

SOMETIMES SAYING NOTHING MEANS MORE THAN SAYING SOMETHING

BASKETBALL COACH WEEKLY

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**BEAT
ATHLETIC
TEAMS
WITH THE
PACK-LINE
DEFENSE**

< TONY BENNETT
VIRGINIA LED
NATION IN SCORING
DEFENSE

**FLUSTER
THE BALL
HANDLER
RELY ON HELP
DEFENSE**

**WHEN
ELIGIBILITY
BECOMES A
CONCERN
DOUBLE-CHECK
EVERYTHING**

**THE BEST
COACHING TIPS
EVERY WEEK!**

SIDE OUT-OF-BOUNDS: SET DOUBLE SCREEN, RUN SHOOTER ALONG BASELINE TO CORNER

Let Them Figure It Out



Basketball Coach Weekly Issue 28

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Sideline Stories

You are paid and trusted to mold young men and women into better basketball players and, hopefully, better citizens. So, I understand coaches want control over every aspect of their team. I did find it interesting that one of the best coaches of this generation, San Antonio's Gregg Popovich, says he sometimes goes into a timeout huddle with his team and has nothing to say.

You know those times in a game. Your players know their roles and responsibilities, but they simply aren't executing. In those circumstances, saying less may be more.

Popovich told the *San Antonio Express-News* last month he

sometimes tells his team to figure it out and is looking for the players to rally as a group.

"I think competitive character people don't want to be manipulated constantly to do what one individual wants them to do," Popovich said. "It's a great feeling when players get together and do things as a group."

Yes, Popovich is coaching some of the best players on the planet. It's easier for him to rely up on Tim Duncan and Tony Parker to "figure it out." But, place a little more trust in your players and see how they respond. Don't feel like you must "look like a coach" in every team huddle.

"Place a little more trust in your players and see how they respond."

Of course, if you have a freshman- or sophomore-laden team, then this strategy may not be the best. Those players typically don't have the leadership qualities to lift a team. Or, if the opposition just threw a new defensive look at you and it's flustering your players, then spending those precious timeout seconds on a new strategy is important.

If you're running mostly seniors onto the floor, however, give them the reins every once in awhile and see what happens. Watch how they respond. See who takes charge. Then, if it leads to success on the court, players now have a more vested ownership in the program. They start to understand how

to respond on their own. And, they trust in their basketball knowledge to come out ahead, rather than questioning

their moves and waiting for someone to tell them what to do.

Having a single voice commanding your players' every step isn't the best way to reach today's teenagers. Obviously your job is to educate, guide and lead the team ... but sometimes less is more.



Michael Austin
Michael Austin
Editor-in-chief



Sometimes Gregg Popovich says nothing to his team in timeouts

In this issue...

3 BEAT MORE ATHLETIC TEAMS WITH PACK-LINE DEFENSE

Eliminate dribble penetration and collapse on the post when facing teams possessing more talent and athleticism

4 GUARD THE WING

Place tremendous pressure on the ball handler with the security of having help defense ready to pounce when needed

5 STOP DRIBBLE PENETRATION

Get your players always thinking about stopping dribble penetration - even when it occurs at the baseline or from the set's top

6 DOUBLE SCREEN FOR CORNER 3-POINTER

From a sideline out-of-bounds situation, run a baseline double screen and free a shooter coming from the weak side to the strong corner

QUICK HITTER

Check Everything, Stay Eligible

When the No. 2 high school team in the nation forfeits its 24 wins and has its post-season tournament aspirations hanging in the balance, then other coaches need to learn from mistakes made.

Last month, Curie High School (Chicago) was found to be using

seven academically ineligible players for the 2013-14 season as the school failed to submit ISPs (Individual Study Plans) for those athletes. The ISPs must be filed for players with a GPA lower than 2.0.

When asked about the ISPs, head coach Michael Oliver told the *Chicago Tribune*, "I assumed they were in. I did my part in November and assumed the proper people took care of the ISPs."

Oliver's mistake was not following up on the ISPs even though he said

there hadn't been an issue in the 20 year prior. When it comes to player eligibility, coaches need to take an active role in all aspects, especially when a majority of the team falls below the minimum eligibility line.

