

Developing Players Ability to Defend 94 Feet

The aim of this defence is that it can be used to change and control the game primarily through controlling the tempo of the game and forcing the offensive team out of their comfort zone.

The primary teaching points of this defence are:

- Deny 'entry' passes; 'safe' passes increase time pressure
- Force the ball to the outside, trap from the middle
- Pressure over players; pressure requires rotating and scrambling to guard various players
- Defend from the basket out
- There are two ways to defend 94 feet: 'on' (pass lanes) & 'off' (penetration lanes)

The principles and the aggressive nature of this defence mean that it is most effective when used as a strategy to stop, change or create 'runs', and as part of a defensive system that utilises multiple defences in a 'proactive fashion'. Essentially this defence is very difficult to play for an entire 40 minutes and is much more effective as a 'change up' defence. The success or failure of this defence is determined by the ability to execute key defensive principles, in particular individual on-ball accountability as well as off-ball defensive movement and reaction. Lastly, and most crucially, is in order to successfully utilise this defence within team play it must be underpinned by excellent individual conditioning and defensive fundamentals along with a good defensive tactical understanding.

Defensive Codes 1 (set up of defence): '100' – full court, '34' – three quarter court, '12' – half court

Defensive Codes 2 (type of defence): 'On' – pressure, 'Off' – containment

UNDERPINNING DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

There are a number of key defensive principles that underpin this defensive system; these are global principles that run across all defensive alignments and systems whether man to man or zone based. Maintaining consistent defensive principles, teaching points and coaching cues makes it much easier to implement multiple defences into a team's play.

1. On-ball containment

On-ball defenders have one responsibility: primarily taking away ball penetration. Effective defence, whether man to man or zone, must be built on containing ball penetration primarily through individual on-ball accountability and off-ball movement and reaction. At all times the ball must be guarded and dribble penetration must be contained by the on ball defender, and pass penetration must be pressured by both the on-ball defender and off-ball defender.

Ability to contain the ball introduces shot clock pressure to the ball carriers, both through the 8-second count in the back court and the 24-second shot clock.

2. Off-ball cheating

Off-ball defenders must be constantly moving or 'cheating' based on the movement of the ball. For example, in the backcourt as the ball is dribbled towards the sideline the off ball defender can cheat towards the ball increasing the pressure on the ball handler.

Pressuring/containing the ball and taking away the strengths of the player they are guarding are the two main responsibilities of defenders away from the ball. The balance of these responsibilities depends on the offensive player's strengths and the defence being played.

By default, 'cheating' on the ball will get players in a position to provide early help and early rotations. For example, in the half court players cheating on the ball may move towards the ball when it is being dribbled getting them in a position to help if the ball defender is beaten. In spite of this, it is still important to reinforce individual accountability for stopping on-ball penetration. It is a mistake to allow good off-ball defensive rotations to excuse poor on-ball defence. Primarily the off-ball defenders' roles are to stop pass penetration (through effectively guarding pressure releases, cutters, screens and post players) and put pressure on the ball through their defensive movement *not* help out beaten defenders.

3. Hot v Cold players

Teaching players the principle of 'hot' and 'cold' players helps with their reads when defending off the ball. 'Hot' players describe individuals that are in a position on the floor where they can hurt you and so must be guarded, for example, a shooter in the half court or a ball carrier in the back court. When a player is 'cold' they are not in a position to hurt you, for example, a big player with poor ball handling skills in the back court or a non-shooter on the weak side.

In a game alignment when guarding a 'hot' shooter in the half court (in a man to man or zone alignment) a defender must hedge towards this player, however, when guarding a 'cold' shooter they can hedge towards the ball thus increasing the pressure on the ball carrier. Likewise, when guarding an extremely quick guard in the back court who has the potential to beat a press with their dribbling ability, a player may need to stay with that player and try to stop them getting the ball.

This concept not only reinforces 'scouting', but more importantly teaches players to scout the players they are guarding in every situation and, in the process, 'read' the offensive player and take away that player's strengths.

