Deeefense! WINS BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Mauro Panaggio
DEFENSE!
Wins Basketball Championships

Mauro Panaggio
DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my wife Rita, and my children; Michael, Daniel, Kathleen, Thomas, James, and Marybeth. I thank them for their love, support and the many other contributions they have made to my life; one that all husbands and fathers should wish to duplicate.
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PASS:  

DRIBBLE:  

CUT OR MOVEMENT PATH:  

OFFENSIVE PLAYERS: 01, 02, 03, 04, 05  

DEFENSIVE PLAYERS: X1, X2, X3, X4, X5  

SCREEN:  

DOUBLE TEAM OR TRAP:
**What is Defense?**

**Defense** is not merely the lack of scoring by your opponent. Often teams with few points scored against them achieve this, not because they play tough defense, but because they utilize an offensive system that controls the ball in a half court offense, running down the shot clock until they get the high percentage shot called for by the offense. Rarely will they utilize any kind of structured transition game. The philosophy behind this practice is, “you can’t score if you don’t have the ball”. While this philosophy can sometimes be successful for winning some games, it rarely wins championships unless it is combined with strong defensive play. The arrival of the shot clock has diminished the number of teams utilizing this offensive philosophy. So what then is true defense?

Most basketball spectators, even those relatively uninformed to the more sophisticated skills of the game, know the primary object of defense is to prevent the opponent from scoring. To achieve that goal it is necessary to deny your opponent an opportunity to realize any kind of advantage after gaining possession of the ball. Defense should not allow the offense to move about the basketball court as they please. Defense begins with individual one on one defense and progression to strong team defense. Good defense dictates the offensive players are not permitted to move easily where they wish to go. The degree of difficulty as to where the ball can be passed and to whom it is passed must be challenged at all times.

In addition team defense must know how to provide help to teammates when needed and what type of shot is preferable to give up to the opponent over less desirable shots. It is also necessary to include a defensive system that has a variety of defensive combinations that can be changed from time to time to prevent opponents from developing an effective pattern of offensive reactions to a single defense that is used at all times. An example being the use of multiple options for defending the various screen/roll situations, using a defensive call to determine the desired defense for the particular screen/roll situation.

Today’s scouting practices include video exchanges between common opponents, personal game site scouting, and the ability to breakdown game video to isolate individual offensive and defensive situations. A team that uses one basic defense will find that opponent’s offensive preparation to meet that single defense has developed a game plan that often enables them to attack the defense in an effective manner. Defense should not only prevent the opponent from scoring, but also should create scoring opportunities by forcing the opponents into turnovers through errors and poor shot selection.
The opposite philosophy adopted by many coaches is to develop a high scoring offense to simply outscore their opponent. This again can be successful in winning many games against lesser opponents. However, it rarely provides the balance between good offense and good defense necessary to win championships. An example of this can be seen in the record of the Phoenix Suns of the NBA. During the 2004-05 they won more regular season games than any other NBA teams. However, they did not go very deep into the championship playoffs. The 2005-06 and 2006-07 seasons were much the same. Phoenix won a high percentage of their regular season games by simply outscoring their opponents, finishing the regular season as the highest scoring team in the league. However, the end result was the same.................... NO CHAMPIONSHIP.

Teams that subscribe to this philosophy feel their offensive capabilities and execution are so much better than their opponents. Although they are giving the ball over to the opposition after each of their own scores, high scoring teams feel the opponent will not execute well enough to outscore them. What these teams fail to recognize is the fact that good defense not only prevents opponents from scoring, but also creates many scoring opportunities by forcing turnovers through errors or poor shot selection, thereby presenting still more scoring opportunities for their team. Teams that place a premium on good defense along with an effective offense win championships. This balance has proven to be a more consistent formula for winning championships at every level.

The target audience for this book is coaches who wish to place more emphasis on defensive basketball, players who want to become better defensive players, spectators who wish to have a better understanding of defensive play and an appreciation of exceptional defensive execution and strategy. The book is for use by both men’s and women’s basketball programs. Although the use of the term he/she when describing drills or other descriptions will not be used, all are intended to include both genders.
DEFENSE TERMINOLOGY

Before one can begin teaching any type of defense or anything else for that matter, the use of specific terms that are to be used must be identified and defined so those being taught will be able to understand the subject. When dealing with the subject of basketball many of the terms will be readily recognized since they are commonly used among those familiar with the subject. However, the author uses some terms that are unique to his personal style of teaching the skills of the game. Therefore this chapter will attempt to cover many of those terms and others specific to basketball defense. A short definition for the benefit of those who may not be quite as familiar with common basketball terminology or those of the author is included.
TERMS:

**On Ball** – Defending the man with the ball

**Off Ball** – Defending the men without the ball

**Gorilla stance** – Initial defensive position assumed by the defensive player prior to and during movement

**Belly-Up** – Position taken by the defender after the dribbler has picked up his dribble or when guarding a stationary opponent in a trapping situation

**Close the Gate** – maneuver to help stop penetration by the dribbler

**Show and Influence** – On screening situations, the screen defender steps out on the dribbler as though he will switch or trap. This influences the dribbler to pick up the dribble, swing wide to avoid the trap, or change direction, allowing the dribble defender to go over the top of the screen.

**Strongside** – Side of the court on which the ball is located

**Weakside** – Side of the court opposite where the ball is located

**Nose-up** – this term dictates to the defender that he will establish his defensive position by pointing his nose on a particular part of the opponent’s body. Example: nose-up square would point the defender’s nose into the chest of his opponent.

**Overplay** – The defender takes a defensive position that does not permit an opponent an easy choice of direction in which to move
Escort – When playing any defense other than man-on-man, by rule the defender must stay with any man in his area of responsibility if he cuts through the defense, until he reaches a pre-determined point of the defense, then releasing him to the defender responsible for that area.

Over the Top – On a screening situation, the ball handler’s defender will go over the top of the screen, staying between the ball and the screen.

Jump Switch – On a switch, the man switching to the dribbler, aggressively jumps into the path of the dribbler looking for the charge or travel violation.

Transition – The immediate period of time when ball possession passes from one team to the other.

Anticipation – The ability to predict in advance what offensive move or pass the offense may make.

Body Balance – The ability to move in any direction without losing body stability.

Agility – The ability of the body to change direction while maintaining balance and stability.

Curl – A move used when using a screen. Usually when the defender is trailing the screen user, the user cuts tight around the screener.

Trail out – Following or trailing hard, the offensive player around a screen.

Mismatch – A situation where a bigger, stronger opponent is matched with a weaker defender. Often occurring after a switch.
CHAPTER III

DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY
DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

It is important that every coach have a basic coaching philosophy on which to base decisions for the direction of his program. A defensive philosophy should be part of his overall philosophy. Before making a decision on the type of defensive team the coach would like, he must take into account the physical make-up of his players. This decision will also depend greatly on the level of competition in which the program will compete.

DEFENSIVE OBJECTIVES

Developing defensive objectives are a must if the defense is to have direction. These objectives should be established prior to selecting the appropriate defense for the team.

EXAMPLES ARE:

- To limit scoring opportunities by all opponents
- The development of good communication skills between all defensive players for meeting specific offensive movements and alignments.
- To increase the level of concentration and intensity for all defensive players
- To develop rules of defense for “on the ball” and “off the ball” that minimizes the need to make decisions in situations that may cause hesitation and indecision.
- To develop a sense of pride and enjoyment in playing good defense.
- To develop a sense of contribution by all on the bench through vocal encouragement to players on the floor.
- Be the actor not the reactor.

The establishment of defensive objectives will demonstrate to players that the coaches are committed to the development of a strong defense as well as a powerful offense and places equal emphasis on each in the overall philosophy of the system. It develops player conscience toward defense. Defensive errors should hurt the pride of each defensive player.
PHYSICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The physical characteristics of the team players must be strongly considered in the selection of defensive style. If the team is small and quick, the coach may opt for an up-tempo game, utilizing pressure defenses to compensate for the lack of size. Man-on-man, various zones or combination match-up defenses can be considered. The coach may wish to apply pressure full-court, three quarter-court, half-court, or trapping only in designated areas on the court. In addition, many coaches like to trap any time the ball goes to a front-court corner, whenever a ball handler turns his back to his defender, and against an over-powering low post player or scorer.

For a team consisting of big players that are not especially fast or quick, the coach may feel more comfortable using a conservative half court defense that is very disciplined and capable of changing defenses from time to time. When this is the case, the defensive rebounding must be able to control the defensive board and give the opponent only one shot at the basket.

Another team make up may have both types of players. When this is the case, the coach will have the luxury of being free to develop whatever defenses he likes and knows best. It is the feeling of many coaches that better teaching of any system takes place when teaching the system the coach knows best and feels most comfortable teaching. Those who like the up-tempo style of play may install a variety of pressing defenses for the full court, three quarter court, half court, or trapping in designated areas of the court. Other coaches may prefer a more conservative basic half-court man-on-man, zone, or combination match-up zone.

It is not important what defense is being used. Whether it is man-on-man, zone, match-up combination, or any other, the same principles and objectives must be followed. In today's high-powered offenses a simple man-on-man will not be sufficient. Defenses must be constantly changing in appearance, points of pressure, extension over greater floor area, and the ability to get help quickly to the point of attack. To accomplish this, many defenses and variations must be taught and executed effectively.
Again, the physical characteristics of the players and a successful past experience with the selected style of defense by the coach must receive strong consideration making this decision. However, all types of defenses must be taught to some extent at the higher levels of competition. At some point throughout the season, many of the different styles of defense will be met. The best way to prepare for those opponents is to go against the various styles in practice. In addition, the coach must prepare his team to effectively execute at least one of the other styles when the situation demands, even though he basically uses his preferred style of defense predominantly.

**YOUTH LEVEL CONSIDERATIONS**

At the youth league level, ages (7-13), the type of defense is often limited by special rules that would make certain defensive types restricted. Some youth leagues do not allow zone defense to be used while others allow zones. The author favors the elimination of zone defenses at this level because most coaches will fail to teach the basic individual fundamental skills needed to play strong defense at the next level of competition. Most youth leagues also do not permit any defense in the backcourt except under certain conditions and at certain times during the game. Playing under these rules fairly limits the selection of the defense to the half court man-on-man except where zones are permitted. However, some form of pressure full court defense should be taught to meet those situations where special rules regarding score and time permit defense in the backcourt.

**HIGH SCHOOL, AAU, COLLEGE CONSIDERATIONS**

At the high school, AAU, and college levels the coach has the option to use any and all defenses available. The high school coach usually must work with the players who are enrolled in the school according to districts. He does not have the luxury of recruiting his players from wherever he can find them. The AAU and college coaches are not so restricted and are free to recruit players. This enables the coach to select players he feels will best fit his preferred style of defense.
PROFESSIONAL LEAGUE CONSIDERATIONS

The National Basketball Association (NBA) and other professional league players are not recruited in the same manner as the colleges. Players in most professional leagues are selected through a league-wide draft. The team selecting a player in the draft owns the rights to that player and he can only be signed to a contract with that team unless those rights are traded to another team.

The only defensive restriction at the NBA level is the defensive rule that prohibits a defender from remaining in the free throw lane more than 2.9 seconds unless guarding an offensive player within or in close proximity to the lane. Other than this restriction in the NBA, most professional leagues are permitted to use any defense they wish to use.
CHAPTER IV

BUILD THE DEFENSE SYSTEM
**INDIVIDUAL DEFENSE**

**ONE-ON-ONE DEFENSIVE SKILLS**

One-on-one defensive skill is vital to any defense. If the defense cannot control an offensive opponent in a one-on-one situation, the entire team defense is constantly being threatened by the outstanding one-on-one offensive player. By isolating that offensive player, the team defense is forced to help the weaker defender, thus weakening the total team defense.

