

Changing Double-team Rules

By Judd Vance and Martin Shobe

We are *big* fans of Strat-O-Matic basketball. While we admire many of the recent rules upgrades, we offer three suggestions:

Posting Guards: The upgraded rules won't allow anyone to post up unless he has an "I" on his shooting tendencies. This is very admirable, because otherwise, it is advantageous (and unrealistic) to post Kevin Johnson on Clyde Drexler — even though Drexler has 7 inches on K.J. However, we have seen Mark Jackson and Rod Strickland take turns posting on Spud Webb.

If a guard has a mismatch in height, it is not awkward to run an isolation and have him post on the shorter guard. To take this into account, we think a guard or any other "non I-rated" player should be able to post up on his opponent if he has at least 5 inches of height advantage.

Defensive Positioning: The rules on this were the best of the upgrade. However, if James Worthy defends the Right Guard and Magic Johnson defends the Right Forward, Worthy is, in effect, the "defensive Right Guard" and Magic is the "defensive Right Forward" for rebounds. This can get confusing, so we cut strips of paper with the positions on them and we place these below the cards. In effect, the positions on the game board are the offensive positions and the paper below the cards are the defensive positions.

Double teaming: The rules do not take into account who double teams. Spud Webb and Michael Adams (neither known for defense) could be just as effective in stopping Michael Jordan as Joe Dumars and Dennis Rodman. Also, if a player is being double-teamed on a 3-pointer (in a desperate situation), he should have a harder time making the shot than if he weren't double-teamed. A player with nobody covering him should have a much easier time hitting the 3. (The present rules have no effect on 3-point shots.) So, we have redefined some of the double-team rules (see the chart on this page).

A lot of strategy is required in this double-team scheme. For instance, Boston and Utah are playing, and Boston decides to double-team Karl "The Mailman" Malone (Left Forward) with Ed Pinckney (Left Forward) and Robert Parish (Center). They would allow Mark Eaton, a 0-rated shooter, to be open, and also to avoid letting Jeff Malone (Left Guard) score 30+ and be a 2-rated shooter.

The Mailman is now a 2-rated shooter who misses all X rolls. If he posts low, he also misses all "D" shots (Parish plays perfect inside defense). It makes more sense to post Eaton low (he is required — due to his shooting tendency) and Thurl Bailey (the Right Forward).

John Stockton (or Bailey) would become a '1' rated shooter. With Stockton and Jeff Malone rated, it would prevent Boston from playing a sag defense. Also, Stockton is free to wreak havoc on Boston with his drives (since Mailman is posted on the perimeter and there is no Boston "shot blocker"). Bailey takes advantage of Bird's weakness (inside defense).

The primary advantage is to let The Mailman drive on the 2. He misses all X shots, but when he throws a D, he makes all 2-7, 10 shots (use Pinckney's penetration X column, since it is stronger), and on his own card, 6, 7, 8 are fouls — with Parish picking up the majority of them. The Mailman is a good-enough outside shooter if required.

The only way Boston can effectively counter is to remove the double-team (and let The Mailman destroy them) or make the double-team a Pinckney-Shaw combination (and let Lewis cover Stockton). However, this plays into Utah's hands since Jeff Malone is now shooting open (he would be a 2-rated shooter, and Stockton goes back down to 0).

AN ALTERNATIVE DOUBLE-TEAMING SYSTEM	
THE DOUBLE-TEAMED PLAYER	REASON/EFFECT
1. Misses ALL X rolls on O, P and I shots.	Allows 2 good defenders to be more effective than 2 poor defenders.
2. On all D rolls, refer to card of defender with the stronger X column for that shot.	
3. X 9-12 are offensive fouls on I and P shots.	Restores most offensive fouls. Add on offensive foul on X 3 to restore all offensive fouls.
4. On 3-pointers: All D rolls are misses. Use team defense card on all X rolls.	Makes double-teamed shooters less likely to hit their 3-point attempts.
5. His shooting rating is reduced by 1	Keeps double-teamed 1s from being "go-to" guy.
6. On "Opponent Defense" readings, use the primary defender's defense.	Clarification.
7. He is no longer double-teamed on fast breaks, steals, rebound shots and switches.	Realism. Switches could have created a triple-team.
THE OPEN PLAYER	
1. Takes all O and I shots open.	Standard rule.
2. Automatically makes all X rolls, including 3-point shots.	Makes open shooters more likely to hit their 3-point attempts.
3. Is NOT open on switches, rebound shots, steals and fast breaks.	Clarification.
4. His shooting rating goes up 1. However:	Open man gets more shot opportunities.
a) If he is a 0, he goes up 1 only if he is rated 1 on the basic side or has VERY few replays (about 14-16 shots per 48 minutes)...Use judgment.	Prevents a Manute Bol from becoming a "go-to" guy.
b) If the open player remains a 0, another 0 player who matches the criteria in (a) may become a 1. However, he is not the "Open Player" and does not automatically make all X rolls or shoot all O and I shots open.	Distributes shots more realistically.
THE DEFENSE	
1. Determines double-teams after all else is determined (low post players, team defense, etc.)	Standard rules
2. Cannot double-team and Press simultaneously.	
3. Cannot position an inside defensive player and double-team simultaneously. However, while announcing double-team, a player may be designated as a shot blocker ONLY in the case of a switch on D-7 (P and I shots).	A double-team and a defender "cheating" inside would be an illegal defense.

This would have been a worthwhile option when Bobby Hansen and Darrell Griffith were the shooting guards, but not now. If Kevin McHale is used at Left Forward, The Mailman still hits 2-6, 10 on "D" rolls.

Probably the best strategy is to double-team only if The Mailman posts low (double-team has priority), and take chances that The Mailman will avoid the 6, 7 and 8 on his card, and maybe pick up a few offensive fouls. Use Parish to try to stop the Stockton drives, and hope that Jeff Malone doesn't tear up Reggie Lewis.

You can see that a lot more realistic strategy is used this way. It does take a little bit of learning — or relearning (especially concerning double-teaming), but it can be learned fairly quickly — similar to relearning any changes in Strat rules.