

01.3

coaching tips & tricks from
the best in the game...

the waratah way...



01.3

Defence:

Identifying right
from wrong!

01.3

Defence: Identifying right from wrong!

The concept of defence can be broken into an individual or a group construct. From the individual perspective, players must have an awareness of pre-contact positioning and body shape, what they must do in contact, and the options available to them post-contact. When dealing with a defensive pattern, teams must be able to identify why they are defending the way they are and the options available to them.

Individual Defence:

Individual defence can be broken into three distinct segments:

- Pre-Contact
- Contact
- Post-Contact

Pre-Contact

The most common mistake a player makes is to mark the attacker chest-to-chest. In doing this they provide the attacker with three distinct attacking options – left, right and over the top! Players must off-set themselves to the person they are defending, as this provides the attacker only one real option – away from the defender – and makes it easier for the defender to be in a safe position to make a tackle.



Example 1: Off-set positioning

From the off-set position players should approach the ball carrier using the "A-B-C" philosophy:

A = Approach

B = Balance

C = Close-out

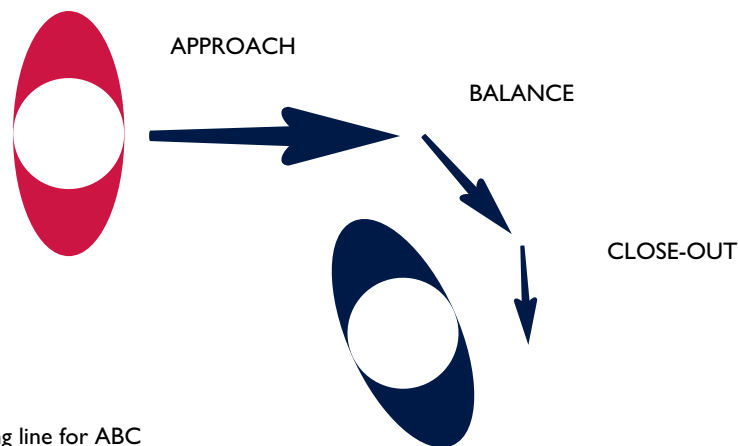
The **Approach** the defender takes is forward, not at an angle! This assists the defensive player denying "time and space" to the attacking player. Approach also relates to the line-speed of the defensive player – that is, do they come up hard or slow. The important point here is that all defensive players should come up together in one line.

Balance refers to the defender shortening their running stride, dipping their body and preparing them for contact. The defensive player must also rotate their body so that they approach the attacker on a "J-curve"; with the centre of the defensive player's chest pointing past the attacker's shoulder; this assists with correct head placement on contact.

01.3

Defence: Identifying right from wrong!

Close-Out is the term used for defensive contact. The defensive player must get as close to the attacker as possible – foot in the hoop – and have their hands up ready to make contact. If players are too far away from the attacker going into contact, then the possibility of injury is increased.



Example 2: Running line for ABC

Contact

Contact occurs from the close-out position when the defensive player impacts with the ball carrier. Here the player be in an upright body position with their hands in front – as if taking a photo of where they are going to make impact; the defensive player dips their body late and keeping their head up and with their foot in the hoop, they get their head behind the attacking player (preferably on their buttock); the defender then makes contact with the shoulder (**Hit**), has both arms wrap and link (**Stick**), and pulls their body into the attacker (**Squeeze**).

Post-Contact

One of the most important parts of defence in the modern game is the ability of the tackler to regain their feet in order to attack the ball. This is a skill which takes time to perfect but if all the ingredients of pre-contact and contact have been addressed, then it is a simple matter of slight physical adjustments that will make the difference.

Upon making contact the defensive player must drive their back leg through the contact zone. This does two things. Firstly, it assists with a successful tackle being made and, secondly, it helps the defender regain their feet. By maintaining the Stick on the ball carrier the defensive player ends up closer to the ball because if they let go of the ball carrier they would fall off the tackle and find themselves around the attacker's feet. Also by driving the back leg through the contact they can use the ball carrier's momentum to assist them with getting back to their feet.

