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January 10, 1941

Coach M.C. Wood
Latah High School
Latah, Washington

Dear Coach Wood:

Answering your favor of the sixth instant I beg to state that my definition of the stratified transitional man for man with the zone principle is that whenever we are outnumbered, of course, we play the principle of the zone, but when we have equal numbers to meet then we play a sliding zone. However, when two men of the opponents quickly move into a zone area, then our defense is that each man picks a man so that there will be no man loose for a quick shot.

As I observe your defensive formation as sketched on your letter, I can see that you play a 2-1-2 zone defense. Your apex man, which is your center, would not be able to cover shots from the side of the court, say ten feet in from the side line and twenty or twenty-five feet out on a diagonal. For instance, the offense could slip a man in to the area just in front of the position of your center player, then the right forward of the offensive team would swing around as if he was dribbling towards the basket. He would then pass the ball to the offensive man located just in front of your center. The right guard would fake as to go to the left and then would swing down to this area that I described and would shoot a looping shot from the side.

The defense that you have diagrammed would prevent anyone from getting close into the basket, but if the guards were fairly good shots they would soon work the ball around until they could consider this defense a lot of trouble, unless your defensive men were so big and powerful that the offensive guards would get but one shot. The strategy of the team to work against your defense would be to put your best shots out in the guard area and count on longer shooting and a quick retreat.

Please do not think that I am finding fault with your defense, but if the opponents get onto your style and if you would go out to get them quickly then they will develop a type of play with set shooters that will cause you some trouble. However, if you are versatile enough with transitions on defense, then I would say that you have a corking good defense and one pretty tough to beat.

If we relied upon this defense strictly in our territory, there are a few coaches who would patiently work out a type of offense that would lick us. For that reason we try to cover up our apparent defensive set formation with some versatility. Of course, if the defensive team does not have some good big men under the basket, then of course, they are doomed.