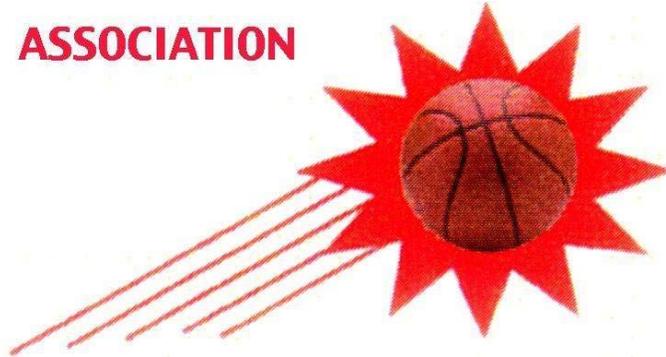


**COFFS HARBOUR BASKETBALL
ASSOCIATION**



Coaches Handout

- **Pre- Game Strategy**
- **During Game Strategy**
- **After Game Strategy**

Thankyou to Basketball NSW for part of this handout



COFFS HARBOUR BASKETBALL – COACHES ASSOCIATION
GAME COACHING SESSION
February 21st 2008

Hello coaches and welcome to this month's coaches education session on 'game coaching'.

The aim of tonight is to learn how to be better at coaching on game day. We hope to highlight the important aspects of the entire game experience from arriving at the game, to warm up's, the actual game and the after game situation. We will discuss specific tactics to use and highlight common observations to be made.

Below is a list of the topics to be covered tonight.

6.30pm - meeting room – **Welcome and Introduction.**

6.45pm - meeting room - **Pre Game situation**

7.00pm - on court – **Full Court Press**

7.10pm - on court - **Warm up**

7.15pm - on court - **Game**

7.45pm - on court - **After game situation**

7.50pm - on court – **Questions and Session end**

Thank you to everyone for coming along tonight. An especially big thanks to Regan Kama for running and preparing the session and also to the under 16 girls for their enthusiastic participation.

Next months session will be on referees. Sandra Mottram will be the guest speaker.

Thanks again

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GAME DAY MANAGEMENT

Q1. What are the goals of the game for your TEAM

1. To ENJOY playing and have FUN
2. To PLAY to their ability level
3. To SCORE baskets
4. To REDUCE the scoring opportunities of their opponent

Q2. What do you need to consider on Game Day

1. STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES of your players and OPPOSITION PLAYERS
2. STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES of your TEAM and OPPONENT
3. WHERE your team ranks in the competition and REALISTICALLY how you will fare (short/tall, slow/fast, beginners/advanced)
4. COMPETITION PARAMETERS (halves/quarters, running clock/fully timed, time outs permitted, half time break)
5. TEAM STRATEGY

Q3. WHAT methods of defence can your team employ & WHY?

1. Full Court Man to Man – aggressively attack the ball/apply pressure/press
2. $\frac{3}{4}$ Court Man to Man – contain the ball/trap
3. Half Court Man to Man – contain the ball/match up 5v5
4. Zone Defence (least preferable) – stop penetration & increase rebounding opportunities

Q4. WHY should juniors be taught man to man defence in preference to a zone defence (list 5 reasons)?

1. It makes players run the floor (play the game properly)
2. Players improve their footwork, agility, reflexes and conditioning
3. It puts pressure on the offence (e.g. can cause turnovers, poor decisions, rushed play)
4. It makes the offence work harder to be better players
5. It teaches the offence to create leads, and can help with their floor spacing
6. It helps defensive players to read the game (e.g. take risks, make decisions)
7. Improves teamwork (e.g. helping team mates, improved communication)
8. Players can transfer their defensive skills into their offensive game
9. Allows for more players to be involved in the game (and provides more substitution opportunities)
10. Provides offensive players with more scoring opportunities (e.g. penetrate, screen)
11. Players not highly skilled in scoring can contribute
12. It enables players to compete at higher levels and in older age groups

Q5. WHAT do you need to RECOGNISE during the game?

