

D Time!

While it's true that LFE Hoops is committed to teaching the concepts of the Read & React system of offense which, at their core, are really just good solid basketball habits, we are also committed to instructing our girls to play really good helping man to man defense. As this document unfolds, I will go into excruciating detail (4,400 words worth of detail). Please know that the principles I cover are all end game ideas. Obviously our younger players are going to fail to execute most if not all of these things. The key is that we are constantly pushing them improve and we can help that by using the common terminology that is outlined below and by being on the same page philosophically.

Why teach them to play man to man (girl to girl) defense?

-The best answer is explained by JFK's quote about space exploration: "We choose to do these things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard." In short, playing defense in basketball is difficult. There is a reason that games played at the highest level are in the hundreds. The defense is always at a disadvantage. However, in keeping with our philosophy of teaching our girls the game, we feel that teaching them man to man defense is what they deserve even if it's more difficult than the alternative.

What exactly do we teach?

-Get IN STANCE & STAY IN A STANCE! Our defenders need to be in an athletic, defensive stance throughout the possession. We want to emphasize the need to use their slides as much as possible, but we should also remind them that they need to switch hips and sprint to regain position when they are beaten.

-HELP & RECOVER! HELP & RECOVER! HELP & RECOVER! HELP & RECOVER! HELP & RECOVER! We must teach helping man to man defense. A nasty byproduct that comes from teaching young players man to man defense is the idea that they must "stick with THEIR GIRL." We do this at a young age to try to help the games look more like basketball. In the process, we plant an awful habit in their minds. We teach them to be selfish defenders who stare at the girl they are guarding without a care in the world for where the ball is. Unfortunately, "the stick with your girl" mentality (SWYGM) is extremely hard to break. If we teach our girls the "HELP and

RECOVER” instinct instead of the stick with your girl habit, we will help them understand team basketball in a deeper way. It’s really about being a good teammate.

-SQUEEZE OFF THEIR SPACE! We want to teach them to funnel everything to the sideline and to the baseline (yes, to the baseline). Once the offense moves the ball to one side, our defensive principles dictate that we should have all five girls on the ball side. Again, this is not zone even if it looks like it. Once the ball is on the wing, we want to force it to the corner, and once it’s in the corner, we want to keep it there. We teach the girls to force the ball to the baseline. Forcing baseline causes old school basketball ideologist to just about keel over. Here’s why we teach our girls to force baseline. It’s a matter of percentages. When the ball is forced baseline:

- The offense decreases its usable court space
- The baseline acts as a 6th defender
- Shooting angles are more difficult (unless you’re Larry Legend)
- Passing angles are fewer and more difficult
- Off the ball defenders natural drop to help on baseline drives

One thing that is important to note. We don’t just let girls freely drive to the baseline. We force baseline, but a baseline drive must cut off before the driver reaches the lane (highway). At the middle school level and in our travel program, we look to trap baseline drives. At the Academy level, we suggest you teach the baseline help defenders to help and then recover as described above. As soon as the dribble is picked up, we recover.

-SEE THE BALL! Every defensive player on the floor must see the ball. They can lose sight of their girl for a few seconds, but they must see the ball at all times. We emphasize that offensive players don’t score. THE BALL SCORES. Since the ball is what actually scores, all defenders must see it and be prepared to help when the ball is being driven or passed to attack our basket.

-JUMP TO THE BALL! Every time the ball is passed, every defender should “jump to the ball.” This term is used to describe how every player should, on the air time of the pass, take one defensive slide toward the ball. This helps everyone get a head start on their defensive rotation. Again, we jump to the ball while it’s still in the air, not when the offensive player receives the pass. There’s a big difference.

-POINT TO THE BALL AND YOUR GIRL (Back to the baseline) Many of the girls have a hard time getting their body in the right position to defend. They get all twisted around and end up facing the basket that they are defending. As a general rule, the only time they should be facing that basket is to rebound a shot. Having them consistently point to both the ball and the girl they are defending forces their shoulders into the proper position and ensures visions of both. If the girls cannot see both ball and girl and point to both, it's likely that they need to sink lower toward the baseline. **REMIND THEM: "POINT TO BOTH AND MAKE YOUR FEET MATCH YOUR FINGERS!"**

-CUTTERS MUST GET "STAMPED" This is a pretty advanced concept, but the girls can begin this process by jumping to the ball after their girl has made a pass. By jumping to the ball the defender does not allow the cutter to make a "front cut." In other words, the cutter must cut behind our defender. At the higher levels we teach them to jump to the ball, get their outside forearm to the cutter's shoulder, whip the head around to find the ball, and extend the inside arm to deflect/discourage a pass to the cutter.