The teaching of all defenses should begin with the teaching of individual one-on-one skills. No matter what defense is to be employed, at some point one-on-one skills will be required. Needless to say, this is the case at all times when the man-on-man defense is being used. However, the need for one-on-one techniques is required in all zones or match-up combination zones when a defender has an offensive player, with the ball, in his area of responsibility. In any zone defense, the defender has man-on-man responsibility as long as that offensive player remains in his area of responsibility or is attempting to dribble penetrate into the defense. In a match-up combination zone, that man-on-man responsibility continues if the offensive player passes and cuts through the defense. This follows the escort rule defined in Chapter II. There are many physical and mental requirements necessary for developing strong one-on-one defensive skill.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

*Quickness of hands and feet* – This is not the same as foot speed. It is the initial action or movement of the hands and feet. It does not extend over a long period of time or distance. Quickness permits maximum pressure on the opponent and forces mistakes.

*Foot speed* – This is the ability to go from point A to point B in the shortest time. Without foot speed it is difficult to recover from defensive mistakes or to help and recover.

*Balance* – This means the body is able to move in any direction without losing its stability.

*Stamina* – This is the ability to go as strong in the last minute of the game as in the first. Stamina is necessary to be strong defensively throughout the entire game. This is developed through a well-planned program of conditioning.

*Hustle* – This encompasses many qualities such as extra effort going for loose balls, second attempts for rebounds, overtaking a player to stop a breakaway drive, etc.
MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

**Mental Toughness** – This means the player has intense desire and determination to play strong defense. He has confidence he can beat his opponent with defense. He dictates what the opponent will be allowed to do and completely dominates him. The mentally tough player is convinced he is stronger, quicker, and tougher than his opponent.

**The “Actor-Reactor Theory”** – This is the development of a state of mind that you, as a defender, will dictate to your offensive opponent, that by your actions he will be forced to react in a manner you have encouraged through your action. Thus the defender becomes the actor and the offensive player becomes the reactor. As the defender this should always be the goal. This follows the “actor-reactor” theory.

**Alertness** – This means the defender is aware of the existing situation at all times. He not only concentrates on his defensive assignment but those of his near-by teammates also, and is in a help position ready to “close the gate”.

**Aggressiveness** – The defender attacks his opponent. He is an actor not a reactor. He takes the action to his opponent, forcing the offensive player to do what he wants him to do, not what his opponent would like to do.

**Anticipation** – This is the ability to predict in advance what offensive action the opponent will likely take. It may be a pass, a drive to the basket, a move down the sideline or baseline, or an attempt at an offensive rebound.

**Pride** – The defensive player must take pride in his ability to dominate his opponent in every defensive situation. He must feel a sense of accomplishment in keeping his opponent from his objective, whether it is an attempt to score, make a pass to a teammate, or move the ball with a dribble to be in a better floor position. The defender must take a great deal of pride in his ability to play strong defense.

The recent development of speed, power, and shooting ability of today’s offenses has forced defense to take a good like at itself. To counteract the effectiveness of these offenses, new concepts of defensive basketball have been developed. No longer can the transition from offense to defense be made by leisurely running back to the defensive end of the court to set up the half court defense.
The improvement of the transition offense requires that defense begins the moment of the “change of possession” and extends the full length of the court. Today’s defense requires a very positive and aggressive approach. Defense must be one of action rather than one of reaction. The defender must strive to be the actor, not the reactor. Often times the offensive player tries to fake the defender into reacting to his foot or ball fakes. At the same time, the defender should be “faking the faker”, trying to make the offense react to the moves of the defender.

**STANCE**

**GORILLA**

Before any defense can begin to be taught the proper initial defensive stance (posture) must be established. A good defensive stance will enable the player to move in any direction with good body balance and stability. For the man-on-man defense or any time the defender finds he is in a one-on-one situation, the gorilla stance is required. The term “gorilla stance” is given this stance by the author because it gives the player somewhat of a picture in his mind, that when in the stance his posture and demeanor should resemble that of a gorilla. How does a gorilla look? The gorilla’s knees are bent with the feet spread about shoulder width apart; the back is slightly crouched but fairly straight with the head up and the hands outside the knees. However, for basketball defense we like the hands to be higher with palms facing the opponent. We also want the basketball defender to have one foot slightly in advance of the other. The purpose for this is to influence the direction the offensive player probably will move. By placing one foot slightly in advance of the other, the defender makes it difficult for the offensive player to move in the direction of the advance foot. This also helps teammates know the direction the defender is forcing the offensive player. This in turn strengthens the team defense.

It is not recommended to have the hands up high when in the gorilla stance. The defensive player cannot move as quickly as he must and cannot change direction as effectively with his hands high. Unfortunately many coaches are constantly calling to their players “get the hands up, get the hands up”. The demeanor of the gorilla is one of toughness and strength. This is what coaches’ look for in their defensive players. From this stance all defensive movement will begin. It is important that the stance be one that is not only effective in allowing the defender to maintain good position but must also be comfortable because he is expected to be in this posture throughout much of the game. The gorilla stance is used whenever the ball handler has not used his dribble or is in the act of dribbling. It is effective because it enables the defender to maintain good defensive position relative to the moving dribbler.
The gorilla’s back is slightly crouched but straight, the head is up and the legs are spread about shoulder width apart. The only difference from what would be an almost exact model for the basic defensive stance is the feet are parallel rather one foot in advance of the other and the hands are not well outside the knees with palms facing a would be opponent.
BELLY-UP STANCE

The belly-up stance is utilized in four basic situations:

- Any time the ball handler is in a stationary position, as in some zone defenses.
- The defender does not expect a great deal of movement from the ball handler who is primarily looking to pass inside.
- The offensive player picks up his dribble for any reason.
- When double teaming trapping.

The objective of the belly-up is to get the hands high, forcing the ball handler to pass over the outstretched hands of the defender, necessitating a lob or bounce pass. Both of these passes are slower reaching the receiver and can be more easily intercepted.

Additionally, the belly-up stance obstructs the vision of the passer, making it difficult to see open receivers. Foot position, body position, and hand position differ in the belly-up from the gorilla stance. The foot position is parallel and the body is straight and almost belly-to-belly with the opponent, and the hands are as high as possible with the thumbs pointing toward each other 8-10 inches apart and following the ball wherever the opponent moves it. In a trapping situation the two trapping defenders follow the same positions except they align their feet perpendicular to each other with the outside foot outside of the opponent. This will prevent the ball handler from splitting the trap or easily dribbling around it. Using the hands in this manner will help obstruct the offensive player’s vision as he tries to locate possible passing lanes. Under no circumstance should the defenders wildly reach or slap at the ball. This will usually result in a foul call. Stealing the ball from the ball handler is not the primary objective in any double teaming situation. Making the pass-out difficult is the objective and this may create a turnover.
**NOSING-UP**

What do we mean by nosing-up? This is a term used in the defensive system to indicate the portion of the offensive player’s body on which the defender will align his nose, depending on the direction he wishes to force his opponent. Nose-up square means the defenders nose will point into the middle of his opponent’s chest with no specific direction force but to keep the opponent in front of him. Nose-up shoulder means the defender will align his nose to either shoulder, depending on the direction he wishes to guide the opponent. It should be noted that whatever direction is selected, the foot of the defender farthest from that direction should be the advanced foot in the gorilla stance which is used throughout. Nose-up on ball dictates that the nose will point the ball wherever it is located. If the ball position should change, so does the nose up change to wherever the ball moves. This perhaps is the most difficult of all the nose-up positions to execute. One of the main objectives of nosing-up on the ball is to force the dribbler to change direction on his dribble as often as possible. This diminishes his ability to make a hard, fast drive to the basket or any floor position he desires.

**FOOTWORK**

The skill that is most often taken for granted and therefore most overlooked by coaches is the teaching of footwork. There is neither a more basic skill nor one that touches on more areas of the game of basketball than proper footwork. Improper footwork is generally the cause of poor execution of any skill that requires movement or body balance. Most coaches when teaching defensive footwork teach the slide or shuffle movement. Coaches emphasize that defenders should not cross one foot over the other. Basically this is true in all defensive systems. While the shuffle type footwork is basic, one slight emphasis many seem to overlook is the shuffle movement is a push and slide, not a hop and step movement.

Proper execution of the push and slide technique for movement in all directions is essential to the playing of strong individual defense. Many coaches claim to teach the push and slide movement technique but often allow more of a hop and step technique. The difference is that in the push and slide, when properly executed, there is no time when both feet are off the floor at the same time, whereas in the hop and step movement there is a time when both feet are off the floor at the same time. When executing the push and slide movement to the right, the move is initiated with a strong push by the left foot, the foot farthest from the direction of the desired movement.
At the same time the right foot glides barely off the floor to the right as the left foot slides to replace the right foot without leaving the floor. At no time should the feet touch each other when properly executed. This movement is repeated continuously and rapidly. The defender should maintain a wide base throughout the movement for maximum body balance. This same technique is used whether the movement is right, left, forward, or back. An indicator of the improper execution is to observe the hips; if the hips are continuously moving up and down throughout the movement, most likely the incorrect hop and step method is being used. If on the other hand the push and slide movement is correctly executed, the hips will remain fairly level throughout the movement. One may ask, what is the difference between the two methods? In the hop and step where both feet are off the floor at the same time, should the offensive player change direction while both feet are off the floor, the defender is beaten because he can’t change his direction until at least one foot is again in contact with the floor. This is not the case with the push and slide. With one foot always in contact with the floor, the defender can change direction at the same time as the offensive player. For this reason, the push and slide technique is superior even though it is more difficult to master. Therefore, as coaches we should constantly be conscious that this defensive movement is closely observed and corrected when executed improperly. Again, throughout this movement, the hips should remain fairly level as the defensive player moves to defend his opponent. If the hips are moving up and down throughout it means the incorrect hop and step technique is used.

**OVERPLAY**

One of the most important skills to be learned to play any type of defense, especially pressure defenses, is that of overplay. Whenever a defender wishes to prevent the offensive player from receiving a pass in his desired area or from driving the ball to his strong side the use of overplay is required. While in the gorilla stance, the defensive position is determined by where the defender noses-up on his man. This will influence the direction an offensive player will take on a dribble drive. The defender may overplay forcing his opponent to the middle of the floor or to the sideline, to a player’s weakness, or to the direction of defensive help. If an offensive player cannot move well to his left, the defender will nose-up on the offensive player’s right shoulder with the left foot in advance. This will influence his opponent to move to the left. The reverse would be true if the defender wishes to force the offensive player to the right. At other times, the defender may overplay according to the position of the ball in the hands of the ball handler. As the offensive player moves the ball from one side of his body to the other, the defender must shift his nose-up
position accordingly. Example: If after overplaying the ball on the offensive player’s right hand, he executes a cross over dribble or a reverse pivot dribble and brings the ball to the opposite side of his body, the defender must quickly shift to that side and nose-up on the opposite shoulder. In addition, the defender must also remember to change the foot that is in advance in his stance. When the ball is on the right side of the ball handler’s body, the defender’s left foot would be in advance. As the offensive man changes the ball to his left side, the defender must also change to bring his right foot in the advance position.

