



by Aluisio Ferreira
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Aluisio Ferreira (Lula) is the head coach of the Junior and Senior National teams of Brazil. At the South American Championships with the Junior team, he won a gold medal in 1998 and a silver medal in 2000. He earned a silver medal at 1998 Pan American Championships. With the Brazilian Senior team, he won a silver medal at the 2001 South American Championships and Pan American Games. Last year, he coached the Brazilian team to the World Championships in Indianapolis.

1. DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

A great basketball team, whatever its level, must adhere to some defensive principles and each player must understand that everything he does on defense is not done alone. He is part of a group made up of individuals who form a team and work on defense together to neutralize the offense. It's understood that the dynamic of the game doesn't allow the defense to stop 100 percent of the attack, but by working together the defense can certainly create many problems for the offense. To be effective on defense, coaches must systematically teach players a defensive philosophy that includes such principles as:

- n EVERYONE ON THE TEAM MUST BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BALL.
- n THE DEFENSE MUST ALWAYS ACT, NEVER REACT.
- n EVERYONE ON THE TEAM MUST SUPPORT A DEFENDER'S INITIATIVE.
- n THE OFFENSE MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO MOVE WHEREVER IT WANTS ON THE COURT.
- n A GOAL MUST BE SET IN EACH GAME FOR THE DEFENSE TO ACCOMPLISH.
- n THE DEFENSE MUST SPONSOR THE ATTACK.
- n THE SUM OF SMALL DEFENSIVE ACTIONS BUILDS A GREAT DEFENSE.
- n THE 24-SECOND CLOCK MUST BECOME A USEFUL DEFENSIVE WEAPON.



The building of a defensive system demands time, patience, a lot of discipline, and also the complete commitment of all the players on the team.

It's up to the coach to accomplish the difficult mission of explaining to the players the benefits of an effective defensive system. This task demands a lot of discussions, some good examples, constant stimulation, a lot of specific on-court drills,

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and good physical conditioning. These goals will only be reached with the full support of all the players and the staff that works with the team.

2. PHYSICAL AND TECHNICAL ABILITIES

One of the key elements in developing and maintaining an effective defensive system is physical conditioning. Skills such as quickness, strength, agility, and stamina are essential for the development of defensive techniques. In addition, the athletes must also work on understanding the dynamic of the game. Learning defensive techniques-the use of feet, legs, arms, proper positioning, and rebounding-is an important element in the development process. Defense may be a player's least favorite part of basketball, but a team can't win without a good defensive game. It all starts with attitude. The player must have a good attitude to become a good defender. This attitude, and all the other elements that make a good defensive player, can be acquired with the right practice plan.

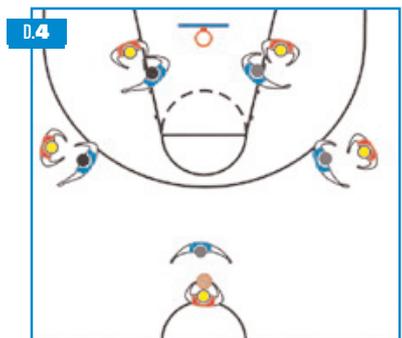
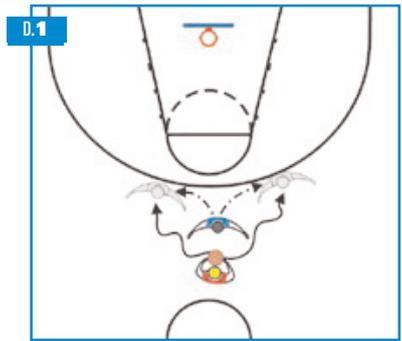
3. DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING OF A MAN-TO-MAN DEFENSIVE SYSTEM

The man-to-man defense is the foundation in the development of all basketball players. Therefore, it has to be part of the tactical planning for young teams.

