

10 Defense Creates An Advantage

By Shane Dreiling

Over the years, our “10” defense has generated many wins for us over the years and allowed us to matchup with teams who are taller, quicker and in many cases, more talented overall.

The “10” defense is ran from a 1-1-3 alignment that when played aggressively, can look like a 1-3-1 zone to the offense. The rules for the players is quite simple:

- 1 (point guard - POINTER) – guards the ball along the perimeter from free-throw lane line to free-throw lane line.
- 2 (second guard - HAWK) – guards the high post and helps double down on the low post.
- 3 / 4 (wing) – each wing guards the ball along the perimeter from the nearest free throw lane line to the sideline on their side of the court. When the ball is opposite, they protect the basket while looking to steal the skip pass.
- 5 (HOOP)– plays behind the low post and covers the low post from lane line to lane line.

When the ball is on top of the floor, the alignment is typically a 1-1-3. However, quicker teams can bring the wings up higher to give the defense a traditional 1-3-1 look but with our rules. By bringing the wings higher, you can create more pressure on the perimeter while helping make sure your wings don't get screened in by offensive players along the baseline when the ball is skipped from side to side.

When the ball is on the wing, the wing defensive player (either 3 or 4) takes the pass. The point guard splits the offensive player on top of the circle and the high post. The second guard splits the high and low post area, looking to bait the offense into throwing into the low post. On the pass, the second guard steps in front for the steal. However, assuming the second guard is a bit late in their positioning, double teams the low post along with 5 who is playing behind the post player. We teach our players to trap by asking them to cross legs and touch hips, preventing the offensive low post player from stepping out of the double team and reversing the ball to the weakside of the floor.

Many teams try to attack this defense by either sending a baseline cutter to the ballside corner or, by using a 2 guard high attack. When facing a baseline cutter, we have four options on how to defend such movement. The first way is to simply bump down.

- Bump down. For example, 2 would slide to take the wing, and 3 or 4 would bump down to take the corner. We can also send 2 to take the corner or, when faced with teams who don't fill the low post spot frequently, we can send 5 out to slow down the cutter.
- We will utilize an X cut. In this variation, “The forward stays on the wing, and the guard takes the corner.” In the beginning, “One guard is in the paint, and one guard is out. The in-guard doubles and helps on penetration. The out-guard picks up the opponent's guard.” Then comes the X cut. “The in-guard runs out to defend the corner. The paint is now empty from the guard who left. The guard who was outside of the paint goes in. There is always one guard in the paint, and one out. So they have to watch each other. If one guard goes out to cover, the other drops into the paint.”
- We have the center step out and go to the corner. When that happens, the weak-side forward has to take the center's spot.” The advantage here is that the center may be able to get to the corner quickest because the strong-side forward is guarding the ball. Once that forward has been pulled out to the wing, you want your defender who can get to the corner most quickly to go there, Mitchell pointed out. And that defender is often the center.
- The weak-side forward goes with the cutter. She sees the cutter coming and mans up with her.” Most offenses facing a zone will run a cutter who ultimately runs to the corner. “You have to decide how big a threat that corner cutter is. Does that person shoot? The

better the shooter, the more radically you change the defense.” As a result, of course, you leave the weak-side open. “We’ve found it necessary to do that on occasion. The absolutely quickest way to get to the corner cutter is [sending the weak-side forward to her], leaving the weak side without a defender,” Mitchell said. You then have to drop a guard to help occupy the vacant area.

Teams that use the 2 guard high attack force our top two guards, 1 and 2 defensively, to frequently switch spots. For example, 1 would take the ball on top from lane line to lane line. However, if 1 gets stretched to the sideline too far, on ball reversal up top, 2 would take the ball and 1 would quickly slide down to take 2’s spot. Many times, because the high post is temporarily open, this quick movement allows us to steal the ball at the high school level with 1 who is moving down.

To cover high post dives when the ball is entered low, we have a guard or the weakside forward go with the diver. If the guard takes the cutter, the weakside forward has to replace that spot. If the weakside forward takes the cutter, the guard has to be aware of who the weak forward was previously guarding and cheat to that side of the floor while maintaining vision of the ball. The HAWK guard has to communicate with the weakside defender to make sure all offensive players are accounted for.

The 1-1-3 also allows for a variety of trapping and double-team situations. We try to mix up our defenses, including our traps, as the game goes along to prevent teams from picking up our patterns.

We do a wing trap following the pass. We make a call according to how many traps we want. We try to get our guards active in the backcourt. Once the pass is made, the closest guard follows the pass and traps with the forward. We can also trap with a specific defender, in order to protect assignments better. Occasionally, we trap for an entire possession. Players like the action but doing so over an extended period of time, leaves the defense vulnerable.

For coaches that prefer a more trapping style of defense, our 10 defense can offer several good trapping opportunities. When trapping, we can extend our defense so that the backline of the defense is at the free throw line or higher. Our rules are this: 1) If the ball is dribbled across the time line, our Hawk and Pointer guard trap the ball. 2) If the first pass across the timeline is to the wing, we have our Point and our ball side Wing trap that pass. 3) On first passes to the corner, we have our Post and ball side Wing trap the pass. In all cases, players not involved in the trap rotate to cover passing angles.

One of the advantages of the 1-1-3 is that not many teams are currently running this zone defense. Terri Mitchell of Marquette University and Mike Dunlap, formerly the head coach at Metro State in Denver, are two coaches that have had success with the 1-1-3. This defense helps protect the paint area while allowing easy access to traps. This defense is especially useful when playing a team that is limited in terms of their outside attack. For most coaches, it is easier to plan for a man-to-man system than it is for a zone defense, especially one that is not used as heavily.

This defense can be ran by teams, regardless of size or speed. In the 1-1-3, you always have the HAWK guard back to protect the paint and guard against penetration. This strategy ensures that your best defender is always inside. That makes the HAWK guard your most important defender...they have to be aggressive but smart. They have to be aware of the ball and the offensive players, always thinking how can help next.

Though the 1-1-3 can lose effectiveness against strong shooting teams, the defense is naturally designed for good rebounding position, something most zones struggle with. Considering how the paint and low most is protected, as well as the variety of trapping formations that can come

out of the defense, the 1-1-3 is a safe and effective defense to use at any level. As with all defenses, communication among your players is essential to the overall effectiveness of your defensive strategy. If your HAWK guard is a strong communicator and understands the defense, this defense can and should be the base of your package.