

Research on the Construction and Practical Application of Modern Basketball Defensive Tactics System

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Abstract: When basketball games reach a critical moment, what often matters is not whose offense is more flashy, but whose defense is tougher. This sounds like a pet phrase of old coaches, but the data doesn't lie – in the past five seasons of the NBA Finals, the teams with the top three defensive efficiencies have won four championships. This article doesn't want to talk about theory in the abstract, but rather starts from real games to discuss how modern basketball defense is built and used. I have sorted out four major systems: man-to-man defense, zone defense, mixed defense, and full-court press, and combined them with impressive defensive plays in the NBA and CBA to analyze how technical details such as rotation and weak-side contraction are executed in actual games. Ultimately, good defense is not about five people standing in a row, but rather a living creature that can breathe, contract, and counterattack.

Keywords: basketball defense, tactical system, team defense rotation, practical application, space control

1. Regarding the defensive rules

When basketball was first invented in 1891, the rules probably didn't include the word "defense". But over a century later, offensive and defensive confrontations have long become the soul of this sport. The current game is not the same as it was ten years ago – players run faster, jump higher, and can shoot from just a step outside the three-point line. Data analysis breaks down each possession into tiny pieces for study. In the 2023–2024 NBA season, the average number of possessions soared to 99.2, with nearly 40% of shots taken from beyond the three-point line. This means that the defending team has to make more decisions every second: should they go for a block or retreat? Should they switch defenses or push through? These choices are made in a flash, and getting it wrong can result in a three-pointer or a dunk.

2. What does the modern defense system look like

I observed that it has at least three features that people can recognize at a glance. The first is spatial compressibility. The defender is now like a moving net. The net goes where the ball is. There is always someone in front of the ball holder, and someone on the weak side is squinting at the basket, ready to shrink at any time. This kind of "outside expansion and inside contraction" playing method requires extremely high lateral speed of players – if you slow down half a step, the opponent will shoot; You may have missed the person behind you. Therefore, modern basketball increasingly prefers players with "ambiguous positions". It was unthinkable ten years ago that a two meter tall man could change his guard.

The second is dynamic synergy. Defense is never a five man fight. Once the ball is transferred, the whole defense moves like a domino. The coach has been shouting for 20 years about the four words "moving ball", but few teams are really fluent. Why? Because rotation requires anticipation, anticipation requires tacit understanding, and tacit understanding requires losing and winning together. Those teams that defend the top -- such as the Celtics in 2022 and the bucks in previous years -- look at their rotation. You hardly need to shout. You can see who will catch up and who will catch up with them with one look.

3. How exactly? I choose the four most common systems.

3.1 Man to man: old base, new pattern

Man to man is the most primitive defense. One person sticks to another, like dog skin plaster. Its advantage is that the responsibility is clear – everyone knows whose pot it is if someone is omitted; It is also convenient to attack the core of the other party. But modern basketball has taken man to man to play to a new height: “unlimited defense change”. What do you mean? When the pick and roll comes, you can change it directly. If you don't change your defense, you can squeeze through. If you don't squeeze through, you'll delay. Anyway, it doesn't make the ball holder comfortable. The warriors after 2015 have taken this to the extreme. Green can defend from position 1 to position 5. Although curry is short, he can start quickly. The defense change system has won them three championships in five years. Of course, not everyone can play unlimited defense change – if you have five defensive mistakes in your team, changing defense is to send points.

3.2 Regional joint defense: not an antique

Many people think that regional joint defense is the patent of college basketball or backward teams, which is wrong. The frequency of NBA joint defense is several times higher than that ten years ago, especially at the critical moment of the playoffs. 2-3 joint defense defends the restricted area, 3-2 joint defense locks the three-point line, and 1-3-1 joint defense pinches the pass route -- every formation has its temper. The current trend is to “hide marking in the area”. On the surface, it is the area. As soon as the ball reaches a certain position, the nearest person immediately rushes to put pressure on it, and the boundary between the area and marking is becoming increasingly blurred. This is what the heat has been doing in recent years. Spostra has played joint defense like magic.

3.3 Mixed defense: a bet

“One stare at four couplets” or “box and one”, these names sound like board games. The essence is: I know you can kill me alone, send a shadow to follow the whole process, and the others will fight four. In the 2019 finals, the Raptors used box and one to stare at the warriors, and the effect was surprisingly good – of course, it was also true that the warriors were full of injuries at that time. The risk of mixed defense is high. Players need to have a clear mind and communicate smoothly. Otherwise, a dull mind is an empty three-point.

4. The system is dead and the execution is alive.

The same tactical board, different teams play different. What is the difference? In my opinion, the key lies in several technical details. Rotation is the pulse of defense. When the attacking side makes a breakthrough or passes a ball, the defense line will be torn open. At this time, the neighboring people must go to fill in, and the original position of the person to fill in has to be filled in by rotation – one ring after another, like a gear. Half a beat slower rotation? The opponent has made an open shot. There are more people taking turns? The other side leaks again. A good rotation needs a global perspective, but the situation on the court is changing rapidly. How can you have time to look around? So top defensive players have the ability to “look behind” and know where their teammates are without looking.

Strong side pressure and weak side contraction are the breathing rhythm of modern defense. The ball is on the right side, the person on the right side is stuck and tied, and the person on the left side is pulled under the basket – not to be lazy, but to protect the most dangerous area. When the ball moves to the left, the entire defense line surges like a tide. This dynamic balance is easier said than done. How much does the weak side charge? If you receive too much, the opponent will pass the ball and score three points at the bottom corner; The number of catches is less, and the breakthrough hand goes directly to the basket. This sense of distance, without the accumulation of

hundreds of games, can not be found at all.

Retreating from defense is a neglected art. Now the round is so fast and the attack is not successful. You have to return to the defensive position within three seconds. How can I return it? It's not five people running back together, but there's a hierarchy – protect the ones under the basket first, and then catch up with the outside line. At the moment when some teams shoot, the bench has stood up and shouted "back defense". This kind of consciousness is trained and lost.

5. Look back, what will defense be like

I don't think I can escape in several directions. Intelligence is unstoppable. AI can now calculate the shooting percentage of each player in each position and predict the opponent's tactical preferences. But no matter how accurate the data is, someone has to execute it. I've seen too many teams. The colors on the tablet computer are still the same on the court. Technology is neutral, and the key depends on how people use it.

Position ambiguity will become more and more common. In the future, basketball will no longer be divided into point guards, point guards, forwards and centers, but only into "defensible" and "defensible". It was a wonder ten years ago to change the guard to a small guard with a height of 2.10 meters. Now it is standard. To cultivate this kind of player, we have to practice lateral movement and reaction since childhood, and we can't wait until the age of 18 to change.

6. Concluding remarks

The construction of modern basketball defense system is indeed a systematic project – to understand man to man, joint defense and mixed defense, and to switch back and forth according to the opponents and their own conditions. Space control, collaborative rotation, and information driven are three things that cannot be done without anyone. But it is easier to talk on paper than to execute on the field. Studying defense is not to write a paper, but to win. For Chinese basketball, this area may be more worthy of effort than attack – our players' physical talent is not bad, but their defensive awareness and system execution are poor. Even if 30% of what is in this article is implemented, the appearance on the court will be different.

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