# 2.7.2 BASIC SHOOTING - TEACHING LAY-UP FOOTWORK

TEACHING LAY-UP FOOTWORK

With very young players simply having the players stop, get balanced and shoot is a good starting point.

When progressing to moving lay-ups, coaches should emphasize correct footwork and the ability to shoot with either hand. Spend a short amount of time on technique in each training session, and then give the players plenty of chance to practice.

ONE SEQUENCE TO TEACH THE CORRECT FOOTWORK FOR LAY-UPS IS:

Step with Right Foot and jump off right foot, lifting left knee. Clap with Left hand.
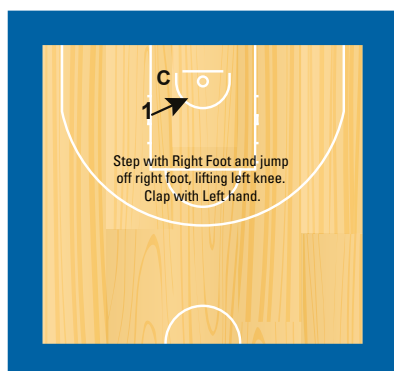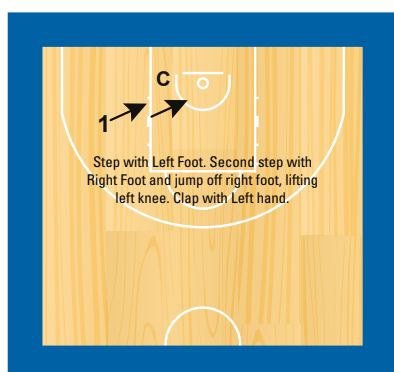
The player starts at the low "block" position facing the basket, the coach stands under the backboard, facing the player. The player takes one step and jumps to "high 5" the coach (they clap hands).

The step is with the foot furthest from the baseline (i.e. right foot when on the left hand side) and the player "high 5's" with the hand closest to the baseline.
When the jump they lift the knee and hand on the same side of their body.

After a few tries, the player has a ball, stands in the block, takes one step, jumps and shoots.

Step with Left Foot. Second step with Right Foot and jump off right foot, lifting left knee. Clap with Left hand.

Next, the players start one step from the block. They take one step (landing in the block), a second step and then jump to "high 5" the coach's hand. The first step is with the foot closest to baseline, the second step is the same as in the first stage above! After a few tries, give them a ball and let them shoot!

THE TEACHING POINTS THAT THIS SEQUENCE EMPHASISES ARE:

- Land a foot in the "block" (left foot on the left hand side, right foot on the right hand side). The foot that lands in the block is the one closest to the baseline , and the player should shoot with the hand of the same side (i.e. left foot in the block, left hand shot);

- Pick the ball up just before the foot lands in the block (i.e. when their feet are still in the air);

- Take one more step, jump and shoot.

To continue with the teaching sequence, the players now need to dribble the ball! Have them start one step away from the block, dribbling the ball, whilst standing still. When the coach says go, the player takes two steps to the basket. The footwork is the same as stage 2 above – the first step landing in the block!

Next, players start two steps from the block, standing still and dribbling the ball. Taking their first step while dribbling and then taking a second step, which lands in the block. They pick the ball up at this time. After the third step, jump and shoot.

Finally, players start at the three-point line, dribbling the ball while standing still. They move towards the basket, focusing on landing with one foot in the block (baseline foot), taking a final step, jumping and shooting. They should catch the ball while their feet are in the air, landing in the block.

Another progression is to have players run toward the basket, catching a short pass from the coach. They catch the ball with their feet in the air. They land with one foot in the block (left foot on the left hand side, right foot on the right hand side), land their second foot and then jump and shoot.

2.7.3 BASIC SHOOTING - FOUNDATION FOR THE SHOT – BALANCED STANCE

TEACHING POINTS FOR SHOOTING

There is a large number of resources available to help coaches to teach shooting. The key elements are:

- Foundation of the Shot – Balanced Stance
- Grip on the ball;
- "Top of the shot" – Releasing the Ball

THE FOUNDATION OF A GOOD SHOT

The "power" in a shot comes from the legs – whether it is a jump shot, or set shot (e.g. foul shot), the athlete pushes up from their legs to project the ball. It is particularly common with young athletes that they will use their upper body to try and generate the force to shoot. This can lead to exaggerated movements.

A good shooting technique should be a relatively simple and uncomplicated motion.

2.7.4 BASIC SHOOTING - GRIP ON THE BALL

GRIP ON THE BALL

The shooting hand should be behind or under the ball. The other hand is on the side of the ball. Fingers should be spread comfortably and the grip on the ball should feel "natural".

The elbow moves to a position underneath the ball, and the non-shooting hand remains at the side of the ball. The shooting "action" is now to push up.

2.7.5   BASIC SHOOTING - "TOP OF THE SHOT" – RELEASING THE BALL

"TOP OF THE SHOT" – RELEASING THE BALL

The higher the arc of the ball, the higher the probability that it will go into the basket. This is facilitated by having a "high release" point – elbow above eyes.

The shooting hand is underneath the ball, as is the elbow.

In the course of shooting, the player should look underneath the ball, not over the top of it, to sight the target.

The arc of the shot is enhanced by the ball spinning backwards in flight. As the ball is released, the player should flick their wrist, putting spin on the ball.

This flick is a relaxed movement. The fingers of the shooting hand should remain spread and not squeezed together. The only movement is in the wrist.

The other hand simply releases from the ball – it should not push the shot at all.

TEACHING A "FLUID" SHOOTING STYLE

Whether a shot is taken after dribbling or after catching the ball, the shot will usually start at approximately hip height. Many players have a habit of pausing in their shot technique at their forehead, which is often the result of practicing the "form" of their shot from that point.

This type of "concept" shooting can be valuable as the player learns to push up to a high release point, however, equally important is having a "fluid" shot technique without a pause. Any pause will both slow the release of the shot (which makes it harder to shoot under defensive pressure) and may also reduce the power that comes from the legs.

A simple method to practice a fluid shot technique is:

1. The player stands on the "no charge" circle, facing "side-on" to the basket.

2. If the player shoots right-handed, their left shoulder should be closest to the basket. The opposite applies for a left-handed shooter.

3. The player starts with the ball in the "shooting pocket", as if they have picked it after dribbling. Their shooting hand should be behind the ball, with elbow pointing behind them. Their non-shooting hand is on the side of the ball.

4. The player makes a 90° forward pivot, which will have them facing the basket.

5. A right-handed shooter will step with their right foot and a left-handed shooter steps with their left foot.

6. As their stepping foot lands, they push up with their legs and lift the ball as high as possible, finishing standing with their heels off the ground. The shooting hand should be underneath the ball and the non-shooting hand on the side of the ball. This "release point" should be as high as possible.

7. After a few repetitions without releasing the ball, the player then shoots the ball — jumping into the air if they wish.

2.7.6   BASIC SHOOTING - SHOOTING OFF THE DRIBBLE

Most players are taught (or teach themselves) to shoot from a stationary position, however often in a game they will need to shoot immediately after dribbling, which needs to be practiced.

One of the difficulties that players face is to establish their balance as they go from moving forward (as they dribble) to stopping (and perhaps jumping) to shoot the ball.

Some key things to consider are:

- Footwork – It is recommended that young players be instructed to use a "stride stop" as they catch the ball as it is easier to establish balance. After the last dribble, the player should catch the ball with both feet in the air, and then land one foot followed by the other. Preferably, the "inside foot" (closest to the basket) will be the pivot foot (land first). As the second foot lands, the player begins shooting.

Some coaches prefer a jump stop as preparation for shooting which can also be used at the end of a dribble.

- Short steps – After catching the ball, (with feet in the air), the player lands one foot after the other (a "stride stop"), keeping the feet close together (taking small steps). If their feet are too far apart it makes shooting difficult as it will affect both their balance and power.

- Pick up ball – if the player is dribbling with their left hand, they should move their right hand across their body to pick up the ball (and vice versa when dribbling right-handed). Instead, many players move the ball across their body, which gives an opportunity for the defence to deflect the ball;

- Practice the last dribble – When learning to shoot at the end of their dribble, a player starts shooting off one dribble and should shoot inside the key. The player stands in the key (e.g. at the free throw line), takes one dribble and then steps forward (catching the ball in the air) shooting off a stride stop.

The player should focus on dribbling the ball hard (with one hand) and shooting with rhythm (1-2-3). They can then move further out to shoot off two dribbles or three dribbles. The coach should start under the basket and then step forward (as if a help defender) so that the player gets used to "pulling up" before a defender.

- Fluid pick up – Once the player has two hands on the ball, they start their shooting action and there should not be any "stopping point" or hesitation in the shot.

2.7.7 BASIC SHOOTING - JUMP SHOT

A player should not be taught to jump shoot unless they have a consistent shooting action with a high release.

It is also important that players stay "within range" when developing jump shooting technique, although many players will immediately want to move out to the three point line!

The advantage of a jump shot is that it enables an offensive player both to get additional strength in the shot and to shoot over a taller defender. However, when first developing the technique, players should begin with a small jump. Players may lose balance when jumping (particularly when they jump high), which can affect their shot even if it is only a moderate loss of balance.

A good way to improve balance when jumping is to have the player jump on a trampoline (a mini trampoline is best if possible). The player should jump only high enough so that they can point their toes to the ground while in the air. Have the player keep their arms still and concentrate on trying to land on the same spot on the trampoline. This will focus on them using their core strength and head position to remain balanced (often they will use their arms to balance).

A trampoline can also be used to practice shooting (again a mini trampoline is preferred).

A jump shot is exactly that - jumping to shoot and to gain an athletic advantage and power when shooting the ball. Everything else about the player's shot technique must remain the same, including landing after the jump with feet in the same position as when they started (or slightly forward if shooting from long range).

Some players will jump back slightly, which is often caused by looking at the ball in flight (and moving their head back) rather than maintaining focus on their target (e.g. spot on the backboard, front of rim or whatever).

