



Teaching Defense to Young Players

CB's Coaching Education and Development

I borrowed and expanded on a talk given by Tim McGarrigle at the 2007 BNS Coaching Summit. This article should go along with an earlier article on the discovery approach to teaching defense.

Teaching Defense to Young Players

Defense starts with a stance. Here are some stances that players need to learn

Universal - this is the basic on the ball stance.

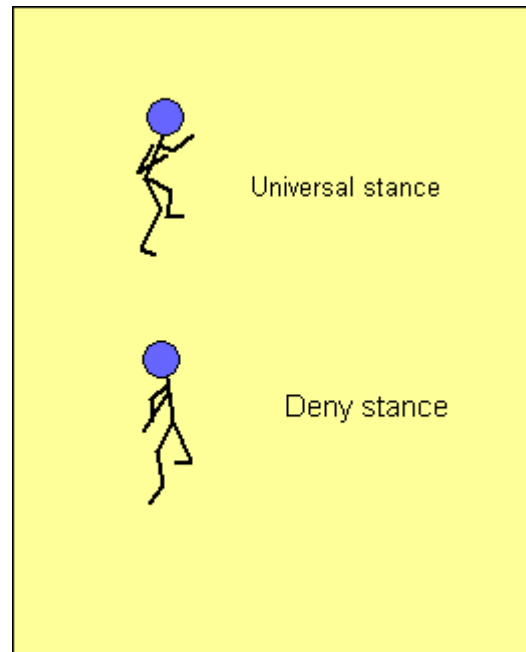
The player is flexed and able to move quickly in all directions.

Deny - this is a closed hip position. As My old university coach called it " thigh high, thumbs down ear to chest denial stance.

Help - this is an open hip position where the player assumes the universal stance but must see ball and his /her check.

Players need to:

- start in stance
- move in stance
- assume the appropriate new stance when the ball and check changes position



No stance is absolute

All stances are on a continuum from one extreme position to another. Where players position themselves in relation to the check depends on:

- position on the floor
- who has the ball
- where is the ball
- the strengths or weakness of the player's
- the team defensive strategy
- time and score in the game or in the shot clock

Most defense is taught as a strategy, in other words we will always be in this position when guarding the ball. With young children we want to give them a solid base from which to begin, but they much be enabled to make defensive decisions. They need to understand why they are assuming that position or stance. By playing lots of one on one from different positions on the floor the player will learn some of the variances in their ball stance. Playing 2 on 2 and a 3 on 3 help with denial and help stances.



Defensive continuum

Shade

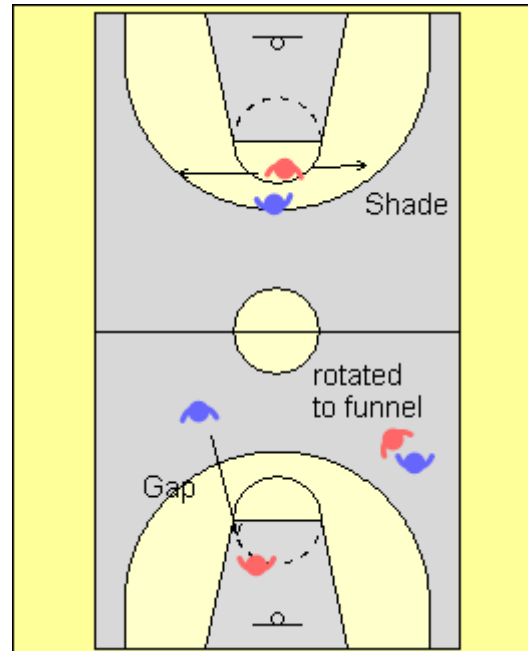
The distance the defender takes from the offensive player in the horizontal plane.

Gap

How far away is the defense from the offensive player in the vertical plane.

Open /closed

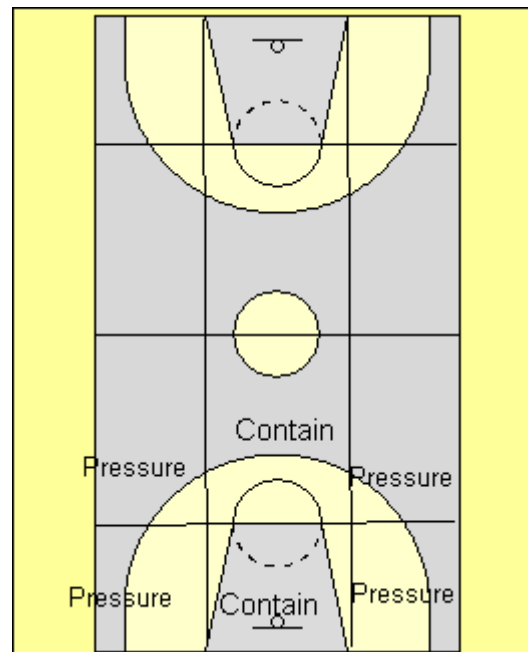
How much does the defender rotate around the offensive player. This is use to direct the offensive player (funnel) in a desired direction or to deny a pass.



