

PACK LINE DEFENSE:

- 1. Packline Defense Ultimate Guide...1**
- 2. Encyclopedia of Pack Line Defense by Chris Filios 97**
- 3. Virginia Cavalier's Pack Line Defense..... 175**
- 4. Pack-Line Defense by Kramer Soderberg 187**
- 5. Principles of Pack Line Defense by Jim Boone..... 204**
- 6. Pack Line Defense Coaching Guide 211**
- 7. Pack Line Defense Hoop Clinics 219**
- 8. Pack Line Defense Xavier Basketball 258**
- 9. Pack Line Playbook by Randy Sherman..... 280**
- 10. Drills to Build Pack Line Defense by Chris Mack 292**
- 11. Nike Coaches Clinic by Sean Miller..... 297**
- 12. Basketball Defense - the Pack Line Defense (Sagging M2Man) 306**
- 13. Tony Bennett and the pack line defense..... 309**
- 14. Pack Line Defense by Jim Boone..... 320**
- 15. Pack Line Defense in Basketball Basic Concepts Explained
Hoop Student338**
- 16. Pack Line defense Drills.....352**

PACKLINE DEFENSE

ULTIMATE GUIDE

PART 1

Packline Overview and Drills
Chris Mack, Xavier Basketball

PART 2

Packline Defense: Do What We Do
Mike Neighbors, Washington Basketball

PART 3

Packline Pressure Defense
Jim Boone, Delta State University



CHRIS MACK
HEAD COACH
6TH YEAR
XAVIER '92



TRAVIS STEELE
ASSISTANT COACH
6TH YEAR
BUTLER '04



MIKE PEGUES
ASSISTANT COACH
3RD YEAR
DELAWARE '00



RICK CARTER
ASSISTANT COACH
2ND YEAR
MICHIGAN STATE '02



MARIO MERCURIO
DIR. OF ADMINISTRATION
11TH YEAR
XAVIER '03



JEREMY GROWE
DIR. OF OPERATIONS
6TH YEAR
INDIANA '09

PACKLINE DEFENSE

ULTIMATE GUIDE

PART 1

Packline Overview and Drills
Chris Mack, Xavier Basketball



Chris Mack
Head Coach, Xavier University

“Drills to Build the Pack Line Defense”

Introduction

Regardless of what you run on offense or defense, you must have a defined system you believe in

- Your team must have an identity
- Everyone in your league should know what you’re about
- When you have a system, it gives your players answers and accountability to what they’re doing
 - o For example, we don’t give up baseline – if you give up baseline you understand you’re coming out of the game
- It simplifies scouting
 - o Identify the common offensive actions you face and teach a standard way to defend
 - o Start at the beginning of the season practicing these actions in your shell drill
 - o This allows you to focus on your opponent’s offensive concepts (rather than detailed set plays) when going over the scouting report
- Your system should create “Regenerative Learning” (Tony Dungy), where upperclassmen can teach underclassmen

Why play the Pack Line?:

- On offense, kids are way better ball handlers and way worse without the ball in their hands compared to 20 years ago

There is nothing “soft” about Xavier’s Pack Line:

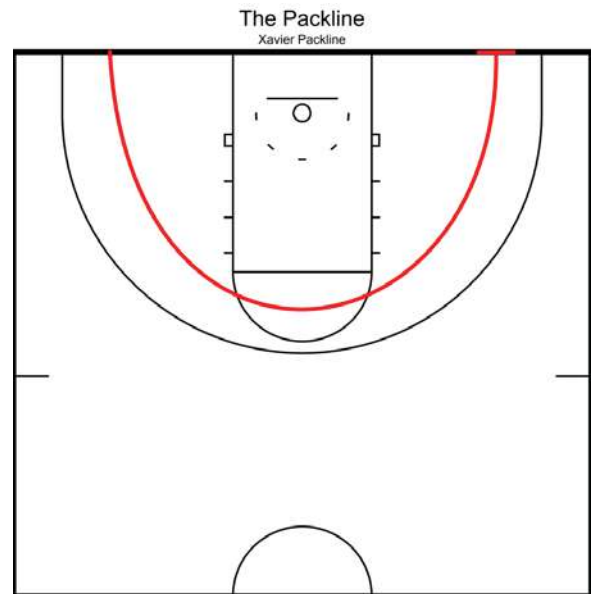
- Aggressive
- Ball pressure
- Smart positioning off the ball

What is the Pack Line?

- 16-17’ from the basket, mirrors the 3 pt line
- Tape it down every day before practice

Rules

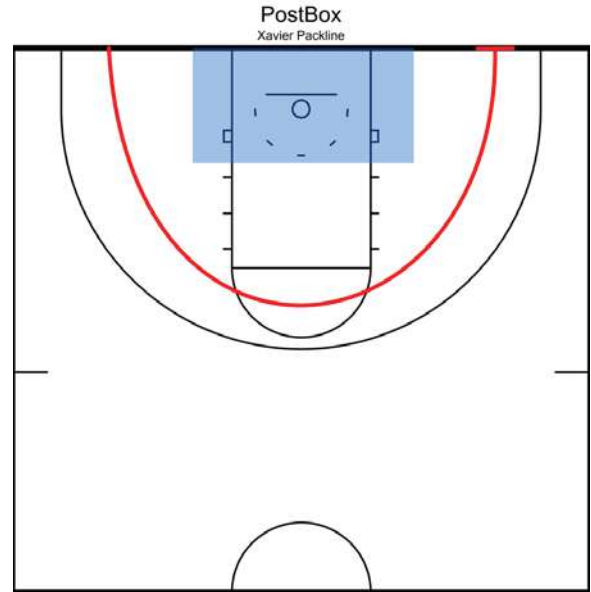
- GOLDEN RULE: You must have two feet inside the PL when your man does not have the ball
 - o Only two exceptions:
 - Your man becomes a cutter



- Your man becomes a ball screener
- On-ball defender must play with extreme ball pressure
- On-ball defender CANNOT get beat baseline under any circumstances, nor can he get beat in a straight line (from a poor close out)
 - It's all about what you emphasize: A Xavier basketball player WILL NEVER get beat baseline – this is nonnegotiable!

Post Defense

- Tape the “Post Box” down every day before practice also
 - Rectangle 1.5’ off the lane running across the 2nd hash mark
- General Rule: Post defender should be positioned “¾ on the high side”
- The post defender uses a clenched fist arm bar to push his man out of the “Post Box”
- If your man catches the ball in the post:
 - “Pop Back” (jump to play from behind) and “Wall Up” (show the referee your hands)



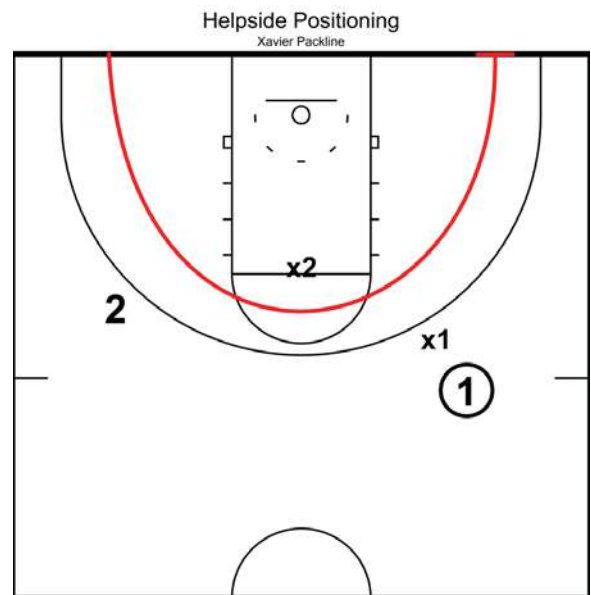
Fundamentals & Drills

Positioning on the ball

- Extreme ball pressure – make the dribbler as uncomfortable as possible
- Take away vision
- Unacceptable to ever get beat baseline or in a straight line

Positioning off the ball

- Player must have two feet inside the PL
- “Open” stance in helpside positioning
- Helpside defender wants to form a “Flat Triangle” between his man and the ball
 - This is called “being in your gap”
- Because the off-ball defender’s gap is always changing, he must be able to see both man and ball at all times – he must “be in two places at once”
- “Jump & Swipe” when moving from on-ball to off-ball position... Why?
 - Puts you in better help position



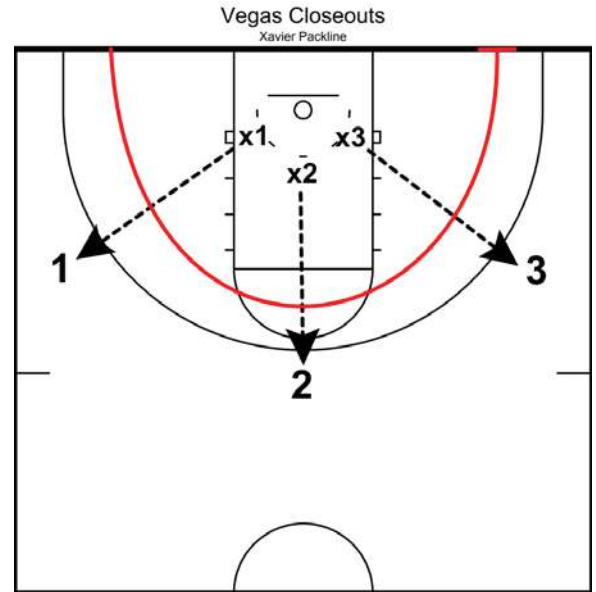
- May get a piece of the ball (Ronald Nored from Butler made a career off doing this)

Close Out

- One of the most important fundamentals to this defense! You must work on this every single day (including pre-game warm-ups)
- Xavier Way: "Close out with two high hands"
 - Why "two high hands" instead of one?
 - Discourages rhythm shots and quick passes over the top
 - Creates a mentality to "take away vision"

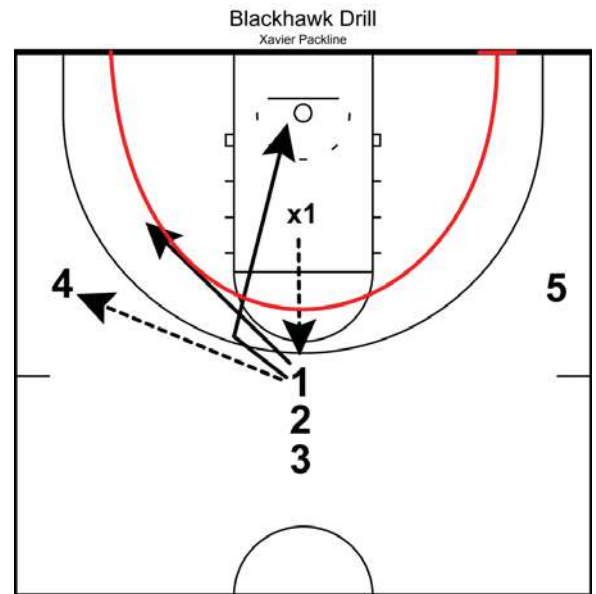
Drill: "VEGAS CLOSE OUTS"

- We do this drill every single day (practice, shoot around, pre-game warm-ups, etc.)
- Each defender tosses the ball to offensive player
- Xavier Way to close out:
 - 2 High hands
 - Elbows bent
 - Low stance
 - Short/choppy steps
 - Stay square
 - Yell "SHOT" early
- The offense will catch, triple-threat, jab step and rip the ball through a couple of times



Drill: "BLACKHAWK"

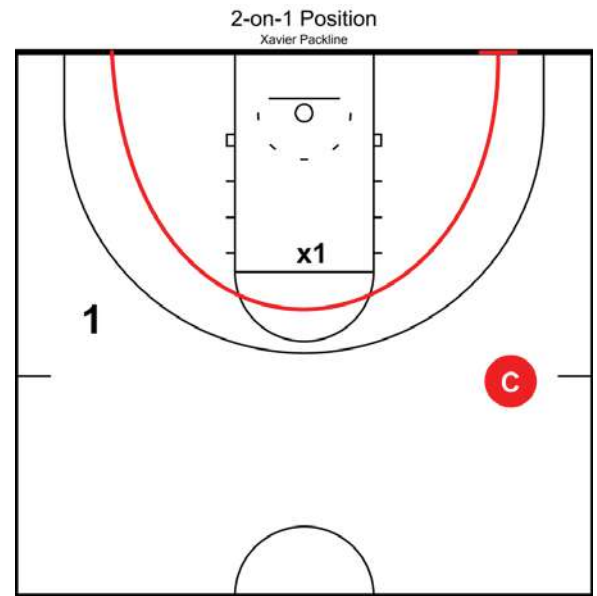
- Great drill that incorporates closing out, ball pressure, jumping to help position, fronting cutters, and closing out from help position
- ***Closing out from a help position is one of the toughest fundamental to master defensively***
 - x1 throws ball to first offensive player (1) inline and close out
 - 1 can pass to either wing, x1 must "jump and swipe" to get to appropriate help position, 1 basket cuts, x1 must use arm bar and "bump cutter" to the logo (below the FT line)



- Wing will pass to next offensive player in line (2), x1 must close out again – this time from a help position
- After two or three passes from wing to top to wing back to top, the Coach will yell “LIVE”
 - Two players play 1-on-1 off the close out
 - Offense has 2-3 dribble max to score
 - x1 must get a stop to complete the drill – if offense scores, x1 restarts drill
- Coaching Points:
 - Make sure x1 keeps proper fundamentals during the dummy period of the drill

Drill: “2-on-1 Position”

- Coach starts with the ball, x1 is matched up with 1
- Coach can pass to 1, dribble him out, cut him through, etc. forcing x1 to play on and off the ball
- Drill lasts for a prescribed amount of time, no one looks to score – just focus on constant offensive movement
- Coaching Points:
 - Make sure x1 plays with proper fundamentals throughout the drill:
 - Close outs from ball to help & help to ball
 - Jump & Swipe
 - Bump Cutter
 - Protect against baseline & straight line drives
- Intense ball pressure



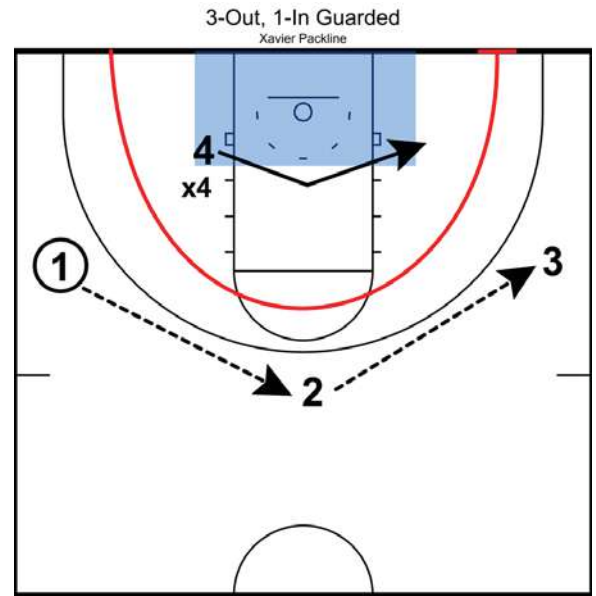
Post Positioning

- Golden Rule: NEVER GIVE UP POST FEEDS FROM THE TOP
 - Post defender should always be “on the line, up the line” when ball is up top
- A post defender’s work should be done before the ball is ever passed
 - Use an armbar to push the post player out of the “post box” before the catch
 - Play $\frac{3}{4}$ on the high side (except if player flashes to the high post)
- On a post catch:
 - “Pop Back”
 - Move from $\frac{3}{4}$ high-side position to behind, keep a boxer’s stance
 - “Wall Up”
 - As post makes move, show the ref your hands and hold position with your lower body and try to walk through the offensive player

- “Walk through the shooter!”
- “Walling up” also provides great box out positioning and prevents easy offensive rebounds
- “Show the ref your hands and foul the hell out of him with your hips”
- Undisciplined post defenders try to block their own man’s shots
 - The on-ball post defender should never leave his feet when walling up, even when the shot goes up
 - For every one block a player may get, he’ll pick up three fouls
 - Great shot blockers get their swats from a help position

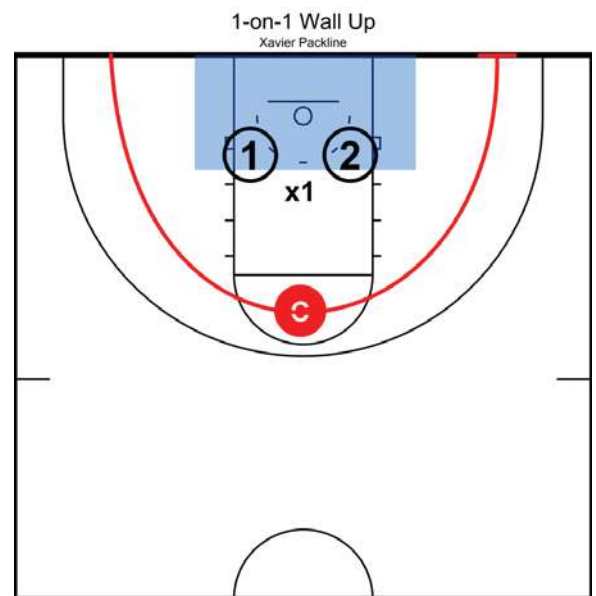
Drill: “3-out, 1-in Guarded”

- Drill begins with ball on the wing
- Offensive post tries to get position inside the box, post defender plays $\frac{3}{4}$ on the high side and uses arm bar to force a catch outside the box
- On a pass from wing to top, post defender plays “on the line, up the line” as offensive post tries to leg whip and seal, post defender can’t play too high and give up lob
- On a pass from the top to opposite wing, the post defender hits offensive post with an arm bar and “peels” to resume $\frac{3}{4}$ high side positioning outside the post box



Drill: “1-on-1 WALL UP”

- Drill works on “walling up” against shot attempts from offensive rebounds
- Coach will lob ball up off of backboard to offensive player 1
- 1 will offensive rebound the ball, x1 will “wall up” and try to push 1 out of the post box with his hips
 - “Show the ref your hands”
 - Do not leave your feet!
- 1 does not try to shoot, rather just battle for shooting position inside the post box
- After a few pivots, 1 will pass the ball back to Coach who will then repeat the drill on the opposite side with player 2
- Run this drill for a prescribed number of reps
- Optional conclusion to drill: x1 has to



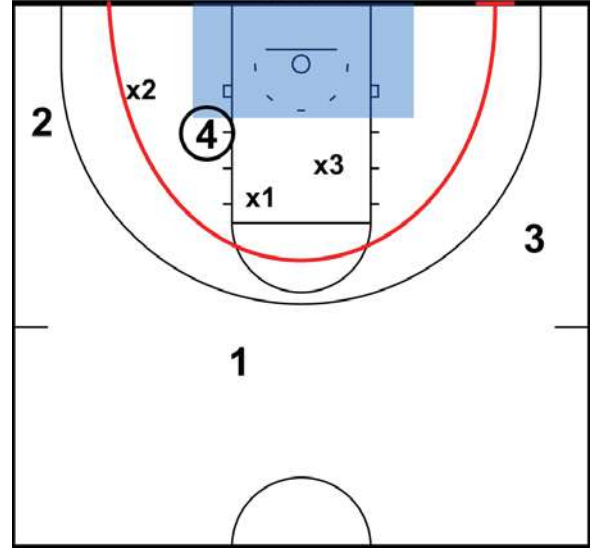
finish drill by taking a charge from either 1 or 2 lowering their shoulder

- Coaching Point:
 - o So many offensive players will throw up bad lay-up attempts either because their feet aren't set, or because their positioning is poor in relation to the basket

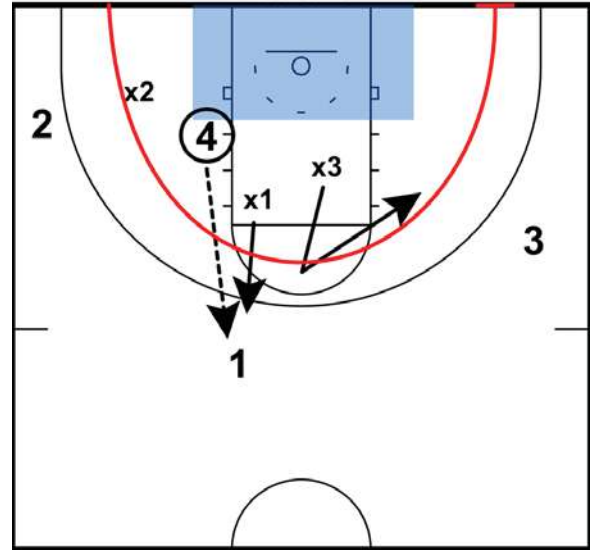
Defending the Post from the Perimeter

- "Crowding the Post"
 - o Requires great COMMUNICATION!
 - o All defenders have an open stance
 - o Must be in "two places at once"
- "See both" post player and man
 - o Be able to close out correctly on pass out
- x2 has "butt to baseline"
- x3 will help on x2's man:
 - o Most likely pass out of post is to top
 - o x3 will "jump and swipe" on x2's man to hold him up until x2 closes out

Crowding the Post
Xavier Packline

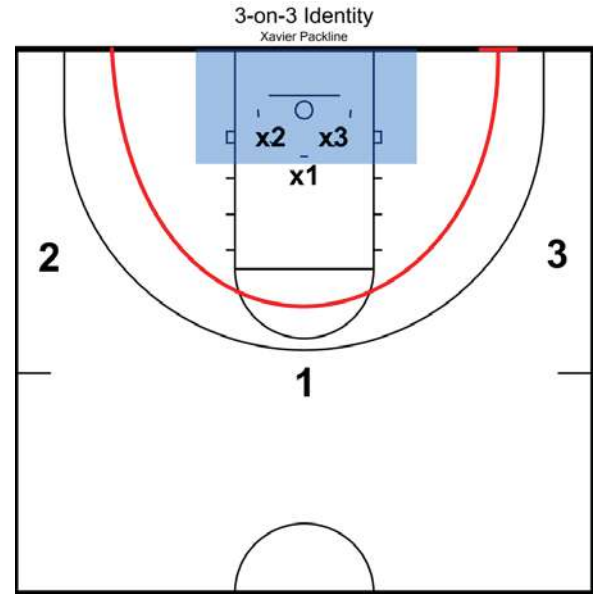


Crowding the Post 2
Xavier Packline



Drill: “3-on-3 Identity”

- Great drill Xavier runs through almost daily
- Coach is under basket and passes ball to one of the three offensive players
- Offense has :20 to score
 - o Offense can do whatever they want to score but ball screen
 - o 3 dribble max per touch
- Early season practice: 4-5 possessions for each team
- In-season practice: 2-3 possessions for each team
- Scoring:
 - o 3 pt shot = +3
 - o 2 pt shot = +2
 - o TO = -1 for offense
 - o Foul = -1 for defense (still same possession)
 - o Off. Rebound = +2
 - o If ball ever goes inside of post box (not including offensive rebound) = +2 (still same possession)



Drill: “3-OUT, 1-IN IDENTITY”

- Same rules as above, just add post player and post defender

Transition Defense

- 1/3 of all possessions in a game are transition
- It is virtually impossible to put any pressure on the ball in these situations
- Xavier Way: 1 & 2 never offensive rebound, always sprint back – no exceptions
 - o Coaches get themselves into trouble when they start making exceptions for certain match-ups

PACKLINE DEFENSE

ULTIMATE GUIDE

PART 2

Packine Defense: Do What We Do
Mike Neighbors, Washington Basketball



What We Do

We Value Team Chemistry

- Respect each other**
- Input from players/coaches**

We Play with Mental and Physical Toughness

- No excuses**
- Preparation/Scouting**

We Play Tenacious Team Defense

- FG% defense**
- Rebounding margin**

We Play FAST and SHARE the Ball

- Team first**
- Fast**
- Good decisions and shot selection**

We Play Anybody, Anywhere, Anytime

- Tough travel**
- Tough turnaround**
- Tough environments**

PACK LINE DEFENSE

Our base defense in the half court is popularly referred to as the **PACK LINE DEFENSE**. It gained recognition when Dick Bennett installed and used it with his teams at the University of Wisconsin. It has been copied, adapted, and modified through the years by coaches at all levels. While it is a man to man defense, it is **NOT** an individual defense. It is a true team defense that relies on five people working together to accomplish the ultimate goal of a defensive stop.

The Husky **PACK LINE** is a proven winner for us. It meets all the standards we have for anything that we do within our program philosophy wise.

1. Can it put you position to **BEAT** the **BEST** teams on your schedule?
2. Can it win on the Road?
3. Do you improve as the season progresses?
4. Can you advance in post-season tournaments?

The key measurable stats that determine success in the Pack Line Defense are easy to find from any post game stat sheet and over the course of a season are statistics that are actually directly correlated to wins/losses and success in NCAA Tournament.

- A) **Field Goal Percentage Defense:** This is the percentage of made FG's your opponents are able to achieve against your scheme. This stat is more reflective than points allowed per game. This stat directly supports your defenses ability to contest shots and force teams to take shots they don't want to take.
- B) **Rebounding Margin:** Once your defense forces a contested missed shot it is imperative that you complete the **STOP** with a defensive rebound. Teams with a low field goal percentage defense and high rebounding margin consistently make the Sweet 16 and Elite 8.
- C) **Fouls per game:** When executed properly this defense limits fouls per game therefore limiting **BONUS** situation opportunities for opponents. This defense is designed to reduce the number of lay-ups and free throws your opponent gets.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

LANGUAGE

Our ability to communicate as a team comes down to the LANGUAGE that we use to teach/talk the defense in practice and game situations. Our language is specific and it is consistent. With such importance placed on the terminology that we use it is a must to clearly define each term into their simplest form and then consistently use them with each other.

The first thing we introduce are two areas of the court.

PACK LINE: An area one step inside of the painted three point arc. We will tape this area down in early practices to help us learn where this area is located

Rule of Pack Line: if your player does not have the ball you have BOTH feed inside

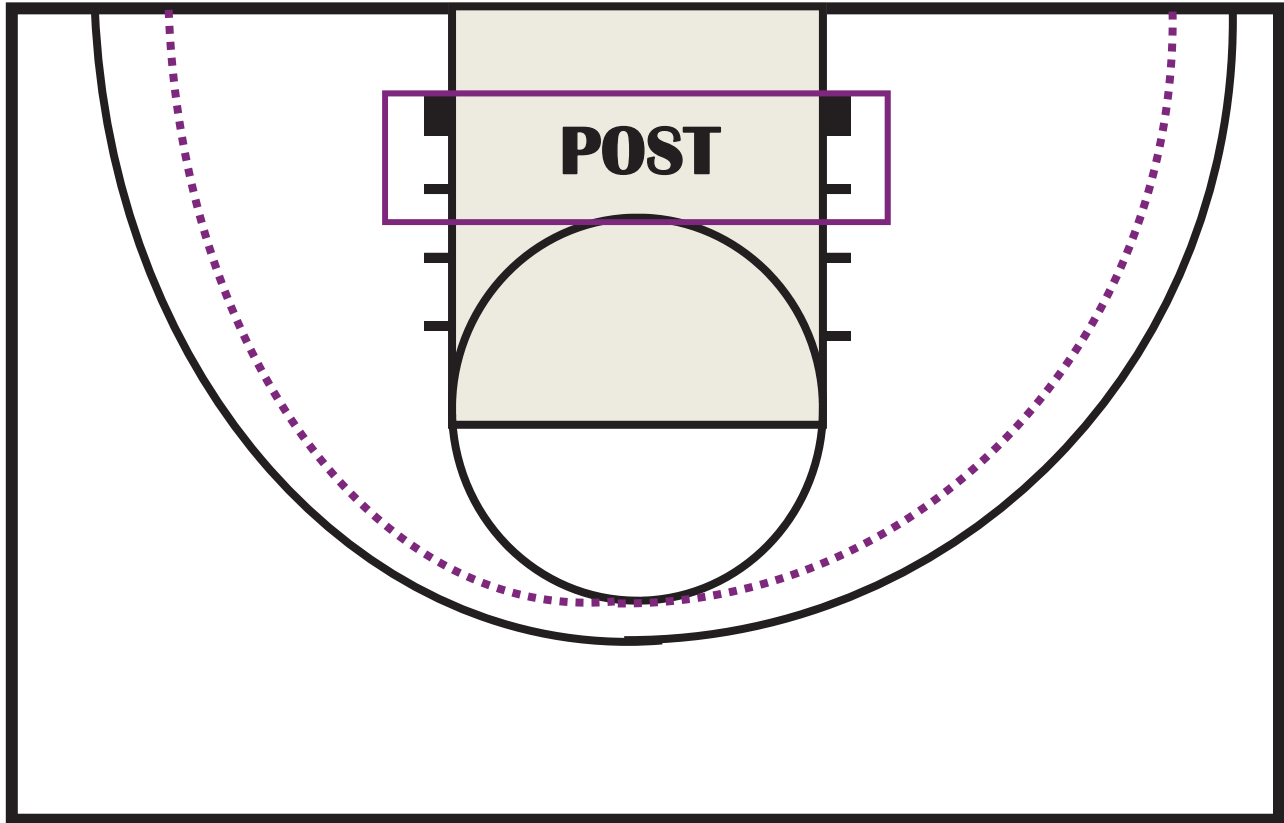
POST: An area step out of the three second lane and one step up from the second FT spot.

This area extends across the lane to the opposite side of the court and runs parallel with the backboard.

Rule of the Post: NO two feet inside this area catches, push outside the post then chin on shoulder outside the post area.

(SEE DIAGRAM ON NEXT PAGE FOR VISUAL EXPLANTION)

PACK LINE DEFENSE



Two areas that are defined from Day 1:

Pack Line: An area one step inside of the painted three point arc. We will tape this area down in early practices to help us learn where this area is located

Rule of Pack Line: if your player does not have the ball you have BOTH feed inside

Post: An area step out of the three second lane and one step up from the second FT spot. This area extends across the lane to the opposite side of the court and runs parallel with the backboard.

Rule of the Post: NO two feet inside this area catches, push outside the post then chin on shoulder outside the post area.

These two areas are the basis of the PACK LINE defense. The marriage between our perimeter defense and our post defense are keyed by these two areas. As time progresses, these areas will not require being marked but until they are clearly defined the time and money spent to tape these areas will some of the best you spend.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

DEFINE YOUR POSITION IN THE PACK LINE

Once again simplicity is the key here. In basketball, your player either has the ball or they don't. In the pack line, that basketball certainty defines your responsibility and your position. We will introduce the various positions and responsibilities as they would occur during the flow of a game and progress through an entire possession.

When your player has the ball on the perimeter (any area outside of our defined **POST**)

- 1) You were there on the catch
- 2) You were there with high hands to take away quick shot or quick pass
- 3) You were close enough to pressure without getting beat off the bounce
 - A. We don't get beat to the **OUTSIDE**
 - B. We don't get beat in a **STRAIGHT LINE**

OUTSIDE: This is our term to define toward the baseline when the ball is on the wing and also define the area toward the sideline when the ball is in the middle of the floor.

STRAIGHT LINE: Term describing an opponent drive that is in a straight line from the spot they received the pass to the rim. There is no effective defense to help in drive situations like this.

This situation is referred to as **GUARD YOUR YARD**. This gives our players the confidence to apply ball pressure and the individual accountability that we are only asking them to be really effective in containing the dribble three feet in either direction. With the other 4 players properly positioned, the ability to **GUARD YOUR YARD** is a non-negotiable skill in our attack.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

When your player does NOT have the ball on the perimeter :

- 1) You are about half way between the ball and your player
- 2) You are on the line, a step off the line that would connect the ball to your man
- 3) You are actively able to see both ball and man

This position is simply defined as the **GAP**.

This imaginary line connecting the ball to our player applies to ALL areas of the court outside of the post. It is constantly changing with offensive player movement which dictates our defensive movements. BUT, we are always on that line and off that line a step. It is this positioning in the **GAP** that defines a standard of the PACK LINE... "POSITIONING IS YOUR HELP"

When your player does NOT have the ball in the post:

- 1) You have constantly fighting for space to keep offense out of **POST**
- 2) You have **CHIN ON SHOULDER** as you fight to keep them from having two feet in the **POST**.

CHIN ON SHOULDER: A visual term that describes our defensive body position as we are fighting to keep an opponent from catching the ball in the POST area defined earlier. By placing our chin, on our opponents TOP SIDE shoulder, we have placed ourselves in good position to win the battle for that valuable space. We are maintaining contact with opponent around the basket and also discouraging a quick entry pass. This position combined with our perimeter players NOT getting beat to the outside eliminates the most common passing lanes and keeps our opponents from catching the ball deep in the post.

This simple terminology defines EVERY scenario that occurs in the half court when players are in a static position. Obviously your opponents are not going to simply stand still like in a shell defense, but these basic principles are a must to learn before every progressing.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

Basketball is obviously NOT a static movement sport. It is dynamic. And with the athletes these days it's becoming increasingly more dynamic every year. Now that your players understand where to be on the court and understand your expectations it's time to introduce to them their responsibilities as the ball and players begin to move. To me, this is where the real coaching/teaching begins and your ability to connect with each player is important. It is also the point where your LANGUAGE must be clear and consistent.

As the ball is passed, once again your players will each fall into one of two categories:

- (A) Ball being passed to their player or (B) the ball is NOT being passed to their player

Ball being passed to their player:

1. **Move on the Air Time of the Pass:** the instant the ball leaves the fingertips of the passer it is a non-negotiable factor that all five of our players are on the move to their next responsibility on the court.
2. **Start with a sprint and end with a chop:** As we are moving on the air time of the pass as mentioned above, we must make sure our first step is explosive and we are on a sprint the entire time the basketball is in the air and not in the hands of an offensive player. As we close the distance between our original position and our player who is about to receive the ball, we begin to chop our feet to gain our balance and keep the soles of our shoes in contact with the court. This allows us to arrive in an athletic position so that we can assume our responsibilities of guarding a player with the ball.
3. **High hands to active hands:** This actually is happening simultaneously with the chopping of our feet. As our feet begin chopping, our hips are lowered and we throw our hands up into the air as our player is receiving the pass. This takes away vision for another quick pass and also contests a quick catch and shoot. That is why #2 and #3 are so important in that they work together... We are taking away quick pass and quick shot leaving the drive as the last option so it's very important we are prepared to defend that action.

The above technique of moving on the air time of a pass, starting with a sprint and ending with a chop, and having high hands/active hands is a technique we call a **CLOSE-OUT**. Close-outs are a fundamental building block of the PACK LINE DEFENSE and must be perfected.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

The ball is being passed but NOT to their player:

1. **Move on the Air Time of the Pass:** This concept is the same as if the ball were being passed to our player. It is still imperative that we utilize every second the ball is not possessed by an offensive player as time to adjust our defense.
2. **Sprint to the GAP:** As defined previously, this is the position about half way between our defender and where the ball is being passed. It is the position of being a step off the imaginary line that connects the ball and our player.

If all five defensive players execute the above techniques, our entire defense should have shifted as the ball was in the air and should be perfectly positioned to defend the next action.

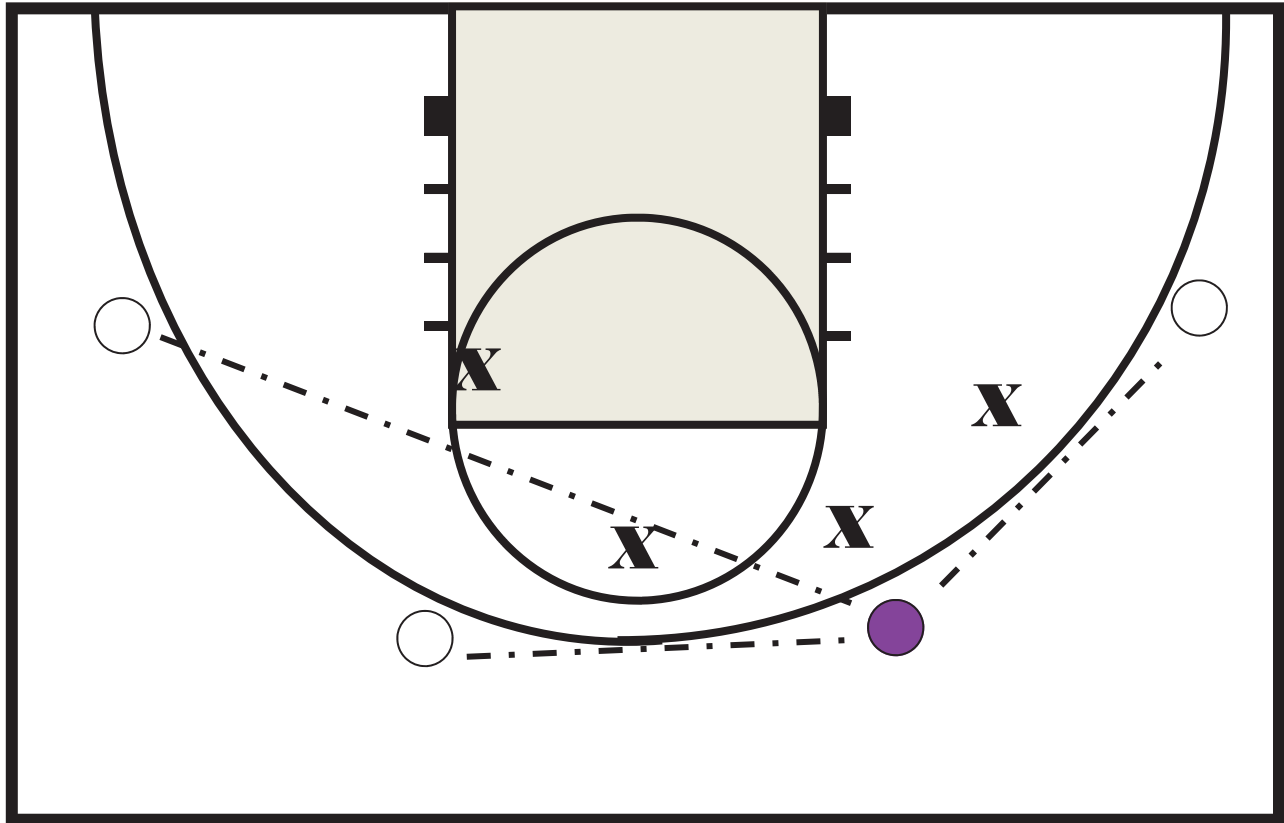
Now that we have defined certain areas of the court and explained the basic responsibilities and positions of our defenders we are ready to practice it in drill format.

It may be the oldest defensive drill in the game but it's the most effective and is a staple of every practice schedule you will ever see with WASHINGTON attached to it. It's the SHELL drill. And we introduce the concepts above with it being all perimeter oriented (no player in the defined post area).

We are simulating the before mentioned static positions of the PACK LINE. Each of the 4 players are either ON BALL or NOT. The offensive players do NOT move in the initial drill. They simply pass the ball to each other and hold it for a couple of seconds. This allows us to evaluate the players individually in their positioning and their effort as well as evaluate the cohesion of the team defense.

SHELL DRILL 4 AROUND 0 is diagrammed on the next page.

SHELL DRILL 4 around 0



TEACHING POINTS:

- 1) Players must begin in the proper position
- 2) Players must be vocal in communication of their responsibilities
 - A. Ball— this call means I have the player
 - B. Gap- this call means my player does not have the ball but I am in your dribble GAP
 - C. Help- this call means my players does not have the ball but am on the opposite half of the court than the ball is
- 3) Hold each player accountable for the proper technique and the communicating from Day 1

We use a variety of reminders to hold players accountable. If a player isn't able to do this basic drill they will never be a successful player for you in the PACK LINE. Although a simple drill in format it is THE MOST important drill in the implementation of your team defense.

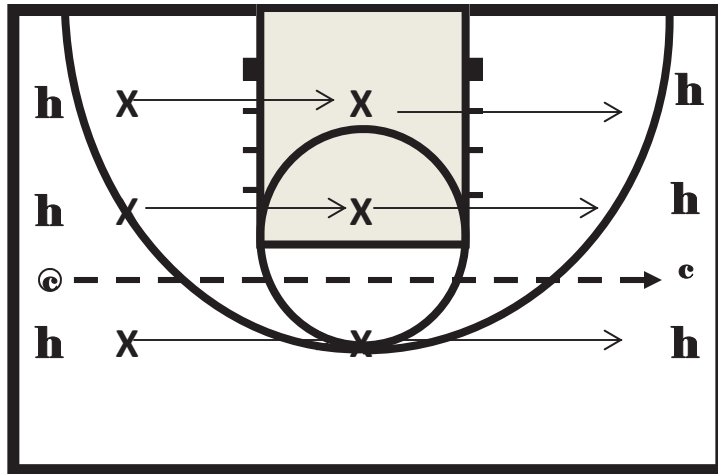
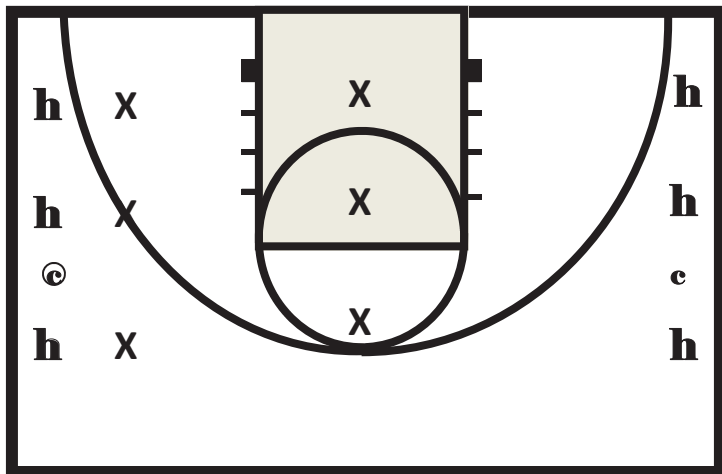
CHAIR CLOSEOUTS

With the importance of CLOSE-OUTS we work on them daily. A staple drill of our plan is Chair Closeouts. This stretches our defenders from sideline to sideline and puts them in the worst case scenario when it comes to drilling the techniques we have taught.

This drill forces players to move the on the air time of a pass and cover the maximum distance possible in the half court. Coach holds the ball long enough to evaluate the positioning and efforts of individual players. It easily exposes a player who is late to move on the air time of pass. It exposes a player who does not properly execute chopping feet or high hands.

We usually go for 25 seconds of a shot clock to simulate a possession. Those 6 players sprint off the court and six more sprint on.

YOU WILL GET WHAT YOU TOLERATE. If you allow players to practice less then perfectly, don't be upset with them when in a big game they don't perform to your standards. Set, expect, and enforce a high level of execution and enthusiasm in this drill and it will carry over into game situations.



A Position 3 chairs along each sideline. We place a ball in the seat of each to simulate that chair as a player being a ball handler.

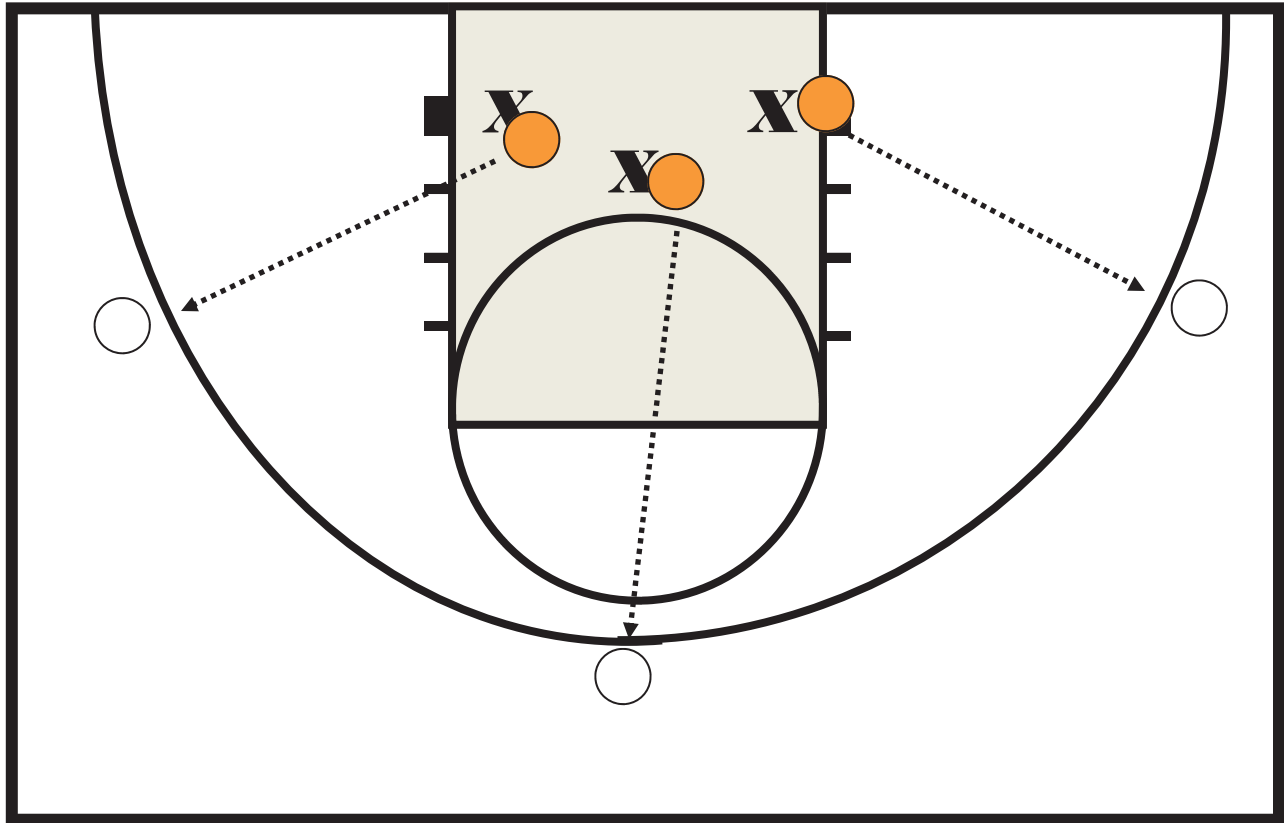
Coach on each side between the chairs

Three defensive players at "on the ball", three

Coach with ball passes across court to other coach.

Defensive players that were in "help" sprint to close-out to the chairs on the AIR TIME of the pass.

VEGAS CLOSEOUTS



Three offensive players around the arc. Two on the wings with one at the top of the key.

Three players with balls under the basket with a foot in the post area. These three players roll ball out to players on the arc.

As the ball is rolling they start with a SPRINT and CHOP their feet as they approach the player now with the ball.

We are looking for a SPRINT, CHOP, and HIGH HANDS on the **CLOSE-OUT**.

We are listening for shoes squeaking on the chop and “ball, ball, ball” from the mouths of the players as they are closing out.

After the defensive player gets into the proper position, we blow whistle and defender goes to offense and next three players around the basket are ready to start drill again.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

Let's add the POST defense component at this point. Remember we have defined the POST area on the court with our players from Day 1 as the area a step outside the paint in each direction and a step above the lowest FT block.

This is an area not a position. This means any player can be asked to defend in this area and we use basically the same technique regardless of whether they are a 5-2 point guard or a 6-6 post player.

Earlier we stated we never want to allow any offensive player to catch it with two feet planted in this area. To do that we utilize **CHIN ON SHOULDER** position and fight with our entire body to make sure it does not happen. Pushing the offensive player out of this area has obvious benefits in that the offense is not getting the ball close to the basket. It also has many more benefits that will come into play later as we build onto the base foundations.

But despite best efforts the ball does make it to this area from time to time. When it does we teach the player defending the post to **POP BACK** on the catch. **POP BACK** means we can from chin on shoulder quickly to a spot between the player and the basket. This move eliminates any angle the offensive player was hoping to gain with their positioning. **POP BACK** gets the defender into an athletic stance close enough to maintain contact with offensive player but far enough away to not allow the offensive player to feel their body. From this athletic stance we are able to defend the offensive player from a quick shot or a quick drive to the basket. We stay in this stance until the player passes the ball back outside the post or begins to attack.

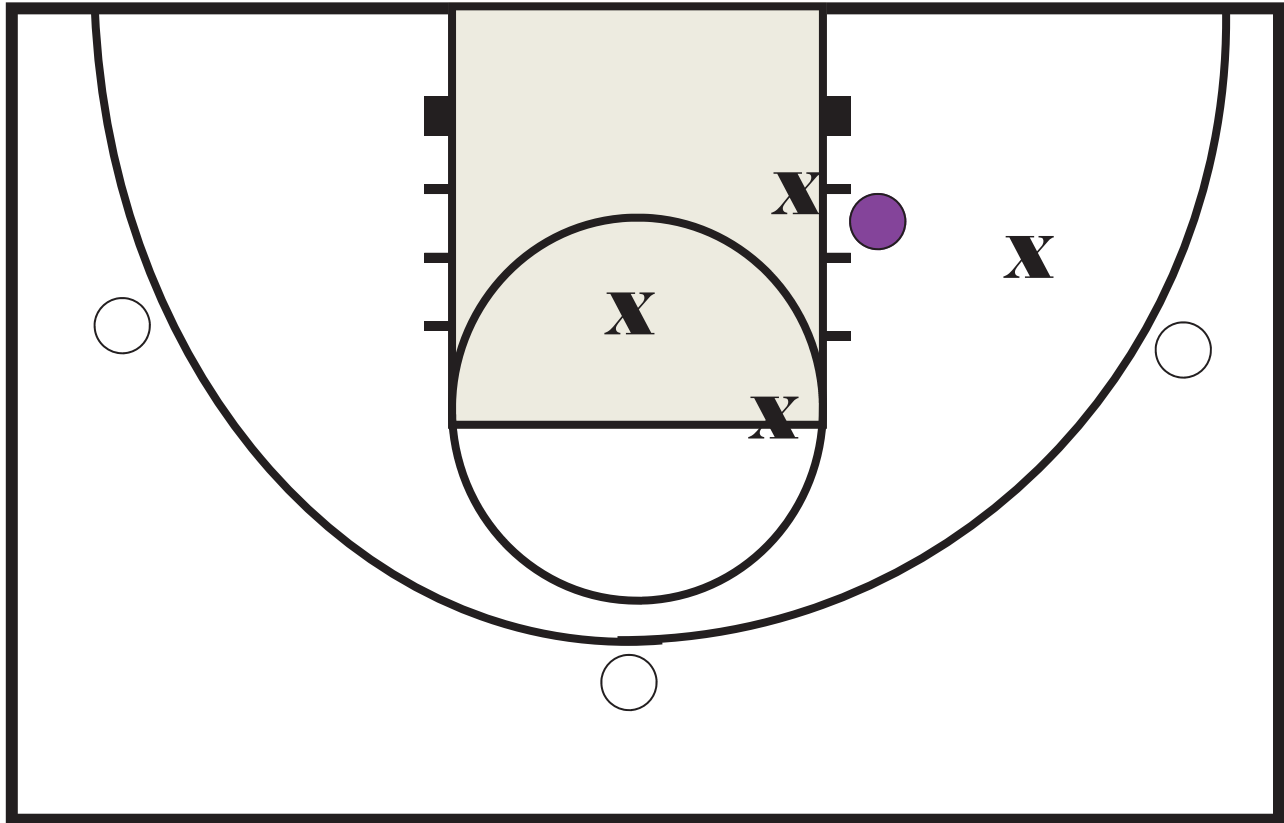
On a pass out of the post, we simply go back into CHIN ON SHOULDER and try to fight them out of the post area with our body.

If they dribble the ball while being in or near the post area, the post player is taught to stay in their athletic stance and not allow the offensive player to get nearer the bucket. This dribble also engages our players who are defending players outside of the post area.

PLAYERS OUTSIDE POST responsibilities when a post dribbles the ball:

- 1) On the initial pass into the post, the perimeter defenders should have jumped to half way point between their player and the ball as usual.
- 2) On the dribble of the post, the perimeter player **DIGS** onto the post. This is technique in which with their back to the baseline the perimeter defender uses their arm closest to the post player to strike at the ball. It's our simple intention to make the post player pick their dribble up before they can hurt our defense. We are NOT doubling the post, we are **DIGGING**. The instant the ball is picked up, the perimeter defender must return to their original position.

SHELL DRILL 3 around 1



Shell 3 around 1 gives us the best scenario to teach our actions when the ball is passed into the post. 3 perimeter players are stationary. The offensive player in the post is working on following the ball to force her defender to maintain **CHIN ON SHOULDER** position and work with her body to force as far outside the POST area as possible.

We pass the ball around the perimeter as we diagrammed earlier in SHELL 4 on 0. After a few passes the ball is passed into the offensive post player.

The on-ball defender **POPS BACK** between man and basket and perimeter players get to **GAPS**.

The offensive post player dribbles the ball a couple times to allow perimeter players to execute a **DIG** and then recover to their **GAP**.

When the ball is entered into the POST area we want that player to feel surrounded and uncomfortable to the point that they can NOT attack the basket and must pass the ball back to the perimeter where are team defense is waiting on the catch.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

Now that we have covered our static positioning and our dynamic positioning, it's time to allow the offense to look like an offense and let them begin moving without the ball and working on their attack actions.

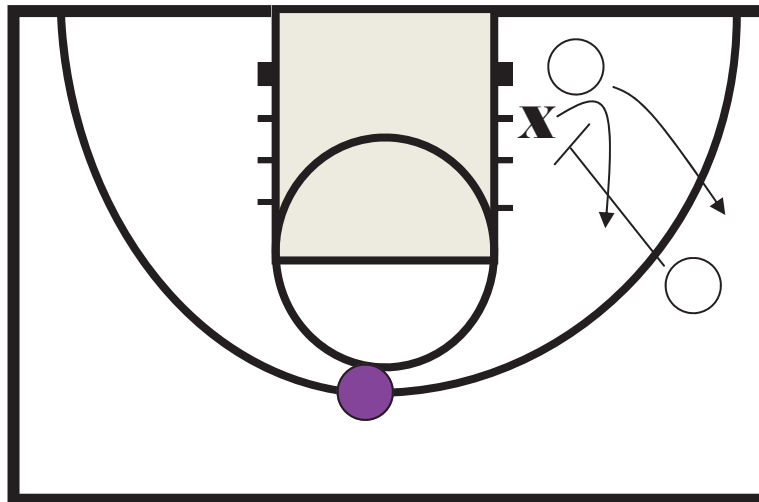
To effectively do this, we first need to introduce some new **LANGUAGE**. These will be the terms that we use to communicate our defensive actions from player to player as the players begin cutting and screening.

Our system is numerically based. We feel it is consistent to all actions that offenses utilize. We feel it allows us to make adjustments game to game and also play to play. We feel it breeds confidence in our players and their ability to defend any action an opponent attempts to use.

The first concept is that the ball is where we begin numbering. In all situations of screening or cutting the player we are guarding is always **FIRST**.

With our player always being the **FIRST** it is the next number that pertains to our defensive positioning. **SECOND** then becomes defined as placing our defensive player between their man and the action. Man is **FIRST**, defense is **SECOND**. When we tell our defensive player to go **SECOND** on an action, they immediately understand to place themselves between their man and a screen or the ball or another cutter. This is most commonly a down screen so we will use this to illustrate our basic **LANGUAGE**.

Diagrammed below is what **SECOND** looks like on a down screen.

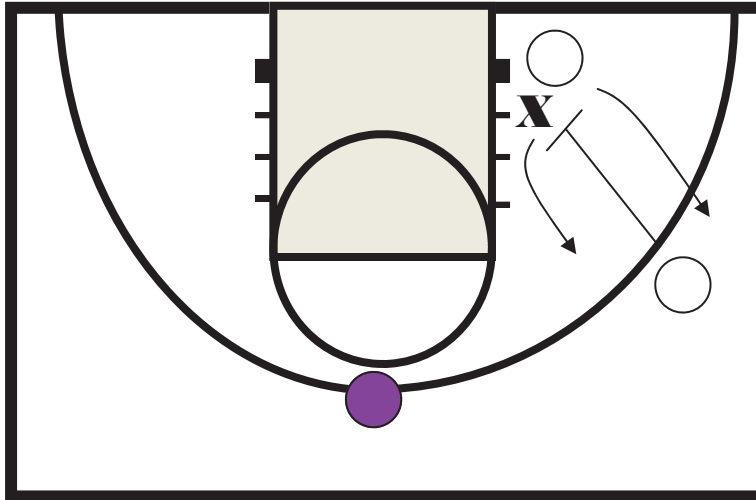


Here the man is **FIRST**, and X is going **SECOND** to guard their cutting opponent. This action can be moved to any area on the perimeter without changing our ability to communicate how we are defending the action.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

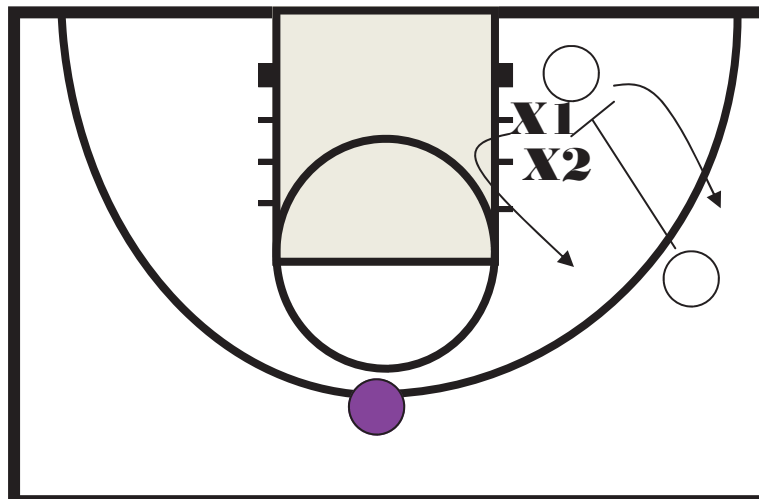
THIRD will then be defined as placing our defensive player in a position where the man is **FIRST** as always, the action is **SECOND**, and we are **THIRD**.

Diagrammed below is what **THIRD** looks like on a down screen.



Here the man is **FIRST**, the action is **SECOND**, X is **THIRD** to guard their cutting opponent.

The last possibility in our action defense is **FOURTH**. It rarely happens in actions not involving the ball but will illustrate it here as we have been. **FOURTH** will be used much more when we reach Ball Screen defense. **FOURTH** is when the ball is **FIRST**, the action is **SECOND**, our teammate guarding the action is **THIRD**, and our defender is **FOURTH**. Our defender guarding the action **JAMS** the action with their body allowing their teammate to go **FOURTH**. Again this is not best illustrated or utilized on a down screen but for consistency in teaching we introduce it now so it will be even clearer when we advance to Ball Screen Actions. The **JAM** by X2 is a technique of forcing the screen lower and not allowing that screen to be moved allowing teammate to slip through in the **FOURTH** position to their **GAP**.



PACK LINE DEFENSE

Armed with the ability to communicate and defend offensive actions you can now begin to work situational things that occur within an offensive possession as players begin to move without the ball and execute set plays or their motion attack.

Our LANGUAGE stays the same throughout the 1000's of "what if a player does this" questions you get from your players. It is now up to you as a coach to identify the most common actions you are forced to defend and practice those scenarios to insure you have a clear understanding of how the PACK LINE is designed to defend them.

We progress in a specific order based on how it pertains to overall scheme of PACK LINE and the number of times a defense must deal with the action in game situations. Again we will build from the perimeter to the post. These are mainly cutting actions and the actions that are NOT ball screens. Screening actions involving the ball will be our next building block.

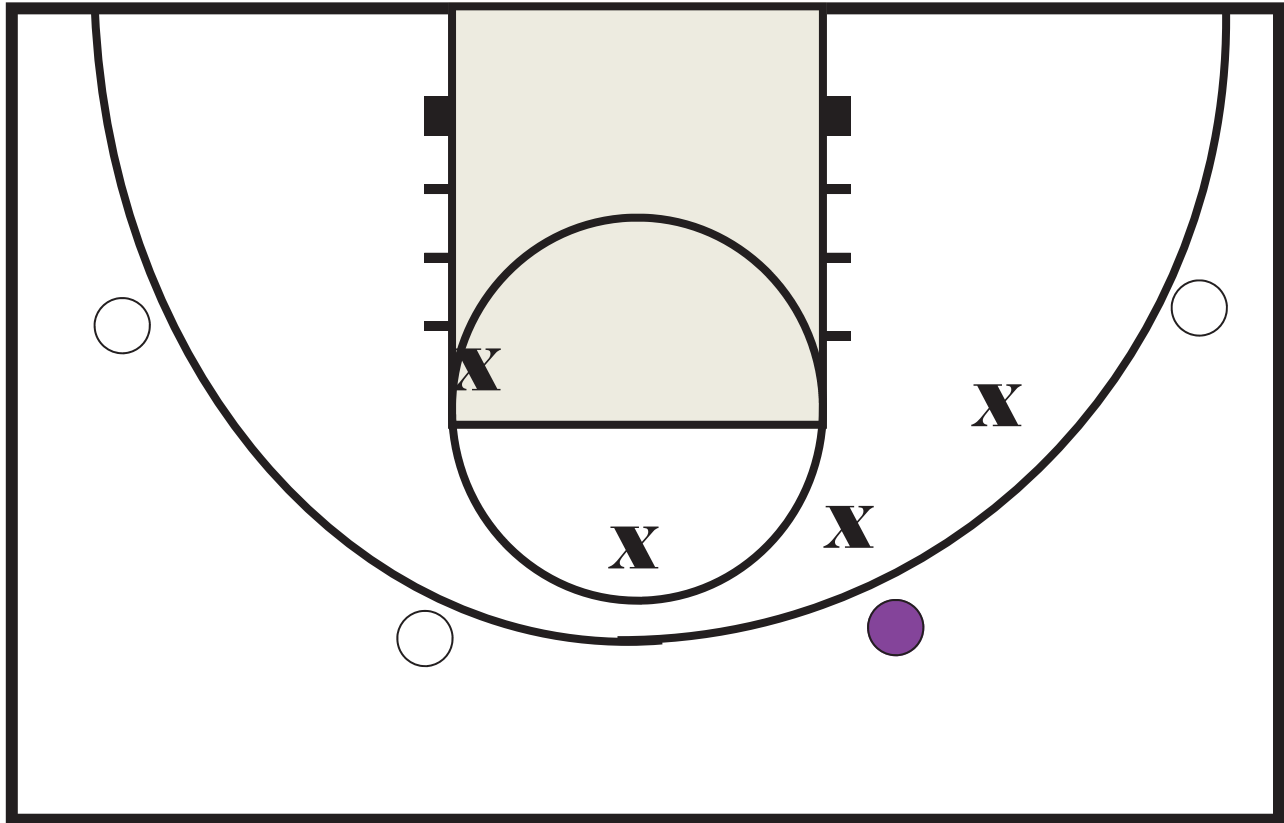
BASKET CUT: In theory this is the easiest one for us to defend in the PACK LINE because the essence of what we have already instilled in the perimeter defense is to always move on the air time of the pass to the **GAP**. If we have properly taught and practiced this skill from Day One, when a perimeter player tries to cut to the basket we should already be in the proper position to defend such action. A lot of defensives call this "jumping to the ball" or "jumping to the pass".

We teach our defender to be very physical on the cut and never allow the offensive cutter to cut to the **POST** without being punished with contact.

WEAKSIDE SCREEN AWAY: A lot of motion offenses involve a pass and screen away or a simple exchange screen on the weak side in an attempt to occupy help side defenders. If we properly shifted into **GAPS** positions on the air time of the pass we should already be in the proper position to effectively defend this action. We are in **GAPS** seeing both the ball and our player. When the screen arrives the player guarding screen calls screen and opens up allowing her teammate to slide between **THIRD**. The defender guarding the cutter sprints through the open space and takes position in the proper **GAP**. This action was actually diagrammed on the previous page as we were introducing the **SECOND**, **THIRD**, and **FOURTH** language.

FLARE SCREEN: Flare screens are very difficult to set against teams that use the PACK LINE because on the air time of the pass they have already jumped to the **GAP**. But when the flare screen does arrive, the defender guarding the screener yells FLARE to alert her teammate. We yell the specific types of screen to mentally trigger the countless times we worked on them in practice settings. The person being screened goes **SECOND** with the hands up as they fight over the top of the action. With confidence ball pressure is begin applied this is a tough pass to throw.

SHELL DRILL 4 around 0 Actions



Our most effective drill for working on the various actions is the SHELL DRILL. We can control the offense and evaluate our defensive efforts against each of the actions.

- 1) Basket Cut- Player with ball passes to wing then makes a basket but with the other offensive players filling up a spot. We cycle through on the right side the pass the ball across the top then complete a cycle on the left side.
- 2) Weak side Down Screens or Exchanges– On any pass across the top the weakside players execute and exchange or down screen with defense communicating and adjusting. Again work both sides to complete a cycle for each individual player in each spot
- 3) Flare screen: On any pass across the top the wing player on the ball side sets FLARE screen for the player who just passed the ball.

4 on 4 without a post allows for the best possible evaluating of the action for you as a coach. It also places defense in a worst case scenario situation to develop toughness and resolve.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

Let's add the Ball Screen here on Day 4. It's becoming a MUST in any defense as more and more women's teams are incorporating variations for the pick and roll into their offensive attack.

We are now dealing with a situation directly involving two defenders. For writing purposes we will use screenee and screener as we "talk" through them here on paper and discuss the responsibilities of each defender. On the court, it's much easier to differentiate players but we will stick with those terms here. We will also begin our teaching on WING BALL SCREENS and progress later to different areas of the court which bring slight variations. There are also five things that we do in WING-ON Ball Situations so we will tackle them one at a time. Obviously there are three other players on the court as well and they will have roles in the action as well but can not discuss them until we introduce and master the main action.

So, an offensive players has the ball on the wing. That defender assumes responsibilities taught on Day 1. We were there on the catch with high hands, we now have active hands applying ball pressure , as we are **GUARDING OUR YARD** (not getting beat to outside and not getting beat in a straight line). All other players moved to the **GAP** on the air time of the pass there.

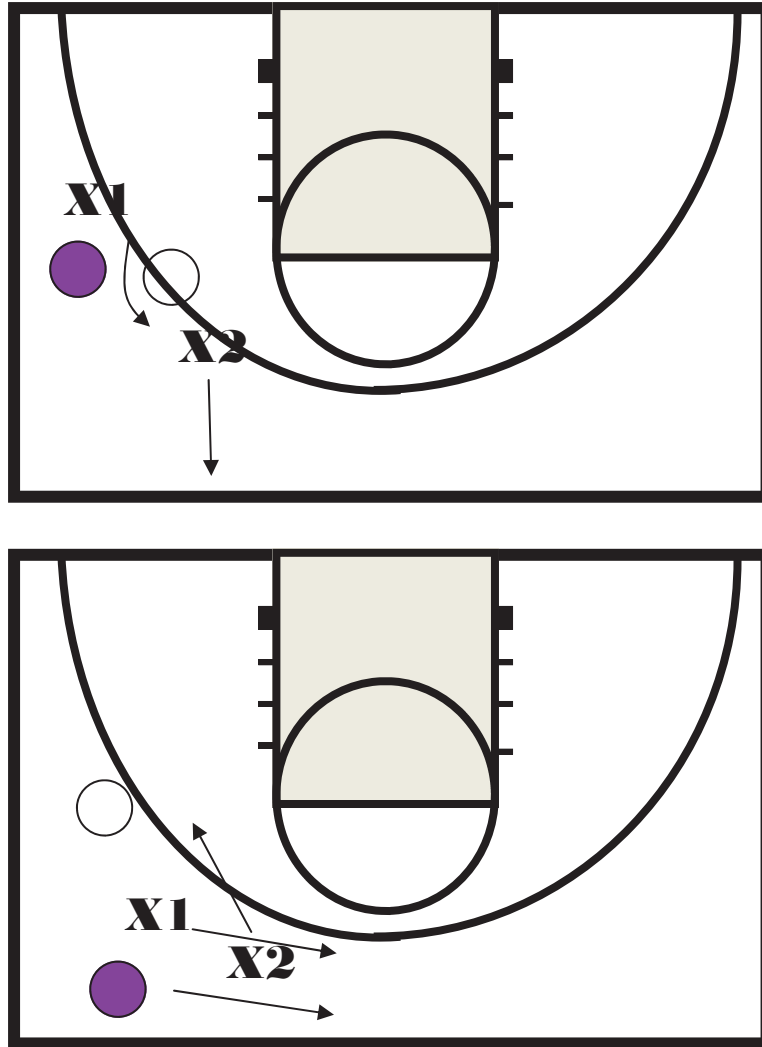
We start introducing our scheme with **SECOND** and **HEDGE** because it is the most difficult:
SCREENER DEFENSE:

- 1) CALL ...the type of screen coming as the offensive player begins in that direction to screen
- 2) SPRINT... to the action. Arriving before the screen is set gives us the best chance to defend
- 3) **HEDGE...** this is an action in which the defender of the screen maintains contact with the hip of the screener as the screenee is utilizing the on ball. As the ball handler comes off the screen, the HEDGE defender is in an athletic stance with shoulders parallel to sideline of the court. Her goal is to force the ball handler TWO hard dribbles toward the half court line.
- 4) RECOVER... to the **GAP** of their player

SCRENEE DEFENSE:

- 1) ON BALL... responsibilities as always
- 2) FORCE...into the screen. The instant they hear SCREEN called by teammate, she will position her body to insure the ball handler has no option but to use the screen. This takes away all reject options.
- 3) SECOND...if they were tough on the ball it is easier to fight SECOND (between the ball and the screen)
- 4) RECOVER... under the HEDGER. As the HEDGE defender is releasing from their two dribble force to half court, we should be shaped up and ready to defend on ball again.

PACK LINE DEFENSE



In top diagram:

X1 jumps to the outside to force ball into the screen. X2 is in stance but still in contact with the player setting the screen. X1 fights over SECOND on the screen.

In the bottom diagram:

X2 forces the ball two hard dribbles toward half court. X1 who went SECOND on the screen recovers to the ball UNDER the HEDGE of X2

We will use the SECOND and HEDGE when the player using the screen is a good shooter that can also hurt us as a driver AND the person setting the screen is NOT a great threat to shoot a 3 pointer. There are other instances but that is the most common in the women's game.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

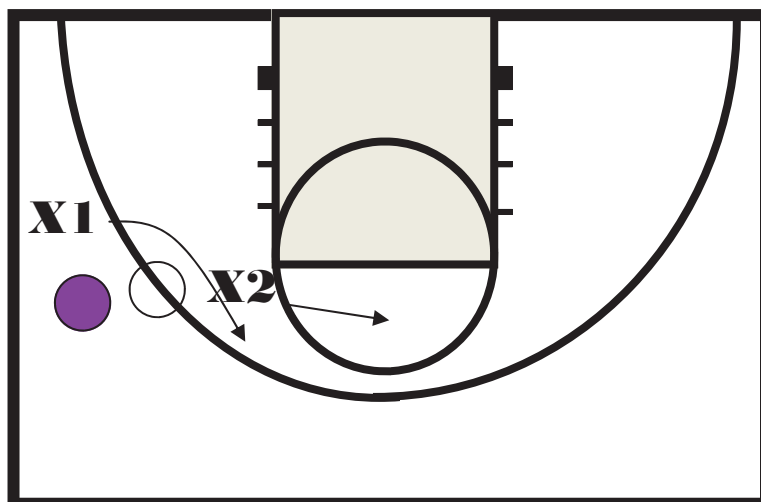
The next method to teach is **THIRD** and **PLUG**.

SCREENER DEFENSE:

- 1) **CALL** ...the type of screen coming as the offensive player begins in that direction to screen
- 2) **SPRINT**... to the action. Arriving before the screen is set gives us the best chance to defend
- 3) **PLUG**... this action by the defender guarding the screener is best utilized to neutralize a player using the screen who is a strong driver but not a threat to shoot behind the screen. As the screen is being set, the PLUG defender still maintains contact with the screen but now her shoulders are parallel to the half court line and her goal is to force her from sideline to sideline and NOT allow her to quickly turn and attack the middle of the court or the basket.
- 4) **RECOVER**... to the **GAP** of their player after they defend the action and teammate has recovered to guard the ball.

SCREENER DEFENSE:

- 1) **ON BALL**... responsibilities as always
- 2) **FORCE**...into the screen. The instant they hear **SCREEN** called by teammate, she will position her body to insure the ball handler has no option but to use the screen. This takes away all reject options.
- 3) **THIRD**...knowing their player is not a threat to shoot the ball behind the screen we now go **THIRD** to control the ball
- 4) **RECOVER**... over the **PLUG** to their assignment and take up On-ball responsibilities.



PACK LINE DEFENSE

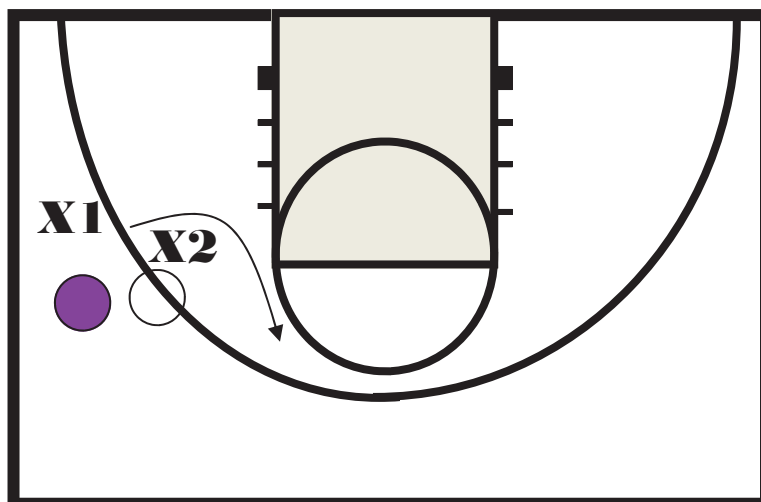
The next method to teach is **FOURTH** (this explains the action of both defenders)

SCREENER DEFENSE:

- 1) **CALL** ...the type of screen coming as the offensive player begins in that direction to screen
- 2) **SPRINT**... to the action. Arriving before the screen is set gives us the best chance to defend
- 3) **FOURTH**... this action by the defender guarding the screener is best utilized to neutralize a great driver that can't shoot the three behind the screen **BUT** the player setting the screen **CAN** shoot the three ball. The defender guarding the player setting the screens jams her body against the screen as closely as she can to give our other defender maximum room to also go **FOURTH**. This action also keeps the screener from being able to move the screen further down inside the arc to allow ball handler a better angle to drive or shorter shot.
- 4) **RECOVER**... to the **GAP** of their player after they defend the action and teammate has recovered to guard the ball.

SCREENEE DEFENSE:

- 1) **ON BALL**... responsibilities as always
- 2) **FORCE**...into the screen. The instant they hear **SCREEN** called by teammate, she will position her body to insure the ball handler has no option but to use the screen. This takes away all reject options.
- 3) **FOURTH**... we sprint under all the screening action. Must be a sprint and we must go hard to be able to get ball back under control.
- 4) **RECOVER**... to get the ball handler under control and become **ON-BALL**.



PACK LINE DEFENSE

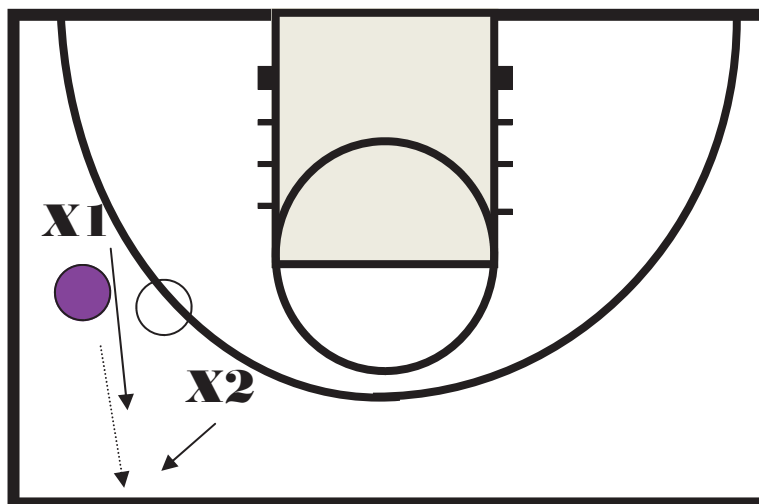
The last ball screen situation we drill is the **TRAP** (we change this call throughout the season) mainly to keep teams off balance and unaware as to when we will utilize it.

SCREENER DEFENSE:

- 1) **CALL** ...the type of screen coming as the offensive player begins in that direction to screen
- 2) **SPRINT**... to the action. Arriving before the screen is set gives us the best chance to defend
- 3) **TRAP**... this action can be used against a variety of personnel involved in the PNR and also as an element of surprise that can force turnovers. The defender guarding the screener does the same thing they did in **HEDGE** described earlier. Expect in TRAP we stay with the ball handler until we steal the ball or they pass it out of the double team.
- 4) **RECOVER**... most of the time this is NOT to their original matchup because of rotations that we will cover later.

SCREENER DEFENSE:

- 1) **ON BALL**... responsibilities as always
- 2) **FORCE**...into the screen. The instant they hear **SCREEN** called by teammate, she will position her body to insure the ball handler has no option but to use the screen. This takes away all reject options.
- 3) **TRAP**... our player guarding the ball performs the actions we described in **SECOND** earlier. Knowing their teammate is setting the TRAP it is up to the ball defender to close the trap and not allow the ball handler to split the trap and attack.
- 4) **RECOVER**... to the **GAP** created by a pass out of the double team.



PACK LINE DEFENSE

We can call any combination of the mentioned actions to create a variety of options as to how we will defend the PNR action. Communication of the call is key and must be executed properly by both of the defenders involved in the action. The decision of how to defend the PNR will depend on the strength and weaknesses of the personnel involved in the offensive action. That comes through scouting as well as in game adjustments.

Armed with these varieties and an easy manner in which to communicate them, we have had success over the years making calls on the spur of the moment when we get a “call” on a set play or see an action being set up in a last second situation.

To recap actions of defender guarding the ball:

- A. Second— over the screen
- B. Third- under the screen
- C. Fourth- under the screen and teammate jamming the screen
- D. TRAP- again we have a call that varies throughout the year for this

To recap actions of the defender guarding the screener:

- A. Hedge- force ball handler two dribbles toward half court before recovering
- B. Plug- force the ball handler side-line to side-line
- C. 4th- jam the screener as not to allow her to move screen down and stay connected to her
- D. TRAP- stay with ball handler and trap with teammate until stolen or ball passed out.

Obviously incorporating the other three defenders is a huge key, you must first master the two player defending of the various offensive actions. We will work two or three days incorporating ball actions with non-ball actions in our 4 around 0 Shell Drill before introducing the three remaining defenders.

We are relentless in our teaching the precise LANGUAGE and the manner in which the teammates communicate them to each other as well as the manner we communicate them to players. Not talking on defense is a non-negotiable for us and is not tolerated from DAY ONE

PACK LINE DEFENSE

At this point you should be able to scrimmage and maybe even play a game. You have the basics in and accountability assigned in the half court. It's now a perfect time to begin working on perhaps the most important aspect of our defensive package... TRANSITION DEFENSE.

The reason I say TRANSITION DEFENSE is the most important, is because over the course of a game, teams are in transition situations more often than they are in a HALF-COURT set. Rarely if ever in the women's game do you shoot over 50%. And if you do, when you combine your live ball turnovers with your missed shots you will find your transition defense is tested more than your half court set.

I still believe you need to teach and install your half court LANGUAGE and ACTION first, but once it is in place, your practice time should be focused on TRANSITION to HALF COURT. Our goal from Day One is to force an opponent to go against our half court set up defense. So our ability to stop quick transition and an opponent's early offense is key to us reaching that goal.

TRANSITION DEFENSE begins the instant our opponent secures a defensive rebound, creates a live ball turnover, or we score a made basket. The instant any of these occur we have one player assigned to be our **FULLBACK**. This is usually our Point Guard and it is her responsibility to protect our basket by getting fully-back. At this same instant, a second assigned player becomes our **HALFBACK**. This is usually our 2 guard and she is responsible for getting to the half court area ready to pick up the ball as it is being advanced in transition. Our remaining three players are crashing the offensive boards until this instant and then sprinting back to stop our opponents transition. It is the **FULLBACK** and the **HALFBACKS** responsibility to begin **POINTING** and **TALKING** to their teammates who are sprinting back. This communication is key our success in stopping transition attack. This ability to effectively communicate allows us to **BE ON ASSIGNMENT** and set our half-court defense as quickly as possible.

This sounds like a simple task for a team but it is anything but. It is a challenge and there are countless "what if this happens" situations that you can only work through in practice situations. It is a true test of the PACK mentality to work together to quickly retreat and organize so that we force our opponents to score against our half court set that we work so hard on. I will diagram the family of drills we use to work on these situations but first want to go over some of the terms in our **LANGUAGE** that you will hear being yelled during our practices and games.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

SPRINT: Our radio guy at Xavier, Mike Schmaltz, actually kept a tally sheet on how many times he heard me yelling SPRINT during our Sweet Sixteen game versus Gonzaga in 2010. They were the nation's best transition team and had Courtney Vandersloot at the point. She was leading the country in assists and the Bulldogs were the NCAA's leading scoring team. That tally sheet reached 75 in the first half so he gave up keeping it in the second half so he could concentrate on calling the action, but I assure you it was at least 150 by the end of that game!

It is our players reminder that we don't tolerate anything but a dead sprint in transition. We are intolerant of back pedaling. We are intolerant of pouting after a missed shot or turnover. We are intolerant buddy running (running side by side with our match-up). We are intolerant of jamming a rebounder. If it's NOT a dead out, all out SPRINT back, we assume that player is tired and needs to sit on the bench and rest for a while.

AHEAD OF THE BALL: This takes care of itself if players are sprinting. But this specifically addresses what we called buddy running earlier. This is the situation where a player makes the excuse for themselves by saying they were running with their man. That's not good transition defense. We want as many players as we can get AHEAD OF THE BALL. This allows illustrates our point that we don't have match-ups in transitions. There is no "that wasn't my girl" excuse in our transition defense.

POINT AND TALK: Mentioned on the previous page, this is the action initiated by our full back and half back then continued by the three other players as they **SPRINT** back to get **AHEAD OF THE BALL**. Pointing is the non-verbal component of this scheme. It is physically using our fingers to point in the direction of attacking opponents so that the players who are retreating on a full sprint can run in the direction their teammates are instructing them to run. Talking is the verbal component. This is the act of speaking AND listening so that we effectively and efficiently slow or stop the transition attack of our opponent. When our team effectively Points and Talks it is very frustrating to our opponents. I have seen very, very good transition teams become demoralized early in a game to the extreme that they virtually stop attempting to run on us. Conversely, when we don't Point and Talk, a very average transition team gains confidence and scores easily on us.

BUILD A WALL: This is our ultimate goal in transition. To get back ahead of our opponents so that we are able to effectively take away all passing and driving lanes. We want the ball handler and the attacking players to see a WALL of jersey's with WASHINGTON across the front. This can only be accomplished when all the above actions have occurred.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

BE ON ASSIGNMENT: Now that we have a wall built we must be ready to work as a PACK to defend the open man. As we mentioned, there are NO match-ups in transition so there will often be situations where a post player has picked up a guard and vice versa. Transition is not the time to try and fix those problems. OPEN SHOTS beat you way more often in women's basketball than do mis-matches. If you want to see our coaches go crazy on the bench watch for the time when we have two players on the ball leaving a player open in trail for an uncontested 3!! Make or miss I can assure you there will be a visible explosion so that our players understand this is unacceptable.

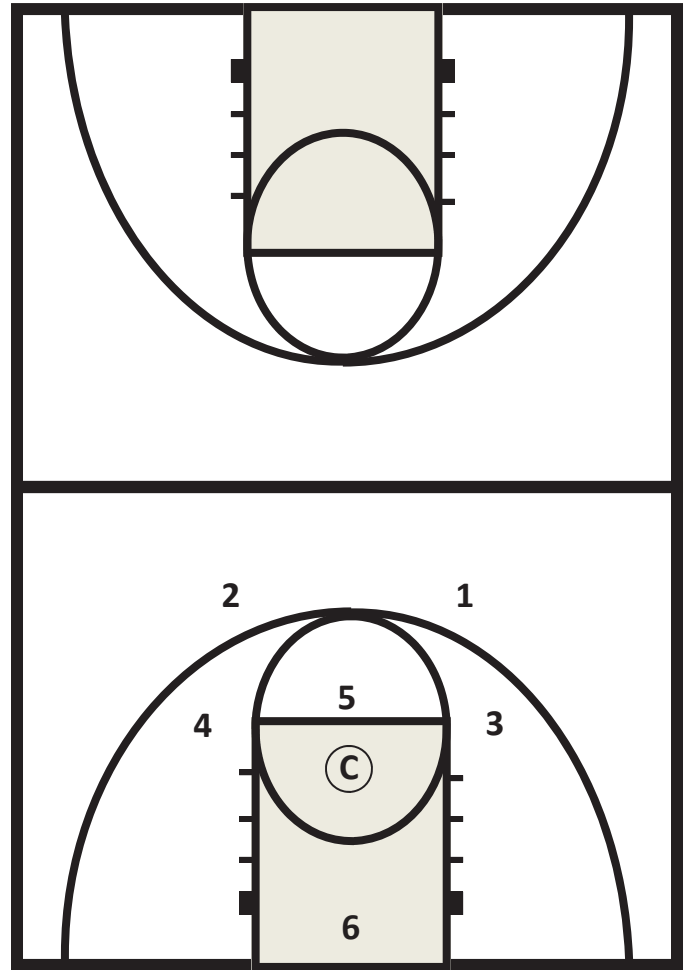
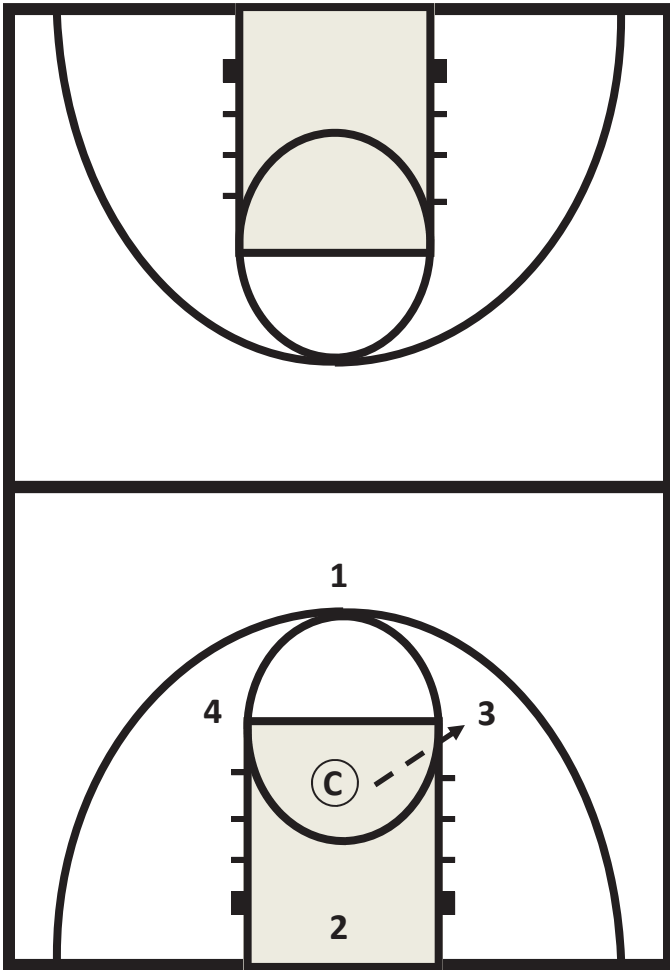
KNOW WHERE THE BALL IS: There are countless ways that our point guard influences the on court action of our teams. But her ability to effectively communicate to her teammates how to quickly BE ON ASSIGNMENT is an art that never, ever shows up on a stat sheet. While it begins with her it is every player's responsibility to know where the ball is as transition is happening.

DON'T FOUL IN THE BACKCOURT: We are intolerant of players who foul someone 80 feet from the basket trying to steal a pass, pick a ball handler, or jam a rebounder. With all the effort the other four players are exerting, it is a selfish play to foul someone who is not a threat to score.

There is actually one exception to this rule that we do teach and drill with our players who are ready for a next level type play. When we turn the ball over in a situation that we have virtually no chance to defend we will teach our player to take a foul before the ball can be advanced. We call these "turnovers for touchdowns". The reason I say this is a next level play, is because the player must be aware of the foul count, their individual foul situation, and also have the maturity to forget they just turned it over. The poise to make this play comes with experience and confidence but it's won us a couple of games over the years. It's a great play self-less play that often times rallies our defense and also helps us recover from the turnover we just made. Don't expect your freshmen to make this play if you don't explain it to them and drill them on it. Put players in these situations during scrimmages so that they can practice them.

Now that you have your LANGUAGE in place and your tactics explained, it's time to begin implementing your strategies. Your ability to simulate transition defense in practice will directly relate to your players ability to defend it in games. We use a lot of drills that put our players in the worst case scenario to take them out of comfort zones and force them to PACK together. Be creative in planning your drills so that players are forced to SPRINT, BE AHEAD OF THE BALL, POINT and TALK, and BE ON ASSIGNMENT. And when they do all of these make a big deal out of it and celebrate their accomplishment.

GET BACK DRILL



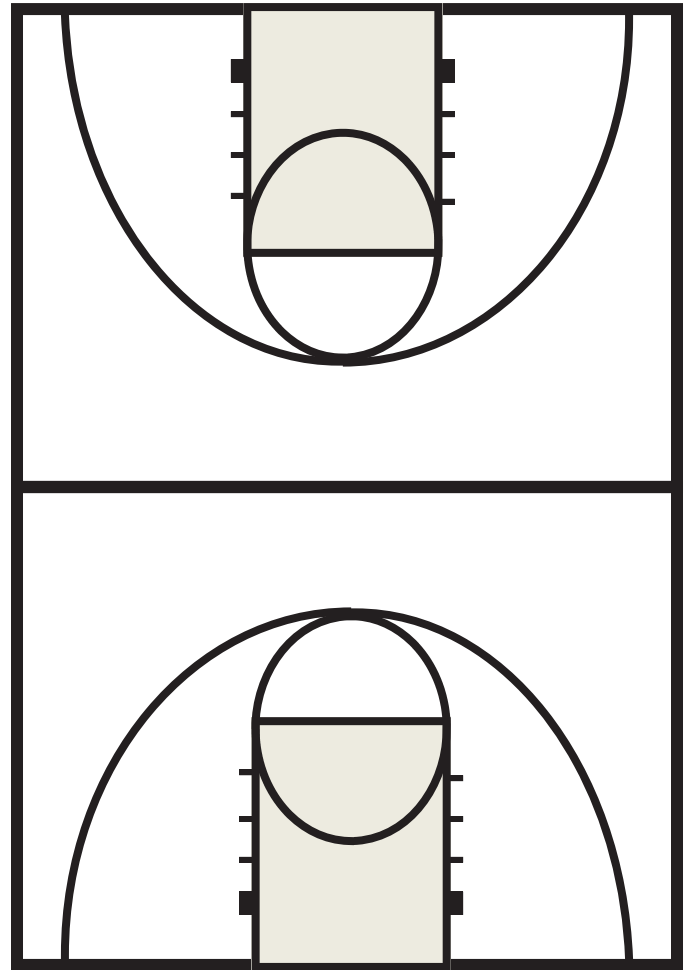
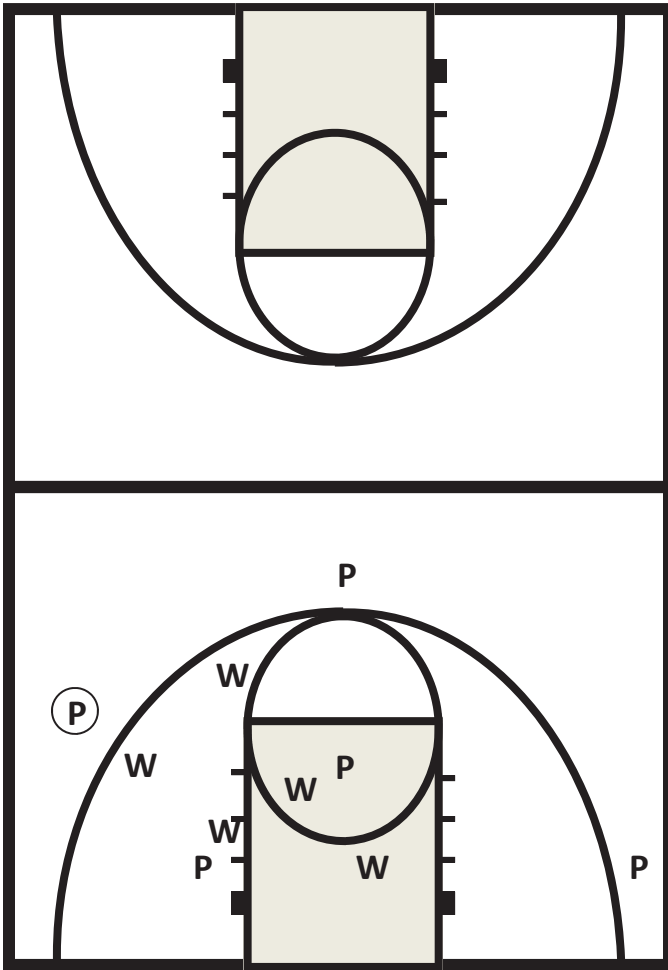
Players 1 and 2 are on defense. Players 3 and 4 are defenders. Coach has the ball. Tosses the ball to 3 or 4. 1 turns and **SPRINTS** back as the **FULLBACK**. 2 then must **SPRINT** back to get **AHEAD** of the **BALL** and try to slow the attack.

In diagram 2, we have added player 5 on offense and player 6 on defense to simulate 3-on-3 play.

We will slowly begin to add players and manipulate the number of defenders to get the advantage/disadvantage situations in which we drill.

To add to fun of the drill, after the coach passes the ball to the offense we will turn and using a blocking pad try to impede the progress of the last defender.

CHANGE DRILL



Drill begins with teams divided into two colors... Purple and White for the Huskies.

Purple is on offense and white is on defense. Purple is executing a motion offense and white is defending. This can be shell like action or you could be working your own half court attack. As the action is progressing... Coach yells "CHANGE"...

CHANGE means the person with the ball simply drops it and the offense goes into transition mode. A white team player retrieves the ball and initiates transition attack.

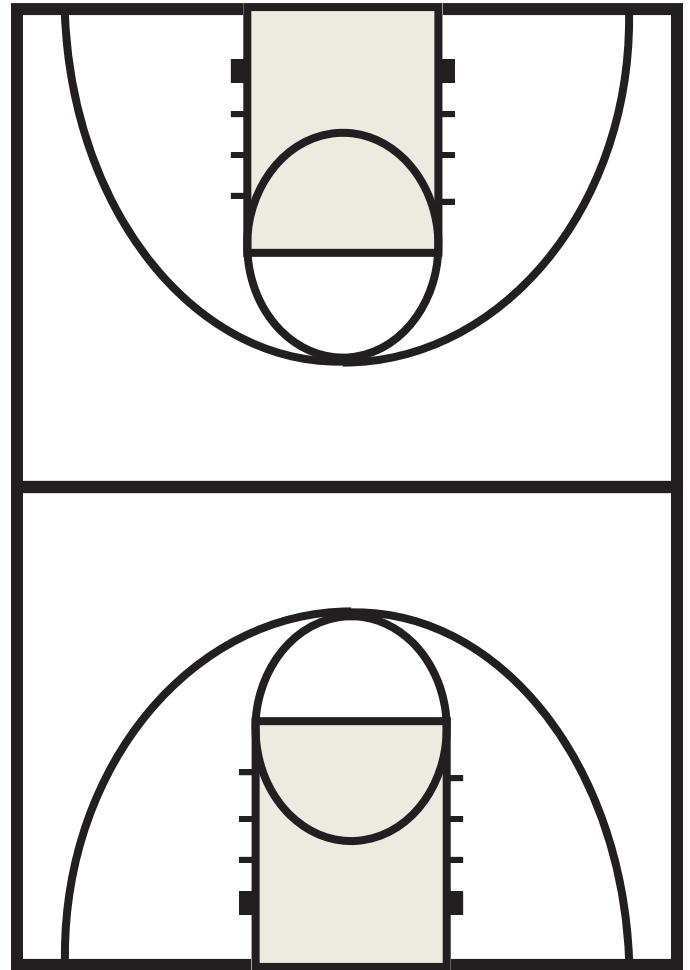
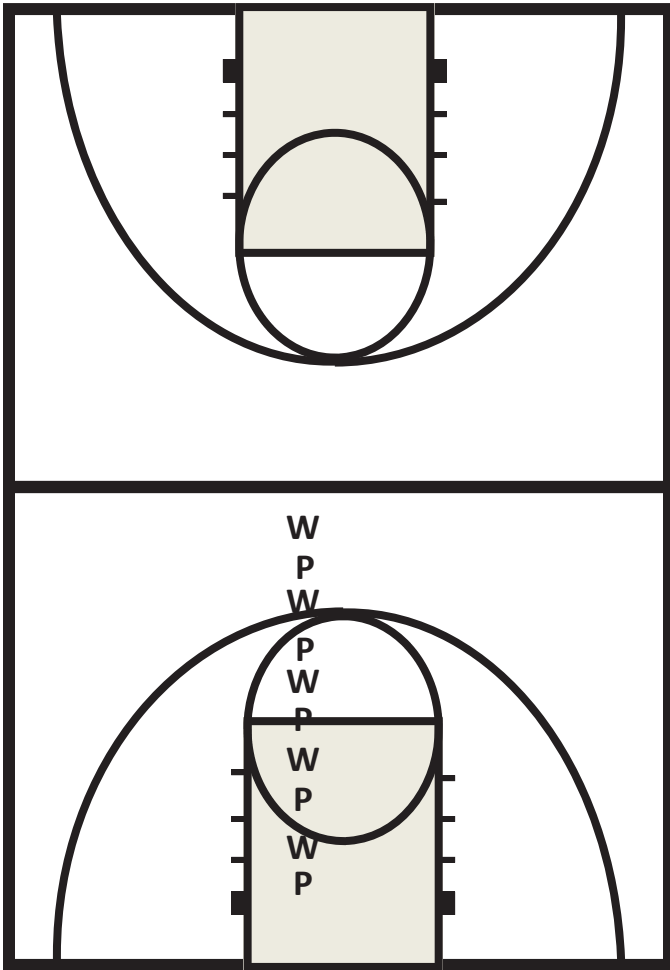
PURPLE team SPRINTS back, gets AHEAD of the BALL, BUILDS a WALL, and gets on assignment.

WHITE team tries to score as quickly as possible. We don't usually work on our early offensive attack but it is an option should you choose.

Make drill competitive by keeping score and flipping from offense to defense equal times.

To add variation, we will designate one player to touch the baseline before retreating to defense. We will also have a coach with a ball to throw to offense rather than having them pick it up off the floor to speed up the attack.

TIP DRILL



Drill begins with teams divided into two colors... Purple and White for the Huskies.

The are lined up alternating colors in a line stretching toward half court. The ball is being tipped off the glass with players going from front of line to back of the line.

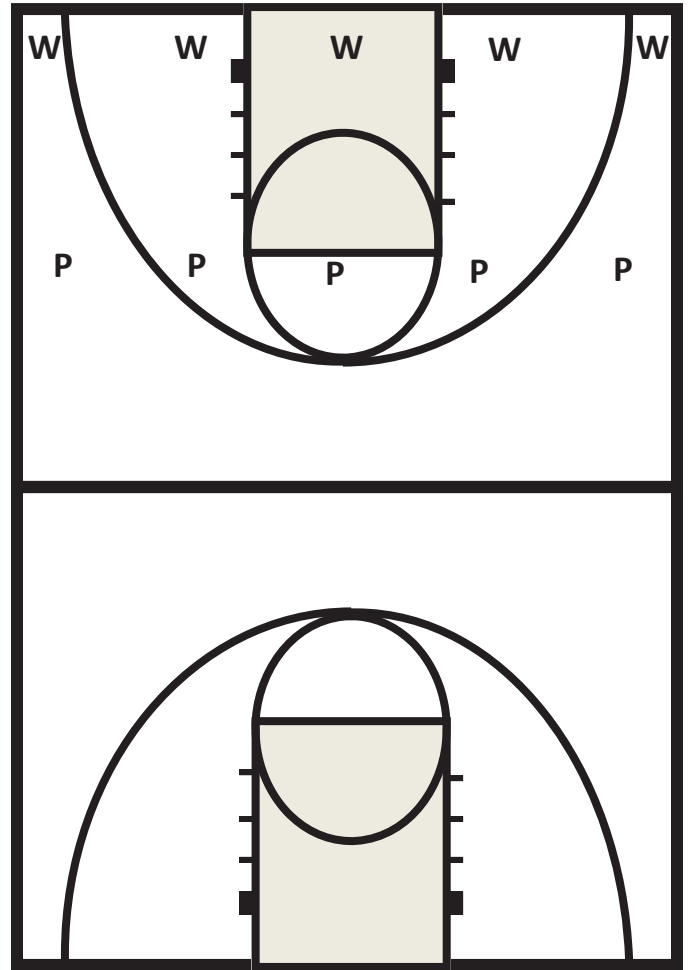
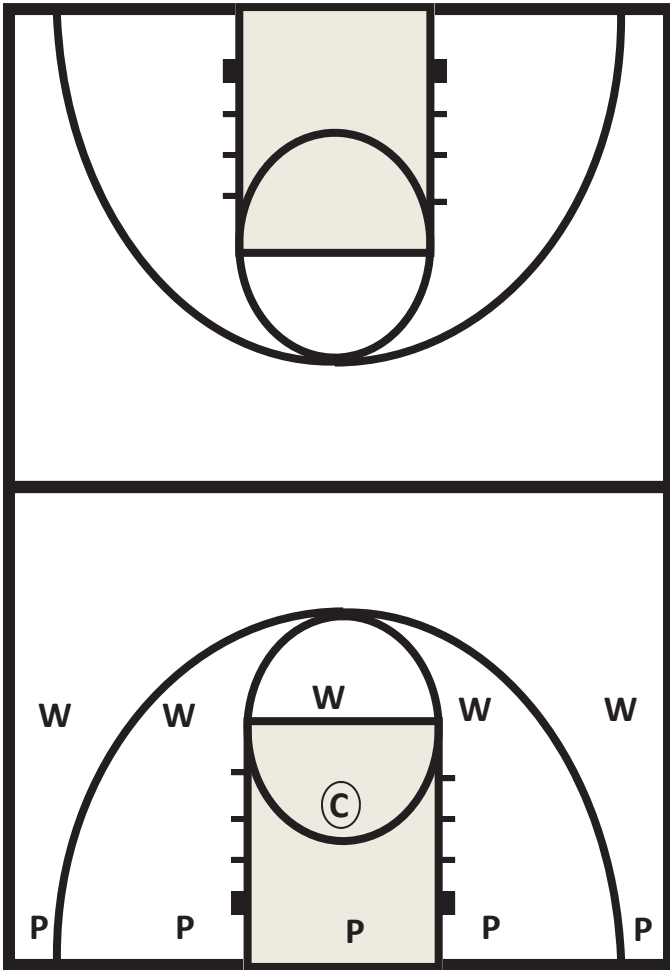
On the whistle the player with the ball becomes offense with the rest of her colored team. The opposite team retreats in TRANSITION defense as they attack.

