

Pressure Basketball- Ralph Miller

Coach Miller's system of game execution is based on pressure tactics and continuous offensive and defensive pressure that eliminates rest opportunities and time for thought for opponents throughout a contest.

Rules and executions key upon the simple theory of instant conversion, or transition, on all offensive and defensive ball exchanges. This means pushing the ball up court on all offensive possessions and implementing the "automatic pick-up rule" -immediately guarding the person who was guarding you - on defensive conversion.

Pressure basketball is based on high percentage rules, which eliminate gambling and allow teams to beat themselves. Poor shot selection, fatigue and the constant pressure will promote this outcome.

By limiting the decisions that a player has to make, a team that is not physically quick will react more rapidly to situations afforded by the competition.

Naismith never made any mention of the dribble in his original rules.

Passing has become the chief weapon of attack as it was years ago.

Three laws of learning have always dominated coaching methods. They are: (1) learn by doing, (2) repetition, (3) the whole and part theory of instruction.

The measuring stick for success, unfortunately, is the coach's won - loss record.

The primary objective of the coach is to teach young people how to win or how not to lose games.

It was better to do five things perfectly or near perfect, than it was to do twenty things in a mediocre fashion.

Offensive executions require only a good body position and foot action that maintains ball-handling skills: Namely, passing, catching, shooting and dribbling a ball.

Defense requires the ability to have good body position with hand and foot action that provides body balance at all times. Defensive executions require the ability to cover the ball or one-on-one coverage; the ability to play off the ball defense, which relates to basket protection and points of pressure (if pressure is a part of the defensive concept); and screening the backboards to prevent additional shooting opportunities.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR BEGINNING COACHES

1. Don't over-coach.
2. Be firm, fair, and consistent.
3. Don't practice too long (especially late in the season).
4. Develop some kind of coaching philosophy and readjust as the years go by.
5. Keep the lines of communication open.
6. Explain "why" you do things.
7. Encourage suggestions and give credit if used.
8. Develop a sense of humor - insert some humor in each practice.
9. Should have some part of each practice that lends itself to good, clean "ribbing."

10. Try to balance criticism with praise (often conscious of one and not the other).
11. Learn to work with players individually (they appreciate the extra time).
12. Be yourself - don't emulate some successful coach. His methods may not fit your style.
13. Don't tie yourself to rules (have an out) - not a compromise, but be realistic.
14. Attend clinics - read books - talk to fellow coaches - learn the game.
15. Tell and explain - Don't show unless you know.
16. Make a practice schedule and stick to it. Do not spend extra time on something just because you are getting poor results. .
17. Make a master practice schedule and daily practice schedule and coordinate the two.
18. Set some realistic goals for yourself and your program and readjust these goals from time to time.
19. Coordinate the total program whenever possible.
20. The game passes kids by - don't let it pass you by.
21. Motivate your players to improve skills by putting in extra time in the off-season.
22. Don't try to do something in a game situation that you have not worked on in practice.
23. Learn to use your time-outs.
24. Know the rules.
25. Reach your players a basketball vocabulary and encourage it.
26. Help players to recognize their limitations and play accordingly.
27. Remember you are the teacher. If you cannot teach, you cannot coach.
28. Get along with your superiors, your colleagues, and those who work under you.
29. Get involved in the total school program.
30. Key word for players is "practice."
31. Key word for coaches is "work."
32. Be LOYAL to the school, staff and players

The pressure system merely attempts to control or dictate the tempo of court action at every opportunity.

The definition of pressure is attack full time or 100% pressure time. The best results occur when you organize the offense and defense toward a common goal or purpose. The overall reason for using pressure is to wear down the opposition mentally and physically during the normal course of the game. The key to pressure is the elimination of all resting periods occurring upon ball exchanges. Coach Miller feels, "in the simplest of terms, defense attacks immediately upon each loss of a ball, and offense does the same upon gaining a possession. Gambling or over committing to obtain ball possessions are considered cardinal sins as are poor passing or shot selections.

Ball exchanges are most important to the success of the pressure system because a great deal of resting opportunity is available when pressure tactics are not used in a contest. By utilizing pressure tactics both on offense and defense you force a full forty-minute game on your opponent and eliminate the possibility of rest. Unless your opponent uses the same premise for game execution, fatigue will occur. Fatigue does not mean mental or physical exhaustion, but rather tiring to a point where shooting percentages drop and physical reactions slow down.

Over the years it has been shown that the opponent's ability or talent does not cause most losses. They are produced by three basic weaknesses appearing in team performance.

1. Poor individual and team coverage allowed the opponents too many easy baskets. Over commitments to obtain ball possession and poor reactions to team rules for basket protection and the point of ball pressure are the most notable sins.
2. Poor rebounding resulting from inadequate screening of the defensive backboard provided too many second and third shot opportunities on a single possession.
3. Turnovers totally eliminate shot opportunities, and turnovers are often caused by pressure defenses which effect passing and ball handling.