4. Pass v Penetration defence

Players' off-ball reads will also depend on the defence being played primarily whether the team is guarding passing lanes or driving lanes. If a pass defence is being played, pressure may be applied to 'safe' passing lanes (passes that do not penetrate the defence) as well as 'entry' passes (passes that penetrate the defence).

Teams that understand two or more approaches to defence improve their versatility and ability to defend teams and/or players with different offensive strengths, and also increase the ways that they can change and influence the game with their defence.

5. Up-tempo pressure defence does not have to mean up-tempo pressured shots

When teams attack the offensive team over 94 feet there is a danger that this will lead to over zealous decisions on the offensive end. It is important to teach players the concept of using defence to control the tempo of the game and implementing consistent offensive principles and tactics regardless of the defence being utilised. Of course the game situation may dictate various offensive tactics (eg. a team down late in the game may look for quick shots), however, it is important that players understand that this is an offensive tactic and is not necessary dependant on playing an up tempo defence.

6. Guard the basket

Good defensive teams get stops by pressuring teams to take shots from poor positions. The best position to score is around the basket so overriding all defensive principles are the rules:

- ✓ There must always be a defender between the ball and the basket
- ✓ All players must stay between their man and the basket

It is important to note that if the ball is on the perimeter and is being guarded by an effective on-ball defender, then there is a defender between the ball and the basket so there is no need to trap a defender under the basket. However, in a full court defence which involves trapping and rotations, there will be times when the ball is unguarded so it is important to have the basket guarded by an off-ball defender.

TEACHING DEFENCE OVER 94 FEET

1. Underpin defensive team play with tactical understanding, individual fundamentals and conditioning

To successfully play a fullcourt defensive system, players must be well conditioned, have good individual defensive fundamentals and an understanding of defensive tactics.

This involves taking a whole-part-whole approach to teaching fullcourt defence by breaking down and teaching the components of the defence progressively building up towards the execution of the whole defensive system. This will involve the following sequences:

Aerobic (fitness) and anaerobic (defensive explosiveness) conditioning work;
Part and full court individual defensive drills (1 v 1);
Part and full court defensive advantage break down drills (eg. 2 offence v 3 defence);
Part and full court defensive disadvantage break down drills (eg. 3 offence v 2 defence);
Part and full court breakdown drills (eg. 2 v 2, 3 v 3, 4 v 4);
Controlled scrimmages (eg. half court to full court).

It is important to teach the majority of this defence with transition drills for players to develop the ability to convert after any defensive steals or forced turnovers.

2. Start simply, develop complexity

Essentially defending the whole court is built on full court man to man defence; using a zone defensive alignment to execute this defence can help build players' confidence to pressure the ball and sets a platform to 'change up' the defence. Primarily coaches should develop players' understanding of man to man defensive principles, then introduce a fullcourt defensive change up, then introduce the different looks of the defence:

| | |
|-------|---|
| '100' | Trap the full length of the court |
| '34' | Trap three quarters of the court |
| '12' | Trap once the ball crosses half court |
| 'On' | Pressure all passing lanes ('safe' and 'entry' passing lanes) |
| 'Off' | Only pressure 'entry' passing lanes |

3. Teach players the importance of defensive communication

As the defensive code determines when and how the ball is going to be trapped in this defence, teaching this defence explicitly reinforces to the players the importance of defensive communication. Using a combination of visual and verbal cues and having all players (on-court and bench) repeat codes can help with this.

In addition, the use of defensive cues is a key tool in determining players' rotations after a trap; players who cannot or will not communicate will not be effective in this defence. That said, it is important that coaches tell players what to say by teaching that specific cue words they can use (eg. 'long' or 'short' on rotations) and how they can utilise strategic communication ('cover the basket, cover down').

USING FULLCOURT DEFENCE

1. When

Due to the aggressive nature of this defending the full court and the demands on the defensive team, its most effective when used as a change-up defence and for short periods of the game. Like most fullcourt systems, it is easier and more effective to set up after a score or dead ball, however, there is potential to use this defence off a missed free-throw and, depending on the a the shooting team's defensive balance, after a missed shot.