The hardest thing when shooting a jump shot is co-ordinating the timing of the jump and ensuring your shooting action works in motion with your jump. Some important teaching points:

- Prepare to shoot the ball before catching it, be low and ready;
- Catch the ball in the air to develop rhythm, land and then jump into the shot;
- Lock your feet (pointing at the basket) and head (focusing on the target);
- Be balanced in a strong athletic stance;
- Keep your feet apart throughout the shot and attempt to land in the same spot (or slightly forward). It can be good to start standing on a line on the court as this will easily enable the player to identify if they jump forward or backward;
- Release the ball at the top of your jump, or just before the top of the jump, for maximum power. If the player shoots whilst they are on the way down, the power from their legs will have dissipated.

FOLLOW-UP

1. How do you teach shooting to Beginner players?

2. There are many different shooting techniques amongst the world's best scorers.
   Discuss with a coaching colleague when you would attempt to change a player's shooting technique.

3. How well does your team shoot contested lay-ups?
   Discuss with a coaching colleague how you could improve this.

2.8   OFFENSIVE MOVES

2.8.1   THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FIRST STEP

Coaches should pay close attention to an athlete's footwork, particularly the first step they take when beginning to move. The adage "the quicker the start, the earlier the finish" certainly applies when a player is attempting to beat an opponent.

Athletes should aim to make the first step as "explosive" and as quick as possible, and this is helped by first being in a low and balanced stance.

One of the most common mistakes that players make is that their first step actually goes nowhere or moves them in the direction opposite to the one intended.

A simple way to identify whether or not a player is doing this is to have the players start by standing next to the baseline (or any line). On the coach's command the players start running (i.e. when the coach says "go"). The coach should pay close attention to their footwork, and in particular must look at:

- Which foot moves first (the coach may designate this if they wish);
- In what direction that foot moves.

Surprisingly, the first step is often backwards (or straight up and down) and it is only the second step that moves forwards. Having the athletes next to the baseline makes it easier to identify the footwork.
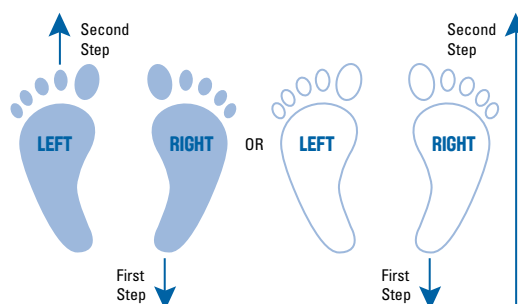
Similarly, when athletes move sideways, the first step should be with the foot of the direction they are moving (i.e. if they are moving to their right, they should step with their right foot). Often though, the footwork is incorrect:

LEFT   First Step   RIGHT   Second Step

Less commonly, the player may even cross their feet when moving to the side (e.g. the first step with the left foot is so big that it goes past the right foot). Clearly, this is not moving as quickly as possible.

Whilst the effect of this may seem trivial, this type of movement makes it highly likely that a player will be beaten by an opponent that has the correct footwork – essentially, the player will always at least be one step behind.

This is illustrated in the following graphic:

3re Step

3rd Step   2nd Step

2nd Step   1st Step

LEFT   RIGHT   LEFT   RIGHT

1st Step
(Going nowhere)
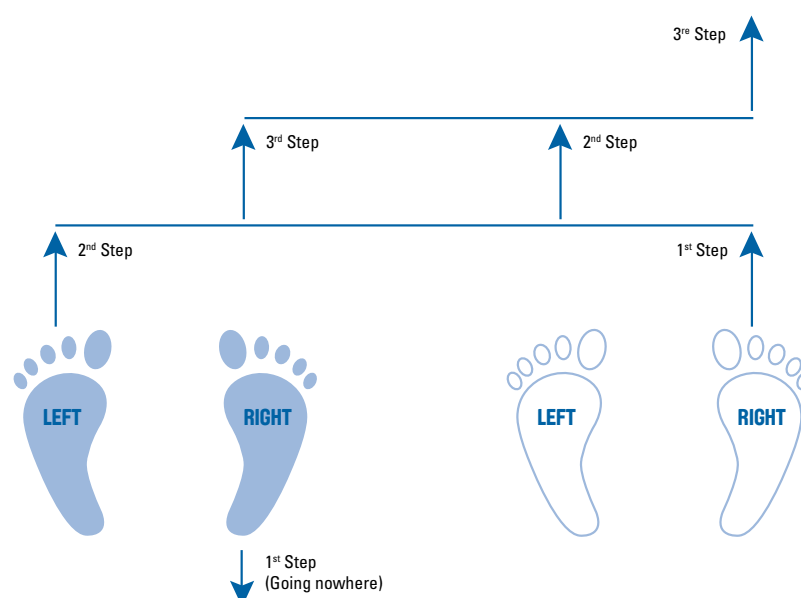
The cause of stepping backwards (when moving forwards) is often the player's stance. Particularly if they are standing with straight legs and need to move a leg so that they can push of it.

Most players will not realize that they are doing this – they are "unconsciously incompetent" and the first step to improving the footwork is for them to become aware of what they are doing. Once, this is done, they can start to move through the stages of learning until reaching "unconscious competence".

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
BASKETBALL
COACHES

2.8.2   GETTING POST POSITION

All players should learn the fundamentals of playing "back to the basket" from the low post.

BASIC LOW POST MOVES

It may seem obvious that tall players need to develop these fundamentals, but forwards and guards may also find themselves playing in a position that needs these skills. Indeed, one of the most valuable team strategies is to have a player that can take advantage of a mismatch (regardless of position) by moving to the low post.

BEFORE RECEIVING THE BALL

The first task of a low post player is to be able to receive the ball in the low post position. This is not easy as the defence is often actively denying a pass to the post. Using fakes, changing direction and changing speed are very important aspects in establishing a good position in the post, as is having a balanced body stance.

The post player focuses not on where the ball is, but on their opponent, getting a position of advantage. That position may have an immediate "passing angle" or it may be that the ball needs to be passed to a team mate who has a "passing angle". It is the post player's responsibility to get open. It is the responsibility of their team mates to then get the ball to them! When a post player is not free, they should not follow the movement of the ball.

In the diagrams following, the shaded feet are those of the offensive post player.
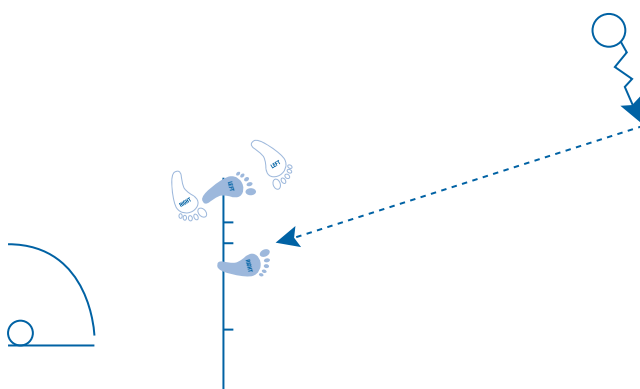
Here the defender is on the "high side" of the post player, blocking an initial pass. If the perimeter player dribbles toward the baseline, it can create a passing angle.

The post player should use their elbow, shoulder and hips to "hold" the defender in the high position.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF BASKETBALL COACHES
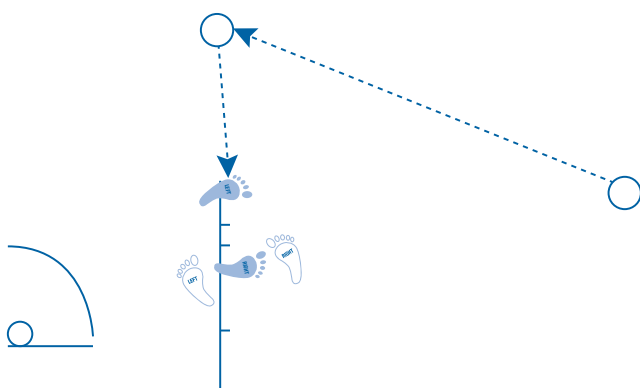
Here the defender is on the low side of the post player, again blocking an initial pass. By passing the ball to a team at the top of the key, it creates a passing angle into the post player.
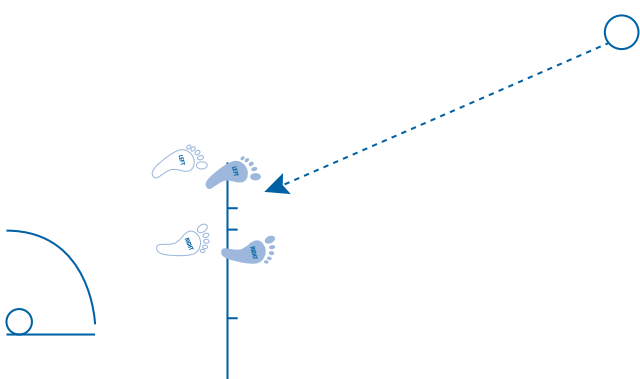
Where the defender stands behind the post player, a pass from the perimeter is relatively straightforward.

However the post player must have their elbows out and present a target hand, ensuring that the defender cannot step around and deflect the pass.
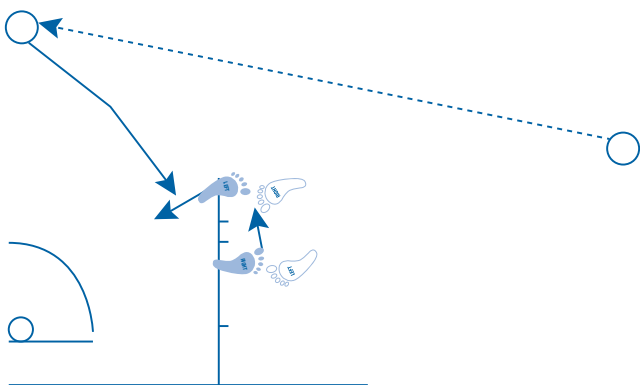
Where the defender "fronts" the post player, it blocks the initial pass being made from the wing. If the post player can hold the defender in this position, the offensive team may be able to move the ball to the top of the key and then pass to the post player.