If the objective of the overplay of a player near the sideline is to funnel the offensive player down the middle of the floor, the outside shoulder will be the position on which the defender would nose-up and the foot closest to the sideline would be the advanced foot. This deprives the ball handler of a choice of direction because he can only move easily to the middle of the court where defensive help will be available. Many defenses utilize this overplay to the middle, especially when they have a big quick man who is adept at blocking shots and protecting the middle against penetration. In the absence of such a player, many teams will overplay to force the offensive man down the sideline by nosing-up on the inside shoulder of the ball handler and the inside leg (the one closest to the middle of the court) in the advance position. In this defensive overplay, forcing to the sideline and end line takes place only until the offensive player reaches a point approximately 8 feet along the end line. At that point, if the dribbler has not ended his dribble, the defense shifts to overplay the offensive player back to the middle where his help defense is located. Do not allow the dribbler to continue along the end line beyond the 8-foot point. Usually bad things will happen when the offensive player is allowed to dribble along the end line.

**OPEN AND RUN**

The open and run concept is basic to the defensive system and should be used whenever the defensive man feels his opponent has beaten him in a one-on-one situation. This will usually occur in the open court. With this technique the defensive player retreats by crossing over his lead foot and running as quickly as possible to a new position in front of the dribbler and then opening up again to face the opponent in the gorilla stance. This is one exception to the “never cross your feet” rule learned in defensive footwork. In a man-on-man situation when the defender is beaten, too often the defensive player attempts to maintain the push and slide foot movement and ends up trailing the dribbler all the way to the basket.
Invariably the dribbler will either be fouled or will score. There is an appropriate slogan used to describe this situation. “When Beat—Retreat—You Trail—You Fail”. With this in mind, the defensive player must reestablish good defensive position by utilizing the open and run technique.

**COMMUNICATION**

Communication is probably the most difficult of all the necessary skills to teach. It is difficult because many times certain members of the team are not natural talkers and to get them to talk on defense is a monumental task. Communication must be continually stressed whenever working on defensive skills. The coach must constantly remind the players to talk, talk, talk. What do they talk about? They should warn teammates of screens, they should alert teammates of extra cutters coming into their area, and they should call out the ball position and player position among other things. In other words each should be running commentators of the action on the basketball floor, describing the action that is taking place before them for the benefit of their teammates. For effective defense the coach must get the team not only to talk but also to listen because talking is only part of the skill of communication. The second part of the skill of communication is listening or hearing. Many times poor communication is the fault of the one who does not listen. He does not hear when warned of a screen. Many times his teammate will warn him of a screen right or left but the warning falls on deaf ears because he has not trained himself to listen to his teammates.

In order to effectively communicate, team terminology must be established early in the pre-season practices and each player must understand the meaning of each term. It also makes the description of drills much easier to be given and understood. It eliminates the possibility that team members do not understand each other or the instructions the coach gives during the course of practice or a game. If there is terminology that is unique with your team; it should be carefully described in the player handbook. Players should be taught early in the season and terminology should not be changed without proper preparation and explanation to the team members and staff. When the coach talks about “overplay,” “gorilla stance,” “close the gate,” etc., everyone must know exactly what is meant. If there is to be an effective method of communication, it must be established early and it must be stressed throughout the practice sessions and in whatever drills are used throughout the season.
INDIVIDUAL DEFENSIVE DRILLS

Agility is extremely important in effective execution of defensive footwork, especially in the ability to change direction. The two step change of direction is a good starting point in developing the proper technique for the push and slide defensive footwork. In this drill, with no opponent, the defender assumes the gorilla stance facing an imaginary opponent. He then pushes off with the left foot for two steps as described in the push and slide footwork, pivots on the right foot to change direction. He next takes two steps in the new direction, pivots on the left foot to change direction again. Changing direction after only two steps in each direction, he continues the length of the floor. After reaching the far end line he repeats in the opposite direction.
After sufficient time drilling on the two step change, the four step change is introduced. This is merely a repeat of the previous two step drill and is a natural progression in the development of the proper footwork.

**Points of emphasis are:**
(1) Do the hips remain fairly level?
(2) Do the feet come together on the slide; they should not?
(3) Is the pivot properly executed?
(4) Is the gorilla stance maintained throughout the drill?
The next step in the progression is the addition of an offensive player to the drill. The offensive player, without a ball, makes random changes of direction. Initially the offensive player should begin at a fairly moderate speed. As the drill progresses the speed of the changes should increase and the length and speed of the changes should vary. The defender must maintain a position in front of the offensive player as he changes direction, trying to maintain a square nose-up on the opponent (nose pointing into the chest of the opponent). Here the coach must take note that the hips remain level, the feet do not touch each other; at no time are both feet off the floor at the same time, and the defender remains in a good gorilla stance throughout the drill. At this point the defender will have a tendency to begin straightening his posture and the proper footwork will be diminished as the speed of the offensive change of direction increases. This is the point when the coach must constantly remind the defender to stay down in a good gorilla stance. Once the pair reaches the far end line they reverse positions and repeat to the other end of the court.
The next step in the progression is the addition of a dribbler. The drill now progresses to a true one-on-one offense versus defense. The offensive player dribbles, changing direction randomly and at varying speeds. The defensive player must remain in front of his opponent in a good gorilla stance while executing proper footwork, using the push and slide technique. The dribbler may change direction using the cross over dribble, the reverse pivot dribble, or the between the legs dribble. After reaching the far end line the pair reverses positions and repeats the drill to the other end of the court. Again the coach should observe that the defender uses proper footwork while maintaining good defensive stance. Although the illustration shows a uniform distance on the direction changes, the dribbler in fact will change direction and speed randomly or on a signal designed by the coach.
Escort Drill

O1 has cut to the corner from the point after passing to O3 and is escorted by X1. O3 passes to O1 in the corner. O3 cuts through the lane and X3 escorts, staying between the ball and O3, forcing O3 to cut behind him. If O4 flashes high to the strongside elbow, X3 and X4 switch at the midline of the lane. The advantage of the switch in this situation is that it permits O4 to remain in the low position which gives the defense stronger rebounding position. Although this leaves X3 to play a bigger man, he is out away from the basket and less dangerous. If O4 does not flash high, there is no switch and each follows their next designated assignment. This is especially an advantage when disguising a match-up zone for a switching man-on-man defense.
Figure 5-6 illustrates the escort rule in the corner to wing pass. O4 has the ball in the corner. O4 passes to O2 on the wing and cuts to the basket. X4 escorts O4 to the mid-point of the lane, forcing O4 to cut behind him. O2 is unable to make a pass to O4. O5 uses O4 as a screen and drives to the strong side low post position. X5 stays with O5. O2 dribble drives. X2 stays with O2. X4, after releasing O4 closes the gate with X2 to stop penetration by O2. X3 drops low into the lane to zone the weak side players.

These are only two of the examples of execution of the escort rule. However, all other situations will follow the same principle of escort to a pre-determined point of the defense and release to another defender. Other situations may be drilled in the same manner, following the rule of escort.
OVERPLAY ENTRY PASS

Photo 5-1 illustrates the proper positioning of the wing defender for overplay of the wing entry pass. Denial of the entry pass is crucial to half court pressure defense. The wing defender establishes the gorilla stance on the inside shoulder of the wing player, extending the far hand in front of the receiver. This puts pressure on the passer attempting the pass to the wing player, often creating an interception or a deflection of the pass. Many times in this overplay situation the receiver will make a backdoor cut to the basket. When this occurs, the defender should open to the ball and retreat quickly in the direction of the basket until he again has ball and his opponent in his sight. He then takes a normal defensive position, depending on the location of the ball. Once the defender loses sight of the back door cutter, it is only logical the cutter is going to the basket.
LOW POST DEFENSIVE POSITIONS

Depending on the offensive skill the post player possesses, the defender has the option of several defensive positions. If the offensive post player has little or no outstanding offensive post moves but is primarily a passer and rebounder the defender may play behind the post player. The defender should body up strong with his forearm firmly in the back of the post player preventing him from backing down the defender (this is legal). If the post player is permitted to back the defender low enough, even he then becomes an offensive threat. This position offers the best opportunity for the defender to neutralize the rebounding ability of the post player with effective box out position. The defender also has a better opportunity to help on a pass from the post player to the cutter when playing behind the post.
It is always best to discourage an entry pass into the post player from another offensive player, especially if he has good post moves and shots. In this case the defender must take a three quarter position on the post player. A good rule of thumb for attaining this position is for the defender to line up on the ball side with his closest ear opposite the inside shoulder of the post player with the outside arm extending in front of his opponent and the outside leg over the close leg of the post player. As the ball is moved from one side of the court to the other, the defender must establish the same position on the ball side of the post player. Depending on the strength of the post player and the quickness and strength of the defender, this change of sides may be made by the defender sliding over the top of the post or behind to reestablishing the three quarter defensive position.
Another means of defending against the entry pass into the low post is to front the post player. Against a very effective post player, the fronting position makes the entry pass most difficult. However, the lob pass over the head of the defender can be very costly for the defense if completed. In order to be effective fronting the post, the defender must be quick, have good vertical jumping ability, and have long arms. The technique for fronting a low post player from the three quarter position is to step forward with the front leg, then step over the near leg of the post player with the back leg and bring the rear arm through in front of the post and sit in his lap so to speak. This means the defender places his backside firmly against the legs of the post player. While in this position the defender should attempt to gently force the post player to give ground, backing him down lower in the post. This decreases the floor space available to the passer to complete the lob pass with good angle for a shot. The other criterion for effective defense fronting the post is to put a great deal of pressure on the passer, utilizing the belly up stance. This makes it difficult for the passer to have a good view of the post player and forces him to pass over the outstretched arm of the passer defender.
HIGH POST DEFENSE
The first step in defending the high post is to make the pass into the high post player difficult. Use of the three quarter ear to shoulder position is the safest method for accomplishing this. The defender takes a position aligning his ear closest to the offensive player with his opponents shoulder, keeping his closest leg behind and the outside leg in front of the opponent while extending the far arm in front of the low post player.

The high post position is usually established to execute two-man plays. A few of the plays offenses like to run off the high post are:

- The high-low-pass to a posted player who ducks into the lane.
This photo illustrates the high-low play. Upon receiving the pass into the high post, the low post offensive player makes a strong duck into the lane for a pass from the high post. This enables him to make a power move to the basket due to his deep position in the lane.
The Scissors Cut Path

The Scissors Cut Off the High Post
This illustrates the paths the cutters would take when executing the scissors cut. On the scissors cut, the post defender should step off and behind the high post player to be in position to help either of the cutters’ defenders if either should have a problem with the screen after one of the cutters receives a hand off from the high post.
In Figure 5-8
This would be a hand off by O5 to O1 on the scissors cut. In this case, O2 would be the passer into O5 and would make the first cut. O1 would time his cut to come as close as possible off the tail of O2 for the hand off and drive to the basket.

Scissors cut hand off to second cutter
In this Scissors Sequence

05 fakes a hand off to each cutter. He then keeps the ball and drives to the basket after the last fake or turns and spots up for the jump shot.
**HIGH SCREEN AND ROLL**

If the high post player, *05* steps up above the foul circle, this indicates the high screen and roll is called for. The defense would follow the normal screen/roll defenses that will be discussed and illustrated in the following chapter.

