Man-4-Man Full Court Pressure -- Run and Jump

Without question the first step is to develop a complete defensive philosophy for your team. This is the blueprint for how your team will play defense in all situations that may arise through the year. It should include man-to-man half court, full-court, man defense stunts, inbounds defenses sideline, under and backcourt, all your zone defense, trapping zones, full court zone presses, and defending inbounds. It is critical that you first establish an overall defensive philosophy before trying to apply it to any one defense.

Things you will need to consider in regards to teaching fundamental skills are basic footwork (including footwork and balance changes between slide and sprint defensive footwork), ball pressure, jumping in the direction of a pass on each pass, help position, defensive rotation on breakdowns, post defense, how to challenge shots, pressuring passing lanes, defensive rebounding, and communication on the court. These should all be included in your defensive philosophy and detailed in your teaching of man-to-man fundamentals.

Organizing your team after a made basket will require you to teach various types of pressure on the inbounds pass and who has safety coverage as well as various amount of pressure and the chances you will take with your full court pressure to force a turnover. I believe trapping must be taught only after you have mastered the fundamentals of hard full court pressure and your players have confidence they can pressure without getting beat and recover their positions when they are beaten of the dribble. Switching in full court pressure is not a value option unless you are playing a "run and jump" defense which I will describe shortly.

Here is a brief synopsis of how to structure the teaching of a full court man-to-man run and jump defense to give you ideas how to build full court structure through drills and what key points to focus on in your teaching.

Run and Jump is only an aggressive version of basic full court man-to-man pressure where players are allowed to jump the ball and rotate defensive assignments based on their experience and ability to read where an opportune time exists to create a steal or turnover. You can use the same progressions to build your regular pressure man-to-man defense just limited their ability to play run and jump as an option.

First, establish the basic rules of your defense. Here are the basic rules for the run and jump man-to-man full court defense.

1. The player on the ball must: (a) always force the dribble, (b) push the dribbler beyond their limit of control, and c) turn the dribbler as often as possible.

2. Help defenders must: (a) constantly adjust their ball-player (defensive triangle) relationship so that (penetration by the dribble or pass can be stopped by them in a help position when the player guarding the dribbler is beaten, and so they can execute jumps as often as possible when the proper conditions to jump present themselves), (b) jump only
when the dribbler is out of control and/or they turn their back to the court with no vision
down court (do not double team the ball), (c) always initiate the jump, by running full
speed to at the dribbler, and yelling JUMP or GO. The player guard the ball will not leave
the dribbler until the help defender yells JUMP.

3. All players involved in the run and jump, MUST rotate their positions away from the
jump, on all jumps, and recover to their new help positions as quickly as possible. (Only
in the two man run and jump rotation will the defensive player on the ball rotate toward
the jump).

**Second, teach the progression for the Run and Jump Full Court Press.** You cannot
be a good run and jump team unless your players solidly understand and can execute
basic 1 on 1 man defensive fundamentals. Teaching the run and jump is the second step
after you have taught your players how to be sound in basic man to man defense.

1. **Basic concepts of sound fundamental 1 on 1 defense include:**

   (a) The center of players mass must always be kept over their base of support.
   (Balance)

   (b) The center of gravity should remain on a constant horizontal plane, and should
   be as low as that of the offensive player they are guarding.

   (c) Teach each player that good defensive position means being in a position so
   that at any given moment in time they can react and move with equal quickness in
   any direction at any time, including challenging a shot attempt.

   (d) The hand and head of the defensive player should remain in the same vertical
   plane as the center of mass.

   (e) The hands should be positioned in a centralized position to the body versus the
   dribble, except when the dribbler is a threat to make a cross-over dribble. The
   hands should never be extended so as to break the body's balance.

   **Drills** that are effective for teaching this kind of footwork and balance **include** things like
   jumping rope, the 1 Step Defensive Slide Drill (to stop initial penetration step by
   attacking player), zig-zag drills (without and with hands), 14 Step drill (lateral sprint
   slides from sideline to sideline), wave drill, 1000 MPH recovery drill (teaching footwork
   between sprint and slide steps), Chase and Turn Drill (to recover and contain a sprinting
   player), tag games, and loose ball drills where one player becomes an attacker and the
   other a defender.

2. **Basic rules of the 1 on 1 Defense in the run and jump** (note these rules will differ
   only slightly from regular 1 on 1 defense)

   (a) Keep your balance at all times.

   (b) Keep your chin in front of the ball until you are ready to turn the dribbler, then
   get your chin clearly outside the ball until the dribbler turns their back.
(c) Play tight and aggressive at all times forcing the dribbler out of control.

(d) NEVER let the dribbler have the direct line to the basket off of penetration in the open court, but rather contain and push the dribbler on a line toward the help or jump defender.

