

12 ABSOLUTES OF DEFENSIVE AND OFFENSIVE BASKETBALL

Regardless of the style of basketball you play-full court, half court, motion offense, or a structured continuity type of offense, man defense, zone or match up, I believe there are 12 ABSOLUTES (6 defensive and 6 offensive) you need to accomplish at both ends of the floor if you wish to be successful in that phase of the game. I believe these ABSOLUTES need to be clearly communicated to your players and they need to learn these ABSOLUTES and be able to tell you these without hesitation as they apply to your system or style of play.

DEFENSIVE ABSOLUTES

- **NO EASY BASKETS** whether in transition or the half court. Make the opponent work and earn everything they get.
- **NO 2ND SHOTS** of any kind. Too many good defensive efforts are wasted because of failure to get the defensive rebound. This can be actually demoralizing in many situations.
- **NO UNCONTESTED SHOTS**- this goes back to #1 somewhat in that we don't want to allow easy and free looks at the basket. Don't allow mediocre shooters to become good ones because you don't contest the shot.
- **NO PENETRATION** into that paint/post area. This means no penetration off the pass as well as the dribble. When the ball enters the middle of the floor and in particular the post area there are too many options available for offense. Try to limit the things they can do by keeping it out of the middle. If it does get in there then attack the ball and dig it out as quickly as possible. Offensive rebounding is also a way a team can get the ball in this area and we have already said in #2 that can't happen.
- **PRESSURE THE BASKETBALL** as much as possible. #3 certainly implies pressure on the shot. Pressure the dribble, the pass, and the catch as well in order to take the individual or team out of their comfort area. Making the people dribble, pass or catch going away from the basket is a good rule of thumb. How much you are able to pressure may vary from game to game or year to year depending on your personnel, but going back to #1 where the opponent must earn everything they get is critical. Make them work!
- **COMMUNICATION** kind of pulls it all together. It lets you know that your players understand what it is you are trying to accomplish. It creates a team cohesiveness and promotes unselfish play. It says you are in this together and it takes everyone doing their part to be successful.

OFFENSIVE ABSOLUTES

- **FUNDAMENTALLY SOUND** in the basic skills of the game of basketball. This means the ability to dribble, pass, catch, shoot and rebound the ball without mistakes. It also means the ability to cut and screen, and space yourself properly. If you cannot execute the fundamentals of the game it makes no difference what you try to do offensively, you won't be

successful. John Wooden has always said you need to “quickly and properly execute the fundamentals of the game.”

- **GET EASY BASKETS** whenever possible. This would apply to both transition basketball and half court basketball. This can have a devastating effect on the opponent if you are able to get easy baskets time and time again and then they have to work to get any thing at the other end of the floor.
- **SHOT SELECTION** is a critical importance. Take the shots you want, when you want, where you want, and who you want to take them. Players need to know their roles, accept their roles and fulfill there roles to the best of their ability. Basketball is not an equal opportunity sport!
- **OFFENSIVE REBOUNDING** can make up for a lot short comings. Crash the boards with aggression and get at least 50% of all offensive rebounds available to you. It will have a demoralizing effect on the opponent. Rebounding is how you win championships.
- **GET THE BALL INSIDE** for the higher percentage shot. The obvious way to get the ball inside is to feed the post. However, driving the ball to the basket, getting into the lane area in transition, passing the ball to a cutter cutting through the lane, offensive rebounding are other ways to get the ball inside. All are excellent scoring opportunities that put constant pressure on the defense.
- **MAKE YOUR FREETHROWS** whenever you get to the free throw line. Many coaches make it a goal to make more free throws that the opponent gets. There is nothing wrong with that, but regardless of whether you are able to do that or not, you have to make your free throws when you get to the line. It's been said that 20% to 25% of a teams scoring opportunities come at the free throw line. This is especially true at “crunch time” of the game.

These **ABSOLUTES** are not met to be a system of play. They are meant to guide your thinking as you put together your system or style of play at both offensive and defensive ends of the floor. As I have studied and watched teams and programs play over the years, it has become apparent to me that the successful programs, regardless of “style” incorporate the above **ABSOLUTES** into their offensive and defensive thinking and the result has been good, sound, successful basketball.

Wolves Basketball Teaching Progression:

Motion Concepts:

A. 4 cuts while moving without the basketball:

1. **Basket cut** – call out cut and carry to the rim.
 - Quick cuts are best for getting by good defenders. Step by defender while making the pass.
2. **Back cut**
 - If defense is denying you the ball, step toward the ball to take up space between you and the defender. Show your fist and back cut hard to the rim calling out your cut.
3. **Fill cut**
 - Keep the top spots filled at all times. Set up the fill cut by V-cutting into the spot.
4. **Replacement cut**
 - If defense loses vision with you because he is watching the ball after you passed, take 2 hard steps at the defender and fill the spot you just vacated with proper shot preparation. Catch facing looking for a 3.

