

# On Ball Defense

*"Pressuring the player with the ball makes passing and dribbling more difficult, and increases the chances of an offensive mistake."*

Individual "On Ball" defense is comprised of three basic fundamentals: Pressuring the player with the ball; influencing a dribbler and attacking the picked up dribble. Disruptive Pressure uses simple, one syllable terms, "**Ball**", "**Push**", and "**Jam**", in order to provide players with quick, mental pictures for each of these basic defensive actions.

## What you will learn:

- ★ The importance of pressuring the player with the ball Pg. 19
- ★ Containing and influencing a dribbler Pg. 21
- ★ Attacking the picked up dribble Pg. 25
- ★ The correct way to take a charge Pg. 25
- ★ Skills & Drills Pg. 27

## Terminology

Back	Jam
Ball	Offensive Charge
Block	Push
Cushion	Sprint Release
Elbow	Triple Threat



# “BALL”

## Pressuring the Player with Ball

*“Ball pressure is the single most important element of team defense.”*

In guarding a player with the ball, defenders must attack, rather than react to offensive actions, and eliminate the “triple threat” (shot, pass, drive) by taking away the shot and pass options, and forcing the ball handler into dribbling. The reason being is that the offense can “put points on the scoreboard” off a shot or pass, but cannot score when dribbling.

The defender’s feet should be in a “heel/toe/pushpoint” alignment influencing the ball handler towards a sideline or trap zone preventing any dribble penetration into the middle of the court.



- Stay low in a bent knee, “nose on chest” upright position. Do not lean or reach.
- Have both hands up to take away shot and post pass options.
- Keep fingers spread.
- Have active feet. Keep feet moving with small chatter steps. Do not ever stand flat footed.

## Important to Have Active Hands

When guarding the player with the ball, both hands should be held up in a shoulder high, martial arts position where they can strike out and recover with lightning speed. The defender should have very active hands and must be ambidextrous using both hands equally well.



- One of the defender’s hands should be tracing or following all ball movement.
- The other hand is held lower and slightly to the side waving to distract the passer and to cut off the passing lane into post.
- Stay on balance and do not reach.

### Teaching Tip

Having both hands up where the officials can see them also eliminates fouls.

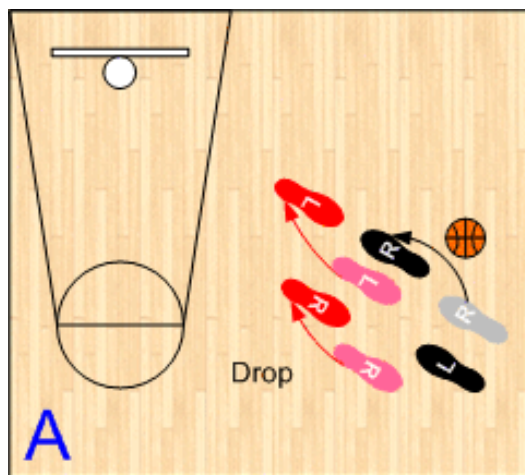
# Defending Against Offensive Moves

## *“Back” – Building Cushion*

Since almost all offensive moves (jab steps, crossovers, reverse pivots, etc.) are predicated in getting past a defender, rather than trying to counter every offensive move, defenders should simply back off (build cushion) and protect against drives.

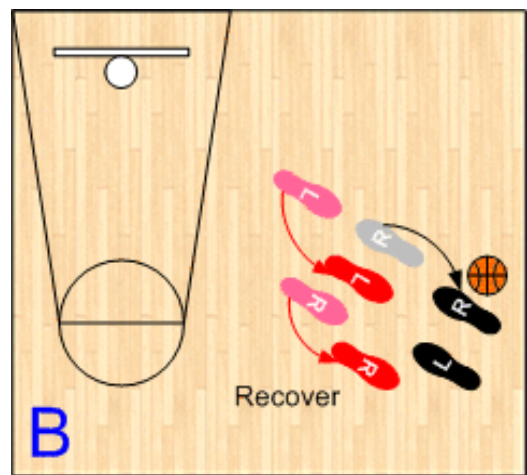


In building cushion and neutralizing the offensive move, the defender should execute a quick, short 12” hop back with both feet.



### **Back**

If the ball handler takes a jab step toward the basket, the defender must protect against the drive by countering with a quick, two footed drop (short 12” hop) maintaining a low “nose on chest” push position.



### **Recover**

When the ball handler steps back and reassumes a triple threat position, the defender immediately closes back out using a quick, two footed short hop to an on ball position with both hands up.

Note: Since most offensive players tend to over stride when executing jab steps and crossovers, it reduces the effectiveness of the move and provides the defender with a slight advantage.

