume you want to work on shooting for 15 minutes. You will find it will be more beneficial to break up that 15 minutes into three, five-minute shooting drills and put one at the beginning, middle, and end of practice. If you have an hour practice planned, then you know you have six, ten-minute segments. You also can use different combinations of both five- and ten- minute segments totaling 60.

3. KNOWING WHAT TO PRACTICE AND FOR HOW LONG: You are probably saying to yourself, "I can divide practice time into segments, but how do I know what to actually do during the segments?" We spoke earlier about taking the final end product and working backwards. In Steps 6 and 7 in this manual, I show you a system of teaching defense and offense. In essence, it's the final end product and it's broken down into the necessary daily fundamentals and drills that must be taught and perfected. This will be your source of information in knowing what to practice. I have also given different drill variations. The following is a sample list of things taken from Steps 6 and 7 you could incorporate into a typical practice:

A. STATIONARY BALLHANDLING
B. FOOTWORK
C. ZIG-ZAG

D. PARTNER PASSING
E. DRIBBLE LAY-UPS
F. HELP AND RECOVER

The question we now must face is how long we should practice each drill listed in A through F and in what order. I have a general pattern that I follow in planning a practice. I will designate one practice a defensive-emphasis practice and the next one an offensive emphasis. In planning a defensive emphasis practice, I will plan more defensive drills and really focus in on the defensive execution in practice. The same format holds true on offensive emphasis practices. I then plan more drills pertaining to offensive execution. This allows you to balance out time between both offense and defense. The following is a basic pattern to follow in determining how long each specific drill should be run:

A 45-MINUTE PRACTICE:

DEFENSIVE EMPHASIS	OFFENSIVE EMPHASIS
5 minutes-warm up	5 minutes-warm up
10 minutes-defense	10 minutes-offense
5 minutes-offense	5 minutes-defense
10 minutes-defense	10 minutes-offense
5 minutes-offense	5 minutes-defense
5 minutes-defense	5 minutes-offense
5 minutes-defense	5 minutes-offense
5 minutes-offense	5 minutes-defense

This is just a suggested pattern to follow and it can be changed and modified to fit your own team's situation and needs.

The next step is to put in the various drills into the specific blocks of time. The following is an example:

A 45-MINUTE PRACTICE

5 minutes-BALLHANDLING	5 minutes.-FOOTWORK
10 minutes.-HELP AND RECOVER	10 minutes.-PASSING
5 minutes-ZIG ZAG	5 minutes.-LAY-UPS

4. WRITING A PRACTICE PLAN

The practice plan you organize must be written down and taken with you to your actual practice to be used as a reference. A 3"x5" index card is a perfect size for writing your practice plan. You should have the 3"x5" card on the court with you to refer to and to help keep you on schedule. One of the challenges you will find about following a practice schedule is staying on time. I have a timer with an alarm on my watch. I set it for the time segment schedule on the card. When you are teaching a skill, sometimes you can really get caught up in things and go past the allotted time. The alarm sounds and reminds me it's time to move on to something else. We have a tendency as coaches when a drill is not being run properly, to stay with it no matter how long it takes. It's like beating a dead horse. Sometimes I find it's better to go to something else and then maybe come back to it later.

The 3"x5" is valuable because it can fit into your pocket and doesn't get in the way. It's important to keep the cards from one year to the next to use as references in planning practices. If practice is a longer one, I may use a couple of cards. I always leave some blank spaces at the end or leave one side completely blank. After a practice I will spend five to ten minutes writing down comments about the practice that just ended. At the top I write "Plus" on the left side and "Negative" on the right side. Under the "Plus" I write the positive things that happened in practice that day. Under the "Negative" I list all the things we didn't do well in practice. For example:

(+)	(-)
(1) We shot free throws well	(1) We were slow getting back on defense
(2) We passed the ball inside well	(2) We dribbled the ball too much

Being organized is very important and using the 3"x5" card to plan your practices will help. The following is a copy of an actual practice plan that you can use as an example:

11/6/94 PRACTICE	
6:00-6:10 WARM UP: BALLHANDLING, FOOTWORK	
6:10-6:15 ZIG-ZAG	
6:15-6:20 DRIBBLE DRIVE LAYUPS	
6:20-6:30 5 ON 5 SHELL TEACHING DRILL: TEACH DEF. READY POSITION	
6:30-6:35 PARTNER PASSING	
6:35-6:40 ATTACK AND RETREAT	
6:40-6:50 5 ON 0 OFFENSIVE REVIEW	
6:50-6:55 WANE DENIAL DRILL: EMPHASIZE GOOD FOOTWORK AND POSITIONING	

11/6/94 PRACTICE EVALUATION	
+	-
1. BACK ON DEFENSE QUICKLY	1. DID NOT BLOCK OUT
2. MADE MOST OF OUR LAYUPS	2. TOO MUCH DRIBBLING
3. EXECUTED THE OFFENSE WELL	3. WORK ON MOVING
4. MICHELLE PLAYED THE POINT GUARD POSITION WELL	FROM ONE DRILL TO ANOTHER
5. GOOD SHOT SELECTION	4. JOHN NEEDS WORK ON FREETHROWS

STEP 5: HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR STARTING LINE UP AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Choosing your starting line up is a critical aspect of coaching. It involves identifying who your best players are and placing them in the correct positions. This will enable your team to perform at its maximum level of play. Evaluating involves making value judgments. Obviously the more time you spend coaching your players, the more information you will have about them. To evaluate your team, you must consider the following:

1. DETERMINING YOUR STARTING FIVE
2. DETERMINING PLAYER POSITIONS

1. DETERMINING YOUR STARTING FIVE

It is important to establish a ranking of your players according to their abilities. This can be done by establishing who your best overall player is and assigning him the number one ranking. You then compare the rest of the team to him and assign each player a ranking. If you have a 12-player team, then you must have a group of players ranked one through 12. This is extremely important because you need to know when you are going to play each player. Numbers one through five will be the starters for the game. You then need to develop what is called a substitution rotation or pattern. You need to know who your sixth best player is going to replace and what time he will be coming into the game. The same holds true with the seventh, eighth, ninth, etc.

We are now entering into an area of coaching that has to do with the overall talent level of your team and also your own philosophy of the game. Do you believe that everyone should play equally? Are you going to establish a top eight players and give them the majority of the playing time? This is why it is important to establish what your purpose is as a coach (see section on developing a coaching philosophy found in Step 1). Many leagues set requirements on how much time each player must play, what quarters, etc. If this is the case in your league, then the decision has already been made for you. If your particular league leaves it entirely up to you, then it's necessary that you set guidelines that will reflect your philosophy. I believe that it's important to play everyone on the team at the youth level. Let me clarify this to mean all players who have attended practice regularly and have met your requirements regarding conduct and effort deserve the opportunity to play.

Another way of identifying who your best players are is by grouping them according to position and then ranking them. For example, you would identify who all your guards, forwards, and centers are, and then rank them within their own groups. You would then take your top two guards and forwards with your best center and have your starting five. You could then make your third best guard as your first substitute (sixth best player), third best forward your second substitute (seventh best player), and follow the pattern. You are now evaluating both when a player should play and where. Let's discuss in more detail evaluation of players by position and in what positions.

2. DETERMINING PLAYER POSITIONS

Determining where your players fit in is extremely critical in getting your team to fully utilize all of its talents and abilities. Here is a guideline to follow in placing players in positions:

A. GUARDS: Generally, these are your smaller, quicker players who have good running speed.

Number One Guard: This player is your point guard. He should be your best ball handler, dribbler, and passer. He should be a smart player who can perform under pressure. He is your coach on the floor and should be a leader. He has the responsibility to run the team on the floor. He is a player who should be able to create scoring opportunities for his teammates through his ability to drive to the basket. He should be a good free-throw shooter because he will most likely shoot a lot of free throws since he has the ball most of the time.

Number Two Guard: He should also be able to handle the ball well and possess many of the same qualities of a point guard. He should be a good outside shooter and also should be a leader.

B. FORWARDS: These players are generally taller than the guards.

Number Three Forward: This player is closer to being a guard than a center, depending on his speed and quickness. He is a player who has a number of guard skills, but can also rebound and play close to the basket.

Number Four Forward: This player is closer to being a center than a guard. He may be the second tallest player on your team. He should be a good rebounder and be able to play close to the basket.

Number Five Center: He is your tallest or biggest player who is suited to play near the basket. This means he should be a good rebounder and inside defender and scorer. Being a good foul shooter is helpful because he will go to the free-throw line often if he plays aggressively.

STEP 6: HOW TO TEACH YOUR TEAM DEFENSE

This section is designed to take you through a step-by-step approach in teaching your team defense. It is presented in a logical order of what your team needs to do when the opponent has possession of the ball. The symbols below will be used throughout the remainder of the manual to represent players, their movements, and the skills they are performing (Diagram. 6a).

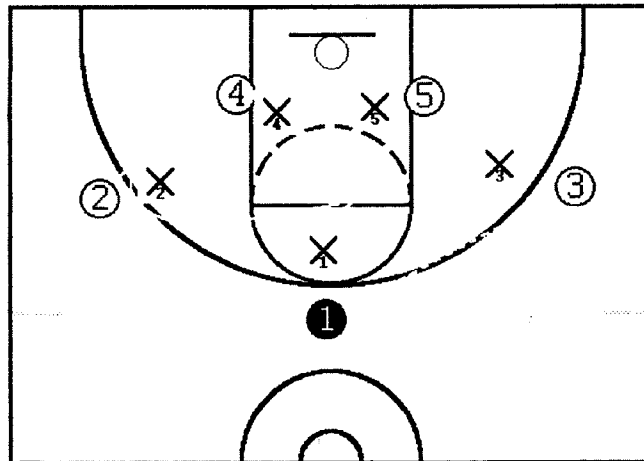


Diagram 6a: Player Positions

Defensive Player	X	#1 = Point Guard
Offensive Player	②	#2 = Shooting Guard
Offensive Player with ball	①	#3 = Small Forward
Path of Player	→	#4 = Power Forward
Path of Pass	- - - →	#5 = Center
Path of Dribble	~~~~~ →	
Screen	—	

The following list provides a quick review to assist you in understanding defense.

1. WHAT DEFENSE IS
2. TWO BASIC TYPES OF DEFENSE
3. TEACHING DEFENSIVE FUNDAMENTALS
4. WHAT TO TEACH
5. PRESENTING A DRILL WITH VARIATIONS AND COMPETITION
6. PROMOTING GOOD DEFENSE WITHIN YOUR TEAM

1. WHAT DEFENSE IS

A team is on defense when it does not have possession of the ball. Stating it simply, defense means stopping the other team from scoring. This is easier said than done. Because of the nature of the game, baskets are always going to be made. There are no shut outs or scoreless ties. The objective of the defense, then, becomes to allow the fewest number of opponent baskets and make it as difficult as possible for the opponent to score. This is accomplished by your team's proper execution of the basic defensive fundamentals.

2. TWO BASIC TYPES OF DEFENSE

The principles being presented are primarily man-to-man defensive fundamentals. This type of defense means that each player on the court is assigned to guard a specific opponent to try to stop that player from scoring (Diagram. 6b). The other type of defense that can also be used is called zone defense. This type of defense is based on players being assigned to guard specific areas of the court (Diagram. 6c).

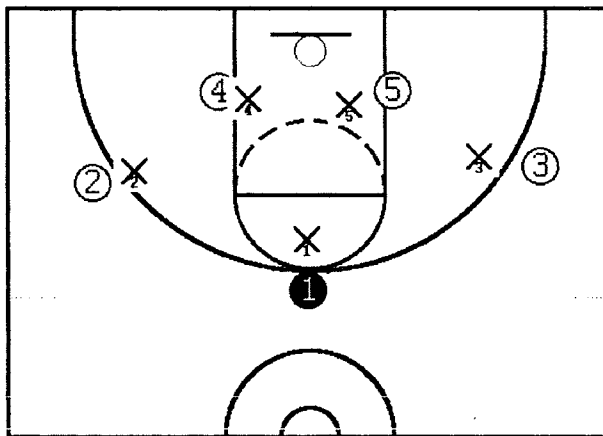


Diagram 6b:
"Man-to-Man Defense"

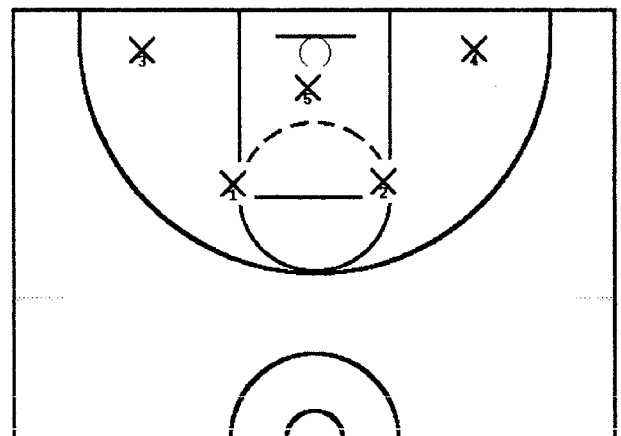


Diagram 6c:
"2-3 Zone Defense"

The players have the responsibility to guard whatever opponent that happens to come into their particular assigned area. Although these two defenses are different, they share many of the same defensive principles and fundamentals. Whether you decide to employ a man-to-man defense or a zone defense, the fundamental presented in the following sections are the foundation for both types of defenses. Teaching them properly and perfecting them as a team will help you tremendously in building a strong man-to-man or zone defense.

3. TEACHING DEFENSIVE FUNDAMENTALS

Each fundamental is discussed in terms of how to perform it and how to effectively teach it to your players. When introducing each one, follow these three steps:

1. GET YOUR PLAYERS' ATTENTION.
2. NAME THE SKILL.
3. EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF IT.

Demonstration is the number one method in teaching your players how to perform the various fundamentals. If you do not feel comfortable in demonstrating, find someone who has played the game who can help you to properly demonstrate a specific fundamental. It may be an assistant coach, a parent, a high school player, or even the best player on your team. Remember that a picture is worth a thousand words, especially in teaching fundamentals. Here are some helpful hints when demonstrating:

1. USE PROPER FORM.
2. DEMONSTRATE THE SKILL SEVERAL TIMES.
3. SHOW IT AT DIFFERENT ANGLES AND AT DIFFERENT SPEEDS.

Along with demonstration comes explanation. Be sure to use simple terms when describing the fundamental. Make the explanation brief and to the point. It helps to explain more complex skills in more manageable parts.

After demonstrating and explaining, allow the players to practice the fundamental. Always use the mass formation with players lined up utilizing much of the court. There should be plenty of space around each player. You should be positioned in front of them and should be able to make eye contact with every

player. Let the players perform the skill along with you as you demonstrate it. You may want to slow down the speed a few times also. Then allow them to practice on their own while you walk around and correct any mistakes. You may have to help a player assume a proper position by using your hands to straighten his or her back so that the player can get a feel for doing it correctly. Make sure you use praise to build confidence. An excellent way to verbally correct a player is to use the "sandwich technique." Compliment the player on what he or she did correctly, point out what the player did wrong and correct it, and follow it up by reemphasizing what was done correctly.

An important concept to remember when teaching the game of basketball is to break things down into smaller steps. It is easier to teach in this manner and it simplifies the learning process for the player. When teaching fundamentals and skills pertaining to the position of the body, always start with the feet and progressively work to the position of the head. Try to always be logical and work in progressive steps in your teaching.

4. WHAT TO TEACH

The following is a list of the five main fundamentals to be taught:

1. HOW TO GET BACK ON DEFENSE
2. HOW TO GUARD THE PLAYER WITH THE BALL
3. HOW TO GUARD THE PLAYER WITHOUT THE BALL
4. HOW TO HELP OUT ON DEFENSE
5. HOW TO REBOUND ON DEFENSE

6. A DRILL WITH VARIATIONS AND COMPETITION

Each fundamental is followed with a drill designed to help you teach and refine your players' abilities to correctly perform the various fundamentals. Only one drill is presented but several different variations are explained. It actually becomes several drills in one. It provides variety for the players but does not require the coach to have to learn a number of different drills. You as a volunteer coach may not have the time to do that.

As players become proficient with the basic drill, you can introduce the variations. Do not try to implement them too soon. You may only practice once a week and it may take most of the season for your team to master the basic drill. You may never get a chance to use the variations. It is much better for your team to perform the basic drill well as opposed to poor execution of the variations.

One of the greatest motivational tools that can be used in teaching

fundamentals to your players is competition. A player's desire to perform the movements and skills correctly increases dramatically when he or she is competing against someone else. The player may also be competing against the clock or a certain standard of performance. Making drills competitive has many benefits for you as a coach. Some of them are:

1. A PLAYER'S PERFORMANCE IMPROVES AT A FASTER RATE.
2. YOU ARE BETTER ABLE TO EVALUATE WHO YOUR BEST PLAYERS ARE ON THE TEAM.
3. YOU ARE ABLE TO OBSERVE HOW YOUR PLAYERS PERFORM UNDER THE PRESSURE OF COMPETITION WHICH RELATES DIRECTLY TO GAME CONDITIONS.
4. THE INTENSITY AND EFFORT LEVEL IN PRACTICE WILL BE VERY HIGH.