1. When you are not in control of the ball (turnovers in back court/poor shots in offence/rushed decision making)
2. When you aren't able to stop the opposition from scoring
3. WHO are your main SCORERS
4. WHO are your opponents main SCORERS / who to contain
5. TIME left in the half/quarter/game
6. WHAT (if anything) you need to change at any given time

1. GAME DAY MANAGEMENT (continued)

2. Q6. WHY do you need to substitute players?

1. Foul trouble
2. Fatigue
3. Injury
4. To change (tactical) the game
5. Cover player mis-matches

Pre- Game Preparation

The immediate pre-game time.... Not the week of practice before the game. This is an important time for the players and coaches to get comfortable with the situation at hand focus on the job to be done. Being organized, and having everyone under you organised, is very important.

Everything should be "routine", no surprises. And remember every coach has his/her own way to get his team ready.

It's a "Routine"

The key is to have a standard routine. Follow your routine and do the same things for every game. Whether you are on the road or at home, whether you have lost or won the last game or whether your opposition has lost or won their last game. It's a routine.

Look and act professional

Looking and feeling good and acting appropriately, are important. Uniform is important, everyone should be the same, whether you have your jumpers on or off. Everyone is expected to act with class as gentlemen and ladies before, during and after the game. Parents, teachers and fans are proud to see their kids looking good and in "team" attire.

Allow enough time

Allow enough time to arrive at the gym. Rushing around at the last minute creates a disorganized, frantic mood entering the game. You want players and coaches to be relaxed, calm and "in control" starting the game. Arrive at least 45 minutes before the game.

Players need time to get dressed, get ankles taped, stretch, and perform warm-up drills, and practice shooting and free throws. Allow about 5-10 minutes for the players to get dressed, while coaches organize the bench, and get scoresheets ready.

Things to do before the game

There are routine things to be done before each game. Have this organized in advance so there is no last minute confusion. You can designate much of this to your assistants, or managers, giving you time to visit with the referees and opposing coaches.

Review with your assistant coaches the starting lineup and defensive match-ups, substitution patterns, and any special strategies for this game.

Have an assistant get the opponent's starting line-up from the scorer's table. Assign the defensive player match-ups (if man-to-man defence). The assistant can then write the names of the starters on the clipboard along with the number of the player they will be defending, and can then inform the starters (while they are doing their warm-up drills), who they will be guarding.

Some coaches may prefer to have their starters know ahead of time who they will be guarding, rather than just "matching-up" around the centre-jump circle. Don't waste time in the last huddle going over match-ups.

Assistants should know their roles and where you like them to sit. For example, assistants can:

1. keep track of player fouls
2. number of time-outs left
3. opponent's individual fouls
4. try to get a sense of who are their best scorers and worst free-throw shooters.
5. assist in looking at X's and O's, offences and defences, press offence and press defence, etc.

Have your clipboard(s) ready, with extra marker pens and a cloth/eraser to wipe it. Don't waste half of your first time-out looking for the clipboard or a pen that works.

Have your manager collect, fold and stack the warm-ups. They should make sure each player and coach has a water bottle with his number or name on it.

If you are in a strange gym, with ambiguous lines, walk your players around the floor, even before they get dressed. Show them where the out-of-bounds lines are, the 10 second line, etc. Sometimes these lines are not obvious if the gym is used for volleyball and other sports, where multiple lines are painted on the floor. Show them where the bench and scorer's table will be for checking in the game. Show them the location of the scoreboard/clock.

Know in advance or any special rules... such as running clock, number of time-outs, etc.

The team meeting (before taking the floor)

This meeting is used to focus your players on the job at hand, discuss your game plan, and review the things that help make you successful.

Set a calm tone for the meeting. You may not gain anything by trying to point out the importance of this game... you are likely to make them more nervous. They already know the significance of the game. Instead of trying to get them "fired-up", you need to calmly reassure them that everything will be OK, and that you are here to have fun... and that we will focus on doing the good things that have made us successful in the past.

You may want to announce the starting line-up and then review your defences, half-court and full-court, and any special adjustments that you have worked on in practice specifically for this opponent.

