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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FUNDAMENTALS AND MECHANICS OF
INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM MAN FOR MAN DEFENSIVE
TECHNIQUES AND PRINCIPLES

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of
Health, Physical Education, and Recreation
Appalachian State Teachers College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Billy J. Price
August 1965

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FUNDAMENTALS AND MECHANICS OF
INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM MAN-FOR-MAN DEFENSIVE
TECHNIQUES AND PRINCIPLES

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1965

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FUNDAMENTALS AND MECHANICS OF
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ABSTRACT

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FUNDAMENTALS AND MECHANICS OF INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM MAN-FOR-MAN DEFENSIVE TECHNIQUES AND PRINCIPLES

Statement of the problem. It is the purpose of this study (1) to establish the qualities and attitudes for a good defensive player; (2) to investigate the mechanics of individual defensive movements; (3) to examine the variations of the man-for-man defense; and (4) to establish sound coverage of the opponent at the different offensive positions. The major emphasis of this study will be placed on sound defensive coverage as it relates to many game developing situations.

Procedure. Since this study was limited to the man-for-man defense, with its many variations, the writer searched all the available written material which was pertinent to the study. From this material, an attempt was made to establish the best possible way to carry out the duties and responsibilities placed upon the individual. A series of pictures was made to illustrate the various techniques and fundamental skills to be used by a defensive player.

Conclusions. The following conclusions were drawn from this study by the writer:

1. The mechanics of individual man-for-man movements are necessary regardless of the type of team defense used.

2. The player must be sold on the importance of the man-for-man defense before the player will develop his capacities to the optimum.

3. The man-for-man defense is the most time consuming and difficult defense to teach, but requires the player to learn only one set of defensive principles.

4. The man-for-man defense gives the best over-all coverage of the opponent regardless of the type of offensive pattern used, but is particularly weak against offensive patterns which use many screens. Therefore, it is impossible to play a man-for-man defense without switching.

5. Three mental qualities necessary for good defensive play are alertness, aggressiveness and determination.

6. Agility and balance are two physical factors all players must possess to be able to play any type of defense.

7. The man-for-man defense permits players to be matched with an opponent of about equal abilities.

8. The man-for-man defense requires the player and coach to have a broad knowledge about the various offensive patterns in order to make adjustments to stop their effectiveness.

9. The best general rule for covering the opponent is to be close enough to prevent, or at least hinder, a possible shot and still far enough away to prevent a drive.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

For many years the man-for-man defense was the only defense used in basketball. Then came the invention of the various zone defenses. Both types of defense have their distinct advantages and disadvantages. The arguments favoring the zone defense were that it was easy to teach and it saved precious practice time. This convinces many coaches to turn to the use of the zone defense. The man-for-man defense gives individual coverage of the opponent. The responsibility to guard an opponent is determined by matching such physical factors as height, position, speed, experience and scoring potential. The conclusions made about either type of defense are based upon judgment and observations by various coaches and not on the results of tests.

I. THE PROBLEM

statement of the problem. It is the purpose of this study (1) to establish the qualities and attitudes for a good defensive player; (2) to investigate the mechanics of individual defensive movements; (3) to examine the variations of the man-for-man defense; and (4) to establish sound coverage of the opponent at the different offensive

positions. The major emphasis of this study will be placed on sound defensive coverage as it relates to many game developing situations.

Limitations of the study. This study will be limited to the man-for-man defense, with its many variations. The man-for-man defense has often been labeled the stabilizer in basketball. The development of sound man-for-man defensive play requires many hours of hard practice. Most of the written material on the man-for-man defense has not scratched the surface of the many problems. "This shortage of written material has resulted in a meagerness of knowledge of the proper fundamentals of defensive play, a lack of understanding and appreciation of defensive play, and a sparsity of defensive teaching methods."¹ The techniques and mechanics used in this study were obtained from observations of many coaches through years of experimenting and study of the basis for the development of motor skills. The ability to recognize the elements of a skillful performance is the first task for the coach in the development of the required motor skills. The methods for teaching man-for-man defensive movements have been tried with thousands of players with the final results varying because of many

¹Blair Gullion, Techniques and Tactics of Basketball Defense (St. Louis: Bardgett Printing & Publishing Co., 1951), p. 3.

factors uncontrollable by the coaches. Even with these variations in the final results, some definite ways of performing certain fundamental skills have been indicated better than others. Some of the mechanics must be adjusted to meet individual differences. In this study a series of posed players were made to illustrate the sound techniques which can be applied in teaching man-for-man defense to all basketball prospects and not to just a few exceptionally gifted players.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Defensive footwork. Defensive footwork is an efficient means of movement to position and for adjustment of position.²

Defensive position. Defensive position is the most advantageous location from which the attack may be launched.³

Defensive stance. Defensive stance may be defined as the optimum arrangement of the body parts for skillful defensive action against a specific maneuver employed by an offensive player.⁴

Floor position. The position a defense maintains

²Ibid., p. 25.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

with relation to the ball, the offensive man, and the basket.⁵

Man-for-man defense. The man-for-man defense makes it possible to match men against opponents of equal size, skill, and speed.⁶

Pressing man-for-man defense. "This defense . . . requires each defensive player to guard his opponent tightly all over the floor."⁷

Screen (picks). "A screen is legal action of the player who, without causing contact, delays or prevents an opponent from reaching a desired position."⁸

Screening out. "When a shot is launched the defensive man screens out the shooter by placing himself between the shooter and the basket."⁹

Sinking (sagging) man-for-man defense. A defensive maneuver in which the two players on the side away from the

⁵George Parker, "Different Defensive Principles," Athletic Journal, XLV (December, 1964), 15.

⁶Branch McCracken, Indiana Basketball (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 165.

⁷Glenn Wilkes, Winning Basketball Strategy (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959), p. 33.

⁸National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations, Official 1964-65 Basketball Rules, (Danville: The Interstate Printers, 1964), p. 15.

⁹Jay McCreary, Winning High School Basketball (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956), p. 136.

ball drop clear of their opponent to close in around the foul circle.¹⁰

Strong side. The strong side is the same side as the location of the ball.¹¹

Switching (shifting). "Shifting is the terminology used by most coaches in describing the man-for-man defensive maneuver in which a defensive player changes from the offensive man to whom he is assigned and takes another offensive player who has become a more dangerous threat."¹²

Tight man-for-man defense. "This defense calls for one man to guard an opponent without ever leaving him or switching."¹³

Weak side. The weak side is the side away from the ball.¹⁴

¹⁰Ibid., p. 138.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Gullion, op. cit., p. 90.

¹³McCracken, op. cit., p. 171.

¹⁴McCreary, op. cit., p. 138.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

An increasing number of articles and sections of books have been devoted to different phases of the man-for-man defense. At the same time, there have been an increasing number of teams, both high school and college, turning to the use of one or more of the various zone defenses. More adequate publication of the man-for-man defense has slowly been released, but it has not yet been extensively used.

The mechanics basically established as man-for-man fundamentals are, to a certain degree, incorporated into the various zone defenses. "It is accepted as a defensive truism, that a player must know sound man-for-man principles in order to play effective defense in any kind of a team pattern."¹⁵ The primary difference is the point of concentration. The man-for-man defense concentrates on the guarding of the individual, with the ball being of secondary importance. The zone defense concentrates on the guarding of the ball, with the individual being of secondary importance.¹⁶

¹⁵Rex Grady, "The Mechanical Defensive Pattern," Athletic Journal, XLV (November, 1964), 34.

¹⁶George M. MacDonald, "Team Defense Wins Championships," Athletic Journal, XLII (January, 1962), 38.

Much has been said and written about the lack of defense in basketball.¹⁷ It has been true that the offensive phase of basketball has overshadowed the defensive phase. There have been more and better improvements in the offensive fundamentals because of the interest shown for the offense by both the coaches and players. The offensive man learned the skills of shooting, passing, catching, and dribbling more proficiently than he did the defensive skills. Players enjoyed playing offense more than defense for numerous reasons. This has indicated that defensive practice has not been interesting and challenging to the player. It has been proven many times and in many ways that the individual who has no interest in an activity does not learn as quickly or as efficiently as the individual who has been stimulated.¹⁸

Basically, many of the defensive skills have the same mechanics as offensive skills, therefore it was not so much the lack of methods and techniques for teaching defense as the lack of emphasis on this phase of the game.¹⁹ A major factor contributing to the lack of defensive emphasis has been in the neglect of selling the defense. Not enough

¹⁷Blair Gullion, Techniques and Tactics of Basketball Defense (St. Louis: Bardgett Printing & Publishing Co., 1951), p. 3.

¹⁸Charles C. Murphy, Basketball (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1939), p. 12.

¹⁹Barry Nettles, "Mechanics of Individual Defensive Movements," Athletic Journal, XLII (October, 1961), 21.

emphasis has been placed on the importance of defense and recognizing the qualities which make good defensive players.

I. SELLING PLAYERS ON THE MAN-FOR-MAN DEFENSE

Players have to be sold on the advantages of the man-for-man defense. The selling has to begin with the example and interest of the coach. It has always been difficult to sell a product if the seller, himself, does not believe in it.²⁰

The close games have been won by the team which had a slight edge. The edge, in most cases, was the defensive play. The stolen pass, which sets up the winning basket, is the result of good defensive play, either by forcing a player into making a bad pass, or by a defensive player who is thinking and on his toes to meet the situation when it arises. "A strong defensive team is always a very dangerous opponent. . . . The well organized defense seldom permits an easy basket."²¹ The man-for-man defense has a dual role to fulfill. First, the winners usually make a better percentage of their shots, and the sound defense reduces the number of shots taken by the opponent. Secondly, the winner usually works the ball around for better quality shots, and its sound

²⁰S. J. Picariello, "Defenses Deter Defeats," Athletic Journal, XLV (January, 1965), 20.

²¹Gullion, loc. cit.

defense reduces the quality of the opponent's shots. Once players are convinced that the man-for-man defense controls both the number of shots taken and the quality of these shots, they then realize the importance of a sound defense.

The belief of the less informed coach that a good offense is the best defense no longer can be justified. The cold nights from the floor leave these teams with nothing to fall back on. "The best defense is not a good offense but a balance of a strong defense and a strong offense."²² A good quality of defense can be played more consistently than the precise skills of offense, especially the shooting skills. A strong man-for-man defense will win many games even when the offense is flat. The percentages of the game produce a few points, and if the opponent is held, this gives the good defensive team an edge which the other team with the poor defense does not have. The old traditional saying, "a good offense is the best defense" has been rapidly replaced by "if you can't stop them, you can't beat them."²³

Defensive play has always been underestimated and unpraised by the press and spectators.²⁴ Very seldom does

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Adolph R. Rupp, Rupp's Championship Basketball (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948), p. 147.

one hear words of praise about the performance of a defensive player after a close game. The press has all the statistics concerning how many shots were taken and missed and other offensive skills, but nothing about how many times a player stalled the offensive pattern by stealing the ball or tying up a player with the ball. This has placed an extra burden on the coach to make his practice sessions interesting and as realistic as possible and at the same time give praise for sound defensive play exhibited during practice sessions. It is necessary to have a well organized pattern for teaching defensive fundamentals, strategy, and knowledge to remove the uncertainties of the various defensive assignments.²⁵ The well informed coach can always point out the key defensive moves made by his opponent.

II. IMPORTANCE OF DEFENSE

"Basketball defense may be defined as the sum of the activities of the individual players and of the team which are designed to retard or to limit the offensive or scoring measures of the opposing team."²⁶

It has been a tough job to convince the players of the importance of defense. The coach has to show his players that a strong defensive team will always be a very

²⁵Gullion, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁶Ibid., p. 1.

dangerous opponent.²⁷ It has been proven many times that the best defense has not been a strong offense. The well organized team defense with each member carrying out his individual assignments seldom gives up an easy basket.

Percentage have been an excellent means of selling the importance of hard work to establish a strong man-for-man team defense. The actual number of shots taken by the offensive team means very little compared to the quality and percentage of the shots made. Poor quality shots produce a poor percentage and part of this can be contributed to a sticky man-for-man defense. Most good offensive players shoot well when not pressured by a defensive man. When the pressure is on him, he often loses his shooting touch. Pressure applied to a player has caused numerous ball handling errors and bad passes. When a team loses the ball, other than after a shot, it has lost four points: it has lost an opportunity to score two points and has given the opponent an opportunity to score two points because its defense was alert in forcing the offensive mistake. Defense has a dual role in that it reduces the number of shots and reduces shooting percentage by lowering the quality of the opponent's shots.²⁸

Defensive skills may be performed more consistently

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

than the precise offensive skills, especially the art of shooting.²⁹ It is a great let down to the team when its offensive punch is lost. The team has nothing to rely on if it is not prepared with a strong defense. The control type offense places the team on defense for the greater portion of the playing time; consequently, the strong defensive team is able to control the tempo of the game. The stall or slow down team is forced into the running game by opponents putting pressure on them all over the floor. The sound defensive team is able to fast break more often because it makes its own opportunities by forcing the opponent to make ball handling mistakes; thus pass interceptions and disorganized offensive attack result.

The winning of the close games usually results because one team had a slight edge over the other. This edge, when the game is over, might be traced back to some outstanding defensive work both as to individual and team efforts. Good defensive work provides the team with more control of the ball. "This situation is the ultimate test of defensive soundness both of individuals and of the team."³⁰

The importance of a sound defense is indicated by extra concentration on the team's defensive play just

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., p. 2.

before an important regular season game or at tournament time. The coach begins preparation to meet the tough games with a good dependable defense. "The well organized defense seldom permits an easy basket. . . . Defense has been appropriately described as the great stabilizer."³¹

III. OBSTRUCTIONS TO DEFENSIVE INSTRUCTION

The traditional philosophy that "a good offense is the best defense" has been thrown at the modern player until he has begun to believe it.³² The modern player has devoted all of his time to the development of his offensive abilities. He works on his defensive abilities only when forced to do so and then it is only a half-hearted effort.