Suggestions on how to make the drills competitive are included. You can use your own imagination in setting the rules for competitive drills. You can give rewards in practice for the winning teams and even keep posted records of wins and losses.

6. PROMOTING GOOD DEFENSE

Your challenge now is to be enthusiastic in your approach to teaching defense. If you make playing good defense a high priority for your team, you will definitely reap the benefits. Your team will develop a high degree of unselfishness. They will play with great intensity and effort. Playing tough defense requires individual sacrifice and determination which will build unity in your team. This can be very rewarding to you as the coach because players become very excited about being a member of your team. The following is a list of ideas for promoting the importance of good defense:

1. PRAISE AND COMPLEMENT PLAYERS FOR GOOD DEFENSIVE PLAY IN BOTH PRACTICE AND GAMES.
2. GIVE OUT A "DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE WEEK" AWARD.
3. DO NOT ALLOW YOUR PLAYERS TO LOOK AT THE SCORE BOOK AFTER THE GAME.
4. SET DEFENSIVE GOALS SUCH AS HOLDING A TEAM TO A CERTAIN NUMBER OF POINTS, FORCING A CERTAIN NUMBER OF TURNOVERS, ETC.

5. BASE PLAYING TIME ON DEFENSIVE EFFORT. YOU CAN NOT ALLOW PLAYERS TO GIVE ANYTHING BUT THEIR BEST EFFORT POSSIBLE IN PLAYING GOOD DEFENSE.
6. PROMOTE IT TO PARENTS AND THE MEDIA. ALWAYS PRAISE PLAYERS WHO CONSISTENTLY PLAY GOOD DEFENSE WHEN REPORTING THE GAME TO A NEWSPAPER OR WHEN TALKING TO PARENTS.
7. DEVELOP A DEFENSIVE MERIT SYSTEM BY REWARDING PLAYER POINTS FOR GOOD DEFENSIVE PLAYS. FOR EXAMPLE, 1 POINT FOR DEFLECTING THE BALL, 2 POINTS FOR A STEAL, 3 POINTS FOR TAKING A CHARGE, ETC.

1. HOW TO GET BACK ON DEFENSE

The first thing you need to teach your team is to run back to the basket before the opponent gets there. The goal is not to allow the other team to score an easy basket. This is called defensive transition or recovery. This is the first fundamental that must be taught to your players. The number one goal in defending the opponent is to make it as difficult as possible for them to score a basket. If your team is slow to run back and allows the opponent to pass the ball the length of the court to unguarded players, you will give up easy baskets. The following is a list of fundamentals to teach transition defense:

- A. SPRINTING TO THE KEY
- B. ASSUMING PROPER POSITION
- C. STOPPING THE BALL
- D. FINDING AN OPPONENT TO GUARD

A. SPRINTING TO THE KEY

A simple rule to teach your players in getting back on defense is to run full speed back to the key (Diagram. 6d). As they are running back they should take an occasional look over their shoulder that is closest to the middle of the court to see where the ball is in relationship to them. You must emphasize that they are to sprint back as soon as they see that the opponent has possession of the ball.

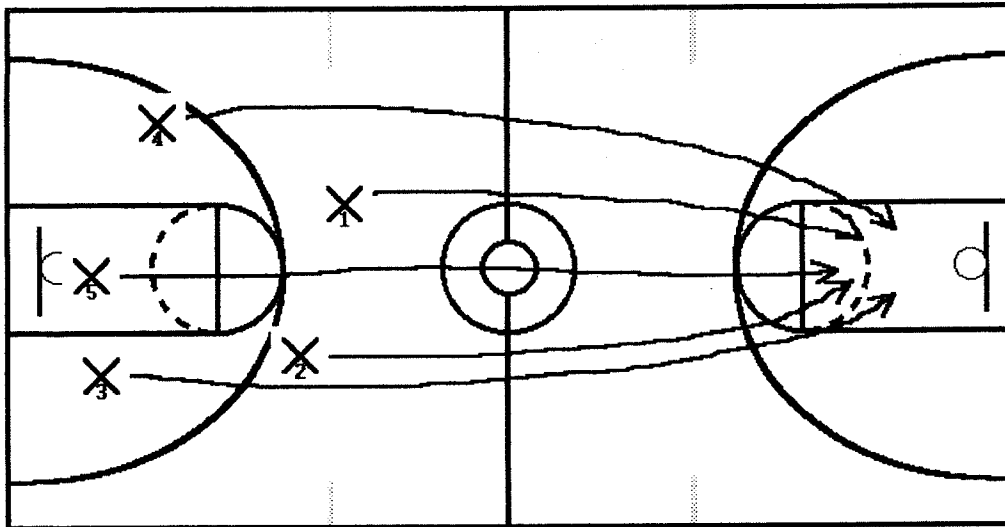


Diagram. 6d: Sprinting to the Key

B. ASSUMING PROPER POSITION

Once players reach the key area, they must immediately turn and square their bodies and face the opposite basket. This allows them to locate all approaching opponents. They need to have their knees bent and feet moving which will enable them to move quickly into a position between an opposing player and the basket they are defending.

C. STOPPING THE BALL

As soon as they reach the key, all players should turn immediately and find out which player has the ball. This is extremely important because only the player who has the ball has the immediate possibility to score a basket. The player that is closest to the opponent with the ball should take a position between that particular

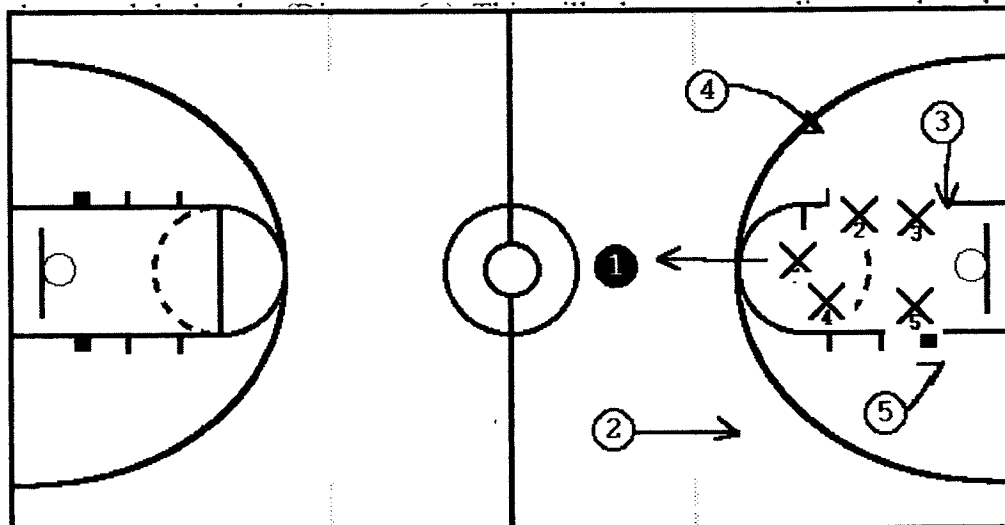


Diagram 6e: Stopping the Ball

The farther away from the basket the ball can be stopped the better. Remember that the goal of the defensive team is to make it as difficult as possible for the offense to score a basket. The greater the distance the ball is from the basket, the more difficult it will be for an opponent to score.

It is extremely important that you teach your players to never leave the player who has the ball unguarded. Some players will make the mistake of stopping the player with the ball and then leaving to look for the person they were assigned to defend. The defender who is guarding the opponent with the ball should never under any circumstances leave that player unguarded.

D. FINDING AN OPPONENT TO GUARD

Once the opponent with the ball is stopped, the other four players should guard the closest player to them (Diagram. 6f). This is called matching up or picking up the opponent. It is very helpful if players will point to or even call out the number of the player they are going to pick up. It is important that the players know that they pick up the closest player, which may not be the one that they were originally assigned to guard. The important point here is to guard opponents as soon as possible. Once all opponents are guarded and there is no immediate threat of a basket being scored, defenders can switch back to their original defensive assignments. The exception to this is the defender guarding the player with the ball. This defender must wait till the opponent he or she is guarding passes the ball to someone else and then wait until it is safe to switch to the opponent originally assigned to guard.

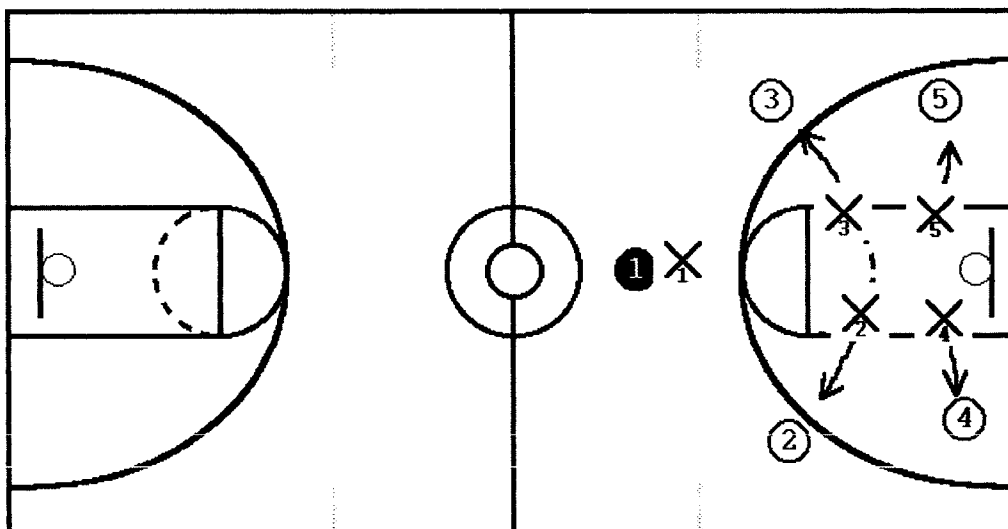


Diagram 6f: Finding an Opponent to Guard

STEP-BY-STEP COACHING POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. The first defensive fundamental to be taught to your team is how to get back to stop the opponent from scoring.
2. Players must run full speed back to the key, occasionally looking over their shoulder to locate the ball.
3. The closest defender to the opponent who has the ball must come out quickly from the key to take away this player's path to the basket.
4. The further away from the basket your team can stop the opponent with the ball, the more difficult it will for the offense to score a basket.
5. Once the opponent with the ball is stopped, the other four players should pick up the closest opponent to guard.

A DRILL TO TEACH YOUR TEAM HOW TO GET BACK ON DEFENSE

Name: RETREAT AND ATTACK

Purpose: To improve player's ability to effectively get back on defense

Organization: 5 against 5 full-court with one ball. Players start at one basket with one team on offense and the other on defense. The offense can be set up in different formations and each player on defense guards an offensive player. The offense passes and dribbles around while being defended. When the coach yells "Shot!", the player who has the ball sets it down on the floor. This player and teammates now are on defense and must sprint back to the key. The other team which was just on defense, picks up the ball and dribbles or passes it down court as quickly as possible. They are trying to beat the new defensive team down the court for an easy shot. The defensive team is working on getting back as quickly as possible to stop the ball and to pick up open opponents. The offensive team is working on passing and dribbling the ball up the court quickly to score a layup. You can stop the drill after one time up and back or after several times.

Coaching Points: Emphasize players sprinting back to the key and make sure they know where the ball is at all times. Stress the importance of stopping the ball as soon as possible and as far away from the basket as possible. Make sure players not involved in directly stopping the ball are pointing to the opponent they are picking up.

Variations:

1. Coach starts with the ball while offense moves around against defenders. At any time you can pass the ball to anyone on the defense and they take off down-court looking to score.
2. Coach yells "Shot!" and offensive player actually shoots the ball. Drill continues as normal.
3. Coach yells "Turnover!" and offensive player passes directly to the defense. Drill continues as normal.
4. Drill can be run 1 on 1, 2 on 2, 3 on 3, etc.

Competition:

1. Award one point to the defense if they stop the offense from scoring a basket. Award two points to the offense for scoring against the defense. First team to reach five points is the winner or play for time.
2. Award defensive team one point for stopping the ball outside the key. Award the offensive team two points for scoring or one point for getting the ball inside the key.

2. HOW TO GUARD THE PLAYER WITH THE BALL

The most important rule you can teach your players about guarding the player with the ball is to always maintain a position between the ball and the basket. This is much easier said than done. Taking away a player's direct driving lane to the basket is the first step in building a strong defense. The following is a list of component fundamentals to be taught. Remember to introduce each fundamental to your team using the 5 against 5 shell teaching drill followed by the corresponding drill presented in the manual. This allows the players to see how the component fundamental relates to the whole picture.

- A. ASSUMING THE DEFENSIVE READY POSITION
- B. PRESSURING THE BALL
- C. KEEPING THE BALL IN FRONT AND THE BASKET BEHIND
- D. ASSUMING THE POINT POSITION
- E. CONTESTING THE SHOT
- F. STEPPING TOWARDS THE PASS

A. ASSUMING THE DEFENSIVE READY POSITION

Getting the defender in the proper stance is critical to defending the ball. The legs must be bent, maintaining the back straight and head up. It is like sitting in a chair without the chair. This enables the player to lower his center of gravity which improves his ability to move quickly. The feet should be kept about shoulder width apart with weight distributed on the balls of the feet and not on the heels. The player should be moving his feet in place similar to what a boxer does in the ring. Again this will maximize the player's ability to react quickly to an opponent.

B. PRESSURING THE BALL

Position of the hands are important when defending the ballhandler. If the opponent has not used the dribble yet, the defender extends both arms out and uses the hand closest to the ball to apply pressure on the ball. As the opponent moves the ball around, the defender maintains a constant attempt to keep a hand on the ball. This forces the opponent to be concerned with protecting the ball. This can cause the ballhandler to not see a teammate who may be open for a pass. It may also cause the defender to panic and make a mistake with the ball.

Make sure defenders do not raise up out of their stance when the opponent brings the ball up overhead. This would not be a good defensive position. The opponent still has the dribble and could easily drive past a defender who is standing straight up. The ballhandler is really not much of a scoring threat with the ball up above the head.

As the opponent dribbles, the defender should extend both arms out to the side and begin to slide. The hands should move quickly up and down in coordination with the movement of the feet. This can distract the dribbler and cut down on the field of vision when looking for a teammate to pass to.

C. KEEPING THE BALL IN FRONT AND BASKET BEHIND

The key to guarding the player with the ball is maintaining proper position in relationship to the ball and the basket. A basic rule to teach your players is that feet, hips, shoulders, and head should always be squared to the ball with the basket behind. This means you could draw a straight line from the ball through the defender and to the basket. This takes away any direct path to the basket for the opponent with the ball (Diagram 6g).

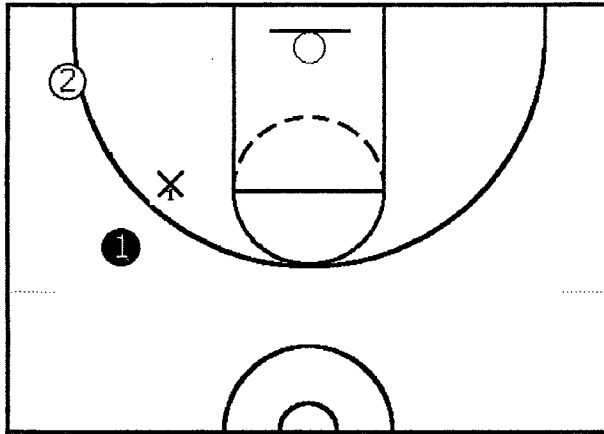


Diagram 6g: Ball in Front, Basket Behind

D. ASSUMING THE POINT POSITION

The offensive player can do three things with the ball. They are shoot, pass, or dribble. The defender has to be prepared to defend all of these. When the ballhandler decides to dribble, the defender must react correctly. Proper positioning (ball in front and basket behind) and correct stance (legs bent, back straight and feet moving) need to be maintained. To do this, the defender needs to slide or shuffle both feet along the path of the ballhandler. The player should try not to bring both feet together but rather to keep the feet apart. A good way to teach this idea is to tell the players that they have an imaginary broomstick between their feet and they cannot break it.

When guarding an opponent who has the ball, it may be necessary for the defender to get around a screen. Screens by the offense can be very effective in freeing up players for scoring opportunities. The defense must know how to defend against screens properly.

The key to defending against a screen is receiving help from a teammate. In this case it is the player who is guarding the opponent who sets the screen. As the ballhandler approaches the screen, the defender guarding the screener moves out and blocks the ballhandler's path. This forces the ballhandler back in the same direction from which he or she came. It actually takes away the effectiveness of the screen because it forces the ballhandler not use it. If the ballhandler insists on going around the screen, he or she will have to take a much wider path around it. This will allow the defender guarding the ballhandler enough room to get around the screen effectively to cut off any direct driving path the basket.

E. CONTESTING THE SHOT

Another option that the player with the ball has is to shoot it. Teach your players to get a hand up in the face of the shooter. You can even tell your players to yell "Shot!" This does a couple of things. It alerts teammates that the ball is being shot and they can get themselves in position to rebound. It may also distract the shooter and cause him or her to miss. A player's ability to shoot effectively drops dramatically with a defender's hand in the face.