Responsibilities

In general players need to learn how to contain the ball in the middle area of the floor. On the sides pressure is a more accepted strategy. What is important is that players need to learn what stance and positioning to assume on the floor based on the variables discussed above.

I suggest by using the grid you can begin to develop the defensive intelligence of your players based on where they are on the floor. Then you can start adding in the ideas of who they are guarding and where is the ball etc.



Concept #1

Stay with your check

"Cops and Robbers"

The player must stay with their check.

The player may start, walk, jog, run and stop in one direction only

Version #1 - stay behind the player

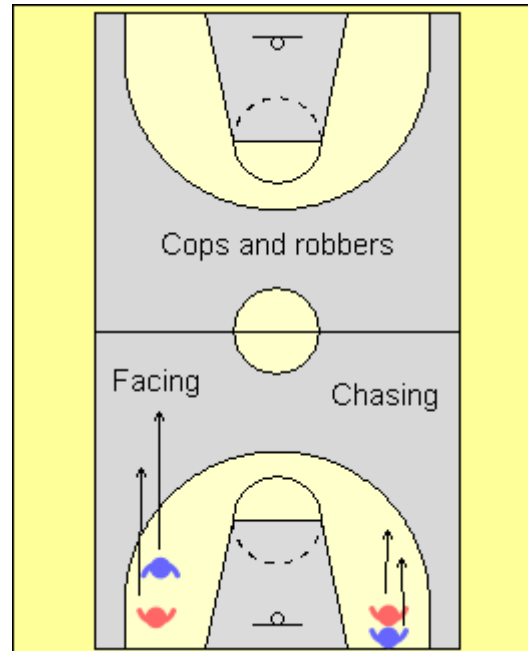
Version #2 - face the player

Version #3 – beside the player facing the same direction

Version #4 – beside the player facing the player

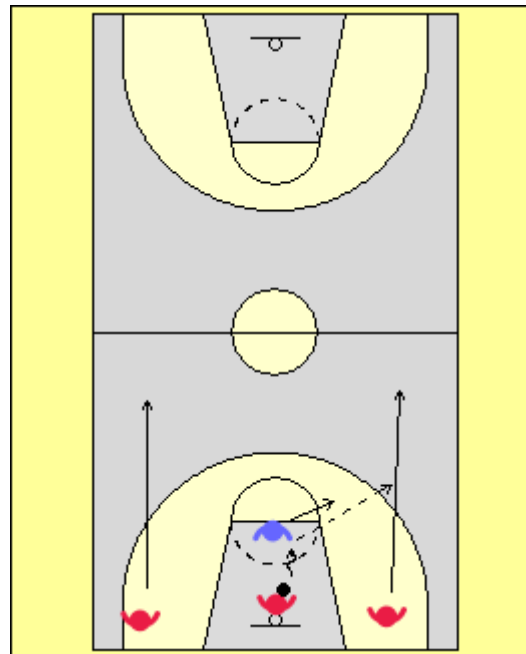
Load

- move in any direction, stay with the player forward backward left and right
- add a ball



3 on 1 cops and robbers

The three offensive players are moving down the court. The player in the center lane is the leader who guides the pace of the group. He/she can move forward or backward and different paces. Everyone else must mirror this pace. The center player dribbles the ball, when an outside lane player shows ten fingers a pass is made. The defender must jump to the ball side while still mirroring the pace. Continue to move down the floor passing and dribbling.



Concept #2

Stay with your check, but be ready to help on the ball.

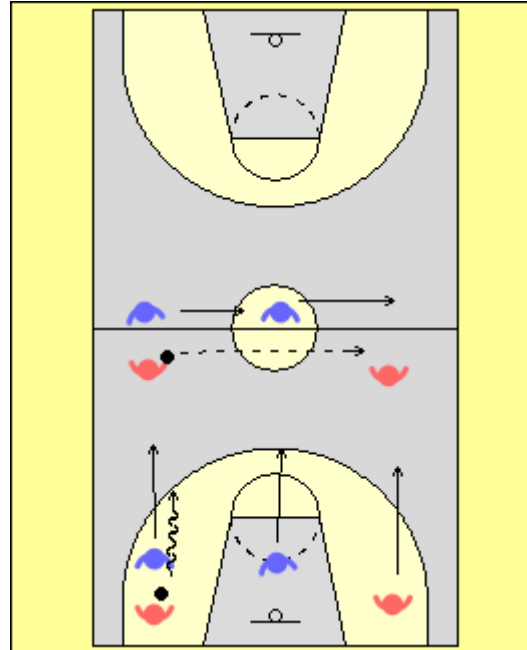
2 on 2 Cops and Robbers

The player with the ball can stop start, walk, jog and run. The other players must mirror his/her actions. The defender of the second offensive player must use the half way rule. Be half way between your man and the ball, scanning to see both.

