



East Basketball
GRIT&GRIND

Travel Team
Coaching Guide

HANG LOOSE DEFENSE



HANG LOOSE DEFENSE:

Players earn higher shooting percentages and earn more points per shot on shots in the TFZ (Paint), catch and shoot (uncontested) shots, and getting to the Freethrow Line. The objective of this defense is to lessen the chances of those shots taking place in the first place.

Taking away everything from the offense is impossible. This defense is willing to give up pull-up jump shots, contested shots, isolation 1 on 1 offensive shots, and mid range shots.

MINDSET OF HANGLOOSE DEFENSE

Being in a great position is far more important than your match-up. Taking away the dangerous scoring advantage, collectively as a team, will always outweigh the idea of a “my man” philosophy.

HANG LOOSE DEFENSIVE KEYS

COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTION: Above all, the number one key is communicating and connecting on defense. No defense works without great communication. This defense is no different. Continuously, players must be in constant communication and connecting with their teammates regarding the action on the floor and their position on the floor.

PRESSURING THE BASKETBALL AND GUARDING A YARD: We need players to constantly put pressure on the basketball to force our opponent into an uncomfortable state of mind. At this same time, in a perfect world, our players need to contain the ball handler without getting beat on the dribble. Getting beat on the dribble causes many issues and puts the defenders in an disadvantageous position.

STICKING FACES AND COMPETING ON THE BALL: Because the defense is switching, there will be mismatches, slips, etc. The most important facet of defending these actions is the on ball defender. This defender needs to always have a hand in the face of the offensive player with the basketball and keep their hands active by competing on the basketball.

“HELP MENTALITY” AND OFF-BALL POSITIONING: We always tell players that their position on the floor is more important than their match-up. Players need to have “Help Mentality” when they are off the ball. This defense prides itself on being great at helping the helper. Positioning is a hugely important concept with this defense. If you are out of position,

your help will be late. Players must be willing to be constantly on the move to find correct positioning on the floor.

- **One Pass Away (Gap Defense):** We want all of our players to be in a Flat Triangle in the Gap.
- **Two or More Passes Away or Weak Side (Help-Positional Defense):** We still want our players to be in a Flat Triangle Relationship between their match and the basketball, but we also want them to find at least Two feet in the paint. We want all of our players matched up with an offensive player at all times. There should never be a time when the defensive player is guarding air. Defenders should maintain position and communicate with teammates to either stay with their match-up or switch to a different match-up.

CONTACT SWITCHES: While we understand that not all switches (especially off the ball) can be “contact switches”, we encourage our players to make contact with the offensive players immediately after a switch. This especially pertains to players switching on the ball and a switch that occurs one pass away.

ARRIVING ON THE CATCH: It is important for the defender to arrive when the offensive player catches a basketball (or shortly after). When we arrive on the catch, it eliminates any advantage an offensive player may have. As always, when you guard on the perimeter, you must stick their face (put a high hand in their face).

AVOID SWITCHING “JUST TO SWITCH”: If we don’t NEED to switch, we don’t have to. Constant switching may impact positioning and vision of the basketball. If we can stay with our matchup, the goal is to stay with our matchup. However, if the switch can help better match you up with a like opponent, switch it. This may even be done on a cut.

PASSIVE SWITCHING: Players should avoid situations where they stand and yell a switch. If possible, we want aggressive contact switches.

MY MATCH-UP VS. MOST DANGEROUS MATCH-UP: It is important that we know personnel prior to the game. We also need to understand the most dangerous scenarios (or potential mismatches) during each possession. Above all, the team should identify with the most dangerous situations, instead of being concerned about “their man”.

- Most dangerous scenarios could include overhelping when a guard is guarding a big in the post OR overhelping when a big is guarding a good driver on the perimeter.

SWITCHING

BACKGROUND:

We believe in switching to eliminate potential advantages that the offense can seek to attain through the action of screening and cutting. One of the myths of a switching man to man defense is that you have to switch everything, but that is not the case. Our switching is based on reads, not rules.

OFF-BALL SWITCHES: A contact switch is encouraged for all off-ball switches, which includes a block to block screen, pindowns, flex screens, back screens, flare screens, or any other random motion screens. The lower defender has the responsibility of jumping inside the screen to take any potential slip to the rim. All switches must be communicated as a “Switch”.