Repeat on other end.

For variation, we tip in circular motion. For variation, we will designate a certain number of players to already be back in transition. For variation, we predetermine a certain number of players to touch the sideline or baseline before they can retreat to defensive. All designed to force communication.

To make competitive, score the drill with losers having a consequence.

PUSH DRILL



Drill begins with teams divided into two colors... Purple and White for the Huskies.

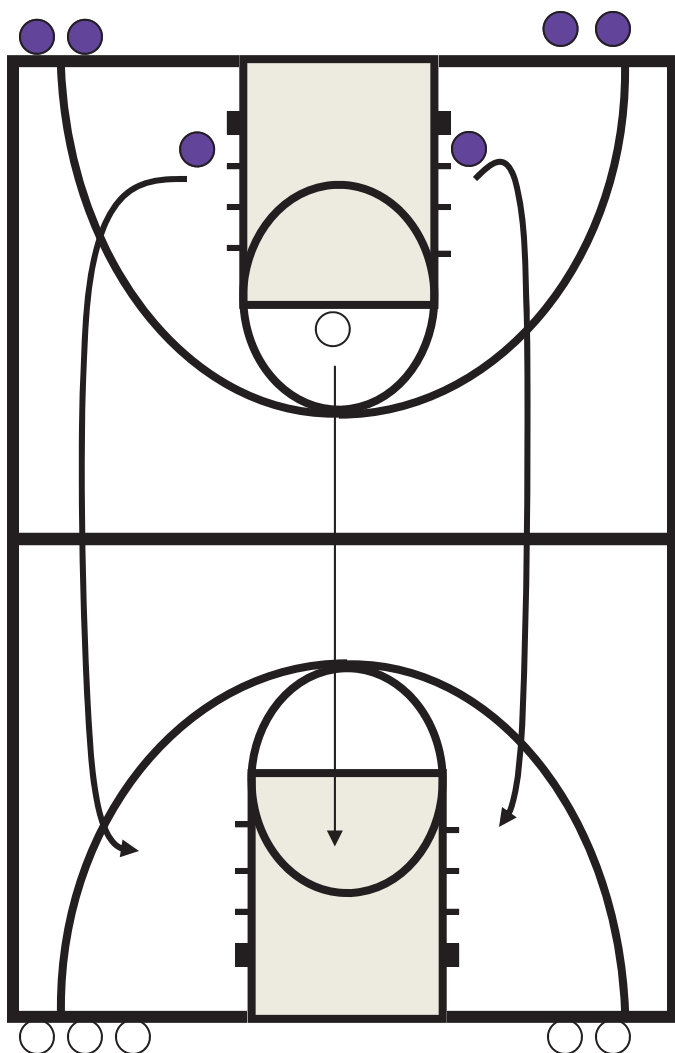
White lined up free throw line extended side line to side line. Purple along baseline side to side.

Coach with the ball. Coach passes ball to Purple player while calling out the name of at least one white team player. That player must touch baseline before coming back onto defense. Repeat coming back with teams flipped.

Variations: Offensive team runs on offensive set until they score, the coach then gives ball to a purple player who begins the offensive attack.

Competitive: Score it with each team getting equal number of possessions on offense and defense.

PROGRESSIVE FASTBREAK

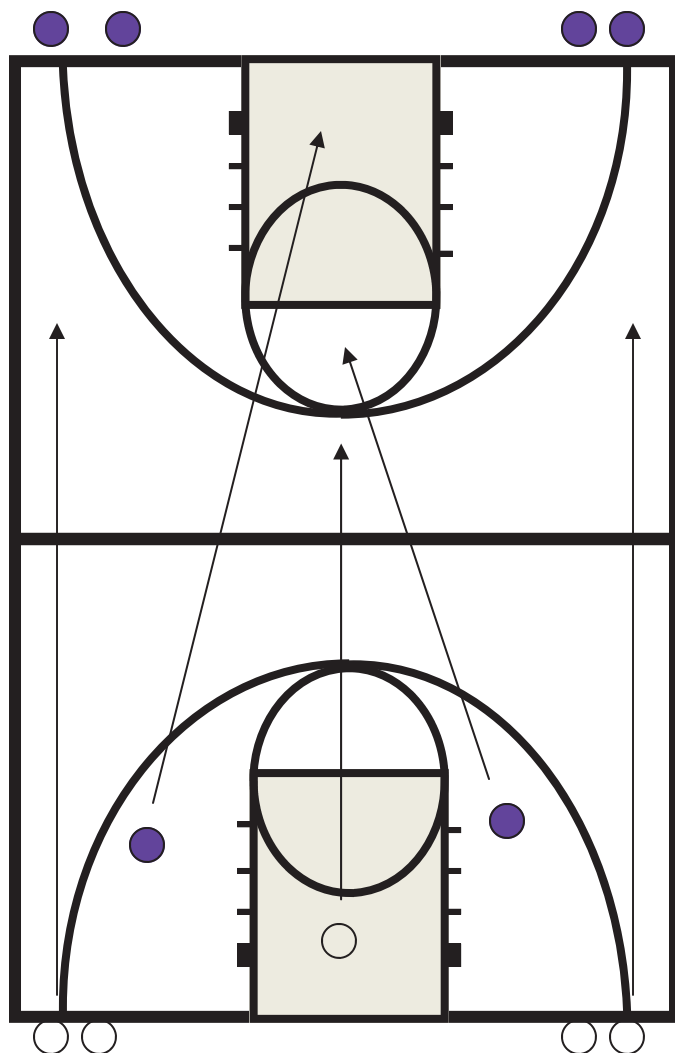


Great drill for teaching transition offense and defense simultaneously. Also stresses importance of making FT's, taking advantage of "numbers" situations.

Divide team into two colors. Try to get even number of guards and forwards if possible but not critical. We score the drill as a normal game with 1s, 2s, and 3s.

White team player attempts a FT. Two Blue defenders play the make/miss. The white player who attempted FT retreats into a 2 on 1 defensive situation against the two blue players.

They play the possession until a basket is scored or the defensive player comes up with the stop.



Once the possession is complete without stopping the action, two additional white team players come from the baseline to join the original white team player as they attack the two blue team players who are retreating into a 3-on-2 advantage/disadvantage situation. Complete this possession then without stopping add TWO blue team players and they attack in a 4-on-3 situation... this continues until you have built it into a 5-on-5 situation. At the completion of the 5-on-5, start again with BLUE team player attempting a FT.

We like to play until each player on each team has attempted a FT or to a certain number of total points. The main thing is that each team has equally number of opportunities to score.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

With the basics of our half court scheme and the basics of our transition defensive philosophy we are almost ready to play a full game. One concept that we need to install the basics of is our BOB defense (Baseline Out of Bounds).

In women's basketball there are seven basic ways that teams score:

- 1) Transition
- 2) Offensive Rebounding
- 3) Free Throws
- 4) Penetration
- 5) Ball Screens
- 6) Half court actions with cuts/screens
- 7) BOB plays

We have enough of our philosophy in place to compete for 40 minutes against the first 6 ways, but if you do not spend time working on BOB defense you can find yourself losing the special situations aspect of a game and in turn losing the game.

Just like our Transition philosophy and Pack philosophy, we have a very specific plan to take away scoring opportunities when the ball is being inbounded from dead ball situations.

The very first point we make with our team is that there is never an acceptable time to give up points on bounds plays as we are defending 5 on 4. If you can't stop a teams actions 5 on 4 your defensive identity and culture are soft and you should never expect to be a good defensive team. With that thought in firmly ingrained in your players heads they will adapt an attitude and have an awareness every time there is a BOB play. Too many teams don't address this as a special situation and therefore do not prepare a plan of attack or practice them. This awareness starts the second a dead ball situation occurs. Our team rallies and organizes quickly before the offense does so that we are never susceptible to quick entry passes for easy baskets. Organizing early also allows our players to begin communicating early so that they can best anticipate actions.

The second concept of our BOB philosophy is **STICKS**. This is our language that has dual meaning. The first is that the four players on defense who are guarding players inbounds are **DOWN** and **READY** and **STICKS** on their match-up. **DOWN** in a stance with a forearm in the body of their match-up. **READY** with their head on a swivel, anticipating actions of the play from scouting or just general knowledge based on set alignment. **STICKS** is their reminder that when the play is initiated we are **STICKING** to our player... never switching, never helping, never hedging.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

With these four players in **STICKS**, the player defending the inbounder is very vocal calling out alignments and preparing herself for her role. We use our “extra” in a couple of different ways which we will discuss in time, but first we teach them to **HELP IN THE DIRECTION OF THE FIRST CUT**. This concept is self explanatory in that we want our free defender to anticipate the actions of the play and help take away the initial quick hit action. She then quickly recovers and might even be able to help in the direction of the second cutter or action. This also allows her to get back into position in the event the play is designed for the inbounder to be a scoring option after inbounding the ball.

If you study inbounds scoring actions you will quickly see that most quick hit scoring plays are designed to take advantage of players who over help on screens or players who switch... pick the picker actions, double screens with slips, pin actions, straight isolations. With that being the case **WE NEVER HELP** on screens... NEVER, EVER, NEVER... we are **STICKING** on our player. We have our extra playing already helping so this gives us trust in each other and individual accountability.

Being in **STICKS** position, it is very easy for us to go **SECOND** on all screens. This allows makes us very difficult to set screens onto. The only exception we have in the screens is when screens occur that are taking the offensive player away from the basket. In this case we will allow players to use their basketball IQ and go **FOURTH** so as not to be susceptible to secondary actions once the ball is inbounded.

By rule, once the ball is inbounded we are no longer in **STICKS** and we are back to our half court philosophy. This is communicated by inbound defender yelling **BALL-IN** so that we trigger all defenders back into PACK mode.

In certain time/score situations we will put max pressure on the inbounders pass rather than help in the direction of the first cut. The other variation is that with this defender she will help on cuts for three seconds then jump hard onto the ball for the remaining two seconds trying to force a violation or errant pass.

To practice this situation, we use opponents plays to prepare against. We don't EVER run our own plays versus our defense. It hurts our confidence in our own plays when they don't work!!

There are certain BOB special situations (i.e. ahead 3 points with under 2 to play) that we will cover before the first real game of the season and we will address those in a SPECIAL SITUATIONS section of installing the PACK LINE.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

It's at this point where we have tried a couple of different methods as far as introducing new information to our teams. One side of the argument is to begin working on guarding some of the most common actions we tend to defend on our schedule. The opposite of this argument is to begin installing portions of our PACK ATTACK (our change of pace defense). We have done it both ways with pretty much equal effectiveness. The argument is usually solved by what our early season schedule looks like and how quickly your players have picked up on the other aspects of your overall defensive scheme.

For Newsletter purposes, we will begin to install how we defend certain actions that we most often encounter in women's college basketball. You should take a few moments here to reflect on your past seasons and make a few notes. Start with the last game of your season last year. What did the team do offensively that you struggled with the most. Work your way backwards through your losses until you have a working list of areas you struggled to defend through out the season. Turn your attention now to your upcoming schedule. Do you know any patterns or actions some of your early opponents might employ on offense? This should give you solid list to begin working on in your practices.

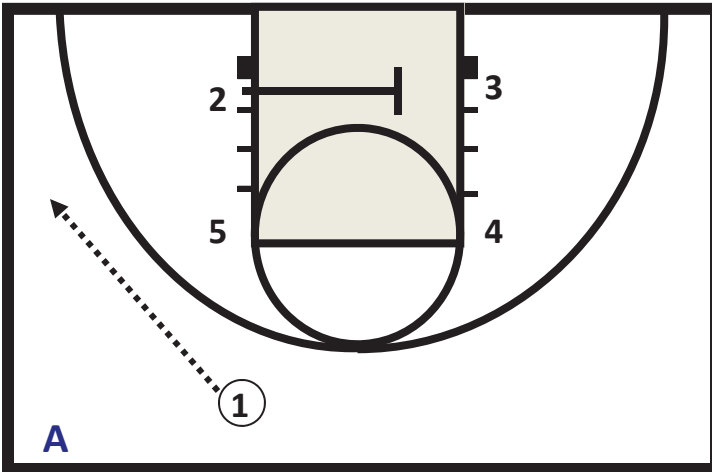
The introduction of these schemes allow you to install your tactics with your **LANGUAGE**. Then as the season progresses it is very easy for your players to draw upon those practices in which these actions were perfected.

For practice purposes and teaching method, we use the whole-part-whole method. We show the entire action 5-on-5. Then break it down into the fewest number of players possible to force us to work with maximum spacing (aka... Worst case scenario). Then go back and build it back up to full 5-On-5.

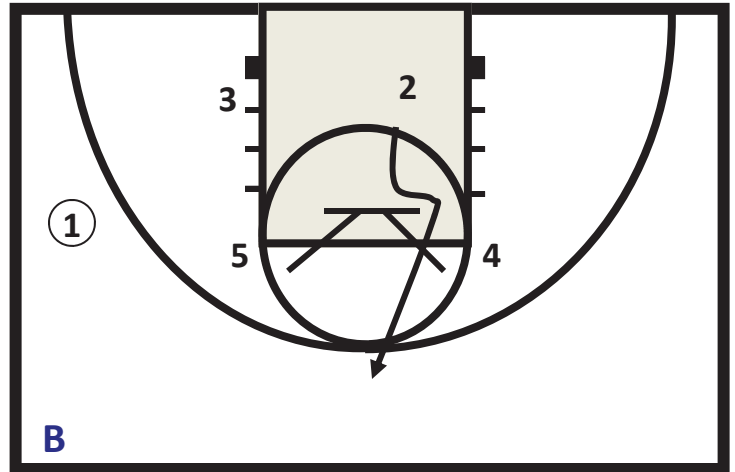
Tell your players that this is base way that you will defend certain actions and that through scouting there might be slight adjustments based on personnel, but this is **WHAT WE DO** when a team tries to execute this action.

Armed with you list of actions to defend and a plan, go to work...

DEFENDING AMERICA'S PLAY



- 1 dribbles to the wing
- 2 cross screens block to block for 3



- 3 posts quickly as 2 goes off the 5/4 double screen...
- ** it's become popular recently for 2 to cut between the 5 and 4 in an elevator screen action

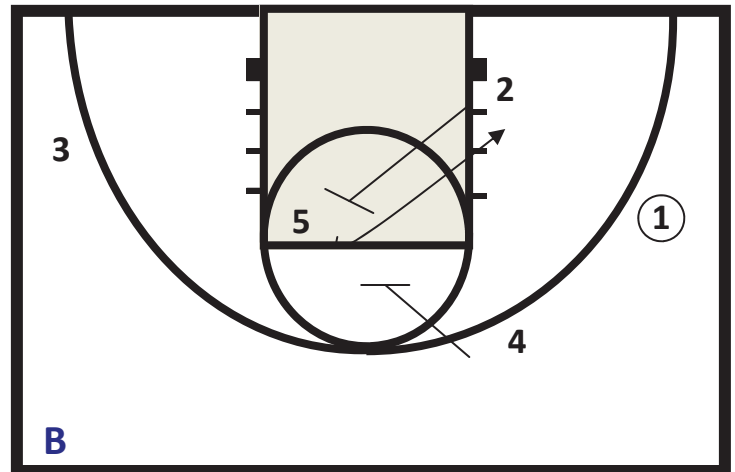
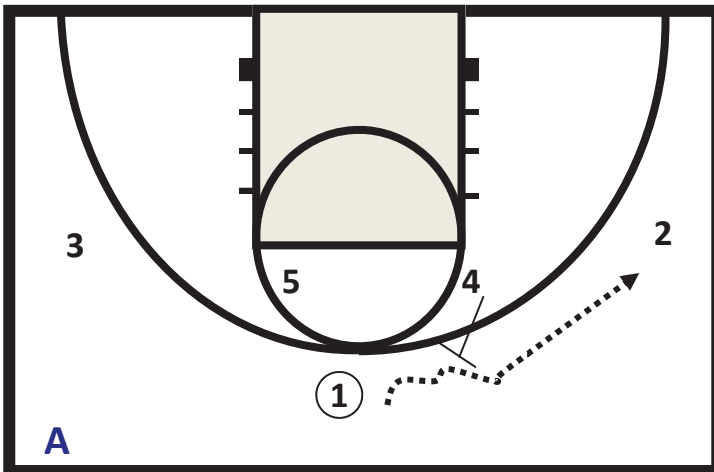
How We Defend

- X1 tough on ball make entry pass tough
- X2 calls the screen and protects the basket as long as needed
- X3 gets to the screen, **hit and peel**, recover to chin on shoulder post defense
- X4 is in the middle of paint seeing both
- X5 is as low as needed to help or deny elbow if 5 player is more of threat than 3

- X1 tough on ball make entry pass tough shaded toward baseline forcing action middle
- X2 recovers to cutter and goes second on the double screen action
- X3 maintains chin on shoulder on top side
- X4 is zoned up ready to take any slip action
- X5 steps out to take the top of the double ready to recover to player on the catch

HIT and PEEL: Technique we teach that we use mainly on cross screens and some back screens. Person guarding person setting the screen calls the type of screen while also seeing the ball incase there is a drive. Person guarding player using the screen **GETS TO THE SCREEN** (physically goes to the screen before the cutter gets there and feels for the screen with her body and arms). As the cutter uses the screen, our defender **HITS** her with a non extended forearm. She then **PEELS** in the direction that the cutter goes. With our screener defense in the **GAP** position it most often forces the cutter to go low side.

DEFENDING UP/DOWN



Lots of teams run this action and get into from several sets... this is from 1-4 high

5 steps out to ball screen for 1

1 dribbles 2 out to the wing

As 1 gets ball to the wing, 2 sets up screen on 5 who posts up...

4 sets down screen for 2...

A lot of people end this action with 4 re-screening for 2 as an on-ball if there was no catch and shoot...

How We Defend

X1 stays tough on the ball with pressure

X2 cuts when 2 cuts to back door

X3 is big in **GAP**

X4 calls screen and **PLUGS** in case 1 turns corner

X5 is in **GAP** jumped to ball when dribbled away from her side...

X1 active hands to take away vision of passer and active feet as not to get beat outside as the post area is emptied

X2 calls the back screen and protects basket as long as needed

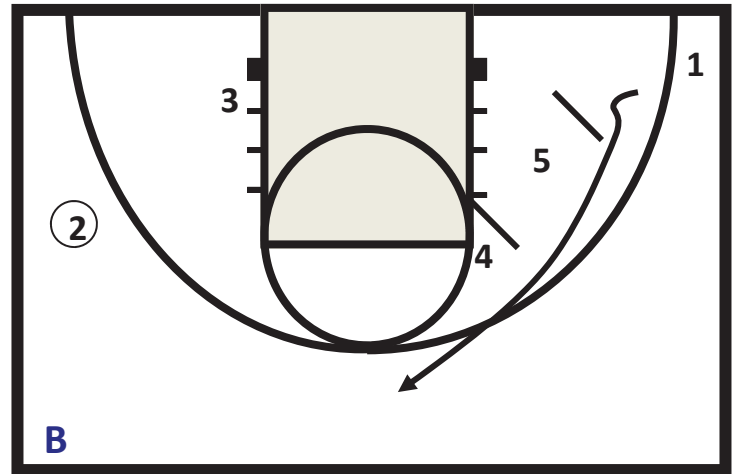
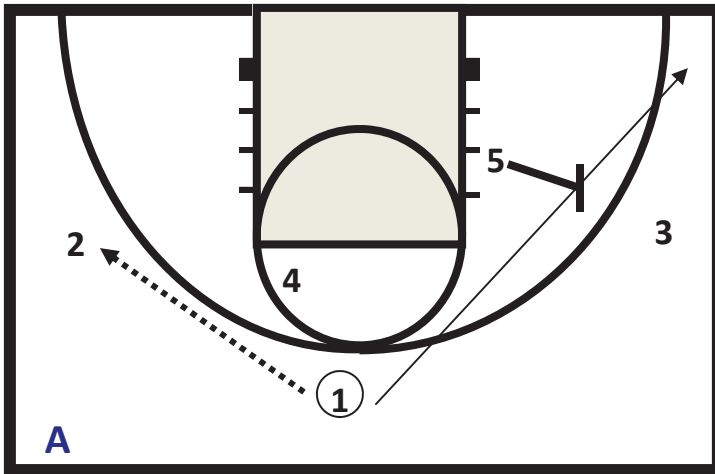
X3 huge in **GAP** with all action in paint

X4 see's ball and calls the down screen on 2

X5 gets to the screen by 2, hit and peel to chin on shoulder as she works 5 out of the post

X2 must now read the down screen... We teach them to go 2nd but allow a quick 3rd if they move the screen since X4 is available to be there **ONLY** if the ball is passed to 2 and X2 is hung up...

DEFENDING BACK STAGGER-DOUBLE



1 passes to 2 and sprints to weakside corner...

5 drops on the cut to get angle for initial backscreen on 3

HOW WE DEFEND IT

- X1 goes with cut but stays in pack line
- X2 close out and apply ball pressure
- X3 gets to the screen, **hit and peel**, recover to chin on shoulder post defense...worst case scenario and we are late she will touch and look on the cut as X5 is protecting...
- X4 has jumped to ball
- X5 calls back screen, protects as much as needed since stagger is coming and she'll be lowest... Also ready as the lowest person if 2 penetrates
- All of the action on the weakside of this play allows you to really protect basket...
- X2 is on her own to guard her yard. She can't get beat to the outside on this set with all the action being in the middle

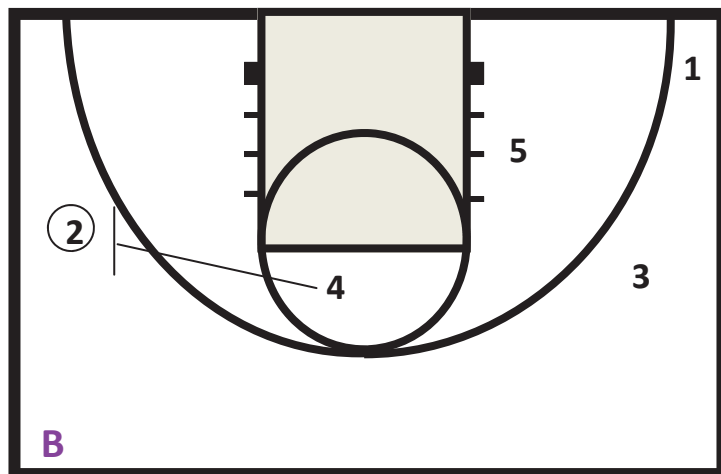
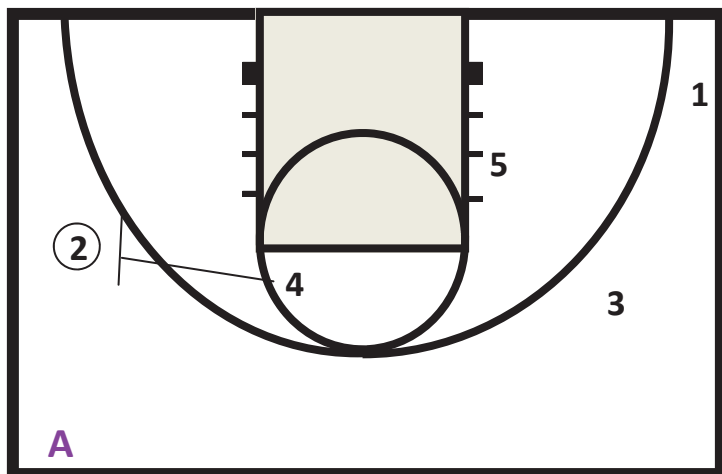
3 posts quickly as 2 goes off the 5/4 stagger....

On 2 to 1 reversal 3 will then come off double screen set by 5 and 4 back to ball side. (this part not diagrammed)

HOW WE DEFEND IT

- X1 cuts when 1 cuts, 2nd on first screen, read next one (2nd if possible but 3rd if they move it)
- X2 Ball pressure
- X3 maintains chin on shoulder on top side
- X4 has the top of stagger and should be there on catch if X1 gets hung up
- X5 is zoned up if anyone slips on the stagger action
- On the 2 to 1 Pass
 - X1 has ball pressure to make any pass tough
 - X2 has jumped inside pack line
 - X3 cuts when 3 cuts going 2nd chasing
 - X4 is calling Double Screen zoned up for slip
 - X5 also calling Double Screen and taking away the tight curl by 3

DEFENDING WING ON-BALL (empty corner)



In this diagram the offense is setting up for a wing ball screen with an empty ball side corner.

Here it is with the 4 player setting the screen on-to the 2 player. The abilities of the 2 and 4 will determine how we play this action.

For this diagram: 2 is a great shooter, 4 is not

HOW WE DEFEND IT

X2 jumps to sideline to force ball into screen
 X4 calls "ball screen" and sprints to beat screen
 X3 is in GAP as is X1 and X5

X4 HEDGES, X2 goes 2nd...

After X4 pushes ball handler two hard dribbles toward the half court line, she recovers to her player and X2 gets the ball under control.

X3 being heavy in GAP gives the ball handler no room to drive it.

Same as first diagram.

Here 2 is a great shooter and 4 is also

HOW WE DEFEND IT

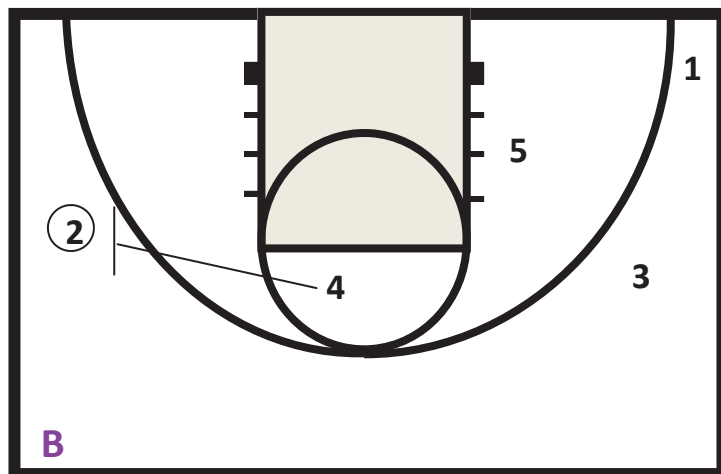
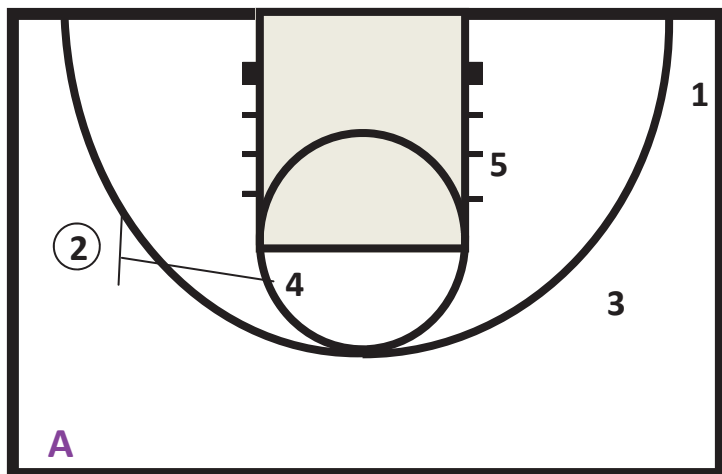
X2 jumps to sideline to force ball into screen
 X4 calls "ball screen" and sprints to beat screen
 X3, X1, X5 are in the GAP

X4 HEDGES, X2 goes 2nd...

As X4 Hedges and X2 goes 2nd, a great shooting 4 player usually slips to space on the arc. In this case X5 communicates "X" to X4. X5 sprints out to take the slipping 4 player.

X3 and X1 being in the GAP are already providing help with the positioning but now are heavy watching the ball to help on 5 player until X4 can recover to the 5.

DEFENDING WING ON-BALL (empty corner)



For this diagram: 2 is NOT shooter, 4 is not

Here 2 is NOT great shooter, 4 is a great shooter

HOW WE DEFEND IT

- X2 jumps to force ball into the screen
- X4 calls "ball screen" and sprints to beat screen
- X3, X1, X5 are in the GAP

With 2 being a NON shooter, X4 PLUGS. We teach X2 to 2nd but can go 3rd if they move the screen lower.

This attack contains a non shooting, driving guard and allows us to maximize pressure and run shot clock down.

HOW WE DEFEND IT

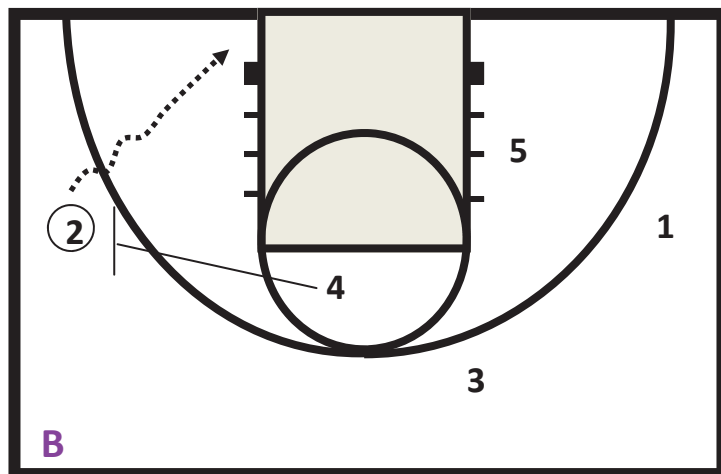
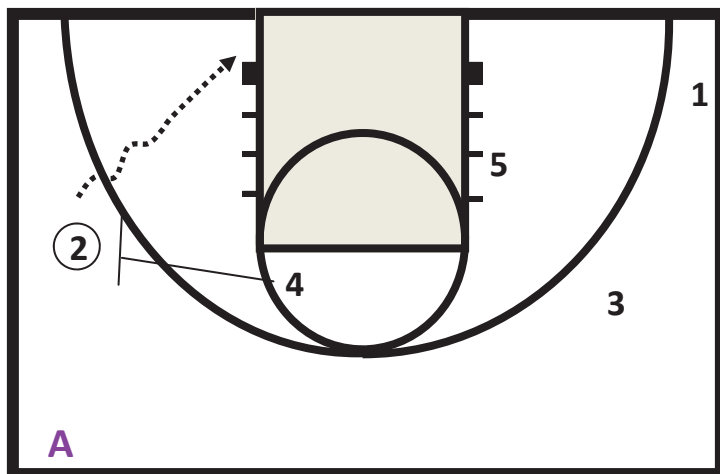
- X2 jumps to sideline to force ball into screen
- X4 calls "ball screen" and sprints to beat screen
- X3, X1, X5 are in the GAP

This personnel is an automatic 4th situation for us

With 2 not being a shooter, the offense is trying to get us to forget about the great shooting 4 player.

Going 4th negates that action and still allows us to control a good driving 2 player without having to work on rotations or provide early help anywhere.

DEFENDING WING ON-BALL (empty corner)



We will work on the situation in which X2 does get beat outside for teaching purposes but all X2's know if this happens they are coming out!!

HOW WE DEFEND IT

X2 blows their assignment and allows 2 player to beat her outside (reject the screen in other defensive terminology).

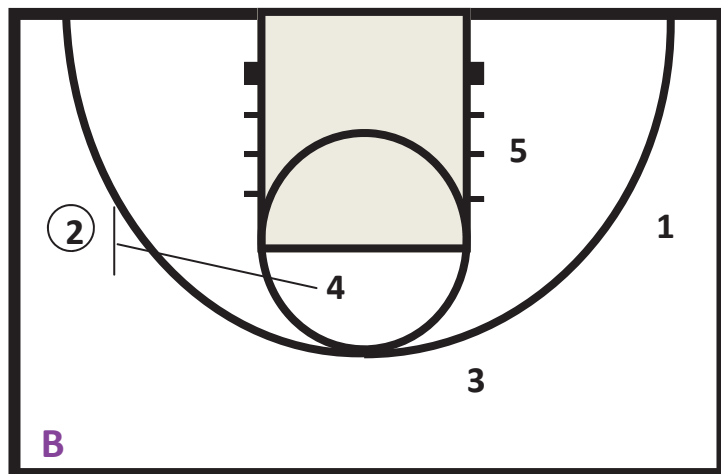
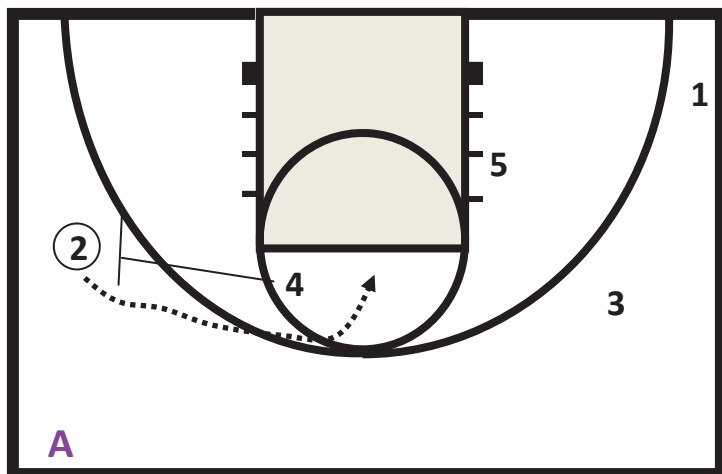
It is in this case that we teach the **LOWEST PERSON** in the **GAP** to provide help onto the ball.

In this alignment it is most likely X1 but she and X5 must be communicating to make sure they are both aware of who is lowest.

The lowest person must get to ball handler before they reach the **POST** area and force ball to be picked up. X2 had better be fighting to get back in position and defend the ball after the dribble is picked up. With X1 rotating to **HELP**, X5 can stay on the post player around the basket. X3 must then get to the **LEVEL OF THE BALL** and be ready to take the first pass out as X1 is recovering.

In the case that X5 was lowest as in the B diagram, X1 is responsible for getting on top of the 5 player around the basket as X5 is helping on the penetration. X3 is again responsible for the first pass out.

DEFENDING WING ON-BALL (empty corner)



The other situation that we will work on that we hope rarely occurs in a game situation is IF the ballhandler using the screen draws help from GAP defender as she uses the screen.... Poor **HEDGE**, bad **PLUG**, or miss communication.

HOW WE DEFEND IT

Something goes wrong with X2 or X4 in the ball screen action and the 2 player attacks the paint and draws the GAPPED defender X3...

X3 dodges and fakes to make the ballhandler pick up the ball.

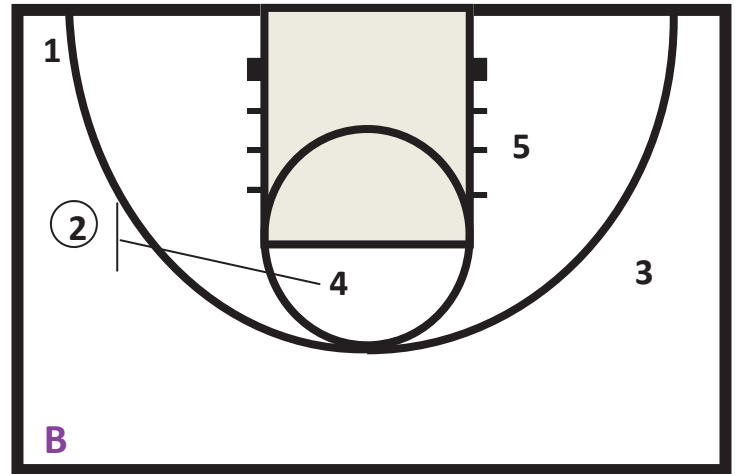
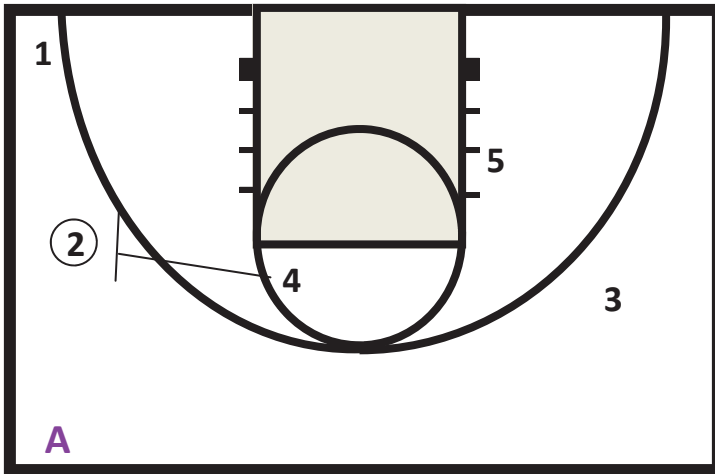
X1 provided **EARLY HELP**. This is the action of moving a couple of steps higher than her normal GAP position so that she can play both the 1 and the 3 offensive players as X3 is recovering from her HELP.

Some defenses refer to this as Help the Helper. For us it's **EARLY HELP**.

The key aspect of all these "rotations" is that they are minimized by being the proper position to start with and also moving on the airtime of any pass to the next proper position.

When we are moving as a **PACK**, these actions are a thing of beauty even though we hope they rarely happen.

DEFENDING WING ON-BALL (occupied corner)



In this diagram the offense is setting up for a wing ball screen with an occupied ball side corner.

All of our actions with X2 and X4 are the same as empty corner again based on the personnel that is using the screen. Here we diagram 1 being in the corner but it could be any player.

HOW WE DEFEND IT

X2 jumps to sideline to force ball into screen as there is no where for them to drive it to outside

X4 calls “ball screen” and sprints to beat screen

X3 is in GAP as is X1 and X5

X4 HEDGES, PLUGS, or goes 4th

X2 goes 2nd, 3rd, or 4th.

The presence of X1 in the GAP on ball side allows her to provide **EARLY HELP** on an X4 roll or Step Out. **EARLY HELP** is provided by X1 who dodges and fakes between 1 and 4.

This action again strings out the offensive action and eliminates direct passes that lead to baskets.

It is with an occupied corner that we get VERY aggressive from time to time and TRAP the ball screen action. Have a special call for this play that you can vary from game to game to keep opponents guessing. We have called it **MOUSE, FIRE, STORM, FLOOD** in the past. One season we used the mascot of our opponent.

HOW WE DEFEND IT

X2 jumps to sideline to force ball into screen

X4 calls “ball screen” and sprints to beat screen

X3, X1, X5 are in the **GAP**

As 2 uses the ball screen, X4 meets her in a stance and actively pushes toward half court AND the sideline. X2 aggressively closes the TRAP.

X1 takes away the most direct pass back to 4 or back to 1. X5 and X3 are “zoned up” looking for any pass out of the TRAP.

We expect any tipped or deflected pass to be stolen and turned into a transition basket.

This action is the first component of our **PACK ATTACK** which we will begin to introduce now.

PACK LINE DEFENSE

Before we begin to introduce some components of PACK ATTACK, let's take a quick inventory and revamp a couple of things that you have been doing daily up until this point.

Hopefully by now your team is developing some very good habits. Their CLOSE-OUTS are solid. Their COMMUNICATION is loud and enthusiastic. They have begun to master the WALL UP concept. They can adjust to 2nd, 3rd, and 4th calls on the fly. Your FULLBACK and HALFBACK are consistent in their efforts to sprint back to POINT and TALK. They build walls in GAPS and are really starting to develop a culture of toughness.

You as a coach should be noticing in your other drills and scrimmages that your team has begun to do these three things:

- 1) Eliminate transition lay-ups
- 2) Drastically decreased your number of fouls
- 3) Limit the number of uncontested shots the offense is getting

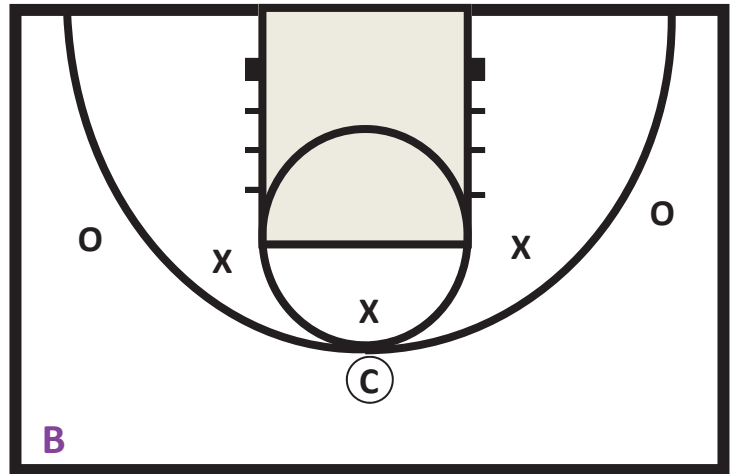
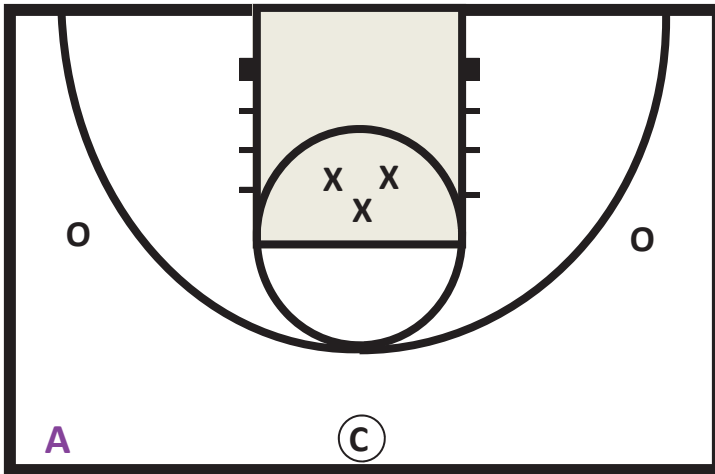
It is probably at this point too, that you are growing VERY frustrated with your team's offense execution!! If you have, then your PACKLINE is working. This is THE exact effect you want. YOUR OFFENSE can't score on YOUR DEFENSE!! Some coaches panic at this point. Some coaches begin to think they need to work on their offense more. Some coaches begin to worry they won't be able to score enough points to win games. DON'T BE THAT COACH.

This is a GOOD thing.

In fact, through the years we have learned NOT to run our set actions against OUR defense so that we don't lose confidence in them. To combat this, use a practice squad if you have one. Use a JV team or simply just put some offense in that you know some of your opponents will use against you. Whatever you decide, make sure you take this frustration as a compliment and also as a sign of how difficult your team is going to be come tourney time!!

I would also guess that you have now been doing many of the same drills for a couple of straight weeks. It's time to introduce a couple of new drills teach the same things you have been but with a new twist. Keep it fresh. This will energize your team and they will never know that you are really just working on the same techniques that you have been.

HUSKY CLOSEOUTS



Great drill to work on Close-outs, GAPS, guarding the ball, and rebounding. Also morphs into a good transition defense/offense drill.

HUSKY CLOSEOUTS

Three defensive players begin with both feet in the paint. Coach with ball around the half court line.

Coach initiates drill with a dribble that defenders react to by picking up the ball before it is dribbled to the arc and the other two by getting to their **GAPS**. Coach passes the ball to one of the wings and defense adjusts. Offense rules are that only the ball handler can attack inside the three point arc and no ball screens.

The ball is passed and dribbled until Coach is satisfied with defense. Coach takes a shot. Both offensive players crash the boards hard. Coach does not rebound as they are the “get back girl” for the other team. Her defender sprints to the LOGO to get any loose ball, tipped rebound.

The three original defenders now go in transition offense against the two original offensive players.

Now you can work both sides of the ball as you teach your **TRANSITION DEFENSE** concepts as well as work your offensive players on making good decisions in a 3 on 2 situation.

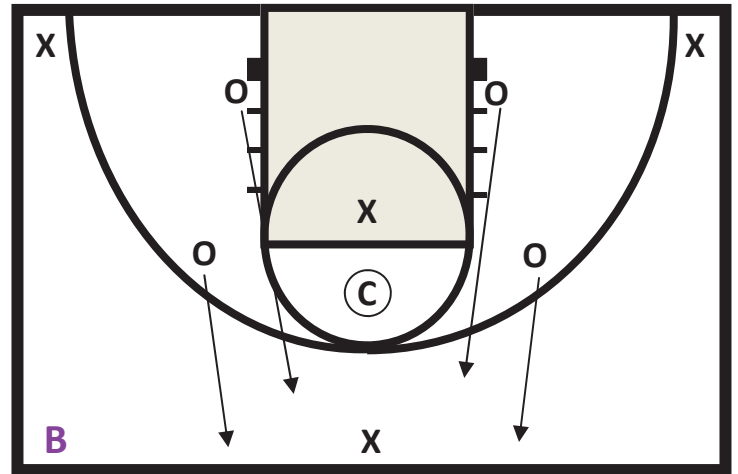
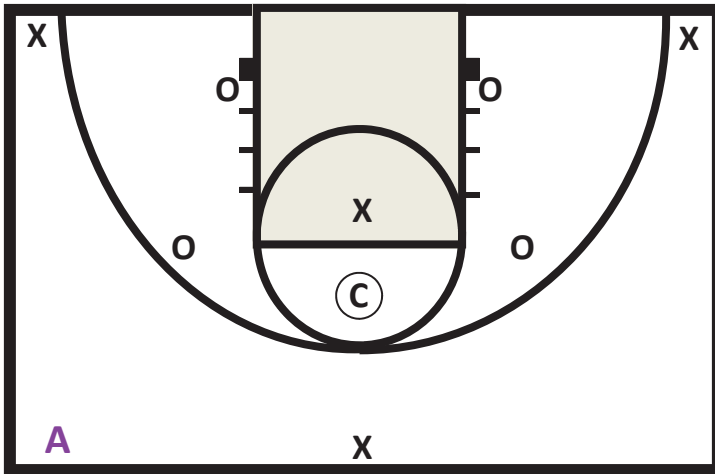
Flip it over on other end and recycle the drill.

You can make this drill competitive by scoring it.

You can build it up into 4 on 3 as well.

This drill can replace **CHAIR CLOSEOUTS** or **VEGAS CLOSEOUTS** for a couple of practices.

TURNOVER TRANSITION



Designed to work on transition situations off turnovers rather than rebounds. A teams ability to organize quickly to stop easy basket is key.

TURNOVER TRANSITION

Two offensive players on the block and two offensive players a step off the elbow.

A defensive player in each corner, one on the nail, one at half court.

Coach with ball initiates drill by dropping it to any of the offensive players. Offense scoops the ball and attacks in transition.

Defenders must **SPRINT** back. **POINT and TALK**. Get **ON ASSIGNMENT**.

This drill can replace Change Drill, Tip Drill, Get Back, and Push.

Easy to make competitive with scoring system and easy to tweak to work specific types of turnovers that might be plaguing your squad.

PACK ATTACK

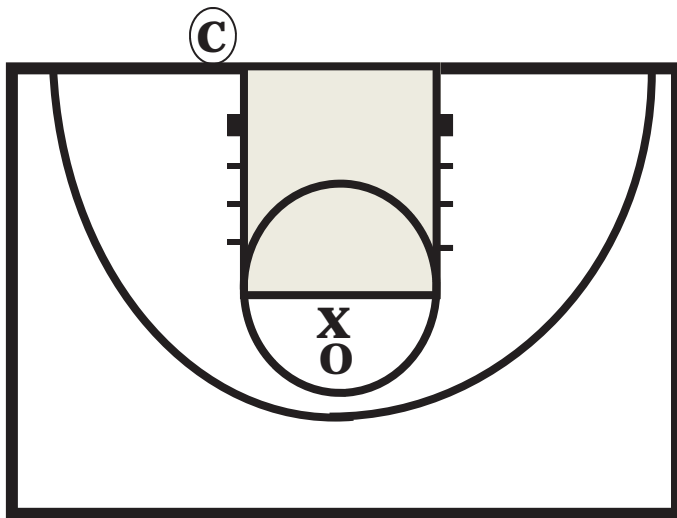
PACK ATTACK is our language for our change up defense. Rather than tweak aspects of our basic PACK LINE into a more pressurized scheme, we teach a completely separate tactical plan. We feel this allows our players to separate them in their minds eliminating confusion and keeping accountability much more consistent. We are either in a PACK LINE situation or a PACK ATTACK situation. There is no gray area. It is cut and dry.

We use the word ATTACK because this is our defense we employ when we are trying to aggressively turn our opponent over for easy baskets. We want our players in ATTACK mode. This defense can be used if we are trying to change the tempo of a game, as an element of surprise, or as a come from behind defense. Which ever the case may be, we want our players to be able to switch their thinking seamlessly.

The first phase of the ATTACK is the introduction of a full court press. We typically use this after a made FT or a dead ball situation in the back court.

There is nothing earth shattering about our plan. We want to apply great pressure on the inbounds passer and deny any initial entry pass. Our initial thoughts are very similar to those we expressed in our earlier discussion on BOB plays. We want our players to be **DOWN AND READY** and in **STICKS** position. We will allow some switching as teams attempt to entry the ball. It is something that requires great communication and practice time. It is always our goal to force a five second violation or a turnover.

We begin with a very basic drill of one on one deny. Since we don't work on denying passes in the half court, this is a completely new concept in our practices. As with all our drills we try to teach "worst case scenarios" or "hardest possible situation" so that games are easy. This is all we teach on Day 1 of the PACK ATTACK.



Coach with the ball.

Defense in **STICKS** position.

Offense has entire half court to get open

Defense must deny any direct entry

Lob passes are not allowed

If defense steals inbounds they attack the basket and finish (without defense).

We want to instill quick score mentality.

Then jump right back into denial.

We will add a second offensive and defensive player to allow them to begin working on communication of switches. We do not progress from this drill until we can effectively DENY entry.

PACK ATTACK

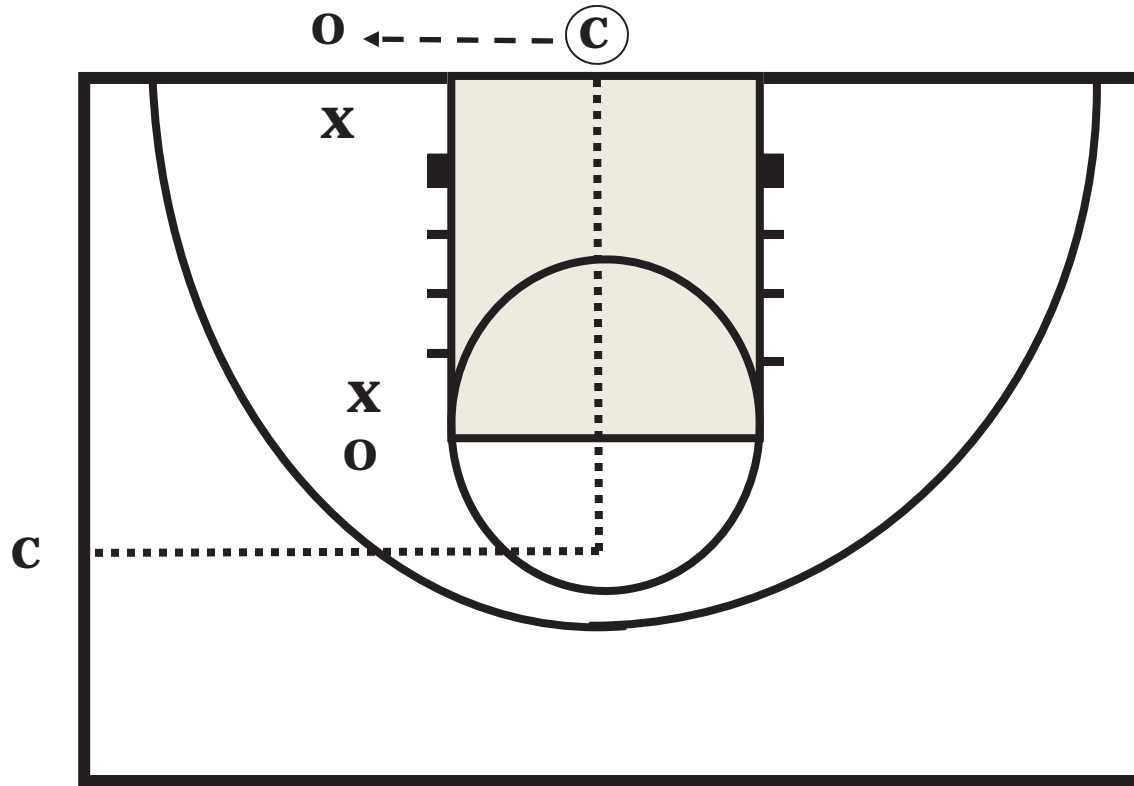
With our initial mindset installed for the **PACK ATTACK** mentality, we are ready to start building on that and toward 5-on-5 situations. Today, we add the element of pressure on the inbound passer. In time, we will have four different ways we defend the inbound passer but we begin with the theme of staying in our ATTACK mode... intense ball pressure.

As mentioned earlier, we employ the full court on full court dead ball situations in which the inbound passer is NOT allowed to run the baseline. We put our tallest, most athletic player in this role. Ideally, it's your 4 player with size, long arms, leaping ability, great timing, and high energy. In the absence of all these traits, err on the side of energy. An energetic player on the ball can greatly effect the success of your press. Depending on who the offense designates to be the inbound passer, your other four players must quickly match up to their most logical match-ups. This most often is simply solved by having your 3 and 5 player communicate so that we best match with the opponents press break attack. We will get to drilling that later, but for now we simply let your designated player work on their skills of pressuring and tipping balls.

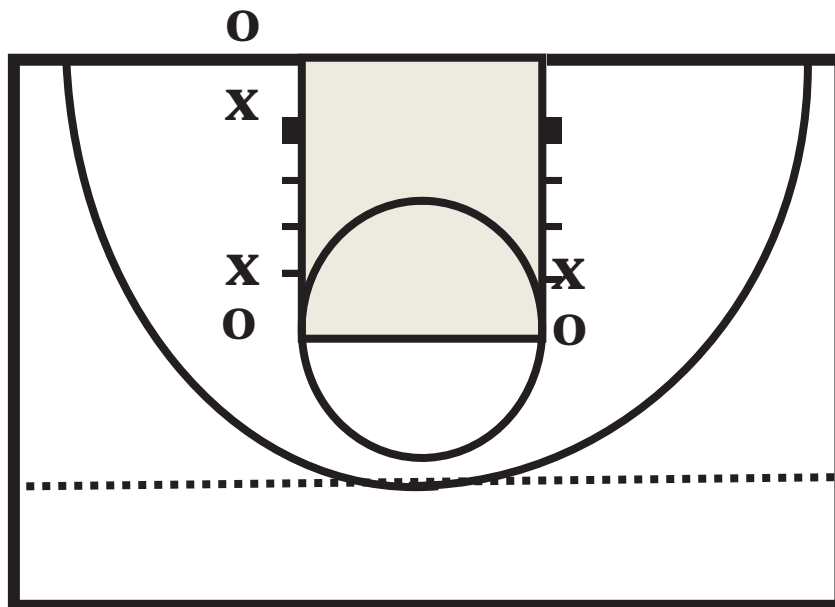
We use the drill on the next page to teach this. Divide team in two colors. One team on offense and one will be on defense for five possessions then we will flip it over. Since we are building from 2-on-2, we shrink the court a little. Place a Coach or Manager or even players from the defense team in position to make sure the offensive player does not receive and entry pass outside our designated area. Coach will toss the ball to inbound passer as if she were an official so inbound defender can work on timing her pressure. I will begin counting as soon as the passer touches the ball and continue the count until the ball is successfully inbounded. It's the defenses goal to deny the entry pass as long as possible!! Even though 5 seconds creates a violation we reward the defense by letting them continuing denying as long as possible. The defense is awarded a POINT for each second they deny the successful inbound pass. Making the idea for the defense to pressure and deny as long as possible which we hope in time eliminates the natural response to losing focus as the five second count nears. The defense is also rewarded with a bonus score IF they force a turnover. This keeps your offensive team from trying to "beat the drill" by risking an inbound pass that could be stolen. If we steal the inbounds pass, we start from drill #1 teaching them to take it to score. If they steal it, they lay the ball in and the offense must inbound the ball again still counting as the same possession... This rule is important in keeping your offense from just quickly trying to inbound the ball in few seconds.

Each team gets five possessions on defense and we determine a winner.

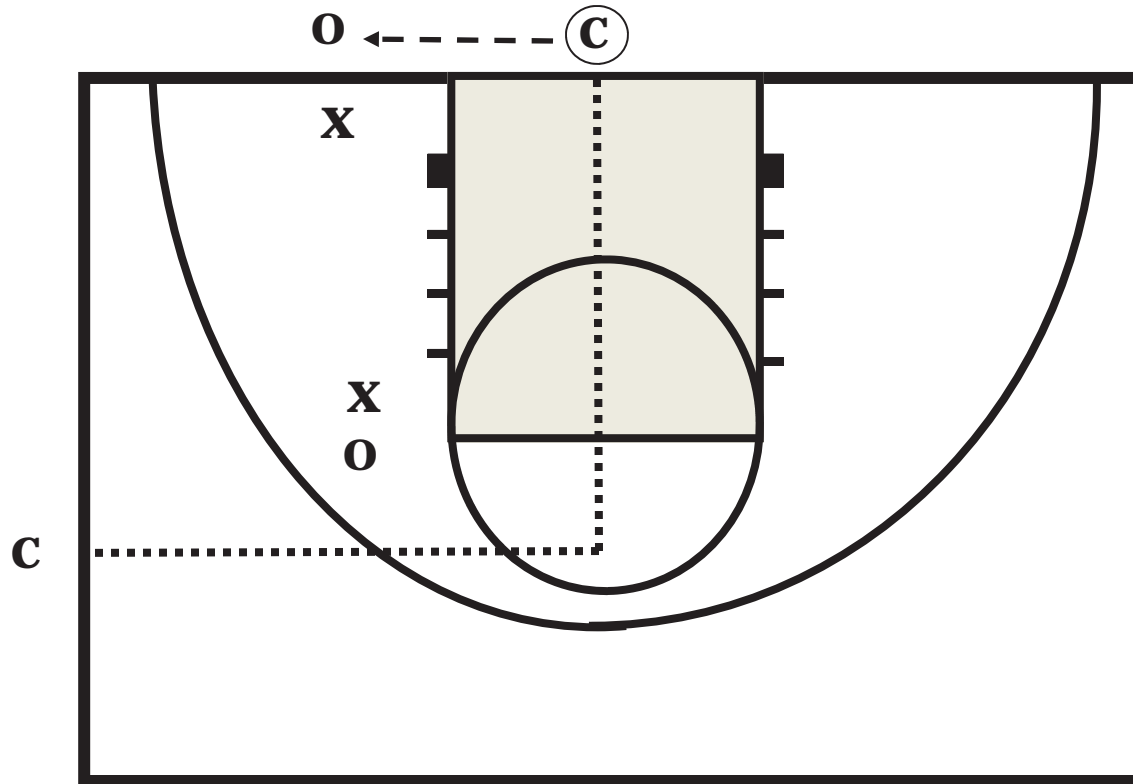
PACK ATTACK



Next we will add another offensive player and another defensive player. We expand the CATCH area slightly but the rules will be the same. For teaching purposes, we will tell the two offensive players where they will start and how they will initially try to get open. Teams normally run a stack/pop or a screen/roll scenario. This does give the advantage to the defense but allows us to teach how we guard specific actions that we see during the season. As the year progresses, we will eliminate this advantage from the defense and allow the offense to do whatever they want to get themselves open.



PACK ATTACK



Our next building block is to switch our pressure ATTACK of the inbound defender. Again, we go back to our 2-on-2 framework to begin introducing and drilling.

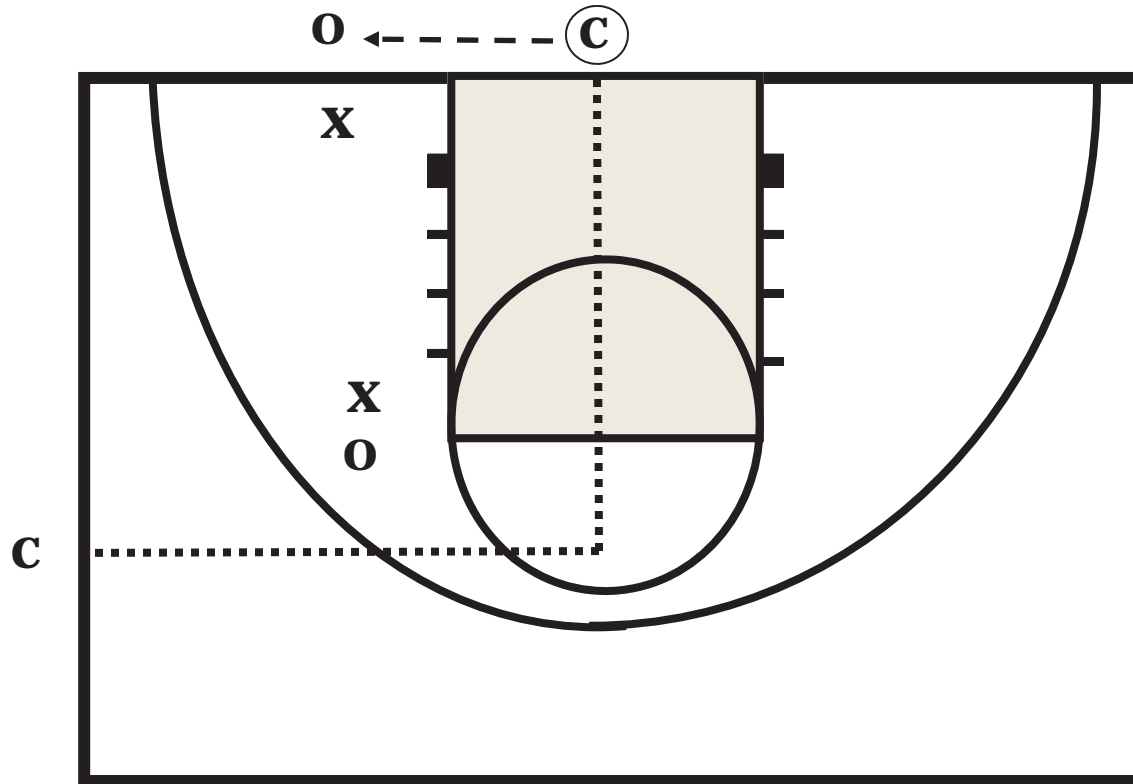
The variation teaches the inbound defender to turn and deny cuts rather than apply pressure to the inbound passer.

This action keeps the inbound passer guessing and also changes how teams must break your pressure.

As the coach is tossing the ball to the inbound passer, the inbound defender turns and helps her teammate deny the entry pass to the offensive player. We use the same GAME rules to make this a competitive situation.

Again we build this drill into a 3 v 3, 4 v 4, and 5 v 5 situation as the year progresses. We can introduce specific press break actions that we routinely defend and through scouting ones that might be utilized by upcoming opponents.

PACK ATTACK



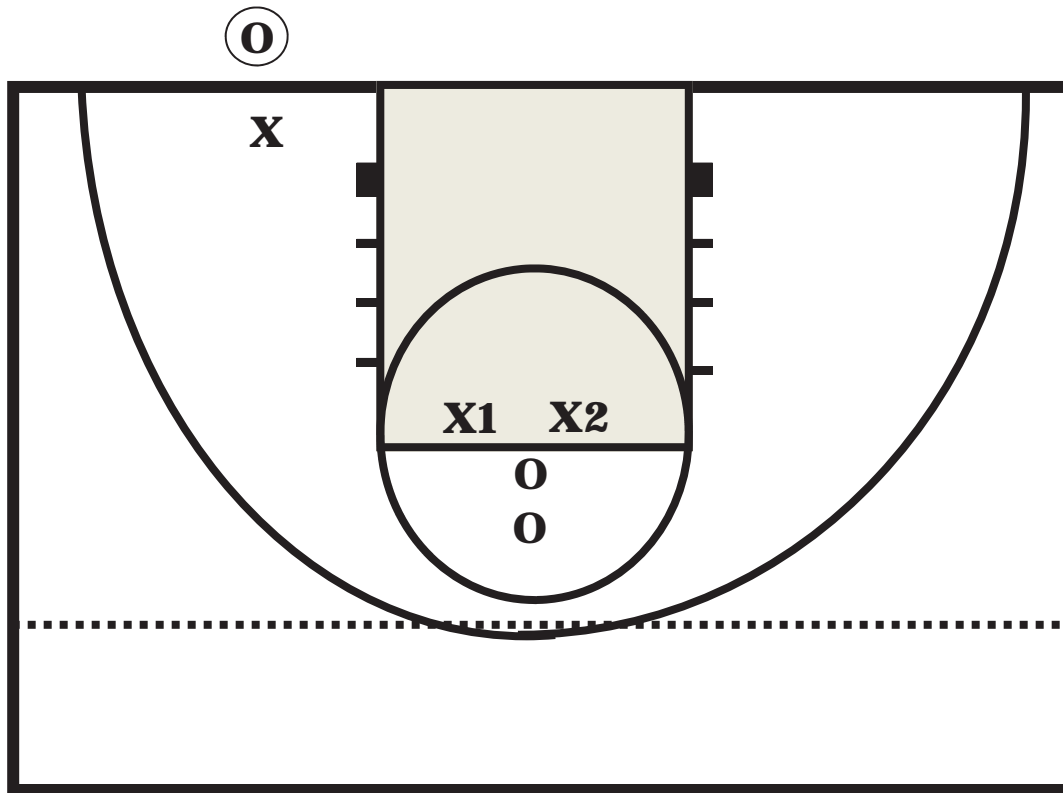
The last two tactics we introduce are the same actions just performed in opposite sequence of each other.

Tactic One: The inbound defender turns around and denies the cutters as we just drilled for the first three seconds of the count. She then turns and puts intense on ball pressure for the remaining seconds of the count. Not only does this hopefully disrupt and distract the inbound passer, it will also sometimes effect her location on the court. If you are a team that presses every possession, you will notice the inbound passer continually backing up further and further from the baseline. If you don't have a wall or a line of cheerleaders there you will see them back up as far as the band!! When we had Amber Harris at Xavier on the ball, players would be 8-10 feet behind the line. Each step she takes back the more time our defenders guarding cutters have to react to passes. If the inbound passer notices there is no one contesting her, she may inch closer to the line and then be more effected by our pressure as the count gets late forcing her into a pressured, quick decision.

Tactic Two: The inbound starts on the ball for the first three seconds then turns and denies.

These variations don't allow a team to get comfortable against your attack. They require your opponents to prepare for each scenario in their scouting preparation. They require a lot of your opponents than they require of you in practice time. And when you mix them up effectively during a game you are well on your way to having a strong base for your PACK ATTACK.

PACK ATTACK: Defending Stack and Go



The first action we work against is the STACK and GO attack that many teams use to break presses. The offense gets into a two player stack and through some form of communication, one breaks in one direction and the other goes opposite. They could utilize some screening sequence as well.

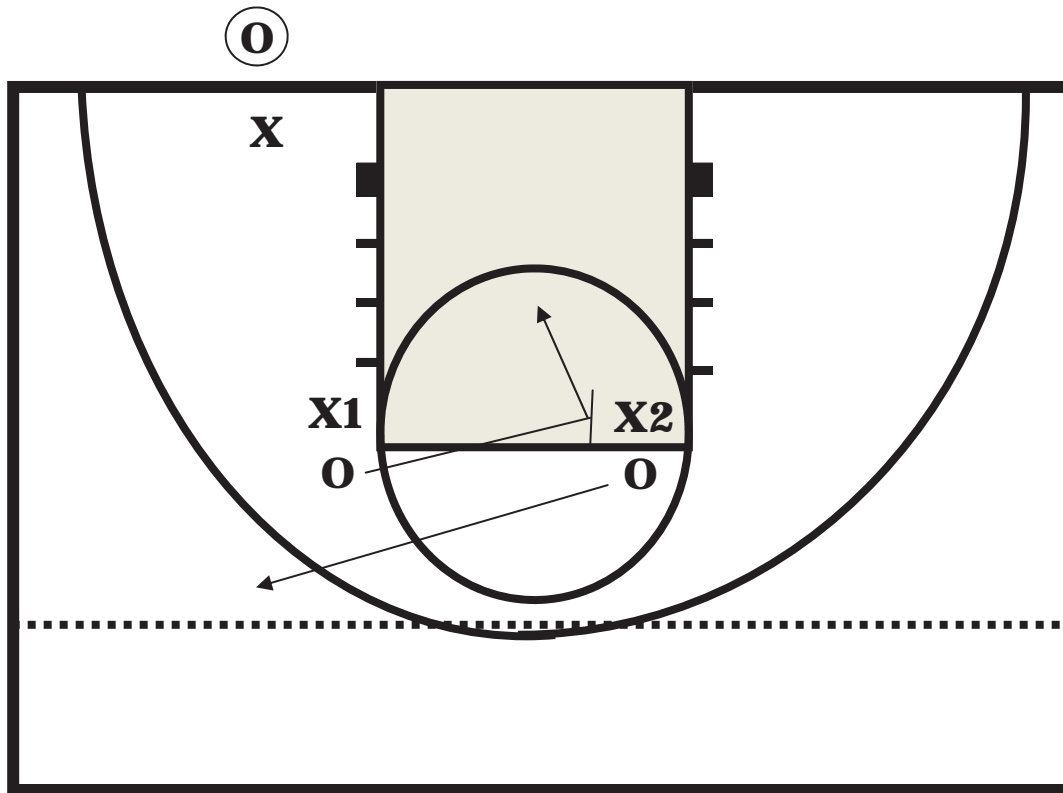
Either we, we teach/drill our players to communicate as well. X1 will take first cutter in their direction. This means X2 must TOUCH the second offensive player and deny. If she doesn't go TOUCH, then it will be very difficult to deny if this player might break long or in the same direction of the first cutter.

Through clear communication and practice you should expect successful denial from this set 8 out of 10 times.

You can allow on ball defender to experiment with their tactics. Historically this is a quick hitting entry, so I recommend either the full pressure or the turn and deny. The hybrid method works best on slower entry attacks.

We use the dotted line only when working three on three to keep inbound pass from being a simple lob that one of our other players might have a chance to intercept or deflect.

PACK ATTACK: Defending Screen and Roll



This is the second most common break we face. The offensive team utilize a screen across/ seal and roll tactic to break our pressure against the switch. When executed properly against an unaware defender this can be very effective.

Through drilling we feel we prepare our players to defend it better than they normally would. We teach X2 to be aware of the roll action and give the freedom to position herself to best fight around to deny the quick entry.

We also teach the inbound pass defender to angle her body at about the count of 2 and half between the ball and this angle of pass. This is also one of those times we might incorporate the hybrid attack. Time your opponent and see at what count they are looking to feed this roller/pinner and simply turn and take it away with inbound pass defender.

You as a coach through scouting and watching a team's attack early in the game can be very helpful in adjusting your second half attack or maybe how you defend in a late game situation.

Practice them a variety of ways to see what best suits your team and know what works best.

PACK ATTACK

With our Full Court Attack in place, we next turn to our half court Pack Attack actions. We have used a variety of defenses in the half court as our “change up” over the past seasons. Each year we try to best determine the strengths of our team and try to choose the most appropriate Attack.

This is a defense that we will use 5-10 possessions a game to change tempo, create a turnover, or surprise an opponent. Like the full court attack it can be used in time/score situations as well to protect a lead or overcome a deficit.

Another benefit we find is that opponents must spend some of their valuable preparation time addressing it. If it’s only ten minutes of their practice or shoot around, that is ten less minutes they can focus on another aspect of preparation or their own stuff. Simply getting it on film forces a coach to at the very least think about it whether they actually prepare their team for it.

With it not being our primary defense we also will not spend as much time on it during practice so we always choose a defense that can be productive without having to work on it daily. Just like a great pitcher in baseball, we will stick with our best stuff but a change up can make us very difficult to play against.

At Xavier we utilized a 1-3-1 due to the abilities of a 6-5 Amber Harris who we could play on the top and a disciplined Senior point guard, Special Jennings, who patrolled the back line. With various trapping schemes and ability to show zone and go man, we were able to keep teams off balance while creating a couple of easy baskets a game from steals with Amber leading the break to finish in transition. I think the 1-3-1 is a wonderful defense given the proper personnel and will write up the 1-3-1 attack we used there in time, but for now I want to address the Attack we are installing at Washington. I believe it is a defense that fits a more standard personnel set that more teams have. (I know how rare a 6-5 athlete is in women’s basketball)

We were inspired by Russ Davis and his Vanguard team’s version of the BUZZ DEFENSE. It’s a defense that has been around for years and I first saw Jerry Finkbeiner utilize it with his great teams at Southern Nazarene. He has taken it to Oral Roberts with a great deal of success as well. Russ Davis will tell you it was from facing Jerry’s teams that led him to tweaking it to fit his personnel and his style of coaching. Mike Divilbiss also had great success with it at Lewis and Clark State and now uses it at Wisconsin Green Bay. You can find some great video’s from these coaches and would encourage you to hear them speak at clinics given the opportunity.

After spending time with these coaches and teams, we have modified some things to fit our players here and have slowly been implementing the schemes during this first season here in Seattle.

Other than fitting our personnel, the main reason we choose this as our PACK ATTACK was that it is a complete departure from the mindset we instill with our PACK LINE. When we go to ATTACK from PACK, we want a SWITCH to go off in our players minds that we are in something completely different. Different rules. Different expectations. Different results. Different.

PACK ATTACK

We don't simply say "Go extend the pressure in PACK LINE, but just do it harder or more aggressive." To us, that doesn't work. It doesn't send the right mental message to our players. As a result of being so totally different, you can sense a change in the mindset of your players the second you make the SWITCH. The SWITCH triggers the players mind to go into a different mode. An ATTACK mode.

The last reason I fell in love with this defense is the very reason I am sharing it with you. It doesn't matter if you know what we are trying to do. It's not a secret. There aren't any tricks to the rotations. If you are playing us, I will send you the exact slides we are going to use. I will send you the diagrams of where we are going to be and where we are going to trap. It will then be up to you to come up with a plan to run against each and decide how much time you need to spend on it with on your team for the 5-10 possessions we might run it against you. And knowing all along that if we have early success with it, you might see it for 20-25!!

Coaches who utilize this defense will tell you that their players enjoy practicing it as much as they love playing it. For us with it being so different from the PACK, our players go into an energized mode that is fun to see.

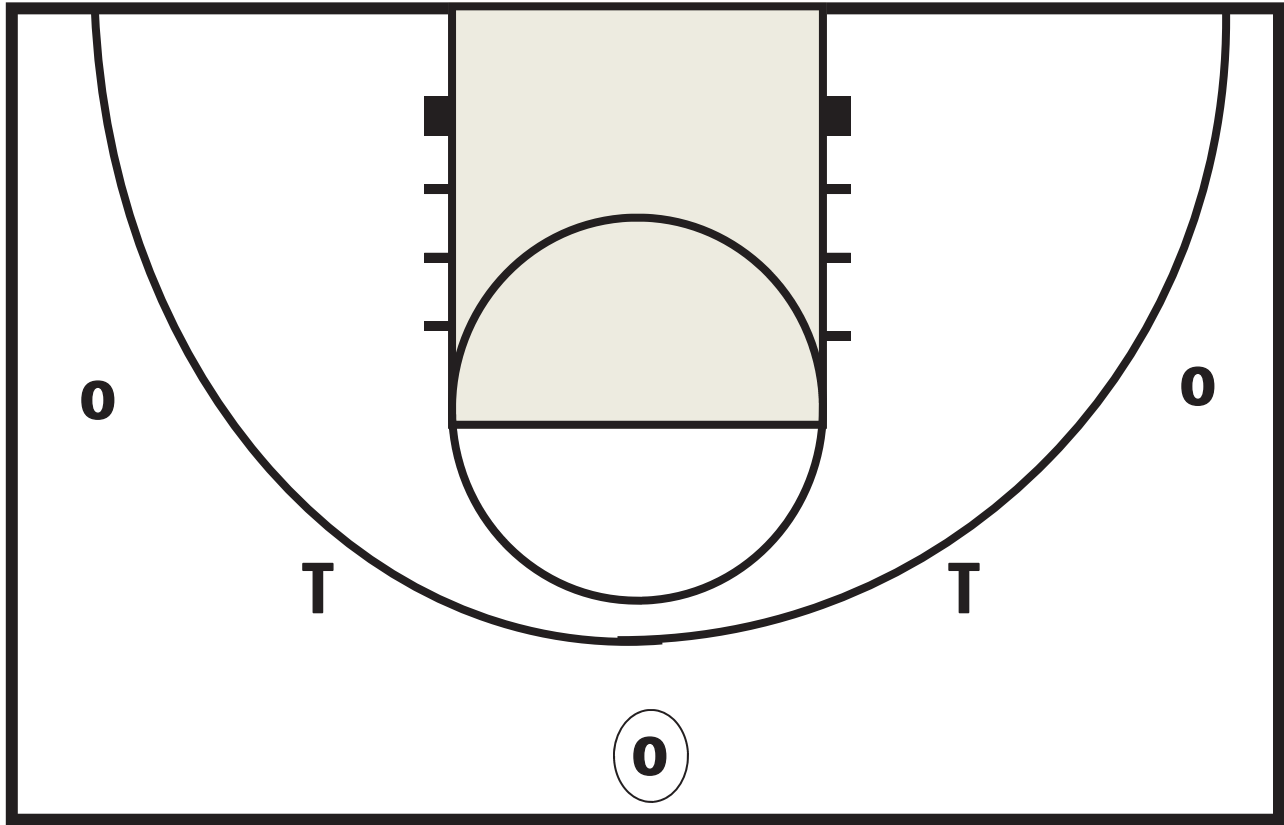
Before you start making you practice plan for tomorrow with the PACK ATTACK on it, make sure you are okay as a coach with a couple of things:

- 1) telling players there are no "WHAT IF" questions EVER when working on this defense
- 2) the ball will get to some places on the court you normally would lose your mind over it going but it won't score nearly as often as you think
- 3) just like with any zone, rebounding is a challenge, so off set by developing great rebounders and live with occasional offensive rebound
- 4) working it 5-on-5. You really can't do "BREAKDOWNS" with it because it truly is a PACK mentality to execute properly.
- 5) make sure you are okay with your coaching buddies to look at it and say "well, all I am going to do is put a player here, and a player here, and one here... do this, do that, and we'll shoot a lay-up or open three. I tell you this because it will happen all the time but in reality what they SAY they would do would rarely if ever work!! It does look open in spots for sure but you really will be surprised how often those open spots really aren't so open!!

If you passed that test , if you believe in it, I think you can run it with just about any combination of players... size, speed, abilities, etc.

If you are still interested, let's go to DAY 1...

PACK ATTACK



Day ONE...

Tell your players about the no “WHAT IF” question rule. Tell them they aren’t allowed to ask “what if a team does this” or “what if someone does this” that they are done with it for the day and move onto conditioning. With that said, the same goes for you as coaches at this point as we begin talking through the entire defense. Questions are fine. WHAT IFs are NOT!!!

Tell them that defense is fun to play and the only way they can really make you upset it is if they aren’t playing HARD and aren’t in ATTACK mode.

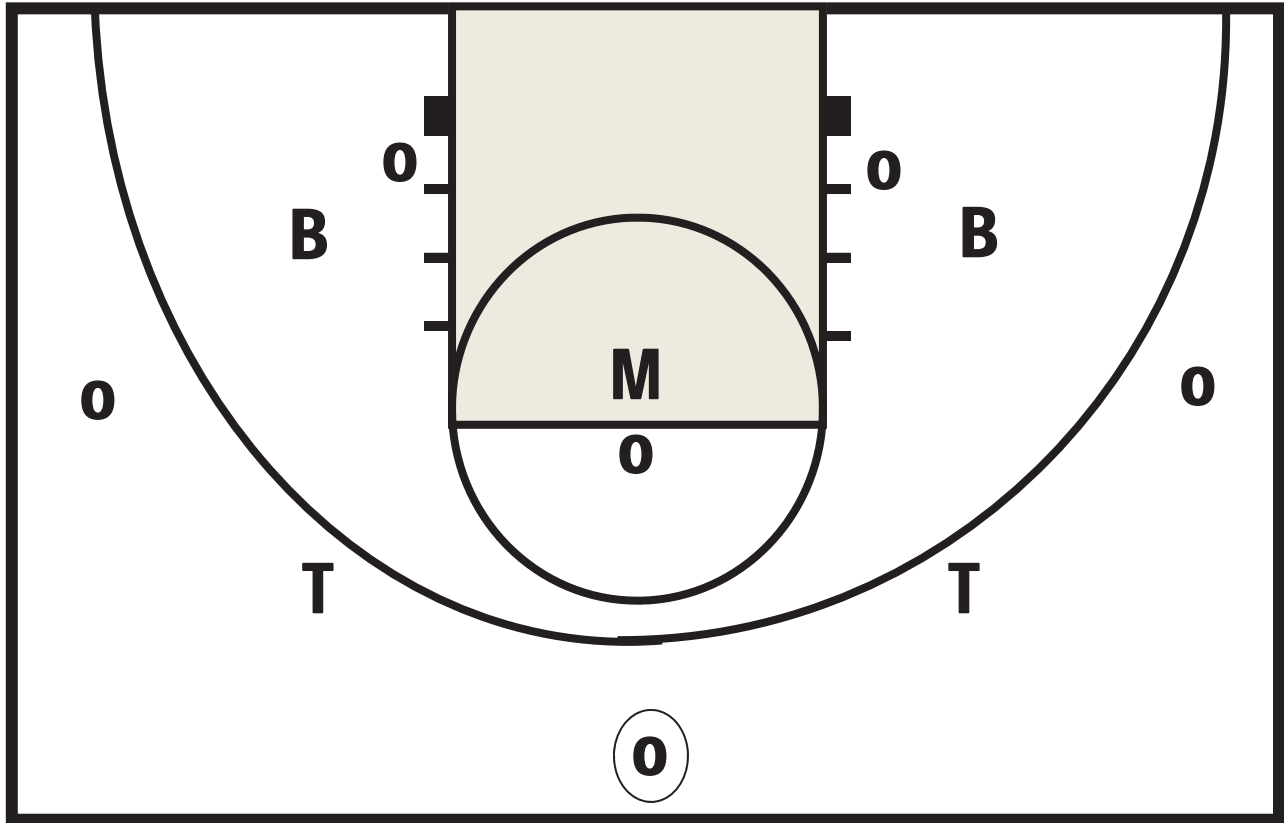
TEACH THIS:

TOP SPOTS: Usually guards. These spots are interchangeable in assignments so you can teach their responsibilities simultaneously. If the two players you choose to play here are of similar size and ability it really doesn’t matter who plays which side. But if one is a better rebounder putting them on the left side of the basket being attacked. If one is a little longer than the other, play them on the right. I think you’ll see why later and to be honest early on just learning the slides is the most important thing.

The first job of the TOP defenders is to position their body in the passing lane between the ball and the first player on the wing. They want to be about half way between the ball and the offensive player on the wing. We begin by teaching our ATTACK against a 1 front offense as diagrammed

this is due to first rule of the ATTACK...NO DIRECT ENTRY PASSES TO START OFFENSE

PACK ATTACK



TEACH THIS:

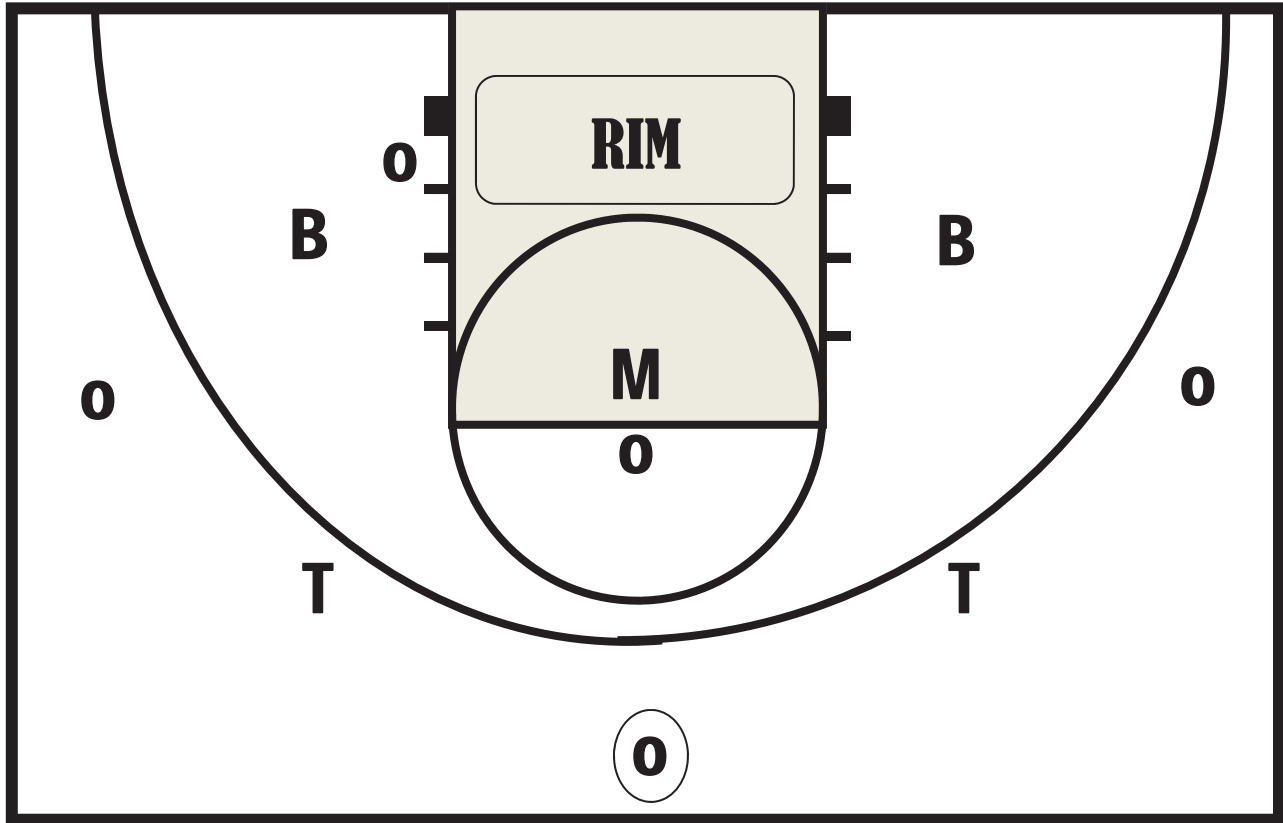
MIDDLE SPOT: This needs to be your toughest, hardest working big. If you have a smart, post player that fits that bill, this might be your “out pitch” rather than your “change up.”

Day One rule for her. Stay in line with the ball and the basket. Then do your best to keep the ball from being entered to the middle of the court to a player who can score from where she catches it. So if they want to break a post player to the arc to make an entry pass...fine... if they break a guard in there then we want to take it away.

BACK SPOTS: This is best when you can play your BIG guard on the right side Back and your other post player on the left side Back. For DAY ONE purposes we put six offensive players on the court to teach. First thing to tell them is that they should play with their butt to the corners of the court. This gives them a constant visual of how they should have their body positioned... if they have their butt to the corner they will be in the right body position 99% of the time. Their first RULE is to cover the block if occupied on their side. They don't have to deny it, but they have to be close enough that they can tip any lob an offensive player might throw.

We call these spots their **HOME** spots. You will use the phrase RETURN HOME early in teaching.

PACK ATTACK



With their **HOME** spots clearly identified and their first RULE in mind. You can move on.

Illustrate to them at this point how difficult it is for the offense to now make a DIRECT PASS to initiate their offense. I am willing to bet at this point one of them is dying to say “But Coach, what if they break a player here” and also willing to bet you as a coach are tempted to say “Well, we are just gonna do x, y, and z and lay it in on ya”... totally natural and quite frankly expected... but DON’T LET EM!!!

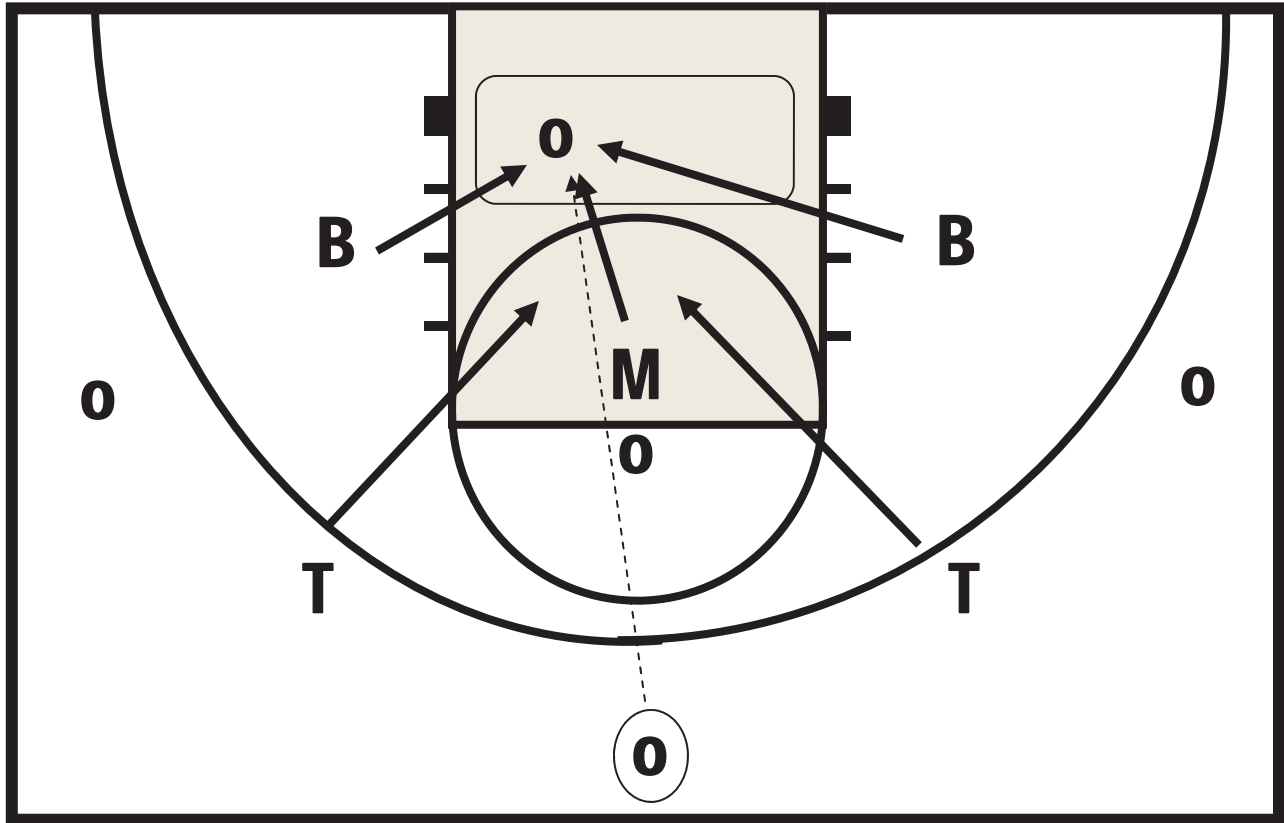
The first thing everyone “THINKS” they can do against this widened zone is throw it to the rim. As a result that is the first thing we cover. As stated earlier, this is one of those spots on the floor teams will successfully get the ball to at times. But you will be shocked how rarely it scores from there and how often it actually produces a turnover or a poor shot.

With no defenders between the offensive player and the basket it certainly appears open on paper.

RIM is our call when the offense attempts to pass the ball here. If we are in proper starting positions this pass has to be a lob. And we teach players to TIP all lobbed passes in our ATTACK. With the ball at the top let them try to complete a pass to the RIM area. If the players you have in the BACK spots can’t at the very least TIP THE LOB, then move them to the TOP SPOTS or MIDDLE!!

With the Middle player in line with the rim the pass must have some arc to it and the anticipation skills of the BACK players must be honed enough to TIP if not STEAL this pass.

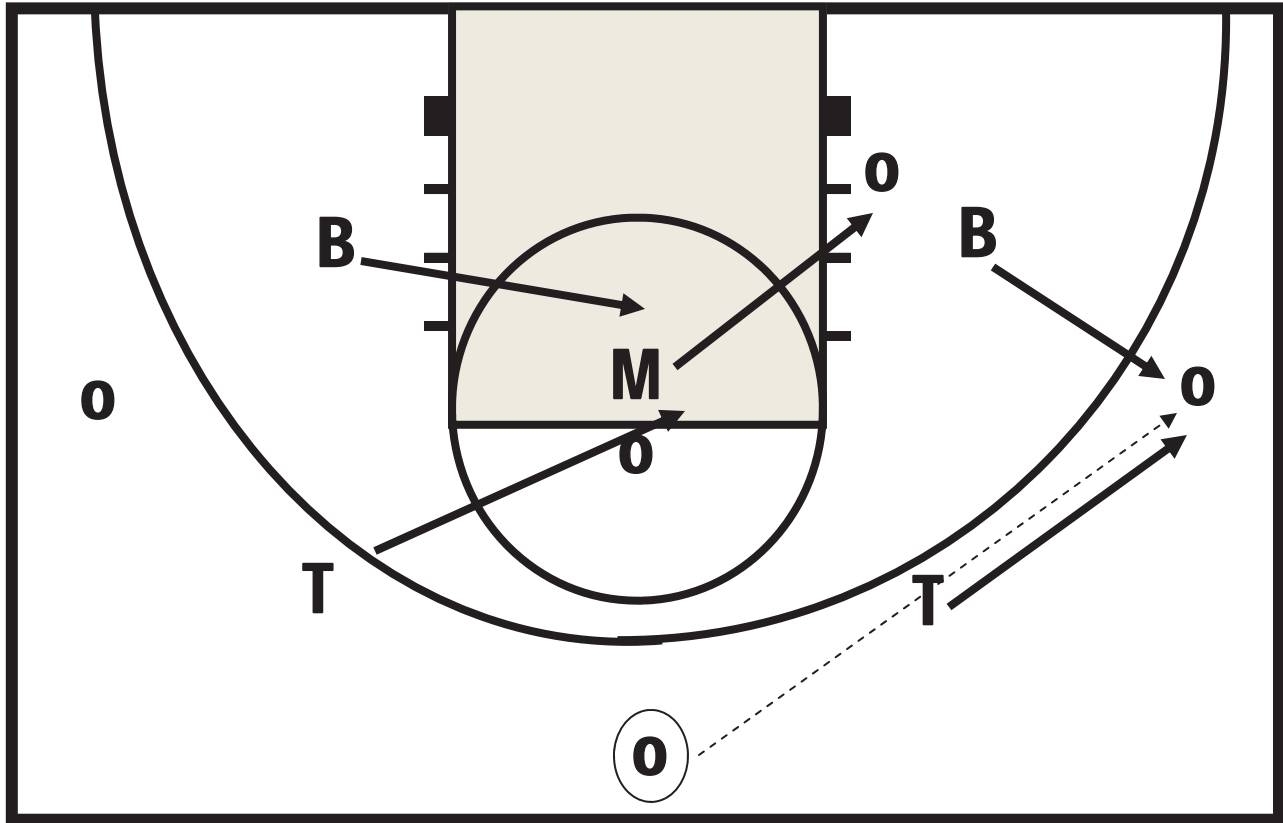
PACK ATTACK



For teaching purposes, let's assume there is a total breakdown on the lob and it is completed in the **RIM** area. The **BACK** players should already be there as they were attempting to TIP THE LOB. They WALL UP. The **MIDDLE** player closes from her spot. **TOP** PLAYERS cover down in the paint to guard any cutter. This action forces the player to at the very least pass the ball back out. It often results in a turnover as they are rushed from being "in the lane" and from being pressured by all five defenders.

While it is the first place people SAY they are going to attack you, it in all actuality is one of the rarest places the ball ever gets thrown after you have the entire scheme installed!!! (remember I said that, because I was very skeptical too when I first began exploring this defense).

PACK ATTACK



With the **RIM** situation covered, let's cover the pass that actually does occur a lot.

The pass from one guard front to a wing.

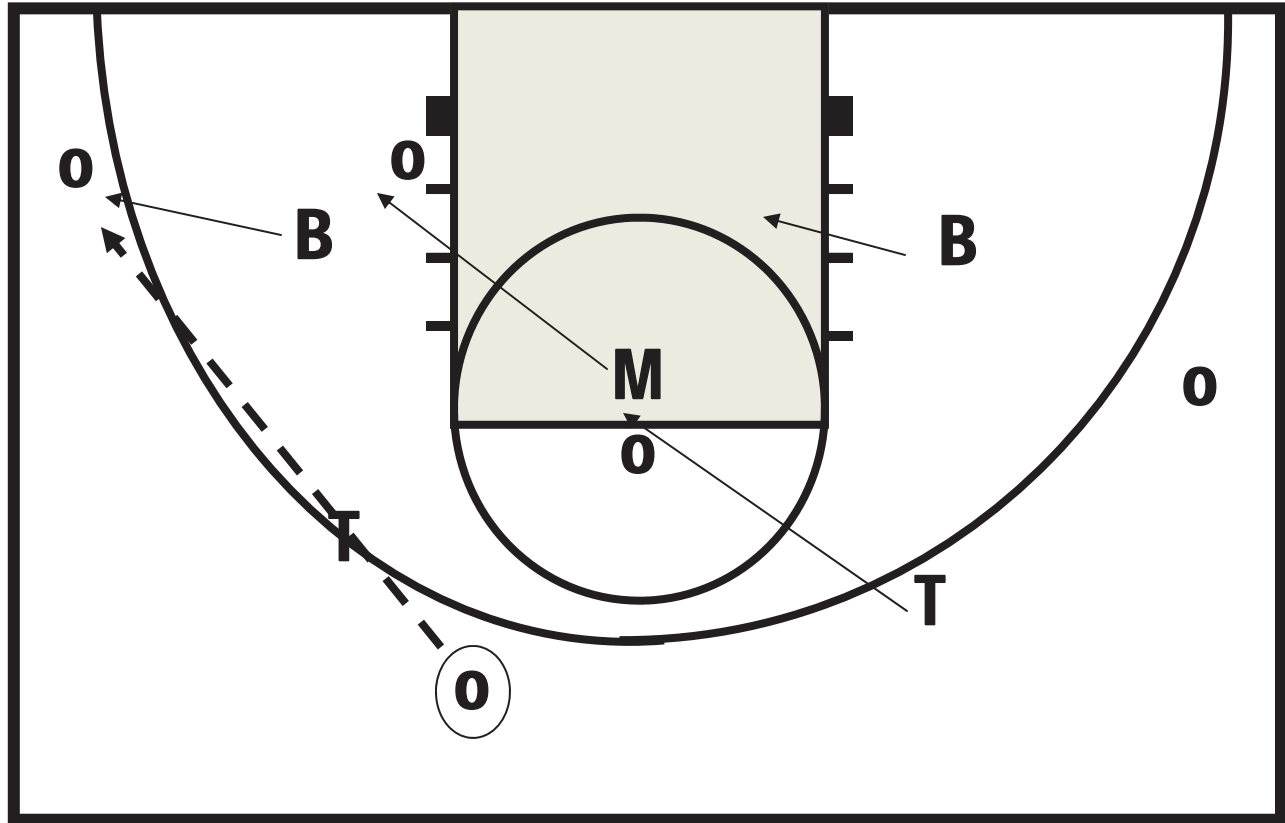
With the **TOP** players bodies in passing lanes between the ball and the offensive players on the wing again this pass **MUST** have some arc to it. That arc is what provides our defenders the extra half second of AIR TIME to move into their next position. The **TOP** player tries to TIP the LOB.

On the AIR TIME all other defenders are repositioning... the ball side BACK player with her butt facing the corner can easily hold on the block of a count as the ball is in the air allowing the **MIDDLE** to get to the block offensive player and then still close out and be there on the catch of the pass. The **BACK** ball side player is there on the catch with her body in passing lane between ball and the player she just left of the block. She is aggressive on the ball. The **TOP** player who tried to tip the lob comes to join the **BACK** player in an aggressive trap of the first pass. Weak side **TOP** player sprints to elbow/high post area vacated by the **MIDDLE**. The back side **BACK** player keeping her butt to her corner can now become a free safety ready to pick any tipped or skipped ball.

For Day One purposes. We drill this 5-0n-5 several times. Review our **HOME** spots.

If you didn't allow any WHAT IF's and successfully instilled the proper ATTACK frame of mind then you have had a successful day and will be ready to move onto Day 2. If not, simply keep re-
DAY ONE until you do. It's imperative you get those two things down before progressing.