When the second offensive player shows 'ten fingers:" the ball is passed. Now the first defender must get to the half way spot as the second defender contains the ball.

Load

- allow the second offensive player to move independent of the first, but must stay in lane
- allow cutting action
- play live at the far basket

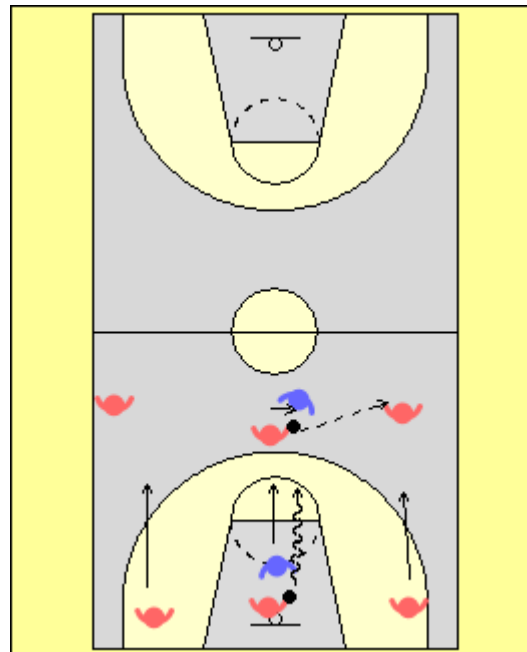


Concept #3

Stay with your check, but deny him/her the ball
Now the players go down the floor. As the ball is passed to an outside lane the defender must jump to the ball and deny the pass back.

Note: we are now entering the realm of strategy. Some coaches may argue that you don't want to deny this pass. You want them more in a position of help. The idea or concept is trying to help players to stay with their checks in different stances

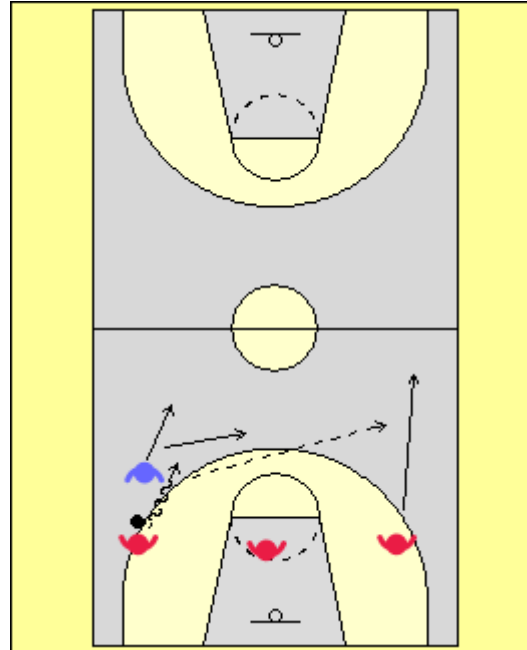
- contain or wall stance staying square
- help stance or open stance away from their check
- closed stance where they are in a deny position
- a closed stance where you are funneling the ball



Jump to a help side

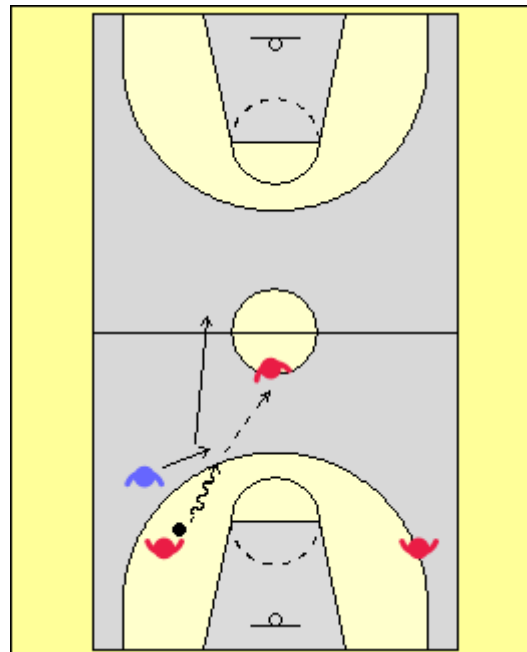
Repeat the same drill but this time the defender guards the player in the outside lane. When a pass is made to the far outside lane the player must get to a help side.