You may want to point out the opponent's best players and how you plan to contain them. Discuss half-court offence vs man-to-man and zone defences and any special plays, out-of-bound plays, etc. You might remind the players about maintaining good spacing, to move without the ball, set screens, and the importance of offensive rebounding. You might mention keeping under control, and avoiding turnovers.

Discuss how you want the game to "flow"... the tempo. Remind everyone to box-out and rebound and play hard on defence.

Remind the kids that if you just do your jobs and do the things that have made you successful in the past.

Then hands together in the huddle, yell a cheer and you are ready to go.

A word about starting line-ups

It is probably a good idea to not make a big deal out of who is starting. With youth teams, let all of your players take a turn at starting, this creates better team chemistry. Often, the first few minutes of the game is a "feeling out" time anyway, when teams are not yet in the groove. Bring in a couple of good players off the bench 3 or 4 minutes into the game.

Let players know that "it's not who starts, but who can finish the game".

Players on the floor

After your pre-game meeting, players take the floor, and start stretching and doing their warm-ups.

Make sure the team knows what they will be doing when they hit floor. Some things can include:

1. Layups – left and right
2. Egg beater
3. 4 corner passing
4. Foul shots
5. 3 on 3
6. 3 man weave

Stress that the kids keep good spacing, zip their passes, and convert the lay-ups. Any drills that get them moving and sweating a little.

Motivation and the "big" game

Sometimes we coaches want to come up with a great, passionate "win one for the Gipper" speech or inspirational quote to get the team "fired-up". In actuality, the kids already know that it's a big game and may be over-hyped and nervous.

Instead, I think a calming, business-like approach is better. It's how you prepare in practice, and how you work on fundamentals, team skills, etc that really counts. Try to maintain a very business-like attitude.

Everyone has to go out and do his/her job every afternoon in practice and during every game. Kids get nervous about playing in big, over-hyped games... you don't usually have to pump them up, but rather calm them down and reassure them and have them focus on what your game is and what you want to do.

Tell players who tell you that they are nervous (before a big game), not to worry about playing good or playing bad, winning or losing... just go out and do your job like you always do. This may help.

Reassure them that being nervous is normal and can be a good thing if they channel that extra energy into playing great defence, rebounding and hustling for loose balls. Playing hard on defence and scrapping under the boards are good ways to "settle-down".

In the overall scheme of life, for most players their basketball career is really short, so they should try to enjoy every game and every moment with their team-mates as much as they can.

Basketball Coaching – Game Strategy

Most games are won and lost by your players executing the fundamentals and plays that you have taught them in practice. But courtside coaching can greatly influence the outcome of a game, especially a close game. If you get blown out by 30 points, let's face it. The other team was probably a lot better than you.

Game Plan

First, prepare for the game through scouting, or reviewing game films of your upcoming opponent. Find out who their best offensive players are, what their style of play is like, what they like to do, and what their weaknesses are. If you have played this opponent previously, review your old game stats, notes and films.

Here is a good habit to get into: soon after playing a game, make notes of the game, your observations and impressions of the opponent and save them. Refer to these the next time you play them. Then you can develop a game plan that hopefully will favour your strengths and attack their weaknesses, and deny their strengths.

Don't change their style of play from what you usually do successfully to something else solely designed to stop our opponent. Let them change their style of play to try to stop you! Discuss in your practices and in your pre-game meeting your strategy for playing this team. Discuss the defensive assignments so each player knows his role exactly, and who he will be responsible for guarding.

If you have never played this team before and have no prior information, try to learn early who their best players are and what style of game, what tempo, they like. Once you know this, you can make quick adjustments in a time-out, or at the end of the first quarter.

Game tempo

Try to set the game tempo to the style that best suits your team. If you are a running, pressing team and your opponent is a slow-down team, push the ball up the floor on offence, press on defence, and create havoc! If you are better in a half-court slower paced game (less team quickness and only average ball handlers), then bring the ball up the court more deliberately, and get back on defence to prevent the fast break. If your opponent is a great fast-breaking team, prepare your team to stop the break by having one, or maybe even two, guards back, and have your big guys jam the rebounder with hands up so they can't get off the quick outlet pass.