PACK ATTACK



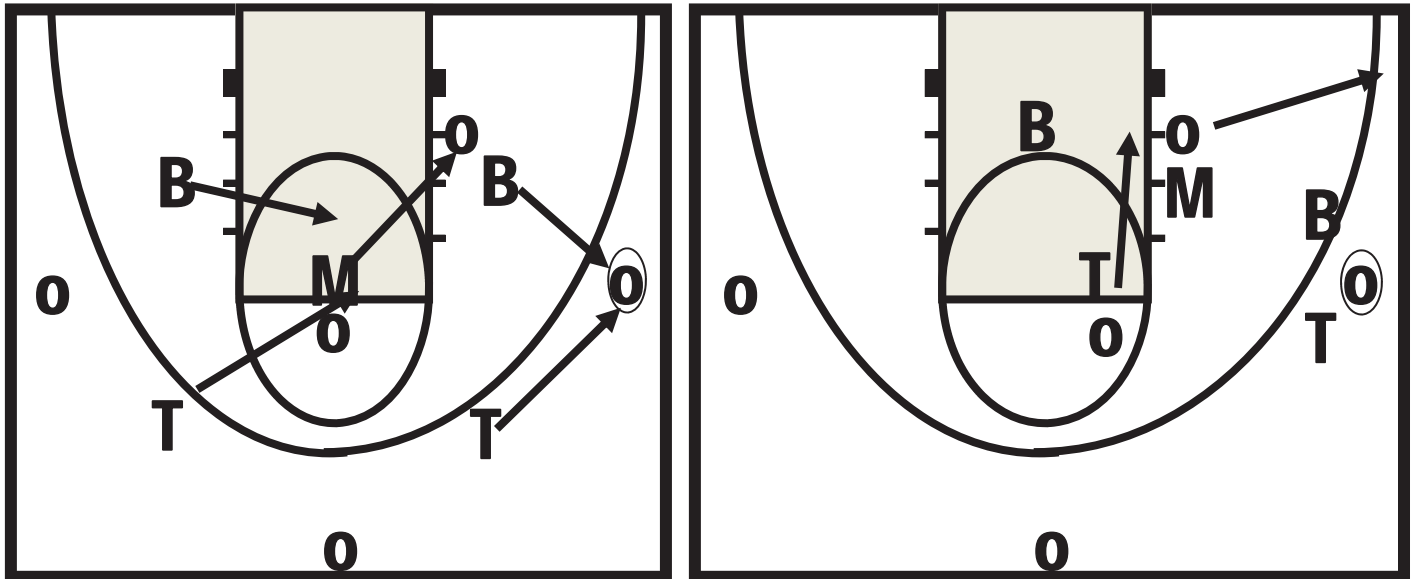
With the basic slides and language introduced it's time to allow the first "WHAT IF... And it's almost always "What happens if they pass it to the corner? Who's is that?" So let's address that first.

The answer is "It depends on where it is passed from?" And this is the very reason we don't allow WHAT IFS from players until now. You have to have some base knowledge and some language in place so that your players can comprehend the answers.

IF the ball is passed from the TOP to the CORNER, by rule it should have some air under it because the T (top player) has her body in the passing lane. This allows the B (ballside player) to leave their **HOME** on the block and be there on the catch. The air time also allows the MIDDLE to slide to ball side post-up and T (top weak side) to slide to the high post. The B (weak side) keeping her butt to the corner can provide help to M on the ball side block and still be able to handle any skip action.

This corner catch is not trapped at this point. As we progress there will be times that we will trap it. But at this stage of installing the ATTACK we simply want to instill the coverage slides and the rotations.

PACK ATTACK



If the ball is passed to the corner from a wing where we are trapping, the coverage is different.

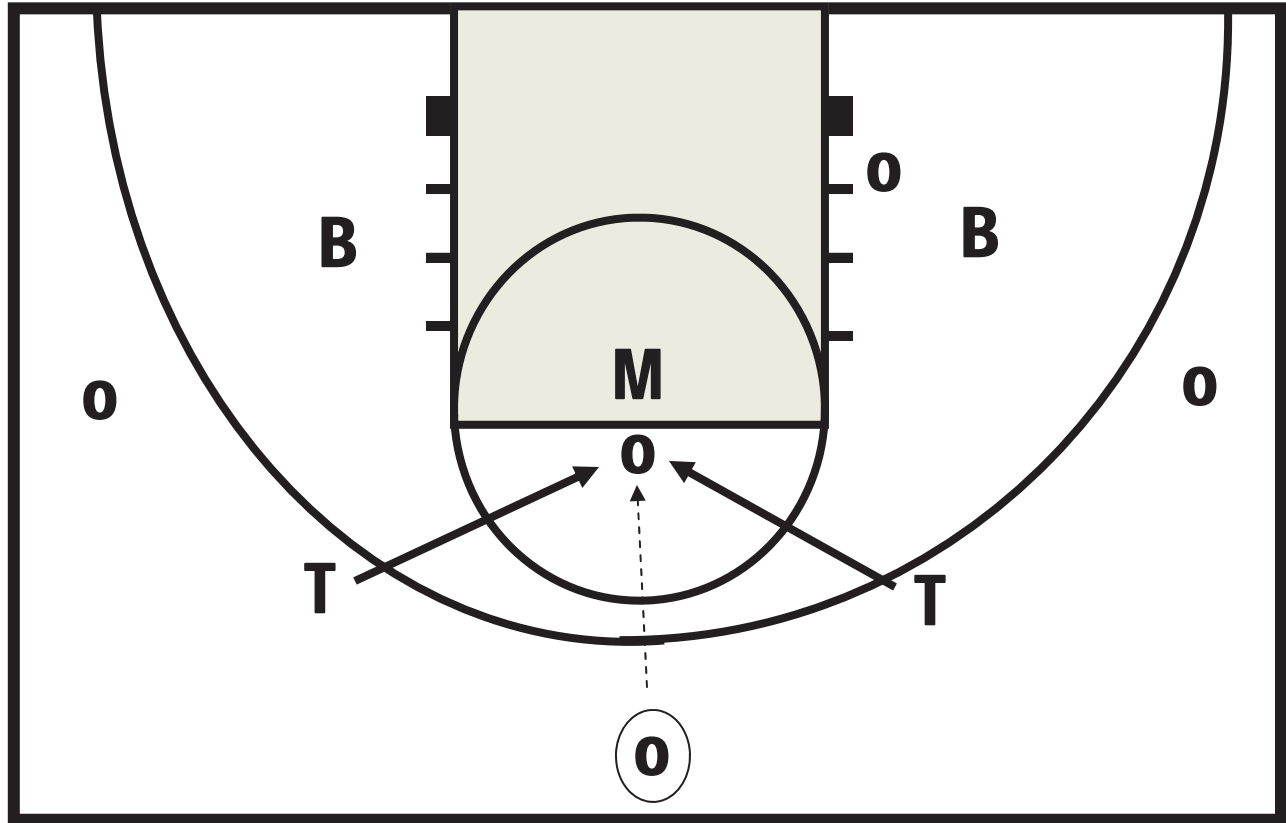
This is a common way teams try to attack zones with an overload as well so it's good to start here. They will cut someone into the corner and then slide the high to low...

With B and T trapping the wing, the M goes with the cutter to the corner. The backside B player has no responsibility at HOME because the offense has overloaded the ball side.

On the pass the M and B trap the corner pass aggressively. The T that was trapping stays and is ready to deny the pass back or steal and tipped ball. When it's trapped in the corner we have our biggest player and longest wing player trapping so it should be very difficult for the ball to be passed out cleanly. We teach the players not trapping to evaluate the quality of the trap and adjust their denial and anticipation accordingly. The better the trap the more aggressive we want them to be in shutting down a direct pass. We have plenty of time to recover to our HOME spots IF the ball is skipped out of a corner.

You need to name the corner trap something. We change ours from year to year so that teams aren't comfortable with the call.... We try to use aggressive sounding calls... Storm, Flood, Fire, Red, Black, Dead, Jail, etc... Have seen some teams simply call it corner. You decide what works best for your team and give it a name so that it's clear to everyone what is expected when the ball is trapped in the corner.

PACK ATTACK

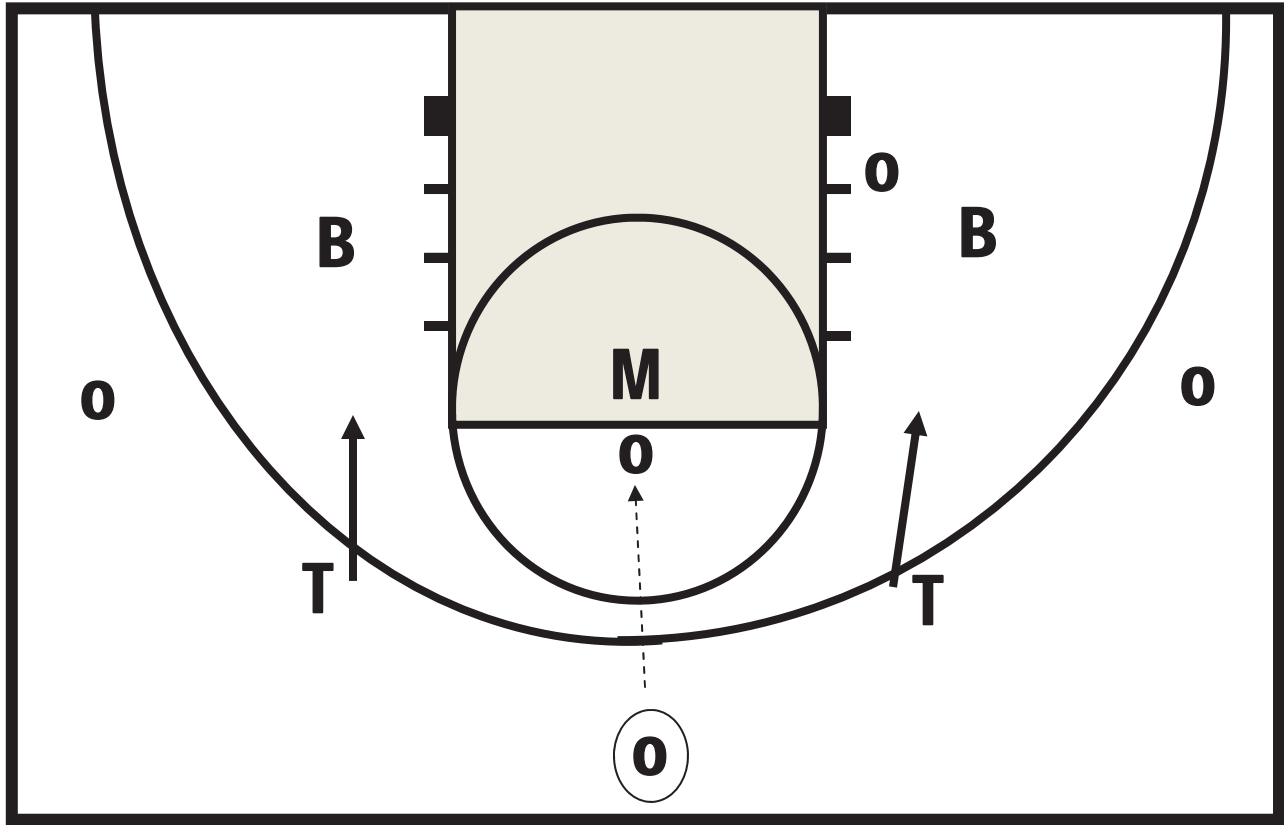


Invariably the next WHAT IF is, what IF ball does get passed to the **NAIL**.

There will ultimately be three ways to play this action. I am not sure which order is best to introduce so I will give you all three and you decide what best fits your particular team.

The most aggressive way is to swarm the pass and get it out of there. The M who wasn't suppose to allow it there in the first place had now better be very intent on not letting something else bad happen, so she should be pressuring the ball aggressively as both of the T's swarm the player. Many times offenses will post a player here who doesn't pass it so well and this is a great place to create a turnover. This method is dangerous IF the ball is passed directly out to a great shooter. You're gambling that with three players swarming that won't happen a very high percentage of the time.

PACK ATTACK



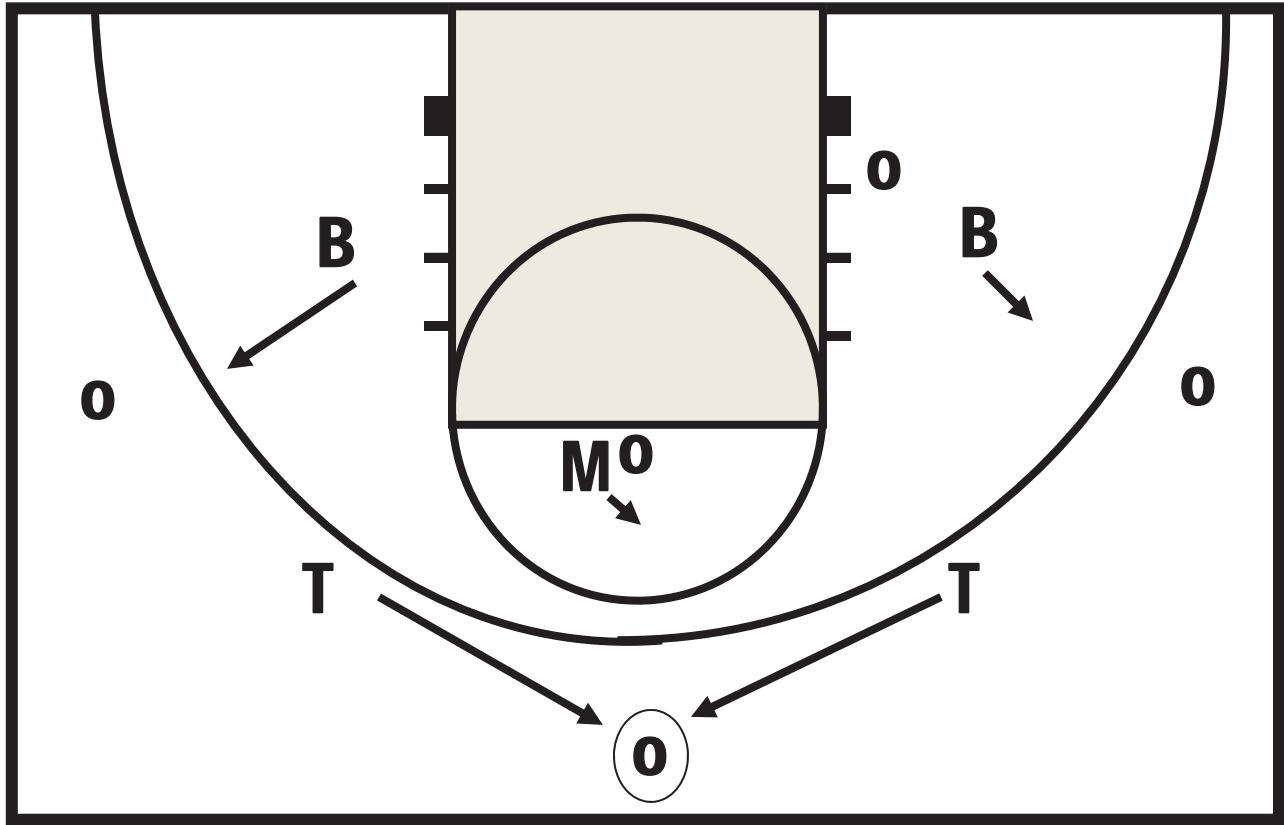
The next method is the most conservative.

It works best with teams who are spotting up great shooters around the arc.

On the pass, both of the T's again place their bodies in the passing lanes between the shooters on the wings. Veteran teams can even get communication from the B players and cover a third guard at the top. As in the diagram above, one of the two B players will most likely have no one in their HOME, so they can take the shooter on the wing allowing one of the T's to be more aggressive on the open player. This is only really a concern if a team has three great shooters on the court at the same time and you not even choose to be in this defense if that is the case.

The third method is a combination of the two and I will NOT diagram it. You designate one of the T's to be a swarmer and one of them to be cover out. This one can create hesitancy and is not my favorite. I prefer the all or nothing look, but experiment with it and see what works for you.

PACK ATTACK



With the basics in, let's get to the FUN STUFF!!!

This is the point where I believe you can really begin to create some havoc and at the very least cause some pause in the offense.

First, come up with an aggressive sounding CALL for this action... Let's just call it STORM for teaching seek.

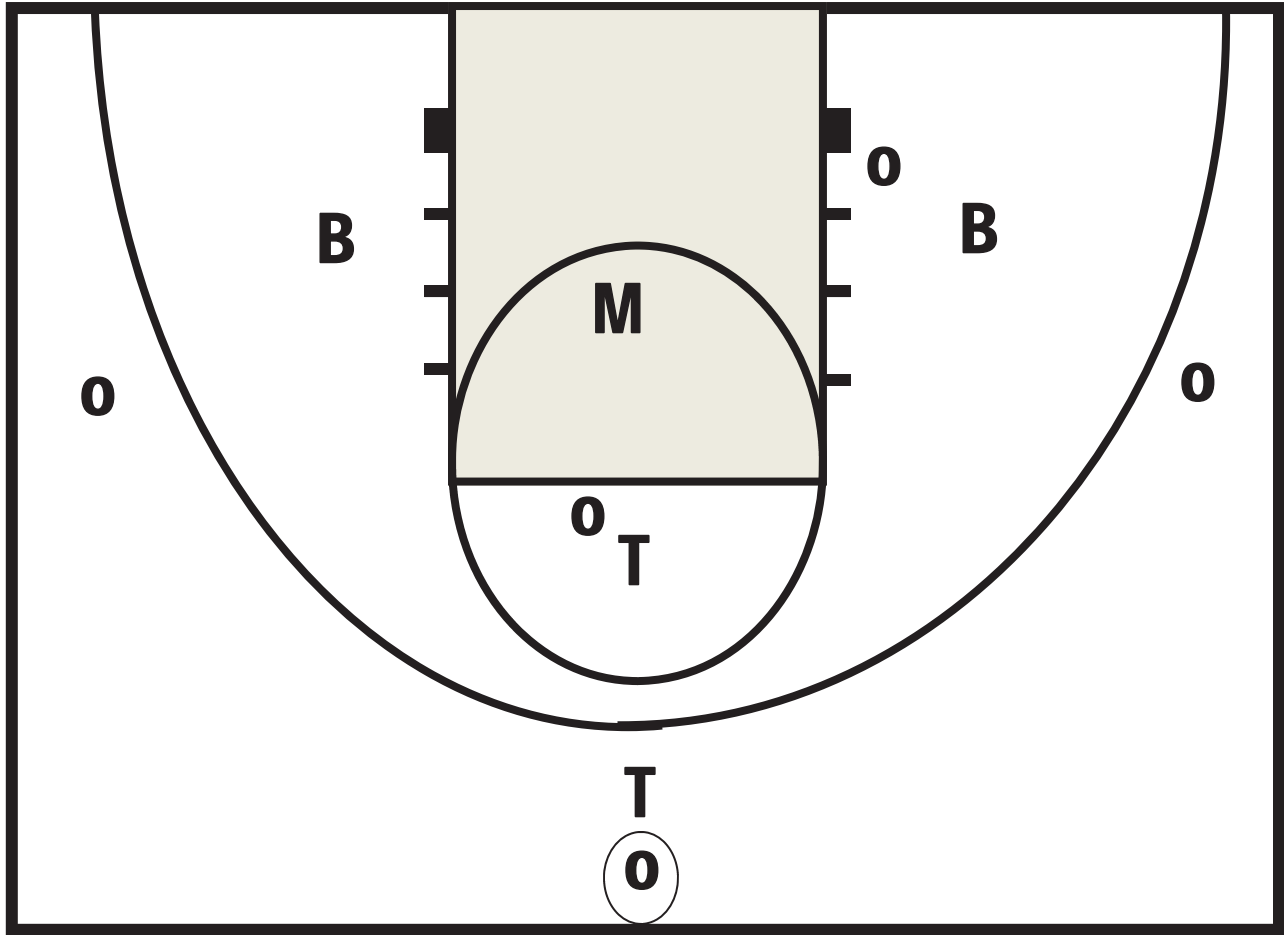
STORM call means the two T's are going to sprint trap the ball handler the second she dribbles the ball across the half court line. As they are sprinting to pressure the ball, the M slides around to deny entry to anyone in the middle. The B's adjust themselves accordingly as well. If they have no one HOME they can be very aggressive. If they do, we teach them to lean toward HOME but knowing that pass will be very difficult if the T's apply appropriate pressure.

This STORM has a ripple effect. The first time you call it you get that element of surprise. And from then on, you cause pause for the ball handler every time they enter the half court.

This is a great plan to use anytime a back-up player is substituted into the game as well.

Utilizing it a time or two also gets it on the scouting report of your opponent forcing them to spend a little of their valuable preparation time scheming for it whether you actually use it or no.

PACK ATTACK



The next concept to introduce compliments the STORM action very well.

Again, first step is choosing a call. Make this one a little less aggressive but keep in theme. Let's use FREEZE in our discussion.

In FREEZE, we move our T's into a 1-1 look. With the Top T picking up the ball handler as soon as she crosses half court. The other T drops more the high post allowing M to drop a little as well. This is a good look against teams that attack with a one guard front or a 1-4 High set.

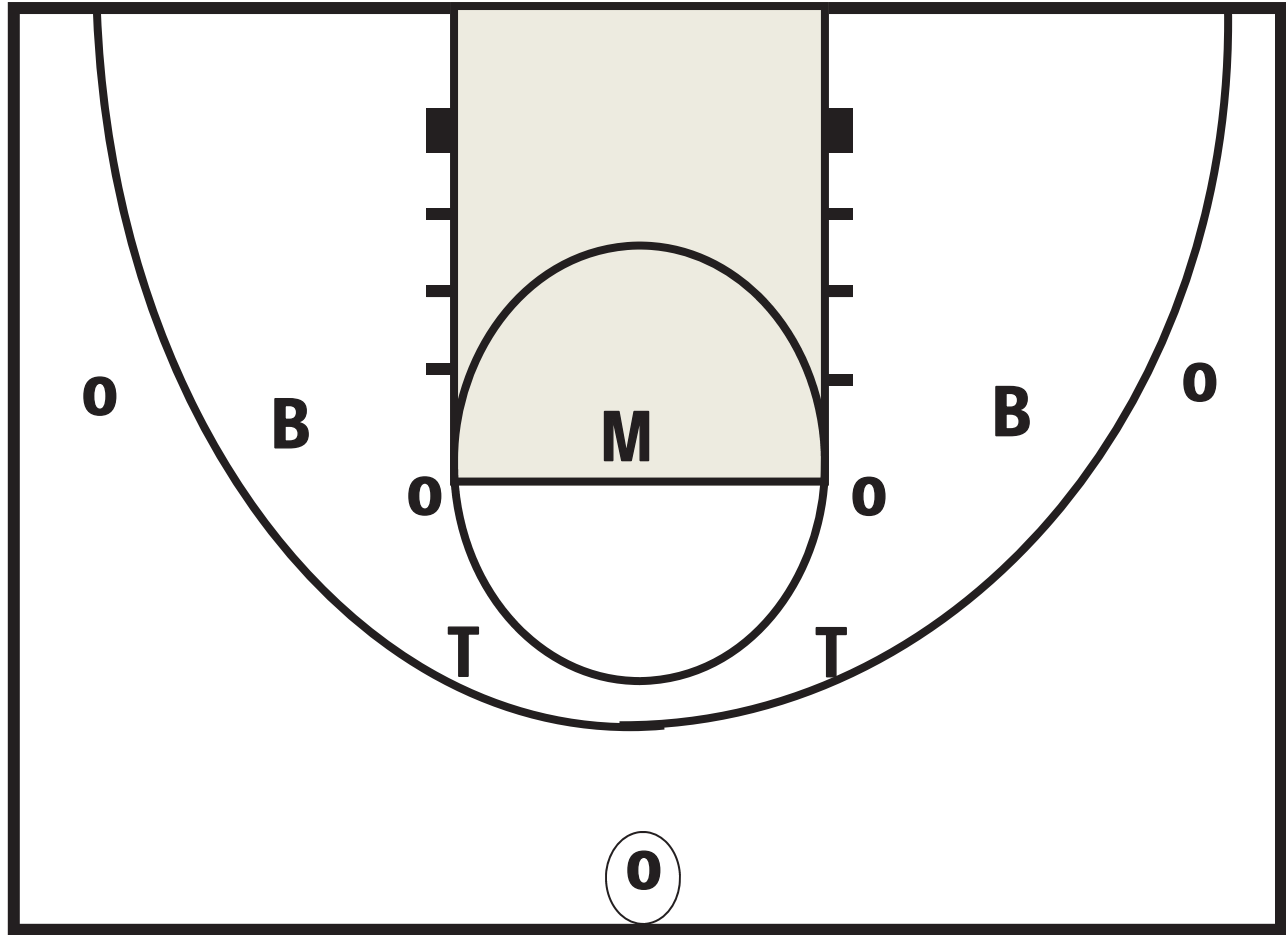
This is also easily disguised as PACK LINE man to man.

Our slides are the same with the back T taking the first pass with a B to either side. If the offensive player chooses to dribble enter, the top T stays with her and we look to trap on the wings as always and the back T stays at the high post as she normally would.

As the season progresses as well or as you see fit with your team, you can go STORM from the FREEZE look. Start in the 1-1 look and then sprint the other T player into a trapping situation.

Again, doing this once or twice a game at the very, very minimum will give even the best point guard another look she must evaluate without changing much in your defensive scheme.

PACK ATTACK

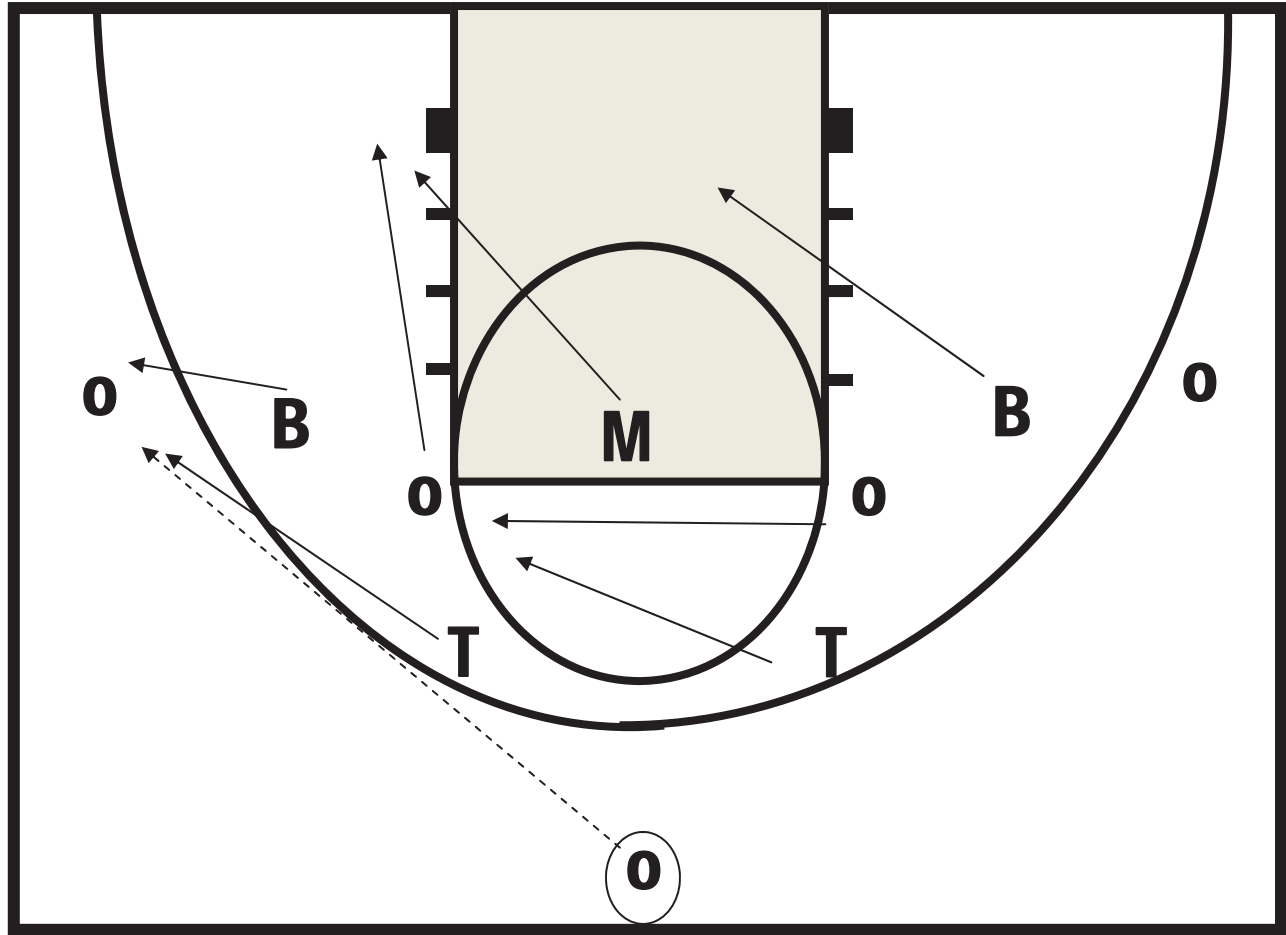


With a few different looks to throw at teams, let's take a day to address a couple of common actions that offensive guru's will draw up to attack your PACK.

The first one most teams try is a 1-4 High Attack...

The first adjustment is changing the passing lanes your T's set up in. They place their body in the passing lanes to the two offensive players at the elbows. The M keeps same rule of keeping her body between the ball and the rim. The B players have no one "AT HOME" so they can also slide up and play between the elbow offensive players and the ones on their wing. This easy, quick adjustment makes any entry pass a difficult one.

PACK ATTACK



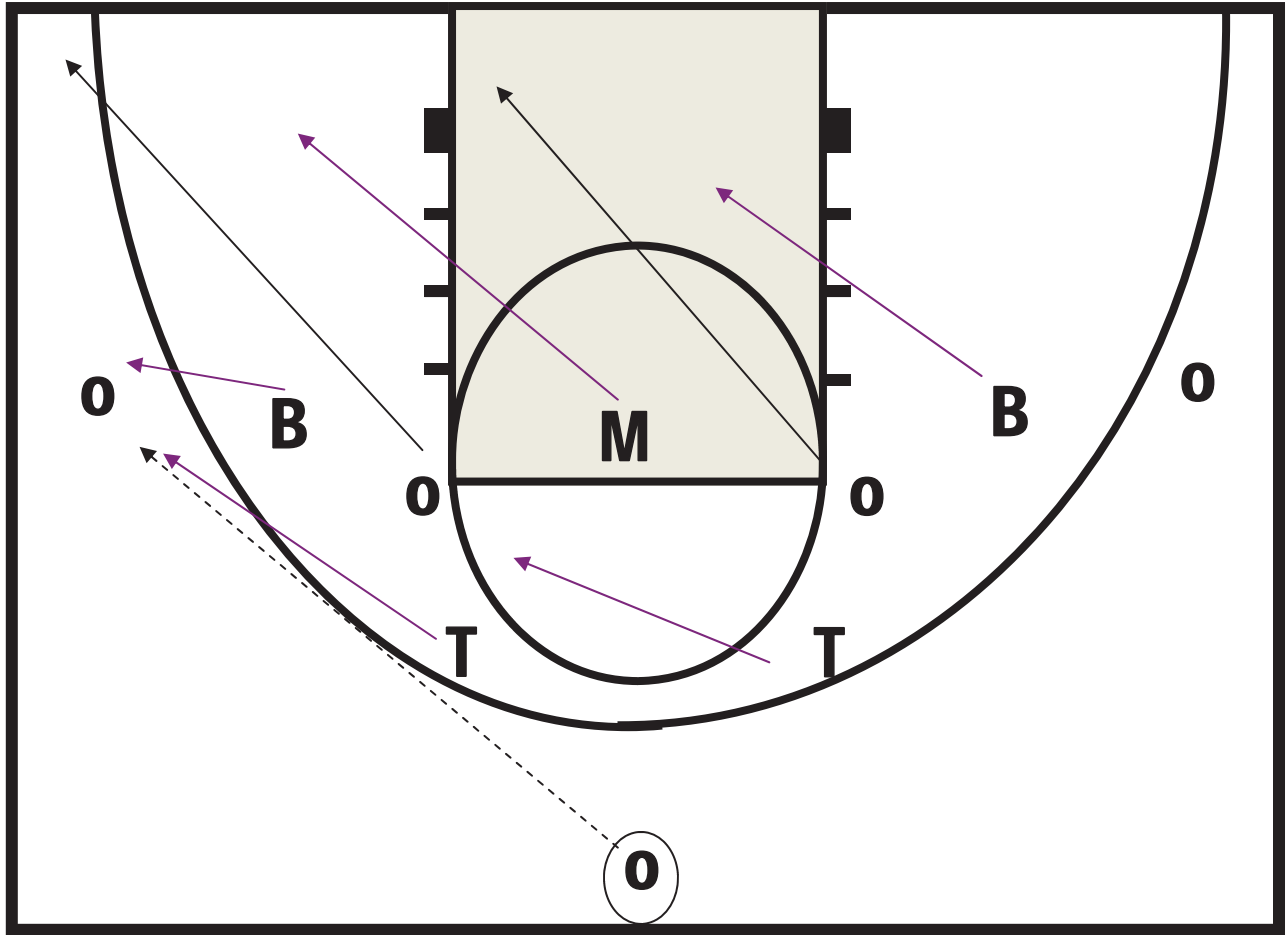
On the pass to the wing, the offense then dives the elbow player to the block. This slide is easy taken by M as B and T are aggressively trapping the first pass to the wing as always.

The other T player is on the way to their HOME at the elbow and is easy there in time to guard any flash to that area.

The weak side B checks HOME first then with butt to corner can see the entire player develop in front of her.

As always, moving on the air time of a pass is key...

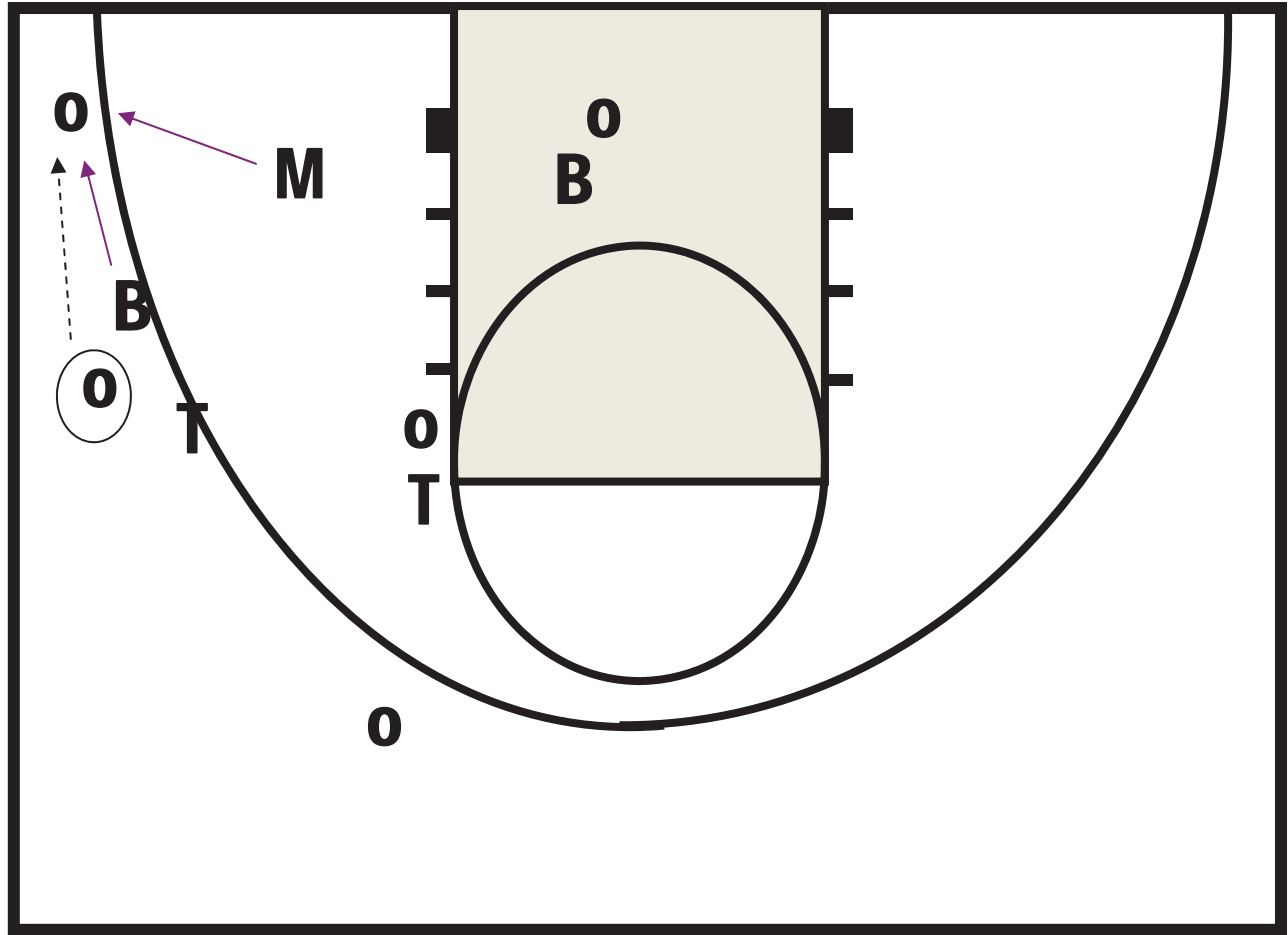
PACK ATTACK



Some teams will put a great shooting player at the elbow and try to sneak her to the corner against our M player. This all sounds good in theory and looks good on paper but actually sets up perfectly for us to defend.

M goes with her and as opposite player dives B also goes to the rim area.

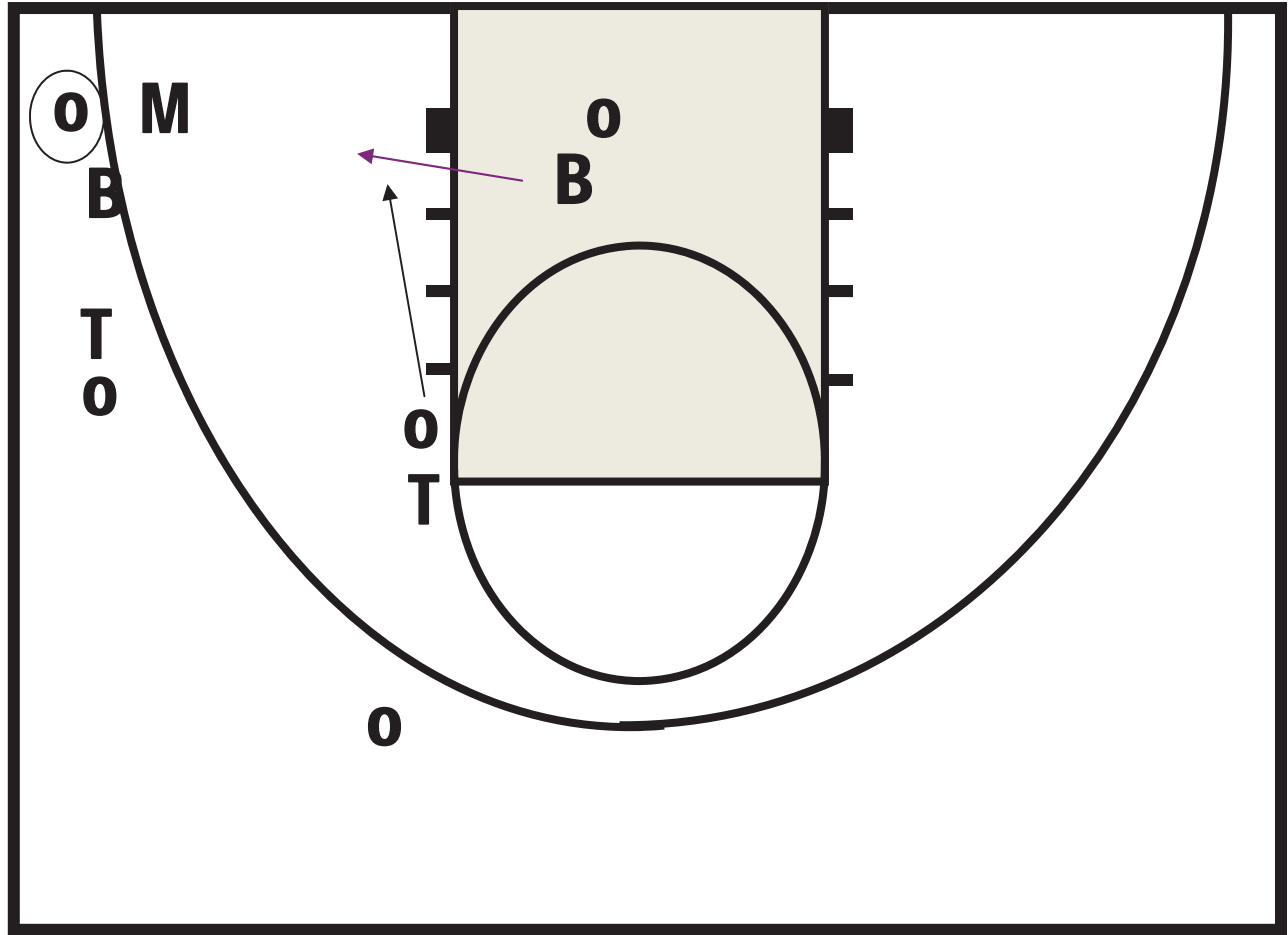
PACK ATTACK



As the offense tries to get the ball to the shooter in the corner, our M is there to take away quick shot or drive and contain ball until B can arrive for our trap in the corner.

The T player that was involved in the TRAP stays and denies pass back out of the corner. Our other T and B take the block and elbow in a volleyball coverage formation ready to steal any tipped pass that comes out soft...

PACK ATTACK



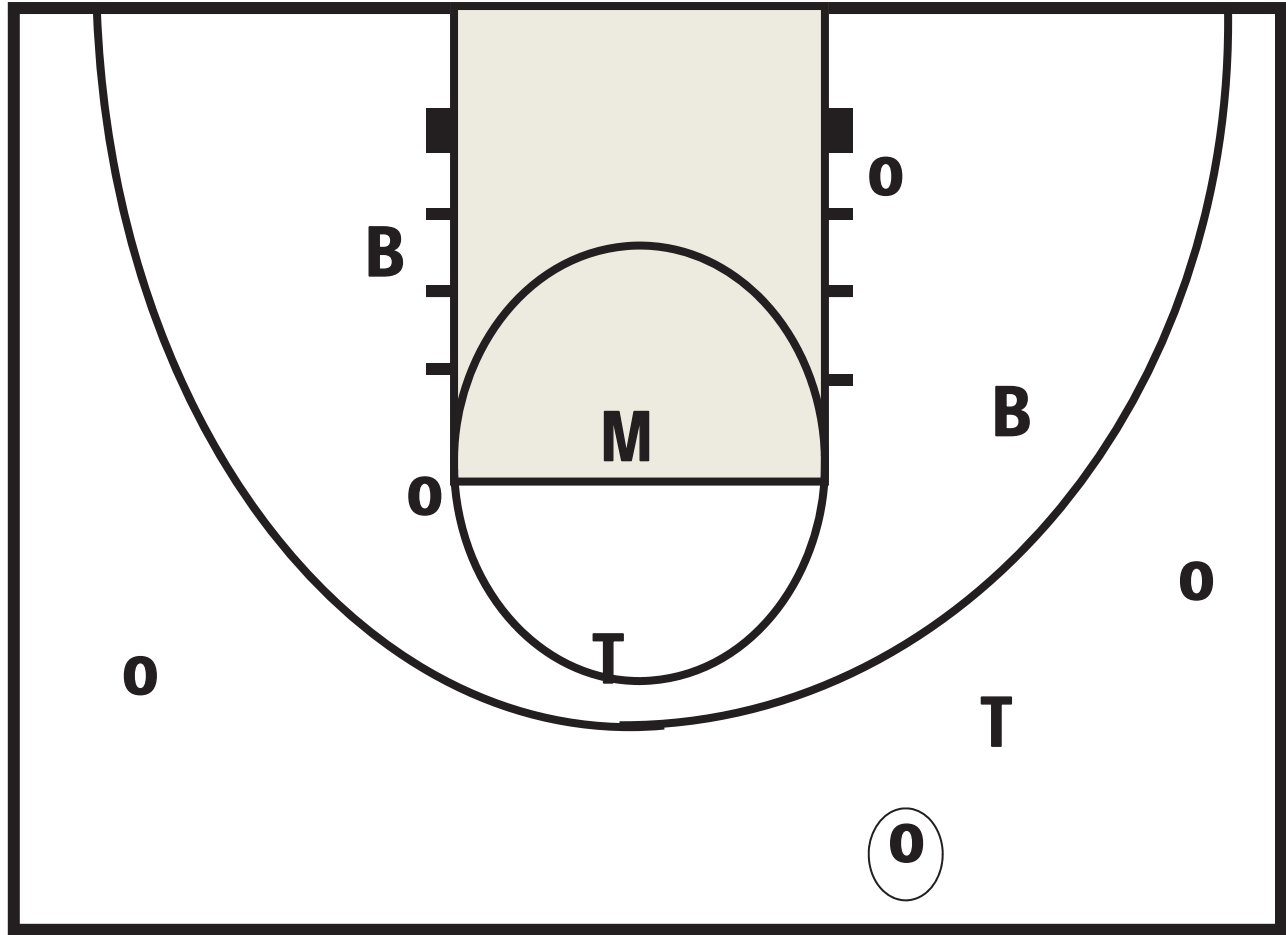
Many teams will then dive the player at the elbow to the block. Knowing this our B player is able to get many steals by baiting the trapped player to throw it there.

The better the trap, the more aggressive we can be on the block and the elbow.

It's also two post players in a lot of offenses who normally aren't their best passers.

That is another common theme you will see versus this ATTACK. To attack it, many teams have to move their players around to spots they normally aren't accustomed to playing in.

PACK ATTACK



Another common attack is what we call a high wing. Teams will break some one out very high to draw our trap away from the basket.

When teams break some one repeatedly to these HIGH WINGS, we adjust and don't TRAP it if they are not in their scoring range. This causes the team to simply pass the ball around the perimeter.

When we make this adjustment you will hear constant calls coming from our bench...either from coaches or players not in the game. You will hear NO echo if the player is NOT in their range and therefore there is NO trap.

If you hear YES, then the player has worked their way into range and we do TRAP these actions.

Once the offense brings the ball into our normal range, we are in the ATTACK spots we have been speaking of since the DAY 1.

PACKLINE DEFENSE

ULTIMATE GUIDE

PART 3

Packline Pressure Defense
Jim Boone, Delta State University





NOTE: Written when Coach Boone was at Tusculum College

PACK LINE PRESSURE MAN to MAN DEFENSE

- We employ the PACK LINE PRESSURE MAN to MAN DEFENSE at Tusculum College in order to compete in one of the nation’s best NCAA Division II basketball leagues, the South Atlantic Conference. We simply do not have the same talent pool to draw from as others in our league. Therefore, it is essential that we give our *“overachievers”* the best opportunity to compete.
- By employing our theory of defense play, we will **lower our opponent’s field goal percentage**, we will improve our **rebouncing**, and we will **reduce their opportunities for lay-ups and easy baskets rather off dribble penetration or transition**.
- The greatest negative of our system; and it is a system of play, is that it can have a tendency to allow lesser talented programs to compete. We can not beat them on the advantage we hold due to our talent level or athleticism, our system is built upon execution – therefore, we have to out execute our opponent.
- Our offense compliments our defense, although this is not completely necessary for our defense to be successful. We work very hard to get what we want offensively and not what the defense decides to gives us. Therefore, we are constantly exploring the defense in an effort to get the ball inside, to achieve a great shot, and or to get to the foul line. We want to make our opponent defend!
- Rather than running plays; we confine our players to certain areas, we define their roles and demand that they play to their roles. We are an offensive system that is grounded upon execution and the fundamental development of our players.
- I think it is more important on the offensive end that you take great shots, what ever you do – take great shots. Conversely, I know that our defense will frustrate offenses into taking bad shots.
- Every team struggles to score, I do not care who you are or what you do, you will struggle to score in league play. It’s an ongoing battle to find ways to play in such a way so as to use your talent to score. Coaches are so much more in tuned today in stopping offense, defense is important and it shows.

- The two most important stats to Tusculum Basketball are Defensive Field Goal Percentage and Trips to the Foul Line. We want to force our opponent into tough contested shots, limit them to one shot, and we absolutely do not want to foul!
- **REBOUND – REBOUND – REBOUND:** You must rebound to win! We emphasize rebounding in everything we do, everything! We will work on blocking-out every night in some form. We will drill our team 1-on-1, 2-on-2, 3-on-3, and 4-on-4, as well as emphasize this very important objective in our 5-on-5 play.
- **Defense is outcome oriented.** Ask yourself: Did we stop the ball. We teach this very important concept through our drills – our players must get stops, anything else is unacceptable!
- **In the PACK LINE PRESSURE DEFENSE,** you only have to recover because we line-up in help. Remember Chuck Daly – It’s not the help that gets you beat, it’s the recovery or lack there of. We work recovery, over and over and over again.
- Our defense is zone oriented on the ball-side. The idea is to build a fence, and to keep the ball out of the PACK area.
- This is a **Defensive System of Play** that can only succeed when all five players work together as one, when they trust each other, and they allow the synergy of TEAM to take over.
- **TEAM UNITY:** Do not allow anyone to come in and break-up the **FAMILY**. The unity of our team must be **protected and nurtured**.

**“Now this is the law of the jungle,
 As old and as true as the sky;
 And the wolf that shall keep it may prosper,
 But the wolf that shall break it must die.
 As the creeper that girdles the tree trunk,
 The law runneth forward and back
 For the strength of the pack is the wolf,
 And the strength of the wolf is the pack.”**

- Ruyard Kipling

Tusculum College Pack-Line Pressure Defense

Philosophy

ALONE with OTHERS

Our first principle is to **Stop the Ball**, which means to stop all penetration to the lane - keep the ball out of the lane. This responsibility falls squarely upon the player defending the ball, alone. He must pressure the ball, defend his man in an aggressive manner, thus creating a level of discomfort for the ball handler. Our pressure must be significant enough to make it difficult for the offensive player to shoot, pass, or dribble the ball. Failure to do this gives the offensive player the advantage, as he can see the floor clearly and has time to anticipate the action on the floor. This is much like the quarterback in football that is allowed to drop back and pass at his leisure without any pressure from the defensive line or blitzing defensive backs. However, this pressure defensive attack can place the defender in a very vulnerable position, especially if the offensive player is quicker. Therefore, the strength of our defense is also based upon the level of confidence the defender “on the ball” has, in knowing that he will receive help from his teammates “off the ball” if his man gets past him; **with others**. This confidence in his teammates, in turn, allows him to concentrate entirely on our principle of **Stopping the Ball!** We simply cannot be effective in stopping the ball without this unity on defense.

We have a “**Pack-Line**”, an imaginary line that is positioned at 17’ from the basket. The only player outside of that line, that arc, is the player defending the ball. All other players are occupied inside the arc. Therefore, we do not have a “**Help**” mode, only a “**Recovery**” mode to our defense. Our players are already positioned in help, a “**Gap**”. We are positioned in a slightly-closed stance, inside the Pack-Line, up-the-line but off the line, maintaining a Ball-You-Man relationship. However, when the ball is being passed to our man, we must “**explode-out**” of this position, and closeout to the ball.

A critical element of our execution defensively becomes our “**Close-out**” to the ball. We believe the most important key in our close-outs is to get “**high-hands**”. We must break the shooters rhythm, we cannot allow the offense to catch and shoot.

There is a second extremely important element of our defense that is best described by **the alone**, with others symbolic terminology. That fundamental is the action of defending screens, whether on or off the ball. A screening situation consists of a cutter and a screener defender. The moment when the cutter breaks off the screener, the defender is completely alone. He has no responsibility at that moment other than to get through the screen. When we are being screened we are no longer a team defender. No matter how good a defender is, he simply cannot fight through a screen and worry about helping his teammates at the same time. Therefore, our cutter defender turns his full attention solely to his man. But even then, versus a good offensive team he will momentarily become separated from his man.

During this moment of separation, he must defend with others, receiving help from the screener defender. Our screener defender must jump momentarily into the path of the cutter, staying within touching distance of his man, and take away his cut. The cutter then has only one option available to him, to move away from the basket. This is a critical element of our success in defeating screens. Successful execution of this principle is difficult, but when done correctly separates good defensive teams from great defensive teams!

TRUST and SERVANTHOOD

There are two intangible concepts that make the above execution possible. The player defending the screener must give total complete help to his teammate, thus allowing him to successfully get through the screen. Any hesitation on his part will cripple the effectiveness of the defense and give the offensive cutter the opportunity to catch and shoot a rhythm jump shot. At this moment, he must serve his teammate and stop the cutter. His priority of helping his teammate becomes greater than that of defending his own man. There is a component of trust which must be present when the two defenders properly execute this technique. Our screener defender jumps out to stop the cutter, but he cannot stay too long. He must return to his own man, the screener, before that player becomes a scoring threat himself. He trusts that his teammate will get through the screen and recover to his own man, the cutter. Therefore, we actually leave the cutter open for a split second while both defenders return to their original players. At this point of transition, both the screener and the cutter are open, but for such a short period of time, that when coupled with our pressure on the ball, neither of them can take advantage of the opening.

This can only be executed successfully when both players work together and trust each other. The instant that one player fails to serve or trust his teammate while defending a screen, the timing of the maneuver breaks down and our defense becomes porous.

COMMUNICATION

For our team to be effective defensively, we must talk, we must communicate! This is never more important than when defending a screener or when positioned in the “gap” off the ball. The best example of this is simply to compare a poor defensive player with a very good defender. A great defender communicates well with his teammates, while a poor defender rarely talks. The contrast is obvious, and the reason very evident. The poor defender has a difficult time communicating because he does not have a sense of what is about to happen next. He lacks the ability to anticipate the movement of the offense. As a result, he is always one step behind and in a perpetual state of catch-up. This makes it impossible for him to have the presence of mind to communicate with his teammates. A player with this limitation may be a great one-on-one defender, but he will

cripple a team defense.

A great team defender has a feel for what the offense is about to do. He can anticipate the action, and thus communicate to his teammates what is going to happen next, before it actually happens. He is not always right, but he is rarely caught off guard by the offense. The most obvious physical characteristic of a great team defensive player, one who communicates well, is that he is rarely out of position to help his teammates. His awareness allows him to maintain a Ball-You-Man relationship that is the crux of our defense. Moreover, and just as importantly, he now has better “Vision” of the offense and the ball.

CONSTANT REPOSITIONING

The rule of Ball-You-Man is constantly being broken, therefore constant repositioning off the ball is absolutely essential. We must constantly battle to reestablish our Ball-You-Man position. This is simply the “backbone” of our defense. Offenses do not stand stationary. Therefore, when the ball moves, or when players move on the floor, the defense must continually adjust to the ever-changing environment. The reality in basketball is that the defender will constantly get knocked off track in the course of a defensive possession. That is why it is imperative that each player perpetually work to regain the correct defensive position. Failure to do so by any of the five defenders will create a breakdown in the team defense, and, moreover, a potentially good scoring opportunity for the offense. Essentially, getting “broken-down” on defense does not guarantee failure, but giving up at that point does!

EVERY WHEEL MUST HAVE A HUB

The hub of our defense is defending the low post. The most important decision that any coach has is to how he will play the post. Our post defense keys everything else we do, it is the hub to our defense, it dictates everything else. Great low post defense may be even more important than playing great defense on the ball. Although, these two key ingredients must work hand-in-hand. Furthermore, good post defense is more about toughness, determination, aggression, and a relentless effort than it is about technique.

There is no glamour in post defense, it is hard work, banging and pounding, it is a relentless effort. It is something that cannot just be turned on and off, it must be present all the time, in practice and in the game. Our defense will only be as good as our post defenders!

Our basic method of defending the low post is to play on top of the offensive player, with the ball on the top and the player positioned in the low post area. There will not be a feed from the top, this cannot and will not happen. As the ball approaches the side, we move into a three-quarter denial position. We instruct our players to be aggressive, to be physical, but to show our hands, do not foul - and “see the ball”, we must have vision.. We should be positioned in such a way as to have our top arm thrown across the post in a

denial position, with our head in front of the post shoulder, but our lower leg and a portion of our body behind the post and thus, disallowing the lob pass.

We only allow a baseline pass that takes the post away from the lane. We tell our players this is our time, not the offenses time, but our time. We do not go for the steal or deflection, we immediately use “our time” to establish a position behind the post, take away the baseline dive, prepared to contest a shot, and to defend a drive.

If the offensive low post attempts to move us up the lane, we must know our slip point - in other words, when to move under the post and stay between him and the basket. We absolutely cannot give-up an angle to the basket or an easy lob, we must force the post to play through us, and not over or around us.

When the ball does get into the low post, it is a disaster! We have to do everything we can to get the ball out of there. We have two methods in which to achieve this objective. We can “**Choke**” the post with a perimeter player or players, in order to force the ball to be passed out of the post, or we can “**red the post**”, double the post big to big.

Excerpts taken from the book, A SEASON WITH COACH DICK BENNETT, by Eric Ferris.

Tusculum College Pack-Line Pressure Defense

Key Teaching Points of the PACK LINE PRESSURE DEFENSE

Conversion Defense

- There are two critical areas in regards to being an effective defensive team that you as the coach must be accountable. The first is conversion defense and the second is defending the low-post.
- In our Conversion Defense we are not assigned a specific player necessarily, but rather, we are defending positions on the floor in order to stop the ball and our opponents transition offense.
- Our conversion defense begins as the ball is being shot by our offense. We send two guards back on defense as the shot goes up – we feel that the benefit of having our guards back on defense to **STOP the BALL**, is of a far greater benefit than any advantage that may be derived by having one or both rebound the offensive glass.

We designate which guard is our “Lane Defender” and which guard is the “Ball Defender”. The lane defender sprints to paint, finds the ball and takes the lane-line on the side that the ball is being entered into play. He positions here in order to take away any cuts into the lane and will closeout to a “Gap Position” or to the ball, as soon as the lane is secured. The ball defender works to contain the ball-handler at half-court, and preferably get the ball out of the middle of the floor. Again, he must contain the ball first and foremost, and of course, his point of pick-up can change due to our opponent’s personnel.

- The remaining three players sprint back to paint as soon as our opponent gains possession of the ball. We teach their first three sprint steps to be with total disregard to vision; turn and sprint three steps, and then locate the ball as they continue to the lane. We will position toward the ball-side as deep as the ball. We cannot express enough the emphasis that we place upon our team of not giving-up transition baskets, **NO LAY-UPS!**

Pressure on the Ball

- We must place pressure upon the basketball, we cannot allow the ball handler to play comfortably, to easily look over the court. Offenses today will pick your defense apart if you allow them to do what they want to do with the ball. This is a great myth in the Pack Line Pressure Defense, that we do not pressure the ball – that we are all about containment. Yes, we must contain and our players must know their limitations, but we must pressure the ball.

It is much like the football quarterback; the passer that has all the time needed to drop back and throw the ball, any NFL quarterback will pick apart a defense that does not pressure – the same holds true with our game. With this being said, we cannot allow the ball to get into the PACK AREA. **Our point of pick-up is at half court, in the play area it is determined by whom you are guarding – your game and his game.**

As much as we want and demand pressure on the ball, we must also understand a very important axiom in our defensive game planning; **“Sometimes to not guard, is to guard”**. In other words, there are players that you are better served to not defend, and therefore, utilize this defender as a helper.

- We do not force the ball in a specific direction. We simply tell our players, **“DO NOT GIVE-UP THE BASELINE”**. We do not want them to feel that it is OK to force the ball to the middle, we just cannot get beat baseline. We will emphasize that our **players must have their baseline foot positioned outside of the offensive player’s baseline foot.**
- We will drill a lot of one-on-one in order for our players to learn their limitations, to understand how to keep the ball out of the PACK, and to learn how to force contested jump shots.
- We deny inside the arc and we will work on this more from a whole method standpoint more so than a 1on1 breakdown drill, but we absolutely do not want to allow the ball inside the PACK AREA (17 foot mark).
- Footwork is of paramount importance in our pressuring the ball, we want to **Step** (point our toe) in the direction that the ball is being dribbled, and **Push** with our opposite foot. We use the term, **“Guarding a Yard”** with our players, if we can execute two quick slides, we can arc and defend the ball. Use quick, short, steps without bringing our feet any closer than 12 inches, there is an imaginary ruler between our heels, no **Heel Clicking**.
- If we can force a **Dribble-Used situation**, we now leave the PACK area with all of our defenders, in an effort to all-out deny all four offensive players. This is a great opportunity for us to create a panicked, and hopefully a turnover situation for the offense. The player defending the ball must verbalize the dribble used situation by calling out **“FIVE – FIVE – FIVE”**.

Jumping to the Ball

- We do not jump to the ball per say, our **first move is to jump back into the PACK AREA** and then move toward the ball to preserve our **Ball-You-Man** relationship. Therefore, the nature of this position places our defender closer to the ball than the man who passed it.

- We assume a **flat triangle position, slightly open** and inside the PACK AREA when our man does not have the ball and is one pass away.

Closeouts

- Closing out to the ball is the key to our recovery mode, sprint the first two to three steps, with the last couple being short, choppy, steps. We must accomplish two objectives in our closeout; first we must closeout **“Hard & Short”** with our weight back prepared to absorb the dribble (**we will not get blown away by the dribble**), and secondly, we must have **High Hands**. We teach our players to keep their hands high, with elbows bent, for a 1001 count. We must create the illusion that there is no shot to be had. We cannot allow the offense to have rhythm jump shots.

Gap Defense

- **All Non-Ball Defenders are located inside the Pack Line** – This is the most critical part of our defense. We do not believe that our defenders can accomplish three things: they cannot **Deny, Help, and Recover**. Therefore, we have eliminated the denial, and we now focus entirely on the other two factors – **Help and Recovery**. Because our defenders in the Gap are already positioned in Help, they are now quicker in their recovery to the ball – there is no negative movement, away from their recovery.
- **We are constantly “Re-positioning” in the Pack area:**
 - 1) Position Up the Line, but Off the Line – slightly closed to the Ball
 - 2) Vision is of the utmost, we must see both Man and Ball
 - 3) Do not Help to Take a Charge, but rather with our **Near Arm and Leg**, we do not want to become **Blind to our Help**, by losing sight of our man
 - 4) Bluff help as much as possible, we cannot become sterile in our positioning.
 - 5) We must be **Active & Energized** in our Gap – **We are Zoning the Ball**

Flash Post

- We are positioned in a flat triangle with our **closest foot to the ball slightly forward, therefore we are in a denial position to begin and better equipped to take away the flash.**
- **VISION** is key, **WE MUST SEE BOTH MAN and BALL!**
- Upon the offensive players flash cut, **we intercept it with our forearm**. We teach our defender to use his forearm, to bump or force the offense away from the lane *without extending the forearm*, which would be a foul, in order to deny.

It is a reality that our defender will momentarily lose sight of the ball, this occurs whenever we are defending a cutter, weather a screen is involved or not.

Defending the Low Post

- **You must have a very clear and concise philosophy of defending the low post. How you defend this area dictates everything else you do defensively.**
- There are only two areas to be defended; the low post and the perimeter. Everything that occurs in our **Post Box** (Approximately two steps off the lane and below the first hash mark on the lane) is considered the low post, everything else is the perimeter.
- We $\frac{3}{4}$ Deny on the High Side of the Post, we tell our players to **“Smother”** the Low Post. Activity is our biggest key, **WE MUST BE ACTIVE!**
- We can play $\frac{3}{4}$ high because we allow no baseline penetration. This also places us in a better position to take away the “High-Low” entry into the low post.
- We must know our **slip-point** in the low post; it can vary from player to player, depending upon size, length, and quickness. Anytime the ball is on the side and the offense tries to move us up the lane, upon approaching the mid-lane area we must slip behind to the baseline side to avoid being pinned high.
- Anytime a player steps away form the post, we then treat him as a perimeter player and deny inside the PACK AREA.
- **There can never be a feed to the low post from the top, no exceptions!**
- On a catch, we tell our post that this is our time, not the offensive player’s time, but our time. We must quickly slide behind the post on **“air-time”** – do not reach or gamble for a steal, but work to immediately position ourselves slightly to the baseline side with a half-step of cushion between our defender and the offensive player, maintaining a position between the post and the basket.
- From our position behind the low post, we will defend the ball in one of three ways:
 - 1) **Play the post one-on-one from behind** – do not give up a scoring angle forcing the offensive player to score over our defender, not through our him. Our post defender must keep his hands at shoulder height with his fingers pointed upward. We teach our post to employ a one step cut-off in this area, using his chest to level off the dribble, **take the hit and force the tough shot.**

- 2) **Choke the Post** – our perimeter players located on the ball-side will open to the ball as it is passed and give help to the post defender. We can dive in and out to bother the post and choke the post only if he puts the ball on the floor, or we can full-out choke the post, immediately diving to the ball and digging it out, forcing him to throw the ball out to the perimeter. Obviously, if our perimeter defender is defending a dead three or a great scorer, we may determine not to choke with his defender, but only to bluff help.
- 3) **RED THE POST** – Double the post Big to Big. This is probably our most often utilized method of defending the post, and our most effective. It is a way in which we can force the ball back out of the scoring area, while creating turnovers.

RED in the Post

- We employ our **Red** if we cannot handle a player one on one. Everyone, because of the **PACK**, is within one giant step of the low post. Therefore, it becomes much easier to double Big to Big, than if we were a denial defense.
- **The passer must absolutely deny the pass back out**, this pass cannot occur!
- The remaining two perimeter players sprint to occupy two areas, the Rim and the X-out positions. The Rim defender must not allow anyone to cut between himself and the basket – he becomes the sole protector of the rim. The X-out defender is positioned just inside the free throw line, opened to the ball. Again, vision and communication are absolute essentials. On a pass out of the low post; our X-out defender takes the initial pass and closes out to this player, our Rim defender has the next pass. Our perimeters will give support help until our Big arrives from doubling the post.
- The defender on the low post will create a cushion and **move slightly to the baseline** side on the pass, to allow the double and to take away a baseline spin move.
- The double must be on the pass, we move on “**air-time**”. The trap must be toe to toe – **shoulder to shoulder**. We want to **take away the cross-court pass to the open man with the position of our trap from the double**. “**Close the Door**” with our trap, do not allow the offensive post to look over the floor, be aggressive, but aggressive without fouling.
- **We want to be as high as we can be with our hands in the trap**. We want to avoid at all cost the temptation of reaching for the ball, keep those hands-up! Hands down will create the path for the pass out, hands down will increase our opportunity to foul.

- On a **“Release Dribble”**, we will leave the ball and immediately look to recover back to our assigned man. We could adjust, and stay with the offensive post on the Release Dribble, but our basic rule is to immediately leave on the **Release Dribble**.
- Recovery is on **“air-time”**. We will support perimeter to post, and we want our post to recover to their assigned man as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will allow a switch by the perimeter out of necessity.

Help-side Rules

- Help-side Positioning:
 - 1) **Ball located above the free throw line extended:** Both feet are positioned outside of the lane, in a closed position – maintaining our **“Ball – You – Man”** relationship.
 - 2) **Ball located at or below the free throw line extended:** One foot in the paint and therefore straddling the lane line, and again with a closed stance – maintaining our **“Ball – You – Man”** positioning.

We can do this because we do not give-up baseline penetration and we do not front the post as a rule. We have placed our help-side defenders closer to their men to closeout and to avoid becoming screen bait. We are in a closed stance to better enable our defenders to deny the flash post or to defeat a screening situation. Because we allow reversal, we must be in this position.

Obviously this could change according to whom we are guarding, vs. a great shooter we would have both feet outside the lane with the ball below the free throw line extended, vs. a great driver we would do the same most likely, however vs. a great post and a non-shooter we may position this defender with both feet in the lane.

DEFEATING SCREENS

Off the Ball

- We do not switch screens, only in special situations or scouting report situations do we switch. **Not switching makes our defense tougher!**
- **Play all off the ball screens the same.** We strive to keep everything we do within our defense as simple as possible. We will spend an inordinate amount of time defending off the ball screens. We spend more time on this than most programs spend on their O/B plays, lay-ups, and shooting combined.

- **We teach technique first**, and then we allow them to play. Our favorite drill to teach this skill, is 4/4 with a release. Thus, allowing the offense to screen as much as possible, in as many ways as possible, and as many combinations as possible.
- **The Cutter defender:** As soon as you know you will be screened, move to your man, getting as close as possible. Once our defender becomes a cutter defender, for this short time, he no longer has help responsibility and thus will lose vision of the ball for just a moment. We must aggressively follow the cutter into our proper defensive position – we want to be as physical as our size and strength will allow us to be. Obviously, if through scouting or playing the game, we can anticipate the offensive players cut, by all means do so.
- **Screener Defender:** We teach our screener defender to jump to the ball and create space between himself and the screener. He must help where necessary in the direction of the cutters action, but while staying within touching distance of his man. We give the screener defender a degree of freedom to help with the cutter.
- **There are exceptions to the above rules.** We want our players to play, we are not as rule oriented per-say as you might think. We want our players to conceptualize what our overall objective is and then play accordingly. We simply do not get caught up as much with this foot must be here, etc. as you must PLAY and Get Stops!
- **Examples of Defending Specific Screens:**

Flare Screen: Chase over the screen and loosen-up with the screener defender to protect the basket. This takes away the pop and rhythm shot by the cutter.

Back Screen: We jump to the ball and back inside the Pack Line, therefore, placing our cutter defender on top of the screener’s hip. Here we are in a position to take away the cut to the basket, a cut to the ball, or the pop-out cut. The screener defender gets lower than the screen, protects the basket and closes out to his man as quickly as possible.

Cross Screen: The cutter defender immediately moves to the cutter to take away the high cut, the screener defender opens to the ball, lower than the screen to protect the basket and provide baseline help if necessary. We utilize a “V” move here to move over top of the screen and recover back into the cutters path.

Screen on the Ball

- **Hard Show:** The screener defender gets in the dribblers path and has his “shoulders facing the ball”, while the defender on the ball gets over top of the screen and under the screener defender. The screener defender must force the ball handler to pick-up the dribble, go around the high side, or take a charge. We must help the helper with our other post defender, Big supports Big. We use this method of defending the ball screen vs. a great ball handler that can create and score with the jumper behind the screen.
- **Soft Show:** The screener defender positions himself in the lower plane of the screener with his shoulders tilted toward half court, two steps away from the screen (we are in a better position to recover to the screener popping), his job is to force the ball to dribble out and around, thus giving our ball defender ample opportunity to recover. He absolutely cannot allow a dribble around or pull-up jump shot. The ball defender goes over both the screen and the screener defender, over taking and recovering to the ball. We employ this method of defending the ball screen with a great ball-handler that is creative with the dribble, can shoot the pull-up, and the screener can pop and shoot it.
- **Slide:** The screener defender positions himself “2 x 2”; two steps under the screen and two steps away from screen, allowing the ball defender to slide under the screener and over our screener defender. We defend the ball screen in this manner when it occurs outside of the scoring area, or the ball handler is not a threat to score.
- **Flat:** The screener defender pushes up into screener while the on ball defender goes under both. We use this vs. a screener that can shoot-it, or a great screen and role guy.

Defending Specific Screening Movements:

- **Double Staggered or Side by Side Screens:** Defend with screener defender closest to ball extending into passing lane, screener defender furthest away is the zone man, and cutter defender chases hard!
- **Screen the Screener:**
- **Flex Action:**
- **UCLA Duck-in:**
- **Late Clock 1-4 Down:**
- **Late Clock Screen on Ball:**

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PACK LINE DEFENSE



"Install and teach the Pack Line defense from scratch using philosophy and drills"

Author: Chris Filios

Pack Defense Playbook

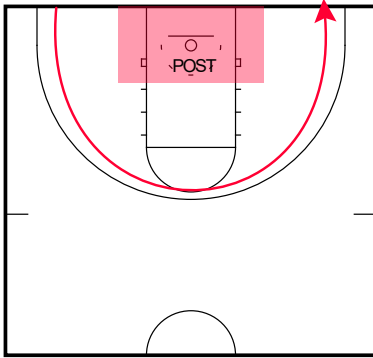
Table of Contents

1.	Pack Line Defense- Key Areas	2
2.	Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique	5
3.	Pack Line Defense- Defending the Post	28
4.	Pack Line Defense Drills- Ball Pressure	37
5.	Pack Line Defense Drills- Positioning	45
6.	Pack Line Defense Drills- Post Defense	56
7.	Pack Line Defense Drills- Transition Defense	60
8.	Pack Line Defense Drills- Rebounding	68
9.	Pack Line Defense- Guarding Popular Actions	70

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Key Areas

Pack Line- Key Areas

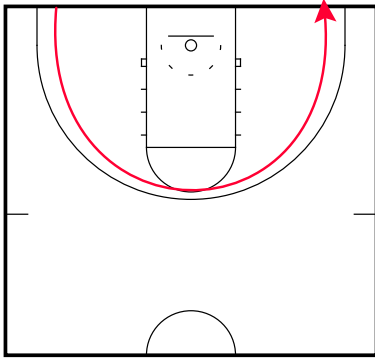


These two areas are the basis for the Pack Line defense. The relationship between the perimeter and post defense are integral to these 2 areas.

Pack Defense Playbook

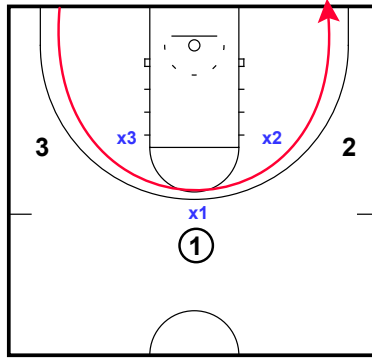
Pack Line Defense- Key Areas

Pack Line- Arc Area



The "Pack Line" is an area one step inside the three point arc.

Pack Line- Arc Area

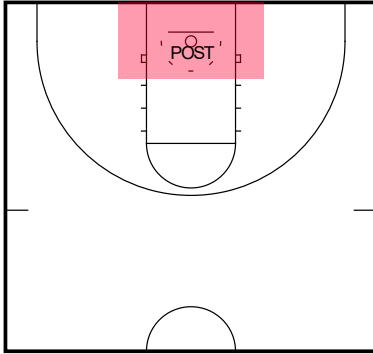


RULE: If the player that you are guarding does NOT have the ball, you have BOTH feet inside the arc.

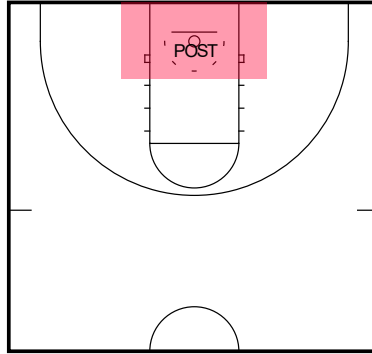
Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Key Areas

Pack Line- Post Area



Pack Line- Post Area



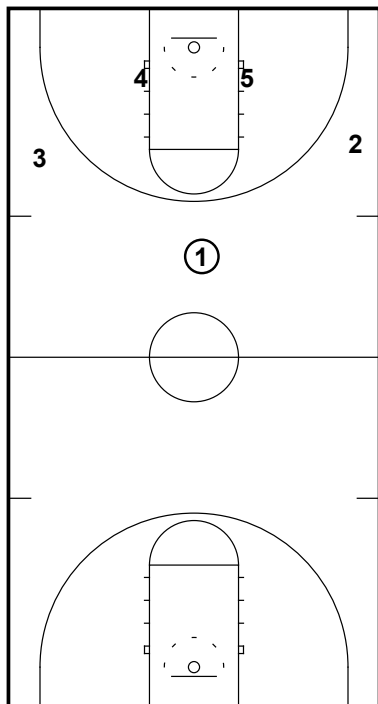
The Pack Line Post Box is an area a step outside of the key and one step up from the second free throw spot. This area extends across the lane to the opposite side of the court and runs parallel to the backboard.

RULE: NO two foot catches inside this area. Your job is to push the catch outside of the post area, then put your chin on the shoulder of the player outside the post area.

Pack Defense Playbook

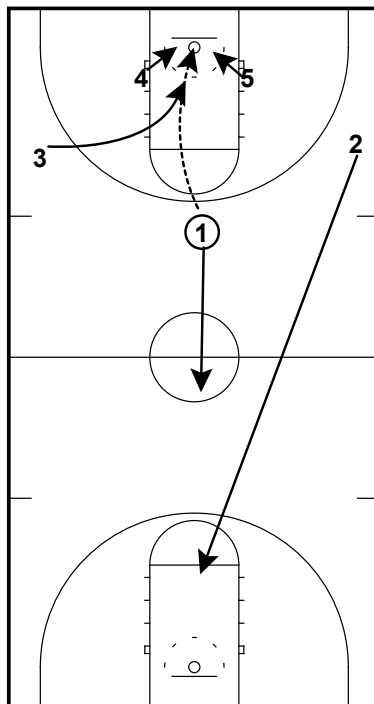
Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line- Defensive Transition



The 1 tenet of the pack line defense is **DEFENSIVE TRANSITION**. It is the most important principle of the pack line defense.

Pack Line- Defensive Transition

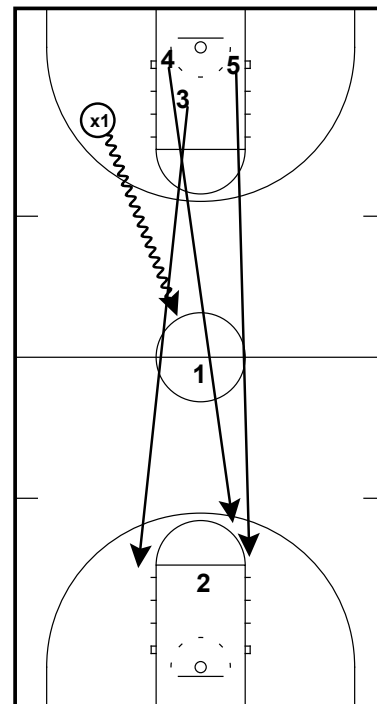


Transition defense begins when a shot is attempted. 3 to glass and 2 back. On the shot, 3-5 go to the glass hard. 1 and 2 sprint back. One is a fullback and the other is a halfback.

The fullback is responsible for getting all the way back and protect the basket.

The halfback is responsible for getting to the half court circle and being ready to pick up the ball as it is being advanced in transition.

Pack Line- Defensive Transition



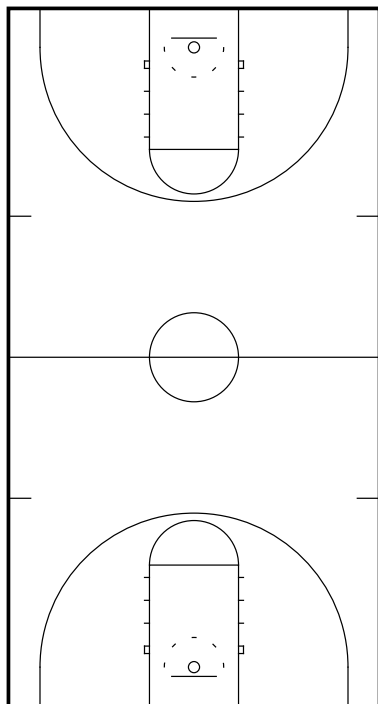
Once the possession has changed and the offense has secured the ball, 3-5 are on a dead sprint back on defense.

The halfback and fullback are responsible for pointing and talking to their teammates who are sprinting back. This communication is key to stopping the ball and getting organized as quickly as possible.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line- Defensive Transition



Keys to D-Trans:

1. Shot balance
2. Sprint
3. Get ahead of the ball
4. Point and talk
5. Build a wall
6. Be on assignment

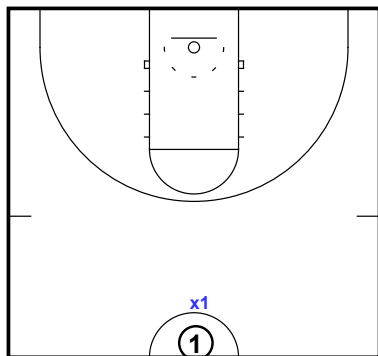
Priorities:

1. Stop the ball
2. Protect the basket

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

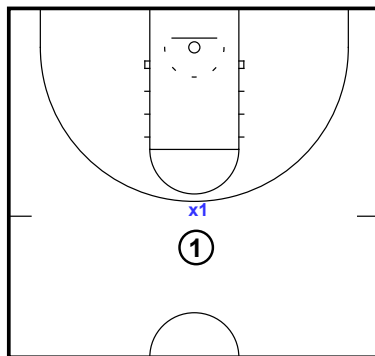
Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball



The #1 rule of the pack line defense is pressure on the ball.

Different coaches choose different places to pick up the basketball. Some want the ball picked up at half court. Some have the ball picked up lower. Either way, the key is having constant pressure on the ball.

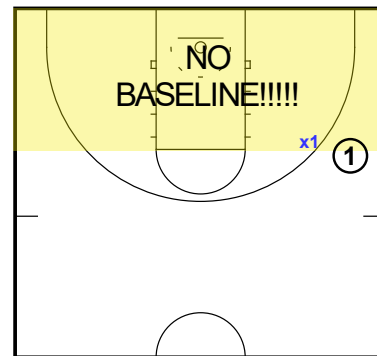
Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball



When the ball is on TOP, the defender (x1) is squared up to his man.

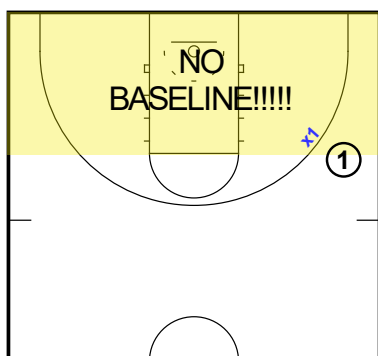
You can tailor your game plan by forcing the ball handler in one consistent direction...or game plan based on personnel by forcing ball handler to weak hand.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball



The #2 rule when guarding the ball- specifically on the wing is: NO BASELINE DRIVE! This is key. The belief behind this rule is that based on the positioning of the other defenders, there is no help to baseline side, but all the help is to the middle.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball

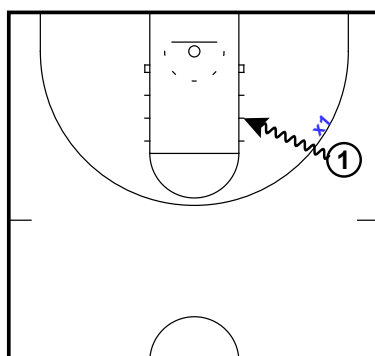


So positioning and technique on the ball is key when guarding the ball on the wing.

x1 positioning is...

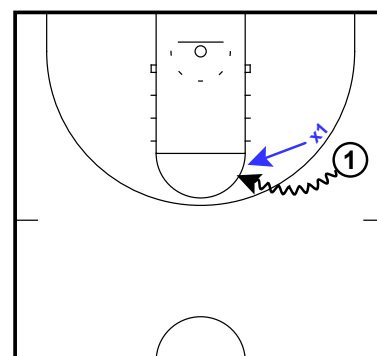
- squared to the offensive player (just like on the top)
- body is shaded on the low or baseline side of the offense player- the bottom foot of the offensive player splits the defender in half

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball



If the defender plays too low on the ball or is too open, it provides a straight line drive opportunity for the offense. The defense either cannot help or causes the defense to over help.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball



Rule #3: NO DIRECT DRIVES. The defender must work on "guarding his yard".

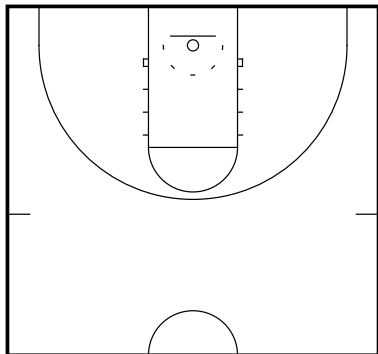
"Guarding your yard" is the accountability to effectively contain the dribble 3 feet in either direction.

With the 4 other players properly positioned, and the on ball defender able to not give up a straight line drive, the offense will not be able to beat the defense with the dribble.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball



On the ball...

When offensive player has ball (before dribble):

- in stance, defender head below shoulder level of offensive player
- active hands looking to deflect pass or take away vision of offense
- apply pressure to create discomfort of offense

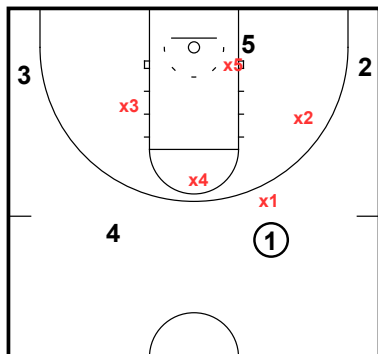
When offensive player attacks off dribble:

- hands fly back- NO HAND CHECK FOULS!
- push off trail foot hard and long slides in direction of drive
- with hands back, play physical with chest

Pack Defense Playbook

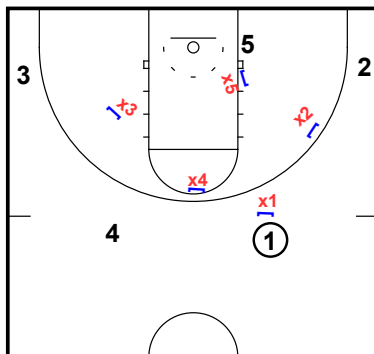
Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Stance Technique



The technique of the stance is also extremely important.

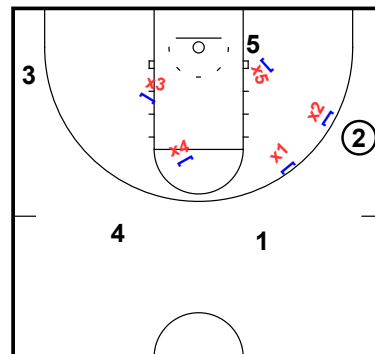
Pack Line Technique- Stance Technique



The stance on the ball is dictated on the location of the ball (see guarding the ball page).

Off the ball, the body and feet are NOT square to ball handler. Top foot is pointed at ball handler but chest is more pointed at angle that allows you to see ball and man while in help position.

Pack Line Technique- Stance Technique

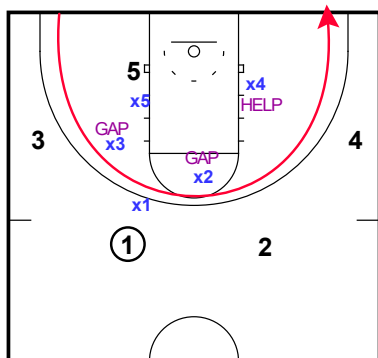


Off the ball, the body and feet are NOT square to ball handler. Top foot is pointed at ball handler but chest is more pointed at angle that allows you to see ball and man while in help position.

Pack Defense Playbook

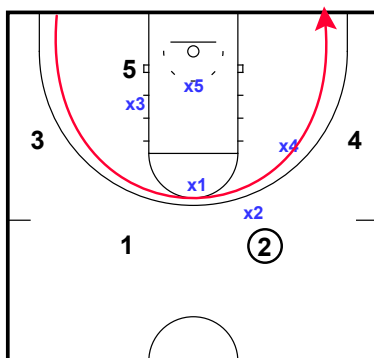
Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Positioning



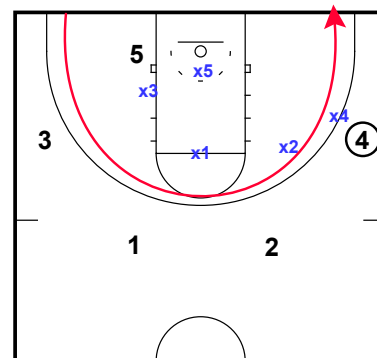
- x1- on the ball.
- x2- in gap position communicating "gap" with ball 1 pass away.
- x3- in gap position communicating "gap" with ball 1 pass away.
- x4- in help position communicating "help" with ball 2 passes away with at least 1 foot inside the paint.
- x5- on top of post player and is up the line, on the line.

Pack Line Technique- Positioning



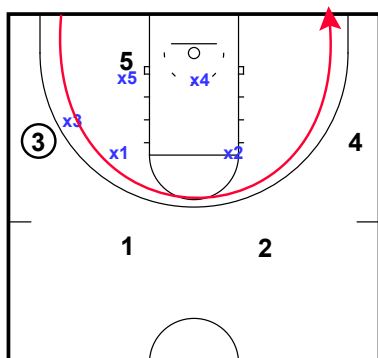
- x1- "Gap"
- x2- "Ball"
- x3- "Help"
- x4- "Gap"
- x5- "Help"

Pack Line Technique- Positioning



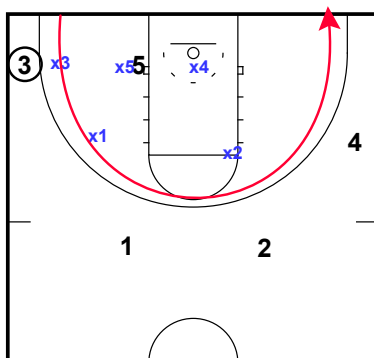
- x1- "Help"
- x2- "Gap"
- x3- "Help"
- x4- "Ball"
- x5- "Help"

Pack Line Technique- Positioning



- x1- "Gap"
- x2- "Help"
- x3- "Ball"
- x4- "Help"
- x5- 3/4 post position with hand in the lane eliminating touch inside the post area.

Pack Line Technique- Positioning

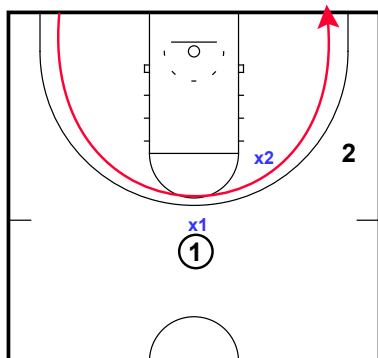


- x1- "Gap"
- x2- "Help"
- x3- "Ball"
- x4- "Help"
- x5- if the ball is as low or lower than the post player, the post defender will slide to full front (if in post box) or slide behind (if out of post box).

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

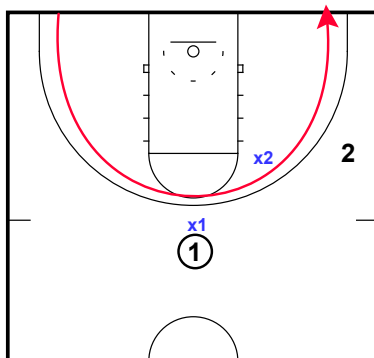
Pack Line Technique- Gap Integrity



The Pack Line defense philosophy is designed to prevent penetration of the basketball. The defense is designed to give you the best chance to compete against any level of talent, improve defensive rebounding, force tough shots, reduce fouling, and limit penetration of the basketball through the dribble or the pass.

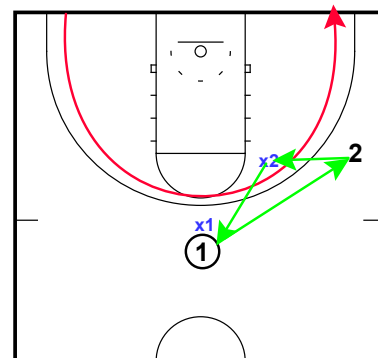
Gap Integrity is most important part of the Pack Line defense.

Pack Line Technique- Gap Integrity



RULE: If the player that you are guarding does NOT have the ball, you have BOTH feet inside the arc.

Pack Line Technique- Gap Integrity

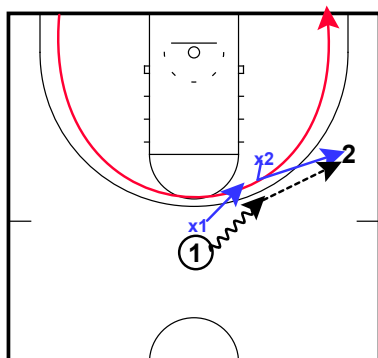


Your position is your help. When your player does NOT have the ball on the perimeter, you are:

1. You are about half way between the ball and your player.
2. You have 2 feet inside the pack line and a step off the line that connects the ball to your man.
3. You are actively able to see ball and man.

This position is also referred to as the flat triangle. You always want your triangle to be as flat as possible with your feet inside the pack line.

Pack Line Technique- Gap Integrity

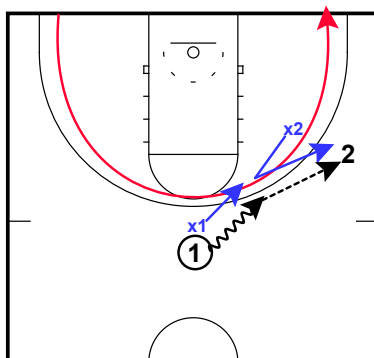


Your position in early help is key!

By having good, early gap positioning, it provides:

1. Visual to offense that there is no open driving lane.
2. If the ball is driven, x2 is able to bluff- thus providing minimal help, and then being able to recover to own man and take away shot.

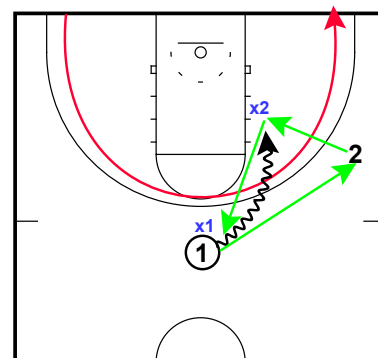
Pack Line Technique- Gap Integrity



If x2 is not half way between ball and man (too glued to man), on it:

1. Provides open driving lane to ball handler.
2. It puts x2 into a help and recover situation where a lot of ground needs to be covered. It is really hard in this situation to help on the penetration and recover to own man to take away shot.

Pack Line Technique- Gap Integrity



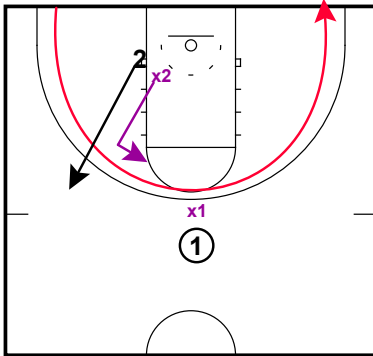
If x2 is too deep in his positioning, also known as the "deep triangle"...the ball handler is able to get deep penetration of the ball and x2 is forced to "sell-out" in his help. This deep position is impossible to recover from when the ball is kicked out to his man for a shot.

Compare the triangle in this frame to the one in frame 3. It is much larger.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Cutter

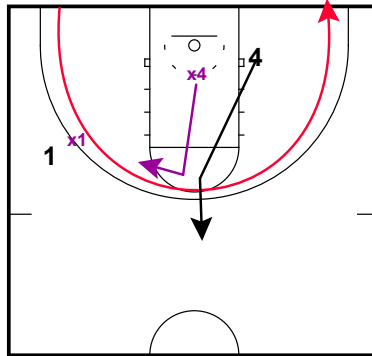


2 things to remember when guarding cutters:

1. Deny any pass inside the arc. The defense wants to prevent any and all penetration inside the pack arc, including passes. So all passes are denied when cutter is inside arc. Defender should not be glued to man, he should be "up the line, on the line" in denial position.

2. Do not chase cutters outside the arc. As soon as cutter has reached pack line arc, defender releases and slides into proper gap position.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Cutter

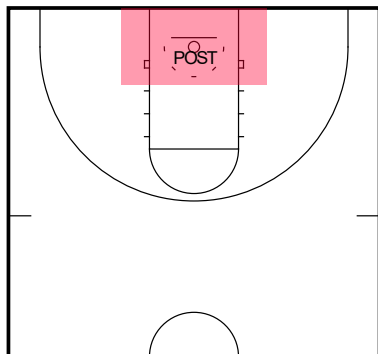


Big flashing high. x4 denies high post entry pass until the offensive player has stepped outside the pack line arc. x4 then slides into proper gap position.

Pack Defense Playbook

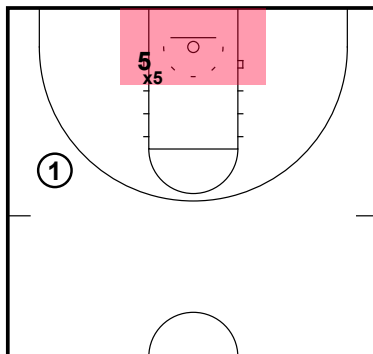
Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Post (w/o the Ball)



You must have a very clear and concise philosophy of how you are going to defend the low post. How you defend the low post dictates everything else you do defensively.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Post (w/o the Ball)

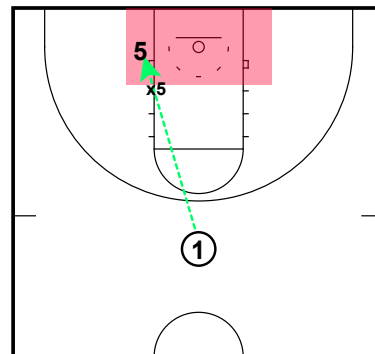


When the ball is on the side, the defense will play 3/4 on the high side of the low post player. x5 is attempting to "smother" the low post. He is working to push the catch outside of the post box.

They are able to do this because there is no baseline dribble penetration, so they do not have to worry about help.

It also helps because when ball is moved to top, now x5 is in position to take away the high low pass.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Post (w/o the Ball)

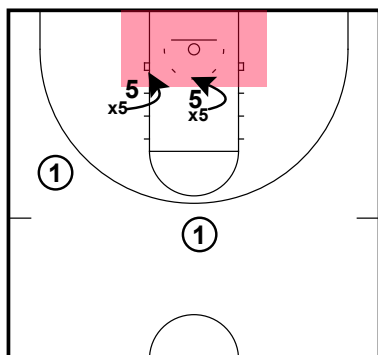


There can never be a feed to the low post from the top.

The defender must play "on the line and up the line" so that he is on top of the offensive post player.

However, he can not get himself too high that the offense is able to lob the ball over the top.

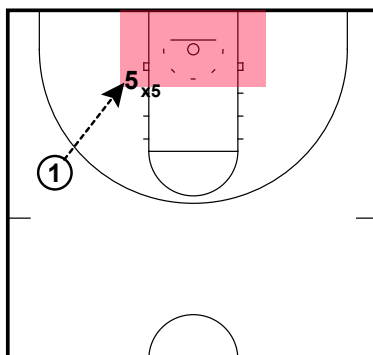
Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Post (w/o the Ball)



By making it difficult to enter the ball in a scoring area of the post, a team will counter by having their post player walk/push the defender higher and lobbing the ball over the top.

The defense must recognize this "slip point". Upon approaching this point, the defender must break contact and slip behind the offensive player and "wall up" as to not give up an easy basket.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Post (w/o the Ball)



On a catch, the post defender on the "air time" must quickly slide behind the offensive player to put himself between the ball and basket.

The defender does NOT reach or gamble for the ball giving the post a free basket.

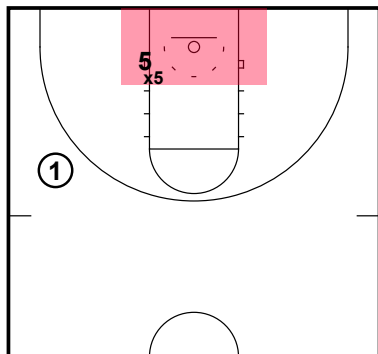
From here, the team guards the post usually 1 of the 3 ways...

1. 1 v 1- make post score over the top
2. Crowd/Dig/Choke the post with active perimeters
3. Double the post

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Post (with the Ball)

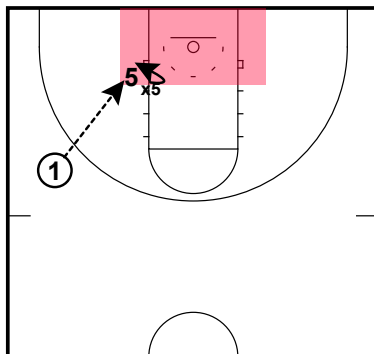


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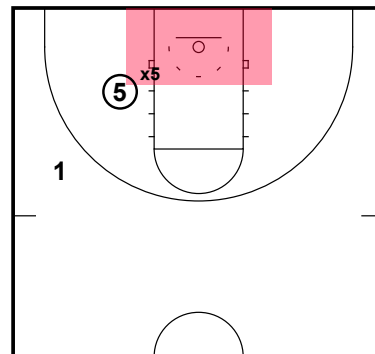
Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Post (with the Ball)



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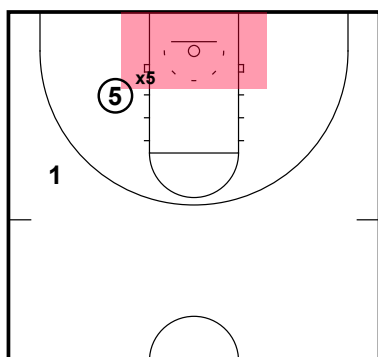
Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Post (with the Ball)



On the post catch, x5 will have "pop back" (or slid behind). He is in stance with small gap between him and the offensive post player- he is not leaning on him. He may have an arm bar on him to protect himself from back down, but cannot extend that arm for it is a foul. Inside hand is high taking away vision to basket and pass out weak.

As the post player makes his move, x5 will throw his hands high with elbows "in his ears", trying to hold position with lower body and walk through the offensive player. "Walling up" provides a great box out position and prevents easy offensive rebounds.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Post (with the Ball)

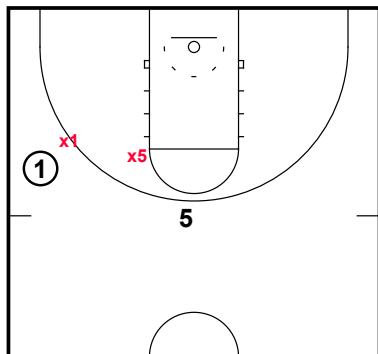


Undisciplined post defenders pick up cheap fouls or give up easy baskets by leaving their feet to block shots. Should never leave "wall up" position to block a shot. Blocked shots come from the weak side in help.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

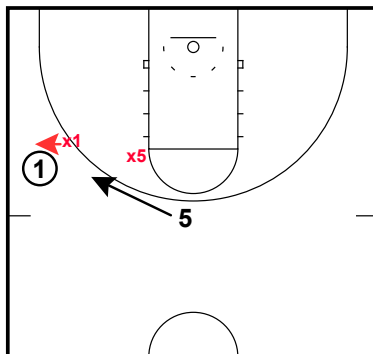
Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Hard Show)



The most common way of defending the ball screen in the pack line defense is the Hard Show (or Hedge).

It all starts with proper positioning and communication.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Hard Show)

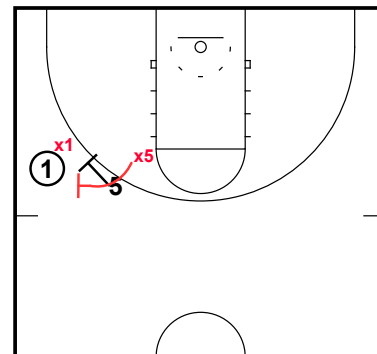


x1 should be on applying pressure on the ball influencing the ball middle (taking away baseline). x5 should be in "flat triangle" plugging the gap.

As soon as x5 recognizes that the offense is setting a ball screen, he immediately communicates with x1 by calling "screen [direction]".

