

Quin Snyder, Utah Jazz

"Defending the Pick & Roll and Other Defensive Musts"

Coaching U Live 2015 (Las Vegas)

-Went to the D-League after being fired at Missouri

-Was told before starting in the D-League, "Pick & Roll defense gets coaches hired and fired."

-Deeply indebted to the coaches he's worked for: Coach K, Mike Budenholzer, Ettore Messina, Mike Brown & Doug Collins.

-Often the best way to learn as coaches is to watch our players.

4 variables involved in pick & roll:

1. Location
2. Angle
3. Spacing (movement into can add another element)
4. Personnel

3 Philosophies--what do you want to do?

- Controlling The Ball: working to keep the ball on the side.
- Impact The Ball: do you want to be aggressive?
- Contain The Ball: willing to sacrifice a matchup to keep the ball in front (switching)

-In Utah we are a no-middle team. Our foot angles are trying to keep the ball out of the middle. Our pick & roll defense reflects those foot angles.

-Adapt/adjust your pick & roll coverage based on your defensive personnel. It's widely accepted that you will need to adjust to the offensive abilities of your opponent. Make sure you're adjusting your defensive package to the abilities of your players as defenders.

-Adjustments are good, but you better have a standard base coverage. Establish a foundation, something your players truly know.

Then you teach what you're doing? Break it down to the finest points, know it inside & out. It's important to hold your players accountable to knowing the system, but make sure you're doing enough to get them reps and build up their habits. It can be detrimental if you're breathing down their throat, but not giving them enough time/reps to actually be successful doing it.

-What do you believe in? Don't adjust too much. What's your philosophy? Don't abandon it just because it's not going well. That being said, don't be stubborn or stupid.

-Accountability becomes ownership. Suddenly instead of you being the one holding them accountable, they start holding each other accountable.

-An offensive possession is broken up into "Early" (early action—drags) and "After" (the second action).

-Some teams will vary their coverages a bit to defend an action early in the shot clock different than they will once their defense is set. In Utah, we don't like to do that. We want to play it our way as often as we can.

-How do you guard the pass-&-follow (a post player catching the ball and reversing it to a guard with the big following his pass to sprint into a ball screen)? I would like to get to the point where we can push it (BLUE/ICE—channeling the ball to the baseline), but we haven't been able to just yet (choosing instead to hedge it).

-Does your defense fit? The way you guard x (e.g. down screens) should be conducive to the foot angles you want which should be in correlation to how you guard z (e.g. ball screens). EXAMPLE: we shoot the gap on pin-down entries because it puts us in good position to channel/keep the ball on one side of the floor. If we were to chase, it would put us in. How you guard the entries is unbelievably important. When you're preparing to guard an opponent, some of the adjustments you make might be how you guard the entry and not just the pick & roll action.

-I want our coverage to be consistent (no matter the location or the angle). Clarity for me is very important (we needed to learn).

-Our base coverage is "CHANNEL" (to direct it, funnel—from soccer). We work on it every day, drilling it systematically.

-Systematic Situational Training—identify a situation, we attacked systematically and trained our players. We could then hold our players accountable.

-The most important thing in our whole coverage is what is going on with the ball. If we can handle pick & roll 2-on-2, that's better than anything. We don't have to help, don't have to do anything off the ball. We just keep it right here, pin it on the sideline and control it. If we win the battle on the ball, we don't need to worry about the other stuff.

Screener's defender:

- Loud ("CHANNEL! CHANNEL!")
- Up (one step below the point of the screen)
- Low (in a stance—think DeAndre Jordan)
- Activity (hands)

-The big defender's screen call tells the guard defender to lock on the ball-handler's inside hip. Guard works to get over the screen and tries to get back in front of the ball ("BACK! BACK! BACK!").

-Best case scenario for our "channel" coverage: the guard defender gets over the screen and gets back in front of the ball to allow the screener's defender to get back to his man.

-If the ball-handler is able to cut off his defender, but we're not completely beat: we don't want the big rushing up at the ball. As soon as the guard picks up the ball to go into his shooting motion, the big falls back to the roller and the guard works to get a rearview contest (we call this concept "stalking the ball").

-Switch: we have mandatory switches (we know we're going to switch) and then we have liberal/late/BLACK switches which means that the big senses that his teammate (the guard defender) is beat and can't get back in front and calls "Black" to switch (guard falls into the screener's leg). Be careful to not allow them to switch too much too early.

-Jazz have established an "Under Line." Anything below that line, the guard can choose to go under the screen. There's a gray area to this (if they do it right, compliment them. If they do it wrong, you can coach them. There's a gray area to exploit to make them get it done). It helps prevent cutbacks (snake dribbles) by guards.