B. 5 actions after moving the basketball:

1. **Basket cut**
 - a. The corner stone to our motion offense – automatic if the defense does not jump to the ball.
 - b. Cut straight to the rim and put a body on the defender to seal your path.
2. **Screen away – Be a second cutter off your own screens!**
 - a. If your screeners are great shooters they can get excellent shots by being good screeners.
 - b. Must be able to read the defense and take advantage of when your man gives help on defense. Knowing how to shape up can get you easy shots.
 - c. Set up screen with 2 hard basket cut steps, cut if off and find the defense to screen. Make a hit!
 - d. Quick stop into the screen with a wide base while your elbows are tucked in at your side. Lower and Wider is always better.
 - e. Hold the screen for at least a 2 count.
 - f. Call the cutters name and tell him to “wait.”
 - g. Sprint to set your screen with the proper angle.
 - i. Downscreen angle – Screeners back to the ball
 - ii. Flare Screen – Screeners back to the corner of the floor
 - iii. Back screen – Screeners back to be facing the basket
 - iv. Ball screen – shoulders parallel to the sideline

3. Replacement cut
 - a. Same as above
4. Receive a screen – (Cutter)
 - a. Three most important rules for a cutter is to wait, wait and wait.
 - b. Read the defender instead of watching the ball. How the defender guards the screen will tell you what cut to make. Go slow.
 - c. Use deception: Change of speed, change of direction.
 - d. Defense chases you – curl cut if you can make a play at the rim. Otherwise, make a straight or hook cut.
 - e. Defense overplays the screen and tries to take it away, step toward the ball and back cut to the rim. Screener does not change angle of screen.
 - f. Defense jumps ballside of screen, call and out and turn your screeners shoulders to rescreen the defender and move right off the screeners back.
 - i. If defender goes over rescreen, fade to corner. Passer must take one hard dribble to the cutter to shorten pass.
 - ii. If defender goes under rescreen, move higher off screen. (shorten pass)
5. Seven cut into vacant post

C. 5 cuts used with down screen:

1. Straight cut – screener shapes to rim after screen.
2. Hook cut – screener makes read for shape up. (can go either way)
3. Curl cut – screener goes back to where he came from.
4. Back cut – screener goes back to where he came from.
5. Out / Fade – screener slips to rim after holding screen.

D. Flare Screens:

1. Passer takes one hard dribble to cutter
2. Screener slips to rim if his defender gives any help at all.
3. Screener fills the vacant spot on top where the passer was.
4. Defense goes over screen, cutter fades to corner
5. Defense goes under flare screen, cutter moves above screen toward the top. (shortens pass)
6. We like to run off the flare screen vs. backpedaling to shot preparation.
7. Screener's back must be facing the corner of the floor and set screen inside the elbow.
8. Cutter sets up screen with a basket cut. (two hard steps)

E. Back screens:

1. Screener can basket cut into a back screen, shaping up to 3 after his screen.
2. Screener can back screen out of post, shaping up to 3 after screen.
3. Rattle the defense's spine with screen and hold for a 2 count.
4. Only is truly affective if screener is a threat to shoot the 3. If not, flash to high post after screen.

Ball Screens:

1. Set ball screen with your shoulders square to the sideline. That gives the player receiving the ball screen the best possible angle to make a play.
2. Must take two hard dribbles past the ball screen to draw defense.
3. Must have a scoring mentality while using a ball screen.
4. Bigs that screen can roll into the post if they cannot shoot.
5. Bigs that can shoot have the option to pop to 3 if their defender stops the ball.



WOLVES REBOUNDING SEQUENCE

1. **3 v 0 offensive rebounding:** Coach shoots from 10' – 12' and three players are aligned above free throw line extended in each 1/3 of the court. On the shot players find the best “slice of the pie.” In doing so, they use a tap and swim technique. Rebound the ball with two hands, two feet, two cheeks, and snap the ball to their chin when captured and finish with a power shot. On the made basket the players sprint back for transition defense.
2. **3 v 3 (with air dummies) offensive rebounding:** Same procedure as above but now the offensive player needs to fight pressure from the air dummy block out. The key coaching point we add is to make sure the players go to a gap, not a back. In this phase a team could also work on keeping the ball alive. If you can't secure the rebound try to tap it out to keep the ball alive for your teammates.
3. **3 v 3 (air dummies) defensive rebounding:** On the shot players use their rebounding technique to block out the air dummies. They must hold the block out allowing the ball to bounce two times before pursuing to and capturing the ball. Make sure players keep their hands high (above shoulders) and use their assets. Once they have possession the best handler of the group comes to receive the outlet and the three player's transition into a fastbreak and finish.
4. **Scramble block out:** This is the same as above but now the defensive player is not allowed to block out the man in front of him. This encourages communication and incorporates help side rebounding techniques.
5. **Baseline trap and cover down wide blackout:** The ball is now moved to the baseline and trapped. The player who traps the ball needs to rotate back to find the man coming down the middle of the lane.