The poor attitude toward performing defensive techniques properly and with a high degree of efficiency has been contributed to by many outside factors. The majority of the rule changes have been designed in favor of the offensive player. The defensive man has always been at a natural disadvantage because the offensive man knew what he was going to do next, the defense did not. Officiating has appeared to be in favor of the offensive player. Therefore to avoid an excessive amount of fouling, the defensive player often relaxed and backed off to avoid contact and

³¹Ibid., p. 2.

³²Ibid., p. 1.

fouls. The spectators approved and applauded the offensive man's abilities over those of the defensive man. Yet, other sports, such as football, have recognized a player as an All-American just on his defensive abilities.

The average player and coach have considered defense to be a necessary evil. The results have been sloppy practice sessions which accomplished nothing. College and professional teams have striven for the maximum offensive production. This has encouraged young players to master the offensive skills but instilled very little desire to master the defensive skills. To develop the defensive abilities of an individual requires many long, exacting and unexciting hours of practice. The defensive man has to have "fine timing, excellent body balance, close cooperative effort with teammates, and a high degree of intelligence."³³

In spite of all the things that work against convincing a player of the importance of defense, teams and coaches recognize the importance of a good defensive man especially in a close game. In many instances, an expert defensive man has been as valuable to his team as a good shooter.

IV. DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAYER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MAN-FOR-MAN DEFENSE

"Defensive men must take a lot of pride in their

³³Ibid., p. 3.

individual defense and feel that this phase of the game is just as much of a challenge as offensive play."³⁴ Many poor attitudes toward defensive play have been removed simply by a well organized pattern for teaching defensive fundamentals, strategy, and the knowledge of the specific duties of the various defensive assignments for removing the uncertainties a player possessed.³⁵ There is a close relationship between defensive and offensive skills. The qualities required for a good defensive player are the same as those required for good offensive players.

Praise given for stolen dribbles, intercepted passes, and fine defensive rebounding has inspired many players to develop into top notch defensive players. At the start of the season, established goals and standards for good defensive play has definite values toward the development of good defensive play. Trophies presented to the most outstanding defensive player stimulates some players to work harder on their defensive abilities.

Simulated game situations which place the defensive team under pressure forces them to put forth more effort. Allowing the defensive players to fast break after they

³⁴Branch McCracken, Indiana Basketball (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 149.

³⁵Gullion, op. cit., p. 4.

recover the ball helps to stimulate more aggressiveness on defense.

"Defensive practice will always be hard work."³⁶
This has been the phase of defensive play which has not been eliminated. The well organized practice which provides interesting drills and game-like situations helps to eliminate the drudgery of practicing defensive techniques and fundamentals.

V. MAN-FOR-MAN PRINCIPLES

"Another potent factor in the backsliding of the defensive arts is the wide popularity of the zone defense."³⁷
Players used to playing a zone defense have picked up many faults which they transfer to the man-for-man defense. The early training of the boy in the fundamentals and mechanics of the man-for-man defense is vital for developing a future defensive star. The aim of any coach should be to teach and insist that players perform and develop correct habits and skills in individual defense.

The basic principles of the man-for-man defense is that each player be assigned an opponent who is somewhat

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Seal-O-San, Basketball Coaches Digest (Huntington: The Huntington Laboratories, Inc., Seventh Edition, 1948), p. 31.

similar in ability.³⁸ From this point on it becomes a personal battle to determine which will be the victor. The end results will be predetermined in many instances through coaching. The defensive man must be equipped with all the knowledge and understanding of his job that is possible.

Basically, the only difference between man-for-man defense and zone defense is the point of interest, the man or the ball. The man-for-man defense is concerned with the guarding of the man and his actions. The zone defense is concerned with the ball only and therefore not as concerned with the movement of the offensive players. True, the man and ball are important factors but the emphasis is placed on one or the other.

The man-for-man defense puts more pressure on individual team members because of the individual assignments of the opponent. By having these assignments, everyone concerned can tell whose man is doing the most damage or which man is not doing his job on defense.³⁹ This type of defense often gets the most out of mediocre players because of the pride and self-confidence they have in themselves even though they may not have much natural ability.

³⁸R. T. Dewitt, Teaching Individual and Team Sports (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1953), p. 78.

³⁹Ibid.

VI. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE MAN-FOR-MAN DEFENSE

There are many very distinct advantages of the man-for-man defense. The responsibility for points being scored by the opponent is easy to trace. No other defense is required to be learned by the players. It makes it possible to put the best defensive man against the best offensive man. This defense enables the team to cope with all styles of offensive play and patterns. Each defensive man has individual responsibility for only one man.

On the other hand, many disadvantages have been cited against the man-for-man defense, the most important of which is the requirement for maximum stamina. Screens and picks are used very effectively against it. The offensive player has the advantage of being able to out-manuever his guard. A guard has often been so engrossed in guarding his man that he failed to see situations arise both defensively and offensively.

Summary. The implications were that many coaches have not taken full advantage of the printed materials available for teaching the man-for-man defense. The man-for-man defensive principles have been cited as being the basis of all types of effective defensive team play.

Three reasons used by many coaches for not attempting

to use the man-for-man defense were: (1) the man-for-man defense requires too much practice time; (2) the man-for-man defense is too difficult to teach because of the wide range of knowledge needed by players to cope with the various offensive patterns; and (3) the shortage of players with the mental and physical qualities required to perform man-for-man defensive skills.

There are six factors of great importance in the development of a sound man-for-man defense: (1) selling the players on the man-for-man defense; (2) emphasizing the importance of defense; (3) overcoming the obstructions to defensive instruction; (4) developing a good attitude in the players toward the man-for-man defense; (5) teaching the man-for-man principles; and (6) recognizing the advantages and disadvantages of the man-for-man defense.

Thousands of our high school players fail to make the college team because coaches have great difficulty in evaluating prospective material. This is due to the increased use of the various zone defenses at the high school level. The zone defense does not require the player to move and react as quickly as the man-for-man defense. Thus college coaches have been limited in their judgment of a prospective player's real worth.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Ken Loeffler, Ken Loeffler on Basketball (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), pp. 24-25.

CHAPTER III

THE QUALITIES OF THE GOOD DEFENSIVE PLAYER

"Coaches and teams build reputations with offensive systems, but they win ball games with good defensive work."⁴¹ Defense is the only phase of basketball which does not vary from one game to another. "Defense is the only stable element--the only completely reliable skill in basketball."⁴² The qualities of great defensive players have been cited as (1) speed; (2) physical and mental qualities; (3) height; (4) agility and balance; (5) quickness of hands and foot reactions; (6) judgment; (7) competitive spirit; and (8) adaptability.⁴³ "The team defense is limited in effectiveness, versatility, and consistency by the degree to which the individual members possess these qualities."⁴⁴ Even when a player possesses these vital qualities, he is required to work many long hours to accomplish his full potential as a defensive player. "Most basketball players, coaches, and spectators realize when they see great shooter

⁴¹Garland F. Pinholster, Illustrated Basketball Coaching Techniques (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 129.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Blair Gullion, Techniques and Tactics of Basketball Defense (St. Louis: Bardgett Printing & Publishing Co., 1951), p. 11.

⁴⁴Ibid.

assembled on a team that only a tough defense and a few good breaks will stop them. . . .defense is the equalizer and through the season it is the deciding factor in several games."⁴⁵

Player speed. "Most players possess greater inherent speed than they utilize in defensive play."⁴⁶ Speed has many values to a defensive player (1) getting back on defense; (2) employing the many variations of the man-for-man defense; (3) compensating for the advantage the offensive man has on the defensive man; (4) breaking up the stall game when behind; and (5) employing a full court press.

The innate speed of an individual can not be improved, but through well developed drills and techniques it may be developed to its optimum. Wind sprints are used very effectively to develop quick starts and stops, both of which have great importance to the success of a defensive guard in keeping up with his man. The teaching of proper running fundamentals aids in the development of speed.

"Defensive play is concerned with three aspects of speed--the development of the optimum speed of the individual player, the process of utilizing the speed of the player

⁴⁵Gary Filbert, "Covering the Outside Man," Athletic Journal, XLI (November, 1960), 22.

⁴⁶Gullion, loc. cit.

with the least delay, and the harnessing of the speed once the player is underway."⁴⁷

Physical and mental qualities. The material the high school coach has to work with is not of the highest quality. Green, inexperienced players must be taught every little trick of defense. Time has always been a vital factor which a coach has to work with in order to accomplish the most during each practice session. To take advantage of every practice minute, special effort must be made to develop a well organized practice schedule.

The strength of the team defense is related directly to the individual abilities of the members of the team. The ability of the individual members of the team to function in the team defense is dependent on certain physical and psychological aptitudes or attributes of those individual team members."⁴⁸

The well developed practice schedule includes drills to teach both defensive and offensive fundamentals. The drills should be arranged to accomplish the development of both the physical and mental qualities of the individual. "Fine physical skills and techniques of defense are valueless without the mental qualities of alertness, aggressiveness and determination."⁴⁹

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 13.

Listed below are eight specific areas of defensive play in which mental alertness pays high dividends:

- a. A knowledge of the special strength and weaknesses of the offensive man.
- b. A knowledge of the location of the ball and of the offensive man to whom he is assigned at all times.
- c. The possibility of intercepting passes thrown to his man or to other members of the offensive team.
- d. The possibility of shifting to pick up a loose offensive man.
- e. The recovery of the ball from the backboard after a shot by the offensive team.
- f. The factor of always having the hand in the proper position to block a shot.
- g. The application of the proper defensive footwork required by the changing offensive situation.
- h. Utilization of special defensive procedures required by various specific offensive situation.⁵⁰

The defensive man should be cautioned to force his man to commit himself before he makes his move on defense. The defensive man who lacks mental alertness is penalized in two ways. First, the offensive man has the advantage because he knows what his next move will be, but the defensive man must wait to make his move. Secondly, the defensive man has not been ready to react to counteract the offensive man's move when he did make it.

"The increasing trend toward the use of the tall players for offensive purposes is reflected in the weaker defenses now displayed by many of the leading teams of

⁵⁰Ibid.

of the nation."⁵¹ The increase in the height of players has given the tall teams three distinct advantages over the smaller teams: (1) shots are easier blocked; (2) defensive men can sag off further; and (3) the rebounding potential is greater. At the same time there have been three disadvantages placed on the tall team: (1) the fast breaking team can outmaneuver the defense down the court; (2) slower to meet the ever changing offensive situations; and (3) the pressing game cannot be used as effective with the tall, slower player. "Height is a valuable attribute in basketball defense, but height alone does not insure a strong defense."⁵²

quickness of hand and foot reactions. "Two basic essentials of sound defense are (1) proper footwork for establishing and adjusting defensive position and (2) varied hand movements for catching the ball or slapping it away from the intended receiver."⁵³ Practice and drills have been developed to teach proper movements of the feet and hands.

Agility and balance. The player's agility and balance are a determining factor in the success of his defensive work. The defensive player is required to move

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid., p. 12.

⁵³Ibid., p. 14.

with great speed about the court, but due to the complexity of the game, the speed has to be controlled. The defensive man may change directions many times on one play; therefore his ability to move with great speed but with complete control of it is one of his most important qualities. The teaching of agility and balance may be accomplished through tumbling and stunts.

Competitive spirit. The competitive aspect of defensive play has been identified and described in many ways. Competitive spirit has been referred to as one's willingness to sacrifice for his team. For example, a player, who has given up going to a party or fulfilling some other personal desire in order to maintain good physical condition is placing the team first. Self-confidence in his defensive ability is a sign of competitive spirit. From self-confidence comes the desire not only to hold an opponent under his scoring average but to prevent his man from handling the ball. The will to win or leadership ability which inspired his teammates to give a little extra is another means of describing competitive spirit. It includes any act which goes beyond just the routine effort of an individual.

Judgment. Good, sound basketball judgment is best developed through experience. Practice alone is not enough to teach good judgment. The pressure presented under game

conditions has more effect on an individual than a routine practice because of the hustle and enthusiasm of the players. Most player have the tendency to put forth greater effort in a game than in practice.

This phase of basketball has not been limited to just the mental aspect. It is true, that the player is required to make split second decisions, but these decisions are based on his knowledge of certain physical limitations in the areas of speed, agility, and reaction time.

Many easy scoring opportunities are provided because of the individual's poor judgment. Oftentimes, a defensive man thinks himself capable of performing a task, only to discover too late, that he is physically unable. Many defensive mistakes can be eliminated through well planned and organized drills.

Many scoring opportunities are made possible through alertness of a good defensive team. These teams take advantage of their physical qualities through good judgment by knowing their limitations in the areas of speed, agility, and reaction time. Also, many players have no opportunity to display their judgment because of the conservative type of team defense they play. The conservative defense decreases the number of defensive mistakes in many cases, but it has cost many teams games because the players lose their aggressiveness. The loss of aggressiveness leaves a team with no

weapon to combat the stall game when they fall behind late in the game. The players should be given an opportunity to exercise their judgment more freely in many cases. A defeat is a defeat whether it is caused from over aggressiveness or lack of aggressiveness.

Adaptability. Adaptability is concerned with both individual and team defensive abilities. The complexity of basketball today involves the defensive man in many changing situations. The key to the adaptability of a player to these numerous changing situations is a thorough knowledge of the requirements of both individual and team responsibilities. These changing situations can be handled only by the quick, well-drilled intelligent player. "Adaptability in athletics is not a natural phenomena but is a planned act."⁵⁴

Summary. The game of basketball has been revolutionized because of the demands placed upon coaches to win. The result of this revolution has been to stress defense, the only completely reliable element of basketball. To have a sound defensive team, players must possess the elements which make good defensive players.

The qualities which the coach should look for in a

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 20.

defensive player are (1) speed; (2) physical and mental qualities; (3) height; (4) agility and balance; (5) quickness of hands and foot reactions; (6) judgment; (7) competitive spirit; and (8) adaptability. The success of the individual and team is directly related to these qualities. The player who cannot qualify in these elements has very little chance of becoming a successful defensive player.