These are the most common plays utilizing the high post. To defend this action, in all but the high screen and roll it is better to use the 3/4 defensive position to discourage an easy pass into the high post player. However, once the pass into the high post player is successful, the defender should step behind and into the belly-up position. This will make it difficult to make the pass to the man posted deep in the foul lane. Since the high post player has not yet used his dribble, the defender must be ready to convert quickly into the gorilla defensive stance to counter a possible drive to the basket or the jump shot. If the passer into the high post cuts off the high post to execute the scissors cut, the high post defender steps off as shown in figure 5-7 to influence the cutter.
CHAPTER VI

MULTI PERSON DEFENSIVE DRILLS
SCREENING SITUATIONS

SCREEN AND ROLL HARD CALL

Photo 6-1a: If the ball handler executing the screen and roll is a good outside shooter, especially coming off a screen, a “HARD” call is made. Ball defender should not allow the screener to get to his body, holding him off with the forearm on the side he attempts to set the screen. This will create space for the ball defender to go over the top of the screen. Screen defender; make it as difficult as possible for the screener to get to his screen position. Once the screen is set and the dribbler begins his drive over the top of the screen, the screen defender must step out and show quickly to influence the dribbler’s path. The dribbler then can do one of three things; change direction, end his dribble, or swing wide anticipating a possible double team trap. This maneuver helps create space for the ball defender to go over the top of the screen and stay with the dribbler. The common error many ball defenders make in their attempt to go over the top of the screen is pivoting on the foot nearest the screener and trailing the dribbler over the screen. In any case they are now beaten by the screen, allowing the dribbler to turn the corner.

Photo 6-1b: The offensive player now has several options. The proper technique for going over the top of the screen is to step over the near leg of the screener with the inside foot and arching the back while continuing to face the dribbler.

Photo 6-1c: The space created by holding off the screener with the forearm and the influence of the quick show by the screen defender make the move over the top of the screen easier for the ball defender.

Photo 6-1d: The dribbler now does not turn the corner. It is important that the screen defender stays with the dribbler until the ball defender is completely over the screen and back to the dribbler. The screen defender can then return to his man.
SCREEN AND ROLL HARD CALL

Ball Defender inside Leg over Top; Screen Defender Show

Photo 6-1a

Ball and Screen Defender Position

SCREEN AND ROLL HARD CALL

Ball Defender inside Leg over Top; Screen Defender Show

Photo 6-1b
SCREEN AND ROLL HARD CALL

Ball Defender is Over Top; Screen Defender Show

SCREEN AND ROLL HARD CALL

All Back to Own Men
SCREEN AND ROLL SOFT CALL

If the ball handler is a capable outside shooter but scouting reports indicate he would rather drive into the lane and look for other options first, a “SOFT” call might be more appropriate. Ball defender; do not let the screener get to your body by using the forearm to create space as previously described. In this case, the screen defender steps back and over in the direction of the dribbler to support the ball defender who slides under the screen to meet the dribbler coming off the screen.

Photo 6-2b: If the dribbler is too quick and is able to turn the corner before his defender can get to him, an adjustment is made. The screen defender now steps out to show as in the “HARD” call, forcing the dribbler wide, allowing more time for the ball defender to reach the dribbler.
SCREEN AND ROLL JUMP CALL

When the ball handler is a good shooter and exceptional at getting into the lane (like Steve Nash) to make plays for others, the “JUMP” call can be effective. As the ball handler and his defender move over the top of the screen, the screen defender jumps out aggressively to double team trap the dribbler.

Photo 6-3b: The two defenders quickly assume the belly-up position after forcing the dribbler to pick up his dribble making it difficult for him to easily pass to another player of his choice. In this situation it is necessary to involve a third defender (usually the lowest defender) to rotate to the screener who may roll to the basket or spot up for an open jump shot in a favorite spot. The jump call can effectively take the ball out of the hands of the offense's best play maker. The original screen defender would then rotate to the open man on the pass out of the double team.
SCREEN AND ROLL PINCH CALL

The “PINCH” call should be made when the ball handler is a poor shooter but is very quick to turn the corner getting into the lane to finish the drive or draw help from another inside defender for the dump off pass as help comes to him. In this situation, the screen defender pinches up tight to the body of the screener making it difficult for him to roll to the basket.

Meanwhile the ball defender slides behind both the screen and the screen defender to meet the ball handler as he turns the corner over the screen.

Photo 6-4b: It is very important that if help is drawn, a systematic and practiced rotation of all defenders is well known. All defenders should return to their own man as soon as possible.
SCREEN AND ROLL FORCE CALL

Thus far the ball handler has been allowed to drive over the top of the screen. In the “FORCE” call the opposite is the case. In this situation, when the ball handler is weaker handling the ball and making plays with his off hand, but is exceptional at making scoring plays for teammates after getting into the lane, and is a good jump shooter once he gets into the lane area; it is desirable to force him to go in the direction of his weaker hand. It is also true that by sending the dribbler to the sideline reduces the number of play options left to him. To execute the force effectively, the ball defender overplays the ball handler by nosing-up on the shoulder farthest from the end line. In so doing, the ball handler is denied an easy path over the top of the screen. The screen defender drops off the screener in the direction of the force and supports the ball defender to that side. It is not a double team but could develop into a double team trap if it appears the dribbler has the ball defender beaten to the end line or if the dribbler picks up his dribble in the corner (this is optional). If a double team of the dribbler occurs a planned system of defensive rotation of the remaining defenders must be executed. The design of the rotation would be of the coach’s choice. If on the other hand, no double team occurs, the screen defender returns to his man and all are back to their original opponent. See Photos 6-5b and 6-5c.
SCREEN AND ROLL FORCE CALL

Ball Defender Force Ball to Sideline, Screen Defender Supports

Screen and Roll Force Call

Ball Defender Beaten, Screen Defender Doubles

Screen and Roll Force Call
**DOWN SCREEN**

When defending the down screen, normally it is best to trail out the anticipated shooter for whom the down screen is set. The defender of the shooter should lock onto the shooter as he begins his move to set up the screen, maintaining tight contact with him. The defender playing the screener should take a high position on the screener maintaining physical contact with the screener by placing his inside hand on the screener’s leg. He steps up as the shooter comes up off the screen. The purpose of this technique is to discourage the curl move around the screen. If the screener slips to the basket, his defender would know by the loss of contact with the screener’s leg. If this should occur, he should open to the ball and retreat quickly toward the basket. The shooter defender must continue to trail hard on the shooter if he still curls. He should not depend on the step up and “show” of the screen defender because he may have been forced to retreat to the basket if the screener slips the screen. See Photos 6-6a, b, and c.
Screen Defender back to his Man; Shooter Defender Continues to Play His Man
**BASELINE SCREEN SWITCH**

The baseline screen is generally defended basically the same as the down screen utilizing the trail out and "show principle" discussed in Photo 6-6d of the down screen. However, there is an alternative technique used when there are defensive players of equal or near equal size and strength involved. In those situations, it is permitted to switch men on the baseline screen and other screens. This is to be permitted only at times designated by the coach. Since we have shown the trail out and show in the previous photos, we will illustrate the switch of defenders of equal size and strength executing the switch on the baseline screen.
In the **straight man-on-man defense**, perimeter lateral screens call for the defender of the screener to drop off his opponent to create space for the ball defender to slide behind the screen. This technique would apply where the dribble hand off is executed. The dribbler would in fact be the screener and his defender would be the one to drop off to allow the defender of the receiver to slide under as the hand off is made. This maneuver can often cause mild confusion because at times the dribbler does not hand off to the person he dribbles toward but instead uses him as a screen, looking to drive to the basket. A good indication this will occur would be the dribbler making an obvious dribble to the outside shoulder of the expected receiver. When this occurs, the defender on the dribbler stays up on the dribbler and the other defender slides behind allowing the dribbler defender to stay up on his man.
Another example is the pass and follow. After passing to another perimeter player the passer moves into a screen for the receiver. In this case it is relatively easy to determine the screener and the screen user. The screen defender steps back allowing the pass receiver’s defender to slide through. A third example of the perimeter lateral screen is the pass and screen away. In this situation it is probably most effective to switch men since the action occurs on the perimeter, it is likely that the defenders involved will be of equal size and strength. Remember, there is no switching in this drill except on the screen away. Since the screen away is a switch we will not illustrate it. The switching rules to be later described will suffice.
On all back screens; it is the back defender who must control the situation. First he must warn the screen user defender that the back screen is being set. Secondly he should know which direction he would like to influence the cutter to take. He does this by stepping off the screener and overplaying to the side of the screener opposite the direction he would prefer to give the cutter. He then would call right or left as the direction the cutter defender should anticipate the cutter will drive. In the event the cutter does the opposite he then calls “switch” and the switch of the men is made. The step off by the screen defender also allows him to cover the screen user in case of the lob pass for the power dunk.
Although there are several possibilities for setting a tandem screen which means that two offensive players form a side by side screen or front to back, as in a stack alignment. For purpose of illustration, a tandem or double screen will be set above the free throw line area with the ball passer on the perimeter strong side. The potential shooter is located below the free throw line. As in the down screen and baseline screen, the shooter defender locks on to the potential shooter and trails him over the screen. Meanwhile, the screen defender closest to the passer steps out into the passing lane making a pass to the shooter difficult. The screen defender farthest from the passer and closest to the shooter drops off to zone both screeners in case one or both slip the screen and cut to the basket. In that case the passer would be double teamed by the defender that stepped into the passing lane, making any pass extremely difficult with both defenders in the belly-up defensive stance.
Shooter Defender Locks and Trails; Other Defenders Paths are Shown
The stagger screen is similar to the tandem screen except the two screeners are neither stacked nor side by side. It is what some like to call a screen by one screener and cleaning off the tail by the second screener who sets a second screen if the first screen has not freed the shooter. In this illustration we will show a shooter coming from the baseline over a down screen set on the weak side with the pass coming from the strong side. As the shooter drives over the first screen the shooter defender locks on and trails hard over the top. The first screen defender steps up and shows to discourage the curl move. At this point, the second or stagger screener, $O_1$ head hunts the shooter defender, $X_2$ and tries to clean off the shooter’s defender $X_2$. The defender of the stagger screener, $X_1$ must step up to either pick up the shooter $O_2$ if the screen is successful or step into the passing lane to discourage the pass to the shooter $O_2$. 
JUMP SWITCH
Whenever switching is called for by the coach, he may wish for the defenders to use the jump switch. To effectively use the jump switch, both parties to the switch must be up tight on their opponents. As the screen is set the screen defender aggressively jumps into the path of the screen user, facing him as he comes off the screen. The suddenness of the jump out often causes the screen user to become startled and creates a travel violation or an offensive charging foul. It is important that the switch is automatic and the screen defender move into the screen user’s path and is facing him as the user comes off the screen; otherwise there could be a blocking foul on the defender. The original screen user’s defender must quickly step behind the screener to prevent a quick roll to the basket.
CLOSE OUT

The purpose of this drill is to teach defenders the proper technique of closing out on a dangerous offensive player after he receives the ball some distance from his assigned defender. It may be a situation where the defender had given help closing the gate, to another player and now must recover to his own man or he may have escorted his man to a pre-determined point of the team defense and must now pick up an open man. There are other situations when the close out must be utilized. However, this drill will teach the proper technique to meet all close out situations. The defender X4 charges at the offensive player as hard as possible until he approaches about two steps from the opponent. At that point he must come under complete control and converts to a good gorilla defensive stance. He must be ready to move in whatever direction the offensive player moves using proper push and slide footwork. If the defender fails to come under control in his final two steps, the offensive player will easily drive by him or fake him into the air and step inside him for the open shot. Of course the quickness and strengths and weaknesses of the offensive player as well as the defensive player may vary the distance necessary for the defender to come under control. If the offensive player is quick but not an exceptional shooter, the defender can come under control a bit farther from the offensive player. However, if the offensive player is a good outside shooter and driver, the two step control would be necessary. After closing out on the first opponent, the offensive player passes to the next offensive player. The defender must then repeat the close out procedure on the second opponent, and then move on to again repeat the close out on the third offensive player. The first time through the drill each offensive player must pass the ball to the next offensive player. The purpose is for the defender to learn to execute the close out. The second time through the drill the offensive player tries to drive to the basket. The purpose is to close out and be in position to stop the drive. The third time through the drill the offensive player attempts to catch and shoot before the close out or step inside the defender for the jump shot.
CLOSE OUT

Choke Off Drill

Figure 6-3
CHAPTER VII

TEAM DEFENSES
In order to develop a strong team defense, a commitment to total defense must be made as individuals and as a team. Once individual defensive skills are taught and drilled, they must naturally progress to the point of incorporation into the team concept. The team concept is perhaps even more central to developing a strong team defense than it is to a good offense. The team defense is quickly broken down if just one player does not perform his responsibility effectively. The same is not so with team offense. One player may forget an assignment on offense and the play may still be successful. To develop a strong team defense, regardless if it is man-on-man, zone, match-up zone, or any other; it is necessary to establish defensive objectives and rules.