# “PUSH” – Containing the Dribbler

*Sideline Push: Force the dribbler out of the middle (“Red Zone”)*

In today's basketball, most players are highly skilled in ball handling moves such as crossovers, between legs, spin and behind the back moves. There are now even personal trainers available that specialize in tutoring and developing player's individual offensive skills and moves. Therefore, defensive players must improve their skills accordingly. Rather than trying to counter every offensive move, defenders should just contain a dribbler since most offensive moves are predicated in getting past a defender.

Once the ball handler initiates the dribble, the defender must stay down using knees apart, push or shuffle steps until ballhandler picks up their dribble. Do not reach or go for the steal unless the ballhandler commits a flagrant dribbling error.



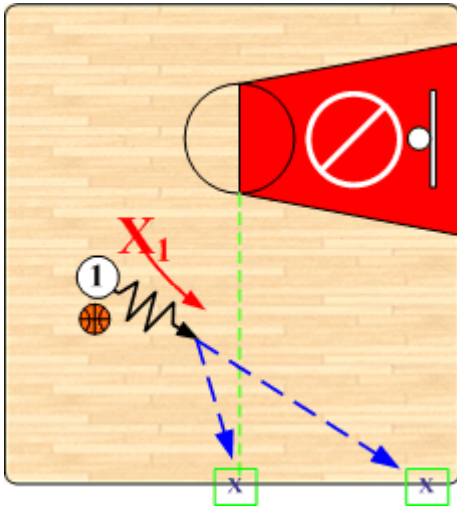
- Use quick, knees apart, push steps maintaining a low “*Nose on Chest*” position.
- Keep lead hand extended tracing the ball, and the trail arm near opponent’s hip in a bent, elbow high position.
- Defender must stay on balance. Contain and push dribbler to a pushpoint. Do not lean or reach.
- Build cushion (space) against a quicker ball handler.

In attacking the dribble, the defender should use short, quick flicks (“Digs”) with the trail or inside hand (closest to the opponent). Do NOT use the lead hand or reach. The lead hand is used to defend against and disrupt any attempt to pass the basketball. Also, reaching in for the ball with the lead hand will draw fouls.

The defender should never allow a dribbler to drive past with only one dribble since it takes two dribbles in order for defensive help to take place. Also, the defender should try to take a charge whenever possible. Once an offensive player picks up a charge they are less likely to keep penetrating.

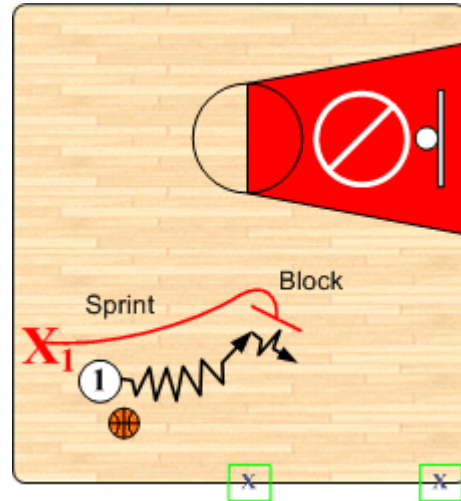
# Defending Against Dribble Penetration

The defender should contain the dribbler by influencing the dribbler to the closest sideline or baseline pushpoint. In keeping the ball out of the middle of the court (“Red Zone”), it minimizes the offensive operating area along with creating helpside defense. On dribble penetration in the front court, the defender must protect the "Elbows" and "Blocks."



Containment

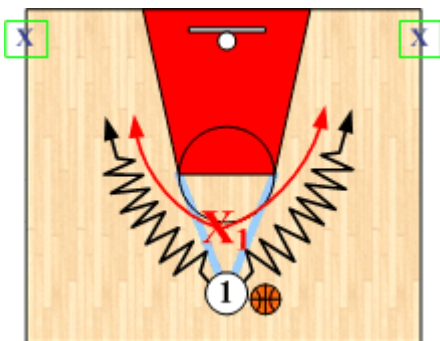
When the defender is unable to maintain leverage and force the ball handler to a desired pushpoint, just continue to force to the next pushpoint.



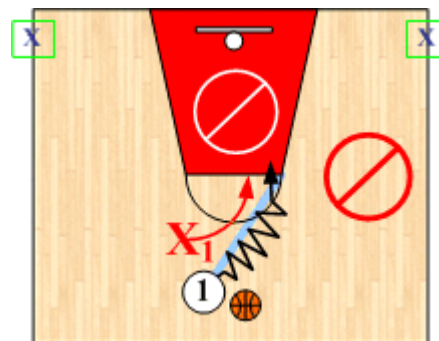
Sprint Release

If beaten off the dribble, the defender should sprint until they get one stride ahead, and then reassume the nose on chest “Push” position pressuring the dribbler to the next pushpoint. Do not ever attack a dribbler from the side.

