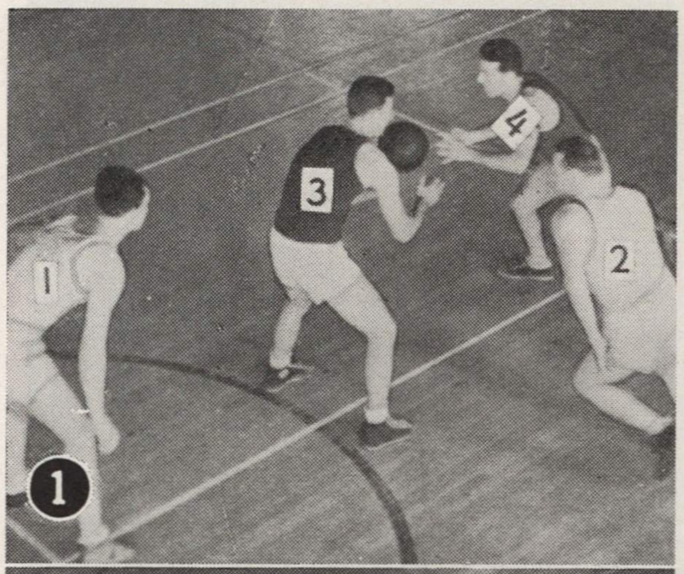
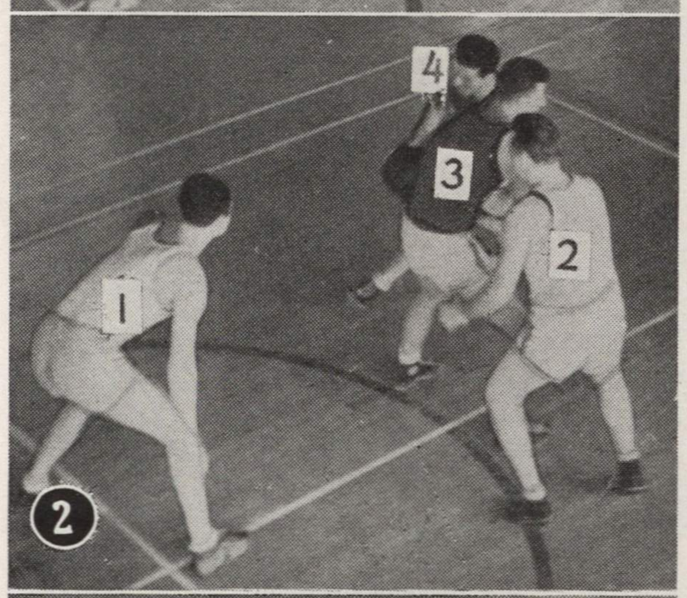
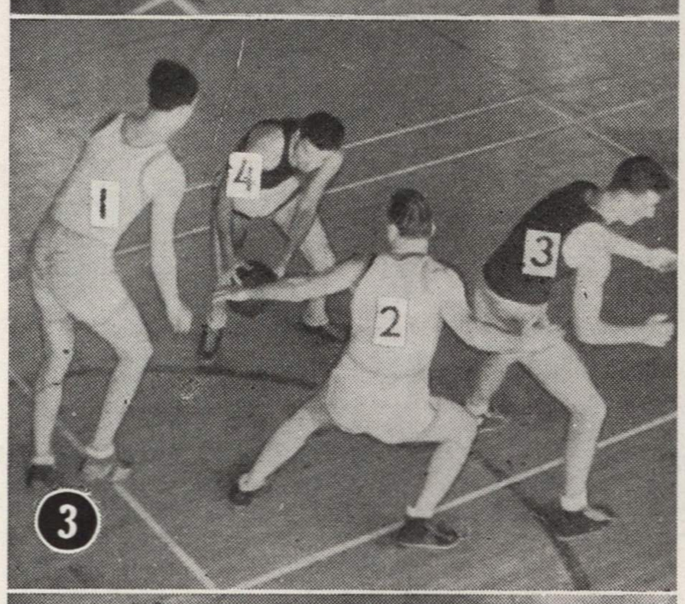
Defense Maneuvers

By Joe Reiff

BASKETBALL was a slow game that was over-balanced on the defense side. Today it is a fast game lopsided on the offense side. It once resembled a game of chess where the players were pawns, moved with slow deliberation by the master mind of the coach. To keep possession of the ball was the best defense.







Today, basketball is a contest of action and thrills because the war cry has changed to, "A good offense is the best defense."

Since the country has become offense-minded, the principle of team defense then assumes a greater importance than ever before because there are necessarily more occasions to employ good defensive tactics in the faster game. The game calls for defensive maneuvers as well as keeping possession of the ball.

