

# WINNING HOOPS



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Coaching Advice To Help You Build A Winning Program

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## 1-2-1-1 Full-Court Defense Controls Tempo, Breeds Aggressive Play

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GAME-LONG, season-long, career-long, our team is going to run a press. That's the identity of our team. Everyone knows that we run a press, and our whole program believes in the system.

Some coaches believe that full-court pressure defense leaves a team too vulnerable once the offense breaks mid-court. We've found, as have several other championship teams,

that you can extend the floor defensively with full-court pressure and still get back in time to protect the basket.

Few things in this game can be controlled by a coach, but tempo is one of them. Every coach can decide whether to go slow or fast depending on the matchup and what gives you the best chance to win. Our team has chosen to use full-court pressure defense to speed the game up. But we can also employ other pressing defenses to slow down the pace of the game.

### WHY PRESS?

Full-court pressure provides numerous advantages. These include:

- ✓ **Exhausting Your Opponent.** No player likes to be pressed. Also, when pressing a more highly skilled opponent, an aggressive team can gain newfound confidence. The press can also be a momentum shifter. A steal and quick basket can help turn things in your team's favor.
- ✓ **Aggressive Play.** Pressing teams tend to play all facets of the game with the same aggressiveness and are better conditioned. Like tempo, hard, aggressive play is something that you can control as a coach.
- ✓ **Disruption Of Offense.** Pressing takes your opponent's offense out of sync. There will be indecision on whether to

attack the press or pull the ball back out, and a press offense doesn't always flow easily into a half-court offense.

For example, when a team is playing fast, players will take shots that they don't practice. And because they aren't running their offense, your team begins to dictate the way the game is played. This also helps reduce the number of

fouls called when your team is in its half-court defense.

The beauty of the press is that if your opponent attacks the pressure, it is agreeing to play at your tempo. If your opponent is patient and doesn't want to run, then you haven't given up anything. Either way, it's a win-

win situation for your team.

✓ **Different Style.** When a known pressing team is on the schedule, a coach must spend valuable practice time working on getting the ball inbounds and up the floor. Time spent in practice to prepare for a different style detracts

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*"You can extend the floor defensively with full-court pressure and still get back in time to protect the basket..."*

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*Continued on page 6*

## Play of the Day

Find out how to get everyone on your roster more playing time and still win more games this season! Check it out on page 9!

—Michael Podoll, Managing Editor

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from the offensive and defensive things that a coach would otherwise want to cover.

✓ **Come-Back Ability.** When a hard-playing team is down by a lot of points, there aren't a whole lot of things a coach can do differently to get back into the game. The full-court press, however, is one of those "go-to" schemes in your coaching toolbox. On several occasions our team has been down by 20 at half and come back to win.

✓ **Score In Bunches.** There's no such thing as an "easy score," but pressure defense creates opportunities to score, with the chance for another opportunity after every made basket.

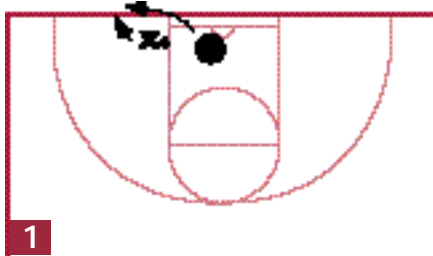
✓ **Creates Turnovers "In The Red Zone."** To use a football analogy, we like to pressure a team on its 10-yard line, when it has 90 yards still to march. If we can intercept the pass or pick up a loose ball, we might be in, or near, the paint for an easy score. That's why our staff believes in gambling *away* from our opponent's basket. If a team beats your press, your players still have the length of the court to come from behind, try to flick the ball away and, if they're able to slow your opponent down, reset into a half-court defense.

✓ **Builds Chemistry.** Pressing requires you to use your bench. Even if your team is not as athletic, you can effectively press if your squad is well-conditioned and if you're willing to use three or four players off your bench. Substitutions help develop younger players while avoiding foul trouble. Full-court pressure is a great way to exhaust opponents while building team chemistry at the same time.

## BUILDING THE 1-2-1-1 DEFENSE

Our team runs many different defenses, but one of the main weapons is the 1-2-1-1 full-court press. Below are some of the key personnel decisions, responsibilities and placements for the 1-2-1-1 full-court press.

