Championships in basketball are won with defense. 80% of 1 bid league champions in 2009 ranked either 1st or 2nd in their conference in field goal % defense.

Had some great opportunities to grow as a coach in his assistant coaching stops. Each one was a very good defensive coach, but all four went about in very different ways.

Mike Deane (at Marquette): Pack Defense defending everything inside-out
Phil Martelli (at Saint Joseph’s): Defensive pressure and doing anything to keep offense off balance.
Jamie Dixon (at Pitt): “Thug ’em, Mug ’em Defense.” Just tough, hard-nosed defense built through their practices where they do the same set of defensive toughness drills every day from October to March. “You couldn’t bring soft recruits to practice because they’d be scared.”
Nick Marcachuk (at Fordham): 1-3-1, 2-3, 1-2-2. Loved Zones

Learned from all these and began to create his own philosophy (was also blessed with the opportunity to work for the Hoop Group running Eastern Invitational where he would regularly attend practices of the best high school coaches in the East including Bob Hurley (St. Anthony), Kevin Boyle (St. Patrick’s) and Speedy Morris (Saint Joe’s Prep).
-Even with all these experiences, the thing that most influenced his philosophy was a 15 minute cab ride. In 19__ while working as a restricted earnings coach at Marquette, one of his jobs was that he would ride with former coach Al McGuire to the airport. McGuire rarely talked basketball, but one quote changed the way Rice though about defense:

“The more they think, the slower their feet”

↑

Defense must be instinctive. You need to engrain the movements you want in your player’s heads to the point where they no longer have to think them. You need to make your players instinctive. Instincts are always discussed offensively, but what about defensively?

-Has drilled the idea “If we defend, we have a chance” into his players at RMU
-It’s simple: “How can I help my team?” ←As a coach, he needs to make the answer instinctive. The defensive rotations need to be instinctive, everything needs to be instinctive.

-Has at RMU aren’t as tough as he’d like so he’s had to demand tremendous ball pressure in order to get possessions over with because he noticed that if the opposing team’s offensive possessions lasted beyond 25 seconds, they were most likely going to finish the possession with an open layup because his kids weren’t tough enough to defend for the full 35. Therefore, he’s instilled tremendous ball pressure in order to get the possession done in 20 seconds.

- Our 5 Rules Defensively:

1. We dictate to you on defensively. We attack
2. Force ball sideline and baseline: our chin on your top shoulder. We don’t drop our feet to open up. We dictate defensively what you do. EXCEPT on baseline or at the top of the key where you are chest-to-chest (defense there at the top of the key is so important because that’s the penetration that really kills you because it is so tough to help on).
3. Make teams play faster than they want to
4. Switch 1-4: You might call us lazy because we don’t want to fight through picks, but I just don’t think I have tough enough or smart enough kids at my level to get through screens. We switch everything – downscreens, backscreens, ballscreens, dribble hand-offs. You need to be strong and athletic to play this (2 things we emphasize heavily in recruiting). Tough kids are so rare today.
5. Energy + Intensity: We have to have it.

-So important for us (and any defense) is containing dribble penetration because without having to help and rotate, it will be a much better defensive possession.
-We heavily emphasize closeouts (and mirroring the ball) because a. good closeouts prevent the offense from passing and reversing the ball with fluidity and b. if we get one great closeout, BAM, the offense is back to zero and everything they positive they had accomplished prior in that possession is negated because they’re cowering with the ball behind their head
-You have to make things fun for your kids. Make everything a game to keep them interested. Whenever someone takes a charge at RMU all 4 players need to help him
-Don’t deny wings or any perimeter passes, but instead sit in help.
- Because of our switching we love playing teams that get a bulk of their offense from set plays. It just drives them nuts. I don’t want to rely on my kids handling the complexities of dealing with staggers and such so we just switch it.
-Make players talk because a loud defense beats a silent one.
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- Believes it to be truly easier in season to make your team a great defensive team than a great offensive team. Offense is predicated on skill work that’s done in the off-season mostly.
- Incorporates the offensive concepts of their next opponent in that day’s shell drill.

**Drills:**

- **1-on-1 Dribble Advancement (Force Baseline):**
  Offensive player starts with ball at halfcourt with defensive player in front of him. Offense is trying to get middle as defender works to force him baseline. We are not dropping our foot. We FORCE him to go baseline.

- **Chair 1-on-1:**
  2 chairs at halfcourt. Players on baseline—offense at 3 point line and defense on the lane. On Coach’s “go,” players sprint towards the chair (the offensive player dribbling). Offensive player circles the outside chair by going between the chairs and emerging on the outside while the defender runs outside the chairs and back through. Play 1-on-1, staying on this half of court. We don’t want our defensive player to sag into paint. We want to be aggressive defensively. We want to attack.

- **4 Chair 1-on-1 (Fullcourt):**
  Same as previous drill, but there are now 2 additional chairs in the backcourt and offense now starts inside. The players weave the chairs and play 1-on-1. After throwing to a coach, the players play 1-on-1 on the other half of the court.

- **Closeout Drill**
  Line of players on the baseline with a coach on the wing and a coach at the top of the key. The ball is rolled out to the coach on the wing and the defensive player sprints 3 and chops 3 to closeout (forcing baseline). Player mirrors the ball until the coach puts it on the floor one dribble towards the baseline before coach tosses it to the other coach and player sprints to touch baseline and closeout again. Coach shoots and the player boxes out to finish the drill.
- Philly Closeout:
  Drill starts with a coach on each wing and one defensive player (player 1) in a
  defensive stance at the FT line with the rest of players in a line underneath the rim. The ball
  is thrown to one of the coaches and the player from the FT line sprints to closeout. The ball
  is then skipped and the first player in line (player 2, with head under the rim) sprints to
  closeout as player 1 drops to help. On the subsequent skip pass the next player in line sprints
  to closeout as player 2 drops to help and player 1 heads to the back of the line. Repeat.

- Bigs Step Drill:
  Drill starts with a coach on the wing and a coach at the top of the key with an
  offensive and defensive player on ballside block. Rice teaches when the ball is above the FT
  line his post is on the high side of the offensive player, but when the ball is swung beneath
  the foul line, the player moves to the low side of the offensive player. The coaches pass the
  ball back and forth as the defensive big makes this transition. Go 2-3 times and rotate.