-The main adjustment we will make within our pick & roll coverage will be adjusting the level of our big (the screener's defender). One thing that helps us protect the 3-point line is the screener's defender staying below the roll man. The better the ball-handler, the farther up the court that big needs to be on our "Channel" coverage.

-The level of our big in this coverage will force us to adjust our help off the ball. What happens on the ball impacts the help on the backside.

-The very moment that the big engages into his pick & roll coverage, the other 3 players (that aren't involved in the pick & roll) shift into a zone. In all these pick & roll situations we try to help with the bottom weakside defender. We call him "Gaucho" (it's silly I know—the sillier, the better, it means they'll remember it). He is responsible for the roll man until he gets back ("That's mine. I'm the Gaucho"). The more aggressive we are on the screen, the more aggressive we need to be with our help. The less aggressive we are on the screen, the less aggressive we need to be with our help.

-If the big is dropped farther back on the ball, the "Gaucho" becomes the "Matador." We don't need his help as much, he's in and he's out. You're still giving help. Your body is in the paint, your mind is on the corner 3. If the roller gets behind the hedge, you become the "Gaucho" again.

-Whether a guy rolls tight or wide affects help (note: Snyder didn't get into this concept at all).

-On the side pick & roll "Channel," x2 and x3 shift over. X2 is the "Gaucho." What do we want x3 to do?

- "Stunt" (doesn't like to use the term "tag")
- "Bump" (making contact with body)
- "Jam" (putting his body in the way of a dynamic roller—Tyson Chandler)



-Your players will blame the coverage. Sometimes it's the coverage, but sometimes it's the players. Don't let them off the hook. Make them do it better, make them do it harder, make them do it faster....then adjust.

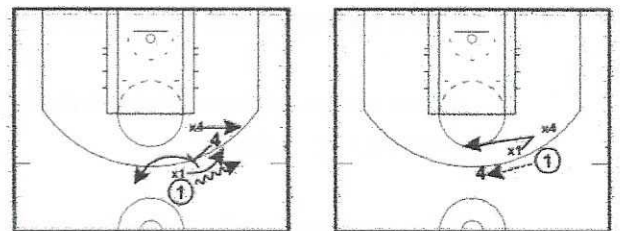
-I can't tell you how important stunts/shifts are. You have a good game defensively, your shifts and stunts are probably good. Poor game defensively, probably not. Stunts and shifts are big-time separators.

-Against a pop versus our "Channel," we will stunt with an off-ball guard at the screener on his catch.

3 kinds of stunts

- Regular Stunt: the screener/popper sees you out of the corner of his eye as the ball is in the air
- Scare Stunt: you're stunting as the guard picks up the dribble (used versus a screener/popper who isn't a great shooter or your guarding a great shooter. We are just trying to create indecision by the ball-handler)
- Stay Stunt: defensive guard stays until his teammate can get back and contest the shot.

-We also have a "Late Black" we will use against a pop versus our "Channel" coverage.



-On middle pick & rolls we honor the guard's foot angle. Whichever sideline the on-ball guard is influencing to, that's our channel. We tell our guards to use the mid-point line to dictate their feet, but that's a bit arbitrary. For the big, your positioning is entirely dictated by the direction in which the guard's feet are angled.

- We do have a "Weak" adjustment that we will go to in order to shade a ball-handler to his left hand. That is a scouting thing for us (a lot of team's use this for their primary high pick & roll coverage).

-Progression of drills starts 2v2 and then moves to 3v3 (and then to 4v4...5v5).

-Stopped using the term "shootarounds." Called them "Game Day Practices"

-Incorporate the offensive actions of the teams in your league into your shell drill (scripted simulation). Create 4v4 sequences of multiple pick & rolls (mixed in are rolls, pops, DHOs, flips, chases, etc.).

-Hard early shifts

-Why it's so important for you to identify your communication system: it's hard to talk when you don't know what to say. Tell them what to exactly say.

-Versus weakside interchanges: zone up and switch (we won't let their interchange take us off the nail—that's what they're trying to do). Another thing you're seeing: "slash the shift"

-We'll switch ball screens late in the shot clock (along with looking to stay stunt late in the clock as well).

Miscellaneous

-You can't be afraid to coach your best players.

-I believe in not over-coaching certain things. There should be elements within your system that are "Get It Done Things."

-Jazz refer to a spread pick & roll (middle pick & roll set by 5) with the 4-man on the perimeter as "Lifted."

-What pick and roll can do for you: it can give you an advantage to get something after the action.

-Spacing plus movement creates confusion.

-Teams want pace so they can play early so they can attack a defense that's not set.

-Offensively, you want to get to multiple ball screens. With each ball screen you run, the defense gets stretched farther and farther out of position.