

Some Defensive Thoughts **Andrew Haysom, Level 1 NCAS, Greenvale, Victoria**

The following is some notes I created to give to my Under 10 Girls domestic team to try and get them to think about defense as much as they do about dribbling and shooting. Therefore the ideas are simply put and don't contain a lot of technical detail. They are just thought-provokers !

Everyone, if they put in the effort and practice can be great defensive players. Defense requires effort, determination, aggression and concentration rather than the ball skills required to be a great offensive player.

Important points to remember, to practice and to execute in games are;

1. Position

- You must be between the player and the basket when guarding a player with the ball.
- Play "in the passing lane" when guarding a player "one pass away" from the ball.
- Play "help defense" (towards the "split line") when guarding the player "two or more passes away" from the ball.

2. Spacing

- Play about an arms length away when guarding a player with the ball. If you know they are quicker than you play a bit further away, if you are quicker go a bit closer.
- Play closer and apply more pressure once they have used their dribble.

3. Stance

- Keep in the proper defensive stance. Feet shoulder width apart, knees bent, head up, hands ready.
- Keep "low" and "wide".
- Stay in the stance and you'll be quicker and more balanced. Stand up and you'll be beaten every time.
- Remember "nose behind toes" - if you lean forward with your head you'll be off balance and beaten easily.

4. Ball pressure

- Your main objective as a defender is to put pressure on the pass or shot !
- Apply as much pressure to the ball as you can !
- Trace the ball with your upper hand.
- "Dig up" - don't slap down !
- Don't foul !
- If the player has the ball well protected behind, don't reach around or give up your position and let them past you.
- No easy, uncontested shots !
- Try and block the players view of the court and basket.
- Have fast hands !
- Be like a fencer !
- Don't reach with your head !

5. **Quickness**

- Stay on the balls of your feet.
- Shuffle - glide !
- Big then bigger, then big again - don't bring your feet together !
- Keep your feet moving - pitter patter - remember the tennis player waiting for the serve.
- Stay on one level - don't move up and down - stay low. No bobbing heads !

6. **Vision**

- Keep your head up - see the whole court !
- You must be able to see the ball and your man - remember "pointing pistols".
- If in doubt, watch the ball.
- When sprinting back down the court, look over the inside shoulder, always see the ball.

7. **Attitude**

- Controlled aggression !
- You must want to play defense ! You must want the ball !
- Say to yourself - "She is not going to get that shot away !", "She's not going to drive past me !"
- Be nasty, mean and greedy - it's your ball - not theirs !
- When chasing a player, run for a spot on the court he wants to get to and get there first !

8. **Transition**

- Sprint ! Get back down the court before they do !

9. **Give ground**

- Give up ground using the drop step rather than letting the player get past you !

10. **Guard the Key**

- We must not let players get the ball in our defensive key ! Don't even let them in the defensive key !
- Under no circumstances is an opposition player to be in the key unguarded.
- Under no circumstances pass back across the defensive key when there are opposition players near.

11. Communication

- Shout (loudly!) to let your team-mates know what is happening - it can also upset the other teams concentration.
- Shout "BALL" when your player (the one you are guarding) has the ball.
- Shout "DEAD" when they pick up their dribble.
- Shout "SHOT" when a shot is taken.
- Shout "SWITCH" when you go to guard someone else's man to let them know to take yours.

12. Force the Opposition to the Sideline / Baseline / Corner

- Always force the opposition ball handler to the sideline / corner !
- Keep them out of the middle of the court.

13. Own the Backboards - Rebound, Rebound, Rebound !

- The team that gets most rebounds, nearly always wins !
- "Block out" - make contact.
- "Hands near ears !"
- Watch the ball - anticipate where it is going to go !
- Jump high - jump stop !
- 75% of rebounds bounce the opposite side from where the shot was taken !
- Grab the ball like you really want it !
- Once you've got it protect it - pull it in, elbows wide !
- After an offensive rebound - power the shot straight back up - power lay-up is the only shot I don't mind you using two hands.
- After a defensive rebound - look for an outlet pass to the wing or dribble the ball out.

14. Shot Blocking

- Don't bring the arm / hand down or forward.
- Keep the arm upright - no fouls this way !
- Don't jump unless the ball has left the shooters hand - beware of shot fakes.