F. STEPPING TOWARD THE PASS

The third option a player with the ball has is to pass to a teammate. The defender should take a giant step in the direction of the pass (Diagram. 6h). Many times a player who has just passed the ball will make a quick cut to the basket, looking for a return pass to shoot the ball. This is called a give and go. The defender should never allow the opponent to cross in front after passing the ball. Making that quick giant step in the direction of where the pass went will prevent the offensive player from cutting in front.

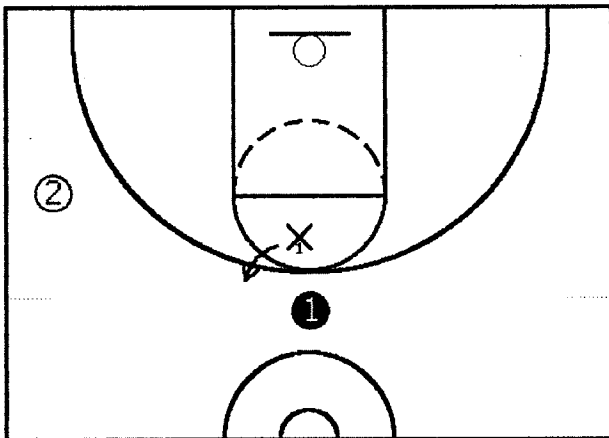


Diagram 6h-1: Stepping toward the Pass

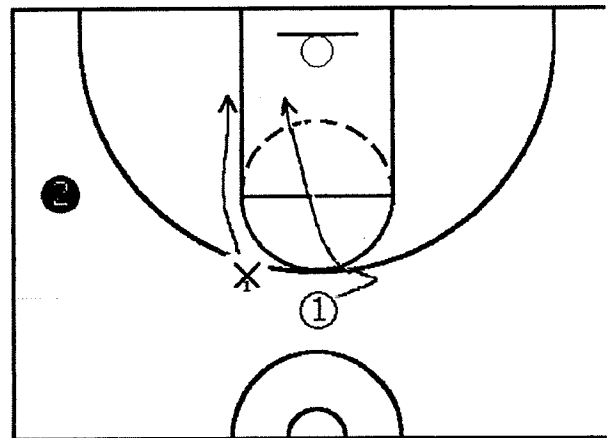


Diagram 6h-2: Denial Defense

STEP-BY-STEP COACHING POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. The most important thing to teach players when guarding the player with the ball is to keep the ball in front and the basket behind.
2. Keeping the knees bent, back straight, head up, and feet moving enables the defender to maximize the ability to react to the offense.
3. Teach the defender to slide or shuffle when the opponent dribbles to block any direct path to the basket.
4. Putting a hand up in the shooter's face and yelling "Shot!" will greatly decrease the chances of the shot going in.

5. When the opponent passes the ball off, the defender should take a quick giant step in the direction of where the ball went. This will take away the give and go by the offense.

A DRILL TO TEACH HOW TO DEFEND THE PLAYER WITH THE BALL

Name: ZIG-ZAG

Purpose: To improve player's ability to effectively guard the player with the ball.

Organization: Players line up in a mass drill formation using as much of the court as necessary to allow plenty of space around each player. Players should be in 4 or 5 lines with 3 or 4 deep to a line. They should be facing the front. You or an assistant coach should be positioned in front of the team and should be able to make eye contact with every player. You then proceed to teach to the entire team the proper technique of how to defend the player with the ball. Follow the routine suggested in the section entitled "Teaching the Fundamentals." Make sure you teach in order the fundamentals that are explained in this section on defending the player with the ball. Explain to your players that each one needs to imagine that they are guarding you or whoever is in front of them running the drill. As you teach and review on-ball defense, have players react to what you do. All players perform the specific movements and skills in accordance with what you do with the ball. If you dribble one way, they must slide with you as if they were actually guarding you.

As you progress in this drill, it will become a review of things already taught along with the introduction of new skills and fundamentals. As players progress, you can introduce variations.

Coaching points: Emphasize players staying low in a proper stance. Make sure that they keep their heads up and backs straight at all times. Watch for players bringing their feet together when they are sliding. Remind them of not breaking the broomstick between their feet. Finally, explain that the players should gradually be moving up the court by sliding side to side. They will have a tendency to slide straight back if you do not correct it.

Variations:

1. Players line up on the baseline at one end of the court in four or five single file lines. This is called a wave formation. Try to have the same number of players in each line. The players will leave in waves with the first players

in each line leaving together, then the second, and third, etc. The first players in each line turn and face the second players in each line. On the coach's command "Ready!" each player in the first group assumes the position of guarding an imaginary player with the ball. The coach then gives the command "Go!" and each player then begins to guard an imaginary opponent dribbling the ball up the court. Once the first group gets past half court, the second group steps up and turns around ready to follow the coach's commands.

2. Give different commands while the players are sliding up the floor. You could yell "Shot!" and the players would raise their hand and yell "Shot!" as if they were defending an imaginary shooter. You could also yell "Sprint!" and the players would then sprint back a distance and resume sliding. Use different commands that will simulate what can happen in a real ballgame.
3. Have the defenders guard a real offensive player by having the second player in each line come out as the opponent. Here is a progression of things to do with the defense guarding the offense.
 - A. Have the offensive player run about half speed dribbling an imaginary ball up the floor in a zig-zag pattern. This means that he dribbles three or four strides to the right, three or four to the left, repeating this all the way up the floor. The defender should be maintaining all the proper fundamentals discussed earlier on how to guard an opponent who has the ball. You can also add commands as they are working one against one up the floor such as yelling "Shot." You can also allow the offense to go threequarters speed and full speed.
 - B. Allow the offensive player to use a ball and follow the same progression previously mentioned.
 - C. This drill can progress to two on two, three on three, etc. Instead of five single-file lines, have the players form two single file lines for two against two. The first two players out would be on defense together against the second two. You can follow the progression suggested in section A and allow the offensive players to pass the ball to each other on the coaches command.

- D. Have players form two single file lines. One line should be positioned at one end of the court and the other at the opposite end. Assign one group half the court to work in, running length-wise. The group at the other end of the court gets to work in the other half of the court length-wise. Players work against each other one against one utilizing their assigned half of the court.

Competition:

1. Award points randomly for players who are correctly performing the defensive fundamentals against imaginary offensive players. You could say the first player to get five points is the winner.
2. Award points in the same manner as above but with the defenders guarding real players.
3. When using variations C and D, you can play for a certain amount of time and allow points only when the defense stops the offense from scoring. For example, you could be running three against three fullcourt as suggested in section C. Every time up the court the defensive team does not allow the offense to score, award the defensive team a point. This is great motivation to play good defense because the only way they can score points is to not allow a basket. There are many variations you can use.

3. HOW TO GUARD THE PLAYER WITHOUT THE BALL

Teaching a player how to defend someone who does not have possession of the ball is important. Since there is only one player who can have the ball at any one given time in a game, there are four other players that need to be defended properly. This is referred to as “off ball defense.” The following is a list of component fundamentals to be taught:

- A. DENYING THE BALL ONE PASS AWAY
- B. ASSUMING THE DENIAL STANCE
- C. CUTTING OFF THE PASSING LANE

A. DENYING THE BALL ONE PASS AWAY

An important question a player must ask when guarding an opponent who does not have the ball is, "Is the player I am guarding in position to receive the ball with one direct pass?" In other words, a defender must determine whether the opponent being guarded is close enough to receive a direct pass. If this is the case, the defender must assume a "denial" position. This position enables the defender to knock down or bat away any direct pass to the player he is guarding, thus denying that player the ball.

B. ASSUMING THE DENIAL STANCE

To deny a direct pass to an opponent, the defender must bend his legs and keep his back straight, head up, and feet moving. He then turns his body to face the opponent while raising both arms up to shoulder level. He then looks down his arm that is closest to the passing lane (pathway of the ball being passed). This allows the defender to see the ball and the opponent he is guarding at the same time. The hand and foot that are in the passing lane are called the lead hand and foot. The closer the opponent is to the ball, the tighter he should be defended.

C. CUTTING OFF THE PASSING LANE:

An offensive player who has been taught how to get free to catch a pass when being closely guarded is not just going to stand still. This player will do some cutting and faking in order to get open. The defender must also move with the opponent to maintain that positioning. He must slide his feet (not breaking the broomstick) in a manner similar to defending a player dribbling the ball while maintaining a proper denial stance. Keeping the lead hand in the passing lane will many times discourage any attempt to pass the ball. Remind players not to lunge too far out to try and deflect the ball. This could allow the opponent to cut to the basket unguarded for an easy basket. Remember we said earlier that one of the goals of the defense was to make it as difficult as possible for the offense to score a basket. Not letting an opponent catch the ball easily makes it harder to score.

STEP-BY-STEP COACHING POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. An opponent who is only one direct pass away from receiving the ball should be defended in the denial position.
2. Teach the defender the proper denial stance with the lead arm always in the passing lane.

3. The defender must slide or shuffle when the offensive player attempts to get open by cutting and faking.
4. Follow the general rule of not allowing players to gamble by going for the steal when denying the pass. If the defender misses the ball, it could result in an easy basket for the opponent.

A DRILL TO TEACH DEFENDING A PLAYER WITHOUT THE BALL

Name: WAVE DENIAL

Purpose: To improve player's ability to effectively defend a player without the ball

Organization: Same as the Zig-Zag drill. The first player in each line will assume the denial position on the coach's command. The coach will yell "Deny left!" or "Deny right!" which will tell the players which arm and foot will be the lead. Coach will then yell "Go!" and the first group of players will proceed to slide or shuffle up to the free-throw line extended and slide back to their original positions. The next group in line will step up and do the same as the first group.

Coaching points: Emphasize proper denial stance especially when players begin to slide. Make sure players do not bring their feet together. Remind them of not breaking the broomstick. Players must keep their heads properly positioned to enable them to see the ball and the player they are defending.

Variations:

1. Add an offensive player by having the second player in line start out side-by-side with the defender. When coach yells "Go!" the offensive player breaks out to the free-throw line extended to receive the ball. This gives the defense the opportunity to work on denying the ball in a more game-like situation. At first, allow the offensive player to only break up and back without doing any faking. You then can allow the offensive to try and fake up and back to try to get open. Remember that you always want to progressively make things more game-like if the players are ready for it.
2. Form two lines on the baseline with all of the bigger players (forwards and centers) in one line and the guards and smaller forwards in the other line. This is important to do because you will now have bigger players defending each other while the smaller ones will be doing the same. The first two

players in line will come out to the wing position on each side of the basket ready to play defense. The second two players come out to the same positions as offensive players. You as the coach stand at the top of the key with the ball. On your command, the offensive players begin to move to get open to receive a pass from you. The defense tries to make it as difficult as possible for the offense to catch the ball. You work this drill for about thirty seconds and then have the players rotate. The rotation should be defenders go to the end of the line, offense become the defense, and new players coming in are the offensive team. If you have an assistant coach working with you, send half the group to the other basket to work the drill. This helps minimize players standing around.

Competition:

Using the variation suggested in number two, you pass the ball to either one of the offensive players and they play a live two-against-two game. The game ends when either a basket is scored or the defense gets possession of the ball. Since this is a defensive drill, you should only award points to the defensive team when they do not allow the offense to score called a (defensive stop). Players rotate as previously explained in variation two. You can play the game for a certain length of time or to a particular number of points.

4. HOW TO HELP OUT ON DEFENSE

An important concept you must teach your players about defense is teamwork. This may sound strange since this concept is generally applied to the offensive part of the game. Effective defense is based on all five players working together to make it as difficult as possible for the opponent to make a basket. If a defender happens to allow the opponent a clear driving path to the basket, a defensive teammate must be ready and in the proper position to move over and block that path to the basket. This concept is called “help defense” and is crucial to good defensive play. The following is a list of important concepts to teach help defense:

- A. RECOGNIZING THE "HELP-SIDE"
- B. MOVING INTO THE KEY
- C. POINTING TO THE OPPONENT AND THE BALL
- D. ADJUSTING POSITION AS THE BALL MOVES
- E. ADJUSTING POSITION AS OPPONENT MOVES
- F. STOPPING THE BALL
- G. SWARMING TO THE BALL

A. RECOGNIZING THE "HELP-SIDE"

To simplify the concept of "help defense," the court is divided in half length wise. An imaginary line is drawn from under the basket out through the top of the key and the center circle to the opposite basket. This splits the court into a left and right side if we stand at one end and look down the court. When an opponent has the ball and is standing in the left half of the court, we call that side the "ball-side" of the court for defensive purposes. The right side of the court is referred to as the "help-side" of the court. The opposite holds true when the ball is on the right half of the court. Players need to be taught this concept and must be able to recognize when they are defending on the "ball-side" and on the "help-side." Whenever a player is defending on the half of the court opposite the ball, he or she is defending on the "help-side."

B. SWARMING TO THE BALL

Players must be taught that whenever they are defending on the "help-side" near the basket, they should move to a position inside the key. This means that if the offensive team has the ball on the left half of the court, the players defending on the right half of the court (the "help-side") should be positioned with both feet inside the key. This will enable them to be in good position to come over and help a teammate who has allowed an opponent to drive to the basket.

3. POINTING TO THE OPPONENT AND THE BALL ("PISTOLS")

A defender on the "help-side" must focus vision on both the ball and the opponent being defended. He must always see the ball to be able to move over to block an opponent's driving path to the basket. At the same time, the defender cannot totally lose track of the player that he is guarding. The defender should maintain the ball and the player in his field of vision. The defender must assume a proper stance to do this. This stance is called the "help-side" or "pistols" stance. In this stance the defender must have legs bent, back straight, and head up looking straight ahead. The player then holds both arms up and out to the side as if he is

holding a pistol in each hand. With one hand, the defender points to the ball and with the other points to the opponent he is guarding. This forces the “help-side” defender to keep vision straight ahead. The defender is now able offer help and at the same time guard his opponent.

D. ADJUSTING POSITION AS THE BALL MOVES

Once the “help-side” defender assumes position in the key and is in the proper stance (“help-side” or “pistols” stance), he must be ready to adjust as the ball changes position. If the defender does not do this, the ball will eventually be lost from the field of vision. This would force the player to turn his head toward the ball which would cause a loss of vision of the opponent he is guarding. This player should adjust position by moving in the same direction as the ball. If the ball drops from the wing to the corner on the ball-side, the “help-side” defender should also move down to the baseline to open up the field of vision. If the ball moves back up with either the dribble or the pass, the “help-side” defender must also adjust, always pointing to the ball and the opponent he is guarding.

E. ADJUSTING POSITION AS OPPONENT MOVES

The “help-side” defender must also adjust when the opponent he is guarding moves. This follows the same principle as adjusting with the movement of the ball. The opponent being defended on the “help-side” is not going to just stand around and watch the action on the ball-side. This opponent will be moving to different positions. In order to keep that player in the field of vision, the defender must adjust his or her position by moving in the same direction as the opponent. If the player moves down from the wing to the corner, the defender moves down also, maintaining the proper stance and pointing to the ball and the opponent. Constant adjusting of position is necessary with every movement of the ball and opponent in order to maintain proper “help-side” position.

F. STOPPING THE BALL

This is the number one priority of the “help-side” defender. Whenever an opponent with the ball drives past his or her defender and has an open path to the basket, the “help-side” defender must move over as quickly as possible to take that open path away. This is called defensive rotation. This is done by sliding or shuffling over and assuming the ready position on the driving opponent. Obviously the sooner the “help-side” defender is able to cut off the

driver's path to the basket, the further away from the basket the driving opponent will have to stop the dribble and hold the ball. The further away from the basket the ball is kept by the defense, the more difficult it will be for the offense to score. Many times the offensive player who has just driven past his defender will be driving full speed to the basket. If the "help-side" defender gets in the driver's pathway quick enough and establishes a set position, the driver will be unable to stop and may run over the defender. This results in an offensive foul by the driver. It counts as a personal foul against the driving offensive player and the defense is awarded possession of the ball.

G. SWARMING TO THE BALL

An important concept to communicate to your players about defense is the the idea of not allowing the basketball into the key area. The fewer times your team allows the ball to enter the key, either by the dribble or the pass, the tougher your defense is going to be. Let your players know that the key area is sacred territory and opponents should not be allowed to enter it with the ball. If it happens, teach the defense the concept of swarming to the ball. All five defenders should converge on the ball and make it extremely difficult for the opponent to do anything, let alone score a basket. It is like a stranger entering a beehive. Make that player pass the ball out of the key immediately. Tell defenders not to reach in and foul because this gives the offense an opportunity to go to the free-throw line for a couple of shots. They must surround the opponent with the ball and give him no room to make a move. Your defense is not very strong if you consistently allow the offense to either drive or pass the ball into the key.

STEP-BY-STEP COACHING POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. Teach players the concept of "ball-side" and "help-side" defense.
2. Players on the "help-side" should position themselves in the key.
3. "Help-side" defenders should be in a proper "help-side" or "pistols" stance.
4. Constant adjustment of "help-side" position occurs with the movement of the ball and the opponent being guarded.
5. The number one responsibility of the "help-side" defender is to block the path of any opponent driving unguarded to the basket.
6. A tough defense will make it extremely difficult for the offense to get the ball into the key area.