The good news: The Illinois High School Association cleared Curie to play in the post-season. The bad news: Curie's top two guards were ineligible and the squad shockingly lost its first game in the regional semifinals. - Michael Austin

There are no easy shots at the rim against a Pack-Line Defense



Beat More Athletic Teams

The Pack-Line Defense eliminates dribble penetration and keeps talented post players off the block - use it when you are at a talent or athletic disadvantage

The best men's basketball Division I defense in 2013-14 belonged to the University of Virginia. It guided the Cavaliers to the ACC regular season title (its first outright title since 1981) and, as of early March, the Cavaliers led the nation in points allowed per game by a wide margin (54.8 points with the second-best team, Clemson, allowing 56.8).

The key to Virginia's defensive prowess? The Pack-Line Defense. It's a philosophy head coach Tony Bennett has used throughout his career, as did his father, Dick, during his successful coaching days (UW-Green Bay, University of Wisconsin and Washington State).

It all starts with transition defense. Pack-Line coaches must convince their players to sprint back on defense after a missed shot. If the offense pushes the ball and the pack doesn't set up in time, the defense is rendered useless.

Once players realize the critical importance of transition defense, then the half-court Pack-Line concept is simple to understand (although more difficult to execute): create chaos and confusion with relentless on-ball pressure knowing help defense always is available as the other four defenders are inside the "pack" - a space extended from the basket to 17 feet on the perimeter.

For less-athletic teams, this type of defense works as it eliminates dribble penetration by talented point guards. So many successful offenses revolve around a ball handler penetrating deep into a defense, which creates in-close scoring chances and opens the perimeter for uncontested shots.

The Pack-Line offers help defense at every turn. With four players stationed within 17 feet of the hoop, higher-percentage shots aren't as available to

the offense. Plus, it lessens the damage inflicted by a talented post player as you have multiple defenders in close proximity to double-team if necessary. The main weakness is it allows some open perimeter shots. But, it's a trade-off you have to make in better defending dribble penetration and post play.

The following two pages provide the basics of how the Pack-Line works (the red line inside the 3-point line is the pack line, some coaches tape this line on the practice floor so players see the physical barrier and where they need to be). Just like with most defensive concepts, when executed at the collegiate level, there are many more layers, responsibilities and techniques needed to be successful. But, for youth and high school coaches looking to slow down more athletic opponents, the Pack-Line Defense basics are a great place to start.

Words by:
Michael Austin

Guard The Wing

The on-ball defender's goal is to keep the defender in front of him but help defense is available if dribble penetration occurs

SET UP

The red curved line just inside and mirroring the 3-point line distinguishes the "pack" area. If a defender is not on the ball, then he is inside the pack. The boxed area is the "post" and the goal is to keep an offensive player from catching a pass with both feet in here [1].

HOW TO PLAY

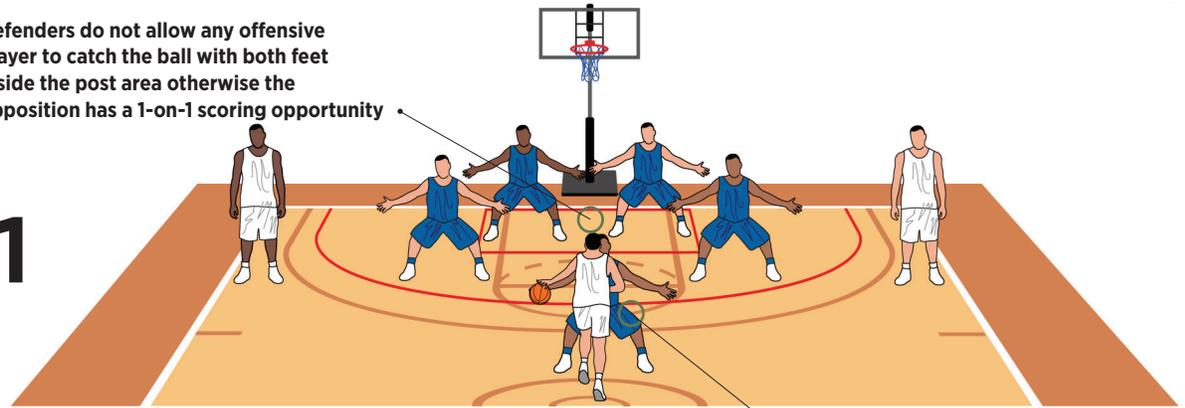
The on-ball defender plays tightly on the ball handler. The goal is to cause chaos and confusion for the ball handler with the knowledge that help defense is available if beaten. In this instance, the ball handler dribbles hard to the left with the on-ball defender trailing. The player at the top left of the pack comes out to stop the penetration as the on-ball defender sags back into the pack. The post defenders front their responsibilities if those offensive players are in the post area [2]. The pass is made to the wing, so the new on-ball defender jumps to the wing as the other defenders shift inside the pack [3].

