

BASKETBALL STANCE AND FOOTWORK

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Basketball

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BASKETBALL STANCE AND FOOTWORK

1. INTRODUCTION

The legendary **Pete Newell** has stated that, “*During the course of a game a basketball player will handle the ball 10 percent of the time, but he will use his feet 100 percent of the time*”. With this in mind, it is incumbent upon the coach at any level to utilize drills that help develop *stance and footwork*.

Players do very little in basketball without first getting into a basketball stance. It is important for them to learn this position because it is the position from which they dribble, jump, pass, catch, slide to defend, and prepare to shoot.

The game of basketball may very well be won on the offensive end of the court. After all, a team must score in order to end up victorious. However, on the flip side of the coin, the end result of a basketball game is always heavily influenced by the defensive pressure that a team is able to exert on their opponents. No matter how well drilled a team is offensively, there will be times when their shots will simply not fall, and their defense therefore becomes paramount to their continued success.

We can divide the Basketball Stance and Footwork in three important elements:

- ***Defensive Position***
- ***Offensive Position***
- ***Pivoting***

2. DEFENSIVE POSITION

A good defensive stance will provide you with stable balance and allow you to get better positioning on the basketball court.

Some **advantages** of good stance positioning are:

- **Improves Quickness:**

A good solid stance will dramatically improve your quickness on the basketball court.

- **Allows for Faster Acceleration**

During a basketball game you need to be able to accelerate quickly at a moment notice when required. In such situations speed is of primary importance. Good solid stance fundamentals will allow you to do this very effectively.

- **Allows for Easy Sprinting & Transition**

When your stance is low and correctly balanced, than you will also gain maximum power from your legs and will be a defensive force to be reckoned with on the basketball court.

❖ **Guidelines for a right defensive position**

A. FEET:

Bend Knees at 90° Angle

Your knees must be bent at a 90° degree angle in order to maximize your quickness. When defending you must be able to move freely and quickly from moment to moment. When your knees are appropriately bent it allows you to maximize this potential as you move up and down the court defending the basketball.

Stick Bum Out

By sticking your Bum out slightly provides your body with better balance and stability. Because your knees are bent on an angle, this should naturally force you Bum outwards.

Arch Head Over Knees

Arching your head over your knees provides even more stability and balance when you are standing in a defensive stance. Your head and shoulders should effectively be vertically aligned with the position of your knees whenever you are standing in a defensive stance. This will ensure good stability and maximize your power and speed of movement.

Hold Center of Gravity

Holding your Center of Gravity simply means that you must remain balanced equally on both of your feet. If for instance you are leaning forward on one foot more than on the other, than at that moment you are not holding your Center of Gravity. This will have a tendency to slow you down and throw you off balance when defending an opponent. Of course, as you move and shuffle your feet, your Center of Gravity will shift from one leg to the next for a split moment. However, because it occurs so quickly, your Center of Gravity actually remains stable during this movement.

Stay on Balls of Feet

This basically means not to stand “Flat Footed” within your defensive stance. The purpose of being an effective defender is to maximize your speed and power, while maintaining your balance at all times. We utilize the front part of our foot for jumping and agility. And it is therefore this part of your foot that must be taken advantage of if you seek to build a solid and quick defensive stance that can easily react and counteract your Opponent’s movement.

Feet Shoulder Width Apart

You must find a middle ground and position your feet at about shoulder width apart in order to maximize your speed, power and balance at all times.

B. HANDS:

Purpose of Your Lead-Hand

The purpose of your lead-hand is to discourage the pass or the crossover dribble that your opponent may try and use against you in order to get to the basket. The lead-hand is also utilized as an arm-bar that becomes a measuring stick between you and your Opponent. If during the game you find that your Opponent is backing your down, than it is important to utilize your arm-bar in order to keep them at arm's length away.

