

## ACT Style of Play

The following information is in line with the National Program and forms the general framework around the offensive and defensive style of play that is being filtered down through the Australian system. These concepts will assist and support the 'The ACT Way' and how ACT Junior Performance Teams should play.

Pace, Poise and Penetration. These three words fit nicely with some of the current framework filtering through our performance pathway of splitting the shot clock into three 8 second segments.

**Pace:** This is the first eight seconds of the shot clock. Here we push the ball, encourage high outlets and bust outs, sprint lanes to get in front of the ball, encourage kick ahead passes and rim runs from our posts (if they have an advantage). In this stage of the offence, we are looking for lay-ups – we want to get heat on the rim. We generally do not take kick ahead 3's – even if you are open. If open for the 3, you should also be able to attack the rim and make a play at the basket. If the ball has entered the paint (through a post touch or penetration) and is now kicked out to an open 3-point shooter, we will accept this 3-point shot.

**Poise:** 16 - 8 seconds on the shot clock. Here we want to move the ball, set great screens, cut with purpose and make the defense chase us for a while. We are still looking to score and keep pressure on the defense – this is not a time of "false motion" as described by some coaches. During this time, we should take lay-ups and any open kick-out 3's generated by great ball movement or penetration. Traditionally, this is the time on the shot clock where we have settled for (what I will call) poor shots.

**Penetration:** Whilst we should be looking to get penetration throughout the 24 second offence, it is especially necessary and effective in the last eight seconds of the shot clock. Penetration can come via a pass to the post (pass penetration) – our posts need to be drilled in making great decisions out of the post, they must be willing passers – or dribble penetration – when a guard either rips past a defender or uses an on-ball/dribble hand-off to get two feet in the paint with the ball. This penetration generates a "split" of the defense, causing the defense to rotate. Appropriate movement and spacing off the ball will now allow the dribbler to either score or make a kick-out pass.

The recipient of the "kick" should shoot it or make an extra pass (they should never drive back into the traffic). This is known as "split, kick, extra pass". When we view this part of the shot clock as a tremendous opportunity to score, rather than a time to panic, we will give ourselves a greater opportunity for success. We should never settle for the contested shot – we should be exploring ways to get to the rim – by this stage of the shot clock, the defense has had to deal with a lot of movement and usually weak side help is not as set – so take advantage and get to the rim.

It takes tremendous discipline to play this way. We have a natural tendency to want to play fast. At times our players shoot shots without consideration for the flow of the game or how that shot fits into the context of the overall game. One of the ways to be a good defensive team is to spend more time with the ball. When we are disciplined enough to stick with the Pace, Poise and Penetration concepts, we have great success. The moment we have a rush of blood and shoot the ball quickly – including on the back of

a steal or offensive rebound and the first receiver thinking they were open for a “dagger” 3 within the first 4 seconds of the shot clock – the game can go against us and the score moves in the wrong direction.

Part of making the shift to this thinking is seeing the last 5 seconds of the shot clock as a wonderful opportunity to get a great shot because the defense has had to do so much work prior to this that they are likely to break down or foul.

The other thing to note is that more teams are looking to disrupt with full court defense. This means that a second ball handler in the back court is becoming a necessity and an offence that easily caters for the other guard or even a post type to advance the ball and start the offence (as opposed to having to get it back to the 1) is also a necessity.

### **Defensively**

The three key concepts on defense being used at the Boomers & Opals level and filtering through the National High-Performance pathway are D-Trans, Disruption and Box Outs.

#### **D-Trans**

Defensive transition starts when we shoot the ball – we must move on the shot, not after the result is known. Generally, our two “big”, the 4 and 5 always go to the glass. Ideally, our small forward or 3 player is also an effective offensive rebounder and hunts the ball. 1 & 2, and at times, the 3, are responsible for back coverage. The rule for the guards is that you have to cover back – if you think you can go and get it, then yes, you can go and get it, but if you go, you better get it. If you don’t come up with it, you need to ensure we don’t give up an easy score at the other end.

We must get safety and the basket covered – some coaches call this the “captain’s spot”, “basket” or “safety”. This player needs to be vocal and be directing traffic, telling each of the other players where they should be.

Once the opposition come up with the defensive board, we must “stick/stop” the ball. The closest man has the responsibility to meet the ball as quickly as possible, start to channel it to a side-line (we want to avoid the ball crossing the split court) and start to slow it down through challenging the ball carrier. We must avoid taking chances and getting blown by, but at the same time, we don’t simply run back and let the ball advance easily – the dribbler needs to ‘feel’ your presence.

The other players are all then sprinting behind the ball – if the ball is contained then we want to take away the easy kick-ahead pass down the sideline. We want to show a crowd to the ball handler and narrow the floor. It is important that we point and talk to understand who we are guarding, even though we are sprinting back down the floor. It is important that we get a “plugger”, if possible, to assist in slowing the ball down the floor to prevent dribble penetration to the basket.

In D trans, anybody has anybody – you don’t have to sprint to your man – guard the person your positioning determines you should guard.

#### **Disruption**

We are constantly looking for ways to be disruptive. On scores and dead ball situations up the floor, we use a variety of methods to manage the shot clock and put the opposition players in unfamiliar or less effectual positions within their offence. This may be as simple as denying the point guard and making someone else bring it up under 1-on-1 pressure.

Disruption is not to be confused with pressure. We don't fly around looking to take all or nothing chances. We simply look for ways to keep the opposition out of a rhythm and under time pressure to execute their plays.

In the half court, we may "pre-switch" side outs or end outs (depending on scouting) in order to force the opposition to counters.

Within the scope of our defensive rules, we will look to bother the ball appropriately – if they are a passer, get after them, if they are looking to take you off the dribble, sit down and use the pack-line strategy to keep them under control. On scouting situations, if there is a particular pass you want to deny or on-ball screens you think trapping the handler will be effective, the scope is there to allow the coach to adjust defensively to attain this sort of disruption.

Finally, we have to be smart with our fouls. At times we foul too much in the last eight seconds of the shot clock. Keep people in front of you, show your hands and challenge our opponents to make a contested shot late in the clock.

In the last 8 seconds of the shot clock, we may look to switch all on-ball screens and dribble hand-offs – calling out "hustle" triggers this. Again, it is about getting the opposition out of rhythm - not taking crazy chances to get steals.

#### **Box-Outs**

We have to be more committed to box out situations. When the shot goes up, we have to go and initiate contact with our player, no matter where they are on the floor. We have to take away the space from our opponent, not allowing them freedom of movement.

Too often we see players look at their player, see they are a good distance from the basket, think they are doing the right thing by going to the ring for the rebound, only to see the ball bounce over their heads or suddenly feel their opponent on their back as they have come flying in for an offensive rebound and put back. GO TO YOUR MAN!

Once you take up the space, then be prepared to wrestle and do whatever it takes to stop your player getting in the contest. The traditional turn and box out technique is nice, but not always practical or effective. We need to be less concerned about technique – place more emphasis on getting the outcome. Often, facing the player and body checking them as they start to move is the most effective way of boxing out, particularly against a great offensive rebounder. Once we are sure our opponent is no longer advancing to the ring, now we can turn and hunt for the ball.