- Uconn 1-on-1:
  Drill starts with 1 coach at the top of the key, a player in a defensive stance facing
  him at the FT line and a line of offensive players on each wing. Coach throws ball to one of
  the wings and defensive player closes out. You need to get a stop to get off. If defensive
  player gets a stop he heads to the back of the lines and the offensive player is now the man
  at the FT line. On a score, the defensive man stays on.

- Uconn 1-on-1 with Bigs:
  Same as the above, but now the 2 offensive players are on the block and coaches are
  on each wing. Same rotation concepts as above.

- Michigan State 2-on-2:
  Drill starts with a coach on each wing being guarded by a defensive player. Ball starts
  with one of the coaches as his man pressures him and the other defender is on the basketline
  in help. On the skip pass the defender in help sprints to closeout and the other defender
  now drops to help.

- Michigan State 2-on-2 with Bigs:
  Drill starts with a coach on each wing and a defensive and offensive player on each
  block. On the skip passes, defenders move to the proper defensive position. Enter ball into
  post if you’d like to play live or simulate double team action.

- George Karl Drill:
  Drill starts with a coach at the top of
  the key and an offensive player on the wing
  and one in the corner with a defensive player
  covering each. Drill begins with the coach
  penetrating to the middle of the defense where
  x1 is forced to step in to help. The drill focuses
  on x2 as he is forced to help up the line on
  the pass to 1 and scramble back to his man as
  x1 sprints to recover. Emphasize helping up
  the line. X2 sagging back into the lane flat with
  x2 is NOT help defense.
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- Help the Helper Drill:
  “I HATE working on getting beat, but you got to do it.” Runs drill with several variations/ formations. All drill variations begin with a perimeter defender being beaten. The post defender is forced to step over to provide help and the other guard must drop to discourage the offensive guard from making the dump-down pass to post (emphasize for the guard to have his hand across post’s chest). 4 variations below.

- Wall Off Drill:
  Drill begins with an offensive player slightly above three point line and a defensive player facing him standing just below the free throw line. Cones are placed at each elbow. A coach throws the offensive player the ball and the defensive player sprints out to meet him and closeout. The defense must attack the offensive player as the offensive player attempts to beat him off the dribble within the 2 cones. Offensive player can’t turn his back on the defender.

- 4-on-3 Closeouts:
  Drill begins with 4 offensive players around perimeter with 3 defenders creating a triangle within the lane. The ball is passed to one of the offensive players and the 3 defenders scramble to cover. Emphasis is on closeouts as a good one will allow their teammates time to recover. Offense must shoot within 4 passes and cannot skip the ball. The offense CAN dribble.

- 6-on-4 Closeouts:
  Drill begins with 6 offensive players around the perimeter with the 2 corners manned by a coach/manager/walk-on. Drill is same as above, but limitations are placed on corner offensive players who can only shoot layups or drive and kick to a shooter.
“Utilizing the Three Point Shot vs. Man and Zone”

- We try to gain an advantage at the three point line by creating situations offensively by using it and by taking it away defensively.
- What is the best way to do this offensively? At my level, get better shooters. At the high school level, get your shooters better.
- A 4 that can shoot it creates so many offensive opportunities for your team (side note: this was a point that was reiterated by 3-4 coaches over the weekend)
- Four ways we try to get open threes:
  1. Transition- push hard for early threes.
  2. Dribble Penetration- drive and kick opportunities.
  3. Post Kickouts- passing out of double-teams followed by ball reversal.
  4. Offensive Rebounds- best time for open threes. Bigs feel that they’re entitled to shoot the ball off of an o-board, but this is a great time to find a shooter sprinting to spot up in an open area.
- The more you force the defense to closeout on you, the greater chance you have of getting to the paint. So, your thinking offensively should be “how do I create closeout opportunities?”
- Loves the flat ball screen because defense has to go so deep under them to get through and because if the ball screen is overplayed, it is so easy to switch the angle to catch the defense.
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-Wants to keep the ball in the “alley” (middle of the court between the two elbows) because it prevents teams from establishing helpside.

Transition ideas:
- A team changing from offense to defense is one of the most difficult things in basketball. **Exploit this!**

- On a miss, free-for-all, score as quickly as possible.
- On a make, we want the ball the inbounded as quickly as possible by whichever big is closest to the ball and we want the ball advanced up the floor as quickly as possible as well. 
  In UF’s practices, ball isn’t across half court in 3 seconds it is an automatic turnover.
- No set lanes, he wants his players to play. He asks his wings to run their lanes as wide as possible and sprint up the floor. If the two happen to be on the same side, it’s the 2nd player’s responsibility to call “push” and send the first wing through to the other side.
- Random ball screens: If our first big down the court is behind the ball or not in position to get the ball in the low post in transition, it’s an automatic flat ball screen for strongside wing (trailing big can run in to set a double).

Drills:
- LMU :35 Drill:
  Goal is to score 5 layups in 35 seconds. Drill begins with 5 players rotating in a circle. The ball is scored by a coach and the players sprint to transition. Progression: 1. Advance pass to wing 2. Advance pass to opposite wing 3. Over the top pass to big rim running 4. Pass to trailing big followed by a drive/wide pindown by trailing big followed by a seal 5. Ball screen for point guard by trailing big for layup.

Diagrams:

"Flat" 1 advances to 2 and runs through. The ball is reversed to 3 as 5 runs to set a flat ball screen on wing.

With a non-shooting 4, on the weakside of the court while this ball screen is occurring, 4 will sprint to the short corner and be prepared for a dump pass from 3 on penetration as 2 lifts. With a shooting 4, 2 will set a flare for 4.

Non-Shooting 4     Shooting 4
“Dribble”
1 passes to trailing 4 who executes a dribble-handoff with 3. 4 fades to corner, 5 sprints to a ballscreen (emphasized the importance of sprinting to ball screens and creating a situation where the defense is late on its show) and 2 sets a flare for 1.

“Double”
Play can be run with either 1 or 2 being the ball handler. Diagram shows 1 sending 2 backdoor, but play can be run with 1 and 2 executing a dribble hand-off.

