

# Bryan College Women's Basketball

## "PRIDE" DEFENSE

### **HISTORY/RATIONALE:**

We believe that defense wins championships. Defense is the one constant that should never have an off-day. I have coached defenses that have been exciting and created lots of turnovers but have not won in the long-run because they were high-risk type defenses that did not give us the stability a basketball team needs. Having study some of the best teams in the nation year in and year out, I determined that I had to make sure that any defense that I taught was a constant, dependable strength of our team. Using the Michigan State men's basketball program as a model, I sought out the best way to approach the defensive side of the ball. Much of this defense will be familiar because it is a conglomeration of what Tom Izzo does and the "pack-line" defense that Dick Bennett used to teach. I have called it the "PRIDE" defense for two reasons. First, it is important that each member of the team take extreme pride in defending and stopping the opposition on each and every trip down the floor. Secondly, as the coach of the Bryan College Lady Lions, I thought it would be appropriate because a pack of Lions is called a pride. This was fitting for what I wanted our team to be on a defense...a pack of Lions committed to always taking pride in stopping the opposition.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

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### **PHILOSOPHY:**

- Make the opponent beat us from the outside-in
- Keep the ball in front of us
- Not 1-on-1, it's 5-on-5
- Containment does not equal soft
- Play until the whistle.
- Force low-percentage shots—in the paint
- No 2<sup>nd</sup> Shots—Finish Possession
- "Pride-Line" (17 feet)
- Kids will learn more through visual than vocal
- You will usually have one defender pressuring the ball outside, and the other four defenders inside the pack line. This allows the pass on the perimeter, but closes down the gaps and prevents dribble-penetration. The prime goal, as in any defense, is to stop the ball.
- This defense will:
  - Lower our opponent's field goal percentage
  - Improve our rebounding

# Bryan College Women's Basketball

## "PRIDE" DEFENSE

- Reduce the opportunities for lay-ups and easy baskets resulting from dribble penetration and/or transition.
- Most Important Stats:
  - Points Per Possession
  - Defensive Field-Goal Percentage
  - Foul Shots
  - Rebounding Margin
- This is a Defensive System of Play that can only succeed when all five players work together as one, when they trust each other, and they allow the synergy of TEAM to take over.
- Things that make you lose!- Can't reach – if you reach you will lose.
  - Silence
  - Low hands
  - Over helping by the bigs
  - Help and stand – they don't get back to their responsibilities
  - Lateness to trap or choke
  - Lack of floor burns
- TEAM UNITY: Do not allow anyone to come in and break-up the FAMILY. The unity of our team must be protected and nurtured.
- Our first principle is to Stop the Ball, which means to stop all dribble penetration. He must pressure the ball, defend his man in an aggressive manner, thus creating a level of discomfort for the ball handler.
  - Our pressure must be significant enough to make it difficult for the offensive player to shoot, pass, or dribble the ball. Failure to do this gives the offensive player the advantage, as he can see the floor clearly and has time to anticipate the action on the floor.
  - This is much like the quarterback in football that is allowed to drop back and pass at his leisure without any pressure from the defensive line or blitzing defensive backs.
  - However, this pressure defensive attack can place the defender in a very vulnerable position, especially if the offensive player is quicker.
  - Therefore, the strength of our defense is also based upon the level of confidence the defender "on the ball" has, in knowing that he will receive help from his teammates "off the ball" if his man gets past him; with others.
  - This confidence in his teammates, in turn, allows him to concentrate entirely on our principle of Stopping the Ball! We simply cannot be effective in stopping the ball without this unity on defense.
- We have a "Pack-Line", an imaginary line that is positioned at 17' from the basket. The only player outside of that line, that arc, is the player defending the ball. All other players are occupied inside the arc.

# Bryan College Women's Basketball

## "PRIDE" DEFENSE

- Therefore, we do not have a "Help" mode, only a "Recovery" mode to our defense. Our players are already positioned in help, a "Gap".
- We are positioned in a slightly-closed stance, inside the Pack-Line, up-the-line but off the line, maintaining a Ball-You-Man relationship.
- However, when the ball is being passed to our man, we must "explode-out" of this position, and closeout to the ball.