When x1 hears x5 call out the screen, he immediately shifts his positioning to bottom side of offensive player to eliminate any baseline and force into him into the ball screen.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Hard Show)



As 5 is going to set the screen, x5 steps up and positions himself early.

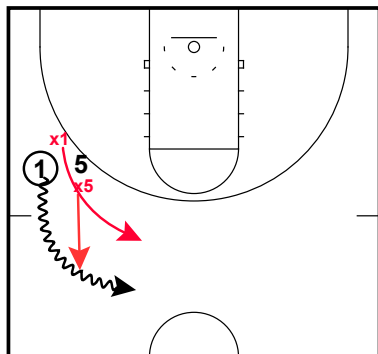
x5 positioning:

- chest parallel to the sideline
- low and wide stance
- "extension of the screen" --> inside hand on screener (5). Having a hand on the screener is key as it helps eliminate the chance of being split by the ball handler.
- high, wide arms/hands. This makes the show wider and eliminates the defender from picking up a cheap hand check foul.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Hard Show)



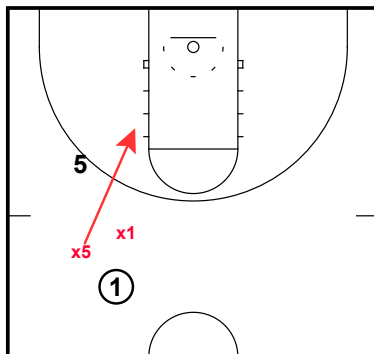
x1 forces the ball handler into the screen and the show man.

As the ball handler attacks, it is x5 job to drive the ball handler up the floor towards the half court line.

In a hard show, x5 will give 2 hard slides up the floor. He must be very careful as to not commit a blocking foul when sliding as the ball handler attacks. He must be in a stance with active feet, have arms out, and hands to the sky.

x1 goes over the screen and under x5 taking an angle to cut off the ball handler and square the ball up.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Hard Show)

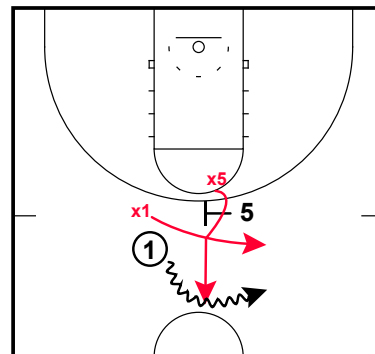


x1 will square up the ball and x5 will recover.

x5 recovery will be based on communication from other big- he may recover to own man or they may have "x-out" (switch).

x5 sprints with high hands in recovery.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Hard Show)

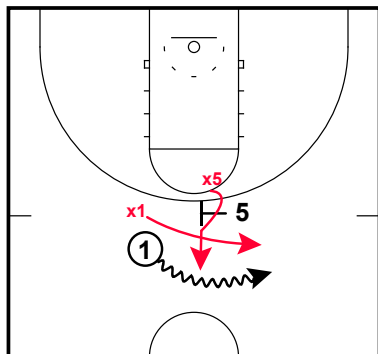


Here's a look at a middle ball screen.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball
Screen (Hard Show)



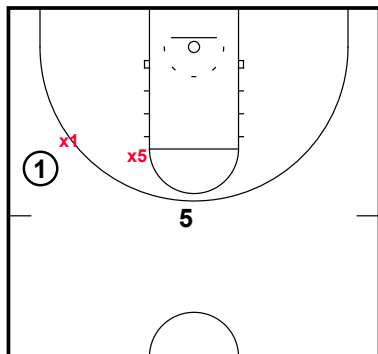
An adjustment that a team can make with the show is to give a "peek-a-boo" (quick) show. They may adjust to doing this if the screener is good perimeter shooter and don't want to get too far removed from him.

In that case, x5 will do everything the same as the standard hard show, except instead of driving the ball handler up the floor with two hard slides, he will either give 1 slide or possibly no slide at all. x1 will have to work hard to get through screen quicker as x5 is committing less time to the ball.

Pack Defense Playbook

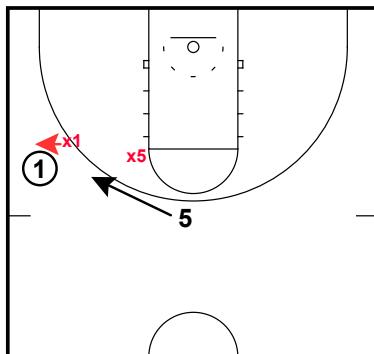
Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Trap)



Although it isn't used too often, some teams will use the trap against a really talented offensive player to force the ball out of his hands.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Trap)

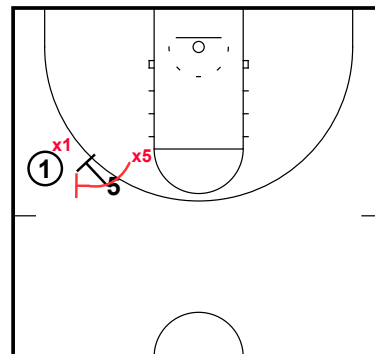


x1 should be on applying pressure on the ball influencing the ball middle (taking away baseline). x5 should be in "flat triangle" plugging the gap.

As soon as x5 recognizes that the offense is setting a ball screen, he immediately communicates with x1 by calling "screen [direction]".

When x1 hears x5 call out the screen, he immediately shifts his positioning to bottom side of offensive player to eliminate any baseline and force into him into the ball screen.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Trap)



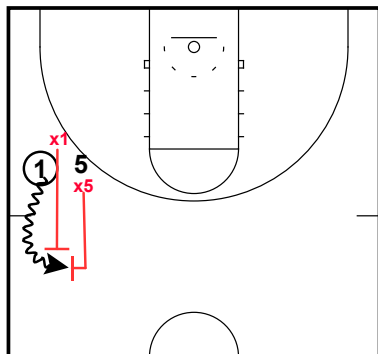
As 5 is going to set the screen, x5 steps up and positions himself early.

x5 positioning:
-chest parallel to the sideline
-low and wide stance
-"extension of the screen" --> inside hand on screener (5). Having a hand on the screener is key as it helps eliminate the chance of being split by the ball handler.
-high, wide arms/hands. This makes the show wider and eliminates the defender from picking up a cheap hand check foul.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Trap)



x1 forces the ball handler into the screen and the show man.

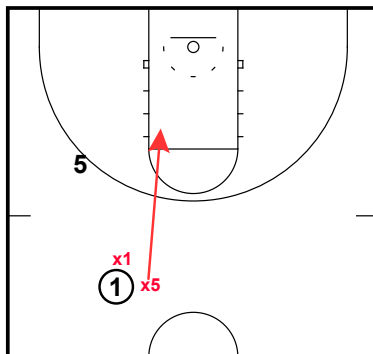
As the ball handler attacks, it is x5 job to drive the ball handler up the floor towards the half court line.

Much like a hard show, x5 will give slide up the floor. He must be very careful as to not commit a blocking foul when sliding as the ball handler attacks. He must be in a stance with active feet, have arms out, and hands to the sky.

x1 goes over the screen and aggressively attacks the ball.

On the trap, x1 and x5 must be shoulder to shoulder as not to allow the ball handler split them with the dribble. That is the cardinal sin.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Trap)



x5 will stay with the trap until the ball is picked up. He does not need to stay with it even if the ball hasn't been passed. The ball handler is no longer a threat to make a play with the dribble or shot, x5 may recover.

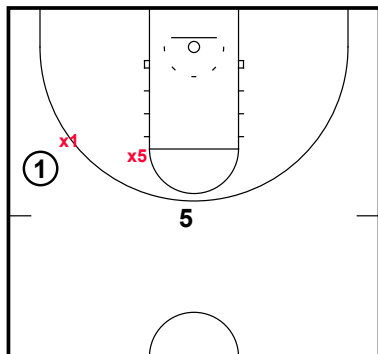
x5 recovery will be based on communication from other big- he may recover to own man or they may have "x-out" (switch).

x5 sprints with high hands in recovery.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Soft Show)

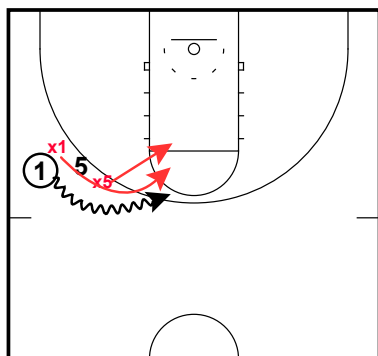


A common way of defending the ball screen in the pack line defense is the Soft Show (can also be called a "flat show", or "lateral").

This method may be used in a couple of situations:

- the defensive big is slow footed and has hard time getting out to give effective shows- leading to guard turning the corner and making plays. It may also be used if big has trouble getting out early and is committing fouls due to poor positioning.
- May be switched to on fly if big knows he is getting out to screen late and will not be able to provide a good show on the screen.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Soft Show)



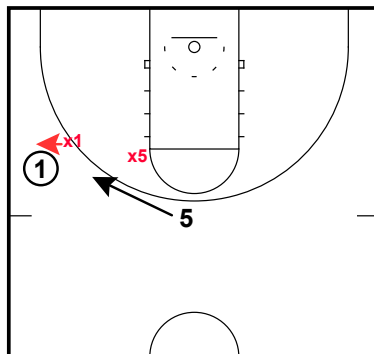
x1 forces the ball handler into the screen and the show man.

x5 forces the ball out and around, thus giving x1 ample time to recover.

His job is to stay between ball and basket and to contest the pull-up jumper.

As the ball handler attacks, x1 goes over the screen and over the top of x5 taking an angle to cut off the ball handler and square the ball up.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Soft Show)

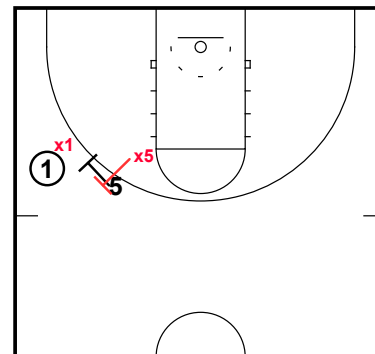


x1 should be on applying pressure on the ball influencing the ball middle (taking away baseline). x5 should be in "flat triangle" plugging the gap.

As soon as x5 recognizes that the offense is setting a ball screen, he immediately communicates with x1 by calling "screen [direction]".

When x1 hears x5 call out the screen, he immediately shifts his positioning to bottom side of offensive player to eliminate any baseline and force into him into the ball screen.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Soft Show)



As 5 is going to set the screen, x5 steps up and positions himself early.

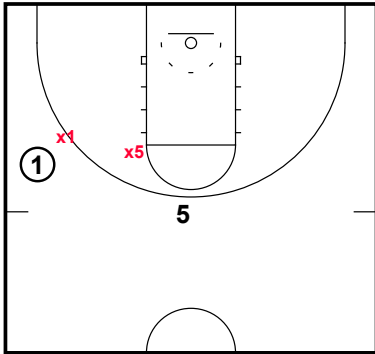
x5 positioning:

- 2 steps removed from screen
- chest flat (more square to ball handler)
- low and wide stance
- high, wide arms/hands. This makes it wider and eliminates the defender from picking up a cheap hand check foul or splitting the defenders

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Bump and Under)

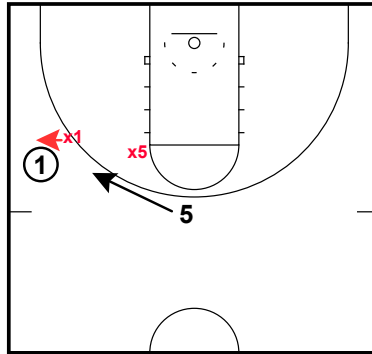


Another defending the ball screen in the pack line defense is the Bump and under (can also be called a "plug & go").

This technique may be used when the the screener is a perimeter shooting threat and the defense does not want to become unattached from the screener.

It all starts with proper positioning and communication.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Bump and Under)

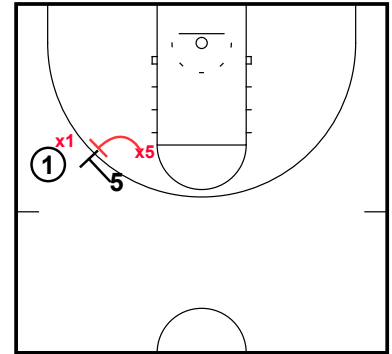


x1 should be on applying pressure on the ball influencing the ball middle (taking away baseline). x5 should be in "flat triangle" plugging the gap.

As soon as x5 recognizes that the offense is setting a ball screen, he immediately communicates with x1 by calling "screen [direction]".

When x1 hears x5 call out the screen, he immediately shifts his positioning to bottom side of offensive player to eliminate any baseline and force into him into the ball screen.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Bump and Under)

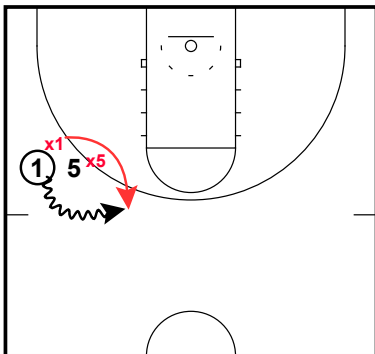


As 5 is going to set the screen, x5 steps up and makes early contact with the screener.

x5 positioning:

- chest parallel to the screener
- low and wide stance
- chest pressed against the screener pushing the screen further out
- high hands to eliminate fouling and for contesting the shot of the ball handler if he pulls up from behind the screen.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Bump and Under)



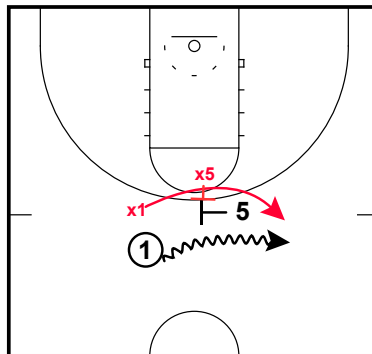
x1 forces the ball handler into the screen.

As the ball handler attacks, it is x5 job to hold the screen firm so that the roller can not roll into x1 when he goes under the screen.

x1 goes under both the screen and x5 to cut off the dribbler on the other side of the screen.

x1 takes angle to cut off ball handler and square up the basketball.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Ball Screen (Bump and Under)

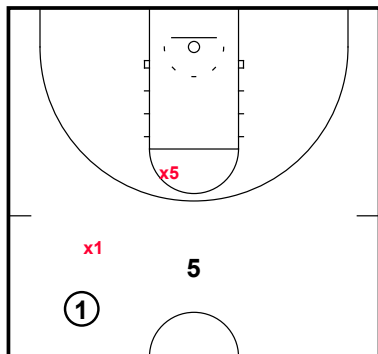


Here's a look at a middle ball screen.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the "Non-Scoring Area" Ball Screen (Soft Show)



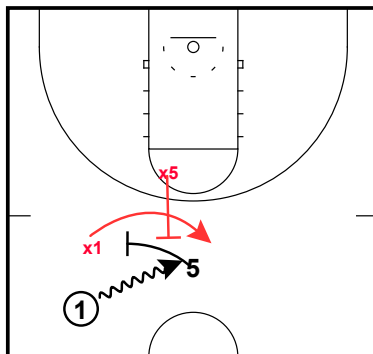
We just covered the "soft show" coverage.

Teams who may hard show will also use this coverage as an exception when the ball screen and ball are out of a "scoring area". This area can be defined by a line on the floor or a developed judgment call by the big.

This is designed to stay soft and keep ball in front of the defense.

An example of this would be a transition drag screen or sometimes a late clock play.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the "Non-Scoring Area" Ball Screen (Soft Show)

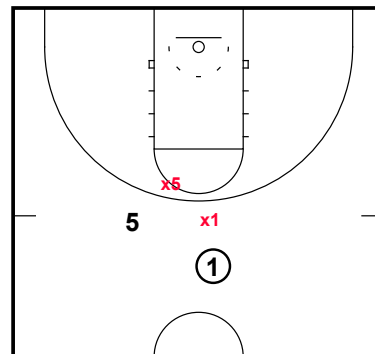


As the screen is happening, x5 is communicating to x1 the action that is happening. Normally he would call "screen [direction]" and then get into his normal screen coverage.

Due to the location of the screen, he is now communicating a little differently. He is still calling "screen [direction]", but now he is also directing x1 to go "under" the screen.

x1 forces ball into screen. x5 "soft shows" to keep ball in front. x1 then slides under screen AND under x5 quickly to cut off and square ball back up.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the "Non-Scoring Area" Ball Screen (Soft Show)

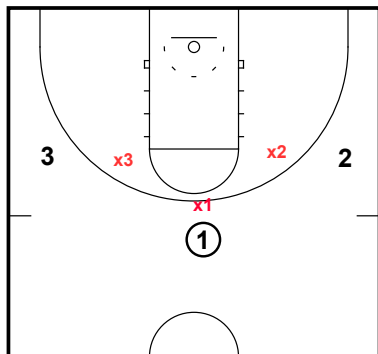


With ball back in scoring area, the defense will revert back to their standard ball screen defense rules/principles.

Pack Defense Playbook

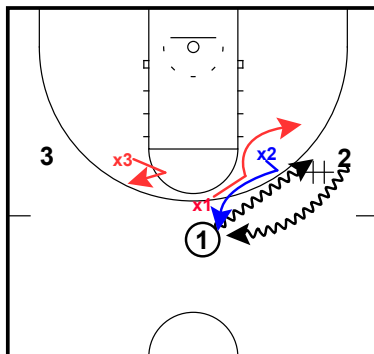
Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Dribble Hand Off



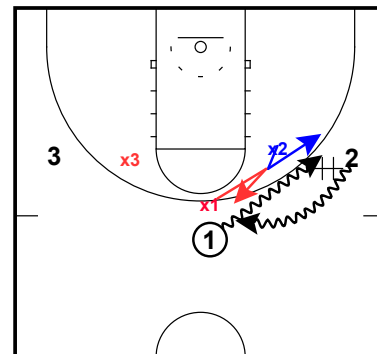
Guarding the DHO. There are a few different ways to approach guarding the DHO.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Dribble Hand Off



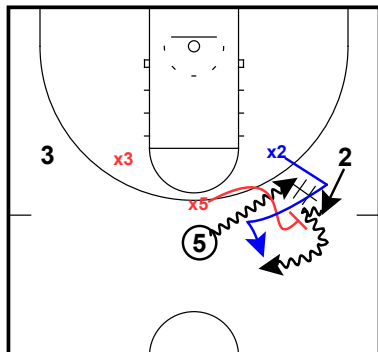
One option for guarding the dribble hand off (usually guard to guard): x1 sees the dribble hand off happening, they will jump back to let x2 through when the ball is exchanged from 1 to 2. x2 will take an angle to square up ball so that 2 can not turn the corner. x3 will provide gap coverage.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Dribble Hand Off



A second option that can be used to defend the DHO is to switch (most used when DHO happens between "likes"). x1 goes with ball handler. When he recognizes the DHO action, he communicates "switch" with x2 and trade men.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Dribble Hand Off



When the DHO occurs between a big and guard, the defensive big may provide a quick hedge to slow ball handler down and provide time for ball defender to recover.

This is much like hedging on a ball screen. When x5 recognizes the hand off, he jumps out into a quick show.

x2 recognizing the handoff has jumped up from gap position to meet his man and slide over the top of the handoff in attempts to "blow it up". If he doesn't he slides over top of DHO and under big.

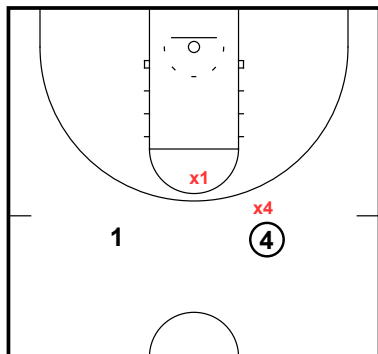
Adjustments that can be made:

- If the hand off is going to talented player, the show can be harder or trap may even be used.
- If the handoff goes to a non-perimeter threat, guard can go under hand off and big.
- The show/hedge can adjusted- hard, trap, soft/flat, etc. based on personnel

Pack Defense Playbook

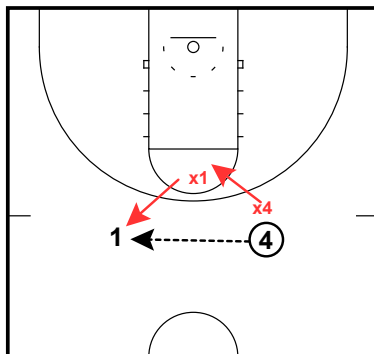
Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Blur Cut

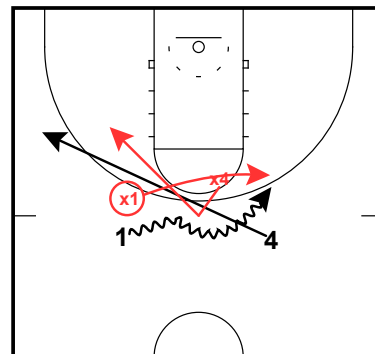


The dribble drive uses the blur cut to rub the defender and create driving opportunity for offense.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Blur Cut

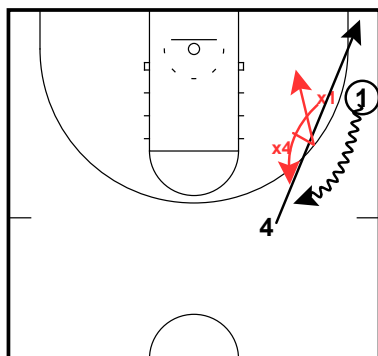


Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Blur Cut



As 4 goes to blur cut, instead of chasing him, x4 hold and sits in driving gap like he is giving a soft/flat show. This will deny 1 the straight line drive into open driving lane and allow x1 to slide through and square ball up.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Blur Cut

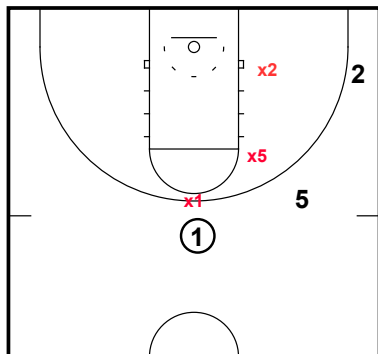


Here is a look from the wing.

Pack Defense Playbook

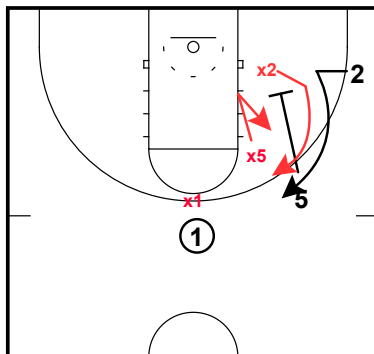
Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Down Screen



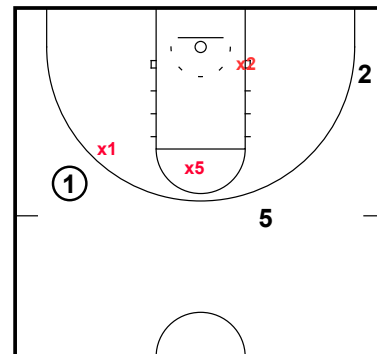
Down screen with ball in middle 1/3.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Down Screen



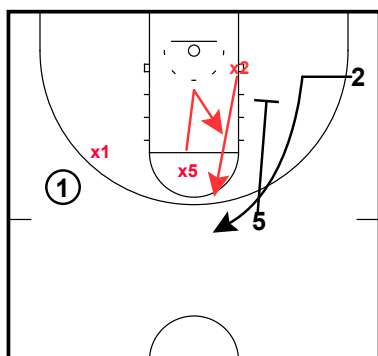
5 pins down for 2. x5 communicates the "down screen" to x2. x2 attaches to the cutter and chases same side. x5 loosened and is arm length away from screener. x5 provides help against the curl from the cutter. x2 is responsible for taking away catch and shoot opportunity.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Down Screen



Down screen on weak side with ball in outer 1/3.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Down Screen

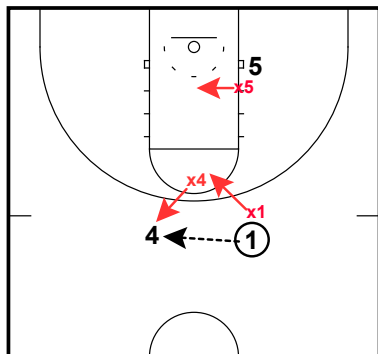


5 pins down for 2. x5 communicates the "down screen" to x2. x2 already in a help position, goes "removed" and shoots the gap. x5 loosens to get x2 through the screen.

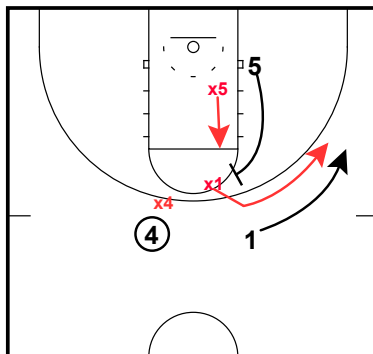
Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Flare Screen



Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Flare Screen



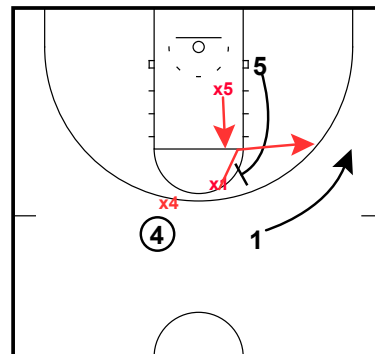
When 5 goes to flare screen for 1, x5 communicates "flare" to x1.

x4 pressures the ball and disrupts vision.

x1 steps up and into his man and chases over the screen. His responsibility is to take away the catch and shoot jumper on the flare.

x5 loosens a couple of steps below the screen, even with the screen, with high hands. He is the basket protector. He provides help against the curl on the flare and against the slip of the screen.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Flare Screen

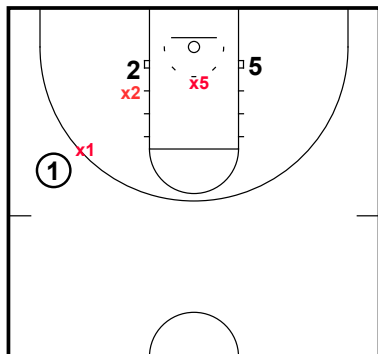


An adjustment that teams can make is to go under the flare screen. This is ONLY done when the person being flared for is a 100% non-perimeter threat. In this case, x1 is free to go under to keep the offensive player in front of him.

Pack Defense Playbook

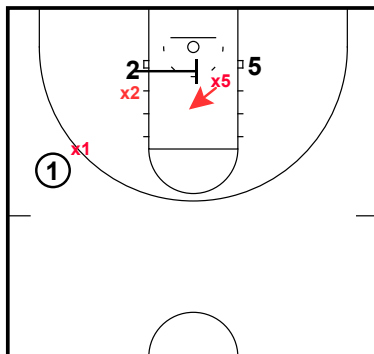
Pack Line Defense- Positioning & Technique

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Cross Screen



Guarding the cross screen.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Cross Screen

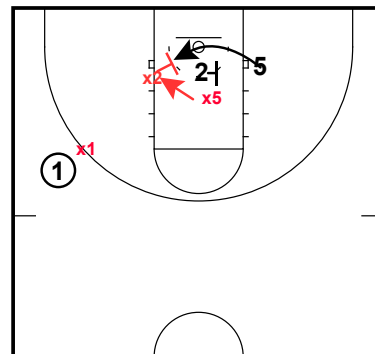


When 2 goes to cross screen for 5, x2 communicates "cross screen" to x5.

x1 pressures the ball and disrupts vision.

x5 should be a little higher than his man and to the ball in his help position. As soon as he hears "cross screen", he makes sure to get on top side of screen, forcing 5 to take the low side of the screen.

Pack Line Technique- Guarding the Cross Screen



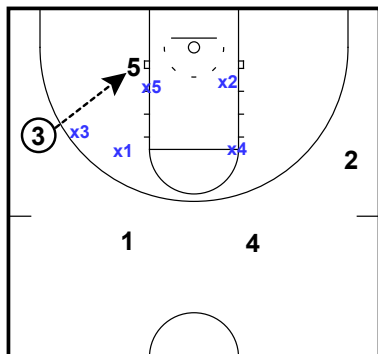
With x5 on top of screen and forcing 5 to low side, x2 gets to low side of screen and bumps the cutter, providing x5 time to get over top of screen and to recover to front to keep 5 from getting touch inside post area.

Once 5 makes this "V" move and recovers, x2 can release "hold" and recover to his man/proper position.

Pack Defense Playbook

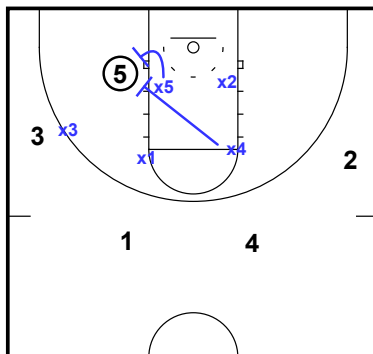
Pack Line Defense- Defending the Post

Pack Line- Post Double Big to Big



x5 is 3/4 on top shoulder pushing the post catch outside the post area box.

Pack Line- Post Double Big to Big



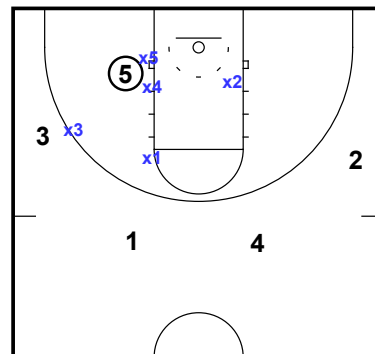
Pack line defensive teams will often double the post against a good offensive player. The most common way of doubling the post is to double "BIG TO BIG".

On the air time of the pass, x5 will slide behind the offensive player to put himself between him and the basket and slide to the low side of the player with high hands. x5 cannot allow 5 to beat him baseline side.

On the air time, x4 will sprint into double team taking the high side of the offensive player. He comes aggressively with high hands taking away quick pass out.

x4 and x5 have to be tight to avoid letting the offensive player split them. High hands take away vision and easy kick out. Their job is not to steal the ball, but make offense uncomfortable and difficult to pass out.

Pack Line- Post Double Big to Big



x3 plays tight and locks up man not allowing direct pass back out.

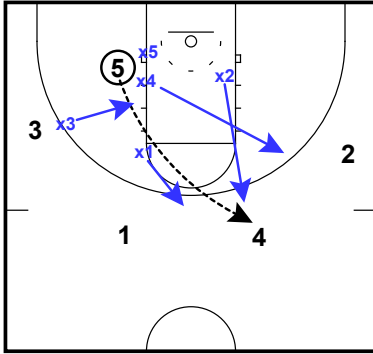
x2 is low man and keeps everyone else above him. He is helper on any type of dive cut from top or weak side. If the ball is skipped out to weak side to 2, he will close to the ball.

x1 sinks to elbow area where he can see both men on the top.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Defending the Post

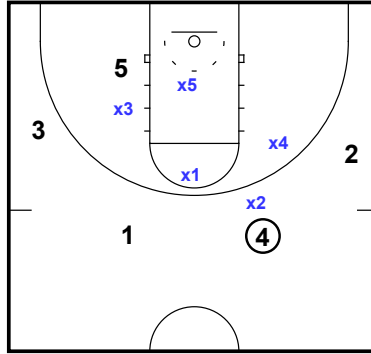
Pack Line- Post Double Big to Big



x4 and x5 stay with trap until...

1. Ball is passed out.
2. Ball is dribbled out of "scoring area" for post player. He will then recover to own man/position leaving to x5 to play 1 v 1 with 5. This is used when 5 is not real skilled with the dribble and making plays, but is good with back to basket.
3. Ball is dribbled out and then picked up killing any threat of the offensive player making a play.

Pack Line- Post Double Big to Big

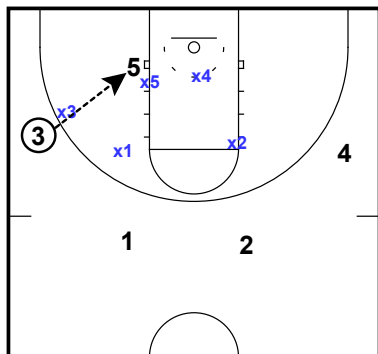


On the pass out of the double team, players will communicate and sprint to "ball" and "help" positioning. It is ideal if players can return to their own player, but sometimes they may have to rotate and get cross matched.

Pack Defense Playbook

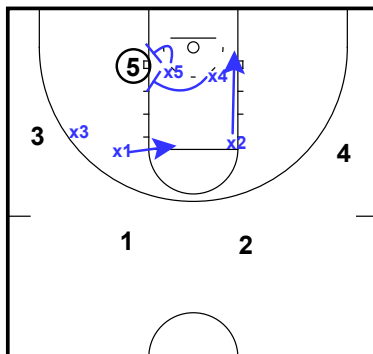
Pack Line Defense- Defending the Post

Pack Line- Post Double Big to Big



x5 is 3/4 on top shoulder pushing the post catch outside the post area box.

Pack Line- Post Double Big to Big



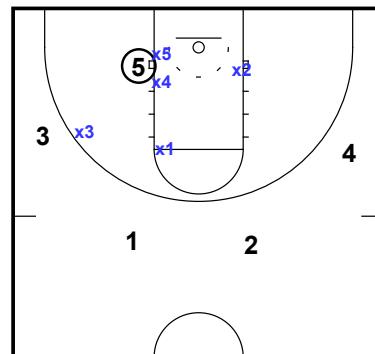
Pack line defensive teams will often double the post against a good offensive player. The most common way of doubling the post is to double "BIG TO BIG".

On the air time of the pass, x5 will slide behind the offensive player to put himself between him and the basket and slide to the low side of the player with high hands. x5 cannot allow 5 to beat him baseline side.

On the air time, x4 will sprint into double team taking the high side of the offensive player. He comes aggressively with high hands taking away quick pass out.

x4 and x5 have to be tight to avoid letting the offensive player split them. High hands take away vision and easy kick out. Their job is not to steal the ball, but make offense uncomfortable and difficult to pass out.

Pack Line- Post Double Big to Big



x3 plays tight and locks up man not allowing direct pass back out.

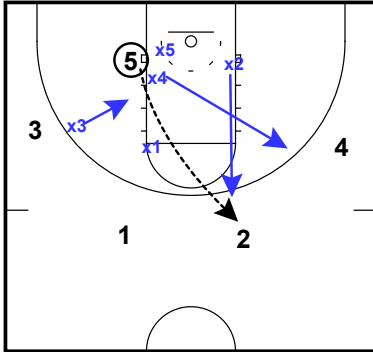
x2 sinks to rim and keeps everyone else above him. He is helper on any type of dive cut from top or weak side. If the ball is skipped out to weak side to 2, he will close to the ball.

x1 sinks to elbow area where he can see both men on the top.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Defending the Post

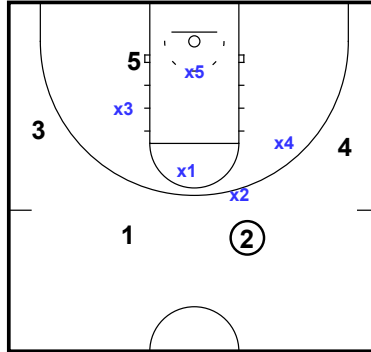
Pack Line- Post Double Big to Big



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Pack Line- Post Double Big to Big

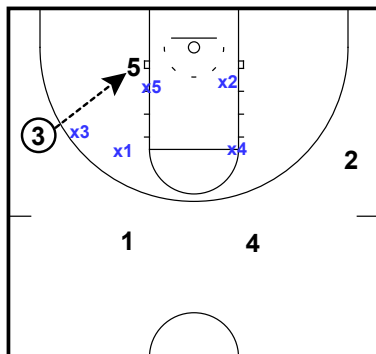


On the pass out of the double team, players will communicate and sprint to "ball" and "help" positioning. It is ideal if players can return to their own player, but sometimes they may have to rotate and get cross matched.

Pack Defense Playbook

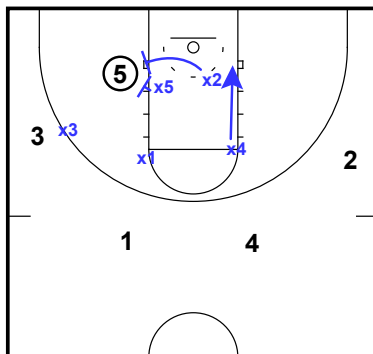
Pack Line Defense- Defending the Post

Pack Line- Post Double Low Man



x5 is 3/4 on top shoulder pushing the post catch outside the post area box.

Pack Line- Post Double Low Man



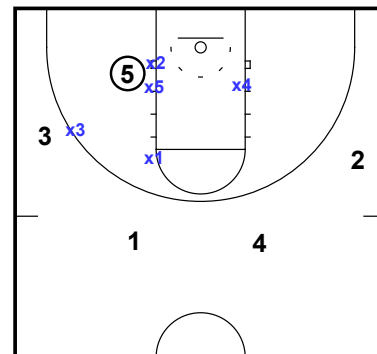
Pack line defensive teams will often double the post against a good offensive player. The most common way of doubling the post is to double "big to big". However, another way that is utilized is to double from the **low man on the weak side**.

On the air time of the pass, x5 will slide behind the offensive player to put himself between him and the basket and slide to the high side of the player with high hands. x5 cannot allow 5 to beat him middle.

On the air time, x2 will sprint into double team taking the low side of the offensive player. He comes aggressively with high hands taking away baseline.

x4 and x5 have to be tight to avoid letting the offensive player split them. High hands take away vision and easy kick out. Their job is not to steal the ball, but make offense uncomfortable and difficult to pass out.

Pack Line- Post Double Low Man



x3 plays tight and locks up man not allowing direct pass back out.

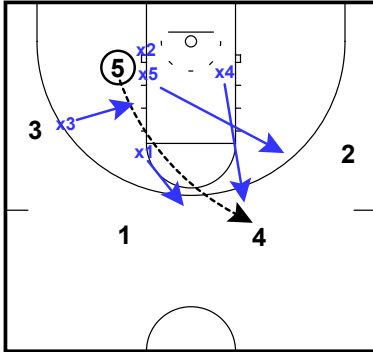
x4 sinks to rim and keeps everyone else above him. He is helper on any type of dive cut from top or weak side. If the ball is skipped out to weak side to 2, he will close to the ball.

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Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Defending the Post

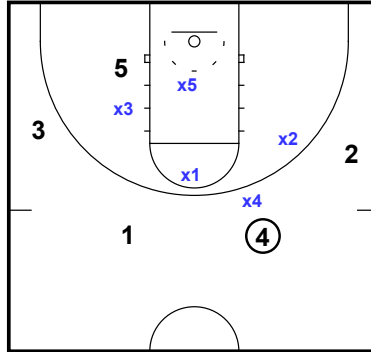
Pack Line- Post Double Low Man



x2 and x5 stay with trap until...

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2. Ball is dribbled out of "scoring area" for post player. He will then recover to own man/position leaving to x5 to play 1 v 1 with 5. This is used when 5 is not real skilled with the dribble and making plays, but is good with back to basket.
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Pack Line- Post Double Low Man

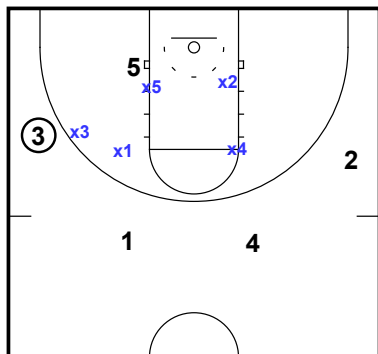


On the pass out of the double team, players will communicate and sprint to "ball" and "help" positioning. It is ideal if players can return to their own player, but sometimes they may have to rotate and get cross matched.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Defending the Post

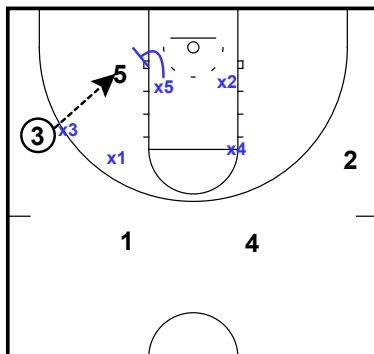
Pack Line- Digging/Crowding the Post



In the pack defense, there are options on how to guard once the ball is entered into the post.

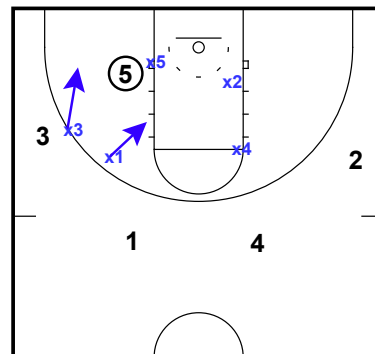
If the offensive player is not a major threat, you may decide not to double. If you don't double, crowding the post is a good option. It can also be a good option if the other team has good post player but you are worried about giving up 3's to good perimeter shooters. "Crowding" or "digging" on the post can make the post player feel uncomfortable without having to double, and take away open 3's.

Pack Line- Digging/Crowding the Post



x5 is on the 5 shoulder playing 3/4 defense trying to push the post catch outside the post box. On the pass (if x5 can't deflect/steal the pass), x5 slides behind 5 to put his body between him and the basket.

Pack Line- Digging/Crowding the Post



x3 and x1 will sink to about 1/2 way between ball and man playing cat and mouse with the post player.

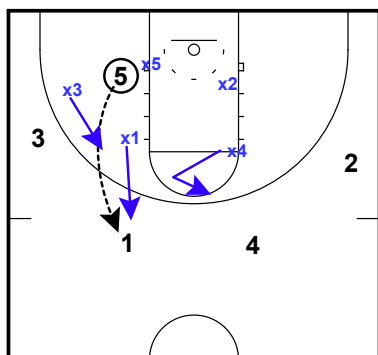
x3 will get his "butt to the baseline" so that he can see everything above him.

All off-ball defenders must have an open stance so that they see ball and man.

They must have active hands and feet so they can properly react when ball is passed out.

The amount of help from off ball defenders can be dependent on strength of post player and perimeter player's ability to shoot.

Pack Line- Digging/Crowding the Post



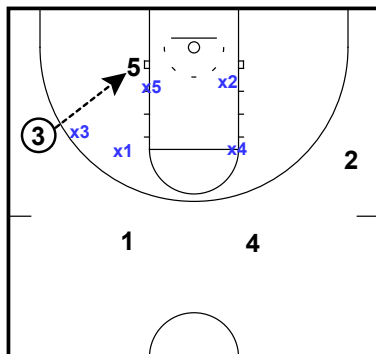
The most likely pass out is to the top.

On the pass, all perimeter defenders actively jump to the ball. x4 bluffs and recovers providing some help and time for x1 to recover to his man.

Pack Defense Playbook

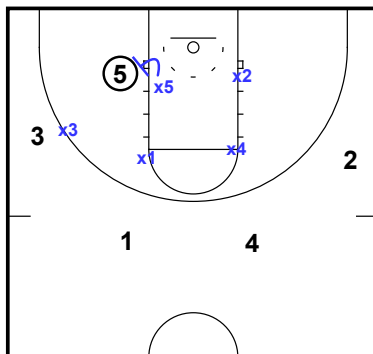
Pack Line Defense- Defending the Post

Pack Line- Post Double Cutter



x5 is 3/4 on top shoulder pushing the post catch outside the post area box.

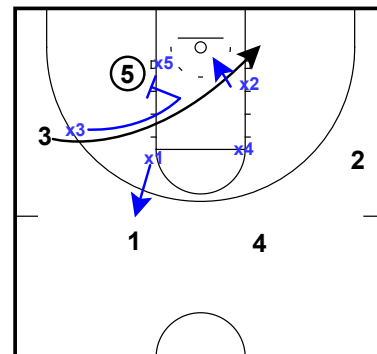
Pack Line- Post Double Cutter



Pack line defensive teams will often double the post against a good offensive player. The most common way of doubling the post is to double "big to big". However, a doubling technique that has become popular is **doubling off the ball side cutter (the player who fed the post)**.

On the air time of the pass, x5 will slide behind the offensive player to put himself between him and the basket.

Pack Line- Post Double Cutter



Many teams like to basket cut the post feeder after passing the ball in the post.

x3 has locked up the pass back out to ball side. As his man basket cuts, he goes with denying him the give and go pass.

When the cutter passes the shoulder of 5, x3 will leave cutter and sprint into double team with x5.

If the cut was on the high side of the post, x3 will take the high side of the double and x5 the low side.

x3 will sink to the inside of the cutter and protect rim.

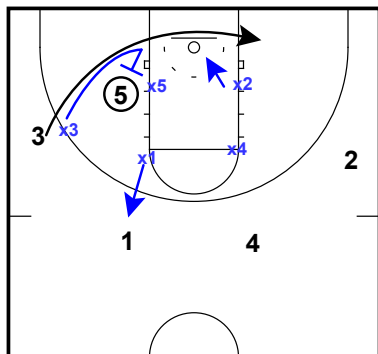
x1 is now the ball side defender and covering the easiest pass out of the double. He locks to man and denies the pass back out.

x4 sits in help and covers 2 on weak side.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Defending the Post

Pack Line- Post Double Cutter



Many teams like to basket cut the post feeder after passing the ball in the post.

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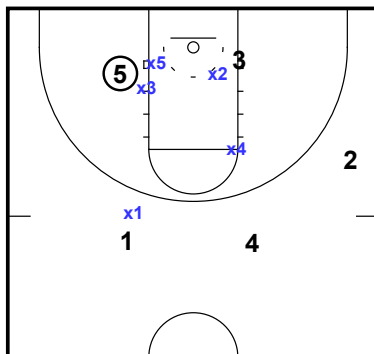
If the cut was on the low side of the post, x3 will take the low side of the double and x5 the high side (more common in the NBA).

x3 will sink to the inside of the cutter and protect rim.

x1 is now the ball side defender and covering the easiest pass out of the double. He locks to man and denies the pass back out.

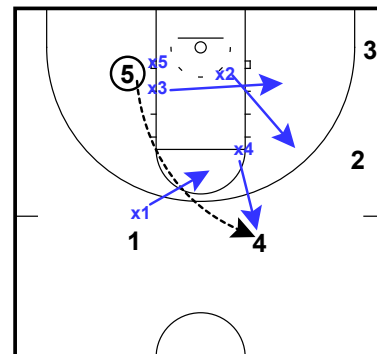
x4 sits in help and covers 2 on weak side.

Pack Line- Post Double Cutter



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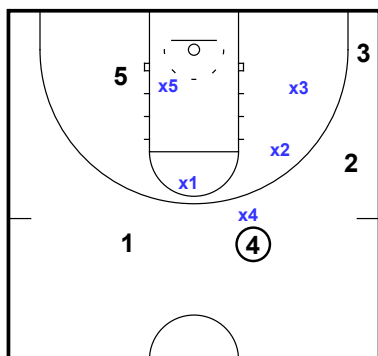
Pack Line- Post Double Cutter



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Pack Line- Post Double Cutter

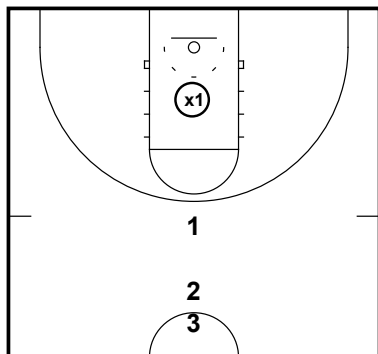


On the pass out of the double team, players will communicate and sprint to "ball" and "help" positioning. It is ideal if players can return to their own player, but sometimes they may have to rotate and get cross matched.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Ball Pressure

1 v 1 Closeouts

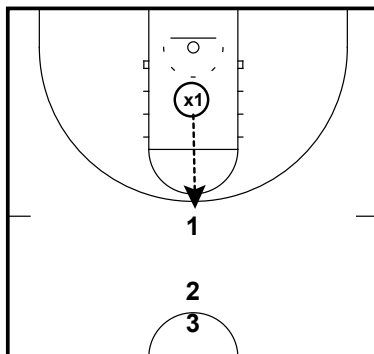


1 defensive player with the ball in the middle of the key.

1 offensive player at top of key.

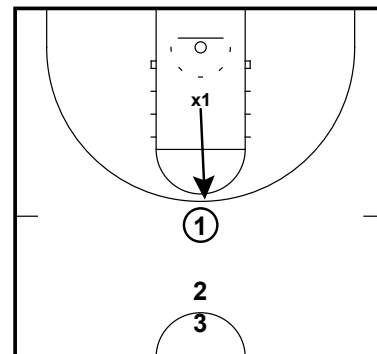
Everyone else in line at half court.

1 v 1 Closeouts



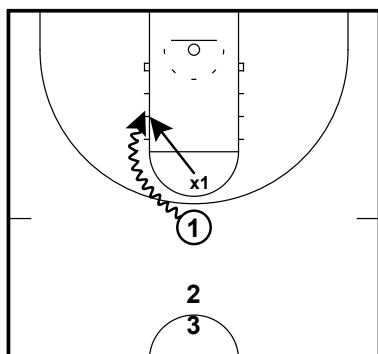
Defensive player tosses the ball to the offensive player.

1 v 1 Closeouts



Defensive player closes out.

1 v 1 Closeouts



Ball is live on the catch.

The offense has 2 dribbles max to score.

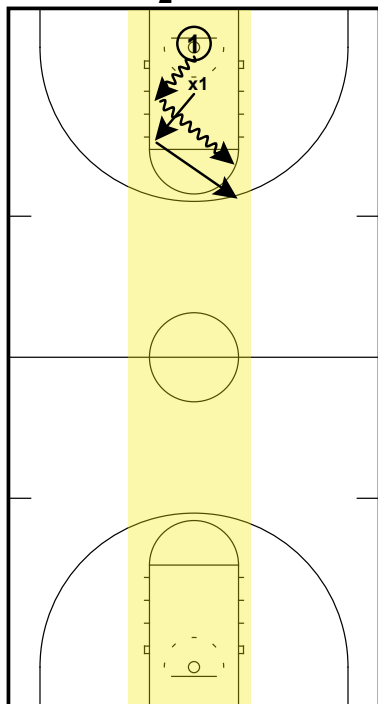
Play through the rebound or made basket.

If offense scores, defense stays and plays next player in line. If defense gets stop, they go off, offense goes to defense and next player steps on offense.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Ball Pressure

1 v 1 Full Court
3 x3
2 x2



Defense (x1) hands offense (1) the ball when ready. Offense must stay in "chute". Defense works offense and tries to turn as many times as possible. If ball goes out of bounds/stolen-defense wins and rep is over. Play through the rebound.

Next pair in line goes when group is finished.

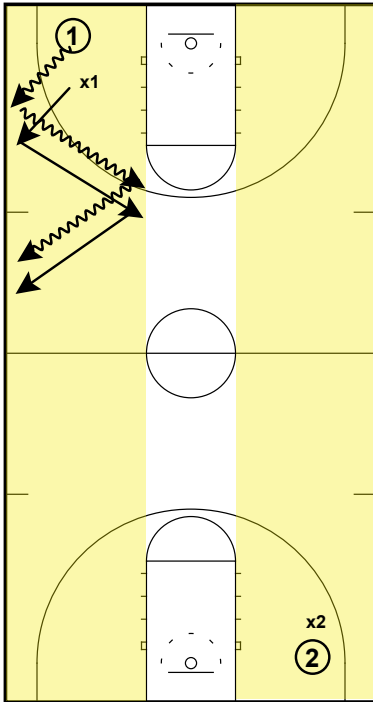
Switch offense and defense and come back other way.

*Texas rules- cannot shoot ball until it touches the paint.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Ball Pressure

Alley Drill (1 v 1 Drill)



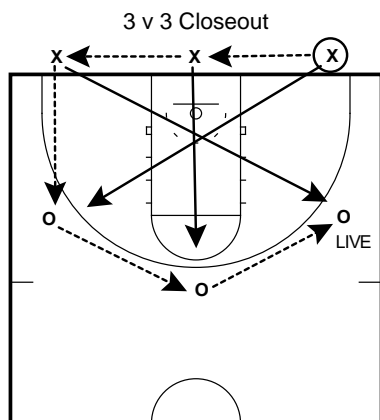
The players on the team will partner up and each take turns dribbling or defending on each end of the court.

The focus of the drill is technique and angling off the ball handler with your chest and not using your hands.

The defender must turn the ball handler as many times as possible to throughout the length of the court.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Ball Pressure



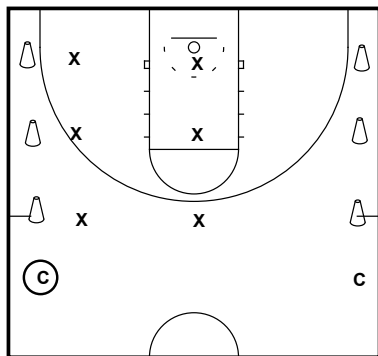
3 offense on perimeter. 3 defense on baseline.
Player with ball on baseline passes ball along the
baseline. As soon as player passes ball he can
take off to defend.

The offense swings the ball as quickly as
possible. Once it has gone around the arc- the
ball becomes live.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Ball Pressure

Chair Closeouts

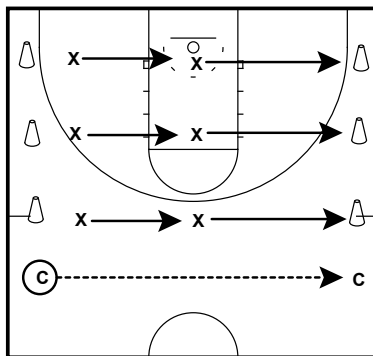


6 cones/chairs total. 3 on each sideline simulating offensive players.

Coach on each side of the floor. One with the ball.

3 defenders "on the ball" and 3 defenders in "help" in the split line.

Chair Closeouts



Coach will pass the ball across the court to the other coach.

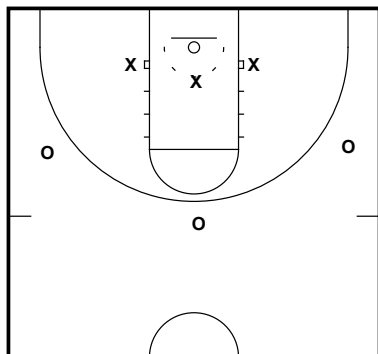
The defensive players that were in help sprint to close-out to the chairs on the air-time of the pass.

The defensive players originally on the ball, sprint to help on the air time of the pass.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Ball Pressure

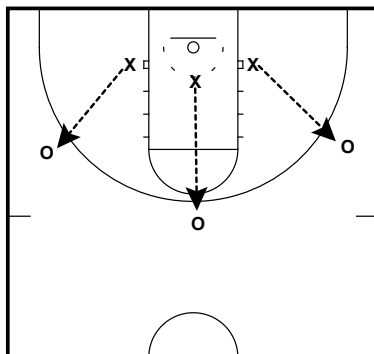
Vegas Closeouts



3 on offense.

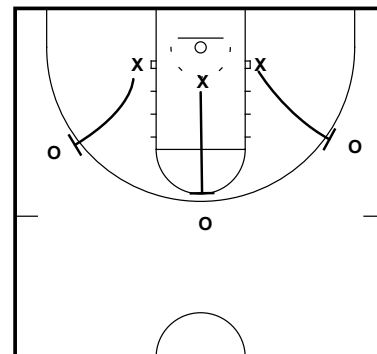
3 on defense with basketballs.

Vegas Closeouts



3 on defense pass the ball to the offense players.

Vegas Closeouts



The defense closes out to the offense.

On the flight of the ball, the defense sprints out with long strides. They then break down and chop their feet as they approach the offensive player with high hands- palms to the ceiling.

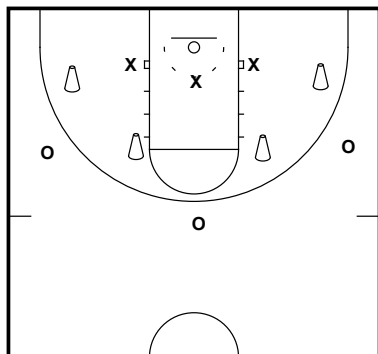
Progression:

1. Closeout, pressure and trace.
2. Closeout, pressure, guard 1-2 bounces.
3. Closeout, guard bounce, contest shot-rebound.
4. Closeout, play live (with restrictions on offense).

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Ball Pressure

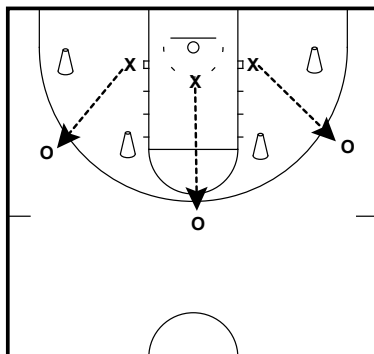
Vegas Closeouts- Guard Your Yard



3 on offense.

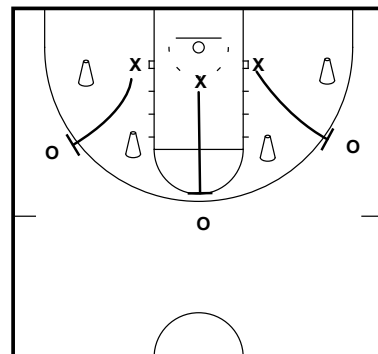
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Vegas Closeouts- Guard Your Yard



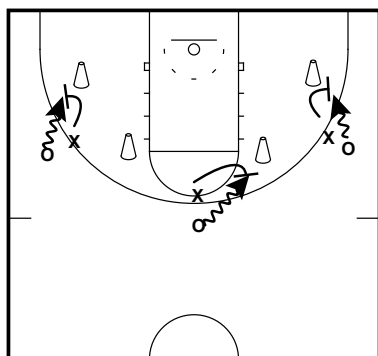
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Vegas Closeouts- Guard Your Yard



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Vegas Closeouts- Guard Your Yard

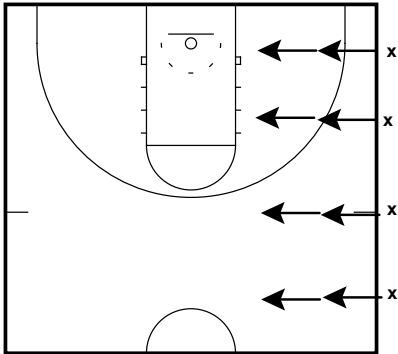


On closeout, take away catch and shoot opportunity. Win the battle to the cone.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Ball Pressure

Sideline Step Slides



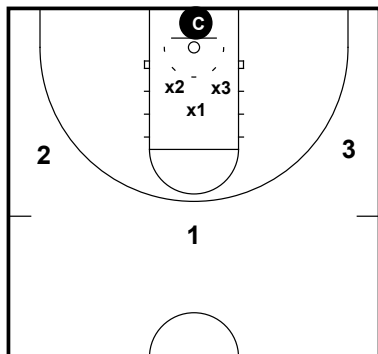
1. Big step to beat the dribble.
2. Big 2nd step to stop the dribble.

Sideline and back.

Pack Defense Playbook

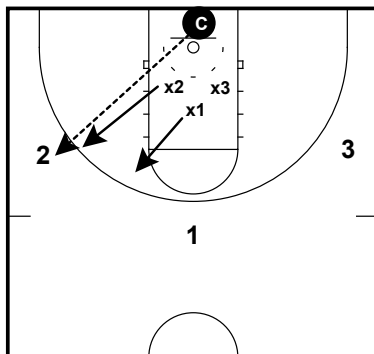
Pack Line Defense Drills- Positioning

3 v 3 Identity



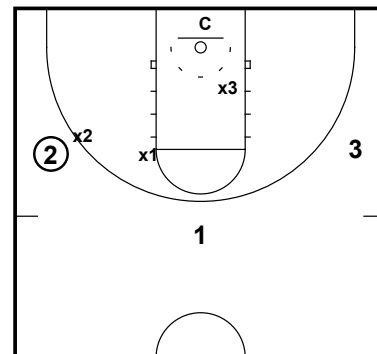
- Coach is under basket with ball.
- 3 offensive players on perimeter.
- 3 defensive players in paint.

3 v 3 Identity



- Coach passes to ball out to one of the 3 offensive players.
- Defense closes out to proper positions.

3 v 3 Identity



- On the catch, the drill is live.
- The offense has 20 seconds to score. They can do whatever they want, except ball screen. 3 dribble limit.
- Do 4-5 possessions for each team, then flip.

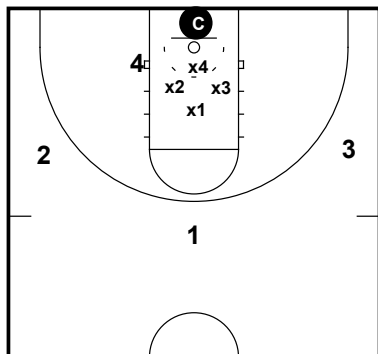
Scoring:

- +3- 3 point shot
- +2- 2 point shot
- 1 for offense on TO
- 1 for defense for foul (still same possession)
- +2 for Off Rebound
- +2 if ball ever goes inside of post box (not including off rebound), still same possession

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Positioning

4 v 4 (3 out 1 In) Identity

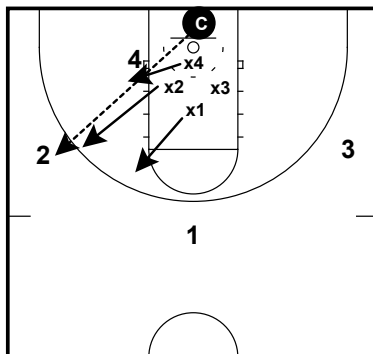


Coach is under basket with ball.

3 offensive players on perimeter. 1 post player.

4 defensive players in paint.

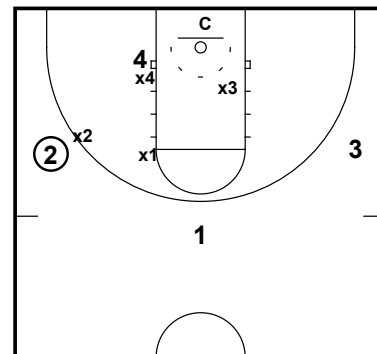
4 v 4 (3 out 1 In) Identity



Coach passes to ball out to one of the 3 offensive players.

Defense closes out to proper positions.

4 v 4 (3 out 1 In) Identity



On the catch, the drill is live.

The offense has 20 seconds to score. They can do whatever they want, except ball screen. 3 dribble limit.

Do 4-5 possessions for each team, then flip.

Scoring:

+3- 3 point shot

+2- 2 point shot

-1 for offense on TO

-1 for defense for foul (still same possession)

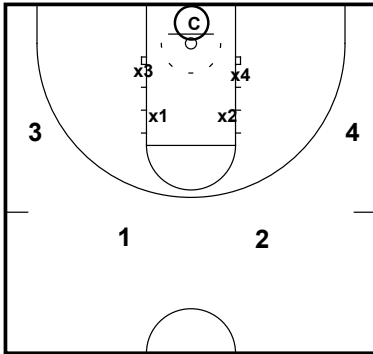
+2 for Off Rebound

+2 if ball ever goes inside of post box (not including off rebound), still same possession

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Positioning

4 vs 4 Shell- Stationary



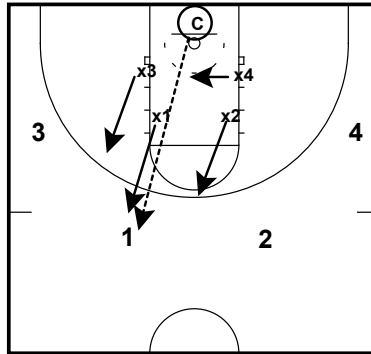
4 v 4 shell.

4 offensive players on perimeter.

4 defensive players in the paint.

Coach with ball underneath rim.

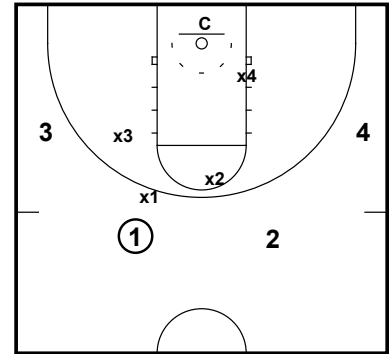
4 vs 4 Shell- Stationary



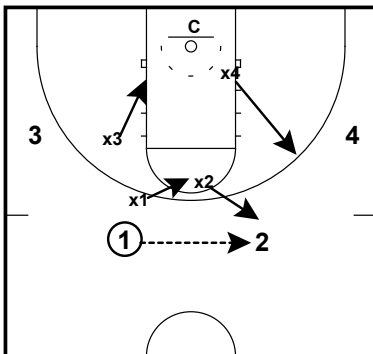
Coach passes the ball out to any of the offensive players on the perimeter.

Defensive players close to man or proper defensive positions.

4 vs 4 Shell- Stationary

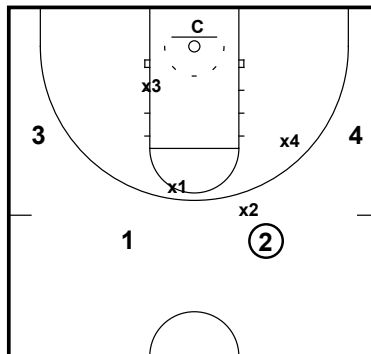


4 vs 4 Shell- Stationary

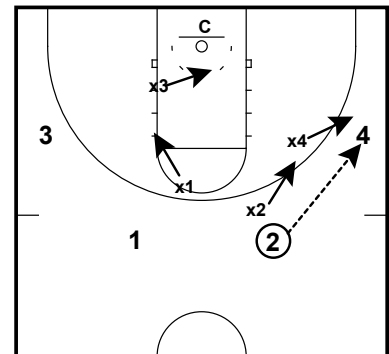


Offense moves ball around perimeter holding the ball a few seconds each touch to get the proper defensive positioning.

4 vs 4 Shell- Stationary

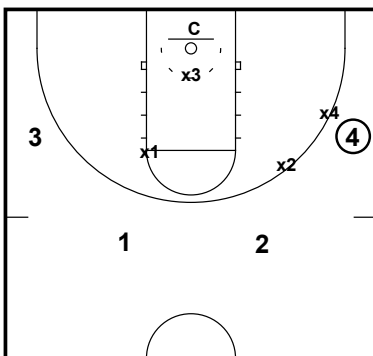


4 vs 4 Shell- Stationary



Offense stays stationary the whole time. After moving the ball around the perimeter- flip offense and defense and rotate the players position.

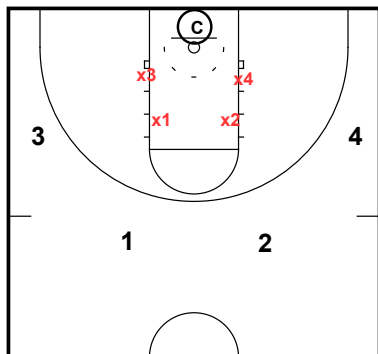
4 vs 4 Shell- Stationary



Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Positioning

4 vs 4 Shell- Progression



4 v 4 shell. This is a great drill for repetition and review. Get quick reps and move on to live work. It also forces all players to work at every position and all actions regardless of position.

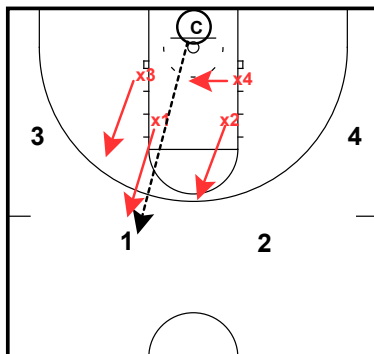
4 offensive players on perimeter.

4 defensive players in the paint.

Coach with ball underneath rim.

You will go through each action and then put up shot, block out, and rebound the ball. Then flip teams over.

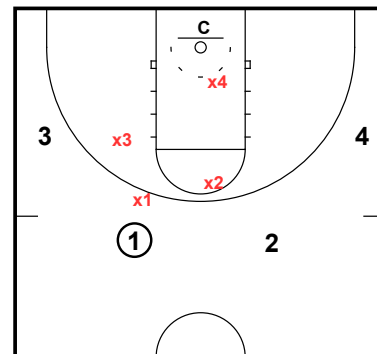
4 vs 4 Shell- Progression



Coach passes the ball out to any of the offensive players on the perimeter.

Defensive players close to man or proper defensive positions.

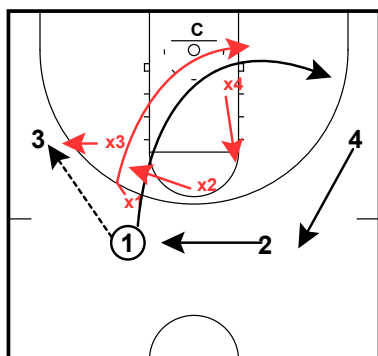
4 vs 4 Shell- Progression



Progression:

1. **Stationary**- Just move ball around perimeter and hold for 2-3 seconds to allow defense to get correct positioning.

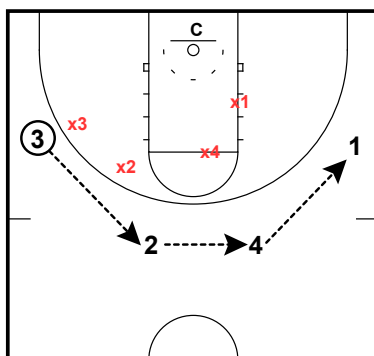
4 vs 4 Shell- Progression



Progression:

2. **Cutter**. Any time a pass is made from the high slot (top) to the wing, passer cuts through and other players rotate over and up. Continue until coach is satisfied. Flip teams.

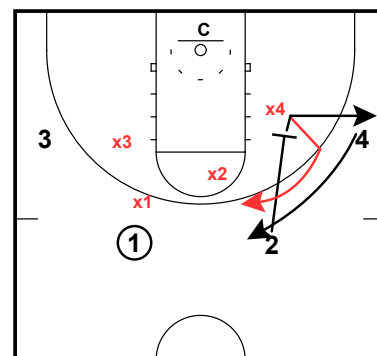
4 vs 4 Shell- Progression



Swing ball and repeat cutting action. Go until everyone on offense has cut.

Flip over.

4 vs 4 Shell- Progression



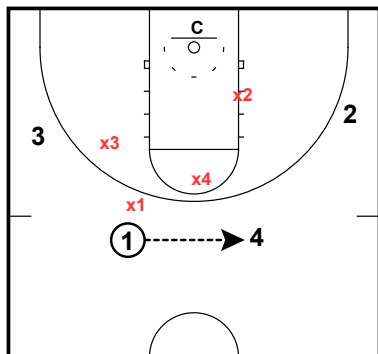
Progression:

3. **Screen away**- when the ball is passed from top to top, passer goes and screens away for wing.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Positioning

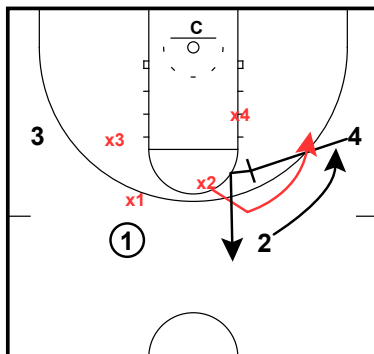
4 vs 4 Shell- Progression



Pass back across top and repeat action. Go until everyone on offense has been in action at both spots.

Flip.

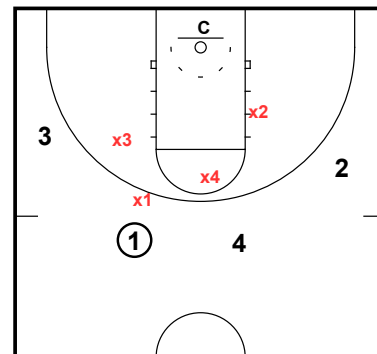
4 vs 4 Shell- Progression



Progression:

4. **Flare screen**- pass ball across top. On pass, wing will flare for passer.

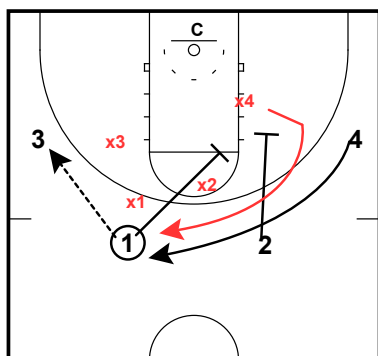
4 vs 4 Shell- Progression



Pass back across and repeat flare action. Go until everyone on offense has been in action at both spots.

Flip over.

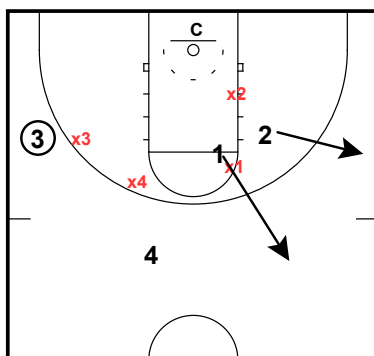
4 vs 4 Shell- Progression



Progression:

5. **Stagger**- on pass to wing, the offensive players on top stagger away for opposite wing.

4 vs 4 Shell- Progression



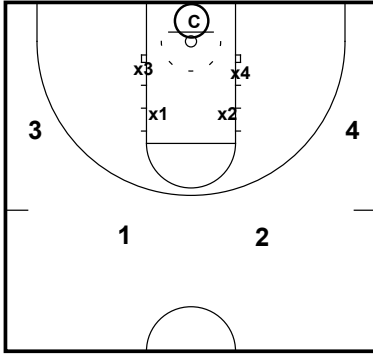
Swing ball back across and repeat stagger action. Go until everyone on offense has been all parts of the action.

Flip over.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Positioning

4 vs 4 Shell- Stationary Change Drill

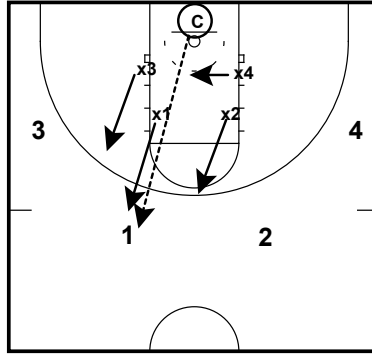


4 perimeter offense players.

4 defenders in key.

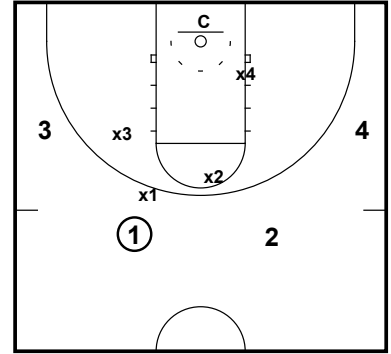
Coach with the ball underneath basket.

4 vs 4 Shell- Stationary Change Drill

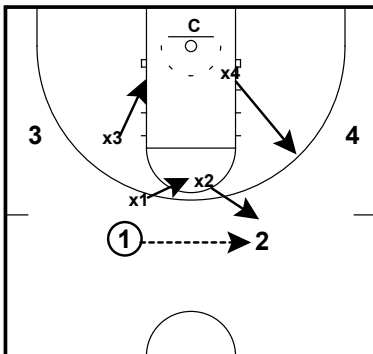


Coach throws ball out to any player. Players close to their proper position.

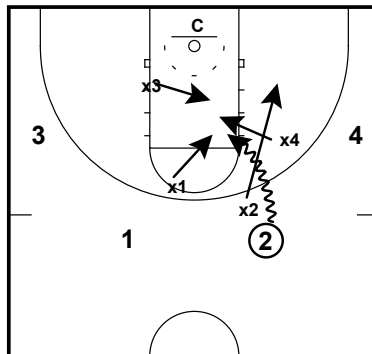
4 vs 4 Shell- Stationary Change Drill



4 vs 4 Shell- Stationary Change Drill

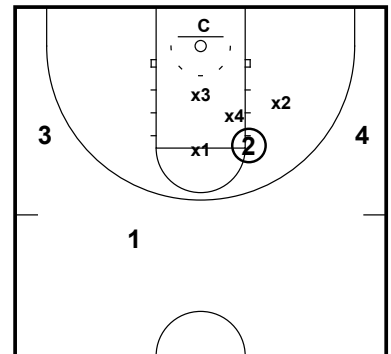


4 vs 4 Shell- Stationary Change Drill



Pass the ball till coach yells "CHANGE". Offense drives to basket. On-ball defender must let offense pass him and guard new man. Defenders must rotate, stop the ball, and other 3 must organize.

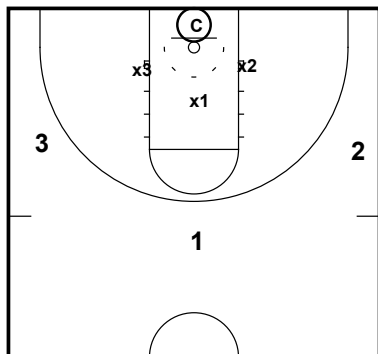
4 vs 4 Shell- Stationary Change Drill



Pack Defense Playbook

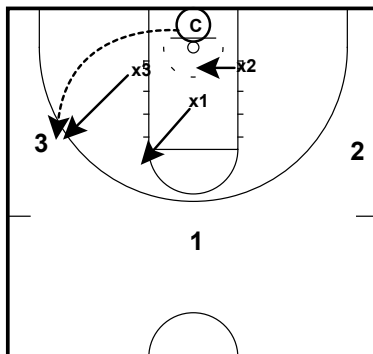
Pack Line Defense Drills- Positioning

Bennett Drill



The drill is set-up in the same way as 3-line (Vegas) closeout.

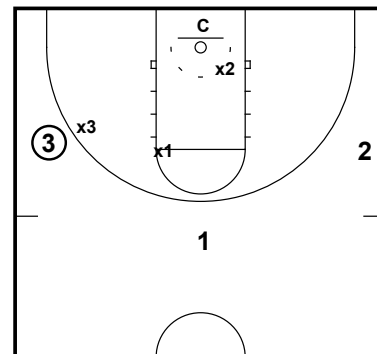
Bennett Drill



The coach will begin with the ball and pass it out to any offensive player.

On the flight of the ball, the defenders must close out to their correct positions- 1 man on ball and 2 others in gap/help positions.

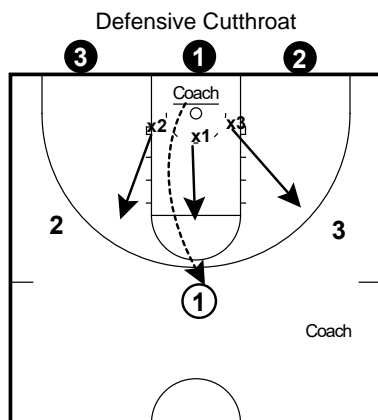
Bennett Drill



You can incorporate any rules that you like in the drill. Ex. Play is live on the catch, must pass a certain number of times, move the ball until coach calls "live", etc.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Positioning



Defensive Cutthroat.

Start with the offense on the perimeter and the defense in the paint. Coach underneath basket throws ball out to an offensive player. Defense closes out to proper positions. On catch, the ball is live.

If the offense scores, defense goes off, offensive player immediately gets ball and outlets to coach on perimeter. The offense then becomes the defense and new offense comes on. Coach passes ball in and play is live. Keep pace and energy high.

Defense Rules:

1. Must be communicating.
2. Must have ball pressure.
3. Must be in proper positioning.
4. Must contest shot.
5. Must "attempt" to blockout.

If they fail to do these, blow the play dead and they are off).

Game Rules:

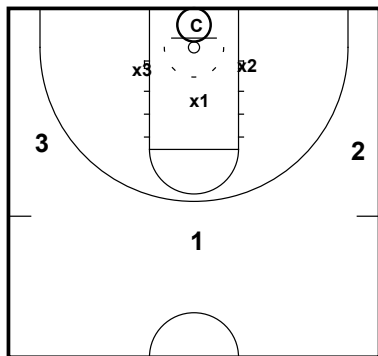
1. Get a stop, stay. Get scored on- off.
2. Limit offensive dribbles. 2-3 max.
3. No ball screens.
4. Charge wins the drill.
5. Each stop is worth 1.
6. Foul- off.

*Can add players- 4 v 4, 5 v 5.

Pack Defense Playbook

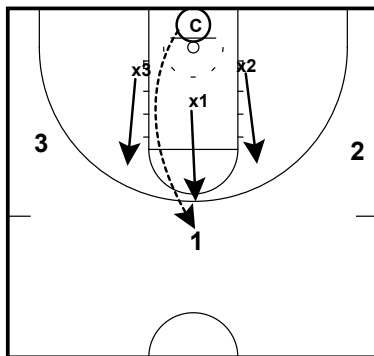
Pack Line Defense Drills- Positioning

Ranger Drill



The drill is set-up in the same way as 3-line (Vegas) closeout.

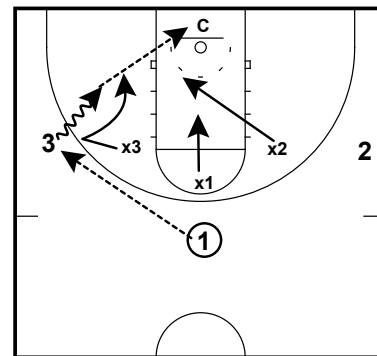
Ranger Drill



The coach will begin with the ball and pass it out to any offensive player.

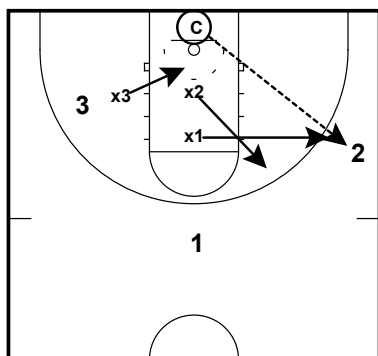
On the flight of the ball, the defenders must close out to their correct positions- 1 man on ball and 2 others in gap/help positions.

Ranger Drill



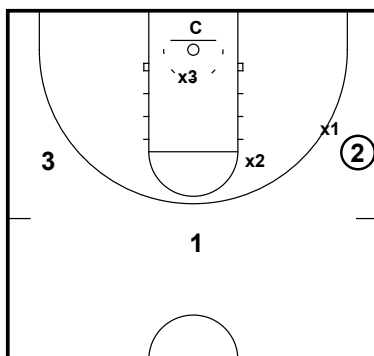
The top player will pass ball to the wing who will attempt to drive the baseline, when they are cut off, they pass the ball to the coach who immediately reverses it to the other wing.

Ranger Drill



When the pass is reversed through the coach, the defenders must rotate and close out to the correct position.

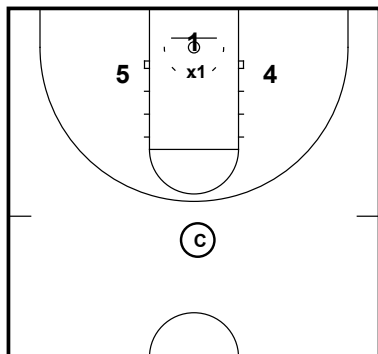
Ranger Drill



Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Positioning

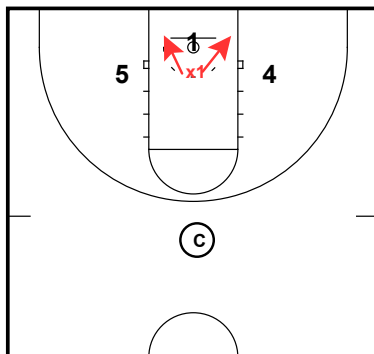
Screening Drill



Coach on top with the ball.

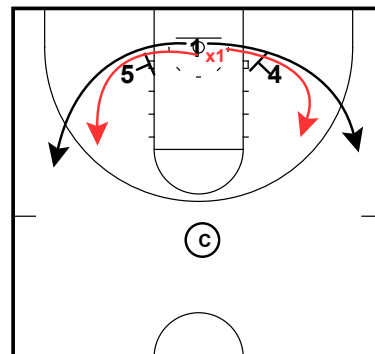
2 screeners just a step off the block. 1 offensive payer underneath rim with defender guarding him.

Screening Drill



Once the defender hears "screen", he steps to man. He is no longer responsible for help when he is being screened.

Screening Drill



The defender locks and trails while working on fighting through screens. He denies the pass until the offense is outside the pack line arc- then settles into help.

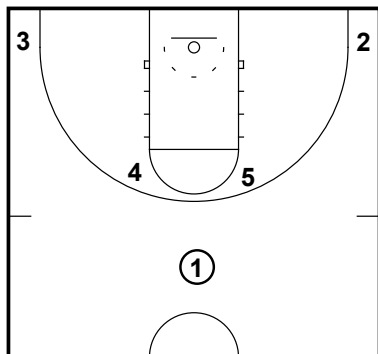
The offense continues to use screens to work the defender on technique and positioning. No curl cuts.

Initially, no scoring attempts- just work defense. Can progress to make it a live 1 v 1 situation.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Positioning

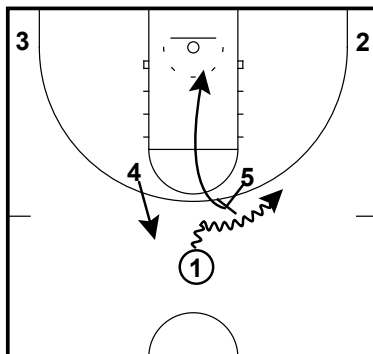
Van Gundy Drill



The Van Gundy Drill is designed to force the defense to guard a variety of actions that they would see in the game.

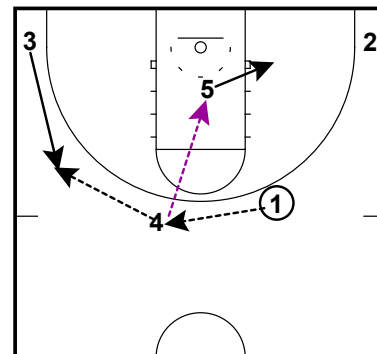
It starts in a Horns sets.

Van Gundy Drill



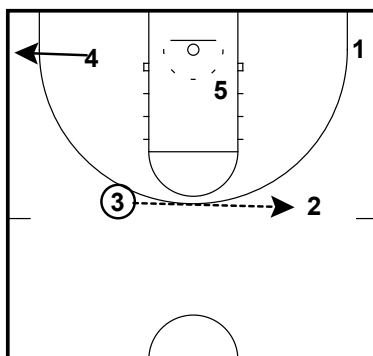
1. Horns BS action.

Van Gundy Drill



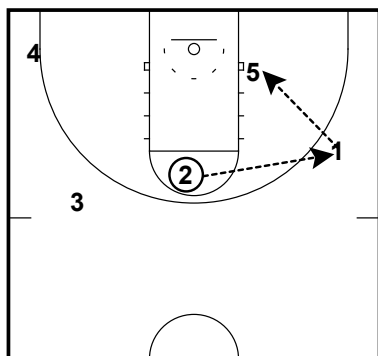
2. Wing PNR with opposite big duck-in.

Van Gundy Drill



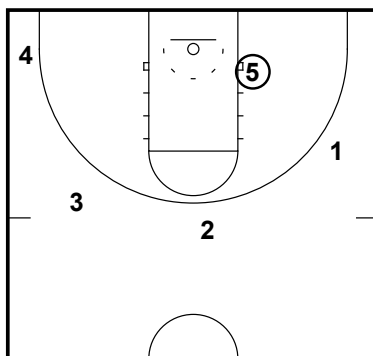
3. High sprint ball screen with 5.

Van Gundy Drill



4. Post up off throwback.

Van Gundy Drill

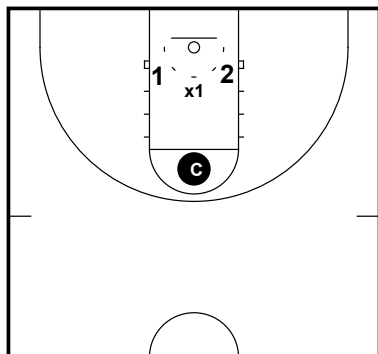


Once the offense knows the motion, the defense will step on and guard it. Play will be live and the offense can score off any of the actions.

Pack Defense Playbook

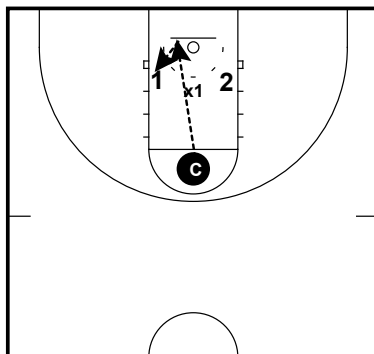
Pack Line Defense Drills- Post Defense

1 v 1 Wall Up



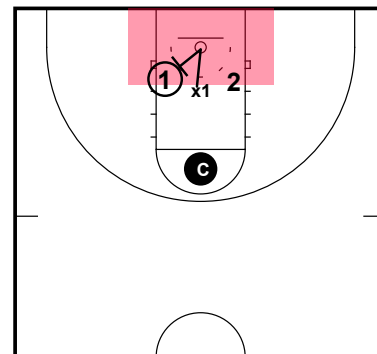
Drill works on "walling up" against shot attempts off an offensive rebound.

1 v 1 Wall Up



Drill works on "walling up" against shot attempts off Coach will lob the ball up off the backboard to the offensive player (1). 1 will offensive rebound the ball.

1 v 1 Wall Up

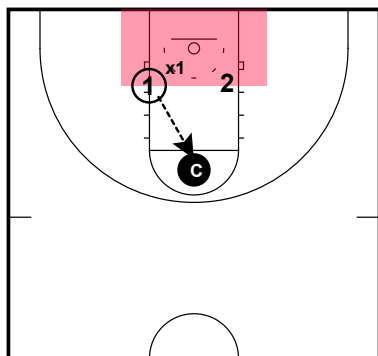


x1 will "wall up" and try and push 1 out of the post box with his chest and hips.

Keys:

1. Show your hands high.
2. Do not leave your feet.

1 v 1 Wall Up



1 does not try and shoot, rather just battle for shooting position inside the post box.

After a few pivots, 1 will pass the ball back to the coach who will then repeat the drill on the opposite side with 2.

Run this drill a certain number of reps and then rotate.

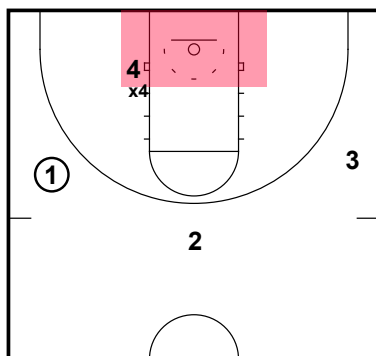
Extra coaching point:

Many offensive players will rush a put back attempt without setting their feet or being off balance. This drill allows them to work on rebounding and finding balance before shooting put back.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Post Defense

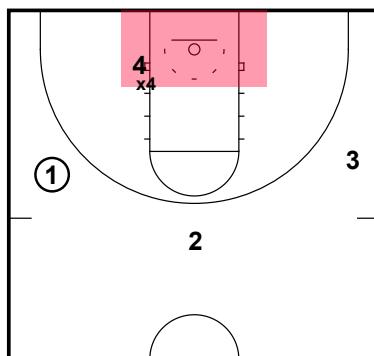
3 Out 1 In



3 players on perimeter. 1 offensive player in the post and 1 defensive post player.

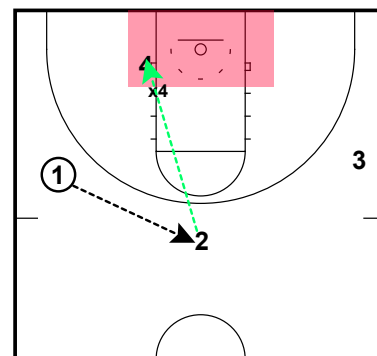
Drill begins with ball on the wing.

3 Out 1 In



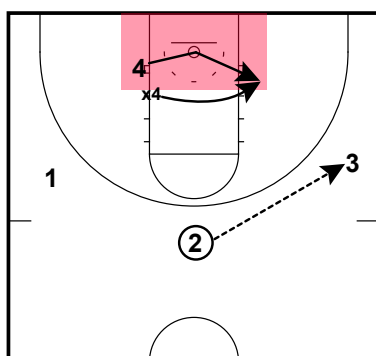
Offensive post tries to get position inside the box. The post defender plays 3/4 on the high side and uses arm bar to force a catch outside the box.

3 Out 1 In



On the pass from the wing to the top, the post defender plays "on the line, up the line" as the offensive player tries to leg whip and seal the defender, but the post defender must be sure not to play too high that he gives up the lob.

3 Out 1 In

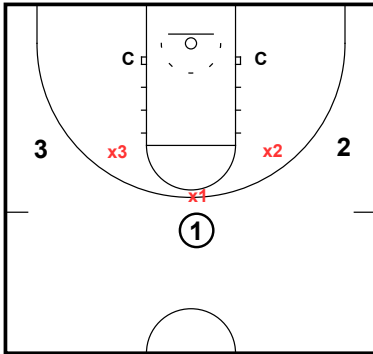


On pass from the top to the opposite wing, the post defender hits the offensive post with arm bar and "peels" to resume 3/4 high side positioning outside the post box.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Post Defense

Post Trap Drill

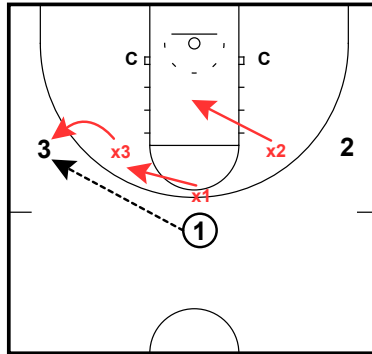


3 offensive perimeter players.

3 defensive players.

2 coaches/manager- one on each block.

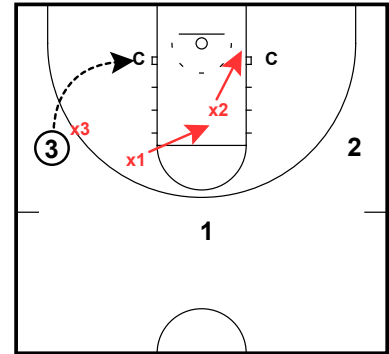
Post Trap Drill



Ball is passed to wing.

Defenders jump to ball with proper positioning.

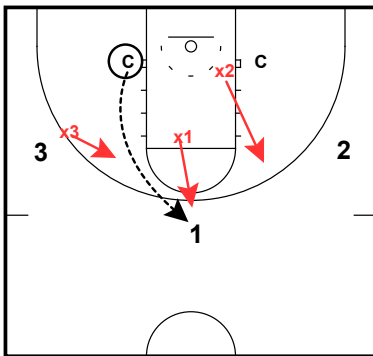
Post Trap Drill



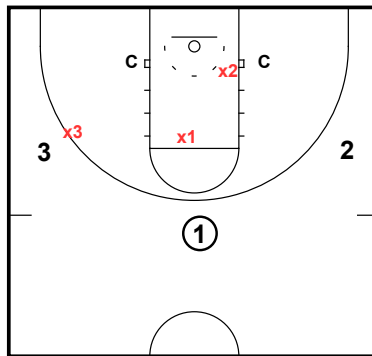
When the ball enters the post...

-The ball side wing defender locks up man. The ball must not allowed to be kicked out same side. Even if he cuts, you deny the ball.
 -Other 2 defenders must talk. One drops to protect rim. One must guard the top.

Post Trap Drill



Post Trap Drill

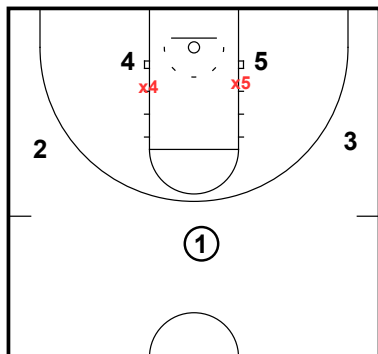


You can do this drill stationary at first to get down the rotations. Then progress where the offense has the freedom to move, pass, cut.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Post Defense

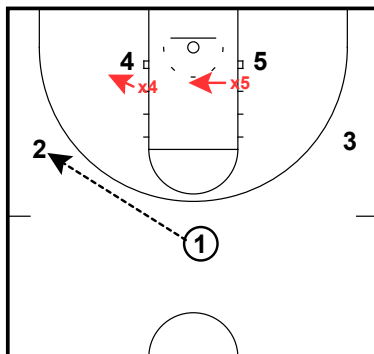
5 v 2 Post



3 players, coaches, or managers on offense around the perimeter.

2 offensive post player and 2 post defensive players on the blocks.

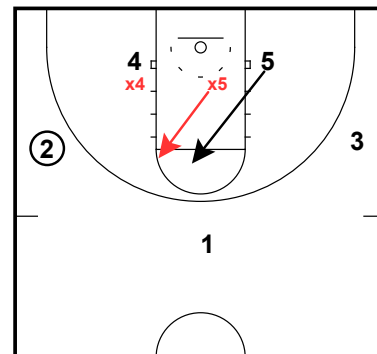
5 v 2 Post



Post players play 2 v 2 working on getting open while the defense works on technique and positioning.

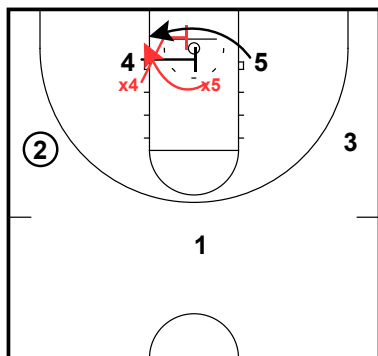
The defense must not allow any post flashes and not allow any catches on flashes or cross screens.

5 v 2 Post



Deny any flashes.

5 v 2 Post



x5 jumps high and gets over top of screen, forcing 5 to take underside.

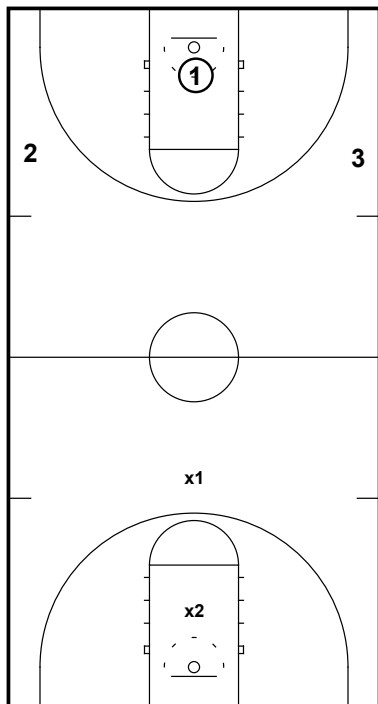
x4 bumps cutter buying x5 time to recover to a 3/4 denial position.

*Can also work on switching the big to big cross screen if you like.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Transition Defense

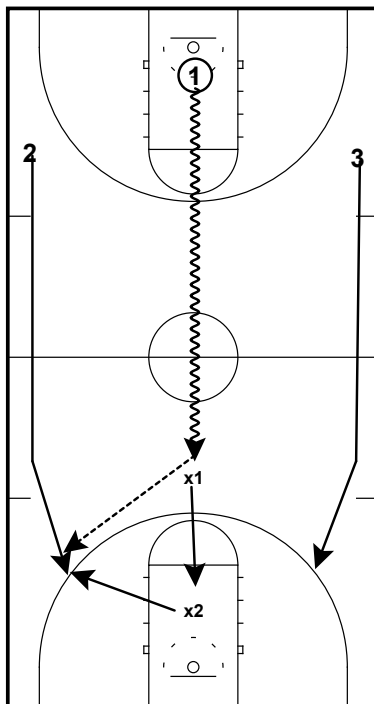
3 on 2 2 on 1



3 on 2, 2 on 1.

Transition defense drill.

3 on 2 2 on 1

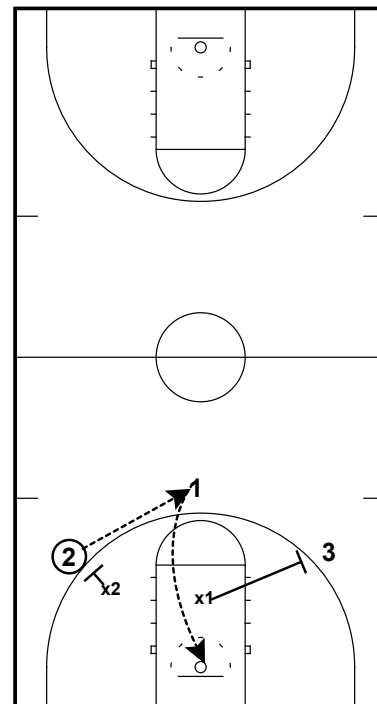


Offense push ball down floor and attack 2 defenders.

Offense looks for quick, open shot. Should be 2 passes or less. Spacing is key and must be maintained.

Defense needs to talk. The defender on top of the stack will stop the ball. Bottom defender will take first pass. Their goal is to work together to get the offense to pass the ball as many times as possible.
Play through the rebound/make.

3 on 2 2 on 1

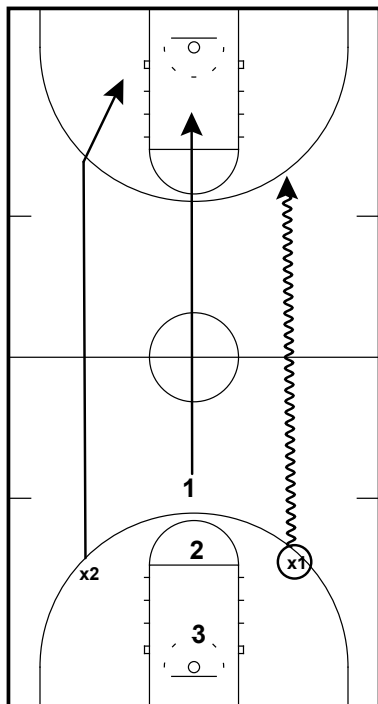


Defense must finish with 2 blockouts.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Transition Defense

3 on 2 2 on 1



Offensive player in middle will retreat on defense.
Other 2 players will remain as defenders for next round.

2 defensive players will attack other direction.

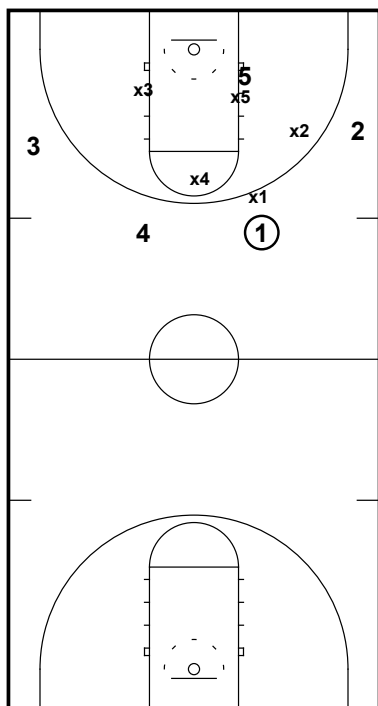
The defender (1) works on bluff and recover.

