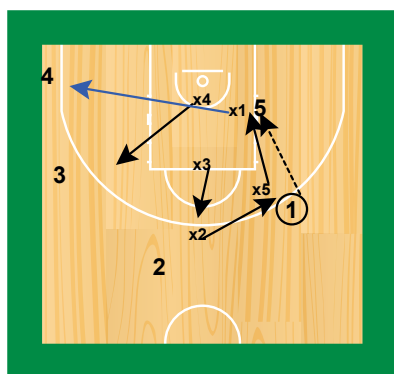## DEFENDING "4 OUT"

Where a ball screen is set and all other players are on the perimeter. If the screener is not a good shooter, defenders switch and x1 sprints to stop 5 getting low post position.


If the low post player (5) gets the ball, the defenders trap, with x5 following the pass.

x2 rotates to defend 1, x3 rotates to defend 2 and x4 initially defends both players on the weakside. Once x5 has established a good defensive position in the low post, x1 releases to defend 4.

DEFENDING THE TRAILER

It is common for the "trailer" to set a screen for the player at the wing that has the ball.
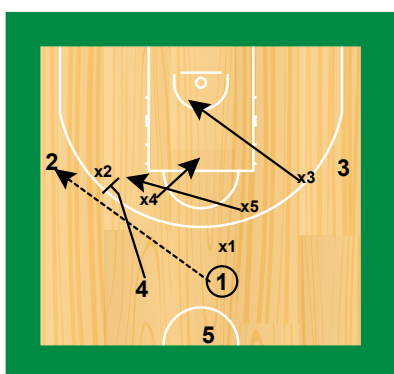
To defend this, both x4 and x5 need to have moved quickly in transition and to be inside the 3 point line.

The defender who would normally defend the screener (i.e. x4) does not do so and instead slides in to the key at the "high split". They are responsible to defend 4 if they move to the basket.

x5 moves to defend the screener.

1.2.3   DESIGNING STRATEGY FOR TEAM DEFENCE

The coach should determine the basic defensive structure that a team is going to use and it may have a number of elements for example:

- Half court defence – "man to man", denying reversal passes;
- Full court pressure defence – 2-2-1 Zone Trap, pick up at free throw line;
- On Ball Screens – Trap or "under" with hard "show".

Within this structure the coach may teach a number of different tactics, such as different techniques defending screens or defending post players. The coach may then choose tactics based upon particular opponents and this may be changed in preparing for a game or changed during the game.

The degree of complexity that the coach can include when preparing the team will depend upon the level of experience of the players and also considerations such as how many hours the team practices each week.

With less experienced teams, preparation often focuses on re-iterating the basic defensive structure chosen for the team. With more experienced teams, preparation focuses on the strengths of the opponent and how they are best challenged.

In considering the opponent's strengths, the coach will consider:

- The tempo the opponent prefers;
- Tendencies of post players – are they passers, rebounders, scorers;
- Tendencies of perimeter players – are they scorers off the dribble or off the pass;
- Screening action commonly used.

The coach can then choose tactics that they believe will negate the opponent's strengths. For example:

- Double team particular players (e.g. a low post player) or in particular situations (e.g. ball screens);
- Deny the ball to particular players (e.g. fronting a low post player) or a particular area on the floor (e.g. deny pass to the wing but allow pass to the corner);
- Force the play to a particular side of court (e.g. deny a pass to the right hand wing but allow a pass to the left hand side);
- Playing a zone defence against a team that is a strong driving team;
- Full court pressure against a team that prefers a slow tempo (the team may also play a faster tempo on their offence in an attempt to quicken the tempo of the game);
- Playing a strong denial defence to disrupt the opponent's movement of the ball.

In selecting the team's defensive tactics the coach must also consider what the team prefers to play and what is their "natural" game style. Changing too much can result in disrupting their own team. They may also change the tactics at times during the games and then revert to their normal game style.

Within the team defensive strategy the coach may also change the individual responsibilities that player's have, choosing "match-ups" that they believe will be to the advantage of their team. This could include, for example, starting a different player than they normally do on the basis that this player is able to defend a particular opponent more effectively.

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The coach may also opt to put less pressure on some of the opposition players, effectively allowing them to shoot in order to be able to put more pressure on the player's that score the majority of the opponent's points. This may include:

- "Stepping off" a player on the perimeter that is usually a passer, in order to more aggressively deny other players'
- Setting a double team against a scorer, allowing passes, and then denying a pass back to the scorer;
- Moving to a strong help line position, allowing a pass to a player that is not a strong scorer, to place more pressure on dribble penetration;
- Not moving to help position when the ball is penetrated by a player that prefers to pass and instead remain in denial position.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Discuss with a coaching colleague how many different defensive structures or tactics they have with their team? In what order did they introduce the various tactics?

2. Do you agree that junior teams need only one defence? Discuss your position with a coaching colleague.

1.3   ZONE DEFENSES

1.3.1   1-2-2 MATCH UP DEFENCE

A "Match Up" zone combines elements of "man to man" defence (on ball) and zone defence (away from the ball) and has sometimes been described as a switching "man to man" defence.

One advantage of a match up zone defence is that it may confuse opponents about what defence your team is playing. This can be particularly effective against opponents that have one offence to play against zone defence and a separate offence to play against man to man.

There are various alignments that can be used in zones and most have options for trapping and "denial" pressure if you want to utilize them. In determining which zone defence to use you should consider:

- Your physical talent: some zones will allow you to keep "bigs" near the basket, others have a lot of interaction between perimeter and post players;

- Your opponent's shooting: some zones provide better coverage of perimeter shooters than others (e.g. a 1-3-1 provides better coverage than a 1-1-3);

- Your preparation time: the more your zone defence has rules that are consistent with your "man to man" defence, the less time it will take to teach it.

All match up zones require good "man to man" defensive skills, particularly:

- Ability to contain the ball and influence where it is dribbled or passed;

- Keeping vision of both the ball and players on the "weak side";

- "Flying with the ball": defenders moving to their next position while the ball is in the air, so that they arrive as the ball is caught.

1-2-2 MATCH UP DEFENCE

The 1-2-2 match up defence can be demonstrated, and practiced, against 7 players.
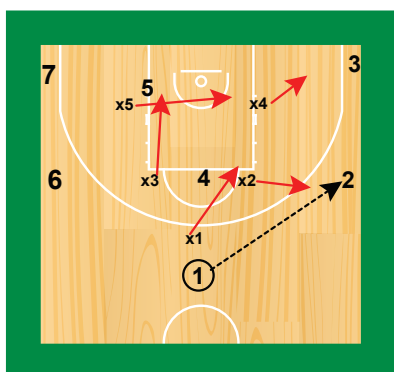
INITIAL ALIGNMENT AND SLIDES

Using seven offensive players (5 perimeter, high and low posts) will show all the coverage that is required.

Defenders start:

- x1 takes the ball;

- x2 and x3 occupy the high post area – keeping arms in front of the post player to stop any pass;

- x4 and x5 are in the low post areas.

On a pass to the wing:

- the closest guard (x2) takes the ball

- x1 drops back to guard the high post

- the closest forward (x4) steps out

- the other forward steps across

- the other guard rotates down into the front line
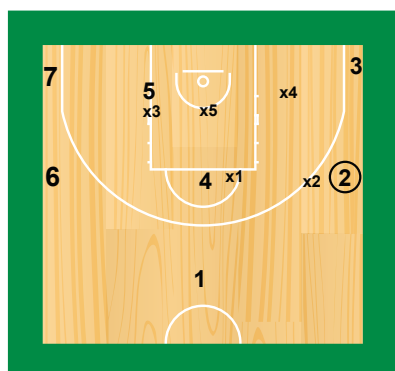
x4 is in position to guard the perimeter player in the corner if they are passed the ball. They keep their hands active to discourage any pass into the low post area behind them.
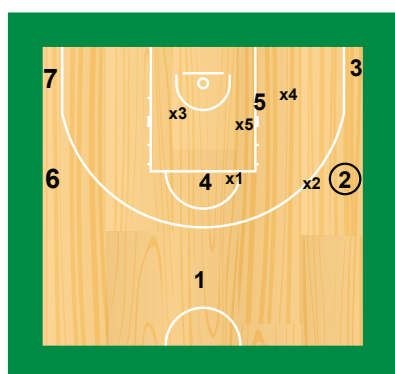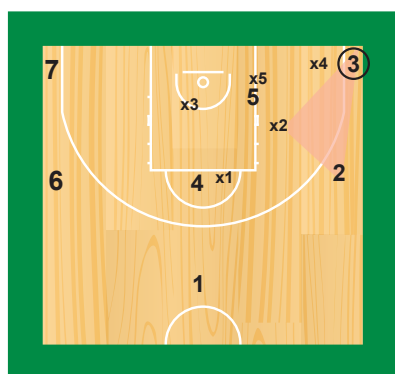

If there is a ballside low post, x4 and x5 should both have a hand in front of the post to deny any pass.
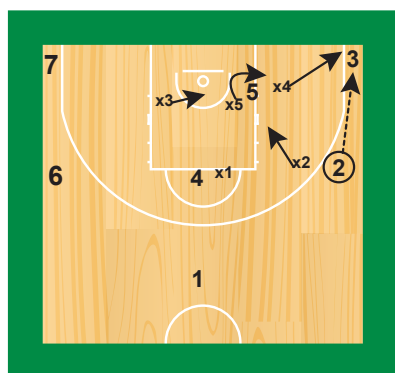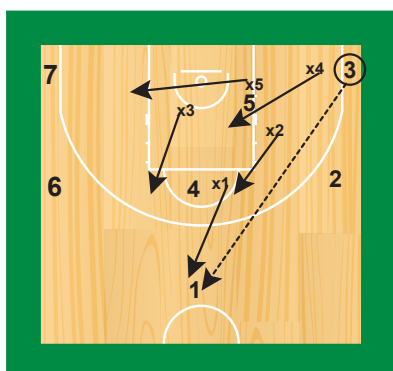

When the ball is passed to the corner, the forward (x4) steps out and must deny any drive to the baseline.

x5 moves to ¾ front the low post, from the baseline side. x2 moves close enough to deny any pass to the low post.

x1 remains at the high post area, and x3 is in a help position.

x2 must make sure that they keep vision of both the wing players and the player with the ball. They face the player with the ball to make it clear that they are ready to help, which may make it less likely that the player will drive.

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As the ball is passed out of the corner, defenders rotate their position.
If the ball was passed to the wing, x2 would take it.

If the ball is passed back to the point, defenders rotate back to the 1-2-2 alignment. x1 may "hold" at the free throw line to deny a pass to 4, staying there until x2 or x3 recover. x4 should have their hands in front of 5 to stop a pass to the low post.
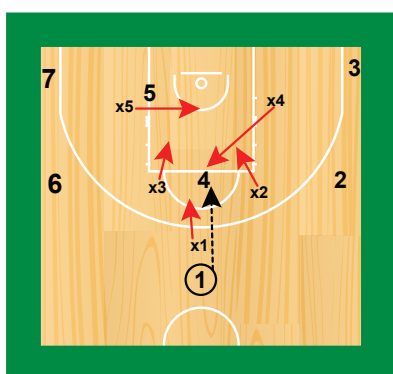
DEFENDING HIGH POST

If the ball is passed to the high post player (4), either x4 or x5 steps up to defend them, the other forward rotates toward the middle of the key.

Which defender moves to defend the high post player can be determined by:

- whoever is closest;

- where there is also a low post, as the defender on the other side of the key steps
  to defend the high post;

- a team rule that one defender will always be the high post defender; or

- whichever side the high post player prefers to drive, the defender from that side
  then moves to defend them (and is in a better position to stop any dribble).

The two wing players (x3 and x2) drop below the high post player and, in particular, help deny any pass to a low post player.
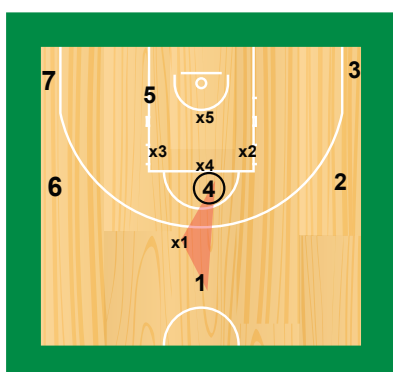
x1 also drops to pressure the high post.

Whilst x1 can pressure the high post, it is important that they keep vision of the offensive player at the top of the key.
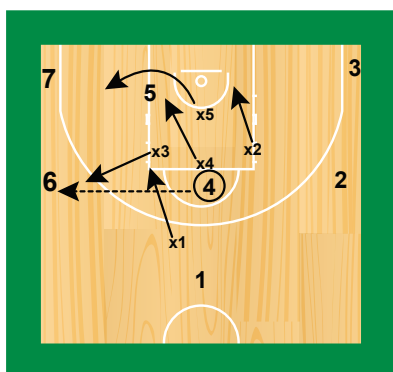
If the high post passes to the perimeter, x3 or x2 will move to take the ball.
Other players rotate into position.
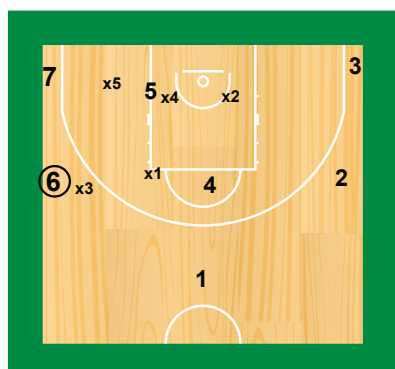
The alignment now is as if the ball was initially passed from 1 to 6.
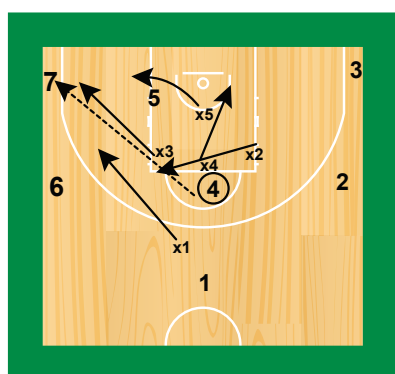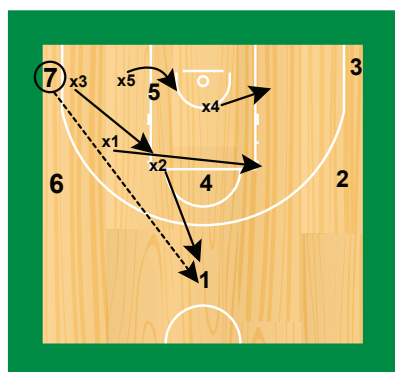
Importantly, if the ball is passed to the corner, this is taken by a guard (x3). Other players rotate so that they end up with:

- 3 players on the front line (x3, x5 and x4) – guarding the ball, low post and help position;
- 1 guard at the high post (x2);
- 1 guard at the wing, close enough to the low post to help deny any pass.
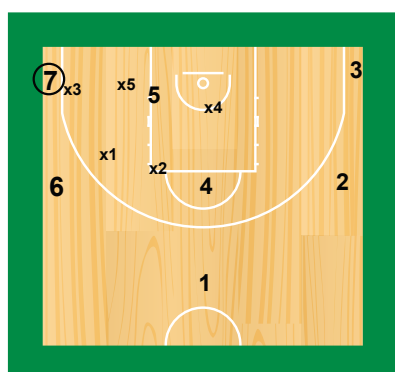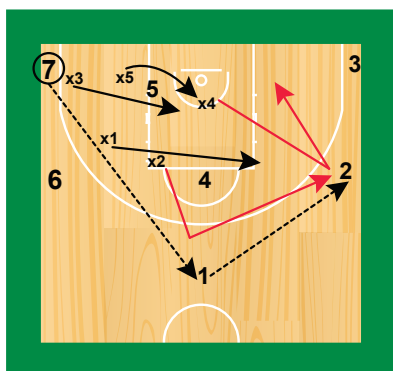
x4 does not rotate to the low post position, because they could be "sealed" easily by the post player. Post defenders should come from the baseline side to the post position.

As the ball is passed from the corner to the point, x3 returns to a guard position.
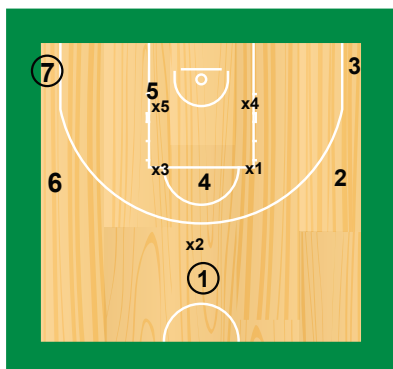
It is important that all players move while the ball is in the air.

"SCRAMBLING" ROTATIONS

The rotations on a pass from the corner return defenders to the initial alignment. However, if the ball is quickly passed to the opposite wing, the slides may need to be different:

- x4 is closest to 2 so initially closes out to guard the ball.
  However, a "rule" of the defence is that x4 and x5 do not guard on the wing;
- x2 moves to the wing as quickly as possible, allowing x4 to return to a frontline position;
- x1 moves to guard the high post, and x3 remains on the front line.
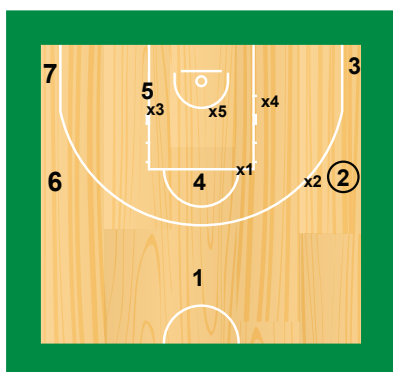
The alignment at the end is consistent with the initial slides shown. This "scramble" is an example of being "efficient" with slides and having the closest defender move to the ball.
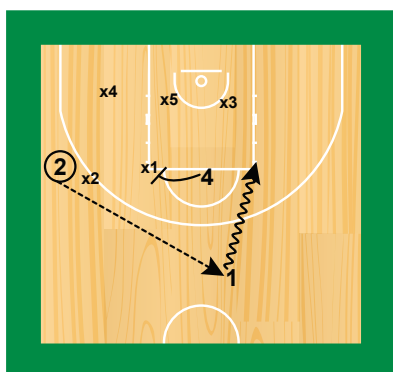
AVOIDING SCREENS

A common tactic used against zone defences is to set screens on the "outside". Accordingly, defenders need to adjust their position to ensure that a post defender cannot set an effective screen.

Here. 4 can screen x1, providing 1 with a lane to penetrate into the keyway.
x1 needs to adjust their position so that they can move past the high post player.
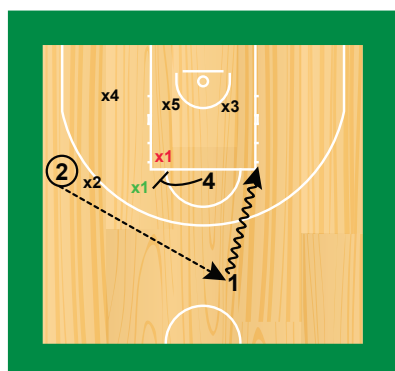
When the screen is set, the defender should adjust their position, so that they can move past the screen. They can move below (shown in green) or above (shown red) the screener.

Moving below the screen may be preferred as it gives a better angle to stop penetration by 1. However, if 1 is a very good perimeter shooter, x1 should move 4's screen. If they move below it, they may be re-screened by 4 and not be able to defend a shot.
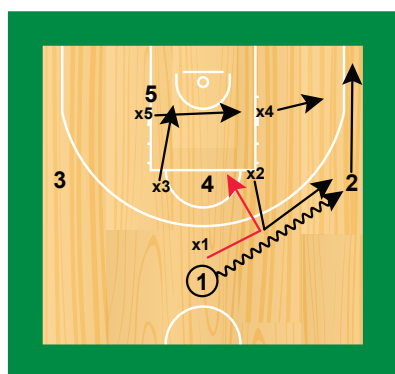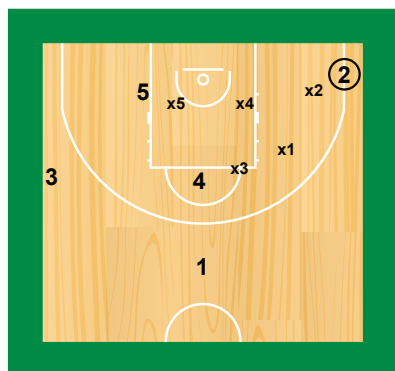
DEFENDING DRIBBLE

x1 should attempt to influence the ball to one side of the court or the other. Which side will depend upon the "scout" and whatever tendencies the opponent has. If they usually play from the right hand side, force them left!

As the ball is dribbled to the wing, x1 "hands off" the dribbler to x2, who guards them to the wing. Other players rotate the same as if the ball was passed to the wing.
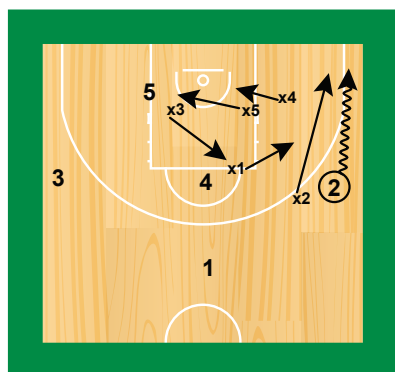
If the wing player dribbles to the corner, the guard (x2) defends this.

x4 rotates to the low post and x5 rotates to the help position – forming the three defenders on the front line. x3 moves to defend the high post and x1 steps toward the wing.

Again, the resulting alignment is similar to when a ball is passed to the corner. If the corner player dribbles out to the wing:

- if a guard is defending (e.g. x2) – they remain on the player to the wing;
- if a forward is defending – the "hand off" to the nearest guard and then rotate back onto the front line.

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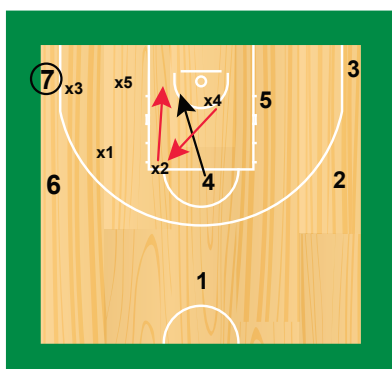
DEFENDING POST CUT

If the high post player dives to the basket, the guard must also defend that cut. This can be done by switching with the help side defender (as shown) although this is most effective when the help side defender is a guard.

It can also be done by "handing" off the cutter to one of the front line defenders, which is particularly effective if they post up.
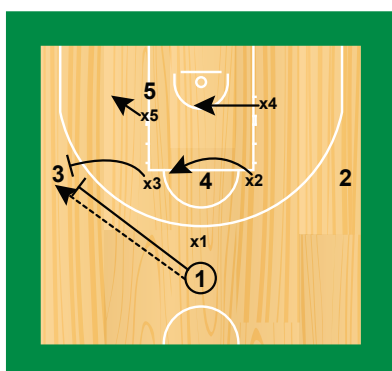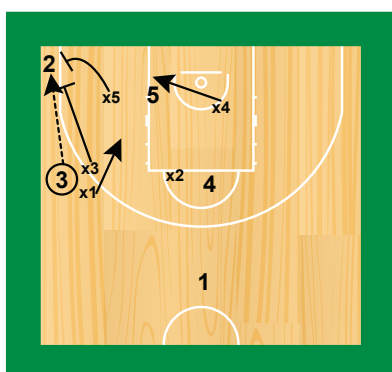
TRAPPING

The zone can trap at either the wing or the corner. The wing trap is set:

- x3 moves to the wing as the ball is passed and x1 follows the pass (this works best when x1 is closer to the wing than the middle of the court);
- x2 moves to cover deny the high post
- x5 moves to short corner and x4 rotates to low post.
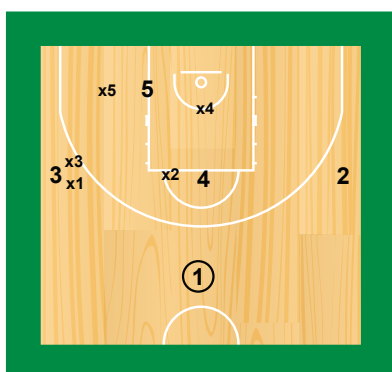
In this alignment, x2 and x5 are "stealers" or "interceptors" and x4 is the "safety"

To trap in the corner, the guard from the wing follows the pass. This can be done after trapping at the wing or just in the corner.

A forward then defends the low post and guards defend both the high post and the wing.

