

## Receiving the Ball

When making the move to get open, whether it is across the key, down the lane, or when the ball is coming to the strong side, the “catch and score” play is ideal. If timing is perfect and the passer is ready when the move is made, the player, playing the post, may be able to catch the basketball and proceed directly into a move to the basket. However, the passer is not always ready, nor is he or she always confident enough to release the ball. Therefore, in many cases, the post player must hold low-post position and wait for the pass. To make things worse, the longer it takes for the passer to pass, the more advantage the defender has. In the catch and score, the defender is usually a step behind the offense. However, when the offensive player becomes stationary, the defender regains position, can better project when the pass will be made, and goes for the steal.

There are basically three ways the defender can play a stationary post: in front (between the ball and the offensive player), on the side, or behind. Therefore, the offensive post must learn three countertactics in order to be open to receive the pass: the seal, the rapid slide, and the foot war.

### Sealing

Because of the amount of room to work with, a defender, if bent on getting between the ball and the offensive post player, will be able to do so. Some may view that as a bad thing. But if the offense is trained to pass the ball to the strong-side elbow in this situation, this defensive tactic may well work against the defender; when the pass is made from the wing to the high post, the offensive player can “seal” the defender away from the key and be wide open with a clear path to the basket.

For effective execution of the seal, just before the ball is passed to the high post, the offensive player quickly spins on the back of the fronting defender, maintaining contact and keeping the upper arms parallel to the floor and the hands toward the ceiling, called an “arm bar” (see figure 5.15).



**Figure 5.15** The offensive player sealing the defender.

We call this the “arm bar” position. The proactive spin (turning before the ball is passed to the elbow), initiates contact and increases the chance of the post player sealing the defender. To help matters, keeping the arms in the arm bar position prevents the player from illegally arm-hooking the defender. When spinning, the player is concentrating on keeping the defender from going over the top.

To help ensure the safe reception of the ball, the offensive player must not leave too soon. Premature departure from the seal helps the defender get in between the ball and the player. If the player leaves when the basketball is almost directly in front of her, and then leaps to it, the defender is rendered hopeless. As a general rule, it is better to leave too late than too soon.

The importance of the seal in individual post work as well as in team play cannot be overemphasized. Defenders who get burned by the seal are more likely to concede good low-post position. In addition, when the seal is used, weak-side defensive players must often get involved, which opens up opportunities on the weak side if the ball is passed there. Sealing should be an integral part of an offensive post player's moves to get open and should also be an integral part of the team offense.

## **Quick Sliding**

The second method of defending a stationary post is to play behind the offensive player, leave space, and, when the pass is made, make a quick move around to make the steal. This defensive strategy is used by quicker and lighter players who are at a disadvantage in a battle for position using the legs, body weight, and body strength. It can be very effective, not only because it can create a turnover but, equally as important, it discourages the ball handler from passing the ball into the post. For that reason, the offensive post player must transmit confidence to the ball handler through quick back-and-forth sliding.

When a player “slides,” he or she lowers the center of gravity, keeps the back vertical, keeps the feet spread wide, and uses quick steps to alternate moving right and left. This helps prevent the defender from timing the steal. For example, the defender may see an opening around the left side of the player. But, through moving in that direction, the offensive player has changed the opening to the other side. This helps instill confidence in the passer that the post player will keep the defender behind and move to the ball when the pass is released.

## **The Foot War**

As a general rule, the defensive post player avoids lower-body contact while the offensive player wants that contact. The defender avoids lower-



**Figure 5.16** The defender (left) begins the foot war by stepping over the offensive player's foot and denying the pass.

body contact for two reasons: to keep the legs free to get into the passing lane, discouraging a direct pass into the post; and, if the ball does go in, to keep the legs free to stay between the ball and the basket. When both players work to achieve their goals, a “foot war” results.

With the basketball coming to the strong side, the offensive post player hits, finds, and pivots, making contact with the opponent's legs. Not acquiescing to this move, the defender releases leg contact and steps over the offensive player's leg in a three-quarter-denial position (see figure 5.16). The foot war has begun.

In order to regain lower-body contact to freeze the defender's legs and regain position between ball and basket (getting the defender behind), the offensive player uses the right leg to step across the defender's right leg. When doing so, the player locks the leg. Simultaneously, the player uses the outer thigh to make contact with the defender's inner thigh and apply horizontal pressure (see figure 5.17). This is different, and much better, than simply sitting on the thigh and applying vertical pressure, because in that situation, the defender may still be able to release. When done properly, the defender will not be able to lift the leg to free it.

When the foot war moves toward the baseline—when the defender is attempting to get into the passing lane from the bottom—the offensive post should maintain contact and keep the shoulders square to the passer. However, when the foot war moves up the lane, there is a point where the offensive player should release, spin, and cut for the basket,

hoping to receive a lob pass (see figure 5.18). If that player does not receive the lob pass, a cut directly back toward the ball should make him wide open to receive a pass.



**Figure 5.17** The offensive player places the foot across and over the defender's foot and places the hip on the inside of the defender's thigh.



**Figure 5.18** The player releases when the lob pass is available.