Play through the rebound.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Transition Defense

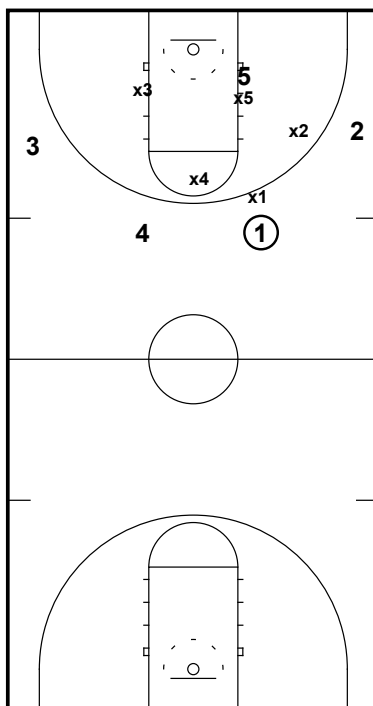
Change Drill



5 v 5. One team on offense and one team on defense.

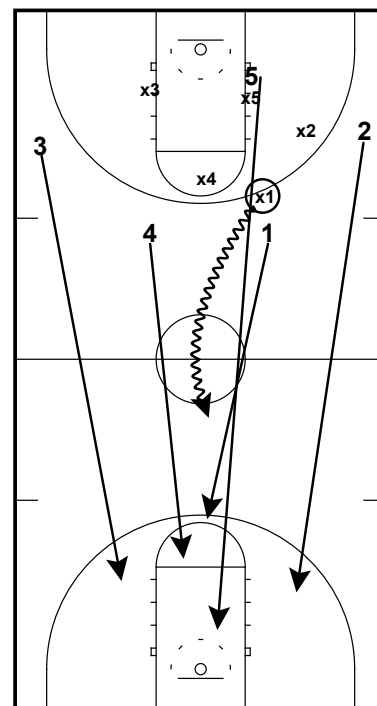
This can be out of any alignment or shell that you would work on in the half court.

Change Drill



While the offense is trying to execute, the coach will yell out "CHANGE"...

Change Drill



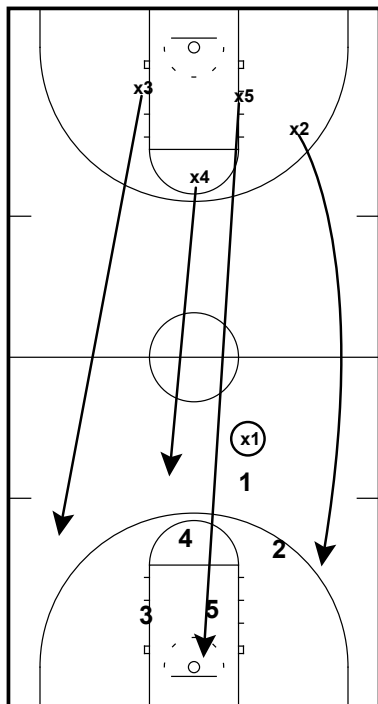
"Change" means that the person with the ball simply drops it and the offense goes into transition mode. A player on the defense will retrieve the ball and attack the other direction.

The team that was on offense is now the defensive team and sprints back to other end. They sprint, get ahead of the ball, build a wall, and get organized.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Transition Defense

Change Drill



The new offense pushes the ball hard trying to score as quickly as possible.

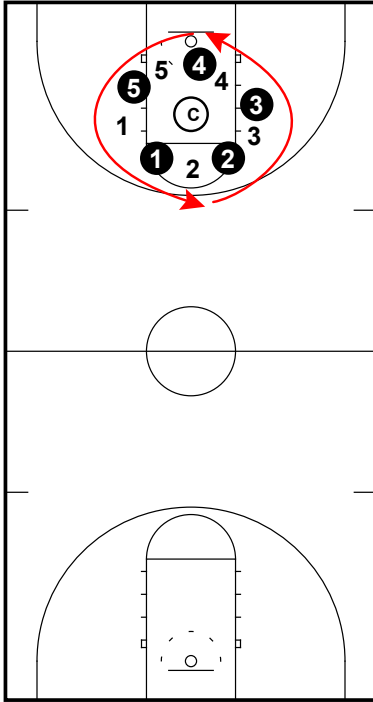
Make the drill competitive by keeping score and flipping teams to give equal amount of possessions.

To quicken attack of transitional change, coach will pass a ball to new offense on "change" rather than having player pick it up off floor.

Pack Defense Playbook

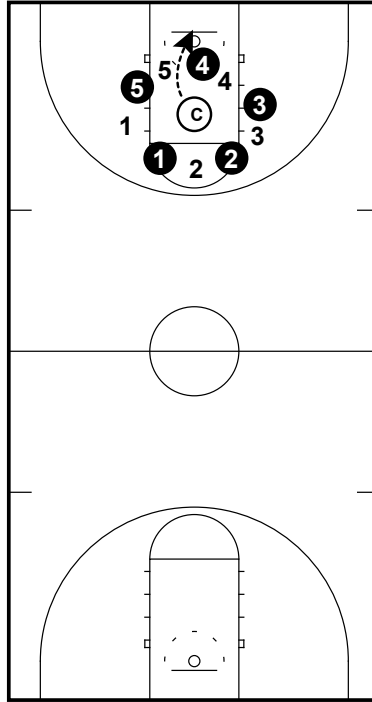
Pack Line Defense Drills- Transition Defense

Circle Transition



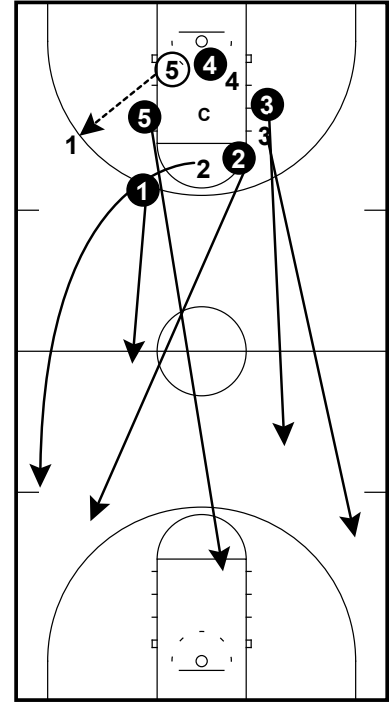
All 10 players align themselves in a circle. They start by moving in a circular motion.

Circle Transition



Coach shoots the ball. All 10 players attempt to rebound the ball.

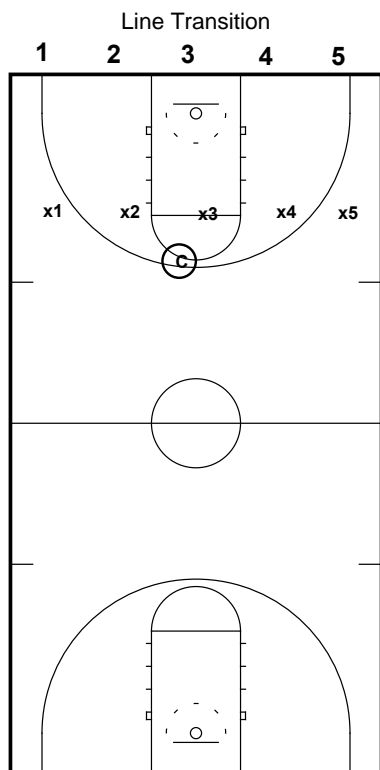
Circle Transition



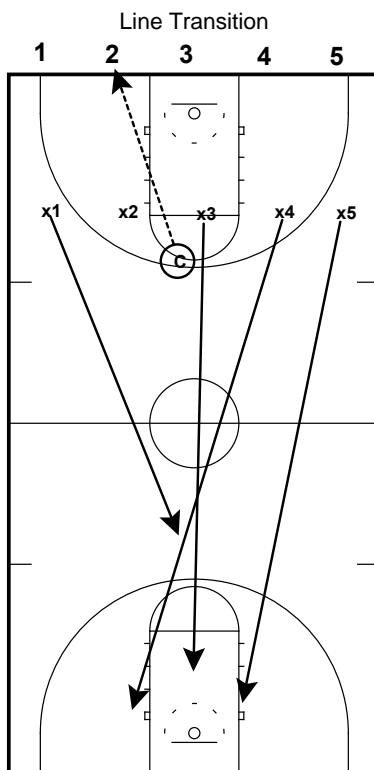
Player who rebounds the ball- that team is on offense and attacking the other way. The other team sprints back and is on defense.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Transition Defense



Coach starts with the ball. 5 offense are lined up on baseline. 5 defense are lined up across FT line extended.

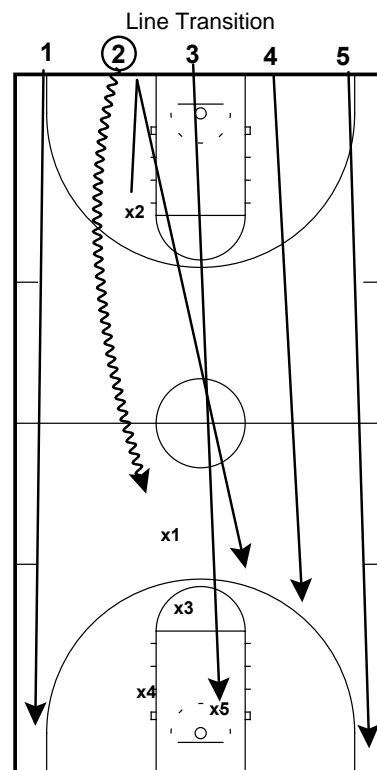


Coach throws ball to player on baseline.

Options:

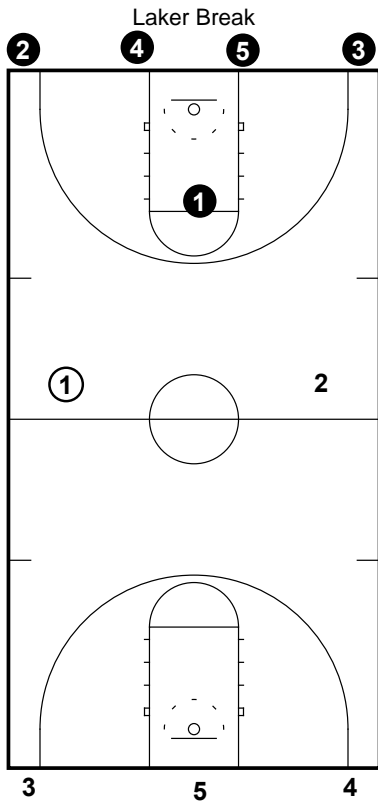
1. Defensive player across from offensive player who gets the ball (x2) runs and touches baseline
2. Coach calls name and that defensive player sprints and touches baseline (or multiple players)

Defense sprints back on defense.

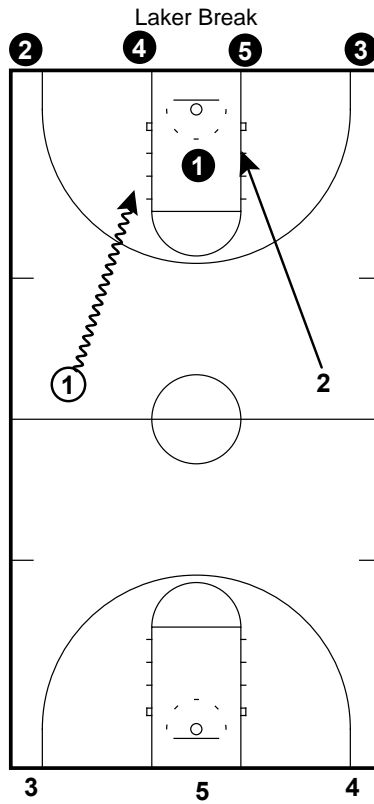


Pack Defense Playbook

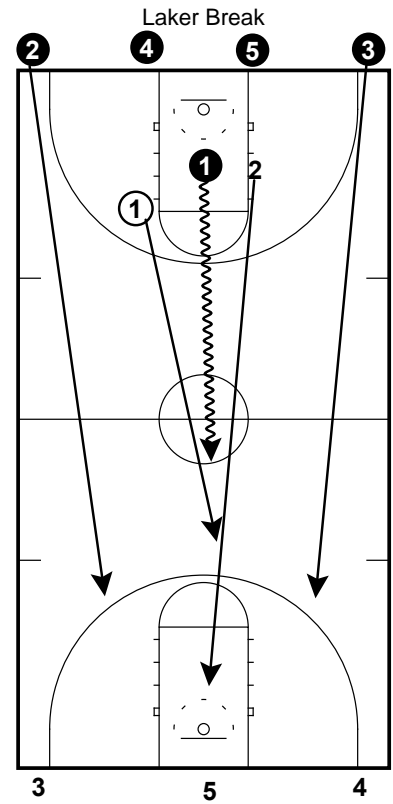
Pack Line Defense Drills- Transition Defense



Starts with a 2 v 1 situation. Other players wait on the baseline.



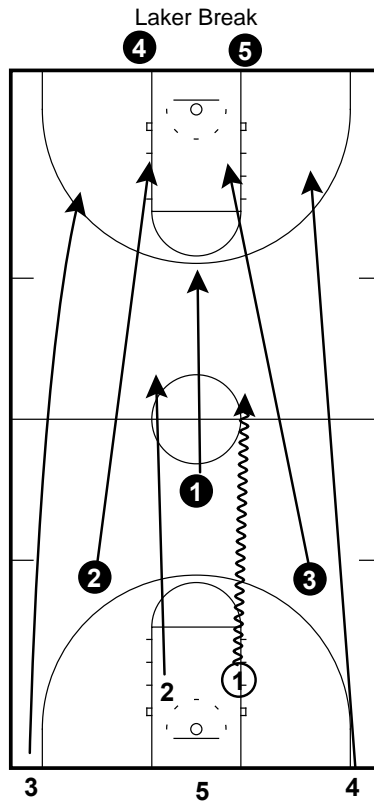
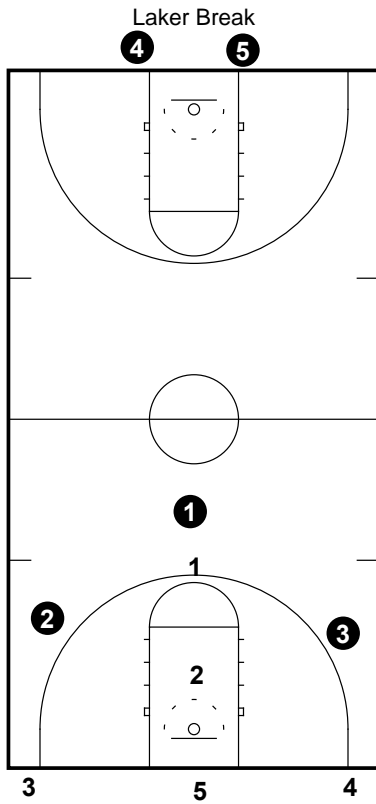
2 v 1 attack.



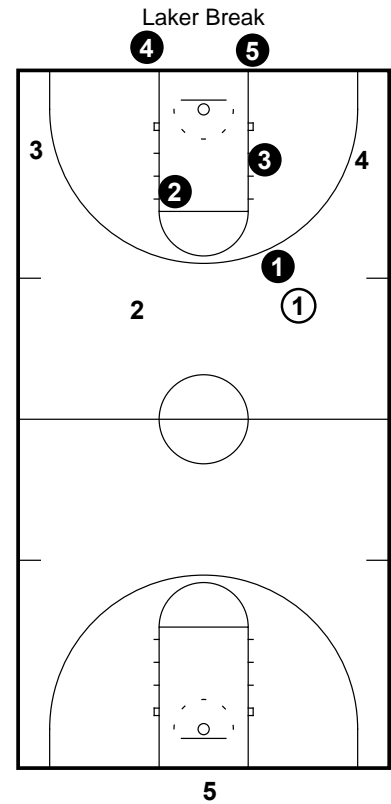
Once the ball changes possession, 2 more players come on for Team 2 (black circles) and attack the other way making it a 3 v 2 situation.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense Drills- Transition Defense



Once ball changes possession, team 1 adds 2 more players and attack the other end making it a 4 v 3 situation.



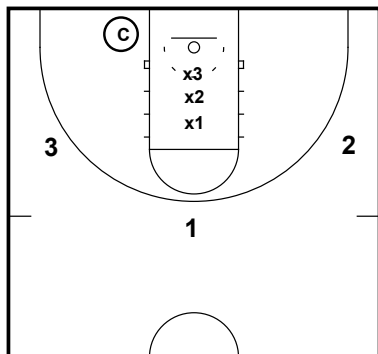
The drill continues until it is 5 v 5. You can decide on how many possessions of 5 v 5 to play or just reset the drill. Play to a certain score or time.

*BYU rules- play with a 7-10 sec shot clock in advantage situation.

Pack Defense Playbook

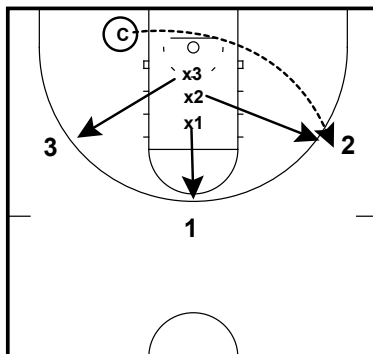
Pack Line Defense Drills- Rebounding

Line Rebounding



3 offensive players position themselves around the perimeter. 3 defensive players line up in a line in the middle of key. The defensive players will be assigned a number 1 through 3.

Line Rebounding

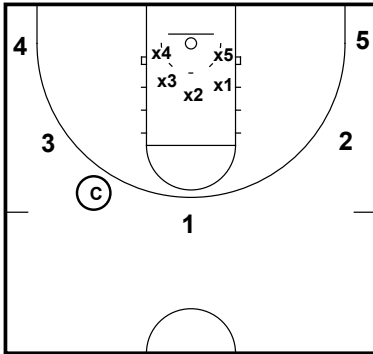


The coach will pass the ball to any of the offensive players while shouting a number (1-3). The number that is yelled out must close out to the shooter, while the other 2 defenders communicate who they are guarding. The offensive player who receives the ball shoots. The defense blocks out and attempts to secure the rebound.

Pack Defense Playbook

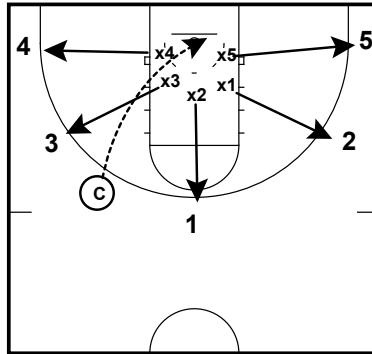
Pack Line Defense Drills- Rebounding

War



5 offensive players position themselves around the perimeter. 5 defensive players begin in the paint.

War

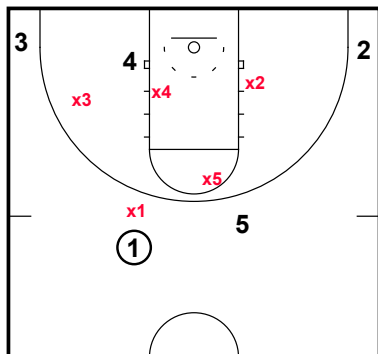


Coach shoots the ball. The defense attempts to block out the offense and secure the rebound. The offense crashes the glass looking for the offense rebound.

Pack Defense Playbook

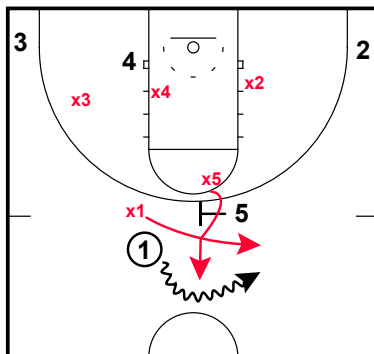
Pack Line Defense- Guarding Popular Actions

Pack Line- Guarding High Roll-Replace



High Roll-Replace.

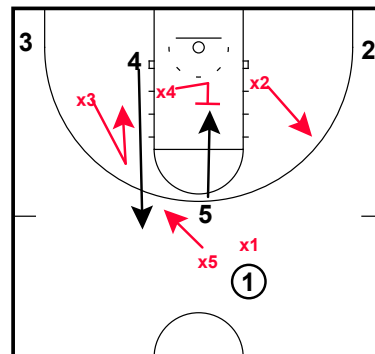
Pack Line- Guarding High Roll-Replace



x1 forces the ball handler into the screen. x5 sprints and gives hard show on ball screen making ball handler dribble up floor towards half court line.

x1 gets skinny and fights over screen and under x5, recovering to square the ball up.

Pack Line- Guarding High Roll-Replace

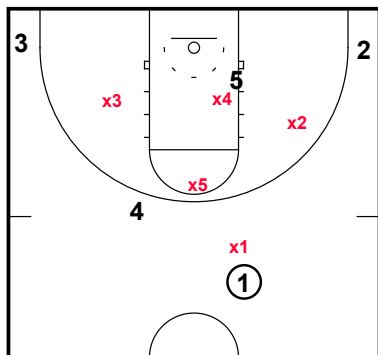


As 4 sprints up on the roll-replace action, x4 communicates the "x-out" to x5. x4 steps up and takes on the roll man meeting him up the lane and not allowing him to just roll to rim and post.

x3 slides up to bluff and recover providing help and buying x5 time to recover to new man.

x5 sprints out of show with high hands through passing lane to 4 and then slides into proper help position.

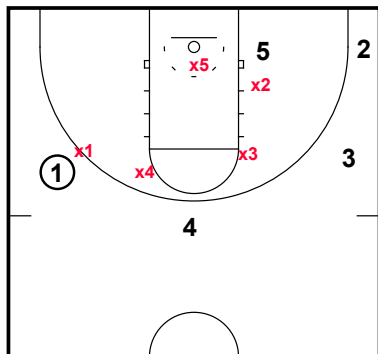
Pack Line- Guarding High Roll-Replace



Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Guarding Side Pick and Pop

Pack Line- Guarding Side Pick and Pop (Empty)

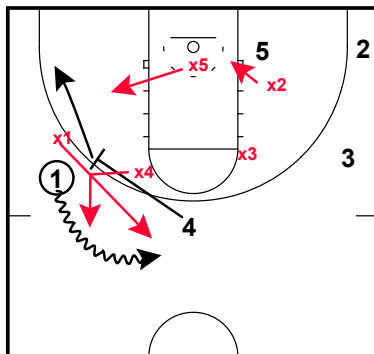


Side pick and pop.

If the offense has a skilled 4 man, they will often try and expose the hard show of the defense by pick and popping for a jumper.

In this case, the defense may have to adjust by "x-ing" out (switching) the bigs.

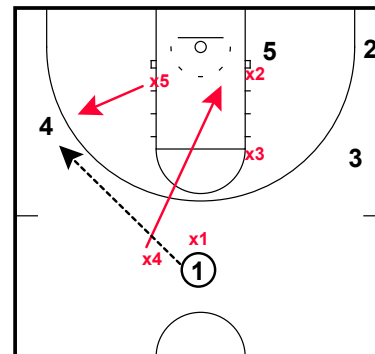
Pack Line- Guarding Side Pick and Pop (Empty)



x1 forces the ball handler into the screen. x4 sprints and gives hard show on ball screen making ball handler dribble up floor towards half court line.

x1 gets skinny and fights over screen and under x4, recovering to square the ball up. x5 slides over to X-out on the pass from 1 to 4. x2 slides over and sits on top of 5.

Pack Line- Guarding Side Pick and Pop (Empty)

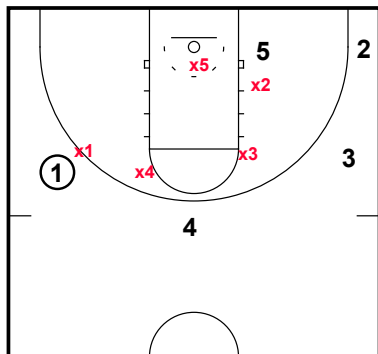


1 passes to 4. x5 "X" out to take ball. He communicates this with x4 who then sprints and recovers to take 5.

Pack Defense Playbook

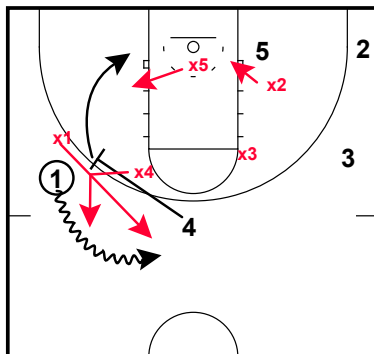
Pack Line Defense- Guarding Popular Actions

Pack Line- Guarding Side Pick and Roll (Empty)



Side pick and roll. The defense will guard by giving a hard show and recover.

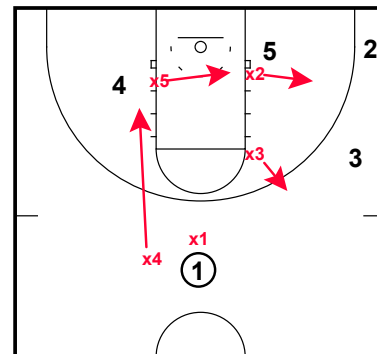
Pack Line- Guarding Side Pick and Roll (Empty)



x1 forces the ball handler into the screen. x4 sprints and gives hard show on ball screen making ball handler dribble up floor towards half court line.

x1 gets skinny and fights over screen and under x4, recovering to square the ball up. x5 slides over to help on the roll. x2 slides over and sits on top of 5.

Pack Line- Guarding Side Pick and Roll (Empty)

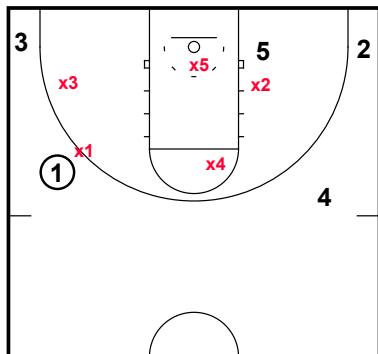


x1 has recovered and squared ball up. x4 is on dead sprint with high hands back to his man. x5 and x2 recover to their men.

Pack Defense Playbook

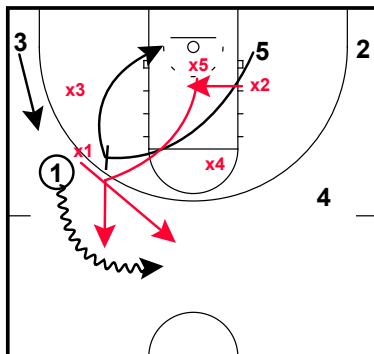
Pack Line Defense- Guarding Popular Actions

Pack Line- Guarding Side Pick and Roll
(with Fill)



Side pick and roll with fill man.

Pack Line- Guarding Side Pick and Roll
(with Fill)



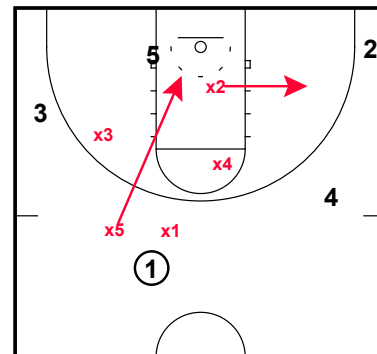
x1 forces the ball handler into the screen. x5 sprints and gives hard show on ball screen making ball handler dribble up floor towards half court line.

x1 gets skinny and fights over screen and under x5, recovering to square the ball up.

x2 slides over to help on roll. x3 hold and lifts with fill man.

Depending on personnel, x3 can provide more help if his man is a non-shooter.

Pack Line- Guarding Side Pick and Roll
(with Fill)

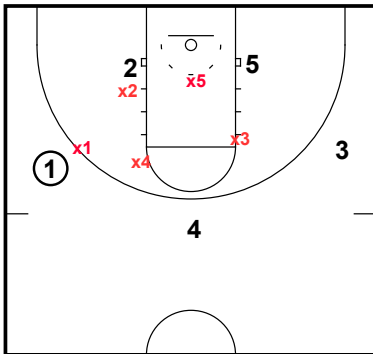


x5 sprints with high hands and recovers to his man. On recovery and as ball move towards his side of the floor, x2 starts to recover out to his man.

Pack Defense Playbook

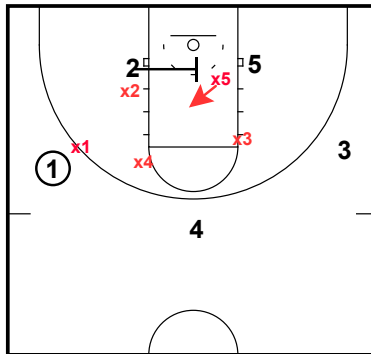
Pack Line Defense- Guarding Popular Actions

Pack Line- Guarding the Little on Big Screen with Down Screen



This is a common action you see. There are numerous way to get to this part of the play.

Pack Line- Guarding the Little on Big Screen with Down Screen

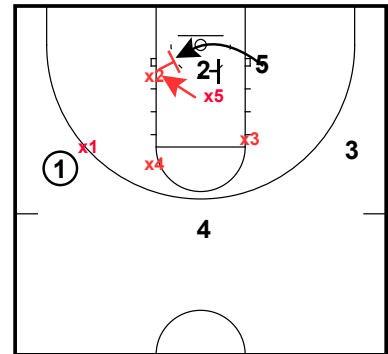


When 2 goes to cross screen for 5, x2 communicates "cross screen" to x5.

x1 pressures the ball and disrupts vision.

x5 should a little higher than his man and to the ball in his help position. As soon as he hears "cross screen", he makes sure to get on top side of screen, forcing 5 to take the low side of the screen.

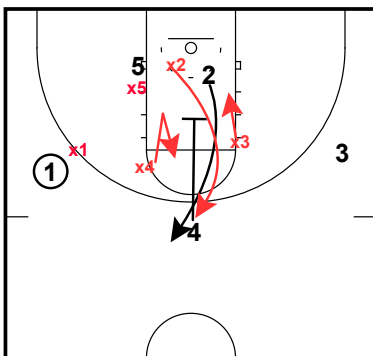
Pack Line- Guarding the Little on Big Screen with Down Screen



With x5 on top of screen and forcing 5 to low side, x2 gets to low side of screen and bumps the cutter, providing x5 time to get over top of screen and to recover to front to keep 5 from getting touch inside post area.

Once 5 makes this "V" move and recovers, x2 can release "hold" and recover to his man/proper position.

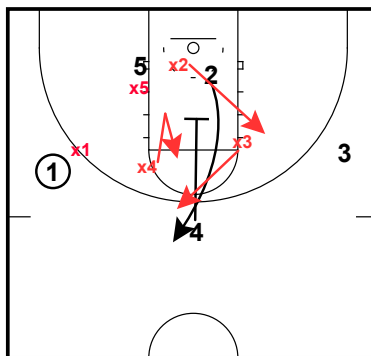
Pack Line- Guarding the Little on Big Screen with Down Screen



There are two ways of guarding this.

The first way is: teams that play the pack do NOT like to switch. So, after "holding" and helping x5, x2 does their best to lock and trail 2 coming off the down screen. x2 responsibility is to get through screen as quickly as possible and take away catch and shoot jumper. x4 will be arms length away from screener towards the ball and 1 step up the floor (towards half court) providing a show on the screen. x4 must remained attached to screen though so they are not slipped to rim for basket. x4 will only provide more help if it is absolutely necessary to buy x2 time to recover (or emergency switch). x3 will sink a little to provide help on any slip.

Pack Line- Guarding the Little on Big Screen with Down Screen

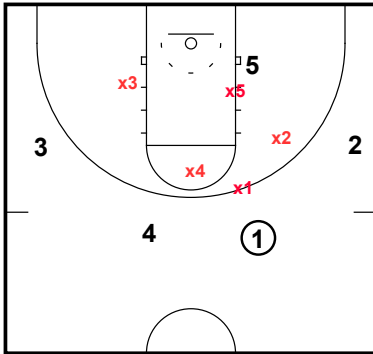


The second way of guarding this is if you "X-out" the guards. This is usually done in scouting so that x2 can hold on cross screen as long as he wants and not have to worry about chasing shooter out. Instead, x3 will call "X" and take the cutter out and x2 will switch out and take 3.

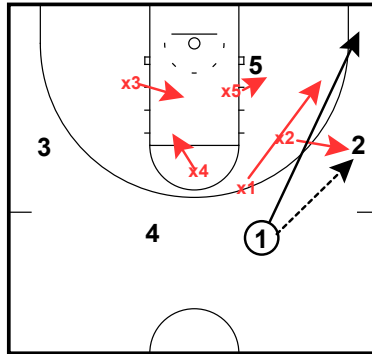
Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Guarding Popular Actions

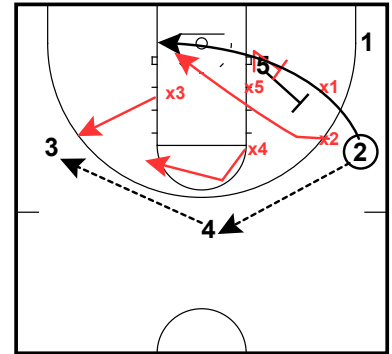
Pack Line- Guarding the Shuffle-Stagger



Pack Line- Guarding the Shuffle-Stagger



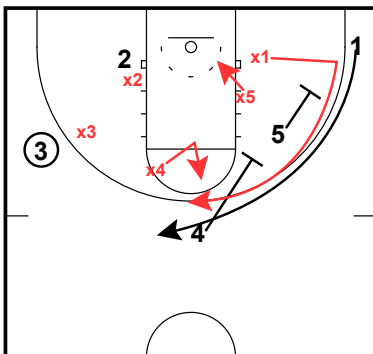
Pack Line- Guarding the Shuffle-Stagger



Ball is reversed from wing to wing.

When 5 steps out to set shuffle screen for 2, x5 calls out "back" screen. x2 should have jumped to ball when ball was reversed, thus putting him on top side of the screen forcing 2 to take the under side of the screen. x2 goes over top of the screen and sprints to beat 2 to the spot. x5 loosens and bumps the cutter buying time for x2. x3 pressures the ball.

Pack Line- Guarding the Shuffle-Stagger

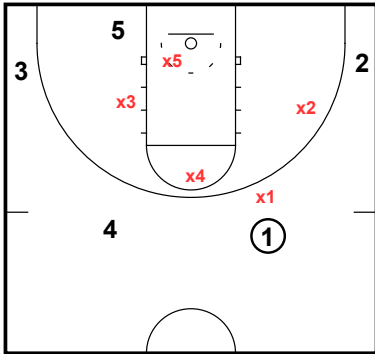


4 and 5 stagger for 1. x1 should be able to see all the action as he is bottom defender. As soon as he sees stagger, he bodies up to man as he is going to chase over top of screen. x5 drops and becomes rim helper. He will be there to help on slip of screen. x4 shows on last screen and protects against the curl.

Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Guarding Popular Actions

Pack Line- Guarding the Dribble Drive

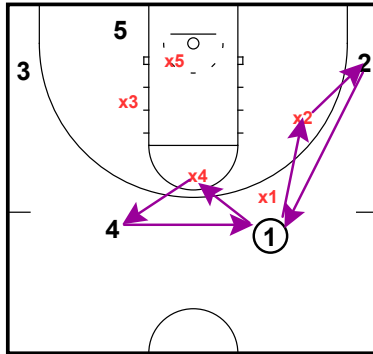


Gap integrity is highly crucial when guarding the dribble drive as the whole offense is based on attacking the rim with the dribble using open driving lanes.

It is very easy to get "too deep" or in a "deep triangle" and have ball handler drive ball deep into arc to point where help man cannot recover to open shooter.

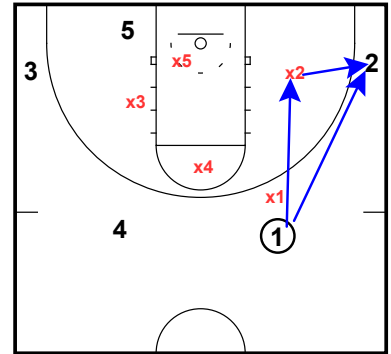
The technique of the stance is also extremely important as the defender can not get to square to the ball handler thus losing vision to his man and getting cut back door.

Pack Line- Guarding the Dribble Drive



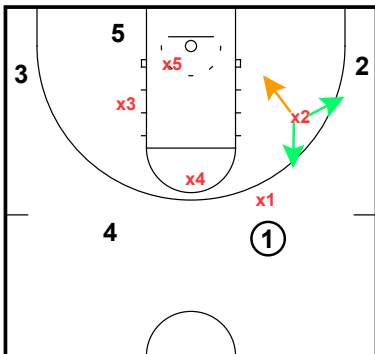
It is vital that the players plug the driving to give visual of no open driving lane, as well as providing early bluff and recover help in their flat triangle.

Pack Line- Guarding the Dribble Drive



It is very easy to get "too deep" or in a "deep triangle" and have ball handler drive ball deep into arc to point where help man cannot recover to open shooter.

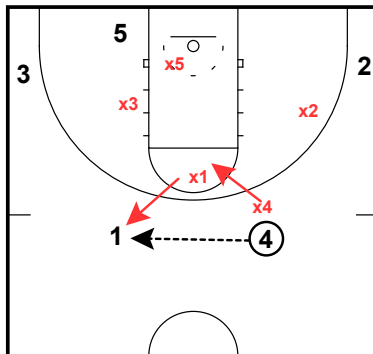
Pack Line- Guarding the Dribble Drive



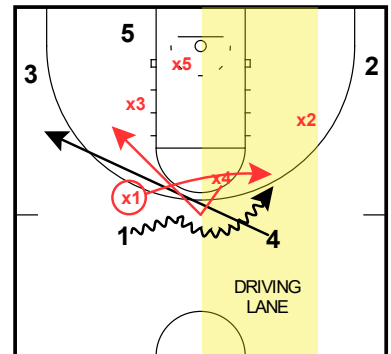
The technique of the stance is also extremely important as the defender can not get to square to the ball handler thus losing vision to his man and getting cut back door.

Body and feet are NOT square to ball handler or half court. Top foot is pointed at ball handler but chest is more pointed at sideline. Butt pointed towards hoop, thus giving defender vision to ball and man while plugging the gap.

Pack Line- Guarding the Dribble Drive



Pack Line- Guarding the Dribble Drive

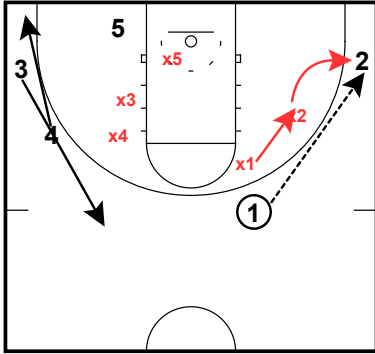


As 4 goes to blur cut, instead of chasing him, x4 hold and sits in driving gap like he is giving a soft/flat show. This will deny 1 the straight line drive into open driving lane and allow x1 to slide through and square ball up. x2 is plugging the gap.

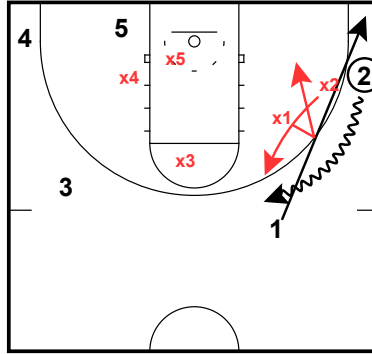
Pack Defense Playbook

Pack Line Defense- Guarding Popular Actions

Pack Line- Guarding the Dribble Drive



Pack Line- Guarding the Dribble Drive



x1 holds and x2 quickly slides through the blur cut.

VIRGINIA CAVALIER'S PACK LINE DEFENSE

PACK LINE OVERVIEW:

Pack line defense is a popular man-to-man defense run at all levels that was popularized by Dick Bennett while he was the head coach at the University of Wisconsin. Pack line emphasizes taking away dribble drives and interior scoring options, while forcing teams to settle for and beat you with outside shots.

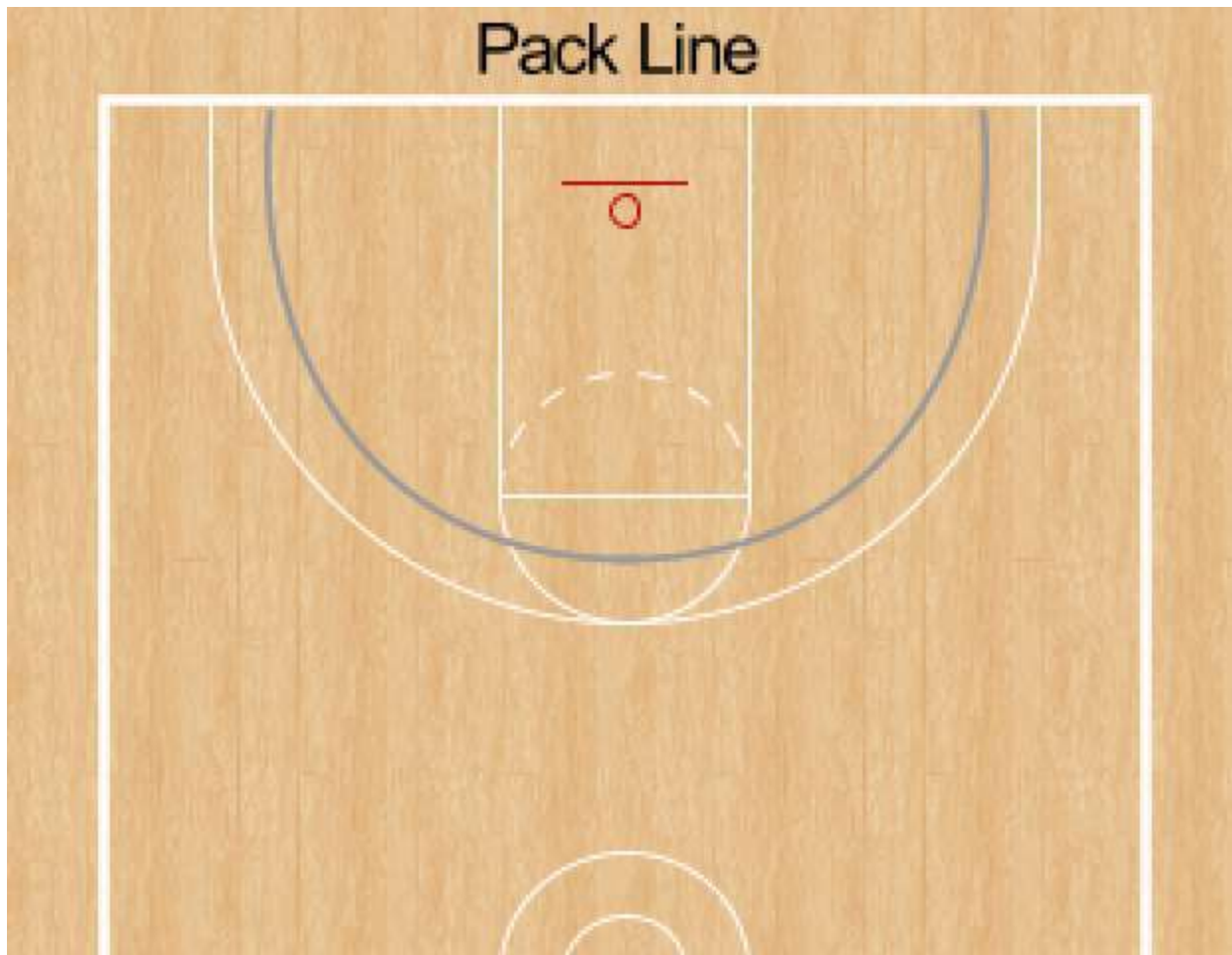
Throughout the years it has been copied, adapted and modified by coaches at all levels but one thing is common across all versions of the pack line defense—while it is a man-to-man defense, it is not an individual defense. All five defenders must be on the same page, communicating and in proper position in order to effectively play this defense.

While Dick Bennett and the University of Wisconsin popularized the offense, his son Tony Bennett and the University of Virginia have made it a staple of today's college basketball landscape. Hundreds of teams across Division I play the pack line defense, but none better than the Virginia Cavaliers. In this breakdown, we will dive deep into the basic concepts and principals of Virginia's pack line defense.

PACK LINE BASICS:

Pack line defense is based around funneling the ball into help, taking away dribble penetration and forcing teams to score from the perimeter. The reason it works so well in today's game, especially at the high school and college levels, is because today's offensive players are better ball handlers than they were 20 years ago, but much worse without the ball in their hands.

The basic keys to emphasize when implementing or coaching pack line defense is aggressive on-ball pressure and smart positioning from the off-ball defenders. If a defender's man does not have the ball, he should have two feet in the "pack line." The pack line is an imaginary line 16-17 feet from the basket (1 step in from the three point line) that mirrors the three point arc all the way around.



DEFENDING THE BALL IN PACK LINE:

Despite the misconception that pack line is a non-pressure defense, that simply isn't the case. The on-ball defender needs to play with extreme ball pressure, knowing he has help behind him. Beyond pressuring the ball, the on-ball defender has one additional job—never get beat baseline. Pack line defense is designed to handle and neutralize dribble drives to the middle of the floor. However, the one thing that will kill a pack line defense over and over again, is the baseline drive.

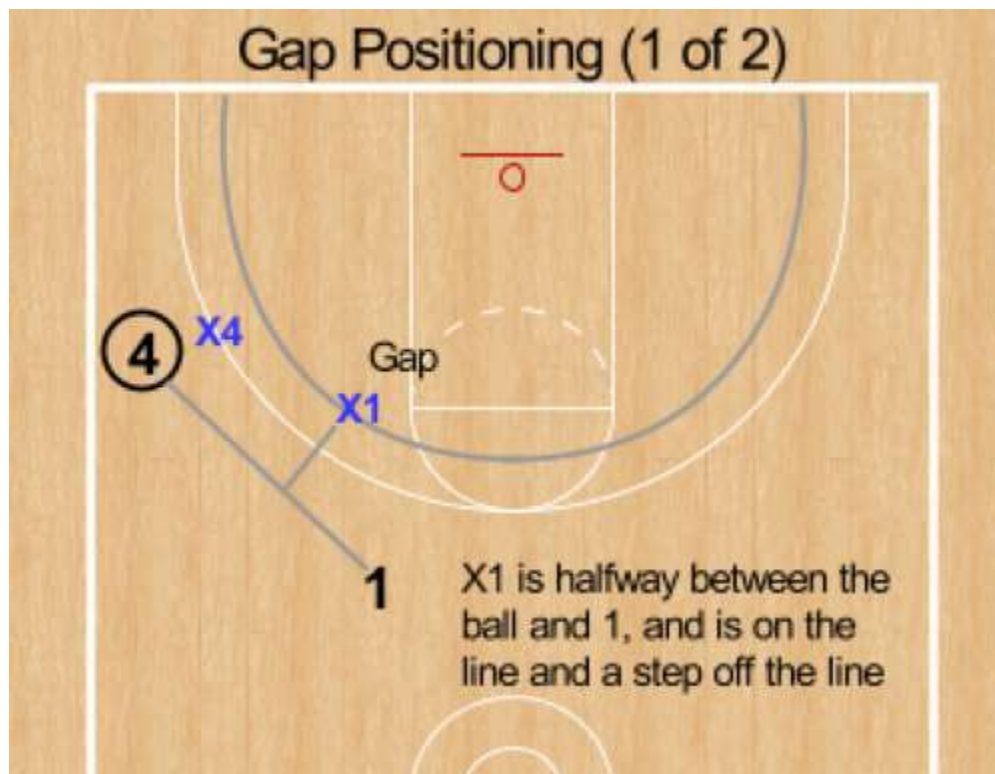
In addition, the on-ball defender can never give up a straight line drive to the rim (i.e. from a poor closeout). There is not a single defensive scheme in existence designed to handle straight line drives.

DEFENDING THE PERIMETER IN PACK LINE:

If your man does not have the ball, the general rule of thumb is that you have two feet inside the pack line. However, there are a few exceptions to this rule—for instance if your man sprints to set a ball screen (Virginia hard hedges ball screens, which we will cover later).

The off-ball defenders should be halfway between the ball and their man, and they should be on the line and a step off the line that would connect the ball to their man. This imaginary line connecting the ball to the defender's man applies to all areas of the court outside of the post. This line will constantly change and shift with offensive player movement, but no matter what the off-ball defenders are always on that line and a step off the line.

This positioning is now as "gap" and is the basis of the pack line defense. By positioning in the gap, the off-ball defenders are already in perfect help position on a potential drive. Rather than having to help and then recover, gap positioning allows a defender to simply recover as they are already positioned to help.



Gap Positioning (2 of 2)





Each time the ball is passed along the perimeter, the off-ball defenders find themselves in one of two scenarios:

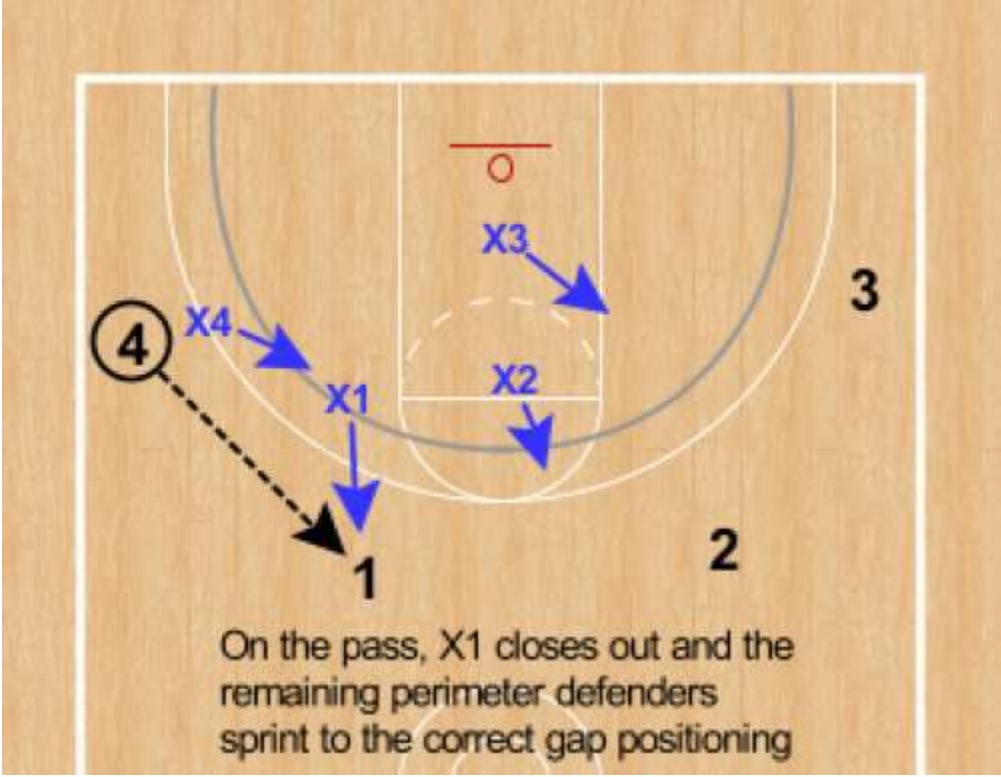
1. The ball is being passed to the player they are guarding

If the ball is being passed to the player they are guarding, the defender must first “move on air.” This means the instant the ball leaves the passer’s hands, the defender is closing out to his man with high active hands and he becomes the on-ball defender. Moving on air is a non-negotiable for all five defensive players—as the ball is in the air, all five players are moving to their correct positioning on “air time.”

2. The ball is not being passed to the player they are guarding

If the ball is not being passed to the player they are guarding, the defender must once again move on air. But rather than closing out to the new ball handler, they will sprint to the correct gap positioning (on the line and a step off the line).

If all five players follow the above techniques and rules, the entire defense will have been shifted and correctly positioned by the time the pass is received and the next action begins.



CLOSEOUTS:

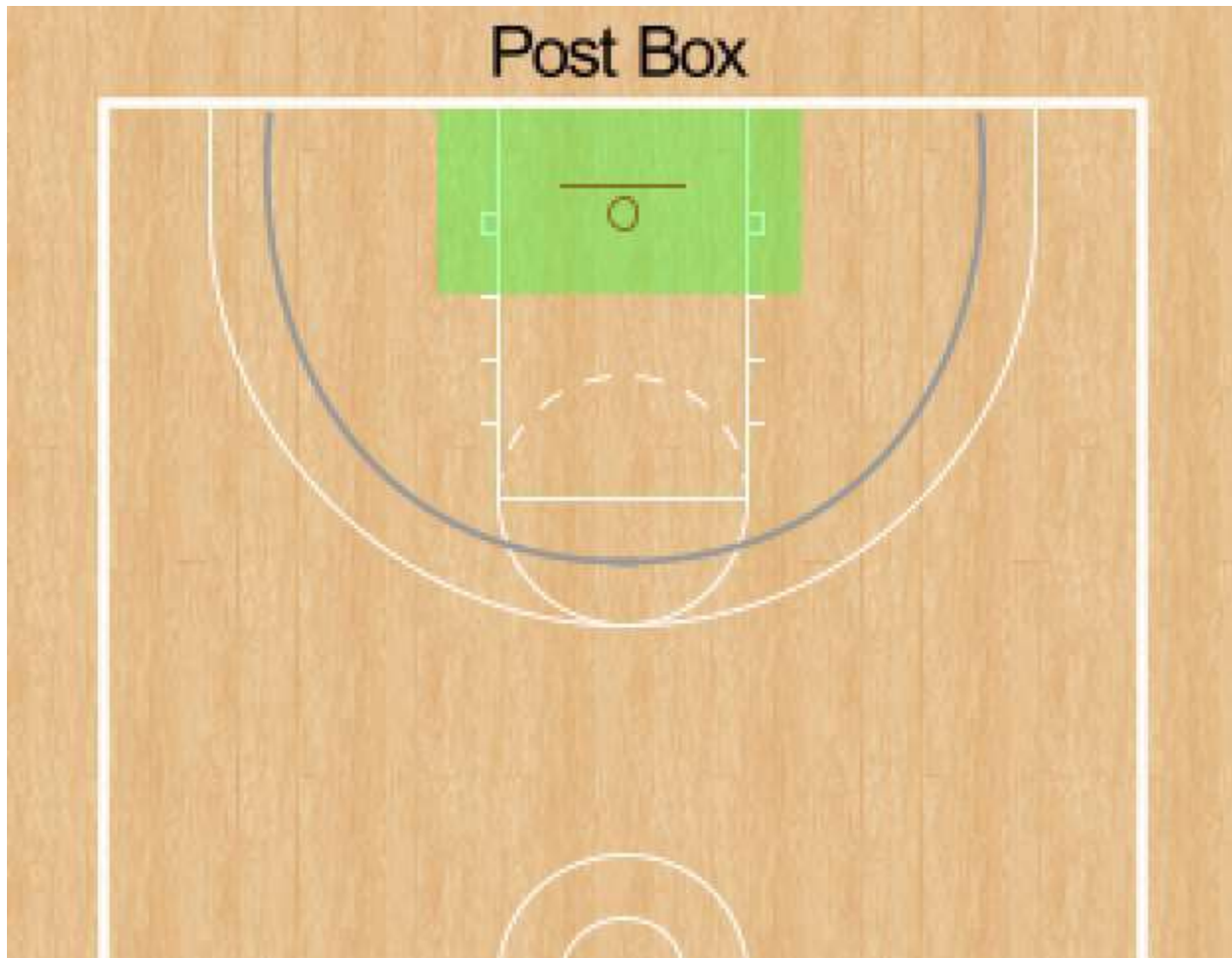
Perhaps the biggest fundamental of perimeter defense within pack line is closing out on shooters. With pack line defense being designed to take away interior scoring options, theoretically the only option left for the offense is to take shots from the perimeter so guarding and contesting outside looks is key to any successful pack line defense.

Virginia coaches their players to begin closing out on a sprint and finish with short choppy steps. As the ball is kicked to a shooter or perimeter player, the defender responsible for the shooter is moving on air and sprinting to close the distance. As he begins to close in on the shooter, the defender begins to chop their feet to regain balance and arrive on the ball in an athletic position so they don't get beat on an immediate drive.

Virginia also coaches their players to close out with two high hands—the reason for this is it discourages shots in rhythm, limits quick passes over the top, and takes away the offensive player's vision. The two high hands of the closeout actually occur simultaneously with the short choppy steps. As the close out defender begins to break down and chop their feet, they sink their hips and throw both hands in the air as the player is receiving the pass.

DEFENDING THE POST IN PACK LINE:

When defending the post in pack line, and really all defensive schemes for that matter, the work must be done early. What I mean is the post defender has to fight for position early and often. If you wait to begin fighting for position once the ball has been entered into the post, it's too late. The post defender should use a clenched-fist arm bar to fight for position early and push his man outside of the post box (see image below)—the goal is no two-footed catches inside the post box. Anytime the offensive post player does not have the ball, the post defender must constantly be battling for space.



The general rule of thumb for the post defender is to be positioned 3/4 on the high side of the post player, and they can never allow a post entry from the top (high-low). The only time you don't look to play 3/4 from the high side is when the post player flashes to the elbow or free throw line. This positioning, combined with the perimeter defenders not getting beat baseline, eliminates the most common post entry passing lanes and keeps the offensive player from catching the ball deep.

If the ball is entered into the post, the post defender immediately "pops back" or jumps from 3/4 to playing directly behind the post player. The post defender should pop back while the pass is still in the air, so the post defender has no initial advantage on the catch. Once the post player has the ball and the post defender has popped back, he should wall up and show the referee his hands. If the post player attempts a shot, stay on your feet with your hands high and walk into the shooter (foul him with your hips).

When the ball is entered into the post, Virginia immediately sends the opposite big (X4) to double and trap the post. X4 must sprint to double as the ball is still in the air or on "air time." The defender guarding the player who made the post entry (X3) will deny his man once the post entry is made. This eliminates the easiest outlet for 5 to escape the trap. The lowest off ball defender X2, will sprint to the rim and protect against any cutters. The final off ball defender will

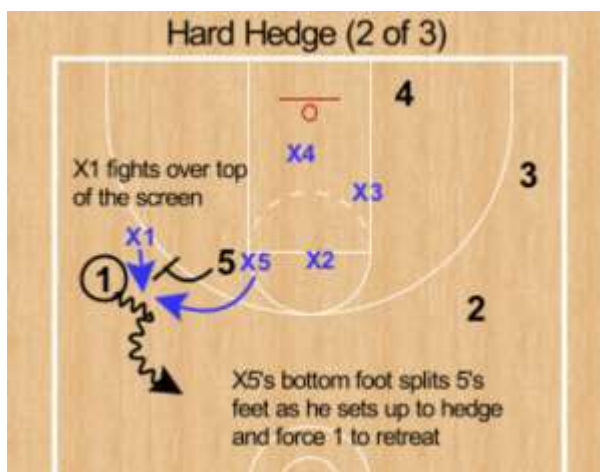
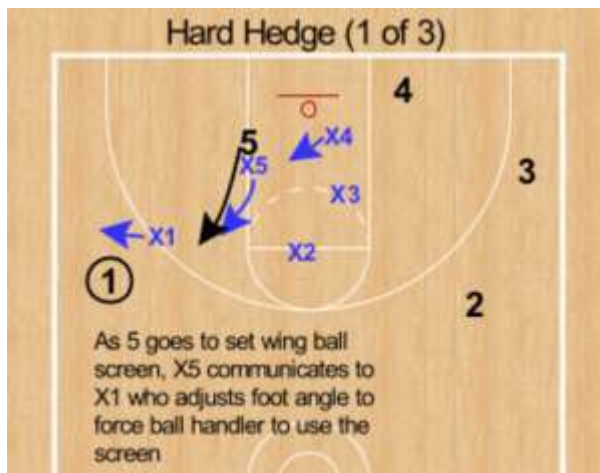
“zone” up and be prepared to close out on a cross court skip pass. Once 5 breaks the trap or retreats, X4 sprints to recover back to his man, while the off ball defenders do the same.

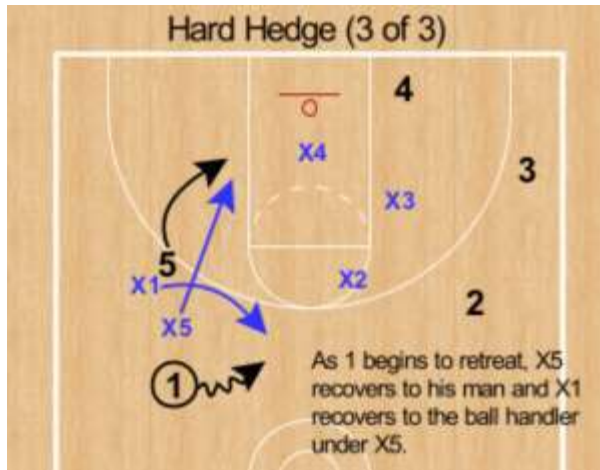


DEFENDING BALL SCREENS:

Virginia famously defends ball screens in their pack line defense by hard hedging, and they do this especially well. As the ball screen is being set, the screener's defender gets in the ball handler's path as he comes off the screen with his shoulders facing the ball handler (parallel to the sideline). The screener's defender's goal is to force the ball handler to slow his momentum and retreat, ideally towards half court.

As this is happening, the defender who was guarding the ball fights over the top of the screen and goes under the screener's defender as he hedges out. The screener's defender then sprints with high hands to recover back to his original man, the screener. The opposite big not involved in the ball screen action is tasked with "helping the hedger" if needed, and rotating to cover the screener if he rolls to the rim.

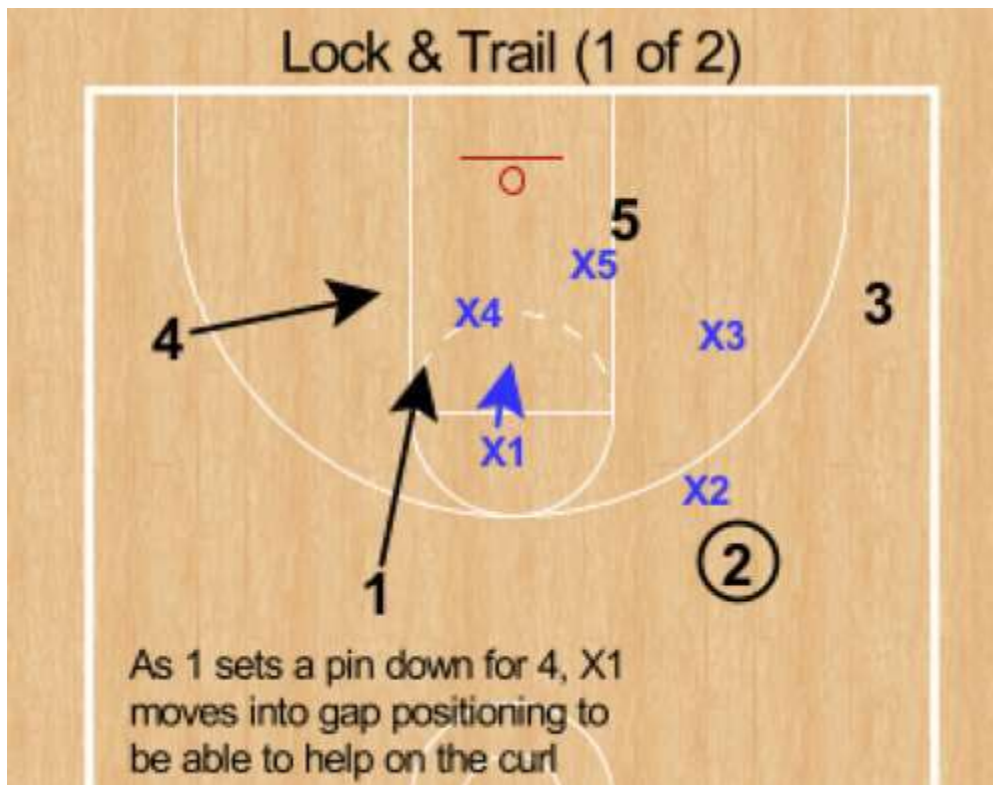




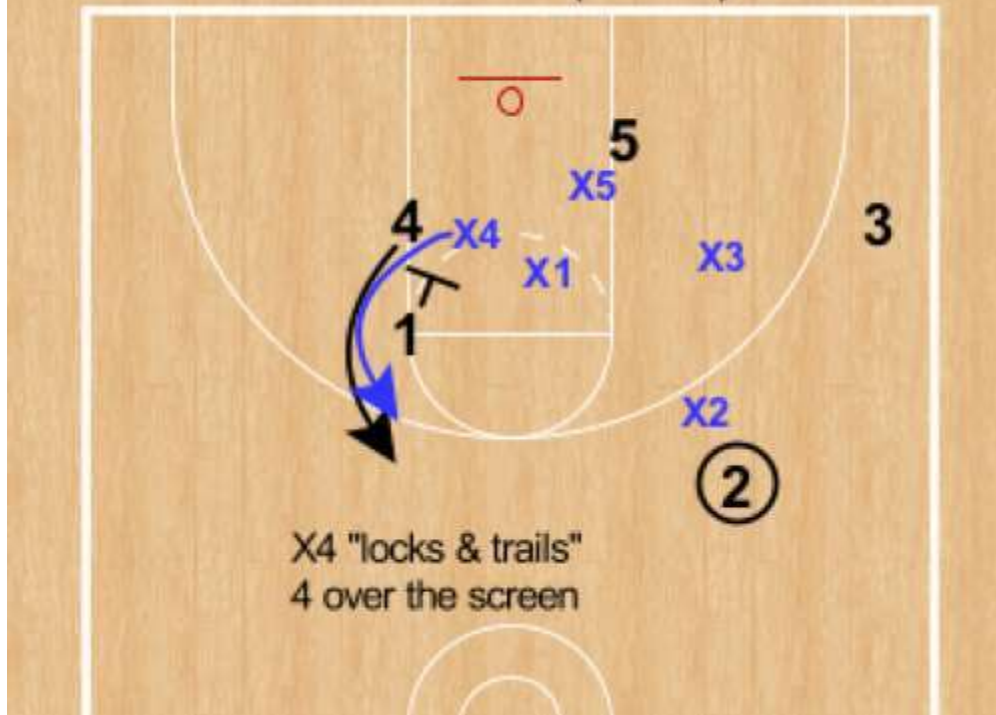
DEFENDING AWAY SCREENS:

To defend away or off-ball screens, Virginia uses the “lock and trail” concept. The defender guarding the player coming off the away screen, will lock onto the offensive player’s near-side hip and trails him over the top of the screen.

The screener’s defender sags in gap position to help on a potential curl cut from the offensive player. The curl is often a hard cut and pass to connect on, especially since the on-ball defender making to look the pass is playing with extreme ball pressure. Once the lock and trail defender has recovered on the now ball handler, the screener’s defender recovers back to his man.



Lock & Trail (2 of 2)



[Breakdowns](#) [Playbooks](#) [Drill Library](#) [Videos](#)

Pack-Line Defense

Understanding the System

By: Kramer Soderberg

Pack Defense Overview

Our Goal:

- 1) Force a shot outside the Pack
- 2) Contest every shot (without fouling)
- 3) Rebound the miss

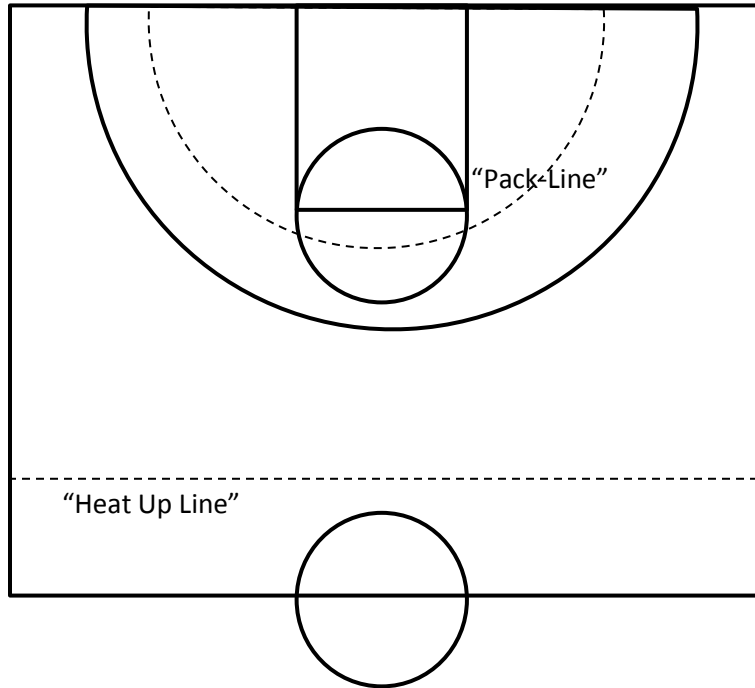
Steps to Defensive Success:

- 1) Defensive Transition
 - a. 2-3 men (Guards) back on the shot
 - b. SPRINT back to pack
- 2) Half-Court Overview
 - a. Pack Explanation
 - i. Two possibilities on D: Guarding the ball or Off the ball
 - ii. Always have 4 guys in and 1 guy out
 - iii. Only outside the pack if your man has the ball or hedging a ball screen
 - b. Positioning Explanation
 - i. On Ball – “Protect Your Feet” (Pop Back)
 1. Ball pressure – make offense uncomfortable (trace & dig)
 2. Ball out Top: Stay between ball & rim (No straight line drives)
 3. Ball on Side: No baseline, no straight line drives
 - ii. Off Ball
 1. ALWAYS be in the Pack (unless chasing or hedging a screen)
 2. ALWAYS be closer to the ball than your man (slightly closed stance)
 3. ALWAYS have vision – see ball & man at all times
 4. Post D: $\frac{3}{4}$ On the high side - “Butt to the ball”
 - c. Ball Screen Defense
 - i. Outer Third:
 1. Hard Hedge & Over
 2. 3 players not involved: “Flood”
 3. X-out (w/ opposite big) if pass is made to screen
 - ii. Inner Third
 1. Flat Hedge & Over
 2. 3 players not involved: “Pinch-In”
- 3) Defensive Rebounding
 - a. All 5 guys rebound!!

“Our defense must OUTLAST the offense”

Basic Explanation

****1st Priority = Defend with a set Defense (5 vs 5) – No transition baskets****



Heat Up Line = Once defense is set, the ball must be picked up and pressured at this point

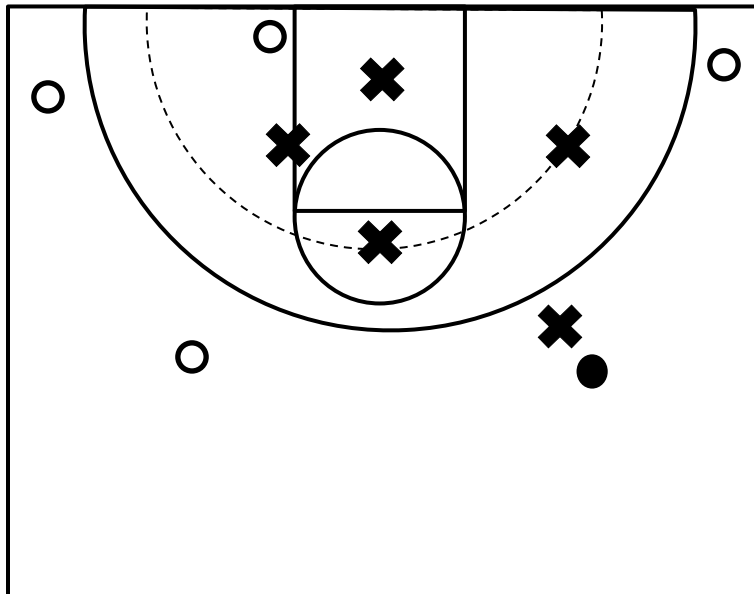
Pack-Line = Arch 15ft from basket intersecting the elbows, starting point of the defense

Basic Positioning

- Always have 4 men in the pack, 1 outside the pack
 - Exceptions: Chasing screen or Hedging Ballscreen

Must Have Player Traits

1. Effort
2. Anticipation
3. Communication



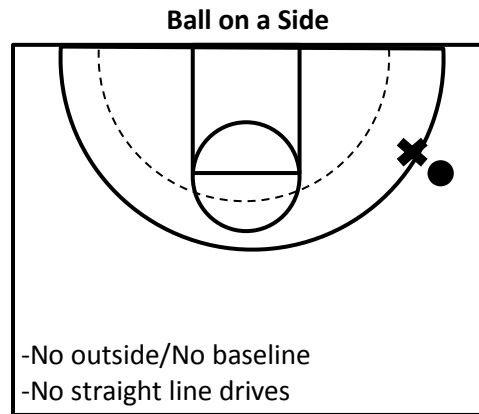
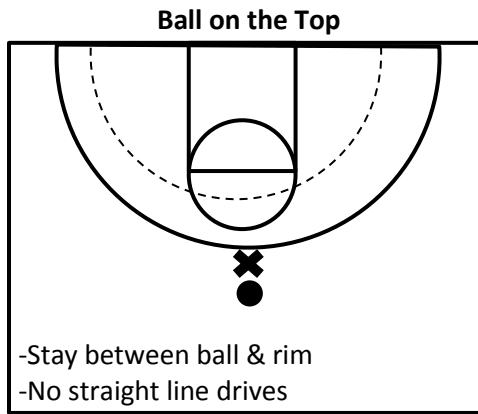
Positioning Explanation

1. On the ball

****This is NOT a soft defense...INTENSE BALL PRESSURE AT ALL TIMES!!****

Ball Pressure = Make the Defense Uncomfortable

(Trace & Dig/Mirror the Ball)



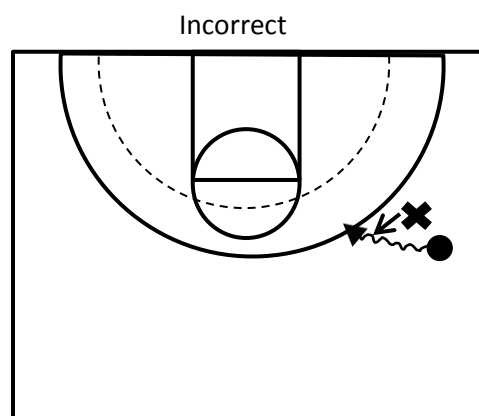
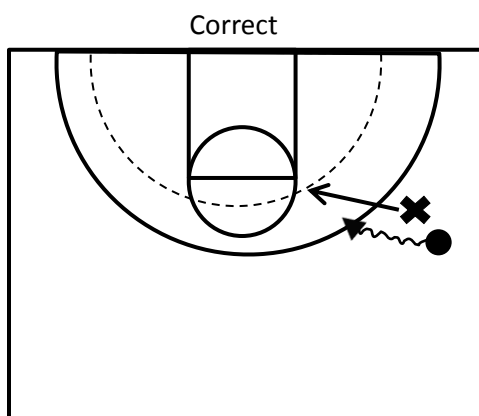
On Ball Defender Must Be Able to:

- 1) Closeout Efficiently
- 2) Take away rhythm shots
- 3) Not give up baseline drive
- 4) Not give up straight line drive

On Ball Teaching Points:

- “Protect Your Feet”
 - Keep a cushion = Arm’s length (be able to touch the defender’s chest)
- “Mirror the Ball” or “Trace & Dig”
 - Defender should always be disrupting the ball = “Hand on Ball”
 - Keep great stance and balance while tracing
- “Guard Your Yard”
 - Defender must have the ability to protect 1 yard to his right and left
- “Pop Back”
 - When the defender drops the ball into triple threat = Defender “pops back”
- “Angle of Pursuit”
 - When ball handler attacks...defender must meet him at a point
 - Can’t let offensive player get to your body
 - Defend with your feet not your hands or chest = Meet him at a point

Angle Pursuit



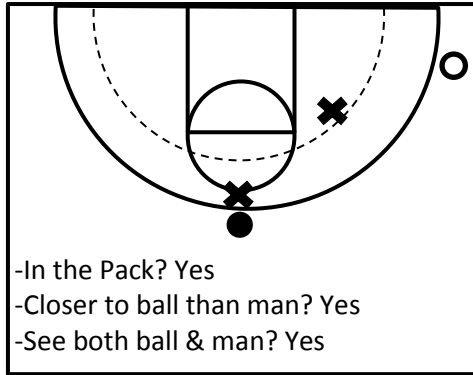
Positioning Explanation

2. Off the Ball

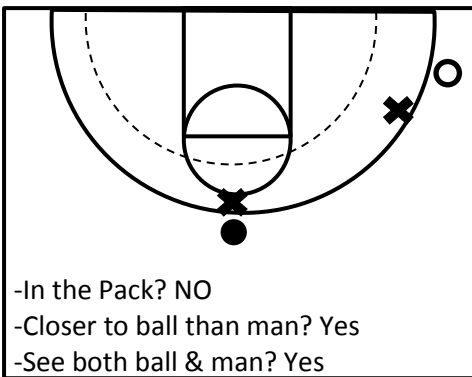
****Defender must answer YES to 3 questions****

- 1) Am I in the Pack?
- 2) Am I closer to the ball than my man?
- 3) Can I see both the ball and my man?

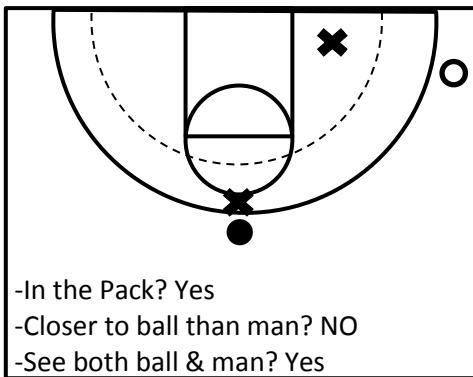
Correct Positioning



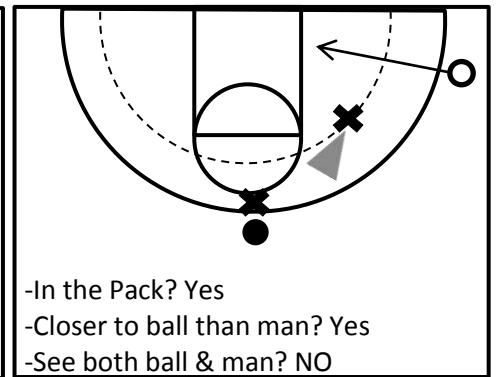
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Incorrect

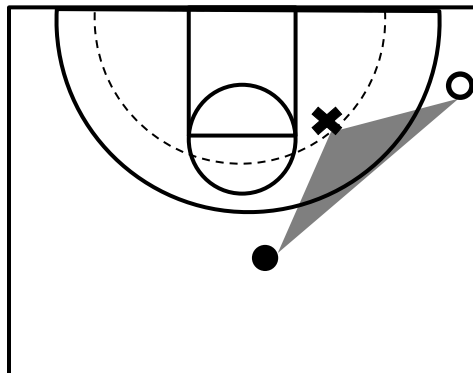


Incorrect



Off Ball Teaching Points:

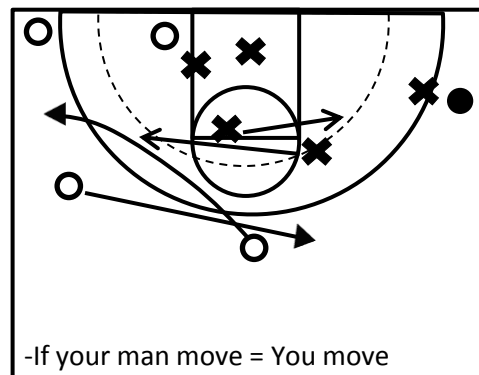
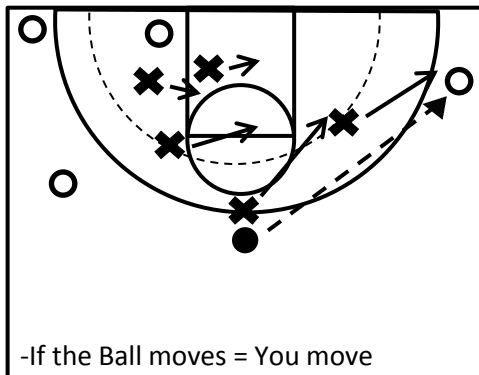
- "Vision"
 - Must see ball and man...AT THE SAME TIME
 - Look in-between ball and man to see both = Peripheral Vision
 - Pointer Fingers
- "Slightly Closed Stance"
 - Foot closest to the ball = Slightly forward, Chest towards your man
- "Narrow Triangle"
 - Defender forms "narrow triangle" with ball handler and his man



Post Defense (Cont.)

Off Ball Movement

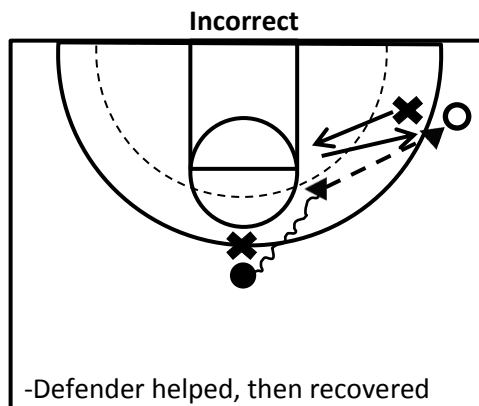
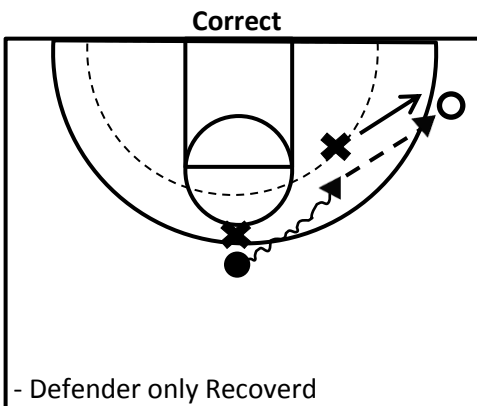
- **Jumping to the ball**
- Sprint to Help
- Turn Hips, 2 steps, Stance



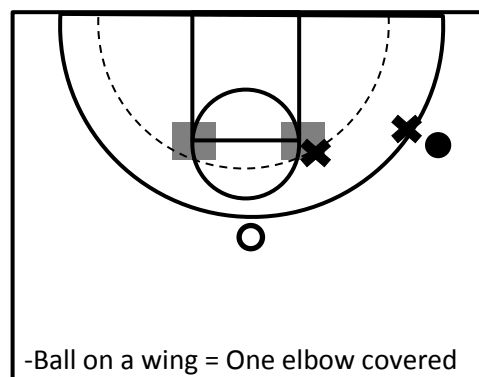
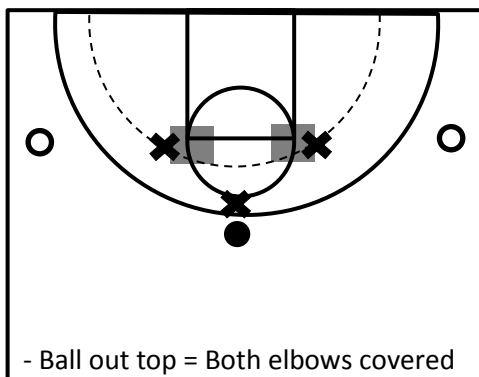
Defender should be constantly adjusting his positioning...Be a CONTINUOUS defender

Off Ball Movement Teaching Points:

- “Your position is your Help”
 - There is no ‘Help and Recover’ – Only Recover
 - Off ball defender should never have to lunge to help, should already be in help position



- “Protect the Elbows”
 - Filling the gaps on the elbow is vital when trying to keep the offense out of the paint
 - When the ball is on the top or at the wing...off ball defenders must “Protect the elbows”



No straight line drives...on ball defender must “Guard their Yard”

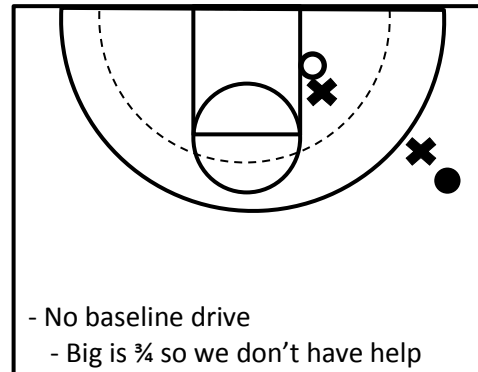
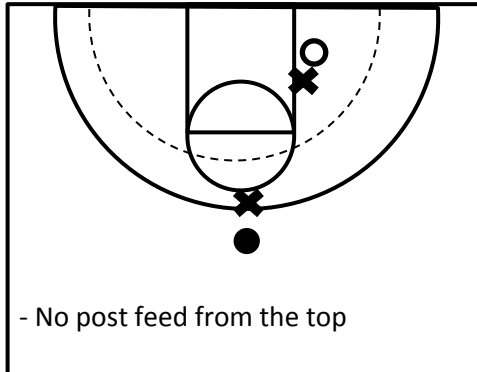
Positioning Explanation

3. Post Defense

****Post defense is 70% Will & Determination & 30% Positioning****

NO POST FEEDS FROM THE TOP

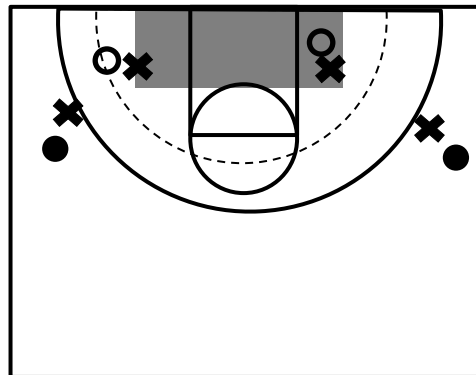
- Post Defender is always $\frac{3}{4}$ on the high side of his man
- Back should be facing the ball, top are in front of man, chin on your shoulder
- Ball in flight (Not Before) = Defender slides behind – Don't Lunge for the Ball!



Post Box

- Man inside Post Box = $\frac{3}{4}$ on the high side
- Man outside Post Box = Play Behind
- Exception = Ball at the Top

If we $\frac{3}{4}$ outside post box, we are prone to give up easy layup



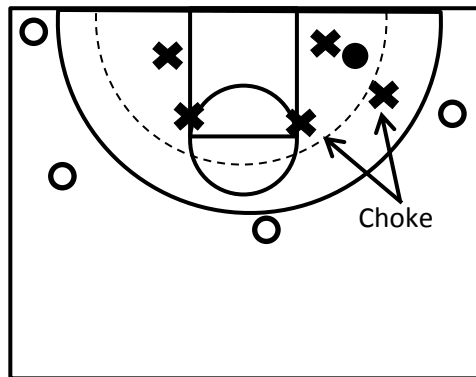
Off Ball Teaching Points:

- "Butt to the Ball"
 - Defender must work to have the butt/back to the ball at all times
 - Helps teach correct position of $\frac{3}{4}$ on the high side
- "Flash Front"
 - Defender can quickly front the post to help him regain $\frac{3}{4}$ high side position
 - DO NOT stay in full frontal position
- "Work your Feet"
 - The less contact the better when battling for position
 - Separate from post player before you attach

Post Defense (Cont.) – Ball in the Post

1) Choke

- Ball side defenders dig at the ball: Hesitant before the bounce, Aggressive on the bounce
- Guards who are choking must jump to the ball on the pass & keep vision on ball and man



2) Post Double (Big on Big)

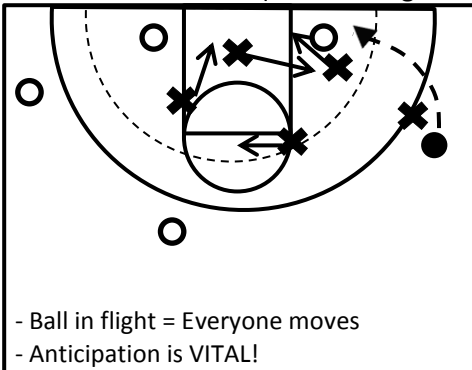
Post Responsibilities

- On the pass, opposite post defender must trap the ball HARD (Be there on the catch)
- Both post defenders must have high hands & trap at a 90 degree angle
- Opposite defender responsible for top side, Same side defender responsible for baseline side
- If offensive player retreat dribbles, opposite post defender sprints back to his man

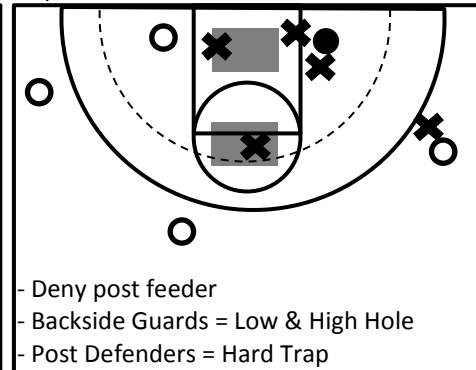
Guard Responsibilities

- Guard defending post feeder = Full Denial, your man cannot get the ball back
- Opposite guards = Fill the Low Hole & High Hole (Communicate)

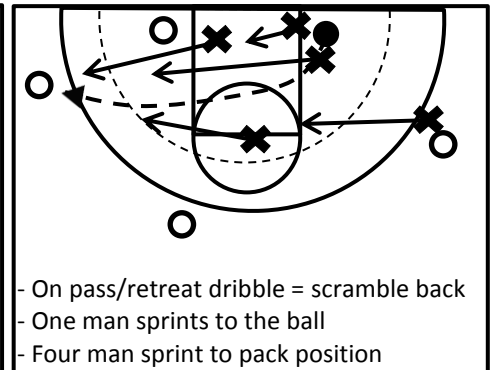
Traditional Scenario (Backside big on block)



- Ball in flight = Everyone moves
- Anticipation is VITAL!

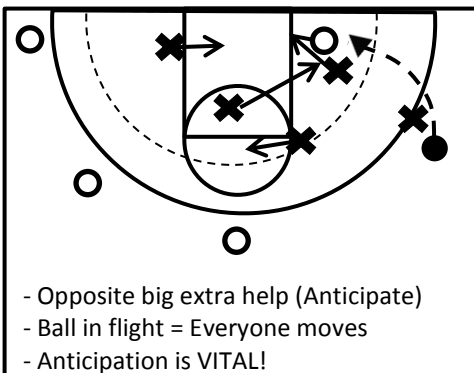


- Deny post feeder
- Backside Guards = Low & High Hole
- Post Defenders = Hard Trap

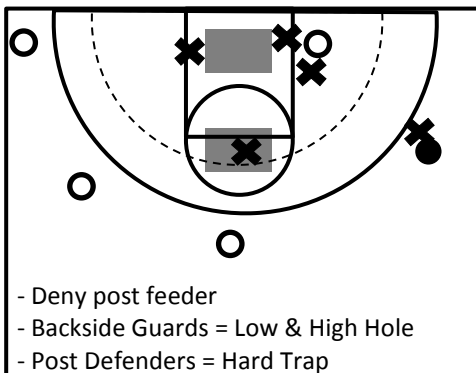


- On pass/retreat dribble = scramble back
- One man sprints to the ball
- Four man sprint to pack position

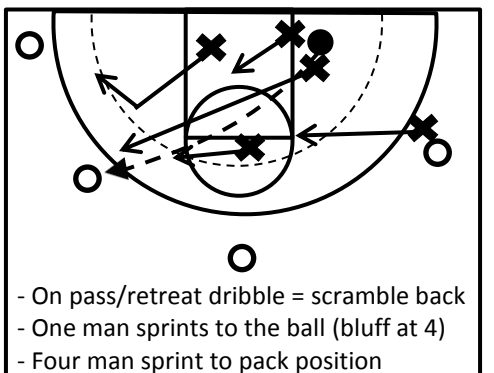
Untraditional Scenario (Backside big on perimeter or 4 guard lineup)



- Opposite big extra help (Anticipate)
- Ball in flight = Everyone moves
- Anticipation is VITAL!



- Deny post feeder
- Backside Guards = Low & High Hole
- Post Defenders = Hard Trap



- On pass/retreat dribble = scramble back
- One man sprints to the ball (bluff at 4)
- Four man sprint to pack position

Depending on skill of 4 man, may need to take ball (no bluff) and rotate

Defending Screens

1) Off Ball Screens

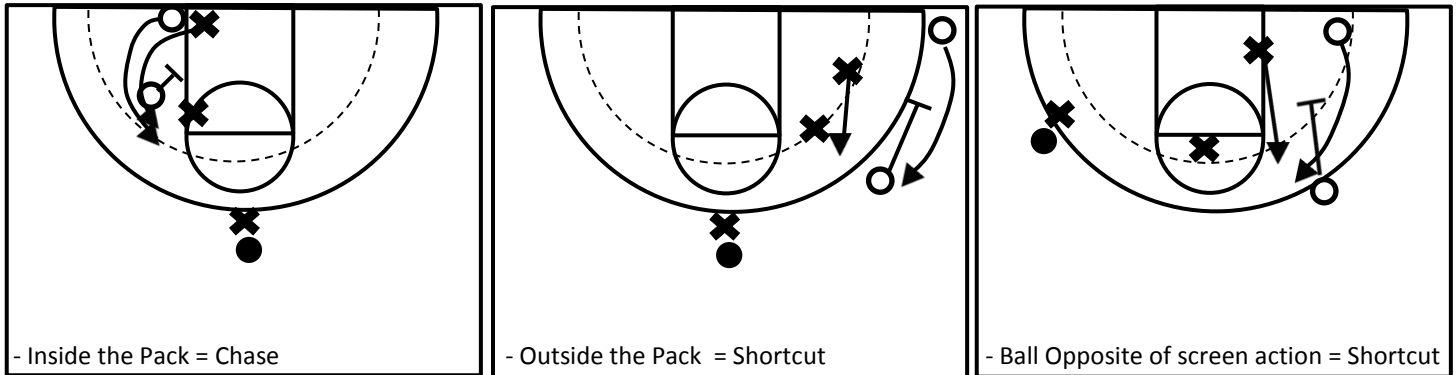
Defending the Cutter

- Must stay within touching distance of the cutter (get in the small of his back)
- Must chase the cutter off all screens (except outside Pack or ball away)
- Defender has no help responsibilities

Defending the Screener

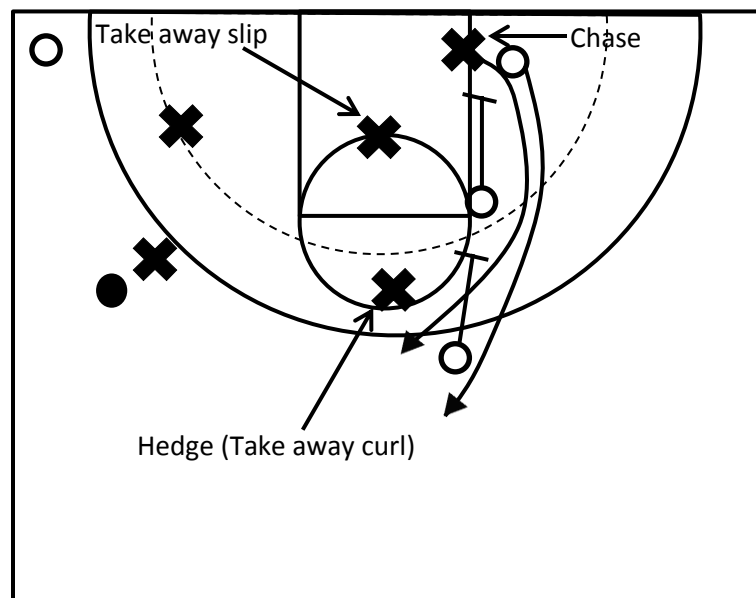
- Must quick show as the cutter comes off the screen (prevent the tight curl)
- Don't give up the slip (Ball Pressure can help)

Single Screen:



Stagger Screen:

- Defending the Cutter = Chase Hard
- Defending the Top Screener = Hedge (Take away curl)
- Defending the Bottom Screener = Cover the middle (Take away slip) – Cover 2 guys for split second



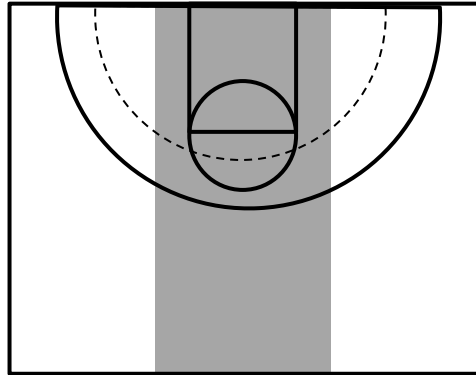
Defending Screens

2) Ball Screens

Inner Third Ballscreen (Middle) = Quick Show or Flat Hedge (Based on Scouting report)

If the ballscreen is being set in the middle 3rd of the court every knows how you are defending the screen

If the screen is set close to the line separating inner & outer 3rd = Bigs Decision



Defending the Ball Handler

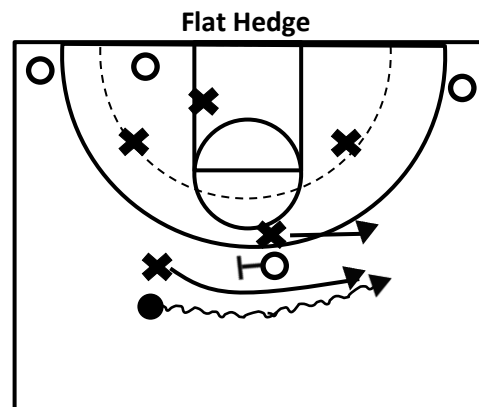
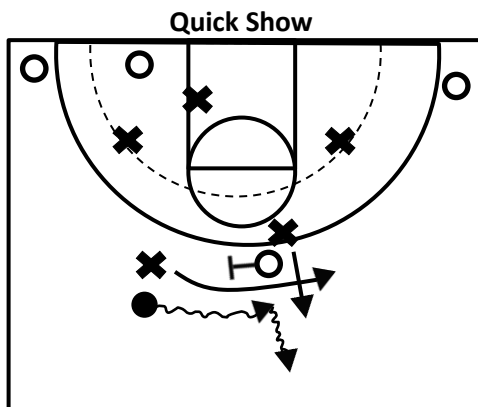
- Make him use the screen (No refusing of the ball screen)
- Go over (unless based on scouting report): Punch Fist and Step over – Stay in a stance

Defending the Screener

- Quick Show = Disrupt ball handler by hedging quickly then get back
Make offense back dribble, Shoulders facing the sideline
- Flat Hedge = Slide with ball handler starting level with the screen
As screener rolls, defender rolls with him with hands high

Defending outside the Screening Action

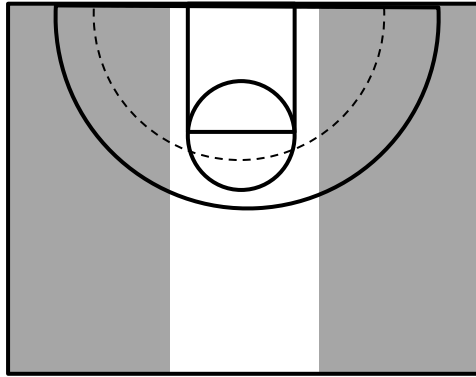
- Pinch = Squeeze the defense in to protect the paint and force a pass to the perimeter
Anticipation is VITAL, must be in two places at once



Outer Third Ballscreen (Side) = Hard Hedge

If the ballscreen is being set in an outer 3rd of the court every knows how you are defending the screen

If the screen is set close to the line separating inner & outer 3rd = Bigs Decision



Defending the Ball Handler

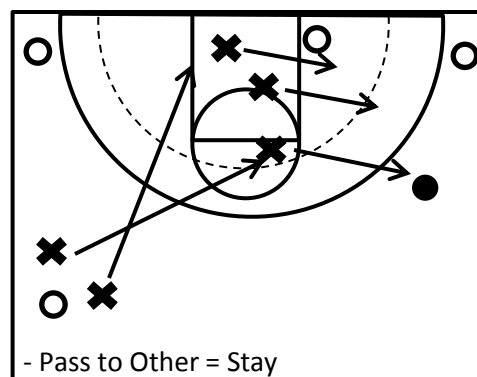
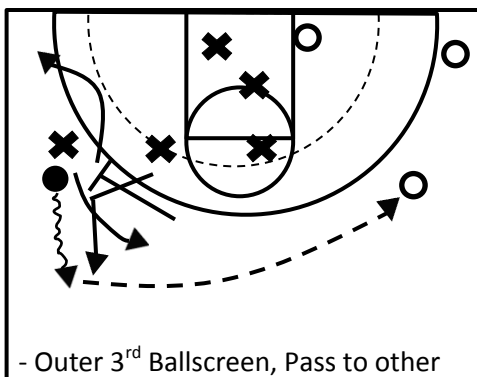
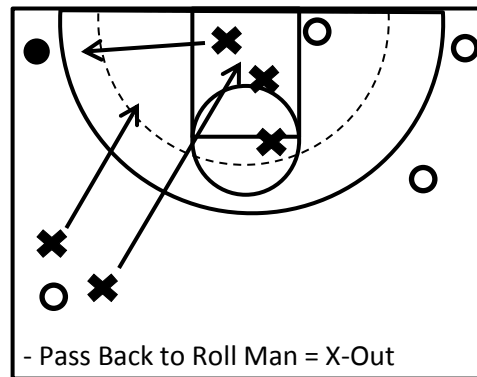
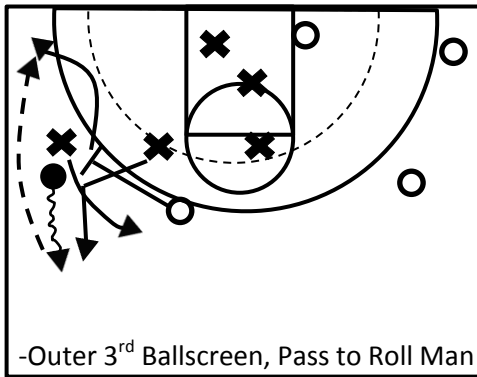
- Make him use the screen (No refusing of the ball screen)
- Go over (unless based on scouting report): Punch Fist and Step over – Stay in a stance

Defending the Screener

- Hard Hedge = Disrupt ball handler by hedging hard, shoulders facing the sideline
Stance and slide for 2 slides
Make offense back dribble towards half court
Sprint back to appropriate man based on where the ball is passed
Pass to Roll man = X-out
No pass or pass to other 3 = Stay

Defending outside the Screening Action

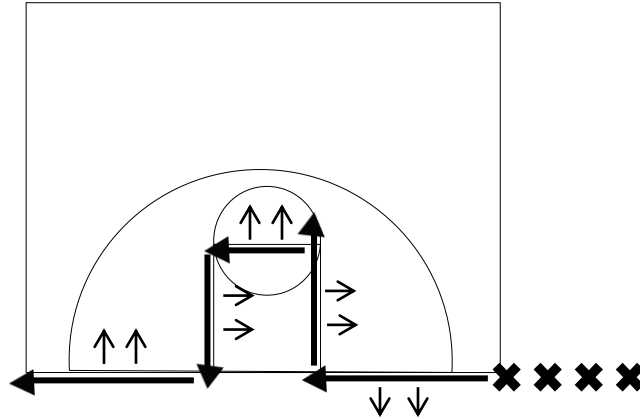
- Flood = Back side defenders should be at the mid-line protecting the paint
Back side big anticipating the X-out if pass is made to the roll man
Back side guards must cover 3 men w/ 2 until hedging big gets back



Pack-Line Defensive Drills

Slow Slide (Charlie Coles)

- Line of Players in the right corner of the baseline, facing outside
- Slow slide to lane line, slide to elbow, slide to elbow, slide to baseline, slide to left corner
- Reverse pivot & slap floor at every turn
- Repeat in the opposite direction

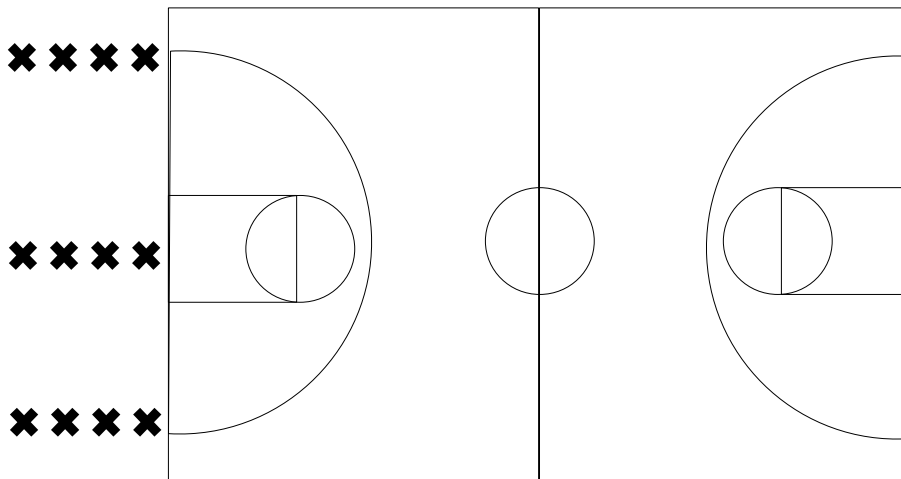


Emphasis: Low/Wide stance, big step (don't let feet come together), Arms wide, TALK!