The difference here from normal coverage is that the "help defender" is not present
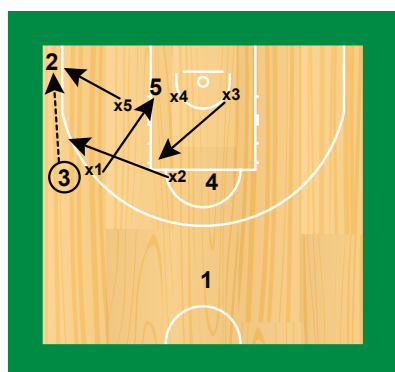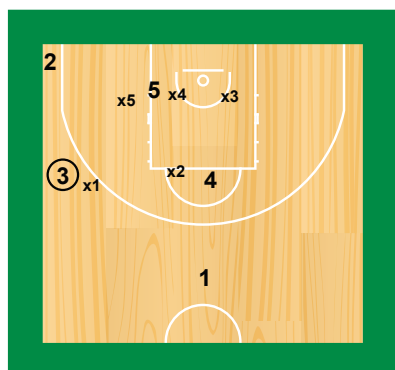
"FIRE" – PRESSURE DEFENCE

The 1-2-2 matchup can also be used as a pressuring defence, where passes to posts and the wing are denied.

Here, x4 and x5 combine to deny the post, keeping their arms active to be in front.

On a pass to the corner:

- x5 rotates to defend the ball;
- x3 rotates to deny the high post.
- x4 remains behind the post player to stop any lob pass;
- x2 rotates to deny a pass back to the wing;
- x1 rotates to deny a pass to the high post.
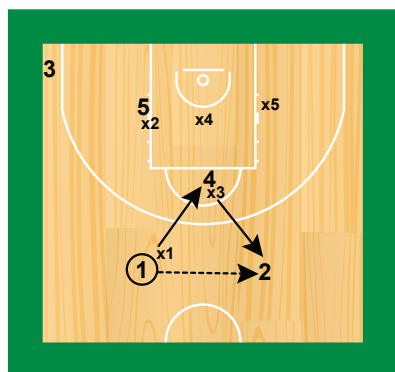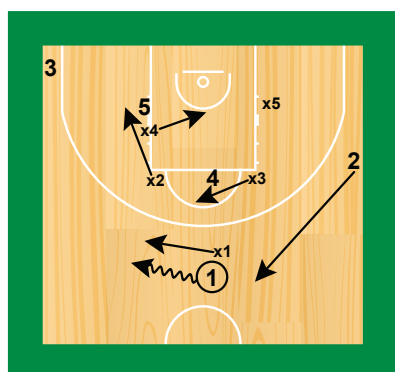
ADJUSTING TO A "2 GUARD FRONT"

Commonly an offensive team that is facing a zone defence that has a guard in the middle of the floor will place two offensive players at the top of the key.

In the 1-2-2 match up, the guard that has the ball (x1) moves with it and the other guard (x3) moves to the middle of the foul line and in front of any high post. x2 rotates to the front line.

x2 makes this rotation as x3 has further to move to reach the position.

Once the ball is reversed, the guard from the high post defends the ball, and the other guard rotates back to the high post.

Similarly, if the ball is passed to the wing, the guard at the high post moves to defend the wing. To help this, the guard may stand to the ball side of the high post player, whilst keeping hands in front of the player to deny a pass.
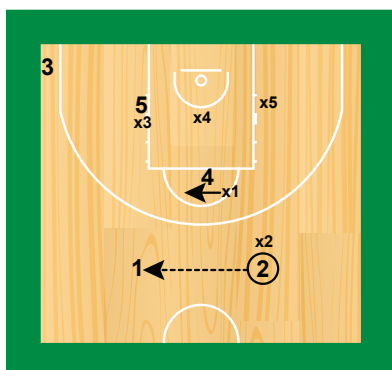
x1 stands to the ball side of 4 and steps across as the ball is "reversed" to 1.
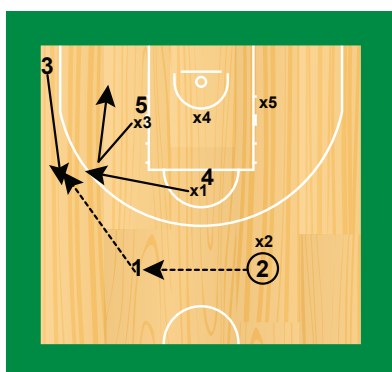

As the ball is passed to the wing, the forward may hedge toward the wing before recovering back to the front line. This can give the guard time to get to the wing.
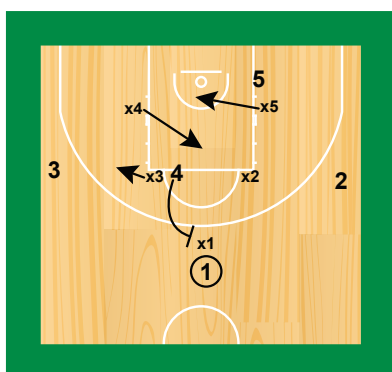

DEFENDING PENETRATION

"Containing" the ball is a critical defensive skill in both man to man and match up zone defence.

If 1 penetrates, the other guards are responsible for stopping passes to perimeter shooters – they do not help to stop the dribble.
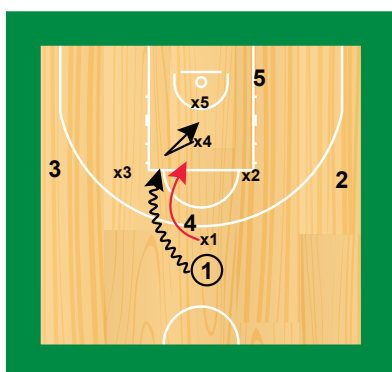
A common tactic is for the high post player to screen the ball defender. When this screen is set, x4 and x5 move into a tandem position.

As the dribbler penetrates, x4 moves to stop the penetration. They recover back once x1 re-establishes good position.

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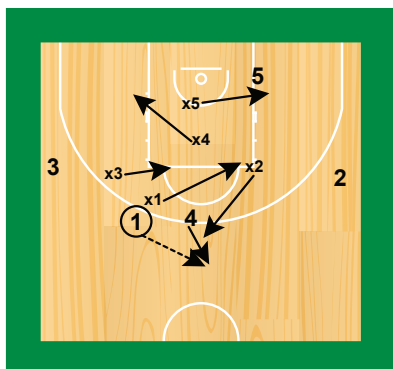
If the screener "pops" to the perimeter and receives the ball, the closest guard moves to defend them and other players rotate to the initial alignment.
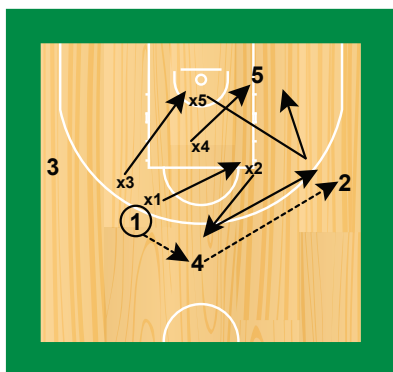

Often the screener, will quickly pass to the wing – this "second pass" is often the most effective at creating an open shot.

This is a "scramble" situation. The forward may need to guard the wing, and then be "bumped down" by a guard, to return to the normal alignment. This is shown in the movement of x5 and x2.
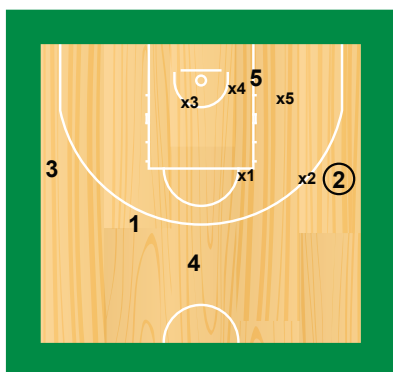
Good communication is the key to this working. The aim is to make the most "efficient" slides and if all team mates know what the others are doing, the defence can be effective.

Here the team rule can be "it's only wrong, if you don't bring your team mates along!"
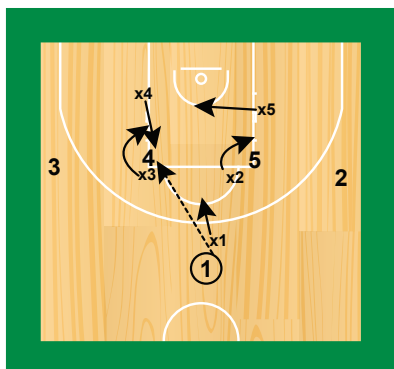
DEFENDING 2 HIGH POSTS

Where an offence has two high post players, both guards at the high post deny an offensive player. Again, they do not have to stand directly in front of the post player, but must deny the pass by at least having an arm across the post player.

If the ball is passed to one of the post players, both guards drop and the forward steps up to guard the post player while the other forward moves to the middle of the key.
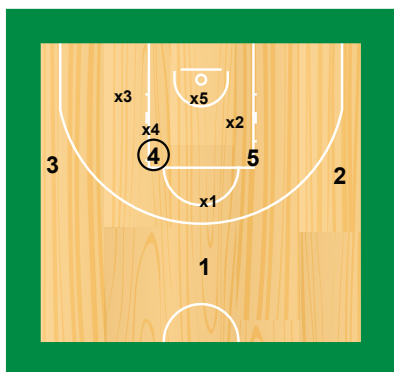
The defence has now moved to the same alignment as when a single high post receives the ball. The guards (x3 and x2) will move to defend any wing or corner player that receives a pass from the high post.

WHEN TO USE THE 1-2-2?

The main characteristics of this defence are:

• x4 and x5 do not have responsibility to guard wing players;

• x2 and x3 will have responsibility to defend in the "front line", at times which may involve guarding post players

Accordingly, the defence may suit teams that have "bigs" that are slow guarding perimeter players or have "swing players" that can guard both perimeter and post.

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1.3.2   1-1-3 MATCH UP DEFENCE

Another common match up defence is the 1-1-3, which (in contrast to the 1-2-2) requires "front line" players to defend in the wing position which coaches need to take into consideration in determining whether or not they wish to use the defence.

KEY CONCEPTS

The key concepts of the 1-1-3 defence are:

1. Deny all penetrating passes;
2. Influence the ball to one side of the court and keep it there;
3. Deny passes to the post – "front" low post players;
4. Keep hands up and active to stop passes;
5. Never let a cutter on the "strong side" get in front of a defender.
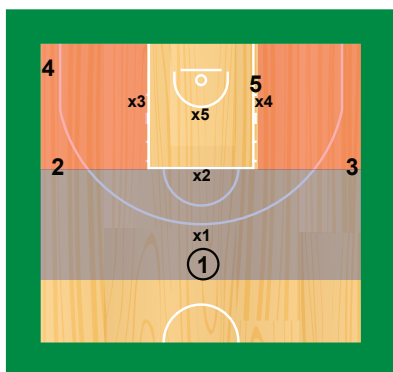
INITIAL ALIGNMENT

Initially one guard (x1) defends the ball – the "up" guard. The second guard (x2) denies the high post area. The guards have responsibility to guard the ball above the free throw line.

The "frontline" (x3, x4 and x5) take position in the back of the zone, staying in front of any low post player.
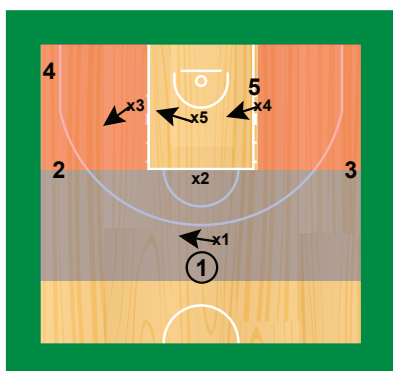
The "Up guard" forces the play to one side of the floor. The frontline also "hedge" in that direction, in anticipation of the ball moving to the wing.

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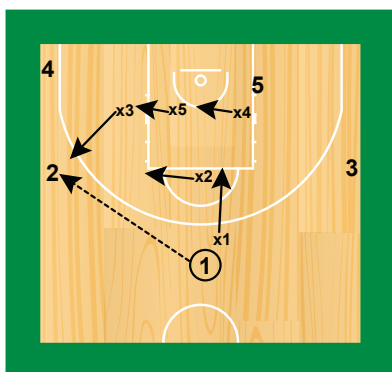
When the ball is passed to the wing, the front line moves to defend the ball. The frontline and the guards adjust to form a "box" with two defenders at the high and low post (in front of any offensive players) and two defenders in the "help" position.

The players in the "help" position are positioned the same as "split line" in "man to man".
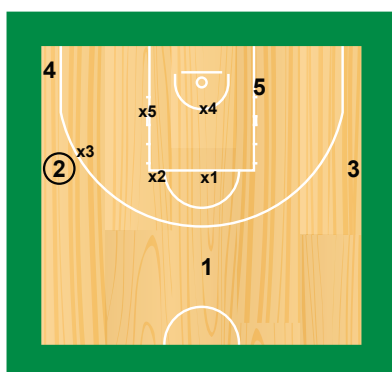
x2 and x5 deny any pass to the post positions. x4 and x1 are in the help position.
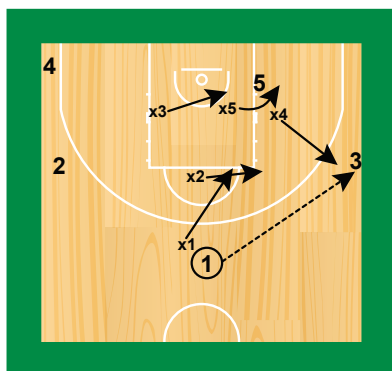
When the ball is passed to the strong side wing, the front line defender in the low post "fronts". The help defender becomes particularly important in order to stop any lob passes into the post.

Pressure on the wing player (so that they cannot make the lob pass) is also very important.
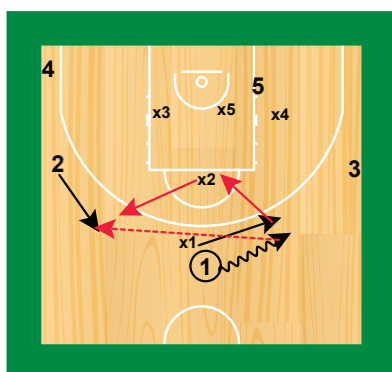
DEFENDING THE DRIBBLER

Where the ball is dribbled from the point, the up guard defends that. On any reversal pass, the up guard and the back guard switch (this is shown in red.)
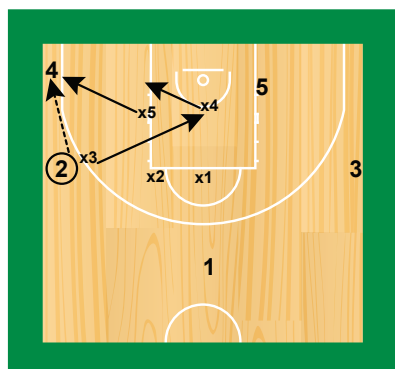
"DEFENDING THE CORNER"

When the ball is passed to the corner, it is defended by the nearest "frontline" player.
The preferred rotation is for the help player to move into the post position, and the wing defender to sprint back to the help position.
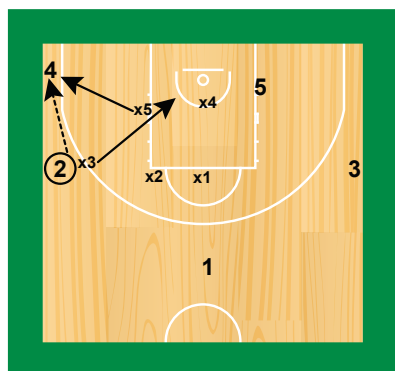
Alternatively, the wing player can rotate back into the low post position.
This can be effective when the low post is not occupied by an offensive player.
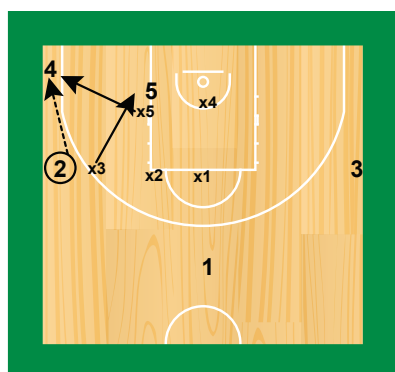
However, it can also be used to get into a "fronting" position where there is an offensive low post player
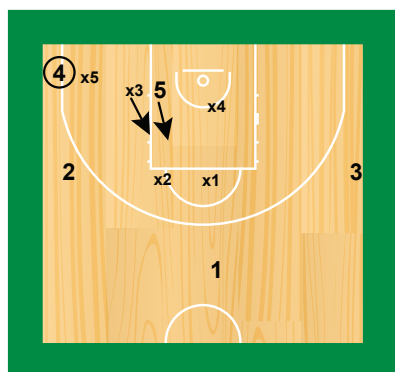
The defender "fronts" the low post. Even if the offensive player moved toward the high post, the frontline defender (x3) stays between the player with the ball and the post player.

The on ball defender must not allow any baseline penetration.

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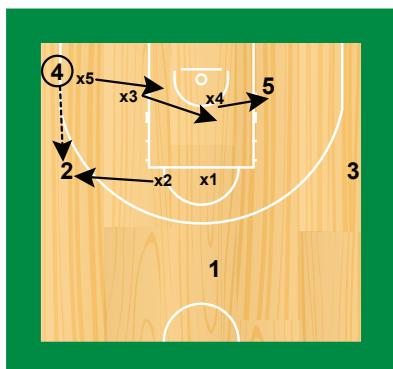
When the ball is passed out of the corner, the wing is now taken by the high post defender. And the three front line players rotate across.

This is different to a penetrating pass (from the point to the wing) where the wing would be defended by a front line player.
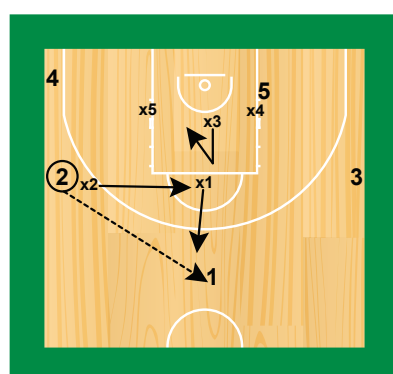
If the ball is then reversed to the point, the "back" guard moves to defend the ball. They should hesitate before moving, to give the other guard time to recover to the high post position.
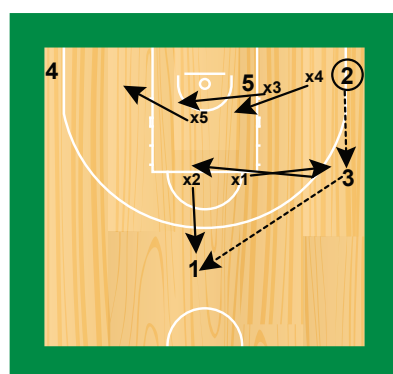
The middle player in the frontline can also hedge toward the foul line to provide additional protection.

This restores the initial alignment.
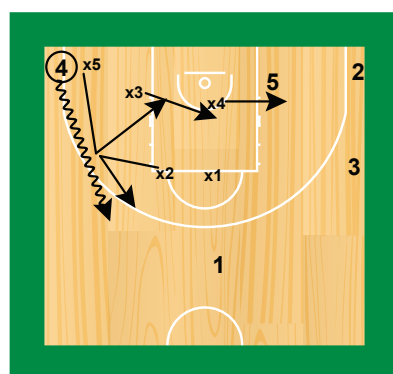
If the ball is dribbled out of the corner, it is initially defended by the frontline player (x4), and is then handed off to the "up guard" (x2).

This is also an opportunity to trap if desired.

When the up guard is defending at the wing, should the ball be passed to the point, the guard must sprint to the middle of the high post area. They will not be guarding either wing on the next pass and must focus on defending the high post area.
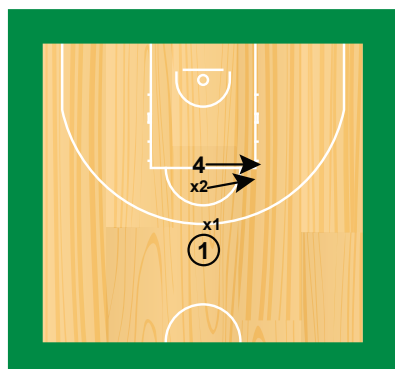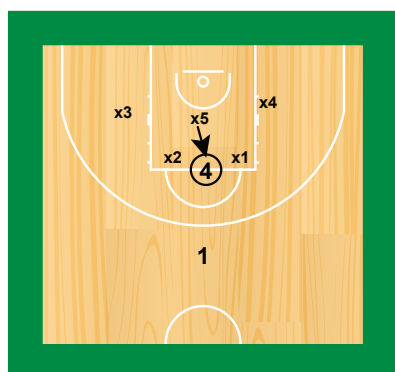
DEFENDING THE HIGH POST

When the ball is at the point, the back guard must front any offensive player in the high post. To do this, they must at least have their arms and hands in front of the post player.

Defenders may opt to stand directly in front of the post player.
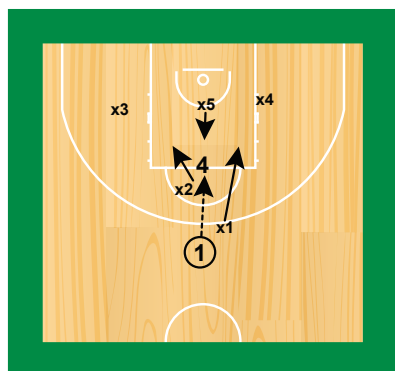
If the ball is passed to the high post player, the two guards drop to the foul line, and may "crowd" the player. Their responsibility will be to guard the wing player if they receive a pass.

x5 hedges toward the high post player, and x3 and x4 take responsibility for any low post players.
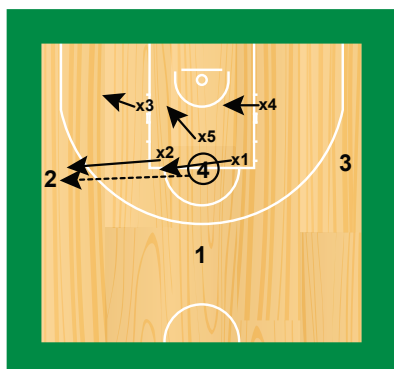
If the high post player turns to face the basket, x5 steps up to defend them.
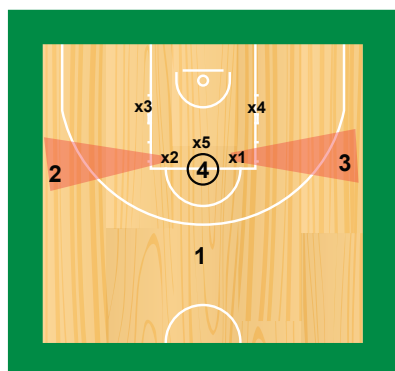
## DEFENDING PASSES FROM HIGH POST

Any pass to the wing from the high post player is defended by whichever guard is on that side of the floor. This means it is important that the guards keep vision of wing perimeter players.
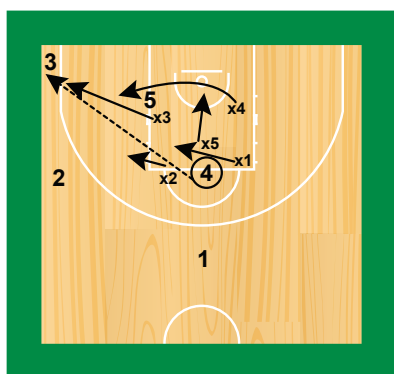
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Whenever the ball is passed all players must move.

As the high post passes to the wing, the nearest guard moves to defend the ball and the other guard moves to defend the high post.

The front line players adjust towards the ball.
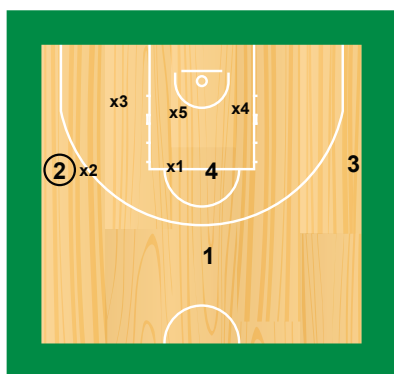
The defence is now in the same alignment as when the ball is passed from the corner to the wing.


On a pass to the corner, the nearest front line player defends the corner player and the opposite front line player moves across the baseline to front any low post player. They should move on the baseline side of a post player.

The front line player that was defending the high post, rotates down to the help position. They do not move to the low post (although they may be closer) as they have a poor angle and could be easily sealed by the post player.

PRACTISING THE 1-1-3 MATCH UP ZONE

An effective way of developing any match up zone defence is to play it against 6, 7 or even 8 offensive players. Initially, limiting the offensive players to passing the ball and then allowing them freedom to dribble and ultimately cut.