2. Why

In addition to when to use this defence, it is important for coaches to consider why to use it at a particular stage of a game.

- Change the tempo of the game
- Stop, change or create a run
- Test a back-up guard or a ball carrier with suspect ball handling skills
- Test the depth of an opposition team
- Utilise a small line-up most effectively
- Counter an opposition coach using a big line-up
- Counter any size disadvantages

3. Where

Within this defence, the ball can be pressured over the full court, three quarter court or when it crosses half way. This will depend on why the press is being used.

4. How

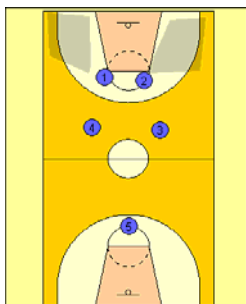
The crux of using this defence involves combining four key concepts:

- Scrambling match-ups
- Pressuring the ball
- Rotating after ball pressure
- Protecting the basket

These tactical concepts, and the individual fundamental skills and conditioning required to execute them, must be broken down, taught, developed and built up.

KEY PRINCIPLES

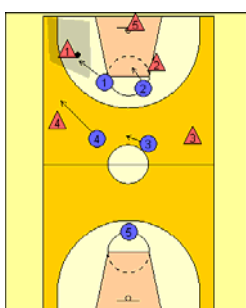
1. Defensive alignment



i. Catch zones (player stances)

All defenders need to 'squeeze in' the middle as it is preferable if the ball is caught in an outside lane.

The defence wants to push the receivers towards their own baseline so they are catching in the deep corners of the court called the 'catch zones'.



ii. Match-up principles

Following the inbounds the court is divided in five zones. The four highest players (01 to 04) are responsible for matching-up on any players in their 'zone'. As the main principle is to deny 'entry' passes, if there are two offensive players in a zone the defender should match up on the lowest player (02 guards X2 rather than X5).

This means that the entry passes to the middle (01 to 03) and down the side (01 to 04) should be denied.

The deepest player (05) always guards home.

iii. Pressure points – trap zones

Primarily we want to trap/pressure the ball from the middle with the player at the top of the zone. Additionally we want to trap/pressure the ball at particular points on the floor:

Full Court ('100') – Follow the pass and trap on the catch (01 & 02).

Three quarter court ('34') – Trap on a trigger once the ball crosses the foul line extended.

Half court ('12') – Trap on a trigger once the ball crosses halfway.

As a ball is moved towards a trap zone it is important off-ball players cheat to the ball.

iv. Player positioning (below ball; bottom of zone)

Any time the ball is live all players must be below the ball defenders shoulder denying 'entry' passes. When the ball is picked up in an 'on' (pressure) defence then players one pass away can cheat into the passing lanes.

2. Pressuring the ball

i. Pressure Cues

There are two main cues which initiate ball pressure, the ball carriers action and the ball carriers category.

There are three key triggers for a trap if the ball player has their heads down, are out of control or make a spin dribble move. It is more effective to trap after these triggers as the ball carrier will be unsighted.

It is also important for the defensive team to 'read' the offensive player. If the ball carrier is a 'hot' player (with the

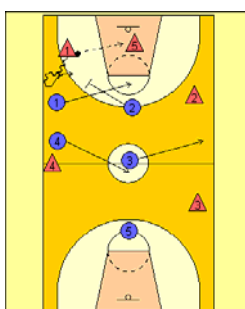
potential to hurt us with ball handling) the defenders want to force the ball out of their hands so should trap them aggressively on any trigger. If the player is 'cold' then it is effective for the defensive team if the ball is in their hands so it may be more effective for the off-ball defender to hedge and recover to apply pressure.