**BASIC RULES OF DEFENSE**

Regardless of the defense decided by the coach, there are three basic rules that should be followed if the chosen defense is to be successful. While the defense may change from game to game or from time to time during the course of a game, the basic “rule of position”, the “rule of escort”, and the “rule of close the gate” will still be basic to each defense.

**RULE OF POSITION**

The rule of position tells the defensive man where he should be in relation to the ball and his responsibility regardless of the defense being used. The defensive man attempts to maintain position between the ball and his responsibility. If the player in the defender’s area of responsibility receives the ball, he is in a man-on-man situation and must take a position that will force the offensive man in the direction the defender wishes. Under most circumstances, this will be toward the sideline. However, it will depend on the strengths and weaknesses of the opponent.

When forcing to the outside, do not give up the baseline beyond the baseline eight foot mark. At that point the offensive player must be turned back to the middle. Do not play defense with the hands alone but move the body into good position, using proper push and slide footwork and nosing-up on the opponent to force him in the direction of the defender’s choice or to his weakness, following the actor-reactor theory. Position also pertains to floor position when the defender’s opponent does not have the ball. Where on the court does the defender position himself? He should establish the ball-you-man principle, meaning the defender is between the ball and his opponent. These are all points that must be followed in the “rule of position”. As a wise unknown philosopher once said, “position is everything in life” It is also most certainly true in defensive basketball.
RULE OF ESCORT
The rule of escort tells us, when a man in the area of responsibility of a defender has the ball, the defender is responsible for him man-on-man as long as he: (a) maintains possession of the ball either by holding or dribbling, regardless where he goes unless he is systematically switched off to another defender as per the rule of escort, or passes the ball; (b) after passing the ball to another offensive player he cuts through the defense in the direction of the basket and is not switched off to another defender. In either case the defender continues to have responsibility for that player and must escort (follow) him through the defense until he is no longer a threat to receive a return pass or he has reached a pre-determined point of the defense at which time he is released to another defender. He then assumes his next responsibility.

The most difficult maneuver for the defense to control is movement of men without the ball through the defense. This is the origin for the “rule of escort”. It means the defender must stay with the offensive player as he cuts through the defense, staying between him and the ball as he moves through the defense. In other words, force the cutter to take a path behind the defender, not allowing him to cut between the ball and the defender. The “rule of escort” is basically a man-on-man principle. As previously stated, the match-up defense is a combination of the man-on-man and zone defenses. The “rule of escort” applies to all defenses.

RULE OF CLOSE THE GATE
The purpose of this rule is to choke off an offensive penetrating move by double teaming the dribbler, forcing him to give up the dribble or passing the ball to another player. In most cases the gate is closed by the defender closest to the dribbler in the direction he is moving. At other times, the need to close the gate often will occur after a player has completed the escort rule, forcing the dribbler to pick up the dribble. Many times the next penetrating dribbler will be the corner man or the wing man who received a pass from a previous penetrating player as the gate is closed on him. In these cases the escort defender is in the best position to close the gate. If the defender moving to close the gate causes the dribbler to give up the initiative on the drive before the gate is closed, the need to close the gate is no longer required and the defender then reverts to the “rule of position”.
CHAPTER VIII

SELECTING A TEAM DEFENSE
Once the defensive players have learned and execute the three basic rules of defense spontaneously, they are ready to deal with specific situations.

Examples of such situations are defending the various screen and roll situations, defending the various screening situations discussed in earlier chapters, positioning for low and high post entry passes, and positioning for overplay of the dribbler. These are but a few situations that must be mastered. Much time must be devoted to drilling and stressing the importance of mastering the three basic rules of "Position", "Escort", and "Close the Gate". The importance of these rules to the success of the total team defense cannot be stressed too strongly.

**MAN-ON-MAN DEFENSE**

There was a time when most coaches taught the straight man-on-man. In the strict version, each defender was responsible for his assigned player with little regard for any other opponent. The premise being that you assumed total responsibility for controlling the assigned opponent and helped others only if possible. To switch was considered to be taboo and only executed when absolutely necessary. While there remain a few successful coaches loyal to this concept in today’s defensive basketball; many have changed their view to embrace the concept that dictates all defenders must be in position to help at all times. From the help position the defender is ready to close the gate as needed whenever playing an opponent off the ball. In addition, switching is permitted and can be made on strong screens in spite of often resulting in a mismatch of a smaller player on a bigger player. If this happens other players must adjust men as quickly as possible to remedy the mismatch even if it does not include the same two involved in the switch.

The change by many coaches to this concept of man-on-man defense has been brought about by the development of offensive basketball skills and systems that make it almost impossible to follow the former concept of man-on-man defense. While it certainly would be preferable to be able to assign players to one man without regard for helping others, the advancement of offensive basketball requires the defense to make the necessary conceptual changes to keep pace. In the eyes of many successful coaches the man-on-man defense remains the defense of choice as the basic team defense. However, most coaches incorporate a variety of other defenses to meet special situations that may occur during the course of a game or to attack certain opponents who have offensive systems that have proven to be especially effective versus the man-on-man but show a weakness against other specific defenses.
**SWITCHING MAN-ON-MAN**

Although it may seem that this is nothing more than the allowing of switches to occur on screens within the straight man-on-man, this is not the case. Teams that utilize an effective zone defense as their basic defense can use the switching man-on-man most effectively. In the switching man-on-man the switch will occur automatically on all screens and crossing of players regardless of size or floor area. This rule eliminates the need to make a decision to switch or not switch. It also makes it more difficult to recognize that it is not still the zone defense the opponent normally plays. The purpose of this is to confuse the offense. Is the defense being used the opponent’s normal zone or is it man-on-man? When properly executed the switching man-on-man resembles the zone defense normally used as the basic team defense of the opponent. The objective is to influence the offense into thinking they are still opposing the opponent’s normal zone defense, thus having the advantage of playing against a somewhat stationary offense since many team still attack zones using little player movement, limited screening, and a great deal of ball movement. This will only be the case if the opponent normally uses a zone offense that concentrates on ball movement rather than player movement and ball movement.

To execute the switching man-on-man, the defense sets up in their normal zone defense alignment. On the first ball movement, the zone shifts so each defensive player is matched up with an opponent except that the weakside will take zone positions, keeping their man in view. If the offense continues to attack with their normal zone offense the defense remains in their man coverage, switching on all screens and crosses. If a player cuts through the defense, the escort rule is used, and if possible that offensive player is switched off to the weakside defender. If the weakside defender is unable to pick up the cutting player, this is an indication the offense has recognized the switching defense and a decision must be made to either, continue the switching defense, return to the basic zone defense, or go to some other designated defense.

As an observer of many basketball games on television over the past years and especially the last year, it is surprising to me the number of coaches who still do not use a zone offense that utilizes player movement extensively, but relies more on ball movement rather than player movement. Against those teams the switching man-on-man defense will be very effective for the teams that are strong zone defense teams. Syracuse University is an excellent example of a team that uses the 2-3 zone very effectively as their primary defense. The switching man-on-man concept in conjunction with their strong 2-3 zone defense would work well in many cases for them.
SWITCHING SKILLS

One of the main drawbacks of switching is the indecision it creates between the two players involved in a possible switch. Whether to stay or switch has long been a matter of debate among defensive coaches. In the final analysis, it becomes a matter of preference rather than one being better than the other. When properly executed, each is effective and each has its strengths and weaknesses. Switching can negate the effectiveness of good screening while at the same time create a mismatch in size and quickness between offensive and defensive players after the switch. One other concern of many coaches is that switching encourages a diminishing of defensive intensity. Defensive players come to expect to be bailed out on a poor defensive effort by the switch. They feel they can place the blame on someone else for a poor defensive play.

Switching can be very effective if rules are established and followed by all defensive players in switching situations:

- Stay tight on the ball handler and any man one pass away allowing the switch to be made automatically without hesitation; no decision needs to be made.
- Do not execute the switch until both the ball handler (screener) and receiver (cutter) come together. Don't anticipate the switch.
- Jump switch on all perimeter screens or exchanges when specifically instructed to do so. *(see photo 6-10 b)*
- Get to the ball side of the screener as quickly as possible. This is to counter the screener stepping to the ball after the screen is executed and the switch has been made.
- On back screening situations, the deepest defender must control the situation. He must show early to influence the ball handler or cutter to think a jump switch is coming. This influences the ball handler to pick up the ball or, the cutter to change direction.
- On down screens or baseline lateral screens, do not switch unless there is repeated difficulty controlling the situation using normal defensive procedures. If the coach decides to call for a switch in further situations, the switch will be made automatically on all such screens to eliminate hesitation and indecision.
- Try to remedy any mismatch that might occur as quickly as possible by another switch of men, even if it is not between the same players.
1-2-2 Zone
This Zone is Strong against a good perimeter shooting Team. It also provides good opportunity for trapping in the front court corners. Its biggest weakness is the difficult coverage of the strong inside game.
This zone works well against strong wing shooters and high-low plays. It also provides quick help on penetrating drives into the middle. One of its weaknesses is the inability to cover the high post area once the ball is passed to either corner, leaving the middle of the defense vulnerable for penetrating passes in that situation. It also gives good rebound position on missed shots from the wings and point positions.
2-1-2 Zone Floor Set

2-1-2 ZONE FLOOR SET
This Zone is effective against a good inside and penetrating offense. Its weakness is stopping the outstanding perimeter shooting team. An advantage is that it provides perhaps the strongest rebound position for any of the zone defenses.
This zone provides good perimeter coverage and trapping options. It also provides good trapping opportunities at the mid-court area and in the front court corners, especially if a team has smaller than normal forwards or poor ball handling corner players. The 1-3-1 zone also gives good protection against a strong dribble driving player. The biggest drawback is the fact that the bottom man must cover corner to corner. This makes that team vulnerable to the strong 3 point corner shooters. This defense is also perhaps the hardest to gain strong defensive rebounding position.
MATCH-UP ZONE

The match-up zone initial floor set may be any of the above zones or a specially designed floor set. We will use a specially designed floor set for our illustration. We feel the special floor set will enable the defense to show a man-on-man match-up while still being in good position to apply the principles of the zone defense. This defense is a combination of the best of the zone and man-on-man defenses. Since most coaches are familiar with the coverage responsibilities of the zones whose initial floor sets are shown previously, we will not illustrate the many coverage responsibilities of those zones, as they are mostly similar. However we will illustrate coverage for the match-up because many coaches vary their coverage depending on the size and quickness of the players involved.
On a pass from \textbf{O1} to \textbf{O2}, \textbf{X1} drops to the foul line and in the direction of the pass. \textbf{X2} closes on \textbf{O2}, \textbf{X4} moves up on \textbf{O4}. \textbf{X5} drops to cover \textbf{O5}. On a pass from \textbf{O2} to \textbf{O4}, \textbf{O2} cuts through the defense toward the basket. \textbf{X2} escorts \textbf{O2} to the mid-point of the lane and releases \textbf{O2} to \textbf{X3} who has replaced \textbf{X5}. \textbf{X2} then moves into position to close the gate on a possible drive by \textbf{O4}. \textbf{O5} drives across the lane to the low post. \textbf{X5} stays with him and plays behind him as \textbf{X4} assumes belly-up stance on \textbf{O4}
01 passes to 03 and cuts to the corner. X1 escorts 01 to a point marked by the first arrow then releases him. When 03 passes to 01 in the corner, X1 moves out to cover 01 and X3 drops in front of 05. X2 and X4 drop into zone positions on the weak side.
On a pass from O1 to O5 in the low post before X3 can drop to front O5. O3 cuts through the defense toward the basket. X3 escorts to the mid-point of the lane and release to X4. X2 drops to the free throw line to zone the area.

