



## **THREE OF A KIND**

### **Course 03: Coach Zeljko Obradovic**

#### **Lesson 04: Individual defense 1**

**Language: English**

#### **INDIVIDUAL DEFENSE**

We start to build our defensive philosophy from the very first practice. It is important for our team to confirm that all of the players perfectly understand what we want in our individual defense.

#### **AGGRESSIVENESS**

The first idea that we want to make clear to our players, is that we are interested only in aggressive defense, across all positions and in all situations. During the long season, in a concrete moment maybe, we can decide for tactical reasons to reduce our aggressiveness on one player but only in a concrete moment and situation. The general concept is always be intense in our defense.

We start with drills for individual defense: 1v1 to 2v2, 3v3, 4v4 until 5v5. We are focusing a lot on basic defensive position, because we believe that everything starts from there.

#### **1v1 POSITION**

The first drills we use are 1v1 full and half court, in several / different situations of the game. After that we are more specific to make it clear what we want in all aspects of our defensive philosophy.

It is also important to remark that if you want to have a really aggressive defense you must have players in your roster with capacity in the physical and mental aspects. For this reason it is important to take care about this decision before you start recruiting your team.

Each coach has different situations in his team and club but before starting to work you must decide which style of basketball you want to play and recruit based on this style.

It is also important to have a balanced roster – players with good skills in different aspects of the game – but putting more emphasis in having players with the capacity to play the style of game that you want to play.

If you do not have the option to decide the roster that you have available, you must carefully observe the weaknesses and skills of your players. After that you must be smart with the aim of having a great balance between the style that you want to play and the abilities of your players.

If you work with young players you have in your hands the opportunity to convince the players that to be a great player they must find a correct balance between their offensive and defensive skills.

### **ON BALL DEFENSE**

They may be easy and basic concepts, but the most important aspects in our defensive philosophy are as follows:

### **ON BALL PRESSURE**

At the highest level, and for sure Panathinaikos is always playing at this level, on ball pressure is mandatory. Our opponents, from O1 to O4 are usually good shooters and have good control of the ball. If we reduce freedom in their perimeter movements we are on the right line to reducing their offensive effectiveness.

Sometimes, when defending O5 we permit a reduction in this pressure, depending on the characteristics of X5. Experience shows that this situation must only be allowed in very special situations because the reduction of pressure on one player has very bad consequences for our overall defensive structure. With this aggressive on ball defense we have the following goals:

- To disrupt our opponents in their perimeter ball movement.
- To take away the preferred passing lanes and angles from our opponents.
- To control the game (tempo).
- To reduce the shooting effectiveness of our opponent's outside players.
- To tire out our opponents both physically and mentally.
- To begin our offense from our defense. Aggressive on ball defense is the first step of our offensive game because we always want to try to fastbreak after a steal and also after a made basket if it is possible.

### **HELP SIDE DEFENSE**

If we want to have a very aggressive defense we must add to the on ball pressure great defense in all of the available passing lanes. To take away the available passing lanes for our opponents is really important in European basketball because the offensive sets from the large majority of teams are based on 3v3, 4v4 or 5v5.

The movement of the ball in the perimeter is the first step in the offensive sets of European basketball teams. We will talk later on with more detail about the pick & roll; one of the most important offensive movements but in all other offensive options the rotation of the ball is really important in the offensive plays of a team.

The goals of our defense in the passing lanes are:

To steal the ball and start a fastbreak. This is our first goal and we have really good players like Diamantidis who can do this. To evaluate the percentage of risk that you can accept in the first line defense is part of the coaches responsibilities. I have some recommendations about this:

- During the game the player will take the same risk that you allow during practice.
- The risk that you allow must be proportional to the capabilities of your players.
- You must be precise with your players about where and when the risk must be taken. For example, the distance between the action and the basket is very important.
- At the highest level of professional European basketball it is very difficult to say which is the best foot positioning when defending players who are one pass away from the ball. I prefer to give players freedom in this decision with the aim to guarantee their best performance and to help them.

To take away the preferred passing lanes and angles from our opponents. This is basic in European basketball because normally all of the offensive sets include a minimum of three passes (except the pick & roll). If the opponent wants to put the ball into the low post they must make at least two passes. After that, if the ball goes out they must again make one or two passes. All this rotation of the ball has as a goal to obtain a great shooting position. If your team start to put pressure on each pass from the very beginning you are in a good position to affect the effectiveness of your opponent. This a job that requires all five defensive players to work like a team, paying attention to the ball, to the player and to the basket. The basic rules are as follow:

- Each player – except the player defending the ball – must pay attention to the ball, their opponent and the basket. Always focus on this triangle.
- Avoiding dribble penetration is the first goal.
- Avoiding easy passes into the paint is the second goal. Defense of all cuts must always deny the pass.
- Avoiding easy passes in the first line of defense is the next goal. If the player receiving the pass does so one or two meters further from the basket than they want is a great success.
- Avoid easy passes into the low post. Always defend three quarters or full front depending on the situation and the goals of our game plan.
- Avoid inside-out out passes with great pressure on our first line of defense.