The post player steps into their defender and then reverse pivots so that the defender is behind them.

The wing player may also be able to make a lob pass to the post player. This is most successful when there is no help defender at the basket. The post player must keep contact with the defender until the ball has gone past the defender.
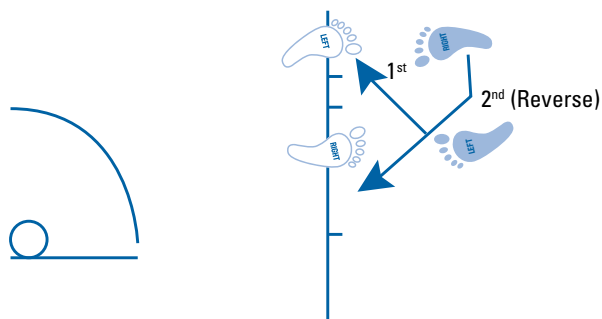
A post player needs to use their feet to get position – two steps is usually enough. Here the first step is into the defender, and then the post reverse pivots to establish position.

Again, using shoulder, elbow and hips to "hold" the defender, and keeping good balance to ensure the defender cannot move them out of position.
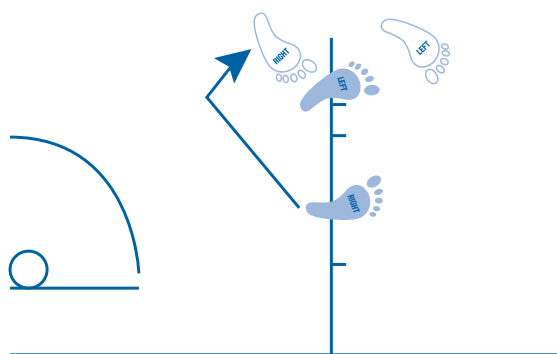
Using a reverse pivot can be a very effective method to get open. It is then up to the post player's team mates to get the ball to them!

HOLDING THE "SEAL"

It is a common mistake for young players to hold the defender only until they see their team mate passing the ball, and then they move their body to catch the ball. However, this also leaves the defender free to move and attempt to intercept the pass.

Instead, the post player should keep a good, balanced, stance with knees well bent and holding the defender with the shoulder, arm and elbow. The post player then presents a "target" hand (away from the defender), which is where team mates should pass the ball. Catch the ball with both feet on the floor – so either can be the pivot foot.

2.8.3 DROP STEP

PLAYING WITH THE BALL

Once the low post has the ball, there are two options:

- If they have a free pathway to the basket – move quickly and shoot!;
- If there is no free pathway to the basket, put "chin to shoulder" and take the time to LOOK.

The two biggest mistakes made by young post players are dribbling as soon as they receive the ball and putting their heads down, losing perspective of what is going on.

By taking time to look (quickly), the post can observe:

- The position of their defender (with a particular focus on their feet);
- The position and moves of other defenders;
- The position of their team mates.

Passing is an important skill from the low post and all players should develop a specific passing ability from the low post:

- Short one-hand passes to players cutting to the basket (including bounce passes);
- One or two-handed passes to players on the perimeter. These passes will typically be thrown from shoulder height and should be hard and flat;
- Pass fakes – to move defenders and potentially create an open pass.

Most importantly, players must be able to pass with either hand.

SPECIFIC POST MOVES
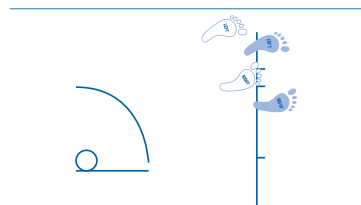
	The position of the defender's feet will give a low post player an indication of what to do: If the defender's feet are higher than the post player (as shown) – go baseline!
	Similarly, if the defender's feet are low – go to the middle! If the post player is standing back, so that the post player could not step past (with a reverse pivot), the post player should simply face the basket!
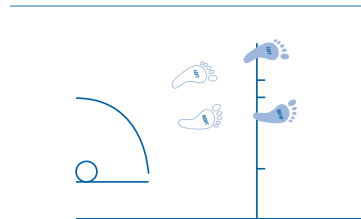
COACHING MANUAL

Fake to one side, with chin on shoulder (to get vision of the defender), turn slightly at the waist and turn the shoulder slightly. Keep the head inside the foot, to remain balanced. Whether the post goes to the middle (defender is low) or to the baseline (defender is high), there are two methods:

1. Forward Pivot – this is an explosive step and is most effective where there are no other defenders in the keyway. If moving to the left, the left foot is the pivot foot, and a quick step is taken with the right foot. The ball is dribbled and the dribble should hit the ground as the right foot does. Typically, post players use this move to go straight to the basket.

2. Drop Step – this is a reverse pivot. For example, if moving to right, the post uses their left foot as the pivot foot. Stepping past the defender, the post player takes a quick dribble between their legs and then jumps towards the basket. The dribble is thrown by both hands, as hard as possible and is caught whilst in the air, landing in a jump stop ("one count").

If using a drop step to move towards the baseline, the post player should end up facing the baseline – protecting the ball from any help defenders. If moving toward the middle, they should face the opposite sideline – again protecting the ball, with elbows out.

The move is then finished by looking at the basket, jumping and shooting the ball. It may be possible to shoot a lay-up (particularly if the post player moved to the baseline), or they may need to jump and shoot a "jump hook" shot. The jump hook is performed by bringing the ball straight up the shooting side, with both hands, and making full extension directly over the ear.

2.8.4   DROP STEP - COUNTER MOVE

COUNTER MOVES

After a drop step move, the post player may face a help defender, or their own defender may have managed to move into position. It is important that all players have a "counter move" to use – however it can also be used on any penetration in the key, whether on receiving a pass, or dribbling from the perimeter.

First, the use of a shot fake can be extremely effective to get the defender to jump (in an effort to block the shot). An effective shot fake should lift the ball to at least the forehead, and should lift the shoulders and upper body. The lower body must stay balanced and ready to move.

After the fake, either a reverse pivot, forward pivot or cross-over step may be the most effective way to step towards the basket, and players should be able to do all three. Forward and reverse pivots have already been discussed in this chapter.
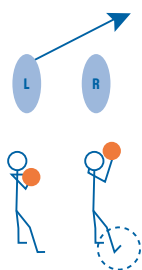
CROSS-OVER STEP ("STEP THROUGH")

With a cross-over step, the player moves to their right, stepping with their left foot or vice versa.

In this instance it can help to pivot on the heel of the foot, rather than on the toes. By pivoting on the heel and turning the pivot foot in the direction they wish to head, it is made easier to move in that direction.
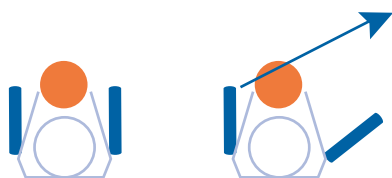
'BIRDSEYE' VIEW

The player's feet are shown by the thick lines. The second diagram shows the turning of the right foot, before stepping with the left foot (shown by the arrow).

2.8.5   BASICS OF PERIMETER OFFENCE

All young players should be taught basic perimeter skills – getting open, facing the basket, passing, dribbling and shooting. The use of fakes is also very important on the perimeter, both drive fakes and shot fakes.

In using the various perimeter moves, the focus must be on "beating" their opponent. Many young players will dribble the ball extremely well – between their legs or behind their back, for example, and yet not be able to penetrate into the keyway.

Once they have received the ball, players on the perimeter must be able to:

- "Square up" – face the basket, with both a forward and reverse pivot;
- "Onside step" – beginning their dribble, stepping with the foot in the direction they are moving (i.e. right foot step to move right, with right hand dribble);
- "Crossover step" – beginning their dribble, stepping with the opposite foot to the direction they are moving (i.e. right foot step to move to their left, with left hand dribble);

- "Shot fake" – faking a shot, and then:
  - Shooting – if the defender does not react and leaves them open
  - Onside dribble – e.g. stepping right foot to move to their right
  - Crossover dribble – e.g. stepping right foot to move to their left
- "Drive fake" – faking a drive, and then:
  - Shooting – if the defender does, steps back
  - Onside dribble – e.g. stepping right foot to move to their right
  - Crossover dribble – e.g. stepping right foot to move to their left
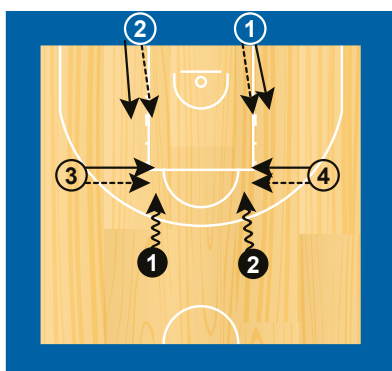
"SPOT DRILL"

Players on the baseline spin the ball to the block, and then move after the ball to catch it. Change between:

- Landing in a stride stop (2 count), facing basket and shooting
- Landing in a jump stop (1 count), forward pivot and shot
- Landing in a jump stop (1 count), reverse pivot and shot

Players in the wing position spin the ball to the elbow, move after the ball and catch it, with feet in the air. They land in either a stride stop (2 count) or jump stop (1 count), face the basket and shoot.

Players from the top start with either a shot fake or a drive fake, and then take 1-2 dribbles to the elbow for a shot. Players should use both onside and cross-over footwork.

2.8.6 DRIVE FAKE MOVES

DRIVE FAKE ("JAB STEP")

A drive fake (also called a "jab step") is when an offensive player with the ball fakes that they will move in a particular direction by taking a small step in that direction. The move is done before they have dribbled.

If the defender reacts to the fake, the player can move in the opposite direction or may be able to shoot or pass. If the defender does not react, then the player can move in that direction. As with any fake, the offensive player must remain balanced (so that they can move in either direction) and they should allow time for the defender to react before taking their next move.