When a team is initially learning the "slides" or movements within the match up zone, it can be useful to work separately with the guards and the frontline.
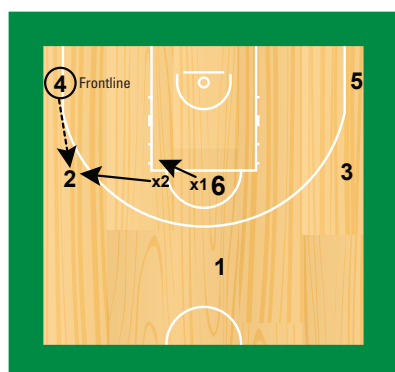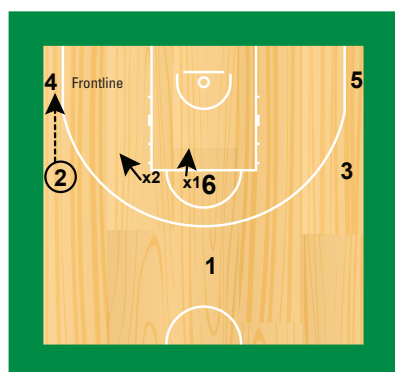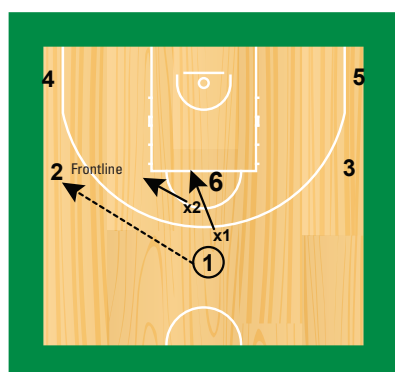
GUARD SLIDES

As the ball is passed around by offensive players, the two guards move as they would in response to the movement of the ball.

If the up guard is guarding the ball, they call "ball". If the ball would be defended by a player from the frontline, then both guards call "frontline".

Sometimes the movement of the players will be minimal, however, every time the ball is passed, both guards should adjust position.

Whilst initially the offensive players will be slow, allowing time for the guards to adjust position, they should quickly work to a game like speed.

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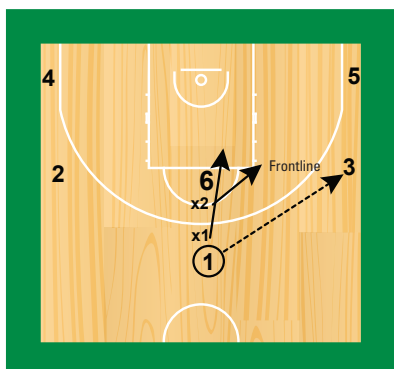
The activity can be made "live" with players that a guard has direct responsibility to defend, being able to shoot or penetrate.
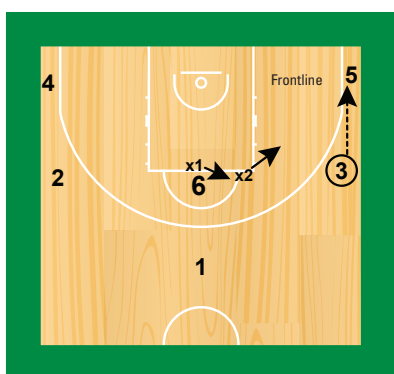

This will also help the offensive players understand the defensive movements as they anticipate whether or not they can shoot or drive when they receive the ball.

In this sequence of diagrams, all of the basic movements that the guards may be required to do on defence are shown.
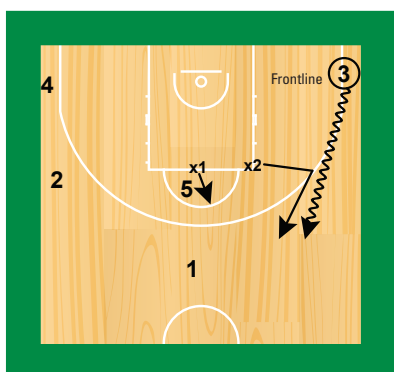
As in any defence, it is important that the defenders "fly with the ball", moving while a pass is in the air so that they are in their next defensive position when the pass is caught.
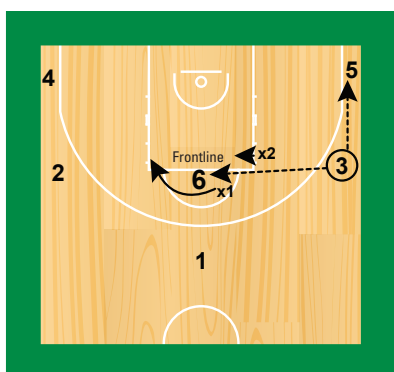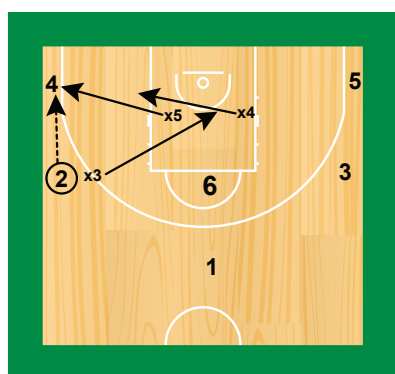

The high post must be denied by the guards at all times, but once the player has the ball, it is a player from the frontline who has responsibility to defend the post player.
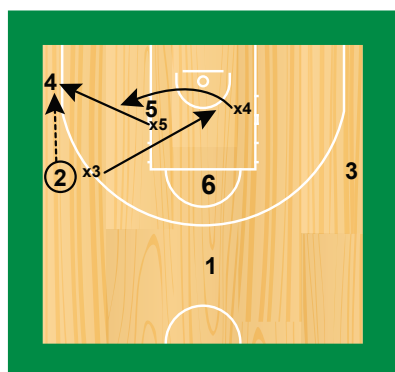
WORLD ASSOCIATION OF BASKETBALL COACHES
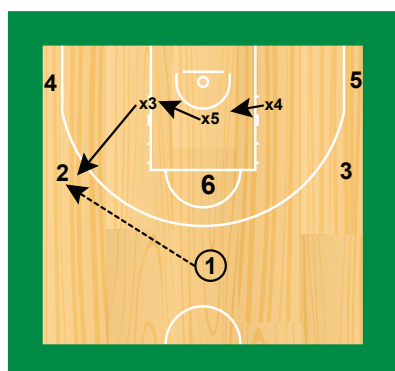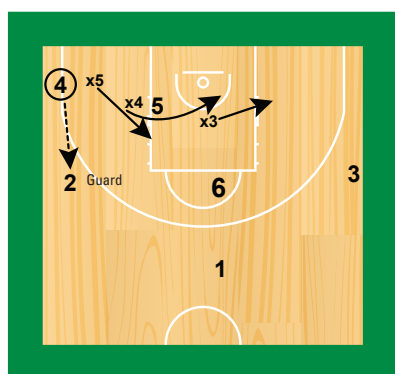
FRONTLINE SLIDES

Similarly, the slides of the Frontline players can be isolated, with passers initially slow but building to fully contested.
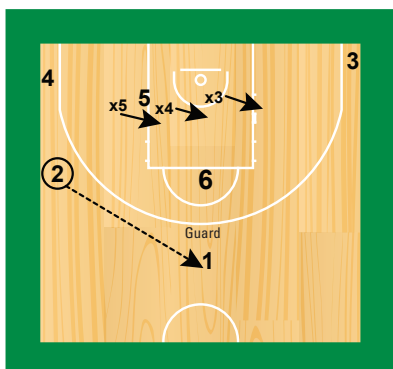
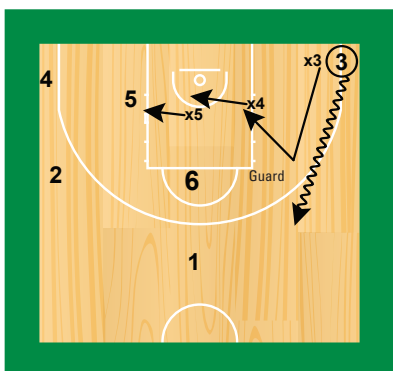As the ball is passed to the corner, the front line players adjust.

It is critical that the help defender (x4) move under (baseline side) of the low post to get to a fronted position.
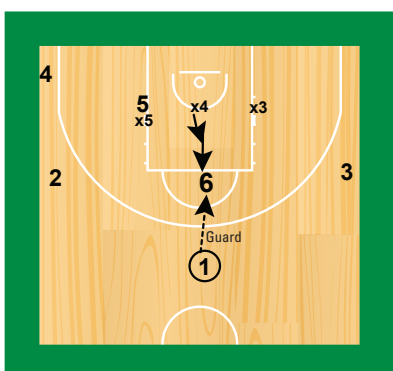
Again, the frontline players call "ball" if they are defending the ball and all players call "guard" if the person who has the ball would normally be defended by one of the guards.

Sprinting to the next position is crucial, as is denying the pass to all post players.

When the ball comes from the corner to the wing, the frontline crowd any low post player.

When the high post receives the ball, the middle player in the front line (x4) hedges towards them. If the high post turns to face the basket, it is x4's responsibility to defend the player as closely as possible.
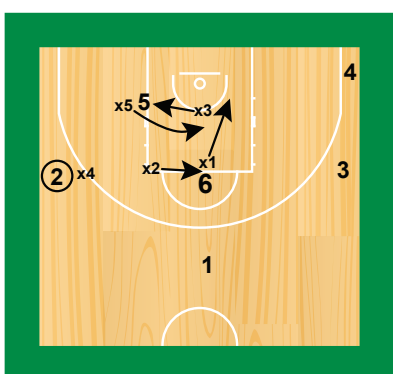
## REBOUNDING IN THE 1-1-3 MATCH UP

If the shot is taken from either the corner or the wing, the frontline defender who is in front of the low post player has no "blocking out" responsibilities (as they are in a poor position). They should drop step past the post player into the key to contest for the rebound.

Other players rotate away from where the shot was taken and "find a body" to box out.
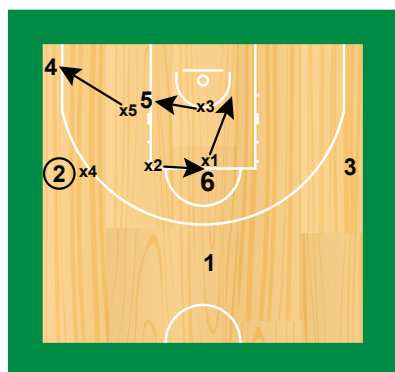
However, if there is a player in the corner, x5 (who was fronting low post) is responsible to box out the corner player.
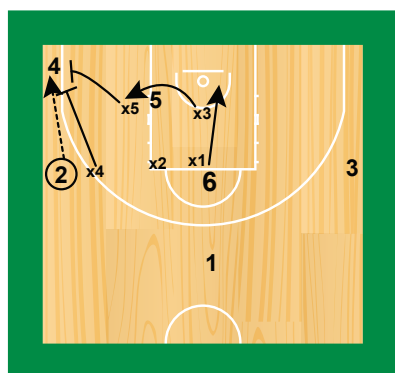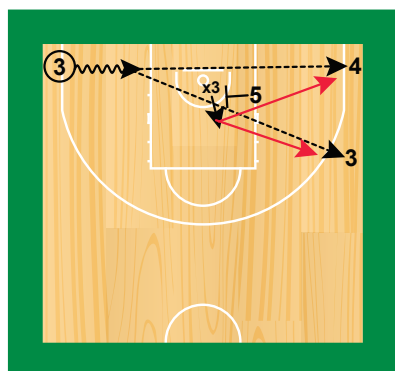

TRAPPING IN THE 1-1-3

Trapping in the 1-1-3 is mostly done in the corner, with the wing defender following the pass to act as a "trapper".

The frontline defender and guard still front any low or high post players, being active to intercept any pass.

The back guard must move down to be in a help position behind any low post player.

"SCRAMBLING"

Many offences will screen the outside of the zone, and then throw a skip pass or send a cutter along the baseline. The frontline player being screened should adjust their position so that they have "foot advantage" and can get past the screener.
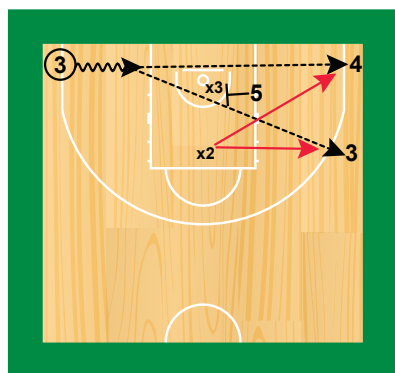
However, if the screen is effective, the guard may need to rotate to defend the ball.
The simple rule is that whoever can get there quicker is the player that defends the ball.
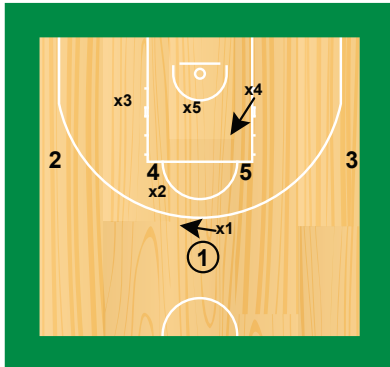
1-1-3 AGAINST TWO HIGH POSTS

Where there are two high post players, the up guard attempts to influence the ball to one side and the back guard denies the high post on that side.

The frontline player (x3) hedges towards the other high post.

1.3.3   1-3-1 MATCH UP ZONE DEFENCE

Like the "Box and 1" defence, a 1-3-1 Match Up Defence can be taught relatively easily from an initial 1-1-3 alignment

To successfully play this defence:

- Frontline defenders must be able to defend wing perimeter players (as is the case in the 1-1-3);
- A very quick guard is required, who plays the back of the zone and is responsible for coverage from one corner to the other;

- Preferably the guard that is to play the back of the zone, should be a relatively tall guard, as they will at times have responsibility to defend in the low post.

An advantage of the 1-3-1 Match Up compared to the 1-1-3 Match Up, is that it provides better coverage on perimeter shooters, particularly at the wing.
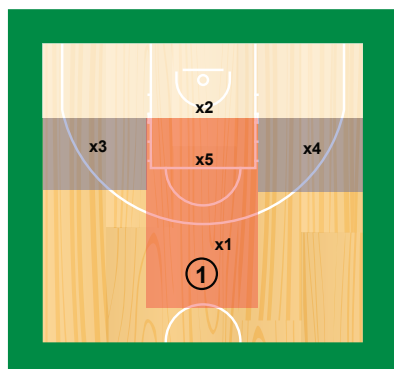

INITIAL ALIGNMENT FOR 1-3-1

The "up guard" is responsible for the middle of the court, and for influencing the ball to one side. The "back guard" plays as the last line of the defence and covers from one corner to the other.

x3 and x4 retain responsibility to defend the wing perimeter players, and have less distance to cover than in the 1-1-3.
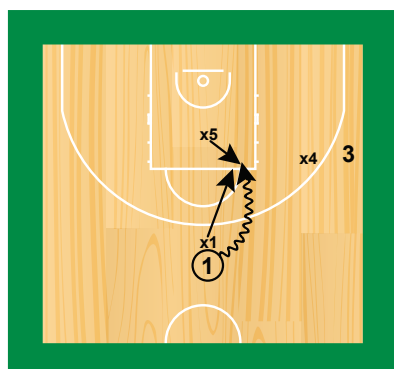
x5 is responsible for stopping any penetration into the keyway.

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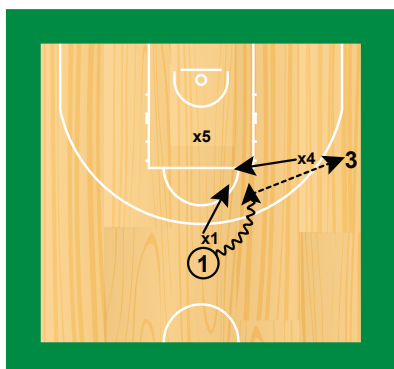
The reason x5 has responsibility to defend dribble penetration, is that if x4 steps in to stop the drive, it will lead to 3 being open, which negates the advantage of the zone (which is coverage on perimeter shooters).
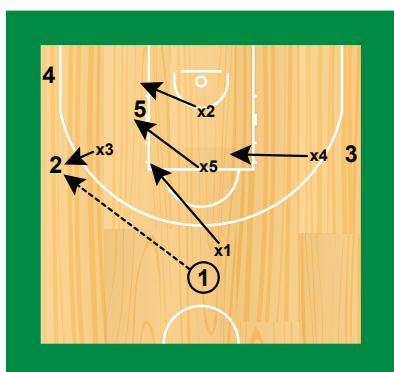
On pass to the wing, rules from the 1-1-3 apply:

- Frontline player (x3) defends the wing player;
- Up guard rotates to deny the high post
- Front line player (x5) rotates to be in front of any low post player
- X4 rotates to a help position.

The back guard (x2) moves toward the corner, but remains in the keyway. If the player in the corner is a very good shooter, x2 can hedge closer.
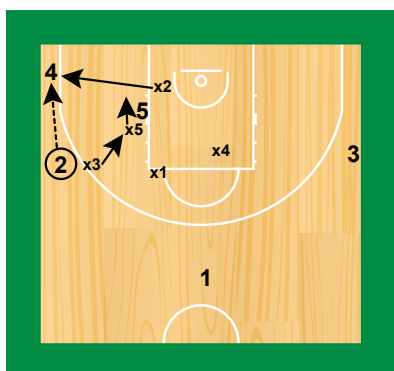
When the ball is passed into the corner, x2 moves to defend the player. x5 moves to front the low post player, and x4 remains in a help position behind the post player.
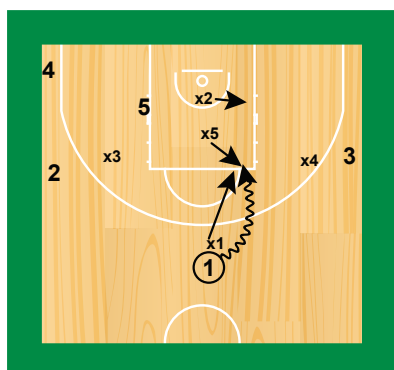
x3 can hedge down toward the low post, but has primary responsibility to defend the wing.
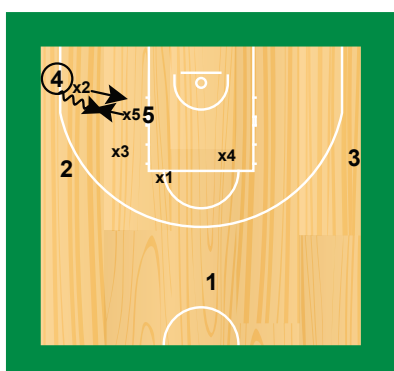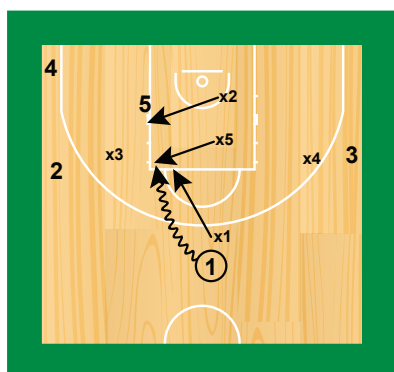
DEFENDING THE DRIBBLE

On any dribble penetration from the corner, the defender in the low post area moves to stop the dribbler.

x3 may hedge to the dribbler, but ultimately must keep the wing player in sight and be prepared to guard that position.

Similarly, any dribble penetration from the point position, is defended by x5 stopping the dribbler from getting into the key.

The back guard (x2) also moves across the key, to be closer to any perimeter shooter in the keyway.

Where there is a low post player, x2 may rotate to deny any pass from a penetration dribbler to the low post player.
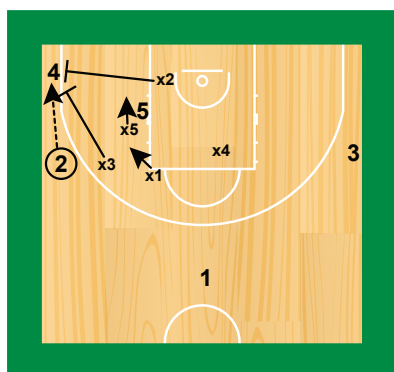
TRAPPING FROM 1-3-1

A player in the corner can also be "trapped" by the perimeter defender following the pass down.

Alternatively, x3 can deny any return pass to the wing, which means that all close passes are denied.

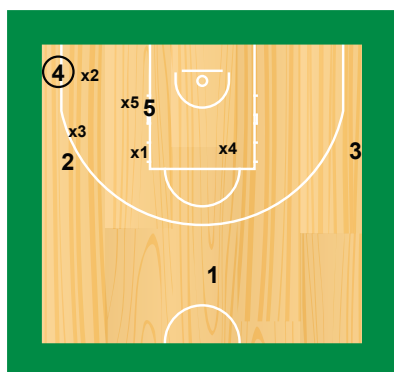**COACHES MANUAL**

Whatever Match Up defence a team wants to employ, it will only be successful if:

1. Defenders can defend a perimeter player to stop them from passing or dribbling;

2. Defenders "fly with the ball", moving as the pass is made;

3. The defenders communicate with each other.

FOLLOW-UP

1. What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of a 1-2-2 Match Up Zone defence?

2. Reflect upon a team that you have coached. What offence (or offensive principles) would they have used against a 1-1-3 Match Up Zone defence?

3. When would you introduce a zone defence with your team? Explain your answer.

1.4 ADVANCED DEFENSIVE TECHNIQUES

1.4.1 DEFENDING DRIBBLE HAND OFFS

A dribble hand off is similar to an on ball screen and can be defended using similar techniques.
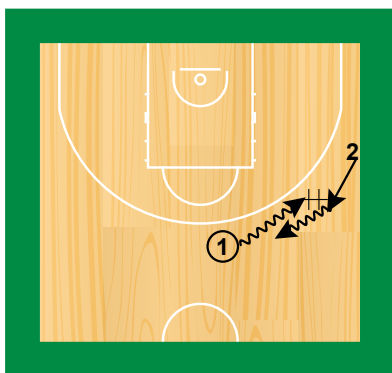
A dribble hand off is an exchange between a person with the ball and a person running past them. It is a dynamic move, with the dribbler stopping and then immediately handing the ball to a person running past.

1 dribbles toward 2, who cuts past, grabs the ball and immediately dribbles.

For convenience, in the following diagrams 1 is not shown dribbling, however 1 would normally be on the move, which does make defending more complex.
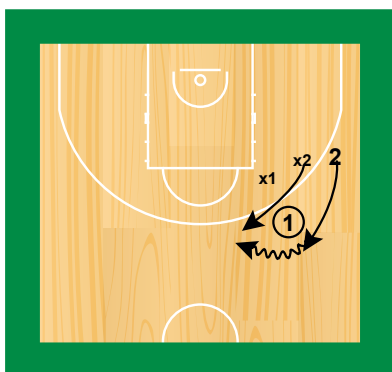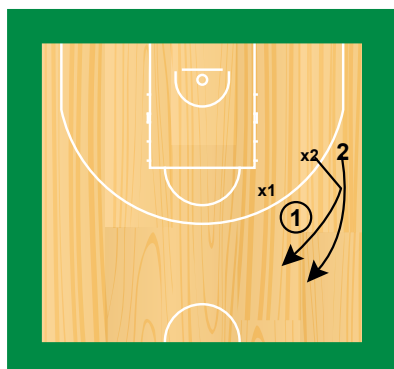

THROUGH

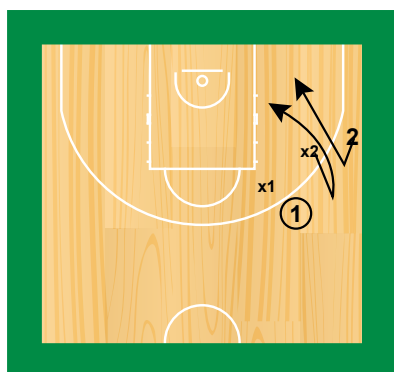x1 may step back from the dribbler, allowing a path for x2 to move through to defend 2.
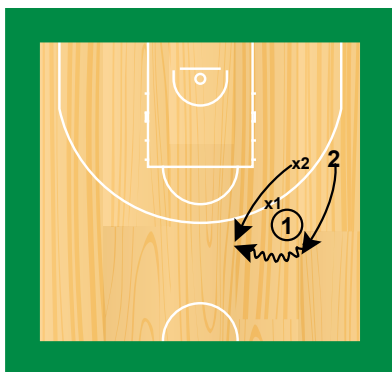
BEHIND

x1 may "jam" into the dribbler, so that x2 can move behind them to defend 2.

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COACHES

"JUMP"

x2 may move directly into the path of 2. If 2 continues the cut then x2 keeps between 2 and 1, making the hand off ineffective.

Alternatively, 2 may opt to cut back door toward the basket, and 2 moves to defend that.