“Down”
Trailing big sets a wide pin-down for 3 who receives a pass from 1. 5 sets a back screen for 1 (who goes through to the corner) and then steps up to set a ball screen for 3 who attacks the middle of the floor.

“Down Out” is the same play, but 4 heads to the corner after the pin-down and 1 runs the fill on the ball screen (circling up behind the ball screen in accordance with 5’s roll
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-Zone work:
1 dribbles down right side of court and receives a ball screen from 4 stepping out of high post, causing the other top defender to step in. 2 is running a baseline cut (with 5 screening the middle defender) as this is going on and on 1’s kick to 2, x3 is left to cover both 3 on the wing and 2 on the baseline.

Lob play versus zone: ball is advanced to 2, but he swings it to the top and 1 reverses the ball to 3. 4 flashes to the high post, causing x5 to step up, while 5 runs and sets a back screen for 2. 3 should be your passes while 2 should be your best athlete.

-BLOB play versus 2-3 zone for three: 5 sets a diagnol for 4 who sprints to ballside block as 5 rolls to weakside block. The key though is 2 who kicks out to corner and will be left unguarded by the 2-3 zone as the middle defender will protect against 4’s cut and the weakside guy will cover 5’s roll.

Three Point Shooting Drills:
-Wave Drill: 4 lines of 3 players underneath basket on the baseline with every player in the middle line starting with a ball. The first group will begin the drill with the player in the middle of the lane passing the ball to the man to his right who passes it back to the middle who throws it to the player to his left. When he crosses halfcourt he begins dribbling and the two wings spot up at the three point line. He delivers a chest pass to either side with the opposite guard getting the rebounder and the passer filling the rebounder’s line. They now form 3 lines on the baseline underneath that hoop. The next group would have started going as soon as the first group passed halfcourt and so forth with the 3rd group. They continue with this for 2 minutes with the goal being 20 makes.
Flood Drill: Similar to the last one, but now there are 3 lines of 2 players under both baskets on a court. On coach’s go, the middle player dribbles the ball up the right lane line with his right hand before throwing ahead to one of the wings running with him for a spot-up three. Both sides go at the same time so make sure you designate which side is running outside and which side is running inside on the perimeter lanes. The next group goes as soon as the previous crosses halfcourt.

Detroit Shooting: 3 lines underneath one basket with a ball in the hands of the first person in the middle lane and the 2nd person in each of the perimeter lines. The first three will proceed down the court via a 3-man weave. Down at the other end will be 2 players, one in each corner, with one ball each. The 3-man weave will finish with a layup, but the other two players will receive passes from the 2 corner players who then join the player who shot the layup in a 3-man weave back the other way. Continuous.
Tom Pecora
Hofstra University

“2-3 Matchup Zone”

-Loves to switch defenses within a possession: go man-to-man first 25 seconds then throw go zone as the shot clock hits 10. So often you will catch a forward with the ball in his hands at the top of the key who freaks out in trying to get it to a guard that the clock is at 4 or 5 by the time everything settles in. Serves as a talent equalizer.
-Fronts all bigs because so few guys these days are able to make the tough entry lob pass over the front
-Has tape all over his practice floor of Offensive Sweet Spots (places we want to get the ball to offensively) and Defensive Pressure Points. There is a line taped running from rim to rim that he calls the Load Line (weakside guard is told to “load and look away” to keep an eye on a shooter on the weakside)

-Hofstra’s philosophy is that you will have to beat us over the top with contested jump shots because we defend everything inside-out. Teaches the “defensive v-cut.” Every jump they make to the ball on defense is a v-cut as the player drops beneath the ball before closing out (rather than in a straight line).

-Had the pleasure of being able to attend New York Jets’ coaching meetings with their training center located on the Hofstra campus. Witnessed their tremendous use of terminology and the way they moved their players around in military-like fashion. Pecora believes that you need to have a football mentality as a defense.
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- Believes in simple one-word commands (“Ball,” “Bump,” “Flash”)
- Doesn’t buy you can’t rebound out of a zone or the long-held belief that you go zone when you’re big. Believes that some of this best zone teams were actually undersized.
- It’s invaluable to have a smart and vocal middle player in the back of the defense that can direct traffic.
- The high post can kill matchup zones so defensively he emphasizes keeping the ball out of there (offensively against a matchup zone, Hofstra will put their 2 right at the high post and allow him to make plays). When the ball does enter the high post while Hofstra is running match-up, their center steps up to take him and calls “match” as they now revert to a man-to-man defense.
- Responsibilities:
  - Back middle: Any offensive ballside post.
  - Weakside forward: Any overload (flash to high post)
  - Weakside guard: Inside hand deterring the high post pass
- Plays ball screens like a man-to-man going under the screen (continuing the philosophy of playing inside-out).
- Wants his guards to be in “early help” where they’re foot faking at ball handler. They’re not coming to help, but they want you to think you are.
- “The majority of bad coaching is overcoaching”
- Don’t let them throw the ball through your defense. Make them throw it over or around you (sidenote: this was also a point stressed by several coaches including Darin Horn and Bob Huggins throughout the weekend as a point of emphasis for the defense).
- In the matchup zone we cannot allow the ball to get to the middle of the floor, either by the pass or the dribble. (“Syracuse does this better than anyone because their length forces you to make plays going baseline).

Talent Equalizers (mixing up defense slightly to throw opposing offense off):
- Splits: go zone first 25 seconds of a possession then switch to man or vice versa.
- Crush: double the ball if it enters into the corner.
- Blitz: blitz ball screens.
- Porch Crushers: double team a short corner catch.
- Inversion: bring forwards up to man top positions of 2-3
- Thumb Up: a 1-3-1 halfcourt trap/2-3 matchup zone hybrid where they blitz the first pass made in the halfcourt.
- Thumb Down: a 1-3-1 halfcourt trap/2-3 matchup zone hybrid where they blitz the dribbler as they cross the time line.
- Big Thumb Up/Down: place your best athlete at the top of Thumb Up/Down.
- Loves these looks because they’re something you can do early in the game to discourage something you don’t want the opponent doing (Crush until the first media timeout can discourage the team from going to the corner all night) or you can save it until late in the game for a key possession to surprise the offense.
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-A week before practice begins, he calls a coaches retreat where he rents a house on Long Island and meets with several former head coaches on Monday night. On Tuesday morning, Pecora leaves and his assistants meet with one of the coaches. From Tuesday night on it’s just him and his staff for 2+ days. Got the idea from Rollie Massimino and believes it to be great for bonding.