The coach should not "over teach" the drive fake and instead should have players practice in contested situations frequently to improve. The following considerations will assist the coach to provide feedback to athletes:

1. Balance – keep the head centred, not leaning too far forwards (keep the "nose behind the toes")

2. Fake with the whole body – the more realistic the fake is, the more likely it will deceive the defender. The player should:

    a. Look in the direction of the fake

    b. Turn the shoulders toward the direction of the fake

3. Threaten – the drive fake should be in a direction that the defender is likely to want to stop them (i.e. toward the basket). Players will often fake stepping sideways, which is not threatening

4. Ball position – with the development of skills such as the "throw down" dribble, skilled athletes will often not move the ball. Players should be initially told to move the ball outside the leg that they are stepping (or jabbing with), ready to dribble in that direction.

5. Don't Overstep – the fake step should be a small step so that they player can quickly move in either direction with a longer step. If the fake step is too long it can lead to losing balance and also may mean the player has to step backwards before being able to change direction.

6. Take advantage – many young players will perform a fake but then not take advantage of a reaction by the defender and often pre-determine what they want to do. Players should "read" what the defender does and then react, for example:

    a. If the defender steps backward, the player may be able to shoot

    b. If the defender moves to defend the drive, the player may be able to drive in the opposite direction

    c. If the defender loses balance (e.g. their weight shifts to the back or to one side), the player may be able to drive (the defender will need to re-balance before they can move)

Practicing in contested situations will help the players to improve their ability to fake. Some activities are:
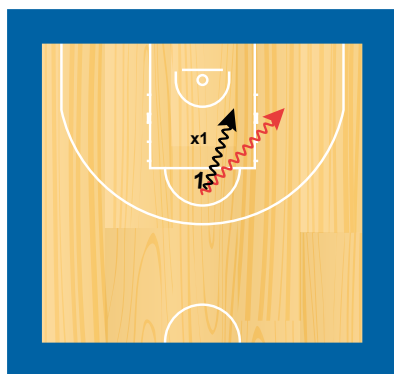
FOUL LINE 1V1

The defender starts with the ball and hands it to 1, and they play 1v1 with 1 restricted to a maximum of two dribbles.

A common mistake made by 1 is to drive away from the basket (shown in red). Instead, 1 should "attack the hips" of the defender and go towards the basket.

It is important that this is played at a distance where 1 can comfortably shoot.
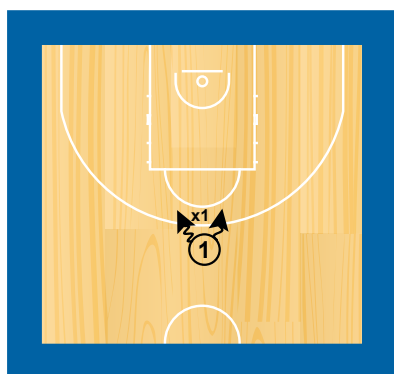
ATTACK THE ELBOW

1 starts with the ball and scores a point if they can dribble the ball on either elbow. Limit the number of dribbles that the offensive player can use.

The offensive player should be encouraged to use a retreat dribble, if the defender initially stops them getting to the elbow.
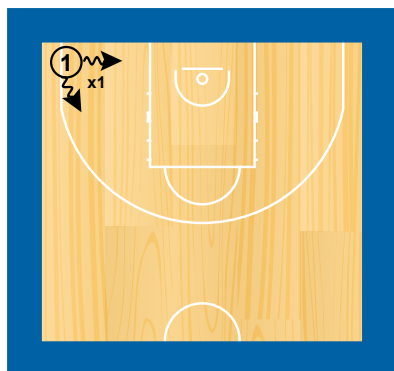
GUARD THE CORNER

This activity can be done anywhere a corner is marked.

The offensive player is in the corner and must attempt to dribble out. The defender tries to stop them, moving laterally into their path. If the offensive player puts a foot on the line they are out of bounds.
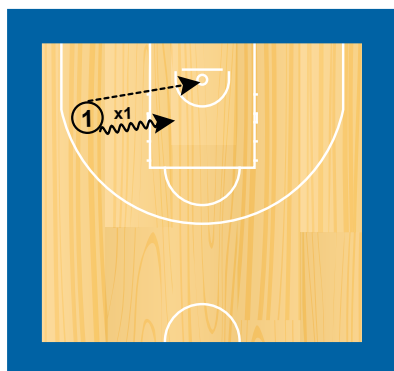
PENETRATE OR SHOOT

This activity is done from a position where the offensive player is comfortable shooting – this will vary depending upon the skill and age of the players.

The offensive player gets 1 point if they are able to shoot (whether or not it goes in) and gets 2 points if they are able to dribble into the key. The offensive player has a maximum of 3 dribbles.

2.8.7   SHOT FAKE MOVES

A shot fake is simply that – pretending to shoot in an attempt to have the defender move out of their position, which may enable the offensive player to shoot and may also cause the defender to foul the shooter.

As with any fake, to be effective a shot fake needs to be realistic. Otherwise, it is unlikely to get a response from the defender. Key teaching points are:

- Bring the ball above the eyes (and continue to look at the target underneath the ball). Some players will also lift their head and upper body, which can help to get a response from the defender;

- Keep the shooting hand underneath the ball, as if shooting. If the player simply lifts the ball above their head with hands on the side (for example) it may not cause the defender to react;

- The movement of the ball up should be quick – at the pace that would be used when shooting. However the player should not immediately bring it down because if the movement is too quick, it will not give the defender time to react to the shot;

- Both feet should stay on the floor (and it is imperative that the pivot foot stays on the floor otherwise the player is likely to travel) and with knees flexed. The offensive player needs to be ready to move explosively if the defender does react;

- After raising the ball, the player should bring it down to their hip, so that they can dribble or shoot depending upon the reaction of the defender.

If the defender reacts to the fake, the offensive player must be ready to dribble while taking a step. The ball should hit the floor (on the dribble) at the same time as the foot they step with hits the floor.
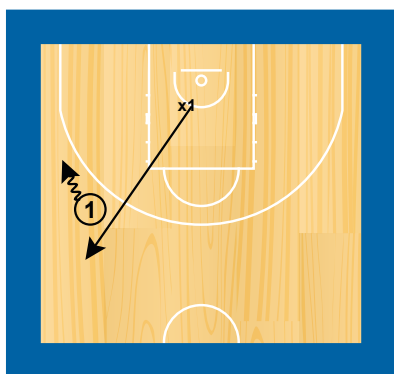
If the defender moves past the offensive player or lunges forward, the offensive player may wish to move sideways. This is particularly important, for example, if the player wants to shoot a 3point and accordingly does not want to move forward.
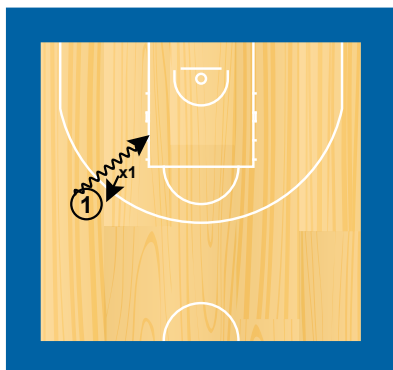
If the defender jumps or lifts, the offensive player may wish to step past them – attacking the defender's hips. If the offensive player moves directly behind the defender it is almost impossible for them to turn around to block the shot.

If the offensive player moves sideways the defender may be able to recover position.

2.8.8   CATCH AND SHOOT

There will be many occasions when a player receives a pass, knowing that they will be open to take a shot:
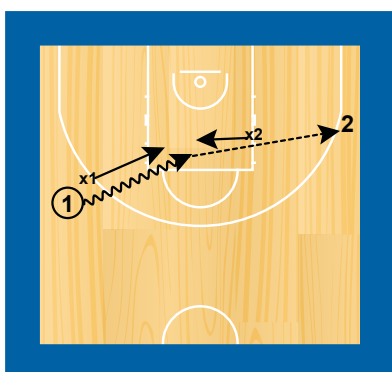
When x2 moves to help stop 1's dribble penetration, it will give 2 the opportunity to shoot as they catch the ball.
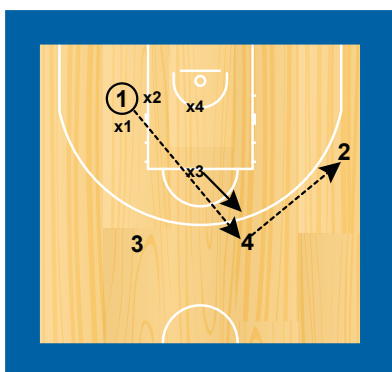
Here, x2 rotated to stop the drive by 1 and x4 and x3 also rotated to "help the helper". x3 is able to defend 4 as they receive the first pass but a second pass to 2 creates an opportunity to shoot.
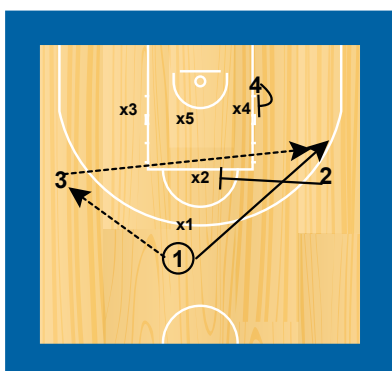
2 and 4 both screen the outside of the zone defence, and 1 will be open for a shot as they move to perimeter.

COACHING MANUAL

Although they are open to shoot when they receive the ball, the offensive player must be ready to shoot quickly as the defence will no doubt rotate to defend them. Below are some key instruction points:

- Being on the move as they receive the pass will help the shooter get their "rhythm". This can be done by catching the ball with feet in the air as they take a small jump or step forward;

- The player should have their hands ready to catch, with their shooting hand behind the ball. An accurate pass is also important to the player being able to shoot;

- If the player is going to shoot they should not hesitate (unless they shot fake) or it will break their rhythm;

- The passer should tell their team mate to "shoot", giving them the confidence to take that shot.