Type of defence

What does your team do best? -- Man-to-man, or zone? Are they quick, good defenders (go man-to-man), or do you have a couple slow defenders (maybe go zone)? Most teams may try both at various times of the game. Only you can decide what is best for your team. Here are a few things that you can look at.

- If the opponent has good outside shooters, use man-to-man to keep pressure on their shooters.
- If their strength is inside post play, you can play man-to-man and double team the post with your weak-side guard. In this situation, whenever the ball goes into the low post, have your low post defender deny him the drop step to the baseline, and have your weak-side guard slide down quickly to prevent the move to the lane. Or you can go into a 2-1-2, or 2-3 zone to "pack the paint" with your defence. This leaves the outside more vulnerable. During the course of a game, if you realize that the opponent is getting most of their baskets inside, you may switch to a 2-1-2 zone to jam the paint and see if they can shoot from outside. If they can't hit the outside shot consistently, this may be the best way to stop them.
- If they are playing with a point guard and two wing players ("3-out, 2-in"), you may try a 1-2-2 trapping zone.

Some coaches play only man-to-man and refuse to use zones. Others use only zones. As a coach, you should use every possible tool or trick that you can to win a game.

I personally favour pressure man-to-man, but will not hesitate to go zone if I feel it will give us an advantage, or a better chance of winning. One exception, teach kids in the lower levels to play good man-to-man, before getting into zones. So in practice, work on man-to-man defence, but also have the 2-3 and 1-2-2 in your arsenal, and periodically review your zone coverage patterns.

So when do you switch from man-to-man to zone, or vice versa? There are different ways of doing this. Some coaches will change defences frequently, in order to confuse the opponent... as long as your own team doesn't get confused too. If you are doing a great job with your current defence, stay with it until it begins to fail.

You might also change from man-to-man to a zone if one or two of your better players are in foul trouble, and you are trying to protect them from additional foul exposure.

When to press, or stop pressing

Again, the decision to press depends on whether your team has quickness, stamina, and bench support, and whether the faster pace favours your team.

- Some teams will press the entire game because it favours their quickness, and they have a deep bench. Some will press at the start of the game to get off to a quick start.
- Some will press the last few minutes before the end of a period, realizing they can rest at the break.
- Some teams will press after each made basket.
- Some teams only press when they are behind late in the game, but it's usually too late by then.

My personal plan often is to start the game pressing. Once the opponent starts breaking down the press, or gets a couple lay-ups, I'll drop it. I'll put it back on later as a "surprise" tactic, or if I sense a critical time in the game where a couple quick steals and lay-ups could make a big difference. If I have a 10 point lead with a just couple minutes left in the game, I would drop the press, slow the game down, get back on defence and make the opponent work hard in the half-court for their shots, working the clock down.

Using time-outs

Coaches should use their time-outs wisely. In close games, if possible, try to save two or three time-outs for the last few minutes of the game, when you may need to stop the clock, set up a play, discuss your team's strategy, etc. Sometimes it doesn't work this way. You get behind early, and must use your time-outs to hopefully break the opponent's momentum, and reset your own strategy.

If you are trying to slow the game down, you might also use some time-outs early. If you are getting beat early, there is no point in saving your time-outs for the end of the game, when you are down 20! Sometimes look over at the opposing coach and notice that he is going to call time-out, and this may save one for you.

Keep it simple in your time-out huddle. The kids will often only remember one thing you tell them in a time-out... usually the last thing. So use your time-out to make one important team point... don't waste a time-out to instruct just one player... you can substitute for him and explain things to him on the bench quickly, and then send him back in. Examples of an important "team" pointer might be:

- stressing getting back quickly on defence and keeping one or two guards back if the opponent is fast breaking.
- to change your defence, or your offensive plan,
- and another might be to simply prod the kids into increasing their defensive and rebounding intensity and overall hustle.

But keep it simple.