7. Instruct your players to swarm to the ball whenever it enters the key, whether by the dribble or the pass. They should force the ball to be passed back out and be very careful not to foul.

A DRILL TO TEACH HELPING OUT ON DEFENSE

Name: HELP AND RECOVER

Purpose: To improve players' ability to play help-side defense

Organization: Five against five half court with one ball. Players start with one team on offense and one on defense. The coach has the ball and can be positioned anywhere on the perimeter. The offensive team spreads out and is instructed to move around in a freelance manner. Each player on defense guards an offensive player. The coach can do a couple of things with the ball. He can dribble drive to the basket or pass the ball to any offensive player. When the offensive player catches the ball, he or she must immediately dribble drive to the basket. The defender guarding this player is instructed to allow the offensive player to drive uncontested. The player tries to drive all the way to the basket but does not attempt a shot. The player then passes the ball back to the coach and the drill continues. You can run this drill for about two or three minutes and then have the offensive team go to defense and the defensive team to offense. The drill is then repeated.

Coaching points: Emphasize defenders being in the proper position on the "help-side" by reminding them to be in the key, pointing to the ball and the opponent they are guarding. As you, the coach, dribble drive the ball to the basket, "help-side" defenders should be moving into your path and forcing you to stop your dribble. The same holds true for an offensive player dribble driving to the basket. Every so often you should stop the drill right in the middle of the action and have players freeze in their positions. This is a great opportunity to teach, correct, and review proper defensive positioning, not only on the "help-side" but also on the "ball-side." Make sure a defender who is guarding a player who is one direct pass away is in the proper denial position while also checking correct "help-side" positioning. If the ball gets into the key, make sure that all five defenders swarm to the ball.

Variations:

1. This drill can be played two against two, three against three, and four against four. Follow the same guidelines as 5 against 5. This will allow you more of an opportunity to focus on teaching individual defensive fundamentals.
2. This drill can be run full-court. This will give your players practice on getting back on defense along with “help-side” defense practice. After running the drill for a minute or two, you can yell “Shot!” and set the ball on the floor. The closest defensive player picks up the ball and dribbles the ball toward the other basket. It basically becomes the “Retreat and Attack drill” presented in the section on getting back on defense. You as the coach can jog down to the other end or have an assistant coach run the drill at the other basket. This drill can be run back and forth several times and is excellent for practicing both getting back on defense and maintaining proper defensive position on half-court defense.
3. You can add two unguarded offensive players to the drill. Place one player in each corner with a ball. You now have put the defense at a numbers disadvantage, seven against five. This creates a situation that is more difficult for the defense to handle. It will make your defense even stronger by making it work harder. You run the drill as previously explained but now you can point to either player positioned in the corners and they will automatically dribble drive to the basket. They do not shoot the ball. This creates a definite help situation where “help-side” defenders must move over quickly to take away the driving path of the unguarded offensive players. Once the unguarded driver is stopped, the defenders go back to guarding their assigned opponents.
4. Add another unguarded offensive player, making it an eight-against-five situation. Position that player in the key and whenever you yell “Pass to the key!” whichever offensive player has the ball immediately passes the ball into the unguarded player in the key. All five defenders must swarm to the ball and surround the offensive player without fouling. This gives your defense excellent practice at stopping an opponent with the ball in the key. The player holds the ball for about a two-second count and then passes it back out to you or another offensive teammate. You as the coach can also make a direct pass to the player positioned in the key.

Competition:

1. After you have run the drill for 30 seconds or so, you can yell "Live!" This means that it is a live-game situation. The offense now tries to score a basket and the defense tries to stop them. You only award points to the defense if they stop the offense from scoring. If the offense scores a basket, they do not get a point but they have also stopped the defensive team from getting a point. The offensive team now goes to defense with a chance to score a point if they stop the new offensive team from getting a basket. Any foul committed by the defensive team results in their going to offense right away. This is very helpful in reinforcing the importance of playing defense without fouling. Remember you can run this drill two against two, three against three, etc. Play for time or to certain number of points.
2. Award the defensive team a point whenever they deflect a pass or help out by blocking the path of an opponent driving to the basket.

5. HOW TO REBOUND ON DEFENSE

The defensive team does not become the offensive team until it gets possession of the ball. The job is not done by simply not allowing the offensive team to score a basket. We said earlier that it is the objective of the defensive team to make it as difficult as possible for the offense to make a basket. Even better than that is to not allow the opponent to play offense in the first place. This means limiting the opponent to as few opportunities as possible to gain possession of the ball and be on offense. This is where defensive rebounding comes in to play. The defensive team's goal is to limit the offense to taking one shot per possession. This means that the defensive team should never allow the opponent to miss a shot and get the rebound itself and be on offense again. The defensive team's job is not done until it gains possession of the ball from the opponent. The following is a list of important coaching points to teach defensive rebounding:

- A. RECOGNIZING A SHOT ATTEMPT
- B. FINDING THE OPPONENT
- C. BLOCKING OUT
- D. HOLDING THE BLOCK OUT
- E. LOCATING THE BALL AND GETTING IT
- F. BLOCKING OUT THE SHOOTER
- G. BLOCKING OUT FROM THE DENIAL POSITION
- H. BLOCKING OUT ON THE "HELP SIDE"
- I. RIPPING THE BALL TO THE CHIN

A. RECOGNIZING A SHOT ATTEMPT

The sooner the defensive team recognizes that the opponent is attempting a shot, the better chance they will have of getting the rebound. That is why it is important for the defender guarding the shooter to yell "Shot!" This not only may distract the shooter but it also alerts defensive teammates that a shot is being attempted. This may give them that extra jump on the opponent in getting to the rebound first.

B. FINDING THE OPPONENT

The big tendency for defensive players when an opponent shoots the ball is to look up at the ball in flight to the basket. This is a major mistake because this gives the opponent they are guarding a quick opportunity to find an open path to the basket to get an offensive rebound. Defenders must be taught that as soon as the ball leaves the shooter's hand, they must locate the player they are guarding immediately. This will allow them to block the path of that opponent to the basket.

3. BLOCKING OUT

After locating exactly where the opponent is on a shot attempt, the defender must turn his back to the opponent, with legs bent and back straight. The defender must then be ready to block any path the opponent may choose to take to the basket in looking for an offensive rebound. It is important to stress to the defender the need to initiate contact with the opponent when blocking out. Many times the offensive player will not even try to go to the basket for a rebound if the defender makes quick contact and drives the opponent back a step. If the defender is slow in making contact, the opponent may get a running start to the basket. This makes blocking out much more difficult because now the defender has to take the path away from a moving target. Teach players to be very aggressive in blocking out, especially when playing against opponents who are bigger and stronger. A good

offensive player will fight to gain a path or an opening to get an offensive rebound. The defender must be equal to the task of not allowing the opponent to do this. You must encourage your players to be fearless in blocking out the opponent. Aggressive blocking out can make up for a lack of height in rebounding.

D. HOLDING THE BLOCK OUT

Many defenders make the mistake of stopping the block out too soon. They make strong initial contact with the offensive player but then they go after the ball too soon. This allows the offensive player to slide around the defender and have a chance at getting the rebound. Defenders must maintain contact with the opponent until the opponent is no longer a threat to get the rebound.

E. LOCATING THE BALL AND GETTING IT

The defender must locate the ball coming off the rim as quickly as possible and at the same time maintaining the block out. The defender can do this by taking quick glances up to the rim but keeping the main focus on blocking out the opponent. Once the defender sees the ball coming off and feels that he or she can get the rebound, he or she must use good judgment in not going for the ball too soon. Make sure the opponent cannot sneak around in front and take the rebound. It is better to be sure to hold the block out a little bit longer than to go after the rebound a little too soon.

F. BLOCKING OUT THE SHOOTER

The defender guarding the opponent who attempts the shot should make immediate contact to block out when the ball leaves the shooter's hand and both feet are on the floor. Sometimes defenders will make contact with the shooter before the shooter returns to the floor after a jump shot. Officials will usually call a foul on the defense and award free throws to the shooter. Allow the shooter to get both feet on the floor and then aggressively make contact and block out. Never allow the shooter to get an offensive rebound.

G. BLOCKING OUT FROM THE DENIAL POSITION

A defender who is guarding an opponent one direct pass away will be in the denial stance. When a shot is attempted, this defender must move quickly from the denial stance to the block-out position. The defender must turn quickly in front of the player he is guarding and initiate contact and block out.

H. BLOCKING OUT ON THE "HELP-SIDE"

A "help-side" defender has more of a challenge in blocking out. First of all, the defender is positioned in the key and usually a minimum of two to three feet away from the player he is guarding. This gives the offensive player a real advantage because he will have some open space to find a path to the basket to rebound. The "help-side" defender must come out to meet the opponent as quickly as possible on any shot attempt. This defender must then try and take away the path of an opponent who is on the move. This can be a real challenge and it takes a lot of practice and determination to get it done. Many offensive rebounds are allowed on the opposite side of where the shot is taken ("help-side"). The defender must come out quickly and with knees bent. He must come face to face with the opponent and then pivot and make contact to block the opponent's path to the basket. It is critical that the "help-side" defender keep blocking out the opponent because there is a good chance the rebound will be coming off on that side of the court.

I. RIPPING THE BALL TO THE CHIN

The rebound should be taken aggressively with both hands. It should be brought under the chin with both elbows out to protect the ball. Do not allow a player to bring the ball below the chin after grabbing the rebound. This allows smaller and quicker opponents to reach in and try to knock the ball away. Once the defender has the rebound secured, he should look for a teammate to pass the ball to. This is called outletting the ball.

STEP-BY-STEP COACHING POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. The defensive team should allow the offensive team only one shot attempt per possession.
2. Teach defenders to quickly recognize when the opponent is attempting a shot and not to watch the ball in flight to the basket.
3. Defenders must locate the player they are guarding, pivot with knees bent and back straight, and initiate contact with the opponent.
4. Defenders should not go for the rebound too soon. This may give the opponent an opening to sneak in and get an offensive rebound.
5. Defenders should locate the ball coming off the rim and aggressively secure it with both hands.
6. The ball should be brought down to chin level with elbows out to protect the ball.

7. Teach defenders to be fearless in blocking out and fighting for rebounds.

A DRILL TO TEACH DEFENSIVE REBOUNDING

Name: CIRCLE BLOCKOUT

Purpose: To improve players' ability to block out and rebound

Organization: Five-against-five half court with one ball. Players start at one basket with one team on offense and the other on defense. The offensive players position themselves in a semi-circle on the three-point line or about 20 feet from the basket. Players occupy both corner positions, wing positions, and the top of the key. They are facing the basket with a defender guarding each player. The coach has the ball and can be positioned anywhere on the three-point line. Defenders assume proper defensive stances and position. The coach yells "Shot!" and shoots the ball up to the basket trying not to make it. The defenders block the offensive team out and get the rebound. You can allow the defense three turns in a row and then have the teams switch around.

Coaching points: Make sure players are aggressive in initiating contact in blocking out. Remind players not to watch the flight of the ball when it is shot. When you shoot the ball, watch the defenders' heads to see if they are looking up at the ball or to the players they are guarding. Emphasize the importance of keeping the opponent blocked out and not going for the ball too soon. Make a goal for the defensive team to block the offensive team out so well that the ball comes off the rim and bounces one time on the floor before a defender grabs it.

Variations:

1. This drill can be run two against two, three against three, etc. This allows more individual player attention and instruction.
2. Instead of shooting the ball, place it on the floor under the basket. Give the command "Shot!" and the offensive team tries to touch the ball as fast as they can. The defense tries to block out for as long as they can. Use a stop watch and time how long each defensive team can keep the offensive team from touching the ball.

3. Combine this drill with “Help and Recover” and “Retreat and Attack” drills. When you shoot the ball, the defenders block out, get the rebound, and dribble the ball to the other end. The team that was on offense must run back to the key and execute the fundamentals of the “Retreat and Attack” drill. You can also dribble drive the ball to the basket to work on the “help and recover” drill. You are combining three different drills and making situations more like a real game. You can also run this combined drill in two against two, three against three, etc.

Competition:

1. Award a point to the defense every time they correctly block out and get the rebound. If they get the rebound but only one or two players do not block out, do not give them a point. Every time the offensive team gets a rebound, give them two points and make the defensive players do five push-ups. You can play to a certain number of points or for time.
2. If you set the ball on the floor under the basket and are timing how long the defense can keep the offense from touching the ball, award a point to the defensive team who keeps the offense out the longest.
3. In the combined “Circle Block Out,” “Retreat and Attack,” and “Help and Recover” drill, you can award points to the defense for doing different things. For example, give one point for blocking out and getting the rebound, one point for getting back on defense and not allowing the ball to enter the key area, and a point for helping on defense by blocking the path of an offensive player driving to the basket. Use your imagination in setting up ways to earn points.

SUMMARY

You may be thinking to yourself “How can I possibly teach all these things when our first game is in two weeks?” The important thing to remember is to spend time on each defensive fundamental in every practice, even if it is for only a couple of minutes. Do not neglect any of them. The moment you stop working on “help-side” defense, you are going to have opponents driving to the basket unguarded for easy baskets. Keep in mind that teaching proper defense to your players is a process that continues on throughout the entire season. Your team may experience early season difficulties in playing proper defense. Do not panic or give up! The principles you are teaching are correct. Use games as teaching time to correct defensive mistakes and to praise and reinforce good defensive play. As you continue to do this over the course of the season, you will not only see steady improvement in your players but also in your ability as a coach to teach good defense.

STEP 7: HOW TO TEACH YOUR TEAM OFFENSE

This section is designed to take you through a step-by-step method in teaching your team offense. It is presented in a logical order of what your team needs to do when it has the ball.

I. PREPARING TO TEACH OFFENSE: The following is a list of important points for study before teaching offense to your team:

1. WHAT OFFENSE IS
2. STYLE OF OFFENSE
3. THE BALANCED STYLE OF PLAY
4. TYPES OF HALF-COURT OFFENSE
5. TEACHING THE FUNDAMENTALS
6. WHAT TO TEACH
7. HOW MUCH TO TEACH
8. HOW TO TEACH OFFENSE

1. WHAT OFFENSE IS

Offense is in effect when a team has possession of the ball. The objective of the offense is to try to score points. This can be done in many different ways. It can be the result of one player's effort or two, three, four or five players working together to score points. Points can be scored by executing patterns and using a variety of cutting and screening techniques. A steal on defense that leads to an easy shot, an offensive rebound and "putback" shot, or a fast break are other examples of how points can be scored. Just as the goal of the defense is to make it as difficult as possible for the offense to score, the objective of the offense is to get as easy a shot as possible to score points. Because of the nature of the game, the closer to the basket the offensive team can get a shot, the better chance or percentage they have of scoring. This is accomplished by your team's proper execution of the basic offensive fundamentals.

2. STYLE OF OFFENSE

Any organized effort by the team with the ball to score is considered an offense. Offenses are categorized by the pace or tempo in which they try to score points. In other words, they either try to score quickly, or they take their time. This is referred to as style of play. The style of play of a team is generally determined by

the coach and the type of players who are on the team.

A team that brings the ball up the court fast in order to create an easy scoring opportunity before the defense can get back is considered a fast-break or up-tempo style of team. This means they attempt to score in an organized fashion designed to out race the opponent to the basket. This would require a team made up of good athletes who are quick and run the court well. There are various kinds of organized patterns within the fast-break or up-tempo style. These are called fast-break or up-tempo types of offense.

A team that prefers to bring the ball up the court and set up a patient and organized offense to produce a high percentage scoring opportunity is referred to as a deliberate or controlled style of offensive play. It is more commonly called a half-court style, meaning that the team prefers to utilize the offensive half of the court to try to score. The type of players suited for this style would be bigger and slower ones. This is in contrast to the fast-break or up-tempo style which utilizes as much court as needed in order to create easy scoring opportunities. There are many half-court types of offense.

3. THE BALANCED STYLE OF PLAY

An ideal style of play is a combination of both the up-tempo and half-court styles. Since most coaches have teams made up of players of different sizes and physical abilities, the balanced style would allow you to better utilize your players. This also allows a team to take advantage of an opponent that may be slow getting back on defense. It also allows the offense to take advantage of weaknesses that the opponent may have in playing half-court defense. It can also provide your team with a balanced approach to scoring. It gives you, the coach, more possibilities in fully utilizing the different abilities of your players to score. This manual presents the balanced style of play by suggesting a basic fast-break and half-court offensive attack. You as the coach can decide how much emphasis you are going to put on one or the other, depending on what your individual preference is and also more importantly the type of players you have.

4. TYPES OF HALF-COURT OFFENSE

The two main types of defense that can be used in the half-court area are man-to-man and zone. It follows then that there are two main types of half-court offense, man-to-man and zone offense. Whether an opponent employs man-to-man or zone defense is not as much of a concern to the up-tempo style of team as it is to the half-court style. The fast-break team tries to score before the defense even sets up. The half-court team needs to know what type of defense the opponent is play-

ing. This will determine what type of half-court offense your team will use. This manual will provide you with a basic half-court offensive attack to be used against man-to-man defense. It will also include simple adjustments that you can use to make your offense effective in attacking zone defenses.