-TALK! Good defensive teams are loud! They must talk to each other. Our girls are required to yell BALL when their girl has the ball. They must let the girl guarding the ball know that they have HELP and if we are beaten of the bounce we have to call for HELP! We must know if there has been a SHOT! We must call out SCREENS!

-HAVE G.U.T.S. This acronym serves a dual purpose. First, in order to be a great defender, you must be tough and willing to simply play harder than the girl you are guarding. That takes GUTS. G.U.T.S stands for "Get Under Their Skin." The primary purpose of defense is to bother, harass, and frustrate the opposition, so we tell the girls to "Have G.U.T.S".

Drill to Work On It

Full Court 1 on 1 (Or half court if space is limited)

We do this drill just about every practice because it works on so many key skills both defensive and offensive.

- Have the girls pair up and start on the baseline (one girl on offense, the other on defense)
- Have the next group in line serve as inbounders. We will usually start with the defensive player fronting the offense and force the offense to work to get open.

- Once the ball is inbounded, the offense should let the defense reset between the offense and the basket.
- The girls play 1 on 1 to the opposite basket

Areas of focus

- The defense's goals are to maintain an arm's length distance only.
- The defense should work to get the ball out of the Highway (the center of the floor if you continued the lane lines the full length of the floor).
- If they are beaten by a speed dribble, they must switch hip (turn and sprint) and regain the bubble (arm's length).
- Good defense would be the defender dictating where the offense is allowed to go, keeping the offense out of the highway, and forcing multiple changes of direction.

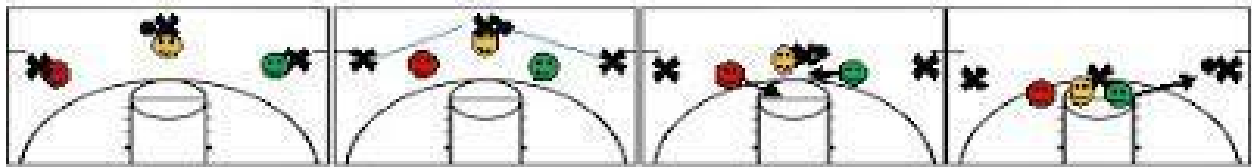
Modifications

- This can easily be done in the half court. It's nice this way also because the girls can start from different spots (point, wing, corner) and play from each.
- We will sometimes forbid the offense to speed dribble. This turns the drill into a more defense friendly scenario, but allows the offensive players to learn how to handle the ball under defensive pressure. At higher levels, teams that press and trap feast on speed dribblers who are out of control.

X's and O's-One Pass Away (In the Gap)

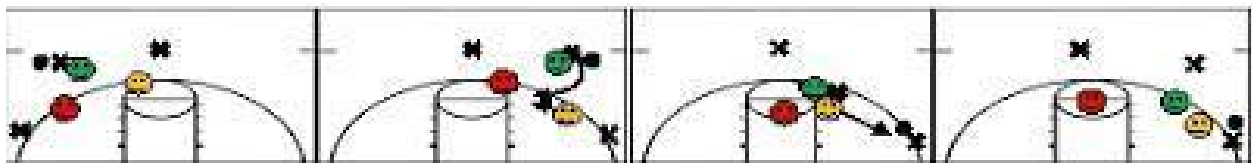
As a general rule, we ask our defenders who are one pass away from the ball get "IN THE GAP." This is where we start to get away from the "stick with your girl" mentality (SWYGM). Our defenders who are one pass away have a primary focus of helping the on the ball defender stop dribble penetration. These girls must view themselves as HELP DEFENDERS first! We must stop the ball. We teach our girls to help on drives and then recover.

Positioning is key here. We tell the girls to "GET UP THE LINE" if we feel they are too close to the girl they are guarding. What we mean by that is, if you draw a line from the ball to the girl we are guarding we want the defender up the line toward the ball. Another general rule that we teach is that we should be one slide away from helping and one slide away from recovering at all times.