TECHNIQUE

If the ball handler picks up the dribble outside the pack line, then all defenders go into full-deney mode. Otherwise, they remain in the gap and available to provide help defense, which cuts off dribble-drive opportunities and cuts down high-percentage shots.

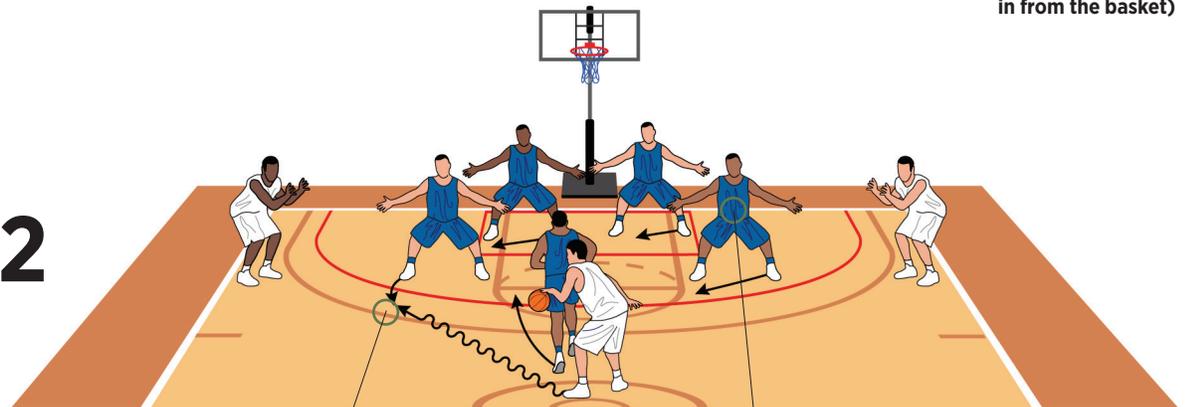
Defenders do not allow any offensive player to catch the ball with both feet inside the post area otherwise the opposition has a 1-on-1 scoring opportunity

1



The on-ball defender tightly guards the ball handler with all other defenders inside the pack area (about 17 feet and in from the basket)

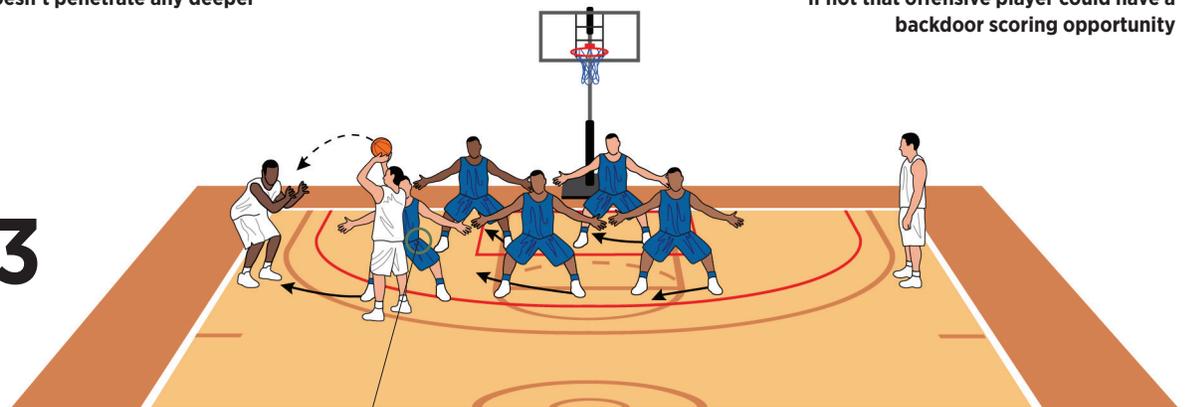
2



This defender steps outside the pack and provides help defense so the ball doesn't penetrate any deeper