CHAPTER IV

MECHANICS OF INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM DEFENSIVE MOVEMENTS

It has been generally agreed upon, both from experience and observations of players in action using the man-for-man defense and its many variations and the zone defenses, that the basic skills and techniques hold true in any of the various forms of defenses.⁵⁵ It has been observed that players who have been well coached in the man-for-man defensive principles adjusted very quickly when used in a zone defense. It was not as successful when the reverse was tried. The players restricted to the various zone defensive principles were not capable of making the adjustments necessary to play the man-for-man defense successfully until adequate training was provided for them.

The man-for-man defense, without any doubt, has been the most difficult to teach. It requires much practice time which many coaches feel they cannot afford to spare. The man-for-man defense requires the players and the coach to have much knowledge about the various types of offenses and how to restrict these movements by reorganizing the defense to stop the offense.

⁵⁵Gary Filbert, "Covering the Outside Man," Athletic Journal, XLI (November, 1960), 22.

The successful use of the man-for-man defense has created challenges both to the individual player and to the coach. The challenge has been accepted in many cases to the extent of not just merely holding the high scorer of the other team, but to preventing him from even handling the ball. The latter has been next to impossible but the number of times the star actually handles the ball can be reduced. The number of good shots is limited through intelligent defensive maneuvers. The man-for-man defense requires the players to use their intelligence and never to relax while on defense. This type of defense handicaps the defensive man because the offensive man knows his next move. The defense has to guess what the move will be. Of course, the intelligent defensive man has eliminated much of the guess work by learning, as quickly as possible, the strong and weak qualities of his man. This knowledge enabled the defensive man to force his opponent to rely on his weaker qualities, beating him to the vantage points and stopping him before he has the chance to get started.

These situations have been handled with good timing, excellent body balance, close cooperative effort with teammates and high degree of intelligence.⁵⁶ The proper execution of the various defensive fundamentals has to be a

⁵⁶Blair Gullion, Techniques and Tactics of Basketball Defense (St. Louis: Bardgett Printing & Publishing Co., 1951), p. 3.

challenge to the coordination and intellect of the player. The good defensive man has been taught through an organized pattern which enables him to move about the court unhampered by fears of blocks or screens.

I. MECHANICS OF INDIVIDUAL DEFENSE

The mechanics of individual defensive movements have been categorized into the following areas: (1) change over from offense to defense; (2) defensive position; (3) defensive stances; (4) defensive footwork; and (5) team defense.⁵⁸

Change over from offense to defense. The change from offense to defense was established as being (and rightfully so) the first phases of any defensive action. "Few coaches emphasize the break from offense to defense with its many important implications."⁵⁹ The change over was cited as being when the offensive team loses possession of the ball. Many easy baskets are scored because of the slow change over. The defensive-minded team has as its goal, the optimum defensive adjustments in the minimum time. The defensive team must move automatically into the areas

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Barry Nettles, "Mechanics of Individual Defensive Movements," Athletic Journal, XLII (October, 1961), 21.

⁵⁹Gullion, op. cit., p. 19.

assigned to carry out team defense, or to the points which give them the most advantage. The defensive man must find the ball and his man immediately in order to stop or slow down possible fast breaks and easy baskets. The points to halt the attack have to be stressed and drilled to teach defensive assignments. The knowledge of these various points should increase the abilities of both the experienced and inexperienced players. The change over time decreases as experience is gained.

Defensive position. Defensive position will be obtained after the location of the ball and man. The change over must be fast and this requires the defensive man to retreat to at least mid-court and turn around looking toward his offensive end of the floor. This position allows him to locate the ball and his man. At this point, the defensive man must obtain his defensive position between his man and the basket. "The skill with which the defensive player can maintain this position depends largely on his natural ability and training and in the ability and training of his opponent."⁶⁰ "A general rule would be to play a man near enough so that he can be adequately guarded but not so close that he will be allowed to break by for a chance to score."⁶¹

⁶⁰Charles C. Murphy, Basketball (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1939), p. 44.

⁶¹Adolph F. Rupp, Rupp's Championship Basketball (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948), p. 135.

Defensive stances. The defensive stance is the most vital part of the defensive man's weapons. Most defensive mistakes may be traced to faulty stance. The stride and parallel stances are recognized as the best to meet the numerous situations of defense. "Proper stance and well-executed fundamentals in defense are of vital importance. . . . Balance is without question the most important single factor in individual defense."⁶²

The stride or staggered stance requires the player to spread his feet a comfortable distance apart with one foot slightly ahead of the other. The amount of space between the toe and heel of the feet is determined by individual players. What is comfortable for one may not be for another. The player should bend forward at the waist with the back held straight, flexing the knees. The head and eyes are held up so the player can see the entire body of his opponent and as much of the playing floor as possible. The hands and arms on defense have great importance in the balance of the defensive player. The extended arm and the lead foot are for balance. The other arm is used for feeling for screens or picks, stopping the low pass, and helping balance. About three-fourths of the body

⁶²Jay McCreary, Winning High School Basketball (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956), p. 128.

weight is placed on the balls of the feet.⁶³ When the defensive man approaches his man, whether he has the ball or not, he approaches him cautiously. By doing so, he does not leave himself open for a fake or drive by him. One should approach the shooter by extending the arm opposite the shooter's arm.⁶⁴ The defensive man must work for a comfortable, balanced stance which will give him the speed needed to play a good, sound brand of defense.

The staggered stance is used for defending against an opponent facing the basket in scoring territory. The distance away from the opponent varies with the guard's abilities and the situation at the time. As a general rule, the defensive man is a little more than an arm's length away from his man. In this position, the defensive man is able to defend against a shot or a pass off to a cutter breaking toward the basket. The defensive man should attempt to force his man to commit himself first by feinting or making short stabs at the ball. These feints or stabs are not all-out attempts to get the ball, but are very deliberate, controlled movements. Many foolish defensive mistakes are the result of losing balance on attempts to slap the ball away when there is little chance of success.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 128-29.

⁶⁴Nettles, op. cit., p. 21.

The staggered stance, to provide the best coverage on a shooter, positions the defensive man with one foot forward and one hand and arm extended out front and above the head. For the best balance, the defensive man has the hand and foot on the same side out front. It is usually left up to the individual player as to whether he has the right or left foot and hand out front. Through observations of defensive players defending against shooters, a small but important element arises. Many shooters are not guarded because a right handed guard has the tendency to put his right hand and foot forward. A right handed shooter does not have to shoot over the hand because the guard's hand is covering his left side. The purpose of extending a hand out front is to distract the shooter's attention and to cause, if possible, the shooter to shoot an unnatural type shot. Giving the shooter the open shot is not the defensive man's intentions but this is happening.

The defensive man has to meet all feints by the offensive man. He counters feints by either stepping or moving the hand in the same direction as the opponent moved his foot or the ball. He has to make these moves if he expects to keep his floor position. After a pass, the defensive man has to release off quickly and keep his eyes on the man, not the ball. When he releases off, he does not lose his floor position.

The parallel stance has basically the same mechanics as the stride stance. The feet are placed so the toes are parallel. The arms are placed at the sides to provide better balance, and so they can be moved up or down quickly to stop passes. The parallel stance is illustrated in Figure 9, page 62.

The parallel stance is used against the dribbler and the cutter. This stance gives the defensive man better balance and permits him to move in any direction easily. The stance is not used to prevent shots but to maintain the all-important floor position, between the man and the basket. It is also used in the full court press.

Defensive footwork. Defensive footwork enables the defensive man to keep good body balance and at the same time keep him between his man and the basket. Many easy baskets are scored because of poor footwork on the part of the defensive man. The defensive man must master three types of movements: the side step, the approach step, and the retreat step.

The side step is probably used more than the other two. The player picks up the foot on the same side as the direction he intends to move, just enough to clear the floor. As the foot touches the floor, the other foot is slid on the floor to the side of the lead foot. By doing

this, the legs are never crossed and the feet do not become tangled up.

In the approach step, the defensive man picks up the lead foot just enough to clear the floor. As the lead foot touches the floor he immediately moves by sliding the rear foot forward. In this movement the defensive man, in order to keep body balance and keep the body under control, should turn his body to the side. The rear foot is used to push off.

The retreat step is much the same as the approach step. The defensive man has to learn to keep his balance while moving backward. Balance is lost if he rocks back on his heels. He must keep the majority of the weight on the balls of the feet. Again, he does not cross his legs.

Regardless of the type step necessary to be used, the important thing to remember is to keep the body under control and balanced. The offensive man uses many fakes before he commits himself; therefore, the defensive man's balance is a very important factor in preventing drives and shots. The defensive man must counter any fake step by the offensive man with the foot on that side. When the offensive man steps to his right, the defensive man counters with a step to the left. If the offensive man steps toward the defensive man with the right foot, the defensive man steps back with the left foot. By countering the steps, the defensive man can maintain not only his floor position on his man but his distance away from him also.

Team defense. Team defense, the fifth area, and how it is to be used must be determined by the material at hand and the various situations occurring in the process of playing the game. Whatever the defense, all players need a thorough knowledge of it and what part they play in its function.

Summary. The seven points to remember for good individual defensive play are recognized as: (1) a wide base with the feet spread, knees bent and hips lowered; (2) take short steps and keep the feet in contact with the floor as much as possible; (3) shuffle and drag the feet when moving about the floor on defense; (4) don't cross the legs; (5) do not lunge or take long steps when approaching the offensive player; (6) don't leave the floor on fakes; and (7) maintain floor position, stay between the man and the basket.⁶⁵

II. INCORPORATING INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM DEFENSIVE FUNDAMENTALS

There is no set rule, which applies to all of the numerous situations which a defensive man encounters for playing an opponent. However, a general rule would be to play the man close enough to prevent or hinder the ball

⁶⁵Murphy, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

handler from having a good shot or clear pass off.

Major responsibilities. The defensive man has four major responsibilities to carry out; (1) to prevent his man shooting over him; (2) to prevent his man driving by him for the easy basket; (3) to hurry his man into making bad passes and taking poor shots; and (4) to tie up his man if possible.⁶⁶ The success of carrying out these responsibilities depends on the knowledge the defensive man had about his opponent's abilities. This knowledge is acquired by one of two means. First, the scouting report is carefully analyzed by the player and coach to establish weak and strong qualities. This has its disadvantages because the player could have had an off or bad night when the scouting report was made. The type of defense the other team might use has its effects on different players. The second means of handling and acquiring knowledge about a player is through observation of a particular player as the game progresses. This method has its disadvantages because a player can hurt you before you can figure out a solution to stop his movements. This type of assignment requires the defensive man to be well schooled in the techniques and fundamentals of the man-for-man defense. The goals in this area are seldom reached because of the limited abilities

⁶⁶Gullion. op. cit., p. 154.

of the high school player.

Thinking defensive player. The man-for-man defense has placed much responsibility upon the individual. In order for a player to be a good defensive player he has to learn to think for himself. Until he acquires this ability, his mistakes will be numerous. The individual should be encouraged to take each assignment as a personal challenge. Of course, this attitude does not relieve him of his team work.

Distance from opponent. The defensive man has positioned himself between his man and the basket. There are a few exceptions to this thinking. The distance away from the offensive man is determined by six factors: (1) man in scoring territory; (2) man a good or poor shooter; (3) speed of the opponent; (4) time remaining in quarter or game; (5) the score; and (6) team defense.

Scoring territory. The defensive man has two types of defensive assignments which are based on what was considered scoring territory. First, an offensive player advancing into the scoring area is played tighter to prevent him from scoring or receiving a pass. When the offensive man enters this area he becomes a scoring threat which means he cannot handle the ball or go where he wants to unhindered. Second, when he leaves the scoring territory, the

defensive man releases immediately. This does not mean he is able to relax. He has to stay alert for any possible move. The positioning used to cover the offensive man is determined by the type of team defense. The individual's personal assignments are part of the total team defensive plan. One defensive player not performing his duties will lessen the effectiveness of the entire team's defense.

Opponent's abilities. The type of shooter, good or poor has to be considered both for individual and team defensive strategy. A good shooter has to be played close enough to prevent, or at least hinder, a shot or pass. At the same time, the shooter has to be defended to prevent drives. When a player possesses all of these qualities, a good shooter, driver and passer, the strongest or the most immediate threat is defended first. The ideal situation is to prevent or defense all three, which in most cases, proves impossible. The defensive man normally plays the man to give him the long shot rather than an easy lay-up or pass off for an assist. An opponent who possesses good shooting and passing qualities is defended in a different way. Since he is a poor driver, he should be played tight to prevent the good shot. The poor shooter but fair to good driver or passer is played loosely to force him to shoot from outside. His poor shooting gives the defensive team an opportunity to get the defensive rebound. These are some of the numerous

ways of defending an opponent. Of course, these methods should be coordinated into the team defense strategy.

The speed of the opponent has tremendous influence on the position of the defensive man. A very fast opponent forces the defensive man to play much more loosely than he normally would. In most cases, it is wiser to defend against the drive or pass off to breaking men near the basket. Over playing a speedy man is giving him too much of an advantage. This type of defense may be classified as percentage basketball. The major responsibility of the defense is to defend against the easy two points. This is accomplished best by plugging up the middle of the court and forcing them to shoot from twenty-five to thirty feet out. The percentage of shots made from this distance is much lower than the shots taken under the basket.

Time factor. The time remaining in a quarter or game influences to some extent the type of play of the defense. In a close game (three to five points difference) the defense has to play according to who has the advantage of the lead. When the defensive team is behind, the strategy has to be to prevent the offense from scoring in order to have a chance to cut the lead. When the defensive team is ahead, the defense plays to protect its lead by giving the opponent the long shots but plugs the middle against drives and pass offs for easy baskets to cutters. The defensive team has to be

cautious; they must not commit fouls which would give the opponent a three point play. A three point play with a five point lead cuts the lead to only two points and one basket would tie the game. Of course, a lead less than five points has really put the pressure on the defense. This situation calls for the same type of strategy--play it safe and protect the lead.

Summary. The team defense determines the activities of the individual players. There are five individuals trying to do a job as a unit. One defensive player not performing his duties weakens the best team defense. A team defense which uses switching or dropping off to pick up loose men requires more team work than any other type of defense.⁶⁷ Each player has to have the knowledge and know how to play this type of defense. Each player is dependent upon a teammate when in trouble and if this teamwork fails, the team defense fails.