It is best to teach 1 on 1 near the basket first, then extend to mid-court, then to full court. You can add an additional dimension by having the defender go to mid-court and attempt to control or veer the oncoming offensive player sprinting from the far baseline in the open court. These kind of drills allow both teaching time, plus your players to gain valuable experience as how to control speed and direction in the open court through trial and error learning. Once you have established your players ability to pressure 1 on 1, control and contain a dribbler then proceed to 2 on 2 drills. 2 on 2 is where you first introduce help and recovery/ and our jump relationships to the man-to-man full court.

Basic rules for 2 on 2 Defense

(a) Help defenders must keep the defensive triangle at all times (1 step off the line of the ball between the player with the ball and the player you are guarding, with the inside hand up in the passing lane, 1 giant step away from your player for every direct pass you are away from the ball, and with your head steady in a position to have maximal peripheral vision at all times).

(b) Jab and recover, when the dribbler has good court vision, and/or maintains control of their dribble. This will depend on the individual skills of the dribbler, and their foot speed).

(c) On 2 man run and jump, the jumping player yells JUMP or GO, and the player on the ball rotates to the new help position vacated by the jumping help teammate. Teach your players to first go to the correct jump or rotate positions. When they gain experience you may allow them freedom to anticipate and go for steals off the jump or rotations. Think about forcing a turnover by pressure first, before thinking gamble for the steal.

(d) Jump can occur down the sideline as well (forward to guard jumps) but this is more difficult to contain and not as desirable because the offensive team is rapidly advancing on the basket.

(e) Force as many jumps as possible in your full court drills.

(f) NO jumps should occur once the ball has crossed the mid-court line. As your players gain experience you can relax this rule some.

(g) Players must learn through practice (trial and error). Let them make mistakes without stopping the drills, but correct them as a group if they are consistently making the same error. They need to learn what distances they can cover in a given amount of time from specific locations on the court and what are high and
low percentage jump situations.

**Drills** you can work on include; *help and recover 2 on 2 from a dead ball touch situation, allowing no forward passes, only dribble penetration and lateral or backward passes to work the ball up the court, 2 on 2, narrow court, reducing the width of the pressing area vertically, 2 on 2, controlled situations (starting your players off in exact positions), and 2 on 2 full court competition* to score and press in both directions to a set number of baskets.

Next **proceed to 3 on 3** which teaches the more normal reverse rotation by a defender more common to most run and jump defenses. **Teach:**

(a) *The player guarding the ball to rotate* away from the jump to the furthest position left open by the defensive players involved in the rotation, usually in the direction opposite of where an attacker will turn their back in the open court.

(b) *3 on 3 from controlled start situations* to better teach specific responsibilities.

(c) *The importance of maintaining the proper triangle help relationship* for all defenders away from the ball as this is usually where most problem occur when teaching run and jump. Poor help triangle position (most often caused by the help defender losing vision of their player and the ball) results in poor jump timing and inability to be at the most advantageous jump position when a dribbler loses control or turns their back. This occurs as well because the defender on the ball fails to push the dribbler directly toward a help defender on a straight line.

**Drills** you can work to build 3 on 3 skills full court include; *3 on 3, no forward passes, no screens, 3 on 3 controlled situations on a coaches whistle, 3 on 3 competition to a set score*. It is very important at this stage to review chase and turn and the 1000 MPH recovery type drills initially taught in 1 on 1 fundamentals for without them you will never be a good full court pressure team.

Proceed now to **4 on 4** and begin to stress team rotations, and the importance of communication between players. **Teach** them to:

(a) Remember that the more players involved in the run and jump rotation, the shorter the distances that must be covered by the jump defenders, making the defensive more effective. **However use only players in the jump defense who have the quickness and sense to play the run and jump. You can play it with 3 and one or two safeties, or 4 and one safety, or with a gifted team with all five players.**

(b) Remember that the more rotations that occur, the greater the chances for mismatches in the half court defense, and for penetration breakdown. Teach them to be alert and take advantage of the best possible jump opportunities.
Use the same drills you used in the 2 on 2, 3 on 3, and 4 on 4, such as no forward passes, then from a controlled start, then live. Remember that with 4 on 4 and 5 on 5 it will be time to introduce the sideline jump and run and down court pass because these situations most resemble game action where the deep man must stay alert for passes over the top of the pressuring defenders in addition to maintaining help position and being prepared to rotate when a jump occurs.

