

Defending Onball Screens

The Onball screen has been around a long time. In saying that, it has become a huge facet of international and domestic basketball of the past decade. The pick and roll can be a great weapon to add to an offensive attack as it can be extremely difficult to defend especially if you have players with well rounded fundamentals.

Apparently there are many way to skin a cat and the idiom runs true to defending onball screens. In a perfect world where your team trains more than twice a week you might drill all of the possible ways to defend the onball and decide how to attack the screen depending on who you are playing on the night or even who are the two offensive players using the screen. If you only have a couple of trainings a week you might want to choose two that fit your team's capabilities. Some examples:

Undersized Team: Trap, Switch. Small teams should be quick and have the ability to scramble and rotate out of traps, small team are also going to be mismatched against the oppositions inside players so switching might not prove to give you any more mismatches than you already have!

Big Team: Under, Push: Taller players have longer wingspans and might be able to go under screens whilst still being able to contest the jump shot. Larger players generally also don't have the footwork or agility abilities of smaller players and might struggle with getting over a screen. Larger players also bother shots and are harder to pass over, so forcing the onball to the splitline help might be a good idea.

Finally maybe you want a pack and pressure option. This way if you are trying to put pressure on the defence your onball screen philosophy fits and vise versa - Hand in glove theory

General Rules For Defending Onball Screens

The man defending the screener must be aware of his mans intentions so that he has time to communicate to his teammate that a screen is coming, how he will defend it and still allow enough time for the onball defender to adjust his position accordingly. i.e. - "Screen coming, get over!"

Over



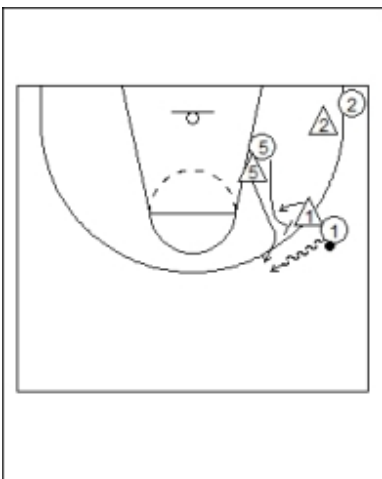
1 must change his foot position to take away the baseline drive and force the offence to use the screen.
5 steps out and "shows his numbers" with toes to the sideline, this will force the dribbler to drive horizontally and allow time for 1 to slip over the screen.
To fight over the screen 1 must "make himself skinny" by tucking his butt in and stepping over the screener.

Under



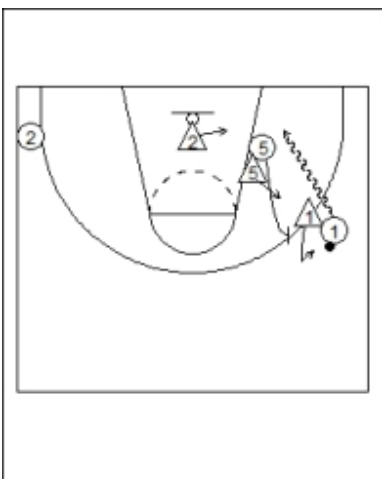
1 must change his foot position to take away the baseline drive and force the offence to use the screen.
 5 leans into the screener to "squeeze" him up the line to force the screen further from the basket.
 As the dribbler comes off the screen 1 runs under the screen and his teammate.

Switch



1 must change his foot position to take away the baseline drive and force the offence to use the screen.
 5 steps out early and "shows his numbers" when the dribbler puts the ball on the floor, 5 will jump into the dribblers path and switch onto him.
 1 needs to quickly jump to the ball and get between 5 and the basket to prevent to roll.

Push



1 must change his foot position to force the offence away from the screen towards the baseline.
 5 "shows below: to take away the straight line drive to the hoop, but he does not switch.
 The splitline defender will now help and recover or trap depending on your team defensive rules on a baseline drive.

Trap



1 must change his foot position to take away the baseline drive and force the offence to use the screen.
 5 will jump out as 1 dribbles off the screen and must not let the dribbler turn the corner and drive to the hoop.
 1 must fight over the screen and trap with 5 not allowing the dribbler to split the double team.
 The splitline defenders will now help and zone off the key to stop any roll from 5.

Guidelines on Implementing Onball Screen Defensive Tactics

Use "Over" when:

The ball carrier is a good shooter.

The offence is not using the screen correctly - i.e. the dribbler is leaving a gap for the defence to slide through.

Use "Under" when:

The ball carrier is not a shooter.

The screen is outside scoring range. When the offence is a great driver of the ball.

Use "Switch" when:

The screen is being set and used by similar sized players or no offensive mismatch will be gained from switching players.

When the shot clock is low and the offense will be unable to take advantage of the mismatch.

Use "Push" when:

The weakside is overloaded giving you 2-3 players in help position.

The offence is setting a screen for the purpose of reversing the ball rather than looking to score.

Use "Trap" when:

The shot clock is low.

When you are behind late in a game.

When you know the ball carriers are not strong passing and/or dribbling.