2 may try to get close to 1 before performing the back cut (so that x2 gets "stuck" on 1). In this event, x1 could defend the back cut and x2 could relocate to defend 1.
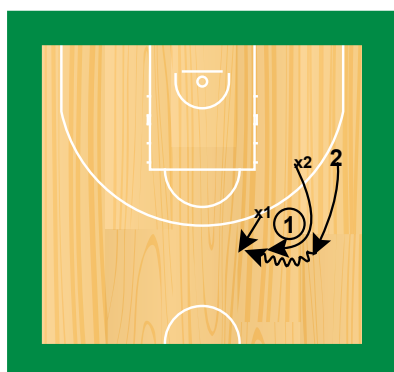
DOUBLE

The defenders may double team 2 as they start their dribble. x1 moves to get directly into the path of 2 and x2 "trails" and moves with 2.

x1 should not move position until 1 has stopped their dribble and picked the ball up. If x1 moves to early (when 1 still has a live dribble), 1 could simply turn to dribble to the basket.
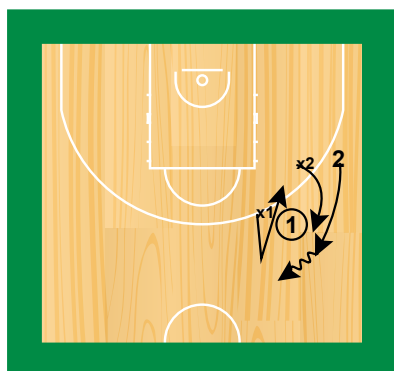
SHOW

Similar to "double", x1 can "show" by getting into the path of 2 and then recovering to defend 1. This will stop 2 from turning the corner and attacking the key and gives 2 time to recover and defend 2.
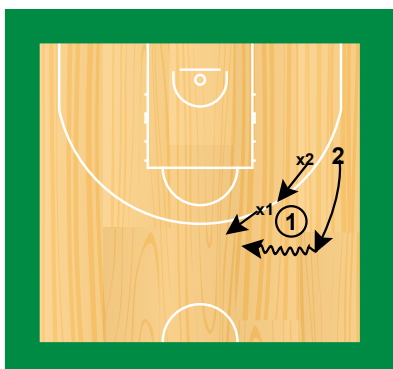
SWITCH

Particularly if the hand off is from one guard to another guard, the defenders may switch, with x1 moving to defend 2 (who now has the ball) and x2 moving to defend 1.

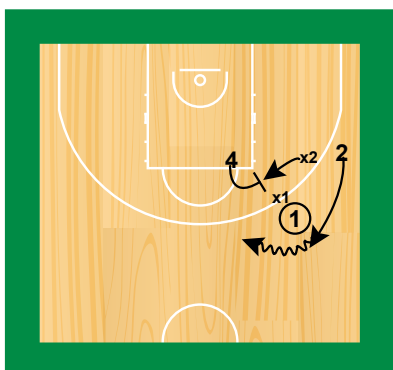The two defenders should "come together" as they switch, to ensure that there is no gap where the dribbler could penetrate after x2 has stopped defending the ball and before x1 is defending the ball.

Some teams add a screen to the hand-off action, which is designed to stop whichever defender is going to defend the new ball handler from getting in position to do so.

4 steps from the high post into the path of x2 (who is depicted going "under" to defend the hand off).

4 does not set the screen at a "spot" and instead must "read" how x2 is defending the screen and move to a spot that will impede x2 from being able to defend 2.
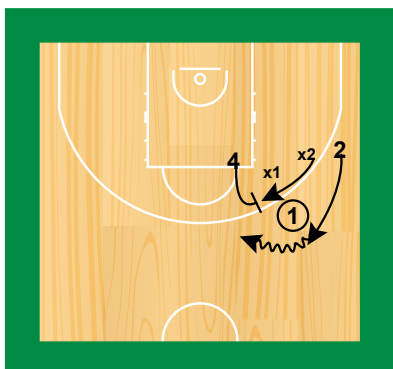
If the defenders switch to defend the hand-off, x4 would then need to establish a position to screen x1.

The screener's defender (x4) can also assist to defend the hand-off.
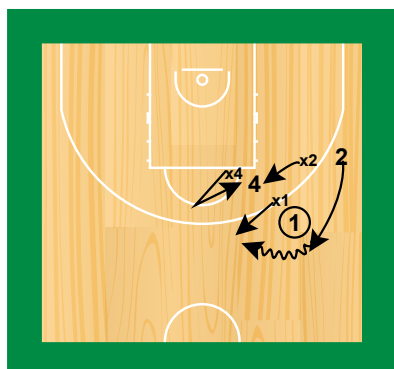
If x2 and x1 are going to hedge, x4 may step out to ensure 2 cannot penetrate to the key ("show"), then x1 defends 2 and x2 rotates to defend 1.
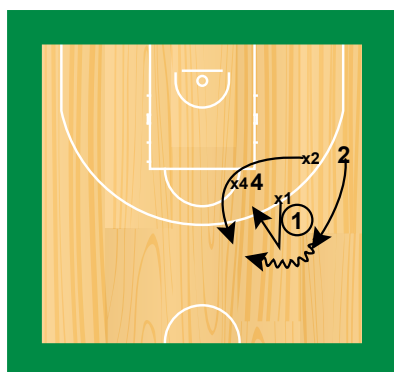
x4 may "jam" into the screen so that x2 can go "under". x1 should "show" and then recover to 1, to ensure that 2 cannot take an easy shot as they come off the hand off.
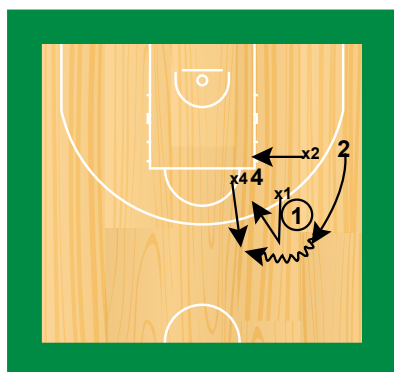
x4 can switch onto 2 and x2 rotates across to defend the screener (4). x1 may "show" and then recover to defend 1.

This tactic may be used if the shot clock is low or if x4 is not particularly mismatched in their defending on the perimeter.

1.4.2   DOUBLE TEAM POST PLAYERS

George Mikan was so hard to defend and to score against, so much so that the NBA had to change its rules of play in order to keep him from completely overwhelming the league.[12]

Basketball is a team sport but there is no doubt that talented individuals can have a significant impact upon the success of a team and it is commonplace for a team to employ specific tactics to reduce the impact of dominant players.

Some coaches will adopt specific tactics to defend a dominant player, whilst others may be prepared to concede that the dominant player will score a certain number of points and to focus on limiting the performance of other players. The "Box and 1" defence discussed above is an example of a tactic that might be used against a dominant player.

With junior teams it is probably more effective to highlight particular aspects of an existing defence rather than devise something new to guard a dominant player. Most importantly though, is that the team has time to prepare and practice whatever the coach wants to do.

DOUBLE TEAM POST PLAYERS

Often where a team has a dominant post player, the defence may attempt to limit how often the player receives the ball. This can be done by "fronting" the post player so that no pass can be made. Alternatively, coaches may prefer their team to attempt to limit the effectiveness of the post player once they receive the ball.
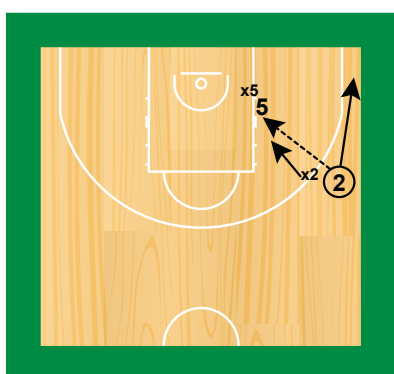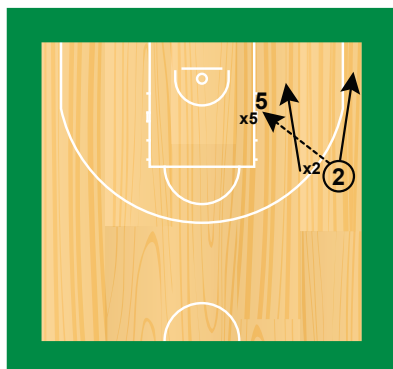

CROWDING THE POST PLAYER

When the ball is passed to a low post player, the wing defender may "hedge" toward the post (one or two steps) to reduce the space the post has to play.

This can be particularly effective against a post player that plays facing the basket.

The wing defender remains responsible for defending the wing player and must keep vision of them.

12 http://www.nba.com/history/players/mikan_bio.html
    The NBA changed the shape and size of the keyway in
    an effort to reduce the dominance of George Mikan.

The wing player can go on either side of the post player, and this is influenced by where the post defender is positioned. If the post defender is low, the wing may crowd on the high side (which is the direction the post player may move).

Shown here, the post defender is high, so the wing defender moves low. They should play "butt to the baseline" – with their back facing the baseline to maintain vision of their opponent and the post player.

The option of "crowding" the post player effectively leaves a one on one contest between the post player and their defender. An alternate tactic is to double team the post player once they receive the ball in an effort to force them to pass or take a poor shot option.
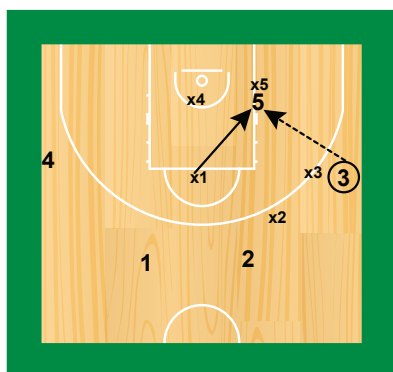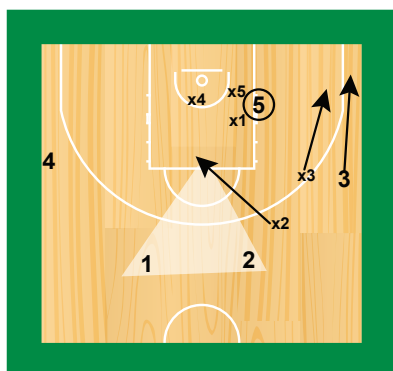

DOUBLE TEAM POST

When double teaming the post, x5 takes a position on one side or another of the post player. This defines where the double comes from.

When x5 is on the baseline side, x1 double teams the post player, moving from the high "split line" position.

In double teaming, x1 should keep their hands high – reaching for the ball will often result in a foul.


Importantly, x3 denies a pass back to 3 and x2 rotates into a help position at the top of the key.

x2 must be active and adjust their position to potentially intercept any pass that the low post player may make.
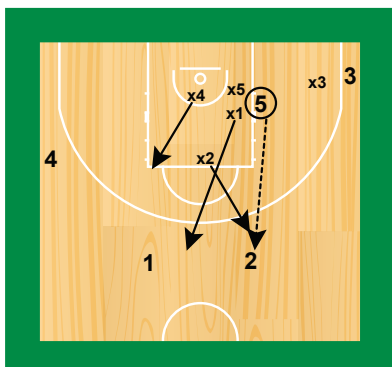
When the post player does pass the ball, the defensive rotation is similar to when there was dribble penetration.

x2 rotates to the first pass and x1 moves to guard the next perimeter player. This means that x4 remains responsible for defending 4 and adjusts their position accordingly.
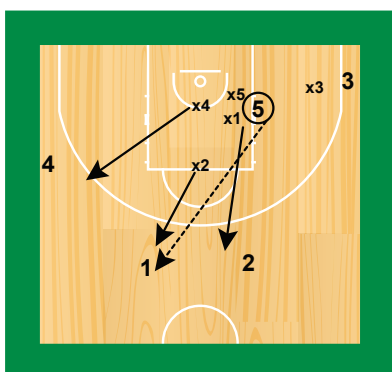
When the ball is passed to 1, x4 adjusts their position to defend 4. If 4 is a "driver" rather than a "shooter", x4 may not move to a denial position, but will remain in a position to defend the penetration.
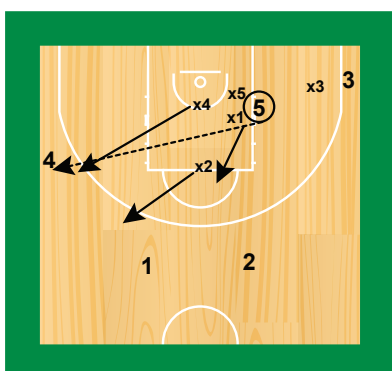
When the ball is passed to the opposite wing, the team could simply have x4 "close-out" and guard their player.
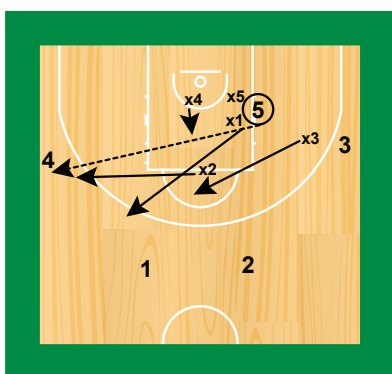
However, having x2 rotate to defend the wing enables more pressure on an outside shot and may be preferred if 4 is a good perimeter shooter.

As x2 rotates to 4, x1 rotates to deny the pass to 1 and x3 rotates into the key to a help position, and is responsible for defending 2. This leaves x4 in the key (and now responsible for defending 3), which can be very effective if 4 is likely to drive, as x4 will be in position to help if necessary.
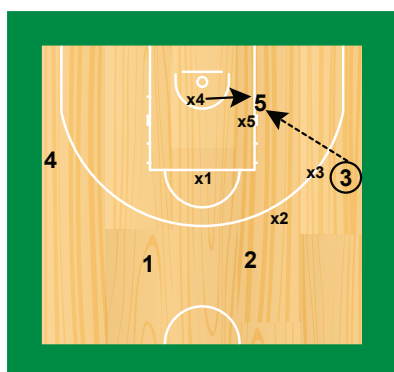
## DOUBLE TEAM FROM LOW POSITION

If x5 is defending the low post player on the "high" side, x4 rotates across to double team. The double team needs to arrive as the ball is being caught, ensuring that the post player has no time to make any offensive move to the basket.
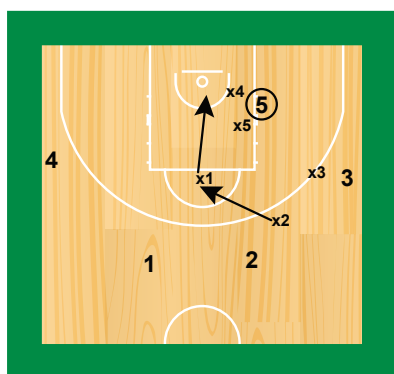

Again, following "help the helper" principles, x1 rotates to the low help position and x2 rotates to the high help position.

x3 continues to deny a pass to the wing, however if 2 was more of an offensive threat, x3 may sag toward the key to deny any pass to 2.
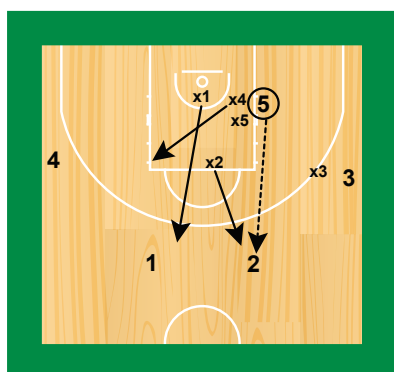
The team can rotate as indicated above, however this would require x5 to move to the perimeter and x1 to remain in the low help.

Alternatively, x1 can rotate to defend the "second pass" (the perimeter player nearest to where the ball was passed) and x4 returns to defend their player.
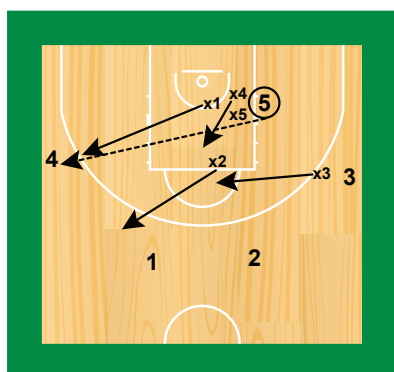
On a pass to the opposite wing (4), x1 could defend 4, x2 rotates to 1 and x3 rotates to the high help position.

If 4 is a known perimeter shooter, x2 may rotate to them. If 4 is a known driver, x1 should rotate, as they then have a better angle to defend any drive.

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With junior teams, it may be preferable to use the same rotation regardless of whether the initial double team came from the high position or the low position.

1.4.3 GETTING THE BALL OUT OF THE HANDS OF THE POINT GUARD

Many teams (at both junior and senior level) have a preferred point guard who has the ball "in their hands" for the majority of the team's offence.

Many times that is also how the team practices, with the preferred player having the ball most of the time.

It can accordingly be a very effective tactic if the defence is able to force a different player to have the ball.
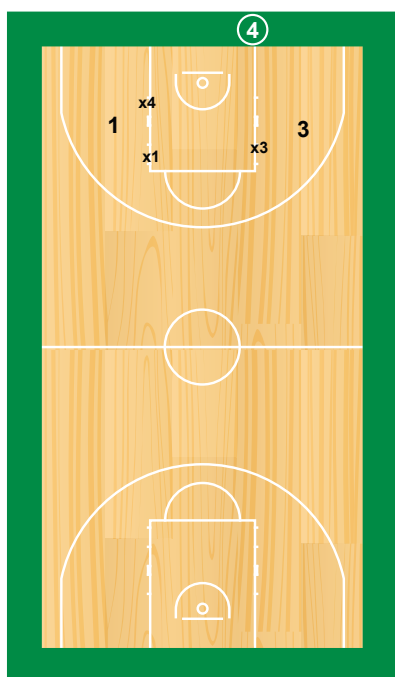
An inbounds pass is the most common opportunity that a defensive team has to force the ball info the hands of someone other than the preferred player.

Instead of guarding the inbound passer, the defender (x4) can aggressively deny a pass to the preferred player (1). This also enables x4 to step away from the baseline to be in a better position to defend them if they do receive the ball.

In this example, x3 is in position to deny a pass to 3 in the middle of the court, but would allow a pass toward the sideline.

COACHES MANUAL
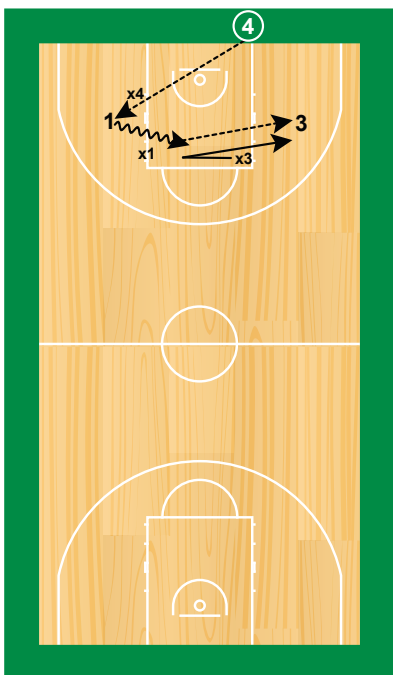
Teams may also have x3 step off , so that x3 is in a position to help defend any dribble if 1 does get the ball. A strong "hedge" may cause 1 to pass the ball, which achieves the defensive objective of having another player with the ball.
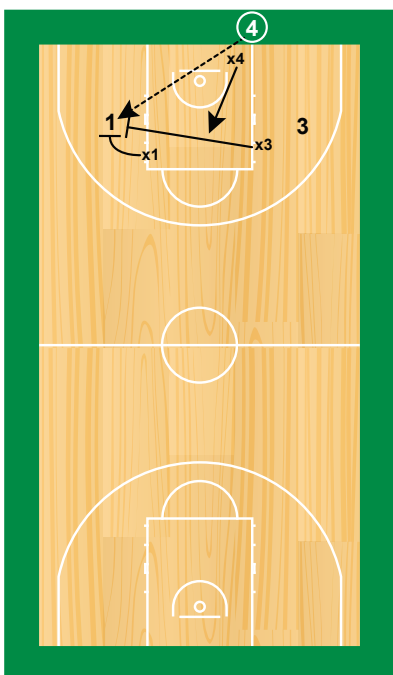
Another tactic is to have x3 double team 1 as soon as they receive the pass. This double team must happen quickly, so that x3 arrives as the pass is caught.

On the pass, x4 can rotate to defend x3, which allows an easy pass for 1 to make, which again achieves the defensive objective.

x3 is used to double team 1, as they come from a position that can stop 1's dribble x4 is not in a position to stop this dribble as they are above the line of the ball.

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These tactics can also be adopted in the half court context, when the team has an inbounds pass. The harder situation is to keep the ball out of the hands of the preferred player in "transition" or open play.

It can be achieved through tactics such as:

- "double teaming" the person that has the ball and then denying the pass back to them;
- playing a "sagging" defence, with help defenders being ready to rotate to stop any dribble penetration;
- have whoever is being defended by the "preferred player" immediately deny them after a shot attempt.

1.4.4   DENYING SPOTS ON THE FLOOR

Just as many teams have a preferred point guard, many teams have a preferred position on the floor from where they initiate offence

Commonly, the wing will be where offence is initiated and it is often on the right hand side of the floor, given most players are right-hand dominant.
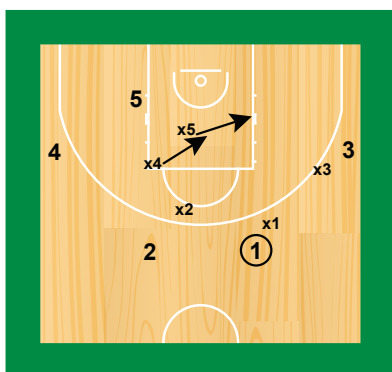
AGGRESSIVELY DENY PASSES

x3 denies the pass to the wing, which may cause 3 to cut back door. x5 steps toward the wing to help to stop any pass to a "back door" cut. x4 similarly moves toward the middle of the floor.

If the offensive team looks to initiate from either wing, then x4 may deny a pass to 4, while x2 sags towards the key.
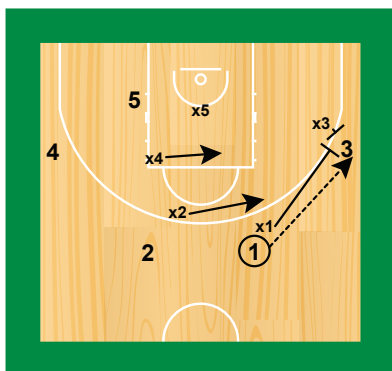
Another tactic is to automatically double team the ball when it is passed to a preferred area of the court.

x1 follows the pass to the wing and x3 adjusts position to force any dribble back toward x1. x2 and x4 both rotate across.
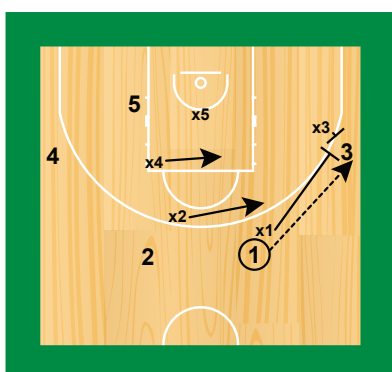
From the double team, the player that has vision of where the pass went, sprints out.

1.4.5   "BOX AND 1" DEFENCE

A "Box and 1" defence is often regarded as a "junk" defence, however particularly if a team employs a 1-1-3 Match Up defence, the "Box and 1" can be incorporated into the defensive scheme to provide an option that most teams have little experience in playing against.

Simply, the "Box and 1" is a combination defence, with one defender denying a particular player the ball at all times. This is done by playing a "tight" man to man style defence, however without any responsibility for "help" or rotation. The defence is mostly used if a team has a particularly dominant perimeter player.

The remaining four defenders play a "zone" defence and the rules of the 1-1-3 Match Up can be used to quickly develop a "Box and 1" defence.
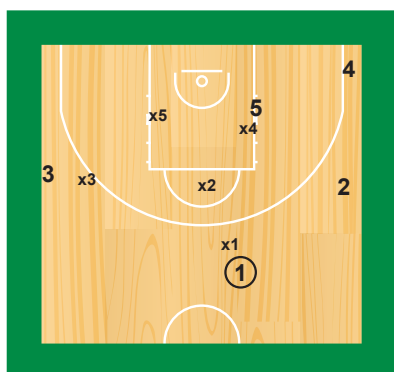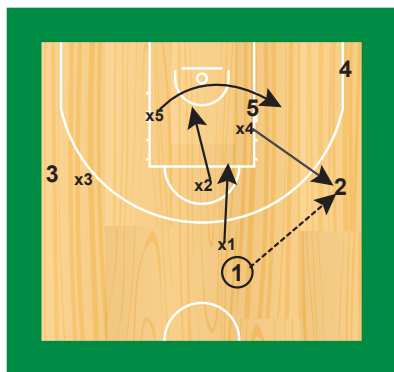
TEACHING THE "BOX AND 1"

To teach the "Box and 1", have 4 defenders and up to 7 offensive players.
The defenders are to use the slides of the 1-1-3, provided that:

a) 1 defender is always on the ball;

b) 3 defenders always have one foot in the key (or are fronting a post player).