Zone Offense Looks:

“Wiggle” lob play
1 drives off 4’s ball screen into the middle of the floor as 4 pops to the corner. Just as 1 clears the ball screen, 5 steps up from the short corner porch to set a back screen on x5 (x3 should be hung up on 4’s pop to corner)

“Ram” for Three Pointer
1 drives off 5’s ball screen as 2 (best shooter) sprints baseline as 4 screens the weakside forward. Creates a 2-on-1 situation with 1 driving to the middle of the floor with 3 on the wing and 2 in the corner.
Mark Few
Gonzaga University

“Man to Man Offensive Concepts”

- Started as a high school coach then took a graduate assistant job at Gonzaga for no pay. He was single and could afford to be broke for a couple of years.
- Took over Gonzaga in 1999 and for much of his first 5 years the Zags were a motion/flex team, but as they started receiving national exposure, their recruiting expanded and their talent improved. With the improved talent, they began running more sets and more 2-man game.
- Benchmarks they want to hit (they will post individual’s numbers and the team average in the locker room): 50% FG 40% 3PT 75% FT
- They also stress offensive and defensive efficiency with an offensive goal of 1.15 or more points per possession and a defensive goal of limiting the opponents to .9 points per possession or less.
- Offensive Concepts:
  1. **Attack:** Whether it’s coming off the rim or out of the net, they are attacking and getting the ball down the floor as quickly as they can to put pressure on the defense. They want GREAT shots early in the clock. Few firmly believes that an open three early is often as good of a look as you’ll get all possession.
  2. **Get to the Free Throw Line:** The most underrated aspect of offensive basketball as roughly 25% points scored in division 1 basketball are from the free throw stripe. They have 2 goals surrounding this: make more free throws than the other team attempts and to be in the bonus by the 2nd media timeout (8 minutes in)
  3. **Limit Turnovers:** Worst thing you can do offensively is turn it over because it allows you no chance for an offensive rebound or a chance to go to the FT line.
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-To stress the importance of taking care of the basketball they will start scrimmaging in practice and have a ball rack on the sideline at practice with x number of balls on it. With each turnover the players commit, the ball is thrown away and they take a new one off the rack. When the rack is empty they stop scrimmaging and run for the remainder of the time.

Ball Screen Offense:
-Requires great spacing, utilizing the corners, and the ball handlers must slow down and read each screen. No two ball screens are the same; you can’t setup a screen thinking “I’m going to turn the corner for a pull-up on this” or “I’m going to split this.” You must read the defense and take what the defense gives you.
-Doesn’t like his guards to split the high hedge because it’s such a high-risk move. Would rather have them “Stockton Pivot” when trapped hard, pivoting off your inside foot and moving your high leg past the guard and throwing a bounce pass to the roll man.
-The Fill Guy is as important as the ball handler or the screener in a ball screen offense. In diagram to the left, 3 is the fill man. As his defender drops to help on 5’s roll, 3 fills up back behind the screen. A good fill forces defenses to be honest with their help. Switch your fill guys as defenses begin to become comfortable with their rotation. A 4 that can shoot in this fill spot is extremely dangerous as the opposing 4 will have fits providing help and getting a hand up. Tells players that if you see the ball going away from you on a ball screen you can’t stand, you’re the fill guy. Move up the court behind the spot where the screen was set.
-Whenever a ball screen is going on one side of the court, the two players on the weakside do not just stand. They will run an exchange or a back screen, some kind of movement to make the helpside defenders think and move. They love an exchange with the corner moving up the court, but making a hard dive to the rim as soon as he gets to the wing.
-Emphasizes a dead sprint to ball screens by his bigs.
-Run 2 different ball screens: Regular (chest to sideline) and Flat (If you guess and show on one side, the big will just pivot to switch the angle and you’re burned).
-Majority of ball screens they run will have the opposite block filled with a post who is stepping in hard in front of his defender as the ball handler is clearing the screen.
-Goal on every ball screen: get a piece of the paint.
-Can only pick and pop when there is an open corner

Here in this diagram, the big can pop to the corner because there are only 2 people on this side, but on the diagram above, it has to be straight roll because of the 3. 4 would duck in hard as 3 and 1 would replace.

-1st pass of a ball screen is either a catch-and-shoot situation or a quick swinging of the ball. This isn’t a dribble opportunity, it’s either shot or swung.

“Regular”
1 passes to wing and cuts through to ballside corner. 4 screens across for 5 who sprints into ball screen. 2 drives off ball screen as 4 pops to lane line extended and 5 rolls. This is especially dangerous with a shooting 4 man as x4 is stuck with the dilemma of helping on 5’s roll or leaving 4 open.

-Against a hard show:
Offense starts in a 1-4 high set as 1 passes to a wing and rubs off the post for a UCLA cut and proceeds through to weakside. Post who set the back screen steps into a ball screen for wing.
Option 1:
As this is happening, 3, the weakside wing, sprints to set a back screen for 5 after he ball screens. 1 quickly passes the ball to 4 who hits 5 streaking to the block for a post-up.

Option 2:
2 and 4 set a stagger for 3 (back screener for 5):

-Move players around to different spots. Test their preparation. If they’ve decided they want to “X” their bigs on ball screens. Put your 4 on the side the ball is being dribbled to off the ball screen. What do they do?
-“Eliminate Help”
Offense starts in a 1-4 high set with 1 bringing the ball down the middle of the floor. 1 passes to 2 and then receives a double flare from 4 and 3. 2 dribbles off ball screen and passes quickly to 4 who has popped to the top of the key. With the double flare and the 4 popping they’ve eliminated all help for 5’s roll.