Two of these relate strictly to the defense. Therefore, it is Coach Miller's opinion, that defense is more important to the cause of win or loss than is the offense. It is a premise that a defense that is good enough to be used at all should be sound enough to be used at all times. Theoretically, it is preferred to stress the importance of not giving games away rather than how to win.

It is important to establish the correct numerical order in which ball possessions are gained.

1. Unsuccessful shots and free throws of the opponents.
2. Successful shots and free throws by the opposition.
3. Errors of omission and commission by the competition.
4. Pass interceptions.
5. Steals from a dribbler.

Under these circumstances, it is insane to base defensive theory upon steals and interceptions. Concentration upon basket protection, screening the boards, securing the rebound and forcing turnovers produce better results in the long run.

Physical skills can be learned by doing or participation. Repetition of the acts or action definitely improves executions and is a beginning for developing reflex reactions. It is important that players react instinctively and not waste time thinking of what to do.

Coach Miller's system is based upon full court offensive and defensive tactics. It is obvious that for maximum efficiency, full court rather than half court drills should dominate drill activity.

Offense requires a good body position and the ability to run hard, stop, and pivot without losing the body balance. The only other skill requirements relate to ball handling: namely passing, catching, shooting, and on occasion, dribbling the basketball.

By the same token, defensive requirements for good execution are few in numbers. A body position, foot, and hand action that maintains body balance at all times is a key.

One key to good passing is never faking the ball to a teammate and then passing the ball to that teammate. Only the jump stop is recommended for offense because body and foot positions can be altered during the stop execution. By jump stopping, you still have not established a pivot foot and you can still maintain triple threat positions. Receivers, not passers, are responsible for creating open passing lanes, and only direct air passes traveling through open passing lanes are recommended. Passes are caught with two hands at all times. The bounce pass is used only on backdoor cuts in a half court offense or in emergencies. More than a few times, a player has been told where to stick the basketball after a bounce pass.

For defense, the arms are at waist level with the palms of the hands turned upward. Leaving or moving the feet to block shots or passes at inception, are cardinal sins. This is also true for over committing the body position for pass interceptions or stealing the ball from a dribbler.

Ball coverage includes touching distance of the ball at the time of reception. Applying pressure on the ball, and preventing passes to the power zone or middle court area at the time of ball reception and at the end of a dribble. The only pass denial is to a player in a low post position in or near the power zone in half court attacks.

Off the ball defensive personnel are responsible for protecting the basket and point of ball pressure. They must see the ball at all times to execute the team rules for coverage and provide protection. Primarily, off

ball defense utilizes zone principles of cover and ball coverage. Strong side wing activates man principles.

Drills

Coaches must teach or condition automatic or reflex responses to competitive questions to produce a good team.

Drills should be used to teach players how to execute the game of basketball, not teach skill executions.

I was amazed at how much practice time was spent scrimmaging. The skills learned in our drills were put to use constantly and reinforced through scrimmage.

The seven drills that will be described are the only drills used throughout an entire year for practice sessions. Drills should be executed at full speed to promote conditioning and directly simulate game conditions and executions.

BODY POSITION AND MOVEMENT

A reverse type of spin is used in defense. The front foot moves first and to the rear. Head, shoulders, and arms remain level during the execution. Pivoting is used in all assignments and phases of defensive coverage. Full, half, quarter spins are taught with both front and back pivots. In the defensive position, players move rapidly forward, backward, left or right, upon commands. The players were spread out in the gym. In the backward command, a quarter pivot or turn is used for the first step (reverse pivot). Likewise, it is used for the forward command (forward pivot). Movements to the right or left are preceded by an aggressive step in that position. Remaining footwork includes forward, lateral, backward or recovery steps. Lateral and forward moves utilize sliding toe to heel. These movements are running, when necessary, cease with a jump stop (stop and go). Recovery acts originate by pivoting prior to sliding or running action, and this procedure is utilized in extended periods of drill activity. Continual movement, maintaining a proper position, begins with five minute periods and increases to ten within ten days,

LAY-UP DRILL

The feeder dribbles to the free throw line, Jump stops, executes a reverse pivot, and passes to the shooter. He then rebounds the shot, moves behind the base line opposite the shooting lane, returns ball to next feeder, and goes to the rear of the shooting line remaining off the floor in doing so. Two balls are used in the exercise. Feeders execute the pivot whenever possible, passes are crisp, and never lobbed or bounced. The shooter presents a passing target with both hands at chest level, and eyes remain on the ball until secured.