These are a few of the most common coverage the match up zone may be called upon to defend. It is necessary that definite rules of defense must be established and thoroughly practiced if there is to be success executing the match-up defense. As mentioned previously, the match-up is very compatible and effective when used in combination with the switching man-on-man defense. Try it, you’ll like it.
CHAPTER IX

SPECIAL DEFENSIVE CONSIDERATION
TRANSITION DEFENSE
This is one of the most important situations to consider, especially against a fast breaking team. Players must be conditioned to play a full court game. They must sprint to the defensive end of the basketball court as well as they do to the offensive end. Whenever a change of possession occurs, everyone is responsible to quickly get back on defense, especially anyone above the free throw line extended. Transition defense can be more effective if the defense can get to the rebounder quickly and delay his outlet pass to the ball handling guard. This will slow the progress of the ball down the court. Another frequent error seen in transition defense is each player, rather than running as quickly as possible to the far end of the court to pick up their man, looking instead for his own man who may be in the backcourt. An exception to this is when setting up for the full court press. In that case the guards must first check the possibility for the long pass before sprinting to their press positions. Finally, don’t be the last man down the floor.

BALL PRESSURE
Never let the man you are defending feel comfortable with or without the ball. If he does not have to work hard to receive and handle the ball, he will immediately think he can beat his opponent and in many cases he will. If he has the ball, put immediate pressure on him. Nose-up in a position that will force him to the strength of the defense and away from his strength. Do not give the offensive player his choice of direction. When the ball handler receives the ball and dribble drives, cover him using the gorilla stance. Once he ends his dribble convert immediately to an aggressive belly-up stance.
FREE THROW LANE DOMINANCE
A good defensive team will dominate the free throw lane area. Deny the ball to posted players. Use the three quarter ear to shoulder position to make it difficult to make a pass into the low post. Take ball side position on cutters. This means your position is between the ball and your man, forcing your man to cut behind you. Block out on defensive rebounds. Don’t get beat on easy post-up moves for shots; if necessary double team strong post players. Prevent easy penetration by dribblers and lay-ups by cutters. Make the opponent earn the points at the free throw line if necessary. Eliminate second shots by limiting offensive rebounds by the opponent.

BALL REVERSAL
Keep opponents from swinging the ball from one side of the court to the other. Force their guards to one side of the court by overplaying them, and then keep them to that side by double-teaming or further overplay. If this can be accomplished, only one side of the court must be defended. If the ball goes below the free throw line, keep it there. Now only one quarter of the court need be defended. Of course the skip pass must be prevented by strong pressure on the ball handler using the belly-up stance. If the ball goes to the corner, this presents a good opportunity for a strong double team in the corner along with overplay of the strongside wing to prevent the swinging of the ball or a skip pass to the weakside corner.

BACK LINE HIGH
Defenders below the foul line should play on the topside of their opponent to deny him an easy entry pass. This applies even more so when in a pressure defense. Play high on the forwards and centers to deny easy entry passes when they are close to the basket and to discourage the flash to the high post area for the high-low pass or the backdoor cut by a guard. (see high post defense Chapter V)
BACK COURT PRESSURE
On a missed shot and loss of the rebound, pressure the rebounder to slow up his outlet pass. Locate the lead guard quickly because he is the one they want to receive the outlet pass. Do not look for your man while still in the backcourt. All sprint back on defense. Once the basket is guarded, move out on the floor to pick up assigned men. If in a pressing defense, quickly get to your assigned position in whatever press has been called. Guards check the back court first.

FORCE OPPONENT TO DRIBBLE
Good defensive teams force their opponents to dribble more than they would like. Repeatedly force a change of direction by the dribbler. This hurts the flow and timing of their offense and also takes time off the shot clock. To accomplish this, the ball defender should nose-up on the ball as the dribbler changes the ball from one side of his body to the other. This forces the dribbler to change direction each time, preventing a hard drive to the basket. If at any time the dribbler turns his back to his defender, a double team on the dribbler should be made by the closest defender teammate.

DON’T REACH FOR THE BALL
Reaching for the ball as the offensive player is holding or dribbling the basketball will cause one of two things to happen and both are bad. Reaching for the ball causes fouls or gets the defender beat by the ball handler. Presses should be aggressive and team oriented. Do not try to steal the ball directly from the ball handler by reaching and slapping as he is holding or dribbling. If on the other hand he brings the ball to you, take it but don’t reach for it. Pressure and contain. Look to create turnovers not fouls. Control your risks.
Defender Gets Hand on Ball and Takes it

Dribbler Places Ball in Front of Defender
TRAPPING

Double team trapping is a vital skill in any system of defense. It is a necessary element in both the zone traps and various man-on-man pressure defenses. It must be thoroughly learned and effectively utilized. There are three areas of the court that lend themselves to effective double team trapping. The first is the backcourt corners. When the offensive team puts the ball in play from their end line, a pass to the corner should be encouraged and the double team trap should be attempted in the corner. It is very important in trapping to approach the offensive man quickly, but under control so he does not have an opportunity to dribble past the defender or to split the trap by driving between the two trapping defenders. Once the offensive player has been forced to pick up his dribble or is holding the ball looking for someone to whom he can pass, the defenders should convert to the belly-up stance immediately. One of the trappers will probably arrive to the ball handler in advance of the other. He should overplay the ball handler to force him in the direction of the second trapper. Once the ball handler has picked up his dribble, both defenders spring the trap by moving into the belly-up position with both hands high, their thumbs about 8-10 inches apart and facing the opponent. The defenders’ bodies should be perpendicular to each other. If you were to draw a line from the inside toe to the heel of one defender and the inside toe to the inside heel of the other, these lines should intersect at a 90-degree angle. In other words, the two defenders should not be in a straight line in front of the offensive man but should create a corner with their bodies. The forward leg of each defender being the one farthest from the offensive man, so he can't dribble to the outside of either man without having to make a backward move, nor may he advance forward by splitting the trap. This assumes he still has his dribble and is merely holding the ball looking for an outlet pass. If he has used his dribble there is no threat of splitting the trap with a forward move or going around by dribbling to the outside of the trap.
The second area of effective trapping is at a point where the mid-court line and the sideline intersect. This trap may be made on either side of the time line. However, it is a greater advantage if the trap can be made across the time line. Trapping across the ten second line is more effective against teams that like to use a trail man as a safety valve against the press. The trail man is an offensive player who remains behind the ball at all times so the offense has an outlet pass to combat the trapping defense. The reason over the time line trap area is so effective is that you eliminate the backward pass to the safety valve, denying easy ball reversal. This trap is executed just over the mid-court ten second line and in the corner created by the intersection of the mid-court line and the sideline. A trap in this corner makes it very difficult to find open passing lanes. The offense, not having the advantage of being able to pass backward over the time line has only one lateral direction in which to pass because the player with the ball is also hemmed in along the sideline. Execution of the trap itself is the same as described previously in the backcourt corner traps.

The third area of effective trapping is the corner of the offensive portion of the frontcourt. Again the techniques for trapping are the same as previously described. The corners are effective trap areas against a team that does not have tall forwards or has forwards who have poor ball handling and passing skills. Corner traps are also effective in preventing ball reversal, which diminishes the area that the defending team must cover.

**FULL COURT ZONE PRESS**

Although there are many varieties of zone presses used by coaches, we will limit our discussion and illustration to the 1-2-2 full court press. Before any instruction on the execution of the full court zone press takes place, the location of possible trap areas must be identified and learned by all defenders. In addition, the number of traps and the designated trap zones where the coach wishes players to trap, before returning to the regular half court defense, should be established. There are basically three trap zones on each side of the basketball court (see figure 10-1) The teaching of player coverage of the 1-2-2 press as the ball is moved can be effectively accomplished using the “flash drill” previously discussed and illustrated. The coach would determine the number of traps, the designated trap zones, and the half court defense to set up after the designated traps.
Once the location of the trap zones have been learned the rules for coverage of the 1-2-2 full court press are given:
**RULES OF COVERAGE**

**# 1 MAN**
- Keep the ball in front of him as long as possible.
- Trap in zone #1L with the 2-man or the 4-man if inbound pass is made to the right side.
- If ball passes his floor position, he should retreat rapidly down the middle of the floor until he is below the level of the ball, and then locate the nearest offensive player.
- If the ball is returned to the inbound passer, return to him as though the ball had not yet been thrown inbounds.

**# 2 MAN**
- If no offensive man in his area, drop to cover the short middle area.
- If inbound pass is to his side, trap in zone #1L with 1-man.
- If ball passes his position to the opposite side near trap zone #2R, retreat as quickly as possible to cover weakside of the basket.
- If ball passes his position on ball side, look to trap in zone #2L with 3-man.
- If inbound pass is to opposite side, cover middle area between the foul circle and center circle.
- If after trap with 3-man in zone #2L, ball passes his position on same side, drop to ball side free throw line elbow.
- After trap with 3-man in zone #2L, ball passes to opposite side, sprint to cover weakside of basket.

**# 3 MAN**
- On inbound pass cover sideline on side of inbound pass.
- If ball is passed near trap zone #2L after inbound pass to that side, look to trap with 2-man in trap zone #2L.
- If after inbound trap by the 1-man and 2-man in trap zone #1L, the ball is passed to the trailer, return to protect the middle area.
- If after trapping with the 2-man in zone #2L, the ball is passed to the deep sideline on the opposite side of the court, sprint to cover the weakside of the basket.
- If instead, the ball is passed to the opposite side near the trap zone #2R, drop back to the far foul circle elbow, replacing the 5-man.
**# 4 MAN**

- If no man in his area on inbound pass, drop to cover the short middle.
- If inbound pass is to his side, trap in zone #1R with 1-man.
- If ball passes his position to opposite side of court near trap zone #2L, retreat as quickly as possible to cover the weakside of the basket.
- If ball passes his position on same side, look to trap in zone #2R with 3-man.
- If inbound pass is to opposite side, cover middle area between the foul circle and center circle.
- After trap with 3-man in zone #2R, ball passes his position up the same side, drop to the ball side free throw line elbow.
- If after trap with 3-man, ball passes to opposite side of court, retreat to top of the far foul circle.