## 1. Point Penetration: Protecting the “Elbows”



When the ball is in the middle of the court, it is important for the defender protect the “Elbows” and to force the ball handler to a corner pushpoint. If the defender gets to the elbow first, then the offensive player is forced wide, outside the lane line, disrupting the dribble penetration and creating a difficult shot.

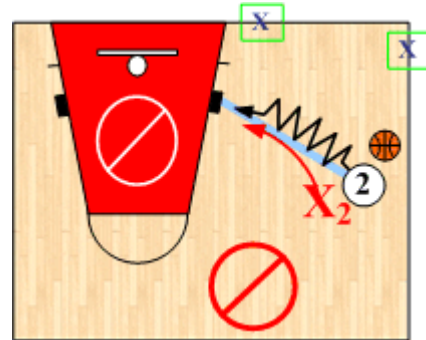
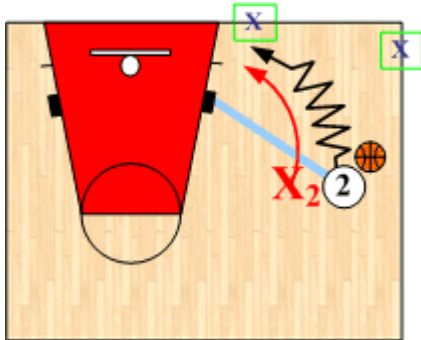


### CAUTION

The defender should NEVER allow a ball handler to penetrate inside the elbow. If the offensive player gets to the elbow first, they can drive inside the lane to the basket for an easy shot using the backboard if necessary.

## 2. Wing Baseline Penetration: Protecting the block

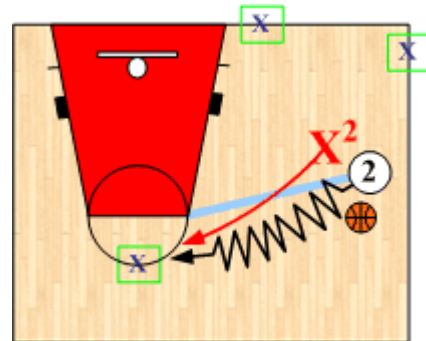
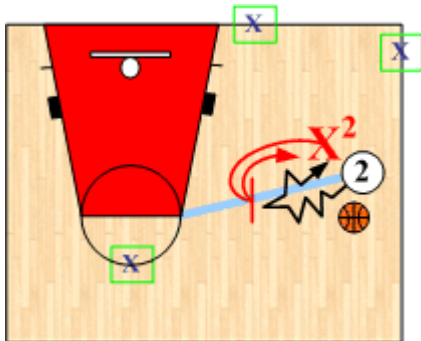
When guarding a player on the wing, whoever gets to the block first will win the battle. If the defender gets to the block first, the dribbler is forced in a difficult shot from behind the backboard or into a secondary trap zone. However, if the offensive player reaches the block first, it will allow them access to the backboard for an easy shot.



When guarding a ball handler on the wing, the defender must force the dribbler below the block. To do this, the defender must stay down and push the dribbler to the baseline pushpoint.

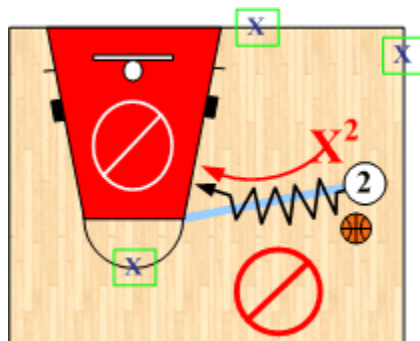
**CAUTION**  
Never allow the dribbler to drive above the block to the basket.

## 3. Wing Middle Penetration: Protecting the Elbow



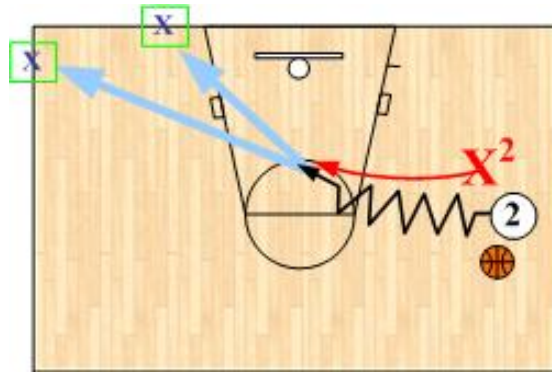
**Protect the Elbow.** When a wing tries to drive into the middle, immediately protect the “Elbow” and turn the dribbler back toward the sideline. Whenever possible try to take a charge.