ON-BALL SWITCHES: A contact switch is encouraged for all on-ball switches as well. We want all players to “switch up” by jumping into the ball handler after the switch.

DRIBBLE PENETRATION

BACKGROUND: Guarding dribble penetration starts with the defender guarding the basketball. The player guarding the basketball must challenge the offensive player and make them feel uncomfortable. At the same time, the ultimate goal is to have the players “guard a yard” and contain dribble penetration without help. Players that are guarding an offensive player, one pass away, should be between their match-up and the offensive player with the basketball, high in the gap, creating a flat triangle. This flat triangle puts the help defender in a position of helping early to stop dribble penetration.

- **Multiple Lines of Help/Peel Switch Preparation:** In most dribble drives, there should be multiple lines of help. This starts with the “gap” defender and those that are in help position, those that are two passes away or more. If a defender is beaten off the dribble, we must attempt to stop the ball, but also must consider personnel and “most dangerous” situations.
- **Peel Switches to Eliminate Two Guys on the Ball:** A “Peel Switch” can be defined: “When a defender is beaten on dribble penetration, the nearest help defender switches onto the ball while the beaten defender “peels off” and switches to another player.” It also involves the other defenders rotating to their next switch if need-be. It is a system designed to not have “2 on the ball.” Oftentimes, when a player is beaten off the dribble and the next defender comes to help, there is a moment of having “2 on the ball” while

the original defender recovers back to their man. The “Peel Switch” is designed to minimize that situation and keep everyone matched up in an attempt to take away a kick-out, catch and shoot opportunity.

- **Peel Switch is Last Resort Option:** Let it be clear, we do not want to be in a situation of peel switching. We want our players to guard a yard. However, in the scenario where our players are beat off the dribble, we will peel switch in an attempt to not only stop the penetrator, but also attempt to eliminate the catch and shoot opportunity from the 3-point line.
- **Peel Switch into the Passing Lane:** When the gap defender commits to a Peel Switch, the player switching out to the shooter should find the passing lane immediately. Once the defender finds the passing lane, he needs to attempt to get to the shooter in the corner immediately on the catch. He should recover to this man with his hands high and reading the eyes of the offensive player.
- **Peel Switch vs. a Non-Shooter:** Understanding personnel is key when peel switching. There may be times where it will not hurt our defense when two guys stop the driver. This may be the case when the helper stopping the driver is guarding a non-shooter.

OTHER DEFENSIVE TEACHING POINTS

- **OUTLAST THE OPPONENT:** We need to make sure that we have five guys operating in sync at all times! BE DISCIPLINED! No matter what we do defensively, GOOD teams will be able to get shots... HOWEVER, we can influence the shots that they take! DO NOT BREAK DOWN!
- **MATCHUPS:** Whenever there is a substitution, you need to teach kids how to talk to one another to ensure they are matched-up with the right man. Additionally, if there is any dead ball period of play, tell your team to “point to their match-up” to ensure everyone is guarding the correct man
- **STANCE:** This is a non-negotiable for you as a coach. All of our kids need to be in a defensive stance when we are on the defensive end. At the high school level, we have to teach this over and over again. We like to tell our guys to “Sit down and guard”!
- **HAND IN PASSING LANE:** Disrupt the offense by always getting a hand in the passing lane with the nearest palm out.
- **COMMUNICATE TO TEAMMATES:** We need to make sure we talk to our defense throughout the possession when we need to. DO NOT TALK TO TALK.

- **BASIC POSITIONING:** We need to make sure everyone is in the correct positioning. We need to make sure we have help/weak side defense in the correct position every possession.
- **FINISHING THE PLAY/BOXING OUT:** We need to teach kids how to box out. And be sure to encourage this every single shot attempt. Too many kids don't even attempt to get a box out.
- **50/50 BASKETBALLS:** We get all loose balls (50/50 Balls). If the ball is on the floor, teach kids to dive after it! You need to drill this in practice.

INTRODUCTION TO OFFENSE

Our "Open" Offense focuses on habits more than anything else. It is easily taught and easily transferred from coach to coach, built on habits instead of high basketball IQ, and teaches fundamentals rather than straight execution. The goal of the "Open" offense is to teach spacing, cutting, moving, reading different types of screens, and most importantly, how to react to these offensive actions. These are skills that our high school players really struggle with.

