

Selecting Your Offence

by Heath Millar

As a Coach I love incorporating sets into my playbook to ensure that at any given time I can dictate to a certain degree who will be taken the next shot and where.

As a "Motion Coach" my predominant offence is either a 3 Out 2 In High/Low attack as used by 2008 NCCA Champion coach Bill Self from the Kansas Jay Hawks or a 4 Out 1 In motion adopting many of Rick Majerus' philosophies who achieved prominence at Utah University and currently coaches at St. Louis University.

One of the first things to consider when running sets is what alignment you wish to run your sets from:

Alignments:

5 Out

4 Out 1 In

3 Out 1 In

1-4

1-3-1

Box

2-3

I prefer to run set plays that start and finish in my motion alignment: 4 Out or 3 Out, this way if my team finishes the set with no got scoring opportunity we are now operating under our motion guidelines: i.e. pass and cut or screen away.

Whether running sets, continuity's, or a motion based offence there are certain principles that are universal to successful offence:

Spacing

How you need to space the court will depend on who you coach. Younger players will be spaced closer to the hoop to be near their shooting range, older players and adults will be anywhere from the 3pt line to 4 feet behind it.

No matter whether you are a "Power Game" coach that emphasises pounding the ball inside to a post player or a "Drive and Kick" coach who likes to give his guards room to drive and score or pass out to open receivers you must keep the key area clear for players to be able to penetrate the ball to the basket via pass inside or dribble.

Although a team sport, basketball is essentially played 1 on 1, a game within the game. No matter what you run only one player will end up shooting the ball, if the floor is spread players then have the space to create and take a shot.

Ball Reversal - Ball Movement

When you space the floor ball movement or reversal becomes so much more effective.

I like to see my team move the ball from one side of the court to the other at least twice before shooting.

Reversing the ball side to side makes the defence adjust and move. Players must adapt from on the ball, one pass away and two or more passes away. Basically this forces the defence to close out on the ball which is one of the toughest situations to defend in basketball as the defenders momentum is moving forward whilst the offence will suddenly explode forward.

Court Balance

Depending on what age you teach court balance will take on different meanings.

For youth players it might closely tie in with spacing in that you don't have all your players on one side of the court or inside the key.

For older teenagers to adults this could encompass having rebounding and transition balance at the end of the offence. For instance I will send three players to the offensive rebound, one player deep to cover the hoop and the last player to rove for the last rebound and pick up the outlet pass.

Player Movement

All good offences must have purposeful player movement which will occupy all defenders and make it harder for the defence to help on a scoring action. Player movement can consist of either cutting or screening or a combination of both.

Timing

Timing is the last ingredient to a successful offensive recipe. Spacing, Ball Reversal, Court Balance and Player Movement are less effective if players do not know when to cut, screen or stand still.

Most scoring actions are broken down to 1 v 1, 2 v 2 or 3 v 3 but the remaining players must time their action away from the ball to occupy their defenders and to be arriving into space at the correct time.

Suitability

When selecting an offence the question foremost in your mind should be "what is my team make up and who do we need taking the most shots?" When you figure this out you then need to figure out the following: What position on the court do they score best from? What type of shots are they? How do they best set up their shot, with the ball or without the ball?

Flexibility

All offenses must be flexible to adapt to other teams defensive philosophies and tactical adjustments.

Your offence should have different ways to enter or start the offence. What will you do if your offence can only be run with a pass to the wing but teams overplay the pass? You might run a backdoor cut but then what?

Your offence must always have counter options and allow the offence to read and react to the defence. Defences will adjust to scoring actions and your offence must be flexible enough to counter those adjustments.