This is all about understanding positioning yourself between your check and the basket and the ball.



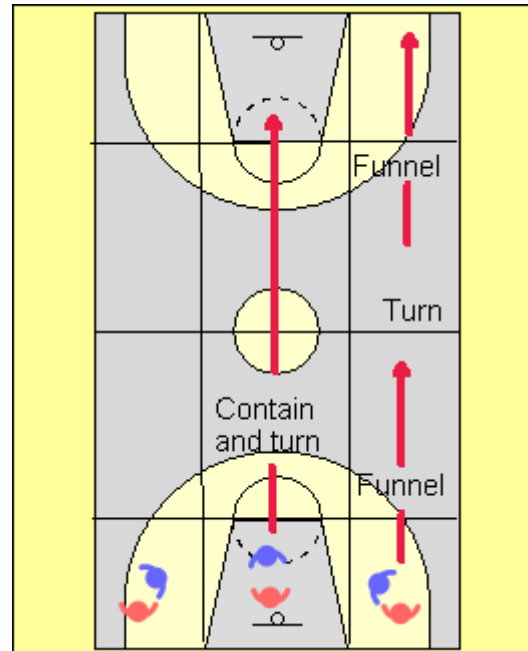
Add a rover

In this version there is an offensive player roving behind the defender. When the pass is made the defender must sprint to in front of the ball, but still know where his or her check is located. Deny the ball back to your check.



Pressure and Contain (funnel and turn)

The players now must understand how they can contain a player in certain areas of the floor or try to funnel or turn them in other area. The players learn to funnel and turn by their positioning in relation to the offensive player.



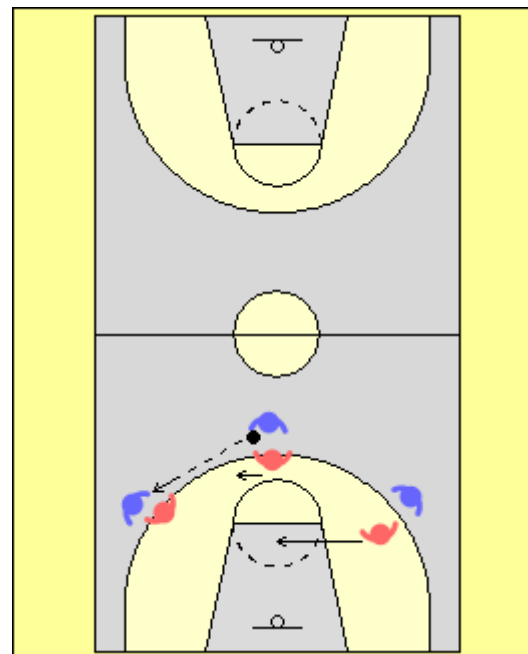
Stance work in the half court

There are many defensive drills where a coach can work on stance. A point of emphasis needs to be starting in the proper stance, moving in stance and arriving in the proper stance when the ball arrives at its new position.

You need to slow the drills down and guide the offense. At first the coach should call the pass or the action of the ball. Have the players call out their stance; "ball", "deny", "help". You can also have the offense working on calling out what they see: "shot", "drive right", "pass".

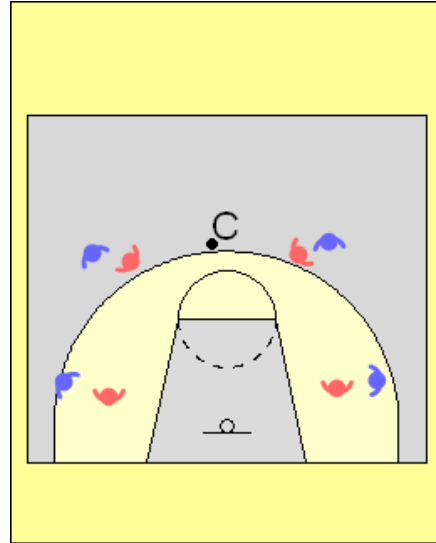
Load

- change positioning of players
- change the rules - great shooter, great driver, non-shooter
great rebounder – How does this impact the stance?
- late in the game we are down / up
- late in the shot clock



Team defense

When teaching your team defense we need to start with a base concept. You as a coach give the player the "strategy" on how you want them to play. In the example shown we have the top two defenders playing in a closed help position because the ball is one pass away. The bottom two defenders are player open deny position. This would be very effective if the coach at the top could not drive. If the coach penetrates it is very difficult for the top two defenders to help. If the bottom players help it is an easy pass for a high percentage shot. This is the weakness of this defense.



What we need to do is increase the defensive intelligence of our players. I contest that if you teach absolutes on defense such as; "We always do this..." you have not played against enough good teams in your coaching career. At all levels you will eventually need options.