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2.8.9   PENETRATING OFF THE DRIBBLE

The dribble can be used very effectively to distort the "shape" of any defence and create opportunities to score, although if dribbling is "over used" it can frustrate team mates and lead to reduced effectiveness in offence.

The dribble should be used to "attack", and players should attempt to get into the key, either for a lay-up, jump stop or to stop and pass.
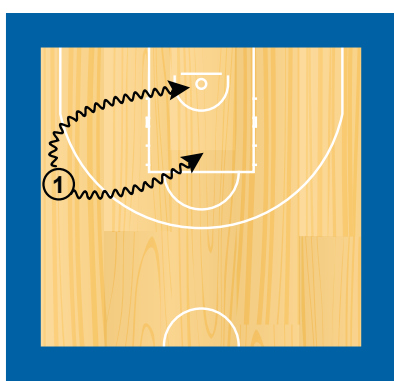
From the wing, offensive players can attack through the elbow or baseline. They should aim to cover this distance in one or two dribbles.
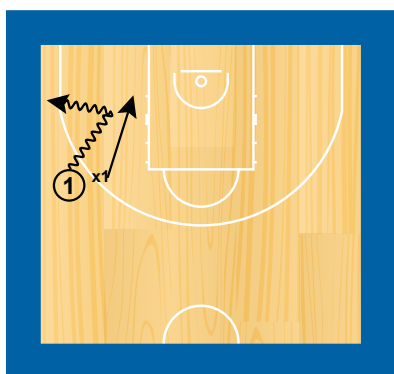
If the defence is able to stop the dribbler, the offensive player should keep their dribble "alive" and retreat to the perimeter, rather than stop in the area between the 3 point line and the key.

Players should be instructed to attack the "hips" of a defender, attempting to move past them rather than move "laterally" which gives the defender the opportunity to recover.

If the offensive player is able to dribble past their defender it will force the defence to rotate and help (otherwise the dribbler has a lay-up).
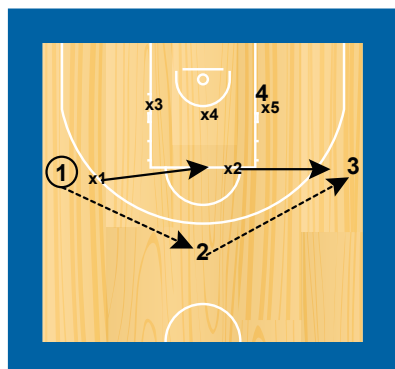
This offence (against a zone defence) "reverses" the ball from one side to the other, however, the defence is able to move to defend it.
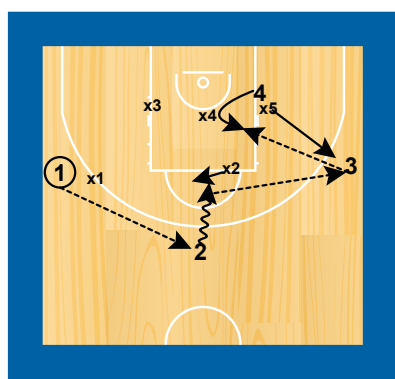
However, the use of dribble by 2 to get a commitment from x2, provides an opportunity either for 3 to shoot (if x5 remains at the key to defend 4) or for them to pass to 4 in a good position in the key.

2.8.10   ACTIVITIES TO PRACTICE OFFENCE IN LOW POST

When coaching junior players, every player must get the opportunity to practice and play in a "post" position and on the perimeter. Often with young teams, a "5 Out" offence may be preferred, which allows for a player to cut to the basket, "post" for 2 or 3 seconds and then move back to the perimeter if they do not receive the ball.

Many activities can be organised to practice low post moves. Initially, activities should be limited to practising separately each of the three aspects mentioned earlier:

- Moves before receiving the ball ("sealing the defender");
- Passing;
- Playing with the ball to score.

However, do not spend too long on such isolated activities. It is better to move to activities that utilise two or three of these aspects relatively quickly.
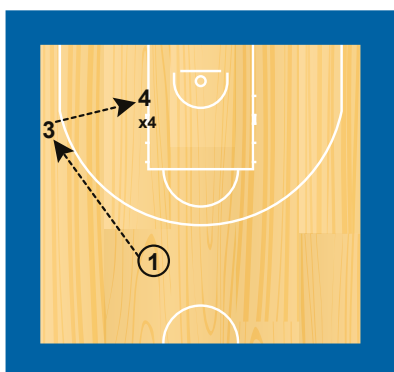
"FIND THE ANGLE"

Have offence and defence in the low post and 2-5 players in perimeter positions.

The defence takes an initial position, and the post player establishes a "seal" and holds it. The perimeter players must move the ball to whoever has the best passing angle.

Initially the defender may be relatively passive, but can build to full 1x1 contest.

"1X0"

Each player has a ball and passes to the coach, moves into the low post and receives a pass from the coach. The player performs a designated move.

Initially, have no defender, however move quickly to using a defender in position so that the post player's move must be realistic.
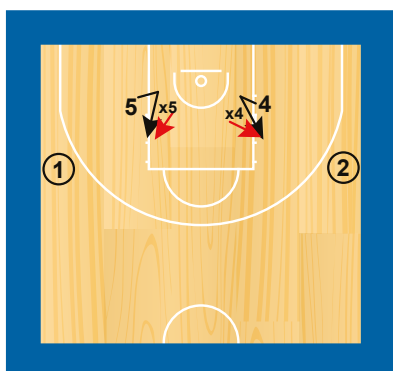
"CATCH AND SCORE"

A team mate passes the ball to the post player. Initially there is no defender, and then a defender is introduced but is "passive" (i.e. they stand in position but do not attempt to guard). Passive defence enables the post player to recognise cues such as foot position and hip position.

Finally, introduce defence for 1x1.

"CATCH THE BALL"

Use two perimeter players (each with a ball) and one post player. The low post catches a pass, landing in good balanced stance, and then passes back.

Introduce a passive defender to give cues such as foot and arm position.
Finally introduce defence for contested 1x1.
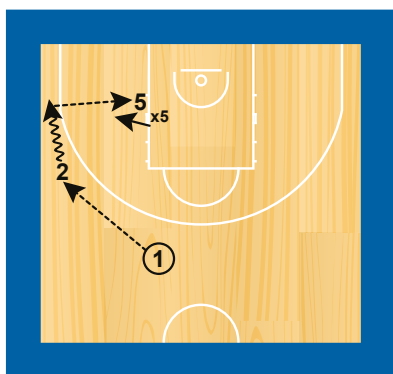
"PASSING LANE"

One low post, with defender and two perimeter players. The low post tries to establish position, and the perimeter players pass the ball (or dribble on the perimeter) to identify a passing lane, and then pass into post.

This can then be played to score/defensive possession. For added complexity, add one and then two perimeter defenders.

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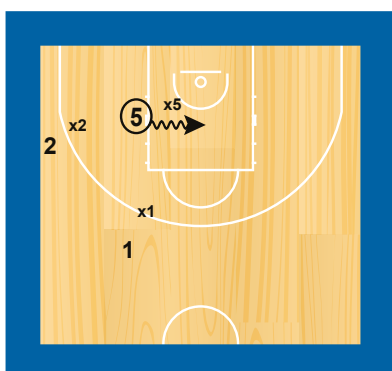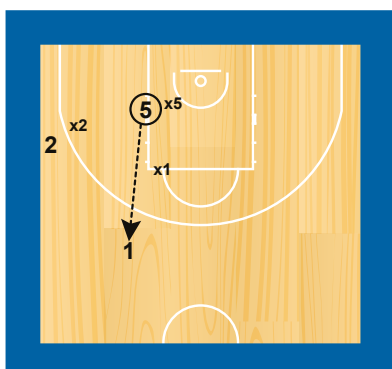
"POST DECISIONS"

This activity is played either 2x2 or 3x3. The low post receives the ball (defenders cannot intercept the pass) and then has to decide between passing back to perimeter players and playing to score.

Initially, have defenders decide whether to "crowd" the post player or stay out on a perimeter player. Then introduce that any shot taken by a perimeter player will count for a score (to make the defence more realistic).

"2X2" & "3X3"

This activity can be restricted by playing on one side of the court or allowing perimeter players free movement on the perimeter.

2.8.11   ACTIVITIES TO PRACTICE PERIMETER OFFENCE
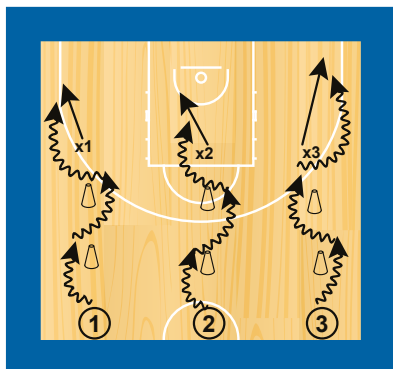
"3 FAKES"

Offensive players start with either a shot fake or drive fake, and then take one dribble to move past the cone or chair (having a team mate stand in front of them is even better - the defender moves to the next position after the offensive player has moved). They should then pick up the ball (feet in the air) and land in a jump stop.

They use a different move to progress past the second cone, and again end in a jump stop. Then play 1x1 against the defender. The middle player tries to score. The outside players try to beat the defender to the baseline.
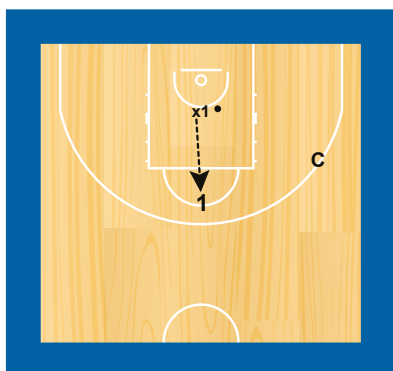
"1X1 WITH COACH"

Offence and defence play 1x1, with the offence limited to two dribbles. To avoid them taking bad option shots, they may pass to the coach and reset.