Finally, if the defender can maintain Stick plus use the ball carriers momentum to be in a dominant position on their feet over the ball, then they can follow the Law to appropriately win possession. This means they must:

- Release the tackled player; then they can,
- Play the ball from any direction.

The important point to note here is that the defensive player went to ground with the ball carrier. By going to ground, determined by at least one knee touching the ground through the tackle, the defensive player is deemed to be a Tackler. By being a Tackler a defensive player may play the ball from any direction within the tackle area giving them a huge advantage over other defensive players; remembering that all other players entering the tackle area must do so via "The Gate".

01.3

Defence: Identifying right from wrong!

Group Defence:

Over the past few years the Waratah's employed a number of defensive strategies. However, the basic principles, as detailed above, have been the cornerstone of the defence. This section details a simple three person defensive group and their roles/responsibilities in defending their zones.

Tracking – Hustle – Jam

Ball Defender

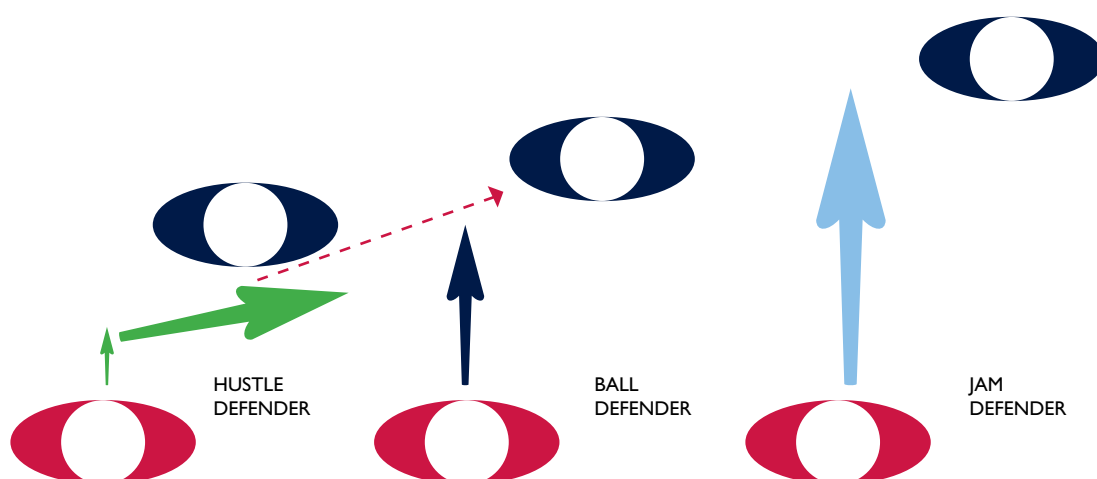
The Ball Defender refers to the defender who is marking the ball carrier. Their job is to (1) deny time and space to the attacker, (2) get into a position to make a sound tackle, and (3) either complete the tackle or follow the pass into the next channel (Hustle).

Hustle Defender

The Hustle Defender is the person who was previously marking the ball carrier. However, when their player passes the ball their job is to get to the space between their player and the ball carrier. This does two things, (1) covers an inside pass to either the passer or an inside runner, and (2) puts them in a good position to support the Ball Defender.

Jam Defender

If all players are completing their roles correctly, the attacking team will get to a point where their outside player is marked closely by their opposite defender. This player is known as the Jam Defender. The Jam Defender's role is to (a) stop the pass being made, or (b) be in a position to take the pass from the attacking team (Peter Hewitt, ex-Waratah being an exceptional exponent of Jam defence).



Example 3: A simple Hustle and Jam Defence.

This defensive pattern can be used in both Set and Phase play. It is primarily a man-on-man defence starting with an inside-shoulder alignment.