Benefit: Improve stance, Energizer/Warm-up

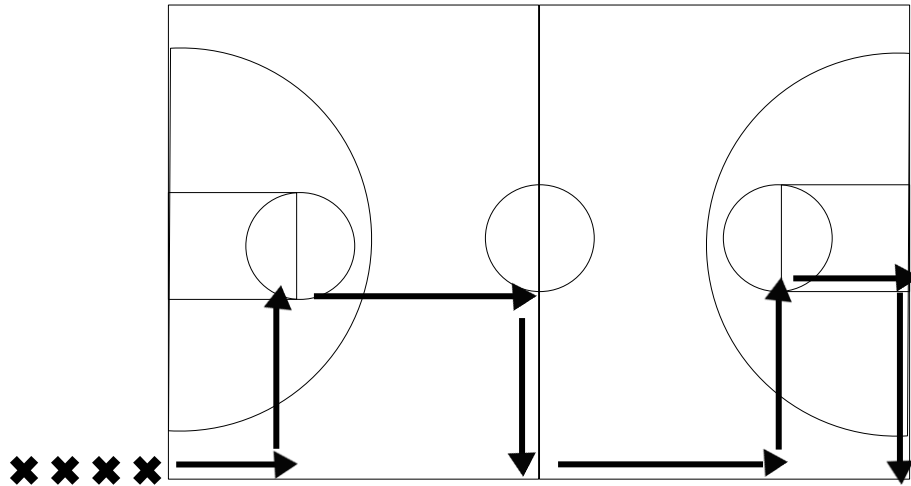
Full Court Close-outs (Kramer Soderberg)

- 3 Lines of Players on the baseline evenly spaced
- Closeout to FT line extended & "pop back," into a stance.
- Continue action at volleyball line, half court, volleyball line, free throw line & baseline
- Players don't sprint to close-out until coaches whistle, coach can force them to hold stance as long as he wants



Full Court Close-out + Slide (Kramer Soderberg)

- Line of Players in the right corner of the baseline, facing other baseline (Can use both sides)
- Closeout to FT line extended & slide(L) to elbow → Close out to HC & slide (R) to sideline → Close out to FT line extended & slide (L) to elbow → Close out to Baseline & slide (R) to sideline
- Can put a Coach at each close-out position and have player pop back before each slide



Emphasis: 2 hands high on close-out (choppy feet/weight back) Low/Wide stance, big step on the slide

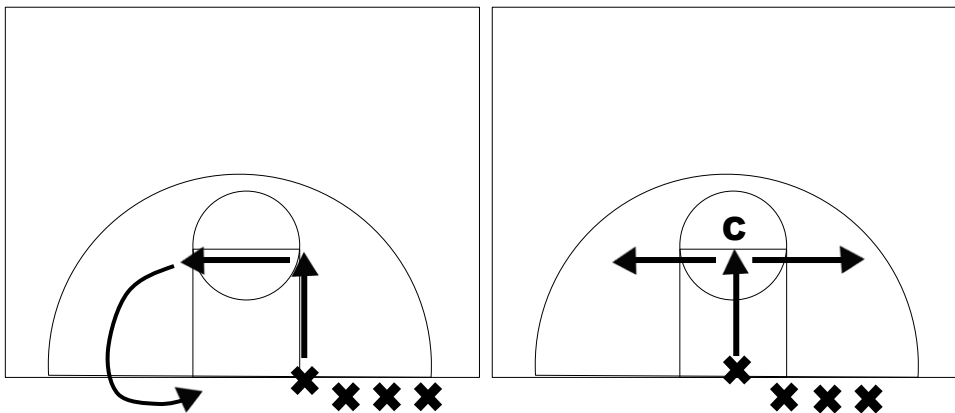
Benefit: Rep Close-out, Conditioner

Basic Close-outs (Tony Bennett)

- Ball and a partner, 1 on offense/1 on defense
 - 1st Sequence = Close-out Only (Defense tosses ball to offense and closes out)
 - 2nd Sequence = Trace the Ball Only
 - 3rd Sequence = Pop back (Ball up, Hand up...Ball Down, Pop Back)
 - 4th Sequence = Pop back + 1 slide

Box Close-outs

- All players start on the baseline on the right or left lane line
- Players sprint to close out at the elbow and slide to opposite elbow (can pop back before slide)
- After completed, players then start line on the other side & repeat sequence
- Coach can also stand at FT line and point which direction to slide after close-out (Reactive)

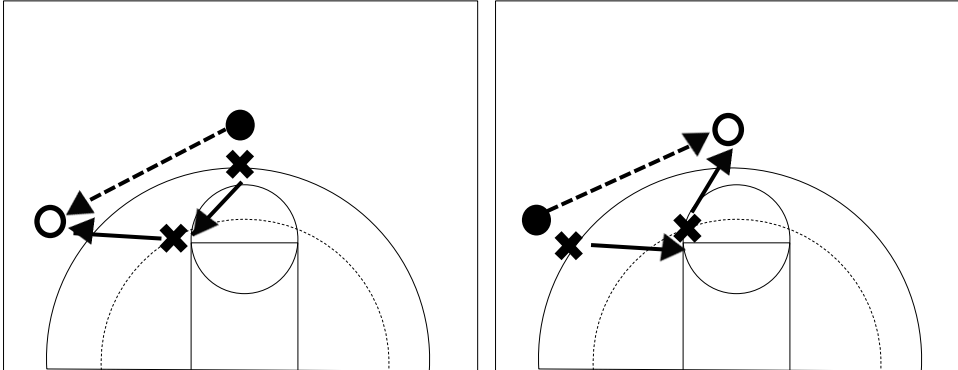


Emphasis: 2 hands high, Butt down & Weight Back, Big step on the slide

Benefit: Rep closeout, Energy drill

Close-out to Gap Repetition (Brad Soderberg)

- Dummy Offense at the top & wing being defended
- Offense passes ball back and forth on the Coaches whistle
- Defense gets from gap to close-out & from on ball to gap as fast as possible

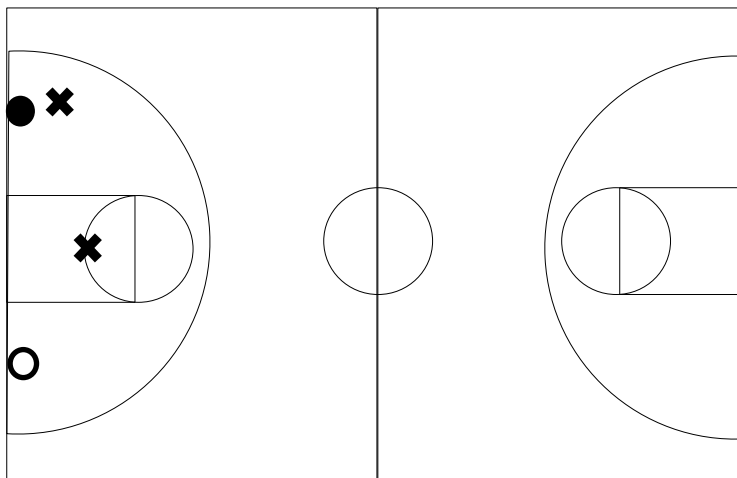


Emphasis: 2 hands high on close-out, sprint from on ball to gap (DON'T SLIDE)

Benefit: Rep Close-out, Rep on to off ball transition

2 on 2 Full Court Energizer (Brad Soderberg)

- 2 Offensive Players on the baseline, defended by 2 defensive players
- Offense makes their way down the court by dribbling and passing (Half or Full Speed)
- Defense keeps offense in front and works on filling the gap, jumping to the ball, & not giving up a dribble lane to the outside

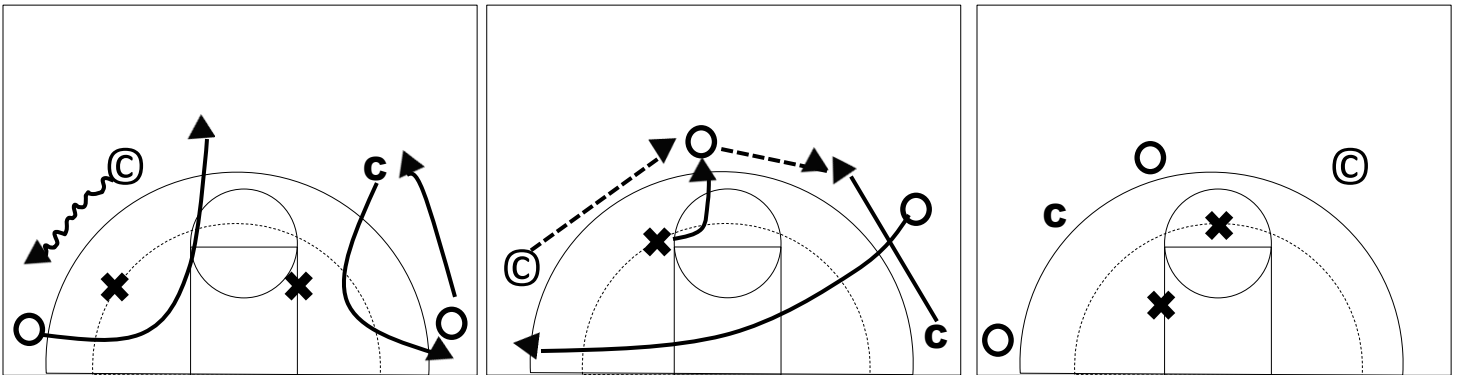


Emphasis: Communication/Energy, Jumping to the Ball, No Baseline/Outside

Benefit: Energize players, Defensive teaching points covered

2 on 2 Vision (Brad Soderberg)

- Not a live drill (can make drill live after 20-30 seconds of perfect positioning is completed)
- 2 coaches & 2 players on offense, 2 defenders guarding each player
- Offense moves randomly in the half court passing and cutting with coaches
- Defenders focus on proper positioning & perfect vision:
 - When your man doesn't have the ball = inside pack line
 - See both Ball & Man at all time
 - Always be closer to the ball than your man

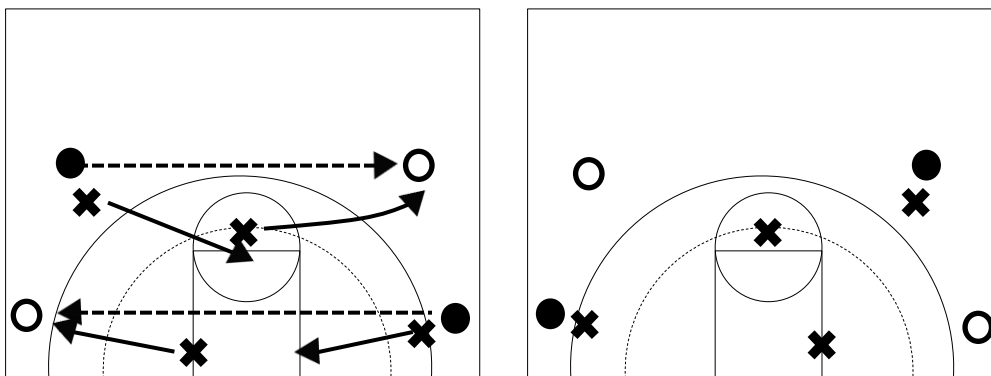


Emphasis: Perfect Vision at all times (See Ball & Man), IN A STANCE, Communicate, Great Closeouts

Benefit: Improve vision defense, improve positioning defense

2 on 2 Top/Baseline Breakdown (Tony Bennett)

- 4 offensive players on perimeter; 2 in corner, 2 on wings
- 4 defensive players defending in a 2 on 2 situation (Wings together, Baseline together)
- Offensive players (Wings/Baseline) play catch back and forth
- Defense goes from on ball to help defense

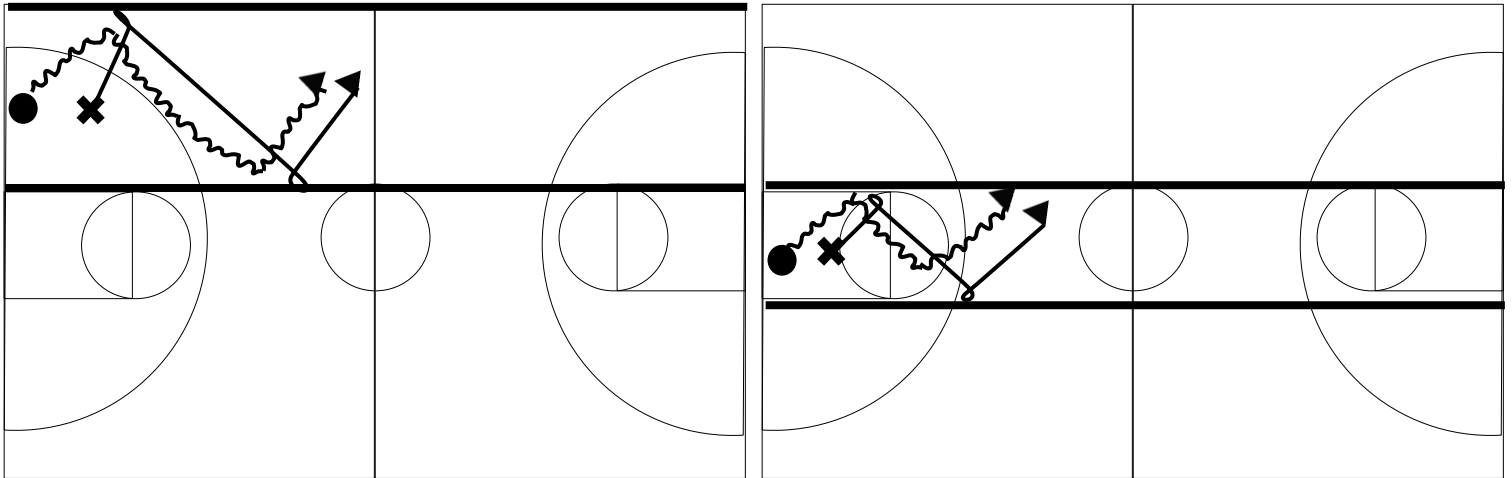


Emphasis: Jumping to the Ball, No Baseline/Outside, High Hand Closeouts, Trace the Ball

Benefit: Improve positioning, vision, anticipation, ball pressure

1 on 1 Full Court Zig Zag (Brad Soderberg)

- Offense starts with ball on baseline and tries to beat defense while staying inside boundaries
- Boundaries = Sideline & Lane Line Extended or Both Lane Lines Extended
- Defense tries to keep offense in front of them, no straight line drives
- If defense does get beat...sprint ahead and cut off offense

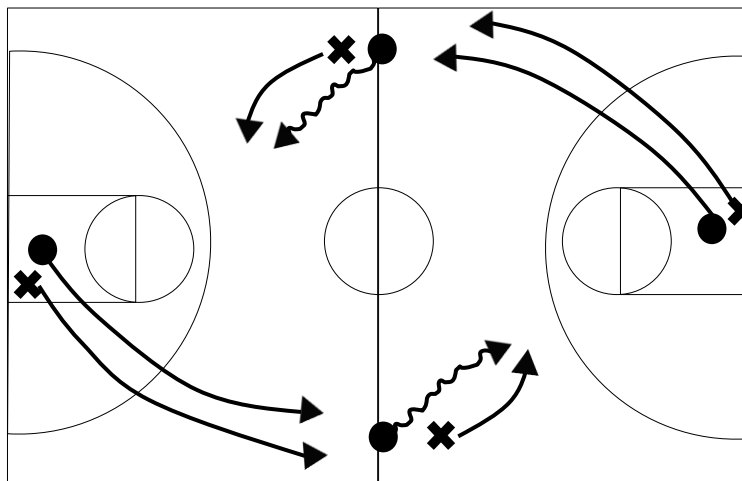


Emphasis: Protect your feet (cushion), Eyes on offense belt buckle, meet "O" at a point (angle of pursuit)

Benefit: Improve on ball defense, intensity drill

1 on 1 Half Court (Brad Soderberg)

- Offense starts w/ ball on right or left side of half court (can add close-out to start)
- Defense works to keep man in front and force a contested shot w/o fouling
- Players rotate from offense to defense after each attempt
- After each possession players start at opposite side of half court & play in the other direction



Emphasis: Protect your feet, defend w/o fouling

Benefit: Improve 1 on 1 defense (offensive 1 on 1 work, also)

1 on 1 Stay Down Drill (Brad Soderberg)

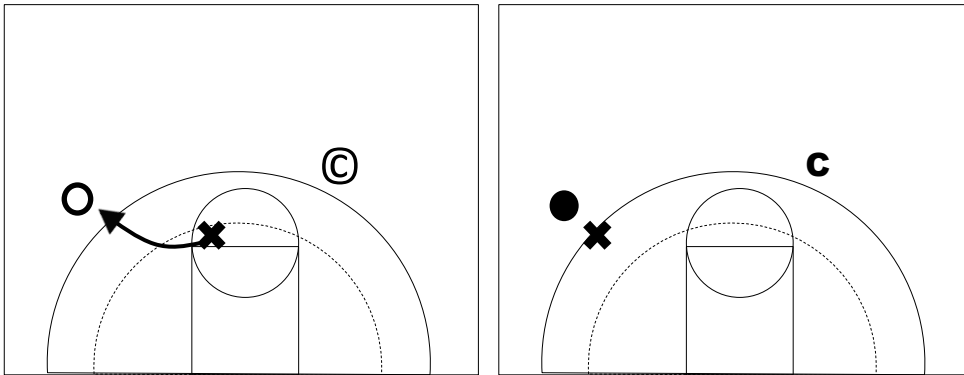
- 1 on 1 from the top of the key: Offense tries to bait defense into jumping on a pump fake
- Offense gets 2-3 dribbles and must pump fake at least 3 times before shooting
- Defense keeps man in front and stays on their feet until offense shoots

Emphasis: Don't jump until he jumps, STAY DOWN!!

Benefit: Defensive Focus

1 on 1 from the Gap (Brad Soderberg)

- Coach starts with ball at the top or wing
- Offense on wing or top attacks after they receive the pass (2-3 dribble limit)
- Defense must close out, force offense into contested shot w/o fouling

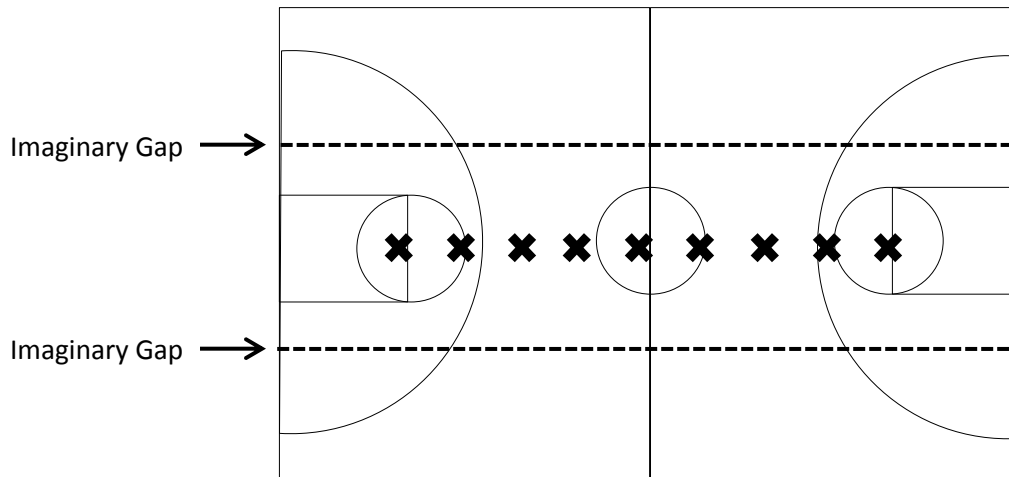


Emphasis: High hand close-out, Pop back, defend without fouling, NO BASELINE

Benefit: Improves gap to ball defense, improve 1 on 1 defense

1 – 2 Stance Drill (Kramer Soderberg)

- Entire team lines up along the mid-line of the full-court
- On coaches whistle, players sprint to the left (imaginary gap) and get in a stance
- On coaches next whistle, players sprint to close out back at the mid-line
- On coaches 3rd whistle, players sprint to the left (imaginary gap) and get in a stance
- On coaches 4th whistle, players sprint to close out again back at the mid-line



Emphasis: Turn hips and sprint (1 step, 2 step, stance) to gaps, High hands & choppy feet on closeout

Benefit: Improves ball to gap quickness & technique, extra close out work

I. Intro

- Less is More
 - Let's keep it Simple and be Exceptional at what we do.
- Keep it Simple... "Complexity is the enemy of Execution."
- Don Meyer Concept, "Consistency is one of the five things that Separates Good from Great."
 - Culture
 - Concepts
 - Drills
 - Everything...
- "It's not what you do, it's what you Emphasize." To Coach Boone everything they do centers around their defense. ***The one singular question he asks is does this make our Defense better?***
 - The Offense they Run
 - The Pace they Play At
 - What they'll do at Practice

II. Program Anchors - Program Building

What are your Program's Anchors?

- You should be able to say them quickly
- Your players should know them

UAFS Basketball Anchors:

1. Sureness
2. Shot Selection
3. Great Team Defense

→ The Pack Line Defense is not for Everyone...Cautions Coaches to Know Yourself.

The DNA of Championship Defense -

- Coach Bennett, is the Father of the Pack Line Defense
- They have a Passion for our Defense and Teaching
- He Truly believes that the DNA of Championship Teams lies in its Defense
- Something in this Presentation for Anyone, not just Pack Line Coaches

Will Your Defense Allow Your Team to -

1. Defeat the Best Teams in your League, Conference, or State?
2. Win on the Road?
3. Improve as the Season Progresses?

4. Advance in Postseason Play?

- He believes that the Pack Line helps keep the ball out of the paint, and that's where games are won. Set Up your defense to take that away.
- He wants to guard actions in the way in which they want to guard them. In theory this will allow them to get better throughout the year.
 - Ball Screens
 - Down Screens, etc
- **What do the best teams do?**
This is why it is important that they can defend this in the postseason.
 - They take care of the ball
 - They take good shots
 - They make you guard them

Know Your No's Discussion -

- Coach places a large emphasis on closing out on the basketball. **Not Giving Up Rhythm Shots & Direct Drives** are directly connected to this.
- You need to emphasize Rebounding & Getting Back on Defense. Those are things that kids will not do on their own.
- He does not Press and that is solely connected to the concept of not giving up layups on the other end of the floor.

KNOW YOUR NO'S

- NO PAINT
- NO BASELINE
- NO RHYTHM SHOTS
- NO DIRECT DRIVES
- NO FAST BREAK LAY-UPS
- NO SECOND SHOTS
- NO FOULS

III. Building Your Pack Line Defense

A. Pressure on the Ball

- One of the great myths of the Pack Line Defense is that it is a soft defense.
- Because they are provided help for the basketball they need to put a ton of pressure on the basketball.
 - Used Football QB Analogy for not letting the basketball see the floor.
- They want to be a Tough, Grit & Grind type defense that makes you work for everything you get.

THE THREE SECRETS To Developing THE PACK LINE DEFENSE

- 1) **PRESSURE ON THE BALL**
- 2) **DEFENDERS ARE ALREADY POSITIONED IN HELP**
- 3) **CANNOT PREVENT THE OFFENSE FROM GETTING SHOTS BUT WE CAN INFLUENCE THE TYPE OF SHOT**

Coach Boone Drill Comments -

- Be a **Skill Coach, Not a Drill Coach** - keep it simple. Focus on the Skill.
 - **Name Your Drills** so they know what they are, and the players can take more control over the drill.
 - **Make it Competitive** where possible
 - **Rule of 2** (Tates Locke) - 2 Min to Demonstrate, 2 Days for PLayerS to Execute it, 2 Months for PLayerS to Make it Habit
 - **Repetition** - the oldest method, but the most effective method
- They have a very short list of drills and they want their players to get repetitions at those drills which they do every single day and master them.

1/1 Partner Closeout - toss out & Closeout

- Two Lines
- One Player Under the Rim
- One Player on the Wing
- Closeout, Jump Up, Jump Back, Mirror the Ball



1/1 Full Court - 1/1 from the baseline

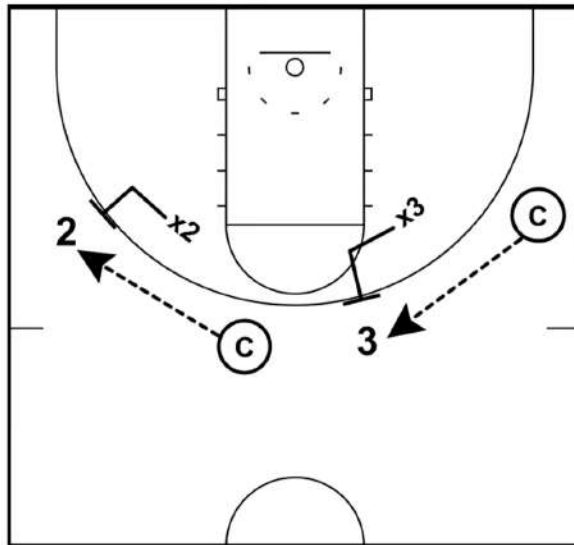
- Ball must stay within the lane line extended
- First 2 Times they are going $\frac{3}{4}$ Speed Working on Footwork
- Next 2 Times they are going Full Speed
- Teaching Point - "Get Off & Get Ahead" if they are beating you.

→ If the offense gets beat, they should stop & force the defense to sprint ahead of the ball.

1/1 Closeout - a drill they are going to do throughout the year.

- “Seeking Leverage” on the offensive player.
- The Closeout is Sink & Explode Up... Rather than Slide Over.

1/1 Closeout



- ✓ Coach initiates with a pass
- ✓ 2 dribble max
- ✓ Square them up/no drives
- ✓ Move around to different positions



B. Your Position is Your Help

- Your Positioning is Your Help
- Chuck Daly Quote, “It is the Recovery that Beats You”.
- It’s impossible to do all 3 Defensive Off the Ball Tasks:
 - Denial
 - Help
 - Recovery
- The Pack Line Eliminates one of those 3 - DENIAL. The focus now lies in the Help & Recovery.

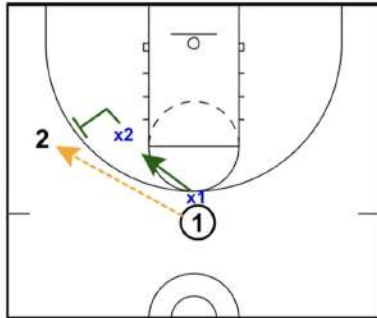
Pack Line Defense Rules -

1. If your man does not have the ball you must have two feet inside the Pack Line
2. You must be closer to the ball than you are to your man (Closed, Staggered Stance)
3. You Must See Your Man and the Basketball

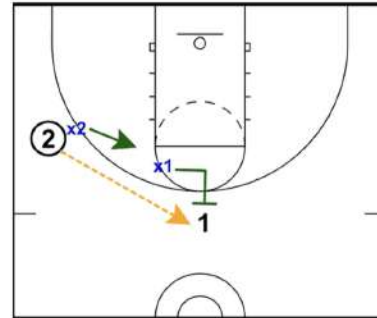
→ Off the Ball Rules....



2/2 Positioning Drill



- Must Get On to Off Quickly



- Seek Leverage on Closeouts

- Nothing to the Outside

2/2 Seal the Gap

 - Working on Closeout & Off Ball Positioning

- Move on Air Time - Not playing to score, working on Footwork, Help, & Positioning.



2/2 FC Seal the Gap

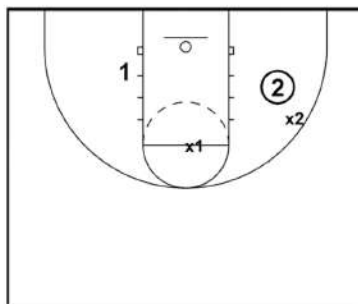


Offense:

- 2 off. players and 2 def. players
- Off. players must stay even with each other (can't run ahead of ball)
- Offense looks to "punch" gaps and beat their man off the dribble until they get to other end of floor

Defense:

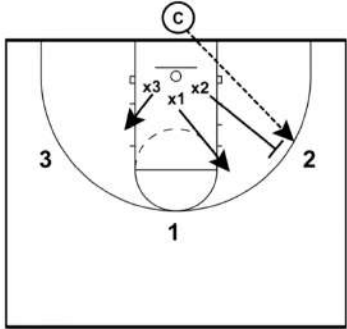
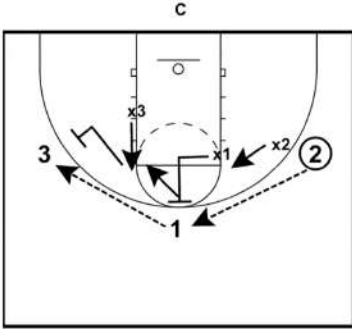
- Pressure on the ball
- Cannot get beat to the outside
- Off ball defender in the gap
- Seal gap with near arm and near leg
- As ball is picked up, seek leverage and closeout on pass



3/3 Closeout - this is a staple drill for them


- Can not score until they make 1 pass - (Paint Touch, or Add a Post Element as well)

3/3 Closeouts

- Start with a pass from the coach
- Defenders closeout to ball/gap

- Progression:**
 - ✓ Lay-Up Only
 - ✓ Paint Touch
 - ✓ Low Post






C. Influence the Types of Shots they Get

- Three Areas we as Coaches have Direct Control:
 - Post Defense
 - Defensive Rebounding
 - Conversion Defense


4/4 Stationary Change Drill - old Coach Knight Drill where you run Shell First, then get into Live Play.

4/4 Stationary Change Drill

Teaching Points:

- Teach from Stationary Position Initially
- Cannot Guard the Man who was Guarding You
- Communication is an Absolute
- Stop the Ball
- Get to Paint & Find the Ball
- Find a Man



4/5 Drill out of “Change” - where they send the 5 man sprinting ahead

- Repping Transition Defense
- He Tells Kids that they are either “Get Back Guys” or “Rebounders”.
- In this drill they must defend the runner first and then play Def from there.

IV. Pack Line Troubleshooting

- They work on Closeout EVERY SINGLE DAY.

Things that Will Kill Your Defense -

1. Poor Closeouts
2. Getting Stretched Out - they are not denying but they are not in Pack position either
3. Going for Fakes or Helping up the Floor
4. Lunging or Reaching
5. Being Late to Positioning or to the Post
6. Too Low in the Gaps
7. Silence

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Pack Line Defense - Coaching Guide



The 'Pack Line' was created by Dick Bennett of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Wisconsin-Green Bay, University of Wisconsin, and Washington State. It is now commonly used in some form by many coaches including Tom Izzo at Michigan State, Sean Miller and Chris Mack at Xavier, Tony Bennett at Virginia, and Steve Alford at UCLA.

For a bit of history, the term 'Pack Line' wasn't coined or even thought of by Bennett. The word was brought to the attention of Bennett by a person at a marketing company after convincing Bennett to create a DVD on his new defensive system.

Overview of Pack Line Defense

The 'Pack Line' defense is a variation of man-to-man defense. The biggest difference between the two is that instead of the off-ball defenders being out pressuring their player and denying the pass, everyone except the player guarding the ball must be inside an imaginary line 16 feet from the rim.

This 16ft line is known as the pack line. You can see the differences in positioning in the diagrams below...



At all times there must be one defender pressuring the player with the basketball, and four defenders in gap/help positions. The only exception is if the offensive player picks up the dribble and it becomes a 'dead ball', then all players can go out and deny looking for the steal.

The premise behind this defense is that by having four players within the pack line, it discourages the opposition from penetrating and getting inside the paint and forces them to beat you with well executed offense and great outside shooting.

When the ball is passed around the perimeter, the next defender closes out with high hands to prevent the rhythm shot and then provides on-ball pressure while the defender who was playing on-ball defense falls back within the pack line.

Again just to emphasize the most important point... At all time there must be one defender pressuring the player with the basketball and four defenders in gap/help positions.

What teams give up in exchange for always being in help position is that players don't have the benefit of denying the pass on the perimeter. This is why the pack line defense is also referred to as 'sagging man-to-man'.

For this reason, the pack line defense requires the players to be patient and play smart defense until the offensive team takes a contested jump shot, or makes a mistake.

As you can probably tell, all five players must work together as a defensive unit for this defense to be successful. If any of the five players aren't performing their job properly, there will be open gaps that can lead to easy scores.

Advantages of Pack Line Defense

1. Prevents Dribble Penetration

Due to four defenders always being inside the pack line, the offensive players will be find it hard to find gaps through the wall of defenders.

2. Prevents Back-Door Cuts

This is a great defense if you're playing against an offense like the Princeton offense that likes to utilize the back-door cut. Since your players are sagging off their man, the offensive team will find it hard to get easy layups off back-door cuts.

3. Lower Opponent Field Goal Percentage

If your team can be patient on defense and not gamble, it will lead to the opponent taking tough contested jump shots.

4. Increased Rebounding

Sagging off their players will put your players in better rebounding positions... as long as they box out.

5. No Easy Scores

This advantage ties in with dribble penetration. If the opponent can't get to the ring and your defense is packing the paint, there will be no easy opportunities to score.

6. Always in Help Position

Unlike traditional man-to-man defense, your players don't need to move to be in help position... they're already there!

Weaknesses of Pack Line Defense

1. Three Pointers Can Beat You

As your players are playing off their player and are in help position, it can lead to open three-pointers if your players don't react quick enough and close out on the ball. If a team gets hot from three

2. If There's No Shot Clock

If you coach in a league that doesn't use a shot clock then the opposition can use as much time as they like passing the ball around the perimeter until they find an open shot. It will come down to who is more patient, the offense or defense.

3. Must Be Patient

One problem that arises when using this defense at a youth level is the players sometimes aren't patient enough. They want to gamble and get a steal so they can stop playing defense and start playing offense.

The 7 Areas of Pack Line Defense

1. Transition/Conversion Defense

Transition defense is the start of every defensive possession and could be the most important of all. There are two main things you need to remember...

1. Never allow easy buckets in transition.

2. "Always take a guy out if he loafs back during a game" – Dick Bennett

The first thing coaches must do is decide how many players they want to send to glass for offensive rebounds and how many they want to immediately send back.

We recommend to always send two guards back on defense and the other three to the glass. That means the guards must get back as soon as the shot is put up... not after the rebound is secured by the other team.

When the ball is rebounded by the other team or a shot is made, the three players that went to the glass must turn and SPRINT back to half-way without regard for their player. Sprinting to half-way is non-negotiable and players should immediately be subbed out if they don't do it. When they get to half court, then they can find their player and establish proper defensive position.

No easy transition scores!



2. On Ball Defense

Contrary to what some coaches think about the pack line defense, there should be A LOT of pressure placed on the ball-handler.

Whoever is on the player with the basketball should be right up on them and harassing them without fouling. We want to make it difficult for them to see the floor and it will make it difficult for the other team to pick as apart with their passing.

The reason we can allow the on-ball defender to apply so much pressure to their player is because, as long as everyone's in the right position and are playing as a unit, they have the confidence that if they get beat off the dribble then there will be immediate help.

Even if they offensive player thinks they can beat their defender one-on-one, they're going to look up and see a wall of defenders and pass the ball off to the next guy.

To teach our players to apply constant pressure we run a lot of one-on-one drills with lots of pressure and recommend you do too. You need to get your players comfortable with being so close to the offensive player.



3. Off Ball Defense

While the on-ball defender is applying constant pressure to the ball, the other four players should be within the pack line in their correct gap/help position.

At all times players should be in a ball-you-man position and down in a low stance ready to react if a pass is made.

If your players are ever out of stance you should immediately sub them out of the game. If they're not in the correct position that's not always bad depending on how new the defense is to them. They might just need more practice at learning where they're meant to be. But being in stance is an attitude towards defense and should be non-negotiable.

Players must constantly be readjusting their position to the correct gap as the ball is passed around on offense. Remember: All five players **MUST** be working together as a unit for this defense to be successful.

The only exception to the rule of being within the pack line is if the ball is picked up by the offensive player and become a 'dead ball'. In that case, everyone hustles out to their player and denies the pass looking for the steal. If a pass is made by the offensive team everyone hustles back to their correct gap position.



4. Close Outs

Since all off ball defenders are always in help positions, they must recover to their player every time they catch the ball. This means they'll be closing out very, very regularly and must to learn how to do it properly.

There are a few important things for players to remember and coaches to teach when closing out...

1. High Hands

We need to keep our hands up on the close out to discourage the rhythm shot.

2. Short Choppy Steps

The last couple of steps should be short and choppy. This allows you to keep your weight back and absorb the dribble.

3. No Baseline

Don't allow your player to get an easy baseline drive on the close out. Close out so that if they do happen to get by you, they're running into the help defence in the middle of the floor.

5. Don't Give Up Baseline

This is more a 'rule' of the defense than it is an area... but because of how important it is to the success of the defense, I thought I'd include it anyway.

Under no circumstances do we let the opposition drive the ball baseline. If they drive baseline we get beat.

We need to force the dribbler towards the middle of the floor where our help defenders are located.

You'll understand the importance of not giving up baseline in the next section when we discuss post-play.



6. Guarding the Post

How you defend the post is one of the few aspects of the pack line defense that the coach will control and that will change on a game-to-game basis.

Guarding the post can be broken down into two areas...

1. Before the post gets the ball

When we're in pack line defense we never want the ball to get into the post. That's the danger zone. How we prevent the ball from entering the post changes with different coaches.

Coach Bennett teaches to 3/4 front the post from the high side and discourage the pass. The reason he never fronts the post is because he doesn't want to allow offensive rebounds and easy baskets.

Coach Boone allows his team to front when the ball is below the free-throw line to completely discourage the ball entering the post at all.



2. When the ball is in the post

It's crucial that on the flight time of the ball entering the post, your players slip behind their player and establish good defensive position on the post player.

One of the main early rules of the pack line defense was "if the ball gets into the post area, get it out of there as soon as possible". I believe this isn't as important as it used to be since we've entered the era of perimeter bigs and post-play skill has gone down. Also, if you're running this defense with a youth team, doubling the post isn't usually necessary.

So the first thing you need to do is decide whether you're going to double the post or not. Traditional pack line defense doubles anyone in the post. The great thing about this strategy is that the players don't have to decide whether to quickly go and double or not. They KNOW they have to straight away. So there is no confusion.

If you choose to double only the one or two best post players on the other team, it will slow down the double because it forces the players to think.

Dick Bennett recommended two methods:

1. Choke the Post

This involves bringing the closest perimeter player down looking for a deflection if the post puts the ball on the ground and to force the big to pass the ball back out.

2. Big to Big

Bennett like doubling big-to-big because they're close and usually are the taller and longer defenders on the court. The guards are also quicker to rotate.



One last very important note: Never allow the basketball to be fed to the post player from the top of the key.

7. Defending Screens

Coach Bennett believes in fighting through all screens and not cheating. He doesn't like switching because he feels it will hurt the team come the end of the season.

Players should be within touching distance of their player at all times when they're being screened. He believes that if you're that close and have are determined to get through the screen, then the screen won't be very effective.

One important thing to note is that while being screened the only responsibility the player has is to chase down the player running off the screen. They shouldn't worry about helping at all. Just chasing down their player.

The only exception to the 'fight through all screens' rule is when the screen is set on the weak side of the floor and the obvious option is to cheat over or under the screen and still be in position.

8. Rebounding

Everyone knows the saying... “A defensive possession doesn’t end until we’ve secured the defensive rebound”. That means we can’t slack off after forcing them into a contested shot... we have to go and get the ball!

On the shot everyone needs to find their player and box out. If they’re in the right help position we will usually have a good advantage to establish early positioning first.

The key is for players to be aggressive and really want to rebound the basketball.



Conclusion

The Pack Line defense really is a ‘team’ defense. Everyone must to be on the same page defensively for it to be effective. If there’s anyone on the team not in position it can lead to easy defensive breakdowns.

It’s a great defense to implement for teams on any level. It’s can be used in youth basketball teams all the way up to variations of the pack line defense in the NBA. It cuts down penetration, forces the other team to beat you from outside, emphasizes the importance of playing as a unit, and teaches them how to play in help position.

Pack Line Defense

Presented by HoopClinics



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Pack Line Table of Contents

Introduction

Acknowledgements.....	1
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Section I Defensive Philosophy

Defensive Beliefs	2
Defensive Expectations.....	4

Section II Six Defensive Phases

Phase #1 Conversion.....	8
Phase #2 Establish and Maintain Defensive Spacing	10
Phase #3 Pressure the Ball.....	16
Phase #4 Keep the Ball Out of the Lane	17
Phase #5 Contest every shot	24
Phase #6 Block out, secure rebounds, loose balls.....	24

Section III Special Situations

Helping from Basket, End of Quarter, Free Throws, In Bounds,	26
Catch Up Ball Screens.....	28

Section IV Teaching Pack Line Through Repetition in Practice

Individual Skills, Six Phases, Shell Drill.....	29
Guarding Specific Movements, Competitive Drills, Disadvantage Drills.....	30
Recovery Drills, Toughness Drills	31

Section V Pre-game Decisions and In-game Adjustments

Defensive Matchups.....	32
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Conclusion

Defensive Evaluation.....	33
Resources.....	34

Appendices

Appendix A Playing Hard on Defense.....	35
Appendix B Teaching Defense in Practice.....	36

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in our version of the pack line defense. This e-book is meant to complement the screen cast that we have prepared, not to be a word for word transcription. Some of the concepts and drills will be better presented with the animations on the screen cast. My hope is that between the two mediums, you will be able to pull some ideas that will help your defense.

We are presenting this information as the complete pack line defense that we have used and that we feel that has fit our personnel the best over the years that we have used it. It has been our primary defense due to our evaluation of our talent compared to our opponents. It can be your primary defense or a part of a multiple defense system. It could be the defense you go to when you want to change the flow of the game.

This is a rules based defensive presentation. One of the toughest decisions a coach makes defensively is to what extent you are going to make changes in your rules in order to defend exceptional players or teams that you face. We want our defense to become habit from what we have practiced, so we do not make many adjustments based on scouting.

My objective in putting this segment of HoopClinics together is to give you some ideas to possibly implement in your pack line system. I am never in favor of taking anyone's

"The more they think, the slower their feet get."

--Jerry Tarkanian

whole system and then implementing it into our program as is. I believe that no matter what coach you learn from, that coach does not know your personnel, face your schedule, and is not you. Your experience, personality, beliefs about how the game

should be played, and many other factors will determine how you fit this information into your defensive system.

Many of my ideas for developing the system that I am describing came from long time Indiana and Ohio boy's high school Coach Mike Sorrell. Coach Sorrell won over 400 games without ever coaching an Indiana All Star. He consistently took jobs that had a history of being also rans and turned them into programs that no one wanted to play against. The game of basketball lost a great friend when he passed away.

No one can profess to run a Pack Line Defense without having been influenced directly or indirectly by Coach Dick Bennett. Anyone interested in improving their ability to teach the Pack Line should read or watch anything you can get your hands on where he talks about the Pack Line. I have also studied the defensive ideas of Jim Boone, Tom Izzo, Thad Matta, Herb Sendek, Todd Lichliter, and many other high school and college coaches in regards to our Pack Line system either by hearing them at clinics, watching their DVDs, talking to some of their assistant coaches and former players, and just by watching and recording their teams on television.

Section I

Defensive Philosophy

This e-book and screen cast is meant to be much more than just a rambling about philosophy, but I do think it is essential to developing your defensive system that you know what you believe as a coach and there is no way to gain clarity on that topic better than putting your philosophy in writing. I have always been inspired by the quote to the right in all areas of my personal and professional life and feel that

**“Clarify your beliefs in writing and you improve your behaviors
Change your behaviors and you change your results. Change your results and you change your life.”**

--Unknown

it is very applicable to developing a defensive philosophy. Knowing what you feel is essential to your defensive success will help you decide how to approach determining what style of defense to use; to building your defensive schemes, rules, how you will practice them; and most importantly, what you will see happen in a game.

I believe that:

1. You should determine your style of play by what it will take to beat the best teams on your schedule and to advance in the state tournament. In our case, we have played the style that we think will help us to beat the teams in the season ending sectional (which is the first round of the Indiana state-wide tournament). We feel that in order to advance as far as possible in the state tournament we are going to, at some point, beat teams with more talent than us. I do not believe that you can beat teams with more talent by pressuring and trapping, which increase the number of possessions.

I do not believe that any style of play will ever turn the tables so that an underdog has the upper hand, but I do believe that the odds of an upset increase as the number of possessions decrease. Dean Oliver has written a book entitled “Basketball on Paper,” which has statistical proof that a slower pace of play increases the odds of the underdog winning. It does make sense to me that the more possessions, the more chances the better team has to make plays. Pack Line defense does not increase the number of possessions by allowing opportunities for quick shots.

It has been my experience that switching back and forth from pressure to pack defenses depending on who our opponent for the week is has not allowed us enough practice to get good enough at either one. We have selected the Pack Line as our primary defense to play and to practice. As such, we feel that we become

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

better at it than if we only practice it half of the time and spend the rest of our defensive practice time on other schemes.

When we do have the upper hand in athleticism, the pack line does help our opponent by minimizing the possessions, but it has been our experience (from the school of hard knocks!) that we still fare better sticking with what we do best and have rehearsed over and over than we do by trying to play pressure and trapping defense which we have not spent as much practice time on.

2. It is difficult to get the best teams to turn the ball over enough to use that as our primary plan to beat them. We also feel that by trapping, pressuring, and going for steals, it will lead to better shots for our opponents.
3. By not extending our defense, working to keep the ball in front of us and out of the lane, not forcing our players to cover large areas, we are minimizing the times where our players are going to pick up fouls due to being “out of control” on defense. Depth is almost always a problem at small enrollment schools, but we feel that regardless of school size and what is considered depth, there is almost always a group that comprises the best players who you cannot afford to lose due

“When you are playing hard, you move your feet and get in position, so you should not foul as much.”

--Coach Herb Sendek

to foul trouble. The pack line defense does not play any less hard than a denial or passing lane pressuring defense, it simply guards less of the floor which does mean less energy is expended, but if played correctly, it does not take less effort to play.

4. The best ways to score in order of effectiveness when we have the ball are:
 - #1 shoot free throws
 - #2 shoot shots in the lane
 - #3 have our best three point shooter shoot uncontested three point shots

So, on defense we do what we can to minimize those opportunities for the offense and we feel that we can do that best by playing the pack line defense.

I have not done a formal study and statistical analysis, but from my observation, I believe that the majority of the time, the team that wins has *fewer* field goal attempts for the game, unless they absolutely pound their opponents on the offensive glass. It has been my experience that the reason that a team with less field goal attempts usually wins is that more of their possessions end in free throw attempts rather than field goal attempts. We want to have a system of defense that

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

does all that we can to keep the opponents off of the free throw line and out of the lane. I am saving the discussion of defending the three point shot for #6 below.

5. When you try to stop everything, you stop nothing. We decided to concentrate our efforts defensively on limiting the number of good shots (shots in the lane, or unchallenged shots) and free throws that our opponents get. The added bonus is that it keeps your players out of foul trouble. The number one goal of our defense is to allow a low defensive field goal percentage. We want our opponents to shoot contested 18 foot shots and out, then block out, pursue the ball, and chin the rebound. A good team, that is the type of team we want to beat, is going to get shots. We want to be in a position to influence the types of shots that they take.
6. You cannot effectively deny, help, and recover all in the same possession. In the early years of our defense, we tried to do all three, but our recoveries suffered which led to us allowing too high of a three point percentage. We then made the decision to not deny and to place our defenders in the help gaps to begin with. The change allowed us to control penetration better and to become better at recovering which led to us being able to hold our opponent's field goal percentages (both on two point and on three point shots) lower.
7. With the recent surge in popularity of the Dribble Drive Motion Offense, I feel that the Pack Line offers the best system to combat a team that is intent upon attacking the basket with the dribble and still being able to recover to an effective closeout when the ball is kicked for the purpose of either a three point shot, or another drive.

The following is our set of defensive beliefs that we share with our players and that we expect from every player.

1. A defensive attitude is essential. The players need to feel that they are difficult to score against and must take pride in the defensive aspect of the game.

I believe that your defense needs to be a constant in your game and that it should be a defense that no one looks forward to playing against.

“We must OUTLAST the offense on every possession! Great defense takes consistent effort and commitment to excellence, every second of every basketball practice and every game. It is not good enough to just go through the motions, to give the impression that you are trying, that you care. You must take PRIDE in your defense, in your effort, and be committed to OUTLASTING your opponent. You have to believe that! Anything less gives our opponents the edge. Gentlemen, we must OUTLAST the offense on every possession. That must be our foundation.”

**--Coach Dick Bennett
A Season with Coach Dick Bennett**

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

2. Defense involves continually performing one responsibility after another, and is never over until we have the ball.

Being a good defensive team is more like a marathon than a 100 meter dash. You have to convince your players that it sometimes takes three and four and five great defensive bursts and efforts within a possession to get a defensive stop. And more importantly, that effort has to be there for every defensive possession of every game.

3. Players who do not play defense as hard as possible do not play.

If you have a lack of depth, then the time for the players to rest is on offense. If you have eight or nine players in your rotation, then the time to rest is on the bench. But, there is never a time to rest on defense.

I feel that if you allow a player to play less hard on defense because he or she is a great scorer and you want to save energy by playing less hard on defense, that it affects the overall defensive attitude of the team. I think it erodes the team defensive morale if not every player is giving an all out effort on defense. It only takes a time or two early in the season of taking a player out for a lack of effort on defense to send a message and fix that problem.

4. Any player with desire and determination can learn to be an adequate defensive player.

This ties in with the previous point, but I feel that some players can be more effective as a defensive stopper or an on ball defender due to their temperament, or physical attributes, but that every player must give an all out effort on every defensive possession and can be effective, not necessarily great, regardless of physical limitations.

5. Individual concentration, awareness, anticipation, recovery, and communication are vital to the team success of our defense.

Repetition in practice and placing emphasis on those aspects of the defense in all of our defensive drills and defensive scrimmage work is the only way to develop those areas in each of our players.

6. Great defensive teams cover up mistakes.

Playing hard will make up for a lot of defense mistakes. See our Appendix A for what we consider playing hard on defense. We strive to promote a helping mindset among our team.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

7. Great defensive teams take charges and don't reach in for steals or swing at the ball to block shots.

If you are going to get a foul, make it a block call that you executed your part correctly, but did not get the call. Take the charge in front of the basket, in the lane, and on the baseline. It is next to impossible to get a charge call in the middle of the floor.

8. Playing in your helping gap (Gapping is our term) is more important to our defense than edging out in the passing lane and gambling for steals.

When we gamble for steals, we take ourselves out of the play. Even though this appears to be hustle to many people who are watching and not aware of the pack line rules that we employ, we feel that it is giving the opponents the five on four situation that is now putting our defense in one of the situations that we work to avoid (except for working our five offense on four defense drill in practice). Sprinting to the new defensive position when each pass is in the air is a lot more productive use of hustle than running or diving through passing lanes. See Appendix A for the list that we give to our players to express what we feel playing hard on defense looks like.

9. It is not a "man to man" defense, but it is a team man to man defense.

We are concerned about the individual opponent that we have been assigned to guard, but the contest is against everyone wearing a different color jersey, not just an individual battle of one defender against the player they are guarding. I made the mistake once of asking an assistant coach as we arrived in the locker room at halftime, "Whose man was that who just scored?" A couple of players said, "He was all of ours, coach." They knew what I wanted better than I did at that moment.

**"Now this is the law of the jungle,
As old and as true as the sky;
And the wolf that may keep it may prosper,
But the wolf that shall break it must die.
As the creeper that girdles the tree trunk,
The law runneth forward and back
For the strength of the pack is the wolf,
And the strength of the wolf is the pack."**

--Rudyard Kipling

Section II

The Six Defensive Phases

The structure of our pack line defense is based on what we term “*The Six Defensive Phases*”. We use them to organize this defensive system in order to be able to teach it, break it down in parts to practice it, to establish our goals, and finally to evaluate it:

Our six defensive phases:

1. Conversion
2. Establish and maintain defensive spacing
3. Pressure the ball without fouling and without allowing penetration
4. Keep the ball out of the lane
5. Contest every shot
6. Block out pursue the ball and chin the rebound or dive on loose balls

Our defense begins the second that we no longer have the ball. Certainly, we want the change to defense to take place as the offense is inbounding the ball after we have scored. But, reality says that we must have a plan in place to be able to defend the shots we take and the turnovers that we make. If we are chasing from behind all night, then the practice that we put into our half court pack line system is wasted.

In order to be the most effective that we can in defensive conversion, we feel that we must take great shots and take care of the ball to defend well. To us, taking great shots merely means that no one on our team should be surprised when a shot is taken because we have practiced and rehearsed who, what, where, and when the shots will come from.

That is not to say that we do not believe in offensive rebounding. We simply feel that it is important that every player has a purpose as the ball is shot. They are either going to their triangle rebound spots at the block, block, and front of the rims spots that is shown in Diagram #1 on the page 9, or getting back. We teach that everyone except the shooter anticipates a miss when a shot is taken. The shooter anticipates a make, but still carries out her rebounding or transition defense responsibilities without hurrying or changing any part of the shot, the landing, or the follow through.

As for the turnovers that are made, we don't want turnovers, but have never been involved in a game with less than four turnovers for a full game. With the fact that it is next to impossible to have an error free game, it is best to handle the ball in a manner that allows you to defend when you do turn it over. Rather than throwing passes up for grabs, getting stripped of the ball in a trap, or throwing passes away from the basket, we would much rather have a five second or 10 second violation rather than throwing the ball away for a layup because when the opponent has to inbound the ball, we can to set our defense.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Evaluating all six phases on every possession is a difficult proposition for anyone to do and still keep an eye on the big picture of the game as a head coach must. We assign an assistant to keep track of deflections (part of Phase #3 pressure the ball), challenged shots (Phase #5 Contest Every Shot), and Block Outs (Phase #6), so that we can give feedback to the entire team at quarter breaks and to individuals during the course of play. We teach our managers to keep these statistics during practice and check them from time to time as we see the need. We do a final post game evaluation of all six phases of each possession when we view the tape and have a handout for the players which includes this information and other areas we want them to see.

“Champions do not become champions when they win an event, but in the hours, weeks, and months, and years they spend preparing for it. The victorious performance itself is merely a demonstration of their championship character.”

--Michael Jordan

“The Six Defensive Phases” Broken Down

Phase #1: Conversion

Our terminology (in order to bring more clarity to our teaching) is that transition is when we are gaining possession of the ball and moving from the full court into our half court offense. We refer to “conversion” as the aspect of our play when we are moving from offense to defense.

Some coaches refer to this in between time as a third part of the game, and this is not to say that those coaches are wrong, but we feel that a major part of our defense is how we defend in open court before we get to the half court where we can set our defense and play by our half court rules. In order for our half court defense to have significance, our full court conversion defense must be every bit as good as our half court defense and is a significant part of our defensive system.

The goal of our conversion defense is to force our opponent to play against our set half court defense by allowing 0 points in conversion. We don't like to say stop the ball because we feel as you are moving down the floor, we must give ground in order that the ball does not go around us as we are trying to make a stand at half court. There is no way that you are ever going to consistently keep the ball from going across half court, so we feel that slowing the ball by establishing a defender on the ball if it is being dribbled with the purpose of allowing the three players who went to the offensive triangle rebound spots a chance to sprint back, is what we want to see take place.

We are going to practice and convert the same way in games off of made and missed field goals, made and missed free throws, and off of live turnovers.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

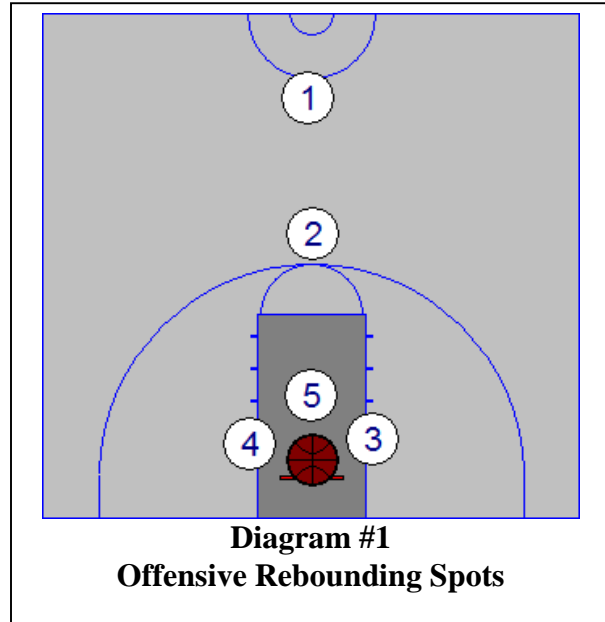
The assignments for our conversion defense are as follows: (Refer to Diagram #1 for our offensive rebounding spots as they are the start of our conversion defense.)

Conversion responsibilities:

Player #1 (Fullback) retreats to the basket and is responsible to stop lay ups.

Player #2 (Halfback) slows the dribbler at half court.

Players #3, #4, and #5 Block, Block, Front of rim rebound spots, then sprint back if the opponent rebounds or if the ball goes through the basket.



Without question, the offense has an advantage if it has numbers such as two on one, three on two, etc., but we even feel that one on one is advantage to the offense. Two on two is better for the defense, but not yet what we want. It is tough to stop the offense from getting a shot, but it is easier to keep them from getting to the basket for a layup with two defenders. Defense is never easy, but a defense is more effective as you add defenders and is at its best when it is a five on five situation because the more defenders there are, the more helpers you have.

A point that we must continually sell regarding our conversion defense is that we are converting to defense regardless of how the ball changes hands. There seems to be more of a sense of urgency among players that you must get back quicker on a turnover or a missed shot than you do when you score a field goal or a free throw. The tendency to relax in conversion defense after a score will always be there and it is important to constantly coach, emphasize, and drill our players out of that mentality in practices and in games.

Our rule is that whoever picks up the ball in conversion stays with the ball until he is pushed off by that man's assigned defender. We never leave the ball unguarded to go find our man. So, while the player who has the ball is working to slow the ball, the other players are sprinting back, matching up communicating about the matchups, and preparing to fill their roles as we have outlined in Phase #2.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Phase #2: Establish and maintain defensive spacing

We have 5 roles in our system of defensive spacing. Those roles are:

1. Low Post Defender (When an offensive low post player is on the ball side)
2. Post Gapper (plays in the gaps between two offensive players when one is located on the perimeter and the other is located in the post.)
3. Perimeter Gapper (plays in the perimeter gaps between two offensive players who are both located on the perimeter)
4. Goalie (When an offensive low post player is opposite the ball side)
5. Helpside defender (Guarding a player not on the ball side)

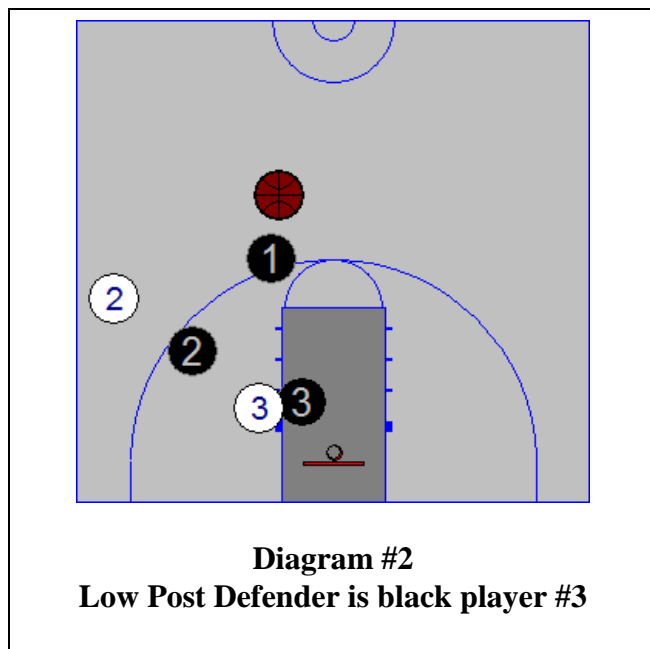
We have identified these roles in order to better define, teach, and correct our pack line system of defense. They are not assigned roles as in a zone defense, but are roles that the players cycle through as determined by where the man they are guarding moves during a given possession.

● Low post defender

In our version of pack line, we do not front the post to discourage post entry passes; we use our post gappers to discourage the pass to the low post. The term that we use for playing the post is for the post defender to play “half around” and take away the pass to one side, while the gapper discourages the other side. The stance we use is a wide stance with one foot always closer to the basket than the post player and a denial arm extended as high in front of the post player as possible. We want one foot to be closer to the basket to fight for block out position when a shot is taken.

Diagrams #2 and #3 illustrate our player positioning for two different scenarios, one where the ball is above the free throw line, and one the ball is below the free throw line.

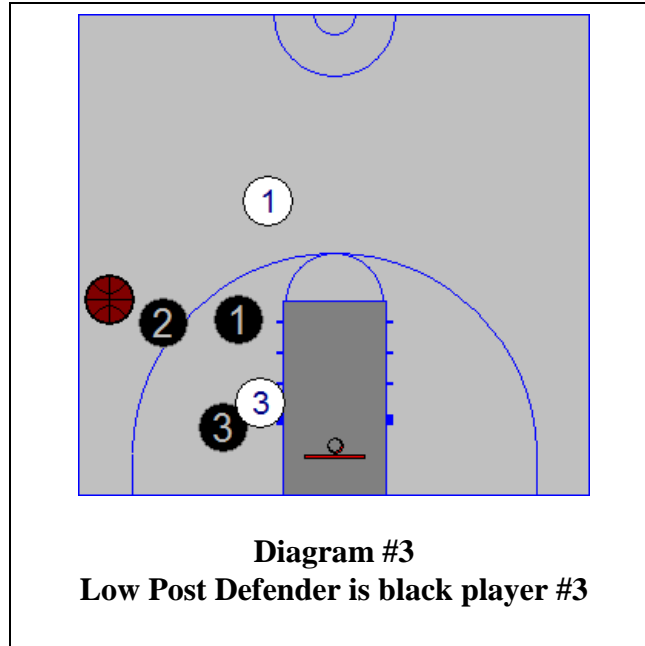
If the ball is above free throw line (See Diagram #2) the post defender plays on the lane side and the positioning of black defender #2 (see post gapper on page 12) is used to discourage the



The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

post feed.

If the ball is below free throw line (See Diagram #3) the post defender plays baseline side and the positioning of black defender #1 (see post gapper on page 12) is used to discourage the post feed.



We feel that in addition to having help from the top when the ball is below the free throw line (which has flattened our defense to the level of the ball), it puts the post player in a better position to help on a baseline penetrating dribble which will be discussed in more detail in Phase #4.

It is important to drill individually on going from playing on the top side when the ball is at the deep elbow, to playing on the baseline side when the ball is dribbled or passed below the free throw line.

We do not teach either going over the top or going behind as a steadfast rule. The belief is that if we do the same thing every time in our post defense, it will be too easy for the post player to pin and bury the defender behind him or her. Our rule is to not get beat by getting pinned on the top side because even if the post player does not receive a post feed, she has established offensive rebounding position.

With the combination of a concerted effort to fight from one spot to the other, help from the gappers, and pressure on the ball, we keep the ball out of the low post. No method is fool proof and a good offense is going to get the ball into the post at times, so we will discuss how we handle that situation in Phase #4.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Many teams have fronted the post with a great deal of success. We have only fronted the post when we have attempted to play a more pressuring defense in catch up situations.

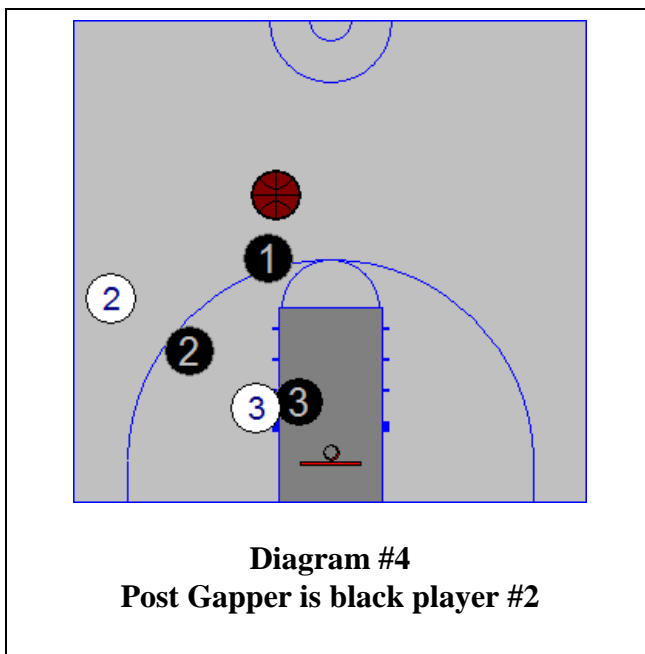
An area of emphasis for the post defender is to communicate to the gappers in front of them that they now have become a post gapper when a low post player positions herself in the low post.

● Post Gapper

Any player who is guarding a perimeter player on the side where the ball and a low post player are located automatically becomes a post gapper (See Diagram #4 below) and now has four responsibilities:

- 1) Discourage a post feed.
- 2) If the ball is fed to the post, be ready to trap the ball in the post.
- 3) Discourage and be ready to give early help on dribble penetration.
- 4) If the ball is passed to your man, make a quick close out so that you arrive at your player at the same time as the ball does.

As a part of communicating with our teammates, it is essential that players on the perimeter be aware that they are on the side of an occupied low post. They should receive verbal support from our defenders guarding a low post player.



We want these players to play with arms extended at shoulder width and in a wide feet defensive stance to be able to discourage the post feeds. Phase #4 will go into detail on items two through four on the list above.

Black defender #2 is the player who will trap the post if the ball is fed to the post. Our system for trapping the post is outlined on page 21 and in the screen cast. We also outline how we rotate out of the trap to cover when the ball is kicked out to the perimeter and to cover our block outs.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

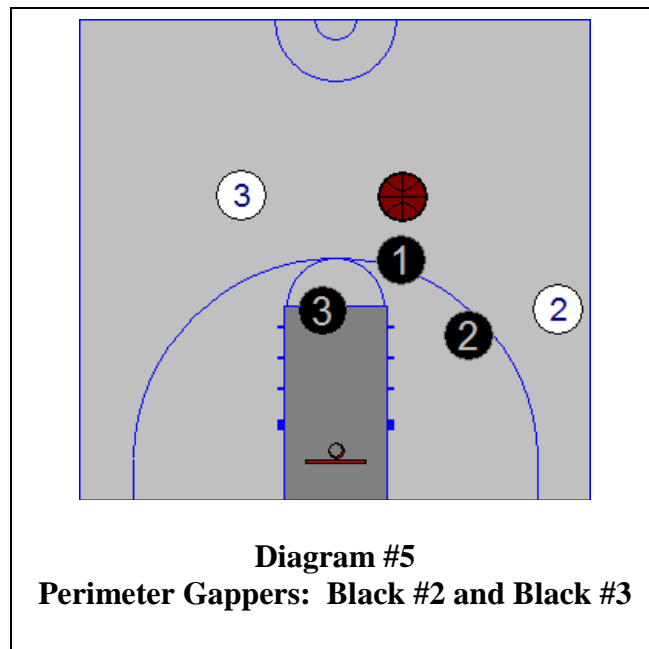
● Perimeter Gapper

Any player who is guarding a player who is on the perimeter and is not on the side of the floor with the ball and a low post player is located automatically becomes a post gapper (See Diagram #5) and now has four responsibilities:

- 1) Discourage and be ready to give early help on dribble penetration.
- 2) If the ball is passed to your man, make a quick close out so that you arrive at your player when the ball does.
- 3) Jam the lane to disrupt cutting through the middle.
- 4) Be more ball oriented than man oriented.

In our version of this defense, the perimeter gapper is positioned halfway between the ball and the player they are guarding.

They should play open to the ball and with their back to the basket. We want these players to play with arms extended at shoulder width and in a wide feet defensive stance to be able to discourage the post feeds.



The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

● Goalie

Anyone who is guarding a player on the help side block is in the goalie position until the player he is guarding moves. We play with a stance with the back parallel to the baseline. The jobs in this spot are:

- 1) Help on lobs to post
- 2) Take away all flashes to the elbow and to the high post by the player he is guarding. This is critical to stop a high low post feed. Our term for this is to “T it up.” That is--meet the cutter and deny him the ball. This will be more clearly illustrated in the screen cast.
- 3) Be the last line of defense at the basket.

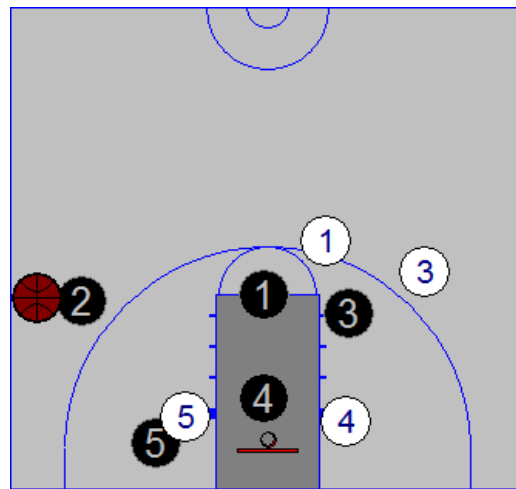


Diagram #6
Black Defender #4 is playing “Goalie.”

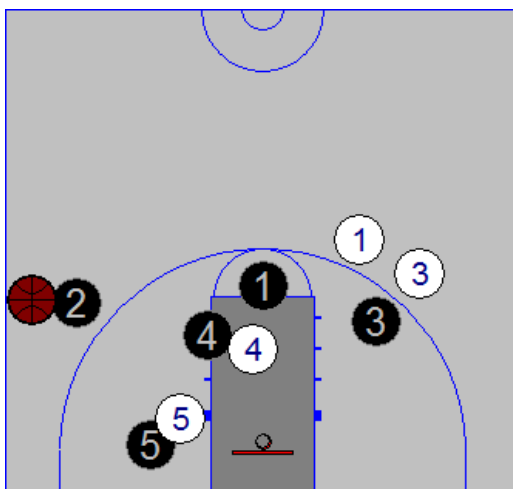


Diagram #7
Black Defender #4 “T-ing it up”

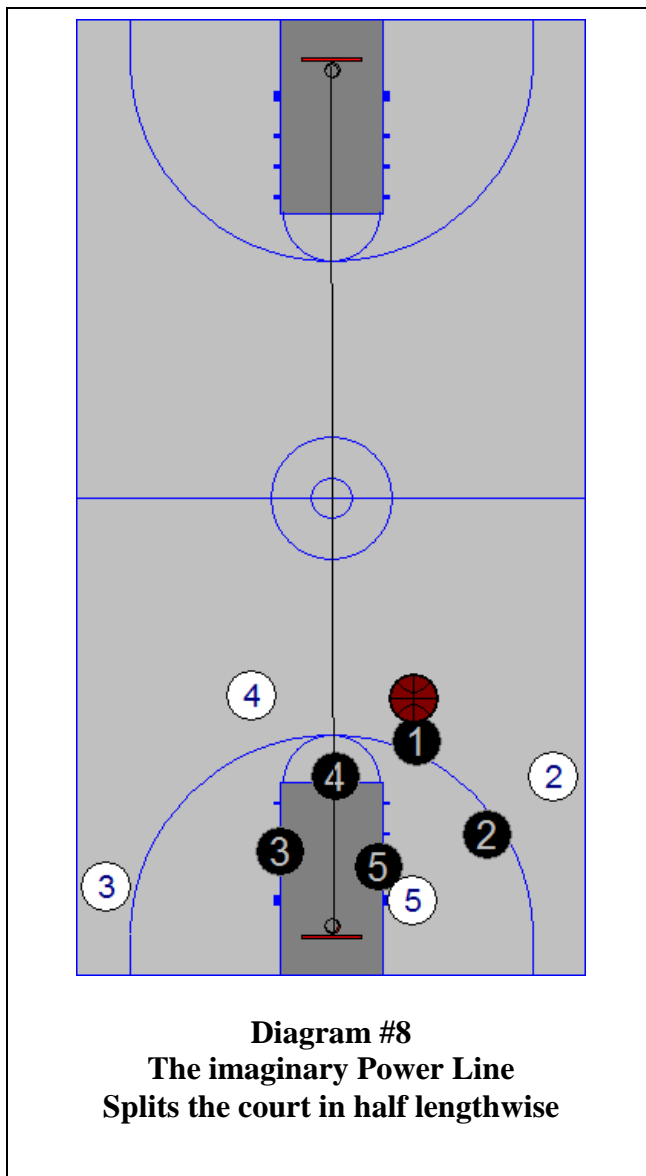
Often, there will be help from a perimeter gapper, but in the case that we are showing in Diagrams #6 and #7, white offensive players 1 and 3 have a screening or exchange action going on which makes it imperative that the goalie be able to “T-Up” the flash cutter to keep the ball out of the high post or off the elbow. It is a skill that must be repeatedly drilled in practice as an individual breakdown drill, and also be incorporated into your shell and five on five work.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Helpside Defenders

Like many coaches, we do not like to use the terms strong side and weak side when referring to our defense because we do not want to plant the thought in our player's minds that our defense has any weaknesses.

We use the terms ball side and helpside. The two sides are determined by the imaginary line that runs from one basket to the other basket (Perpendicular to the ten second line) that splits the court in two horizontally. The term we use for this line is the Power Line. It is illustrated as an additional line on the court in diagram #8. We teach our players to use the lane and our offensive basket as guides to align themselves defensively and to not turn their heads to position themselves using the basket we are defending.



The closest perimeter gapper, (In Diagram #8 that is Black Defender #4) is always half way between his man and the basketball in order to discourage and then be able to give support against a penetrating dribble.

Black defender #3 has his back to the basket in an open stance with his right foot (closest foot to the basketball) on the power line. We want him to be about a step on the basket side of a direct line between the man he is guarding and the basketball. Our reasoning for having him a step back is to be able to see both his man and the ball. Having #3 back in the lane helps to clog the lane and makes the screening angle a tougher one for the offense.

Having three defenders in the lane will help to clog the lane and make cutting and driving more difficult.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Phase #3 Pressure the ball without fouling and without allowing penetration.

We keep a stat, as many teams do, to count deflections as a partial measuring stick of how effective we are in this particular phase.

The three situations that we practice relative to pressuring the basketball are:

- 1) A receiver catches a pass and still has a live dribble.
- 2) Offense is dribbling.
- 3) Offense has used his dribble.

Regardless of what the dribble availability is, we have the following defensive rules:

“Fouling negates hustle.”

--Coach Rick Pitino

- 1) Make the ball uncomfortable.
- 2) Play position defense--Do not go for a steal and take yourself out of a play. That is false hustle and it hurts our team.

- 3) Hands off. Don't put the opponent in the bonus or put yourself on the bench with foul trouble.
- 4) If the ball is exposed or is loose, we go for it with two hands because going with two hands is less likely to be called a foul.

When a receive catches a pass and still has a live dribble

We stress high hands on the closeout playing the shot with our hands and raised arms and playing the drive with our mind and feet. The defender must know where the help gappers should be (and to trust that they will provide the necessary support) if they are beaten on the dribble. Trace the ball with the hands while in a defensive stance to pressure without fouling.

Offense is dribbling

We emphasize the mindset of controlling the dribbler and being determined to keep him out of lane. We teach for the on ball defender to watch the basketball.

Offense has used his dribble.

When the dribble is picked up, we apply pressure—“Up” is our communication call that we make so that everyone knows the ball is up and the dribble has been killed.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Phase #4 Keep the ball out of the lane.

Our objective is to keep the ball out of the lane by getting our defenders who are not guarding the ball, the basket, or the low post into the help gaps to discourage and to then stop penetrating passes and dribbles.

We feel that it is important for the gappers to be in a position where they do not have to move toward the ball to help and then have to turn their momentum around to recover to the player they are assigned to guard. Our term for this concept is high gappers. If the gapper is too low on the line between the player they are guarding and the ball, the gapper will be forced to move away from their assigned player to help on a penetrating dribble.

Working to keep the ball out the lane during the flow of an offensive possession:

Guarding Ball Movement

All five defensive players reestablish defensive positions with every pass or dribble and must sprint on the air time of any pass that is thrown. We move as soon as the ball is out of the hands, so that we are not faked into moving. We do not wait to move when the ball is caught. That is too late. We must be in the appropriate adjusted defensive position when the ball is caught. That is something that we have to work on every day in practice. We have a visual representation of this in the screen cast.

When we recover, we recover to the ball or to a gap, not to a man (unless he has the ball or is in the post).

Guarding Player Movement

Guarding a screener

First responsibility is to communicate to our defender who is being screened that the screen is coming. If possible we want to jam the screener and make it difficult for her to get to her screen. We want to do this in a way that allows our defender who is being screened to get through. We emphasize not getting in the way and not being a double screener for the offense.

We teach hedging to allow the cutter's defender time to get there by faking a switch and then recovering to the screener. The defender guarding the screener is responsible for all action that goes toward the basket such as a slip and is responsible for bumping and disrupting the curl cut.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Guarding a cutter

The mindset we work to instill in our defenders who are guarding cutters coming off of screens is that you must be difficult to screen by always:

- establishing proper helpside and gap positions when the ball is passed along the perimeter to make the screening angles difficult for the offense.
- being determined to not get screened. You are going to fight through and not be screened. We take steps at the screener before we start chasing in order to get the screener to stop before she wants to.

We do not go ball side on screens. We chase the cutters coming off screens. Our rule is to trail the cutter with a six inch gap between the offense and the defense. We expect the chasing defender to arrive at the same time that the ball does. If this forces the cutter to curl cut, then we feel we are in good shape because that is where the screener's defender will help and where our helpers are packed in.

“When you attempt to defend everything, you defend nothing.”

--Unknown

For the same reasons, we go over the top when chasing flare screen cutters because we have help if they cut back door. We want to go over the top on these flare screens to take away the three-point shot which is why they are flare screening to begin with.

If you click on this link:

Trail (6" gap) cutters off screens.

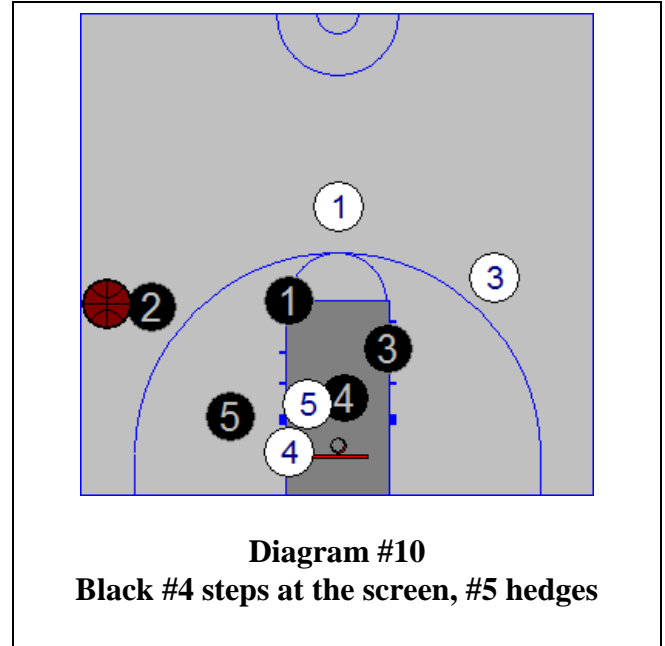
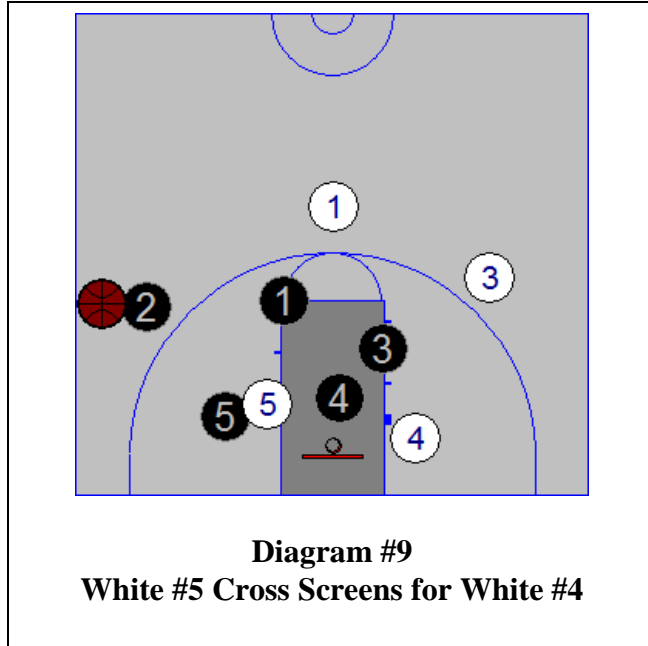
it will take you to a video of a drill run by Dick Bennett to illustrate chasing the cutters. Scroll to the bottom of the page to see the concept.

When you are chasing a cutter, you do not have any help responsibilities on dribble penetration until the cutter is no longer moving. The help responsibilities are left to your teammates.

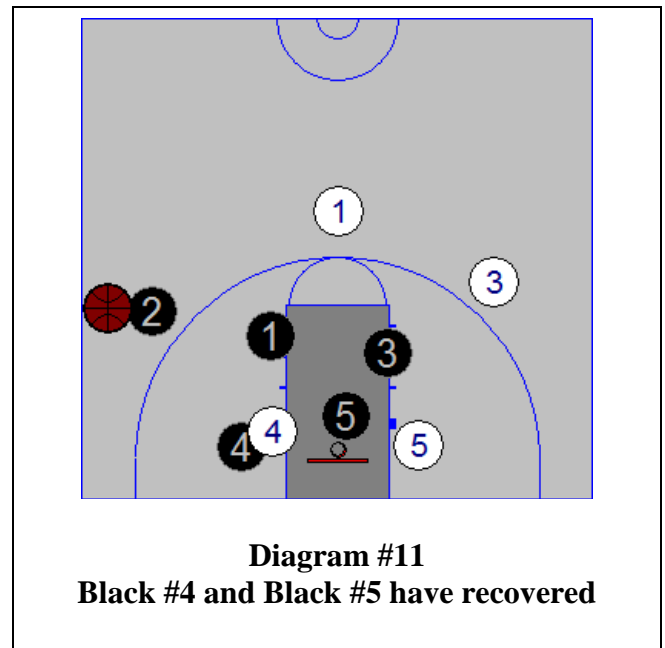
There have been seasons where we have not been quick enough at recovering from our hedges on back screens to get to the screener who becomes an open three point shooter. During those seasons, the adjustment that we made was that we switched all back screens, and only back screens.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Defending block to block cross screens



The keys are that the man guarding the player coming off the screen be determined not to get screened. He must step at the screen as it is coming to make the screener stop earlier than he wants to. The player guarding the screener (Black Player #5 in Diagram #9) must open to the ball and momentarily guard both post players and the basket until the player who is being screened recovers (This is shown in Diagram #10). It is important to have pressure on the passer from Black Defender #2 to make it tough to make an easy feed as the post players are fighting to reestablish defending positions. We also need our gappers to be ready if the ball is lobbed in front of the basket or to the helpside block.



The player who is being screened (Black Player #4) follows the rule for “T-ing” up a flash cutter and makes the cutter (White #4) cut lower (closer to the baseline) than the Black #4s position.

The screen cast will be a better resource for an example of how we play the screens.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Defending on ball screens

Since our philosophy is that we are working to keep the ball out of the lane, we have decided to go under on ball screens. We have not had on our schedule more than one or two players per year who can consistently pull up and hit a three point shot when we go under the ball screen. When we do face a player of that caliber, we trap the ball screen and rotate a gapper to pick up the ball screener if he is a threat to pop off the screen for a three point shot.

Due to a lack of quickness in our post players, we have never been able to switch the on ball screens with any success. Certainly there are many ways to defend ball screens and feel that it is important to choose a way that works for your personnel and the personnel that you defend. We also feel that it is imperative to have a planned adjustment that you can make if you are being hurt by ball screens during a game.

The big key to our defending a ball screen is to not allow the dribble to turn the corner and start heading north and south to the basket.

The responsibility of Black Defender #2 (whose man is setting the ball screen) is to not be a double screener and to give gap support in the same manner that he would to discourage and then help on any penetrating dribble. We also feel that by backing off and giving Black Defender #1 room to get under the screen, he is in a better position to react to a roll to the basket by the screener (White #2), to a pop for a three point shot by the screener (White #2), and to a slip prior to actually setting the screen by the screener.

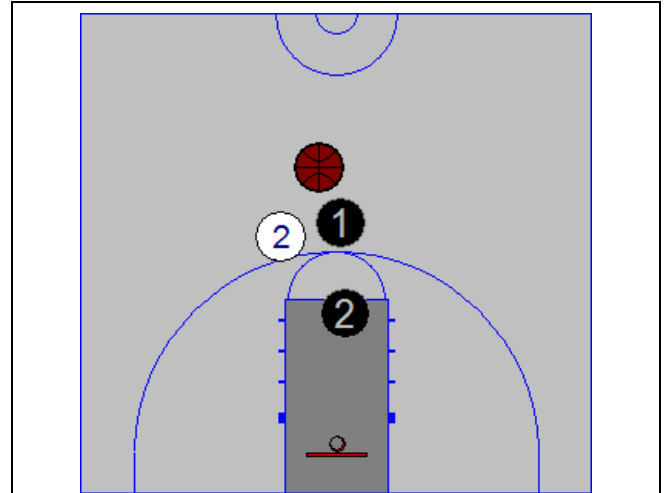


Diagram #12
Defender #2 gives #1 room to go under

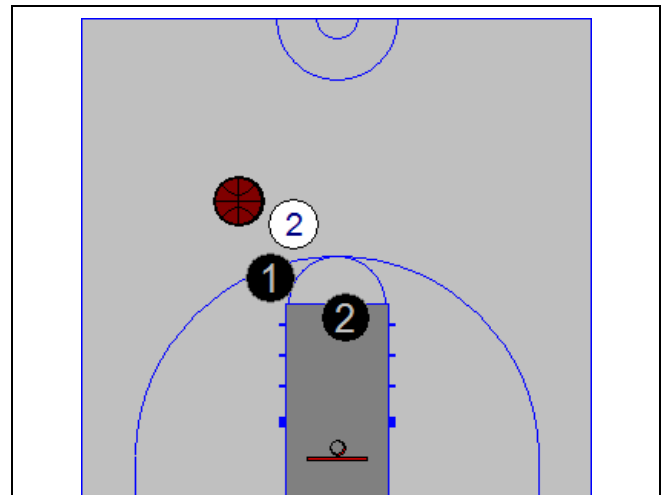


Diagram #13
Defender #2 gives #1 room to go under

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Reacting to penetration

If we can keep the ball out of the lane without helping or trapping that would be an ideal possession. That would keep us from having to rotate and potentially miss block outs. Just like any machine, the less moving parts, the less chance there is for a malfunction.

Regardless of how hard we work and how well we execute our plan to keep the ball out of the lane, good teams are going to be able to get the ball into the lane at times. We have to have a way to get the ball out of the post or lane when it does go in. We give early help, make quick traps in our trap areas, and then make the quickest possible recovery that we can make when the basketball is passed back out to the perimeter.

Our goal is to trap with high hands to make pass outs difficult which will give us a better chance to make a full recovery. If the ball is exposed, our rule is any time we make a play to steal a dribbled or a ball being held by an opponent, we always reach with two hands to lessen the chance of a foul,. Not just in trapping but in all situations—we reach with two hands when going after the ball. At least we want a tie up for a jump ball.

If the ball does go in the lane, we trap, gap, and protect the basket.

“Getting ‘broken-down’ on defense does not guarantee failure, but giving up at that point does.”

--Coach Jim Boone

If the ball does get into the post, we want to force it to be passed back out to the perimeter as quickly as possible. We feel that the best way to do that is to trap it. We trap everyone who has the ball in the low post regardless of size, ability, score situations, or anything else.

We use the term “red” when we trap the ball which means that all five players must execute their responsibilities not just the two players who are involved in the trap. We trap every post feed with two trappers, two gappers, and a goalie.

Trapping Post Feeds

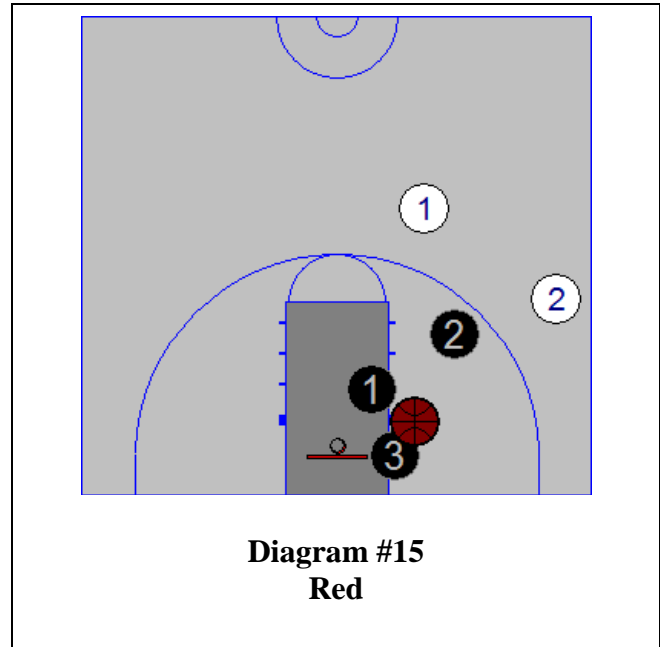
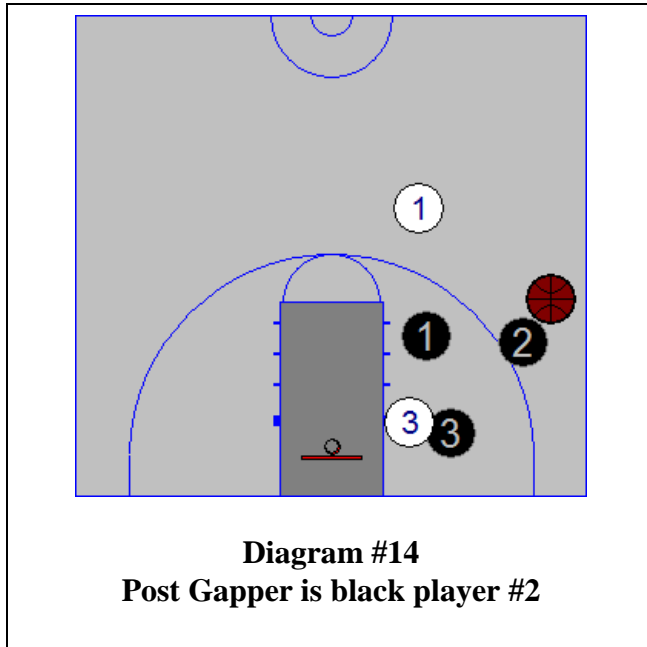
Our rule is that we do not ever leave the player who fed the post to trap the post player who caught it. Instead, we trap the post with our nearest post gapper. There are two reasons for our decision to double the post in this manner:

Reason #1: We feel that if the defensive player on the ball is putting the type of pressure on the ball that he should, it is too far to go to leave the feeder and get to the post in time to trap effectively. Our post gapper is much closer to the post, so that is who we send to trap. He must react to go to the trap as soon as the ball leaves the post feeders hands, and get to the post receiver as soon as the ball does.

Reason #2: We feel that it is crucial to be able to recover back to the perimeter shooters when the post player kicks the ball out of the double-team. So we leave

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

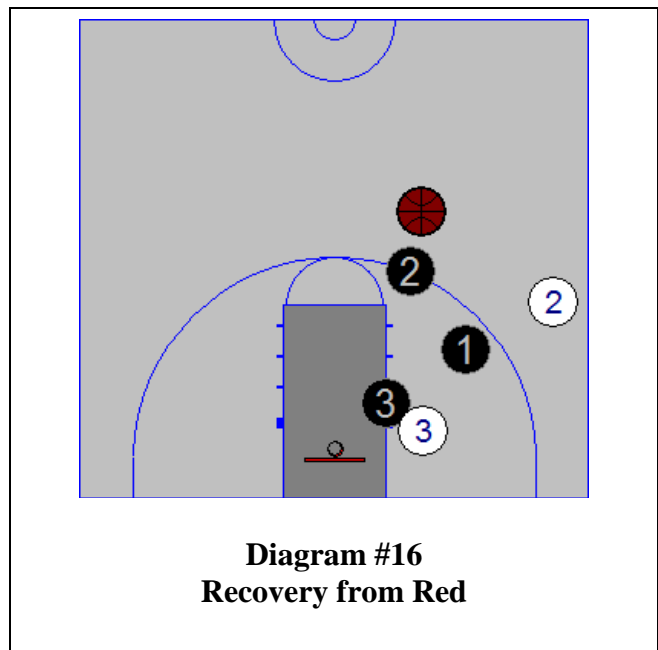
the defender of the feeder on the perimeter. In Diagrams #14 and #15 that is black defensive player #2.



Our rules on the trap are that if the ball is fed from the wing and the trapper comes from the top, then the post defenders job is to take away any type of baseline move by the post and the gapper (who is now a trapper) takes away the middle. The defender guarding the feeder (Black Player #2 in Diagrams #14 and #15) now becomes a gapper and will take the player who receives the first pass out of the post, regardless of whether it is.

Diagrams #14, #15, and #16 illustrate our trapping sequence when the ball is fed from the wing and then how we recover out of the trap. The screen cast offers a better illustration of this aspect of our defensive system.

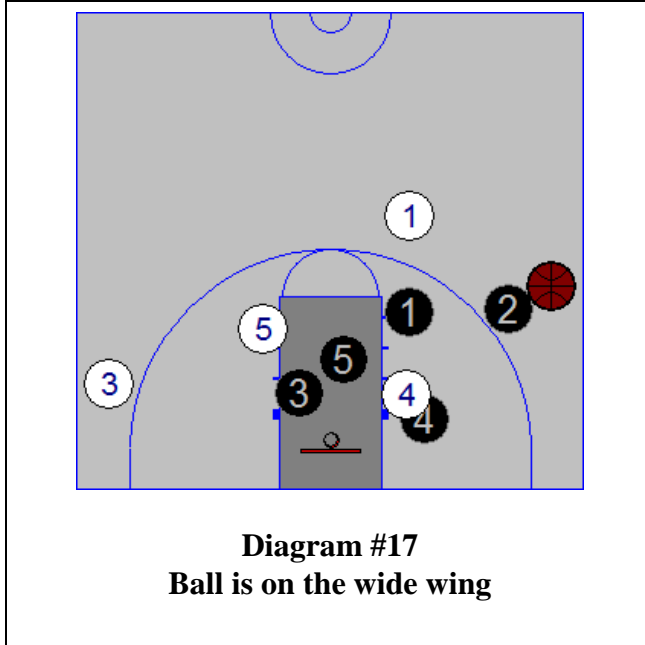
When the ball is passed out of the trap and back to the perimeter, we must have a system to recover. We have the defender whose man fed the post (in this case black defender #2), and who then became a perimeter gapper to take the first pass out of the trap using great closeout technique, described in phase #3 "Pressuring the Ball." Black Defender #1 recovers out of the trap to guard White Player #2 and now becomes



The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

the post gapper.

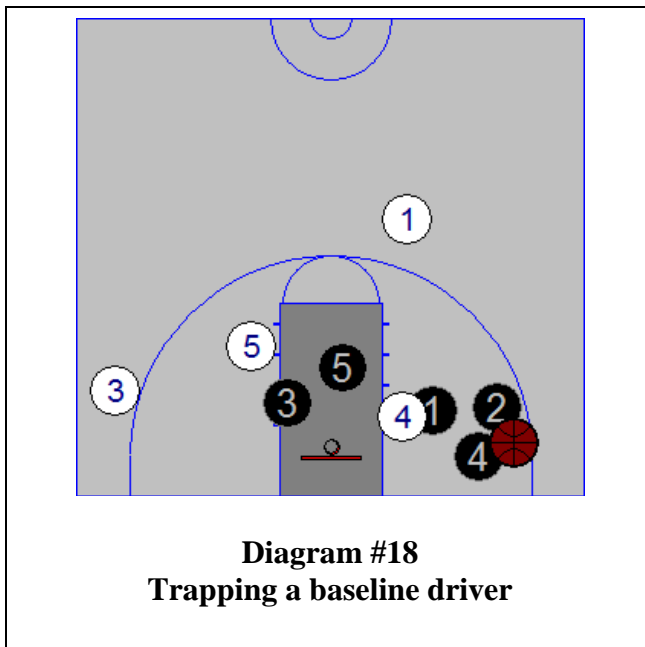
Helping on a baseline drive



We trap the baseline drive and follow the same red rules to rotate and then to recover that we use and were just described on pages 21 and 22 for trapping the post feed.

In Diagram #17 at the left, White Offensive Player #2 has the ball on the wide wing and drives, and should be trapped by our rotation as shown in Diagram #18.

We stress the concept of “helping the helper.” As white offensive player #2 drives the ball to the baseline, we trap it as far outside the lane as we can with the Post Defender (Black #4).



Black Defender #2 (who was guarding the ball) traps to keep the dribble or a pass from going to the middle. The helper (Black Defender #4) is responsible for stopping any drive or pass on the baseline side.

Black defenders #3 and #5 should already be in their help side locations in the lane. Black defender #1 is a key to the rotations as he is responsible for “helping the helper.” He was already gapping in Diagram #17 and dropped to help the helper in diagram #18.

Our ideal defense would be not to allow the dribbler to make a baseline drive, but this is our way to react to

it once it happens. We want to force the ball to be thrown back out behind the three point arc as quickly as possible.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Phase #5 Contest every shot

There are several different techniques that coaches use to teach challenging shots. Some people challenge the shot by literally putting a hand in the face and looking to distract the shooter's vision. We put a hand towards the ball. We don't ever swing to block shots, or smack at the ball. We challenge with the mirror hand as our defender is facing the shooter. So, if the shooter is right handed, we challenge with the left hand. If the shooter is left handed, then we challenge with our right hand.

We have to drill very, very hard at contesting, but not fouling the jump shooters. Again, our defense is predicated on making the opponents shoot contested, non-rhythm perimeter shots, so it is imperative that we constantly emphasize getting a hand up on every shot and still keep them off the free throw line.

There are times in our scouting report when we feel that a shooter can hurt us more from the three point arc than by putting the ball on the floor. This may happen in three or four cases during an average season. In those cases, we will practice and then execute in the game "running the shooter out" which means that we are going to jump in the air to contest that shooter and make her put the ball on the floor. We feel that since we do have the helpers in their gaps that when the ball is dribbled we have the necessary support help. When the player who jumps at the shooter lands, that player is to scramble back to help the helper.

"Never foul a jump shooter because on a good night he will make 50% of his field goals, but 80% of his free throws."

--Coach Hubie Brown

We make sure that when we do this, that we jump straight up in the air and not toward the shooter to make sure that we are not putting ourselves in a position where a smart offensive player is going to draw a foul from our defender being in the air.

We have an assistant coach keep track of challenged shots during the course of the game. We relay the statistics at halftime and have that coach address individuals who are not contesting shots. If they do not improve that, then they will be taken out of the game.

Phase #6 Block out, pursue the rebound, and chin the ball (or dive on loose balls).

Since our Pack Line is designed to force contested jump shots and to hold the opponent to a low field goal percentage, it is imperative that we rebound and not allow second shots. We have to complete the defensive possession. An offensive rebound is just another way for the offense to get the ball into the lane which is exactly what our defensive is designed to prevent.