The weak-side defender shifts into the gap but keeps an eye on the weak-side wing - if not that offensive player could have a backdoor scoring opportunity

3



After stopping the dribble penetration, this wing defender jumps to cover the ball when passed to the wing



Stop Dribble Penetration

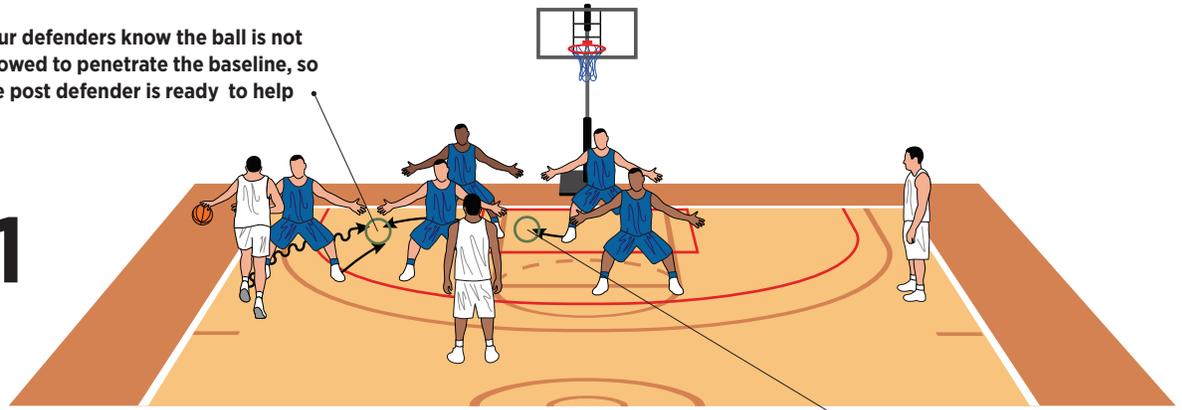
Help defenders must be ready to stop dribble penetration, even when it occurs near the baseline, then back toward the top

SET UP

The ball is located on the wing with the on-ball defender tightly guarding. The post defenders front their responsibilities if those offensive players are inside the box. The weak-side wing defender cannot lose track of the weak-side offensive player. If he does, a backdoor cut and easy score becomes possible.

Your defenders know the ball is not allowed to penetrate the baseline, so the post defender is ready to help

1

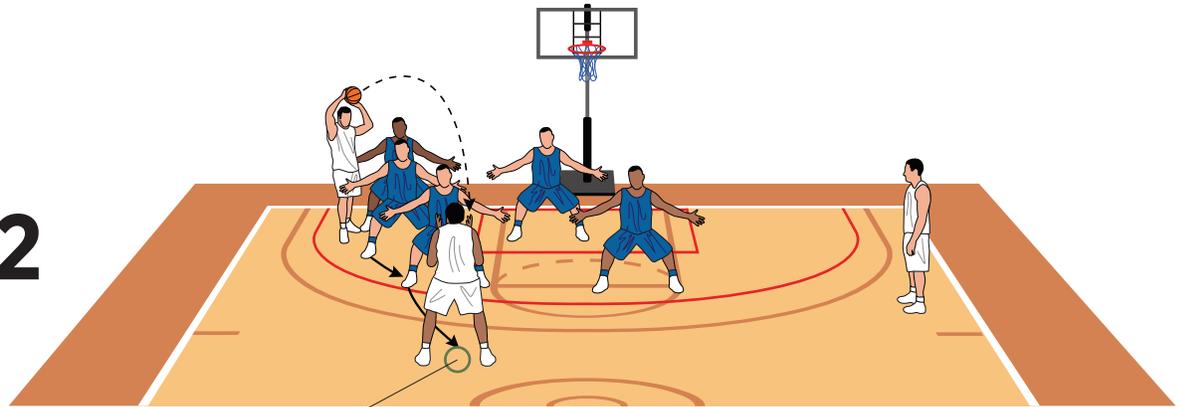


The weak-side post defender slides over and puts a body on the offensive player in this area