Shown are the 1-1-3 rules being used:

• Frontline defender (x4) takes the wing;

• Frontline defender (x5) fronts the low post;

• Guard (x2) moves to help position behind post (e.g. the same position as when trapping in the 1-1-3).

• x3 remains close to 3, denying them the ball
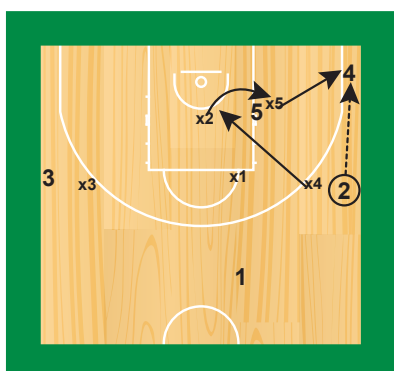
As the ball is thrown to the corner, the frontline defender (x5) moves to there. The help defender (x2) moves to front the post and the defender that was on the wing makes the "long slide" to the help position.
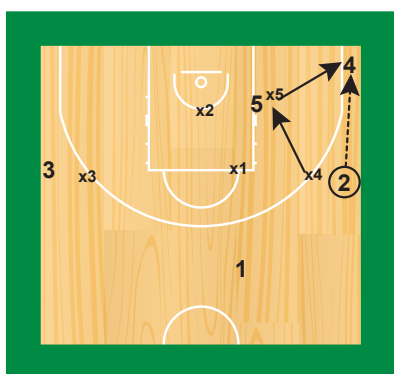
Alternatively, x4 could have made a "short slide" into fronting the low post, leaving x2 in the help position. The difficulty with this, is that the low post player may "seal" x4 as they rotate.
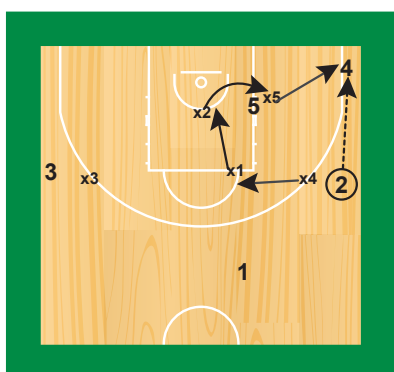

Another alternative rotation is for x4 to rotate to the high post (and denying any high post players) and x1 rotating down to the help position.
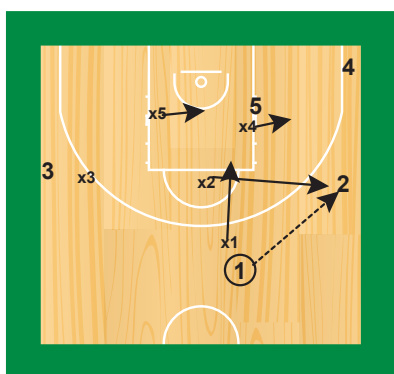

The defenders may also apply the principle of "whoever can get to the ball quickest moves". Here x2 rotates to defend 2 at the wing position and x1 drops to deny the high post.

This leaves the two front line players (x3 and x4) defending the low post player.
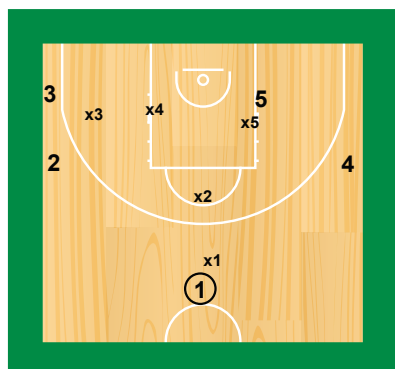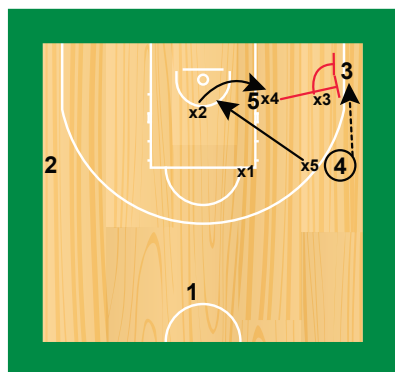
PLAYING THE "BOX AND 1"

As shown, initial alignment is very similar to the 1-1-3, with the exception that x3 is guarding only 3. x3 stays close to the offensive player, not needing to move into "Help" positions.
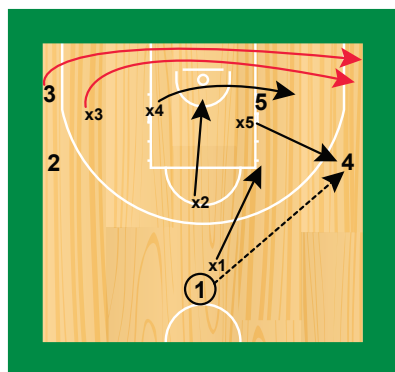
x3 defends 3 wherever they go on the court – denying any pass to x3.

When the ball is passed to the player that is under pressure (3), the zone defender that would have normally rotated to defend a person in that area, can now make the same rotation and trap or "double team" the offensive player.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Discuss with a coaching colleague the pros and cons of using a "box and 1" defence with an U18 team? If a team used that defence against your team, what would you tell your offensive player that was defended by the "man to man" defender.

2. How would you defend a dominant post player? If you were coaching that post player, what would you instruct them to do in response to this defence?

3. Some coaches do not put in place a particular defensive scheme to stop the dominant player and instead focus on limiting the scoring of the rest of the team. Do you agree with this approach? Discuss your views with a coaching colleague.

4. Who are the dominant players that your team plays against? How have you defended those players in the past? What change could you make?

1.5 DEFENSIVE STRUCTURES FOR SPECIAL SITUATIONS

1.5.1 BASELINE OUT OF BOUNDS & SIDELINE

Some common options taken by defensive teams are:

- Switching every screen;
- Playing zone defence (essentially another form of switching on screens);
- Having a tall player defend the passer, regardless of whether the passer is a guard, forward or centre. The defender will often angle their body to "allow" a pass to the perimeter, but to block any pass toward the basket;
- Having defenders sag in towards the key, but to allow passes to the perimeter;
- "Sagging" into the key, essentially allowing a pass to the perimeter but denying any pass into the key;
- Strongly denying the "safety" pass. This can be particularly effective, as the presence of the backboard limits the areas of the court where this pass can be made.

There is no necessarily preferred method for defending a baseline inbounds pass but what is important is that the team is organized and all players understand (and implement) whatever method is employed.

DEFEND SIDELINE OUT OF BOUNDS

As with defending Baseline Out of Bounds, there is no particularly preferred way to defend a sideline out of bounds situation although each coach may have their own preference.

A coach may also opt to have more than one way to defend, and then choose a particular tactic depending upon:

- Time left on the game clock or shot clock;
- Margin between the teams (i.e. does the opponent have to shoot a 3 point shot?);
- Position on the sideline where the ball is to be inbounded.

Some common options that are used in defending sideline out of bounds are:

- Switching screens;
- Having a tall player defend the inbounds pass – the inbounder may also stand at an angle to influence the area on the court where the ball is passed;
- Having a player "sag" into the key way to stop any lob pass to a player cutting to the basket (which is often done off a back screen and it is often the defender of the screener that will sag);
- Allowing the inbounds pass, but double teaming a particular receiver;
- Completely deny passes to a player outside the 3 point line, forcing players to cut inside the 3 point line (this may be done if the offence was ahead by 3 points);
- Defending the inbound passer and then strongly denying to them receive a pass as they step into court;
- Denying passes to particular spots on the floor (e.g. based upon where particular players prefer to shoot or to stop particular shots).

1.5.2   LATE SHOT CLOCK

Teams do not necessarily need to have complicated or intricate "plays" but it is vitally important that all players know the team rules that apply in a "late clock" situation.

Some tactics that are commonly employed are:

- Double-teaming any on-ball screen;
- Switching off all ball screens;
- Denying a particular player getting the ball (e.g. point guard);
- Denying the ball being passed to a particular area of the court (e.g. wing, if the opponent often uses an on-ball screen from the wing);
- Double-teaming the low post.

A common frustration for coaches is where a defender fouls as the shot clock is about to expire and this is particularly frustrating if they foul while trying to steal the ball. Simply instructing players "don't foul" is unlikely to be effective. Instead, coaches should help players to develop the mindset that:

- The "shot clock" is like a defender and will "steal" the ball;
- The role of other defenders is to prevent the opponent from shooting.

This mindset can be reinforced at practice by using a "no grab" rule in practice, which simply means that a defender cannot take the ball out of the hands of an offensive player. Passes can be intercepted, but the emphasis is on playing aggressive defence, without "reaching" for the ball.

1.5.3   LAST POSSESSION PLAYS

LAST POSSESSION PLAYS

There are a number of considerations that the defensive team need to consider in a "last play" situation, such as:

- How to defend back cuts;
- Whether to play "help" defence or defend the 3 point shot;
- Whether to guard the passer or deny receivers.

Often in a "last shot" situation, the defence will deny a pass, particularly when in an inbound situation and the offensive team has only 5 seconds to make the pass. However, to counter that, teams may look to make back door cuts.
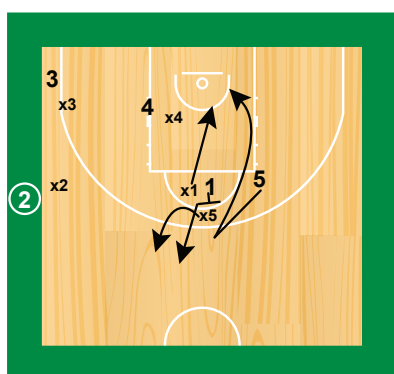
Here the defensive team is denying all passes.

5 moves to the perimeter and then cuts off a back-screen from 1 to the basket, which is designed to allow a lob pass to 5. Even if x1 and x5 switch, 5 may have a height advantage and people able to catch the pass.
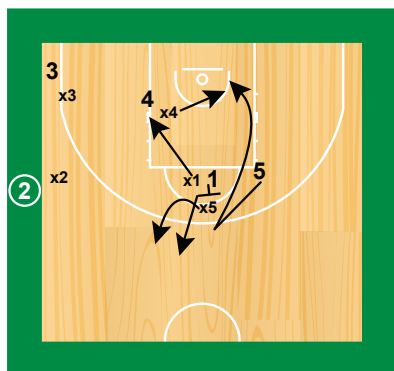
To combat this disadvantage, x4 can rotate across to intercept the lob pass, and x1 rotates onto 4.
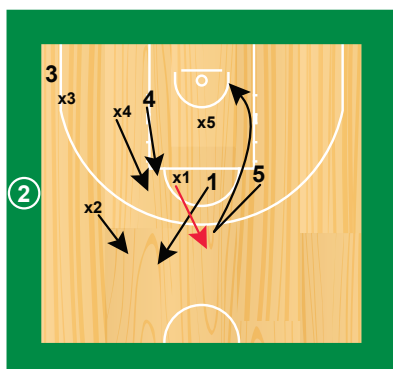
Another option to defend this situation is for:

• x2 not to guard the passer but instead, face in court and deny cutters.

• x5 sags into the key to defend any lob pass

• x1 guards the initial cut by 5, with x2 denying any pass to 1

• with x5 in the key to defend a lob pass, x4 can move to a denial position on 4.

Another consideration for the defensive team is whether or not to have a player defend the passer. Above is an example, where a team may not defend the passer, which can be effective to either deny a particular player the ball (as above) to enable a defender to remain in the safety position.

However, there are two particularly memorable examples where teams opted not to defend the passer from the baseline and the offensive team were able to make a full court pass, which was caught and the subsequent shot was made.

In the gold medal game of the 1972 Olympics and in the Eastern Regional Final in the 1992 NCAA Championship, the offensive team (Russia and Duke University respectively) had the ball on the baseline, with barely seconds left in the game and were 1 point behind.
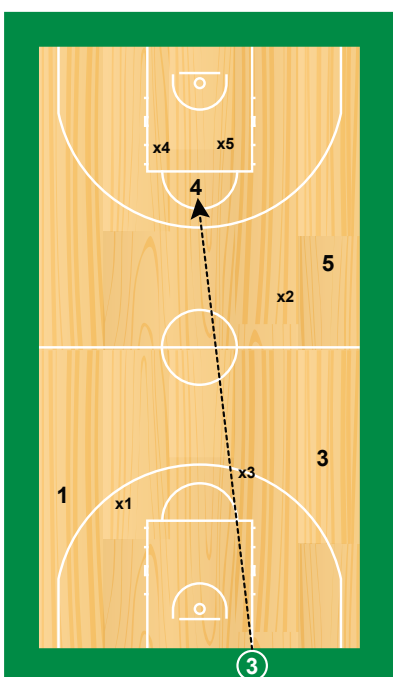
On both occasions the defensive team (USA[1] and University of Kentucky) did not defend the passer, but instead had two players back guarding the basket.

The offensive team made a full court pass, which was caught (by Sergei Belov for Russia and Christian Laettner for Duke), who then made a shot to win the game!

Whilst it is a matter for speculation only, it is perhaps unlikely that the passes could have been thrown as accurately as they were if the defender (particularly a tall defender) was standing in front of the passer.

1 The last play in the Olympic final was replayed a number of times
  - on the last occasion the inbounds pass was not defended.

Most teams in playing "man to man" defence, have defenders move to a position on the court, where they can help to defend against dribble penetration. However, a last shot situation may require a change to that tactic.
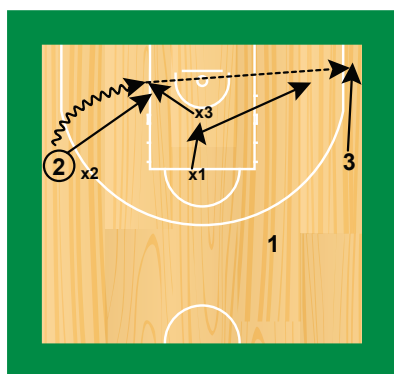
In this situation x1 and x3 are on the "split line" and are able to assist to defend if 2 beats x2. In that situation, x3 will rotate across to stop the dribbler and x1 will rotate down. If the ball is passed to 3, x1 will move to defend.

However, assume that the offensive team is 3 points down with seconds left. By having x1 and x3 in a position where they can help against penetration, it is likely that 3 would shoot a 3 point shot.
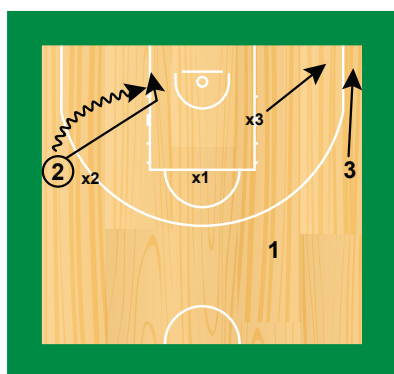
Instead, if x3 did not move to the "split line" but instead stayed on the perimeter to defend 3. It is unlikely that 3 will get an open 3 point shot.
2 may beat x2 on the dribble, however, a successful lay-up would only be worth 2 points, resulting in a 1 point loss if this was the last possession.

Obviously, x2 would defend and attempt to contain any dribble penetration (and stop 2 from shooting), however varying from the normal rule may be required in response to the game situation.

1.5.4 CATCHING UP - STRATEGIC USE OF FOULS

When an opponent has a lead a team can only catch up if they are able to out score the opponent.

This often means that the team will change defensive tactics (e.g. trapping players, changing from zone to man to man). Hopefully, the team is able to get consecutive "stops" and score themselves.

The shot clock was introduced to stop an opponent that has a lead from simply passing the ball without attempting to score. However, when trying to catch up, a team needs to be conscious of how much time remains in the game and they may need to quicken the tempo of the game to increase the number of possessions that they have.

Once a team has 4 team fouls in a quarter, any additional foul (that is not an offensive foul)[13] results in the opponent having two free throws whether or not they were in the "act of shooting"[14] when fouled. The team may strategically foul the opponent to:

- Reduce the time taken by the opponent's offence (it can be 1 or 2 seconds rather than 24);
- Have opponents that are poor free throw shooters take shots, rather than the higher percentage shooters.

In adopting this strategy, teams must:

- Avoid either an unsportsmanlike or technical foul, as either will result in the opponent having free throws and then getting another possession. Some examples of an automatic unsportsmanlike foul are:
  - fouling a player before an inbound pass is made (e.g. holding onto a player and not allowing them to cut);
  - fouling a player on a "fast break" when they are the last defender and do not attempt to defend the ball.

- Foul quickly as there is little point in defending for 20 seconds and then attempting to foul (at this stage the team should continue to force a bad shot). Often teams will initially attempt to intercept a pass and if unsuccessful then foul;
- Be aware of who is a good free throw shooter and try to deny them the ball and then foul players that are not as good. The offence will usually attempt to have the ball in the hands of their best free throw shooters and the defence may need to foul a good shooter to stop too much time being taken;
- Consider which of their players will foul. It is better for a player that is not one of the team's scorers to foul. Some coaches will substitute their scorers out of the game to avoid playing defence, and then substitute them back into the game to play offence;
- Execute their own offence efficiently and as quickly as possible. They must still score to catch up.

A team may also use the strategy when they are ahead. For example, if a team is 3 points up on the last possession they may prefer to foul (giving the opponent 2 free throws) rather than allow them to take a 3 point shot to win the game.

This tactic can also be used prior to the last possession and will often result in both teams taking a succession of free throws with only a few seconds coming off the clock each time. If the team that is ahead is able to make their free throws they will obviously win, however any missed shots provide an opportunity for the opponent to catch up.

13 An offensive foul is when the team has possession of the ball. For example, once a shot is taken, neither team has possession of the ball and any foul in the rebound contest is not an offensive foul.

14 The penalty for a foul against a player that is in the act of shooting remains the same (i.e. 2 or 3 free throws if the shot was missed and 1 free throw if the shot

FOLLOW-UP

1. How many times during a game do you think your opponents have a baseline inbounds situation at their offensive end? Have someone count the number of times in your next game – are you surprised by the result?

2. How much time do you practice defending baseline inbounds plays? Do you think this is warranted with regard to how many times they happen in a game? Discuss this with a coaching colleague.

3. Do you have a particular structure for your teams to defend when it is a late shot clock?

4. What is your preferred way to defend baseline inbounds situations?
   Does it depend upon your opponent?

5. At what point in a game would you instruct your team to foul the opposition so that they were given free throws?

7. Assume you were 20 points down during a game and you made some substitutions. Your substitutes got the margin back to two points, with three minutes to play. Do you keep them in or return to your starting players? Discuss your view with a coaching colleague. What other factors might influence your decision?

CHAPTER 2

OFFENSIVE TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

CHAPTER 2

OFFENSIVE TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

2.1   COMMON OFFENSIVE SETS

2.1.1   READ AND REACT OFFENCE

"Read and React" Offence is not a set or structured offence. Instead it is a framework that relies upon "reads and reactions" in a 2 player context, which are combined into a seamless framework for 5 players.

Teaching the offence requires "drilling" the "reads and reactions" into the 2 player context so that they become habits. The offence is differentiated from a "motion" offence because it does stipulate specific actions that a player is to take and in the "read and react" offence the key is what the person with the ball does. Players without the ball act based upon the action of the ball handler.

In contrast, a "motion offence" teaches players to react both to their defender and also to the movement and position of their team mates.

The offence has many "layers", which add complexity to what the team will do. The layers are taught in sequence, however a particular team may not work through all layers, depending upon their skills and experience.

The offence is most effective the better the skills of individual players, so coaches must teach and practice fundamental skills, not just work on team movements.

For simplicity, the offence is often initially taught in a 5 Out alignment, which emphasizes that all players must be able to play on the perimeter. Below is an overview of the foundations of the read and react offence. There are DVDs and other materials available for coaches wanting further information about the offence.

LAYER 1 – DRIBBLE PENETRATION AND CIRCLE MOVEMENT

On any dribble penetration, the dribbler looks to penetrate "to the rim" (i.e. get the lay-up), however they will also have the following passing options:

- Pass to a perimeter player that is opposite
- Pass back to a person behind them
- Pass to a baseline cutter
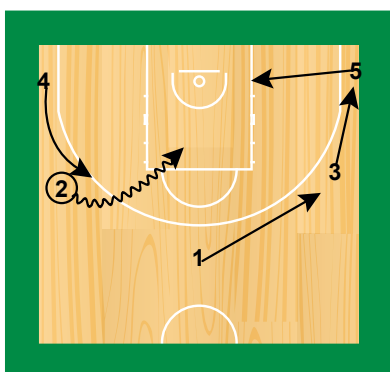
Whichever direction the dribbler moves, the other players also move in that direction, creating a circular movement.

Here, 5 is the baseline cutter, 1 and 3 are opposite and 4 lifts behind the dribbler.

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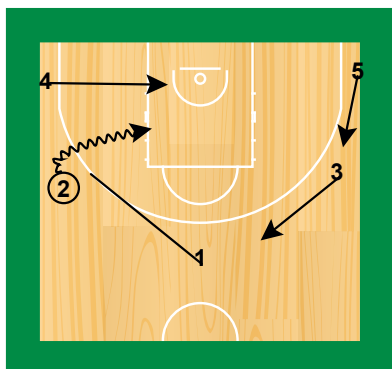
Similarly, where 2 dribbles to the left, the circular movement is to the left.
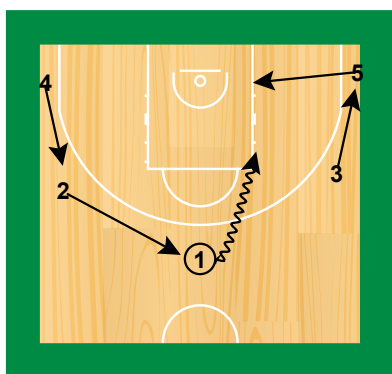
The rule applies regardless of where the dribbler is.
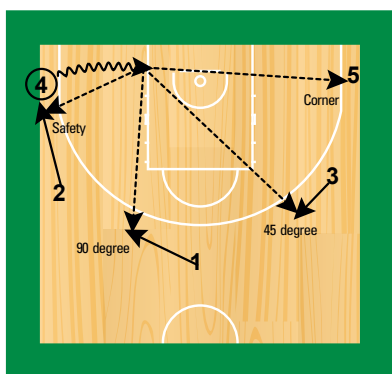
LAYER 2 – BASELINE PENETRATION

On baseline penetration, the player in the opposite corner stays as this is a good passing angle.

The other players continue circular movement, although it may be smaller movement. On baseline penetration, the dribbler must have 4 passing options:

- Opposite corner
- Opposite side – 45 degree
- Same side – 90 degree
- Same side – behind (safety)
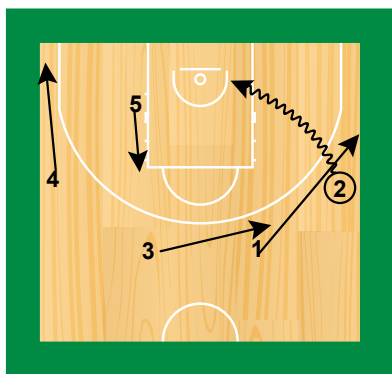
The baseline penetration rule may mean that a player rotates in the opposite direction to the "circle". For example, in a "4 Out, 1 In" alignment, the movement is:

- 4 drops to the opposite corner (even though this is not in the direction of circle movement)
- 5 lifts to 45 degree position, but at the post not on the perimeter
- 3 moves to the 90 degree position
- 1 moves to the safety (behind) position

LAYER 3 – BACK CUTS AND PASS & CUT

The next layer introduces the "pass and cut", which is one of the simplest yet effective moves in any "invasion" sport, whether that is basketball, football, hockey etc.
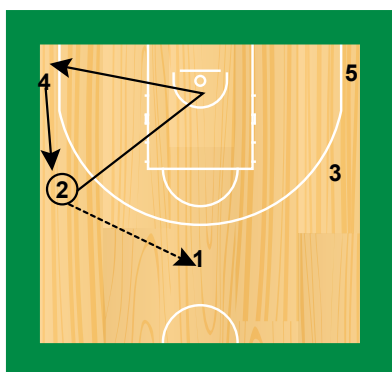
When a pass is made to a team mate that is "one pass away" (also known as a "single gap"), the passer must cut to the basket.

