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“Pack Line Defense”

What defines a defensive system?

- 1) Do we have a defensive system that our team can excel in and get better at throughout the course of the year?
- 2) Do we have a defensive system that our individual defenders can excel in and get better at throughout the course of the year?

Throughout the course of a basketball season, we might play a game ever 3 or 4 days, however the season lasts 6 months long. We don't want to sacrifice our defensive philosophies to help us for a mere 3-4 day span. We want to continue to build on our defensive ideals so that we are playing our best basketball at the end of the 6 month season.

Prepare with the big picture in mind

Whitford's defensive identity: hard-nosed man-to-man team that plays within the pack-line and makes it really hard for you to get the ball to the rim.

6 Principles to Pack Line Defense:

1. Be committed to getting back. Defense starts in transition. NO EASY BASKETS.
2. Pressure the ball.
3. Off-the-ball defenders must always be in defensive stance and be ready
4. Keep the ball out of the deep post/limit catches in the post
5. Help early on all penetration. Don't wait for the ball to get in the paint to help.
6. Challenge all shots. “Three's don't kill you – Open three's do”

How do you measure your defensive success:

- Greatest indicator is Points Per Possession. Their goal is to hold teams to about a .84 points per possession on offense.

Other defensive stats he monitors closely:

- 2 point Field Goal Defense
- 3 point Field Goal Defense
- Defensive Rebounding Percentage



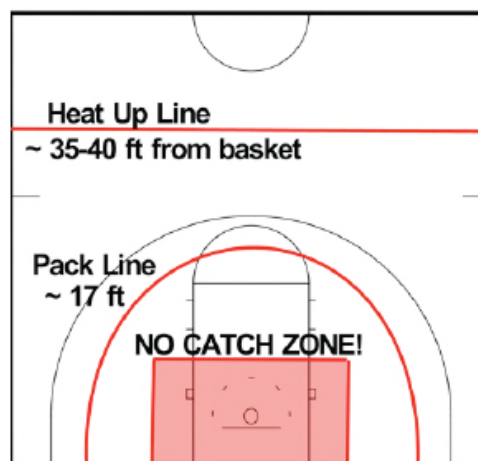
- Turnovers Forced
- Freethrows given up

As far as defensive rebounding is concerned, does the way you defend put your players in good rebounding positions, or are they constantly caught in rotation? This will be detrimental when you're holding teams to low percentages from the field, but are unable to get in good positions to blockout and secure the rebound.

Reason for Pack Line Defense: In this era of basketball, so many guys can make moves off of the dribble, it's beneficial to have your off-the-ball defenders in a position to better help them contain penetration.

PACK LINE DEFENSE:

- PG is picking up in tough man-to-man defense at the half court line. The PG's defense extends much more than the rest of the team's, especially in the initial entry of the offense.
- One step beyond the coach's hashmark is the "Heat Up Line". They aren't worried about denying catches to anyone beyond the Heat Up Line. However, once the offense gets inside of the Heat Up Line, they turn up the pressure, and are a ball-pressure team
- "Pack Line" is a 17 foot semicircle just inside the three point line. If you're not defending the ball, you should be inside the Pack Line.



These lines are taped down on the floor everyday for practice at Arizona.

Most important of any kind of defense is transition defense. "If you can't defend in transition, you can't defend."



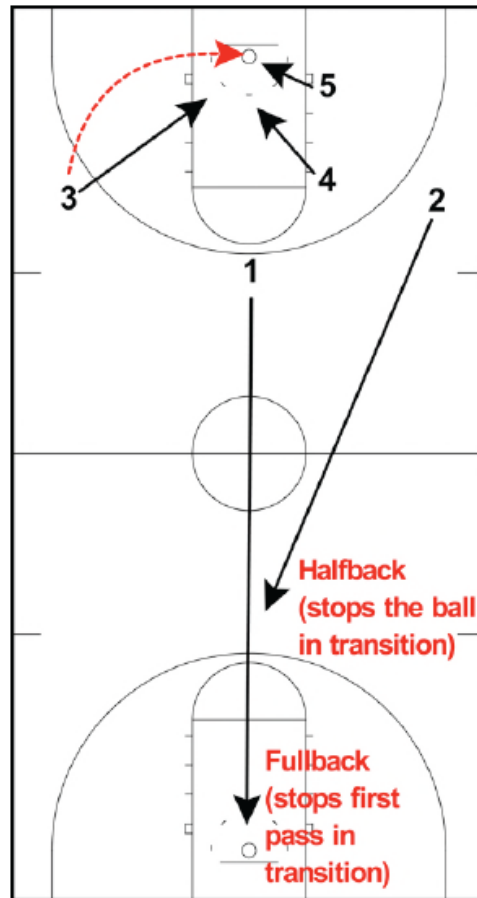
3 Keys to Emphasize on Transition Defense:

95% of a team's defensive mistake will come from one of these three points:

1. Floor Balance – when the shot goes up, who's going to the glass and who's getting back. This becomes more important playing against better talent.

UA sends their 3, 4, and 5 men to offensive glass to rebound; 1 and 2 men get back in halfback and fullback positions to stop any fast breaks.

2. Effort – foul line to foul line require full speed sprint. Whitford suggests having players run sprints from FT line to FT line.
3. Communicate – “if you can't communicate, you can't be successful on defense”



“Strong and wrong is better than weak and right.” Players need to be vocal, bold, and decisive on defense.

“I've never seen a guy talk and not play hard”

At UA they tell their players “if you don't say it, you don't know it”

RULE OF THUMB: last defender back in transition defense should look to pick-up the man at the top of the key or the opposite side of the ball.

As a coach, you are what you emphasize. If you want to put an emphasis on communicating on defense, you can't be scared to bench your best player when he doesn't talk on defense.



POST DEFENSE:

Before you figure out how you're going to defend the ball on the wing, you need to determine how you're going to defend the post.

UA defends the post $\frac{3}{4}$ to behind, on the line up the line. When the ball is at the top of the key, as a post defender, your bottom foot should be above the post player's top foot.

DON'T ALLOW GUT PASSES (passes from the top of the key to the post).

You can't allow a post player with the ball to get two feet into the paint.

It's harder to play behind in the post with smaller players. UA has let smaller players front the post from time to time.

Good post defenders play with their feet, and if they do have to give up a catch to the post player, they force a tough pass away from the block and closer to the short corner.

We want to force opponent's big men to have to make decisions off of the dribble. To do this, we want our off-the-ball defender closest to the post to look like a linebacker, who you can't tell if he's blitzing or not.

Helpside defense must stay at home until the offensive post player puts the ball on the ground. Just keep faking at him.

DEFENDING PERIMETER:

They give their players some freedom. They want their players to pressure the ball as tight as they can without getting beat.

Perimeter defenders should be able to cut the ball off on the baseline without any help. They will have helpside defenders rotate over just in case the on-the-ball defender is unable to stop the baseline drive, however they hold their perimeter defenders accountable.

ALL GREAT DEFENDERS HAVE GREAT FEET ON THE BALL

They chase all screens inside of the Pack-Line.



They will switch 1s, 2s, and 3s on ballscreens. But in terms of off-the-ball-screens, they don't ever switch because they want accountability.

FOR OFF-THE-BALL DEFENDERS: "Your positioning is your help. You should be in helpside position before the offensive player ever drives the ball.