

Basketball Coach Handout

Team Defense

Man-to-Man Defence

Man-to-Man defence is very important as the techniques used can be applied in all defences. This type of defence is the most challenging and also the most personally rewarding type of defence. No defender can hide in this type of defence. The offence is likely to score an easy basket after any defensive lapse. That is why man-to-man defence team defence promotes individual responsibility to the team. It also involves each man helping his teammate or help defence. There is never a time to rest or relax in man-to-man defence. A successful defensive player must continually perform one defensive responsibility after another, according to where the ball is and what the player he is guarding does.

Key Defensive Concepts

1. Flat Triangle

The Flat Triangle concept of man-to-man defence envisions each weakside player as part of a triangle which vertices are the ball, their man, and themselves. The base of the triangle is a line drawn from the ball to their man; the defensive man forms the apex of the triangle by moving away from their man towards the ball.

In forming the apex of this triangle:

- a. The defender should never be more than one step off the base of the triangle (the passing lane). If the defender stand too far back from the passing lane, it gives their man too much room to make a weakside cut (flash cut) to the ball and also increases the chances of a successful cross-court pass.
- b. The defender should be close enough to the ball to stop penetration by a pass or dribble. The faster the defender the closer they can play to their man. Stopping the ball is the key to this defence.
- c. The further the ball is from the defender's man, the further the defender can be from their man.
- d. If the offensive man is two or more conventional perimeter passes away from the ball, they should represent a minimum concern for a ball-orientated defence.

Ideally, using Flat Triangle principles, the defence is trying to pack in on the ball and create a five on three situation in the defence's favour.

2. Help & Recover

The next consideration for the weakside defence is the concept of Help & Recover. Help and Recover is dependant upon an understanding of Flat Triangle positioning. The help side man should get into a position to *help* stop penetration of the ball and then *recover* back to their own man. If a weakside defender helps stop the ball but doesn't recover back to their own man in time to prevent them scoring, they haven't done their job. Ball side defence is what makes a defence tough. Help side defence is what makes it successful.

3. Ball-You-Man

To teach positioning you can teach players the BUM Triangle. B is for ball, U is for you and M is for man (you can also use BUG - G is for girl). To build the triangle the player should be basket-side and ball-side of their player, in a defensive stance (of course) and 'pointing their pistols', (maintaining vision on ball and player). Players should be in a position to get the ball at all times so:

- a. If the triangle is too fat - the pass is easy, too flat - the cut is easy.
- b. If the point of the triangle (i.e. 'U') is too close to the ball, we can't stop the pass, too close to the man and we can't stop the drive (help) & also any cut is easier because we are not cutting down the angle (much like a soccer goalkeeper does when he moves forward to stop shots on goal) of the pass.

Guarding the man with the ball

1. If he still has his dribble, stay about three feet away, keeping pressure on the ball and the shot with your hands.
2. If he has used his dribble then you can approach closer and increase the pressure.
3. If the ball is down (on dribble or held low), the defence should be 'back and down' (back a little and down in stance).
4. If the ball is held high, the defence should be 'up and in' (up closer and in pressuring).
5. Focus on the belly button on the offensive player as they can't go anywhere without it.
6. Keep the palm of your lead hand facing up. Try to get at the ball from below, not by slapping down it. Slapping down will usually result in a foul. Your other hand should be in the passing lane.
7. Must deny penetration into the key, especially down the middle.
8. Ball pressure is paramount. The defence must place extreme pressure on the ball to make passing and dribble penetration difficult for the ball handler.
9. Keep your feet active but your defensive position calm.
10. Move your feet before your head and hands.
11. Stay down and keep your centre of gravity motionless.
12. When you must move- move in short sharp slides & keep your peripheral vision active.

Basketball Coach Handout

Team Defense

Guarding a man without the ball

Here the object is to stop the man from getting the ball.

1. One Pass Away

- When defending a player that is one pass away from the ball the defence should be in a denial stance, also known as a closed stance.
- The arm and leg that is closest to the ball should be in the passing lane looking to deflect a pass, with the other arm forming an armbar for balance purposes & for maintaining contact with their man.
- In order to maintain vision on both the ball and their man, players should look down their denial arm and use their peripheral vision.
- When in the denial position, the defensive player should be 2/3 from the ball and 1/3 from their man as a general rule, and should always be closer to the basket than the player they are defending.
- As the team defence develops, you can begin to incorporate further responsibilities to each player on the floor. For the players defending 1 pass away from the ball, this could include hedging to help contain penetration.



2. Two Passes Away (Weakside)

- When guarding a man two passes away from the ball, the defensive player maintains their 'Flat Triangle' position but moves closer to the ball to be in a position to help teammates.
- The general rule is to have one foot inside the keyway or alternatively be in line with the edge of the backboard.
- As in Help & Recover, both feet point towards the passing lane with one arm pointing at the ball, the other at their man i.e. 'Pointing Pistols'

3. Three or More Passes Away (Weakside)

- When guarding a player three passes away from the ball, the defensive player maintains his 'Flat Triangle' position but moves closer to the ball to be in a position to help team-mates.
- The general rule is to have one foot on each side of the imaginary line between the two baskets i.e. 'splitline'
- As in Help & Recover, both feet point towards the passing lane with one arm pointing at the ball, the other at their man i.e. 'Pointing Pistols'

Defending the Low Post

There are three ways the defender can position him/herself in defending the low post player.

1. Playing behind the offensive post player.

Here the defender plays directly behind the offensive player. This may be advantageous if your post defender is much taller than the offensive player, and has a good chance of altering or blocking the post player's shot. But do not let the offensive player back the defender down under the basket. The defender should use their legs (use a strong stance with knees bent) and their lower body strength to keep the offensive player out... but the defender should not put their hands on the post player's back as they may get called for a pushing foul.