HOW TO PLAY

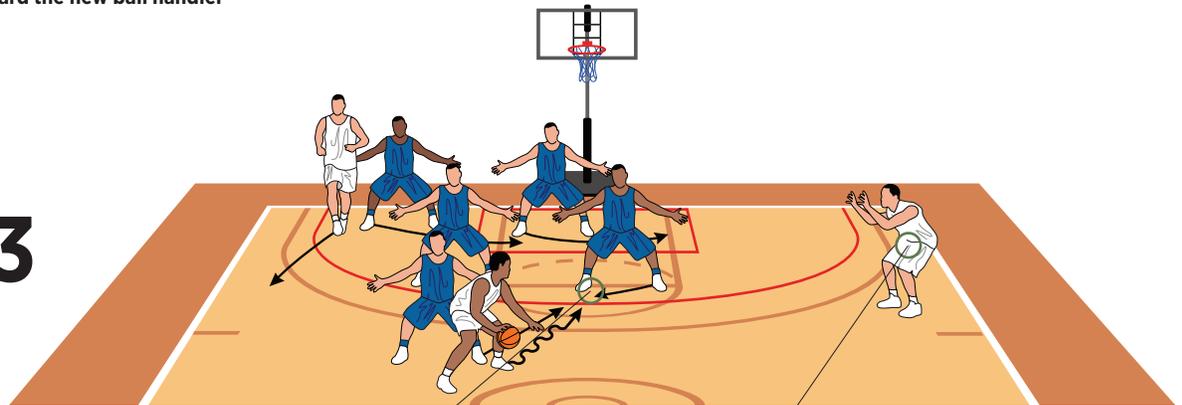
The ball handler drives toward the baseline and is met by a post defender. The weak-side post defender slides over to disrupt a possible post-entry pass [1]. The ball handler picks up the dribble and fires a pass back to the top. The top-left defender jumps outside the pack to guard the ball. The initial on-ball defender shifts to the left-top spot [2]. On the catch, the top offensive player sees an opening and tries to dribble into the middle of the defender. The ball handler is met by the top-right defender in the gap. The post defenders shift in front of their offensive responsibilities [3].

2



The defender closest to the ball jumps out of the pack to tightly guard the new ball handler

3



With a shifting defense, the offense looks to penetrate the middle so this defender slides over and stops the ball handler

Here is the weakness - this player is open on the wing - the new on-ball defender must hustle to close out on this shot





Double Screen For Corner 3-Pointer

Run the farthest player off a low double screen to create an open 3-point corner shooting opportunity from a sideline out-of-bounds set

WHY USE IT

Double screens on inbound situations are perfect for creating an open corner shooting situation.

SET UP

The inbound play is coming from the left side. Your shooter is on the right block. Place a player at the top and another at the elbow. Your final player is on the strong-side block.

HOW TO PLAY

The top player moves to the strong-side block. After the top player clears, the elbow player comes high and receives the inbound pass [1]. The initial strong-side post moves across the lane to set a screen for the shooter. The top player who now is low also sets a screen. This double screen allows the shooter more separation as he sprints to the strong-side corner. The pass is made to the shooter [2]. The screeners in the lane get into box-out rebounding mode. The shooter takes the shot in rhythm before the defense recovers [3].

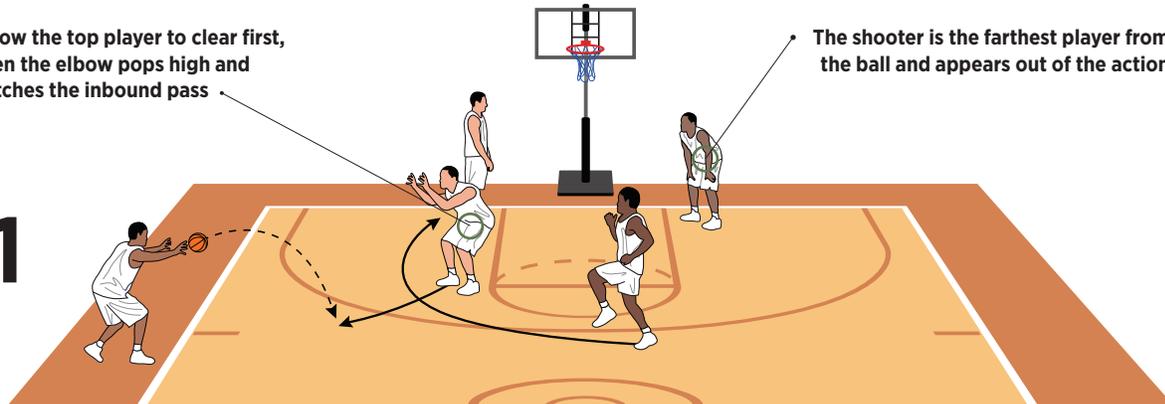
TECHNIQUE

Be sure the top player moves low before the elbow comes to the ball. You want the double screen set up at the same time rather than already having the ball in play and waiting for the top player to move into position.