Substitutions

If you are coaching youth basketball, where everyone is supposed to play, or if you have a team with a deep bench and can do a lot of substituting, then I would advise relying on your assistant coach to help with the substituting. If you only play six or seven players, you can handle it. In the former situation, I have found that it's really hard to keep track of everyone's playing time, and still try to coach the game, set the strategy, etc.

Before the game, discuss with your assistant who the starters will be for that game. You could also talk about which substitutions to bring in for certain players and at what intervals. Your assistant can see when certain players are getting tired and need a break. If you have a "hot" player on offence, ride that horse for awhile and not substitute until things "cool off".

Be aware of your players' fouls. Have a formula to teach your players in regard to staying out of foul trouble: "your number of fouls should be less than the number of the quarter you are playing in." So you never get your 2nd foul in the first quarter, or your 3rd foul in the second quarter or your 4th foul in the 3rd quarter.

If any of these situations occurs with any of your key players, you may sit him/her down for a while. If you are down 10, you may need to keep him/her in there, and have to take my chances with the fouls, and maybe try to protect him/her, using a zone on defence. On the other hand, some coaches essentially foul-out their own players with four fouls, sitting them down for a quarter or more because of four fouls... essentially the coach has fouled his own player out with only four fouls, and taken him physically and mentally out of the game. You might be better off letting him play carefully, than not at all!

Another point on substitutions... if you have eight or nine fairly good players, it will probably be to your advantage over the course of the season to play all these kids, with lots of substituting. If you are willing to risk a couple losses early in the season, you may be a much stronger team late in the season if you develop that eight or nine-man rotation into a good team, with lots of bench support. This also creates more team harmony and team spirit.

Yelling at players

Coaches should be vocal in encouraging their players, and yelling plays, strategy, etc. It is counter-productive to yell negative stuff at kids in front of their parents, friends and the fans. Maybe get on their backs in practice, in the privacy of your gym. Games are for the players and should be fun for them, and they shouldn't have to dread the coach yelling at them.

Talking to Officials

Try to be on good terms with the refs and introduce yourself and shake hands with them before the game. Most referees are good people who like and take an interest in kids just like you. And just like you, they want a fair game for both sides.

Expect them to make some calls that you do not agree with. Players and coaches make mistakes, and so do the referees. Basketball is not a perfect game. Learn to live with it and teach your players to adjust to the officiating and "play over" bad calls.

Most referees will talk and respond to you if you treat them with respect and sometimes you can even throw in a little humour. You may be in for a really long night if you have a referee who believes you are trying to "show him up". Then instead of focusing on calling a fair game, he changes his focus to "show you who's the boss". Also, be patient with young, new referees.

End of quarter strategy

If you have the lead, and there is only 20 seconds left in the quarter, you may want to hold the ball for the last shot, so that you may increase your lead, and at worse, maintain your present lead without allowing the opponent a last second chance.

The shot should go up with about 5 or 6 seconds left. This allows time for an offensive rebound and a second shot, but not much time for the opponent to get the ball up the floor off the rebound. Also, it takes some of the pressure off the shooter when there are 6 seconds left, as he/she knows there is a chance for a rebound and put back. If you wait until the buzzer, there is more pressure on the shooter to make the shot.

Late game strategy

With a 6 to 12 point lead

With only a couple minutes left in the game, try to "shorten" the game by holding for a good shot, preferably a lay-up, and keep the clock running. This may be a good time for a time-out and explain to the kids, "nothing but lay-ups". Even better, make the call from the bench so that the clock doesn't stop for a time-out. Chances are, the opposing coach will use one of his time-outs anyway to instruct his players to foul and press... so you can probably save your time-out.

In "running the clock", I would always take the lay-up because it is a higher percentage thing than just trying to hold the ball, and you can put the nail in the coffin with one last score. You must still work your offence, but looking only for the lay-up. If you try to just "stall" without looking for the lay-up, the chances are greater that you may turn the ball over, or that you will get fouled, and a lay-up is easier than two pressure packed free throws.