We believe in aggressively blocking out every player except the shooter. We also believe that blocking out is not enough, and that you have to pursue the rebound. We do not run the rebounding drills where the offense blocks out until the ball hits the ground because

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

that is not what we want in the games. We believe that you cannot hold the block outs for very long against a good opponent and that you must go get the basketball before the offensive rebounder does.

The defensive block out method that we teach is to forward pivot into the man you are guarding, hands open and above the shoulders, with the elbows extended so that the offensive rebounder must go through or around the extended elbows. We certainly do not teach, condone, or accept swinging the elbows on block outs, but we do like to have the hands up so that we don't use them to and are not called for holding.

We do not believe in blocking the jump shooter out hard because we are concerned that we will be called for a foul. We turn and get between the shooter and the basket. We don't even like to brush against him because there are many shooters who have learned to flop when the defense is even close. My belief is that the flopping usually occurs on the landing, as the block out would be taking place (if we chose to block the shooter out). Since the call on a block out is usually going to be three shots on a three point attempt, even if the shooter has already landed and by the rules ending the field goal attempt, I have seen enough three shot fouls called that I want to avoid this situation completely.

“Offense sells tickets; defense wins games, rebounding wins championships.”

--Coach Pat Summit

So, we leave some space and if the shooter does “follow the shot” for an offensive rebound and comes towards us, then we will make a more aggressive block out after he has taken a step towards the rebound and towards us.

We must chin every rebound. If we ever have a rebound stripped from us, then all of the hard defensive work that went into that possession was wasted. In practice in our competitive rebound drills, a rebound does not count until the player chins the ball. In scrimmages it is an automatic turnover when a defensive rebounder does not chin the ball.

In addition to our rebounding statistics, we chart block out percentage in practices and games and set a standard of 90% executed block outs.

As I have attempted to stress, one of our goals defensively is to keep the opponent out of the bonus. We stress playing hard and getting in position which we believe limits our fouling and work very hard at teaching our players to not reach and swing. We accept hustle fouls going for loose balls because we want to establish the mentality that when the ball is loose, it should quickly become our possession. Even when the ball is loose, we do not accept all fouls. “Piling On” once the ball has been secured, reaching, hacking, smacking, pushing and shoving for position, and similar types of fouls.

Section III

Special Situations

The following situations are covered by our defensive rules in the Six Defensive Phases, but we also feel that in addition to applying the rules, it is important to spend practice time teaching and practicing how you are going to handle each of these situations.

1. Never help up the lane from the basket.

Even though ours is a helping style defense, we do not want to help from the basket up the lane and allow a dump down to the block for a layup. A five foot pull up is a high percentage shot, but not as high percentage as a layup. Of course, if our players in the goalie position are faced with this situation frequently, then we are allowing too much penetration and need to find out where the breakdown is occurring out front and get that fixed.

2. End of quarter

We force the ball to the sidelines in conversion defense and in the half court as well with less than five seconds to go in the quarter. That will lessen the likelihood of a player banking in a half court shot if their momentum is going partially sideways rather than head on. It also give your players a better idea of where a rebound will go (opposite side of the shot) if there is one. We want to all be on the same page as to what we are doing when time is of the essence.

3. Converting after we shoot a free throw (make or miss)

“When a milestone is conquered, the subtle erosion called entitlement begins its consuming grind. The team regards its greatness as a trait and a right. Half hearted effort becomes habit and saps a champion.”

--Coach Pat Riley

One of the toughest things to defend is a missed free throw, so we practice that frequently. We have always put two players back even before that was the rule. We put the halfback and fullback in the back positions. Make sure that you communicate as to who is going to fulfill each role. Confusion can result when our designated halfback or fullback are shooting the free throw. Then we have to put one of the three triangle

rebounders back. It is something that is easily practiced and communicated, but it

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

is a point that we make sure that we spend time on every year in our practices prior to beginning playing our games.

Once we have achieved clarity as to how each role will perform in a free throw setting, we still like to use the free throw conversion as a part of our conversion drills during the defensive segment of our practice. We practice converting from a free throw in two ways. One is to rotate different players shooting the free throws and then play it live, make or miss. This gives us practice converting from a rebound and from the ball being taken out of bounds. We also line up for a free throw with a player at the free throw line to practice missing the free throw on purpose in case we have to do that, and then we convert to defense since it is tougher to convert on a miss than on a make.

4. Defending underneath in bounds

“As a coach, I feel if you can get your players to play hard and together on the defensive end, they will automatically be unselfish at the offensive end.”

--Coach Pat Riley

Our philosophy on defending out of bounds plays is that we are not going to give up a lay-up, so we do not deny past the ball. We apply our “run when the ball is in the air” rule, so that when the ball is passed from out of bounds under the basket (either on the right or left side free throw lane line), we sprint to our positions. If we are guarding a

player who is behind the three point arc, then our responsibility when the ball is out of bounds is to keep the ball from being passed from out of bounds directly into the lane. We want to have the ball passed out beyond the three point arc and then close out to our gaps, post, goalie, or ball pressure positions. The defender guarding the inbounder backs off to the basket and takes away all passes to the basket for layups. He must then get to his man or to his gap as soon as the ball comes in bounds.

5. Defending side line in bounds plays.

We do not allow a pass inside the arc from the sideline, nor to the arc for an immediate three point shot, but we do not contest the ball being inbounded to any other part of the floor, unless we are behind late in the game and playing our two minute catch up game. The player who is guarding the inbounder is one again responsible for any lob passes that are thrown to the basket.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

6. Catch up defense when trailing late in the game

We don't believe in trapping at the end of the game for a couple of reasons.

One is that if and when you choose to stop the clock and put the opponent at the free throw, it is much harder to foul because there are times when there will be an open man.

I believe that traps are much less effective when the opponent is not trying to score or is not under the pressure of having to cross the 10 second line. If there is no pressure on the offense to move the ball toward the basket, then they can use the entire half-court and spread the defense out.

We do however, extend our defense and move from a helping and gapping mode into a denying and helping mode, which makes our recoveries less effective. But, we have to gamble and give something up. Even if the opponent shoots a shot at that point, it gives us a chance for a rebound, so I feel it is worth the gamble to get more pressure in the lanes to give up better close outs.

In order to deny, we back the on ball defender off when the ball is being dribble and work to stay within the six foot closely guarded count distance. This is a time that we do front the post because we do not have any post gappers to help keep the ball out of the post.

7. Ball Screens late in the game when protecting a lead

We have not had on our schedule, more than one or two players per year who can consistently pull up and hit a three point shot when we go under the ball screen. When we do face a player of that caliber, we trap the ball screen and rotate a gapper to pick up the ball screener if he is a threat to pop off the screen for a three point shot. This is a late game adjustment that we always make if our opponents are looking to get off three point shots in order to catch up.

“Never underestimate the heart of a champion.”

--Coach Rudy Tomjanovich

Section IV

Teaching the Pack Line Through Repetition in Practice

Seeing the drills in the screen cast will be a much more effective way to communicate them than in this e-book, but I do want to outline some of the drill work here. I have included Appendix B on page 36 with some checklists and details of how and what we defend in practice.

I found the best methods for teaching our defensive system have been to break the individual skills down into drills and to teach the team concepts with the use of the four or five man shell drill and by running parts of common offenses and plays that we face or that we could face during the course of our season.

I think the best way to come up with drills is to clearly define what you want to see happen in your defense and then orchestrate those situations in practice so that you can isolate and rehearse the movements you must make to defend as you want to defend. Here are the nine areas that all of our drills fall into.

1) Individual Skills

I have listed the individual skills that I have isolated for our defense in appendix B on page 36.

2) Six Phases

Since those are the heart and soul of how we teach, practice, and evaluate our defense, we make sure that we cover each of those in some fashion every night. It might be just running our motion 5/0 with a second group of players on the baseline to take the ball and run it at us as we convert to defense. We like to end every drill that we can with the block out rather than doing a lot of block out drills.

3) Shell Drill

We use the traditional shell drill with variations to get a lot of individual drill work done in a short amount of time such as pass and basket cut with the remaining offensive players filling the spots, defending ball screens at various locations on the floor, pass and screen away, help side interchanges or screens, trapping a post feed, trapping, a baseline drive, and any other situations that our upcoming opponents will put us in that we need to be able to defend.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

4) Guarding specific movements

I have listed the specific movements that we face during the course of a season in Appendix B on page 36. It is a list that changes and evolves as we scout and see new systems that our opponents are putting in. We usually will start out early in the season in the teaching phase by having the offense go half speed to three quarters speed in order to get our technique correct. If we are faltering in a certain technique area as the season unfolds, we will go back on a Monday or a Tuesday and go half speed to reteach and refresh on our rules and techniques.

5) Competitive Drills

We like to play defensive cut throat with one special rule at a time. Our version is that you only score points by getting defensive stops. When you score on one of the teams you are competing against, then you have earned the right to play defense to accumulate points for getting stops. Examples of some of the special rules are: if you foul, you are off rather than giving the ball back to the offense, no block out you are off--even if you get the rebound, all defenders must be in a stance for the entire possession, etc... We set the special rule to be whatever we need or want to work on. We play cut throat five on five to make it more game like.

6) Disadvantage Drills

One of the tough things about putting more than five offensive players on the court when practicing the Pack Line is that you do not get realistic gaps. Since playing the gaps is such a key part of the defense, we do not like to go against more than five offensive players except for two cases.

At times when we are working on conversion, we will put an offensive player in each corner of our defensive end of the court, as we run our offense at the other end. When we the ball changes hands and we convert to defense, the second team can throw a long pass to the corner to those players that we expect our conversion defense to get back and cover. We usually can't steal that long pass, but the fullback can get to the basket to cover it, the halfback can sprint to take the ball (those are their normal assignments) and the triangle rebounders must sprint back. It forces us to convert quickly and simulates converting against a team that plays at a very fast pace.

We also occasionally play against seven offensive players when working on the half court phase of our Pack Line defense. We put two unguarded offensive players in the dead corners and play our normal rules while the offense runs whatever we want to work on defending. It could be their offense that they will be using in the JV games. What they run does not affect the drill. We use the two open players in the corners to simulate a baseline drive and work on our rotations

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

to prepare for when we do have a baseline drive against us. The open players can only drive to score when they catch a pass. If we execute our trap, help the helper properly, and force them to pass the ball out to the perimeter, that player returns to the corner, awaiting his next action.

We also put the defense at a disadvantage by decreasing the number of defenders from five to four at times. Since we play a team man to man defense, when we run our four on five defensive drill (four defensive players guarding five offensive players) in practice, we have found what works best for us is to designate a specific player who is not guarded rather than just having four guard five with no purpose. So, we will play four on five and designate the open player as a particular type of player. For instance, if we designate the open player as a driver, then that designated driver (no pun intended) catches and drives every time while the four defenders execute their help responsibilities. When we run this drill, we are working on our help against a driver. We have four versions of the drill:

- Open Driver
- Open Low Post
- Open Point Guard
- Open Shooter

“You don’t get beat on the help; you get beat on the recovery.”

--Coach Chuck Daly

This is an excellent drill to work on “help the helper” because if a defensive player steps in to help on the unguarded player, our rule is that if you pick up the player with the ball, you stay with her. Since that happens a lot in 4 on 5, we are constantly getting to practice our rotations to help the helper.

7) Recovery Drills

Our philosophy is that not only do we need to work on all six phases of our defense each practice, but that we also must practice and stress recovery. We constantly drill on our individual closeouts and our team rotations when we help and rotate out of our traps. We will illustrate some of these drills in our screen cast. It is very important to make sure that we are blocking out and charting our block outs when we practice recovering.

8) Toughness Drills

- 15 Deflections in 5:00 (Run the clock only when we are on defense)
- 3 X 51 seconds of perfect defense (Run clock only when on defense)
- Take 4 charges and dive on a loose ball

We like to use one of these to conclude our defensive segment of practice or at times to conclude the practice.

Section V

Pre-game Decisions and In-game Adjustments

The purpose of this e-book was to offer the Pack Line defensive system that we have evolved into using. From time to time, we have made some pre-game adjustments to our rules for a particular opponent or for particular individuals. I have already discussed the adjustment that we make from time to time when we feel that a particular three point shooter can hurt us with a three point shot, but is not able to hurt us off the bounce.

Other adjustments that we will make is to have a plan for our backup defenders for a particularly outstanding individual if the original player we assigned to guard that player cannot go due to foul trouble, ineffectiveness, or an injury sustained during the game.

With some teams where we have lacked depth, we have elected not to put our best offensive player, who also is our best defender, on their best offensive player to start the game in order to save additional fatigue and possibly foul problems. We select a time to make the change in the final quarter to put our best on their best. There are also times when we want to rotate two or three different defenders on an individual throughout the course of the game so we have a fresh body guarding that player at all times.

Some coaches have had success with putting a particular defender on an outstanding offensive player and placing that defender in a dead denial position with no help responsibilities similar to a Box and One. We found that does not work well in the pack line system that we use because it disrupts our defensive roles more than it disrupts the offense that we are working to stop. We have had success with not guarding specific individuals and playing the helper back in the lane with a specific gap responsibility and inviting that player to shoot rather than having teammates are better shooters take the shots.

We also believe it's helpful to have another way to defend the on ball screens if you're being hurt by that. Since our system is to go on the ball screens the thing that we give up by doing that is the pull up three point shot. We have not faced many players that can hurt us with that. But we do know that at different levels there are players capable of doing so. We have faced a few of them ourselves and to combat that we trapped the ball screens. If the screener is a three-point threat, then we must rotate our gappers to defend the "pick and pop."

We are not a switching team, but we do have the call "Green" and practice switching everything to have some adjustments to make. We also have a call of "Blue" where we would switch the down screens when defending flex.

As I have stated, we are 95% rules based rather than report based in our defense.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Conclusion

Defensive evaluation

We like to use points per possession which is determined by dividing the points scored by the number of possessions. We keep this statistic for each individual quarter and also come up with a total for the entire game. It takes the tempo factor out of the evaluation of the game. It allows you to compare your defensive efficiency in a quarter where there were 10 possessions against the fourth quarter of a tight contest where there may be 20 possessions as both teams attempt to extend the game.

“That which is evaluated tends to improve.”

--Unknown

The points per possession statistic also allows you to compare your defense from one game to another as you play against different types of opponents. We have found an average high school team will have a points per possession of around 1.0. We set our defensive goal to be less than .90 in games and .50 in practice.

It has been very valuable to film our early defensive practice segments because that is the time when the newness factor and the excitement of starting practice leads to a lot of intensity, communication, and effort defensively. If you tape another practice after a month, usually the intensity and communication will have fallen off. It is a good thing to show the players what it was like and what it falls off to as a way to work at keeping that defensive fire.

I believe that an individual possession should be evaluated on how well we performed our six phases. No matter how well you play defensively, you are not going to shut out anyone—especially anyone that you set your sites on as having to beat to experience the success in terms of wins and losses that you are after. There will be times when you contest the shot and do everything else right and a good offensive player is going to hit it.

We have the following team goals for eight minute quarters in games and in practices.

Category	Games	Practice
Conversion Points	0	0
Allowing ball in paint	33%	20%
Fouls	No Bonus (either half)	1 foul per quarter
Deflections	5	8
Challenged shots	100%	100%
Block outs	90%	100%
Put Backs Allowed	0	No offensive rebounds
Loose Balls	75%	90%

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

Individual Defensive Goals

We have offensive awards as well, but will stick to the defensive topic. We have boards that we give stickers out for outstanding individual performances:

8 rebounds

90% block out efficiency

Take a charge

Big Play (at the discretion of the coaching staff)

I have found that giving these out is a good way to emphasize individual areas that are significant to our team's success.

“We stop practice any time we see one of our players not blocking out.”

--Coach Jim Calhoun

We hope that the questions we received when we announced that we would be putting out this pack line defense clinic have been answered in the previous pages. If there are still questions that have not been answered to your satisfaction, please feel free to e-mail me at bwilliams@coachingtoolbox.net and we can correspond until I have answered all questions. I can also be reached at 765-366-9673.

Resources

The following resources were used in developing our Pack Line Defense.

Coach Jim Boone's Pack Line Philosophy

Defending the Lane (Dick Bennett)

Pack Line Pressure Defense (Dick Bennett)

A Season with Coach Dick Bennett (Eric Ferris)

APPENDIX A

There are many areas in basketball coaching that are more art than a science. Getting players to continually play hard is one of those areas. If you can come up with a list of things for your program that you believe constitute playing hard and then look for and praise those things when they happen, you are likely to develop a culture in your program that playing with all out intensity is the only way you practice and play. This list was designed for a high school basketball program, but can be modified for your level.

Applicable to Both Offense and Defense

- We are relentless in everything we do!
- Sprinting from spot to spot in practice
- Beat the ball down the floor in transition and conversion
- Constantly communicate to teammates
- Sprint to follow a breakaway layup to rebound a miss on both offense and defense
- Attack a rebound rather than waiting for it to come to you
- Dive on loose balls—if you can pick it up on your feet—chin it

Playing Hard on Defense

- Block out every time our opponent shoots
- Play defense in a stance
- Provide early help and then recover quickly
- Help the helper
- Close out with hands above shoulders
- Chin rebounds and face our basket
- Take a charge in the lane or on the baseline
- Steal passes that are thrown too far
- Contest every shot
- Deflect passes without reaching and fouling
- Always be in position, so you do not get into foul trouble
- Move your feet on defense rather than one-hand reaching and grabbing
- Put your foot on the out of bounds line when shutting of baseline or sideline
- Sprint to your new spot on the airtime of the pass—arrive when the ball does
- Use active hands to distract dribblers, shooters, and passers without reaching
- Reach to tie up or take the basketball from an opponent with two hands
- When you are a trapper, sprint out of the trap when the ball is passed out of it
- Adjust your defensive position each time the ball or your man moves

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

APPENDIX B

Teaching Defense in Practice

In our practices, we break down the segments into

- 1) Meetings
- 2) Individual Skill Development
- 3) Teaching Offense
- 4) Teaching Defense
- 5) Situations

Here is a master list of what we need to continually teach, emphasize and drill during our Teaching Defense segment. We refer to this every week as we plan the week's practices.

We cannot cover all of these areas each practice, so we look at our practice plans in terms of the whole season as to when we play certain opponents and how long it will take us to be ready to defend their movements. We especially look at those that we will need to defend to be successful in our state tournament series. We look at each week as a whole and pick out what we are going to need to work on for both opponents for that week.

We use a specific type of movement that we have to defend that is either a common basketball movement or a specific movement from the teams on our schedule as we do our breakdown drills. That way we are establishing habits that we hope will carry over to the games.

Our Defensive Mindset:

1. Communication, enthusiasm, energy toughness, competing, playing hard.
2. Tough enough to outlast opponent.
3. Dive on or chin all loose balls.
4. Playing together.
5. Constantly teach our defensive philosophy.

6 Phases of our Defense

1. Slow the ball in conversion (no points) ALL OTHERS SPRINT.
2. Establish and maintain high gappers, goalie, and post.
3. Ball pressure, no penetration, no foul.
4. Keep the ball out of the lane.

5. Contest every shot with mirror hand.
6. Block out, pursue the ball, chin rebound or dive on the loose ball.

Individual skills within our defense

1. Closeout, Contest, and Contain.
2. Pressuring a dribbler.
3. Pressuring a player holding the ball with the dribble remaining.
4. Pressuring a player holding the ball having used the dribble.
5. T-up a Flash cutter.
6. Help the helper force another pass.
7. Take charges don't reach or swing.
8. Help and recover on dribble penetration.

The HoopClinics Version of the Pack Line Defense

9. Playing a Back cut—turn to your man find the ball.
10. Basket cut and help side clear out by cutter.
11. Basket Cut and Corner the post by cutter.
12. Stop baseline drive.
13. Jump to gap immediately on pass or dribble.
14. Post defensive position ½ around.
15. Chase top side on flares.
16. Trail (6" gap) cutters off screens.

General Offensive Movements that we must defend

Many of these we use variations of the shell drill to teach and rehearse, for others, we just run the movement with our second group. We use the rules that have been outlined in the previous sections of this e-book and in the screen cast to guard these movements. We believe that all of these movements are best practiced five on five because the key to the success of our defense is our defensive spacing and the help that we get. Many times we only play five on five live for ten to fifteen seconds when we are drilling and teaching so that we stay with the movements that we are working on guarding.

1. Red/recover/block out on a post feed from the top.
2. Red/recover/ and block out on a post feed from the wing.
3. Red/recover/ and block out on a baseline drive.
4. Ball screens at various spots.
5. Block to Block Cross Screen.
6. Flex/Flex High.
7. Dribble Weave.
8. Under out Screen/Screener.
9. Under Out Screen inbounder.

10. 1-4 Low (don't help up the lane on penetration).
11. Point to helpside wing screen.
12. Inside out down screen.
13. Block screen for curls.
14. Back screens.
15. Help side interchange no dribble.
16. Helpside interchange with a dribble.
17. America's play for a three point shot.
18. America's play for a baseline backdoor.
19. America's play for a slip screen.
20. Single cutter Handoff.
21. Double cutter Handoff.
22. Screen—rescreen.
23. Staggered Down and flare screen the second screener.
24. 4 out 1 in style motion.
25. 3 out 2 in motion Cutters on wings.
26. 3 out 2 in motion cutters on blocks.
27. Traditional UCLA for a post duck in.
28. High/Low Post Feeds.

Specific movements opponents use

I have included this as an illustration. These names are names that either our opponents use or that names we have given to plays our opponents run.

1. Jayhawk
2. Bulldog Screen the screener
3. Pairs style motion
4. Illinois
5. UMass
6. Turn Out

XAVIER

BASKETBALL

PACK LINE

DEFENSE

Four Questions You Must Answer in Regards to Your DEFENSE

1. Can it put you in a position to beat the **BEST** teams on your schedule?
2. Can it win on the Road?
3. Do you improve as the season goes on?
4. Can you advance in post-season tournaments?



XAVIER NON-NEGOTIABLES

1. Committed to Transition D
2. Keep the Ball out of the Post
3. Must Pressure On-Ball
4. EARLY help on dribble penetration
5. Awareness off the ball
6. Contest ALL shots



DICK BENNET/SEAN MILLER

A. Identity

1. Important Concept
2. Do What WE Do
3. Xavier Defense/Rebounding
 - (a) Have an identity
 - (b) Notre Dame Zone Defense
 - (c) Texas A&M Denial Defense
4. Why Pack Line

B. How To Measure the Success of Identity

1. FG% Defense
 - (a) 2009– 33.2%— 1st in NCAA
 - (b) 2010– 34.9%— 11th in NCAA
2. Rebounding Margin
 - (a) 2009-- +11.2— 3rd in NCAA
 - (b) 2010-- +11.1— 4th in NCAA



DICK BENNET/SEAN MILLER

C. Terminology/Language

1. Ball Pressure
2. The Pack Line
3. The Post
4. Half Back/Full Back
5. Screening Terminology
6. Why Language is Important



PERIMETER DEFENSE

A. On-Ball

1. Tough
2. No Straight Line Drives
3. Don't Get Beat Outside

B. 1 Pass Away

1. Gap Defined
2. Talk on Early Help
3. Close-Out

C. 2 Passes Away

1. Line of the Ball/ Step Off
2. About 1/2 Way with foot in paint
3. Move on Flight of the ball
4. Recover to the Gap



PERIMETER DEFENSE

D. Working with the Post

1. Dig
2. Recover

E. Drills

1. Chair Close outs
2. Vegas Close outs
3. Three around One





POST DEFENSE

“How you defend in the post has to be related to how you defend on the perimeter”

Below the FT Line

- 3/4 chin on shoulder high side
- Slide behind on the catch

Above the FT Line

- on the line
- up the line

Deny inside the Pack Line

- Smash Cutters

On Catch

- Pop Back
- Wall Up on Dribble





3 THINGS YOU HAVE TO HAVE

1. Believe In It
2. Prepare Everybody
3. Be Honest with Your Players



XAVIER

BASKETBALL

Transition D and Defending Screens

TRANSITION

- 1. Sprint**
 - 2. Get Ahead of the Ball**
 - 3. Point/Talk**
 - 4. Be On Assignment**
-
- A. Three to the Offensive Glass (3,4,5)**
 - B. 1 and 2 sprinting**
 - C. 1 (Full-Back) all the way beyond 1/2 ct**
 - D. 2 (Half-Back) between top of the key and 1/2 Court**

DRILLS:





REBOUNDERS

Half-Back



Full-Back



DEFENDING SCREENS

“Great players don’t get screened because they have great awareness and give great effort”

1. Defending a CUTTER is your only responsibility
2. Defending a SCREENER you are a help defender

DEFINE Numbering System

4 People Involved in Each Screening Action



WHY LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT

- 1. Timeouts**
- 2. Play Call During Games**
- 3. Quick Turnaround in Tournaments**



XAVIER

BASKETBALL

**SPECIAL
SITUATIONS**

Why is END OF GAME SITUATIONS even a topic for a clinic when we all as coaches know that the first possession after tip-off, or the third possession after the 8:00 media, or the 43rd possession of the game all have the same point value potential?

It's because everything gets magnified at the END OF THE GAME. Pressure seems greater. Emotions run higher. Coaches have to talk louder in timeouts because everyone in the crowd has stopped text messaging and is now laser locked onto the action. Referee's huddle and make sure they are all on the same page. The number of in game distractions increase.

It as become evident to me that the teams who are BEST at EOG's are teams that throughout the course of the game have treated every single possession with the same respect as the very last ones. These teams appear to be oblivious to any of the mentioned distraction and repeatedly execute game winning situations when the pressure is the greatest. They display a composure that others don't. Their coach has a control that others don't. Their players demeanor is consistent. They are in character. As a result THEY WIN more than they LOSE!!

Once you establish that approach it is still imperative that you have a plan for implementing and executing. That is where we come up with the D.I.E.

- D- Develop your philosophy**
- I- Implement you strategy**
- E- Execute your tactics**



Develop your philosophy

You can attend clinics, buy books, look on-line, or steal from others but to be successful your EOG Philosophy has to be YOURS!!! My grandpa always said “You can’t sell what’s not yours” and he was right. If you don’t believe in it, your players won’t and you’ll LOSE more than you’ll WIN. So utilize all the resources you can to think through as many situations as possible then MAKE THEM YOURS!!!

Some philosophy things to consider:

Are you going to foul on the floor ahead by three points? Does it depend on the time left? Is that time 8 seconds? Is that time 5 seconds?

Are you going to get the ball in your best players hands or use that player as a decoy for option #2? Do you work in practice as if your first option has fouled out already?

Are you going to take a quick two point shot then foul if down three with a certain amount of time?

Are you going to miss a FT on purpose with a lead to force opponent who is out of time outs to rebound and hit a last second shot?

Are you going to run plays that your players already know or draw something up? Are you going to run a “dork” play?

Are you a go with the stats coach? Are you a go with your gut coach? Are you depends-on-the-situation coach?

Are you going to switch all screens? Stay on and play 1-on-1 defense? Trap a ball screen? Change defenses out of the time-out? Show a defense play another defense?

Are you going to put a big player on the inbounds passer or play centerfield?

And the countless other situations that we encounter at the end of game.



IMPLEMENT YOUR STRATEGY

Now that you have your philosophy, you must implement the strategy with your players and your team.

This is where you determine which players on your rosters can perform certain skills... *who can throw it the length of the floor, who can catch that pass, who can dribble from end-line to end-line in five seconds, who can create their own shot, who can throw a lob pass at the rim, who can simply inbound the ball safely*

This is how you are going to teach the skills necessary to be successful when pressure and distractions are at their highest level... *will you devote time in practice to these situations, will you turn on the PA system to simulate crowd noise, will you stop practice in the most stressful moment and work on an EOG,*

This is the plays the you are going to call or the defenses you are going to play to win games in the last few minutes... *beg, borrow, steal from the best, find ones that have worked*

Some great EOG things I've stolen from various coaches:

Throwing tryouts... A coach stood at one end of the court and let players try to throw balls to hit them. Whoever could, was their long throw in girl

Set the shot clock to various times and see who can go score 1-0, 1-1, 2-0, 3-0 etc.

Team worked on saving the ball to their own basket and keeping the ball in play as the clock ran down

Keep away in working on not allowing a team to foul ball handler

Dribbling the ball to various spots on the court to call timeouts

Loose ball scramble to work on creating held ball situations and NOT creating held ball situations

Deck of Cards



EXECUTE YOUR TACTICS

Now that you have a philosophy and a strategy, it is time to **EXECUTE** your tactics to win the game.

Your very first thought should be that **HOW** you say what you are going to say is just as (if not more so) important as **WHAT** you say!!! Your demeanor and your tone will be directly reflective of how your team will perform.

Are you talking to them in the same manner?

Are you on the same spot on the floor as you normally are for timeouts?

Are you using a wipe board or not?

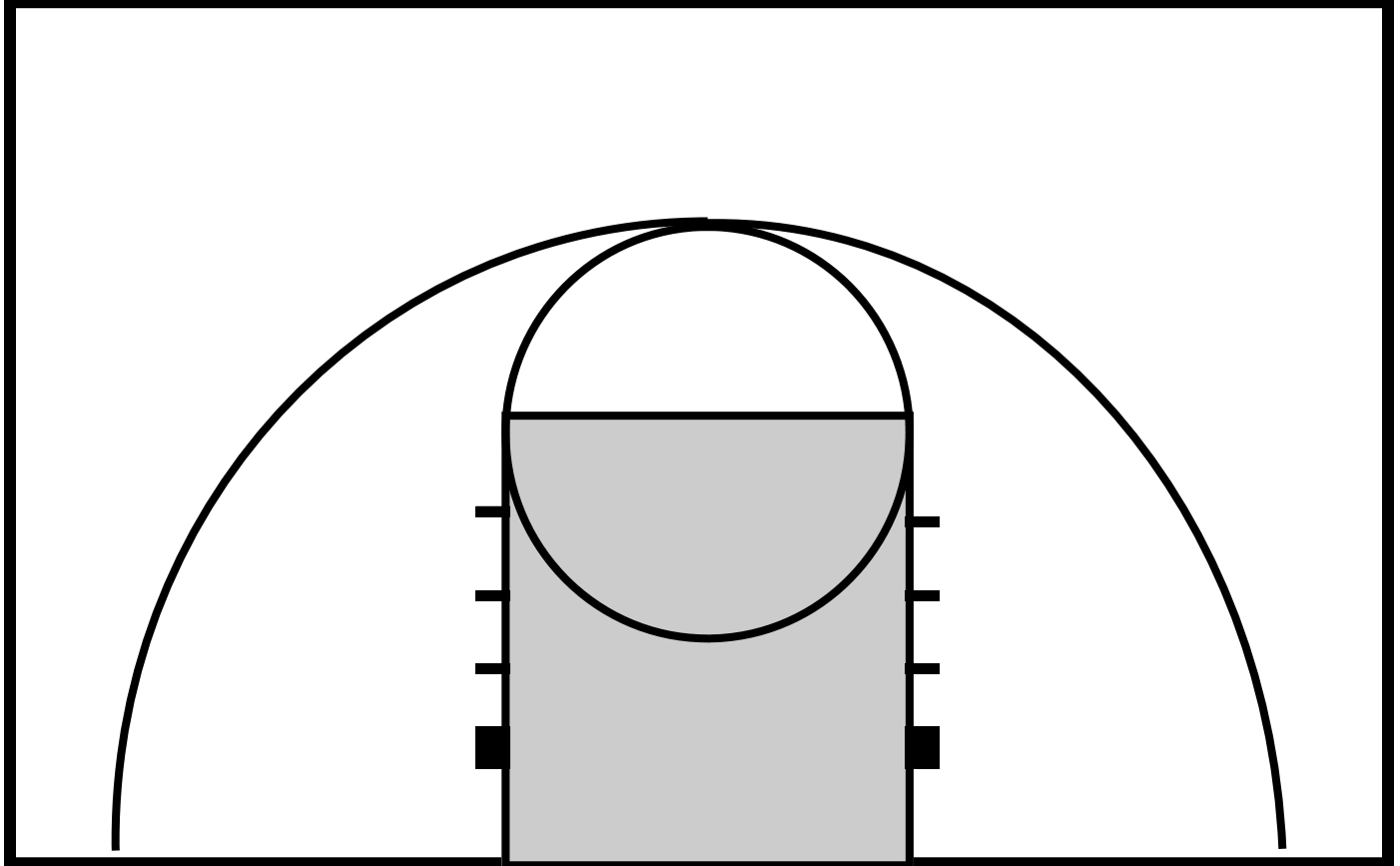
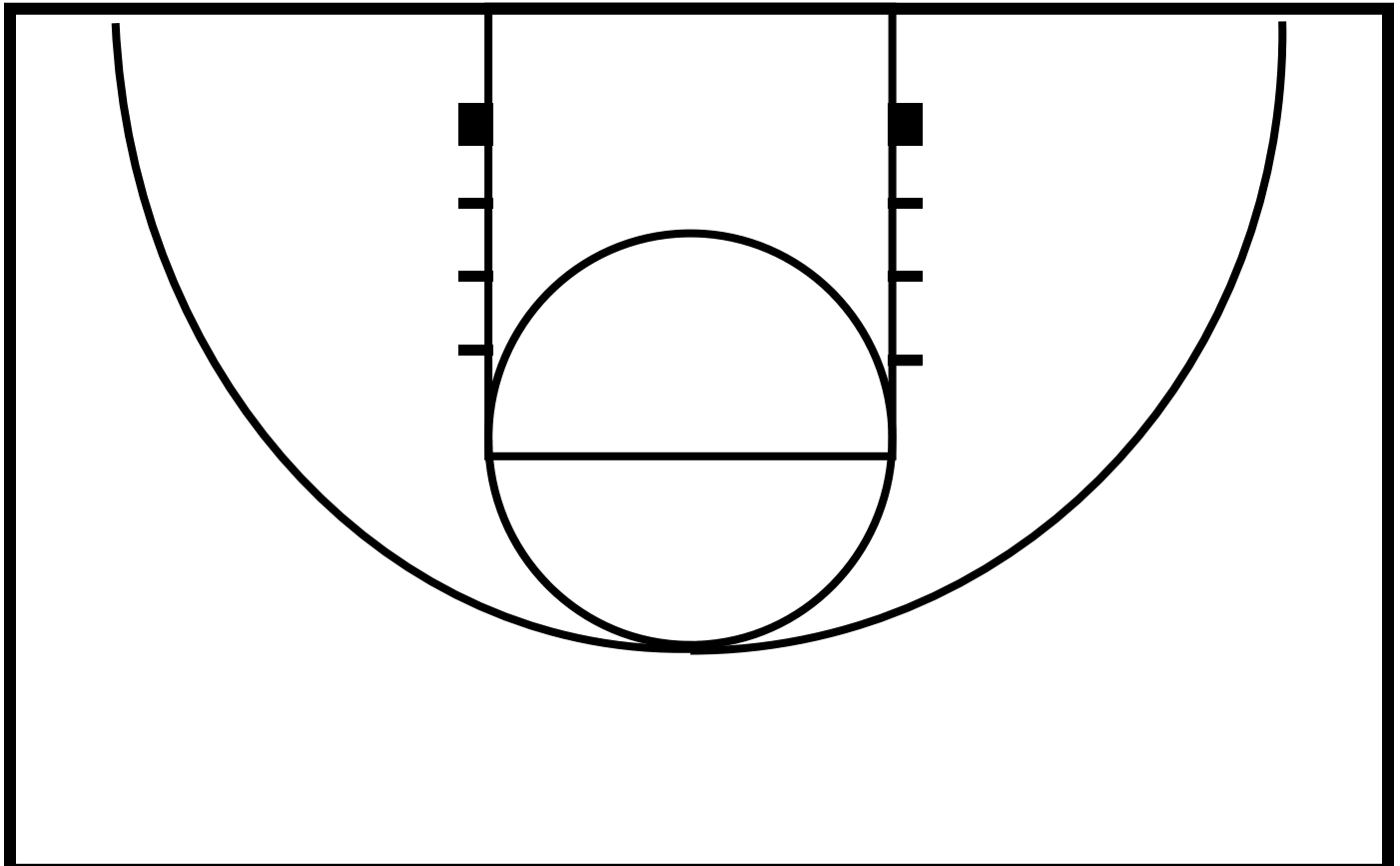
Are your assistants scrambling and frantic in your ear?

Are the subs in their 'normal' huddle mode?
(if it's not how you successfully practiced it, then don't expect them to perform in the game)

Do you have a method for knowing the number of fouls on each team, who has the possession arrow, have you pointed out in the various arena's where the game/shot clocks are located?

Do YOU know the situation?





Pack Line Playbook: Lock And Trail

Defense

Featured

Film Room

Man to Man Defense

December 21, 2018

By Randy Sherman



Pack Line Playbook: Defending single and double down screens within the Pack Line Defense using the “Lock and Trail” technique.

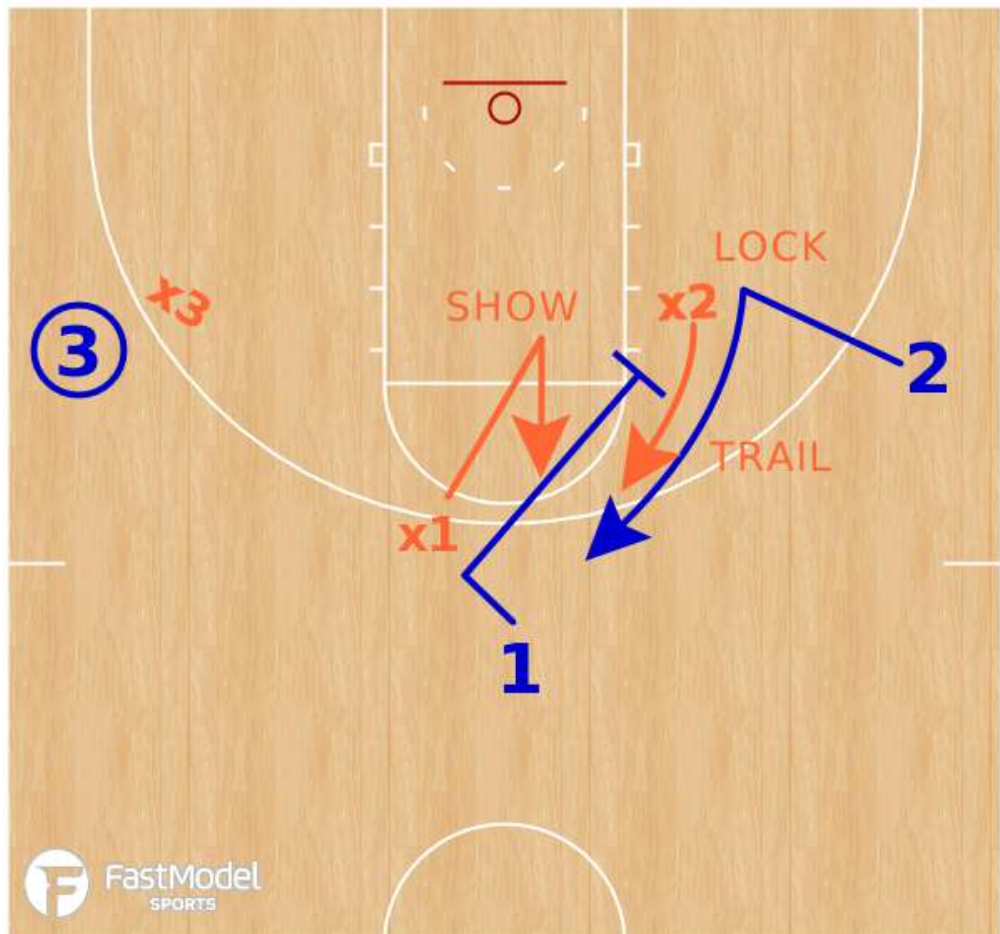
The Pack Line style of defense features some unwavering absolutes. There are specific rules and techniques that change little from game-to-game or opponent-to-opponent. The mindset is to do a things and do them well.

We will begin exploring these techniques, beginning with defending **down screens**, with a bit of help from the quintessential Pack Line program – the University of Virginia Cavaliers.

Lock and Trail

The first part of defending down screens Pack Line-Style is the “Lock and Trail” technique. This refers to the cutter’s defender “locking” into his/her man then “trailing” the cutter as he/she uses the screen.

In the diagram of the **single down screen** below, X2 is being screened. He/she has no help responsibilities at this moment. X1 must alert X2 a down screen is coming. X2’s first commandment is to be physical with the cutter; get into him/her. Do not let 2 reject the screen and go backdoor. Give a “one way go.” X1 must be wary of 1 slipping to the basket.



When 2 uses the screen X2 tightly trails. Do not “dance” at the screen and if you do get screened, not “melt” on the screen. Get off the screen and get back into the play to contest a potential **catch-and-shoot**.

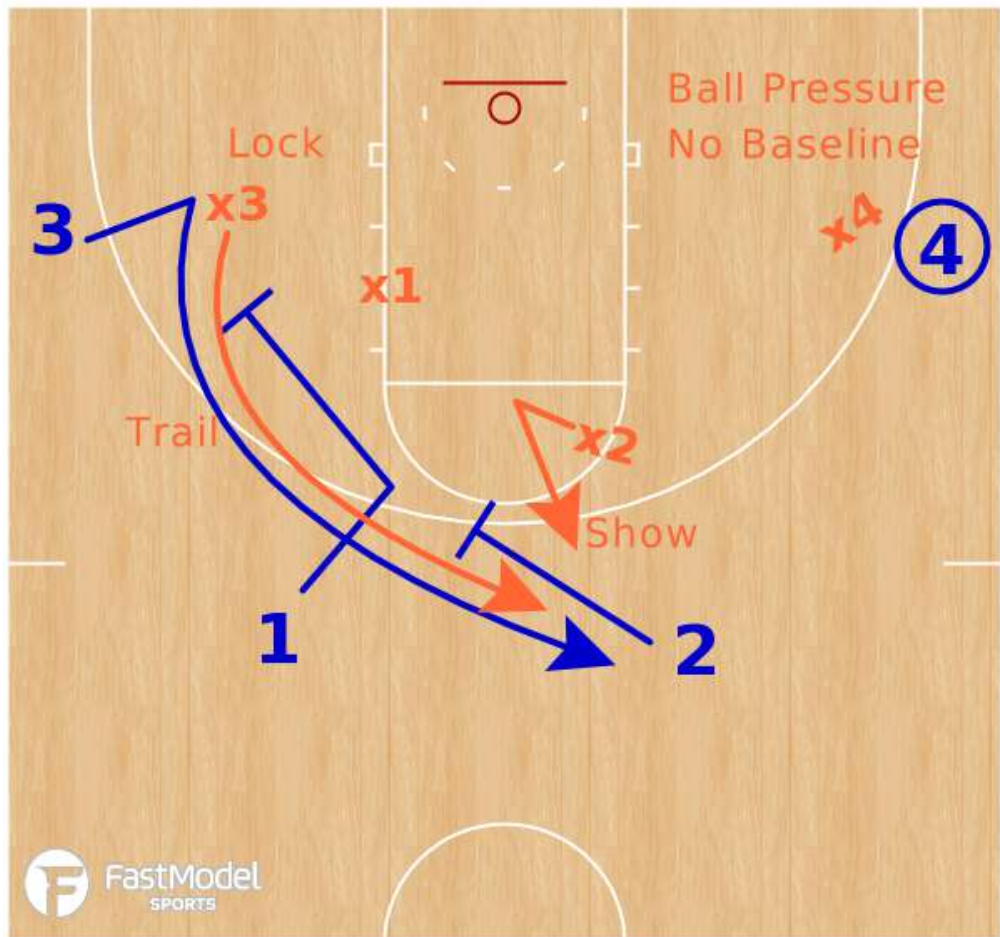
Show and Recover

Pack Line is a “team” defense and teammates must be connected and help one another. The second vital part of defending the down screen with “Lock and Trail” is the “show” from the screener’s defender.

In the diagram above X1 is guarding the screener and must provide a “contact show” to stop a potential **curl** by 2. They must also be prepared to contest a catch-and-shoot should X2 be taken care of by the screen. A quick show can alter the pass to the cutter and buy time for the cutter’s defender get back into the play. After “showing” X1 must recover to their man.

Staggered Screens

Lock and Trail plus Show and Recover are also part of defending staggered double screens. Little changes for the cutter’s defender (X3 below) – lock into the cutter, be physical and do not let them reject. Tightly trail the cutter when they use the screens.



X1, who is defending the first screener, can “zone up” and protect the basket from any of the screeners slipping into the paint. X1’s presence means X2 can make an even more aggressive show on the cutter.

Game Footage

Perhaps no team in the country gets more of what is taught in their practice gym to game nights than Virginia. In the videos below UVA demonstrates the Lock and Trail and Show and Recover in text fashion. The first video shows the techniques against single down screens. Watch these videos with volume up for tips and pointers!

The second video shows the techniques applied to staggered double down screens.

Drills

Head over to the [PlayBank](#) and add these two drills for the techniques discussed here to your FastDraw library.

Screen Away 3v3 – Working on the Lock and Trail plus Show and Recover using 3v3 and offensive restrictions.

Staggers 4v4 – Working on the Lock and Trail plus Show and Recover versus staggered screens using 4v4 and offensive restrictions.

Continue the conversation:

For help with practice planning and implementation of a Pack Line or Pressure Man man-to-man defense, [join our community of basketball coaches!](#) Follow [#PackLine](#) on Twitter!

Any questions: [Contact me](#). Happy to talk hoops any time day or night! [Sign up here](#) for our twice-

Bio

Latest Posts



Randy Sherman

Randy Sherman is the owner and founder of Radius Athletics - a basketball coaching consulting firm - where he consults with basketball coaches at all levels on coaching philosophy, practice planning, Xs & Os and teaching a conceptual style of basketball. While a head basketball coach at the the interscholastic level, Sherman's teams won 197 games in nine seasons.



Virginia Cavaliers guard Kihei Clark (0) during the NCAA Basketball game between the George Washington Colonials and the Virginia Cavaliers at John Paul Jones Arena on Sunday November 2018 in Charlottesville, VA. Jacob Kupferman/CSM(Credit Image: © Jacob Kupferman/CSM via ZI Wire)

Pack Line Playbook: On To Off

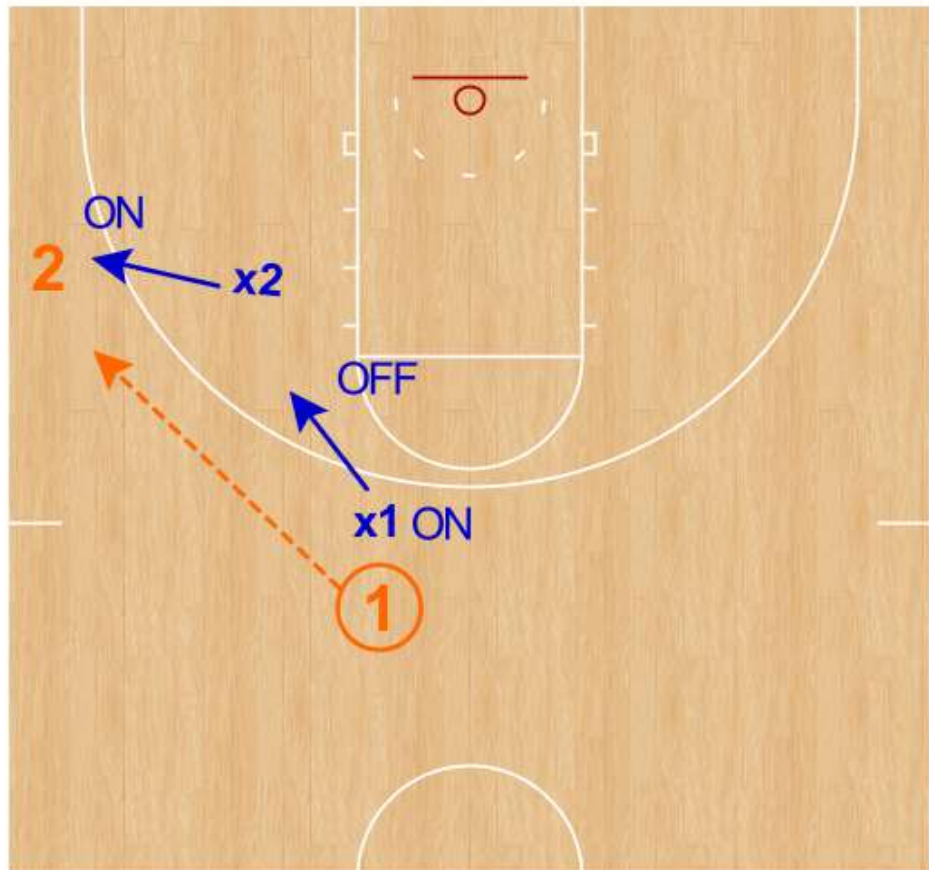
Defense Featured Man to Man Defense January 10, 2019

By Randy Sherman



In Pack Line defense, the ability to go “on-to-off” (and back on again) on airtime is vital to protecting the paint and contesting shots.

Moving on airtime of the pass is vital to any defense. There is no scenario in which the ball moves a defender does not. In **Pack Line defense** teammates must move in a connected nature to press the ball and shrink gaps. Moving “on-to-off” (and back on again) is a foundational skill which Pack players must master.



X1 is applying ball pressure (ON)
X2 is offering support in the gap (OFF)

1 passes to 2 and on airtime of the pass X2 moves to ON (ball) and X1 moves to OFF (gap/help)

In the diagram above, X1 is defending the ball (ON). Per Pack Line rules, X1 is the only player permitted to be outside the “pack line” – an imaginary arch inside the three point line.

While one pass away X2 is in the “pack” and shrinking **gap space** by their positioning (OFF). They are about halfway between ball and man. In short, X2’s positioning is their help. They help even before needed to **deter** drives.

When Player 1 passes to Player 2, the two defenders must work in concert and react on airtime while moving from on-to-off and from off-to-on. Keyword: **airtime**. The movement of the ball via the pass moves you from either off-to-on or on-to-off.

One of the fundamental tenets of Pack Line defense is **“don’t get stretched.”** If X1 were outside pack guarding the ball (ON) and did not sprint to gap/help (OFF) on airtime of the pass from 1 to 2 gap space is exposed and the defense becomes stretched. Player 2 could drive middle through the gap. It is being overly “man-conscious” when OFF that exposes space.

Pack Line Killers: Getting stretched

By moving on-to-off the perimeter defenders build a wall around the paint and offensive players cannot see gap space. If offensive players see space, they will attack it. When moving from ON to OFF it is better to be early than late.

Pack Line Killers: Being late to positioning

The player moving ON must close out to prevent the rhythm shot. The player moving OFF must get gap/help to shrink space. In the clip below the Virginia Cavaliers, the Pack Line gold standard,

<https://gph.is/2C9ODi9>

You can see the two highlighted players going on-to-off-to-on and forcing a contested shot over the top of the defense.

The next clip shows three Virginia players moving with connectivity to apply ball pressure, shrink and fight against penetration. Same result, a contested shot over the top of an organized defense. moving on-to-off the three highlighted defenders keep the ball from penetration the paint.



Going on-to-off is the fundamental skill for the top objective of Pack Line defense – building a wall around the paint. It requires great activity and alertness. Players must take as much pride in guarding off-the-ball as they do while guarding the ball.

Follow the link below and add this drill to introduce and apply the on-to-off and off-to-on Pack Line fundamental to your FastDraw library.





Drill: 3v3 On-To-Off – A 3v3 drill to teach moving from on to off to back on again on airtime of the pass.

Further Pack Line reading: [Pack Line Playbook: Lock And Trail](#)

Continue the conversation:

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Bio	Latest Posts
   	<p>Randy Sherman</p> <p>Randy Sherman is the owner and founder of Radius Athletics - a basketball coaching consulting firm - where he consults with basketball coaches at all levels on coaching philosophy, practice planning, Xs & Os and teaching a conceptual style of basketball. While a head basketball coach at the interscholastic level, Sherman's teams won 197 games in nine seasons.</p>

Florida State Seminoles guard Trent Forrest (3) during the NCAA College Basketball game between the Florida State Seminoles and the Virginia Cavaliers at John Paul Jones Arena on Saturday Jan 5, 2019 in Charlottesville, VA. Jacob Kupferman/CSM(Credit Image: © Jacob Kupferman/CSM via ZUMA Wire)

Pack Line Playbook: Post Defense

Defense Featured Film Room January 25, 2019

By Randy Sherman



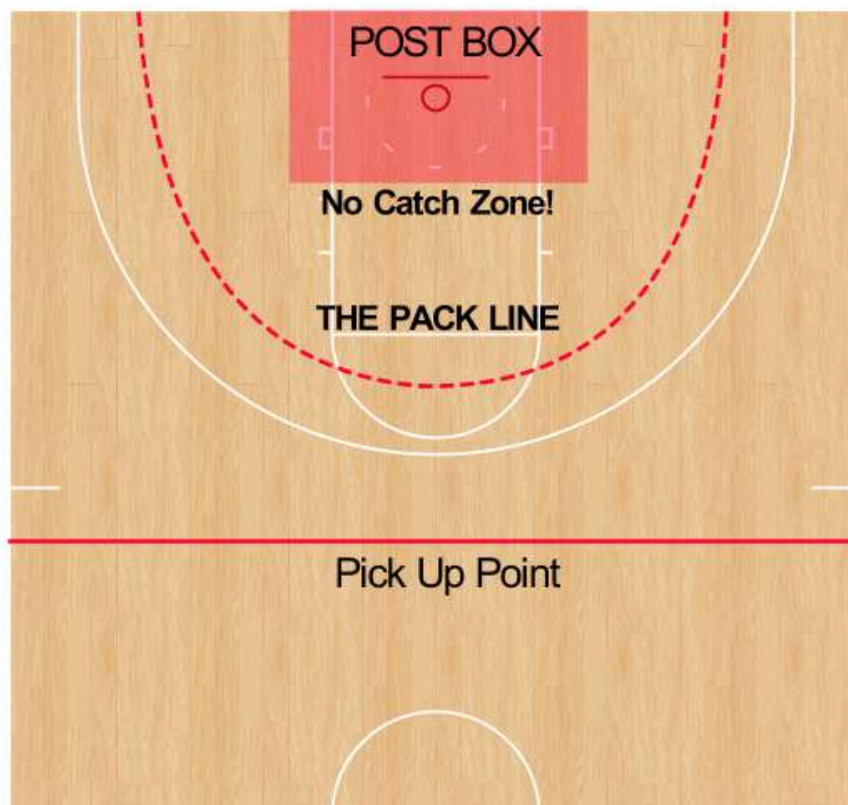
Three post defense concepts – walling up, choking the post and post traps – from the Pack Line defense.

The focal point of post defense within Pack Line principles is to limit deep catches. Pack Line teams want to keep the ball out of the “Post Box” altogether (see diagram below). When the ball does enter the Post Box there is a singular mission – get it out.

Defending the Post Box and playing **post defense** in the Pack Line system requires effort and physicality. It also requires help from **perimeter defenders** as well as the execution of three Pack Line fundamental concepts – walling up, “choking” the post and post traps. We’ll take a look at these with the help of the Pack Line archetype Virginia Cavaliers.

Radius Athletics

Pack Line



Walling Up

Play in a 3/4 front position when guarding the post with the ball on the wing. Again, the mission is keep the ball out of the Post Box. The defense shall allow no post feeds from the top. Do not gam for steals or make yourself too vulnerable to lobs, but have an arm in the passing lane to deter ent

Post defenders should be physical forcing the post out of the Post Box for a catch. But catches in Post Box do happen. When the entry is inevitable, the post defender must “pop behind” and “wall Get hands up and chest out. Brace for contact and move your feet. Virginia calls this becoming a ‘ on wheels.” Keep feet moving and arms up to stay between the ball and basket.

Featured Video – “Virginia Cavaliers – Pack Line Defense – Post Defense” features game examples and teaching tips for the three post defense concepts in this article. 

Choking The Post

Effective post defense in the Pack Line requires team effort from the post and perimeter players. Guards too play a role in post defense.

First, guards apply suffocating ball pressure so as to disrupt the passer from entering the post. Get their eyes down on you and disrupt sight lines by being dogged on the ball.

Second, when the ball does enter the post strong-side guards reduce the space the post has to operate by “choking” the post.

Drill: 2v2 Choke – Guard/Post combo drill for “choking the post”

In choking the post, the strong-side guard stunts at the post once he/she receives the post entry. While the post has a live dribble. Once the post puts the ball on the floor, the strong-side guard hel “dig” it out. Use a “hard dig” when you are guarding a non-shooter and a “short dig” when you are guarding a shooting threat.

There is a fine line here as the defense wants to disallow a direct pass back out to the feeder from post. Stunt only so far as to not present an easy **catch-and-shoot** three for the feeder. This is personnel driven. With a great shooter on the strong-side there may be no choke at all.

Post Traps

An aggressive option in the Pack Line post defense package is the post trap. This is an all out ass on the ball when it enters the Post Box.

Trap the post with a “big-to-big” post trap. Assuming your team has two “big” in the game and on them is the on-ball post defender, the trap would come from the other “big.”

There are two parts to an effective post trap. First, the on-ball post defender must pop behind and disallow the baseline turn. Second, the “trapper” comes hard with hands high looking to deflect an pass out. Tighten the trap forming a 90° angle with the original post defender. Do not foul on the tr

The three players outside the trap follow these guidelines. The strong-side guard must deny the feeder. The weakside defenders must cover rim and nail and take any cutters coming to those are

Pack Line teams must treat all threats to the Post Box as an emergency. Walling up, choking and trapping the post are ways Pack Line defenses protect and defend this vital real estate.

Further Pack Line reading:





Pack Line Playbook: Lock And Trail

Pack Line Playbook: On To Off

Continue the conversation:

For help with practice planning and implementation of a Pack Line or Pressure Man man-to-man defense, [join our community of basketball coaches!](#) Follow [#PackLine](#) on Twitter!

Any questions: [Contact me](#). Happy to talk hoops any time day or night! [Sign up here](#) for our twice-monthly newsletter.

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January 9, 2019; Chestnut Hill, MA, USA; Boston College Eagles forward Jairus Hamilton (1) and Virginia Cavaliers guard De’Andre Hunter (12) in action during the NCAA basketball game between

Virginia Cavaliers and Boston College Eagles at Conte Forum. Virginia won 83-56. Anthony Nesmith/CSM(Credit Image: © Anthony Nesmith/CSM via ZUMA Wire)



“Drills to Build the Pack Line Defense”

*Regardless of what you run on offense or defense, you must have a defined system you believe in

- ❖ Your team must have an identity
- ❖ Everyone in your league should know what you’re about
- ❖ When you have a system, it gives your players answers and accountability to what they’re doing
 - For example, we don’t give up baseline – if you give up baseline you understand you’re coming out of the game
- ❖ It simplifies scouting
 - Identify the common offensive actions you face and teach a standard way to defend
 - Start at the beginning of the season practicing these actions in your shell drill
 - This allows you to focus on your opponent’s offensive concepts (rather than detailed set plays) when going over the scouting report
- ❖ Your system should create “Regenerative Learning” (Tony Dungy), where upperclassmen can teach underclassmen

*Why play the Pack Line?

- ❖ On offense, kids are way better ball handlers and way worse without the ball in their hands compared to 20 years ago

*There is nothing “soft” about Xavier’s Pack Line:

- ❖ Aggressive
- ❖ Ball pressure
- ❖ Smart positioning off the ball

*Pack Line

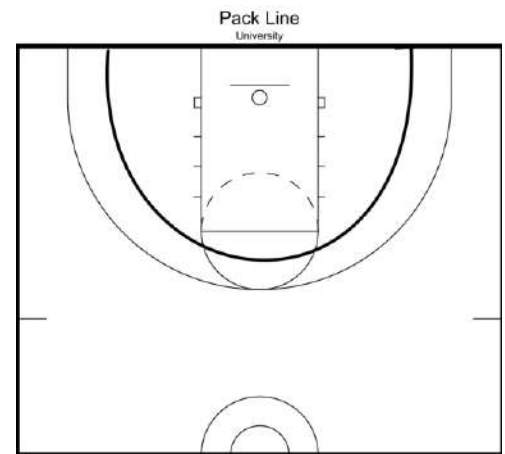
- ❖ 16-17’ from the basket, mirrors the 3 pt line
- ❖ Tape it down every day before practice

*Rules

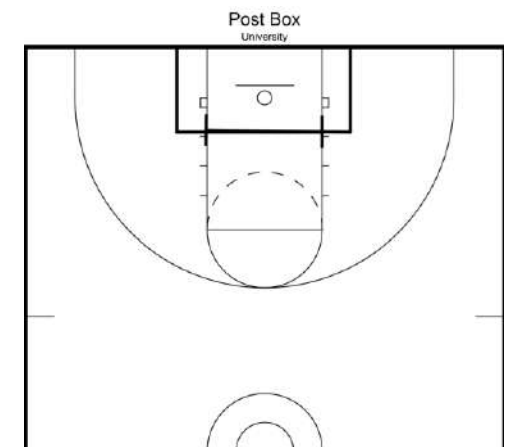
- ❖ GOLDEN RULE: You must have two feet inside the PL when your man does not have the ball
 - Only two exceptions:
 - Your man becomes a cutter
 - Your man becomes a ball screener
- ❖ On-ball defender must play with extreme ball pressure
- ❖ On-ball defender CANNOT get beat baseline under any circumstances, nor can he get beat in a straight line (from a poor close out)
 - It’s all about what you emphasize: A Xavier basketball player WILL NEVER get beat baseline – this is non-negotiable!

*Post Defense

- ❖ Tape the “Post Box” down every day before practice also
 - Rectangle 1.5’ off the lane running across the 2nd hash mark



Pack Line: 16-17' from basket



Post Box: 1.5' outside of lane across 2nd hash

- ❖ General Rule: Post defender should be positioned “¾ on the high side”
- ❖ The post defender uses a clenched fist arm bar to push his man out of the “Post Box”
- ❖ If your man catches the ball in the post:
 - “Pop Back” (jump to play from behind) and “Wall Up” (show the referee your hands)

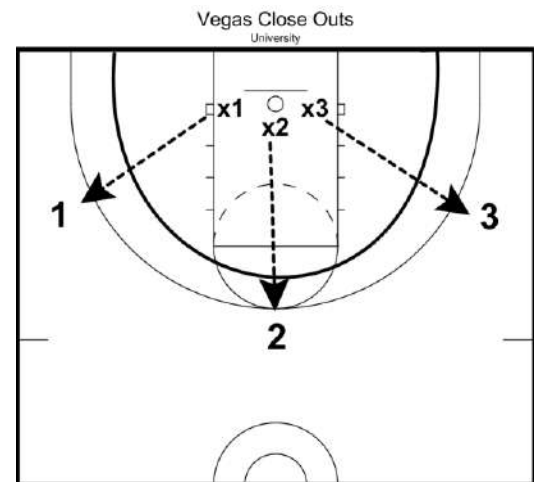
***Fundamentals & Drills**

- ❖ Positioning on the ball
 - Extreme ball pressure – make the dribbler as uncomfortable as possible
 - Take away vision
 - Unacceptable to ever get beat baseline or in a straight line

- ❖ Positioning off the ball
 - Player must have two feet inside the PL
 - “Open” stance in helpside positioning
 - Helpside defender wants to form a “Flat Triangle” between his man and the ball
 - This is called “being in your gap”
 - Because the off-ball defender’s gap is always changing, he must be able to see both man and ball at all times – he must “be in two places at once”
 - “Jump & Swipe” when moving from on-ball to off-ball position... Why?
 - Puts you in better help position
 - May get a piece of the ball (Ronald Nored from Butler made a career off doing this)

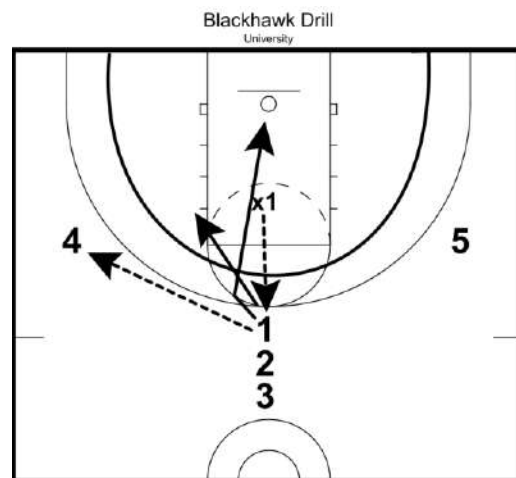


- ❖ Close Out
 - ****One of the most important fundamentals to this defense! You must work on this every single day (including pre-game warm-ups)**
 - Xavier Way: “Close out with two high hands”
 - Why “two high hands” instead of one?
 - Discourages rhythm shots and quick passes over the top
 - Creates a mentality to “take away vision”
 - Drill: “VEGAS CLOSE OUTS”
 - We do this drill every single day (practice, shoot around, pre-game warm-ups, etc.)
 - Each defender tosses the ball to offensive player
 - Xavier Way to close out:
 - 2 High hands, elbows bent, low stance, short/choppy steps, stay square, yell “SHOT” early
 - The offense will catch, triple-threat, jab step and rip the ball through a couple of times



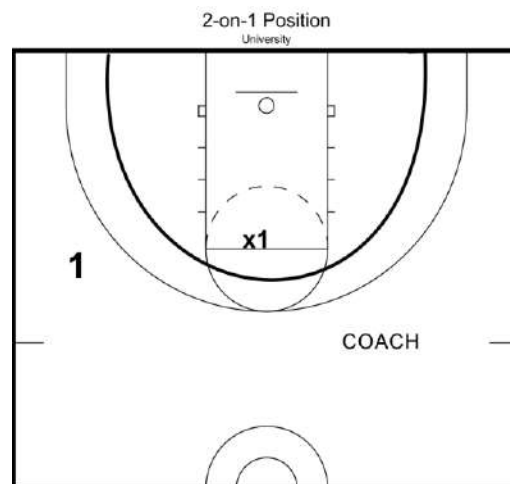
❖ Drill: “BLACKHAWK”

- Great drill from Sean Miller that incorporates closing out, ball pressure, jumping to help position, fronting cutters, and closing out from help position
- ***Closing out from a help position is one of the toughest fundamental to master defensively***
 - x1 throws ball to first offensive player (1) in line and close out
 - 1 can pass to either wing, x1 must “jump and swipe” to get to appropriate help position, 1 basket cuts, x1 must use arm bar and “bump cutter” to the logo (below the FT line)
 - Wing will pass to next offensive player in line (2), x1 must close out again – this time from a help position
 - After two or three passes from wing to top to wing back to top, the Coach will yell “LIVE”
 - Two players play 1-on-1 off the close out
 - Offense has 2-3 dribble max to score
 - x1 must get a stop to complete the drill – if offense scores, x1 restarts drill
- Coaching Points:
 - Make sure x1 keeps proper fundamentals during the dummy period of the drill



❖ Drill: “2-on-1 Position”

- Coach starts with the ball, x1 is matched up with 1
- Coach can pass to 1, dribble him out, cut him through, etc. forcing x1 to play on and off the ball
- Drill lasts for a prescribed amount of time, no one looks to score – just focus on constant offensive movement
- Coaching Points:
 - Make sure x1 plays with proper fundamentals throughout the drill:
 - Close outs from ball to help & help to ball
 - Jump & Swipe
 - Bump Cutter
 - Protect against baseline & straight line drives
 - Intense ball pressure



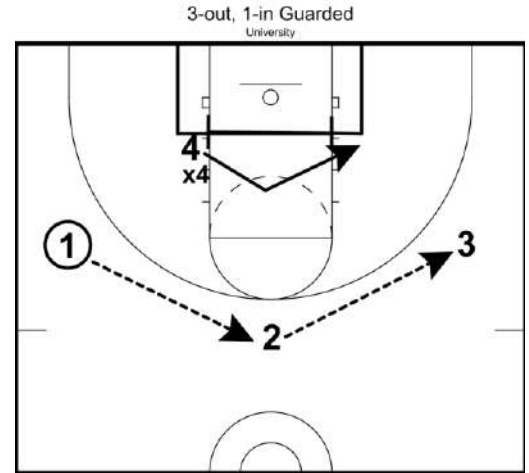
❖ Post Positioning

- Golden Rule: NEVER GIVE UP POST FEEDS FROM THE TOP
 - Post defender should always be “on the line, up the line” when ball is up top
- A post defender’s work should be done before the ball is ever passed
 - Use an armbar to push the post player out of the “post box” before the catch
 - Play $\frac{3}{4}$ on the high side (except if player flashes to the high post)
- On a post catch:
 - “Pop Back”
 - Move from $\frac{3}{4}$ high-side position to behind, keep a boxer’s stance
 - “Wall Up”
 - As post makes move, show the ref your hands and hold position with your lower body and try to walk through the offensive player
 - “Walk through the shooter!”

- “Walling up” also provides great box out positioning and prevents easy offensive rebounds
- “Show the ref your hands and foul the hell out of him with your hips”
- Undisciplined post defenders try to block their own man’s shots
 - The on-ball post defender should never leave his feet when walling up, even when the shot goes up
 - For every one block a player may get, he’ll pick up three fouls
 - Great shot blockers get their swats from a help position

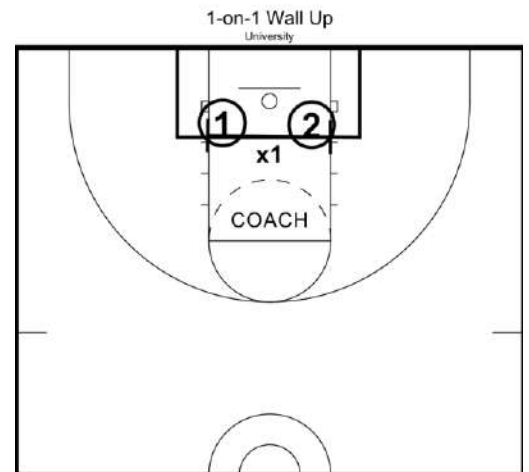
❖ Drill: “3-OUT, 1-IN GUARDED”

- Drill begins with ball on the wing
- Offensive post tries to get position inside the box, post defender plays $\frac{3}{4}$ on the high side and uses arm bar to force a catch outside the box
- On a pass from wing to top, post defender plays “on the line, up the line” as offensive post tries to leg whip and seal, post defender can’t play too high and give up lob
- On a pass from the top to opposite wing, the post defender hits offensive post with an arm bar and “peels” to resume $\frac{3}{4}$ high side positioning outside the post box



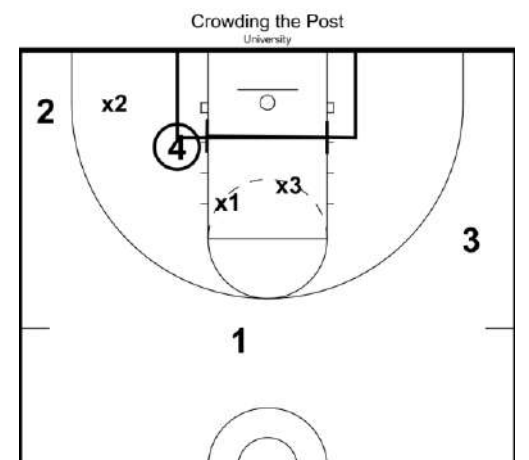
❖ Drill: “1-on-1 WALL UP”

- Drill works on “walling up” against shot attempts from offensive rebounds
- Coach will lob ball up off of backboard to offensive player 1
- 1 will offensive rebound the ball, x1 will “wall up” and try to push 1 out of the post box with his hips
 - “Show the ref your hands”
 - Do not leave your feet!
- 1 does not try to shoot, rather just battle for shooting position inside the post box
- After a few pivots, 1 will pass the ball back to Coach who will then repeat the drill on the opposite side with player 2
- Run this drill for a prescribed number of reps
- Optional conclusion to drill: x1 has to finish drill by taking a charge from either 1 or 2 lowering their shoulder
- Coaching Point:
 - So many offensive players will throw up bad lay-up attempts either because their feet aren’t set, or because their positioning is poor in relation to the basket

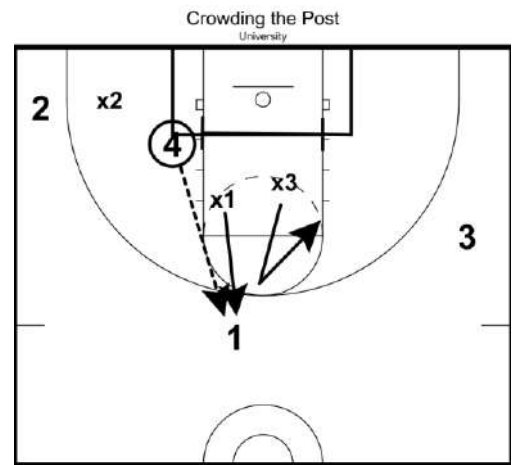


❖ Defending the Post from the Perimeter

- “Crowding the Post”
 - Requires great COMMUNICATION!
 - All defenders have an open stance
 - Must be in “two places at once”
 - “See both” post player and man
 - Be able to close out correctly on pass out
 - x2 has “butt to baseline”

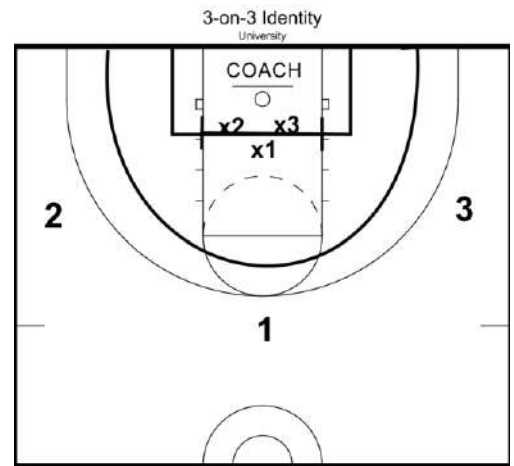


- x3 will help on x2's man:
 - Most likely pass out of post is to top
 - x3 will "jump and swipe" on x2's man to hold him up until x2 closes out



❖ Drill: "3-ON-3 IDENTITY"

- Great drill Xavier runs through almost daily
- Coach is under basket and passes ball to one of the three offensive players
- Offense has :20 to score
 - Offense can do whatever they want to score but ball screen
 - 3 dribble max per touch
- Early season practice: 4-5 possessions for each team
- In-season practice: 2-3 possessions for each team
- Scoring:
 - 3 pt shot = +3
 - 2 pt shot = +2
 - TO = -1 for offense
 - Foul = -1 for defense (still same possession)
 - Off. Rebound = +2
 - If ball ever goes inside of post box (not including offensive rebound) = +2 (still same possession)



❖ Drill: "3-OUT, 1-IN IDENTITY"

- Same rules as above, just add post player and post defender

❖ Transition Defense

- 1/3 of all possessions in a game are transition
- It is virtually impossible to put any pressure on the ball in these situations
- Xavier Way: 1 & 2 never offensive rebound, always sprint back – no exceptions
 - Coaches get themselves into trouble when they start making exceptions for certain match-ups

Nike Coaches Clinic – Verona NY - May 2012

Notes from Sean Miller – M2M Defense (aka the Packline)

Prepared by George Seff

There are 7 tenets of defense

1. Transition Defense
2. Guarding the Post
3. Guarding the Perimeter
4. Closing out
5. Help Position (The Packline)
6. Defending on-ball screens
7. Defending off-ball screens

Coach Miller wants to be great at simple defense. His teams get better at defense over the course of the year because he is consistent and repetitive.

1. Transition Defense

Get back as fast as possible. Always want to be playing at least even-sided on defense (5v5).

1 & 2 always get back on the shot. Rebound with 3 players.

Against a “road runner” point guard. One defender slows the ball down, while the others build a wall so that the PG cannot get to the basket.

If a player back pedals on transition defense he pulls them from the game and makes them sit. Players need to sprint back on defense to get to the paint.

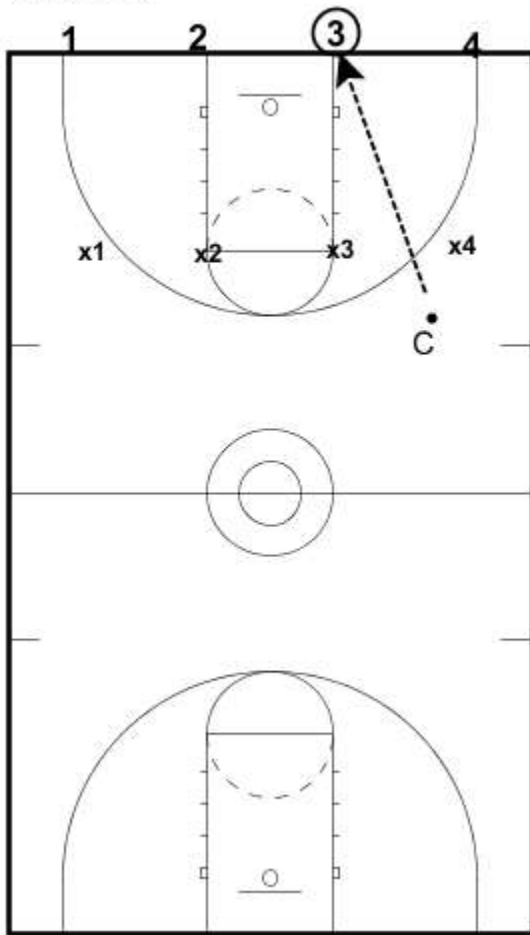
If you are a man down on transition defense – do not MATCH UP – SHAPE UP. Always form a shape – either a column (2 players), triangle (3 players) or diamond (4 players). Top guy slows the offensive PG down.

The trailing defender always goes to either the top of the key, or the side opposite the ball. He does not load to the ball side. The players who got back before him are already doing that.

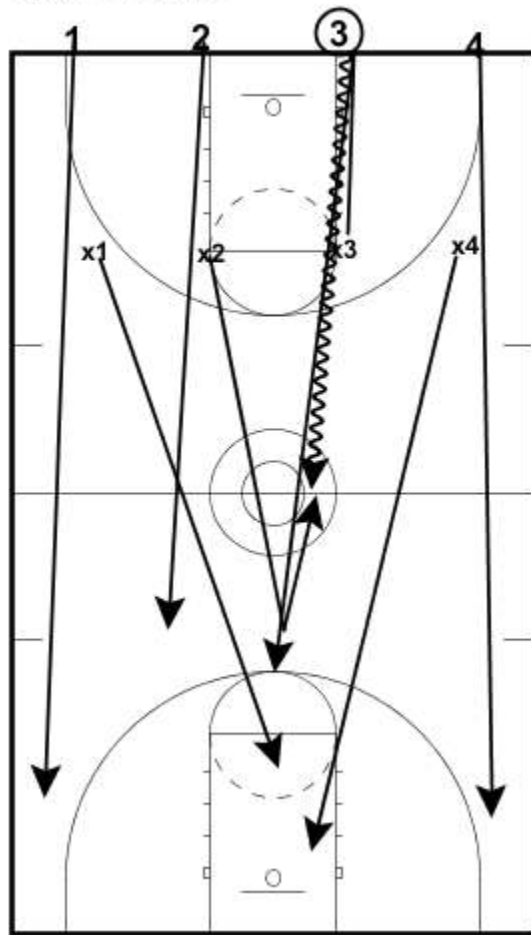
Coach Miller does the typical 4v4 line touch defense transition drill. Sometimes 1 player touches the line and sometimes 2 players touch the line. Sometimes runs this 3v3 too.

4v4 Line Touch Drill

4v4 Line Touch



4v4 Line Touch Action



2. Guard the Post

You need to start all defensive theories based on how you decide to guard the post. The rest of your defense builds on that.

He does "3/4 TO BEHIND" - this means that he starts $\frac{3}{4}$ high defense, then on any lob or pass to the post, the post defender MUST get behind the offensive post play. He does not play $\frac{3}{4}$ or fronting. He plays 3/4 TO BEHIND. The "TO BEHIND" part is important.

Post defender

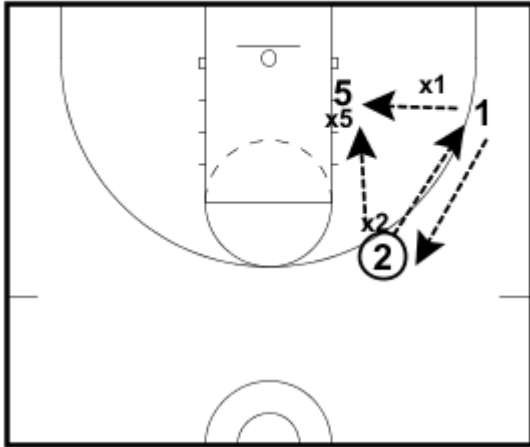
- must discourage the post entry pass.
- must be higher than the offensive player – ie $\frac{3}{4}$ from the high side.
- On the pass to the post, the post defender must jump behind the offensive player and push them out with their belly button.
- On the throw – GET BEHIND

- If the offensive player catches it – take a step back so there is no contact.
- Then, WALL UP so that help can come.
- If he turns to shoot, walk into him with your hands up in the air and your feet taking short choppy steps.

Post Help

- Help never comes from ball side. That is the easiest pass for the post to make and it is a simple shot for the shooter.
- Help always comes from the TOP. Especially when the post dribbles the ball. If he dribbles, crash on the post hard. Try to touch the bottom of the ball if he dribbles.
- Help never comes from the other block. That is a simple pass for a simple shot.
- Crowd from the top and fake from the top and help from the top

Defend the post drill



Defend the post shell drill.
 Players 1 and 2 pass the ball and try to feed the post.
 X5 - 3/4's the post, on the pass hustles behind the offense.
 Top player gives help.
 Corner player fakes at ball if passed in from the top

3. On the Perimeter

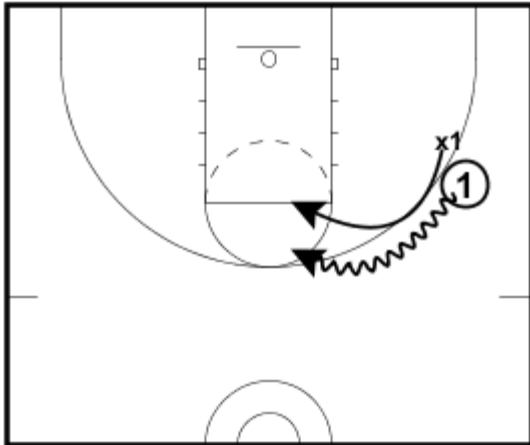
Pressure the ball. Always have someone on the ball

Defender must be able to touch their player. Don't want to be able to reach through them, just touch them.

Never get beat to the outside. Cannot get beat baseline or to the outside.

“Level the ball” – on the drive to the inside, don’t let the ball get to the elbow. Level the ball so the offensive player cannot get to the elbow. Use your feet and body to push the offensive player higher than they want to go.

Level the Ball



LEVEL the ball - Force the ball up high.
Do not let ball get to elbow

4. Closeout

Does lots of closeout drills. Must be consistent on closeout and practice it a lot.

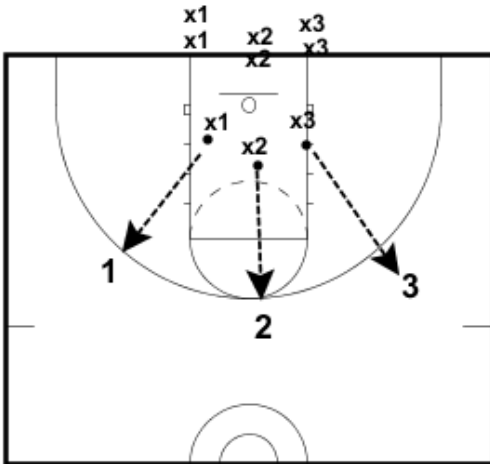
Big steps into choppy steps with hands high. “High Hands” means hands above the shoulders.

Take the jab fake with your back foot. React to fakes with your back foot.

Closeout depends on the player with the ball too. On a good shooter - close tight. On a poor shooter, close looser.

Closeout so that you do not get beat to the outside or baseline.

Vegas Closeout Drill



Defenders form lines
Defenders pass to coaches, managers or other players
Defenders closeout.
Offense moves ball around, and defenders trace the ball with the hands.

He does shell drill with closeouts – offensive player must count to 3 before passing in order to give the defender time to closeout and trace the ball.

5. Packline – Help position

Player on the ball is ON THE BALL.

Players 1 pass away are in the GAP. (Jump to the ball first, and then get within the packline)

Players 2 passes away are in HELP with at least 1 foot in the paint.

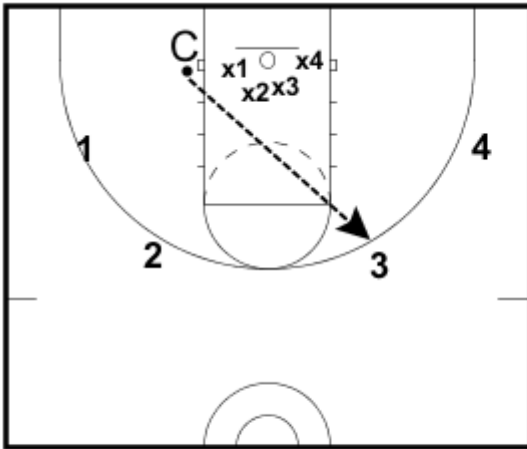
Always need to closeout fast and hard. Should be easy, because you are only coming from help position to closeout. The defender does not need to get to help position and then close out.

He does shell drills for this stuff. He builds and progresses the shell drill. He assigns a coach to the offense of the shell drill. This coach is responsible for getting realistic efforts and effects from the offense.

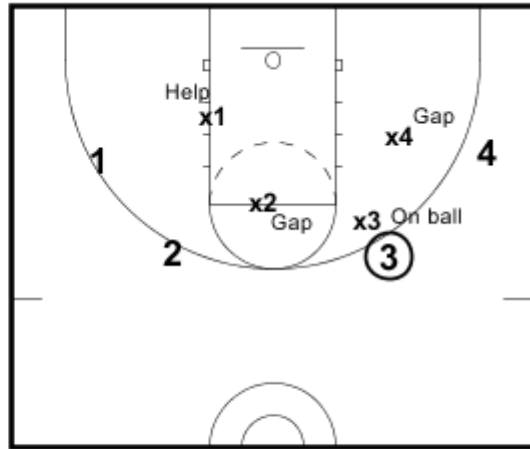
The progression in the shell is:

- Defensive players and coach start under the rim. The coach passes to one of the offensive players. Everyone gets to their spots.
- Offensive players pass the ball, but stand still
- Offense passes, cuts through and rotates to fill
- Offense passes and screens away
- Offense – on guard pass, guard-to-guard interchange. On guard to forward pass, cut through.

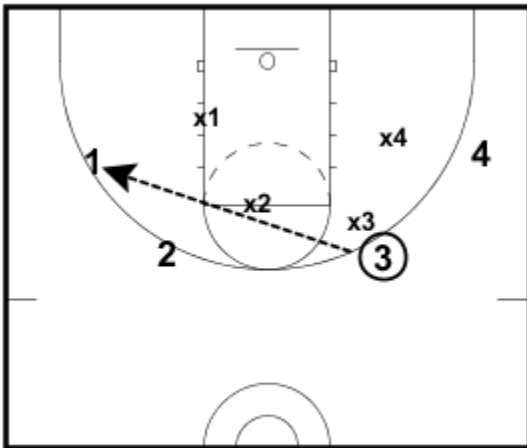
Initial Shell Drill



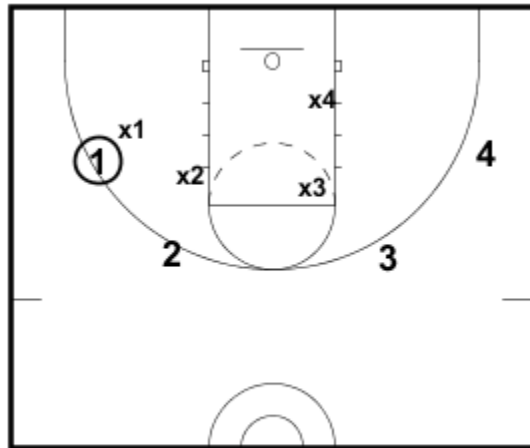
Defenders start under rim.
Coach passes to one of the offensive players
Defenders get into their positions (on ball, gap, help)



Defenders get into their positions.
If ball moves, so do they.



On the pass, rotate



Into new positions

6. Defending Ball Screens

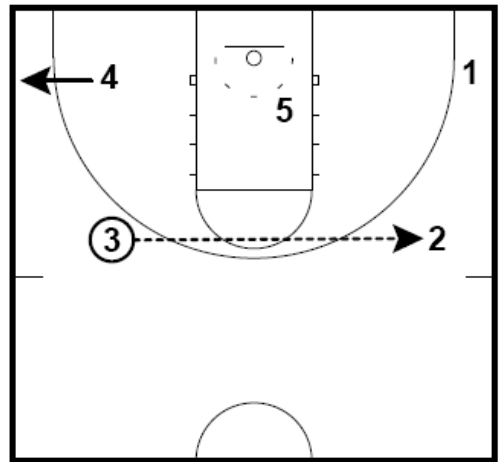
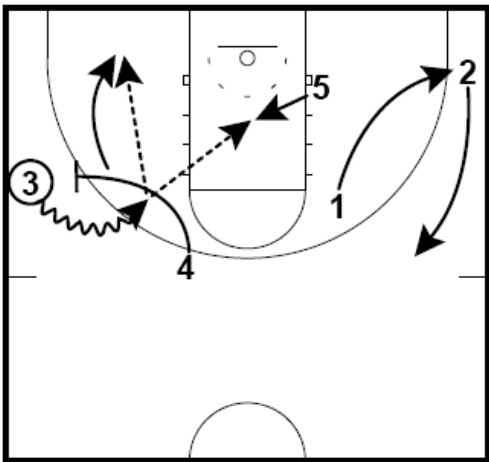
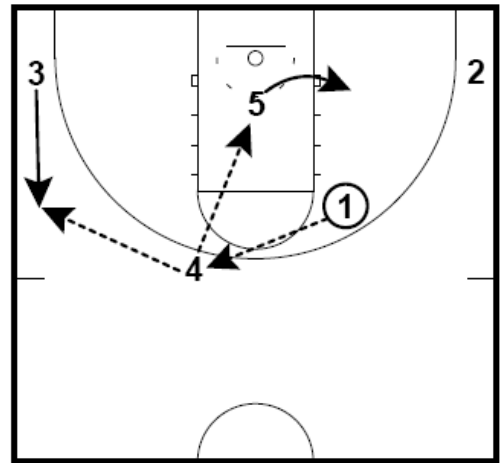
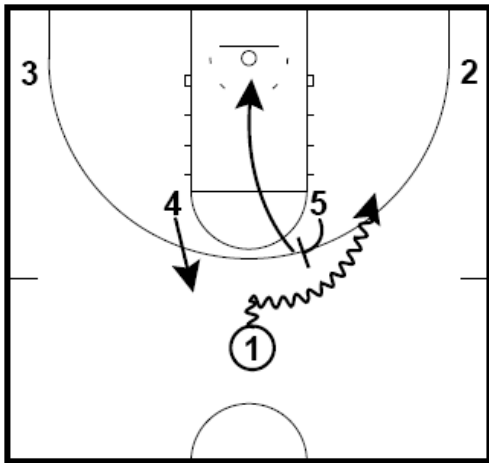
General thoughts on defending the ball screen.

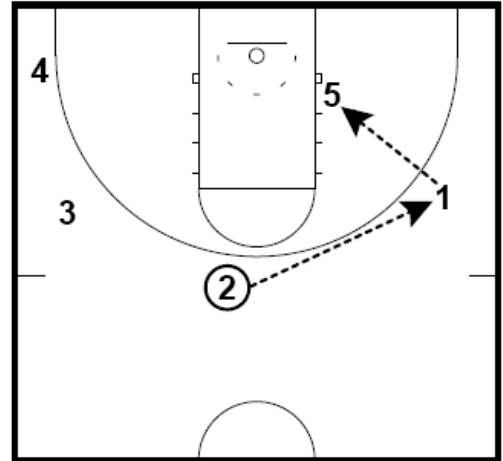
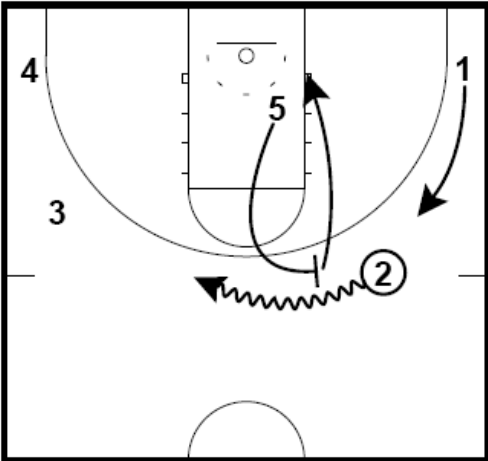
- a) Perimeter players cannot go under a ball screen
- b) Always go over the screen
- c) The screener's defender jumps out to make the cutter go high. This gives perimeter defender more chance to get over the screen.
- d) When the ball screen happens, the other 3 defenders are a critical part of the ball screen defense.

- e) When the ball screen happens, the other 3 defenders form a triangle to stop penetration.
- f) It is OK to switch on the ball screen if that is what you like to do.

Coach Miller does a drill he calls the Van Gundy Drill. In this drill, he has the offense run through a series of screens, while the defense defends them. This drill starts in a Horns set. It then does a screen at the top of the key, followed by a screen on the wing, then a cross court pass, followed by a backscreen, followed by a pass back with a feed to the post. The offense runs this and the defense must defend it. On all the actions, the screener can pick and roll or pick and pop.

Van Gundy Drill – the offensive motion.





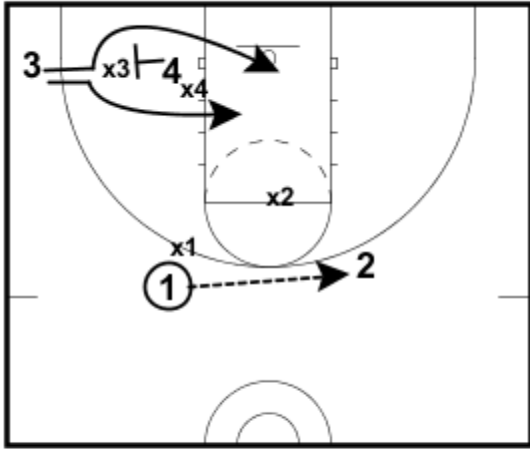
Once the offense knows this motion, he puts the defense on the court and they play shell, followed by live action with the same offense.

7. Defending Off-Ball Screens

If I'm guarding the cutter, I must follow the cutter. I have no packline/gap/help responsibilities until after the screen and cut are done. The screener's defender helps by jamming the cutter or bumping the cutter. All cutters need to get bumped.

For the flex cut, the cutter's defender "sits on" the screener. Reads the cutter and then bumps the cutter, making them go higher or lower than they wanted, and then follows the cutter. The screener's defender must try to give the passer the impression that the defender will steal the ball. Sort of faking to steal the ball all the time. Thus, influencing the pass to the cutter.

Flex Defense



X3 "sits on O4.
X3 reads O3 on the cut.
X3 bumps the cutter to make them go
higher or lower than the cutter actually
wants to go.

On the back screen – you still must stay with the cutter, and always try to stay ball side of the screener.

Basketball Defense - the Pack Line Defense (Sagging Man-to-Man)

The pack-line defense is a variation of man-to-man defense developed by [Dick Bennett](#) for the Washington State University Cougars. Something similar has been used by Tom Izzo at Michigan State and also Sean Miller of Xavier University.

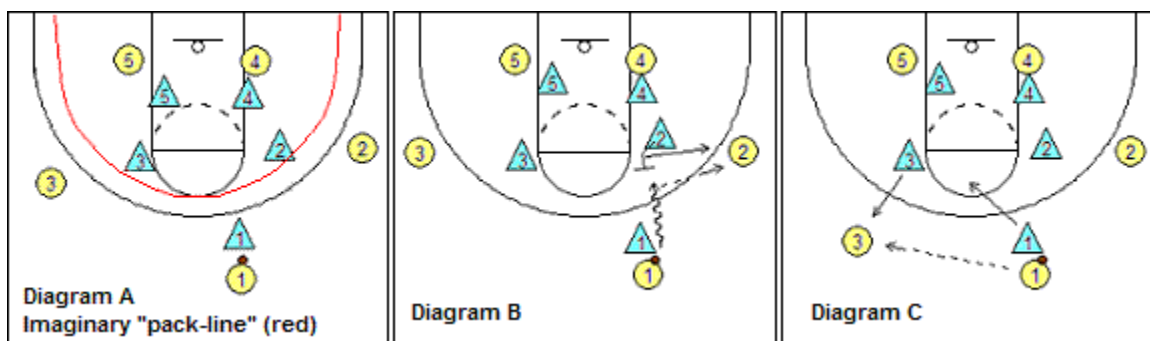
First understand the [basic tenets of pressure man-to-man defense](#). There is probably no reason to use the pack line defense if you have excellent, quick athletes who are good defenders... just keep the intense pressure on, using the standard pressure man-to-man defense. On the other hand, the pack line defense will perhaps help less talented teams "hang in there" with better teams, and can also help a team having difficulty preventing point guard dribble-penetration.

The "pack line"

The pack line man-to-man defense is also called a "sagging" man-to-man defense. The idea is to clog the inside, protect the paint, and prevent dribble-penetration. Instead of defenders (whose man is one pass away) playing on the line in denial, they will sag back inside the imaginary "pack line". The pack line is an imaginary line two feet inside the 3-point arc (see diagram A). You will usually have one defender pressuring the ball outside, and the other four defenders inside the pack line. This allows the pass on the perimeter, but closes down the gaps and prevents dribble-penetration. The prime goal, as in any defense, is to stop the ball.

Pressure the ball

When the ball is on the perimeter, tight, harassing pressure should be applied by the defender. He/she must stop the ball, make the ball-handler uncomfortable, and make it difficult for the ball-handler to see the floor. The on-ball defender does his/her best to contain and pressure the ball, but if he/she is beaten, the pack line gapping defenders are there to give help and stop the ball. So the on-ball defender can have some confidence and trust that his teammates will be there to help, even if the opponent is a little quicker.



Stopping the gaps

It's pretty hard to do all three things... deny, help and recover. In the pack line defense, gapping defenders only have to help and recover, and it is easier because the defender is already in position to give help. Gapping defenders are inside the pack line in a "ball-you-man" position, and must re-position themselves as the ball and the offensive players move. There is one instance wherein all players go into complete deny, and that is when there is a dead ball situation (the ball-handler has used up his/her dribble). Everyone will yell, "dead, dead, dead" and deny the next pass, looking for the 5-second call.

Notice in diagram B above that X1 is pressuring the ball, while the remaining four defenders are inside the pack line. As O1 attempts to dribble-penetrate, the X2 defender slides in to help stop the

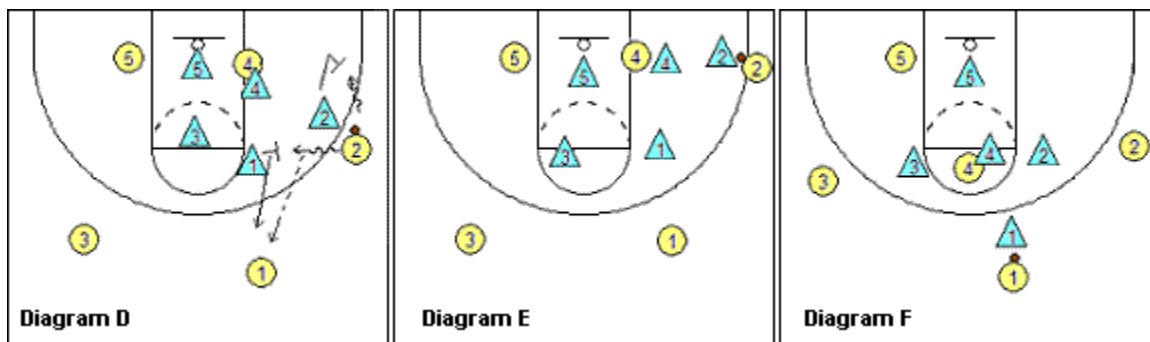
dribble, but then immediately recovers to his own man O2, when the pass is dished back out to O2. In stopping the seams (gaps), the idea is that X2 will fake a trap on the ball just to stop the dribble, but instead of actually trapping, once the ball is stopped, will immediately recover to his man (assuming the pass goes there). Importantly, a gapping defender should always be able to see his own man and never turn his back to his man. Otherwise, his man could flare cut or back-cut uncontested.

Close-out with "high hands"

In diagram C above, the ball is passed to O3. O1 immediately drops back inside the pack line. X3 quickly closes-out and applies pressure on the ball (O3). Defenders should close-out with hands high in order to contest the outside shot, and then assume the usual defensive stance when the ball is put on the floor, or the initial shot is stopped. Yes, it is possible that the offensive player may attempt to dribble around the closing defender, but then we have the seams stopped with our other four defenders. Also, when closing out, this does not mean "flying" or leaping at the ball. The defender must keep his feet on the floor and contain the ball. Once the defender has closed-out on the ball, he/she maintains good pressure on the ball.

Deny baseline

Another thing that is different from standard pressure man-to-man defense is that in the pack line defense, the ball is not forced to the baseline, but rather the baseline is denied. The ball is not actually forced to the middle... it's just that the baseline is denied. In diagram D, X2 overplays to prevent the ball from being dribbled baseline. If O2 dribbles into the top gap, X1 will help stop the seam. As the ball is passed out to O1, X1 closes-out with high hands.



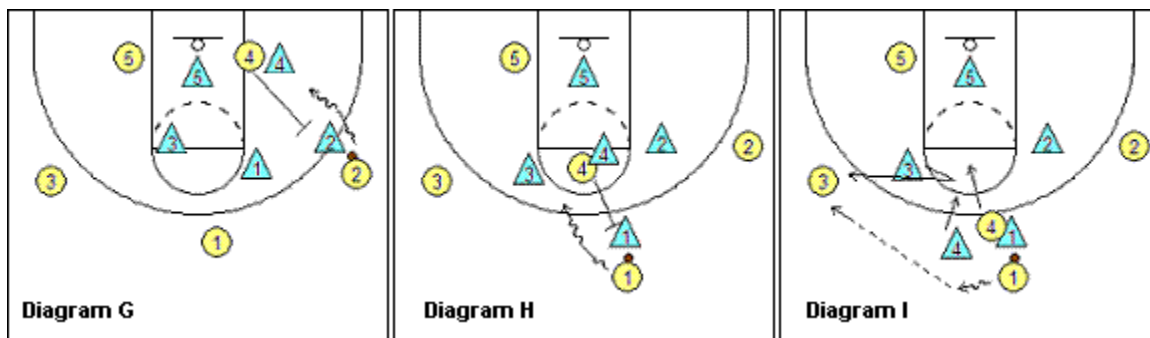
Post defense

In defending the low post, defenders should be full-fronting when the ball is at the top (diagram C), or in the corner (diagram E). When the ball is on the wing (diagram D), a 3/4 front from the top side is used by many coaches. This works with this defense because the wing defenders deny the baseline. If the ball does get into the post, you must decide whether you are going to play this with your post defender sliding between the ball and the basket and playing this 1-on-1, or whether you want to double-team with either the opposite post player, or a perimeter player. This may depend on your opponent... a strong post player, double-team the post. A weak post player and good outside shooters, play the post 1-on-1. Remember that denying and defending the low post has more to do with hard work, aggressiveness, determination, and being tough than technique.