If the defender is unable to turn the dribbler back to the sideline, the defender should beat the ball handler to the elbow and push to top of circle pushpoint.

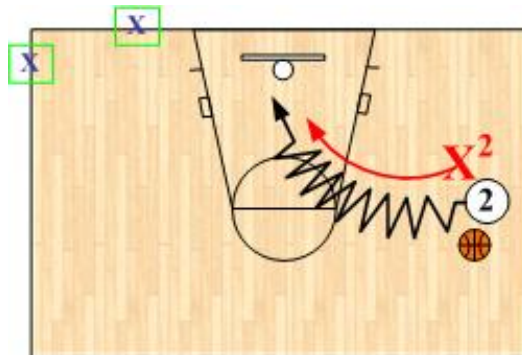


**CAUTION:** The defender should NEVER allow a ball handler to penetrate below the free throw line into the three second area. Nothing good ever happens. It's all bad. It results in a lay up, short pull up shot jumper, drop pass to post, or kick out pass to spot up shooters.

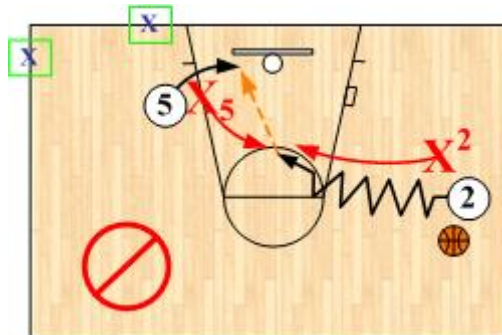
#### 4. Red Zone Penetration Adjustments:



If the wing drives into the three second area, the defender should push them across the three second area to the corner or baseline pushpoint keeping both hands up near the shoulders in the martial arts “Strike” position.



Erasers: When the defender is beaten badly, it is best just to give up the shot and rebound. Do NOT foul. Driving shots down the middle are not easy. Even if the shot is successful, all you have to do is score on the ensuing offensive possession to cancel it out, and begin defense anew.



#### CAUTION

Do NOT rotate off a low post to help out on a drive. It is much more difficult to score on a driving shot the down middle than it is off a drop pass.

# “JAM”

## Attacking the Picked Up Dribble

Anytime a dribbler stops and picks up the dribble, the defender must immediately and aggressively attack and smother the ball. The defender should exert maximum pressure by crowding the opponent and tracing (following) the ball with both hands. Force the opponent into making a bad pass or, better yet, taking a valuable time out.



- Immediately and aggressively attack the ball when the dribbler picks up dribble.
- Smother the ballhandler by crowding and straddling the ball handler's pivot foot.
- Force the ball handler to pivot away from the basket in order to protect the ball.
- Trace the ball with both hands in order to disrupt the passer's vision and concentration.
- Pressure the opponent hard, but do not foul.

## Taking an Offensive Charge

Whenever possible, defenders should try to draw an offensive charge. Anticipating and taking an offensive charge is a really big play (RBP) in basketball. It not only takes away a potential basket and creates an offensive turnover but it also assesses the offensive player with an additional penalty of a personal foul. When taking a charge, it is important to try to establish good defensive position by squaring up before the ball handler can get into a shooting motion, preferably outside the three second area. In the case when a blocking foul is called the ball handler will not receive any free throws (unless in the bonus).



In taking a charge it is very important to eliminate injuries. Players should be taught to absorb contact by executing a shoulder roll. If, the defender remains rigid and does not give on contact, injuries to one or both players are likely to occur.

To perform a shoulder roll, on contact, players must first lower their center of gravity by sitting down. Then, roll over using the back of their shoulder, while leaning their head to one side and tucking their chin into their neck.

In taking an offensive charge, players should be able to roll over backwards and bounce right back up on their feet using a shoulder roll with either shoulder.

By knowing how to properly take a charge it not only prevents injuries, but, more importantly, players are more likely to take charges during the game.

### CAUTION

Players should never roll on their neck or head.