Also, if you entirely lose your focus on scoring, you may also lose your aggressiveness and momentum, and you become easier to defend. But if you have a two possession lead (4 points) with less than 30 seconds, hold the ball.

On defence, get back and play good half court defence. Avoid silly fouls that stop the clock and allow the opponent to score when the clock is actually stopped (free throws). Contest (but don't foul) the three-pointer, and prevent the fast break and easy lay-up. If you only have 3 or 4 team fouls, you can play aggressively and pressure the ball... a non-shooting foul just results in their in bounding the ball (which you could steal).

If you are behind

Have your players push the ball up the court on offence, and full court press on defence. Use your time-outs to stop the clock and remind your players that the key to winning is tough defence and rebounding... you must prevent the opponent from scoring to allow your offence a chance to catch up.

Think in terms of the number of possessions you are down.

Be aware of your number of team fouls. If you only have 2 or 3, you may have to foul quickly so that you are over the limit (4) and can send the opponent to the free-throw line. If the difference in the score is only one possession, play very aggressively... if the ref calls the foul, that's fine. If not, we may come up with a steal or force a turnover with our aggressive play.

If you are inside a minute and are down two or three possessions, try to get the quick steal, but if you don't get it, then immediately foul to stop the clock. Too often, teams will let 20 seconds run off the clock before someone finally fouls, wasting too much precious time. Remember that a lot of things can happen in just 20 seconds.

If you are down 4 points, you don't have to go to the three-pointer, since its two possessions anyway. Take it to the hoop and get to the free-throw line and stop the clock. Then after scoring, or making the two free throws, put maximum, deny pressure on the in-bounds pass, going for the steal, or quick foul.

Even if you are down 3 with only 20 seconds to go, it might be a higher percentage move to go for the quick two-pointer and then pressure the inbounds pass than putting the whole game on the shoulders of your three-pointer shooter, who probably has tired legs. If you take the "3" and miss, and the opponent gets the rebound, you are usually history, because you will have to foul, and they only have to convert one free throw to "ice" the game. If there are only 8 seconds or less, take the three-point shot.

If the game is tied and you have the ball

Hold for the last shot and try to get that shot with 4 or 5 seconds left, so you have time for an offensive rebound and a second shot. But warn your players to be careful not to get the "over-the-back" foul on the rebound. Again, it takes some of the pressure off the shooter if he doesn't wait until the buzzer.

Try to get the ball inside for the high percentage shot... you may either get the shot, or get fouled and win it on the free-throw line. If you have an outstanding outside shooter, you can go "inside-out", passing the ball into the low-post, sucking the defence inside, and then kicking the pass out to your perimeter hotshot for the game-winner.

If you need to, call a time-out to instruct your players on this strategy... but realize that when you call time-out, you risk having your in-bounds pass stolen. Even better... work on this game situation in practice and be able to call it from the bench without using a time-out (unless you need to stop the clock).

If the game is tied and you are on defence

Make sure your players all know their defensive assignments. Be sure to get "help-side" defence on their star players. Contest the shot with hands up, but do not foul, unless it looks like an easy lay-up... then you must make them win it on the free-throw line, which is not always easy late in the game with the pressure on and fatigue a factor.

Some coaches will have their defence try to "take the charge" on dribble-penetration. Unless it is a really obvious charge, you won't get the call from the referee when the game is on the line.

If your number of team fouls is 3 or less, play very aggressive defence. If the opponent waits until the last few seconds to make the move to the hoop, you could foul (unintentionally) the ball-handler. Since they are not yet in the bonus, they must reset and inbound the ball with just a second or two left.

If you still have 3 or less team fouls, you can be very aggressive in defending the inbounds pass... each foul will harass them and cost them time on the clock.

If you get the quick steal in transition, attack the basket immediately without calling a time-out to set up a play. Chances are, in transition, you will get a good shot, or get fouled. If you get the defensive rebound with 5-6 seconds left, get a quick time out to stop the clock and set up your last play.

Another "gutsy" strategy is: assuming they have a poor free-throw shooter, you may immediately foul him, if it is a "one and one" situation. If he misses the first free throw, you can gain possession and now you have the advantage.