SPLIT THE POST DRILL

The split the post drill utilizes five lines. Two located at each junction of half court, two located between baseline and half court lines (outlet receivers), and Post-men form out of bounds and outside the lane. Post play, increased passing, new shooting angles, jump shots, pass-offs, and high feeds are included skills. A guard-to-guard pass starts the sequence. The receiver dribbles cross-court within five feet of the sideline (outside or closest to half court line) of the opposite guard who runs to the spot vacated by the receiver (opposite side of court). Both jump stop, reverse pivot, and the receiver passes cross court to the other cutter who has moved to position at the time of the dribble across court. After the jump stop and pivot, the opposite guard starts his movement towards center of court and basket. Receiver does the same (so the pass is not a half or cross court pass). During the second pass, the post player positions himself at the free throw line to await the third pass. The first cutter is the passer, the scissors occur outside the free

throw lane, the lay-up angle is 45 degrees to the backboard, and the path is outside the lane. Normally, the second cutter receives the post feed, but either player may be used to shoot the lay-up shot with or without defense. Post defensive action produces a shot or pass off to the partner. Instead of the lay-up, jump shots be used, and if defended, the shot or pass occurs, Lastly, a fake jumper is used and a return high feed is given to the opposite player who has gone to the basket to rebound or receive high feed (outside the lane and on a 45 degree angle to the basket). The pass is made at or above rim height. Coaches denote which action will be used in the drill until later in the season, where the post will dictate the choice based on type of defensive pressure, Opposite player rebounds and makes outlet pass to his side of the court, and both replace the outlet person on their side of court. Outlet person then goes to end of the line at half court. It is important that outlet makes a move away from the basket and comes back to meet the ball. Numbers can be used again to add competition to drill. Again, if they do not reach the number, they start all over again. Peer pressure takes the place of the having to yell at the players!

THREE LANE RUSH

Three lane rush movements are in straight lines at top speed. Wings remain within five feet of the sidelines and five feet ahead of the middle man until reaching the free throw line extended where a 45 degree angle cut to the hoop Occurs, The ball is passed continually between participants without ever dribbling the ball. Receivers should show a target with outside hand at chest height. Lay-ups taken by wings are rebounded by the middle position, and wings swing under the basket and behind the baseline to within five feet of sidelines before turning up court on the return trip. The ball should never hit the floor. Rebounds are taken out of the net. Return sequence initiates with a pass to the non-shooting wing. Shots taken by the middle-man are rebounded by the feeder who fills the middle spot, and the shooter moves to the sideline opposite the feeder to assume the wing position. Options used by the coach to make the drill more competitive are: missed lay-up, same group goes again. If the ball hits the floor, same group goes again. Turnover, the same, It is so important to keep the floor spread and wings ahead of the ball, By closing in on the center of the court you make it that much easier for the defense to guard the ball. You never want to pass the ball backwards, so when a player becomes a wing in the drill, it is mandatory to sprint to the position 5ft. ahead of the ball.

WIDE FIGURE 8

The wide Figure 8 utilizes the same procedures used in the Three Lane Rush operations, but floor movements change, and passes are elongated. Basic rules: Passer always cuts behind the receiver until reaching a new position within five feet of the opposite sideline and five feet ahead of the ball. A pass must always move ahead of its floor position, and only one bounce by the ball handler is allowed; however, this should seldom be necessary and should be discouraged.

THREE ON THREE AND FOUR ON FOUR

These drills do provide the foundation for pressure style basketball, and they use up approximately 75% of allotted drill time in practice sessions. The jump stops, pivots, passing and targets by receivers need special attention.

THREE ON THREE FULL COURT

Identical three lines form as used for speed drills. The first player in each line steps on the court to assume offensive purposes, and the ball is maintained by the middle man remaining out of bounds. The defensive unit pressures all offensive personnel and the sequence originates by inbounding the ball. Full scrimmage conditions exist until the offense scores or defense gains ball possession. A made basket stops play, the ball is taken out of bounds, and group assignments are reversed unless the basket was scored from a second shot attempt. In this case, the defense is penalized by remaining on defense for the return trip against the original offensive group. The return sequence begins with an inbound pass, and scrimmage action continues. The defense can stay on defensive assignment until they stop the offensive attack. Possession gained by the defense or by other means does not stop action, but immediately reverses

assignments and evokes the speed attack. Offensive personnel, when reversing assignments, automatically picks up the man defending them at the time a score occurred or ball possession is lost. Normally, a six-man group makes only one round trip before moving off the floor, but additional round trips may be used at the discretion of the coach. The offensive player touching the ball is allowed only two dribbles. Early usage evokes a hockey type rule, namely, "A ball may not be passed across the midcourt line on one long pass." The long pass or "bomb" is an offensive weapon against pressure, so in general, the hockey rule is used only in the early weeks of practice.