Other players rotate in a circular movement in the direction of the pass.
Here, 2 cuts to the basket, 4 lifts and 2 moves out to the corner.
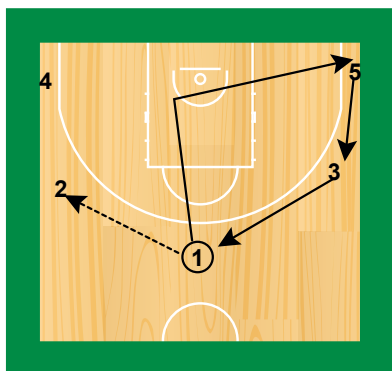
The rule applies regardless of where the pass was made from. Here, the pass is made from the point to the wing, and players from the opposite side of the floor lift and rotate, with 1 moving out to the corner (which is the vacant spot).
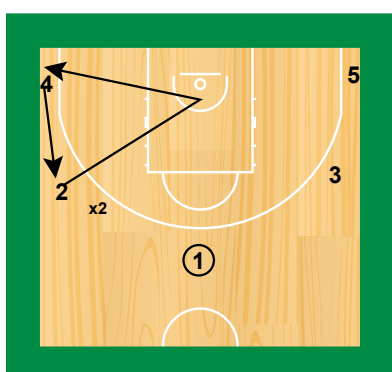
Anytime a defender that is "one pass away" (or single gap) is outside the 3 point line, the offensive player cuts to the basket (a "back cut") and players rotate to fill positions from the baseline.

Here, 2 cuts to the basket and 4 lifts from the corner.
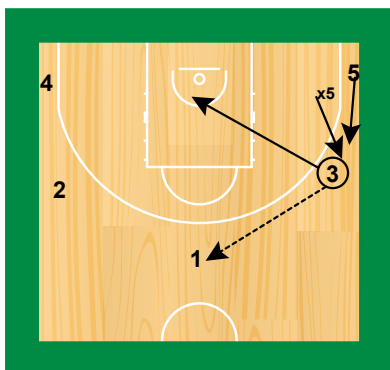
The rule equally applies to an offensive player moving following a pass and cut.

3 passes to the wing and cuts to the basket. 5 lifts, however x5 moves to deny a pass and is outside the 3 point line.
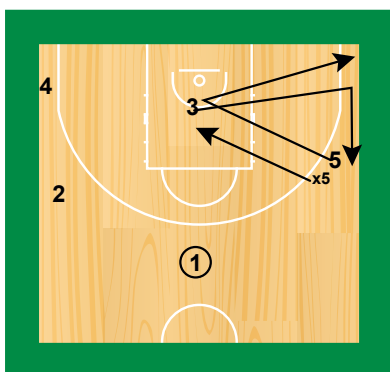
Accordingly, 5 then cuts to the basket and 3 will lift having moved to the corner.
5 then moves out to the vacant corner.

LAYER 4 – POST MOVEMENT ON DRIBBLE PENETRATION

When a dribbler penetrates the key, any post player moves according to the following rules:

- If the penetration into the key comes from below the post player or along the baseline, the post moves up to the elbow
- If the penetration into the key comes from above the post player, the post steps to the short corner which (if their defender steps out) creates more room for the dribbler or (if the defender stays in the key) creates a passing lane.
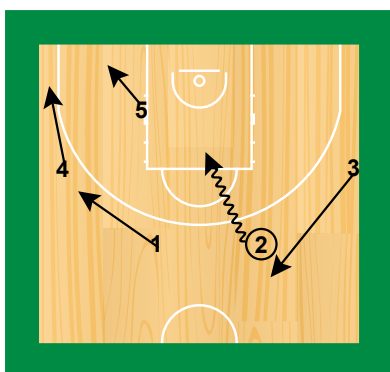
2 penetrates into the top of the key, so 5 steps to the short corner.

The other perimeter players move in a circular movement, to the left which was the direction of the penetration.
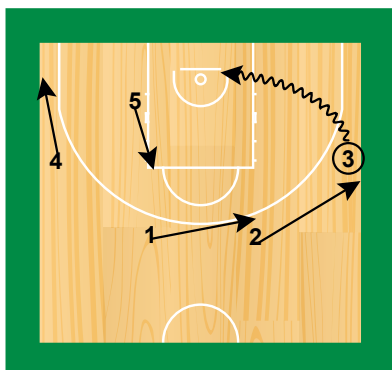
3 penetrates along the baseline, so 5 lifts to the corner.

1 and 2 rotate to the right (the direction of the dribble) and 4 drops to the opposite corner because the penetration was baseline.
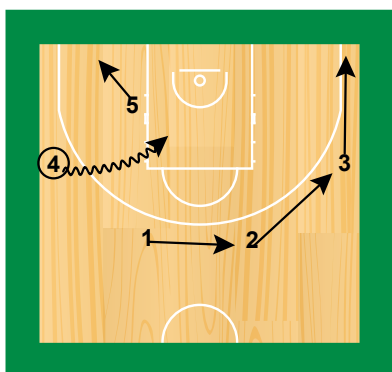
The rules equally apply when the penetration is from the same side as the post player. As 4 penetrates the top of the key, 5 moves to the short corner.

The perimeter players move to the right, the direction of the dribble.
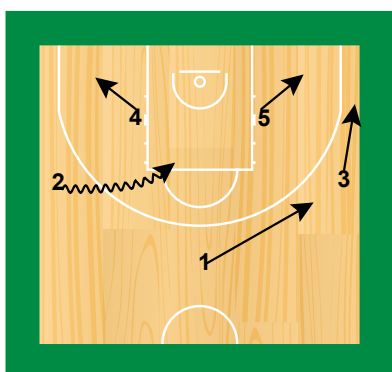
The rules also apply when there are two post players, with 4 and 5 both stepping to the short corner on 2's penetration to the top of the key. 4 in effect becomes the "safety" pass and would move higher (on the perimeter) if necessary.
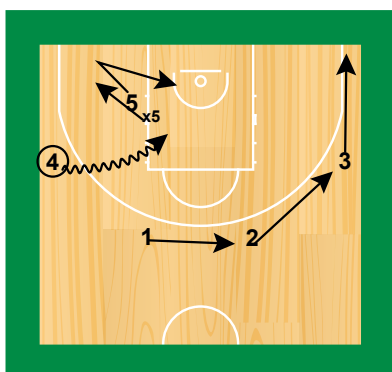
If the post defender steps out to the short corner, the post player may be able to back door cut.
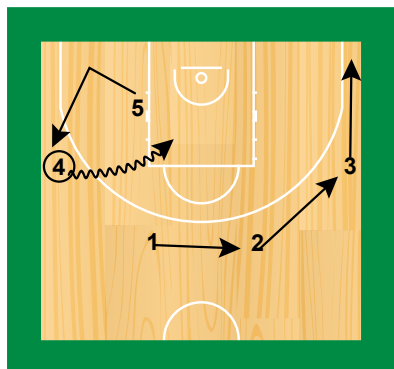
The post player can also move from the short corner to the "safety" position behind the dribbler. This can be very effective if the post player is a good perimeter shooter.

LAYER 5 – SPEED DRIBBLE

The "speed dribble" is a non-penetrating dribble (i.e. it moves from perimeter position to another perimeter position) and forces a backdoor cut which then triggers other perimeter movement.
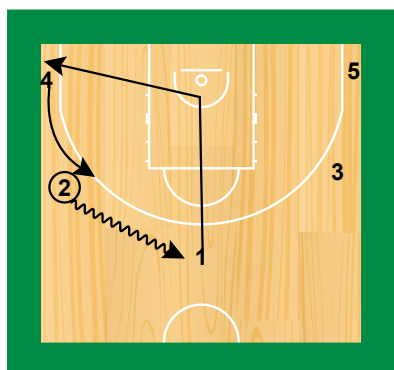
If the dribbler does not penetrate into the key, but dribbles toward a team mate, that team mate cuts back door to the basket.

Other perimeter players adjust position from the baseline up.

The dribbler uses a "speed dribble", facing the direction that they are moving in.
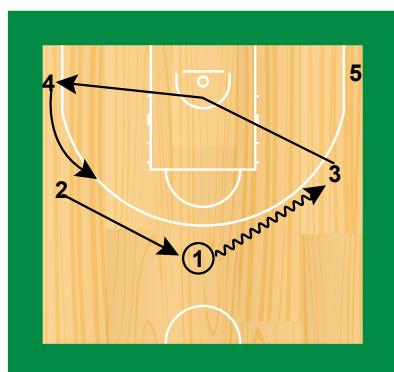
LAYER 6 – POWER DRIBBLE (DRIBBLE HAND-OFF)

A power dribble is used to initiate a dribble hand off. It may be used as a pressure release or to get the ball into the hands of a better ball handler. It can be signalled either by using a sideways "step-slide" dribble or other visual signal (e.g. tapping the chest).
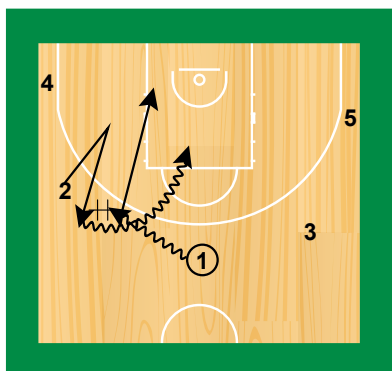
1 dribbles toward 2 and comes to a jump stop. They hold the ball with one hand, one top and one hand below.

2 "v-cuts" (and could cut to the basket if their defender does not react) and then takes the ball from 1, attempting to penetrate into the key.

1 can roll to the basket.
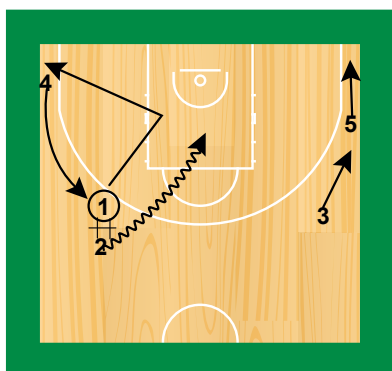
If 1 does not receive the pass, they move to the perimeter. 4 lifts to be a safety pass behind 2.

3 and 5 drop on the perimeter.
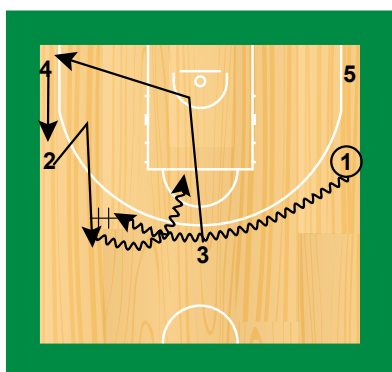
Sometimes the player dribbled at may cut to the basket, in which case the dribbler can continue to the next player for a hand off.
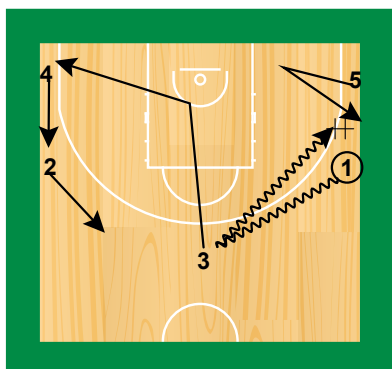
Alternatively, 1 could reverse direction and hand off with 5.
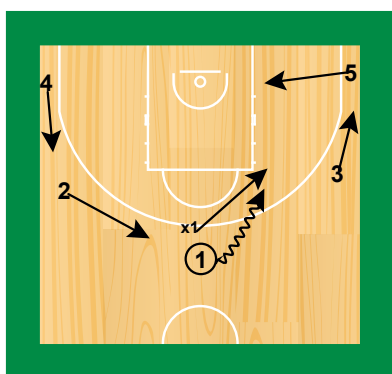
LAYER 7 – CIRCLE REVERSE

If the defence are able to stop dribble penetration, the perimeter players change direction and "circle" in the opposite direction.
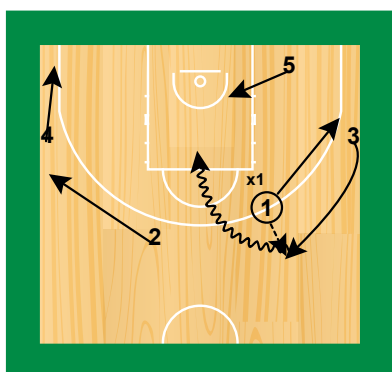
The pass to 3 could be a hand off or a short pass.

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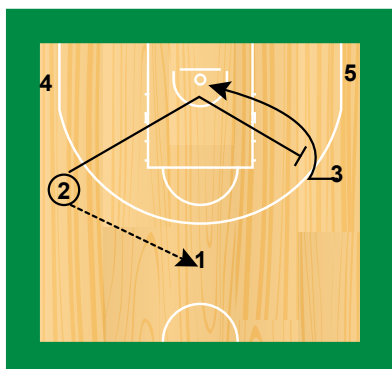
LAYER 8 – BACK SCREENS

After any back cut, the player can back screen for a team mate, rather than moving to a gap on the perimeter. As with any screen, it is important that the cutter does not move until the screener has "set" – listening for the screener's feet landing on the floor.
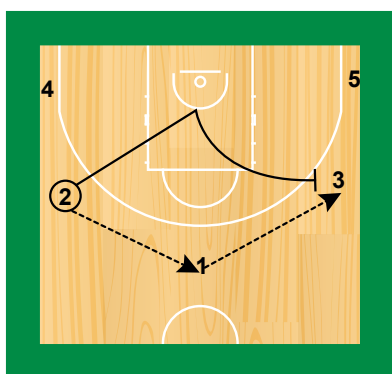
The player can also set a ball screen, if the player they were setting a screen for receives a pass.
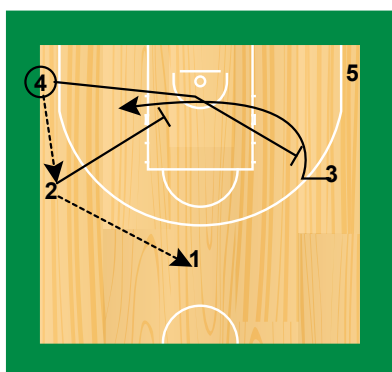
LAYER 9 – STAGGERED SCREENS

There are also opportunities for staggered screens when multiple players cut after passing the ball.
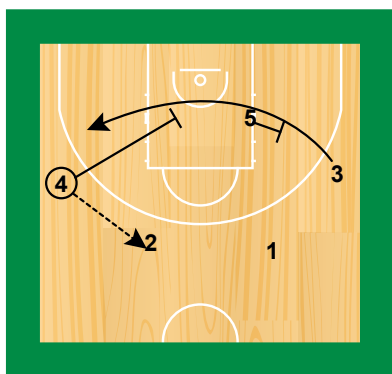
Staggered screens can also be used where there is a post player.

2.1.2   "FLEX"

The next section provides a short summary of some common offensive sets, the names of which are a part of the basketball lexicon. There are many videos and books that provide detail about each of these patterns and how to teach them.

This summary is provided so that coaches may have some familiarity with each of them. However, any coach interested in introducing some of these concepts should seek out further information.

Coaches of young players must be particularly careful to ensure that players do not become so fixated on running the particular "movement" that they do not learn to correctly identify opportunities to "beat" their defenders and score.

An example of this, is where a play requires the ball to be passed to a particular player. Young players may concentrate on that option to the extent that they do not see other passing opportunities and will "force" this pass instead.

To avoid this, in practice coaches should allow players to make "reads" and where a player makes a pass that is different to what the play required, the coach should ask the player what they saw and why they attempted that particular pass, where were defenders positioned, where their team mates were etc. It may be that in this context, the coach will agree that what the player did was appropriate.

If the coach simply insists that players must follow the play, they will not learn to read the defenders. And whilst they may initially have success with the play, other teams will soon learn what they are doing and will defend it.

Set offensive plays should be used as a framework, which is designed to create offensive opportunities but most of all, players must be taught to react to whatever the defence does.

"FLEX"

"The Flex" is a patterned offence that is a "continuity" offence because a team can play it on one side of the floor and then the other in a continuous fashion. The offence is most effective against "man to man" defences and it will often create size "mismatches" through its screening action.

The basic motion of "The Flex" includes a baseline cut off a back screen and then "screen the screener" action.
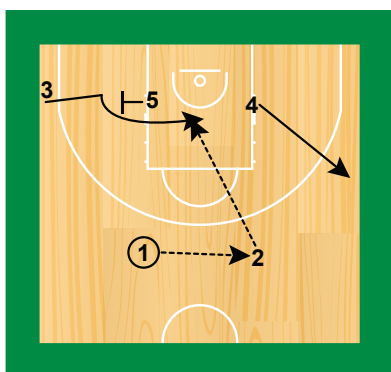
3 cuts off a back screen from 5, as 1 "reverses" the ball
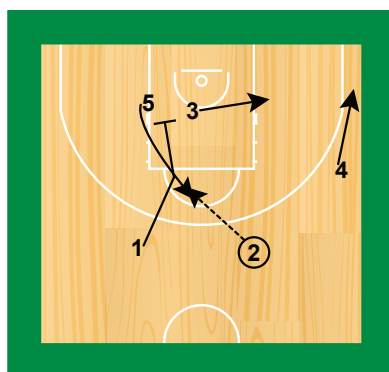
1 then sets a screen for 5 who cuts to the free throw line
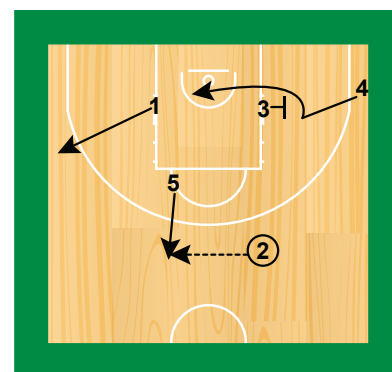
2 can reverse the ball to 5 and 3 sets a back screen for 4. This is the start of the "continuous" nature of "Flex"

2.1.3   "THE SHUFFLE"

"The Shuffle" was first named in the 1950s when coach Bruce Drake at Oklahoma University used its basic cutting action as part of the team's offence.

Many teams have used aspects of the "The Shuffle" or have added options to the initial movement. It can be used against either "man to man" or zone defence.
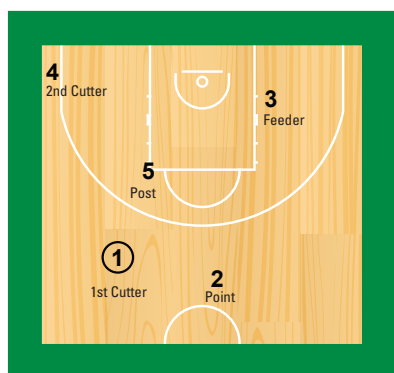
If the offence is used with junior players, they should be given the chance to play each role
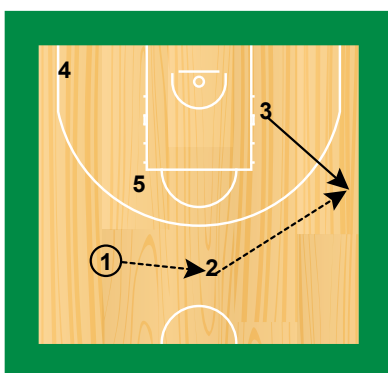
"Reversing" the ball starts the movement of the basic "Shuffle Cut"
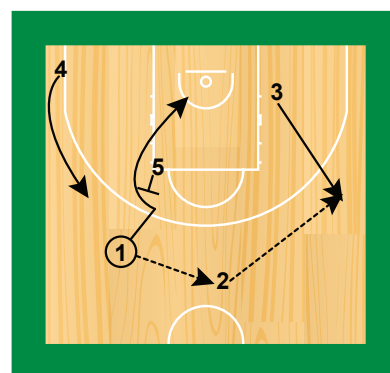
1 cutting off the high post screen is the "Shuffle Cut"
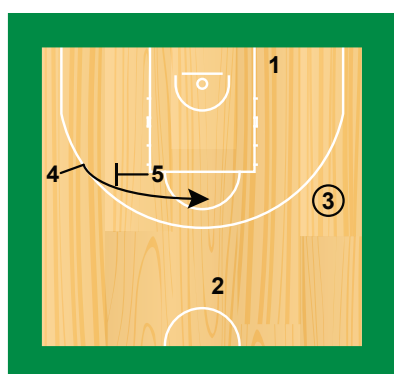
The "second cutter" also cuts off a screen from the high post player.

There are many other options that can be incorporated into "The Shuffle" and the "Shuffle Cut" is often used in other offensive patterns.

2.1.4   "TRIANGLE"

"The Triangle" half-court offence, originated with coach Sam Barry at the University of Southern California and has come to prominence more recently being used at both the Chicago Bulls and Los Angeles Lakers by Head coach Phil Jackson and assistant coach Tex Winter.

The key to the offence is its spacing, with players about 15-18 feet apart.

The basic structure of the offence is a "triangle" (formed between a post player, wing and guard on the strong side of the court) and a "two-man" game on the weakside of the court.

Below are some options involving cutting off the low post:
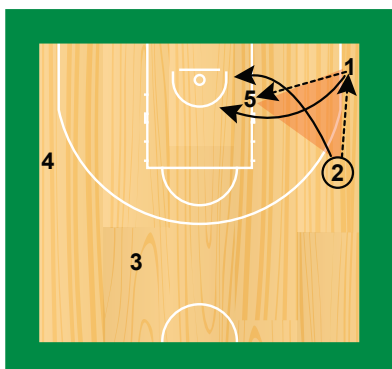
When the ball is passed to the low post player, the wing or corner can cut off the post player.
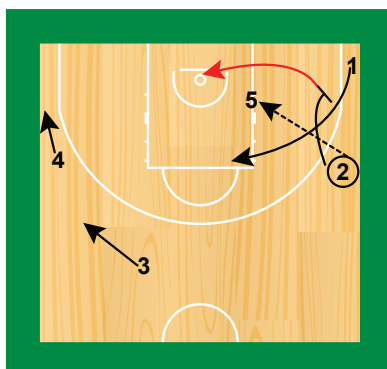
The wing player can also screen for the corner player and then cut to the basket.
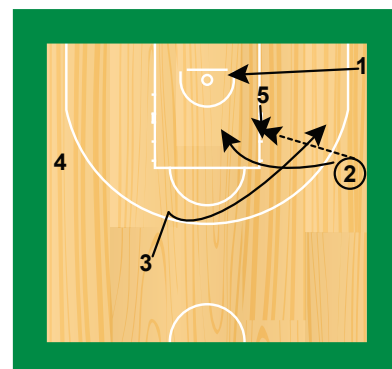
The low post player steps toward the high post to receive a pass. The corner player cuts to the basket and the wing cuts off the post.

3 moves to the perimeter to receive a pass from the post player.

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2.1.5   "HORNS"

The "Horns" offence (sometimes called "A-Set") has been used at both US College, NBA and Euro League levels by a number of teams. It is a relatively simple basic alignment, with two screens being set for the ball handler.
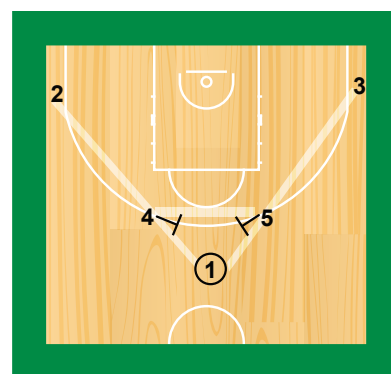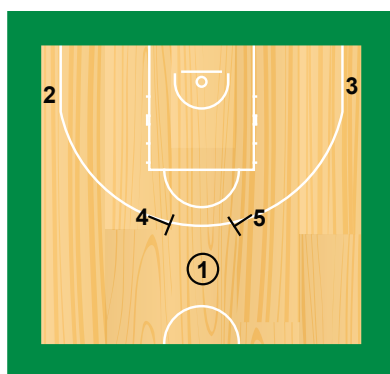
The offence is sometimes known as "A-Set"

"Horns" starts with basic high pick and roll action. It can include various options for movement by both the screeners and perimeter shooters.
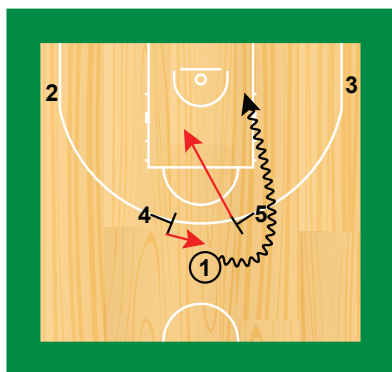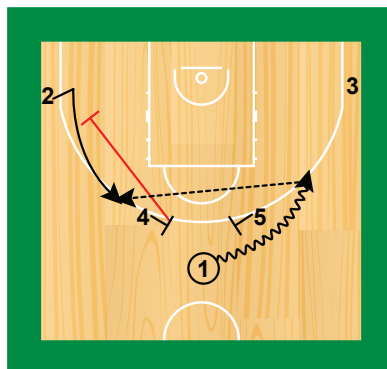

Basic Screen and Roll
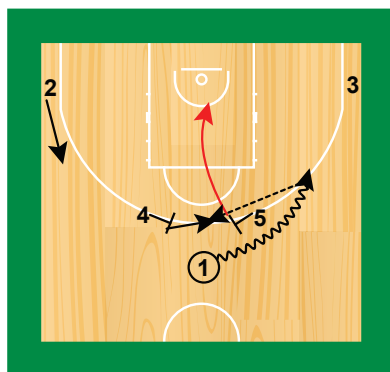
The screener rolls to the basket and the ball is reversed back to the top
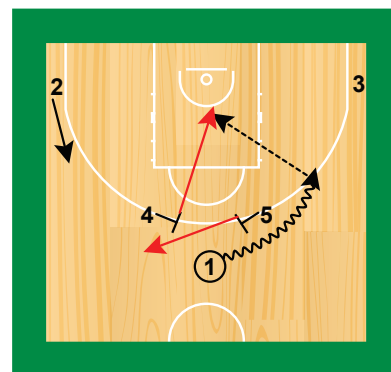
The unused screen cuts to the basket
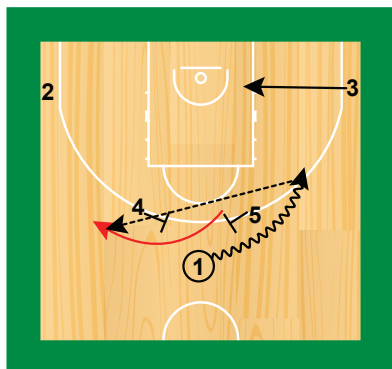
This is a basic "screen the screener" action.