**DIAGRAM 1: Post Player On the Ball (X4).** X4 must be positioned to defend before the inbound passer takes the ball. This is critical, as the



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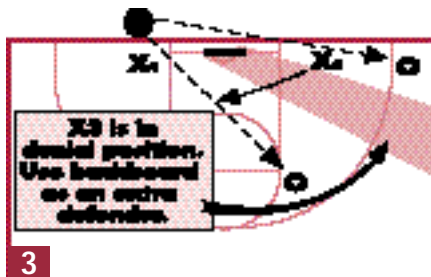
best way to beat a press is to inbound the ball before the defense is ready. Instead of lining up directly in front of the inbounder, X4 lines up on the passing hand of the inbounds passer and first must be sure not to give up the full-court touchdown pass.

X4 reads the passer's eyes, yells to distract and never jumps. Once the ball is put into play, X4 "helps" the referee by loudly counting out the seconds in hopes of a five-second call. When the ball is in the air, X4 yells "ball" to alert teammates.



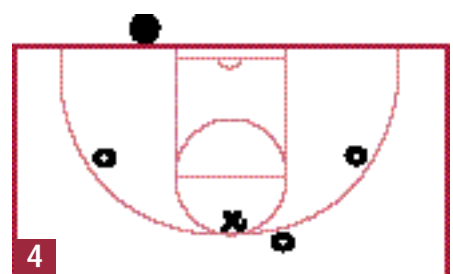
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**DIAGRAM 2: Shooting Guard (X2).** X2 is usually your next quickest defender (after the point guard). Located in the interceptor position, this player stands one stride off the passing lane and defends the first receiver to the ball side. If the receiver vacates the area, X2 backs up to identify the next closest receiver and prepares for the interception.



3

**DIAGRAM 3: Small Forward (X3).** The offside defender, X3 is positioned inside the lane in a denial position. X3's primary responsibility is the first receiver to the weak side. X3 plays the passing angle and uses the backboard as the extra defender.



4

**DIAGRAM 4: Point Guard (X1).** X1's first responsibility is to protect from the long pass until the post (X5) can get back. Once X5 can cover, X1's responsibility is for the next available receiver.

If the receiver instead heads near the sideline at half-court, X1 floats back instead of being positioned in the middle as shown in Diagram 4. X1 should be given great freedom to read and react.



5

**DIAGRAM 5: Post (X5).** X5 is your most intimidating post player who is most effective at stopping 2-on-1 situations, blocking shots and taking charges. While most of the action is up front, this player is the one defender you can count on to protect the basket. X5 maintains responsibility for the deepest offensive player.

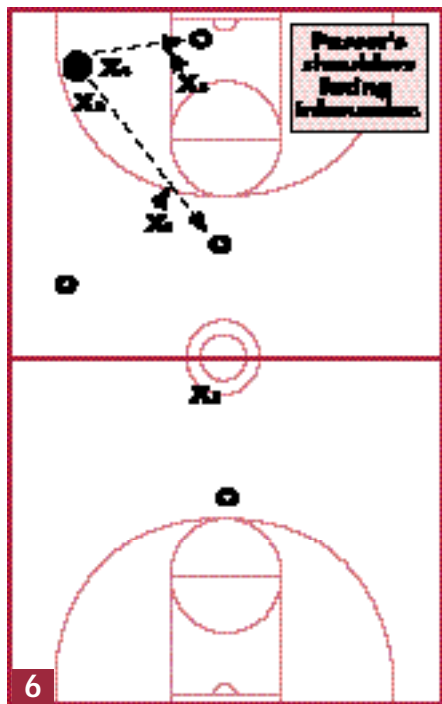
When the ball goes into the trap, X5 looks cross-court and anticipates the pass. As the ball comes down the floor and the press has been beaten, X5 moves toward the ball, but does not match up. Instead, X5 tries to slow things down as teammates pursue from the rear.

## TRAPPING — SPRINT IN AND OUT

Despite your best efforts, spacing will not permit a trap every time. Don't attempt a trap if the players can't get into position in time to successfully trap.

