

- As with catching, follow the flight of the ball with your eyes, move your feet and carry your hands (thumbs pointed at ears).
- Jump! Go and meet the ball, most juniors tend to wait for the ball to come to them, encourage and teach players to jump, work on timing.
- Land ready to act. Teach players how to land in a low, wide stance ready to execute the next skill. Players need to be able to land and shoot (for offensive boards), land and pivot, land and pass, land and dribble. Teach them to use fakes and combinations of the above e.g. pivot, pass fake and then bust-out with a dribble.
- Chin it. Again different coaches have different cues and techniques for where the ball should be held but the underlying premise is that the ball is protected. I like to teach juniors to chin it with their elbows out.
- Rebounding Triangle. As a team, we want a chance to rebound every shot that goes up. A triangle should be formed, so that regardless of whether the ball rebounds to the middle, left or right, our team has a chance of coming up with it! We often teach players to get to spots to receive a pass when a team mate drives, but a key element of that is also to be in a position to rebound should they shoot it. It is the same on defence when we teach defensive rotation, we not only cover likely passes but also the key rebounding positions!

Personally, I am hesitant to teach a lot of blocking out to beginners, I just try and emphasise effort, the rebounding mentality. Technique can come later. If you do want to go down that path encourage them to value inside position. Fight for that position, contest don't concede and remember it is block-out! By this I mean, it is no good being inside your player but directly under the ring, the ball is going to rebound off there! What we want to do is to create space around the ring so it won't go over our heads and we can actually move forward and attack the ball in the air and get the rebound sooner.

Rebounding is a defensive stop; it gets or keeps possession for our team. Defence doesn't end until we get the ball, so stay in your stance and keep playing until we secure possession. Reward yourself for forcing a missed shot! Similarly, good offence will put you in a position to rebound, take advantage of second opportunities! Until next month - have fun with the kids. They all want the ball; well being good at defence and rebounding means they can have it more often!

Past Articles

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BUILDING BETTER BASKETBALL

ISSUE NO. 9 COACHES

DEFENCE AND REBOUNDING

'Rebounding and defence are the key contributors to our offence'



For more information visit www.basketball.net.au

The Building Better Basketball Coaching Series this month brings you key teaching areas for defence and rebounding. Both of these require the development of a mentality in junior players. As coaches, we need to emphasise and illustrate the value of both these facets of the game, to entice the same application to the development of defence and rebounding, as players show to scoring!

So what is defence? I ask the kids what they are trying to do on defence and "Get the ball" is the usual response. I suggest we let the other team score because then we get the ball! This is not well received so then I ask; "How can we get the ball BEFORE they score?" "Steal it" is the dominant response and I agree but then offer; intercept, out of bounds, rebound, travel, double dribble, 5 seconds, 8 seconds, 3 seconds, cross-court and draw an offensive foul as other avenues to achieve the same outcome - get the ball! We want to develop the players that, regardless of the quality of the opposition, can compete. At this stage of their playing careers, the quality of opponent will vary greatly and getting a steal may be quite easy. Obviously this will not always be the case and you need to equip them with the why and the how of individual fundamental defensive skills and team defensive strategy/philosophy.

DEFENCE

Stance - Just as we did with offence, demonstrate the correct stance for defence. Point out the strengths of this position. If we are down low and wide, you take up more space, stopping the offence from going there. We can cover more distance (and do it quickly) because our legs are bent and loaded, ready to move.

Balance - Players need to learn how to move, keeping their head centred and at the same height (not bobbing up and down). This is advantageous when they need to change direction and/or speed. Players need to be able to apply hand pressure without leaving their stance, whether it be digging for the ball or carrying a hand, this needs to happen in isolation from the legs. Keep 'nose to chest', so we're in stance and in a good position.

Foot Movement - Our initial stance is big. Any movement should be big to bigger back to big, so we don't lose the advantages of our stance. So when we move, teach to push off the trail leg and move the lead foot first. Players should be taught how to slide and also how, and when, to change from sliding to running. The key is position; so if the slide is not quick enough to protect your position (over distance this will invariably be the case), teach the skill of slide-sprint-slide to maintain your advantage.

On-Ball Pressure - At this age I suggest that players are taught how to channel, turn and contain the ball-handler. They should have positional pressure (feet), ball pressure (hands) and mental pressure (communication). If the ball is down (on dribble or held low) then they should be 'back and down' (back a little and down in stance). If the ball is held high, defence should be 'up and in' (up closer and in pressuring).

Off-Ball Pressure - To teach positioning I teach players the BUM Triangle. B is for ball, U is for you and M is for man (I also use BUG - G is for girl). To build the triangle the player should be basket-side and ball-side of their player, in a stance (of course) and 'pointing their pistols', (maintaining vision on ball and player). I want my players in a position to get the ball at all times so if the triangle is too fat - the pass is easy, too flat - the cut is easy. If the point of the triangle (i.e. 'U') is too close to the ball, we can't stop the pass, too close to the defender and we can't stop the drive (help) and also any cut is easier because we are not cutting down the angle (much like a soccer goalkeeper does when he moves forward to stop shots on goal) of the pass.

Movement - Should be constant. "If the ball's on the move - you're on the move." Even when the player with the ball is not dribbling, they are usually faking or pivoting; we should be moving on the balls of our feet, ready to move. On a pass or shot the defence should "Fly with the ball." Use the time the ball is in the air to adjust your position accordingly, whether to execute a block-out or the next phase of defence. On a pass, defence should "Jump to the ball." By adjusting our position in relation to the ball as it moves, we are in a better position to stop a pass, a cut and to help.

Transition - No doubt when teaching offence you will cover the issue of court balance and receivers, both will assist with transition into defence. Good balance will give you safety and the receivers allow you to begin defence as quickly as possible. Should you score or lose possession, receivers can slow the inbound/outlet pass by pressuring both the passer and receivers.

When coaching games you may apply rules. For example no steals, intercepts and rebounds only. Only one person on the ball (if you get beat rotate to someone else) this is good for defence and the game as it avoids the 'bees around a honey-pot' look of most U/8-10 games! You might work on channeling one week and turning the ball-handler the next. Challenge the team and individual kids with different aspects of defence, don't settle for short-term outcomes (i.e. the win) that may harm their long-term development. Not only will they be able to play any style of defence as they continue in basketball, but they will also be better able to recognize and counter different defence as an offensive player (assuming you teach the 'why of the how' of each defensive strategy) correctly. Ultimately we want players to develop the mentality that we will be disruptive, we will make the offence uncomfortable and make what they are trying to do difficult, preferably even stop it! We want pressure and patience, because against better teams you need pressure and time before sterner stuff breaks!

REBOUNDING

I often hear coaches implore their players to dive on the loose ball, well really we should be just as aggressive about rebounding, it is a loose ball - so get after it! Everybody should be encouraged to rebound, not just tall players. Some key areas to cover include:

- Be in stance, ready to move.