5. TEACHING THE FUNDAMENTALS

You should refer back to the defensive section of the manual and review the "teaching fundamentals" section. Your team's ability to score points will depend primarily on your players' individual execution of the fundamentals. There are no "magic" offensive patterns that can make your team dribble, pass, and shoot well. Players must be properly taught the individual fundamentals and then practice them over and over until they become habits.

Offensive fundamentals are broken down into two categories: individual and team. Any fundamental or skill involving interaction between two or more player is classified as a team fundamental. An example of this is the "give and go." One player passes the ball to a teammate and then makes a direct cut toward the basket. The teammate then makes a quick return pass back to the cutter. This manual presents both individual and team fundamentals necessary in teaching the offense.

6. WHAT TO TEACH

An offense is presented to you in a step-by-step progression beginning with lining up for a jump ball, organizing the fast-break, and teaching a half-court offense. Remember that you have to teach your team what to do as soon as they gain possession of the ball. Basic plays to properly pass the ball inbounds are covered along with the fundamentals of simple fast-break. The half-court offense is a basic offense used against man-to-man defense. It includes simple adjustments you can make to effectively attack zone defenses. It is followed by a section entitled "Adding some options to the offense." These are simple things you can add to what you are teaching. This will allow you, the coach, to choose the appropriate options of offense to teach to your team in accordance with what they are capable of learning and what you feel capable of teaching.

7. HOW MUCH TO TEACH

The way in which the information on teaching half-court offense is presented will allow you the freedom of selecting the options that you are most comfortable in teaching. This is essential in effective coaching because we cannot teach our teams something we do not know ourselves. For example, you may have

a team of players who are very skilled and are capable of learning many offensive options, but if you are a first-time coach, it would be best for you to teach the most basic offensive and possibly a couple of extra options. Your players may be ready to learn more but the determining factor is your ability to teach what you know. As you teach the basics, you will become more and more confident and will want to progress to teaching more offensive options.

Your team's skill level and ability to learn will also determine how much to teach. The age group you are working with is also a major factor. Obviously the younger the players are, the less developed they will be in terms of both skill level and ability to learn. An important principle to remember in teaching offense is to keep it simple and do not try to teach more than players are capable of properly learning. Effective performance of basic fundamentals is superior to doing a number of things poorly.

8. HOW TO TEACH OFFENSE

After you have determined the stage of offense you are going to teach to your team, follow the format in the manual on how to teach it. It is presented to you in a teaching sequence that, when followed, will provide you with the most effective method in which your team can learn. The following is the teaching sequence:

A. Presenting the "Whole Picture"

It is important that players are taught the general idea of the offense first. This includes placing players in proper positions and proper locations on the court. It also includes showing what all five players do in terms of moving, cutting, and working together. More importantly, all the scoring possibilities must be shown. This is done by having five players walk through it since they do not know the offense yet. The drill you should use is the 5 against 5 Shell Teaching Drill. This gives your team a general idea of what the offense looks like.

B. Teaching the Necessary Individual Fundamentals

This manual identifies the individual fundamentals that must be taught to your players to make the "whole picture" effective. The ability of the players to score from the offense will depend on how well they have mastered the individual fundamentals. An explanation on how to properly teach the fundamentals and what drills to use are discussed. The drills are designed with a very important purpose in mind and that is to maximize player participation. With your usually limited practice time and so much for players to learn, you cannot allow players to

just be standing around. Mass drills are the key to allowing maximum player participation in practice.

C. Teaching Breakdown Drills

This is where the “whole picture” is broken down into smaller and more manageable parts to be practiced and perfected. These are also called team offensive fundamentals. They involve two-, three-, and four-player plays that are part of the total offense. They can be run with or without defense. The basic movements and patterns from the offense are listed in the manual and presented in drills that will help your team properly execute the offense in a five against five situation.

D. Putting it All Back Together Again

We now go back to the “whole picture” and work on 5 against 5. This is basically accomplished in controlled scrimmages where your team is working on specific parts of the offense in a more realistic game type of situation.

9. TIME TO TEACH

In presenting this section on teaching your team offense, it is important to understand the basic positions in offense. This is covered in earlier sections but a quick review is presented here. The following is a list of the basic positions:

(Diagram 7a)

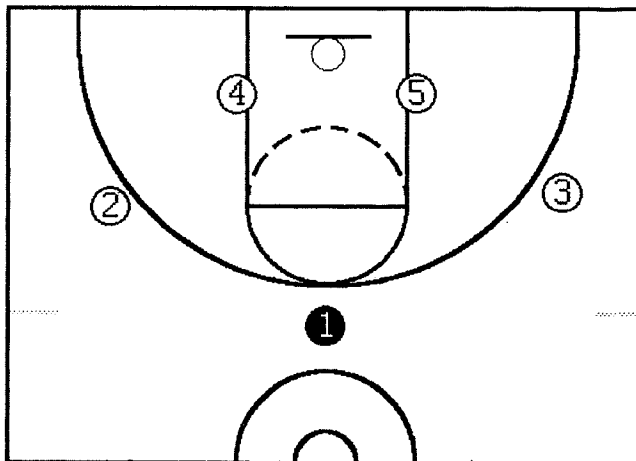


Diagram 7a: Player Positions

POINT GUARD OR #1 PLAYER: This player is your best ballhandler and passer and should be your leader on the court.

SHOOTING GUARD OR #2 PLAYER: This is your other guard who should be a good outside shooter and good ballhandler and passer.

SMALL FORWARD OR #3 PLAYER: This player should be like a guard but also be able to rebound and play inside.

POWER FORWARD OR #4 PLAYER: This player is similar to a center. He or she should be a good inside player and is most likely your second tallest player.

CENTER OR #5 PLAYER: This player is generally your tallest and most effective inside player.

To help simplify the presentation of material in this section, references to players and their positions are going to be by number. For example, when explaining what the point guard does in a certain situation, we will use #1 to represent the point guard.

Study and review the information on teaching offense. Use the drills to teach and improve proper execution of the basic fundamentals. When to use the drills and how much time to spend on them will be discussed in the section entitled "How to plan your regular practice."

II. A GENERAL WARM-UP AND REVIEW ROUTINE

There are certain basic offensive fundamentals that need to be practiced by all players on a daily basis in order to play the game successfully. The following routine is designed as a warm-up and a review. It should be done at the beginning of every practice session you hold. Encourage your players to do this routine on their own time also. You will see improvement in the areas of ballhandling and dribbling, footwork, and passing. The best way to teach this routine is to introduce one or two of the drills from the different areas at each practice. You may be able to teach more than two, depending on the skill level and learning ability of your players. With each successive practice, review the previous drills and then introduce a new one until you cover the entire routine. You then will be able to move quickly through it as a warm-up for your practice.

The following is a list of the complete routine. It is presented in the exact

order of how it should ultimately be performed by your team. This routine is done from different formations, depending on the individual fundamental to be performed. For the ballhandling and dribbling drills, each player must have his or her own ball. If you are unable to supply each player with a ball, ask them to bring one from home with their name marked on it.

1. STATIONARY BALLHANDLING ROUTINE
2. STATIONARY DRIBBLING ROUTINE
3. FOOTWORK DRILL
4. BALLHANDLING ON THE MOVE ROUTINE
5. DRIBBLING ON THE MOVE ROUTINE
6. PASSING ROUTINE

1. STATIONARY BALLHANDLING ROUTINE

Players are in mass formation with each player having a ball. Each player performs the following at the same time on your command. These drills will improve a player's ability to handle the ball well and with confidence. All of these drills can be performed for between 15 and 30 seconds.

- A. "Pound the ball": Player holds the ball in one hand and pounds the ball hard with the other hand and then alternates. Fingers must be spread wide when pounding the ball.
- B. "Body Circles": The player starts with the ball in the right hand at waist level and moves the ball behind the back to the left-hand. The ball is brought in front of the body with the left-hand and passed to the right. This is a clock-wise body circle. The direction of the ball should then be reversed to do a counter clock-wise body circle. Players can also do the body circles at head and knee levels as variations.
- C. "Hand to hand": The ball is held in either hand and flipped to the other. The wrist should be used to pass the ball from one hand to the other.
- D. "Figure eights": The player bends over with the ball in the right-hand. The ball is passed through the legs to the left-hand and brought around to the front of the left leg. The ball is then passed through the legs from the left hand to the right, making a figure-eight pattern as it goes around the legs.

- E. “Alternating”: The player performs a body circle and then a figure eight, body circle, and figure eight, and so on.
- F. “Single leg circle”: Player moves the ball around one leg by handing it from one hand to the other. This can be both clock-wise and counter clock-wise.
- G. “Mixer”: The player performs all of the above mentioned drills in no specific order.

2. STATIONARY DRIBBLING IN PLACE:

This is a series of drills to develop dribbling skills.

- A. “Right hand”: The player assumes right-hand dribble stance by turning and squaring the feet, hips, and shoulders to the right sideline. He should be in a crouched position with the back kept straight. The player should be looking over the left shoulder with the left-hand extended out in front to protect the ball. The ball is dribbled with the right-hand.
- B. “Left-hand”: Everything is opposite of right-hand dribble.
- C. “Up and back”: Player dribbles the ball at an angle, not straight up and down.
- D. “Back and forth”: The player assumes a squared stance facing straight ahead. The ball is dribbled from the one hand to the other back and forth.
- E. “Side to side”: The ball is dribbled at an angle with one hand.
- F. “Figure eight”: The ball is dribbled in a figure eight pattern through the legs.
- G. “Mixer”: The player combines all of the dribble drills in no specific order.
- H. “Double mixer”: The player combines both the ballhandling and dribble mixers.

- I. "Floor pound": The player takes the ball in both hands and bends down close to the floor. The ball is then bounced with both hands as hard as possible and caught with both hands. This should be done 10 times in a row.

3. FOOTWORK

These drills are done in a wave formation and are designed to develop correct footwork. It also serves as a very good warm-up routine. Each drill can be performed one time up the floor or up and back

- A. "Forward-Backward": The player jogs forward starting at the baseline to the free-throw line, backwards from the free-throw line to half-court, forward to the free-throw line, and backwards to the baseline.
- B. "Change of pace": The player runs forward at different speeds depending on the command of the coach. Coach yells "Sprint!" "Jog!" or "Half-speed!" The player adjusts his or her pace accordingly.
- C. "Cutting": The player starts out running two or three strides to the right and then plants the right foot hard and makes a quick cut or change of direction to the left. After two or three strides to the left, the player plants the left foot and cuts back to the right. This is done all the way up the court.
- D. "Change of pace and direction": The player combines "change of pace" and "cutting" drills together.
- E. "Jump stops": The player starts out sprinting to the free-throw line extended and then performs a two-foot jumpstop. On the coach's command "Go!" the player sprints to half-court, the other free-throw line, and the opposite baseline, performing a jumpstop at each spot.
- G. "Pivots": The player does the same as the jumpstop drill but performs a pivot instead of a jumpstop. A pivot is maintaining one foot on the floor, in the same spot at all times, while freely moving the other.

4. BALLHANDLING ON THE MOVE

The player performs all the previously mentioned drills while running.

5. DRIBBLING ON THE MOVE

The player performs all the previously mentioned dribbling drills while running.

6. PASSING

Players work in partners about 10 feet apart and perform various types of passes.

III. TEACHING YOUR TEAM AN OFFENSIVE SYSTEM

1. STARTING OUT WITH THE BALL

There are different ways your team can gain possession of the ball. For example, the game begins with a jump ball which is potentially the first time a team can be on offense. Other ways are after the opponent scores, commits a turnover, or misses a shot. Your team needs to know what to do when gaining possession of the ball.

A. JUMP BALL

The game begins with a jump ball. The jump ball has lost some of its importance because of the alternating possession rule. This means that after the initial jump ball to start the game, teams alternate getting possession of the ball at the start of a new quarter or in any situation that used to call for a jump ball under the old rule.

Either your #5 player or best jumper should line up in the center circle to jump against the opponent. We are going to assume that the #5 is jumping. Your #1 should be positioned at the top of the key of the opponent's basket to not allow any clear path to the basket. There are two different ways you can position the #2, #3, and #4 players. It depends on whether you think your team can win the jump. This means the ability of your #5 to control the tip and guide it to a teammate. If you feel confident he or she can control it, then you should utilize the offensive tip. You place your #4 on the edge of the circle directly opposite #5. Then #2 and #3 should be positioned on opposite sides of the half-court dividing line on the edge of the circle (Diagram 7b). They can even line up a step toward the basket they are shooting at. Then #5 should tip the ball to #4 while #2 and #3 sprint directly to the basket looking for a pass from #4. This could result in an easy basket which is a great way to start the game.

If you think that your #5 will not control the tip or even if it is questionable, you should set up in a defensive tip alignment. #4 is positioned in the same spot

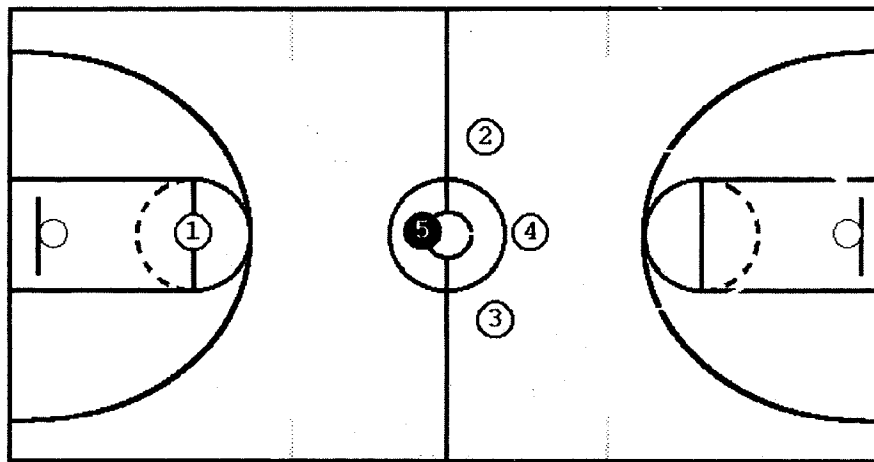


Diagram 7b: Jump Ball, Offensive Tip

but on the opposite side of the court. He is now lined up behind #5. While #2 and #3 are in the same spots also but they should take a step toward the opponents' basket in more of a defensive position. #1 stays in the same position whether it is an offensive- or defensive-tip alignment. #5 now tries to tip the ball back to a teammate. The opponents will probably be looking to tip the ball toward their basket so #2, #3, and #4 must be alert to take away any openings.

These are two basic alignments for a jump ball. You may want to use your own formation. These do not need a lot of practice time.

A DRILL TO PRACTICE JUMP BALLS

Name: JUMP BALL REVIEW

Purpose: To teach players what to do in a jump ball situation.

Organization: Five players line up in a particular jump ball formation with no opponent. You, the coach, toss the ball up and the players execute the proper movement when gaining possession of the ball.

Coaching Points: Emphasize players not moving too soon and stepping into the circle. Work on good timing on passes. You should stress to players to be aggressive in going after the ball after the tip.

B. TAKING THE BALL OUT OF BOUNDS

Your team must know how to properly take the ball out of bounds and bring it back into play. This is called inbounding the ball. A team must inbound the ball when they gain possession after the following situations:

- (a) if an opponent makes a basket,
- (b) if an opponent makes a free-throw shot when it is a one-shot penalty or the second attempt of a two-shot penalty,
- (c) if there is a foul, violation, or turnover by the opponent,
- (d) if following the alternating possession rule, or
- (e) if the ball is last touched by the opponent before it goes out of bounds.

Your team will have to inbound the ball in various locations, depending on which of the above occurred. You may have to inbound it from the side, from the opponent's basket or from its own basket. Another consideration is whether or not the opponent is allowing you to freely inbound the ball. Some opponents will extend their defense the length of the court and will not allow the ball to be easily inbounded. This is called a press. Many youth leagues do not allow pressing until the final quarter of a game. Your team must be prepared for this. The following plays are designed to inbound the ball according to the five situations mentioned in (a) through (e).