In defending the high post, try to deny that pass as well by 1/2-fronting. The defender must be careful however, not to get pinned outside and get beaten by the lob pass. Notice in diagram F that the pack line defense tends to clog the high post fairly well due to the position of the gapping wing defenders.

Pick and roll screens

The pick and roll is fairly well-defended, as the paint area is clogged with defenders. In diagram G, there is a pick and roll on the wing. Diagrams H and I show a pick and roll with the high post player stepping out to screen and roll. X4 "shows" over the top of the screen to stop the ball and then recovers back to O4. Notice that X3 is in a position to help X4 in stopping O4 cutting inside off the screen. X3 then has to be able to recover to O3 if the pass goes there. Optionally, X2 (instead of X3) could give the initial help on O4 until X4 recovers. As in any defense, communication is key in dealing with screens.



In summary, the pack line defense will help a less-athletic team compete with a stronger, quicker team. And you still can use a full-court press, but then drop back into the half-court pack line defense. There are some disadvantages, however. If you play at a level where there is no shot clock, the offense can take as much time as they want, until they get the good shot, and you allow them to dictate a slower tempo. With the shot clock rule, as the offense gets deeper into the shot clock, there is more urgency to shoot, and the pack line defense is more effective here.

Also, if you are behind late in the game, the offense can "run the clock", unless you come out and start denying passes. So the pack line defense is a problem here. Now you are caught in a situation of having to play deny defense with more pressure on the outside, and this is often difficult to do when you are not used to playing that way. In fact, it is usually easier for a typical pressure-deny man-to-man defense to drop back and play the pack line defense, than vice-versa.

Some teams might want to use both... the usual [man-to-man pressure defense](#) (call it "Red"), and the pack line defense (call it "Blue"). Using the pack line defense can help a good man-to-man team that is having difficulty stopping a good point guard and dribble-penetration.

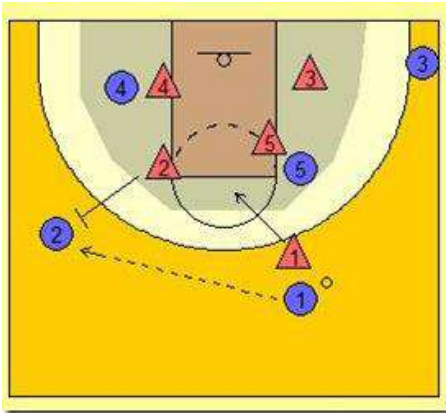
Tony Bennett and the pack line defense

Thursday, April 23 2009 by Ben

With all the hoopla surrounding the Virginia football team's transition to the spread offense, I'd like to take a few moments to educate Virginia fans about what Tony Bennett's quasi-unique defensive strategy, known as the pack line defense, entails. With the help of Coach Bru from favorite web site of mine, [Xs and Os of basketball](#), I'll take you through a highly simplified version of it.

The pack line defense was developed by Dick Bennett, Tony's father, and gained prominence when the elder Bennett used it at Wisconsin in the 1990s. It has a couple of names and is sometimes called a "sagging man-to-man" defense.

I started out calling this strategy "quasi-unique." That's primarily because the pack line shares a lot of principles with your typical man-to-man defense: each defender is matched up with an offensive player; there's a significant amount of defensive pressure placed on the ball handler; there's rotations when an offensive player beats his defender off the dribble, etc.



Below is a diagram of a team playing the pack line defense. (They're the triangles.)

The outline of gray area on the court is known as the pack line: defenders who are not guarding the ball are supposed stay within this area at all times. This principle is often referred to as "keeping everyone on a string." Essentially, the defense is trying to conserve the amount of space between the defenders at all times.

For example, look what happens when offensive player #1 (O1) passes the ball to offensive player #2 (O2). Defensive player #1 (D1) sags back to the free throw line as D2 goes out to meet the ball handler.

Traditional man-to-man does not always feature as much help defense. Often, man defenses will try to prevent passes that are close by, known as being "one pass away." Given the preponderance of Dave Leitao's defensive sets were predicated on low-risk/plain vanilla man to man - after all, [Virginia ranked 235th in steal percentage last year](#) - this may not be a dramatic change for the Wahoos.

The pack line defense also makes doubling in the post much, much easier. The second figure below diagrams a catch by the center (O5) on the block. As you can see, another post player (D4), comes over to double-team. This leaves his man (O4) open. Because the defense is so packed in, D2 does not have to go very far to keep O4 from getting the ball.

Doubling the post leaves O2 open on the outside. However, O5 has got to find him across the court and through a double team of the two biggest defenders on the court. It's a gamble, for sure, but a calculated one that might pay off.

Less athletic teams playing this defense can "ugly up" the game and contend with more athletic teams. Seeing as how the ACC has athletes in spades (and the current Virginia



roster really doesn't), it should keep Virginia within striking distance of their ACC foes next season.

For example, I think this defense would do wonders against Wake Forest. The Deacons athleticism makes them a hard match-up but their three point shooting leaves something to be desired. The pack line defense would keep them honest.

In sum, I think this defense is an outstanding fit for Virginia's current roster and going forward, especially because the Wahoos are always going to be at a disadvantage in recruiting to schools like Duke and Carolina. That doesn't mean we can't compete on the court with them, but it's always going to be an uphill battle on the recruiting trail.

However, don't take my word for how great this defense is, [take coach Bru's](#) assessment of Washington State's defense versus Winthrop in the 2008 NCAA tournament:

A breakdown of the pack line defense featuring the Virginia Cavaliers

[with 4 comments](#)

[Tony Bennett's teams](#) have been very strong defensively, despite a lack of athletic wings and dominant shotblockers in the majority of the past 5+ years. Bennett relies on the packline defense to compensate for his teams weaknesses, which is a man to man defense with a few specific principles. The defense will put heavy pressure on the ball when it is beyond the three point line but the help defense will sag below the three point line, taking away dribble penetration.

Since the gap in athleticism of the guards makes it difficult for the primary defenders to stay in front of the ball, the help defense has to work extra hard to discourage penetration. The primary defender will put heavy pressure on the ball to make it difficult on the ball handler, with the knowledge that their teammates are available to help if they get beat off the dribble. This forces the defense to leave the three point line open, allowing teams to shoot well from beyond the arc against Bennett coached teams historically (range of 33.1% to 36.3% in the 5 years prior to 2011-12).

You can see in the following frames how Virginia packs their defense below the three point line. This clogs the space below the arc and helps defend against dribble penetration.



This forces teams to pass the ball around the perimeter or get stuck in traffic when they try to dribble through the lane. The defense likes to put hard ball pressure on the ball handler to make it more difficult to pass or drive and they know they have help behind them if their man gets by them. This puts a ton of pressure on the help to slide over, cut the penetration off and recover to shooters.

The three point line will be open often times against this defense due to the emphasis on denying penetration. The defense has to concentrate on closing out strong but in the ACC, many teams have shooters that can bury

these open looks, negating all the hard work the defense did to deny penetration. While the defense would much rather allow a three point shot than an open layup, teams have hurt Bennett coached teams in the past by shooting well from this spot on the floor.

When the packline defense is working it either forces the offense to pass the ball continuously around the perimeter, with no lanes to drive, or provides help on penetration to cut off the lanes to the rim. In the following video, watch the packline offense work for Virginia as they pressure the ball to deny penetration, force Michigan to swing the ball around the three point line without any lanes to dribble through and help on the ball when a player does get below the three point line.

Now, let's briefly discuss how to beat the packline defense. As we talked about above, the three point line is an area on the court where offenses can find open shots. Also, since the defense is often utilized to mask less athletic defenders on the perimeter, teams can find space to drive if they move the ball. One area that is often open is the baseline if the defense makes a mistake, as a principle of the packline defense is to deny the baseline. If a defender does not take away the baseline (as we see in the first clip below), the defense is not set up to be in position to help.



In the second clip, we see how guards can break down their defender off the dribble and find gaps in the defense. The guards of UVA (as is often the case of teams that utilize this defense) are a bit slow-footed and have trouble staying in front of dribble penetration, which can leave the defense exposed. When the help does not come in time, the ball handler can have an open lane to the rim.

When the packline defense is not working well, teams will be able to get to the rim easily without much resistance from the defense. It starts with a lack of ball pressure, allowing the ball handler to put some space between himself and his defender to break the defense down off the dribble. The help will be out of position, either due to the position of the ball or a mistake in rotation. The following video shows a few breakdowns of the packline defense that UVA suffered against Michigan, which allowed penetration to the rim.

The packline is a fine defense to employ with below average guards, as it will allow teams to better defend when they get beat on penetration. However, a single mistake in positioning can give the offense an open lane to drive against the slower guards, which many teams in the ACC can take advantage of, as well as the openings around the three point line. Bennett has had his two worst season defensively in his two seasons at Virginia, as ACC teams are naturally built to take advantage of this defense's weak points. Time will tell if this defense can work at Virginia but it has been in the bottom half of defensive efficiency in conference games in both years of the Bennett regime.

Tony Bennett (no, not that Tony Bennett) is one of many coaches who uses the defense created by his father.

It had been a back and forth game between the Michigan Wolverines and the Virginia Cavaliers. The #14 ranked Wolverines had come to Virginia to play as a part of the 2011 Big Ten-ACC Challenge, and they were now in a dog fight against the unranked Cavaliers. With twelve minutes to go, guard Zack Novak hit a jump shot to put Michigan up 41-38. But the fight was over; the Wolverines wouldn't score again for almost six and a half minutes, when a Tim Hardaway jumper made the score 43-53. Michigan scored six more times in the remaining five minutes after the Hardaway shot, but it wasn't nearly enough to win. The final score was 70-58. The highly rated Wolverines had fallen to an unheralded team. Coach John Beilein had watched for 40 minutes as his beautifully choreographed motion offense had been chopped to bits by the Virginia defense.

It's [the Virginia defense] always going to be good as long as that man is coaching this team. I'm not crazy with scoring 58 points, but not a lot of teams may score 58 against them. -- John Beilein (ESPN.com, November 29, 2011)

Except for the most experienced viewer, understanding basketball in real time is next to impossible. In basketball, stuff happens too quickly to really allow us to understand the action while it occurs. This hurts our understanding of the game. Making matters worse, the pace of basketball doesn't lend itself to the detailed dissection of plays in the way that football does; in many ways it is easier to be an educated football fan than it is to be an educated fan of basketball.

My interactions with readers on Burnt Orange Nation over the last several years have taught me that there is a great deal of mystery surrounding basketball defense. While most viewers can recognize the difference between zone defense and man-to-man defense, I have the sense that there isn't much understanding of team defensive principles beyond this one difference. I want to help.

This post highlights a few aspects of team man-to-man defense. My aim is to highlight a few of the differences between some of the various styles of man-to-man defense played in college basketball, and to point you to a few of the consequences of these differences. This is not meant to be a detailed description about basketball defense targeted at coaches. This is intended for viewers. The hope is to give you, the basketball viewer, a few different things to look for during games, and to get you to start thinking about this stuff as you watch basketball.

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In 2000, Dick Bennett coached the Wisconsin Badgers to a surprising run to the Final Four. Not once during the 1999-2000 season did the Badgers appear in the AP poll. As an 8 seed,

Wisconsin easily beat Fresno State in the first round, creating a second round match-up with the #1 seed in the West, the Arizona Wildcats. Lute Olson's Wildcats were loaded, with future NBA players Gilbert Arenas, Luke Walton, and Richard Jefferson, as well as talented point guard Jason Gardner. Wisconsin beat Arizona, holding the Wildcats to 39 percent shooting, and slowly squeezing them to death with what we now call the Pack Line defense.

Burned out, a year later Bennett suddenly resigned as head coach of Wisconsin. He resurfaced in a few seasons, and coached Washington State for three years before retiring and being replaced by his son Tony. Over his long career, Bennett's most famous feat as a coach was that 2000 NCAA tournament run. But Bennett's legacy will always be the Pack Line defense. That is because the Pack Line has spread like wildfire all over basketball. When the Boston Celtics won the NBA championship in 2008, they did it by adhering to many of the Pack Line principles. Butler's two NCAA tournament runs were fueled by Brad Stevens' version of the Pack Line. Sean Miller implemented the Pack Line at Xavier (where it is still used), and later at Arizona. And the Pack Line has spread across high school basketball through the DVDs of Dick Bennett and other Pack Line enthusiasts.

So what exactly is the Pack Line? To see it in its purest form, it is best to watch a team coached by a member of the Bennett family. Dick's son Tony now coaches the Virginia Cavaliers. According to the Ken Pomeroy ratings, the Virginia defense was the sixth best in college basketball last season. Last season, **Joshua Riddell wrote a very nice description of Virginia's defense**. I am not going to attempt to go into the depth that Riddell did with this defense. But I do want to show you a few of the basic ideas, and show you how to recognize it.

The image below shows a single frame taken from a game between Virginia and North Carolina last season. North Carolina, in the light blue jerseys, has the ball. I have indicated the man with the ball, who is near the upper left corner of the image. To give some context, the Tar Heels are preparing to set a ball screen.

This image shows a few characteristics of the Pack Line defense. With careful study, you can learn a lot from a single photograph. First, I want you to look at the man defending the UNC player with the ball. Notice how his feet are set. His toes are pointed towards the mid-court line, and the plane of the defender's body is almost parallel with the baseline. This defender is not directly on a straight path between his man and the basket, the way that you were taught to defend in grade school. Instead, he is making sure that his man does not beat him by driving towards the sideline, ultimately getting to the baseline. Bennett's defense forces dribble penetration towards the middle, where the help defenders are. If a player is beaten to the outside, it generally results in disaster.

And now let's talk about those help defenders, or at least one in particular. I have labeled the other perimeter player for UNC as being "1 pass away," meaning that only a single pass from the ball handler is needed for him to get the ball. I have also labeled his defender. Notice that this defender is roughly 17 feet away from the basket. This is the classic characteristic of the Pack Line defense. The off-ball defense is never supposed to extend more than this distance from the basket. As a result, dribble penetration into the lane is difficult. The man guarding the ball is forcing the ball penetration to the middle of the floor, while the other perimeter defenders are crowding near that middle.

This is a very powerful idea; a well run Pack Line defense allows a team to protect the rim without a shot blocker. Virginia is a good example of this. Virginia lacked a dominant shot-blocking center last season, and yet held opponents to 45 percent shooting on two point shots. They did this by limiting chances at the rim in half-court situations.

Nothing comes without a trade-off. In the case of running the Pack Line, a team is conceding that first pass. Denying this pass creates an opportunity for a turnover, which Pack Line teams do not pursue. Denying this pass also can force the offensive player to move away from the basket to open up passing lanes, disrupting the spacing of the offense. And of course, it puts a premium on closing out when the ball is passed to a dangerous shooter. Pack Line teams stress these close outs; one of the easiest ways to recognize a Pack Line defense is to watch the way that defenders close out. Close outs always occur with the defender holding his hands high above his head, to contest jump shots.

What if a defense doesn't want to be so passive? At the other extreme of man-to-man defense is the ball denial approach taken by teams like Duke and West Virginia. This style of defense is meant to disrupt the offense, whereas the Pack Line is meant to stifle it. If the Pack Line approach is most closely associated with Dick Bennett, the father of the modern ball denial defense is probably Bobby Knight. And Knight's most famous pupil, Mike Krzyzewski, has taken this approach to defense to new heights, in part by recruiting the fastest perimeter defenders that he can find, as well as by extending the defense further away from the basket.

The photo below, taken from a game between Duke and Maryland, illustrates some significant differences between this style of play, and the Pack Line. In this case, Maryland has the ball, which is in the hands of the offensive player in the upper left corner of the image. Maryland has things spaced similarly to the image above, although the players are spread a few feet farther from the basket. The type of pressure Duke applies tends to move the offense a bit further out, so this is quite a common situation. Just like in the image above, the offense is preparing for a ball screen.

Let's start with the man guarding the ball. Notice which way he is facing. His toes are pointed towards the sideline, and his back is perpendicular to the baseline. He is turned exactly 90 degrees from the way in which the on ball defender stands in the Virginia defense. This has a very specific effect; it

forces the offensive player towards the baseline, and prevents him from dribbling into the middle of the floor. Recall in the Pack Line, this situation is exactly what you are trying to prevent. Because of the sagging defender, the help in the Pack Line comes most easily in the middle of the floor. In the pressure defense of Duke, the help will come along the baseline, from a player on the other side of the court.



With the ball being forced away from the middle, the defender guarding the perimeter player one pass away from the ball denies this pass. This has several benefits. First, it creates turnovers. This particularly happens when the ball is forced towards the baseline, and the dribbler is cut off by help defenders. In these situations, there are often dangerous passes that can be turned into steals. But in most possessions, the ball isn't stolen. In these cases, this denying defense still has some advantages. It tends to push the offense farther away from the basket than it would normally like to operate, disrupting its spacing and rhythm. Additionally, this type of defense helps with limiting three point attempts. Duke excels at preventing opponents from attempting the three, and this style of defense is a big part of the reason why. With pressure on players away from the ball, there is less need to close out after a perimeter pass.

The downside of this type of defense is that it puts a premium on having very good on-ball defenders. Duke's defense struggled last year, as the level of on-ball defense was well below its typical standard. There is still help in this defense, but the help is further away, and by the time helping defenders rotate over, the attacking player can get deep penetration. With rotations often coming from big men, it makes it harder for these players to box out on rebounds. Duke, for all of their talent, is in most years just average at defensive rebounding. Pack Line teams, like the ones coached by Bennett, the Xavier teams, or Brad Stevens' Butler teams, are usually among the best defensive rebounding teams in the country -- in part because the defense limits penetration and relies less on help from the big men, leaving players in better position to rebound.

Many teams fall in between these two extremes. Texas coach Rick Barnes doesn't make coaching DVDs, so we only can infer his approach to defense by watching. Barnes' adaptability is one

of his strengths as a coach -- he is not a "system" coach. In some years, when loaded up with incredibly gifted perimeter defenders like Avery Bradley and Dogus Balbay, Barnes has gone to a full ball denial approach, as described by this **X's & O's of Basketball** post. Not doing so would have defeated the whole purpose of having a player like Bradley, who laughs at your attempts to screen him.

From what I can tell, in most years Barnes has not played a full out ball denial defense. The photo below shows an early defensive possession of the young Longhorns from last season, in their first game against Boston University. This photo was captured shortly after Texas had recovered from a ball screen set by Boston, so it is hard to get a clear read on the intention of the on-ball defender, as he is still in recovery mode. If you watch **the video of the entire possession**, you will see that at the very start of the possession that the on-ball defender was forcing the ball handler slightly to the baseline, but was mostly defending straight up.

The most interesting thing about the photo below is the location of the defender one pass away from the ball. Note where he is. He is not in full on ball denial mode, like Duke. He is also not 17 feet from the basket, like Virginia. He is sort of in the middle. This provides a compromise between the two defensive styles. If the offense throws a sloppy pass, this defender is in position to take it away. Otherwise, he is capable of both providing help on a driving defender, but is also in good position to prevent a three point shot, and is forcing the offense to set up further away from the basket.



There is no right answer. All of these approaches work. Championship teams have pressured the ball. Other champions have played back, allowing the pass on the perimeter.

Now it is time for a test. The image below is taken from the Final Four match-up last season between Kentucky and Louisville. Louisville has the ball. The man with the ball is #3, Peyton Siva, in the lower right hand corner of the screen. Take a look at the alignment of the defense. What do you see? What sort of strengths and weaknesses does this defense create? Is it suited to the team playing it? You can post your answer in the comments section below.



First Line Of Defense

The system developed by Dick Bennett two decades ago has his son Tony's Virginia team on the brink of its first NCAA tournament bid in five years

LUKE WINN

The basketball coach at Virginia 30 years ago, Terry Holland, was flush: He had 7'4" center Ralph Sampson—a singular player who was so talented that he declared himself "the next stage of basketball development"—and the nation's No. 1 team, which was headed toward a No. 1 seeding in the NCAA tournament. The coach of the Cavaliers today, Tony Bennett, has a Sampson-sized challenge: His 7-foot center is out with a broken ankle, his righthanded shooting guard is hindered by a broken left hand, and his 22--8 team, which is clinging to UVA's first big-dance bid since 2007, has only one real option on offense: senior forward Mike Scott.

Bennett didn't inherit the anxiety that drove his father, Dick, out of the game shortly after taking Wisconsin to the Final Four in 2000, but he is the caretaker of a defense created by his father to help overcome competitive disadvantages. The Pack-Line defense is a containment system in which one man pressures the ball and the other four stay in help position within an imaginary 16-foot arc around the basket. Virginia deploys it well enough to rank first in the nation in fewest points allowed per possession (0.87). But what the Cavaliers do, Tony says, isn't groundbreaking. "It's just about having an iron will and saying we won't budge on certain things defensively."

Bennettball demands stubbornness; its rules are called "nonnegotiables." What's unusual about this system, which has spread to high schools and colleges around the country, is that to become a Pack-Liner, Dick Bennett had to do more than budge: He had to ditch the system that first made him famous.

IT'S 1984 AND Dick Bennett, 41, is standing in front of a dusty chalkboard. At the top he has written STOP BALL and underlined it. Drawing attention to himself isn't his sort of thing; he was talked into making this instructional video by his assistant, Rod Popp, who's working the camera. Bennett is the reigning NAIA coach of the year, having taken Wisconsin--Stevens Point to the national title game, but he has no expectation that the tape, *Pressure Defense: A System*, will spread very far.

Bennett tells the camera that defenders in this man-to-man system must apply intense pressure and gamble with reckless abandon—a curious order from someone whose teaching style is painfully thorough (the video will run 82 minutes) and whose yellow UWSP polo shirt is neatly tucked into his blue polyester coaching shorts. He's a tightly wound man with a blueprint for suffocating "oh-fenses," as he occasionally says in his Nordic Wisconsinese.

This early version of Dick Bennett D aims to force 20 turnovers per game by following these rules: All five defenders must sprint back to prevent transition baskets. The ball is pressured as soon as it crosses half-court, and off-ball defenders are always in denial mode—"on the line and up the line," Bennett says—in the path of potential passes. (The players in the

practice footage he splices in, including a young Terry Porter, hop around like trained jackrabbits.) There is no switching, only early help and quick recovery. The ball must be pushed to one side of the floor and then to the baseline, where a help defender is dead-fronting the post. Once the defense has ganged up on that side, the ball cannot be allowed to swing back around the perimeter.

"If you can get the ball on the baseline, eliminating ball reversal is a pleasure," Bennett says. "That's where you're gonna create tremendous turnovers." His earnestness is what makes this the tape's most precious quip, although Bennett's piece of chalk leaves a more lasting impression about 20 minutes into the video. During a vigorous drawing of a court diagram, it snaps in half, causing a brief crack in the coach's demeanor. After a chuckle he quickly gets the lecture back on track, but for years he'll hear broken-chalk jokes from coaches he's just met. That's evidence that his VHS went the pre-Internet equivalent of viral.

Where did the video spread? Where *didn't* it spread? Bob Hurley of St. Anthony's in Jersey City received a copy at a Marquette clinic in 1985. An instant convert, Hurley implemented the defense during his son Bobby's freshman season and used it to win 15 of his 24 overall state titles and induction into the Naismith Hall of Fame. Iowa-based Championship Productions bought the video for wider distribution, and in an SI poll in the '90s, college coaches said Dick Bennett was one of the men from whom they most wanted to take a clinic (along with Bob Knight, Mike Krzyzewski and Rick Majerus). When Pat Riley became the Miami Heat coach in '95, he cited Bennett as an influence on his aggressive Knicks-era defenses, even though he and Bennett had never spoken. The sideline fraternity knew Bennett as a professor of pressure, but a national audience will meet him as a purveyor of something else.

It's March 17, 1994, and Dick Bennett is a Division I coach in an NCAA tournament first-round game in Ogden, Utah. This isn't his first national TV appearance; he took Wisconsin--Green Bay to the dance three years earlier, when Tony was its star point guard, and nearly knocked off Michigan State. Now the Phoenix is a No. 12 seed, pitted against No. 5 Cal, an up-tempo scoring machine with Final Four aspirations and a soon-to-be No. 2 overall draft pick, Jason Kidd, at point. CBS tells viewers that Bennett is a "guru," but it's an indication of his employer's lack of prominence that analyst Ann Meyers refers to the school as "Green Bay Wisconsin" for the first six minutes of the game. By the time she corrects herself, the Phoenix has a 6--2 lead and two things are evident: Kidd's Bears are flummoxed, and Bennett's new defense has taken a philosophical 180 from the one that earned him guru status.

After the Phoenix sprints back in transition, the team builds a wall in front of Kidd to keep him away from the paint. Gary Grzesk, a 6'5" sophomore guard, is the primary defender on Kidd and becomes the game's quiet hero. Once the defense is set, the player on the ball applies pressure—but his teammates don't. Instead of denying "on the line and up the line," they pack themselves in a 16-foot arc around the basket and constantly reposition themselves, either as helpers who shrink Kidd's potential driving lanes or as angled post-fronters who prevent feeds from the top of the key. (Cal coach Todd Bozeman says it's almost as if the Green Bay defenders are "in the lane posing for a team picture.") The players are content to let the ball rotate, but they refuse to let anyone drive baseline, because post defenders aren't in position to help. No one ventures outside the pack line unless his man is about to catch a pass, at which point the defender closes out with a vengeance, his hands high to prevent a rhythm jumper, while the passer's man retreats to the pack. Gambling for steals is kept to a minimum, in favor of forcing a contested shot and sending all five men to the glass to end the opponents' possession.

How well did the Pack-Line D work on that St. Patrick's Day? The Bears did not get a field goal until almost midway through the half. Kidd was held to 12 points on 4-of-17 shooting. And UWGB pulled off the greatest upset in school history, 61--57.

Tony was watching from a sports bar in Charlotte, where he was an against-the-odds NBA success as a backup guard for the Hornets. He saw this coming. When he was a junior at Green Bay in 1990--91, Dick started to doubt that all-out pressure was right for a D-I David that would always be at an athletic disadvantage when it faced power-conference programs. The north-south driving offenses that had come into vogue were tough to stop with slower defenders, and the Phoenix was getting caught out of position and giving up too many offensive rebounds. Dick reluctantly sought out a system that would neutralize the talent gap, and as an experiment he taped down a pack line on UWGB's practice court.

Tony's teams were the guinea pigs, but Dick didn't fully make the pushing-to-packing conversion until after his son turned pro in 1992. A few years after his NBA career ended in '95, Tony became an assistant to his father, who had moved on to Wisconsin. There the pack line was painted on the practice floor. Disciplined defenders are the key to Bennettball, and that season's pack leader was the unscreenable Mike Kelley, who guided the 1999--2000 Badgers to the Final Four.

Tony's Virginia team has a player in the same mold as Grzesk and Kelley. Junior guard Jontel Evans is a 5'11" self-proclaimed "pest" who leads the Cavaliers in steals with 48.

The most difficult part about doing a Pack-Line D story is that the Bennetts pressure you *not* to do a Pack-Line D story. They just don't believe it's a worthy topic. "The Pack Line isn't revolutionary," Tony says. "It's a basic containment man-to-man, built on simple rules that my dad put together. I wouldn't want to waste your time."

From Dick, more of the same: "We're very respectful of the work that's gone into developing defense," he says, "and the last thing that I want is to be thought of as an inventor of a defense that's been played in many variations." He adds that he didn't even coin the term *pack line*—that came from a marketing guy who talked Bennett into making a DVD on the new system.

So, in order to do a story on the Pack-Line D, you must assure the Bennetts that you *won't* say it's sui generis. Everything in modern basketball is built on something else, and Bennett stresses that he was influenced by Bob Knight's helping man-to-man at Indiana, Lou Henson's ball-line defense at Illinois, and Colorado State's Boyd Grant's emphasis on the importance of a player's keeping his hands high while closing out. Bennett selected the pieces that best fit his team, made a set of rules and drilled his players incessantly. He may not have been an inventor, but he has been a shrewd editor and an even better teacher.

His 2005 Pack-Line DVD became one of Championship Productions' best sellers and helped the defense gain traction outside the Bennett family. (Dick's daughter Kathi teaches it at Northern Illinois, and his brother Jack did the same at Stevens Point.) Arizona coach Sean Miller's father, John, a high school coach in Beaver Falls, Pa., admired Bennett's methods. When Sean got his first head coaching job, at Xavier in 2004, he implemented the Bennett's D and used it to reach the 2008 Elite Eight. Now, with the Wildcats, Sean has made the Pack Line the third most efficient D in the Pac-12. According to Synergy Sports Technology, Arizona is the nation's fourth-best team at defending jump shooters. Miller's successor at Xavier, Chris Mack, stuck with the Pack-Line, and Northern Iowa's Ben Jacobson used a hybrid of it to upset No. 1-seeded Kansas in the 2010 NCAA tournament. Butler used Pack-Line principles in its recent back-to-back runs to the national title game, although coach Brad Stevens has reconfigured his defense, as Bennett had before him, into something that will inspire a future branch of coaches.

College basketball's steady de-acceleration since the '90s has less to do with stalling offenses than with the rise of containment defenses. Virginia plays at the 339th slowest pace in D-I because the Pack-Line is next-to-impossible to score on early in the shot clock. By limiting the number of possessions, Pack-Lining can fuel Cinderella runs but also produce aesthetic atrocities, like the 53--41 Final Four grudge match that Dick Bennett's 2000 Wisconsin team lost to Michigan State. That the system's highest-profile showcase was widely panned as a peach-basket-era grinder does not bother Tony Bennett, whose Cavaliers could be in the bracket as a No. 8 seed, just like his dad's Badgers. Says Tony, "I'd love to get to the Final Four and have them say that about me."

PACK LINE DEFENSE

LOW POST DEFENSE & DEFEATING BALL SCREENS

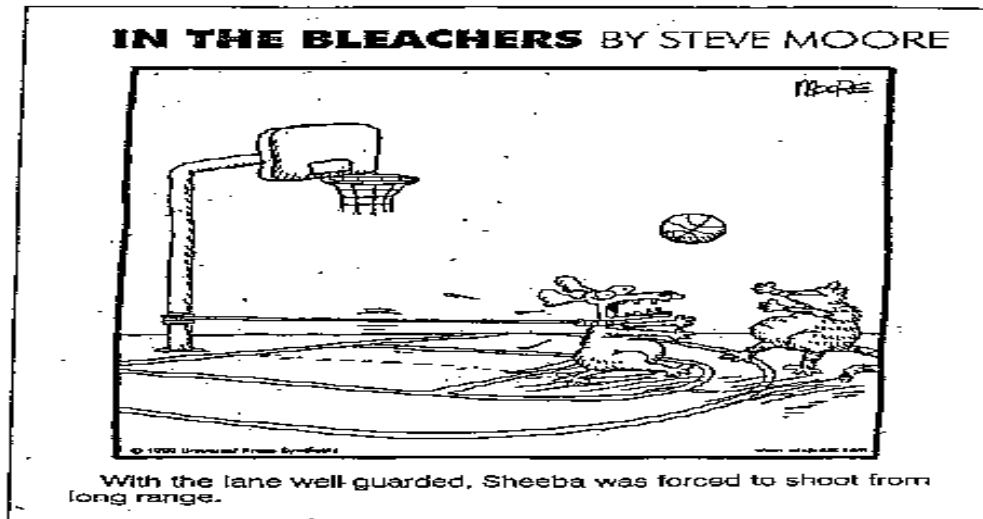
Session II



It's More Than X's & O's

PACK LINE DEFENSE

- * **Players Do Not Have Bad Days, Coaches DO!**
- * **Again, Pack Line Defense, it's a mindset... a Belief System...we do not have an Alternate Defense.**
- * **Numerous Ways to Defend the Low Post and Ball Screens, this is what 32 Years have Taught us.**



DEFENDING THE LOW POST

Dictates Everything

Low Post Defensive Keys & Teaching Points:

1) Fight to Keep the Ball out of the Low Post

**TP: 3/4 Top Side - Keep Your Feet Active
Chin on Top Shoulder - No Lobs
Know Your Slip Point**

2) On the Pass - Slide Behind - This is Our Time

**TP: DO NOT GAMBLE FOR A STEAL
Shade the Baseline Shoulder
Low-Wide-Big...No Angles to Rim!**

3) Choke and Dig with Perimeter Defenders

**TP: Quarter Deny with Feeder - Consistency
Choke: Rule of Thumb is 50/50
911 on Dribble, Dig it Out**

DOUBLING THE LOW POST

BIG to BIG

Low Post Keys & Teaching Points:

- 1) Fight to Keep the Ball out of the Low Post**
Do not just concede the pass because we are Red

TP: 3/4 Top Side - Keep Your Feet Active
Chin on Top Shoulder - No Lobs
Know Your Slip Point

- 2) On the Pass - Slide Behind - This is Our Time**

TP: DO NOT GAMBLE FOR A STEAL
Shade the Baseline Shoulder
Vision is your Best Friend!

- 3) Double Team must get there on the Catch!**

TP: Come High and Hard - Be Aggressive
Must Talk it Loud - ELO - RED, RED, RED
Working to Take Away Vision - No Skips

***Perimeter RED Keys: All Bets are Off on Feed to Low Post
Must Shrink the Floor & Zone Lane***

1) Feeder Defender “Locks-up” Feeder

**TP: Do not allow a quick return pass
1/4 Deny - No Back Cuts - Force Pass Out**

2) Closest Perimeter to the Baseline is our RIM PROTECTOR

**TP: ELO - Talk it Loud and Get to the Rim
You’ve got to be a Pit Bull here, No Poodles
Cannot allow a Cutter between You and the Ball**

3) Top Defender takes the FT/Key Area and Zones up

**TP: Best Interceptor - Must Read the Ball’s Eyes
See it all - No One Cuts Behind You**

ROTATIONS: Our Base Rules

- 1) Pass to the Top:**
 - Top Guard has Pass out of Trap**
 - Closeout with High Hands**
 - Rim Gets to the Gap/his Man - Stunt**
 - Red Sprints off Trap to the Rim**
 - Look for Man - Lowest to Baseline**
 - Hit on Recovery if in the Low Post**

- 2) Skip to Wing:**
 - Try to Avoid this Pass - Do not Allow!**
 - Top Defender has All Skips to Help-side**
 - Rim Defender must Protect Inside-Out**
 - Rim Defender Recovers off Top Closeout**
 - Red Sprints Off the Trap Along Baseline**

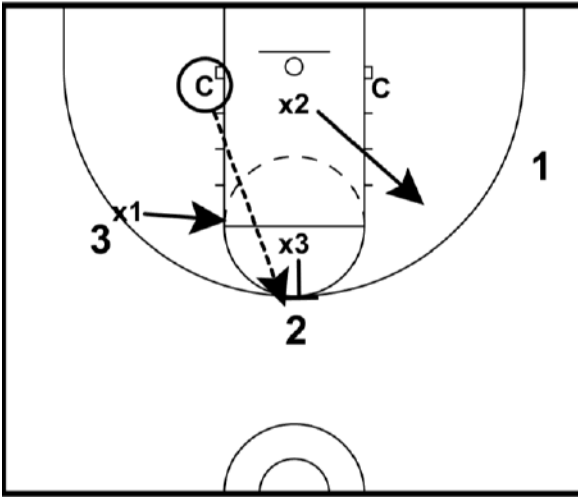
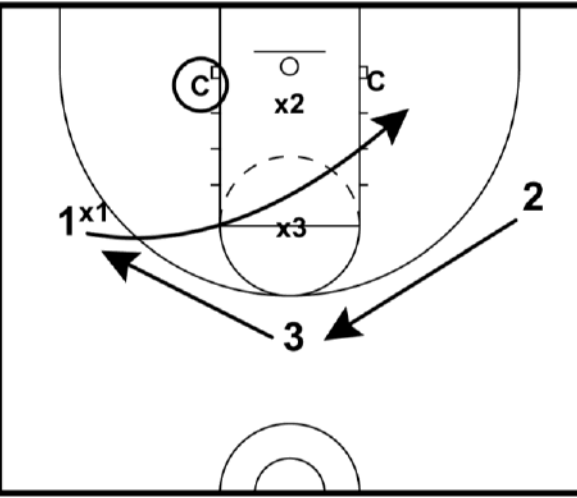
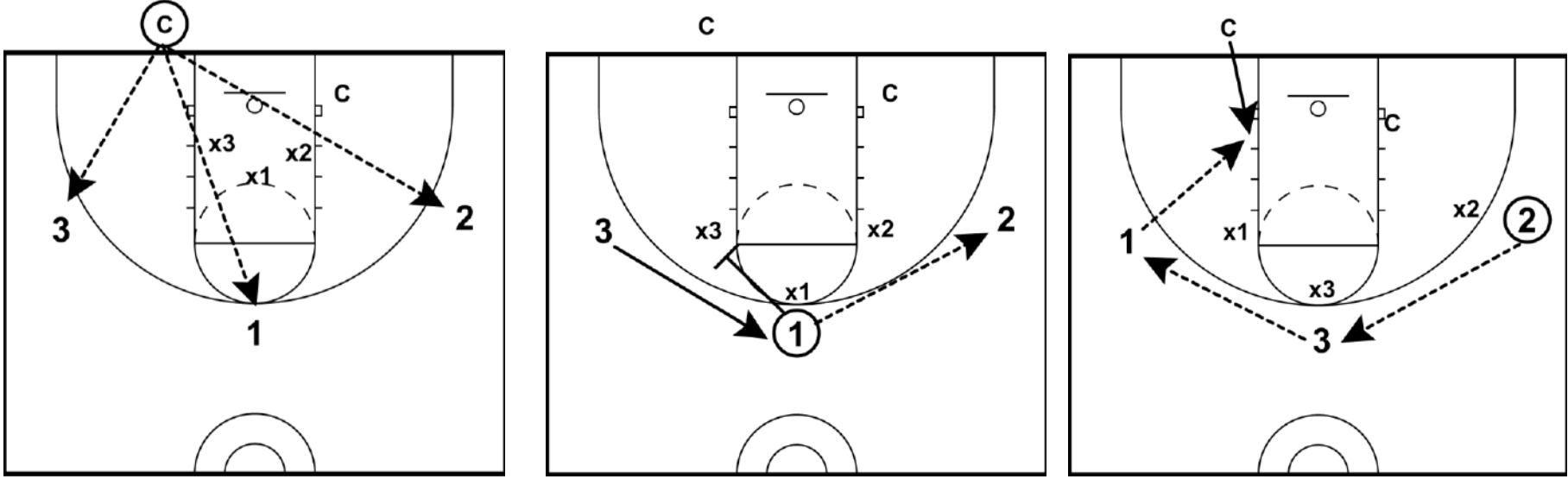
- 3) Dribble Out:**
 - Stay with the Double until Ball is Passed**
 - Dribble Used: RED – RED - RED**
 - Top Read Eyes & Shoulders**

DEVELOPMENT DRILLS

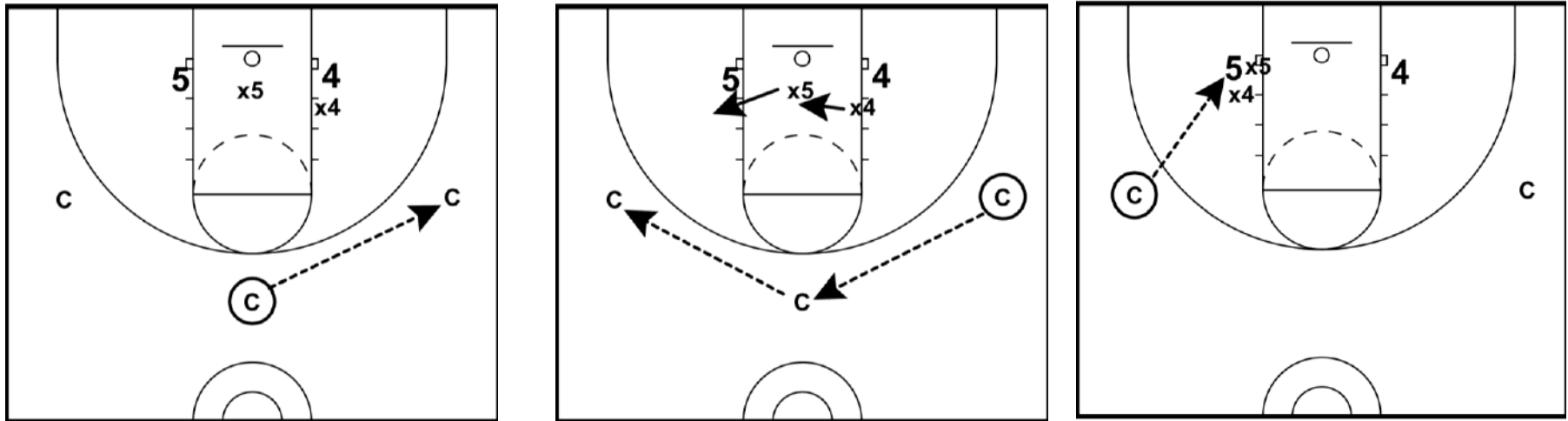
RED ON THE POST

- 3/3 Perimeter with 2 Release
- 2/2 Inside with 3 Release
- 5/5 Red on Low Post
- 5/5 Multiple Actions

3/3 Perimeter w/ 2 Release

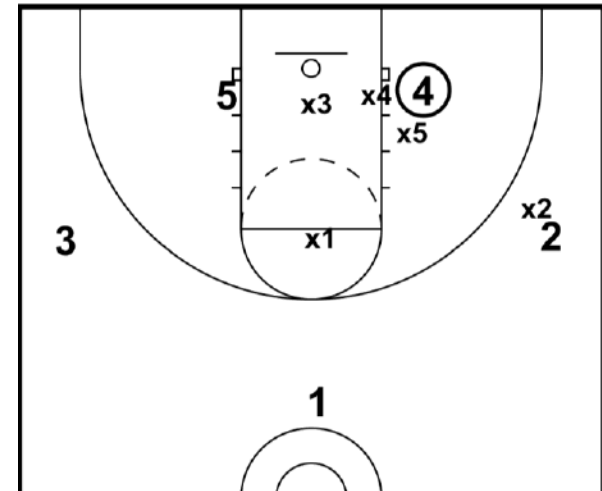
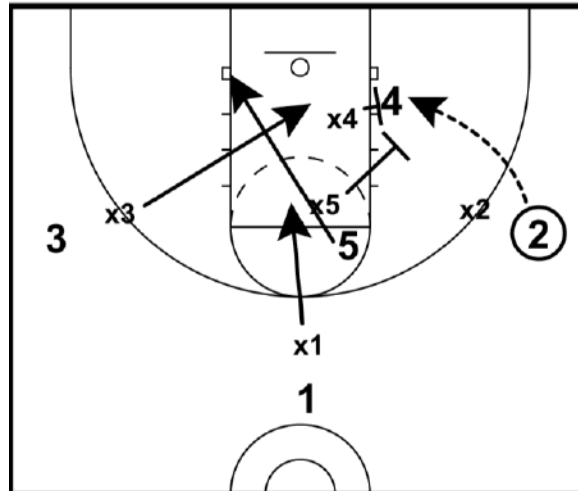
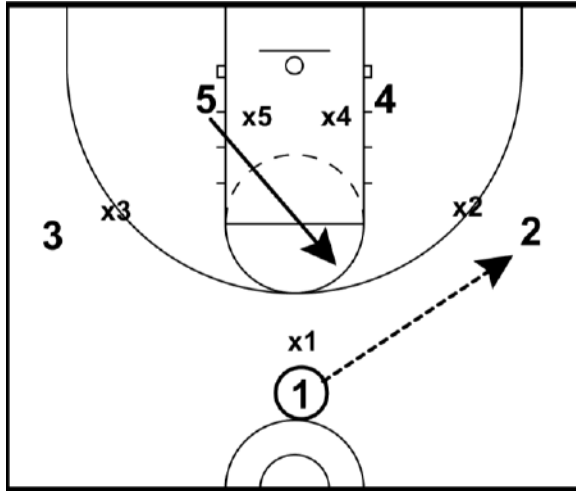


2/2 Inside w/ 3 Release



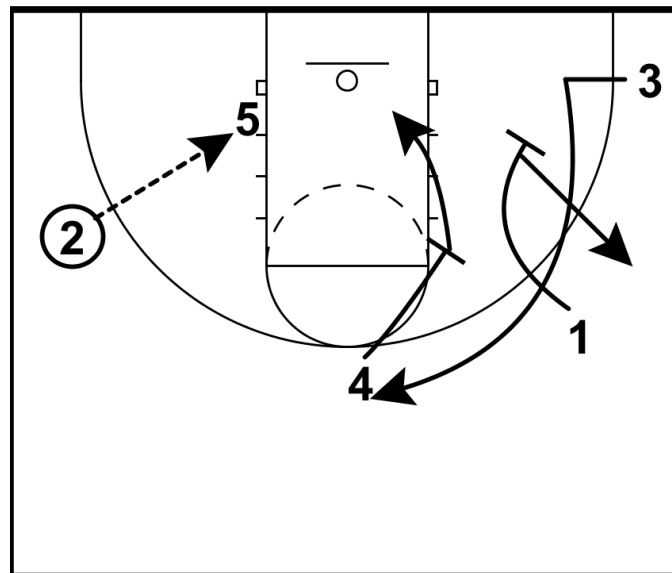
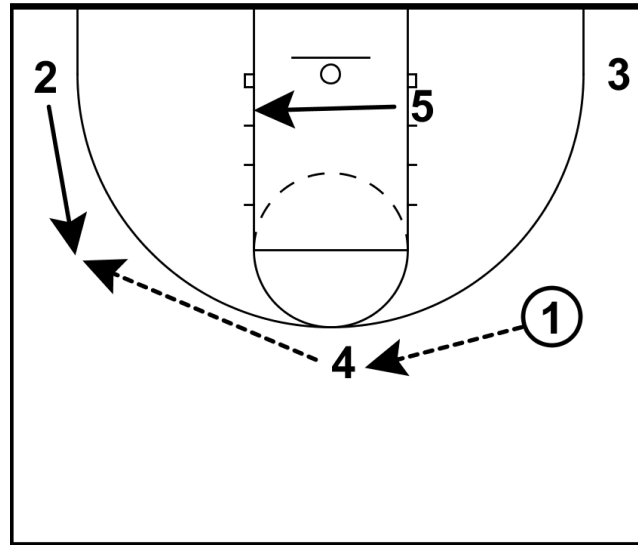
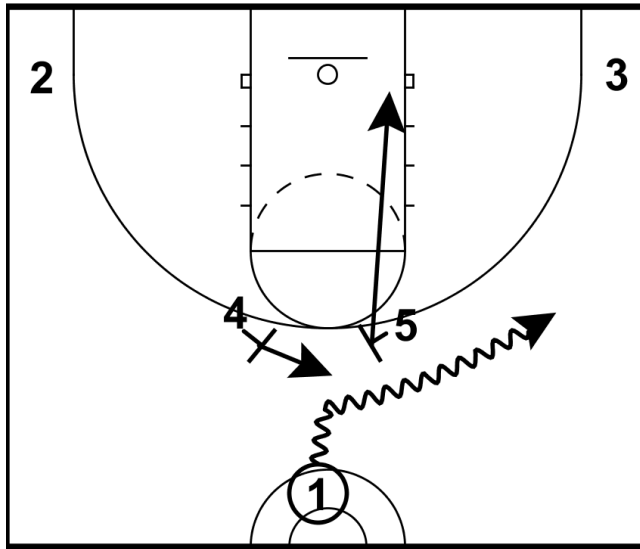
- On air time, post defender should slide behind and place nose on offensive player's baseline shoulder
- Opposite post defender anticipates the RED and traps on air time yelling **"RED-RED-RED"** with hands up
- Offense should not be able to go baseline or split the trap
- Trap will stay with offense until Ball is passed out
- Any pass to top or other side of the court should have to go over outstretched hands

5/5 Red on the Low Post



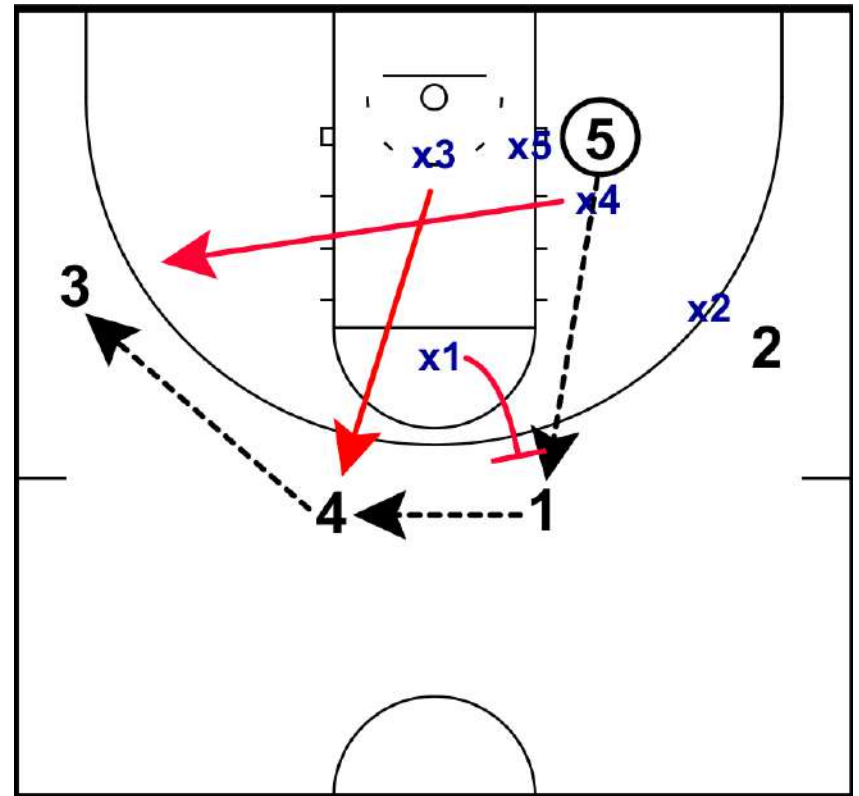
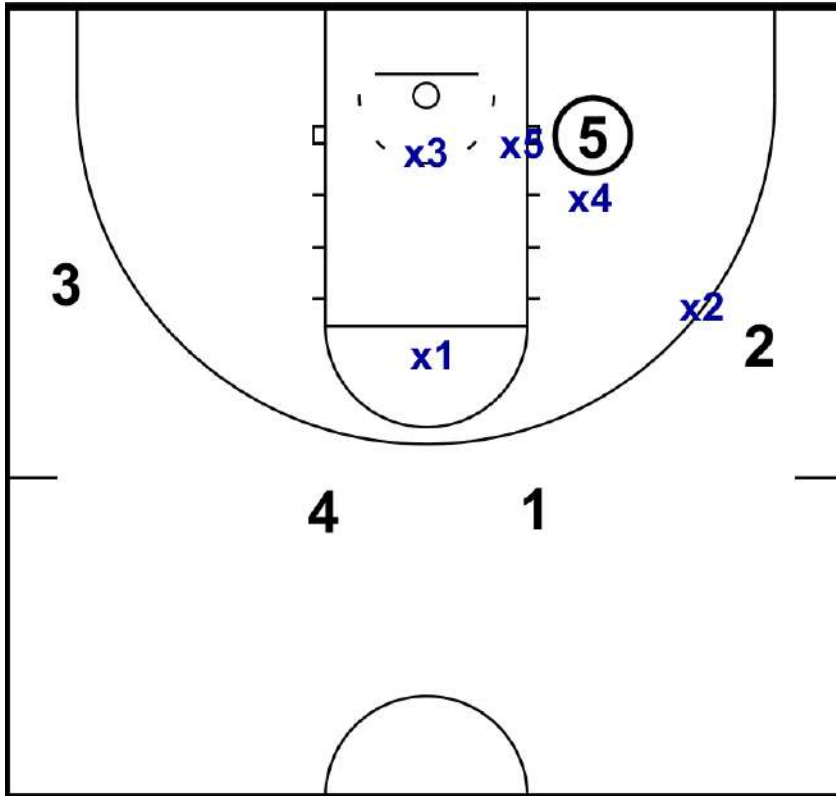
- ❑ Any type of offense can be run
- ❑ Coach can designate whether 1 post is doubled or both
- ❑ On pass into the post:
 - Ballside denies the wing pass out
 - 2 posts double the post with hands up
 - A guard must be protecting the rim
 - A guard must be at the nail hole seeing it all

5/5 Multiple Actions



5/5 Red the Post

“Switch 4”



SPECIAL SITUATIONS:

- **Feeder Screens:** **Switch it - Must Talk it Loud & Early**
- **Big to Big Feed:** **No Red**
- **Stretch Fours:** **“Switch Four”**
Red Sprints off and takes Lowest Base Line
Make him a Jump Shooter



DEFEATING BALL SCREENS

Our Thoughts:

- 1) Do not allow the Ball to Beat Us
- 2) Make the Big Shoot Contested Jumpers
- 3) Defend Areas & Personnel – Shrink Floor

Keys to Success:

- 1) Communication
A Ball Screen cannot occur without a Screen
- 2) Consistency of Execution
Our Game Prep Begins the First Day of Practice

Teach in Three Layers:

- 1) On Ball Defender
- 2) Screener Defender
- 3) Off Ball Defenders

**This is a FIVE Man Proposition
We must be Connected!**

SIDE BALL SCREENS:

HARD SHOW

LAYER ONE:

Body-up	Force to Screen
Body-in	Get into the Ball
Body Over	Arch and Over

LAYER TWO:

Cannot Get There too Early – Hands Down
Same Boards - Force Ball to the North
Take Two Steps with Ball
Go to Body - Hit on Recovery

LAYER THREE:

Again, Defending the Ball
Screen is a 5 Man Proposition,
Takes Everyone being Involved.
Shrink the Court - All Bets are Off
Be Active & Alert - Communication

MIDDLE BALL SCREEN: LEVEL SHOW

LAYER ONE:

**Body-up, Body-in, Body, Over
Remain “Hip Pocket” until Ball Passed
Square-up the Ball on Recovery**

LAYER TWO:

**Level with the Screen – Mirror the Ball
Stay Squared – Cannot Get Turned Sideways
NO DRIBBLE AROUNDS
Motor Running – Stay with Ball until Passed
Low - Wide - Big - Hands Down
ACTIVE – Keep Feet Moving**

LAYER THREE:

**Shrink Positions – We are Zoning the Ball
Ball Coming to You: Sit on Fence
Ball Going Away From You: Tag the Roll
Stunt to Ball: Active & Alert**

PACK LINE DEFENSE TROUBLE SHOOTING

Things that will Kill your Defense

- 1) **Poor Closeouts:** Cannot give-up Direct Drives or Rhythm Jumpers - Must Have High Hands and Know who you are Guarding. We don't like to switch for this reason, not switching allows us to lock into our Match-up, who we are defending. I want my best guarding your best!
- 2) **Getting Stretched:** Cannot wander outside of the Pack Line. Stay in your Gap - Do not become too Man Oriented.
- 3) **Going for Fakes or Helping up the Floor:** Stay on the Floor - High Hands - Bigs Cannot Help-up or Over Help.
- 4) **Lunging or Reaching:** Hands on the Glass, stay Balanced.
- 5) **Being Late to Positioning or to the Post:** Standing Must be Active and Alert in Gaps, we say, "Motors Running".
- 6) **Too Low in Gaps:** Too Safe, causes us to have to move to help and forces long closeouts. Use of Gap Line.
- 7) **Silence:** Talking is the Glue, gives you a head start, helps your teammates, and can intimate the Offense. ELO: Early Loud Often



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Hoop Student

Basketball Offense and Defense

Pack Line Defense in Basketball Basic Concepts Explained

What is the pack line defense in basketball

The pack line defense is a basketball defensive strategy as well as a variation of man to man defense that implements on-ball defensive pressure and off-ball actions in which defenders will either sag into the pack line or deny passing lanes to limit or prevent offensive scoring opportunities.

Furthermore, the pack line defense was initially developed by [Dick Bennett](#) but it has also been utilized by his son, [Tony Bennett](#) as well as a variety of other coaches in recent years.

What is the pack line itself

The pack line is basically an imaginary line covering the [perimeter areas](#) inside of the three-point line about 16 feet from the basket.

Essentially, any four off-ball defenders that are not currently guarding the player with the ball should be within that pack line standing in the gaps between the top/wing and the wing/corner.

The only exception to that rule is if an offensive player ends their dribble, a concept known as a dead dribble within the pack line defense.

If that occurs, then defenders that are [one pass away](#) near the perimeter can possibly come out of the pack line to deny their respective assignments from easily receiving the ball.

Why is the pack line defense a potentially effective strategy

The pack line defense is a potentially effective strategy because it limits dribble penetration, hinders scoring opportunities, especially near the basket, and it influences the offensive team into settling for jumps shots from the mid-range or beyond the three-point line.

Limit dribble penetration

Each defender within the pack line defense will either pressure the player with the ball as an on-ball defender or sag into the gaps/pockets of the possible driving lanes as an off-ball defender.

As a result of that, an offensive player with the ball will have difficulties easily navigating through the entire defense to ultimately get to the rim.

As an example, let's say the on-ball defender that is currently guarding the offensive player is able to use a proper defensive stance and sliding movement to stay in front of the offensive player without fouling.

This essentially means that the offensive player with the ball cannot easily dribble towards the basket due to the resistance of the on-ball defender.

However, let's also say in certain instances, the offensive player with the ball is able to get by the on-ball defender, particularly towards the middle of the lane with initial [dribble penetration](#).

If that were to occur, then the dribble penetration of that same offensive player would eventually be hindered or completely stopped by the one of the other four pack line defenders which provide secondary [help defense](#) near the gaps of the pack line.

Hinder scoring opportunities, especially near the basket

Since the pack line defense, at least in theory, is designed to limit or prevent dribble penetration, this basically means that an offensive player in current possession of the ball should not be able to easily score by dribbling the ball to the rim.

In addition to that, because off-ball defenders sag away from their respective assignments towards the lane, this should potentially take away easy scoring opportunities of off-ball offensive players that might cut to the rim such as with the [backdoor cut](#).

In other words, if an offensive player that is playing off the ball cuts to the basket, there should be at least one off-ball pack line defender nearby to slow down or completely take away that offensive player's cut before they even have a chance to receive the ball.

Furthermore, if the offensive team prefers to get the ball into the low post area and score near the basket in that manner, then the pack line defense has certain rules to mitigate or totally eradicate that type of scoring option.

That is, if the low post player has not yet received the ball, then the adjacent pack line defender guarding that low post player can front the post as a method of discouraging the post entry pass, especially from the wing areas.

On the other hand, if the low post player receives the ball, then the next typical defensive action is to utilize a double team, typically from a weak side help defender to influence the low post player with the ball to pass it back near the perimeter areas of the court.

Influences jump shots near the perimeter

If the pack line defense seeks to limit dribble penetration, especially into the lane, as well as additional scoring options near the basket, then the only other viable option is to defeat it with jump shots, particularly from three-point range.

However, a problem arises if the offensive team has players with below average three-point shooting abilities.

That is, if the sagging pack line defender one pass away is not able to recover and properly contest the jump shot, this will not be much of an issue if the offensive player taking that shot is a non-shooter, particularly from three-point range.

On the other hand, if sagging pack line defenders are able to contest jump shots near the perimeter areas, even on a late closeout, this could further diminish shooting percentages of the offensive team with below average shooters.

What is a disadvantage of the pack line defense

One particular disadvantage of the pack line defense is that it might not be as effective against offensive teams with multiple above-average three-point shooters.

As mentioned previously, the off-ball defenders sag into the pack line near the exterior of the free throw lane, primarily to prevent dribble penetration.

However, if an offensive player with the ball dribbles toward the pack line as a decoy, that same player could easily execute the kick pass to an adjacent teammate one pass away.

From that point, the sagging off-ball defender most likely would not have enough time to recover to their assignment with a proper defensive closeout.

If that were to occur, the offensive player which received the ball via the kick pass would probably be able to take an uncontested jump shot.

Furthermore, even if the pack line defender is able to execute a late closeout and get a hand up to contest the shot, this may not be very bothersome to a great three-point shooter.

What are general principles of the pack line defense

If the ball is live

If the ball is live which means it has not yet been dribble or it is currently being dribbled by an offensive player, then the on-ball defender guarding that offensive player should apply as much ball pressure as possible without fouling.

Furthermore, at the same time, the other four off ball defenders should stay within the pack line by sagging off of their respective assignments that will generally be one or more passes away from them.

If the ball is dead

If the ball is dead because the player with the ball ended their dribble, then the on-ball defender should continue to apply ball pressure and have active hands without fouling.

In addition, the active hands of the on-ball defender could be used to obscure the vision of the offensive player with the ball.

Moreover, in certain situations, the on-ball defender might be able to deflect an attempted pass by the offensive player with the ball which could lead to a turnover

Simultaneously, adjacent off-ball defenders can move outside of the pack line to execute denial defense against their assignments that are one pass away from the offensive player with the ball.

Off-ball defenders should remember ball, you, man

Each off-ball defender should keep in mind the defensive concept of ball, you, man.

That is to say, each off-ball defender should always know where the ball and their respective assignment (i.e. their man) is at all times.

On-ball defenders should execute a good closeout

Each defensive player that becomes an on-ball defender should try to properly perform the closeout with high hands and short, choppy steps.

In addition to that, any closeout defender should always try to contest jump shots whenever possible.

Keep the ball away from the lane but also, away from the baseline

Standard [man to man defense](#) typically dictates keeping the ball out of the middle in general and preferably on one side of the floor if possible.

However, the pack line defense does not usually emphasize its defensive concept in that manner.

Instead, the pack line defense first prefers that the on-ball defender completely prevents any dribble penetration altogether with solid on-ball defense.

Yet, at the same time, if an offensive player with the ball does happen to get a little bit of dribble penetration, the second preference is to influence the ball towards the pack line and by extension, a secondary help defender.

If that occurs, the help defender within the pack line could either prevent additional dribble penetration or influence the offensive player into taking a low quality, contested jump shot.

Also, the secondary help defender could also simply cause the offensive player to pass the ball to another teammate near the perimeter and away from the basket, which is a benefit to the defensive team.

In addition to this, pack line on-ball defenders should try to reduce dribble penetration towards the baseline as much as possible.

Basically, in the pack line defense, if an offensive player gets baseline dribble penetration, then an adjacent pack line defender near the basket would most certainly have to rotate over to help, which in turn would trigger the help the helper concept.

That is to say, the pack line defender that is helping to stop the baseline penetration would need help themselves from one of the other pack line defenders, which would have to slide into the lane to protect the basket.

Once again, in standard man to man defense, help the helper is not much of an issue but in the pack line defense, the additional rotations would not only result in potential defensive breakdowns, but it would also defeat the main objective of the pack line defense.

In other words, the general purpose of the pack line defense is to keep the off-ball defenders near the gaps of the pack line to limit or prevent dribble penetration or supplementary off-ball offensive actions.

However, if off-ball defenders have to execute multiple rotations, then those gaps would more than likely become exposed. That, in turn, would probably lead to defensive breakdowns as well as scoring opportunities for the offensive team.

Defending the low post

If the ball is not yet in the low post, then the pack line defender that is guarding the offensive low post player should front the post, typically on the high side, to deny an easy post entry pass.

Furthermore, if the ball does get into the post, then the pack line typically prefers to get the ball out of the post as soon as possible.

Therefore, the defensive team could execute a double team in which the primary defender gets help from a weak side secondary defender.

Alternatively, it is also feasible to execute a double team with a secondary defender on the same side of the ball, that is the strong side.

However, the alternative double team should generally only occur if the secondary defender's assignment is a below average three-point shooter.

It is because in that case, the secondary defender would only be one pass away from their assignment, which could lead to an uncontested jump shot, which is bad for the defense if that shooter is above average.

Defending in transition

Prior to transition defense, when the offensive team takes a field goal attempt, it is generally preferred that only one or two players go for offensive rebounds.

Afterwards, during transition defense, one of the defenders should always sprint back to protect the basket while the other defenders try to match up with opposing offensive players before reaching half court.

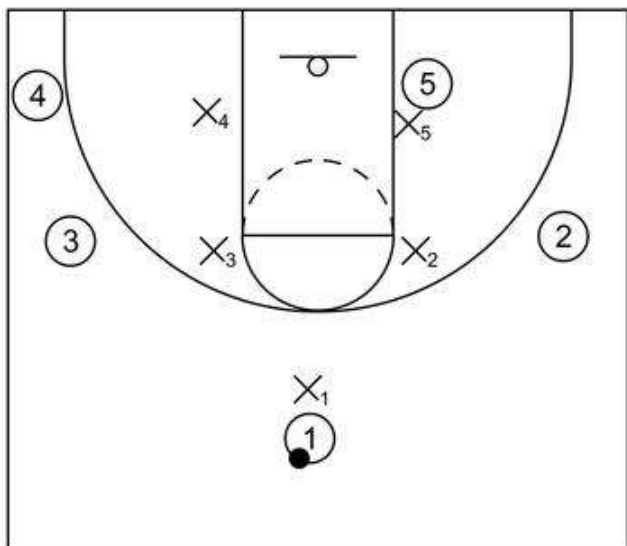
Also, it should be noted that during transition defense, it is not an absolute requirement that each defender matches up with an offensive player that they were guarding on a previous offensive possession.

However, it is preferred that defensive players try to match up with offensive players of similar size and attributes whenever possible to mitigate the effects of defensive mismatches.

Following that, if the offensive team does not score during transition offense but instead, flows into their half court sets or motion offense, then the defensive team could segue into the pack line defense concepts as well.

What are simple diagram examples of the pack line defense

Example 1

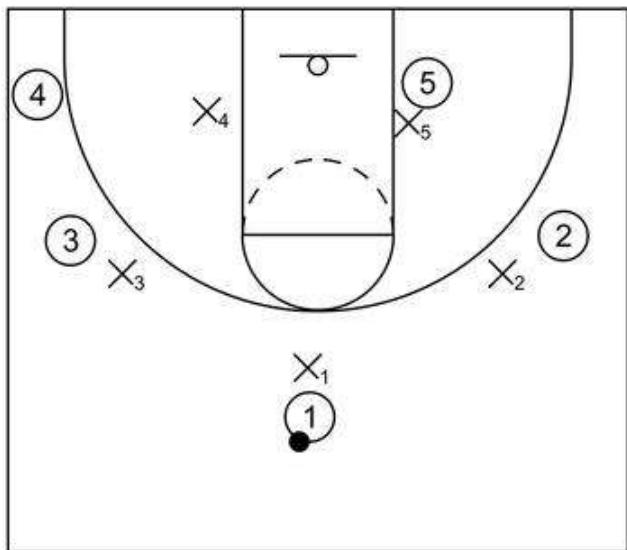


This is an example of the pack line defense when the ball is live at the top. That is to say, 1 is currently dribbling the ball and has not ended the dribble. To begin, X1 applies on-ball pressure against 1.

As that occurs, the other four defenders are inside the pack line. That is, X2 and X3 are currently near the high post elbows while X4 and X5 are currently near the low post areas.

Additionally, X5 could also execute a three quarter front or total low post front on the high side of 5, near the basket.

Example 2

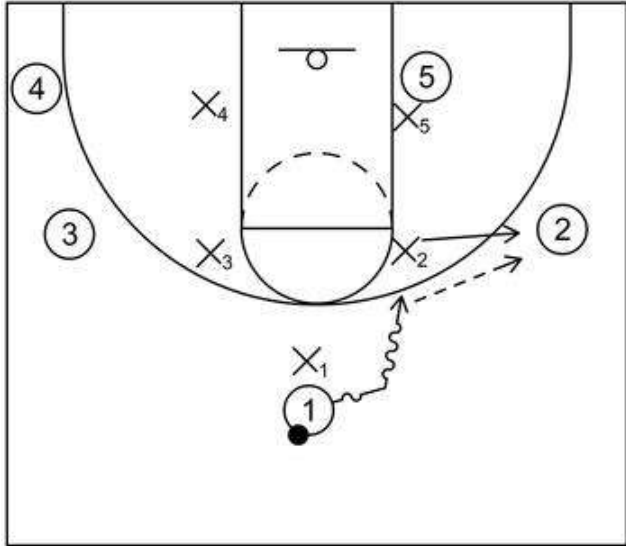


This is an example of the pack line defense when the ball is dead at the top. That is to say, 1 has completely ended the dribble.

When that occurs, X1 applies on-ball pressure while X2 and X3 perform denial defense against 2 and 3 one pass away.

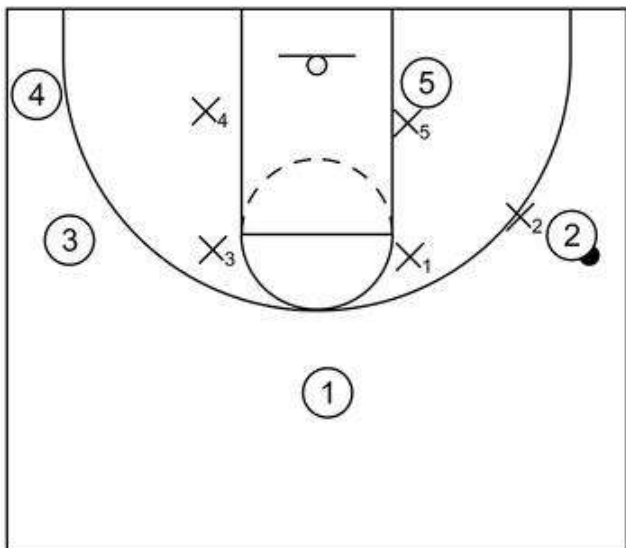
Also, X5 continues to front the low post while X4 remains near the left side low post area for the time being.

Example 3



This is an example of the pack line defense when 1 is able to get by X1 and then attempt to dribble into the lane. When that occurs, X2 prevents further penetration by standing in the gap between the top and the wing. As a result, 2 receives the ball from 1 and then, X2 has to swiftly try to closeout to prevent any further dribble penetration and/or contest a potential jump shot.

Example 4

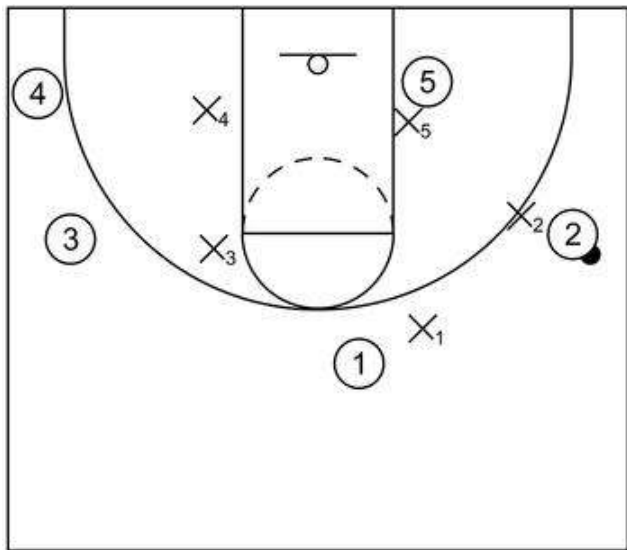


This is an example of the pack line defense when the ball is live on the wing. When that happens, X2 applies on-ball pressure. Moreover, since the ball is on the right side wing, X2 denies the baseline side by influencing 2 towards the left.

That is to say, X2 puts pressure on the ball but at the same time, 2 is encouraged to dribble towards the top or the middle where the pack line defender, X1 can provide help and support if necessary.

X5 continues to front the post on the high side while X3 and X4 are in help formations on the weak side.

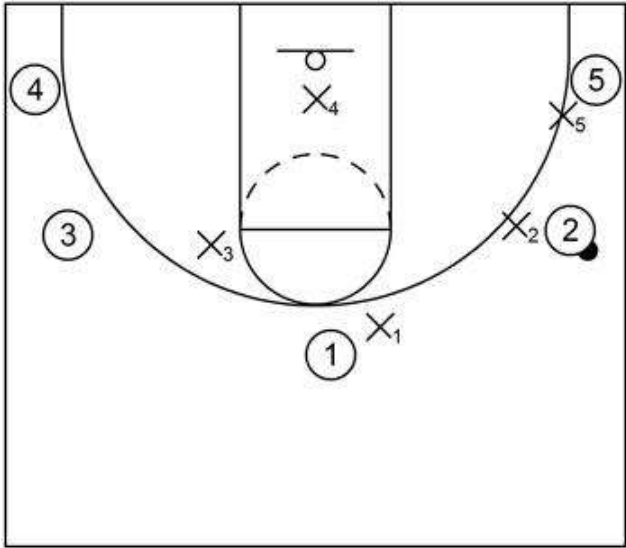
Example 5



This is an example of the pack line defense when the ball is dead on the wing. When that occurs, X2 applies on-ball pressure as before. However, this time, X1 can deny the pass back to 1 because 2 ended the dribble action.

X5 continues to front the post while X3 and X5 are in help spots on the weak side.

Example 6

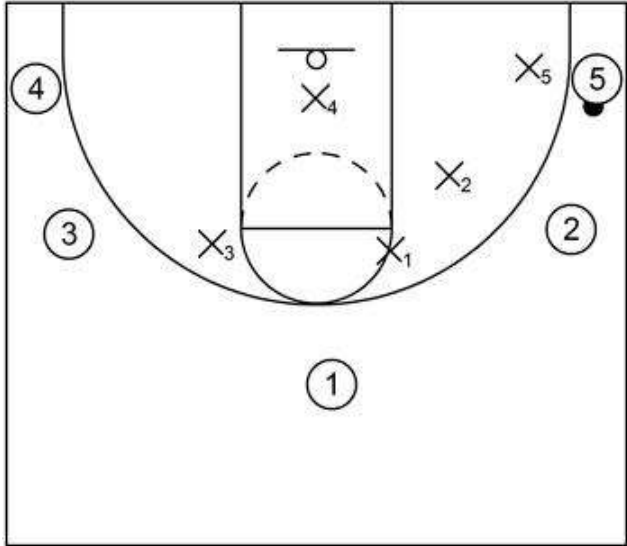


This is another example of the pack line defense when the ball is dead on the wing. However, this time, 5 is near the right side corner as opposed to the right side low post area.

This also happens to create a 5 out formation for the offensive team. From that point, both X1 and X5 can deny the ball in the passing lane of 1 and 5 respectively.

Furthermore, X4 could temporarily slide in the lane to provide additional basket protection in the event that 4 or 5 cut to the basket.

Example 7



This is an example of the pack line defense when the ball is live in the corner. When that occurs, X5 applies on-ball pressure against 5. At the same time, X5 denies the baseline but influences 5 to dribble towards the help defender, X2.

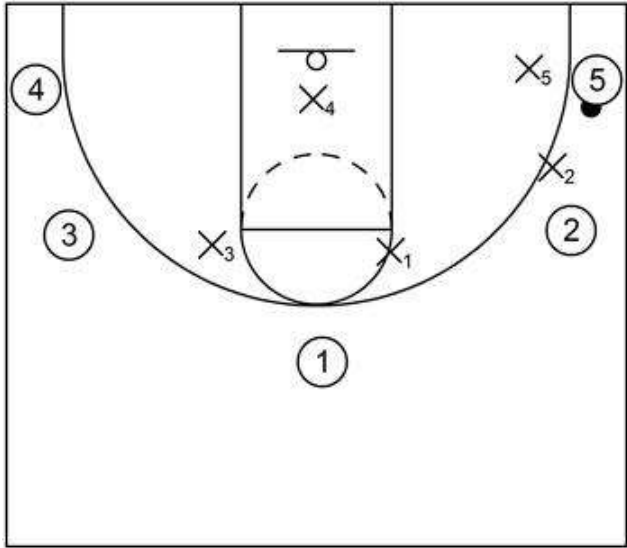
Furthermore, X2 sags away from 2 and stands in the gap between the wing and the corner. This allows X2 to help on possible dribble penetration by 5 and it also prevents an easy backdoor cut by 2.

X1 is also in help position near the right side high post elbow. So, if 1 attempts to cut, then X1 can cut off that pathway.

At the same time, if 2 receives the ball from 5 but then attempts to dribble towards the lane, X1 can also mitigate that dribble penetration as well.

X3 and X4 are in help defense on the weak side. Furthermore, X4 can actually slide into the lane to provide extra basket protection as well.

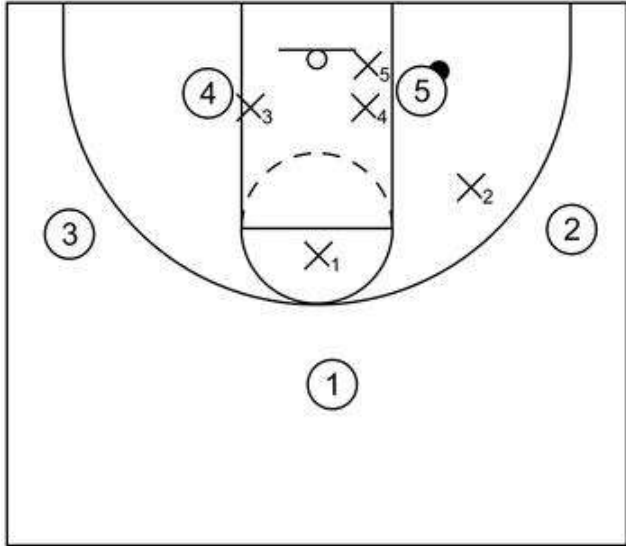
Example 8



This is an example of the pack line defense when the ball is dead in the corner. When that occurs, X5 applies on-ball pressure as before against 5. However, this time, X2 denies the pass back to the adjacent wing.

At the same time, X1, X3, and X4 are ready to provide help defense, particularly by watching for cuts to the basket by off-ball offensive players. Moreover, X4 can slide into the lane to protect the basket as before.

Example 9



This is an example of the pack line defense when the ball gets into the low post. If that occurs, then X4 could double team the low post alongside X5.

Furthermore, for this case, 4 is near the weak side low post block and could quickly receive the ball from 5.

Therefore, to mitigate or prevent that action from happening, X3 could sink down to take away the possible drop pass from 5.

At the same time, X1 fills the high post near the center of the free throw line, also known as the nail to take away easy cuts to the basket by 1.

This is very similar to the sink and fill concept, most notably utilized as a help defense counter strategy if dribble penetration occurred near the baseline in the standard man to man defense.

The Pack Line – No one goes outside that line unless you are guarding the basketball.



INTRODUCE with 3 on 3 Give and Go / Screen Away.

- 1) Stay inside the PACK unless on the ball. Put down the Pack Line 15 to 16' ft.
- 2) Stance – see man and ball at all times. If you can “see”, you can “do”. This vision will improve reaction time.
- 3) Deny only if ball is picked up (now you can go outside the pack).

There is only a RECOVERY rule – we don't have a HELP rule since we are always in HELP.

CLOSE-OUTS – sprint to the ball / stop short / hands high – then wide.

WHAT YOU AS A COACH CAN CONTROL

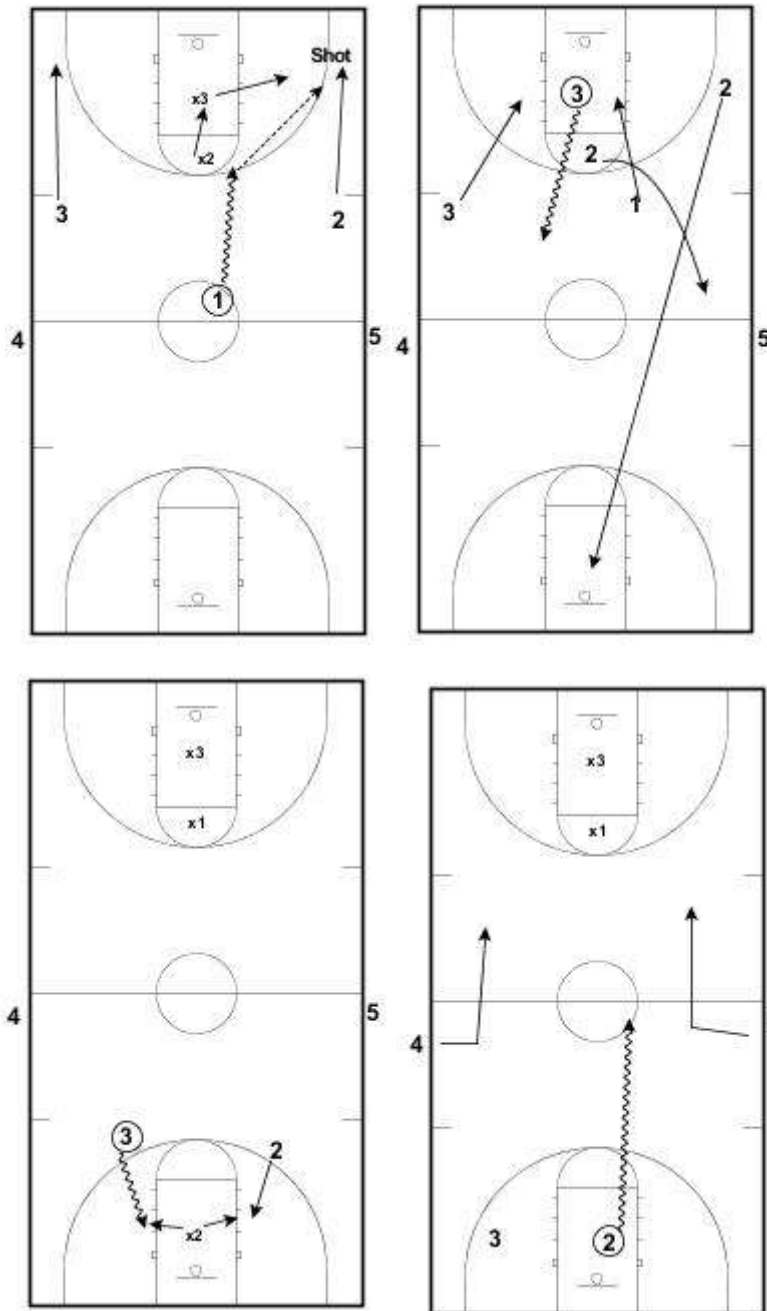
- 1) Don't give up any transition baskets – ALWAYS sub a player for loafing back on defense.
- 2) Don't get beat by a good post player
 - a) double to get the ball out
 - b) choke it or dig it out

We do the same drills at the beginning of the season that we do at the end.

CONVERSION

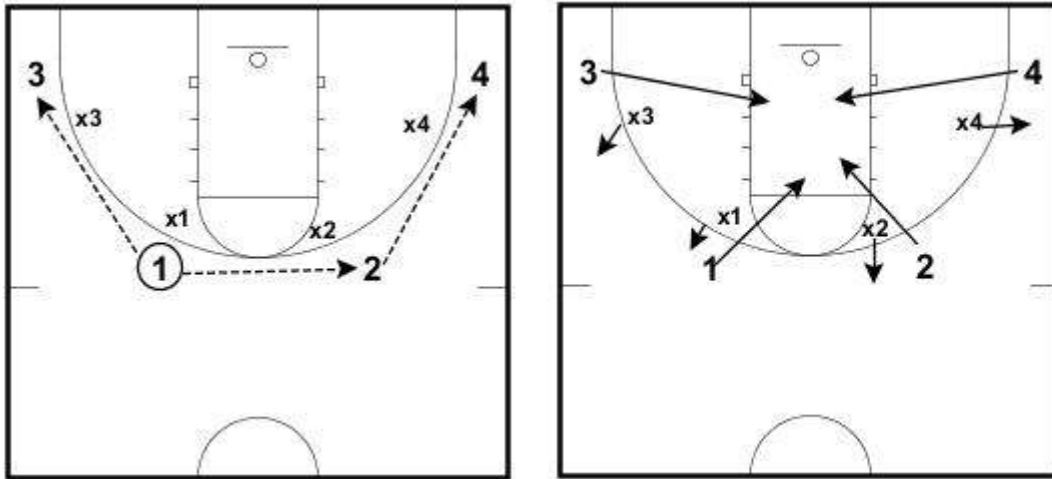
3 on 2 / 2 on 1 Drill

Shooter or person who throws ball away is back



Back defender – try and be in two places at once, just don't stand there. Cat and mouse – fake and recover, etc.

4 on 4 Switch-A-Roo Drill - Improves alertness



Perimeter players move ball around to the four spots. Coach yells “switch” at any time – offensive player sets ball on the floor. All four offensive players must then get a foot in the lane and come out guarding a NEW player. Defense becomes offense and looks to attack. Try and keep the ball out of the lane. “TALK” and get to the ball.

Defense is MORE than getting back and playing hard. Defense is RECOGNITION, ANTICIPATION, REACTION AND COMMUNICATION.

POST DEFENSE

Reminder, you as the coach can control whether or not a post player will beat you. Don’t let it happen – double or choke it.

The way you defend the post dictates how you play everywhere else.

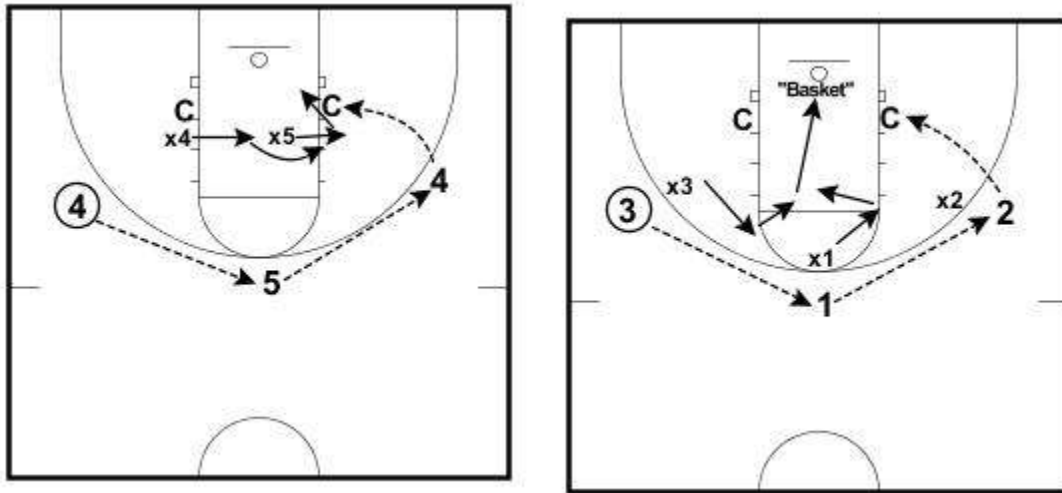
NO FEEDS into the post from the top. Don’t try and deny the high post – treat the high post like a perimeter player. Ball fed inside from the wing – high side on the post, ball in the air – get behind! Don’t go for the steal.

When playing a great post player - DOUBLE the post with weak side post when you want to get the ball out. When playing a good post – CHOKE it out from passer’s defender. If you are guarding a good shooter who passes into the post, you can only “fake” or “hedge” at post. Guarding bad shooter who passes into post, you can attack the ball and get it out from the post.

You don’t want to make a bad post player a good player by allowing offensive rebounds because you were fronting on defense.

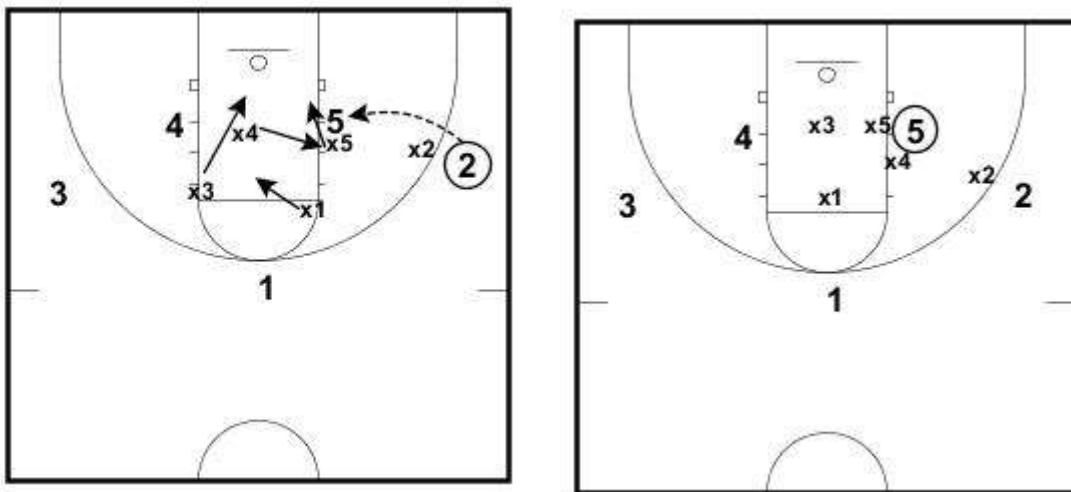
Work POST / PERIMETER defensive drills. 10 minutes at least 3 NIGHTS A WEEK.

Post Double Drill (5 minutes on one end)



Off Guards Tandem / Passer Locked Up Drill (5 minutes on the other end). Bottom guard always calls “basket”. Other guard takes FT line area.

Post Double / Guard Tandem Drill (5 minutes together)



The post double team will be much easier in “The Pack” because your defenders are always inside the pack and not out chasing players around. Your runs will be shorter.

Two CRISIS situations.

- 1) Ball gets into the post from the top (all help to get it out)
- 2) Ball drives baseline – whoever – get it stopped!

BALL PRESSURE

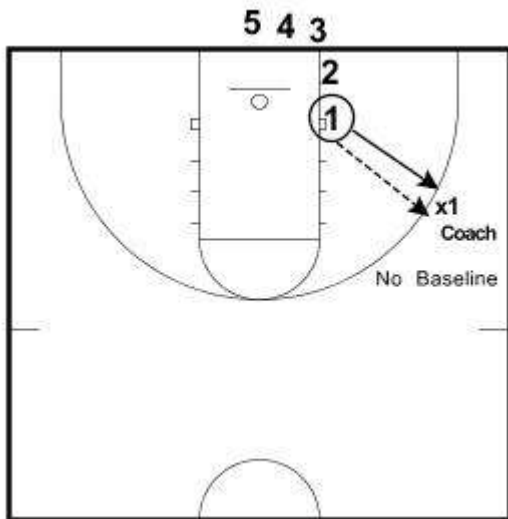
Close – outs: Run 2 steps, chop step, hands high then wide.

Close-out Drill:

- 1) Pass out to coach and close out from top.



- 2) Pass to coach on wing – close out same but NO BASELINE. Coach can attempt baseline drive to get defender to cut off and understand “no baseline”.



- 3) Don't let player shoot a rhythm jumper – make them put it on the floor.

If you close with high hands, you can stop short. 1 sec. count hands high then out wide.

Guarding the dribble drive:

The KEY: Learn to LEVEL OFF your dribbler. No direct drives. Make them drive sideways. Develop this skill with your players through drill work and repetition. They will get better at it.

1 on 1 zig zag defense full court DRILL

- Tell offense to do what they can to beat the defense up the floor.
- See how many times defense can make him change directions. Get them going sideways.
- If the player you are guarding is quicker, give up some space.

Ball pressure on top player – make them drive either direction (sideways). Force them to their weak hand if they have one.

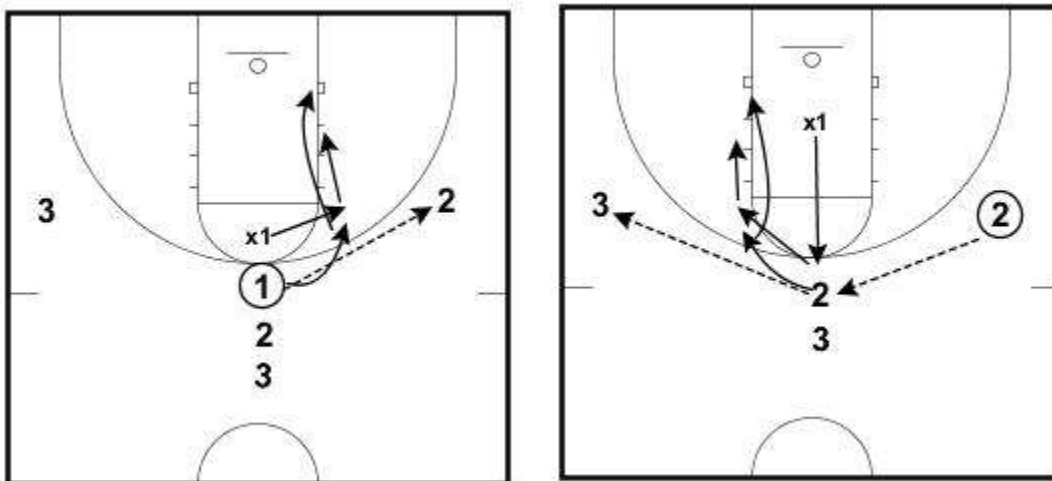
Stay in your stance – hands up on shot. Do not come UP on shot fakes – stay down with hand up.

Rules for closing out on the shooter.

- 1) Close-out hard, stop short with feet chopping and hands high then wide.
- 2) Take away baseline.
- 3) Take away rhythm jumper.
- 4) Level off dribbler – make them go sideways.
- 5) Bother them – pressure.
- 6) Jump to the ball on pass.

Jump to the Ball DRILL

- (1 vs. 3) Work on:
- 1) Close-out
 - 2) Jump to the ball
 - 3) Take away basket cut – no face cuts.
 - 4) Same defender closes out on pass to stop and repeats drill to left side.



Progress to:

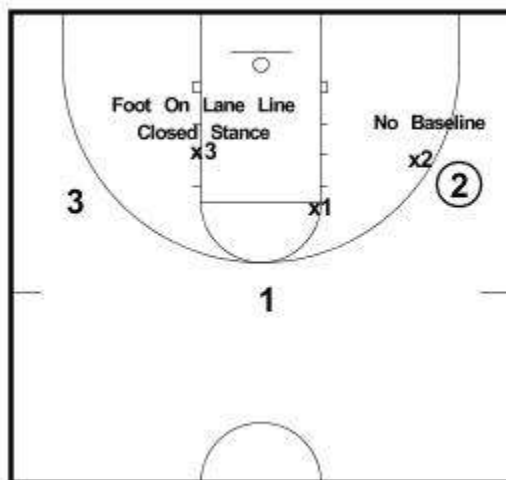
3 on 3 Jump to the Ball Drill



Do this EVERY NIGHT! Vision – pass and cut.

OFF - BALL PRESSURE

- 1) Be in help – get to the ball.
- 2) Anticipate recovery.
- 3) The “help” move is taken out of the vocabulary – as you are always in help away from the ball.



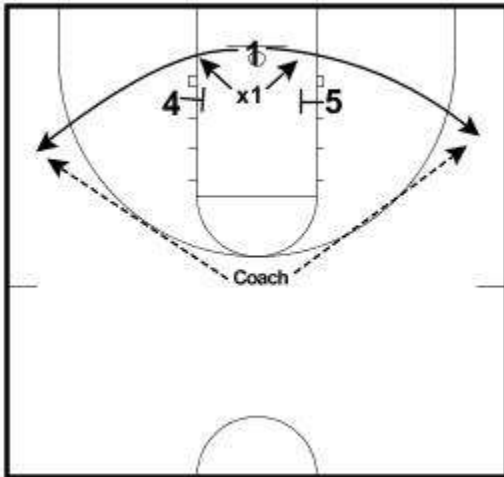
Off - ball positioning. Play 3 on 3 LIVE until you get a stop and rebound.

DEFENDING SCREENS

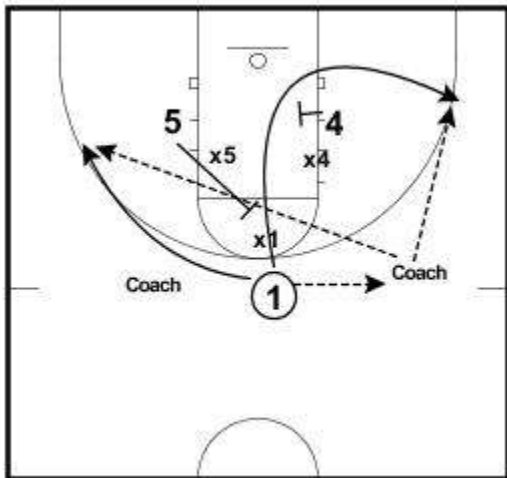
Once you hear “screen”, you get to your man. You are NOT responsible for help or vision when you are being screened.

“Tag” your man, trail right on their back. Chase them! Always stay within touching distance. Defense plays “tag” and chases offensive player.

Screening DRILL (no curl cuts)



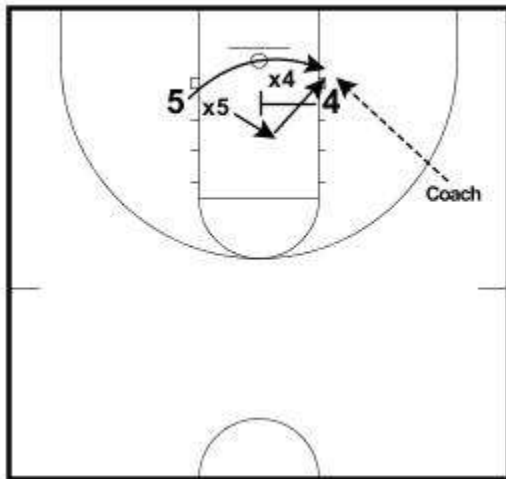
Screening DRILL progression



If you are GUARDING the SCREENER, you help in anyway you can and in the direction of the player coming off the screen. Work on back screens, down screens, staggered screens, etc.

- 1) Give helper some freedom.
- 2) Touching distance of man screening.
- 3) Help defender in the direction the offensive player is going.

Screens in the Lane DRILL (use V-move)

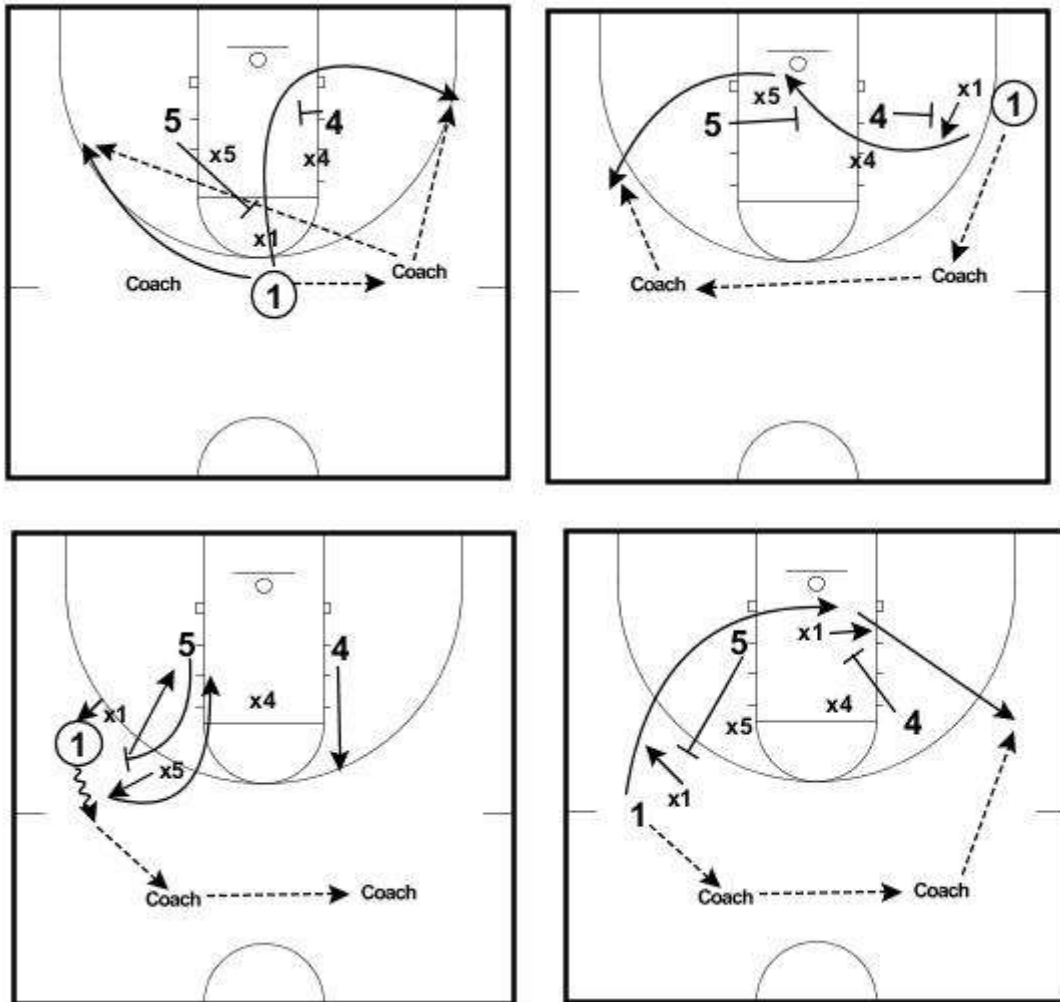


If you are guarding the screener, you cover the rim.

Ball Screens (Ball defender force player into the screen and cut over ball screen – Screen defender steps out while keeping arms distance from screener and forces dribbler sideways or levels off dribbler then hustles back to their player.



Add Ball Screens now to previous screening drill



PROBLEMS

This will bother you and you need to work against it. These are weaknesses observed when trying to teach defense the way it needs to be taught:

- 1) Shot Fakes – defenders coming out of their stance.
- 2) Reaching – trying to steal post pass will get you beat.
- 3) Hands down – this will kill you on the shooter and your rebounding.
- 4) Silence – you must get your team to communicate.
- 5) Over helping in the lane, especially by the post. Post help but get back. Stay at home.
- 6) Lateness on post trap and / or choke.
- 7) You must get on the floor! Check for bruises and missing skin after the game!