

Coaching Clinic Notes – Coach Robert Jones, North State University

Session Focus: Defensive Philosophy & Pick-and-Roll Coverages

Introduction & Defensive Identity

Coach Robert Jones opened with energy and humor, quickly transitioning into pride in his team's **defensive identity**, consistently ranked top-50 nationally in field goal percentage defense. He stressed that **field goal percentage defense**—not points per game—is the most telling metric, as it's unaffected by tempo.

Key Defensive Pillars

1. **Transition Defense** – Prevent easy baskets in the open court.
 2. **Pick-and-Roll Defense** – Neutralize the most common offensive action.
 3. **Rebounding** – Secure possessions and complete defensive stops.
-

Pick-and-Roll Philosophy

- **Guard Rules:**
 - **Body up, body in, body over** — close space and force use of the screen.
- **Big Rules:**
 - **Be at the line of scrimmage and communicate early and loudly.**

Coach Jones stressed **toughness and effort** over complex schemes, using drills to develop habits and multiple-effort defensive plays.

Pick-and-Roll Coverages

1. Red (Trap)

- Primary coverage.
- Trapping the ball with high hands to the sideline.
- Especially effective at multiple levels when well-executed.
- Used in defending middle P&Rs and "double drag" actions.

2. Short

- Counter to teams using the short roll.
- Defender steps up to eliminate short roll; another player drops into help.

3. Drop

- Big starts at screen level and drops to contain the ball.
- If ball handler gets below the free throw line, a **peel switch** occurs.

4. Blue (Ice)

- Used on **side ball screens**.
- Forces the ball handler toward the sideline.
- Requires discipline, effort, and body positioning.

5. Switch

- Relies on the principles of **talk, touch, take**.

- Effective if personnel is versatile.
 - Reinforced with **dribble handoff switching drills**.
-

Drills & Reinforcement

- **Pick-and-Roll Toughness Drill** – Repetitive hedge and recover.
 - **Pick-and-Roll Medley Drill** – Rapid-fire execution of all coverages in sequence (Red, Blue, Drop, Switch).
 - **Echo the Call** – All 5 players must repeat the coverage to avoid breakdowns.
 - **“Weak” Call** – Used to dictate direction on flat middle screens.
-

Defending Actions & Formations

- **Middle Pick & Pop**: Use Red with a stunt to make shooters hesitate.
 - **Negative Side P&R**: “Take” comes from the low man.
 - **Three on the Side**: Utilize **triangle coverage** or **high tag** strategies.
 - **Roll to Replace**: Switch takes the replace, early tag support added.
 - **Four Around One**: Trap the slot screen and split backside with two-side defenders.
-

Zone Defense Adjustments

2-3 Zone

- **Inside Ball Screens**: Use Blue to force sideline drives and prevent overloads.
- **Outside Screens**: Adjust based on shooter; go over or under as needed.

3-2 Zone

- **Side Screens:** Call “side” to trigger help.
 - **Middle Screens:** Hedge aggressively to prevent wings from receiving passes.
-

Defensive Reinforcement in Practice

Coach Jones emphasized that their defensive system is **taught year-round**, with segmented focus on different coverages. **Red and Switch** are their primary man-to-man coverages.

Offensive Counter Strategies

Evaporating the Ice (vs. Blue Coverage)

- Use “**Spurs Action**” (pop + backdoor).
- Attack second side off **throwback DHO**.
- Attack the Ice if poorly executed.

Evaporating the Drop

- Use “**Gort Screen**” (re-screen for downhill driving lanes).

Vs. Switch

- Use **low ball screens** and staggered actions to create favorable mismatches.
- Called action: “**Switch Low**” opens up backside offense.

Vs. Double Drag Defense

- Blow up the first screen with a trap (“Red”) to disrupt the second action.

Additional Coaching Points

- **Communication:** Reinforced with playing time implications.
- **Monsterring the Post:** Trap from the low man—aggressive and loud.
- **Triangle Coverage:** Excellent for complex three-man actions.
- **Offense After a Trap:** Most guards can't hit the weak side corner—force tough passes.
- **Control via Repetition:** Repetition of reads builds control over defensive chaos.

Closing Thoughts

Coach Robert Jones closed by thanking the audience, acknowledging their commitment to improving as coaches, and reminding them that **discipline, effort, and communication** remain the pillars of elite defense.