Some explanations

Press defence extends your defence into the opponent's backcourt. Before selecting and teaching a defensive press system, you must first decide whether an up tempo, pressing defence is best for your team. Do you have team quickness, well-conditioned athletes, and a good bench?

Advantages of a good press

A good press can quickly produce backcourt turnovers, steals and easy baskets for your team. So it is an offensive weapon as such, and a way to come from behind, or a way to break open a close game, and a way to wear down a slower, less well conditioned opponent.

The press keeps the opponent off balance, changes the tempo of the game, and often has the opponent doing things they don't normally do. It often forces the opposing coach to use valuable timeouts. It favours a well-conditioned team with a deep bench, and with more substitutions, allows more of your players to get playing time.

Disadvantages of a Press Defence

A fair amount of practice time is required to develop a good, cohesive press. Also, remember that any press is a gamble (especially trapping defences). You risk giving up the easy transition lay-up, and you have to be willing to accept that fact. If your players are not well-conditioned, fatigue can become a factor. Your players may be more apt to foul and get into foul trouble, so a good bench is very valuable in this regard as well as the fatigue issue. But you might want to press only in certain situations (e.g. after a made basket), or certain times of the game, as a "surprise" tactic.

Press defences can be categorized as:

- Full-Court Man-to-man Pressure Defence
- Zone Press Defences
- Match-up Press Defences
- Half-court Presses and Traps
- Deny Presses

Full-Court Man-to-Man Pressure Defence

Full-court "pressure" defence is simple man-to-man defence extended over the full-court. This defence is excellent for youth teams who must learn to play man-to-man defence, and it is easy to teach, requiring less practice time than other press defences. Players use and learn the same basic concepts of man-to-man defence (on-ball, deny and help-side defence, just extended to the full-court). There is little risk, or gambling, with this defence. This press would probably be less effective at higher levels where good ball-handlers and dribblers could break it down.

Zone Press Defence

Zone presses have the defenders start in a certain formation, such as a 1-2-1-1, 1-2-2, 2-2-1, etc. and feature pressuring the ball and trapping. You can categorize zone presses by where the press starts on the court:

- full-court, where there is a defender guarding the inbound passer (e.g. 1-2-1-1 zone press)
- 3/4 court, where there is nobody guarding the inbound passer (e.g. 2-2-1 zone press)
- half-court, where the press starts at, (or just beyond) the half-court line (e.g. 1-2-2 Viking press)

Match-up Press Defences

Our match-up press defence is a more complicated "system" of presses than simple zone presses and involves a fair amount of practice time. It has the advantage of always having pressure on the ball no matter what press-breaker alignment the offence uses. The match-up press is different from a zone press in that you have your defenders all match-up with someone when the ball is inbounded... much like man-to-man defence, so it doesn't matter what press-breaker the opponent uses.

Half-Court Press Defences

Half-court presses start at, or just beyond, the half-court line. These presses are less of a gamble, since all five defenders are back in the half-court. Usually these defences try to trap the ball as it comes across half-court, in the half-court corner on either side, while the other defenders look to intercept a poor pass made out of the trap. These presses are usually easier to teach and conditioning is less of an issue.

Deny Presses

"Deny" presses are used to deny the inbounds pass, hopefully resulting in either intercepting the inbounds pass, or getting the 5-second call. The defenders play in the passing lanes between the ball and their man. A deny press is needed in a close game, in an attempt to get the ball back after a made basket, or whenever the opponent has to inbound the ball. It can also be used from time-to-time during the course of a game as a surprise tactic. Several deny presses are presented as adjustments to a main press.

In summary, the press (es) that you decide to use should be based on your and your players' level of commitment to press defence, the age and skill level of your players, the amount of practice time that you have available, your team's quickness and athleticism, and the depth of your bench. How you use the press is also key. Do you want to use it the entire game, to fatigue your opponent and make their "biggs" less effective? Do you just want to use it from time-to-time during the game as a surprise tactic, or to make the offence less comfortable? Or do you have a big slow team that would be better off just sprinting back on defence and play a slower half-court game?