FOUR ON FOUR FULL COURT

Floor positions include a post at high or low positions, a point guard, two wings operating on the sidelines, and corresponding defensive personnel. Scrimmage conditions exist until a basket is made or ball possession is gained by defense if usage is limited to half court activities versus full court action. Offense then assumes defensive positions, a new offensive group is formed, and defense moves off the court except when scoring is done via offensive rebounding. In this case, retaining their assignments for another tour against the same offensive group penalizes the defense. The other beauty of the Four on Four is that the offense used by Coach Miller, the 1-4, can be used in the drill.

It is also a tell tale sign of how your defensive progress is doing. After all, defense is what wins basketball games, and the better the defense, the more times a group will have to stay on the floor because of their inability to score. Lines are not established by position. This way, guards get experience defending posts; posts get experience against smaller, quicker players. Other than a few five minute water breaks, drills are continuous, and thus also concentrates on conditioning.

OFFENSE- "Team Concept"

Ralph's teams were composed of "Role Players" who were dedicated to this principle. The first job was to get the team to believe in the system and how they best fit into it. Role players are individuals who know and understand their duties and responsibilities for all floor positions when executing the offensive and defensive assignments. Individual talent is of value to team production only when used within the established framework of team organization. Offensive and defensive team strength depends upon the executions of off ball players and not upon a ball handler or ball defender.

On the whole, an offensive organization necessitates several forms of attack, and a basic plan includes the following:

1. Fast break patterns for possessions gained by rebounds, interceptions, and steals.
2. Speed attacks for use after opponents score.
3. The rotation pattern to move personnel from floor positions of speed attacks to those required in half-court attacks.
4. Half court patterns.
5. Special patterns for jump balls and out-of-bounds situations.

Regardless of style, type or name, the main object of offense remains, "obtain a wide open, high percentage shot with each possession".

According to Coach Miller, "the chief weapon for all offensive attacks is the pass." The definition for perfect offense is, "pass the ball to an open teammate, and then, cut or revolve all other players to new open positions. Continue doing so until a desired shot is obtained."

No form of offensive attack forces the issue. Attacks are designed to take advantage of defensive errors. The pass and cut theory for attack dominates court action, so the pass always was the "chief weapon of attack." The first responsibility of a player with the ball is, to create a situation that sets up a teammate for an open shot. The potential to fulfill this responsibility is limited when the body and foot positions are not

established for shooting prior to pass reception in half-court maneuvers. The pass is always preferred to dribbling, and direct air passes made through open passing lanes are preferred to lob or bounce passes.

Receivers, not passers, are responsible for creating open passing lanes during breaking and half-court attacks. Turnovers are a major cause for losing games, and a majority are caused by passing and catching errors. Strangely enough, more turnovers and loss of good shot opportunities are caused by poor catches than passes. The primary action that forces defensive cover is a threat to score. The only individual fakes needed by a player with the ball is a threat to shoot or pass, and both fakes are executed without movement of the feet and body position.

All half-court attacks premise on ball control, sharp passing, and movement involving quick cuts, revolving to open positions and screening. The only difference between control tactics and normal procedures is seeking easy points with lay-ups or close range shots.

PURPOSE OF CONTROL:

1. Change the style of offense used.
2. Change the pace of the offense.
3. Force the defense to come out and play.
4. Protect or increase the hard earned lead that has been previously gained.

PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

1. Basketball is, primarily, an offensive game, and it is the responsibility of the team that is behind to try and get possession of the ball and the opportunity to score.
2. A team that is ahead in the scoring column has the right to protect its lead by controlling the style and tactics used in its offensive play.
3. This theory of offense is based upon keying from the defense and taking advantage of their mistakes as in a regular offensive game.
4. With every move or pass the offense is looking for a way to score. No gambles or poor shots are taken when using this particular offense.

"Control to Score" is used about 95% of the time. Each pass and move will attempt to set up an easy [here will be no gambling by the offense, and only shots within six feet of the basket will be taken from the wide open spots.

General rules for offense apply to half court operations. First, defensive positions on the ball and the post man key all passes and movement Passes are made only through open alleys or lanes. Secondly, the first pass from guard to wing or post man establishes the pattern of movement for a scoring thrust. Lastly, all movement on patterns is to secure open shooting positions, a first pass inside of the defensive perimeter seldom results in the receiver obtaining an open shot. Normally, the receiver should create a situation that opens up a teammate for the shot.

Basically, only three types of play action are used against man and zone defenses. Post passes at high positions indicate primarily back door cuts. A scissors cut with a strong side wing and point guard is keyed when the strong side defensive wing is below the free throw line extension because a back door cut is not feasible. A power zone concept keyed by wing passes creates a high and low post set. Strong side post is deep and weak side post is high.