Once kids have had experiences reading and reacting to those specific actions within the "Open" offense, we feel our kids will come more equipped with skills at the high school level to be successful in our more advanced offensive schemes.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT: UNDERSTANDING HOW TO APPLY "THE BASICS" OF OFFENSE:

Although the "basics" are necessary for the development of our players, they are not enough in regard to their development. It is imperative that coaches help their players that the fundamentals serve larger purposes.

CONNECT ALL FUNDAMENTALS TO THE GAME BY TELLING YOUR KIDS "WHY".

"A good coach has players to sideline drills, but inevitably in service of playing the game. Few athletes would endlessly block a sled, practice corner kicks, or rehearse fast breaks if they didn't see the connection with the game they will play on Saturday" – Grant Wiggins

Ultimately, we believe that the basics are critical, but we must teach the basics in the context or preparing for a game in which they will play very shortly. Our players should be first and foremost “players in the real game”, and they should always see the immediate connection between our fundamental drills and the game.

NOTE: CONNECT ALL SKILL DEVELOPMENT “BASICS” TO THE FOLLOWING CONCEPTS: TRANSITION OFFENSE, HALF COURT OFFENSE, AND OTHER TEACHING POINTS.

TRANSITION OFFENSE

OBJECTIVE: Score the basketball against a disadvantaged, unorganized, transitioning defense.

PHILOSOPHY NOTE: Seek to score first, and then run offense (not the other way around). Don’t walk the ball up just to “set it up”. If there is a man ahead that is “open”, pass the ball ahead. We want to get the ball to midcourt before most of the defense gets there.

CONCEPTS TO TEACH:

- **Pace:** As soon as we gain possession of the basketball, it is an all-out sprint. It’s a race to see if we can score before the defense is set.
- **Space:** It’s important to teach spacing within our transitional break. These spaces are identical to our half-court offense (slot, slot, wing, wing, and alley).
- **Rapid Ball Advancement (Find the advantage):** If there is a player ahead of the ball with an “advantage”, pass the basketball up the floor.

“WHAT IFS?”

- **What if the defense beats the offense back?**
 - o When the defense does its job by neutralizing the offense, seamlessly move into half-court offense. It’s now when we get into our proper spacing on the floor (Slot, Slot, Wing, Wing, and Alley).
 - o If the ball handler is ahead of his teammates and there is no “advantage”, pass the basketball up the floor.

- **What if there are no “advantages” or “open” teammates?**
 - o We try to beat our defender off the dribble and “create and advantage”.
 - o Try to get two people to guard one person.
- **What if we can’t dribble attack?**
 - o We look to our Teammate and look for a handoff opportunity.

HALF COURT OFFENSE

OBJECTIVE: Score the basketball by finding open shots, whenever.

PHILOSOPHY NOTE: We use basketball actions to create advantages, find advantages, and use advantages. Our offense must rely on basketball skills to score, rather than counting on the defensive errors to score.

CONCEPTS TO TEACH:

- **Play to your strengths:** All players are different. In order to be the best “team”, we need our players to focus on what they are able to do best. Shooters Shoot, Screeners Screen, Attackers Attack, etc...
- **Work with you Partner (Screen away, Brush Screen, Ball Screen):** This is a way to create an advantage. Get a teammate open by working with a partner (on one side of the floor). Examples of this are down screens, brush cuts, and ball screens.
- **Get two guys to guard one:** We need our kids to dribble into the gap and aggressively look to score. If we can get into situations where two guys can guard one, we have ultimately created an “advantage”. Then, we need to find the open player.
- **Dribble Actions :** This includes the “C” series of dribble actions. (C, throwback, keep).
- **Include the Post:** We need to throw it into the post. He needs to be actively looking for it. There will be times where the passer will “work with his partner” when he throws it into the post.
- **Second Cuts (when over played):** When you are overplayed, second cut to the basket. Also, when the ball is dead in within the 3-point arch and paint, we need to second cut.

- **Move with Purpose:** If you're open, why move? Move for a basketball action that creates an advantage.
- **"Live to see another day":** Take care of the basketball. I'd rather have a shot attempt than a turnover.