-Versus a switch, they will roll a big hard into the post and see if the guard can cover him.
-Versus hard traps, they will screen for the ball screener to make it so the trap is late showing.
-Anytime a big catches the ball up top it is an automatic pass and follow with a ball screen.
-Big component of pregame preparation is “How do they play their ball screens?”
-Big problem with players leaving ball screens too early, before the screen has arrived.
-Begin teaching ball screen actions in 2 person groups before moving to 3 and eventually 4 and 5 players at a time.
Two Defensive Keys:
1. What is our identity?
   It doesn’t matter what it is necessarily, it just matters that you have one that you and your players firmly believe in. “What do we want to be about?” you have to ask yourself and it needs to be something that you and your players say “This is who we are. This is what we hang our hats on.”
2. What are we willing to live with?
   Every defense has a fallback. We want to pressure you the length of the court and because of this, we will give up some easy layups. So, you must ask yourself “What are you willing to give up?”

Two non-negotiables we have in our program:
1. Don’t give up middle
2. Pressure (length and versatility are a must for us)

At South Carolina they aren’t very technical, it’s more of a matter of “Just get it done.” Because of this, as much of their drills is about creating a mentality than anything else.

How do you measure yourself defensively?
South Carolina: Deflections, anytime you get a hand on the ball in any way. We need 40 a game to be successful. That’s our number 1 goal defensively every game.

What we believe: play hard and play with trust that your teammate will be there to help you.
- Teaches an open denial stance learned from his college coach, Ralph Willard (who spoke later in the clinic). In the open denial stance, the defensive player is up in the offensive player’s chest and the arm closest to the defender is extended (rather than the traditional denial stance with the arm closest to the ball extended) with the defensive player’s body open to the ball handler. Player is one step off the passing lane and they will do this out to the NBA three point line. Players find it awkward at first, but they learn to really like it as it gives them a better chance at help and prevents the backdoor more effectively.
- Believes that there isn’t an original idea left in basketball. Every scheme or thought is stolen or modified.
- In order to avoid confusion with his kids he calls the two transition periods, “Transition Offense” and “Conversion Defense.”
- The method we take in instilling our defensive philosophy is whole-part-whole. We’ll show them everything, break it down and then build it back up.
- We do work early to keep the ball out of the middle by our point guard pressuring the ball handler in the backcourt. We teach him to retreat back to the halfcourt circle until another guard passes then attack handler to force him sideline.
- The man covering the inbounder (or the man who jammed the man on the rebound) getting to the level of the ball and discouraging the middle drive.
- Another thing we want to take away is the quick advance pass up the sideline.
- Every drill, everything we do defensively has to be loud. There needs to be a talking aspect to everything we do.
- The most important steps in conversion defense are the first 3. You must sprint these out.
- We want you to be aggressive defensively. That doesn’t mean reach and gamble, but you have the freedom to try to make plays in our system.
- Best way to slow offensive movement (besides having 6’8” athletes): have active hands.
- If you’re going to pressure and trap, you CANNOT give up straight line passes. The lofted or tipped pass gives your defense time to recover.
- When trapping, don’t reach, but be physical with your lower body. We can’t afford to be split in our traps and we MUST sprint out of our traps. The best trap does us no good if we’re walking out of it and the offense can do whatever they want after.
- Love 1-on-1 drills because it instills toughness and it forces you to find a way to stop the other guy, there’s no hiding in a 1-on-1 situation.

Drills:
- Loves to do defensive stations at the start of practice: 3 different drills with 1 coach teaching each. 8 minutes on the clock then rotate.
  - 5 man weave → 3-on-2 → 2-on-1: Passer and shooter are the two defenders in the 3-on-2 situation. Their goals must be to force the offense to pick a side and to make the offense throw at least 2 passes because anything more will have help coming. On 2-on-1 the player must get deep in the lane (Tell them to run all the way to the rim because too many players stop at the free throw line on this).
  - Fundamental Defensive Drill: A manager/coach starts with the ball with a defensive player just behind him. Defensive player must scramble to get in front of the ball. Coach passes the ball to a coach situated on the right wing as the defensive player jumps to the ball. Coach heads to the block where he is fronted before going away. Defensive player is now in help...
until the ball is skipped to another coach on the other side and the defensive player moves into the open denial stance. Ball is shot, defensive player boxes out and the drill is done.
-1 Minute Drill: a 4-on-4 drill which begins with 1 minute on the clock and the defense needs a full minute of good defense to get off the court. If the offense scores or there is an offensive rebound or if the coaches just see something they don’t like (“a stop isn’t the ball not going in the hoop. A stop is defending an entire possession the way we want”), the clock is reset back to 1 minute. This can go as long as a coach wants it to (record is 37 minutes). This is a great drill for showing the players that defense is about competing and stopping the other guy from doing what he wants to do than it is about fundamentals.

1-on-1 Cone Drill: as shown in Mike Rice notes.

Loose Ball Drill: Every loose ball needs to be ours. Drill begins with 2 players on each lane line at the baseline. Coach rolls a ball out, player who picks up the ball is on offense. 2 dribbles max.
- Had the opportunity to work with Larry Brown, Roy Williams and Gregg Poppovich on the Olympic staff in 2004 and he treated it like a clinic and tried to learn as much as he could from those guys.
- The main thing he took from Larry Brown was the importance of communication. Brown always said that Rasheed Wallace was the best defensive big he's ever coached because he communicated so well.
- Because of this lesson from Coach Brown, Purnell made “Communication” the theme of Clemson Basketball. He wanted an improvement in communication throughout his program from the secretaries in the office to the managers to the players to the coaches.
- Negativity will come, the important thing is that it must be met head on and confronted.
- A part of this communication is the players understanding their roles on the team. If a player doesn’t know his role on the team, he should speak up and ask a coach and, as a part of the communication theme, the coach must be honest in telling him his role.
- What do you do to work on communicating on the court?
- Clemson begins every practice with a series of communication drills that consists of a number of fast-break drills (3-man weave, 5-man weave, 3 man passing drill, 3 man passing drill with a big as a fourth man). For 5-10 minutes, they will do an assortment of these
“communication drills” with Purnell calling out the variations on the fly. It’s not so much the drills themselves that builds the skill he is looking for, but how the players need to react instantly to his demand and communicate with others to accomplish the drill most effectively.

- Develop this habit of communication.
- “Basketball is a game of mistakes, how do we react?”
- Another theme Clemson has had over the years was “Will it help us win?” The question, in terms of off-court matters, has a great ability to simplify issues and allows you a clear answer to what can seem like a complicated matter.

