

by Mike Wilhelm

DEFENSIVE DRILLS OF THE CHICAGO BULLS

Mike Wilhelm has been an assistant coach/ scouting director of the Chicago Bulls for four years. Previously, he was a scout of the Denver Nuggets and the Cleveland Cavaliers, and he was an assistant coach of the Cleveland Rockers (WNBA). He coached Sundvall in the Swedish League for two seasons.

The Chicago Bulls obtained the good reputation for being a very strong defensive team in the last season. Scott Skiles, the coach, and his staff always demanded the greatest attention on every defensive drill and situation. We are so sure about the importance of our defensive philosophy that our basic concepts are introduced on the first day in training camp. At heart, there is the belief that every player must believe in not being beaten by the offensive player, who is covering, and in the help coming from his teammates. Players must understand the roles that everyone has when employing our defensive sets.

For this reason, we were the best NBA team last season in holding opponents to the lowest overall shooting percentage. We were second best team in holding opponents to the lowest three-point shooting percentage, and the seventh best team in holding opponents back offensively. We reached these goals by working hard during our daily defensive drill practice sessions that I'll describe. Our players always practiced at the top speed, just like during a game.

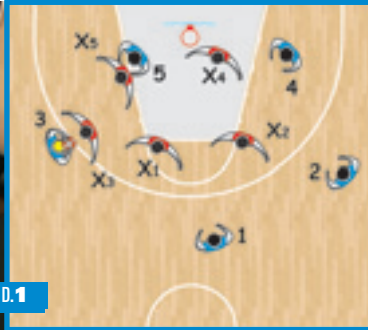
FIRST DRILL

5 V. 5 FRONTING THE POST AND DOUBLING THE BASELINE

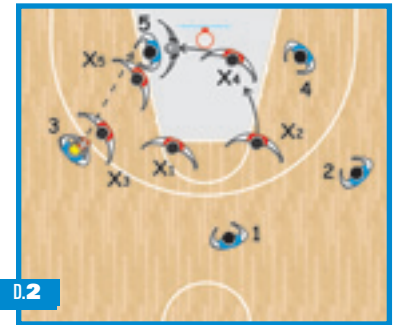
When first introducing the drill, walk through it slowly, so everyone knows what is expected of them. Play at normal speed the second and the third time, then have the defenders become the attackers and vice versa. Five players are on the court. 3 has the ball, while 5 is in the low post position, an offensive player is in the middle lane of court, another forward and another low post player take their position. When you front the post, there should be a big pressure by X3 on the player with the ball, and a good help on the weak side by the other three players, X1, X2 and X4 (diagr. 1).

5 receives the ball and X4, running along the baseline, doubles on 5 with X5. X2 slides low and he covers 4, while X1 guards 1 (diagr. 2).

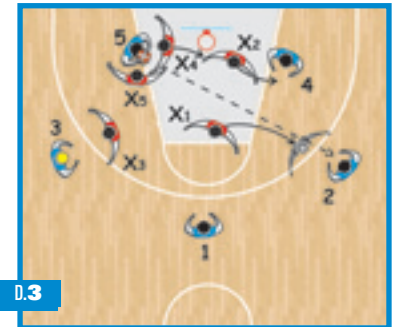




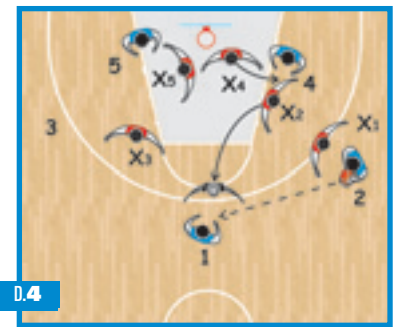
D.1



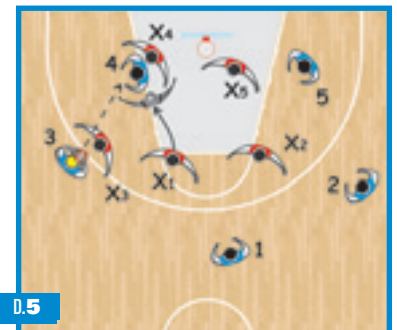
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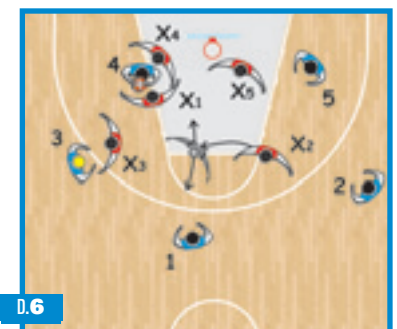
D.3



D.4



D.5



D.6



On the pass by 5 from one side to the other of the court, X4 stays under the basket for a while, towards the side of the ball, and X1 runs to cover 2 (diagr. 3). X2 runs to cover X1 and X4 covers 4 (diagr. 4).

SECOND DRILL

5 V. 5 - FRONTING THE POST AND DOUBLING FROM THE CENTER OF THE COURT

If we guard a good offensive low post player, we double again, but this time, we have a defender that comes down from the central lane of the half court to help out. As before, describe the drill by walking through it for the first time, play normally the second and the third time, then have the defenders become attackers and vice versa. X1 runs to the low post and he doubles with X4, while X3 covers 3 face-to-face. After 3 has passed to 5, don't allow him to get the ball back (diagr. 5). X2 rotates from the weak side and he defends against 1 in the central lane of the half court (diagr. 6).