Here are 7 rules on trapping that our defensive players follow:

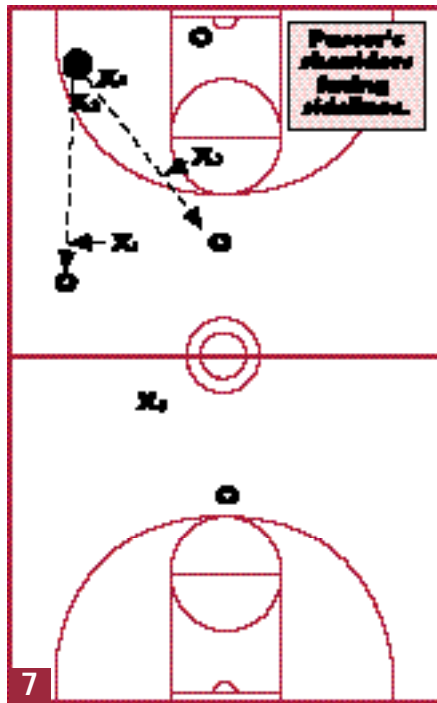
1. Immediately trap the player receiving the ball on the inbound pass.
2. Trappers come together to form a "T" with their feet.
3. Come into the trap with hands up to take away the direct pass.
4. Talk in the trap — be loud and physical.
5. Don't reach in — let the officials see your hands.
6. If the ball handler puts the ball above his or her head, the trappers must step in and take away his or her space to maneuver.
7. If the ball handler is in a triple-threat position and tries to split the trap, the trappers must retreat a step and look to take a charge.



**DIAGRAM 6: Shoulders Facing Inbounder.**

As shown in Diagrams 6 and 7, reading the offensive player's shoulders in the trap will indicate the likely passing option, thus telling defenders how to position their trap. Interceptors should split the receivers.

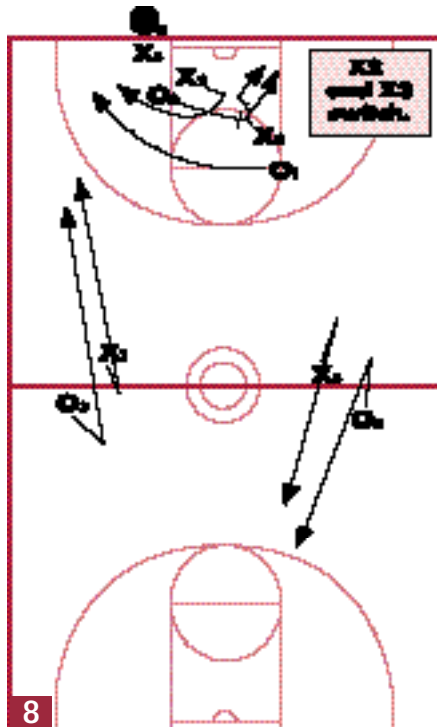
The first thing the wing defender must do is take away the direct pass. Second, take away the sideline by placing his or her foot out of bounds (stepping on the line can result in a



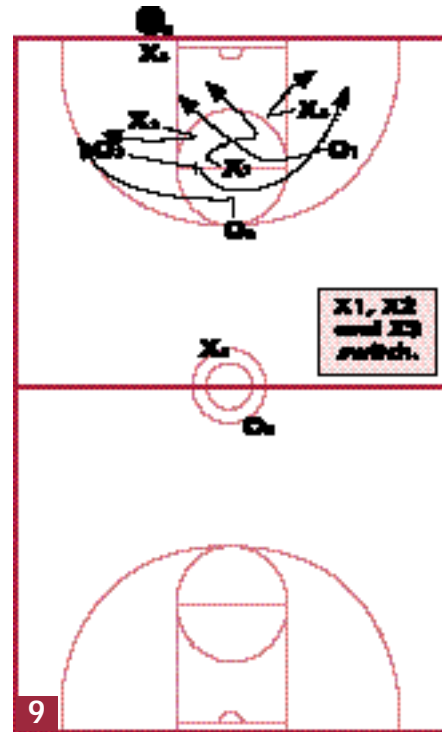
**DIAGRAM 7: Shoulders Facing Sideline.**

blocking foul). Defenders must not allow a direct pass up the floor, dribbling up the sideline or the splitting of a trap. If the player splits the trap, it's the second defender's responsibility to step up and take the charge.

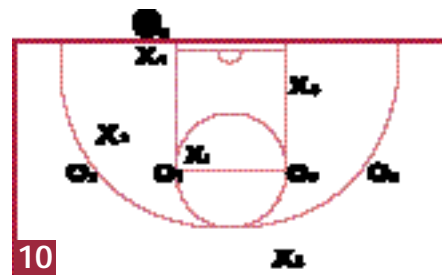
Diagrams 8 to 11 illustrate typical responsibilities for countering offensive players' movements.