- Transition defense: impossible without communication
  1. Take care of basket.
  2. Take care of ball.
  3. Pick up next most dangerous guy (most likely this player will be on ballside).

- Bulls Transition Drill: Five players circle in paint until Coach calls “Go” and proceeds to dummy dribble down court as defensive sprints into transition defensive positions with point picking up ball. Coach dribbles ball all the way down to baseline as defense must shift ballside.
- “Go” Drill: 5-on-5 drill with offense dry-running their offense while defense moves. On Coach’s “Go,” offense throws ball to the side and a coach throws a ball to a defensive player who pushes the ball down court.

- Box Transition Drill: A full court drill that starts with 1 offensive player (in circles) on each wing on each side of the court with another on the far end line (offense moves up court in diagram). 4 defensive players are in a diamond in the foul circle in the backcourt while the 5th defensive player stands at the opposite foul line defending the basket. A coach throws a ball to one of the 4 offensive players situated on the wings and they transition up the court as defense sprints to get back to defend.

- Quick Offensive Thoughts:
  - Play 4-out, 1-in. Will run very similar things versus both man and zone.
  - Their motion set is lifted to the point where wings are situated not in the corners, but at foul line extended.
  - Weakside positions will be either screening away or running flare screens for each other.
First, recognize why the team is playing you zone: Is it their staple? Often, it’s not. Often, it’s because either they can’t guard you, they’re not deep so they’re trying to stay out of foul trouble, they’re trying to make up for a size deficiency, or they’re saying you can’t shoot.

The best way to beat a zone is to beat the zone down the floor with the fast break. Don’t let the zone get set. Beat the zone before it is a zone. Either by throwing over the top to a big rim-running or throwing an advance pass to a wing who has sprinted to beat defense down the court. This is a great concept if you’re NOT great versus zone.

Your 2 and 3 are vital. They don’t need to necessarily beat EVERYONE down the floor, they just need to beat below the opposing team’s guards so on an advance pass the forwards need to come up out of the 2-3 to defend the wing (opens up post and creates a mismatch on the perimeter with a guard being covered by a forward).

On a wing catch, the post evaluates. Can he post to score? If he can, he cuts to ball side block where he faces single coverage by the opposing team’s big (the ball side forward has lifted as a result of advance pass to wing). If he doesn’t think he can score, he cuts to the short corner with the trailing big heading right to ball side high post.

On skip passes versus a zone, imagine there is a volleyball net running from rim to rim. Against good teams, your skip passes need to be able to get over that net. You can’t have low skip passes, too many deflections.

Best 3’s in the game come in transition.

Positioning: in a 2-3, wings should be halfway from the defensive guard’s backs to the backline’s (forwards and centers) chests.
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-Evaluate the zone’s strengths and weaknesses. Put your best penetrator on the slower forward’s side or your best rebounder on the weakest forward’s side.

-Pass fakes and shot fakes: ultra important versus a zone. Make the defense react!

-Create 2-on-1 situations within the halfcourt where 1 defender is trying to cover 2 offensive players on his side.

-All zone teams are vulnerable to offensive rebounds. Send bodies to the offensive glass.

-Throughout basketball, even at the high levels, players shoot a poor percentage from 6-7 feet (bigs) and 10-12 feet (guards). Why? Because no one practices them.

Set plays versus 2-3 zone:
-“Thumbs Up”: As the guard on the right wing (2 in diagram) sets a ball screen for 1, 4 flashes to the high post. 1 is looking for his jumper (if it’s a good screen set by 2, x2 won’t be able to get through the screen and x4 will have to scramble to get a hand up. This opens an opportunity for a dump to 5 or a pass to 4 at the high post.

-“High”: (against a team that is anxious to cover the high post) 1 dribbles at the right lane-line extended and motions the opposite block (5) to flash to high post. With 5’s flash, 1 fakes to the wing (works better if he’s a shooter) to draw 4 up the court before 1 throws a flick lob pass to 4 for a dunk/layup.

-“Thumbs Down”: 1 passes to 2 and runs to set a wing ball screen for him (fades to corner after setting). 2 dribbles to the middle of the court and quickly passes to 3 who steps to the lane line extended to receive the pass. On 3’s catch, 5 flashes to the high post. A 2-on-1 situation has been created as 3 and 4 are on side of the court being covered by 1 defender. (Play is especially dangerous if 4 can shoot from the perimeter).

-“Paint Across”: 1 dribbles 2 out for a shallow cut to the opposite wing. 1 passes ball to 3 filling up top who reverses ball to 2. 4 is setting a cross screen on x5. 5 reads the defense and either cuts low or high off the screen. With quick ball movement, x4 will be forced to come up the court to defend 2’s catch and 5 will be open off 4’s screen.
-“Paint Up”: 1 dribbles to the right wing, sending 2 through to the opposite corner. 1 passes to 3 who has filled up top. 4 has sprinted into a ball screen for 3. 3 uses the ball screen and has plenty of options: pull-up jumper for himself, 2 in the corner, 4 on the roll and 5 on the flash to the high post.

-“Shallow”: (run this for a shooter. In diagram, 2 is the shooter) 1 dribbles 2 out and hits 4 flashing to the high post from the opposite block. On catch, 4 immediately looks across to opposite wing. 2 will have sprinted along the baseline to the corner and should have an open look off of 3’s pass.

-“13” Play begins with a high post flash by 5. 1 passes to 2 on the wing as 5 then sprints to set a wing ball screen for 2. 1 and 3 filter to create space on the weakside while 4 (who ran to opposite block on 2’s catch) looks to duck in over x5. Opportunities: 2 creating for himself, 4 ducking in, kick-out passes to 1 or 3, 5 on the roll.

-“Lob”: (Run for athlete. In diagram, 34 is athlete) Play starts away from athlete with 1 passing to 2 who throws back to 1 who swings it to 3. With the quick ball movement, a skip pass opportunity is available. 3 skips it cross-court to 2. 4 comes from the opposite short corner to screen the bottom wing defender while 5 steps into x5 to screen. 2 throws a lob to 3 who, after throwing the skip, has sprinted to the hoop.
Baseline out of bounds plays versus zone (1 taking ball out on all unless otherwise noted):

- "1-3-1": 5 lines up on the block directly in front of the ball, 4 on opposite block and 2 right in front of the rim. 5 screens x5. 2 comes off first, heading to ballside corner. 4 comes off next heading right to the block. 4 is usually open as x4 (covering the inbounder) reacts to 2’s cut to the corner and x5 is unable to fight over 5’s screen.