(a) If an opponent makes a basket: We are going to assume that the opponent is not pressing but is allowing you to freely inbound the ball. The ball should be passed in by the #4 or #5 player. This player is now known as the inbounder. Whoever is closest to the ball when it goes through the net takes it out. Make sure to instruct these players not to stand directly under the basket when passing it in. They may want to throw it long to an open teammate with a baseball-type pass. The problem is it could hit any part of the backboard in flight, which is a violation and results in loss of possession. They should take it out to the left or right of the backboard. We are going to assume that #5 is the inbounder. Then #1 should move into a direct passing lane with the inbounder while #2 and #3 go down opposite sides of the court. #4 should run down the middle of the court to the opposite baseline. #5 passes it to #1 who dribbles the ball up the court. #5 will run down the court and assume a position opposite #4 on the baseline. (Diagram7c)

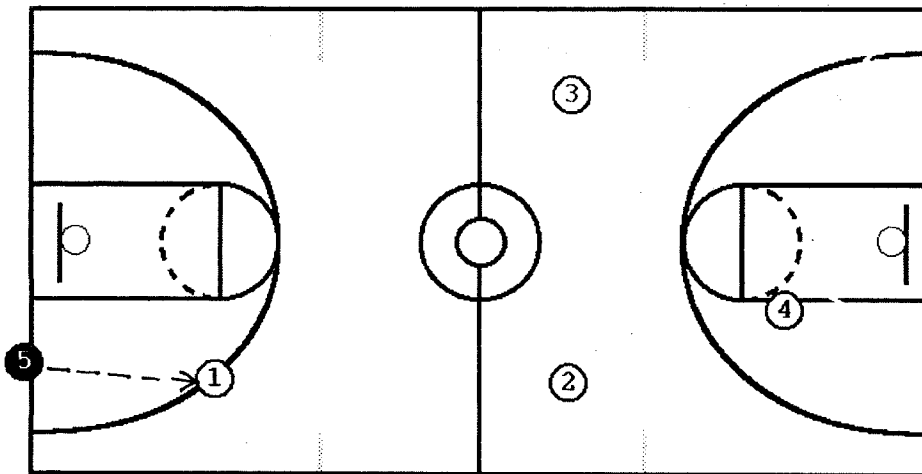


Diagram 7c: Out of Bounds

If the opponent is pressing and not allowing you to freely inbound the ball, your team must adjust. You now must set the team up in what is called a press-breaker. You and your players must recognize when the opponent is pressing and call out “press-breaker.” The best way to beat a press is to inbound the ball before the opponents can set up their press. In this case #5 should try to get the ball in to #1 as quickly as possible. With the ball in the hands of your best dribbler and passer, you have the best chance of getting the ball up the court successfully. Adjustments need to be made by the #2, #3, and #4 players. These three players should look back to see if #1 needs help against the press. If he or she is trapped by two defenders and cannot dribble the ball up, then #2, #3, and #4 should move into a position at half-court rather than take off down the court. Now #1 can pass to three different players at half-court or back to #5 who has stepped in to the court after inbounding it (Diagram 7d).

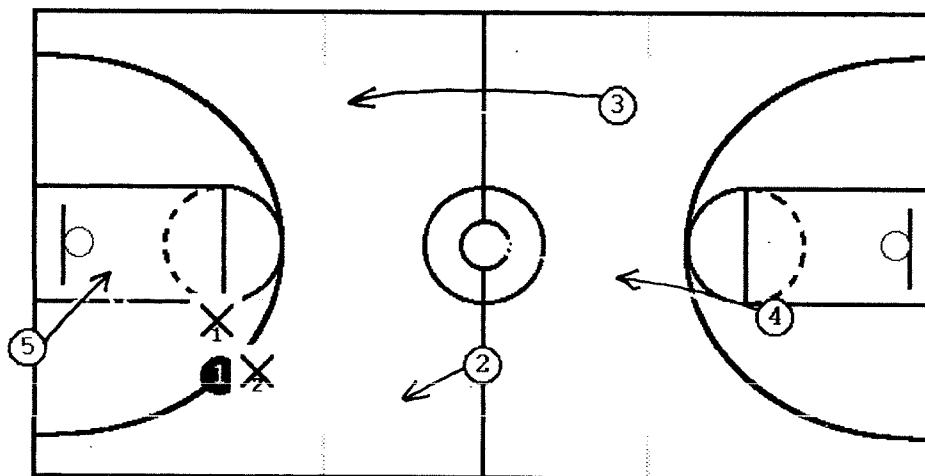


Diagram 7d: Press Break

#1 should attempt to get the ball back after passing it, by moving to an open spot to get a return pass. This should give you a basic strategy against a team that presses. You do not need to spend a great deal of time practicing this unless your particular league permits pressing and the majority of your opponents use it. It can be practiced in a five-against-five situation with out break-down drills.

- (b) If an opponent makes a free-throw: Same as A
- (c) If there is a foul, violation, or turnover by the opponent: Same as A
- (d) If following the alternating possession rule: Same as A
- (e) If the ball is last touched by the opponent before it goes out: Same as A

If your team is awarded the ball under the opponent's basket or on the side as a result of a foul, violation, or turnover, follow A. If your team gets the ball at half-court or on the side near your basket, you can also follow A. Players will basically be in the same positions but closer together. You should not hesitate to make adjustments or use your own plays in these situations. This is just a basic pattern to follow.

When the ball is awarded to you under your own basket, you may want to utilize a set play that may create an easy scoring opportunity. Or again, you may have your own favorites that you use successfully. The following is a simple one that you can use with one variation. Make #1 your inbounder so that you have a good passer throwing the ball inbounds. Position all four of your players along the foul-line extended spaced about three or four feet apart and facing #1. Then #2 and #3 can occupy the two outside positions with #4 and #5 the inside spots. When #1 slaps the ball, all four players break toward the basket with the two inside players criss-crossing. Of course #1 should not be looking directly at #4 or #5 but rather toward the outside, so as not to give the play away. A variation would be to let #2 and #4 criss-cross while #5 and #3 criss-cross (Diagram 7e).

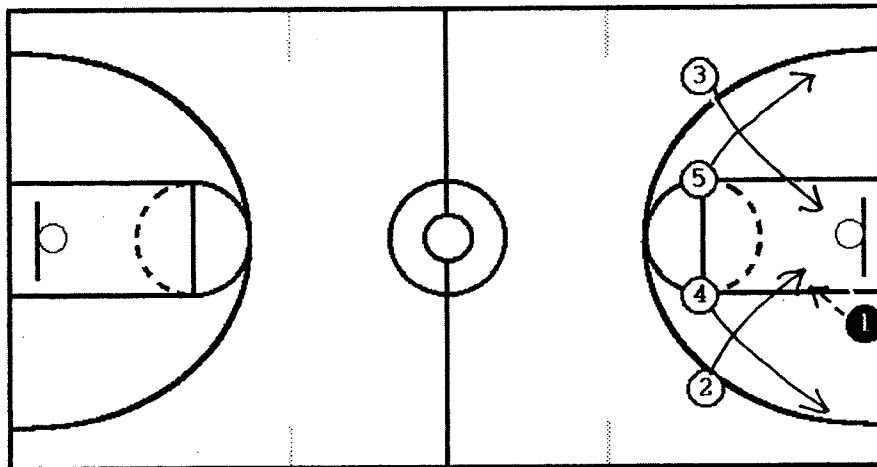


Diagram 7e: Out of Bounds Play

All these situations can be practiced in five against five. You should practice these plays for a few minutes each practice.

C. TAKING POSSESSION OF THE BALL FROM A REBOUND

When the opponent takes a shot and misses, your team will go from defense to offense if it gets the rebound. Your players need to be organized in this situation. You want to get the ball in the hands of your team's best ballhandler and passer which should be your #1. Therefore, you must instruct your #1 to get in position with whomever gets the rebound to receive the ball. This is very important, especially if you want your team to play up-tempo or fast-break style of basketball.

2. BRINGING THE BALL UP THE COURT

We have discussed how to inbound the ball in an organized manner. We also covered what to do when the opponent misses a shot and your team gets the rebound. Once the ball is passed in bounds or you get a rebound, there are a couple of different ways to bring the ball up. You can let your #1 dribble the ball up while teammates run down the floor to get into position to run a half-court offense. This would follow the half-court style of play discussed in the section on "style of offense." This is a safe way of getting the ball up the court because you have your best dribbler bringing it up. #1 should dribble the ball up the middle of the court while #2 and #3 run to opposite wing positions. The wing position is where the 3-point line intersects the free-throw line extended. The #4 and #5 position themselves on both sides of the key in the low-post area. All four players face #1 as he or she is approaching with the dribble (Diagram 7f).

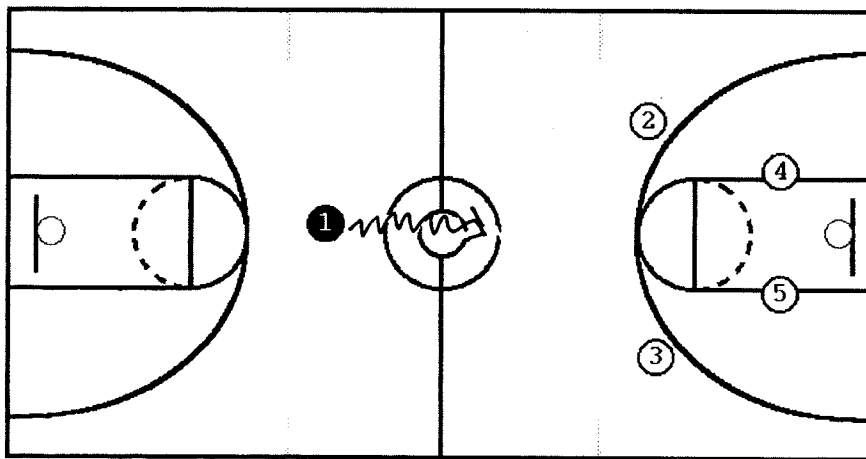


Diagram 7f: Bringing the Ball Up the Floor

If you have a team with good speed and you prefer the up-tempo style, you can try to bring the ball up the floor faster, looking to score a basket right away. This requires more organization than bringing it up slowly. The inbounder (or #5) should look to pass the ball long down the court right away. The #2 and #3 must sprint down each side of the court looking to receive the long pass. #2 should run down the right side and #3 the left. This can result in an easy shot. We will assume that #5 is the inbounder and is right-handed. He or she would then be taking the ball out on the right-side which would make it possible to throw a long baseball pass. #4 should sprint down the floor on the same side that #5 is passing the ball inbounds. #4 should be looking back to the ball in case the ball is passed long to him. If #2, #3, and #4 are guarded, then #5 should quickly pass the ball into #1 who is positioned at the free-throw line extended and directly in line with #5. #1 looks to make a quick pass to #4 first, #2 second, and #3 third while dribbling the ball up the court full speed. If #1 is able to complete a pass to #2, then #2 should look to pass the ball to #4 who may be open for a lay-up. If #2 is a good outside shooter, he or she may take the open shot. If #1 is unable to pass the ball up the court, he or she should dribble the ball over to the middle of the court to the point position to start the half-court offense. #2 and #3 should position themselves at the wings while #4 and #5 set up in the low post area. Your team is now ready to begin running a half-court offense.

3. TEACHING THE “DRIBBLE-DRIVE” HALF-COURT OFFENSE

This is the most basic offense that a team can use. This is basically a “survival offense” that can be utilized by the coach who has no background or experience in teaching the offensive part of the game.

A. “THE WHOLE PICTURE”

It was stated in an earlier section that the first step in effectively teaching a half-court offense to your team is to present the “whole picture” to them. This will give them a general idea of what each player does in relation to his or her four other teammates.

1. **PLAYER POSITION:** Where players need to be positioned on the court
#1 (point guard): He brings the ball up the court and crosses the half-court line trying to stay in the middle of the court. This player should keep dribbling toward the top of the key.

#2 and #3 (guard and small forward): These two players position themselves at opposite sides of the key where the 3-point line meets the imaginary free-throw line extended. This position is called the wing.

#4 and #5 (power forward and center): These two players position themselves on opposite sides of the key and close to the basket. They should be standing on the bottom block of the lane marker. This is called the low post area (Diagram 7g).

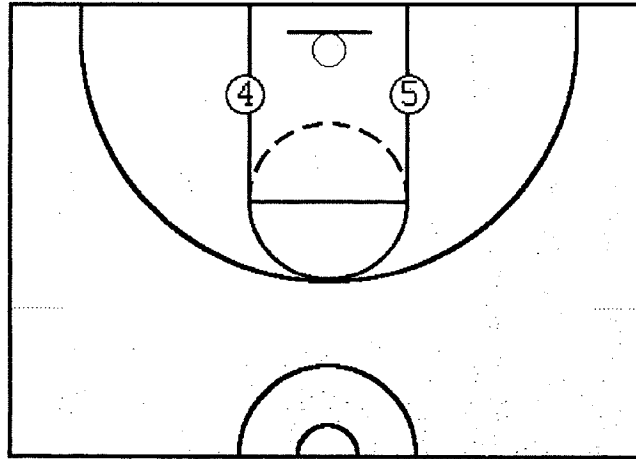


Diagram 7g: Low Post Position

2. OFFENSE AGAINST MAN-TO-MAN DEFENSE

#1 attempts to drive past the defender and score on a lay-up or short shot. #1 may also pass to #4 or #5 for close-in shots if their defenders leave to help stop #1. Players #4 and #5 must look for rebounds when #1 shoots. Players #2 and #3 can also go to the basket to look for a rebound. One of these players needs to be assigned to automatically run back on defense whenever a shot is taken. This will help eliminate any easy basket that the opponent could score by passing the ball long down the court. #2 and #3 can also act as helpers in case #1 drives and cannot shoot or passes off to #4 or #5. If #1 does pass the ball out to either #2 or #3, he or she should run and get the ball back. Then #1 would dribble the ball back to the point position to start the offense over again (Diagram 7h).

3. WHAT TO DO AGAINST ZONE DEFENSE

2-3 ZONE DEFENSE: There are not many adjustments that need to be made. #1 generally will not be able to drive all the way to the basket. This type of defense positions a defender in the middle of the key to stop any player from driving directly to the basket. #1 may be able to drive between the top two defenders and stop and shoot from about the free-throw line. #1, #2, and #3 should look to dribble drive the ball between the two zone defenders. This is called "driving a gap." It forces two defenders to guard one offensive player, which means that the

rest of the zone defense is outnumbered by the offense. This should result in an open shot for a teammate. He can also look to pass down to #4 or #5. #2 and 3 should look for a pass from #1 and be ready to shoot the ball or “drive a gap” between two defenders (Diagram 7i).

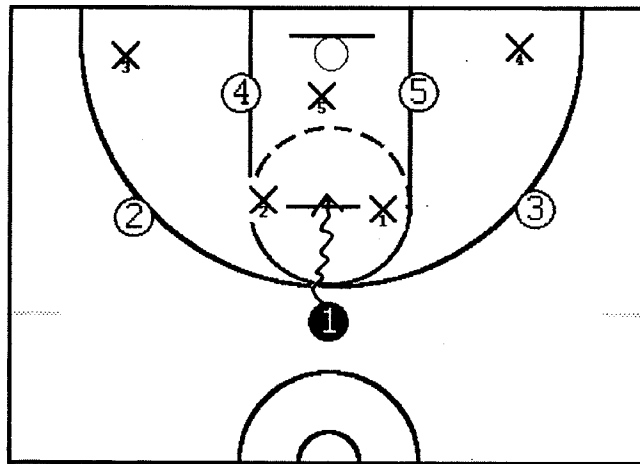


Diagram 7i: Driving the Gap

1-2-2 or 1-3-1 ZONE DEFENSE: #1 should dribble the ball over to one side or the other opposite the top of the key. Either #4 or #5 can move to a position at the free-throw line area. If #1 dribbles toward the side of #3, then #3 should move down to a position near the baseline. Then #2 would move from the wing position to a spot opposite #1. #1 and #2 would look to “drive the gaps” in the zone. They also look to pass to #3 and #4 on the baseline or to #5 at the free-throw line.

4. A DRILL TO INTRODUCE THE GENERAL IDEA OF THE OFFENSE

Name: FIVE-AGAINST-FIVE OFFENSIVE REVIEW

Purpose: To familiarize your team with how the offense is run

Organization: Five offensive players against five defensive players on the half-court. Players are taught the offense by first learning the various positions (#1 through #5), the areas on the court, where to move, and the different scoring possibilities. Players should be walked through the different movements in the beginning and gradually increase their speed. Defense should not try to actively play defense. This is called “dummy” defense. They are basically there to make it easier for the offense to see where scoring opportunities can develop. You can spend five minutes with one team on offense and then switch to the other team.

Coaching Points: Make sure you explain as clearly as possible each position on the court. Be sure to ask players constantly if there are any questions. Do not move through it too quickly unless you feel your team is learning it quickly.

Variations:

1. Use markers (plastic disks or tape) on the floor to mark locations where players need to be. This can be very helpful in speeding up the learning process.
2. Use a chalkboard to show how the offense works. You can also hand out copies of the offense diagrammed on paper.

Summary:

Players should have a general idea of the offense against both man-to-man and zone defenses. It is important that you as a coach and your team get a feel for how the offense works. Time should be spent in every practice in developing the whole picture. As players learn the individual fundamentals and practice the breakdown drills covered in the next few sections, you will notice a great improvement in the overall execution.

B. NECESSARY INDIVIDUAL FUNDAMENTALS

Remember that the second step in properly teaching a half-court offense is to teach the individual fundamentals that players must be able to perform to make the whole offense run correctly, whether it be against man-to-man or zone defense. The following is a list of fundamentals that each player must develop in order to execute this offense:

1. Assuming the offensive ready position.
2. Dribble driving the ball to the basket
3. Making a chest pass and catching a pass.
4. Catching a pass in the low post and scoring.
5. Getting a rebound and putting the ball back up in the basket.