"Pick and Roll" on the strongside and downscreen on the weakside.
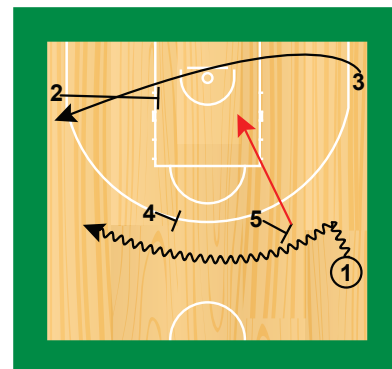
The offence can also be run with a "sideline entry".

2.1.6   "PRINCETON"

The "Princeton Offence" is named after Princeton University, where coach Pete Carrill first developed this team offence.

The "Princeton Offence" is not a set pattern but instead is a structure of play that breaks down into a series of "3 man game" opportunities. The "back door" cut is often regarded as the hallmark of the offence, however it is much more than that.

For a team to effectively use the Princeton Offence all players must have good offensive fundamentals – understanding "spacing" and passing and having the ability to pass, shoot and dribble from the perimeter. Two basic principles underpin the offence:

1. The player in front of you (i.e. your defender) tells you where to go;

2. If a defender overplays you (denies the ball), cut back door.

There are low-post and high-post opportunities within the Princeton Offence. The high post offence has the following advantages:

- Using the high post spreads the floor more and leaves the area below the free throw line open for cutting (particularly back door cuts) and dribble penetration;

- Opponents "big" defenders may not be as comfortable defending in the high post (this again emphasizes the need with junior players to teach all players both post and perimeter skills);

- It is relatively easier to reverse the ball when there is a high post player, as the high post can relieve defensive pressure on perimeter players.

Some elements of the high post offence are set out below. These particularly utilize "turn out" cuts.
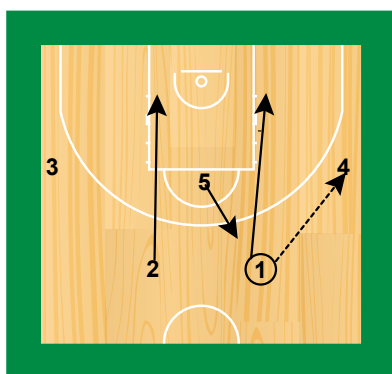
The Princeton Offence starts with a "2 guard front" and two wing players at the free throw line.

The post player (5) can play either low or high.

The ball is passed to the wing, and both guards cut low toward the basket, stopping below the "block". The high post player steps to the perimeter.
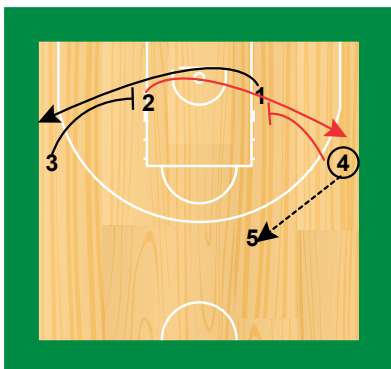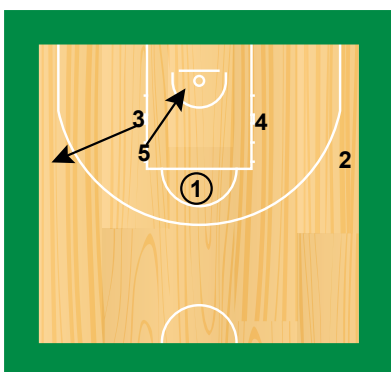
4 passes the ball to 5.

3 and 4 set screens at the side of the key, and 1 and 2 cut to the opposite side of the key, coming of the screens ("turn out cuts").
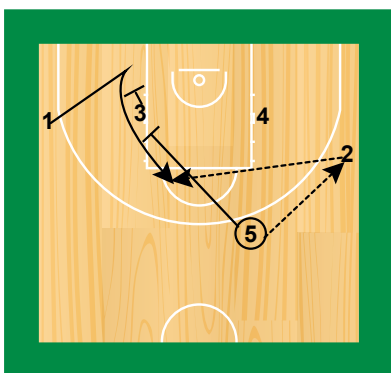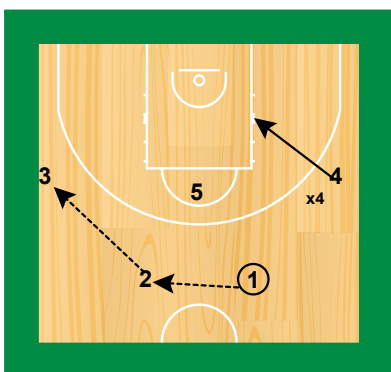
5 looks for one of the guards coming off, and for them to shoot from the perimeter.

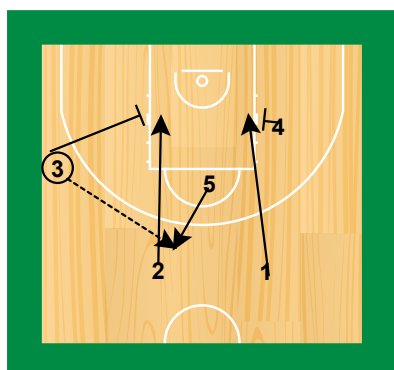After passing, 5 moves to set a staggered screen for the opposite guard.

After the staggered screen, 5 moves to the low post or basket and the other screener returns to the perimeter.
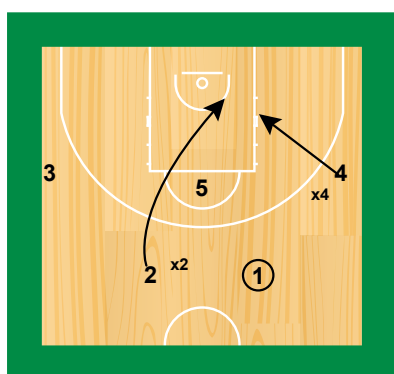
If an initial pass to the wing is denied, the wing player cuts back door, which is one of the underlying principles in the offence.

The ball is then reversed to the opposite wing player.

The offence then continues as before, with the two guards moving to below the low post and making turn out cuts off screens, following the ball being passed to 5 on the perimeter.

If both a pass to the wing and to the other guard are denied, the wing and guard cut back door (again following the basic rule of the offence).
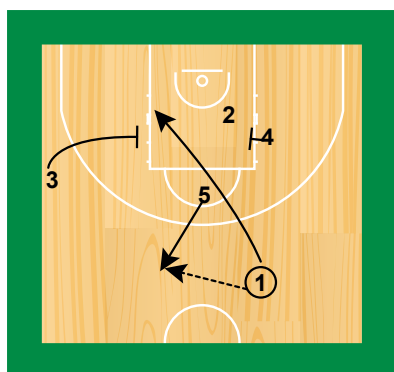
5 steps to the perimeter to receive a pass directly from the guard, who then cuts to the opposite block.

Again screens are set for the guards.
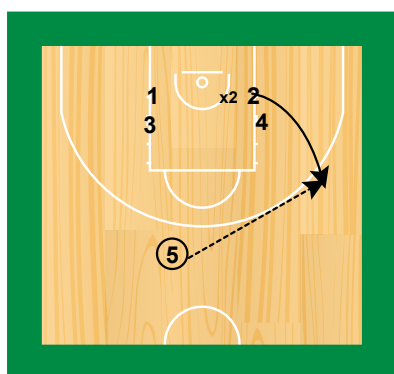
If a defender (x2) denies a guard from make a "swing" cut to the opposite side, the guard can simply utilize the screen nearest to them.

2.1.7   "UCLA CUT"

The UCLA Cut received its name due to its use by coach John Wooden at UCLA. It is a simple "pass and cut" motion, with a screen from the high post.
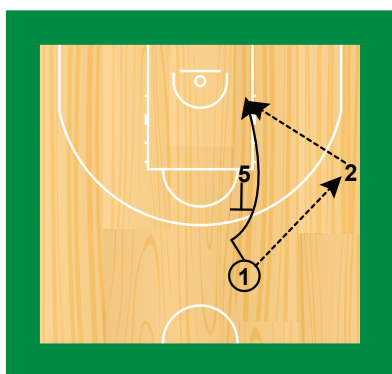
A UCLA Cut is used in many offensive structures

2.1.8   "ZIPPER"

The "Zipper" is a continuity offence, which was used by the Boston Celtics in the NBA, amongst others, in the 1960s. More recently, many teams use a "zipper cut" (which was the first movement of the "zipper" offence) to start their offensive movement.
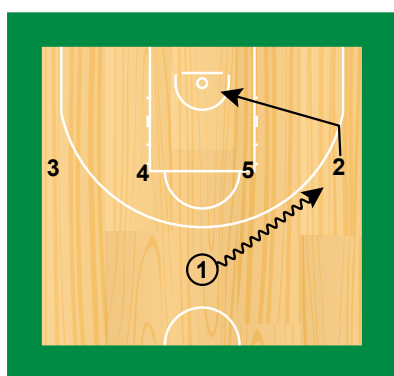
"Zipper" starts in a 1-4 High, offensive set.

1 makes a dribble entry to the wing and the wing player (2) cuts to the basket. They may sink toward the baseline first before cutting to the basket or may step toward the ball handler (as if moving to a hand-off).

If possible, 1 passes to 2 as they cut to the basket.
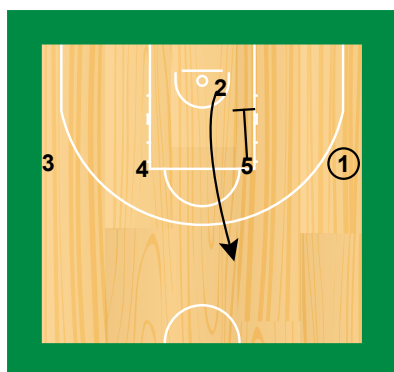
2 then cuts from the basket up the key, using a screen from the strong side post player.

This is the "Zipper" cut. 1 dribbling to the wing "opens" the zipper, and 2 cutting up the key "closes" the zipper.
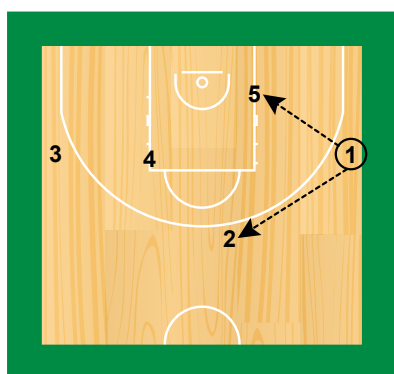
1 looks to pass to 5 in the low post position or to 2 for a shot at the top of the key.
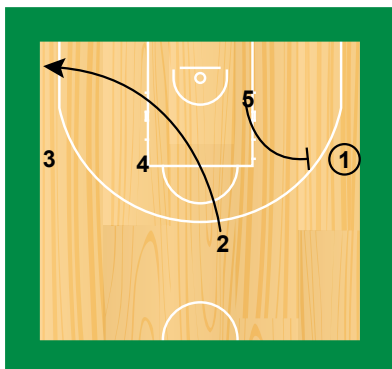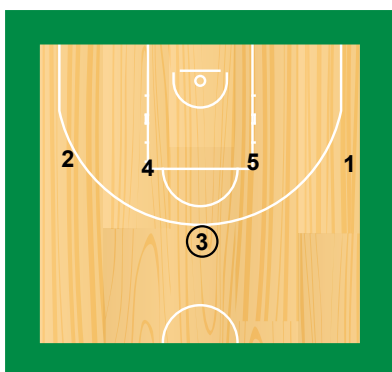
If 2 does not receive the ball, they cut through to the opposite corner.

5 can set a ball screen for 1 at the wing.
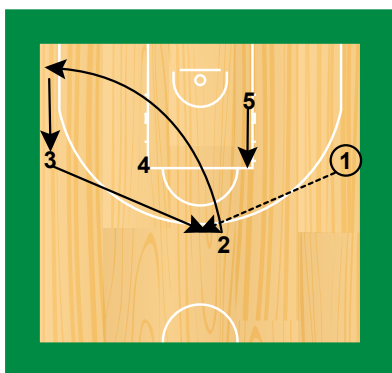
Alternatively, 3 lifts to the point position to receive the pass from 1.
5 lifts back to the high post and 2 lifts from the corner to the wing.


The team is not in the initial alignment (1-4 High) and the play can continue by 3 dribbling to either wing. It is also possible to add other elements, such as:

- 4 setting ball screen for 3 while 2 drops to the corner. 5 could also screen for 1
- 3 passing to 2, 1 cutting to ballside corner and 3 cutting to weakside corner

The "Zipper" is a relatively unsophisticated structure that is easily "scouted" and accordingly is less likely to be used as a structured offence. Instead, it is common in professional leagues for the "zipper cut" to be integrated into their offensive structures, particularly being used as an "entry" into half court offence. Set out below are various options that utilize a zipper cut to start.

Coaches of junior teams in particular are encouraged to consider that these are examples of play, rather than a set structure to implement with their team. These options are probably most effective when they are the result of a "read" by the players, rather than a set rule.
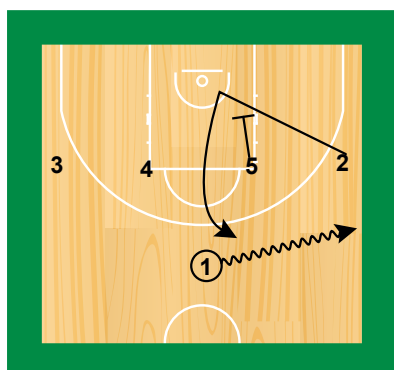
Most professional teams that use a "zipper cut" do not have 1 dribble to the wing and instead they dribble to the side of the court. 2 still cuts to the basket, although some teams have the screen from 5 executed at the foul line rather than near the block.
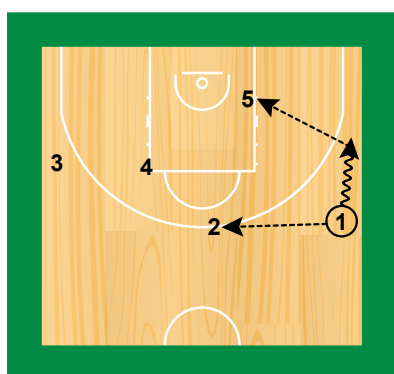
1 still has options to pass into the post or to 2, however will usually need to dribble to a lower position in order to be able to pass to the post player.
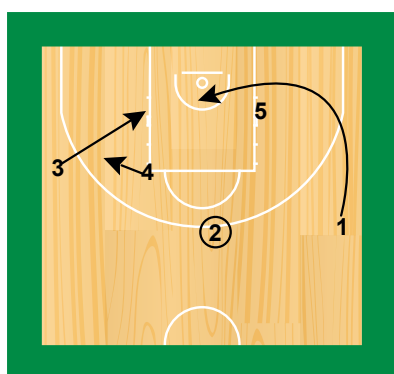
After passing the ball, 1 may also cut to the basket. Commonly, 4 and 3 will move position to be able to screen.
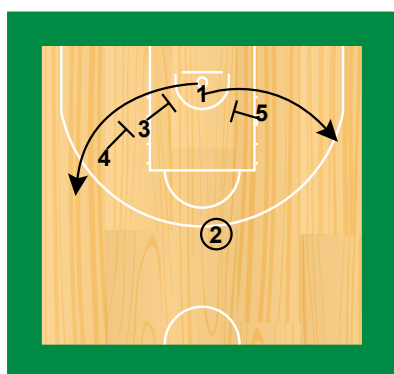
1 pauses at the basket and then can either:

(a) Cut back to the perimeter using a screen from 5

(b) Cut off a staggered double screen from 3 and 4.

Whichever cut 1 makes, they must read their defensive opponent. This may mean they flare to the corners, or curl on a screen etc, depending upon how the cut is defended.
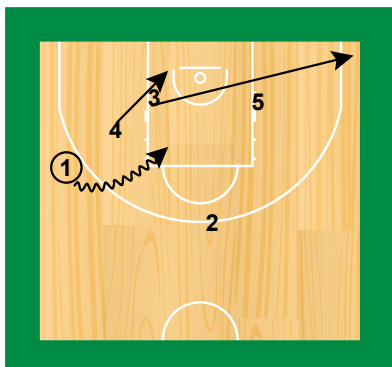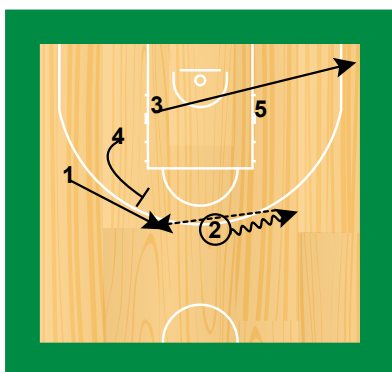
If 1 receives the ball on the wing, they may penetrate. Here, 3 moves out to the opposite corner (to receive a pass after penetration) which creates space for 4 to drop to the basket.
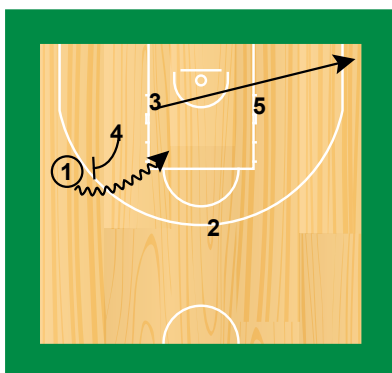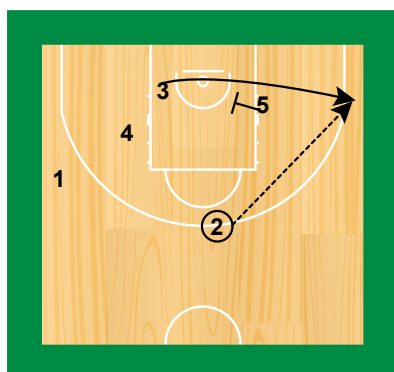

Alternatively, 4 could ball screen at the wing.
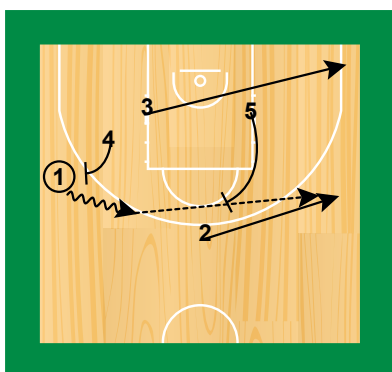
Another alternative is for 5 to screen for 2 to flare to the opposite wing to receive a pass from 1.

Rather than passing to 1 at the wing, 2 may clear toward the opposite side and pass to 1 as they lift to the point. 4 can then set a screen at the elbow extended.
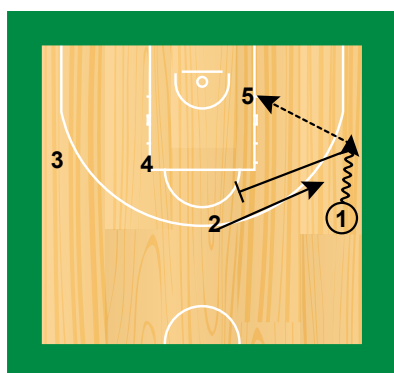
If 2 does not pass to the wing, 3 can make a "turn out" to cut off the screen from 5.
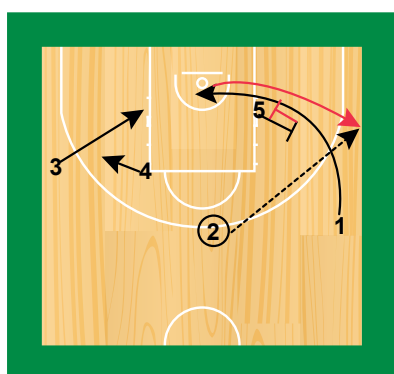

After the initial "zipper cut", 5 can back screen for 5 as they cut to the basket and can then re-screen as they cut back to the perimeter. 3 and 4 can still set the staggered double on the other side.

If 1 does not use the staggered double, 3 could then cut off 4's screen.

After the initial "zipper" cut, if 1 passes to the post (instead of to 2), 1 can then set a screen for 2 to cut to the wing.

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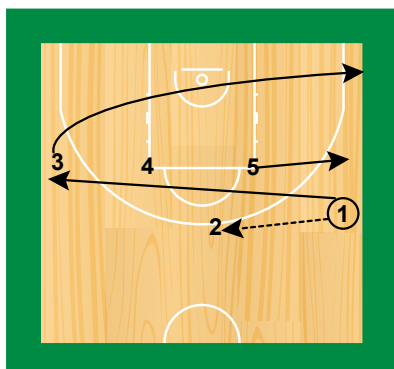
Another option after 1 passes to 2 (on the initial zipper cut) is for 1 to then make a horizontal cut to the opposite wing.

3 would clear that wing by moving to the corner and 5 would also step to the perimeter.
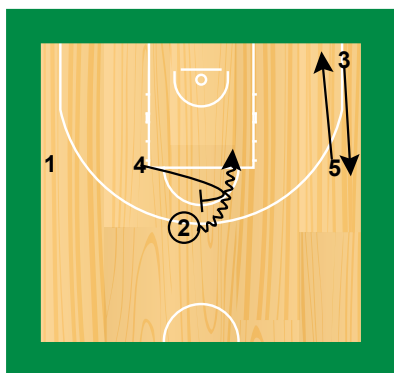
4 then steps across to set a ball screen and 2 penetrates.

3 lifts and 5 drops to the corner and 1 makes sure that they are in a position to receive a pass.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Which offensive structure would best suit your team? Discuss with your assistant coaches.

2. Discuss with a coaching colleague whether the statement Junior Teams (up to the age of 16) should not be taught particular structures and instead should use an offence like "Read and React".

2.2   OFFENSIVE MOVEMENT

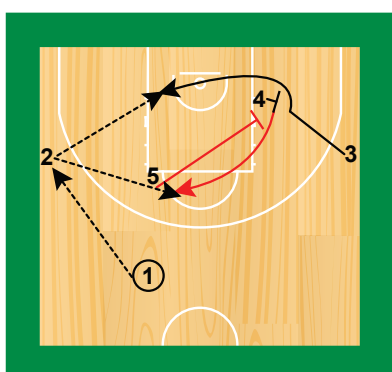## 2.2.1   MOTION OFFENCE - 3 OUT, 2 IN - SCREEN THE SCREENER

With 17-18 year olds, other concepts may be introduced and at this age players can learn to play with two inside players (either two low posts, two high posts or one low post and one high post).