Incorrect- "SWYGM" Correct-Up the Line in Gap On a drive we "HELP" Then we "RECOVER"

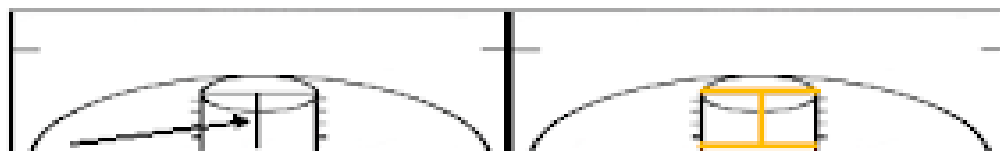
One quick note about our recovery: We want our girls to recover in such a way that they continue to force the ball toward the sideline, so we recover on the "high side" of the player. There's nothing worse than stopping one drive into the highway only to give up another one. This principle of playing in the gap applies to every spot on the floor.



Correct-In The Gaps Drive Left-"HELP" Now "RECOVER" Green in Gap-Red Hi in the I

X's and O's-Two Passes Away (High in the I or 1 Foot in the Lane when ball is at the point)

As we progress to a defender who is two passes away we need to establish some really important common vocabulary. Using these terms really helps the girls to reposition themselves. If they hear these terms from a young age, we can develop a basketball language that will empower our girls to defend at a high level. The graphics below help explain what we mean when we say get to the "HELP LINE," get "LOW IN THE I," and get "HIGH IN THE I."

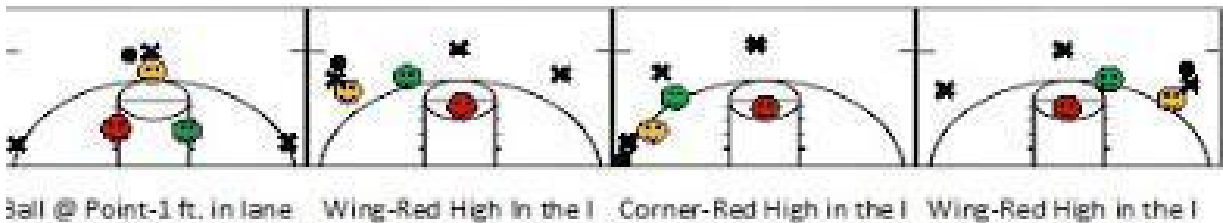


This is the HELP LINE

The I is created by the HELP LINE, FOUL LINE & BASELINE

Our general rule for girls who are defending an offensive player who is two passes away is that they be "HIGH IN THE I." This positioning allows them to help on drives but also provides enough time to recover if a skip pass is thrown over top. Again, our primary goal is to stop the ball and help our on the ball defenders. The positioning of this player often causes people to

misjudge our man to man as a zone. Honestly, that is exactly what we want. The only exception to the “High in the I” rule is when the ball is at the point. When the ball is in that position, we want our girls who are two passes away (who are on the baseline) to have 1 foot in the lane and be a step above the block. Again, this looks like a zone. I promise you that it’s not which you’ll see when the offensive players start to move.



An important detail here is that the red defender must maintain vision of ball and girl. To ensure that, we require them to point to both. When we get High in the I, we ask them to get their lead foot to the help line.

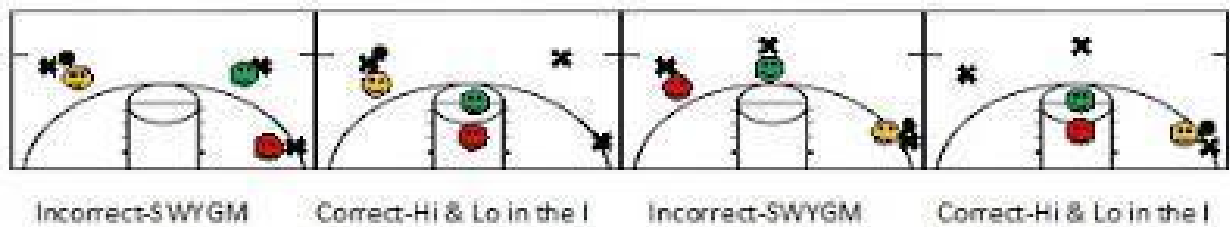
Drill To Work On It (One pass away and two passes away)

3 on 3 Help and Recover



X's and O's-Three Passes Away (Low in the I)