## In Review

1. Ball pressure is the single most important element of team defense.
2. To be successful, players must possess a working knowledge of the basic defensive concepts and fundamentals.
3. "On Ball" defensive fundamentals are comprised of three basic components: Pressuring and attacking the player with the ball, containing a dribbler and attacking the picked up dribble.
4. Pressuring the ball handler makes dribbling and passing more difficult, and increases the chances of an offensive mistake.
5. When guarding a player with the ball, the defender should attack and take away the "Triple Threat" options by forcing the opponent into dribbling.
6. The defenders should influence ballhandlers to the closest sideline or baseline pushpoint. In keeping the ball out of the middle of the court ("Red Zone"), it not only reduces the offensive operating area, but it also creates helpside defense.
7. On dribble penetration, it is important that the defender protect the "Elbows" and "Blocks". Do not allow the dribbler penetration into the three second area.
8. Defenders should constantly anticipate and immediately attack any player that picks up their dribble.
9. Defenders must have a hand up and contest every shot. Since shooters know where the ball is going as soon as it leaves their hand, they must be boxed out.
10. Taking a charge is a really big play in basketball. However, in taking a charge, players need to be taught to absorb contact by tucking their chin in and executing a shoulder roll.

### "On Ball" Defense Terminology

**Back** – A quick, short hop backwards with both feet to build cushion and neutralize any offensive move.

**Ball** – Pressuring the player with the ball.

**Block** – Free throw buffer area marked on the lane lines near the basket.

**Elbow** – Area on the court where the free throw line and lane line meet.

**Jam** – Attacking the picked up dribble.

**Push** – Containing the dribbler.

**Sprint Release** – Sprinting ahead and reassuming a "Push" position when beaten off the dribble.

**Triple Threat** – An offensive stance where the player can shoot, dribble or pass.

# Skills & Drills

Be creative and design your own break down drills to fit your needs and player abilities. Creating drills and plays are one of the joys of coaching basketball. Break down drills not only teach proper execution and footwork, but they are also great for conditioning players. During the season, review the breakdown drills as needed.

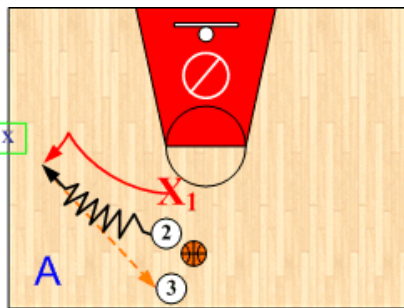
Basketball skills and techniques require active learning. Therefore, to be effective, basketball skills must be learned and practiced at game speed. In addition, motor learning demands active and purposeful participation on the part of the players. Repetition is a must. The greater the number of times nerve impulses are sent over the nerve pathways, the more firmly established they become until what has been practiced becomes automatic or a habit. Correct execution and footwork are very important. Recognize mistakes and correct them immediately. Bad habits can be practiced as well as good ones. Therefore, it is imperative that players build good habits from the start. Motor learning also requires visualization and mental practice, and is directly dependent upon physical conditioning.

## TEACHING DRILL #1: On Ball Defense

This Half court drill is designed to introduce players to the proper footwork and techniques required to successfully guard a player with the ball. The On Ball drill is a one on one drill consisting of three phases: Ball, Push and Jam. First demonstrate and explain the drill. Next walk the players through drill, and then go live (game speed).

### Basic Three – Sideline Push

*Taking Away the Triple Treat Options*

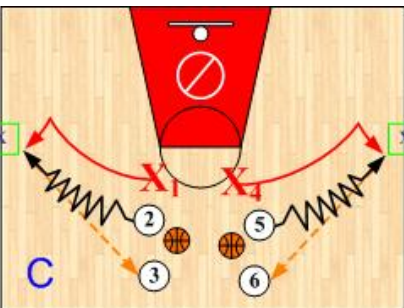


**BALL** – Defender X1 assumes a wide "Nose on Chest" defensive stance with both hands up taking away the shot and pass options and forcing the ball handler O2 into dribbling. O2 fakes shots, passes and jab steps as the defender pressures with active hands.

**PUSH** - When O2 dribbles, defender X1 maintains a low "Nose on Chest" stance with lead hand tracing ball on dribble. X1 protects the "Elbows" and pushes O2 toward sideline pushpoint.

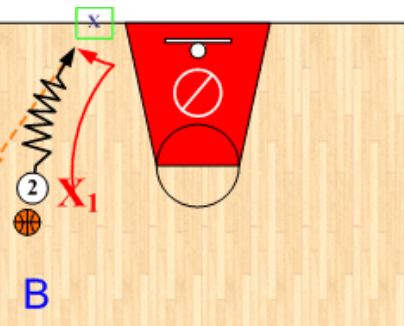
**JAM** - If dribbler O2 picks up the ball, defender X1 smothers and "Traces" the ball with both hands (apply hard pressure without fouling).

**ROTATION:** Players rotate from offense to defense to the end of the line. Be sure to conduct the drill using both the right and left sides of the court.