Team and individual defense has to be organized and coordinated before it will be effective. Perfection of the defense is obtained through practice, and perfection is maintained only by practice. Defense is hard work and a

⁶⁷Glenn Wilkes, Winning Basketball Strategy (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959), p. 31.

player not willing to work at it has no place on the team.
The team defense is only as strong as the individual players
who are performing it.

CHAPTER V

MAN FOR MAN DEFENSIVE COVERAGE

The defensive man has two separate situations in which to defense the opponent. One may be classified as general situations and the other special situations. The general situations cover the basic positions of the back court man, the pivot man, and the corner man. The special situations cover such phases as stopping the dribbler, defensive rebounding, or pass interceptions. The man with the ball, and the man without the ball requires two different sets of principles; each similar in many ways and yet different in many other ways. The defensive man has to have a clear knowledge of both in order to perform his assigned duties to the optimum. The type of team defense employed is a dominant factor in determining the defensive action of the guard on the offensive man with or without the ball.⁶⁸

I. DEFENSING THE MAN WITH THE BALL

There are three general positions to defense against: the back court man, corner man, and the pivot man. The score, the type of player, and the team defense are three factors involved in the final decision as to how each

⁶⁸Blair Gullion, Techniques and Tactics of Basketball Defense (St. Louis: Bardgett Printing & Publishing Co., 1951), p. 63.

position is to be defended. The main goal of the defensive man is to maintain a position between his man and the basket. Of course, there are instances where this principle is secondary to the strategy to defense a particular player. Some cases call for the defensive man to play in front or to the side of his opponent in order to prevent him from receiving the ball. In these situations the opponent is given a straight line path toward the basket. These situations are special cases and not the general situation.

Back court man coverage. The coverage of the back court man (the offensive guard position) is predetermined from available information known about his speed, shooting, driving ability, passing ability, or whether he screened well, and the team defense to be used. Knowing this information allows the defensive man to adjust his defensive stance and distance to take the most advantageous position on his man. Normally, the defensive man assumes a position between his man and the basket and releases off to a distance which allows him to hinder a shot, but guard against a drive or pass off as demonstrated in Figure 1.

When the opponent has more speed than the defensive man, the defensive man has to play him looser. To play a faster man too tightly opens the way to many drive-in lay-ups or causes the defensive man to commit many unnecessary fouls trying to stop the opponent. The tight coverage of a

back court man requires the defensive man to possess great speed, agility and balance to counteract the sudden stops, starts, and change of direction used by the offensive man.

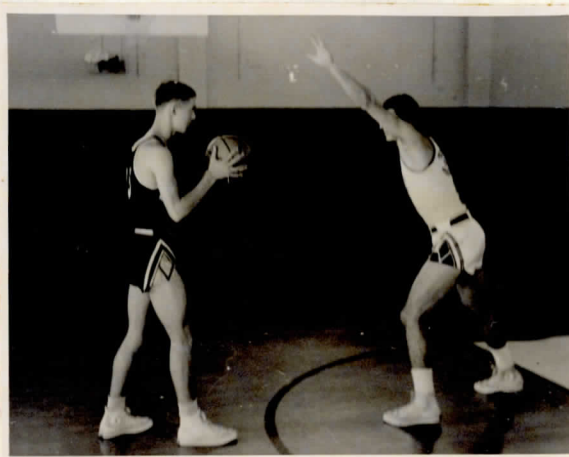


FIGURE 1

DEFENSIVE POSITION ON THE BACK COURT MAN

A good long shooter has to be played more closely in order to hinder his shooting. Again speed enters into the strategy. When the good long shooter possesses speed, the defensive man has two responsibilities to protect against. He has to play close enough to prevent shots and at the same time prevent the possible drive. The normal philosophy in this case is to give the offensive player the long shots but prevent the easy lay-up.

A poor driver but good shooter has to be played tight. The tight position is made possible because the danger of a driving lay-up is not present. An offensive player who lacks

the ability to drive is easy to defense to the point that he cannot even handle the ball. This situation does not occur often because most modern players have developed their offensive abilities. The movement of individual players is limited by the type of offensive pattern. In this situation, the defensive man definitely has the advantage and has to be aggressive in order to stall the offensive pattern.

The team defense determines, in most instances, the strategy to be used by individual players. In the normal man-for-man team defense each player is assigned one particular opponent. His major responsibility is to prevent his man from scoring, therefore his primary aim is to maintain his position between his man and the basket and close enough to prevent or hinder a good free shot. A tight man-for-man team defense requires everyone to tighten up on his man. The sagging man-for-man requires all defensive players, except the man on the opponent with the ball, to release off back around the foul lane to plug the middle giving the opponent many long shots.

Corner man coverage. The corner man (the forward position) is played much the same way as the back court man. The same defensive principles hold true in positioning and distance between the guard and offensive man in the corner as illustrated in Figure 2. The corner defensive man has to be especially careful to prevent his man from driving the

baseline. Being able to drive the baseline gives the offensive man the advantage because the defensive man has no way of getting help from his teammates.



FIGURE 2

DEFENSIVE POSITION ON CORNER MAN
WITH THE BALL

Pivot man coverage. Defensing the pivot man with the ball had many factors to be considered. A good pivot man who is capable of moving both ways and has a good turn around jump shot has a great advantage over the defensive man. As soon as he has received the ball, the defensive man, as illustrated in Figure 3, plays behind the pivot man with his arms outstretched. His first move is a step back as the pivot man starts to make his move. A good pivot man has too much advantage and probably could not be stopped by only one man. When a team has an exceptionally good pivot man the defensive strategy should be to try to prevent him from receiving the

ball. In Figure 3, the defensive pivot man has loosened up on his man. This will enable the defensive man to maintain his distance and good floor position.



FIGURE 3

DEFENSIVE PIVOT MAN POSITIONED BEHIND THE
OFFENSIVE PIVOT MAN WITH THE BALL

The offensive pivot man who moves well to his right is defended best by overplaying him to his left side as demonstrated in Figure 4. This forces him to go in the direction he is weakest. He may still score a few points but he is not able to do as much damage as he would have if he were allowed to move in the direction he liked best. The reverse procedures should be used if he is a left handed man.

The defensive man assigned to the pivot man has to be a strong player because he may have to switch off and help his teammates. He must release off his man on crossing plays

involving the pivot man to allow his teammates to slide through with their men. The defensive pivot man has to always be mentally alert to meet any of the many situations arising around the basket.

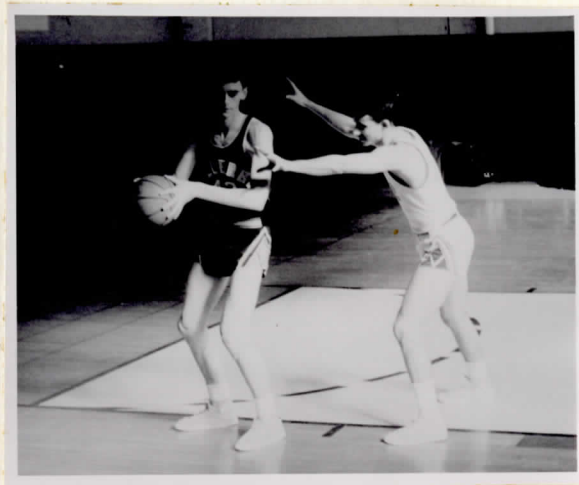


FIGURE 4

DEFENSIVE PIVOT MAN PLAYING TO STRONG
SIDE OF THE OFFENSIVE PIVOT
MAN WITH THE BALL

II. DEFENSING THE MAN WITHOUT THE BALL

The second situation, guarding the man without the ball is as important as guarding the man with the ball. A man with the ball is actually not as dangerous because his moveability is limited to some extent. A man dribbling the ball has no right to be able to outrun a player without the ball. The man without the ball is especially dangerous because of his free moveability. He is able to fake drives, set screens for teammates, use teammates as a screen, and

to shoot over or break free for the basket for an easy two points. Many easy baskets are scored off a faked screen and roll-out to the basket.

The fake screen, or pick and roll-out is the result of poor training in defense or because the defensive man relaxes for a second. The defensive man has to stay alert and ready to go all the time when on defense. The time to loaf is on offense where it does not hurt the team.

The general rule for good floor position is still applied when guarding the man without the ball. There are occasions when this floor position is altered to meet the team defense strategy. The defensive man should be positioned so both his man and the ball are visible. This position requires him to be in the parallel stance and about two full strides away from his man. He must be ready to move in any direction. If the defensive man is forced to make a choice as to whether to lose sight of the ball or man, he is instructed to lose sight of the ball. The man without the ball will in most cases maneuver himself to a position which enables him to receive a pass. The intelligent defensive man will use these maneuvers to locate the ball.

When the defensive man is unable to see the location of the ball, he is very vulnerable to screens or picks. The screens or picks, in most cases, are more mental than physical. They are avoidable, in most cases, by the defensive man using one hand behind him as a feeler to feel the

offensive man setting the screen. The screen is usually made possible because the defensive man failed to release off his man. Mental alertness is the vital factor in keeping good floor position and avoiding screens and picks.

All defensive players should be required to learn to play defense from any position on the floor. As the offensive man moves from position to position, the position on him has to be altered to meet the changing situation. As the offensive player makes his move from one position to another, the guard is to maintain good floor position. He has to maintain his distance away from his man also. If the offensive man is allowed to get closer than two strides it enables him to shoot by the defensive man. It is physically impossible for a defensive man to move as fast running backward as a man can run forward. The guard has to maintain his two strides to keep from being caught out of position.

It is important to keep in a good defensive stance. The tendency is to straighten up as the offensive man starts to make his move. This straightening up gave the offensive man at least a full stride toward the direction he desires to go. A full step gives the offensive man too much of an advantage in beating the defensive man to the punch. This is especially important to a defensive man guarding a corner man who wants to break down the baseline. The defensive man should be instructed to force his man to the middle

so his teammates are able to help choke off the opponent's drive.

Defensing the back court man. The defensive man guarding the back court man should turn his body to the side facing the ball and release off three good strides. This places him in a position which enables him to see both the ball and his opponent. This is illustrated clearly in Figure 8a, page 60. Regardless of the back court man's position, he should not loose sight of his man. He must always be alert for screens on the blind side. He occasionally feels behind him with his hand to find out whether an offensive man has set a screen.

Pivot man coverage. Playing strategy of the offensive pivot man depends upon his speed, his abilities, team defense, and how much the opponents depend upon the pivot man for their offense to be effective. Regardless of these factors, the defensive man has to stay mentally and physically alert. The normal position is to play the pivot man's side nearest the ball as illustrated in Figure 5.

Some strategy calls for the defensive man to play in front of the pivot man as shown in Figure 6. This position is dangerous because the defensive man loses sight of his man. It also gives the offensive man a clear path to the basket. A teammate on the weak side has to be ready to help out if he breaks for the basket. Other strategy calls for

the guard on the weak side in the back court to drop back in front of the pivot man. This allows the defensive pivot man to play behind or at the side of the offensive pivot man.

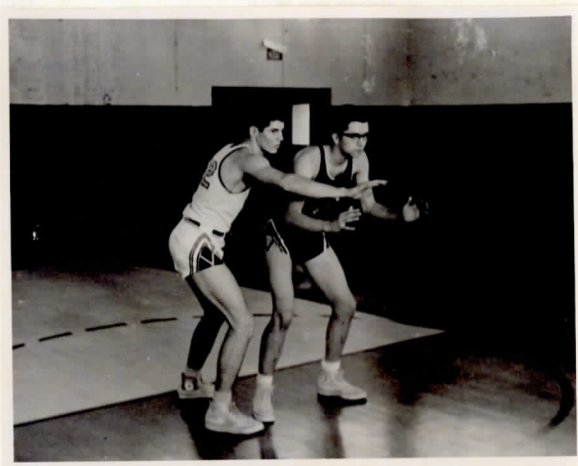


FIGURE 5

DEFENSIVE PIVOT MAN PLAYING TO SIDE
OF OFFENSIVE PIVOT MAN
WITHOUT THE BALL



FIGURE 6

DEFENSIVE PIVOT MAN PLAYING IN FRONT
OF OFFENSIVE PIVOT MAN
WITHOUT THE BALL

Defensing the corner man. Defensing the corner man without the ball in the corner position is again basically the same as from the guard position. The defensive man turns the body in order to be able to see the man with the ball and keep good floor position. Figure 7 illustrates good positioning on the corner offensive man as well as good position on the man with the ball..

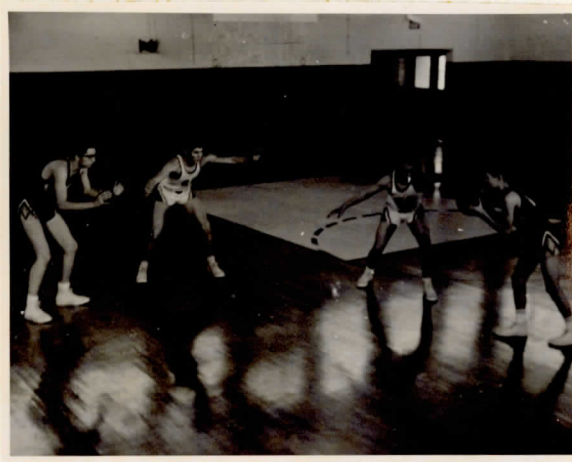


FIGURE 7

DEFENSIVE CORNER MAN PLAYING OFFENSIVE
CORNER MAN WITHOUT THE BALL

Summary. The key factors to successfully guard an opponent with or without the ball are (1) maintain good floor position; (2) release off at least two full strides; and (3) keep mentally and physically alert at all times. Once a defensive man relaxes he puts himself at a disadvantage.

III. DEFENSING THE SPECIAL SITUATIONS

There are numerous other defensive techniques necessary to round out the knowledge the good defensive man needs to carry out his assignments and responsibilities. When guarding a right hand shooter, the defensive man should have his left hand up. This places the hand over the ball and forces the shooter to arch the ball higher or cause an unnatural shot. Either of these techniques has a tendency to cause the shooter's shooting percentage to decrease.