POWER ZONE

Good shooting range can easily be shown by a diagram of what is called the "Power Zone." Regardless of the style of attack, penetration may be made by passing or dribbling. As previously mentioned, the true

power zone extends across the free throw line and to a point on the baseline six feet outside of the free throw line. Open shots in the true power zone are considered being in a 50% to 75% accuracy range.

RULES FOR OFFENSIVE PRODUCTION

1. Offense is never forced. Scoring opportunities are secured by taking advantage of defensive mistakes, rather than over powering the opposition. Individual assignments and responsibilities are exact in all cases.
2. The first responsibility of a player with the ball is creating a situation that sets up a teammate for an open shot. Potential is limited by not securing proper position and foot placement prior to ball reception and lack of passing skill.
3. Passes and player movement key from defensive position. Offense takes advantage of defensive errors, so the defense tells the offense what to do.
4. Passes travel only through open lanes, in the air, and are not lobbed. Bounce passes are used only in emergencies or back door situations.
5. The receiver positions in and creates open passing lanes, catches the ball with two hands, and eyes do not leave the ball until it is secured.
6. Only wide-open, high percentage shots are taken. Good percentage is within 17 feet of the basket. Wide open means **no defense** can rush, hurry, or break the natural rhythm of a shot.
7. Authorized fakes include only shots and passes. Execution is accomplished without altering the feet or body position.
8. A ball should always move into the power zone by pass or movement to create effective scoring opportunity. The power zone encompasses an area from the junctions of free throw lanes to spots on the baseline six feet outside the free throw lane.
9. Passing is always preferred to dribbling.
10. Passing is the chief weapon of attack, and the pass and cut theory is the primary method of creating scoring opportunities.
11. Ball action must be observed at all times. Turning the back of the head to the ball is a cardinal sin.
12. Body position and feet should be set prior to ball reception.
13. Never fake the ball to a teammate and then pass the ball to the same teammate.
14. Upon reception, vision encompasses basket or post area and baseline corner on the opposite side of the floor. The only exception is a post man with his back to the basket upon reception.
15. The jump stop is used to establish foot position except when the individual is out of shooting range and is preferred over a stride stop.

Time for thought prior to reactions in game situations is nonexistent. Good production relies upon automatic reflex responses to game situations faced in contests. Developing such is perpetuated by the daily drills and scrimmage. Attentive supervision, suggestions, and corrections are made at all times, but individual success depends primarily on the mental and physical effort applied to practice activities. Successful offensive attacks mean virtually nothing without total understanding of philosophy, theory, principles, and rules governing executions and production.

A ball is moved and positioned for scoring by a dribble or a pass. Dribblers can be adequately defended, but little or no coverage exists for a pass. Dribbling consumes time that allows additional possibilities for defensive adjustment and recovery. Successive passes make it virtually impossible for defense to conceal weaknesses because coverage for all offensive positions is mandatory, but not so while the ball is bouncing. One-on-one and screens provide ample time for defensive adjustments most of the time, but such are nonexistent with pass and cut tactics.

THE 1-4 OFFENSE

The one-four alignment serves this purpose because the normal floor positions expose typical man-to-man or zone defenses by simple visual observation. Coach Miller preferred to use few or no screens, spacing

helped to isolate the individual defensive players without significant help from their teammates. No matter what defense we faced, the 1-4 put tremendous pressure on the opposition to make correct decisions. All of this was accomplished because of floor balance and spreading of the defense, which limited the defenses ability to "help." You never force the ball or play action. We preferred to "take the path of least resistance." The perimeter positions are interchangeable, and as a result, anyone may initiate the play action as a point guard. If the five offensive players are well spaced then the wings will line up approximately free throw line extended. The posts establish themselves at a medium set, but are ready to move high or low depending on the first pass and the defense.

THE SPEED GAME

Offense always attempts to make the best of each possession, and the following rules aid in this accomplishment:

1. Eliminating rest is equally important in utilizing pressure as the establishment of scoring opportunities.
2. Breaks are only a part of the total offensive program.
3. Pattern design gains advantage through defensive error.
4. Breaks are never forced when little possibility of success exists.

FAST BREAK ORGANIZATION

Defensive coaches believe in slowing or stopping a break at its inception. Rebounders will be jammed, and passes and receivers will be harassed. Accordingly, all offensive rebounders must be screened or checked away from the backboard as far away as possible. This makes recovery easier, prevents the trap on rebounders, and creates floor space for movement and passing.

Defensively, the team watches the ball at all times because the ball is more important in applying good pressure, than concentration upon the individual being covered.

