

Defense

Good offence wins games... great defence wins championships. Believe it! When your offence is struggling, good defence can keep you in the game until your shots start falling. How are you going to catch up the second half if you are down 12 at the half? ... by playing great defence. Simply scoring more baskets won't do it if you allow the other team to score also. You must keep the opponent from scoring by playing good defence and rebounding, to allow your offence a chance to get back into the game. Believe me now?

Everyone on the team must play good defence, because one weak link will cause the entire defence to fail, and a good offence will eventually find out who the weak defensive player is. Playing good defence involves hustle, inspiration and perspiration (sweat!). You got to want to play good defence. Defensive skills are fairly easy to learn, unlike some offensive skills, and everyone can learn to become a good defender. If you are a poor, non-aggressive defender, you will hurt your team.

Stance and Focus

- Your weight should be on the balls of your feet (not your heels), and have your feet about shoulder width apart. Keep your knees bent and your your back straight. Keep your head up, eyes forward, arms out with your palms up and elbows bent a little. Watch your opponent's belly-button. Your opponent can fake you with her eyes, head bob, shoulders, a jab step, but his/her belly button is only going the way he/she is.

Slides

- When guarding your opponent, slide your feet sideways, using quick, short steps, and don't get your feet crossed. Don't hop. If you get beat in the open floor, don't just yell for help... turn and sprint after your opponent. Once you get in front of her again, get back into your defensive stance.

Close-out on the ball receiver

- Defenders must learn to "close-out" on the player with the ball. Once the offensive player receives the pass, the defender should rush toward the ball-handler in a low stance. The last several steps should be quick, choppy steps to stop your momentum (so the defender doesn't dribble around you). Your baseline line foot should be back in order to force the ball-handler toward the baseline. As you approach the ball-handler, snap your shoulders and head back to help slow yourself down.

On the Ball

- Over-guard toward the offensive player's strong side. If she is right-handed, she will probably want to go to her right, so over-guard that side and make her go left.

Denial

- Clog the the passing lane and prevent the player you are guarding from getting the ball, that is, "deny" her the ball. When guarding an offensive player who is one pass removed from the ball, you should be in denial. If you keep your player from getting the ball, you keep her from scoring