Press Offence

Your team must have an offence(s) for countering a defensive full-court, $\frac{3}{4}$ court, or half court press. Without a plan, your team will become confused, frustrated, will panic, turn the ball over, and allow the opponent easy transition lay-ups.

If your players stay calm and have confidence in your plan of attack, you can burn the press and get easy lay-ups of your own.

Stay Calm

The press tries to upset you, and make you commit turnovers. Do not dwell on what's already happened and always think "next play", what is going to happen next. The coach must stay calm too. An upset angry coach is not what the already rattled players need. In a timeout, the coach must be calm, reassure, re focus his players and settle his players down.

Think "attack"

A full court press is always a gamble for the defence. If you think positive, and attack the pressure, you can get an easy lay up and score.

Sometimes you have to beat the press with the dribble, but then you are less likely to get the lay-up. So think pass first.

Three "looks"

When receiving the inbounds pass, catch it and get into triple-threat position facing the defense and look up the floor before immediately starting your dribble.

1. Look up. See the floor. Look up the court. Don't look down at the ball.
2. Look before you pass. Make good, quick safe passes.
3. Look before you dribble. Don't dribble unless you have to. You beat the press by quick, sharp passing usually not dribbling.

Getting the ball in-bounds. Get the ball in quickly, before the defence can set up. Make sure you make a good in-bounds pass. Do not take the ball out from directly under your basket, or your passing lane may be restricted by the backboard. If the other team has just scored, you may "run the baseline". You cannot run the baseline if the ball went out of bounds and the official is handing it to you. You must stay where the ref gives it to you. If the ref doesn't handle it (like after a score), you can use the whole baseline.

To receive the inbounds pass, the point guard must get open. Too often young point guards trying to get open by running away from the defender, which is usually unsuccessful. Instead, your point guard should walk up to the defender, make contact with the defender (get a forearm into the defender) and then "bounce-off" off the defender to get open. If the point guard is being aggressively denied, he/she can walk the defender down almost to the baseline, seal and quickly release long for the over-the-top lob pass. When receiving the inbounds pass, teach your receiver to get into "triple-threat position" after receiving the pass, rather than just putting the head down and starting to dribble. Getting into triple-threat allows the receiver the "three looks" discussed above, to see the defence, see our receivers, and still have the dribble option.

Avoid "trap areas"... the corners. Don't dribble into one of the trap areas back away but keep your dribble alive, or pass off.

If you find yourself in a trap do not turn your back to the defenders as this allows them to close the gap on you and you cannot see your teammates to pass the ball. Instead, face the defenders, and keep the ball low and moving and keep your body moving using your pivot foot; Stay low and do not stand upright with the ball over your head, as this also allows the defenders to immediately close in on you. If you have your dribble, you can attack the outside leg of one of the defenders and dribble by, or split the double-team by making an aggressive "step-thru" with one leg between the defenders, with head and shoulders bent over forward, cradling and protecting the ball like a football halfback going through the line, and then push the ball out in front of you starting your dribble.

Quick, accurate passing. You must look and find the open man immediately, and make a quick, accurate pass. Avoid soft lob passes. Passing up the floor, and cutting, are the secrets to beating the press. Look up the floor and anticipate where you will pass the ball, even before you get it. Don't be hesitant to make the long pass up the court. Oftentimes a good point guard can attack the press with the dribble and, before the double team arrives, make a long pass up the court to an open receiver for a lay-up.

Receivers meet the pass... go to the ball, get open. But keep your spacing. Look for the open spots in the defence. Get open so your teammate can pass to you. Before you even get the ball, look to see where other open teammates are, so you will know where to pass to immediately. When you receive the ball, don't have your back turned. Immediately pivot and face down-court, so you can find an open teammate.

Use the whole court and reverse the ball to the opposite side. Keep at least one player on the "weak-side" to reverse the ball to the opposite side of the court.

Have a standard "press break" offence that works for you, so you can immediately recognize the press and yell, "press break" to your team.