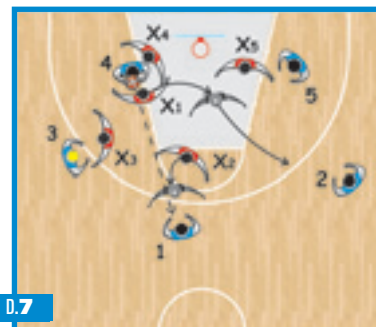
On the outside pass, out of the trap, from 4 to 1, X2 runs to cover 1 in the central lane of the half court. At the same time, X1 runs from under the basket, quickly reads the defensive situation, and he goes to guard the open player, 2 (diagr. 7).

If, instead, the outside pass out of the trap is made by 4 toward the opposite side of the half court to 2, X2 guards 2 and X1 comes out from under the basket and runs to cover 1 (diagr. 8).

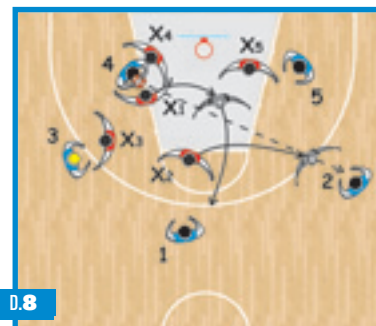
THIRD DRILL

5 V. 5 - DOUBLING IN THE CENTRAL LANE OF THE HALF COURT

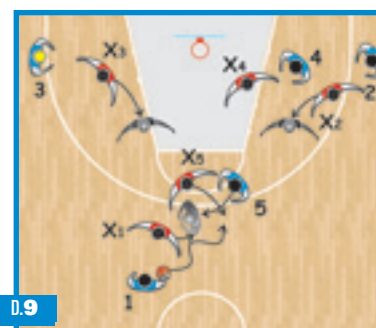
This is the case where we double in the central lane of the half court, when a pick-and-rolls occurs, and the other three offensive players are set low, along the baseline. As before, describe the drill by walking for the first time, play normally for the second and the third time, then the defenders become attackers and vice versa. 5 comes out from the high post position and screens for 1. X5



D.7



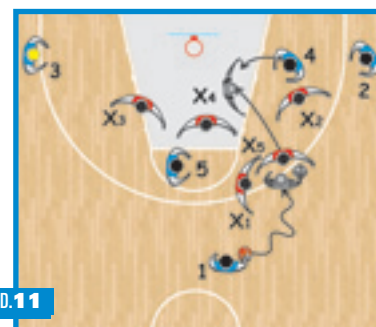
D.8



D.9



D.10



D.11

comes out and he traps with X1 on 1, but always remaining in contact with 5, his assigned offensive player (diagr. 9).

X3 and X2 come up toward the free-throw line and they make defensive fakes, moving up and down from their position, but always over the line of the ball (diagr. 10).

X4 comes up to guard 5, who rolls to the basket, while X5 runs under the basket to cover 4, who has cut to the basket. He is prevented from receiving the ball (diagr. 11).

X5 doesn't leave the trap until he and X1 have not stopped 1, who has the ball (diagr. 12).

FOURTH DRILL

5 V. 5 - PUSHING TO THE BASELINE

In this case, we practice pushing the offensive player, who receives the side screen

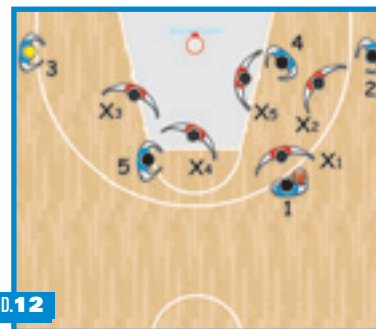
towards the baseline. As before, walk the players through their assignments, play normally the second and the third time, and then the defenders become attackers and vice versa.

5 comes up from the low post position and he makes a side screen for 2, who has the ball (diagr. 13).

X2 forces 2 along the baseline and he doesn't allow him the drive to the middle of the three-second lane or make a direct drive (diagr. 14).

X5 stops the penetration of 2 and forces him to stop the dribbling and pass the ball. X5 must not be beaten by 2 (diagr. 15).

When 2 passes the ball to 5, X5 runs to cover 5, with the arms held high and knees bent (diagr. 16).



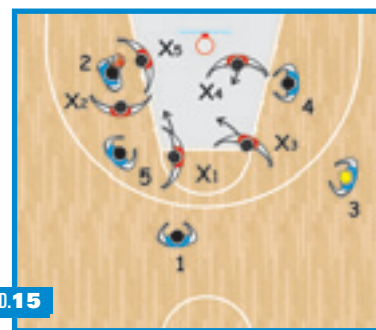
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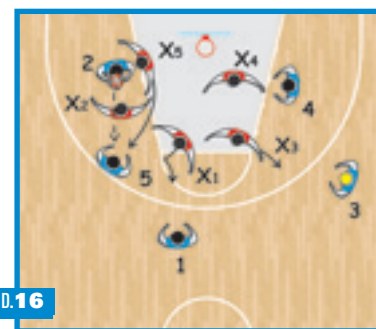
D.13



D.14



D.15



D.16