Vary where the offence and defence start, sometimes being close to each other, sometimes requiring the defence to Close-out.
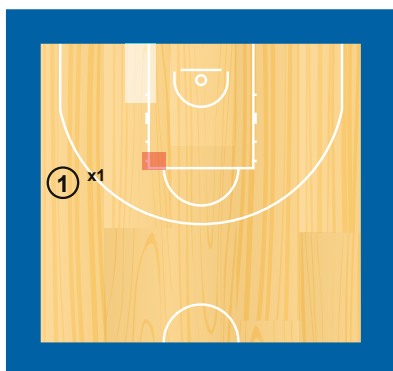
"GUARD THE GATE"

Offence and defence start at the perimeter. Offence must penetrate into the keyway, coming to a jump stop (2 count). Designate "gates" that they must use to get to the keyway (shaded areas), of which there can be one or more.

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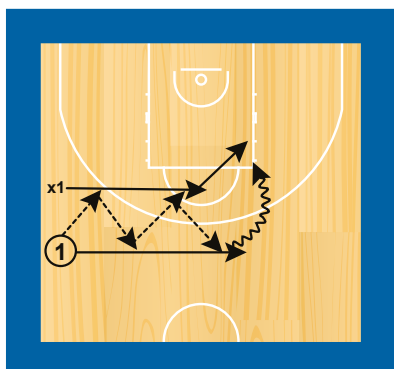
"GO"

Offence and defence move across the court, passing the ball between each other. The offensive player may elect to drive to the basket at any time.
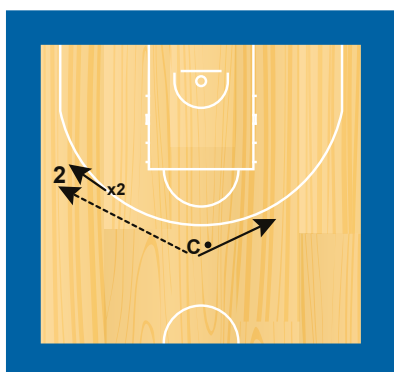
"5 PASS GO"

The coach starts with the ball and the offence is at the perimeter. The defender adopts a position relative to where the ball is (as they would in a game). coach passes to the offence who can elect to attempt to score or can return the pass to the coach.

On a return pass, the defender must return to the correct position, relative to where the ball is. The coach moves around, so that the defender's position will vary.

The offence has 5 opportunities to go. If they score, they return to offence. If they don't score, or don't "go" within the five passes, offence and defence swap.
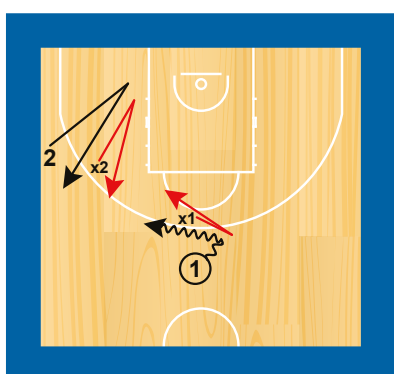
"2X2"

Players play 2x2, emphasising timing of leads. Offence may cut to the basket but must then return to a perimeter position.

Players may take a lay-up at any time. After 3 passes (if there is no lay-up) the players may also take an outside shot.

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FOLLOW-UP

1. Arrange to have someone video one of your practice sessions (and/or have a coaching colleague observe a session). In planning practice, how much time do you want your players to practice offensive skills in (a) uncontested situations and (b) contested situations.

On review of the video, (or have your colleague) record how many times each athlete practices post or perimeter offence in a contested situation.

2. Have your players identified the key elements for performing offensive skills on both the perimeter and in the post. Are you happy that they understand how to perform the skills? Compare this assessment with how well they are able to execute the skills in a game.

COACHING MANUAL

PLAYER

PHYSICAL PREPARATION

CHAPTER 3

PHYSICAL PREPARATION

3.1 STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

3.1.1 BEING FIT FOR BASKETBALL

Basketball is a fast paced sport, played on a relatively small court with all players involved in the action. In any game players will jump, sprint, run and even walk or stand still at times. It is generally regarded that basketball participants do need a reasonable level of "fitness".

WHAT IS FITNESS FOR BASKETBALL?

Fitness is a generic term that simply means the ability of a person to complete a particular task. In the case of basketball players, this means the ability to perform in the final quarter of a game at, or near, the same level they performed at the start of the game.

Basketball is played on a relatively small court (28m x 15m) and is now played in 10 minute quarters. A game takes approximately 1½ hours.

Five players play on the court (per team) at any one time and unlimited substitutions are allowed, providing that a player does not have five fouls or have been otherwise disqualified.

Teams are allowed a certain number of timeouts, which allow a 1 minute break in play. There is also considerable opportunity during the game for active rest as well as passive rest during breaks in play (which are often very short ; for example, when a foul is called etc.), time-outs, substitutions and during breaks between quarters.

The game of basketball consists of a series of explosive movements (e.g. jumping for a rebound, sprinting the length of the court, making a quick step to get past a defender or to stop a person getting past). Each of these "maximal effort" activities typically takes 5-10 seconds. General play consists of almost constant activity – although often at a less than maximal effort. Play phases (in between breaks) would rarely last more than 3 minutes, although the break may only be a short time (e.g. a player may get a 10 second break while a foul is signalled to the bench).

Although there are different playing positions, each have similar energy demands. All players must be able to "get up and down the floor" and equally must be able to defend a player, beat their player to the ball and rebound the ball.

Accordingly, basketball players do need a good "aerobic" conditioning, however, this should not be developed at the expense of being able to move quickly and explosively.

BASIC TIPS TO IMPROVE BASKETBALL FITNESS

- Coaches of young players should incorporate activities that will help their athletes improve their level of fitness. Coaches should keep in mind that:

- Long, equal paced, runs are not particularly useful for basketball athletes. Instead, aerobic fitness should be developed using "interval" training, where maximal efforts are combined within longer duration workouts.

- Use on court activities that replicate game conditions or movements to develop "fitness" for basketball, such as full court lay-up activities, offence / defence activities that require 2-3 minutes of effort without a break.

- Include rebounding and other explosive movements in every training session.

- Use breaks in practice that replicate the type of breaks in a game – 1 minute for a time out, 2 minutes at the end of the 1st and 3rd quarters or whatever the local rules are.

To develop fitness, coaches may need to conduct a separate practice session (focussed on fitness) or give athletes activities to do on their own.

Many coaches recommend that players do fitness work "off their feet", for example riding a bike or swimming in order to rest the player's legs.

Such activities will benefit basketball (even though they do not include any basketball movements) provided that the player is working at the correct level of intensity.

A good way for players to check this is to take their heart rate during the activity, which can be done by counting their pulse for 10 seconds and then multiplying by 6 to get their "per minute" heart rate.

The player should aim to have their heart rate at 65-86% of their maximum heart rate, which for teenagers will be approximately between 140-180 beats per minute.[14]

Checking the heart rate is important, particularly when doing activities such as cycling where the player continues to move even though making no effort (gliding).

14 Maximum heartrate can be approximated as 220 minus the player's age.

3.2 NUTRITION

3.2.1 HYDRATION

Injuries are a part of basketball and players should seek appropriate advice and expertise in treating any injuries that they may sustain. Given the number of players in a small space, injuries are somewhat inevitable, however, there are also a number of things that coaches may do in order to help keep their athletes on the court and performing to their capabilities.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HYDRATION

Between 50-75% of the human body is water, which means that there can be drastic consequences if a player loses water.

Dehydration occurs when the body loses fluid, which during exercise is mainly caused by sweating. The extent of fluid loss can be easily measured by weighing athletes before they start training then once they have finished. Each kilogram of weight loss indicates a loss of 1 litre of fluid. Athletes should be weighed in their underwear, as singlets and shorts will retain sweat.

In order to minimize dehydration, athletes need to drink enough during exercise to match the loss of sweat. Any amount of dehydration will impair the performance of the athlete, with some estimates suggesting that 2% dehydration can lead to a 10% decrease in performance.

Another test for hydration is the colour of an athlete's urine – athletes should aim for it to be consistently colourless or light yellow. Dark yellow or amber coloured urine are signs of dehydration.

The level of dehydration can range from mild to severe, as can the symptoms that an athlete may experience, which include:

- Dizziness or light-headedness;
- Nausea or vomiting;
- Muscle cramps;
- Increased heart rate;
- Increased rate of fatigue;
- Reduced skill level.

Scheduling regular drink breaks during practice and ensuring that athletes have been informed of the importance of hydration are important steps for a coach to take. The coach should not simply call "drinks break", but should ensure that every athlete does take a drink. Having a team rule that every player must have their own drink bottle at every training can help reinforce the importance of drinking.

COACHES MANUAL

Fluids that should be avoided are:

- Carbonated drinks;
- Drinks containing caffeine or other diuretic substances (which cause fluid loss).

Where exercise is of high intensity or lasts for an hour or more, the fluids consumed should ideally meet the following criteria:

- Have a flavour palatable to the athlete (as this will encourage greater fluid intake);
- Contain 6-8% carbohydrate;
- Contain electrolytes such as sodium and potassium.

3.3 PHYSICAL RECOVERY

3.3.1 WARM UP AND COOL DOWN

Warm up and cool down activities should be incorporated into all training sessions. The coach may designate training rules so that players warm up appropriately before the training session commences, or the coach may include them at the start of the training sessions.

The purpose of "warming up" is to:

- Prepare the player's mind and body for physical activity;
- Increase heart and breathe rate;
- Increase the body's core temperature.

The warm-up does not need to be lengthy – a period of 5-10 minutes is usually enough although in cold weather a slightly longer period may be undertaken. The warm-up should include the muscle groups and physical movements that are part of the sport.

Stretching is also commonly included in warm-up although it is probably best if the stretching is done dynamically and focuses on taking muscle groups through the full range of movement that is needed for basketball.

During cool down, longer (static) stretching may be done to assist with improving flexibility although this can also be done in separate sessions. The cool down should similarly take approximately 5-10 minutes and gives the body time to "slow down".