The following formula is used by all individuals for rebounding:

1. When the ball leaves the shooter's hand, the eyes look at the man under coverage and position the body with a shoulder perpendicular to the chest of the opponent.
2. Step towards the rebounder and make slight physical contact.
3. Utilize a quarter turn or pivot with any opponent's movement to maintain contact with the back.
4. Only after these steps does the screener look to the board.
5. Contact is not released unless the ball is secured or it becomes necessary to actually make a recovery.

DEFENSE

Because of the three types of shots available to the offensive player, concentration for basket protection relied mainly on bothering the outside shooter, preventing the lay-up and clogging the post area. A simple plan called for the defense to attack the offense that would eliminate offensive domination and control of court action.

Again, the basic requirement for defense is a good body position, with hand and foot actions that provide body balance at all times. A good body position resembles the stance of an ape. The feet are spread and staggered at a shoulder width, and the lead foot is nearest to the middle of the court. The arms are flexed at waist level, and the palms of the hands are turned upward. The arm and hand action always move upward for defensive purposes and never downward at the ball or person being covered. The foot action includes a sliding to heel movement, the pivot or spin, and recovery action.

The Two-Three Principle of Coverage

The basic definition is that two men defend on a man-to-man basis and three men cover on a zone principle. This is the rule whether in zone or man coverage as a team. Ball coverage and a wing defense to the ball side of the court apply pressure and utilize basically man principles of cover. Wing pressure does not deny wing passes, because this is an over commitment of the defensive position.

Two man coverage: (Man-to-Man)

- On ball man covers accordingly to:
 1. Defensive body position
 2. Touching distance at reception
 3. Harass opponent with upward movement (palms up) of lead hand. If dribbling, make him change directions and contain his movement by making offensive man notice and be concerned with you. Do not get out of position by reaching for the ball. Always maintain good body position.
 4. When a dribbler stops, a quick inward step should be made to stop the shot and then contest passing lanes.
 5. On pass or release of ball, a quick backward step in the direction of the pass should be made to stop any pass and cut movement by the offensive player.
- The closest man to ball, or one man removed, may play denial defense. He plays the open passing lane by placing a hand in passing lane.

Three Man Coverage (Zone Principles)

1. Defensive body position (eyes always on ball)
2. Protector or helper
3. Interceptor
4. Sag and zone according to the ball position and its relationship to your man's position on the floor keeping in mind the distance you are from the basket.

A choice is avoided in the situations by adopting the rule; "watch the ball at all times." You might lose your man temporarily, but by keeping your eye on the ball it will either lead you to your open man or give you time to recover. Ralph used to say, "You have no brain on the basketball floor. Your eyes are your brain. They key you to what you will automatically do next."

Pressure defenses do extend the defensive perimeter and the distance for recovery and protective purposes. A "Perimeter Rule" compensates for these factors, and the rule premises on "ball penetration." When a ball penetrates a defensive seam by any means, those individuals caught in floor positions behind the ball immediately forget man pressure and sprint in a straight line towards the basket. Sideline penetrations do not pose an immediate scoring threat, but penetration into the middle court area, particularly by a pass, is another story. Individuals can often reposition in front of the ball when penetration by pass or dribble moves to the sideline or wing positions. This is virtually impossible when passes split a seam into the middle of the court. In this case, all personnel, except ball coverage, sprint to zone positions near the basket to protect the hoop. "Don't allow your perimeter to be cracked, and don't allow the opposition to pass when and where they want to." Most importantly, "don't allow a pass into the power zone." Defense causes a win or a loss to appear, not offense. This is why starters and top reserves were selected by their defensive abilities rather than offensive skills.

The "Automatic Pick Up Rule" enabled us to immediately apply pressure upon a lost possession. Coach Miller rarely assigned specific match-ups prior to the start of a game. His rule was to guard whoever was guarding you. That way, you did not have to run all over the place to find your man, and thus delay defensive pressure. The man on the balls job was to immediately harass the ball-handler/rebounder and pressure the outlet, so that we could stop the fast break at its inception. Full court pressure serves two

purposes. One was the immediate coverage of all personnel and secondly, to slow or stop breaking attacks at their inception. The principle of automatic pickup is used at all times.

The objectives of full court pressure defenses are to prevent scoring, eliminate rest, harass, and confuse the offense. Any single full court defense can adequately handle the first three objectives, but change-up or alternating defenses are required to maintain constant confusion and disruption. As long as offensive players have to worry and think during combat, their reactions are slow and unsure.

Defense concentrates on coverage, basket protection, and rebounding. Zone presses need time to set up before functioning satisfactorily, so zones are used primarily after made shooting opportunities, or when the offense is slow putting the ball into play.