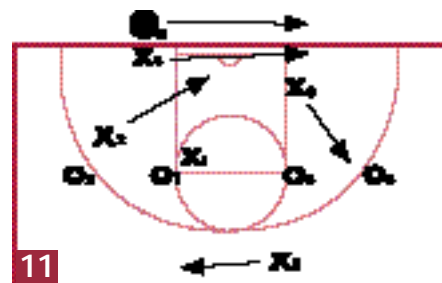
**DIAGRAM 8: 2-Up.**



**DIAGRAM 9: 3-Up.**



**DIAGRAM 10: 4-Up.**

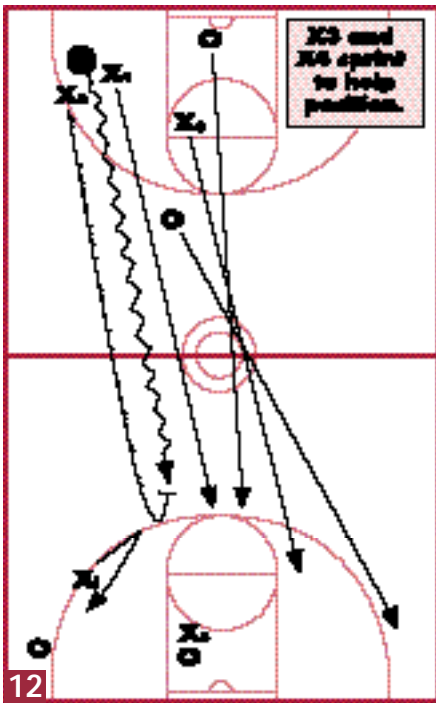


**DIAGRAM 11: Runs The Baseline.**

### TRANSITION DEFENSE

In transition, players must pivot and sprint quickly out of the trap to head downfloor. The wing players should run straight lines, and pursuers should come from behind and try to flick the ball away from the dribbler and ahead to a teammate for a turnover. Again, X1's role is critical. X1 must first help X5 protect the basket, and must be ready to help if the retreating wing players can't recover to the wing.





**DIAGRAM 12: X3 and X4 Sprint to Help, X2 or X4 Pursue.**

Our team always drops back into a man-to-man defense. If the ball is passed down the floor and the wing defender can't cover, X1 covers and the perimeter players account for one another. Generally, X4 sprints and finds the trailing post player.

### GAME-TIME PERFORMANCE, ADJUSTMENTS

You can keep a defensive game chart (see chart at right) to see where things are working and where your

## RULES OF PRESSURE

Some effective rules of pressure for our team include:

- **X1 Hangs Back; All Others Go To The Boards.**
- **Don't Foul.**
- **Control The Dribbler.**
- **Use Active Trapping.**
- **Come Together On Switches.**
- **One And Done.** Once your opponent is clearly breaking the press, get back on defense.

press is being beaten. As shown, this chart tracks stats such as where on the floor the ball was inbounded to vs. various presses, where the second pass was made, etc. It also charts results such as offensive possessions, scores, missed shots, turnovers, fouls, offensive rebounds and made 3-pointers.

Once you understand how a team is breaking the press, you can make adjustments. Force your opponent to come up with an alternative way to break your pressure.

### COMMITMENT REQUIRED

Full-court pressure defense is not for everyone. There are three things to consider before taking it on.

1. You must spend time on it in practice. Our team runs full-court

reaction drills, three-possession drills and trap-and-pursuit drills.

2. You have to sell it to your players and keep them from getting discouraged when an opposing team breaks the press and gets a layup.
3. It's not pretty and appears helter-skelter or out of control. It can be more challenging as a coach to let your players go a bit as opposed to a slow, disciplined and methodical game plan.

An aggressive full-court pressure is very much a part of our team's identity. No team can do everything well and you must choose which things that you're going to work at and excel. Full-court pressure is one of those few things that our coaching staff has decided to commit our program to.

Date		<u>Jan. 9th</u>		UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN <b>MILWAUKEE</b> BASKETBALL			
Half		<u>First</u>					
Opponent		<u>State</u>					
Defense	Offensive Possessions	Offensive Scores	Missed Shots	Turnovers	Fouls	Off Rebounds	Made 3 Point Shot
Full-Court Zone - 55	/// //	///	/// /	//	/	/	//
3/4-Court Zone - 45	///	/	/	/			
Drop-Back Zone - 15							
Full-Court Man - 50	///	//	/	/	/		
Half-Court Man - 30							
Trans	///	//	/	/			
55U							
	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	4-Man Deflections	
In front	/	///	/// /		/		
Overtop		///	///				
	Middle	Sideline	Inbound	Dribble			
2nd Pass	///	Skip //	///	///			