Purpose of Your Back-Hand

The primary purpose of the back-hand is to deflect or discourage Bounce or Overhead passes. However, this hand can also be utilized as a lead-hand in order to put a little more pressure on your Opponent who is dribbling the ball. If for instance you are defending an Opponent who rarely passes the ball, than you would probably want to use both of your hands as the lead-hand, in order to maximize the pressure on your Opponent's dribbling ability.

3. OFFENSIVE POSITION

➤ *Triple Threat Offensive Positioning*

The Triple Threat offensive position is an aggressive stance that allows a player **3 attacking options:**

- *The dribble*
- *The shot*
- *The pass*

It is an explosive, aggressive and controlled stance the readies the player for an attacking assault on the basket. It is in fact a fundamental aspect of basketball that every player must learn and master till it becomes an integrated part of their games.

Basketball is a team game. By playing together and complementing each others talents, a team with less individual talent can beat a team with greater individual talents. This does not mean there is not place for one-on-one opportunities. On the contrary, they arise throughout basketball games. Some players can score only when they receive open shots. Better players develop offensive moves and become triple threats-to shot, pass or drive. To be a triple threat you must be able to make the outside shot, pass to an open teammate in better scoring position, and drive to the basket and finish the play with a shot or a pass to an open teammate for the score.

- ***Why offensive moves are important:***

Every time you receive the ball, you have the opportunity to use offensive moves with the ball against your defender in a one-on-one confrontation. You can help or hurt your team depending on what you do with the situation.

A selfish one-on-one player guns the ball or drives into trouble. Teams defense when players off the ball give help to their teammate defending the ball prevent the selfish player for succeeding. As a team one-on-one player you can gain an advantage over your defender with a solid fake or penetrating drive that forces defensive help from another defender and creates an opening that enables you to pass to your teammate for a score.

❖ **Guidelines for a right offensive position (Triple Threat Position)**

Knees Are Bent Slightly

The Triple Threat stance is an aggressive and attacking body formation that requires speed and precision. It is important to bend your knees slightly in order to improve your quickness and agility off the mark.

Feet Are Shoulder Width Apart

Good balance is a requirement of the Triple Threat stance. To ensure that you are balanced accordingly, make sure that both of your feet are standing about shoulder width apart in a slightly “staggered stance” (one foot being slightly ahead of the other).

Back is Straight

A straight back will provide you with better balance, stability and power when it comes time to shoot, pass or dribble to the basket.

Bottom is Sticking Out

When your Bum is sticking out, this will assist you to pull more power and force from your legs when it's time to move quickly and with precision off your Triple Threat attacking position.

Vertical Alignment of Body

In order to further improve your balance makes sure that your feet, knees and head are vertically aligned as you stand in Triple Threat.

Hands in Shooting Position

Your hands must be positioned on the basketball in a shooting position. This is important, because the moment your Opponent lets their guard down, this will enable you to shoot quickly with precision.

Another important reason to have your hand in shooting position on the ball is that you will be able to transition to either a dribble or a pass without really needing to adjust the movement of your palm or fingers.

Ball is in Shot Pocket

Finally, you must hold the ball in your Shot Pocket. The Shot Pocket is the area between the top of your hips and the bottom of your ribcage. This is the most threatening position to hold the basketball. As it is this position that will enable you to shoot quickly, pass with precision, or drive explosively towards the basket.

❖ Principal errors of a triple-threat position:

1. You face your body toward the left or right, limiting your move with the ball to that direction.

2. You hold the ball too far from your body, allowing your defender to grab it.
3. You lower the ball, limiting your offensive moves to a drive, or you raise the ball over your head, limiting your offensive moves to an overhead pass.

❖ **Correction of a triple-threat position:**

1. Square up to the basket with your body facing the basket and defender in good position for a shot pass or drive to the right or left.
2. Keep the ball close to your chest and no lower than your waist as you move between shooting, passing and driving positions.
3. Keep the balls moving close to your chest so you are triple threat to shoot, pass, or drive.

4. PIVOTING

❖ **The Pivot Drill:**

Description:

This drill is set up and run just like the jump stop drill. However, when the players get to the free-throw line, they are to execute either a front pivot or reverse pivot on each whistle.