### **STANCE:**

- Elbows above shoulders—"high hands"
- Remember when defenders are closing out on the man with the ball, they are supposed to be using "high hands," which seems like a basic skill, but isn't necessarily applied all the time.
- If your hands are down, it really doesn't do much to me the shooter. I have a clear shot. But if you come out with high hands, it's a little bit more of a distraction in terms of 'Am I open? Is this a good shot?' "

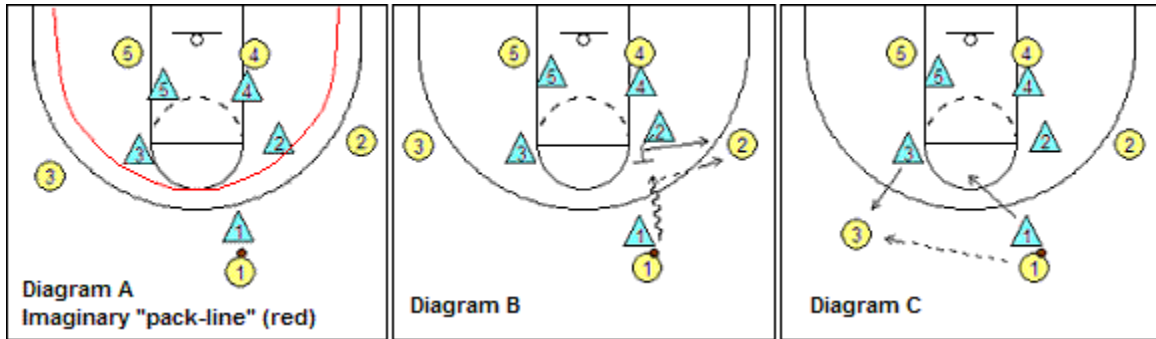
### **PRESSURE THE BALL:**

- Intelligent pressure on the ball
- Hands provide an illusion of bigness
- Stay between man and basket
- Chest-Chest; Shoulder-Shoulder, Feet-Feet, Man-Man
- Make the ball-handler uncomfortable and make it difficult for the ball-handler to see the floor.
- The on-ball defender does his/her best to contain and pressure the ball, but if he/she is beaten, the pack line gapping defenders are there to give help and stop the ball.
- It is much like the football quarterback; the passer that has all the time needed to drop back and throw the ball, any NFL quarterback will pick apart a defense that does not pressure – the same holds true with our game. With this being said, we cannot allow the ball to get into the PACK AREA. Our point of pick-up is at half court, in the play area it is determined by whom you are guarding – your game and his game.
- As much as we want and demand pressure on the ball, we must also understand a very important axiom in our defensive game planning; "Sometimes to not guard, is to guard". In other words, there are players that you are better served to not defend, and therefore, utilize this defender as a helper.
- We do not force the ball in a specific direction. You cannot allow the dribbler to penetrate at all.
- If we can force a Dribble-Used situation, we now leave the PACK area with all of our defenders, in an effort to all-out deny all four offensive players. This is a great opportunity for us to create a panicked, and hopefully a turnover situation for the offense. The player defending the ball

# Bryan College Women's Basketball

## "PRIDE" DEFENSE

must verbalize the dribble used situation by calling out "FIVE – FIVE – FIVE".



### OFF-THE-BALL:

- Everyone gets a piece of the paint off the ball
- Jump to the ball, take away cutter
- Bump all cutters—use an arm bar
- We are not denying
- Off-the-ball—be 2 big steps off man and 1 big step off the line of the ball
- Open to the man on "jump to the ball" drill (not open to the ball)
- Move on pass; not on the catch (move when ball is in the air). Move then look.
- On drives, your positioning is your help.
- Elbow and block should be covered in help
- No cutters across the face in the paint
- **The "pack-line"**
  - The idea is to clog the inside, protect the paint, and prevent dribble-penetration. Instead of defenders (whose man is one pass away) playing on the line in denial, they will sag back inside the imaginary "pack line".
  - The pack line is an imaginary line two feet inside the 3-point arc.
- It's pretty hard to do all three things... deny, help and recover. In the pack line defense, gapping defenders only have to help and recover, and it is easier because the defender is already in position to give help.
- Gapping defenders are inside the pack line in a "ball-you-man" position, and must re-position themselves as the ball and the offensive players move.
- There is one instance wherein all players go into complete deny, and that is when there is a dead ball situation (the ball-handler has used up his/her dribble).

