



12 Essential Qualities of a Complete Guard

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Dennis is former Siena College player, NCAA D1 referee and coach.

1. Leadership- different styles:

- a. Competent
 - i. Be the hardest worker on the team
 - ii. Have the highest skill capability
 - iii. Compete in every drill
- b. Vocal
 - i. Be “directive” in nature
- c. Emotional
 - i. Passionate approach to winning
- d. Know when “followership” vs leadership is needed
 - i. There can be multiple leaders on teams depending on circumstances. Know your role and others’ role on the team

- e. Develop multiple leadership styles and be able to choose the correct leadership style based on team needs
- f. Know your teammates
 - i. Tonality, measured words, body language and gestures at the right time with the right player and/or team is a delicate art of great leaders. Understand who needs a pat on the back vs. who needs a kick in the rear.

2. Court vision on offense

- a. Understand mismatches, weaknesses, foul trouble and switches
 - i. Identify who to get the ball to where, why and when
 - ii. Know who on the other team can't guard, where they can't guard on the court and get your under matched player the ball
- b. Find and get the ball to your shooters in spots where they can score
- c. Find and get ball to post players in spots where they can score
- d. "Good passes" result in "good shots." Get the ball to the players shot pocket and or target hand.
- e. Advance the ball without a dribble when/where possible.
 - i. Only after the player looks ahead should they put the ball on the floor - and then only to advance the ball up the floor, drive to the basket, or improve a passing angle.
 - ii. When advancing the ball with a dribble, you must be able to dribble without thinking about dribbling or about the opponent who is guarding you. This will free you to see the court, ready to pass to a teammate who is open.

3. Court vision on defense

- a. Know who is getting the ball where for the other team. Identify plays that are being run to expose weaknesses on your teams behalf.
 - i. Counter this with defensive adjustments.
- b. Keep your man out of the lane. Know how to stay in front, beat to a spot and redirect without fouling.
 - i. Use angles on court to cut players movement.
- c. Know tendencies of players on the other team and exploit them.
 - i. Draw fouls on their patented moves i.e. scouting report: he/she takes 2 hard dribbles left and always crosses to the right. Take the charge.
- d. Effective guards rarely get caught out of position in defensive transition and the best have the ability to buy time, and space to force the offense into a low percentage shot in the open court even with a superior numbers advantage. They may not stop the break every time, but if they stop or

slow it down half of the time, you can prevent scoring by opposition in a game.

- e. Always look alert on defense
 - i. Slap the floor
 - ii. Crowd the offensive player
 - iii. Hand in shot pocket/triple threat area always

4. Skill and IQ

- a. Eventually talent evens out on most levels. What players and teams are left with is their skill and IQ. Understand the game. Beat players with fundamentals and intelligence.
- b. Guards must know everyone's plays and where/when they should be in spots. Use leadership / communication skills to guide other teammates in tough and or breakdown situations.
- c. Get in the paint and distribute
- d. Know what pass to throw
 - i. Chest passes to shooters
 - ii. Bounce passes to cutters
 - iii. Avoid "tracing" and tips by defenders.
 - 1. Always be deceptive. Hi low; low high.

5. Handle, pass and get in the lane and to the rim under pressure

- a. Change directions, handle double teams
- b. Get dribbled ball off the ground into a pass quickly
- c. Know how to get ball to wings who are also under pressure
- d. Understand passing tempo, distances and angles
- e. Know how to get open under pressure
- f. Get low in lane, stay balanced and be deceptive with ball fakes (big men want to take a bite).
- g. Keep side to side/hip contact with defender. Create separation at end of sequence before shot release.

6. Feed the post (a "lost art"):

- a. Understand multiple ways/passes to get ball to post.
- b. Understand passing angles
 - i. Avoid "tracing" and tips by defenders.
 - 1. Always be deceptive. Hi low; low high.

7. Guard your position

- a. Compete on stats.
- b. Out score and out assist your opponent. No/low turnovers

8. Create for others first

- a. Get teammates involved early
- b. Pass first. Shoot second.

- c. Make teammates better by understanding their strengths and weaknesses. Get them the ball in spots and situations that accentuate their strengths. Don't put them in positions where their limitations can be exploited.

9. Game management:

- a. Game clock, shot clock, score, tempo, foul trouble (both teams), times out left (both teams)
- b. Identify defenses
- c. Choose correct sets

10. Be able to run a fast break effectively

- a. Be available for outlets
- b. Dominate the million dollar highway (aka the middle lane)
- c. Understand who is filling the lane i.e. their strengths, weaknesses, where, when they can and like to get the ball.
- d. Know foul situations and who is prone to "charges."
- e. Know if the defender is known for taking charges.
- f. Know who wants lob, how and when or who needs a high soft bounce pass right at the waist.
- g. Get the ball to the right player in the right position at the right time.
- h. During 2 on 1s leave middle lane open and have you and your teammate stay approximately one step out of middle lane to create a sizeable gap for the defender to guard.
- i. If you beat your man get to the rim (8 foot pull ups are difficult (not impossible) shots to make).
- j. Reverse passes on break are susceptible to charges.

11. Effectively run the pick and roll (6 ways listed here....there are many others....)

- a. Standard:
 - i. screener rolls to the rim and receives pass
- b. Standard:
 - i. player with ball takes shot
- c. Defense hedges hi and hard:
 - i. split the D and drive. Low shoulders. Low dribble
- d. Defense doubles hard:
 - i. drag defense high.
 - ii. Screener "pops" (not rolls as a "roll" in crowded lane with back turned is susceptible to charge on receipt of pass).
 - iii. Guard makes jump pass to screener.
- e. If offensive player with the ball is having difficulty getting to screen:

- i. Pass to screener, fake cut opposite and come around for a hand off screen.
 - ii. Dribble below the screen on wing and come up high
 - iii. Reject screen, reverse and drive to rim
 - f. Defensive player hedges normally:
 - i. As guard's defender is getting over screen, hesitate as if you are stopped by screener's defender. When he retreats to his man explode to rim with your defender on your hip.
 - ii. Or if he/she hedges and stays with you drag player high and get ball to screener who has mismatch

12. Communicate with the coach and the bench:

- a. Understand game plans of coaches and be able to execute
- b. Listen in time outs

For more information please contact us in one of the following ways:

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