

WATER POLO

TEAM DEFENSE

Why is team defense necessary when there are an equal number of attackers and defenders?

By playing team defense, individual players back each other up to shut down the biggest threat and prevent goals. Even playing man to man (aka press) defense, team defense is still very important as each player must read and react to the attack, communicate with their teammates and position themselves to make it difficult for the attack to move the ball and set up the shot. General team defensive strategy may be man to man or zone based and is usually determined by the coach.

Preventing shots is the primary objective. What are the most important aspects of team defense?

- Identification of the greatest threat to the goal: Each defender must be always be aware of the greatest threat to their cage.
- Communication: Each defender must help their teammates be aware of the game situation in order to effectively back each other up. This can include calling for a switch. If there is any question, a defender should always talk to his teammates or goalie.
- Counter 100%: Each player must swim hard to pick up the greatest threat on counter attack. It is much more important to catch the man close to the goal than it is to catch up with "your" man.

What is man to man defense?

Each defender is responsible for neutralizing the threat of their man. The strong points of this strategy are an ability to match the defenders fairly well and good positioning for the defenders for the counter. The weak points are that defenders are subject to being beaten on drives and it requires awareness and calling for the switch. Defenders who are too focused on their man will miss the greatest threat to the goal. Press defense also tends to give the center attacker more space to receive an entry pass.

What is a zone defense strategy?

Each player on the team is responsible for an area of the pool and not just one man. An attacker that moves into an area is picked up by the defender of that area. The strengths of zone defense are it's effectiveness in keeping the ball out of the center. The weak points are that it is subject to confusion as attackers move through the zone and defenders try to keep them covered. Zone defense tends to allow fairly free passing around the perimeter and tends to give up the outside shot to prevent one from center. Zone defense requires excellent communication between defenders.

What is man down defense?

When a defender is called on an exclusionary foul, he must leave the field for 20 seconds. All the other defenders close into the middle and work to defend the goal. Usually, each defender must defend two attackers and shift their position depending on where the ball is. Occasionally, defenders will stay in a man to man defense with only one defender attempting to defend two attackers. Usually this happens when the defense wants to force a goal from the top. Other times, the goalie may direct the players leave the weakest attacker free in order to try to force the shot from the weak shooter.

IT'S OKAY TO PLAY IN THE WATER