- "Direct" Play begins with 4 players lifted to the foul line height. On 1’s slap, 4 and 5 x-cut off each other to the opposite block. 2 (opposite wing from the ball) drops to the baseline corner. The 2-3 zone neglects this corner on BLOBs and 2 will be open for a 3.

- "Box Wide": Play starts in a box set. On 1’s slap, 2 moves from the near block to ballside corner while 5 fights to establish position right underneath the rim from x3 and x5. 5’s fight is more of a decoy than anything else as he is attempting to tie up the two defenders rather than actually getting a pass. With x3 and x5 tied up, 4 acts like he is the safety on the play before sprinting down the middle of the lane and should be available.

Set plays versus 1-3-1 zone:
-A key to attacking the 1-3-1 is getting your players to understand the responsibilities of the defensive players.
- “Under”: 1 passes across the court to 2 who is even with him. 2 swings it quickly to the corner to 3. 5 flashes to the high post while 4 sprints from opposite corner to the middle of the lane on 3’s catch. This exploits a common mistake of 1-3-1 defenses: x1 sprints out to cover his corner responsibility, but with 5 in the high post, x5 is hesitant to drop, leaving 4 wide open underneath the basket.
14 Drop: (Run for shooter. In diagram, 2 is a shooter) Play starts in a 1-4 high set. On 1’s cue, the ballside high post (5) dives to the rim and 2 drops to the corner. The bottom defender (x1) is occupied with 5’s dive and the corner is left open for 2. 1 must pass around x2, but if he can get it to him, 2 is wide-open for a 3 point look.

14x: A very quick action, play starts in a 1-4 high set again. Play is initiated by the high post opposite the ball (4) popping to the top of the key. 1 gives to 4 and on the release of the pass, 5 dives to the middle of the rim. X5 should have stepped up to cover 4, leaving x1 by himself to 5’s dive.

On BLOBs, bring the safety to the sideline and not back to half court so if the ball is tipped it goes out of bounds and is not sent towards the opposite end.

Loves Bruce Pearl’s attitude defensively on BLOBs as he doesn’t let anything in.

To practice playing against zones, in the offseason make every 4th pickup game yours players play a zone game in which both teams play zone.
Bob Huggins
West Virginia University

“Practice Drills to Develop Toughness”

-WVU’s practices tend to run 3 hours a day in preseason. During the season, practice will be 2 hours, but will be preceded by 30 minutes of film and 30 minutes of shooting.
-I want my players to instill in their minds that they’re tougher than everyone else. With 4 minutes to go in a tied game, I want to be able to tell my players, “we have worked harder than they have.”
-In our program, the seniors are responsible for the freshmen.
-Has the benefit of having THE best punishment tool out there: a treadmill on each baseline. A turnover, a defensive miscue, anything he doesn’t like warrants 22 or 44 seconds on the treadmill going 14 MPH.
-If we defend and we rebound, we have a chance.
-Defensive rebounding: “First Blood” Initiate the first contact with the offensive player. Put a forearm into their chest.
-At the end of every pre-practice meeting, he finishes by telling his assistants ‘Let’s make these guys better.”
-Keys to the game: get easy baskets, get to the ball, and compete.
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-Offense is about two things: 1. Create space 2. Create angles.
-What makes our drills so effective in developing toughness isn’t necessarily the drills themselves, but the ramifications we’ve established and the follow through of those ramifications.
-“Your players are what you make them to be.”
-Overload everything in practice. Make the defense constantly be at a disadvantage in practice. Goal should be to make practice harder than games.

Drills:
-6-on-4 Screening: The extra 2 offensive guys are coaches with pads. Their only goal is to get the offensive players open shots. “I enjoy watching soft guys get wacked by a pad by our strength coach.”

-Disadvantage Progression Drill: 2-on-1→3-on-2→4-on-3→5-on-4→5-on-5. Drill starts with a player in white attempting a free throw with 2 players in black lined up in the lane. After ball is shot, it is 2-on-1 back the other way. 2 whites are ready to jump on at the conclusion of the 2-on-1 situation to make it 3-on-2. At the conclusion of the 3-on-2, 2 blacks are ready to jump on to make it 4-on-3. Keep score.

-4-on-4 plus 1: Uses this to prepare for opponents. If your upcoming opponent has a good point the unguarded player will be the point and the rest of the defense needs to react to cover him. If you’re getting ready to play a team with a good post, the post player will be the plus 1.

-1 man or 2 man shell: an offensive player is on one wing being guarded by a defensive player with one coach at the top of the key and one on the opposite wing. Defensive player must react as ball moves, going from on-ball to deny to help. Offensive player crashes on coach’s shot and defensive must block out (making first contact or “drawing first blood”)
Your kids need to believe they can win every game. How do we do that?
1. Special Preparation 2. Circle of Opportunity

Special Preparation:
- Make your team tough to play against. Make the opponent play in a way that they’re not used to – a way in which they don’t practice.
- Games so often come down to execution and I would rather force the opponent to execute something they don’t normally practice. We play a defense in which we start in a 2-3 alignment, but really it’s man-to-man; how many teams practice running their offense against that?
- Have your kids take pride in the fact that, as a team, you are tough to prepare for.
- Knowing the other team is going to be confused gives us confidence.
- Loves to mix it up defensively. Will begin a defensive possession in what looks like a 2-3 zone, but really is a straight man-to-man or will play 2-3 until the 3rd pass of the possession where they’ll switch to man.
Circle of Opportunity:

- If we do execute these 8 things, we will 95% of our games and have a chance to win the other 5%

1. Deflections: our goal is 40 a game. 40+ deflections a game = .900 winning percentage.

2. Blockouts: we go back through tape and chart everyone on this.

3. Shot Contest: Every shot the opponent takes need to be contested on the ballside of their shot. If it is a righty shooting, we are flying directly at his right shoulder with 2 hands up as you can. There is a 4-5% difference between contesting on the player’s shooting side to his non-shooting side.

