

# 'Automating' the Other Team's Coach

Follow these guidelines offered by Strat-O-Matic's computer programmer, and even the super-advanced version of SOM basketball can be played solitaire.

By Bob Winberry

Using the automatic substitution system along with the solitaire improvements outlined in the new Super-Advanced rules, you can coach your favorite team while making a minimum number of decisions for the other team. If you so desire, most of the remaining decisions can also be automated for the other team.

For example, let's say your favorite team is the Knicks and you're playing against Cleveland. By examining the cards and applying a little common sense, you could make the following rules to be used by the Cavaliers:

## FASTBREAK

The roster sheet indicates that Cleveland runs a patterned offense and should fast-break about 1/3 of the time. Since Valentine is a better fast-break passer than Morton, Cleveland will only fast-break when Valentine is in the game and they are trailing.

## PRESS

As a rule of thumb, Cleveland will press when trailing by 10 or more points in the 4th quarter. This can be adjusted if the team has very good or very poor individual pressing defenders. You can get a feel for an individual defender's pressing ability by looking at his defense column—results 46 to 51.

## TEAM DEFENSE/DOUBLE TEAMING

Ewing is the Knicks' only big offensive force and Cheeks is reticent to shoot the ball. Therefore, Cleveland will double-team Ewing with their right guard, leaving Cheeks open.

Also, the Cavaliers will use a sagging team defense any time Ewing is in the game (unless Vandeweghe gets hot and starts lighting it up from outside — in this case the Cavaliers will revert to a normal team defense). When Ewing is not in the game, the Cavaliers will use a normal team defense.

If Cleveland leads by 10 or more with six minutes or less left in the game, Cleveland will go to a close team defense. This will get

the Cavalier defenders in the face of the Knicks' shooters when they attempt to shoot three-point shots.

## SWITCH SHOTS

By examining a player's card and factoring in the effect of the individual and team defense, you can usually make a determination as to what any given player would do on a switch.

Remember the ratio of shots: Half come off the offensive player's cards; one-third from the team defense cards; and, the remaining one-sixth from the individual defender's X-column. Also, keep in mind that the team defense is set up so that you're much more likely to score or get fouled if you shoot from inside, or penetrate, than if you pop from outside.

In Cleveland's case, I would play them as follows:

Always take inside shots: Daugherty, Nance, Williams, Bennett

Always take penetration shots: Valentine, Brown, Morton

Go at weakest X-column of defender: Ehlo, Kerr, James, \*Ferry, \*Paddio.

\* - choose weaker of inside or outside X-column, do not shoot penetraton shot for these players.

## DEFENSIVE INTIMIDATOR (Inside Block-Man)

If I were playing the Knicks, I would simply use the highest rated block-man in the game to provide interior intimidation. We're talking about Nance and Williams here. Since Oakley is not a great outside shooter, it doesn't hurt to give him the open outside jumper in order to help out when the Knicks penetrate or take inside shots.

## INSIDE MEN ON OFFENSE

You are allowed to position up to two players inside on offense. I would recommend that you *always* have two. In Cleveland's case, I would use the following priority when selecting the two players: Daugherty, Williams, Nance, Bennett, Brown, Ferry.

Since we're playing the Knicks, I would be tempted to position Daugherty outside (in an effort to draw Ewing out, thus nullifying his intimidation) while positioning Nance and Brown inside. But, by doing this, there is less chance that you'll be able to get Ewing in early foul trouble. And, although Daugherty

is not a terrible outside shooter, he is the go-to guy in the Cleveland offense and you'd be sacrificing the strength of his game. So the Cavaliers would open with Daugherty and Nance inside. If Ewing starts blocking and altering too many shots, the Cavaliers would be forced to try Daugherty outside.

## FAST-BREAK SHOTS OFF A STEAL

Occasionally, you'll have the option to shoot a fast-break shot directly after a steal. Looking at the player's cards, I would shoot the fast-break shot for the following Cavaliers:

Always: Valentine, Brown, Morton

When game is close (nine points either way): Nance, Williams

When trailing by 10 or more in the 4th: Ehlo, Kerr

I would not take the fast-break shot off a steal for Daugherty, Ferry, Paddio, James or Bennett.

## PASS TO ANY 1+

Always use the first player listed who is in the game and is not double-teamed. If only one of these players is in the game, and that player is double-teamed, then the player left open due to the double-team will get the shot as described in the super-advanced rules.

Priority list: Daugherty, James, Paddio.

## PASS TO ANY PLAYER

Choose in the following order of importance:

1. If a man is open due to a double-team or being positioned outside vs. the inside intimidator, pass to that man.

2. Priority: Daugherty, Nance, Brown, Williams, Valentine.

Choose the first player on the list who is in the game and is not double-teamed. If none of these players are in the game, choose the player with the highest field-goal percentage.

Note that Daugherty is the first choice despite Ewing's tremendous inside defense because he draws so many fouls and this might result in Ewing getting into foul trouble.

## CONCLUSION

With a little preparation, it is possible to play solitaire and get the feeling that you're playing against another coach. The game is ultimately enjoyed as a head-to-head battle between two coaches. But, using the solitaire rules, the game also can be extremely satisfying.