### Basic Three – Two Lines

Once the players have a working knowledge of the basic three on ball fundamentals, they can be practiced using two lines. To insure proper footwork on both sides of the court, players rotate from offense to defense to the end of the opposite line.



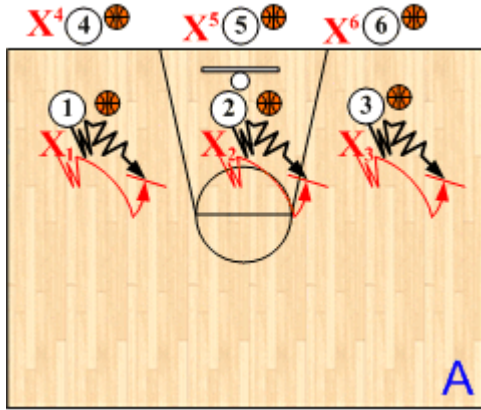
### Basic Three – Baseline Push

Same as above drill with the exception that the offensive players start off on wing. When the ball handler drives to the basket, the defender protects the "Block" and forces the dribbler outside the baseline push point.

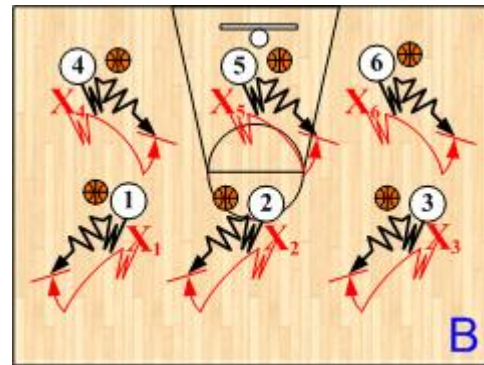
Players rotate from offense to defense to the end of the line.

## Teaching Drill #1B: On Ball Defense - Line Drill.

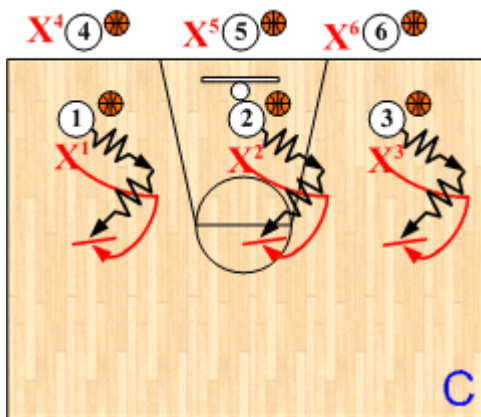
The proper On Ball defense footwork and techniques can also be introduced and taught in large groups by using an “On Ball” defense mass drill. Players pair up and form lines on the baseline. Assistant coaches assume positions where they can check and correct player's techniques if needed.



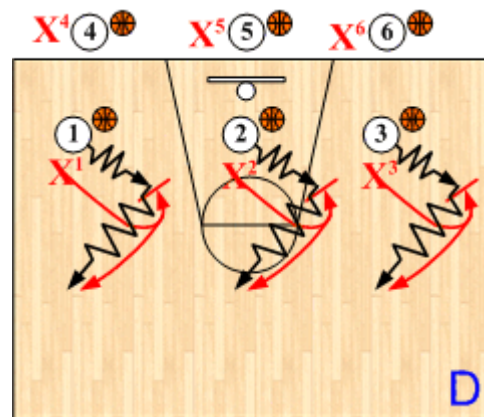
**Phase 1. Basic 3.** Offensive players take 2 or 3 jab steps prior to dribbling to practice the footwork and active hands of defenders. The offensive players then take three dribbles with the defenders assuming a “Push” stance. They then pick up the ball and the defenders immediately “Jam” the picked up dribble.



Once the first group goes, the next group starts. Continue down the court. Offensive and defensive players switch roles on return trip down the court.



**Phase 2: Drop Steps.** On the second time down court, after taking 2-3 jab steps, the offensive players take three dribbles and then reverses direction for three dribbles prior to picking up the ball. The defenders changes direction by executing a drop step.



**Phase 3: Sprint Release.** As the offensive player initiates their dribble, the defender sprints ahead and turns the dribbler by physically blocking the ballhandler’s path. Defender continues to “Block” and turn the dribbler down the length of the court.