There is often high demand for courts and coaches may have limited access for practice. Having players do a warm up and cool down at the side of the court after the allocated time for practice will maximise the on court time.

However, coaches should not simply tell junior players to "warm up" or "cool down" and should make sure that they know what activities to do.

3.4 INJURY MANAGEMENT

3.4.1 INJURY TREATMENT

There are two kinds of sports injuries – acute and chronic. An acute injury is one that happens suddenly such as "twisting" an ankle by landing awkwardly or being hit in the face by an opponent's elbow during a rebounding contest.

Chronic injuries are caused by repeated strain on muscle groups or joints and can be contributed to by a player's technique, a structural abnormality or when a player is experiencing significant growth.

Some common injuries in basketball are:

- Ankle sprain – symptoms include pain, swelling and stiffness
- Bruises – bleeding into the skin, caused by a blow. Particularly prevalent in post play;
- Nose Injuries – a direct blow (e.g. by an elbow in a rebounding contest) may cause a bloody nose or broken nose (or other facial injury)
- Knee Joint Injuries – symptoms include pain, swelling and stiffness. The ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) is typically damaged by a twisting force, whilst PCL (posterior cruciate ligament) is often an impact on the knee (such as falling and landing on the knee). ACL injuries are more common in basketball.
- Dental Damage – a blow to the jaw can crack, break or dislodge teeth (which may occur when going for a rebound) or teeth can be directly broken if the player hits the floor.

Every coach should have a basic understanding of first aid. Any time a coach is unsure of what to do, it is best to not move the athlete and to seek assistance.

The recommended regime for sprains, strains and joint injuries is **RICER** and **NO HARM**:

- **R**est
- **I**ce – apply ice for 20 minutes every two hours for the first 48-72 hours
- **C**ompression – apply a firm elastic bandage to compress the injured area
- **E**levation – keep the injured area above heart level at all times
- **R**eferral – see an appropriate practitioner as soon as possible.

- **No H**eat – heat increases bleeding
- No **A**lcohol – alcohol also increases bleeding and swelling
- No **R**unning – running or exercise will increase blood flow, which will delay healing
- No **M**assage – massage increases swelling and bleeding.

When an athlete suffers a nose bleed they should stop activity and sit down with their head leaning forward. While pinching the nostrils together, they should breath through their mouth, and the nose should stop bleeding within 10 minutes – hold the nose throughout this time.

If bleeding continues or if there was a direct blow to the nose, the player should seek medical advice.

Where a tooth is knocked out it should be rinsed in milk if possible (or water if there is no milk) and the athlete should seek dental treatment immediately.

Athletes can further reduce the risk of injury by:

- Wearing appropriately fitting footwear;
- Strapping joints as necessary (e.g. ankle);
- Wear a mouth guard;
- Seek advice to rehabilitate injuries and follow the regime recommended fully.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Ask your players whether or not they think they are "fit" in regards to basketball.
   Do you agree with their assessment?

2. Discuss with a coaching colleague what activities can be used to develop fitness for basketball
   within the context of a training session (i.e. not separate fitness sessions).

3. Reflect upon your last five practice sessions. Did they reflect the type of physical exertion that
   players are likely to undergo in a game?

4. Have your players weigh themselves immediately before and after training. This should be done
   in private, as the players should be in their underwear. Have them tell you whether they lost weight
   during the session? If they did, it is an indication that they did not drink enough water!

5. Do your player's warm up and warm down adequately? What could you do to improve what they do?

6. Ask someone to attend one of your practices specifically to fill up water bottles for each player.
   Get them to record how much each player drinks – is it enough?

CHAPTER 1

DEFENSIVE TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

CHAPTER 1

DEFENSIVE TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

1.1. MAN TO MAN DEFENCE

1.1.1 MATCHING UP - BASIC PRINCIPLE OF MAN TO MAN DEFENCE

Watch a game of basketball with young, beginning players and you will usually see a "scrum" of players (both offensive and defensive) following the ball:
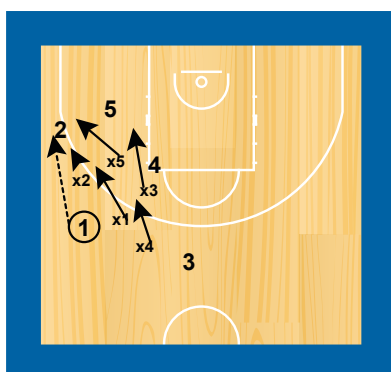
There are a number of reasons that contribute to this, and it commonly occurs in other sports as well (e.g. soccer, hockey etc):

- The offensive player with the ball is often looking down (as they are not as skillful with the ball) so may miss the opportunity to pass to an open team mate;
- When young offensive players do not receive the ball they often stand still or even keep moving towards the ball;
- Young players often lack the strength to pass the ball accurately more than a couple of metres, so team mates often move closer in an effort to get the ball;

- Young players have not understood the importance of "moving to where the ball is going to be, not where it is"[15] and simply follow the ball, hoping to receive a pass;

For the reasons above, and because young players tend to dribble before they pass, on most possessions few players actually touch the ball. Hence, the defenders are often focused on trying to get the ball as that is the easiest way to gain possession on offence.
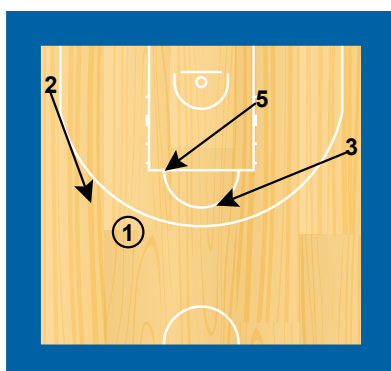
Typically, offence with young players results in offensive players moving towards the ball (and staying there). They will tend to move very close as many team mates struggle to pass the ball more than a couple of metres.

At the same time, defensive players are often all trying to get the ball, which further increases the "scrum" around the ball.

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15 Wayne Gretzky is one of the best ice hockey players in the world and famously attributed much of his success to "being where the puck is going to be, not where it is"

Accordingly, the first step for the coach is to get defensive players to understand the concept of defending a particular player whether or not they have the ball.

The spacing will often still be quite crowded (as the offensive players move close to the ball).

The following simple rules will
help defenders understand their
responsibility in defence:

- You are to defend the same player all the
  time (no "switching");
- You are to be closer to the ball than the
  player you are defending; and
- You must stay within 3 or 4 steps of the
  player you are defending.
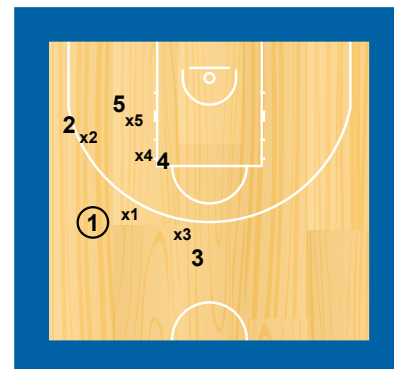
Following is an activity that will help defenders develop their ability to defend "one
player" and will also help offensive players develop their passing and movement.
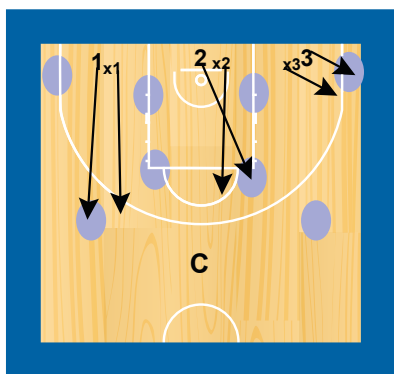
The coach designates various areas where a player may catch the ball.
These areas may be designated by cones, hoops or markings on the court.

The rules of the game are simple:

- The offensive team score a point every time the ball is passed to a team
  mate in one of the designated areas;
- Players cannot pass to the person that passed them the ball;
- Players cannot stand in a designated area for more than 3 seconds;
- The defence cannot take the ball out of the hands of a player,
  however they can intercept a pass;
- A player can pass to the Coach at any time and this cannot be intercepted;
- Play for a set time or until a team reaches a certain score.

As offensive players develop their
spacing, the defenders will become less
focused on the ball and more focused
on defending a particular player. At
this stage, defenders have no "help"
responsibility and so if an offensive
player can beat their opponent, they
should have an open lay-up!
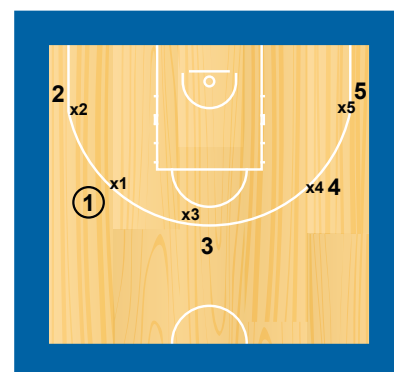
1.1.2   DISTANCE FROM OPPONENT

Young players tend to be very "ball focused" and the initial defensive teaching point may be as simple as "guard your player" rather than everyone chasing the ball.

Building team play is very important and will be a progressive process over a number of years. Building team play should be closely linked to improving individual fundamentals and developing tactical decision-making, so that players learn to interact using the appropriate individual resources.

Team play development combines both defence and offence and both aspects should be built up simultaneously.

DISTANCE FROM AN OPPONENT

The first defensive concept that players must understand when introducing team defence is the distance that
they should be from the person that
they are defending.

The player guarding the ball should be close enough to their player that they can touch the ball. If their player has a "dead ball" (i.e. they have already dribbled) then the defender may step closer.

The position of a defender guarding someone that does not have the ball, depends upon where their opponent is relative to the ball – the further away from the ball the opponent is, the further away from the opponent the defender is!