A player who can dribble with only one hand has to be overplayed to his strong side in order to force him to use his weak hand. Being unaccustomed to this maneuver may throw him off stride enough to cause ball handling mistakes or loss of control or possession of the ball. The parallel stance has been used to give the defensive man better balance and moveability. The hands are carried low to aid in balance as well as to protect against the pass off to teammates.

The clever guard will use his hands continually by slapping and stabbing at the ball. The safest way of making the effort to slap the ball away from the opponent is with an underhand or upward motion from the floor. "His intentions should be to knock the ball from the opponent's hands, get a held ball, hinder the opponent's pass or break up

a possible dribble."⁶⁹ These actions can be accomplished by the defensive man keeping his feet constantly moving to be ready to move in any direction. Good body balance and floor position are also important factors to complete these duties. It takes great effort, skill, and concentration for a guard to hound his man constantly.

To avoid being faked out of position, the defensive man has to concentrate on a section of the body which must be moved as the opponent moves. The belt buckle has to go where the man goes; therefore the defensive man can concentrate on it. The defensive man who watches an offensive man's feet, shoulders, head and eyes finds himself being faked out of position quite easily. Most offensive players fake by using these parts of the body in their fakes. The defensive man counteracts each step of an offensive man with the opposite foot. When the offensive man steps with his right foot, the defensive man counters by stepping with his left foot. This is vital because this prevents the offensive man from getting a half a step by the defensive man.

The defensive man has to release off his man immediately after he has passed off. The first reaction is to take at least two full strides back. While releasing off, the defensive man keeps his eyes on his man. The mistake

⁶⁹Jay McCreary, Winning High School Basketball (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956), p. 45.

often made here is not to release off and to follow the ball. A smart offensive man will cut behind the defensive man for a return pass and usually an easy basket. "An alert offensive player will always take advantage of the guard, when he relaxes, and cut for the follow-in or break to the basket."⁷⁰

The defensive man has to keep his feet on the floor on faked shots. The defensive player who constantly leaves the floor on every faked shot is weak defensively or has poor coaching on this phase of defensive play. Leaving the floor is permissible, even encouraged, after an offensive man's feet leave the floor in order for the defensive man to attempt to block the shot. The shooter has to be forced to shoot an unnatural, or at least a hindered, shot.

Once the team has these basic fundamental guarding positions mastered they can be incorporated into the team defense. A careful study of Figures 8a-c reveals clearly the various positions required by the individual defensive men as the ball is moved about the floor. These positions illustrate the positioning as required for the regular man-for-man team defense. The defensive men are constantly cautioned again not to lose sight of the ball or the man if possible.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 46.



FIGURE 8a

TEAM DEFENSIVE POSITIONING WITH BALL IN CORNER
AND PIVOT MAN ON OPPOSITE SIDE OF FLOOR



FIGURE 8b

TEAM DEFENSIVE POSITIONING WITH BALL IN BACK
COURT AND PIVOT MAN ON OPPOSITE
SIDE OF THE FLOOR

guarding the dribbler. The defensive man, when guarding a good dribbler, is instructed to first of all maintain good floor position and to stay released off at least two good strides. This distance is decreased as the dribbler gets closer to the basket. This requires great concentration on the part of the defensive man. The defender in Figure 9 demonstrates good floor position on the dribbler. The defensive man is in the parallel stance with the arms held to his sides. Good body balance is the important factor in maintaining good floor position. The feet are constantly being moved so to keep ready for the change of pace of the dribbler. The side shuffle step should be used, with emphasis on the shuffle, not the crossover. If the dribbler



FIGURE 8c

TEAM DEFENSIVE POSITIONING WITH BALL IN
CORNER ON THE SAME SIDE AS
OFFENSIVE PIVOT MAN

manages to get by him, the defensive man should turn and go in a straight line to the basket in order to cut the dribbler off. It is a lost cause to follow the dribbler because he is able to cut in front and cause a foul on the defensive man.

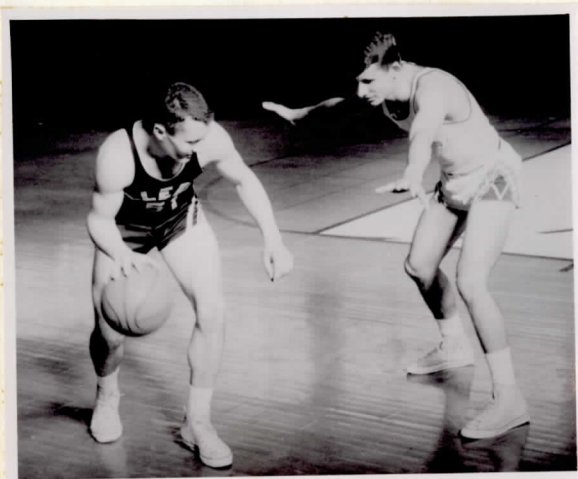


FIGURE 9

GUARDING THE DRIBBLER

The team defense and strategy is the deciding factor as to where the dribbler should be picked up. The normal man-for-man defensive position is about two strides away. The defensive man's primary purpose is to stop the dribbler as far out in the back court as possible. At the same time, he is to prevent any possible drive for the easy basket. This type of strategy does not attempt to steal the ball, but is designed to put enough pressure on the dribbler to cause ball handling mistakes without committing fouls. This

being the case, there is little slapping or stabbing at the ball. These tactics have a tendency to throw the defensive man off balance when being over aggressive, thus giving the offensive man the advantage.

The steal. The attempted steal in Figure 10 was made with an underhand or upward swing of the hand from the floor. This movement was preferred to prevent unnecessary fouling. This is best accomplished by getting in rhythm with the dribbler's hand. The attempted steal was practiced many times in order to get the rhythm and to be able to get the shoulder out of the way of the dribbler's body.



FIGURE 10

THE STEAL FROM THE DRIBBLER

Summary. The four most common mistakes of the defensive man are: (1) reaching to attempt to bat the ball away; (2) being off balance because of faulty body

mechanics; (3) slapping down on the ball instead of upward; and (4) standing and waiting flat footed for the dribbler to come to him.

Stopping the dribbler. The dribbler in Figure 11a has entered the pick-up area. The defender begins his challenge and will attempt to force him to declare his direction or stop his dribble. He was instructed to force the dribbler away from the basket. The dribbler is not to be allowed to go where he desires to go without being hindered. When the defense allows the offensive team to move the ball as they want, they have the defense beaten.

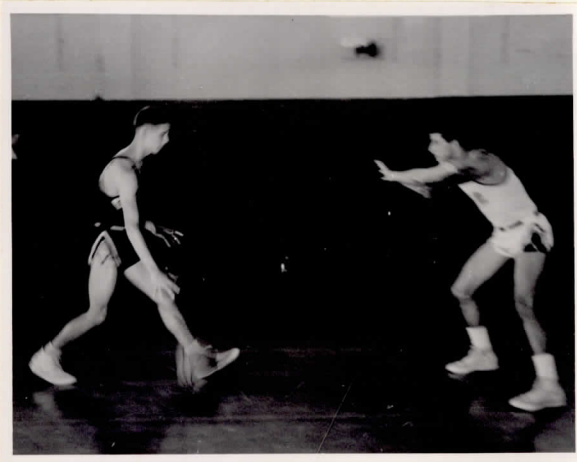


FIGURE 11a
CHALLENGING THE DRIBBLER

The defender has stopped the dribbler in Figure 11b. This was made possible by either hounding the dribbler or by a fake charge step. A good fake charge step toward the

dribbler has a tendency to make the dribbler pause a moment giving the defensive man his chance to get good position or to recover from poor defensive moves. Occasionally, this tactic causes the dribbler to stop his dribble. Once the dribbler has stopped his dribble, the defensive man is to close in and hound his man. Too often the hard work involved in stopping a dribbler is wasted because the defender backs off and gives his man room for an outlet pass. His first goal is to force the dribbler to turn his back to the basket as shown in Figure 11c. Then he is to make it as difficult as possible, without unnecessary fouling, to prevent a pass out. The arms are to be vigorously waved to help prevent a pass off.

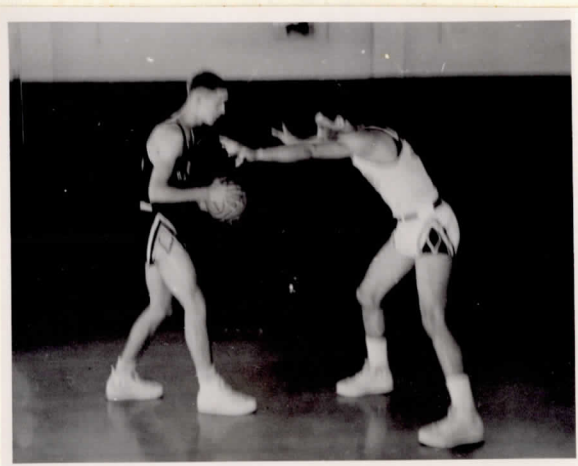


FIGURE 11b

HOUNDING THE STOPPED DRIBBLER

Slide through on crossing men. It has been found to

be practically impossible to play a man-for-man defense without some switching. However, it is generally agreed upon that the defensive men should avoid switching as much as possible. This is made possible by teaching the proper methods for the slide through on crossing men.

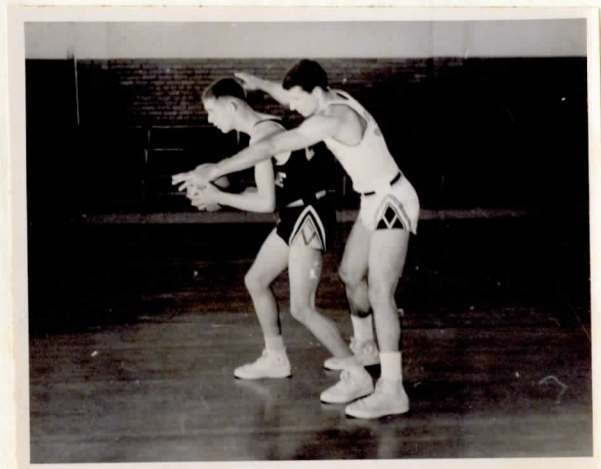


FIGURE 11c

FORCE DRIBBLER TO TURN BACK TOWARD BASKET

There are several principles and techniques involved in this defensive maneuver. The points to be concentrated upon are (1) the slide step to the side and not to cross the legs; (2) the use of the parallel stance for better moveability; (3) immediate release off of man when he started his move; (4) maintain good floor position; (5) permit only one man between the defensive man and the opponent; and (6) help teammate through by releasing off or taking hold of his hips and pushing him through. Defensive men who have

mastered these principles and techniques seldom end up as the victim of picks or screens. These principles and techniques prevent the defensive man from getting into unnecessary trouble.

The teams using a cutting, crossing or pivot man type offense are not as much interested in the long out side shot as they were in breaking a cutter loose for an easy lay-up shot. Their primary purpose is to shake loose a man by letting the defensive men pick each other off when crossing. To prevent teammates from screening each other, the defensive team must avoid as many of the situations involving the screen or pick as possible.

The natural screen created by crossing players is avoidable as demonstrated in Figures 12a-c. The action starts in Figure 12a when the two offensive men start toward each other. The defender guarding the dribbler has released off enough to prevent a possible quick cut for the basket. The other defender has his normal position of approximately two strides off his man.

As the two offensive men approach the hand off in Figure 12b, the defender on the original dribbler has stepped back with his left foot to avoid picking off the other defensive man. His teammate has taken a step forward in order to permit only one man between him and his man. This is probably the vital area of this defensive maneuver.



FIGURE 12a

SIDE SLIDE STEP ON CROSSING PLAYERS



FIGURE 12b

THE SLIDE THROUGH ON CROSSING PLAYERS

The possibilities here are numerous. The two common errors are: (1) the defender on the original dribbler not releasing off; and (2) the defender on the new ball handler not stepping forward. These two errors have to be eliminated if the defense against a crossing type offense is to be successfully defended. In either situation, the defensive man performing his duties correctly will have to push his teammate out of the way. For example, the defender on the original dribbler has forgotten to release off. The defender on the new ball handler should have taken hold of his arm and pulled him sharply back out of the way. After a good sharp jerk, the next time this situation arises he will release off. This is referred to as fighting your way through and is used incorrectly by many defensive men. They pushed their opponent instead of their teammate; this causes an unnecessary foul.

Figure 12c demonstrates the successful slide through maneuver. The defensive men have performed their duties properly and there has been no mix up. The defender on the original dribbler has released off a good two full strides and has maintained his floor position. The defender on the new ball handler has taken his proper position.

These techniques are instilled into the defensive man through continual drilling. The defensive man will be aided greatly by the development of his peripheral vision.

The proper use of his hands for feeling for screens and picks is important to avoid being trapped.



FIGURE 12c

COMPLETED SLIDE THROUGH AND RELEASE OFF
TO MAINTAIN FLOOR POSITION

Defensing the cutter. One of the toughest of the defensive man's various assignments and responsibilities is to maintain good floor position on the cutter toward the basket. The key to success in this situation is to maintain a safe distance away from the man. The defensive man can stay out of trouble by not permitting his man to get too close to him. Naturally, the defensive man has to close the distance as the offensive man approaches the basket. The defensive man has to concentrate on beating the offensive man to the point he desires to go.

The guard on the ball handler in Figure 13a has his right hand low to try to prevent a possible pass to the

cutter as he starts his move. At this point of his cut, the offensive man has the advantage because of the angle of a pass and handling the pass. The further in the cutter advances, the more difficult it becomes to pass in or to receive a pass. Here is a situation where the defensive man guarding the ball handler has to watch for a fake cut and a screen for the ball handler. The guard on the cutter has the responsibility of telling his teammate about screens or picks. Here is another example as to the importance of talking on defense. The ball handler has been forced to pass over the defensive man as the cutter advances further away. The receiver has to run looking back in an awkward position which makes handling the pass more difficult.



