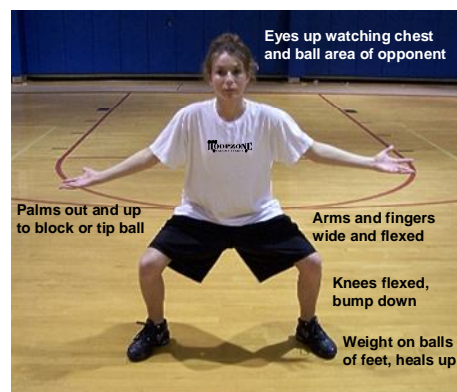


DEFENSE

Most players don't realize that playing great basketball defense has a lot less to do with having speed and quick feet, and a lot more to do with having good anticipation, being aware of what's going on around you, good body balance and basic fundamentals.

The defensive player's responsibility is to contain their opponent while helping out their teammates - with the ultimate goal being to prevent the other team from scoring.

The tips listed below will help build a solid foundation for each player's defensive skills and techniques. This foundation will help each player become an important part of their team's success. These tips can be used and applied to any type of team defense.



The team defense that is played depends on the coaching strategy and the talent of the players. Some basketball coaches prefer man-to-man defense, while others prefer a zone or combination defense. I am a firm believer that all youth basketball players should play man-to-man defense. I think this allows them to improve their individual defensive skills while being an important part of the overall team defense.

COACHING TIPS FOR DEFENSE ON BALL:

Players should always stay between the ball handler and the basket.

Players should always keep their hands and feet active. They should keep pressure on the dribbler.

Players should stay within an arm's length from the dribbler to keep constant pressure on their opponent.

Players should jab at the basketball with their lead hand. They should slap up at the ball, trying to knock it away from the dribbler. They should avoid slapping down at the ball, as this often results in a foul.

Players should always sprint to recover if they are ever beaten by the dribbler. They should pick a spot on the court in front of the dribbler and try to run there before the dribbler. This will put them back in the good defensive position of "ball-defender-basket."

Players should swarm over the ball handler after they pick up their dribble to make things difficult.

Players should move toward the ball after their opponent makes a pass. This is known as "jumping to the ball." This puts the defender in a better position to defend against a cut to the basket, screen, or return pass.

Players should force the dribbler to the side and out of the middle. This is done by playing slightly to one side of them.

Players should know which hand is their opponent's weak hand and overplay the strong one.

Players should overplay the dribbler's strong hand side to force them to dribble the basketball with their weak hand.

COACHING TIPS FOR DEFENSE OFF BALL:

Players should always stay between their opponent and the basket. They should maintain the position of "man-defender-basket." An exception to this would be if they were fronting their opponent in the post position.

Players who are one pass away from the basketball should be in a denial position. They should keep their hand in the passing lane and deny their opponent the basketball. They should be ready to defend their opponent if they receive a pass or help out their teammate on a drive to the basket.

Players who are two or more passes away from the basketball should be in a help position. Their stance will be open so that they can see both their opponent and the ball handler ready to help out on any drives to the basket.

Players must always be ready to help out when one of their teammates is beaten on a drive or when the ball is passed down into the post.

Players should communicate on screens. They should either fight over them, go under them, or switch on them. Their action will depend on the coach's strategy

Players should close out quickly on the ball and get into a good defensive stance when it is passed to their opponent.

Players will either front the post, drape the post on the ball-side, or play behind the post. Again, this will depend on the coach's strategy on post defense.

Players should be ready to box out and rebound on any shots.