THESE PLAYERS MAY USE THE FOLLOWING CONCEPTS:
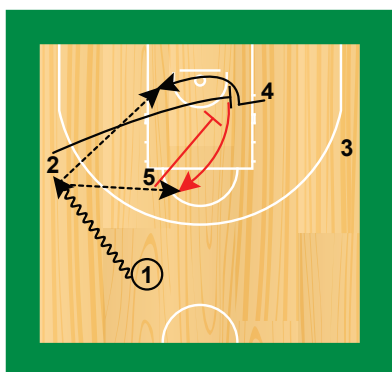
A player that sets the screen is immediately screened by another team mate, providing the player with the ball with two consecutive options to pass.
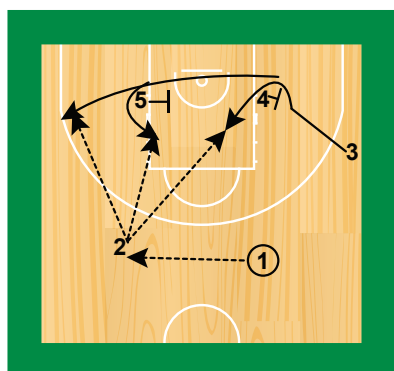
Here 2 screens for 4, and 5 sets a screen for 2.

Here, 4 sets a screen for 3 and then 5 sets a screen for 4.

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2.2.2   MOTION OFFENCE - 3 OUT, 2 IN - MULTIPLE SCREENS FOR THE SHOOTER

*Two or three screens can be set in a row to allow a shooter to get free.*

Two or three screens can be set in a row to allow a shooter to get free.

The screeners should also look to receive a pass after the cutter has made their cut.

Here 4 and 5 both set screens for 3
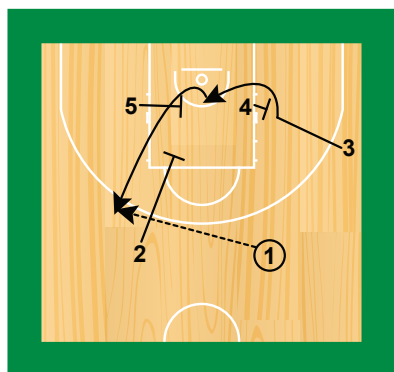
4, 5 and 2 set screens for 3

2.2.3   MOTION OFFENCE - 3 OUT, 2 IN - DOUBLE SCREENS

*A double screen is where two team mates stand together to set a screen.*
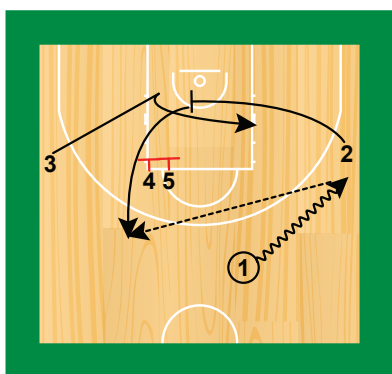
After the cutter has used the screen, the screeners need to both "read" the defence and also be aware of the position of the other screener, when looking to receive a pass after setting the screen.

Here 3 cuts to the basket and then cuts to the opposite side of the court using a screen from 2.

2 cuts off a double screen from 4 and 5.
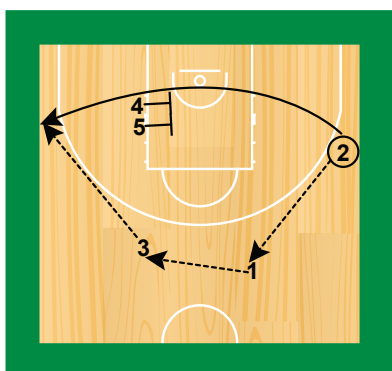

2 makes a "turn out" to cut off a double screen.
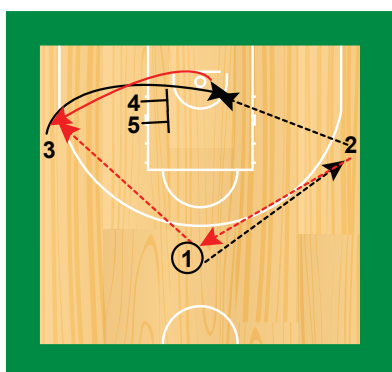
Here 3 uses the double screen from the post players twice. First, 3 cuts to the basket and the ball is passed to 2 to make the pass.
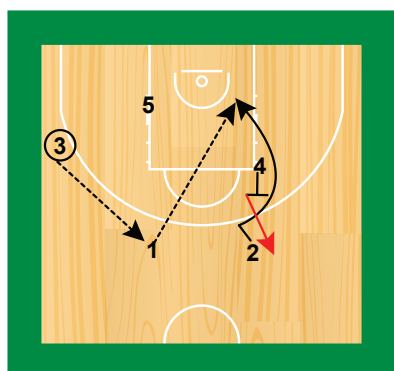
However, if 3 does not get open, they can cut to the perimeter again, off the double screen and 2 would reverse the ball to 1.

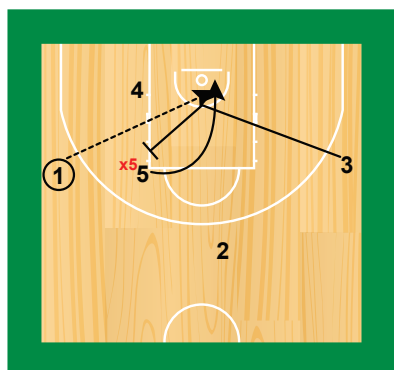# 2.2.4   MOTION OFFENCE - 3 OUT, 2 IN - BLIND (BACK) SCREENS

"Blind", or "Back" screens, are set behind a defender so that they cannot see the screener.
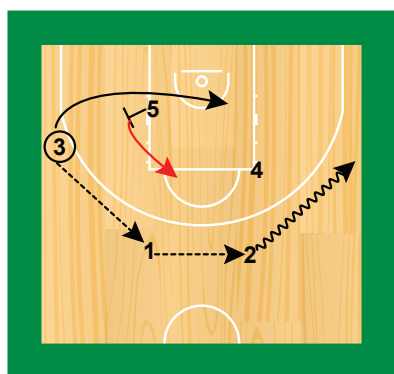
The screen must be set at least one step away from the defender's current position.

From the same alignment, the back screen can be set on the "weak side", creating an opportunity for 2 to cut to the basket.

These screens can be particularly effective when used against the defender on a player that has just passed the ball or defenders that are denying passes.

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2.2.5   MOTION OFFENCE - 3 OUT, 2 IN - PICK AND ROLL WITH TRIANGLE ON HELP SIDE

The team may play a "pick and roll" with three players at the help side, in a triangle formation (low post, wing and guard). in a triangle formation (low post, wing and guard).
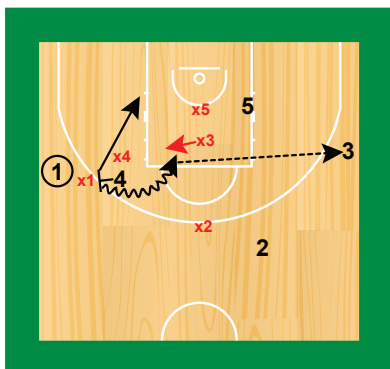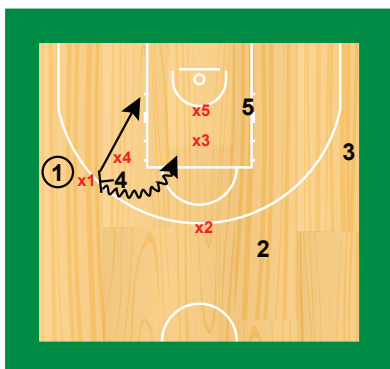
This still gives plenty of space for the "pick and roll", with the dribbler attempting to get to the elbow, and the screener looking to move to the basket.

When a help defender rotates to stop the penetration, the ball may be passed to the open player on the perimeter.
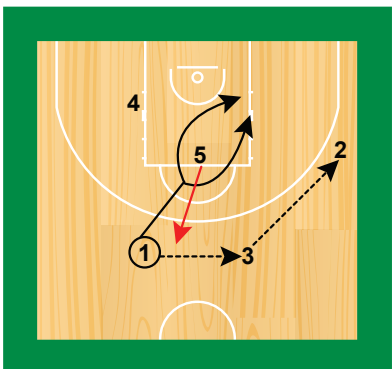
2.2.6   MOTION OFFENCE - 3 OUT, 2 IN - CUTS OFF HIGH POST SCREEN

Guards may cut off the high post, after the ball goes below the extended free throw line but before any defenders move to the "split line".
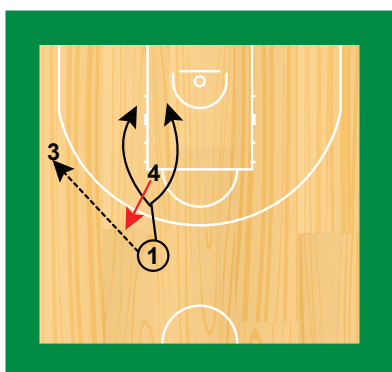
This does not have to be a screen and 4 may move to the perimeter to potentially receive a pass.

If 4 does screen, they can do so facing the defender or facing the basket.
The advantage of facing the basket is that they can see the rest of the play.

Timing is especially important when the cutter comes from the weak side as the ball needs to have moved to a "passing position". After a cut off of the high post, the high post should pop.

# 2.2.7   MOTION OFFENCE - 3 OUT, 2 IN - 1V1 ISOLATION

Players can give a team mate room to play 1x1.
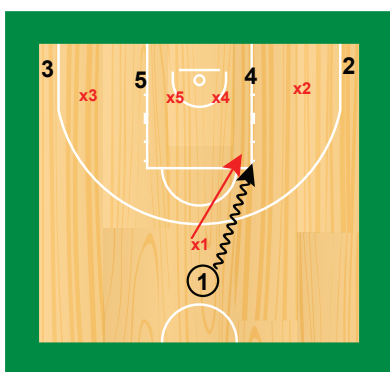
This is often used to create a "last shot" opportunity, with 1 unlikely to get a lay-up, but attempting to penetrate to the top of the key for a shot.
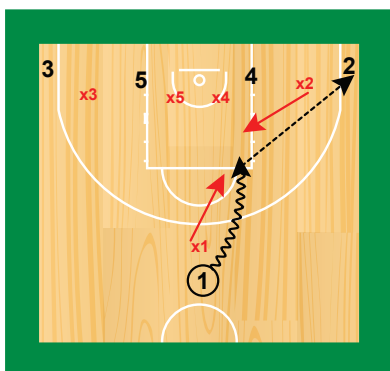
It is likely that help will come to stop any penetration, in which case the offence should be ready to pass to their open team mate. This is most effective if 2 and 3 are able to shoot from the perimeter.
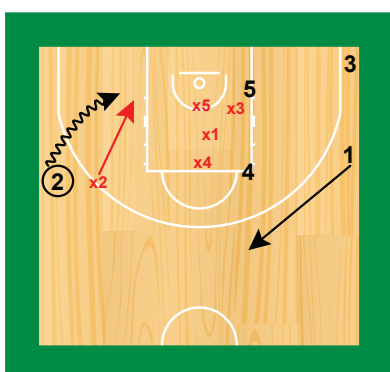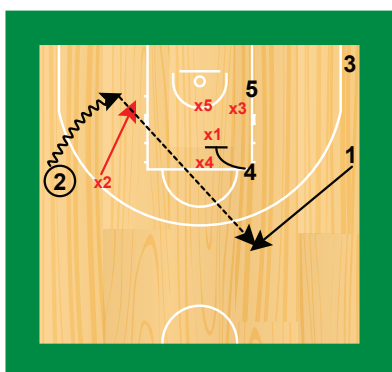
Another isolation alignment is to "clear out" one side of the court. Here, 2 attempts to drive and get an open shot.
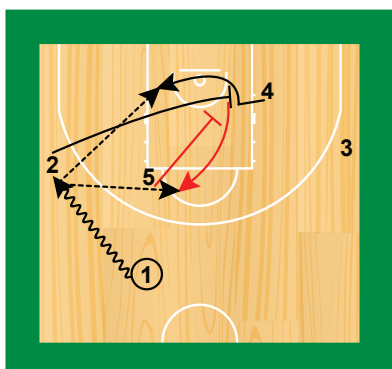
Players on the weakside, should be prepared to move to a position to receive a pass.
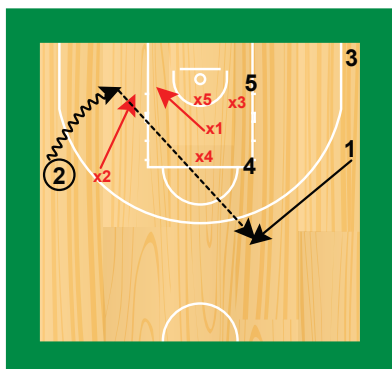
If one of the weakside defenders (e.g. x1) rotate to help defend the penetration, a pass may be open to their opponent.

In this alignment a similar passing opportunity can be created by one of the post players setting a screen for the perimeter players.

If the defence switch to defend this (e.g. x4 moves to defend 1), it can open a pass into the screener. However, when the isolation play has been run as a "last shot" opportunity, the offensive players must be very conscious of the amount of time remaining.

Many options have been presented here and it is not necessary for a coach to teach all options to their players. Rather they should choose some of the options, depending upon the experience of their players.

Coaches must also keep in mind that "it is not enough to memorize moves, but that players should understand their meaning, master all the decisions, and fundamentals involved, and practice enough to be able to perform each efficiently".

2.2.8 SHOT SELECTION - IMPORTANCE OF THE CORNER 3

The introduction of the 3 point shot has made a significant change to how basketball is played, placing a much greater emphasis on shooting from distance.

The reason for this can be starkly illustrated:

- A team taking 100 2pt shots @ 50% accuracy scores 100 points;
- A team taking 100 3pt shots @ 35% accuracy scores 115 points!

It must be emphasized with junior teams that players should not be encouraged to shoot from "beyond the arc" until they have the correct strength and technique to do so.

Increasingly, teams are adding specific options to their offensive playbooks to take 3 point shots and this trend seemingly continues even though the 3 point line is now further away from the basket than when first introduced.

In particular, the "corner 3" has been described by some commentators as the most important shot in basketball and some recent analysis in the NBA supports its increasing importance:

- Successful teams tend to take more "corner 3" shots than less successful teams do;[15]
- Teams shoot a higher percentage from the "corner 3" than other 3 pt shots.[16]
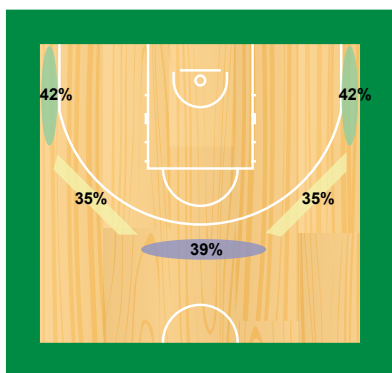
Whilst the "corner 3" is closer to the basket than a 3pt shot from the wing or top of the key, this is only a marginal difference and is unlikely to explain the increased shooting percentage from the corner. More likely an influence is how playing to the corners can distort and stretch a defence leading to shots from the corner not being as closely guarded.

15 In 2014 the teams that competed for the NBA Championship took 11% (Miami) and nearly 8% (San Antonio) of shots from the "corner 3". The league average was 6.6% of shots taken from the "corner 3".

16 NBA teams make 42.5% from the "corner 3", compared to 34.9% from the wing 3 and 38.8% from the top of the key (see http://www.82games.com/locations.htm, which is not official NBA statistics)
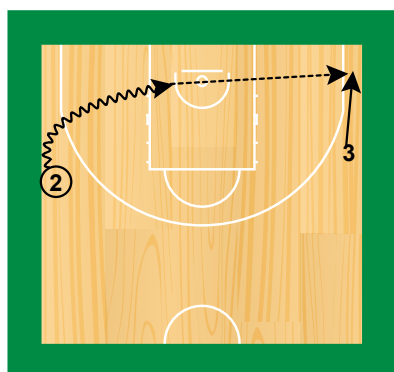
Most teams will have a player move to the corner when there is dribble penetration. On baseline dribble penetration, there will often be a pass directly to the corner.
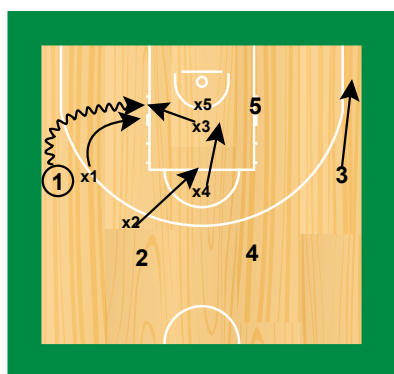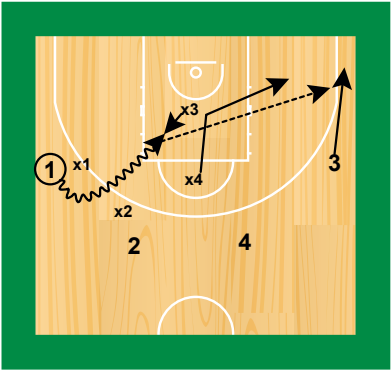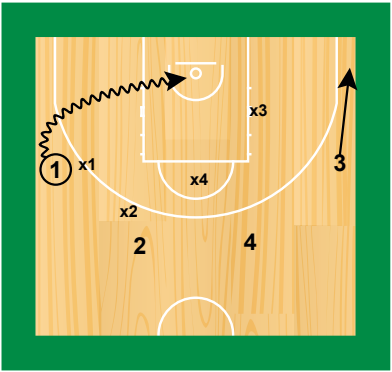

Most defences will "help" stop dribble penetration with a rotation from a player from the low split line – this is usually the defender of the offensive player that moves to the corner.

This rotation requires further help (x4) to rotate, which can result in a shot from the corner being relatively open.
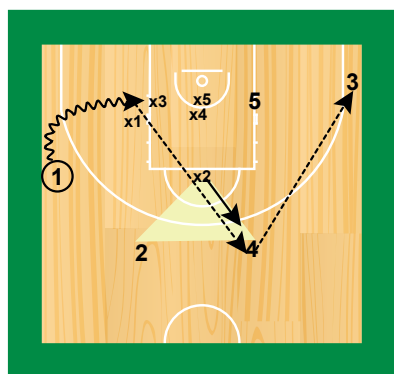
On baseline penetration, a pass to the top of the key will often be defended as the team rotation is designed to defend. Here x2 is in position to close-out and defend either 2 or 4 if they receive the pass.

However, a quick pass to the corner forces a longer "close out" from the defence, which again, can lead to a relatively open shot.

COACHES MANUAL

The effectiveness of passing to create an opportunity to shoot from the "corner 3" is confirmed by analysis that indicates 95% of "corner 3" shots are "assisted", meaning that they are taken after receiving a pass.[3]

Dribble penetration to the middle also requires rotation from x3, who is responsible for defending the player moving to the "corner 3". Again, this can create a relatively open shot either as x4 closes out (rotating to help x3), or if x3 rotates (after doing a "hedge and recover" to assist in defending 1's penetration).

Teams that effectively use the "corner 3" can also create more space for penetration as the defenders adjust and "hedge" toward the shooter rather than being in a position to rotate and help.

3   See http://www.82games.com/locations.htm

FOLLOW-UP

1. If a team was using a "3 Out, 2 In" structure where do you think the majority of their shots would be taken? How could you affect that with defence?

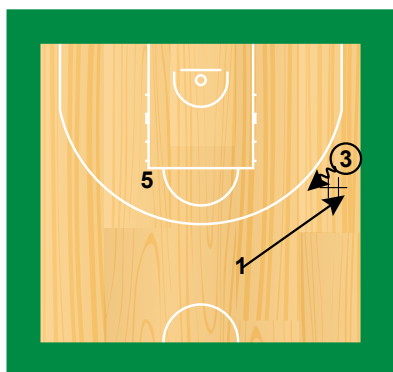2. Do your teams utilize the 3 point shot? From where are they most effective in scoring?

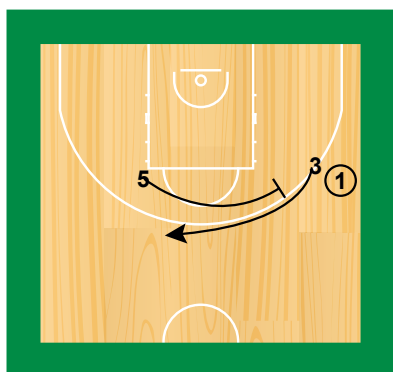# 2.3 SCREENING

2.3.1 ON BALL SCREENS - PISTOL

"Pistol" is simply where the ball is passed to the wing and then the player follows their pass to receive the ball back. An on ball screen is then set.
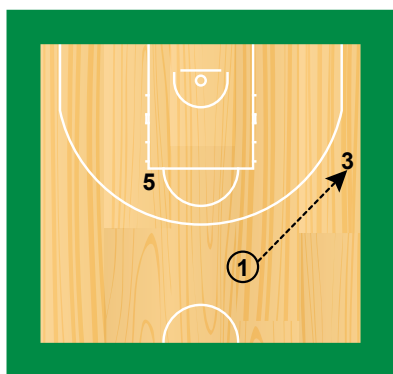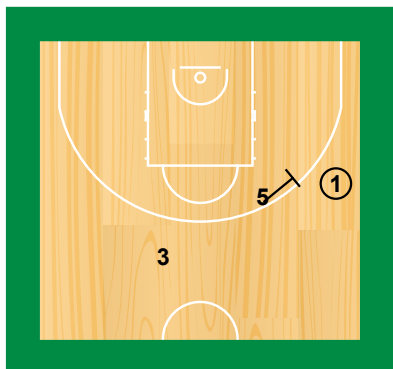

1 passes to 3 on the wing.

1 then moves to the wing to receive a hand-off from 3, who takes one dribble.

5 moves to screen 3, who cuts to the top. A pass to 3 may create an open shot or an opportunity to penetrate into the key.

5 then moves to set a "side pick and roll" for 1.

2.3.2 OFF BALL SCREENS - "ELEVATOR" SCREENS

The "elevator" screen is a type of double screen that has been used with particular success by the Golden State Warriors in the NBA.

Simply, when setting an "elevator" screen, two team mates set a screen but stand one or two steps apart from each other.

The "elevator" screen is often used after some other screens in the offence as it is most effective when there is some separation between the cutter and their defender.
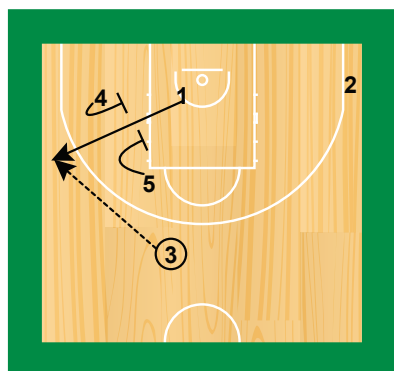
BELOW IS AN EXAMPLE OF AN OFFENCE THAT INCORPORATES AN "ELEVATOR" SCREEN.
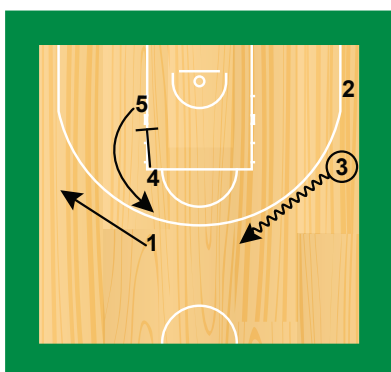
4 sets a down screen for 5, as 3 dribbles out from the wing and 1 relocates to the wing.
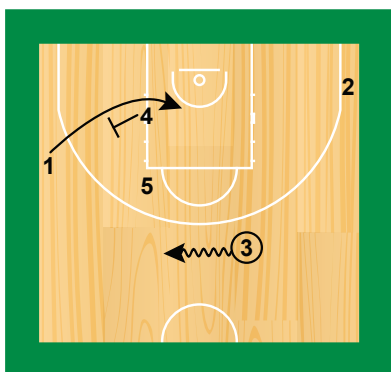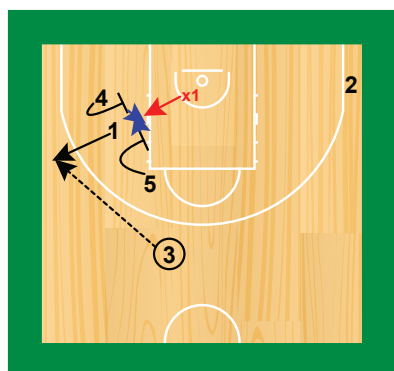

1 then cuts off a back screen by 4.

4 and 5 simultaneously set down screens for 1. They leave enough space between themselves that 1 can cut through the middle of them.

1 could also cut either side of 4 or 5, which is a read they would make.

If x1 attempts to follow 1 and run between 4 and 5, 4 and 5 step together (like an elevator door closing) to stop x1.

If x1 attempts to run outside either 4 or 5, then they would not step together.

Timing of the screen in this action is very important. If the screeners step into the path of x1 without giving sufficient time and distance for them to stop or change direction, then that could be an offensive blocking foul.

The other common spot for this screen to be set is for the screeners to be on the foul line.