FIGURE 13a
GUARDING THE CUTTER

The guard on the cutter has maintained his floor position in Figures 13b-d. The distance away has been steadily decreased as the cutter approaches the basket. At this point, it is very important to prevent the cutter from getting a step ahead. By maintaining his floor position and distance, the defensive man is at a disadvantage because his offensive man is in a position to receive an unhindered pass. The defensive man is instructed, especially at this point, not to take unnecessary risks of attempting to intercept the pass.



FIGURE 13b

MAINTAINING FLOOR POSITION ON CUTTER

Although the guard was able to maintain his position he was forced into a dangerous situation as is shown in Figure 13e, page 74. The pressure was really put on the defensive man because the offensive man advanced into the



FIGURE 13c

MAINTAINING FLOOR POSITION ON CUTTER



FIGURE 13d

MAINTAINING FLOOR POSTION ON CUTTER

scoring zone with the ball. The defensive man was required to work harder and avoid mistakes.



FIGURE 13e

GUARDING CUTTER WITH THE BALL

In too many cases, the defensive man relaxes on the cutter and falls behind him. The defensive man has to try to defense the cutter by throwing both hands up as high as possible. He is forced to make a choice of either losing sight of his man or the sight of the ball. He has to trail his man as close as possible to help discourage a pass to him. The defensive man has to keep his eyes on his man even though there is a possible chance of the ball handler sneaking a quick pass to the cutter. This trouble is avoidable simply by keeping alert and ready.

The front guard, in Figure 13a, page 71, would have played the ball handler tighter if he had already used his dribble. The position in Figure 13a indicates that the

the ball handler has not yet used his dribble because the defensive guard has taken a strong position to the offensive man's right. This position is used to force the potential dribbler to go to his left. If the ball handler has already used his dribble, the guard would then shift more to the left to make it more difficult to make the pass to the cutter.

As shown in Figure 13e, page 74, the defensive man should keep his eyes on the passer and must not follow the flight of the ball. A defensive man who follows the flight of the ball on passes is forming a bad habit which is certain to get him into trouble. This particular situation is an ideal one for the old give-and-go play. It works perfectly if the defensive man follows the flight of the ball because the passer can break for the basket for a return pass from the receiver.

Summary. The points to be stressed while teaching this defensive work are (1) maintain floor position and distance; (2) do not risk interceptions; (3) keep ball handler from being able to make an easy pass off; (4) keep eyes on the passer after the pass off; and (5) talk to each other for possible switching situations.

Blocking the lay-up shot. The defensive man has several things to keep in mind in attempting to block a lay-up shot. The defensive man in Figure 14 has timed himself with the shooter but has caused body contact which is a

foul. This foul has been protested both by players and coaches, all because of the lack of knowledge concerning body contact.



FIGURE 14

BODY CONTACT ON ATTEMPT TO BLOCK
A LAY-UP SHOT

The defensive man in Figure 14 could have blocked this shot very easily by keeping a foot away from the shooter. The guard has timed himself perfectly by getting in stride with his man. He left the floor and was able to get the hand over the ball. By doing this, he was forced to get too close causing body contact. Using an upward movement of his hand would have helped to avoid body contact.

This particular play requires perfect timing. The defensive man has to have good position as well as timing. Both of these factors could have been accomplished through practice.

Summary. There are five points to be stressed to accomplish a successful blocked lay-up shot: (1) get in stride with the dribbler; (2) slap the ball with an upward movement of the hand; (3) stay away from the dribbler to avoid body contact; (4) timing; and (6) try to get half a step ahead of the shooter.

switching. The man-for-man defense is vulnerable to many screens and picks by the offensive team. The switching of players on screens and picks is not always the solution. The defensive men are often placed at a height disadvantage because of the switch. Often an offensive man is not covered on a switch, and this leads to an easy basket. Still, there are situations which warrant a switch. The performance of the switching techniques and mechanics require much practice and a thorough knowledge of the various situations which call for the switch. Skillful execution of these skills is based on two main points: (1) recognition of the switching situation; and (2) the delegated responsibility of calling the switch. "The switching man-to-man defense requires more team play than any other defense."⁷¹

The beginning point for switching is to establish responsibility for whoever is to call the switch. The defender on the screener is in the best position because he

⁷¹McCreary, op. cit., p. 134.

can see the screen developing. The defender on the dribbler or cutter in most cases does not see the screen in time for each man to make the switch in time. The switch has to be made without hesitation or delay. These conditioned responses are developed by continually drilling the team members in defensive drills which demand a defensive switch. At the same time, these drills teach the defender being screened to stay and cover the screener. To leave the screener is dangerous because he is able to break to the basket for a return pass.

The offensive man, in Figure 15a, has set the screen for his teammate. The defender guarding the screener waited until the offensive man started his move. The switch is called in Figure 15b by the defender on the screener, as soon as the dribbler commits his direction. The defensive man, being screened in Figure 15c, page 80, immediately releases off and picks up the screener. The defenders have to keep these opponents until they are able to switch back without any danger of losing their man.

Teams using the man-for-man defense will be forced to use switching tactics occasionally or else risk the chance of getting key players in foul trouble when they fight their way through all screens. This makes it essential that the team be drilled in switching techniques.

It has been stated by many coaches that there are not



FIGURE 15a
BACK COURT SCREEN



FIGURE 15b
THE SWITCH ON A BACK COURT SCREEN

as many switching situations as one might think. Many screens are avoidable by simply releasing off of the opponent as he makes his move. The defender who talks, points or pushes his teammates out of the way reduces the need to switch. "If hit and called upon to switch, the defensive player should yell 'switch' and get between the man with whom he has collided and the defensive basket."⁷²



FIGURE 15c

SCREENED DEFENSIVE PLAYER RELEASED
OFF AND PICK-UP OF SCREENER

Covering the shooter over the screen. One of the most difficult jobs a defensive man has to perform is to defend against the shooter over a screen. When this play has been performed properly it is almost impossible to stop. The ideal solution is not to allow the player to be shooting, to

⁷²Basketball (Prepared by Officers of the Aviation Training Division. Annapolish: United States Naval Institute, 1950), p. 88.

handle the ball. This is not always possible; therefore the defensive players have to be taught a pattern in how to attempt to stop the screen play. The principles used in this situation have to be clearly understood by the players and drilled into them.

The objectives for the defensive man to accomplish are (1) to force the shooter to rush his shot; (2) to prevent the screener from rolling out for a pass and easy basket; and (3) to defend against the fake shot and drive. These options make this particular situation difficult to defend against, especially when players have not been drilled on these options, their reactions have to be performed in a split second. The defensive man who has any doubt as to how to handle the situation will delay in his actions and by the time he makes up his mind, the opponent has already completed his assignment.

The screen was set, in Figures 16a-b, by number eleven to allow his teammate to carry out one of the three options mentioned. This situation requires communication between the two defenders. As the play developed, number thirty decided to force action by going out on the opponent with the ball. This action places the responsibility of defending against a roll out by the screener for a pass or fake shot and drive on his teammate. If the opponent with the ball faked a shot

and drove, number thirty would certainly be picked off, thus constituting a switch. The responsibility for calling the switch has been placed on his teammate since he is in the best position to call it. Number thirty has to release off and pick-up the screener immediately. If he fails to release off quickly, the screener will roll out and this will give the offensive players a two-on-one situation.

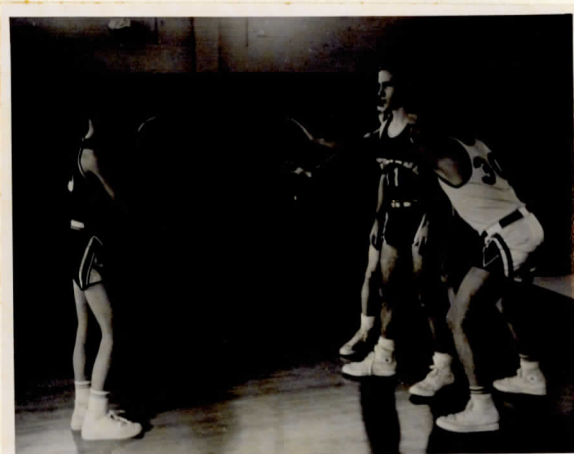


FIGURE 16a

SHOOTER USING TEAMMATE FOR SCREEN ON A SHOT

These options made this a difficult play to defend. The defensive men involved in such a situation have to be mentally and physically alert at all times.

Pass interceptions. Games have been won or lost as the result of pass interceptions or failure to complete an attempt to intercept a pass. Pass interceptions are set up by defensive play or by poor offensive movements. The good

tight defense can force the passer into an awkward body position which makes his pass easy to intercept. Poor offensive movements, such as a potential pass receiver standing flat footed and waiting on the pass to come to him, will make the pass interception an easy task. These factors plus good judgment on the part of the player attempting to intercept is the key to success.

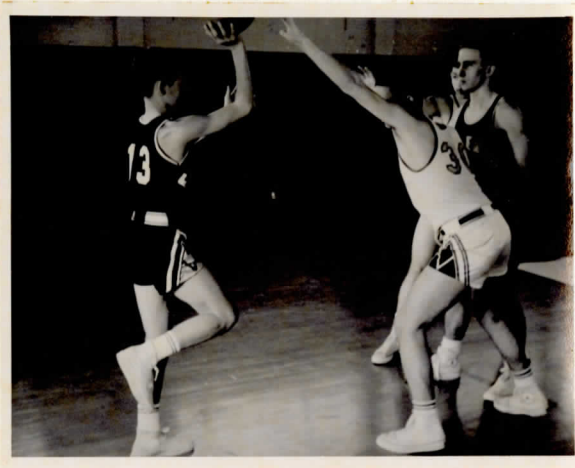


FIGURE 16b

THE SLIDE AROUND TO DEFEND AGAINST
THE SHOT OVER THE SCREENER

In Figure 17a, the defensive man in the lane is anticipating a possible pass interception. The potential receiver has made no attempt to go to meet the pass which has given the defensive man the advantage. The defender, on the ball handler, has applied pressure to cause a hurried or bad pass which enables his teammate to make the interception easier.

The intended pass receiver in Figure 17b has been caught standing flat footed waiting on the pass instead of moving toward it. The defensive man has timed the pass perfectly and has slapped the ball down for his dribble. The defensive man would have had better control of the ball by catching it first, but he has chosen to slap the ball to the floor to start his dribble. By catching the ball, the defensive man would have possibly traveled with the ball before he started his dribble. The method to be used is determined by the ability of the player. The defensive man defending against number forty-one has released off in order to cover up for his teammate if the interception is not successful. This is the type of team play necessary if chances are to be taken.

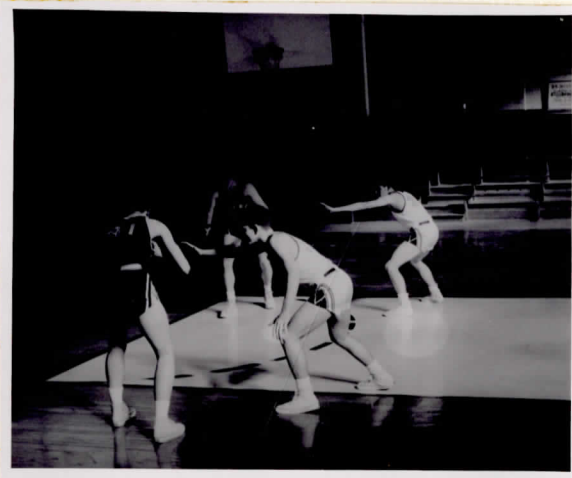


FIGURE 17a

POSITIONING FOR THE ATTEMPTED STEAL

The interception, shown in Figure 17c, has been successful. The defensive man has gained a step on the intended pass receiver. The other defensive man has made his move down the court in order to help his teammate out if the opponents catch up.



FIGURE 17b

PROPER TIMING ON THE STEAL



FIGURE 17c

THE CHANGE OVER FROM DEFENSE TO OFFENSE
AFTER A SUCCESSFUL STEAL

Summary. Four coaching points to accomplish the successful steal are: (1) develop timing; (2) try to catch offensive man standing flat footed waiting for the ball. It might be pointed out that the chest pass is the easiest to intercept, whereas the bounce pass is harder to handle; (3) stress pressuring the passer to make him hurry his pass or to pass off balance; and (4) emphasize the necessity of good team work in the event interceptions are not successful.

Screening out and defensive rebounding. The team which has been able to control both the offensive and defensive boards has a definite advantage over the other team because they handle the ball more, giving them more scoring opportunities. There are certain principles to be carried out by all defensive men whether their man is the shooter or not. The defensive man has the early advantage provided he has good floor position. The techniques used on screening out the shooter are adaptable to other offensive players also. The only difference is in the stance used by the defensive man.

Since the defensive man is defending against a right hand shooter, in Figure 18a, his left hand and foot have been extended forward. He is not in as much of a crouched position because he wants as much reach in height as possible. This enables him to force the shooter to arch the ball more in order to get his shot away. The defender is far enough away

from his man to prevent a drive and yet he is still close enough to hinder the shot.

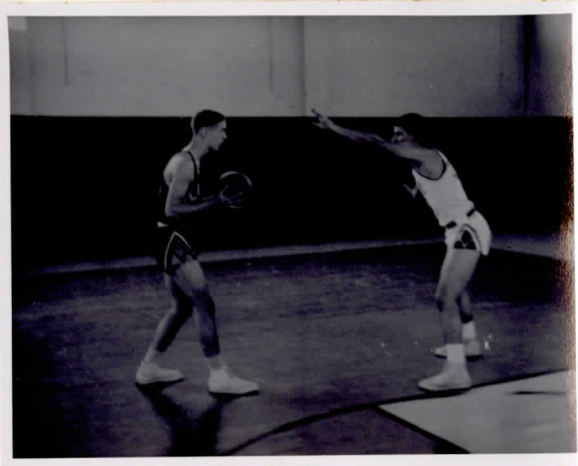


FIGURE 18a

GUARDING POTENTIAL SHOOTER AT FOUL CIRCLE

The shooter has taken his jump shot in Figure 18b. Many mistakes are committed at this point. The defender has to wait to determine whether the ball handler is going to shoot or fake. As soon as the potential shooter's feet leave the floor, the defender can attempt to block the shot or at least hinder it. If the shooter fakes his shot and the defender jumps, he opens the lane for a drive. The defender has to keep his feet in contact with the floor. The second mistake made on a jump shooter is to bring the hand down on the attempt to block the shot. The defender will be called for a foul in most cases when the hand is brought down. This has been a foolish foul because the ball has, in most cases,

already been released and is in flight toward the basket. The defender has to concentrate on going up with the hand but not to slap down with it.