BASIC ELEMENTS OF PRESSURE DEFENSES

1. Surprise - can always be present by the type of defense used, the point of pressure applied, and the amount of pressure.
2. Pressure - is constant on the ball and the opponent creates mental and physical fatigue to compound mistakes by the opponent.
3. Panic - comes through constant pressure since the opposition rarely has a chance to rest, relax, or think during a game.
4. Fatigue - created mentally and physically, eventually causing the collapse of the individual and team.

The 2-1-2 full court zone press and defense was used to change the pressure tactics normally seen in other full court zones. Basically, if an interception is not made on the inlet or second passes, the defense revolves immediately to the desired half court defense. Only the man defending the ball continues to apply pressure. Only in so doing can your basket be adequately protected. The other defenders retreated to the defensive end of the court while still applying pressure to passing lanes and never turning their back on the ball. The defensive men stay on topside coverage of their man, while retreating, until the offensive group enters the attacking area on the other end of the court. Here the normal 2-3 principle of coverage takes over.

GENERAL RULES FOR THE FULL COURT PRESS

1. Do not protect the pass in from out of bounds when using the zone presses except when fronting. Pressure on the first pass inbounds can be applied when using the man-to-man attack.
2. Force the direction of the ball always to the middle of the It when using the 2-2-1 zone press, in which force is exerted to the nearest sideline.
3. Invite and force, when necessary, the ball to be moved in the proper direction when an opponent receives it. Never allow the man with the ball to remain unguarded to pick a spot for passing
4. Forcing the opponent to dribble a ball in the proper direction is an asset to the defense. When dribbling under pressure, accurate passing is difficult and good passing is the biggest detriment to the full court press.
5. When the opponent is dribbling, attempt to stop the dribble immediately with one or two men if necessary and, after stopping the ball, attack with hands high to force the lob or cross-court pass from the opponent.
6. When a player is stopped without a dribble, all men off the ball automatically cover the obvious open passing lanes.
7. Keep a defensive position at all times so the ball and man can be seen at the same time. If a choice must be made, always watch the ball.

8. Primarily, in all full court presses, 2/5 of the defense, generally the strong side forward and guard, use man-to-man principles and press the ball and the pass to the strong side wing. The remainder of the defense, 3/5, uses the zone, sag, or protective principles of defense.
9. It is necessary to utilize the switch when pressing the defense. This is particularly true between the two defensive guards or the guard and forward on the same side of the floor. It is an automatic switch anytime movement is made over the top of a pick or screen. Movement behind the pick is not made unless necessary. The post defense switches only when necessary. When switches are called, the man off the ball does it. The defense on the ball never asks for help.
10. Whenever the ball, whether passed or moved by a player, cracks the perimeter of the defense, all players except the man on the ball collapse to the basket in straight lines for on against a scoring thrust.

FULL COURT PRESSES

General observations for the use of full court presses are as follows:

1. Use pressure defenses all of the time so the team can meet and learn to face any type of offense being used against them, and to benefit the maximum results from the use of pressure.
2. Never give up on pressure defenses. A team must be given the opportunity to properly learn and react to the theory and philosophy of the defense, even when playing a game. With proper adjustments to the defense, the offense will crack sooner or later. Rarely will the offense have more than one or two methods of attacking the press.
3. Never allow the opposition an advantage or score by gambling or over committing the defense. The opponent should earn, the hard way, anything they receive.
4. Pressure in defense does not mean fouling, gambling, or stealing a ball from the dribbler.
5. Possession of the ball is gained most often in the following order:
 - Hurried Shots
 - Violations
 - Bad Passes
 - Charging Fouls
 - Pass Interceptions
 - Stolen Balls
6. Protection of the basket is necessary in all defenses; therefore, it is important to stress the collapse of the entire defense when the offense cracks the perimeter of the defense. All men, except when covering the ball, run to the basket in straight lines to protect against a scoring. Without good anticipation and collapsing of the defensive perimeter, easy scores are impending.
7. The pass is the best weapon against pressure defense, and ball action keys responses to the perimeter rule which provided basket protection.

Traps are also pressure tactics, but they automatically over commit a defense, so they were used sparingly. The players were never to commit to a trap, unless they were two to three steps away. Off the ball defenders establish traps only if odds favored such a commitment. The Trap Rule dictated that once a trap was established, off ball personnel immediately covered open passing lanes, and went for an interception or steal.

Basic defensive floor position for all personnel is between a man being covered and the basket. All defensive players were to be in front of the ball's position on the floor. Passes made down court beyond a defensive floor position demanded instant recovery toward the basket, until a new position in front of the ball had been established.

Since Coach Miller felt the pass was the best weapon against pressure defenses, a passer was always harassed by defensive coverage, which included these rules:

1. Coverage is within touching distance of the ball at all times. The position is assumed the instant a person receives the ball.
2. Harassing the passing lane to the middle of the court or post area begins at the instant of ball reception or after the dribble is picked up.
3. Palms of the hands are faced upward, to reduce fouling and maintain body balance at all times.
4. Body position and balance is never over committed to block passes or shots at the point of attack.
5. Recovery action always starts with a pivot in the direction of the pass. Maximum distance away from the passer and slightly to a receiver is an automatic response.

