

# Basketball Implementation of Individual Defense/Conditioning

Brian Blackburn  
Head Boys Basketball-Wall ISD

## When to Use Individual Defense/Conditioning

As mentioned in a previous article about individual skill development, pre-season and off-season basketball varies drastically from one school to another. A coach at a 6A school may be able to implement individual defense and conditioning in early September. At Wall HS, we will begin this section of our training the first week we get the football players after the playoffs. Individual Defense/Conditioning is my favorite part of our pre-season or early season training. I believe it brings our players closer together and actively reinforces our culture. Our off-season/early season program not only builds skills and improves conditioning, but it DAILY reinforces the culture of "Being Great Today, Having Fun, and Working for Each Other" that we want to build in our athletic and basketball program. This portion of our "off-season" training is actually used in the early season because of my situation. You may use it during a different time of year because it works best for your situation.

## Individual Defense-Stations

My coaching staff and I believe that individual defense is all about creating habits. We want our players to move fluidly without thought while playing on the ball defense. The way we teach these habits is through station work. These stations not only teach what we want from every player defensively (9<sup>th</sup> thru Varsity team) but also how we want players to have fun and work hard. Below is a list of the stations and the times we put for each during our defensive station work. Each group has no more than 8 people (4-6 is best). While ½ of the group is working the other half is "coaching" the players in that drill. We will do this 3 days a week (unless it is a tournament week)- 20 minutes per day for 3 weeks.

Back Board Touches - 4 min (30 sec on 30 off)

Start at the free throw line- run and touch rim/backboard. Back peddle back to free throw line. Try and get as many touches in 30 seconds.

Lane Slides - 4 min (30 sec on 30 off)

Players start on one side of the lane and slide across for 30 seconds. Try and get as many slides across the lane as possible in 30 seconds.

Box Closeouts - 4 min (45 sec on 15 off)

All group members at once. Players start on the right block, sprint to elbow and close out, slide across the free throw line, then back pedal to the left block and slide back to the right block/repeat.

Speed Ladder - 4 min (no rest)

We use many of the basic speed ladder drills- one foot in each, two feet in each, hops, side step, one leg hop, lcky shuffle. We have the players do a 5 step sprint TO the ladder and 5 step sprint OUT of the ladder.

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X out Slides

- 4 min (45 sec on 15 off)

This is similar to the lane slide, but the defender is making an "X" through the paint. The line is behind the defender on the left block. We sprint up the lane to the elbow then "big step slide" across the lane to the right block then sprint and close out on the right elbow.

## **Conditioning**

The conditioning portion of our stations involves a punishment/reward system. The only time we run sprints is if: the team is punished, a team loses a drill, or if there are sprints left on the board. We start our conditioning segment with "sprints on the board." For instance we may have 12 sprints on the scoreboard at the start of our station work. The players can get sprints taken OFF of the board by: extreme enthusiasm, coaching each other, and giving extraordinary effort. By the same token, we will put sprints ON the board if we lack any of these team building activities. We may start our stations with 12 sprints and end with 2. Or we could start with 12 and end with 15. It is up to the players to bring energy and communication during each station.

## **Conclusion**

The defensive and conditioning stations are my favorite pre-season/early season activity. We teach so many valuable aspects of our culture during this 20 minute segment. Some coaches use this station work as a "boot camp" for their teams during the spring which is a great idea to reinforce what your program is all about. Everything we work on has a purpose. If we are organized and plan and practice with purpose, our players will buy into our culture and team. The last article in this series will deal with team play in the spring/summer.