1. ASSUMING THE OFFENSIVE READY POSITION

Players need to be taught this, which is one of the most important offensive fundamentals in the game. The ready position, or sometimes referred to as the triple-threat position, is assumed whenever a player catches the ball in the scoring area. It is referred to as the triple threat because this position allows the player to

perform three options with the ball: (1) dribble drive, (2) pass, or (3) shoot. The following is a list of points that must be taught in order:

a. FACING THE BASKET

Teach your players that they must face their bodies to the basket and to their defender. Players have a tendency not to do this. As the player catches a pass, he must pivot on the foot that is opposite the shooting hand. Right-handed shooters always pivot on the left foot and the opposite holds true for left-handed shooters. The foot that is allowed to move is referred to as the shooting foot because it is the same as the shooting hand. Players should focus their vision on the rim which makes them a constant threat to shoot the ball.

b. FOOT POSITION

Feet should be shoulder-width apart with the shooting foot slightly forward of the pivot foot, making sure the feet are pointing directly to the basket. Players sometimes may have their feet properly placed on the floor but their toes may be pointing somewhere other than directly to the basket.

c. HEAD OVER THE WAIST

Teach players to keep their heads over their waists to insure proper body balance. Players sometimes have a tendency to position their heads over their feet which can cause a loss of good body balance.

d. BACK STRAIGHT

This is critical for a proper ready position. Keeping the back straight allows the head to be over the waist.

e. HAND POSITION ON THE BALL

The ball should be held as if it were going to be shot. The shooting hand should be placed directly behind the ball and the other hand on the side and slightly under the ball. This will allow the player to be able to shoot the ball quickly if the defender is playing back.

f. BALL CLOSE TO THE CHEST

Instruct players to keep the ball close to the chest and no lower than the waist. If the ball is raised over the head the offensive player has taken away his or her own options of shooting or dribbling. If the ball is brought down too low, then the only option available is the dribble drive.

Keeping the ball in the proper position allows the player to quickly utilize all options.

g. KNEES FLEXED

The knees should be slightly bent which allows a player to move quicker should he or she decide to dribble drive to the basket.

h. WEIGHT EVENLY DISTRIBUTED

It is very important that players maintain proper balance. Players should feel the weight evenly in the buttocks. Players sometimes will have their weight on the shooting foot which will cause them to lean forward. This generally results of having the shooting foot too far forward. This is very common in younger players. It is important that this be corrected right away by moving the shooting foot back slightly.

A DRILL TO TEACH YOUR PLAYERS TO ASSUME THE OFFENSIVE
READY POSITION

Name: MASS FORMATION READY POSITION

Organization: Players are positioned in mass formation. This drill should be run first without a ball. Later each player can use a ball. Players are holding an imaginary ball while assuming the ready position on your command of "Ready." You can also throw an imaginary pass to the whole group and they catch the ball and immediately assume the ready position.

Coaching Points: Reinforce correct execution of the ready position. Make sure players have proper placement of the feet. Check for players leaning too far forward because of incorrect foot alignment or a back that is not straight.

Variations: Have players set the ball on the floor and then pick up the ball and quickly assume the proper ready position. You can also have players toss the ball slightly out in front of them and pick it up quickly and assume the ready position. Players can also quarter turn to the left or right and then on your command of "Ready!" turn back to the front in the ready position.

Competition: Randomly award points to players properly performing the ready position.

3. MAKING A CHEST PASS AND CATCHING A PASS

Teach players to start in a balanced stance, holding the ball with two hands in front of the chest. The hands should be slightly behind the ball with the elbows in. They should step in the direction of the target, extending the legs, back, and arms, then forcing the wrists and fingers through the ball, propelling it toward the potential receiver. Players should not let the strong or dominate hand do the work but rather both hands equally. The ball should come off the fingertips which will cause backspin on the ball. This gives direction to the flight of the ball. Make sure players follow through by pointing the fingers at the target with the palms facing down.

Players must be taught to catch the ball with the hands in a relaxed position, giving with the ball as it is caught. There are two different ways of catching the ball. The first employs the use of both hands forming a pocket, with the fingers spread and facing the passer. The ball is then caught with both hands simultaneously. The thumbs should be close together so as not to allow the ball to go through the hands. It is important that the receiver have his palms facing the passer for two reasons: First, it is easier to catch the ball with the hands already in position, and second, it gives the passer a target to throw to.

The second way of catching the ball is with the block-and-tuck method. Teach players that when they are facing the passer they extend out the hand furthest from the defender as a target for the passer. This acts as a blocker for the ball as it arrives. The other hand is used to tuck the ball in. This method of catching should be utilized when the receiver is being closely defended.

A helpful hint in teaching your players to catch the ball is to instruct them to call for the ball verbally. When the receiver yells "Ball," he is telling the passer that he is ready to catch the ball. It also assures that the receiver is concentrating on catching the ball.

A DRILL TO TEACH YOUR PLAYERS HOW TO MAKE A CHEST PASS AND HOW TO CATCH A PASS

Name: PARTNER PASSING

Purpose: To develop players' ability to chest pass correctly and receive a pass correctly.

Organization: Each player has a partner positioned opposite him at a distance that would be appropriate for the strength level of the age group you are working with.

The maximum distance should be fifteen feet. There should be plenty of room between groups. Each partnership has a ball. Players pass back and forth to each other.

Coaching Points: Emphasize correct technique in both passing and receiving. Stress the importance of making passes that travel in a direct line to the receiver. Encourage players to pass the ball crisply and with force. Passes that travel slowly have more of a chance of being deflected or intercepted by the defense. Have players practice both the two-hand and block-and-tuck methods of catching. Make sure players call for the ball first and tell the passer not to throw the ball until they hear "Ball."

Variations:

1. Have players move closer together or farther apart as they are passing. They can also move left or right. This allows both the passer and the receiver to work on execution while moving.
2. Have partners start on the baseline and pass back and forth while running up the court and back. Partners can leave in waves with three partnerships going at the same time. All partnerships go up first and then return leaving in waves.
3. Form groups of three players in triangle alignments on different areas of the court. Players pass in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction. You can also have players do three-way passing on the move. Have players line up on the baseline with a player in the middle and one on each side about 12 feet apart from each other. Players leave in waves with the middleman passing to either side and getting a return pass. You can also teach the three-man weave by having the passer cut behind the receiver continuously up the court.

Competition:

1. Have players pass back and forth and you randomly award points to partnerships whenever a chest pass is correctly executed. You can also award points for proper catching technique. You can do this for time or to a specific number of points.
2. Have players pass back and forth as fast as they can for a certain length of time. The partnership with the most passes in that time are the winners.

4. CATCHING A PASS OFF IN THE LOW POST AND SCORING

Players need to be instructed on how to catch a pass close to the basket and score. The pass comes from a teammate who dribble drives to the basket and draws the defense. This opens up short passing opportunities to teammates who are positioned close to the basket.

When teaching this fundamental, review the fundamentals of catching a pass. Teach players to be very aggressive in catching the ball close to the basket. They must come and meet the ball because of the confined space close to the basket. There will also be defenders swiping at the ball in an attempt to steal the short pass.

After receiving the pass, the player must be taught to quickly face the basket and shoot either the lay-up or the short shot using the backboard. In this case there should be no dribbling before shooting because of the short distance to the basket.

A DRILL TO TEACH YOUR PLAYERS HOW TO SCORE CLOSE TO THE BASKET

Name: TWO-LINE SHOOTING: CATCH AND SCORE

Purpose: To teach players how to catch a pass and score close to the basket.

Organization: Players work in groups of six forming two lines of three players each. One line is positioned at the top of the key with the first two players in the line with a basketball. This is called the driving line. The other line is positioned at the low post on either the right or left side. This is called the low post line. The first player in the driving line dribble drives to the basket and passes off to the first player in the low post line. That player then shoots a lay-up or short shot using the backboard. If the shot is missed, make sure the shooter rebounds the ball and tries to put it back again until the basket is made. He then rebounds the ball and dribbles it back out to the driving line. The drill continues with the low post line changing sides after running the drill for a specific amount of time.

Coaching Points: Make sure players are catching the ball aggressively and shooting the ball strongly. Emphasize to players to have their hands up in anticipating the pass coming.

Variations:

1. The driving line can be moved to different spots on the perimeter. This gives a bit of a different passing angle for the low post player.
2. Place a defender on the low post offensive player to make it more like a game situation. As the dribble driver approaches the basket, the defender moves over to defend that player. The driver then passes off to his team mate for the lay-up or the short shot.

Competition:

1. Have one group of six players compete against another to a certain number of the points. Award two points for every lay-up made on the first attempt and one for every one made on the second or third attempt.
2. Form two-man teams of a guard with a forward or center. Place a defender in the middle of the key to guard both the dribble driver and the low post player. Award the partnership one point for scoring.

5. GETTING A REBOUND AND PUTTING THE BALL BACK UP

Players need to be taught to go to the basket on every shot attempt and always assume that the shot is not going in. You must teach players, especially the taller ones, to be aggressive in going for rebounds. There are a few simple maneuvers you can teach players when trying for offensive rebounds but it really comes down to hustle and persistence. The following is a list of simple moves to teach your players when going for an offensive rebound:

(a) Straight cut: This is used when the defender tries to pivot into the offensive player when attempting to block the path. The offensive player makes a quick move straight to the basket before the defender can complete the pivot.

(b) Fake and go: The offensive player makes a one- or two-step fake one way and then cuts the other way directly to the basket looking for the offensive rebound possibility.

(c) Step back: This is to be used when the defender is leaning hard into the offensive player on the block out. The offensive player simply takes a step back so that the opponent loses balance, then cuts by and goes for the ball.

Offensive players should be taught to never bring the ball below the chin when securing a rebound. Bringing the ball down low allows defenders the opportunity to deflect the ball out of the rebounder's hands. Many players have the natural tendency to bring the ball down low with the idea that they can protect the ball better. Actually the opposite is true. It is much more difficult for the defender to knock the ball away from a player who keeps the ball high.

After the ball is brought to the chin, the offensive player should immediately face the basket and shoot the ball, using the backboard whenever possible. The ball should not be dribbled if at all possible.

A DRILL TO TEACH YOUR PLAYERS HOW TO OFFENSIVE REBOUND AND SCORE

Name: BACKBOARD REBOUNDING

Purpose: To teach offensive players how to effectively rebound a missed shot and score.

Organization: Form groups of no less than three and no more than five players. Each player has a ball and forms a single-file line about 10 feet from the basket on either the left or right side of the basket. The first player in line uses a two-handed chest pass to throw the ball off the backboard above the rim. The player then moves to the basket and jumps up to rebound the ball. The ball is then shot right away. If the shot is missed, the player rebounds it again and puts the ball back up. After the shot is made, the player dribbles the ball to the end of the line.

Coaching Points: Encourage players to jump high in the air and rebound the ball aggressively. Stress to players to keep the ball under the chin and no lower. Make sure players are facing the basket with their shoulders and hips squared up. Players should shoot the shot using the backboard.

Variations:

1. Have players move their line to the free-throw line. Each player hands you the ball and you toss it off the backboard. This forces the player to concentrate on where the ball is coming off the backboard without knowing ahead of time.

2. Have the first player in line be a defender and the second player be the offensive player. You, the coach, toss the ball off the backboard and the offensive player tries to get around the defender for the rebound. This can be run from different spots on the floor.

Competition:

1. Award a point to each player as he executes the drill properly. Play to a certain number of points or for time.
2. Using the second variation suggested, award two points to the offense if they get the rebound and one point if the ball is put back up in the basket. Award the defense one point if they get the rebound. This drill can be run two against two, three against three, etc.

SUMMARY:

We have just identified the individual player fundamentals that need to be mastered to effectively execute the “dribble drive offense.” How well your team is able to run this offense will depend on their ability to properly perform these fundamentals. It is important to remember that you are putting your best ballhandler and scorer in the middle to run this offense. However, you want to be developing the other players' abilities to play the middle position also. Working hard in practice in perfecting the ability to handle the ball, drive to the basket, make the lay-up or short shot, or pass to an open teammate should be the goal for each player.

C. BREAK-DOWN DRILLS

The third step in teaching a half-court offense is the use of break-down drills. These drills are designed to practice specific parts of the offense that involve two, three, or four players. If we use drills with five players, we are then back to the “whole picture.”

The following are a few break-down drills that can be used to improve execution of the offense. Be sure to use your own imagination in devising break-down drills that will help your particular team improve its offensive execution. The first two drills are used against man-to-man defense and the second two are for developing the offense against a zone defense. It should be noted that these drills can be run without any defense. It is recommended you do that if your team is not executing the drills well against defense.

1. THREE-AGAINST-THREE DRIVE AND SCORE
2. THREE-AGAINST-THREE ON A SIDE
3. THREE-AGAINST-THREE DRIVE THE ZONE
4. FOUR-AGAINST-FOUR ATTACK THE BOX

A DRILL: THREE-AGAINST-THREE DRIVE AND SCORE

Purpose: To develop players' abilities to dribble drive to the basket and score or pass off.

Organization: Players form teams of three with one player positioned at half-court with the ball and one on each side of the key in the low post area. A second team is assigned an offensive player to guard. The player at half-court tries to drive around the defender and score on a lay-up or a short shot. If one of the bottom defenders comes up to help, then the driver would pass off to an open teammate who tries to score. It ends when either the offensive team scores or the defense gets the ball. Each team gets a turn on offense and moves to defense while a new team comes on as offense. This drill can be run for a certain period of time or a specific number of turns by each team on offense.

Coaching Points: Be sure the driver is under control when driving to the basket. Emphasize the importance of watching to see what the defense does near the basket. The driver needs to make the right decision on whether to drive all the way to the basket, shoot the short shot, or pass the ball to a teammate positioned near the basket.

Variations:

1. If you see that your team is not quite ready to play against hard defense, run the drill without defense or tell the defensive team to play "dummy" defense. This means that defense allows the offensive players to basically do what they want.
2. Work on specific scoring plays without defense, for example, the driver passing off to the left side or the driver shooting only the short shot.

Competition:

Award a point to the offensive team for scoring a basket. You could award two points to the offense for scoring on a specific option such as the short shot by the driver. You could also award a point to the offense for getting an offensive rebound.

Name: THREE-AGAINST-THREE ON A SIDE

Purpose: To teach players how to run the offense on one side of the court.

Organization: Players form teams of three, with one player at half-court with the ball, one positioned on the right wing and one positioned in the right low post area. A second team plays man-to-man defense. The player at half-court attempts to drive the right side of the key and looks to score or pass off to the low post player or out to the teammate located on the right wing. The driver would then work to get free to receive the ball back from the wing. The drill then continues until the offense scores or the defense get the ball.

Variations:

1. Have your team run this drill without defense or with “dummy” defense. You can also put defenders on only specific offensive players and gradually work up to three against three.
2. This drill could also be run full court. Do not allow any long passes and make the driver dribble the ball up under control to allow teammates to position themselves in the proper spots. This makes the drill more like a real game.

Competition: Follow the same suggestions mentioned in the previous drill.

Name: THREE-AGAINST-THREE DRIVE THE ZONE

Purpose: To develop players’ ability to drive a zone and score or pass off.

Organization: Players form teams of three, with one player positioned at half-court with the ball, one player in the left low post and the other in the right low post. The defensive team positions two players to the left and right of the top of the key, simulating the top spots of a two-one-two zone. The third player is positioned in

the middle of the key, simulating the middle defender of the zone. Defenders should have hands up and should be instructed to defend their area and not a specific offensive player. The driver attempts to drive between the two top defenders to score or pass off to an open teammate underneath. The driver may get surrounded by defenders and not have anyone to pass off to. You as the coach can be a safety outlet for the driver to pass the ball off to. If this happens, the driver should then move back out toward half-court and get the ball back from the coach. Each team can have a certain number of times on offense or the drill can be run for a specific amount of time.

Variations:

1. Have the two top defenders move from the top of the key area of the zone defense to the bottom near the baseline. This will give the offensive team the opportunity to work against the bottom part of a two-one-two zone defense. Allow the low post offensive players to step a bit further out away from the basket to catch the ball. The driver should be looking for the short jumpshot which will force the middle defender to come out farther from the basket to defend. The driver should then look to drive past this defender and look for an open teammate in the low post.
2. Have the defensive team position themselves in a triangle defense with one defender located at the top of the key, one at the left wing, and the third at the right wing. This represents the top of a one-two-two zone defense. Have the driver choose a side to try to drive through to score or pass off.

Competition: Use the suggestions mentioned in previous drills.

DRILL: FOUR-AGAINST-FOUR ATTACK THE BOX

Purpose: To teach your players how to attack the middle of a zone defense.

Organization: Players form teams of four, with one player with the ball at the top of the key, one player in both the left and right low post, and the fourth positioned on either the left or right wing. The defensive team sets up in a box formation with two defenders up high near the top of the key and two located near the baseline. This is actually a two-one-two defense without the defender in the middle. The driver looks to drive the ball between the two top defenders while the low post offensive players look to move around to get free to catch the ball. The driver

should look to score or pass off. The offensive player on the wing can move over to the other side of the court from time to time and should always be prepared to catch the ball from the driver. This drill is run for time or a specific number of turns on offense.