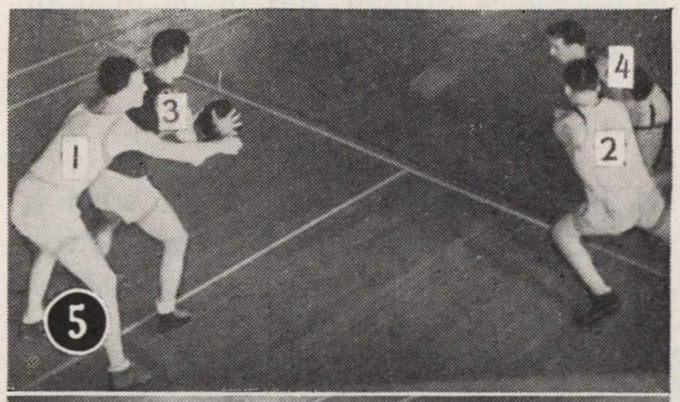
Moreover, these defensive principles or techniques can be stressed without reducing the speed of the game or lessening the action of the game. A team that can switch quickly and with little effort, a player who can guard two or more opponents running down the floor at breakneck speed, or two players who can cover three or more opponents on a fast-break, can put on a show just as thrilling to the fans as any number of spectacular shots splitting the nets with monotonous regularity.

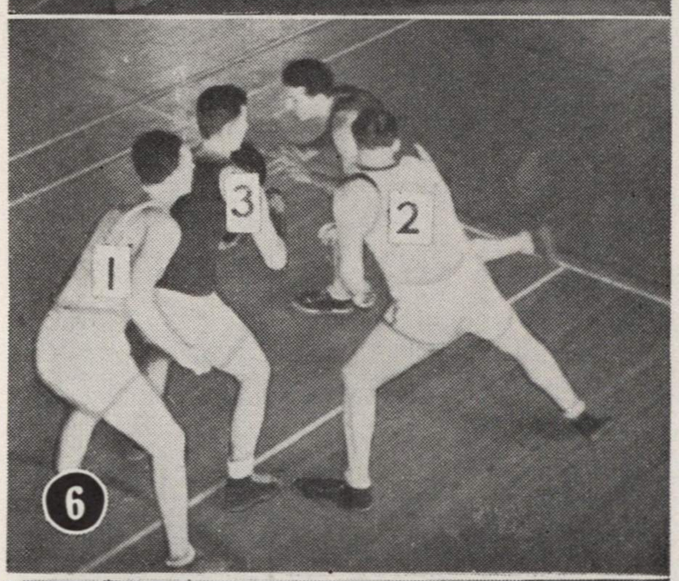
Switching

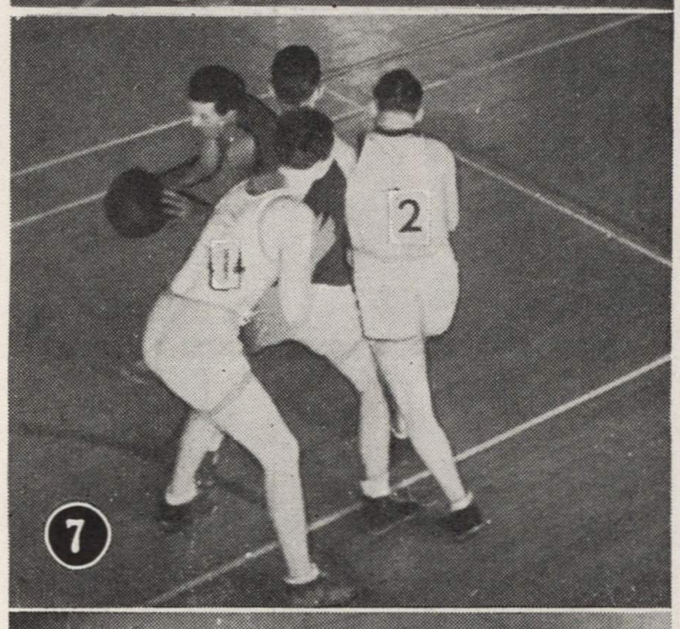
Switching, of course, refers to the act of a guard changing from one opponent, whom he is covering, to another opponent who is in a more favorable position to score.

The interpretation of the rules with regard to screening plays when switching is necessary to cope with the situation, have been changed from year to year. The reasons for the changes may be attributed partly to the laxity of officials, but are due, mainly to the inability of the players to react properly to the situation.

Before the ball is passed to the pivot man, the guard should play him closely, should watch for possible interceptions and should make it difficult for the opponents to pass the ball to the pivot man.







THE CORRECT WAY OF SWITCHING

Illustration 1—Guard 1 backs up a step to cover 3 and 4 at the same time.

Illustration 2—Guard 2, seeing he cannot cover 4, because 3 is in the way, runs to the inside of 3.

Illustration 3—After the ball is passed, 1 switches to cover 4 and 2 switches to cover 3.

Illustration 4—Guard 1 is now covering 4 instead of 3 and guard 2 is covering 3 instead of 4.

THE INCORRECT WAY OF SWITCHING

Illustration 5—Here 1 is covering 3 and 2 is covering 4.

Illustration 6—Guard 1 is playing too close to 3; he should be a step and a half farther back.

Illustration 7—Guard 2 runs into 3 instead of to the inside of 3.

Illustration 8—One fails to switch, allowing 4 to dribble to the basket. If 1 catches 4, 3 can pivot and run to the basket for a return pass.