The defensive team can call a 'hot' defence. In this instance every player is considered 'hot' and each trigger is trapped aggressively.

ii. Ball Pressure

There are three main ways to pressure the ball in this defence. The first is to hedge help and recover in which case the off-ball defender stays in an open stance and no rotations are necessary. The second and third methods, run & switch and run & trap, require the defender to close stance thus losing sight of the player in their zone in which case the defence must rotate on any passes.

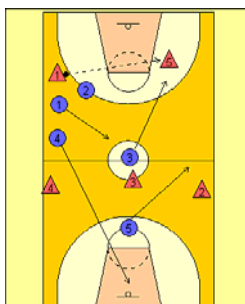
3. Rotating after ball pressure



There are two ways players can rotate, or short. The rotations are communicated by the weak side defensive player (03).

Short rotations are preferable particularly in containment ('off') defence. Essentially a 'short' rotation is a run and switch. 02 responds to a trigger and traps the ball; as soon as the ball is picked up 01 sprints out of the trap and takes 02's zone responsibility.

Basically a short rotation involves 01 and 02 switching their zone responsibility.



Long rotations are used if the distance for 01 to cover is too long. After a 'long' rotation the weak side players (03 & 05) will rotate up a 'zone' and the strong side players (01 & 04) will rotate down a zone.

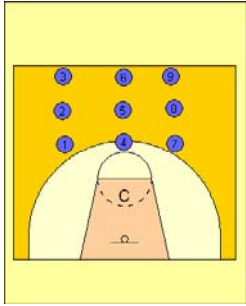
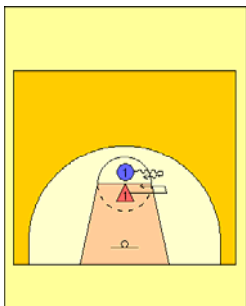
In an 'on' defence, long rotations are used on every trap; this allows the weak side players to shoot gaps and put early pressure on the passing lanes.

On any rotation, players must identify the deepest player in their zone and attack the passing lane between that player and the ball.


4. Protecting the basket

It is important the players in the top four zones always have 'back-up' with a player at the basket. This player is the director and must communicate to all other defenders, and secondly, this player does not leave the basket until there is more back-up arriving.