2. Fronting the low post player.

Here the defender moves directly in front of the offensive post player and denies him/her the ball. The wing defender should put pressure on the ball on the wing in order to make the pass to the low post, or the lob pass, more difficult. Fronting may backfire if the offensive player is taller and can easily seal for inside position and get the high lob pass. Another disadvantage is the defender is out of position for the rebound, and the post player may be able to score just by sealing for inside position and receiving the inside pass, or by getting the rebound and put-back.

Basketball Coach Handout

Team Defense

3. Three-quarter front the low post player.

This is probably the best method. Instead of directly fronting the low post player, the defender "straddles" him/her with one foot in front and one in back, standing sideways to the offensive player with one hand up in the passing lane. If the ball is below the free-throw line extended (in the corner-wing area), he/she should play on the baseline side of the post player, making contact with the post player's inside (baseline) shoulder, and with his/her arm and hand out in the passing lane. If the ball is passed out on top (above the free-throw line extended), the defender should slide chest to chest with the post player and move to the post player's high-side (or lane-side) shoulder, again with a hand up at all times in the passing lane.

Key Defensive Skills

1. Jumping to the Ball

'Jumping to the ball' when your player has made a pass will get you out of most tricky defensive situations. As soon as the ball is released from the hands of the player they are defending, they must begin the movement of 'jumping to the ball', with the aim being that they are in their 'Flat Triangle' position by the time the ball arrives at its destination.

This action helps to make your players proactive defensively, and enables them to be in a good position to deny the ball from coming back to their player, hedging to the ball if it is penetrated towards them, or bumping any cut their player may try to make after passing.

2. Bumping Cuts

Bumping cutters is a great way to teach your players to be aggressive defenders, and is an excellent way for your team to stamp their authority over their opponents, and the game in general. Bumping cutters starts with jumping to the ball. The defensive player must be between their opponent and where they want to cut to in order to bump the cut effectively, and this starts with jumping to the ball.

The aim of bumping a cut is generally to try to send the player to an area of the court where their cut is no longer threatening. If this is consistently the case through a series of cuts, the defence will generally have established ascendancy in the play phase.

3. Closing Out

Closing out is widely regarded as the hardest skill to perform in the game of basketball. Closing out is generally defined as any situation where a defensive player wishes to close the gap between themselves and an offensive player. This most commonly occurs when closing out a shooter, but also happens in the open court when running to contain the player with the ball or hedging to trap the ball, and also in rebounding situations when looking to get a block out.

A good way to help players understand the technique, is to encourage them to 'close out a spot on the floor' rather than a player. So often you see defenders close out a player, only to have the offence blow by them easily. By closing out the spot on the floor in front of the offensive player, the defence will have more time and be in a better position to adjust their movement should they need to.

Key Points:

- a. Foot that moves first is the one closest to the ball
- b. Run 2/3 the distance and pitter-patter (stutter step) the remaining 1/3
- c. Short & low with weight back ready to protect against dribble penetration with a patter step
- d. Hands up (carry hands to bother shot)

4. Turning the Dribbler

The basic idea in turning the dribbler is to dominate your opponent by applying maximum pressure on the ball. Work to establish defensive position a half body ahead in the direction the dribbler wants to go. This position is called '*chest on the ball*'. The objective is to prevent another dribble in the same direction and force the dribbler into a reverse (spin) dribble. With good anticipation, the defender may even draw a charge.

If the dribbler tries a front change of direction dribble, the defender should be able to steal the ball with a quick flick upward of your near hand. On the dribbler's reverse dribble quickly change direction and again move for '*chest on the ball*' position, at least half a body ahead of the direction the dribbler wants to go. Continue forcing the dribbler to reverse turn.

Basketball Coach Handout

Team Defense

5. Channelling the Dribbler

Generally, in the front court, teams will defend against middle penetration by the ball handler and channel the ball handler to the sideline or baseline checkpoints. To accomplish this, defenders must understand how to channel the dribbler.

The alignment of the defensive player on the offensive player's inside shoulder (nose-to-high-shoulder) forces the offensive player to the outside, or to the rear foot in the defensive stance. The defensive player's body position is aligned ½ a body across the offensive player to the inside of the court to force the dribbler to the sideline. Position the feet in a wide stance, with the foot closer to the inside, slightly in front of the other, in a toe-to-heel alignment influencing the ballhandler to the appropriate sideline. Both arms are now outside the knees, with the forearms parallel to the floor and the hands held with the palms up. The inside (back) hand is used to help force the offensive player to the outside. If the offensive player were dribbling with their right hand, the defensive player's inside hand would be their right. The outside (or lead) hand digs at the ball in an attempt to poke it away or force the offensive player to pick up their dribble. The defensive player must be constantly reminded that this hand helps to control and bother the offensive player without reaching in.

Guarding the dribbler becomes a series of three or four footraces where the player who gets to a spot first forces the other to alter their direction. The offensive player should be expected to move towards the outside, and when this occurs the defensive player must react quickly with a defensive slide/s to a spot that forces the offensive player even wider. The defensive player's lower centre of gravity allows them to win every short race, and ride any offensive player away from the basket with proper execution of the defensive slide.

6. Communication

Defensive communication is a crucial and essential element to developing an assertive and effective defensive team. Although being a good communicator on court comes more easily to some players than others, every player on the team must take responsibility for contributing in this area. By shouting, "help," "screen," "ball," "dead," etc..., you can help a teammate know what's coming at them or what's happening on the court. Communicate to your teammates that the blind screen is coming, or anything else you notice on the floor. On the basketball court, talk is not cheap. It is priceless. It can mean the difference between winning and losing.