A coach must make sure that the players stay low and pivot aggressively. Having players dribble a basketball, jump stop, pivot and then execute a ball fake before going to the next line can enhance this drill. The coach needs to make sure that players explode forward or make a positive step after they pivot. He also needs to make sure that the players are not shuffling their feet as they come out of their pivot.

If a player is shuffling his feet or changing his pivot foot during the drill, the coach can place a hand on the player's pivot to remind him to step with the other foot. This drill should be done in conjunction with the jump stop drill two to four minutes a day about three to five times a week.

When you are stationary on the court, the rules say you can move one foot around, as long as the other foot (the "pivot foot") remains planted on the floor. This is called pivoting and all players must know how to pivot.

There are **two types of pivots**, the **forward pivot** and the **reverse pivot** (or drop-step). Pivoting is done on the ball of the foot. You do not want to become flat-footed or have your weight back on your heels. The ball of the pivot foot must be in contact with the floor at all times and must not slide sideways. When you pivot, just actually spin around on the ball of your pivot foot. If you pick up your pivot foot, or change your pivot foot to your other foot, you will be called for a traveling violation. When starting your dribble, the ball must leave your hand before you lift your pivot foot. When shooting a jump shot, you may jump and your pivot foot may lift off the floor, but you must release the ball from your hand before you land again on the floor.

In a forward pivot, the player pivots forward, while in a reverse pivot, the player pivots backward.

For example, let's say the left foot is the pivot foot (usually the case for a right-handed player). Here, a forward pivot would have the player pivoting (spinning), or stepping forward in a counterclockwise motion (if looking down from above). A reverse pivot would have the player pivoting, or stepping backwards (drop-stepping) in a clockwise motion. Just the opposite would be the case if the right foot were the pivot foot.

Which foot should be my pivot foot?

Well, it could be either depending on the game situation. Outside, perimeter players most often will use their non-dominant foot as the pivot foot when facing the basket. For example, a right-handed player facing the basket will most often plant the left foot as the pivot foot and make a jab step with his/her right foot and just the opposite would be the case for the left-handed player.

Coaches vary on this, but we teach our perimeter players that if they are right-handed, the left foot should be the pivot foot, and lefties should use the right foot as the pivot foot.

We believe it is simple and the most natural, athletic way for most players. Now a low-post player who has his/her back to the basket is often wise to receive the ball with both feet planted (as after a jump stop). This allows the player the option of selecting either foot for pivoting, depending on where the defender is located.

A pivot is a legal movement in which a player who is holding a live ball on the playing court steps one or more than once in any direction with the same foot, while the other foot, called the pivot foot, is kept at its point of contact with the floor.

Pivoting:

When you are in possession of the ball, the rules allow you to take as many steps as you need in any direction with one foot while pivoting (turning) on your other foot. The foot that you pivot with, or turn on, is called the pivot foot. Once you establish your pivot foot, you cannot lift it before you release the ball from your hand to dribble.

When attempting a pass or shot, you may lift your pivot foot-providing you release the ball before your pivot foot again hits the floor. Once you have established one foot as your pivot, you can not change to pivot on your other other foot. Pivoting often is an essential part of other basketball skills. To pivot well you need a balanced stance: head over your waist, back straight and knees flexed. Keep your weight on the ball of the pivot foot and do not pivot on your heel. The two basic pivots are for pivoting forward and for pivoting backward. These are called the front turn or forward pivot, and the reverse turn or drop step and both are important to learn. Both pivots are used to move into an advantageous position against your opponent.

Front Turn (Forward Pivot):

Your chest leads the way when you make a front turn. Maintaining a balanced stance, keep your weight on the ball of your pivot foot and step forward with the non pivot foot.

Reverse Turn (Drop Step):

Your back leads the way when you make a reverse turn. Maintain a balanced stance, keep your weight on the ball of your pivot foot and drop your non pivot foot back.

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