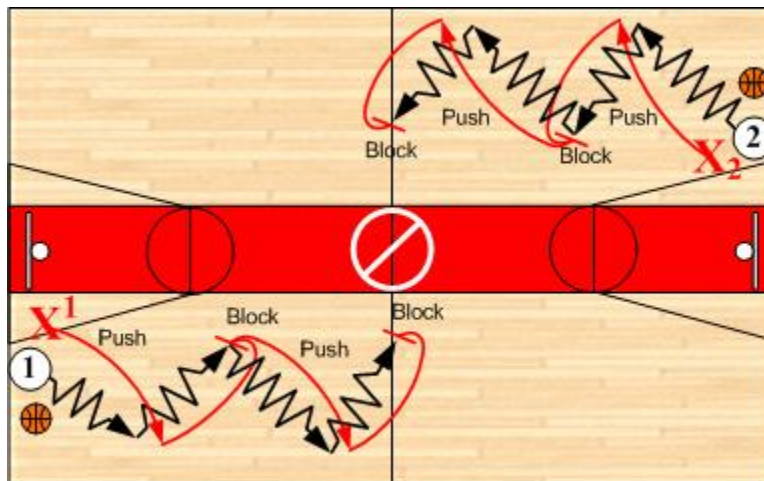
The second group of players starts as soon as the first continues down the court.

### Teaching Tip

Always introduce a skill or drill one day and refine it the next.

## Teaching Drill #2: 1-on-1 "Block & Turn "

This full court one on one non-competitive drill introducing defenders to protecting the middle of the court or red zone by blocking and turning a dribbler. The offensive player advances the ball up the court forcing the defender to protect the middle. The defender blocks and turns the dribbler back toward the sideline.

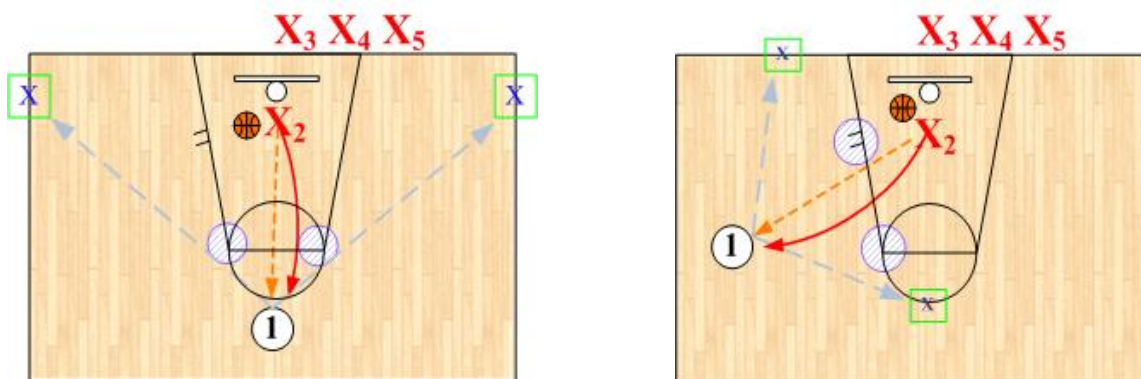


With most zigzag full court defensive dribbling drills the defenders work hard in constantly turning the dribbler. This requires expenditure of large amounts of physical and mental energy on the part of the defender. However, with disruptive pressure, the defender alternates blocking and pushing allowing the defender to effectively contain the dribbler without expending large amounts of energy. Players return on the opposite side of the court changing offensive and defensive roles. The dribbler's speed and intensity should increase as players learn the drill.

## Teaching Drill #3: 1-on-1 Live "Three Up"

This is a live (game speed) one on one drill. It is a very competitive drill that incorporates all of the on ball defensive fundamentals. To begin with, an offensive player takes a position at the top of the circle and a defender with the ball starts out under the basket. Other defenders line up along the baseline. The defender rolls the ball out to the offensive player with medium speed. The defender then quickly closes out to the offensive player. The offensive player picks up the ball and goes live one on one against the defender. Play continues until the offense scores or the defense gets the ball at which time the offensive player remains and a new defender steps on the court.

**Scoring:** If the defender makes a defensive stop they get a point. If the offensive player scores, a point is taken away from the defender. A cumulative score is kept by each individual defender by adding or subtracting points according to whether the offense scores or not. When a defender gets to plus three points or "Three Up", they get to go to offense and a new game is started. However, if a defender gets to a minus three points or "Three Down" they are out of the competition. The objective of the offensive player is to eliminate all of the defenders.