OFFENSIVE TEACHING POINTS: YOU NEED TO TEACH SKILLS!

OVERVIEW: Please understand the importance of the following material. Do not get caught up in the X's and O's. We need to build our kids' habits at a young age. Take time in practice to stress these habits.

- **CATCH AND SQUARE UP AGGRESSIVELY:** Whenever someone catches a ball on the perimeter, we need them to catch and square up to the rim every time.
- **NO PEE DRIBBLES:** A "Pee Dribble" is a dribble that doesn't take you anywhere. OUTLAW "PEE DRIBBLES". Make sure all dribble moves have purpose.
- **BE TIGHT WITH THE BALL:** We want to teach our players to be tight with the basketball ALL OF THE TIME. The ball needs to be tight to your body as a player.
- **RIP THE BALL THROUGH:** We want the ball ripped across our bodies when we move on the floor. Never put the ball where the defense has access to it.
- **USE SHOT FAKES/BALL FAKES:** Our kids (at the high school level) never use enough shot fakes/ball fakes. Teach the importance of these fakes daily.
- **BALL IN THE AIR/FEET IN THE AIR:** We teach kids to be shot prepped immediately when the ball gets to our hands. When the ball is coming towards you in flight, kids are taught to hop (with both feet) into their shots with their palms out (showing a hand target).
- **5 WAYS TO FINISH:** We want our kids to be taught to finish aggressively at the rim. Within our summer program, we stress these 5 ways to finish. We want you to stress these often in your practices.

OTHER COACHING RESPONSIBILITIES

DO NOT PIGEON HOLE KIDS: Just because you have a kid that may be the biggest on the team, this does not necessarily mean that he should be taught to stay in the post all of the time. Give ALL kids the opportunity to excel at different positions.

Believe it or not, there are some simple things we still struggle with at the high school level. Some of these things were never taught at the youth level. If we tackle these problems at a younger age, it becomes a habit for these players down the line. Please make it your responsibility to acknowledge these issues:

Early is on time, on time is late, late is unacceptable

Over the past three years, coaches have voiced their frustration with tardiness or absences of players throughout the season. Please talk to your players about the importance of being on time.

Practice: Practice time is valuable and very tough to gather throughout the season. Players should be ready to practice at the acknowledged start time on the practice schedule. That might mean that players should be dropped off 15-10 minutes before the practice is scheduled to begin. Please get in the habit of having your players (or parents) text or call you if they are going to be late or unable to show. In the high school program, a no call/no text/no show is a cardinal sin.

Games: The general rule for tournament games is to show up 45 minutes before the first scheduled game. The reason why is because many tournaments run ahead of schedule and will not wait for the team to show up before delivering a forfeit.

Eyes in the Huddle: At all levels, this needs to be a non-negotiable. We need to teach kids this aspect of respect towards coaches.

Take good care of the basketballs: As a coach, please ensure all balls are accounted for at all times. Balls are expensive. Also, please keep all balls in gym. No balls are to be used outside (they are not outdoor balls).

What to eat, when to eat: Even though parents can make the ultimate decision regarding their kids' meals, please encourage all players to choose smart things to eat and good times throughout the day. Spending 8 hours in the gym is not easy... neither is eating a hot dog and chips 30 minutes prior to the game. Please find good times within your tournament to encourage your kids to eat at that given time period.

“Bring the JUICE (Joy, Urgency, Intensity, Concentration, Energy)”: Basketball is fun! Teach your kids how to have fun bringing the JUICE!. As we watch our teams warm-up, there should be a noticeable difference between our EBA teams and the other teams. We practice, warm-up, and play with great positive energy!

Summer Basketball: At the end of your season, make sure you take a considerable amount of time “pumping up” our summer program. In our eyes, we feel this is the most important part from a skill development point of view. In the spring, you will be given program flyers. Please strongly encourage all of your kids to be in attendance.

Pride in the Program: Throughout your season, share your pride with your kids. All kids are able to come (with a paid adult) to all East home games. Something that we have noticed is that there are not many of our youth kids at our home games. We not only think this could be a valuable learning experience for our kids, but we also feel that this is something for all of your kids to be connected to.