# Bryan College Women's Basketball

## "PRIDE" DEFENSE

- Everyone will yell, "dead, dead, dead" and deny the next pass, looking for the 5-second call.
- Importantly, a gapping defender should always be able to see his own man and never turn his back to his man. Otherwise, his man could flare cut or back-cut uncontested.
- It's not the help that gets you beat, it's the recovery or lack thereof. We work recovery, over and over and over again.
- We do not jump to the ball per say, our first move is to jump back into the PACK AREA and then move toward the ball to preserve our Ball-You-Man relationship. Therefore, the nature of this position places our defender closer to the ball than the man who passed it.
- All Non-Ball Defenders are located inside the Pack Line – This is the most critical part of our defense. We do not believe that our defenders can accomplish three things: they cannot Deny, Help, and Recover. Therefore, we have eliminated the denial, and we now focus entirely on the other two factors – Help and Recovery. Because our defenders in the Gap are already positioned in Help, they are now quicker in their recovery to the ball – there is no negative movement, away from their recovery.
- Upon the offensive players flash cut, we intercept it with our forearm. We teach our defender to use his forearm, to bump or force the offense away from the lane without extending the forearm, which would be a foul, in order to deny.
- It is a reality that our defender will momentarily lose sight of the ball, this occurs whenever we are defending a cutter, weather a screen is involved or not.
- **CONSTANT REPOSITIONING**
  - The rule of Ball-You-Man is constantly being broken, therefore constant repositioning off the ball is absolutely essential. We must constantly battle to reestablish our Ball-You-Man position. This is simply the "backbone" of our defense.
  - Offenses do not stand stationary. Therefore, when the ball moves, or when players move on the floor, the defense must continually adjust to the ever-changing environment.
  - The reality in basketball is that the defender will constantly get knocked off track in the course of a defensive possession. That is why it is imperative that each player perpetually work to regain the correct defensive position.
  - Failure to do so by any of the five defenders will create a breakdown in the team defense, and, moreover, a potentially good scoring opportunity for the offense. Essentially, getting "broken-down" on defense does not guarantee failure, but giving up at that point does!
  - 1) Position Up the Line, but Off the Line – slightly closed to the Ball

# Bryan College Women's Basketball

## "PRIDE" DEFENSE

- 2) Vision is of the utmost, we must see both Man and Ball
- 3) Do not Help to Take a Charge, but rather with our Near Arm and Leg, we do not want to become Blind to our Help, by losing sight of our man
- 4) Bluff help as much as possible, we cannot become sterile in our positioning.
- 5) We must be Active & Energized in our Gap – We are Zoning the Ball

### POST PLAY:

- "Fire" Double Down
- Dig down on post entry—not double down—that is different
- $\frac{3}{4}$  side in the low post. Don't front because it takes away rebounding advantage.
- If a player is absolutely hurting us inside, we will look at doubling down or double-teaming with the other big.
- No feed from the top
- Don't go for steals
- No lobs
- We don't want to get pinned or sealed on reversal (high-low scenario).
- On a catch, we tell our post that this is our time, not the offensive player's time, but our time. We must quickly slide behind the post on "air-time" – do not reach or gamble for a steal, but work to immediately position ourselves slightly to the baseline side with a half-step of cushion between our defender and the offensive player, maintaining a position between the post and the basket.
- From our position behind the low post, we will defend the ball in one of three ways:
- Play the post one-on-one from behind – do not give up a scoring angle forcing the offensive player to score over our defender, not through our him. Our post defender must keep his hands at shoulder height with his fingers pointed upward.
- Choke the Post – our perimeter players located on the ball-side will open to the ball as it is passed and give help to the post defender. We can dive in and out to bother the post and choke the post only if he puts the ball on the floor, or we can full-out choke the post, immediately diving to the ball and digging it out, forcing him to throw the ball out to the perimeter. Obviously, if our perimeter defender is defending a dead three or a great scorer, we may determine not to choke with his defender, but only to bluff help.
- Double the post ("fire")
- We employ our Red if we cannot handle a player one on one. Everyone, because of the PACK, is within one giant step of the low post. Therefore, it

# Bryan College Women's Basketball

## "PRIDE" DEFENSE

becomes much easier to double Big to Big, than if we were a denial defense.

- The double must be on the pass, we move on "air-time". The trap must be toe to toe – shoulder to shoulder. We want to take away the cross-court pass to the open man with the position of our trap from the double. "Close the Door" with our trap, do not allow the offensive post to look over the floor, be aggressive, but aggressive without fouling.
- We want to be as high as we can be with our hands in the trap. We want to avoid at all cost the temptation of reaching for the ball, keep those hands-up! Hands down will create the path for the pass out, hands down will increase our opportunity to foul.
- On a "Release Dribble", we will leave the ball and immediately look to recover back to our assigned man. We could adjust, and stay with the offensive post on the Release Dribble, but our basic rule is to immediately leave on the Release Dribble.
- Recovery is on "air-time". We will support perimeter to post, and we want our post to recover to their assigned man as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will allow a switch by the perimeter out of necessity.

