
4.6 ADDING DEFENCE

Activities that are competitive are often the most fun, with players or teams racing each other etc. Adding a contested element usually means that players will be trying to execute the skills at a faster pace and also means that they are more likely to “transfer” the skills into game situations.

It is also important, to give players the opportunity to develop the skills in a “game like” situation, where there is an opponent that is trying to get the ball from them!

The coach can turn most of the activities into a “contested” activity by having an offence and a defence. Just like in a game a team will sometimes defend and sometimes be on offence. Therefore, if a player has the ball they must try to protect it (understanding the movements of one’s own body, good ball-handling, knowledge of space and time, etc.).

If the opponent takes the ball away, then the team must be able to get possession of it again (without fouling, therefore with good balance and coordination) and must also be able to defend the team’s basket.

These concepts are not clear to children in the beginning, so the coach must use logical game-drills, which are motivating and help children to understand:

- Players with the ball must protect it from opponents by moving the ball or pivoting. Often inexperienced players will turn their body, but not move their legs (i.e. they do not pivot) which makes it easier for the defence.
- When defending the player with the ball you have to do more than try to take the ball away. When defenders reach for the ball they will often foul or be beaten as they go off balance. Defenders need to learn that it can be just as important to stop the player moving to a certain position on the court.
- That if you are defending the player without the ball, you must stop them from receiving it (children instead try to grab the ball).

Many coaches are also quick to teach players to use “defensive footwork”, which is a lateral movement designed to take a charge. At this age, the emphasis should simply be on maintaining position in front of their opponent who has the ball (or between their opponent and the player with the ball).