

Ross McMains - Building an Offensive System Basketball Immersion Podcast

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_AqMNz3ii0

I met Ross back in January 2019, when he was in London with the Knicks for their NBA game vs the Washington Wizards. Ross spoke at our NBA Coaching Clinic, and immediately loved a lot of the terminology he used. A lot of the terminology and offensive concepts in this podcast you will recognise from stuff we do at the Academy, which is inspired from Ross. He is now an Assistant Coach with Melbourne United in the NBL (Australia).

Offensive Advantage:

- Pie chart - how do you choose what to run offensively with your team?
- Any offensive possession is about the coach and team trying to decide what is the best way to gain an advantage. This means putting your team in a dominoes scenario - e.g. close-out situation.
- This is when any set or action is off and we're just playing using the dominoes, trying to get them to fall and turn a good shot into a great shot.

Offensive System:

Habits package is the first thing to look at with building an offensive system. If you rolled the ball out in a pick-up game, what would occur?

- Transition
- Dominoes (drive and kick basketball)
- Pick and Roll
- Post-ups

How you build this system? Spacing in transition, spacing out of ball screens, post reaction systems and then personnel decisions.

Other Parts of the Pie Chart:

- Offensive Personnel (evaluation of who you have on your team. The personnel determines the sets you do with your team. E.g sets based on a player on your team if they can consistently create dominoes scenarios).
- Opponent's Coverages
- Opponent's Personnel

Once we're in dominoes, have to train team to recognise and value dominoes. Having the recognition to see this is big. If a player sprints to set a ball screen vs an advantage close-out situation, it stops the dominoes.

Three Rules When in Dominoes:

1. First touch decisions (from soccer). Understanding what you're doing before the ball hits your hand. This keeps the dominoes falling.
2. One defender can never guard two. Cutting and Short Spacing Reads. E.g. corner drift, low I defender drops. The wing must lift or cut to stop one defender being able to guard two.
3. Get into and out of space. No creeps! How quickly can you get back into space so the next teammate can make a play?

How can you Drill Dominoes?

4v4 to drill dominoes. 4 defenders in the paint, 4 perimeter players. Defense can't give up a three on the first pass. If offense get an in-rhythm three, drill resets. Long close-out means obvious dominoes scenarios, so there's a big advantage to start building the three dominoes rules above.

New Zealand - How to create dominoes?

1. Opponent's Coverage - e.g. Blitz (double teaming the ball screen) is dominoes put on a platter if we can hit the short roller quickly.

2. Personnel - Favourable match-ups your team can exploit to create dominoes.

Looked at planning games in the World Cup vs Greece and Brazil. Looked at where did their advantage lie playing these teams? NZ had to do something systematically to create an advantage, which ultimately was playing in transition and pace. They started to look for the advantage when ball entered their hands, as opposed to waiting for 16 secs and using HC offense to execute.

Introduction phrase of camp. Tendency among pro and national teams is often to jump to introduce sets and specific transition spacing spots. First offensive talk NZ did at camp was basic Army Drill (5 players on baseline, 5 players on FT line). One or two offensive players on the same line as defense.

Natural 5v4 advantage (one defender whose name is called has to sprint and touch the line after coach passes the ball in). but some guys sprinting already who are ahead. This encourages the bolts - biggest part of transition.

Basic scoring system with trans drill - 2s for lay-ups, 3s for threes, 1 for mid-range. X3 trips / x3 possessions.

Transition Reaction:

1. Ball changes hands = sprint
2. Find nearest sideline unless you have an opportunity to get behind the defense. Clear the freeway in the middle of the floor for the ball handler
3. Stay with your spacing (not crossing the floor just to get to the 'right' corner). This takes away space for the ball handler.
4. Nearest guy inbounds - no designated inbounder.

Aim of transition reaction is to create outnumbered situations relentlessly, lag free in reactions.

KPIs for Transition:

1. How many outnumbered situations can you create
2. How many mismatched situations can you create (the pace means the opposition stop finding right match-up and just find the nearest guy)

What is a mismatch in transition? E.g. 4 man has a 1 man on him.

Triggers:

After this transition period, Ross introduced the triggers for the offense to use to find the dominoes (if they didn't arise from the transition period). This is what happens next after primary transition.

Next layer from transitions is the triggers. NZ didn't show them what triggers to do, as they wanted player ownership over the actions. They loaded up the transition drill described and renamed the next load 'Golden Snitch Drill' (from Harry Potter)! If you find the golden snitch, the game was over.

In this drill, it's 5v5. Each player has to designate a 'golden snitch.' Could be any player, but any basket this player scores (2 dribble max upon receiving the ball) off an assisted basket is worth double.

This is an example of a constraint which naturally leads to actions emerging, as the team organised themselves to get their golden snitch the best look (e.g. quick hand-offs, ball screens, pin aways in transition etc). When the defense started over-reacting and figuring out who the snitch was, the golden snitch would start figuring out not to shoot it every-time and instead create a wide open shot for a teammate.

NZ filmed the whole drill, and then looked at the film as to the actions they'd like to use as designated triggers. They then introduced these to the team in a video session. Now there was a level of player empowerment as they had created their own system.

Starting Structure/ Spacing

Next progression from the Golden Snitch Drill. How we play when defense is matched up / no outnumbered situations etc. This still uses the triggers, but out of 5 out.

Hand-offs were called 'zooms.' Had corner zoom and trail zooms.

Wide action was trail guy (head on rim), before reaching top of the arc quickly veer into a pin away or ball screen. Tendency was 70% wide pin away and 30% drag. Gave the guards on the dribble push more space to play with. Opened up even more space when they used a Zoom on one side and pin away on the other, as there were two '2v2' games going on at different times on the floor.

A lot of the zooms led to gets (hand-offs without dribbles). Head on rim selling attack, when they get inside the arc, veer slightly off for the hand-off. Makes it harder for the defense to switch the hand-off because the defense is in contain mode thinking it's going to be a drive, instead of getting ready to communicate the coverage on how to guard the hand-off.

Gets is a throw and a go, often with their bigs. Happened more when they had a big in the strong side corner ahead of the ball as opposed to a guard. They could post (so the corner would be empty) or come for a get. A get for NZ was a big pistol.

Their pistol action was higher and wider - pass would often cover a long distance vs traditional pistol pass.

Snapback = when big running floor turns back for a get as opposed to running to the rim or corner.

Have to be comfortable with the mess from running a more conceptual offense like this as opposed to sets (common for National Teams). They lived with this because they knew coming in, they had to do something drastically different as a team to compete at that level.