BUILD-UP SEQUENCE

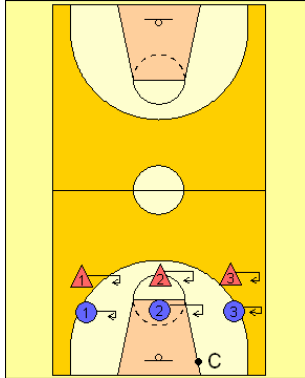
| i. Mass Stance Drill | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|----------|--|-----------------|---|--------------------|--|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Purpose</i> | This drill primarily works on defensive stance and slide technique, there is also potential to work on aspects of on ball defensive strategy. | | | | | | | | |
|  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Players form three even lines; on the coach's whistle they drop into a defensive stance. <p>Progression:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Stance with patter b. Stance with 'drive' step c. Stance with two slides d. Stance with retreat steps e. Stance with closeouts and retreat steps f. Stance with closeouts, sprint into retreat steps | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Transition Element</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick transition to a lay-up on coach's direction (individual drilling only: coach acts as passer) | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Player Cues</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-ball defence – 'ball' | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Coaching Cues & Key Teaching Points:</i> | <p><i>Containment Defence</i></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">'Stance'</td> <td>Hips below knees, head over toes, feet outside shoulders</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'Wide to wider'</td> <td>Move defensively by sliding wide to wider</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'Beat to the spot'</td> <td>Contain by beating to the spot (retreat steps)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'Hand pressure'</td> <td>Lead hand up, trail hand in and dig</td> </tr> </table> | 'Stance' | Hips below knees, head over toes, feet outside shoulders | 'Wide to wider' | Move defensively by sliding wide to wider | 'Beat to the spot' | Contain by beating to the spot (retreat steps) | 'Hand pressure' | Lead hand up, trail hand in and dig |
| 'Stance' | Hips below knees, head over toes, feet outside shoulders | | | | | | | | |
| 'Wide to wider' | Move defensively by sliding wide to wider | | | | | | | | |
| 'Beat to the spot' | Contain by beating to the spot (retreat steps) | | | | | | | | |
| 'Hand pressure' | Lead hand up, trail hand in and dig | | | | | | | | |
| ii. Mirror Drill | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Purpose</i> | In this drill athletes work on defensive slide technique in a controlled game like scenario. A secondary focus of this drill is work on athletes' ball handling ability in a high tempo environment. | | | | | | | | |
|  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An offensive player with a ball (O1) and a defensive player start opposite each other in the jump circle. On the coach's command the offensive player makes a series of dribble moves along the free throw line (eg. Cross over – two bounce – through legs – one bounce etc.) <p>The defensive player (X1) must 'mirror' the offensive player keeping his nose on the offensive player's chest.</p> | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Transition Element</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick transition into a lay-up on coach's whistle | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Player Cues</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-ball defence – 'ball' | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Coaching Cues & Key Teaching Points:</i> | <p><i>Containment Defence</i></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">'Stance'</td> <td>Hips below knees, head over toes, feet outside</td> </tr> </table> | 'Stance' | Hips below knees, head over toes, feet outside | | | | | | |
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| | <p>shoulders</p> <p>'Wide to wider'</p> <p>'Beat to the spot'</p> <p>Hand pressure'</p> <p>'Nose to ball'</p> <p><i>Dribble Moves</i></p> <p>'Stance'</p> <p>'Low quick crosses'</p> | <p>Move defensively by sliding wide to wider</p> <p>Contain by beating to the spot</p> <p>Lead hand up, trail hand in and dig</p> <p>Nose to the ball on first dribble</p> <p>Offensive stance position</p> <p>Low stance, low hard dribbles</p> |
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| iii. 1 v 1 Switch Drill | |
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| <i>Purpose</i> | The purpose of this drill is to work on players ability to contain, then turn the ball when defending in the full court. This drill also works on athletes' transition mentality. |
|  | <p>1. Divide the court into three lanes with an offensive and a defensive player in each lane. Drill starts when defensive player 'checks' ball, the offensive player must try to cross the sideline – defensive player contains ball.</p> <p>When the coach blows their whistle the offensive and defensive player change roles.</p> |
| <i>Transition Element</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick transition between offence and defence (on coach's whistle) |
| <i>Scoring and Timing System</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offensive players get 1 point for each time they reach the sideline Defensive players get 1 point for each time they turn the defence |
| <i>Player Cues</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On ball defence – 'ball' |
| <i>Coaching Cues & Key Teaching Points:</i> | <p><i>Containment Defence</i></p> <p>'Wide to wider'</p> <p>'Beat to the spot'</p> <p>Hand pressure'</p> <p><i>Dribble Moves</i></p> <p>'Stance'</p> <p>'Low quick crosses'</p> <p>Move defensively by sliding wide to wider</p> <p>Contain by beating to the spot</p> <p>Lead hand up, trail hand in and dig</p> <p>Offensive stance position</p> <p>Low stance, low hard dribbles</p> |

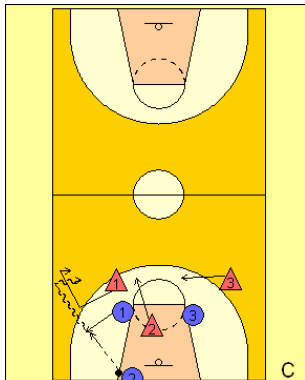
iii. 3 v 3 Middle Trap Drill
Purpose

In this drill athletes work on full court defensive tactics and reads, primarily through turning the ball and trapping then rotating off the ball.