Allow the top player to clear first, then the elbow pops high and catches the inbound pass

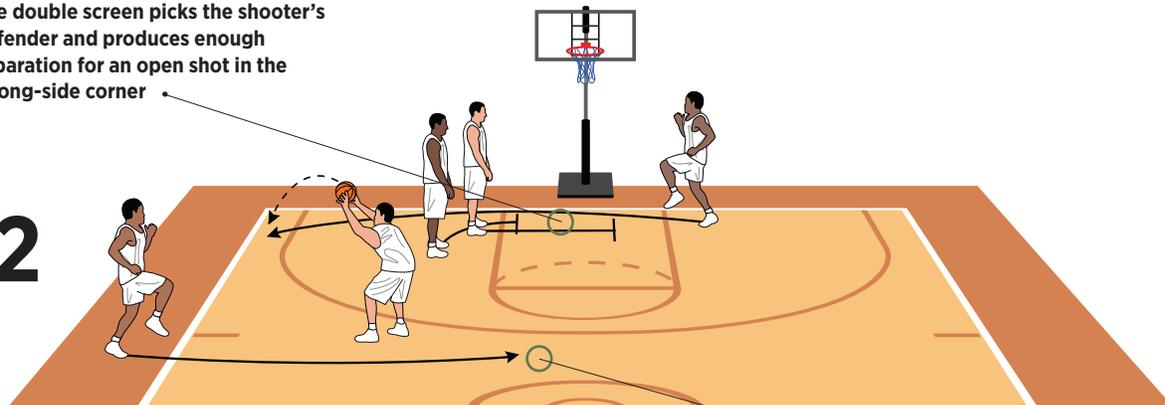
The shooter is the farthest player from the ball and appears out of the action

1



The double screen picks the shooter's defender and produces enough separation for an open shot in the strong-side corner

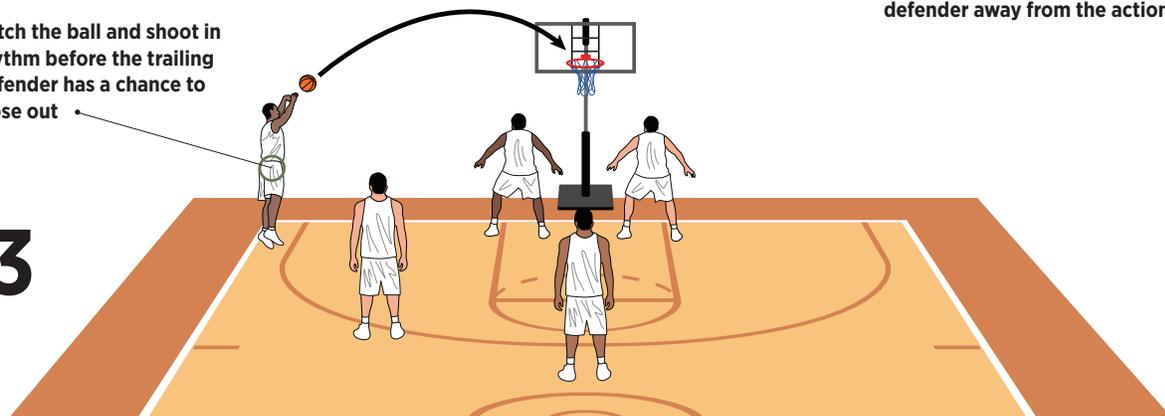
2



The inbinder clears to the top as a safety valve and to pull a defender away from the action

Catch the ball and shoot in rhythm before the trailing defender has a chance to close out

3



By Bruce Bouck, President, Mansfield Youth Basketball Association, boys varsity assistant, Mansfield High School, Mass.



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