Defending Baseline Out of Bounds Situations

Coaches spend considerable amounts of practice time working on offensive baseline out of bounds plays, but spend little or no time on ways to defend them. As a result, too many easy baskets are given up during the course of the game on out of bounds plays simply because teams are not prepared to stop them.

If you analyze "Out of Bound" situations, they are unique in that it is the only time during the game of basketball where the defense actually has an advantage. Because of this numerical player advantage (5 on 4), it can be difficult for the offensive team to inbound the ball, and, as a result, numerous NCAA and NBA championships have been lost because teams were not able to make successful inbound passes in the final seconds of game. This is why many coaches like to avoid taking time outs at the end of the game.

Most coaches take it for granted that their basic half court defense applies to baseline out of bounds situations. However, this is not the case. Defending the ball when it is located out of bounds behind the defense is entirely different matter than defending the ball when it is out in front of the defense. In addition, in regular half court set offenses, defenders are mostly guarding shooters moving off screens away from the basket. On baseline out of bounds, the shooters are going directly to the basket. As a result, there is no room for error. If the defense makes an error on an out of bounds play it results in an easy basket.

Some teams will automatically zone on out of bound situations. However, zones are faced with the same problem of having to make adjustments to defend the ball being taken out on the baseline behind the basket rather than out front. In addition, zones are very susceptible to screen and roll action along with overloads, which happens to be the main staple of out of bounds plays.

Four effective ways to combat the baseline out of bounds

Coaches should exploit this numerical player advantage to its fullest. Since the vast majority of out of bounds plays revolve around screens, the various techniques used to defend against screens can be incorporated into an effective out of bounds defensive attack.

1. Disrupt or Jam - no switching, hard nose "in your face" basketball.
2. Jump Switch - must take away all passing lanes.
3. Trap - double team the inbounds pass.
4. Combo Defense - box or diamond & one, triangle & two, etc.

In disrupting Baseline Out of Bounds situations, the defense must be set and ready prior to the official putting the ball in play. Smart and alert offensive players will immediately recognize when a defensive player is out of position or has their back turned, and simply cut to the basket receiving a quick pass for an easy lay-up.

1. Disrupt or "Jam" Option

Although the type of defense employed against baseline out of bounds will vary according to opponent and game situation, total disruption or "Jam" is probably the most effective. When executed, the Jam option not only totally disrupts the baseline out of bounds play, but it can also result in producing five second violations or, better yet, in drawing offensive fouls.

2. Jump Switch Option

Aggressively jump switching and denying first passing lanes creates turnovers, rushed or bad shots, and often times results in easy transition baskets. Jump switching not only attacks passing lanes, it can also create offensive charges.
Caution: If you are not going to aggressively deny and attack the passing lanes - DO NOT switch.

3. Trap Option

The “Trap” option entails double teaming the first inbounds pass. Trapping on the inbounds pass can not only catch the receiver by surprise, but more importantly it totally disrupts any offensive play or flow.


Often times called "Nickel Defenses", combination defenses can be very effective at times. In 1968, UCLA use a "Diamond and One" to completely stop the NCAA player of the year, Elvin Hayes, on their way to a national championship. In 1998, Utah used a "Triangle & Two" to derail Arizona's bid for a second straight NCAA title. However, timing and surprise are all important elements. Combination defenses are normally deployed against a superior offensive player, but can be used as a surprise attack.

**Box & One Defense Combination Defense.**

Box and One entails four defensive players play zone, guarding areas, and one player, the "Chaser," playing man to man. The Chaser plays full out aggressive chest to chest, in your face, pass denial defense and does not allow the opponent to receive a pass or grab a rebound. On out of bounds play, the Chaser will normally be assigned the opposition's primary inbounds receiver, but can be assign to any offensive player according to offensive threat.

**Triangle & Two Combination Defense**

The "Triangle and Two" defense incorporates the same principles of the Box and One, but deploys two defensive chasers. The other three defensive players assume a triangle zone defense with their hands and arms out stretched. The two "Chasers" play full out aggressive chest to chest, in your face, total pass denial defense against their assigned opponents. Matching up. When the opponent deploys an offensive alignment with a two guard front, invert the triangle.