1. Inbounds

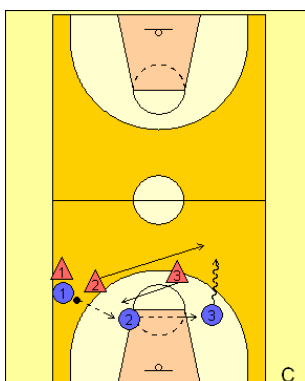
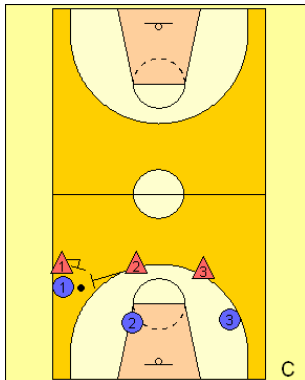
Two offensive players and two defensive players start either side of the free throw line facing away from each other.

To start the drill each pair work on their defensive slide technique. On the coaches command the two offensive players inbound the ball and look to advance the ball to the other end.


2. Full court Reads

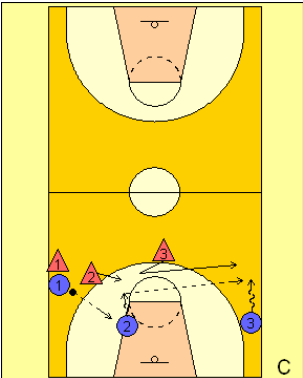
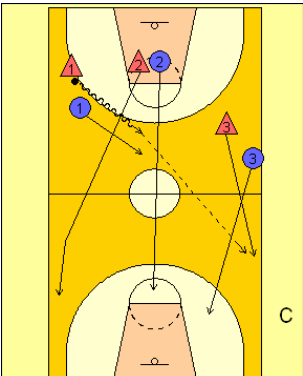
The key to this drill is the rule that in the backcourt the offensive players are not allowed to pass the ball forward. This gives the defensive players the opportunity and confidence to work on attacking the ball in the back court.

The on-ball defender is encouraged to clamp then turn the ball. The off-ball defender 1 pass away (X2) is encouraged to read the cues of the offensive players and attack the ball if the offensive player has their head down, is out of control or makes an unsighted spin move. This player can either hedge or recover (cue: 'help'), trap the ball (cue: 'stay') or switch with the on-ball defender (cue: 'switch').



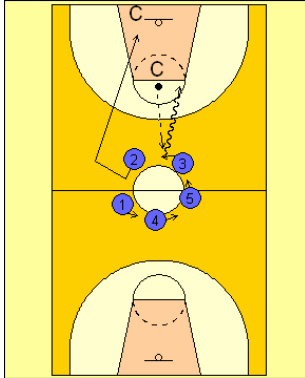
The off-ball defender two passes away (X3) is encouraged to attack the passing lane as the trapping action takes place.

This defender can either commit to the passing lane one pass away thus sending the defender rotating out of the trap (X2) long (cue: 'long').

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|  | <p>The off-ball defender two passes away (X3) may decide the distance is too great and will instead hedge and recover thus sending the player recovering out of the trap (X2) short (cue: 'short').</p> |
|  | <p>3. Transition</p> <p>When the defensive team receives the ball they have three dribbles max to score. The drill ends when the original offensive team (01, 02 & 03) outlet the ball to the coach either off a stop or a score.</p> <p><u>Variation:</u> Coaches can impose a time limit on the score if they prefer the ball dribbled in transition.</p> <p>This is also a chance to practice primary break principles eg. coaches can establish a rule that one player must run the middle lane and deep seal.</p> |
| <p><i>Transition Element</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three dribbles max to score after any change of possession (encourage pass ahead) |
| <p><i>Scoring and Timing System</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of passes forced in the backcourt • Defensive stops |
| <p><i>Player Cues</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-ball defence – 'ball' • On- and off-ball defenders – 'hot' or 'cold' players • Off-ball defence 1 pass away – 'help' then 'trap' or 'switch' • Off-ball defence 2 passes away – 'long' or 'short' |
| <p><i>Coaching Cues & Key Teaching Points:</i></p> | <p>Full court Defence</p> <p>'Turn the ball' Straddle the ball forcing turns</p> <p>'Line off ball' Off ball players at or below line of ball</p> <p>'Vision & hedge' Fake trap and recover, trap on cues</p> <p>'Triggers' Read the offensive triggers to trap</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">- head down or out of control</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">- unsighted spin move/cross over</p> <p>'Shoot the gap' Off ball defenders attack the passing lanes</p> <p>'Long' Player rotating out of the trap sprints long (2 passes away)</p> <p>'Short' Player rotating out of the trap sprints short</p> <p>Transition Offence</p> <p>'Get ahead – pass ahead' Lane runners get wide and ahead of the ball, pass the ball over halfway</p> |