Off the ball defenders are basically weak side positions and they are the strength of team defense. Responsibilities far outnumber those on the ball or on strong side coverage. First responsibilities are protection for pressure points and the basket. Establishing traps and intercepting passes are secondary obligations. The following rules apply:

1. See the ball at all times. Ball action keys all responses designed to protect the basket.
2. Pivots initiate all lateral and recovery foot movement.
3. Body position and balance are not over committed to block shots or intercept passes.
4. Floor positions for weak side defenders are to the middle of the court. In short, open up to the ball and sag to a post area normally used in half court defenses.
5. Zone principles of switching men, temporary checks to stop ball progress, and establishing traps are off the ball responsibilities.
6. The switch is used on all tight screens, except for high post screens in half court offense. Weak side offensive personnel are denied the pass when moving to the ball, particularly when it goes to, or past the free throw lane.

At least forty percent of all possessions are obtained from rebounding missed shot attempts. Maintaining a defensive position to screen a backboard is far better than leaving the feet to block shots.

The primary purposes of defense are to prevent scoring and gain ball possession. Remember, eighty to eighty-five percent of all possession comes from rebounding and the opponent scoring. Ten to fifteen percent occur from opponent's error, and only five to ten percent area gained by pass interceptions or steals. Coach Miller's defensive concentration was organized according to these figures.

TEAM CONCEPT

1. Teamwork is developed by creating a positive attitude among all squad members. The basic point is that an individual never causes a loss or victory.
2. The first prerequisite for playing time was to prove to be one of the best defensive players at his position.
3. There is no room for ego and selfishness in an offensive attack or team defense. Rules that reinforced this concept are as follows:
 - The pass is depicted as "the chief weapon of attack," and "the pass and cut theory" dominates patterns and movement.
 - Perfect offense is defined as "pass the ball to an open team mate, and then cut or revolve all others to new open floor positions." Continue to pass the ball until a deserved shot opportunity is obtained. A good shot is defined as, "wide open, within seventeen (17) feet of the basket."

- The first responsibility of a person with a ball is, "create a situation that provides opportunity to pass off to a team-mate for an open shot, rather than seek one for yourself" The pass is always preferred to dribbling in creating situations.
- 4. Defense, which is strictly a team affair, depends on the entire group on the floor's ability to understand assignments and carry them out.
- 5. Passing exemplifies team concept, and dribbling is often indicative of one on one and selfish tendencies of play.
- 6. Further stress for team concept occurs during non-competitive drills in practice sessions. They were done "by the numbers" rather than, upon a time basis. Drill execution must be perfect with no ball handling errors, missed shots, or unnecessary dribbling. Any mistake in these areas started the drill over again at zero. This concept was based on the old army rule; one individual fouls up, the whole group pays. Accordingly, an equal status for all members of the squad was invoked.

Usage produced these results:

- Established who was the boss (Coach Miller).
- Demand for perfection, which in turn requires concentration and effort by all squad members.
- Eliminates the necessity for constant criticism by the staff. Criticism came from the teammates.
- Work, concentration, and desire for perfection produces all executions and elements required by teamwork.
- Each person has a job to do, regardless of position on the team. Generally, players 8 through 12 acted as our scout squad and emulated the opposing team and were essential in our development.

Pre-Season Conditioning

10 station circuit

1. Pull-ups
2. Sit-ups
3. Power clean - barbell is lifted from the floor to the front of the chest. The legs and hips supply initial pull.
4. Curl - barbell is held with palms forward in front of thighs, ~ flexed until arms are straight above the individual. Keep knees locked and avoid bending the back.
5. Bent over rowing - using the same weight arrangements as in numbers 3 and 4 spread the legs approximately four feet apart. Keep legs rigid, bend back, and keep head and eyes forward. Pull weight toward the body and up under the chin before fully extending weight downward. Hands are shoulder width apart.
6. Toe raises - rise up on the toes concentrating on full extension. He fifteen to twenty repetitions are recommended as the calf responds slowly to exercise.
7. Up-right rowing
8. Bench press
9. Squats
10. Speed jumping - individual should jump to maximum reach with both arms fully extended upward as rapidly as possible. Rest thirty seconds and do a second set. After thirty seconds, do a third set.

I was always amazed at how Ralph handled himself good times or bad, he remained the same. He was famous for his handling of players during a contest, however I don't ever recall him raising his voice at practice or half time of a game. He simply explained the situation we were in and expected his players to take care of business.