**# 5 MAN**

- On the inbound pass to either side take the deepest man behind the 3-man.
- If a trap is made by the 2-man and 3-man in trap zone #2L, move to cover any pass down the sideline on that side.
- If the inbound pass is to the opposite side, then the same coverage would be repeated by the 5-man on that side.
- On the first trap in either, trap zone #1L or zone #1R the 5-man is responsible for the deepest offensive player ball side. After the trap by the 2-man and 3-man in trap zone #2L, and a pass to the opposite side of the court beyond trap zone #2R, the 5-man covers the deep sideline and the 3-man drops to covers the basket If that pass is made near trap zone #2R, the 5-man traps with the 4-man in trap zone #2R.
Guards must first check the back court to eliminate a long pass before the press is set up. All players must sprint to their designated positions. The small forward jumps quickly into the belly-up position on the inbound passer to prevent the long outlet pass; otherwise he noses-up on the passer’s left shoulder to invite a pass into the defenders’ left corner. Defenders #2 and #4 check for opponents in zone #1 on their respective sides of the court. Defenders #3 and #5 look for the two deepest players and match up with them, playing high on the ball side of their man. The #5 man takes the deepest man and the #3 man takes the closest man.
After the pass in to the left side, #2 fires to the ball aggressively but under control with outside leverage on the ball handler, forcing him to defender #1 for the trap. Neither defender should try to take the ball from the ball handler. Both should go to the belly-up position, making it difficult for the offensive player to locate passing lanes. Defender #4 looks for any player in his area. If there is no one there he moves to the middle between the foul circle and the center circle. If there is an opponent there the #4 man covers him. If no man is there he looks for a potential flash cut from the weakside and if none exists, he may come up on any trailer or continue to protect the middle as he retreats down the floor. If the pass out of the trap in zone #1L is near zone #2L, defender #2 and #3 look to trap in zone #2L.
Trap in zone #2 around the time line, preferably just over the time line but not under all circumstances. Defender #2 trails the ball from the inside while player #3 comes up under control with outside leverage. Defender #3 should not be the one to spring the trap; it should be defender #2 when he has just the right position as #3 has forced a reverse pivot or a cross over dribble. Player #1 covers down the middle of the floor until he again has the ball in front of him. Defender #1 must not trail behind the ball. Defender #5 covers the high post area and deep sideline on the ball side. The #4 man sprints back to cover the weakside of the basket and weakside sideline if necessary.
If after the first trap in zone #1L, the ball is returned to the inbound passer, all defenders return to the beginning positions as if the ball was still out of bounds. They try to keep the ball in front of them as long as possible. The #1 man again pressures the ball handler trying to force him to one of the trap areas. Since #1 is approaching from the left it is most likely to attempt the trap, if possible in the right corner zone #1R between defenders #1 and #4. When this occurs, all assignments reverse except for #3 and #5. #3 will cover the ball sideline and trap with the guard #4 in trap zone #2R if no trap is possible in zone #1R. #5 will cover the deep ball sideline in that situation and #1 will retreat down the middle until the ball is again in front of him.
Players #4 and #3 come up to trap in zone #2R. The #1 man covers down the middle of the floor until the ball is again in front of him. Defender #5 covers the deep middle and the sideline on the ball side. The #2 man sprints back to guard the weakside of the basket. If the ball is crossed from the left zone #1L deeper than the right side zone #2, there should be no trap attempt. In that case the #5 man would cover the deep sideline and the #4 man the short middle with the #3 man taking the deep middle to the basket.
On the cross from zone #2L, if the pass is in the mid-court area, Defender #5 & #4 would trap the ball just past mid-court. Defender #3 covers the deep strong side of the basket. #1 covers the short middle and defender #2 covers the basket weakside. If the cross pass from zone #2L is deep on the sideline, no trap is attempted. In that case, defender #4 covers the sideline if the ball is still in front of him. If not, he covers the deep middle of the floor from the elbow to the basket and #5 covers the deep sideline. If #4 is still able to cover the sideline, #5 covers the deep on the strong side from the elbow to the basket. Player #1 covers the short middle of the floor foul line to the basket. The #2 man covers the middle area between the circles. The #3 man covers the weakside of the basket.
While it is impossible to cover all situations that can possibly be met when executing the 1-2-2 full court press, we have tried to cover those that would be most likely to be presented by most offensive opponents. If the pressing defense is to be a major weapon in the coach’s defensive philosophy it must be allotted practice time on a regular basis.

**FULL COURT MAN-ON-MAN PRESS**

After facing the 1-2-2 zone press on several possessions, a sudden change to the man-on-man press often surprises the opponent, creating some confusion in their method of attack. While this may only be temporarily confusing, it may cause several turnovers by the offense until they adjust to the change. Most teams will attack the man-on-man press after the inbound pass, by sending all players out of the backcourt except the ball handler who then dribbles one-on-one against his defender. The trap must come as a surprise to the dribbler and be made near the sideline. Therefore, it is necessary for the dribbler’s defender to overplay, forcing him toward the sideline. This can be accomplished by nosing-up on the opponent’s shoulder farthest from the sideline; this will influence the dribbler to move toward the sideline. It helps for the defender to overplay and aggressively attack the dribbler. This will cause him to dribble faster in an attempt to beat his defender. As a result his focus is on the defender rather than locating open passing lanes or possible trap areas.

A planned defensive rotation must be in place when the trap is made. It must be remembered that where the offensive players set up after being waved off from the backcourt, may not be known to the defense unless a scouting report provides that information. It is then possible to prepare a designed rotation to cover open players. The chosen rotation would be the coach’s decision. This press differs from the many presses that are called the “run and jump”. This press is used as a change up from the normal zone press. It calls for only one trap and then into the designated half court defense.
05 inbounds the ball to 01, X1 invites the pass to 01 then overplays him to influence him to the sideline. 05 then goes deep down court after inbounding the ball. 01 then clears the backcourt of all other players. X1 defends against 01 in a one-on-one situation constantly forcing him toward the sideline. As 03 clears out, X3 follows for several dribbles, and then suddenly breaks back to the dribbler 01 to trap with X1 near the sideline. X4 rotates to cover the open 03, X2 rotates to cover 04 and X5 zones the remaining 02 and 05. If 01 is successful in passing out of the trap, the defense immediately settles into their pre-determined half court defense.
HALF COURT TRAP

- **2-2-1 zone**
- **1-3-1 zone**

Although there are numerous varieties of half court traps, this book will limit its illustration to the **2-2-1 half court zone trap** and the **1-3-1 half court zone trap**. It is believed that these are the two most widely used and effective half court traps.

The half court trap is effective against teams that are successfully breaking the full court trap by utilizing the trail man to outlet the ball from the trap area, quickly reversing the ball and pushing it up-court for transition scores. This is possible because they have prepared well for the full court zone press in their practice sessions prior to the game and realize the quickest way to defeat the full court press is to attack the basket with transition.

The half court trap forces teams out of the normal passing patterns of their half court offense by forcing them to set up further out than they like, to make passes they do not prefer to make, and also disrupting the offensive timing. The trapping opportunities in the front court corners are also very effective especially if the opposition has small forwards or forwards that are poor passers and ball handlers.

The **2-2-1 half court zone trap** is best if the opponent has an outstanding dribbler who is very difficult to contain in a one-on-one situation. On the other hand, if the dribbler can be controlled in a one-on-one situation, the **1-3-1 half court trap** defense is preferable because it allows for a quicker trap in the initial trap area and affords better control of the high post area. The initial trap area is the corner formed by the intersection of the mid-court line and the sideline. After the initial trap, there is little difference between the **2-2-1** and **1-3-1 half court traps**.

Many times opponents are trained, when facing a half court trap, not to cross the mid-court line until finding an open passing lane. In that case the trap may need to be made before the dribbler reaches the mid-court line.
ZONE TRAP

Photo - 10-7a

2-2-1 Half Court Trap Set
ZONE TRAP

2-2-1 Trap at the Time Line
ZONE TRAP

Photo - 10-7c

2-2-1 Trap in the Corner
ZONE TRAP

1-3-1 Half Court Trap Set

Photo - 10-8a
ZONE TRAP

1-3-1 Trap at the Time Line

Photo - 10-8b
ZONE TRAP

1-3-1 Trap in the Corner

Photo - 10-8c
OTHER TRAP SITUATIONS

DRIBBLER TURNS BACK TO DEFENDER OR BASKET
Whenever the dribbler or ball handler turns his back to his defender, he should be double teamed from his blind side. The reasons for this are: (1) When he turns his back he has created a blind side and if the trap is sprung before he can turn to face the defender again, the ball handler is put in the position of disadvantage because he cannot see his open players and often can be forced into making a bad pass, commit a travel violation, or a charging foul. (2) It discourages the effective one-on-one player from using the backing in method for getting close to the basket for the shot he wants. For these reasons the double team trap should be attempted whenever the ball handler turns his back to his defender or his offensive basket. This technique should be taught and drilled so it becomes an automatic reaction regardless of the defense being used at the time.

LOW POST PLAYER
When playing against a low post player that possesses exceptional offensive skills, the use of the double team can effectively reduce his effectiveness. It is required that the defense be given a pattern of rotation to cover the vacated open players once the trapped player passes successfully out of the trap. If the low post player is not very adept passing out of the trap, the result could well be a turnover.

Depending who is best suited to be effective doubling the post player along with his original defender, the coach may select the player from any of the remaining positions. This would be accomplished by a call from the coach or may be pre-determined prior to the start of the game. The plan for use of the double teaming of the post and other trapping situations should be thoroughly discussed during the team pre-game meeting. Many coaches like to frequently change the defender who will double with the post defender to keep the opposition from developing a pattern of response. This may accomplished using a call that designates the player who will double along with the assigned defender. While the coach can develop whatever call best fits his system, an example of a workable calls is offered as follows. In all demonstrated illustrations the pass into the post will be made by the strongside wing.

TRAPPING CALLS
Call ‘A’: This mean the pass into the low post comes from the wing position and the passer is designated to double with X5. Since no rotation is required on this coverage, no diagram is needed. The passer’s defender will be responsible for returning to the passer regardless of where the pass out of the double team may be made.
If the passer O3 cuts through the defense toward the basket, his defender X3 escorts him through to the pre-determined mid-point of the lane (rule of escort) before releasing him to double the low post. The lowest weakside defender becomes responsible for the cutter as well as his assigned man, zoning the area. On the pass out of the double, X1, X2, and X3 all return to their own men.
This would designate the player closest to the top, \textit{X1} to double the post regardless who makes the pass into the low post player. If the pass out of the double is to the top man, the highest weakside player, \textit{X2} rotates to the top to cover the vacated man. The lowest weakside defender, \textit{X4} zones the remaining weakside players. The low man covers the low post area and the double man covers the remaining man.
This would designate the lowest weakside player $X4$ to double the low post. The highest weakside player drops down into the lane, fronting the weakside low post. The top defender $X1$ drops below the foul line to zone the highest weakside player and the man on top. If the pass out of the double goes to $O2$, $X1$ covers $O2$, and the double man covers the remaining open man at the top.
This would designate the highest weakside defender $X_2$ to double the low post. If the pass out of the double goes to $O_1$ at the top, the lowest defender stays home, the top defender $X_1$ returns to the top on the pass out of the trap and the double man goes to the remaining open man.

Call “D” Double from the Highest Weakside
SPECIAL OFFENSIVE PLAYER

Special highly talented offensive players anywhere on the court may have their effectiveness reduced by timely double team trapping. Many teams like to isolate such players to create a one-on-one situation, thinking the defense cannot contain that player in an isolated situation. By double team trapping the specially gifted offensive player, the defense can usually take the ball out of his hands, thus diminishing his ability to consistently beat the defender. In this case, the defender closest to the player to be doubled would be the logical one to double team in this situation.