The young player must develop his concepts of basketball while learning individual defense, living with a philosophy of tightly guarding his opponent throughout a game. The following strategy is a good way to build an effective man-to-man defense system:

- n BASKETBALL TECHNIQUES MUST ALWAYS BE PRACTICED.
- n THE EXERCISES 1-on-1, 2-on-2, 3-on-3 AND 4-on-4 MUST BE USED TO DEVELOP THE FOLLOWING CONCEPTS: HELP, AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY, DEFENSIVE TRANSITION, ANTICIPATION, GUARDING THE PASSING LANE, 2-on-1 AND KNOWING HOW TO STRATEGICALLY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A DEFENSIVE ACTION OF A TEAMMATE.
- n DURING THE TACTICAL PRACTICE, AN ATTACK MUST ALWAYS FOLLOW A SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE (DEFENSIVE REBOUND OR DEFENSIVE TRANSITION).
- n A GOOD DEFENSIVE ATTITUDE MUST ALWAYS BE UNDERLINED, EVEN IF IT DOESN'T BRING AN IMMEDIATE ADVANTAGE FOR THE TEAM.
- n A COLLECTIVE PRIDE IN DEFENSE MUST BE CREATED BY THE REGULAR





PRACTICE OF DEFENSIVE EXERCISES, WITH TWO OR THREE PLAYERS TIGHTLY GUARDING THE BALL (diagr. 1, 2, and 3).

During the practice session, the coach should devote at least half of the time to practice defensive drills. The schedule below presents some suggestions for drills for building an effective defense:

4. 100% MAN-TO-MAN DEFENSE

The term "man-to-man" defense is misleading. In order for any team to play an effective man-to-man defense, all five players on the court must work together. While there is

DRILL	TECHNIQUES INVOLVED	INTENSITY DEMANDED	TRAINING PERIOD	NUMBER OF TECHNIQUES
1-on-1	1 / 2	strong	PRE-SEASON	1. USE OF LEGS
2-on-2	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 6 / 8 / 9	strong	PRE-SEASON	2. USE OF ARMS
3-on-3	all	strong	ALL	3. ANTICIPATION
4-on-4	all	strong	ALL	4. DEFENSIVE TRANSITION
2-on-1	all	very strong	PRE-SEASON	5. AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY
3-on-2	all	very strong	PRE-SEASON	6. HELP
4-on-3	all	very strong	PRE-SEASON	7. DOUBLE-TEAM
5-on-4	all	very strong	ALL	8. HELP & RECOVER
1-on-2	all	strong	PRE-SEASON	9. REBOUND
2-on-3	all	strong	PRE-SEASON	
3-on-4	all	strong	PRE-SEASON	
4-on-5	all	strong	ALL	
5-on-5	all	very strong	ALL	



much individual responsibility in this defense, the ability to help each other is vital. The proverbial line, "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link" fits perfectly when we talk man-to-man defense.

Man-to-man is the most basic defensive strategy in the game of basketball, yet the most misunderstood. To have a good man-to-man defense, a player must do much more than follow his player around the court. In man-to-man, each defender is assigned to a specific offensive player (diagr. 4). While this is a one-on-one style of defense, it does allow for switches and double teams.

Pressure on the ball handler is the key—the goal of the defender is to stop his man from passing or shooting. Many team turnovers occur because of a strong man-to-man defense. Man-to-man defenders need to put pressure on the ball handler. Pressure the dribble, block his shots, and always box out when the shot is attempted. Don't forget that the man-to-man is also a foul prone defense. A good player will learn quickly how to challenge his opponent without fouling him; how to block the shot without coming into physical contact with the shooter. A good man-to-man defensive player knows where his man is at all times, and by understanding the game, he anticipates the play before it happens. The aggressive nature of this defensive system takes precious seconds away from the offense as they try to run their plays, seconds that could be essential for their victory.

By having your players play tough defense in practice sessions, they will surely take that same attitude into the games with them.