iii. Fullcourt Rotation Drill
Purpose

This drill works on 'long' and 'short' rotations out of the press alignment.

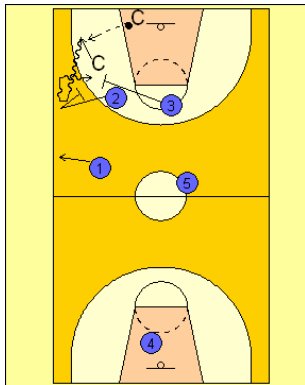

1. 2 v 1 Start

Five defenders start circling the jump circle with a coach on the foul line.

When the coach calls 'live' the ball is passed to the offensive team, the first two players must attack the coach.

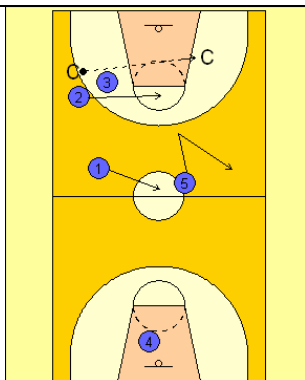
After a score players set up the 2-2-1 press (either the players or the coach can call the alignment '100' '34' or '12')

NB. All players must get below the three point line before setting on defence.


2. Pressure & Rotations

Following a score a second coach will inbound the ball. The defensive team must force the catch to the outside then depending on the alignment they trap on the first trigger. As per the defensive rules the players always trap from the middle.

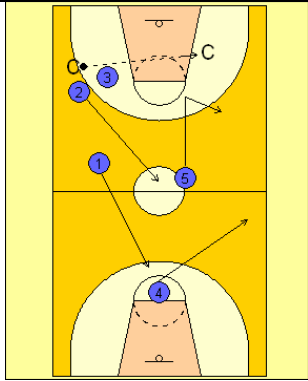
After the trap the weak side defender (03) will either call 'short' or 'long'.



On a 'short' rotation, 02 & 03 switch zones; 05 hedges and recovers to help 01 contain the ball.

On a 'long' rotation the weak side players (05 & 04) will rotate up a 'zone' and the strong side players (02 & 01) will rotate down a 'zone'.

01 must cover the basket and 02 must take away the pass to the middle.

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| <p><i>Transition Element</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defensive team convert on any turn-over or knockdown |
| <p><i>Scoring and Timing System</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of passes forced in the backcourt |
| <p><i>Player Cues</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-ball defence – ‘ball’ On- and off-ball defenders – ‘hot’ or ‘cold’ players Off-ball defence 1 pass away – ‘help’ then ‘trap’ or ‘switch’ Off-ball defence 2 passes away – ‘long’ or ‘short’ |
| <p><i>Coaching Cues & Key Teaching Points:</i></p> | <p>Full court Defence</p> <p>‘Turn the ball’ Straddle the ball forcing turns</p> <p>‘Line off ball’ Off ball players at or below line of ball</p> <p>‘Vision & hedge’ Fake trap and recover, trap on cues</p> <p>‘Triggers’ Read the offensive triggers to trap</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - head down - out of control - unsighted spin move/cross over <p>‘Shoot the gap’ Off ball defenders attack the passing lanes</p> <p>‘Long’ Player rotating out of the trap sprints long (2 passes away)</p> <p>‘Short’ Player rotating out of the trap sprints short (1 pass away – run and switch read)</p> |
| <p><i>Drill Extension</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaches are replaced by live players. Build up from 2 v 2 through to 5 v 5. |