### HANDLING SCREENS:

- Emergency switch only—screener calls switch—communicate. The only other time we might switch is on scouting report situations.
- Violent hedge when defending off-ball screens
- Off-ball screens—screener bumps to take away tight curl not the shot
- Screener needs to get real low (nose to #'s)
- Jam, Up/Under, Trap ball screens
- The pick and roll is fairly well-defended, as the paint area is clogged with defenders
- The Cutter defender: As soon as you know you will be screened, move to your man, getting as close as possible. Once our defender becomes a cutter defender, for this short time, he no longer has help responsibility and thus will lose vision of the ball for just a moment. We must aggressively follow the cutter into our proper defensive position – we want to be as physical as our size and strength will allow us to be. Obviously, if through scouting or playing the game, we can anticipate the offensive players cut, by all means do so.
- Screener Defender: We teach our screener defender to jump to the ball and create space between himself and the screener. He must help where necessary in the direction of the cutters action, but while staying within touching distance of his man. We give the screener defender a degree of freedom to help with the cutter.

# Bryan College Women's Basketball

## "PRIDE" DEFENSE

- Examples of Defending Specific Screens:
  - Flare Screen: Chase over the screen and loosen-up with the screener defender to protect the basket. This takes away the pop and rhythm shot by the cutter.
  - Back Screen: We jump to the ball and back inside the Pack Line, therefore, placing our cutter defender on top of the screener's hip. Here we are in a position to take away the cut to the basket, a cut to the ball, or the pop-out cut. The screener defender gets lower than the screen, protects the basket and closes out to his man as quickly as possible.
  - Cross Screen: The cutter defender immediately moves to the cutter to take away the high cut, the screener defender opens to the ball, lower than the screen to protect the basket and provide baseline help if necessary. We utilize a "V" move here to move over top of the screen and recover back into the cutters path.
- BALL-SCREENS
  - "Jam"—the ball-defender goes under the screen and sticks with dribbler. The screener defender "jams" or bodies up in a strong fashion the screener. This allows the ball-defender room to get through and also keeps the screener from having the liberty to roam free after the screen. Used mainly when the screener is a very good offensive player.
  - "Hedge" (Up/Under)—Used primarily when the dribbler is a strong offensive player, especially off-the-dribble. The screener's man hedges up or steps up to make the dribbler go up and farther away from the basket. The dribbler's defender goes under the screen and tries to cut off penetration. The screener's defender must be big and get back to his man once the dribbler has been forced to hesitate.
  - "Trap"—Screener's man hedges Up and the dribbler's man follows over top/trails the screen. This is used to mix things up or when the dribbler is a good shooter or you want him to give up the ball. The screener's man usually stays until the ball is picked up.

### **CLOSING OUT:**

- Leave feet only when the shooter leaves her feet
- Closeout with both hands up
- Toe-to-Toe on closeouts. Don't invite penetration in any way
- Contest all shots (10-15% less with a hand up instead of down)
- Squeakability on closeouts.
- Closeout—run 2 quick steps, chop feet and high hands

# Bryan College Women's Basketball

## "PRIDE" DEFENSE

- Defenders should close-out with hands high in order to contest the outside shot, and then assume the usual defensive stance when the ball is put on the floor, or the initial shot is stopped.
- Yes, it is possible that the offensive player may attempt to dribble around the closing defender, but then we have the seams stopped with our other four defenders.
- Also, when closing out, this does not mean "flying" or leaping at the ball. The defender must keep his feet on the floor and contain the ball.
- Once the defender has closed-out on the ball, he/she maintains good pressure on the ball.
- Closing out to the ball is the key to our recovery mode, sprint the first two to three steps, with the last couple being short, choppy, steps. We must accomplish two objectives in our closeout; first we must closeout "**Hard & Short**" with our weight back prepared to absorb the dribble (**we will not get blown away by the dribble**), and secondly, we must have **High Hands**. We teach our players to keep their hands high, with elbows bent, for a 1001 count. We must create the illusion that there is no shot to be had. We cannot allow the offense to have rhythm jump shots.
- No rhythm shots are allowed
- Level off the dribble – get him going sideways
- Take away the straight drive
- Bother the shooter
- When defenders are inside the pack-line they are in better position to play help defense. So they don't use a lot of momentum sliding over in help defense. Therefore, when they have to recover to get back to their man on the perimeter, defenders can do so quickly because their momentum is working *for* them to closeout on shooters, rather than *against* them. And all the while, because there are more defenders near the lane, inside the pack-line, dribbles drives into the interior of the defense are discouraged.
- A critical element of our execution defensively becomes our "Close-out" to the ball. We believe the most important key in our close-outs is to get "high-hands". We must break the shooters rhythm, we cannot allow the offense to catch and shoot.
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### TRANSITION:

- No transition layups. 4-to-the-board keeps teams from running out. PG is always back even if they shoot.
- In transition, matchups are secondary. It's a scrambling/crisis situation. Hold the fort until help arrives.
- In our transition defense we are not assigned a specific player necessarily, but rather, we are defending positions on the floor in order to stop the ball and our opponents transition offense.

# Bryan College Women's Basketball

## "PRIDE" DEFENSE

- Our conversion defense begins as the ball is being shot by our offense. We send two guards back on defense as the shot goes up – we feel that the benefit of having our guards back on defense to STOP the BALL, is of a far greater benefit than any advantage that may be derived by having one or both rebound the offensive glass.
- We designate which guard is our "Lane Defender" and which guard is the "Ball Defender". The lane defender sprints to paint, finds the ball and takes the lane-line on the side that the ball is being entered into play. He positions here in order to take away any cuts into the lane and will closeout to a "Gap Position" or to the ball, as soon as the lane is secured. The ball defender works to contain the ball-handler at half-court, and preferably get the ball out of the middle of the floor. Again, he must contain the ball first and foremost, and of course, his point of pick-up can change due to our opponent's personnel.
- The remaining three players sprint back to paint as soon as our opponent gains possession of the ball. We teach their first three sprint steps to be with total disregard to vision; turn and sprint three steps, and then locate the ball as they continue to the lane. We will position toward the ball-side as deep as the ball. We cannot express enough the emphasis that we place upon our team of not giving-up transition baskets, NO LAY-UPS!

### REBOUNDING:

- We do not teach our players to block out but rather to "Hit and Get"
- Aggressively go up and get the ball above head with two hands and chin it.
- Always hit someone! Be the aggressor.
- Defensive Rebounders—Hit someone outside the paint.
- Offensive Rebounders—Get inside the paint and don't be a "leaner".
- Low man/Lowest stance usually wins the rebounding battle.
- Successful rebounding is about desire, toughness, rebounding fundamentals and a solid defense
- REBOUND – REBOUND – REBOUND: You must rebound to win! We emphasize rebounding in everything we do, everything! We will work on blocking-out every night in some form. We will drill our team 1-on-1, 2-on-2, 3-on-3, and 4-on-4, as well as emphasize this very important objective in our 5-on-5 play.

### DRILLS:

- When doing shell drill, must stay in a stance for the full 30-seconds or do it again
- 1-on-1 "D" in the post
  - No lobs
  - Also go for :30—if score then kick it back out

# Bryan College Women's Basketball

## "PRIDE" DEFENSE

- "3-on-3 Get Back"—work on talking/sprinting
- "3-on-3 ½ court. Stop dribble. Help/recover. 1-2 dribbles
- 5-on-4 Scramble. Not M-M, not Zone. 1-on-ball and 3-in-lane. "Who's got ball"? Talk. Awareness. Unselfishness
- Do 5-on-5 ball-screen w/continuous action ("Jam", "Jam", "Hedge", "Hedge", "Trap". All 5 have to be involved in defending.
- 3 vs. 3 continuity "D" drill
  - Recover to help not the man
  - Let them catch on top
  - Take cuts away
  - Don't hold hands with player—recover to help. Elbow help. Recover to elbow when it goes to the top
- "4-on-4" Change
  - Pass ball around
  - Coach yells "change"
  - Offense runs and touches paint and defends someone else
  - Works on awareness, communication, hustle, conversion
- "Post Release" Drill
  - Discourage pass
  - ¾ side defense
  - When ball is in air on pass get behind
  - No steals even if you can
  - Don't want to make a bad player a good player
- 3-on-4; 4-on-5 Shell Drill
  - Communication
  - Hustle
  - Positioning
- "4-Man Shell-Incorporated" Drill
  - Flares
  - Pindowns
  - Other
- 2-on-2 Jump to the Ball