Another question you must address is how to play the inbounds pass. There are three basic options and which you choose to use will depend upon your players physical abilities and the game time and situations in which you find your team. I have found that what works against one team may not work well the next night, so be prepared to adjust. I highly recommend that you teach all three and be able to execute them so that your team is able to adjust to different styles of attack and opponents. The three options are:

(a) LET THE BALL IN (with only slight pressure)- Make sure that your players put just enough pressure on the ball so the offensive player is encouraged to start their dribble as close to the in bounding baseline as possible, thus giving your team the greatest distance in which to execute potential run and jumps in the backcourt. There is a tendency with this modest pressure to allow the ball too far up the court on the inbound, thus reducing the amount of area you can safely play run and jump. Remember pressure up but allow it in.

(b) DENY THE INBOUNDS PASS (arm in the passing lane, but with the rear arm bend as a bumper to keep the attack from going long for a pass over the top).
There will be no safety in this situation because will put a defender on the in bounder. This will create immediate up tempo circumstances more conducive to run and jump pressure. You will have to practice all players recovering to "level of the ball" on all long passes over the top.

(c) FRONT THE INBOUND PASS (this complete deny, face guarding all players) requires that we do not pressure the in bounder but pull that defender deep to a safety position behind the deepest attacking player. The safety must anticipate and intercept any passes over the top of any defender. Immediately after the inbounds pass comes inbounds however the safety must immediately re-establish their triangle help defender position on the player they are assigned to guard when it is first safe to do so.

Finally when teaching full court man-to-man pressure you must practice special situations. After all your hard work and effort you will soon discover there are many special situations which will require you to adjust and creative overcome in order to pressure full court effectively. The following are a few of these:

1. The Offense clears out all offensive players except the dribbler. Several adjustments you can make include (a) trying to direct the dribbler to a mid-court corner where you attempt only one jump, (b) double team the ball and leave a weak ball handler unguarded, then deny any pass back to the strongest ball handler, (c) gamble with help defender furthest away from the ball to player center
field, and jump only with them while the remaining defenders zone up behind, or (d) go to a zone press or zone trap defense.)

2. **A Weak side flash by a deep attacking player.** There is no specific rule here for you except to tell you that a press crumbles if you allow the weak side flash from deep middle. In most cases you will want to make a rule that says on a flash middle this player is immediately excluded from any jump rotations until the flash player is no longer a threat to receive a pass in the dangerous middle.

3. **Defending long baseball type passes will require that you work with your centers and forwards to be able to chase down and deflect away or recover the line of the player-basket on passes over the top.** Working on drills in this area will give them a sense of when they can come up to support run and jump and when they must recognize and retreat to stop the over-the-top threat.

4. **Recovery drills are a crucial part of teaching the run and jump defense.** Most coaches teach every detail of press responsibilities but often fail to teach what to do when the press breaks down. Some possible rules might include; (a) closest player to the ball MUST stop penetration, (b) all other players sprint back into all passing lanes to open offensive players with hands up looking to deflect any attacking pass, and (c) on stopped penetration match-up with the closest offensive player verbally calling out and pointing to the player they have taken. Switching back should not occur until the ball is not in a dangerous attack position, or until it is safe to do so.

5. **To make your press more effective teach reaction drills off of steals.** Many teams that gain possession of the ball, fail to advance it quickly enough to take advantage of a turnover. **Teach these steps:** (a) when you gain possession, immediately face your basket and look for an open teammate up the court prior to initiating your dribble. The forward pass is always faster than the dribbler, (b) the wing player farthest down the floor should immediately flash to the middle to receive the pass and become the middle man on the break, and trailing player should first fill wings wide, then lastly the post trail positions, (c) if you are within one short pass forward of the ball, always go to the ball and call for the pass, and (d) practice scoring off of 2-4 passes on your reaction drills without use of the dribble. This lightning pass attack is the most effective method for scoring consistently on the break and teaches all players to reaction on a steal.

6. **Finally, remember to teach defensive transition to the boards when you are pressing.** Just because you go for the steal and miss doesn't mean you can ignore the most basic of basketball rebounding rules, 5 defenders on the boards. First three players get to the defensive rebounding triangle and the last two look for the long rebounds near the elbows.
As the coach you have the responsibility to provide enough practice time and game like situations for your players to develop confidence in their abilities to execute man-to-man full court or run and jump pressure. You must also provide breakdown situations in practice where by controlling ball location and defensive starting positions you players can more rapidly build a frame of references for making good open court press decisions. Expect errors and mistakes early in teaching full court pressure but resist the temptation to stop and correct until a drill or sequence is completed. Do explain major breakdowns that are occurring team wide. Use the run and jump against teams and in situations where you have a reasonable chance to succeed, or little to lose when it doesn't work. Finally, don't expect miracles. Full court pressure defenses take time to build a sense of confidence and judgment where players make smart players and read the most opportune times to force mistakes. If you restrain your players from making mistakes early on, you will never reap the rewards of a experienced and effective full court pressure defensive team.