Variations: Have the defense change their alignment from a box to a diamond formation. The driver should choose a side to try and penetrate. The drill continues as previously explained.

Competition: Use the suggestions mentioned in the previous drills.

SUMMARY:

We have just identified several break-down drills against both man-to-man and zone defenses. There are many different drills you can come up with using your own imagination. One of the exciting parts of coaching is the opportunity to be creative. Make sure your break-down drills have a purpose that ties into the "whole picture" of what you are trying to accomplish.

D. PUTTING IT ALL BACK TOGETHER AGAIN

The final step in teaching the offense is refining it in a five-against-zero, -one, -two, -three, -four, or -five situation. We are putting all the pieces back together and working on execution as it relates to an actual game. Most of this time should be spent in five- against-five situations. If you have to do a lot of five-against-one, -two, -three, or -four situations then you should spend more time on break-down drills. But five-against-zero can be used to improve timing and execution and is very helpful in developing the offense. The following is a list of five-against-five variations that can help to develop proper execution of your offense. These can be applied against both man-to-man and zone defenses.

1. FIVE-AGAINST-FIVE: TWENTY PASSES
2. FIVE-AGAINST-FIVE ACTION

Drill: FIVE-AGAINST-ZERO: TWENTY PASSES

Purpose: To develop timing, execution, and proper passing

Organization: Five players execute the offense against no defense and do not shoot the ball until they have successfully completed twenty passes without a mistake.

Coaching Points: Stress proper spacing between players, cutting, timing, passing and overall offensive execution.

Variations:

1. Run this drill full court with the team correctly inbound the ball, bringing it up the floor, running to the proper spots on offense, and executing the half-court offense.
2. You can assign from one up to five players to defend. You can also have five defenders play "dummy" defense.

Competition: Have one team of five running it at one end of the court and another team at the other. Have both teams start at the same time, trying to complete twenty passes first. Have an assistant coach count the passes or make sure the players count the passes out loud. You can also run the drill for a specific length of time with the team completing the most passes being the winner.

Drill: FIVE-AGAINST-FIVE ACTION

Purpose: To develop offensive techniques and reinforce proper execution of fundamentals.

Organization: Five-against-five half court with various rules. The offensive team gets three opportunities in a row to score against the defense. After three attempts, the offensive team goes to defense and the defense goes to offense. After both teams have had three chances to play offense, it completes what is called an inning. You can play a certain number of innings similar to baseball. Award the offensive team a point for every basket. You can also establish other ways for the offensive team to score points. For example, you can award a point for every five passes successfully completed to encourage teamwork. Your criteria for scoring points can be applied to what the team does collectively or what players do individually. For example, you say that points can be scored by facing the basket in the ready position every time the ball is caught.

You can also take points away or give out negative points for not properly executing certain fundamentals. You can also penalize the offensive team for poor execution either individually or as a team by taking away one of their chances on offense. Remember that each team gets three opportunities on offense in a row.

Coaching Points: This is one of the best drills to improve offensive execution as a team and individually. Make sure players are executing the offense properly. You may want an assistant coach watching for proper execution of individual fundamentals while you watch team execution.

4. ADDING OPTIONS TO YOUR OFFENSE

The following is a list of options that can be added to the offense that has been previously presented. Each option is followed by a brief explanation.

Options to use against man-to-man-defense:

A. "Give and go": #1 passes to the either #2 or #3 and then cuts to the basket looking for a return pass to score on a lay-up or short shot. #1 continues cutting around to the oppositeside, and the opposite wing moves over to occupy #1 original position (Diagram 7j).

B. "Wing pass to low post and score": Let's assume that #2 has the ball and is on the same side as #4 who is positioned in the low post area. #2 looks to pass the ball inside to #4 who turns to score inside (Diagram 7k).

C. "Baseline give and go": #2 has the ball on the wing and #4 moves out from the low post position toward the corner. #2 passes the ball to #4 and then cuts immediately to the basket looking for a return pass and the possibility to score off a lay-up or short shot. Whoever is occupying the point position (either #1 or #3) will move over to the wing position vacated by #2 (Diagram 7l).

D. "L-cut" and "exchange": Whenever a player moves from the wing to the point position, he or she cuts in a straight line from the wing to the middle of the free-throw line and then cuts in a straight line to the top of the key. The player thus cuts in the shape of an "L". This is the best way for that player to get free to receive a pass at the top of the key. "Exchange" is when the player at the point position switches positions with the player occupying the wing opposite of the side

where the ball is. This gives movement to the offense which makes it more difficult for the opponent to defend (Diagram 7m).

E. "Screen away": #1 passes to #2 and then moves to the middle of the free-throw line, looking to set a screen for #3 who is making an "L" cut toward the same spot. #3 breaks out to the top of the key, looking to receive a pass from #2 for a possible shot. #1 takes the spot on the wing vacated by #3.

F. "Screen down": #1 has the ball at the point while #2 and #3 move down to the low post area to set screens for #4 and #5. These players both look for shots or continue to move out and occupy the wing positions.

G. "Curl cut": #1 passes the ball to #2 and moves down to the free-throw line to set a screen for #3 as in option five. #3, instead of breaking out to the free-throw line, makes a cut around the top side of #1 and breaks directly to the basket, looking for a pass from #2 to score on a lay-up or short shot.

H. "Screen and roll": #1 passes to #2 and then moves toward the pass and sets a screen for #2. #2 drives off the screen, looking for a shot or an opportunity to drive to the basket. Meanwhile #1 looks for a return pass from #2 while cutting directly to the basket.

Options to use against zone defense against all zones:

A. "Screen for the point": #2 or #3 can set a screen on the closest top defender for #1 to dribble off from the point. #1 looks for the shot or an opportunity to drive to the basket and score or pass off to #4 or #5 (Diagram 7n).

B. "Screen for the wing": #1 passes to either wing and moves to set a screen for whomever has the ball. That player should drive off the screen looking for the shot, driving to the basket, or passing to an open teammate (Diagram 7o).

C. "Double baseline screen": #4 and #5 position themselves shoulder-to-shoulder facing the inside of the key in the low post area on either side. The wing player on the opposite side should move down to the low post position. The ball is passed to the wing on the same side of the double screen. The opposite wing player cuts across the key off the double screen looking for a pass from the wing. This player should have the opportunity for a good shot or pass inside to #4 or #5 (Diagram 7p).

SUMMARY:

The objective of Step 7 is to provide a basic offensive system for you and to provide the necessary information on how to effectively teach it. It is by no means the only offense you can run. You may have your own system of offensive play that you prefer to use. The key to successful offense is your players' individual scoring abilities and their ability to work together to get the highest percentage shots possible. Whether you use this offense or your own, you should apply the teaching concepts such as presenting the "whole picture," breaking it down into smaller parts, making drills competitive, etc.

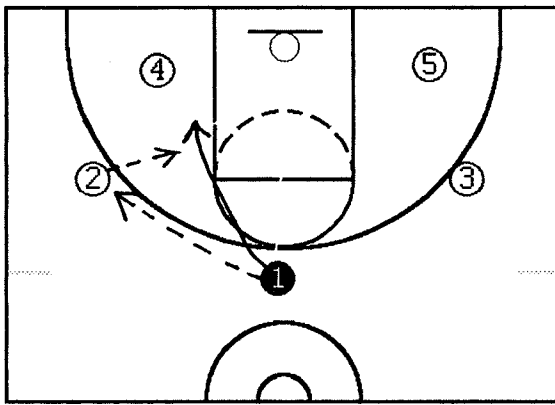


Diagram 7j: "Give and Go"

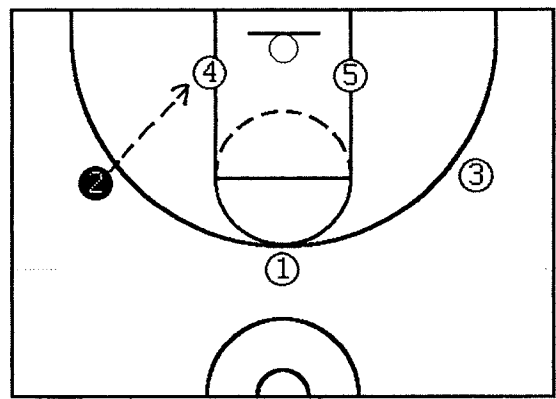


Diagram 7k: Wing Pass

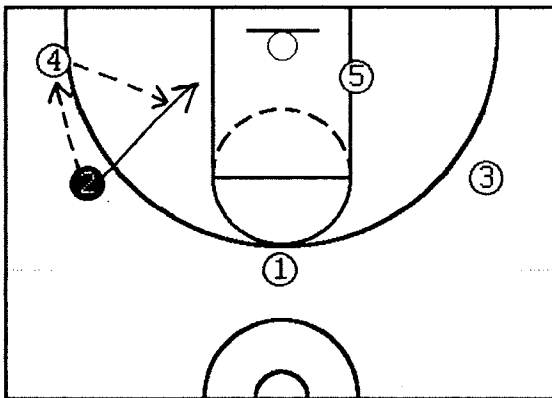


Diagram 7l: Baseline Give and Go

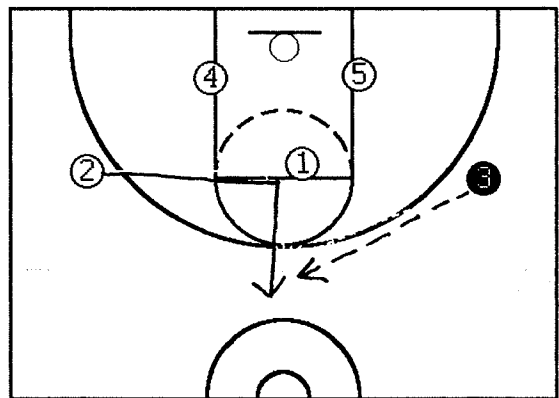


Diagram 7m: L-Cut

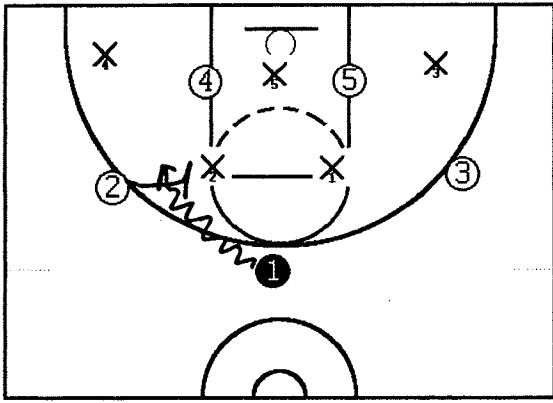


Diagram 7n: Screen for the Point

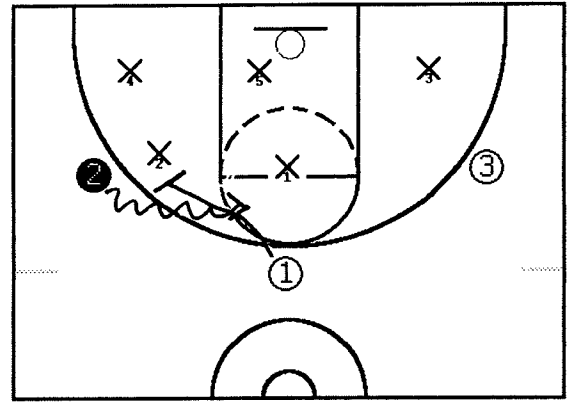


Diagram 7o: Screen for the Wing

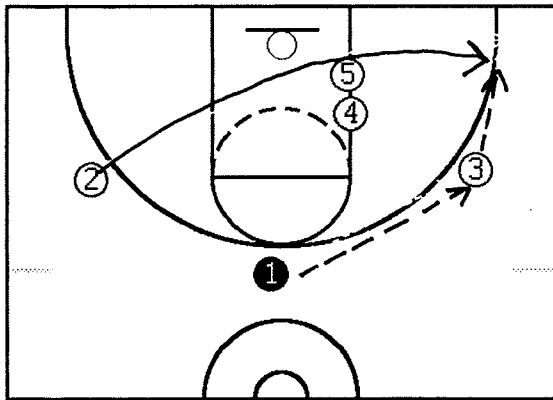


Diagram 7p: Double Baseline Screen

STEP 8: HOW TO GO THE EXTRA MILE TO BUILD YOUR TEAM

The real challenge to coaching a youth basketball team or any team for that matter is getting the players to work together. It's very similar to the challenge of being a parent. There is the ongoing process of teaching children to love and respect each other, be unselfish, and be unified. Successful parents create an environment where children can reach their potential and fully develop their talents and abilities. They are able to foster feelings of respect, confidence, and a desire to succeed. This type of environment can also be created on a basketball team. Some coaches are able to do it. Some are not. For various reasons such as the coach's own ego, lack of effort, poor planning, disinterest, lack of knowledge, etc., it just does not happen. Some coaches simply don't know how to go about it.

We have all seen teams that have something special about them. A lot of times they are teams that have minimal talent, but are able to raise their level of play above and beyond everyone's expectations. This is what I call a team that plays with vision. They see their team and themselves playing at a level beyond their capabilities.

1. CHARACTERISTICS OF A TEAM THAT PLAYS WITH VISION:

A. **HAVING DESIRE, INTENSITY, AND DETERMINATION:** Every player on the team exhibits this.

B. **BEING UNSELFISH:** Players are not concerned with who gets the credit for success.

C. **ACCEPTING THEIR ROLES:** Every player accepts his role and takes pride in fulfilling it to the utmost of his or her ability.

D. **PARTICIPATING FROM THE BENCH:** The people on the bench are involved and supportive of those on the court.

E. **PRACTICING LIKE THEY PLAY:** They practice with the same intensity as they play in a game. They don't turn it on and off in terms of effort.

F. **NEVER GIVING UP:** No matter what the score is they will continue to play the same way.

G. DEMONSTRATING UNITY: They will be united on the court and off. There are no cliques.

H. PLAYING GOOD DEFENSE AND PASSING WELL: These two characteristics are based solely on the team concept of unselfishness. A team that plays with vision, understands the great value of tough, hard-nosed defense and an offense featuring a well-executed concept of passing the basketball.

I. EXHIBITING A STRONG WORK ETHIC: They understand that there is a price to be paid for success. Their desire to be the best is matched by their ability to work hard in all areas of the game.

It is said that a team generally reflects the personality and character of its coach. If that's true then it stands to reason that a team that plays with vision is directed by a coach with vision. Our challenge as coaches is to create an environment in which our team can play above and beyond their capabilities. This will bring a tremendous feeling of satisfaction to the team members, parents, and coaching staff. It goes beyond the win-loss record. So, how do you go about creating this type of team?

2. CREATING A TEAM THAT PLAYS WITH VISION

The following is a list of some of the things that will help you in creating a team with vision. Some of these concepts have been mentioned in earlier sections.

A. SETTING GOALS

This is essential in order to get the team to play beyond its capabilities. It can be as simple or complex as you want to make it. It's vital to set specific goals. You can set motivational goals and performance goals.

(1) Motivational goals: We will out hustle every team we play.

(2) Performance goals: We will hold every team we play under 45 points.

It's important to write these goals down and review them weekly or after each game.

B. CONDUCTING ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

This was mentioned in an earlier section. This is a great opportunity to help create the vision for every player on an individual basis.

C. PROMOTING, PRAISING, AND REWARDING

You need to constantly reinforce behavior and performance. Reward systems such as stickers, candy, trading cards, bonus activities, etc. will help you motivate your players to a higher level.

We said a team that plays with vision exhibits tough defense and passes the ball well. When a player makes a great defensive play or makes a good pass, you must praise and reinforce that performance.

Another characteristic of a team with vision is that the players do not worry about who gets the credit. Should you compliment a player who scores 25 points and forget about the player who only allows the other team's best scorer a couple of baskets? Of course not! The aspects of the game that are important to players come from what you as a coach consider important. Take time out now to reread the list of characteristics of a team with vision. Make these concepts important to you and they will become important to your players.

D. HOLDING OFF-THE-COURT ACTIVITIES

You can create a great deal of enthusiasm and excitement by doing some activities to help unify the team. The following is a list of activities you can do:

- (1) Taking the team to a professional, college, or high school game
- (2) Taking the team to a professional, college, or high school practice
- (3) Inviting them over to your house for pizza and to watch a game
- (4) Having a team Christmas party or a birthday party for a member of the team
- (5) Performing community service such as a clean-up day
- (6) Having a fund-raiser (car wash, bake-sale, shoot-a-thon, etc.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael May has been closely associated with the game of basketball most of his life. He played basketball at El Camino Real High School in Woodland Hills, California, where he was named All-Los Angeles City and Honorable Mention All-American in 1974. He was starting point guard for Brigham Young University. He still holds B.Y.U.'s single game assist record and played alongside NBA standout, Danny Ainge.

May played and coached professional basketball in Argentina for two seasons and was named "Coach of the Year" there on both the youth and professional levels.

May has been a head varsity basketball coach at the high school level for 12 seasons. He is currently the head coach at Hart High School in Valencia, California, where he received area "Coach of the Year" awards for the past two seasons. He is also now coaching one of his four sons' youth basketball teams. He is married to Carol Glazier and they have five children.