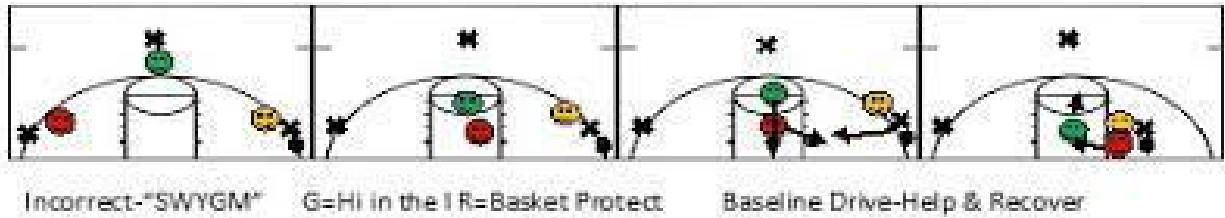
The rule for players who are defending an offensive player who is three passes away is that she should be “LOW IN THE I.” This position allows the defender to help on dribble penetration or be in position to “Help The Help” (more on this later).



Notice in the above diagram I included the defenders who are both 2 passes and 3 passes away from the ball. In each instance the defender should have her back to the baseline and be pointing at both the ball and the girl they are guarding who could be 10-15 feet away from her now. Although this has a zone appearance, this is actually perfect positioning for youth basketball. As the girls get older and can complete skip passes and make 3's we adjust this positioning slightly so that we can account for shooters and close out on skip passes, but the basic principle of overloading the ball side is the same. People who don't really watch the NBA like to complain that nobody plays defense. On the contrary, there was a defensive revolution in the NBA about a decade ago led by Thom Thibodeau who was at the time, an assistant under Doc Rivers in Boston. Coach Thib's whole philosophy is predicated on what you see above, overloading the ball side and choking out the offense's space. We only steal from the best.

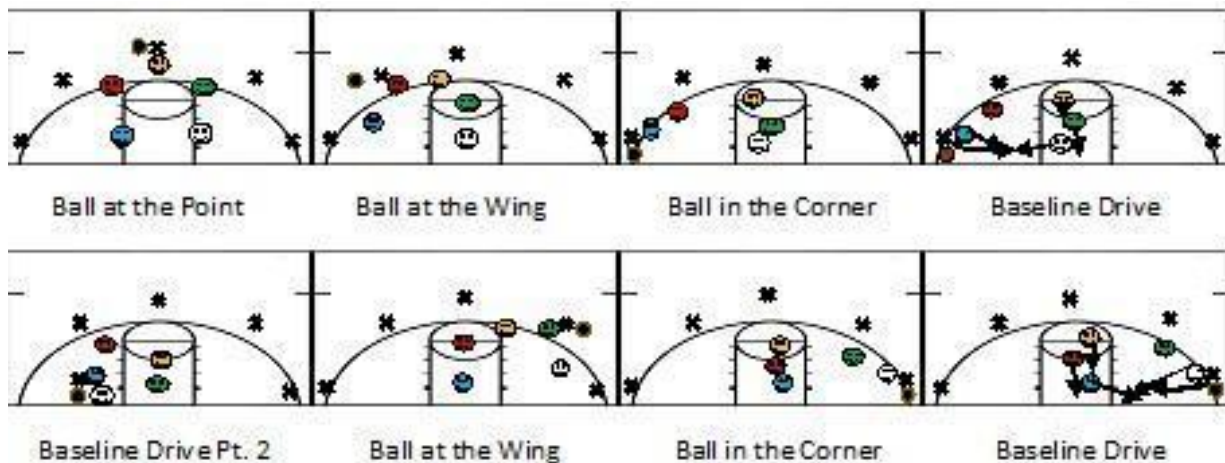
X's and O's-Four Passes Away (In The Hole)

If opposing teams play 5 Out like we do for the most part, there will be times when the ball is in the corner and a defender's offensive player will be in the opposite corner, 4 passes away. When this happens, we want our defender in what we call “basket protect” mode. Both feet of this defender should be on the ball side of the help line and she should be ready to pounce on a baseline drive. At the middle and travel levels, we use this player to trap baseline drives. At the Academy level this girl should still help, but as soon as the dribbler picks up her dribble, the defender should recover to her original position.



X's and O's-Let's Put it All Together Now

So far we've looked at smaller portions of the defense broken down. Now we'll look at it all together with 5 players on the floor. Just a side note: I like to call my man to man defense "FIST." The reason for that is involves 5 players, like the 5 fingers, coming to together and working as one. In addition, the fist is symbolic of strength, and that's the attitude I want my teams to have defensively.



Drill To Work On This

Shell Defense

You can start with a 4 on 4 Shell then advance to a 5 on 5 Shell.

Check our YouTube Channel.