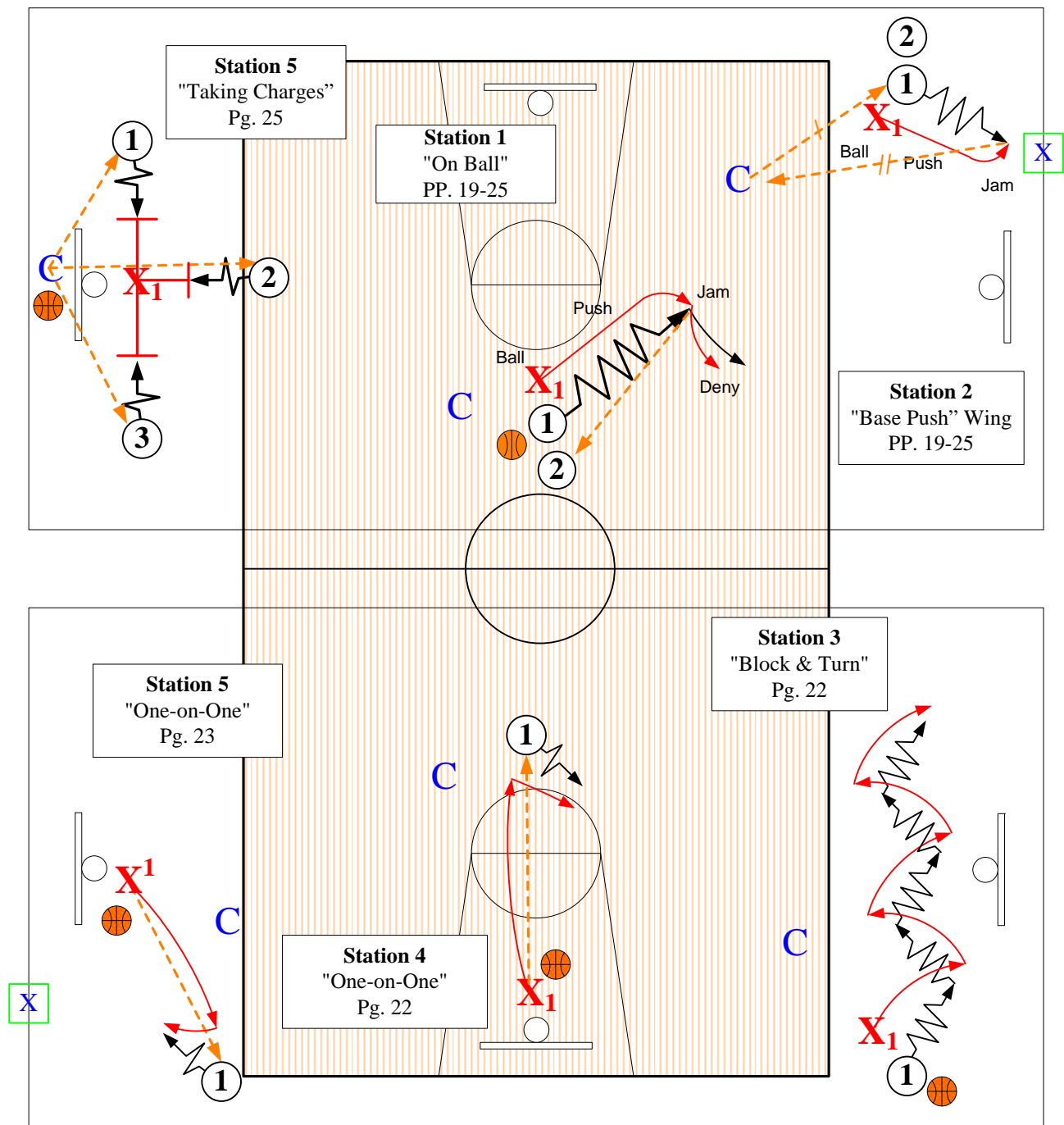


**NOTE:** In addition to deploying and practicing all of the on ball defensive fundamentals, the defender must close out quickly on balance. If the defender closes out to the ballhandler too fast, the offensive player can just pump fake and easily drive to the basket. When the defender closes out too slowly, it will result in an open shot.

**Drill Variations:** Station the offensive player to start the drill on a wing. Defenders must close out taking away the middle influencing the offensive player to a corner or baseline pushpoint. Defenders should be determined and work hard to protect both the block and elbow. Be sure to use both sides of the court.

# Circuit Training 1: "Individual Fundamentals "

## On Ball Defense



### Total On Ball Defensive Fundamentals Review

One-on-One break down drills with passers. Use both right and left sides of basket. Using multiple stations works well for reviewing and reinforcing on ball fundamentals as well as for large group teaching and training.

# *hooptactics*

Thank you for taking the time to preview this chapter of  
Advanced Basketball Defense.

We are confident that Advance Basketball will not only  
enhance your defensive knowledge and expertise; but will,  
also, become an invaluable reference for years to come.

Order your own person copy now:

<http://www.cybersportsusa.com/hooptactics/abdbook.asp>