FIGURE 18b

ATTEMPTED BLOCK OF JUMP SHOT

Figures 18c-d illustrates the responsibilities of the defender after the shot is in flight toward the basket. The defender immediately releases off and keeps his eyes on his man. The defensive man who has formed the habit of watching the flight of the ball will be out of position most of the time to screen his man out. The defender has to make his pivot into the path of the shooter. This is accomplished by turning his body sideways to his man. The defender has to make his man commit himself first and make sure it is not a fake before he pivots. If the pivot is made too quickly or the defender watched the flight of the ball, the shooter is able to get position for the possible rebound. The defender

has to keep his body low with his feet and arms spread in order to occupy as much space as possible in the rebound area. This crouched position gives him balance and he is ready to leap forward and into the air for the missed shot.



FIGURE 18c

FORCING THE SHOOTER TO COMMIT HIS MOVE
TO REBOUND HIS SHOT



FIGURE 18d

THE PIVOT INTO THE PATH OF OFFENSIVE REBOUNDER

Excellent rebounding position and body control have been demonstrated in Figure 18e by the defensive man who has leaped high into the air and snatched the ball out of the air. He has thrown his buttocks out and spread-eagled his legs to take up as much room as possible under the board. This particular form of rebounding has given him good balance and protection of the ball. A player often loses the ball because he rebounds with his body straight, which give him no protection. The protection of the ball is set up by the spread-eagle legs and the extended elbows. This brings the ball in close to the body. A player trying to take the ball away from this rebounder has to make body contact which would cause a foul. Number thirty-two in Figure 18f has failed to get his elbows out but he is protecting the ball by keeping it out of reach of the opponent.



FIGURE 18e

GOOD REBOUNDING FORM AND POSITION

Figures 18f-g illustrate the good balance and protection required once the rebounder has landed on the floor. The rebounder's main thought at this point is to get the ball out away from the basket as quickly as possible. The method of getting the ball out can be one of several ways depending on the type of offensive equipment the team has. If the team is a fast breaking team, then he can take one dribble and hook-pass the ball out to a man on the side. The slow break team can dribble the ball out to the corner and wait until things clear-out before making their move down court. Whatever their offensive strategy one rule which should always be observed; a rebounder should not make a pass across the foul lane under the opponent's basket. An interception is almost a certain two points.



FIGURE 18f

GOOD BALANCE AFTER REBOUNDING

Summary. Seven of the key points to be stressed for screening out the offensive rebounder are: (1) keep the feet on the floor until the shooter's feet leave the floor; (2) keep eyes on man and not the flight of the ball; (3) make offensive man commit himself first; (4) get good position with good balance--feet spread, buttocks out, and elbows out to take up as much room as possible under the basket; (5) take a short lead step toward the anticipated spot that the rebound will come off, jump through the ball and snatch it out of the air; (6) land with feet spread, elbows and buttocks out to protect the ball; and (7) get the ball away from the basket as quickly as possible--take the lead out pass away from the basket, never across the foul lane.



FIGURE 18g

THE LEAD OUT PASS AFTER DEFENSIVE REBOUND

Rebounding form. Rebounding starts with good floor position. Once the position is obtained, it is almost

impossible for the shooting team to get to the boards. This has been illustrated by the numerous fouls called on players for reaching over or around a rebounder.

Another vital factor of good rebounding is body balance. There are many elbows and hips thrown around under the boards. The body must be in a crouched position. The knees should be flexed with the feet comfortably spread and weight distributed on the balls of the feet. The back is straight and bent forward at the waist, with elbows out. The buttocks should be protruded and used to contact the man being screened out. This places the rebounder in a well balanced and coiled stance ready to spring into the air after the missed shot.

Still another vital factor of good rebounding is timing the ball at the highest possible point of the rebounder's reach and jump. To get additional height out of his jump, the rebounder takes a short step forward. This enables him not only to jump higher but to get away from the man he screens out and at the same time to leap into the ball.

Excellent rebounding form is demonstrated in Figure 19. The rebounder has snatched the ball out of the air at the peak of his jump as well as spreading his legs and protruding his buttocks to keep his man away from the ball.

Another form of rebounding is demonstrated in Figure 20, but this method allows an opponent to get in close and tie up the ball or take the ball away especially if the

opponent has longer arms and more jumping ability. It is not an effective way for rebounding against taller players because they have the opportunity to get close and go over the defensive rebounder.



FIGURE 19

THE JACK-KNIFE REBOUNDING FORM



FIGURE 20

THE SPREAD-EAGLE REBOUND FORM

The rebounder alights on the floor in the same crouched position as he originally started from. This gives him good balance which he needs to keep from being knocked around by other players coming down around him. The first thing is to protect the ball until he can get a pass out to his teammates.

Summary. The five coaching points to be stressed to form good rebounding form are: (1) get good floor position--stay between the man and the basket; (2) keep good body balance--spread feet, weight on balls of feet, knees flexed, back straight and bent forward at waist, elbows out and buttocks protruded to occupy as much room as possible; (3) take a short step forward--jump high as possible and through the ball; (4) snatch the ball out of the air; and (5) land in a balanced position--the same position as the take off stance and protect the ball by getting it away from the basket as quickly as possible.

Two-on-one situation. Most teams try to guard against the fast break by having two men back on defense, but occasionally it happens that one player is caught back alone. This occurs frequently on the intercepted pass by the opponent. Many coaches and players feel this is a hopeless situation and do not prepare to meet it. There is no assurance that one player can stop the play, but it is well worth the time spent on the situation in practice.

The defensive man has to stop the man with the ball as far away from the basket as possible, as illustrated in Figures 21a-b. Once the dribbler is stopped, he immediately releases off to defend against the pass off to the other offensive man. The key is to knock down the pass or to cause the opponent to make two or three passes. This allows time for the defender's teammates to get down court and help out. At the same time, the more passes made, the more chances of ball handling mistakes. If the pass off is successful, the defender releases off to the foul lane and picks up the other man to prevent a driving lay-up, as in Figures 21c-d.



FIGURE 21a

STOPPING THE DRIBBLER ON A TWO-ON-ONE
FAST BREAK SITUATION

By the time he has the second opponent stopped, he will be pretty well back under the basket. From here out, he has to play it tough as Figures 21e-f, pages 98-99,

indicate. By this time, he should have help from his teammates provided they are alert and make the change over immediately.

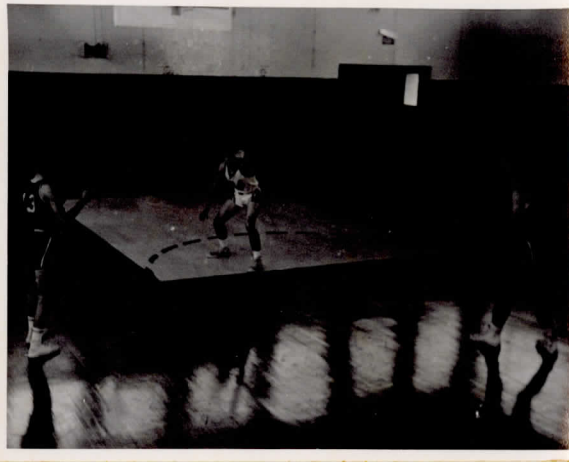


FIGURE 21b

STOPPING THE DRIBBLER ON A TWO-ON-ONE
FAST BREAK SITUATION



FIGURE 21c

RELEASE WITH PASS ON FAST BREAK



FIGURE 21d
STOPPING NEW DRIBBLER

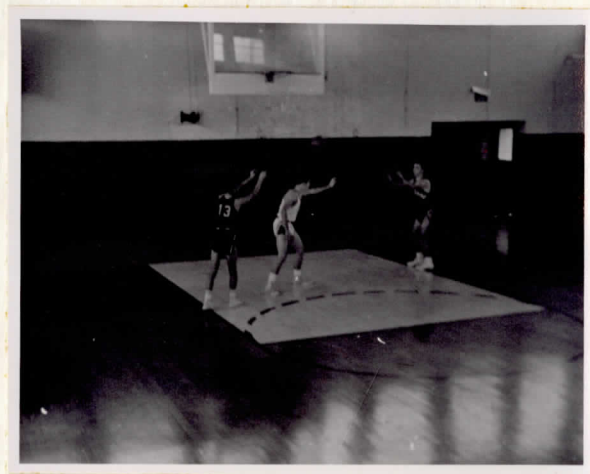


FIGURE 21e
RELEASE WITH PASS TO CUTTER
UNDER THE BASKET

Summary. Three coaching points to be stressed to accomplish a good effort toward stopping the two-on-one fast break are: (1) stop the dribbler as far out as possible away from the basket; (2) release off only as forced to do so; and (3) never give up--keep fighting all the way.

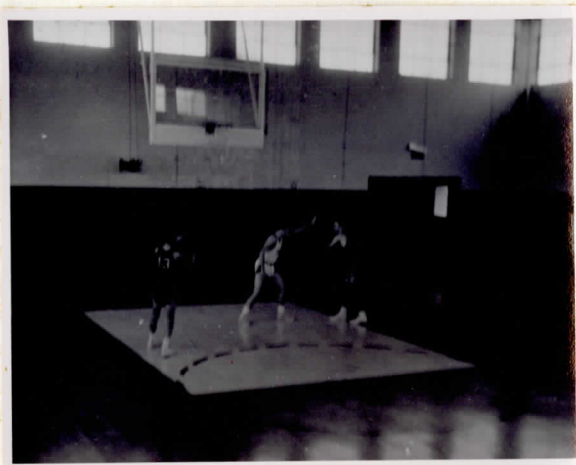


FIGURE 21f

DEFENSING THE CUTTER UNDER THE BASKET

Three-on-two situation. The three-on-two situation is another situation all teams try to avoid, but occasionally it happens. The defensive men are instructed to try to force the offense to make two or three passes in order to get help back. This situation will usually start from missed shots. It is possible to prevent this situation by cutting off the initial pass out from the rebound. This may not always be possible; therefore the team must be drilled in how to handle this situation. Thorough knowledge and practice will probably bring about a high degree of success.

Figure 22a illustrates an effective way to cover this situation. The two defensive men are lined up one behind the other in the foul lane. The front defender should be around the front of the free throw circle. His assignment is to make the dribbler stop or pass off before he reaches the top of the circle. Once he has accomplished one of the two options, he has to release off. If the man stops his dribble, he backs off enough to try to intercept or knock down his pass and remains in position to guard against a possible shot. If he passes off, he immediately releases off to the side away from the pass, as indicated in Figure 22b. As he retreats, he faces the ball all the time. The man who breaks in on this side should be the logical man to receive the next pass. The defender has to slide quickly and be alert to intercept or slap the ball away. He has to be aggressive.



FIGURE 22a

STOPPING THE DRIBBLER ON A THREE-ON-TWO FAST BREAK SITUATION

The second defender is positioned in the foul lane. His first responsibility is to prevent the pass receiver from driving all the way. He shifts to the same side of the floor the first pass went as illustrated in Figure 22b. He has to play it tough but he will not attempt to intercept or to charge out hard on the offensive man. A mistake at this point will mean almost a sure two points. If there is no attempted shot, the two defensive men work side by side. Each man covers the other's moves.

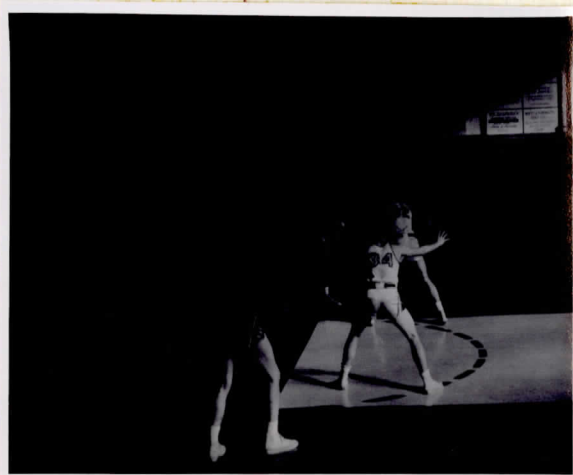


FIGURE 22b

BACK MAN SLIDES WITH THE FIRST PASS AND
FRONT MAN RELEASES TO OPPOSITE SIDE

The two defensive men have stalled the attack long enough in Figures 22c-d for the third man to get back to help out. This success has developed an almost impossible situation into a three-on-three situation. The shot has been put up and each defensive man has good floor position to

block out his man on the rebound. There is a miss match but this is a better situation than having no one back to defend.



FIGURE 22c

THE THIRD DEFENSIVE MAN GETTING
BACK ON THE FAST BREAK



FIGURE 22d

GETTING REBOUNDING POSITION
FOR MISSED SHOT

Summary. The following points are to be stressed in teaching players to handle the three-on-two situation: (1) stop the dribbler as quickly and as far out as possible; (2) the front defender retreats only as he is forced to do so; (3) the back defender goes with the first pass; (4) the front defender releases quickly to the opposite side away from the pass; (5) the front defender retreats facing the man with the ball; (6) force two or three passes to delay the attack long enough to get a third man back on defense; (7) the back defender does not take chances on intercepting the first pass; (8) both players have to cover each other's moves after the first pass; and (9) play it tough--never give up.

Defensing the out-of-bounds play from under the offensive board. The offensive team has only five seconds to get the ball in bounds. Five seconds is not a tremendous amount of time. A tight man-for-man defense, if applied on the four men located in bounds, could force the offensive team to use too much time or make a hurried pass which can be intercepted.

The success of forcing the offensive team into using too much time depends upon good floor positioning. The defensive men are required to maintain their position between their man and the basket and when possible between their man and the ball. When both positions are not possible,

the player will have to use his judgment as to the position to take.