4. Offensive Rebounding: If you have an opportunity to go to the glass, you better get there. From the corner, Willard teaches his players to go baseline-out (meaning a player runs along the baseline to underneath the rim before jumping back into play). In diagram, 2 shoots and 3 runs along the baseline before jumping in front of the basket to get a hand on the missed shot. Teaches bigs to do the same.

5. Charges: Chart the number of times your guys step up to take a charge when they have an opportunity. This is a sign of sacrifice—giving yourself up for the team.

6. Bull Pursuit: Loose balls are OURS. All great rebounders/ rebounding teams do 2 things: They get great position and they pursue the ball. Use the stat “Out of Area Rebounds” and really emphasize it to your team.

7. Confidence & Emotion: Players must be confident going into every game that they can win.

8. Transition Defense: Take away easy baskets.

-There’s nothing in this circle that we can’t do. I’m not asking you to do anything which you’re not capable of doing. It comes down to execution and effort.

Miscellaneous coaching notes:

- To Young Coaches:
  - Learn to teach. The number 1 element I look for in prospective assistants now isn’t recruiting, but rather the ability to teach.
  - Create a philosophy you’re passionate about.
  - Tweak to your personnel. You must adjust, your system can’t win if it doesn’t fit your players.
  - Special Preparation: Make teams do things they don’t practice everyday to beat you.

- On a baseline drive, two areas need to be covered: strongside block & weakside corner. We don’t want our guy getting tangled with the weakside block because very rarely will the pass go there on a baseline drive.

- Importance of film: make subtle adjustments in predicting what they’re going to run to negate what you do.

- Defensive rebounding:
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On block: you have to step into the offensive player and make the first contact. We teach our posts “hands up, thumbs down, and rear ends out.” The thumbs down forces players to subconsciously push elbows out, creating a wider base for the offense to go around to get a hand on the ball.

On the perimeter: allow him to step before making contact with forearm.

A big part of basketball is discouraging people from doing things. Take people out of something early and more times then not, they won’t go back to it. Example: the first 10 blockouts are the most important of the game because if you’re physical you can set a tone saying “you’re not getting to the offensive glass.”

Offensively, anytime a big is penetrated at, he is instructed to back up and get his butt to the baseline.

Great rebounders/rebounding teams do 2 things: They get great position and they pursue the ball.

Key to defense is ball pressure

Jams defensive rebounder with closest big to slow outlet. Jams by getting hands straight up in the air on the rebounder’s inside shoulder.

Switches into the passing lane on every interchange.

Doubles every post pass. 90% of the double-teams come from the other big who steps into the offensive post with his chest with the objective of pressuring the offensive post’s body and making him take a dribble away from the pressure. He will double from the top with his point guard if the opponent’s 1 isn’t a shooter. “It’s who you double with, but how you double.”

We are in a special profession as coaches because if we do it right we can have a major impact on lives and more than any win, the thing I treasure most is the impact I’ve had on those young people that I’ve had the opportunity to teach.

Against a flex offense he will switch everything and not worry about the passes over the top because of the tremendous pressure they will have on the ball up top. Anytime a big catches it up top they get right into his body with hands all the way up to make the big put the ball over his head and make a bad pass. Get into the offense’s bodies!
- Importance of recruiting: “You don’t win with X’s and O’s, but rather with Jimmies and Joes. I became so much smarter when I started getting better players or at least that’s what everyone thought.”
- Believes in having big dreams because he himself started at the lowest rung, taking a high school JV job after dropping out of law school and worked his way up.
- Kept every rejection letter he has ever gotten as a reminder to himself not to be afraid to fail.
- Take 4 things that your team is going to do better than anyone else in your league and structure your practices to emphasize those things.
  - Scrutinize your practice plans. Look them over and check to see if you’re emphasizing what you want to be.
- Our four things:
  1. Dictate tempo.
  2. Change defenses.
  3. Utilize the 3 point line offensively.
  4. Out-rebound the opponent.
- “You can get all the great ideas, but you can’t use them all.” – Coach K. Pick and choose you want and make it fit your style.
- Points of emphasis defensively: keep ball out of middle and don’t let posts turn baseline.
- How do you motivate your team? You have to know what gets them going.
Occasionally you have a tremendous defensive player who you allow to challenge offensive players in the open floor, but everyone else we teach to fall back.

-Lutz and his staff don’t talk very much during scrimmages. They believe this forces their players to communicate and the coaches will touch on all their points at the conclusion of the scrimmage.

-Your shooting drills should mirror your offense.
-Set play for 3: 1 passes to 3 and cuts through to the opposite corner. 3 drives baseline as 4 and 5 set a stagger for 2 looping behind 3’s penetration.

Drills:
-“Vegas”: Drill starts with 3 players, each with a ball, underneath the hoop and 3 coaches around the perimeter (1 on each wing and 1 at the top of the key). Players roll ball out to coach and closeout on him.
-“Florida Circle”: Drill starts with 6 players (3 greens and 3 whites) lined up around the foul line circle. The players are positioned around the circle like shown below (with no 2 players on the same team standing next to each other. A coach throws the ball to one of the players on the green team as the 2 closest whites trap him. There is no dribbling and the drill continues until a turnover or a solid deflection (if 1 completes a pass to 2, 4 and 6 sprint to trap him now).
-“Roll 1-on-1” 2 players on the lane line who sprint out to a loose ball rolled onto the court by a coach. Whoever gets the ball is on offense and they play 1-on-1. On a score, offensive player stays. On a stop, defensive player stays.
-“Five Star 3-on-3 Full Court Transition”: 3 offensive players lined up on the baseline with 3 defensive players lined up across them at the foul line. Coach throws the ball to one of the players on the baseline and calls out the name of one of the players at the foul line who has to sprint to touch baseline as the offense transitions to the other end.
-“4-on-3”: 4 offensive players situated around the perimeter try to get an open look by the 4th pass against 3 defenders. No dribbling allowed. Defense is off with a rebound or solid deflection.
-“Blocks 1-on-1” Drill begins with one post player on each block and a coach at the foul line with a ball. The coach throws the ball to one of the bigs and the other big must sprint to defend. Ball is live off a miss and whoever scores is the one to stay on.