TRAPPING RULES TO REMEMBER

- Move quickly but under control to the player to be trapped.
- Once the trap is made and the offensive player picks up the ball, convert quickly to the belly-up stance.
- Do not try to slap the ball away from the trapped player, make the pass out of the trap difficult and an interception or violation is possible.
- When trapping, leave the offensive man farthest from the ball free.
- Move on the pass, not the catch.
- The three men not involved in the trap must cover middle, ball sideline, and basket.
- Practice proper off ball rotation.
- If the second pass in the 2-2-1 press is forced backward, zone up as if the ball is still out of bounds.
- If the pass out of the trap is forward, drop quickly into the designated half court defense unless the plan calls for a second trap area.
- Remain in the trap until a pass out is made, then know proper rotation if second trap is planned.
- Players off the ball anticipate where the pass out will be made and go for an interception.
- Don’t allow the trapped player to split or dribble around the trap by aligning the trapping defenders perpendicular to each other as previously described.
- Look to double team trap from the blind side anytime the dribbler turns his back to his defender.
- Practice trapping situations with repeated drills throughout the season.
CHAPTER XI

DRILLS FOR TEAM DEFENSES
THREE ON THREE

STAY

The three on three defensive drill will allow the offense to use a free lance offense incorporating the dribble hand off, the pass and go, the pass and screen away, and the dribble out. This should provide enough basic offense to test the defense in man-on-man defensive principles. In this drill no switching is allowed. On all crossing of players or screening, the drop and slide through technique as discussed and illustrated in chapter VI will be used to permit each defender to stay with his assigned man during a one minute period. The points of emphasis for this drill are:

1. That all defenders maintain a proper gorilla stance throughout the drill.
2. That all defenders exhibit proper push and slide footwork while nosing-up on the chest of the opponent, and the hips are not moving up and down.
3. At no time do the feet touch each other nor are both feet off the floor at the same time.
4. From time to time the coach may wish to have the defenders nose-up on the ball or a shoulder to influence the direction of the ball handler.

SWITCH

The three on three drill is again used to develop the switching of men that will be used in the switching man-on-man defense. While switching was not allowed in the straight man-on-man defense on crossing players or on screens; switching on all these situations will be required in this drill. When switching in this drill, the technique discussed earlier under Switching Skills and the rules established (see Chapter VIII) will be followed. In addition the listed points of emphasis in the previous three on three drill will also apply here.

FOUR ON FOUR SHELL DEFENSE

This drill is used to develop off the ball team defense. Four offensive players set up on the perimeter. The ball is then passed from side to side. All players one pass (man) away from the ball play tight to their man with one hand extended into the passing lane. All players more than one man away from the ball drop off into a help position ready to close the gate on any dribble penetration or pass to an open man.
Defenders X1 and X4 are in overplay position with an arm extended into the passing lane. The X2 defender is playing the ball. The defender away from the ball moves into the free throw lane to zone the weakside.
Defender X4 plays up on O4. Defender X2 is on O2 in overplay position with the left arm extended into the passing lane. Defenders X1 and X3 slide into the lane in help position, ready to close the gate on dribble penetration or to pick up any open player.
Defender X3 plays up on O3. Defender X1 is on O1 in overplay position with the left arm extended into the passing lane. Defenders X2 and X4 move into the lane to zone the weakside.
FLASH DRILL

HALF COURT ZONE DEFENSE

One of the best drills for teaching defensive player coverage movement for all types of zones is what we call the “flash drill”. All zones, whether a 1-2-2, 2-3, 1-3-1, 2-1-2, or any other, change into other alignments after the first or second movement of the ball.
Therefore, it is a matter of the coach's choice for the coverage assignment for each floor area of the court. As an example, the 1-2-2 zone while basically remaining in a 1-2-2 alignment with the ball on the wing becomes more like a 1-3-1 when the ball is in the corner. As the ball moves around the court more defensive alignments will take place. It has been our experience that the flash drill is more effective in teaching quick reaction to the changing floor areas if the floor is numbered and the calls use the floor numbers to make the calls rather than calling the positions. This eliminates the need to call or point the direction. This will be the coach's decision.

For the purpose of identifying the different floor areas, the following system is used:

- The point floor area which is normally designated #1 becomes A-1 and extends across the backcourt from wing to wing area.
- The right wing becomes A-2 and the left wing is A-3.
- The right low post area is A-4 and the left low post area is A-5.
- The right corner is A-6 and the left corner is A-7.
- The high post area extending from elbow to elbow and up to the top of the foul circle is A-0.

It is of the utmost importance that players learn the floor areas and can instantly identify them in order to be able to move rapidly to their new area of coverage as the coach's calls direct. In the “flash drill” the coach stands in the backcourt where all defensive players can see and hear him. The coach then calls out various areas of the floor where the ball may move, using only the number of the floor area, omitting the A-before each. This will allow for quicker responses to the calls. Initially, as the coach calls the floor area, he also points the direction as an aid to the defenders. This can later be discontinued as the players become more familiar with the floor numbering system. The players must quickly sprint to their designated area of responsibility depending on the location of the ball. They also must be in the proper defensive stance, either the gorilla stance or the belly-up, the belly-up on the ball and the gorilla on off the ball players.

This drill can also be used to train the defensive players in full court and other pressure zone traps. (see flash drill coverage for a 1-2-2 half court zone)
TRAPPING FLASH DRILL

1-2-2 FULL COURT PRESS

The flash drill for the full court 1-2-2 zone press would follow the same format as the half court flash drill. Before beginning the drill an explanation of the various areas that will be called and their location are learned. Examples of the calls would be “1L”, meaning trap zone #1 left, “side L” being short sideline left, “2L” is trap zone #2L left, “deep L” is deep sideline left. The same directions would be given for the right side, replacing the word left with the word right. The coach again would locate where all could see and hear him. He would then call the different areas of the full court where the ball is passed. The defenders would then move to the proper defensive locations according to the previously taught coverage for each, dependent on the ball location. In the beginning the calls will be rather slow until the players become accustomed to recognition of the areas called. The coach could also point the direction in the beginning to further aid the recognition. The speed should gradually increase until players can sprint to each location. The flash drill has been the best drill this author has found for developing quick responses to the movement of the ball when in any zone defense.

The 2-2-1 half court flash drill would include calls of 1 (point), 2 (wing), 6 (corner), 4 (low post), and 0 (high post). These floor areas are all to the right side. Calls to the left side would be 3 (wing), 5 (low post), 7 (corner), and 0 (high post). At the coach’s discretion, the floor number system may be replaced by making the older call of point, wing, corner, low post, and high post while pointing the direction on each call.

1-3-1 HALF COURT TRAP

Calls for the 1-3-1 zone half court trap would be the same as those for the 2-2-1 flash drill.
CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY
It has been stated many times that defense wins championships. This has been proven in almost every sport. It is rare that a team with poor defense can compete for the ultimate prize athletes, coaches, team owners, and fans most desire; *A Championship*. The question then is “what is defense”? Defense is not merely the lack of scoring by the opponent, although it is a prime objective. Many teams accomplish this without impressive won-lost records through the use of an offensive strategy calling for extreme ball control in a half court offensive system. Defense is denying the opponent an opportunity to realize any kind of advantage after gaining possession of the ball. Defense should not allow the offense to move about the basketball court as they please.

The defensive system should include a variety of defensive combinations that can be changed from time to time to prevent opponents from developing a pattern of offensive reactions to a single defense that enables opponents to attack that defense in an effective manner. Today, scouting practices include team video exchanges as well as on sight scouting. A team that uses one basic defense will find that opponent’s offensive preparation has developed a game plan to effectively meet that single defense.

Defense should not only prevent the opponent from scoring, but also should create scoring opportunities for the defense by forcing the opponents into turnovers through errors, violations, and poor shot selection.

The terminology to be used for the effective teaching of defensive basketball must be identified and defined very early. It should be constantly reinforced throughout the season, especially before and during the practice of drills and the defensive concepts to be taught. If the players do not understand the specific terms used, little learning can take place. Although most terms used will be common to the game of basketball, there may be terms that are unique to the teaching method of different coaches. An example of this is the term “gorilla stance” which is unique in the terminology of the author of this book. Therefore, it must be defined for all who read the book.
The importance of the development of a defensive philosophy and defensive objectives is important to the overall decision of what kind of defensive system is to be installed. In the selection of a defensive system, the physical and mental make up of the available players must be given strong consideration along with the past defensive experience of the coaching staff. In addition the age and competitive level of the players should be considered. Once a decision is made on the defensive system to be installed, the coach must lay out a plan for the teaching of the fundamental skills necessary to effectively execute the defense. The program of skill development should advance on a progression from the simple to the complex in an orderly fashion. The individual skills would be taught first, progressing to the multi-person skills next, and finally the team skills. This does not mean that the progression must wait until the initial drills are executed to perfection, but the time spent on each will depend on the level of improvement shown before the introduction of the next progression. Some drills will need to be conducted throughout the season.

The establishment of defensive rules for specific defensive situations will reduce the need for making decisions on many common situations. Three basic rules of defense advocated are: Rule of Position, Rule of Escort, and Rule of Close the Gate. Once these rules are drilled and learned, much of the decision making is eliminated.

Although the coach may decide to install a particular defense as his primary defense, he should expose the team and spend time teaching any number of other defenses to his team. The reason for this is two fold. First, it is expected that many defenses will be met by opponents during the course of the season. The best way to prepare for those defenses is to practice against them in preparation to meet that opponent. Secondly, there may be games during the season when the primary defense is not effective. One of the practiced defenses has proven effective against that team based on past scouting reports and the coach wishes to try that defense. The players have practiced it, so they will have the confidence necessary to use it.
The book deals with other special defensive considerations such as transition defense and its importance to success. Pressure defenses are covered, including full court, three quarter court, half court and special trapping situations.

DEFENSIVE KNOWLEDGE TO REMEMBER

• Desire and determination are 90% of defense
• Play defense with intensity. Make something happen.
• Locate the ball without loss of time. Pick up your man as quickly as possible all over the court whenever using pressure defenses.
• Stay in a good defensive stance, especially off the ball when temptation is greatest to stand straight and rest.
• Always pressure the ball. Never let your man feel comfortable with the ball.
• See the ball and your man. If you can’t see both, see the ball and retreat quickly toward the basket until both are again visible.
• Force your opponent to his second choice. Do not allow his first choice.
• Force repeated change of direction by the dribbler. Good overplay frequently forces change of direction.
• Don’t allow baseline penetration beyond the baseline 8ft mark.
• When overplaying your opponent you must still contain him. Don’t allow yourself to trail behind the man.
• If beaten by the dribbler, execute the “open and run” technique. Remember; “When Beat Retreat” “You Trail—You Fail”.
• Play good position defense. Don’t reach and try to steal the ball from the handler.
• Challenge every shot but don’t foul, especially the jump shooter
• Don’t try to block every shot. Leave your feet only when you are sure the shot is in progress
• On a shot blocking attempt, don’t try to block while the ball is in the shooter’s hand. Allow the ball to be released from the shooter’s hand. Less likely to have a foul call.
• Belly-up on the ball handler once he kills his dribble.
• Close the gate on all penetration.
• When off the ball be in a help position and let your teammate know you are there.
• Call “help” when beat on drives to the basket to alert your team defense to close the gate.
• Look to trap any dribbler who turns his back to his defender.
• Own the loose ball contest. Aggressively purse loose balls.
• Don’t foul needlessly. It looses too many games.
• Off the ball players should help the ball defender with calls like “help right”, alone, screen behind, switch, etc.
• Dominate the free throw lane.
• Deny an easy pass to the post player.
• Ball side cutters. This means position between the ball and your opponent. Force him to cut behind you.
• Close the gate on all basket drives
• Block-out rebounders. Put a But in their Gut
• The low man on defense must talk to inform other defenders of special situations.
• Below the foul line, defense your man on the high side.
• Once your team loses possession, run to your defensive position.
• Don’t allow your opponent to cut across the lane between you and the ball. Force him to cut behind you.
• Don’t allow screeners to get to your body. Hold them off with your forearm.
• Talk to your teammates. Let them know what is happening.
• Show quickly on screens, especially screen and roll situations.
• Don’t give up easy scores. Make them earn the points at the free throw line if necessary.
• Take pride in your team defense as well as your individual defense.
• DEFENSE IS DESIRE AND DETERMINATION
• ANYONE CAN PLAY GOOD DEFENSE!!!