The out-of-bounds play under the offensive team's basket in Figure 23 can develop into many easy baskets when not defended properly. The defensive man assigned to the player taking the ball out has to play him as tight as possible. He has to prevent the player outside from having a clear pass in or being able to spot open teammates in the back court. He waves his arms vigorously to distract his attention.



FIGURE 23

DEFENDING THE OUT-OF-BOUNDS PLAY
UNDER THE OFFENSIVE BOARD

Defensing the side out-of-bounds play. The defensive man, number thirty-two, in Figure 24, has given his man the clear path to the basket. At the same time, the defensive man assigned to the man out of bounds has slid down where he

is able to help to force the pass-in away from the basket. The basket in Figure 24 is a side basket, not the offensive team's basket.

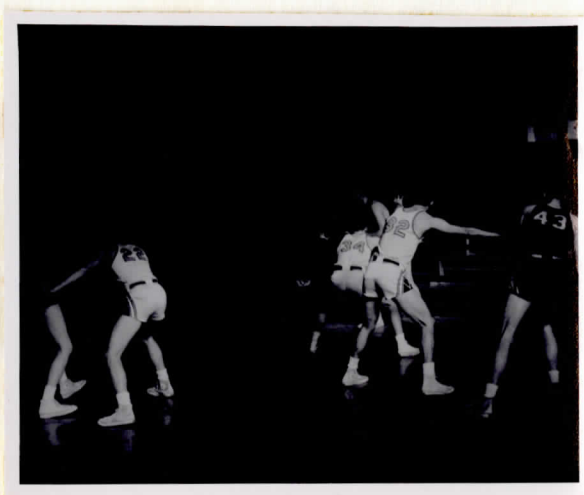


FIGURE 24

DEFENSING THE OUT-OF-BOUNDS PLAY ON THE
SIDE ON THE OFFENSIVE
END OF THE FLOOR

Summary. The points to be stressed to defense the out-of-bounds play are (1) put pressure on everyone--the opponents only have five seconds to get the ball in bounds; (2) force the pass-in away from the basket; (3) try to play between the man and the basket and the ball when possible; (4) judgment used when both positions cannot be accomplished; and (5) face the ball at all times.

Defensing the missed free throw. Defensing the missed free throw is a vital part of team defense. The two inside defensive men (nearest the backboard) have taken excellent

positioning on their men in Figure 25. Both men have taken good stances, feet well spread, knees flexed, elbows out and buttocks protruding to take up as much room as possible. The potential rebounder have to be patient to avoid jumping into the lane too quickly. Once the ball has touched the rim both men step, with the leg next to the opponent, in front of their man.



FIGURE 25

THE SCREEN OUT ON THE MISSED FREE THROW

The third defensive man has moved into the lane to cut off the shooter. The stance is the same as the defensive men next to the board. All three men must have good balance to absorb the shock of the body contact to follow.

The ball is thrown out to the same side from which it came off the board. This eliminates any passing across the foul lane. The man who cuts off the shooter takes the

ball out the same side he is facing. His body is in motion in that direction and makes the lead out pass a smooth graceful motion.

Summary. The points stressed to get good rebounding position on missed free throws are (1) be patient--wait for the ball to touch the rim; (2) maintain well-balanced stance with the feet spread, knees flexed, elbows out, buttocks protruding to take as much room as possible; (3) cut opponent out by stepping in front with the foot nearest him; (4) get good position and maintain it; (5) cut the shooter off; (6) get the ball out away from the basket as quickly as possible; and (7) throw the ball out the same side from which it come off the board--never pass across the foul lane.

CHAPTER VI

VARIATIONS OF THE MAN FOR MAN TEAM DEFENSE

There have been many variations developed from the original man-for-man defense. These variations were invented to meet the improved techniques and tactic used by the offense. The improved methods for teaching shooting fundamentals have given the offensive man a definite advantage. How effective a high school team is able to use part or all of these variations depends on the material and the time available for teaching them.

To develop a sound defensive team is a difficult task under the best circumstances. The soundness of the team defense is based on the molding of five individuals into a unit which acts as an individual as well as reacting to each other to meet the changing situations of the game. The team defense must function as one. The entire defense is weakened when one player fails to carry out his assignment and responsibilities. Every player, regardless of his original position, is required to learn to defense each position. The purpose is to get each player to think as one and to be capable of defending against his man when he moves into a new position. The instinct to react immediately to the changing situations has given the defense a bit of an advantage in that they are able to help each other. The sound defensive team is able to move about the court without having

to worry about screens or picks. The relief from this type of offensive play has taken some of the pressure off the defensive man and enables him to perform more effectively his individual and team duties.

I. CHOICE OF DEFENSE

The major factor to be considered before deciding upon a team defense is the material to play the defense. From here, the team defense is successful when certain elements are present. The defensive men have to be mentally and physically alert always. If there is to be any loafing or relaxing it is to be done while on offense. The responsibilities of each player have to be made clear. Doubt in the mind of one player is enough to weaken the success of the entire team. Each man is required to be able to defense his man in any position. This involves the teaching of good floor position in all situations. All players must be well versed in the fundamentals of good stance and footwork. Above all of these items, the team has to be sold on the defense and its effectiveness against any situation. The team has to have the desire to go out and work to perfect all of these factors. The team defense is only as strong as the weakest man on the team.

The regular man-for-man defense. The regular man-for-man defense was originally set up to pick up the offensive

man with the ball about twenty-five feet out from the basket. The other four men play their men loosely. Their normal position is three good strides away from their men. This gives fair coverage against the long shot and strength against the give and go or screening tactics.

The basic mechanics are much the same as individual defensive mechanics. Each man is to maintain good floor position between his man and the basket at all times. They take no unnecessary chances as a general rule. It is more or less a waiting type of defense, forcing the offensive team to make their move first.

The main weakness, as in any of the variations of the man-for-man defenses, is against offensive play based on screens and picks or give-and-go tactics. These obstacles are combated by talking or switching. Even then there are occasions when the defensive man finds himself in trouble.

Summary. The main points to be stressed to prepare the team to use the regular man-for-man defense are (1) stay between the man and the basket; (2) release off of the man without the ball; (3) try for interceptions only when the odds are in your favor; (4) stay alert for screens and picks; and (5) be ready to help teammates when in trouble.

The tight man-for-man team defense. The tight man-for-man defense was designed to force the opponent into ball handling mistakes or to prevent a certain opponent from

handling the ball. It requires the team to have good bench strength, speed, and to be in tip-top physical condition.

This is a very aggressive type of defense and has caused many players to get into foul trouble. They fight hard and try to maintain a very close position on their man. This, of course, brings about more contact than a less aggressive type of defense.

To maintain the floor position, mostly between the man and the ball, requires the player to be in very good physical condition. A tired player who is unable to carry out his responsibilities weakens the team effort.

The primary aim of this defense is to limit the offensive man from handling the ball and to force him to do things he is not accustomed to doing. When an offensive team is able to handle the ball the way they desire, they are more likely to defeat their opponent.

This aggressive defense produces many intercepted passes and ball handling errors. This, of course, is a big break for the defensive team because the opponent has fewer opportunities to shoot and score points. This defense is valuable in that it slows down the rapid movement of the ball, an essential of good offensive play.

Summary. The points to be stressed to the players are (1) be aggressive, hound your man constantly; (2) stay in tip-top physical condition; (3) stay between your man and

the ball; (4) be alert and ready to move in any direction; (5) force your opponent to do things he does not do well; (6) be alert to switching situations; and (7) help teammates when they are in trouble.

The sinking man-for-man team defense. The sinking or sagging man-for-man defense has been so named because of the positioning of the individual players. This defense operates on three of the principles of a zone defense and has often been mistaken for a zone. It is used to congest the area around the basket to defend against the drive-in lay-up. It automatically places the defenders in better rebounding position. The sagging men are freed to attempt more interceptions because a teammate is there to back them up if the attempt fails.

The defender assigned to the man in possession of the ball is the only one playing tight. He hounds his man into making ball handling mistakes. One guard sags in front of the high post man, when the high post is used. The low post is defended by playing the defender assigned to him in front. The defender on the player on the side away from the ball (the weak side) drops off to the foul lane line. This places him in a position to help the defensive pivot man. The defensive man on the same side of the floor as the ball (the strong side) plays his man only moderately loose, approximately three strides. To take advantage of the strong

side of the defensive pattern, the defensive man guarding the opponent with the ball must force a pass or dribble to the strong side. This gives the defensive team a chance to two-time or to intercept a pass.

This defense is weak against good outside shooting. The best solution is to hound the man in possession of the ball, forcing the offensive man to pass to the strong side of the defense. Most teams that use this defense are not concerned too much with the outside shooting. They are willing to give the long shot but defend strong against the short, easy shots under the basket.

Summary. The main points to be stressed in teaching the sinking man-for-man defense are (1) release off immediately when the offensive man passes off; (2) hound the man in possession of the ball--make him pass to the strong side of the team defense; (3) the man on the weak side releases off to the foul lane; (4) the defensive pivot man plays to the strong side--the same side as the ball on the high post pivot; (5) the defensive pivot man plays in front when the opponent uses the low post pivot man; (6) the front guard drops back to help prevent the ball from being taken into the high post pivot man; and (7) defensive men have to be very aggressive in the foul lane area.

The switching man-for-man team defense. The switching man-for-man defense has been described by many coaches as

being a very difficult defense to attack. It has also been cited as a very difficult defense to teach and to perform by players. "It requires more team-work than any other type of defense."⁷³

The offensive system which used many screens and picks find these tactics useless because the switch is automatic everytime two players cross. Often this is enough to throw off the effectiveness of a team's offensive pattern.

Defensive players are able to conserve their energy by not having to follow their men every place on the floor. The players are able to be more aggressive about going after the ball, knowing a teammate is behind him to back him up if the attempt is a failure

There are certain disadvantages. For example, it is difficult to pinpoint responsibility for mistakes of letting a man score an easy basket because of switching from one man to another. It also produces mismatching of players in size. A small man is often left to guard a much taller man. Automatic switching, regardless of the situation, often leads to laziness and lack of hustle on the part of the players.

Summary. Four key points to be stressed are: (1) be aggressive--your teammates will back you up; (2) talk to each other--this prevents two men guarding one; (3) be alert for

⁷³Glenn Wilkes, Winning Basketball Strategy (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959), p. 31.

the false screens and the roll out; and (4) switch back to original man as soon as possible--especially in a mismatch situation.

The pressing man-for-man team defense. The pressing man-for-man defense is used in various ways. Some situations call for a full court press and others for a three quarter, half court or quarter court press. These tactics are used most effectively as a surprise weapon. Usually a team is able to adjust to any of these types of presses if they are competent ball handlers.

These are very demanding types of defenses. Players are required to be in very good physical condition. Speed is an important factor in the success of these tactics because of the large space each player has to cover. Bench strength is necessary because of the amount of fouling which comes with this aggressive play.

All teams have found themselves in a situation on being a point or two behind late in the game and the opponent starts to stall. This situation forces the team to go into a press to try to force a bad pass, a violation or an interception in order to gain possession of the ball. The press used properly can throw off the timing of the opponents and force them to hurry passes and movements which are very upsetting to the style of play they are accustomed to playing. The press is ineffective when one player does not carry out

his assigned responsibilities. The pressing defense is required to make some switches. Failure to perform the switch properly enables the opponent to make many easy baskets when a man loses his man.

Summary. The main points to be stressed in teaching the pressing man-for-man defense are (1) good physical condition; (2) aggressiveness by all team members; (3) alertness to switch off to help teammates; (4) speed; (5) good floor position; and (6) maintenance of safe distance away from your man--prevent him from driving by you.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was (1) to attempt to establish the good, desirable qualities and attitudes of the sound defensive player; (2) to establish the mechanics of both the individual and team movements; (3) to study the variations of the man-for-man defense; and (4) to determine the best defensive coverage of the opponent at the different offensive positions. The major emphasis of this study was on sound defensive coverage as it related to many game developing situations.

The methods of investigation involved the following:

1. The writer saw a need to determine the elements which were possessed by a good defensive player. In order to accomplish this, a careful study of the best materials available was gleaned to establish these qualities.
2. The writer also saw a need to determine the techniques and fundamental skills which provide the player with sufficient knowledge to carry out his assigned duties and responsibilities. Again, in order to accomplish this, a careful study of the best materials available were gleaned.
3. The writer also saw a need to illustrate the findings of this study. In order to accomplish this, a

series of pictures were made to illustrate the fundamental skills and techniques needed to carry out an individual's personal duties and responsibilities as the various game situations developed.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn from this study by the writer:

1. A wealth of written materials have been made available in the past years on the mechanics and fundamental skills to be used by individual players.

2. The mechanics of individual man-for-man movements are necessary regardless of the type of team defense used.

3. The player must be sold on the importance of the man-for-man defense before the player will develop his capacities to the optimum.

4. The best defense is not a good offense, which has so often been suggested to young players. The ideal situation is a balance between the defense and offense potential of the team.

5. The man-for-man defense is the most time consuming and difficult defense to teach, but requires the player to learn only one set of defensive principles.

6. The man-for-man defense gives the best over-all coverage of the opponent regardless of the type of offensive

pattern used, but is particularly weak against offensive patterns which use many screens. Therefore, it is impossible to play a man-for-man defense without switching.

7. Three mental qualities necessary for good defensive play are alertness, aggressiveness and determination.

8. Agility and balance are two factors all players must possess to be able to play any type of defense.

9. To teach the player to play the man-for-man defense effectively, a well organized practice schedule must be worked out to eliminate any doubts in the mind of the player as to his duties and responsibilities.

10. The man-for-man defense permits players to be matched up with an opponent of about equal abilities.

11. The man-for-man defense requires the player and coach to have a broad knowledge about the various offensive patterns in order to make adjustments to stop their effectiveness.

12. The best general rule for covering the opponent is to be close enough to prevent, or at least hinder, a possible shot and still far enough away to prevent a drive.

13. Generally, the best floor position is for the guard to be between his opponent and the basket and turned in such a way to be able to see the ball at the same time.

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