This is often described in terms of how many passes away the opponent is from the ball. Many players will be able to throw the ball from one side of the court to the other, reaching any player in 1 pass. However, in determining defensive position, we use the number of short passes:
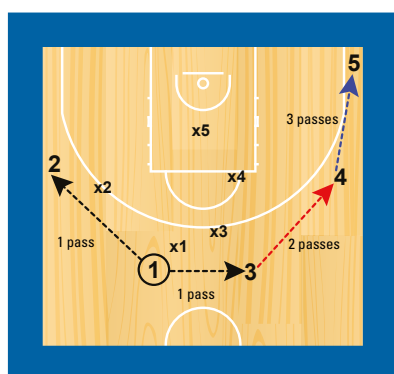
- Player 1 has the ball.
- Players 2 and 3 are one pass away
- Player 4 is two passes away
- Player 5 is three passes away

COACHES MANUAL
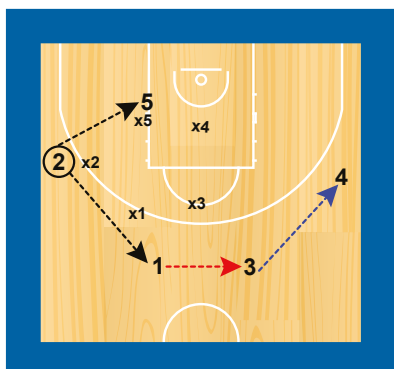
- Player 2 has the ball
- Players 1 and 5 are one pass away
- Player 3 is two passes away
- Player 4 is three passes away
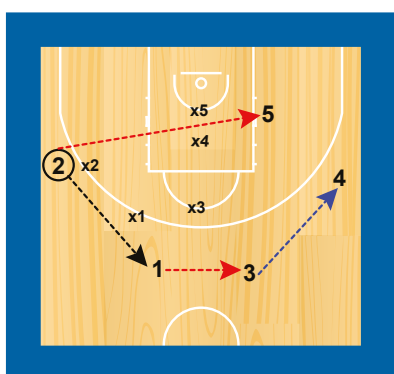
- Player 2 has the ball
- Player 1 is one pass away
- Players 3 and 5 are two passes away
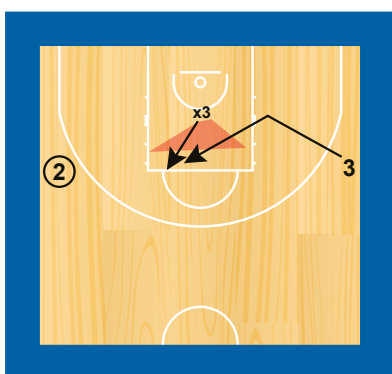- Player 4 is three passes away

1.1.3   DEFENDING ONE PASS AWAY

STANCE – DENIAL OR OPEN

Players need to be instructed in the two types of stance that may be utilized in defence. A "denial" stance is where the defender's back is to the ball and they are very actively stopping a pass being made to their opponent. A "floating" or "open" stance is where the defender's back generally faces the baseline. Players must be able to play both techniques.

DEFENDING ONE PASS AWAY

Coaches need to make a decision as to which technique they wish to use and in what circumstances. Players must be able to both deny an opponent and to play from a more open stance.
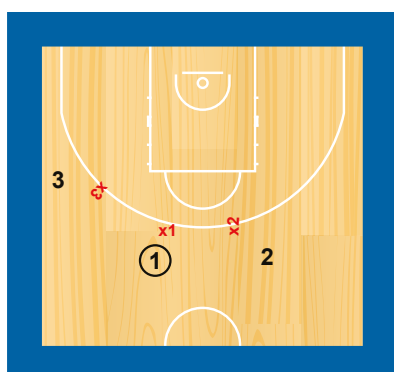
DENIAL – 1 PASS AWAY

Adopting a denial stance defenders X3 and X2 are close to their opponents and would have their backs to Player 1.

Both defenders would have the arm closest to the ball extended, so that they can knock away any pass.

In this diagram, x2 would extend their right arm, x3 would extend their left arm.

If the defender has their thumb pointing to the ground, they will have the palm of their hand facing the passer. This will provide them with better control if they can get a hand on the pass.

The defender looks down at their arm, which enables them to see both their add "direct opponent and the player that has the ball."opponent and the player with the ball within their peripheral vision.
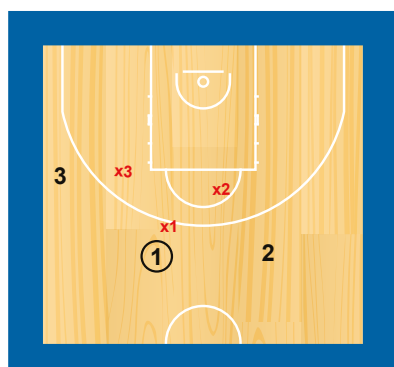
FLOATING (OR SAGGING) – 1 PASS AWAY

Here defenders X3 and X2 step away from their opponents and have their backs facing the baseline. This "floating" or "sagging" defence allows Player 1 to pass, but allows the defender to place more pressure on the dribble.

On any defensive possession, it is likely that some defenders will be in a denial stance while others use an open stance.
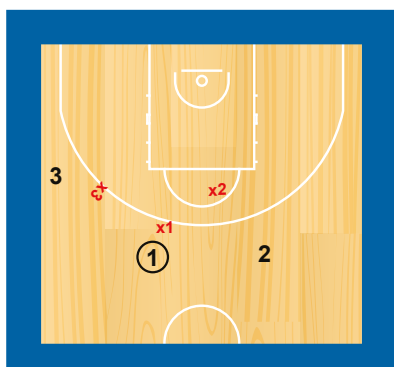
DENIAL – ON STRONG SIDE

X3 is guarding a player that is on the same side of the floor as the player with the ball – accordingly X3 uses the denial technique. X2 is guarding an opponent on the opposite side of the floor so may adopt a floating or sagging technique.

This is one tactic that a coach may employ and one that players should be given the opportunity to adopt at practice, using both techniques in contested situations.

DENYING THE PASS BACK TO THE GUARD

When the ball is below the extended free throw line, coaches may choose to either deny the pass back to the guard or to allow it, by adopting a floating or sagging technique. By adopting an "open stance", the team creates more pressure on the offensive player dribbling.
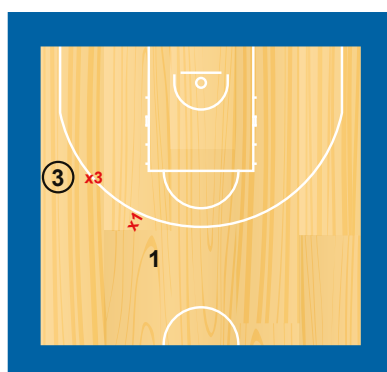
Denying the Return Pass
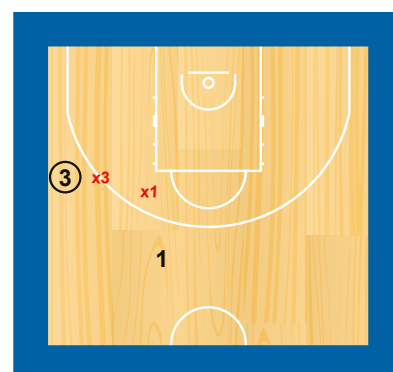
Sagging / Floating Defence

When first introducing team defence, coaches should be careful not to confuse the players by introducing too many options. The players do need to know both denial and open techniques but it is recommended that initially one technique is used for "one pass away" (e.g. denial) and the other technique is used when opponents are further away from the ball.

1.1.4   "FLAT TRIANGLE" POSITION

"FLAT TRIANGLE" POSITION

Regardless of whether a denial or open stance is being used, defenders must always be able to see both the player they are guarding and the player with the ball. In a denial stance, this requires the defender to have their chin on the defender's shoulder rather than looking directly at them.

In an open stance it is a little easier to do, but again requires the defender not to turn their head to look directly at their opponent but rather see them in their peripheral vision.

To improve this type of vision, players should be introduced to the "flat triangle" position, which summarises their position relative to their own player and the player with the ball.

In the diagrams below, each defender adopts a position, based upon how close their opponent is to the ball. The triangles represent the defender's vision – being able to see both the player with the ball and their direct opponent. This can be further improved by having players that are in an open or floating stance point at both the player with the ball and their direct opponent.
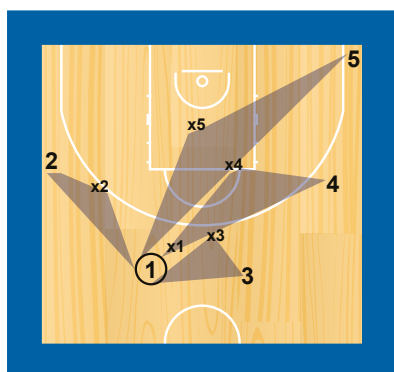
- Player 1 has the ball
- Players 2 and 3 are one pass away
- Player 4 is two passes away
- Player 5 is three passes away
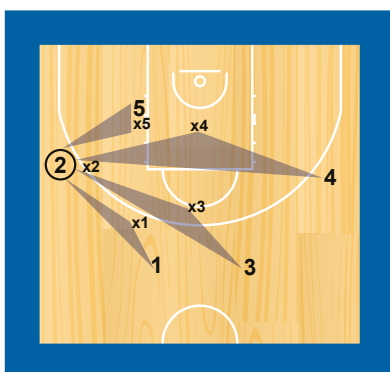
- Player 2 has the ball
- Players 1 and 5 are one pass away
- Player 3 is two passes away
- Player 4 is three passes away
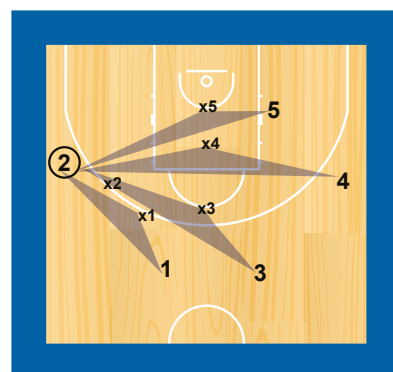
- Player 2 has the ball
- Player 1 is one pass away
- Players 3 and 5 are two passes away
- Player 4 is three passes away
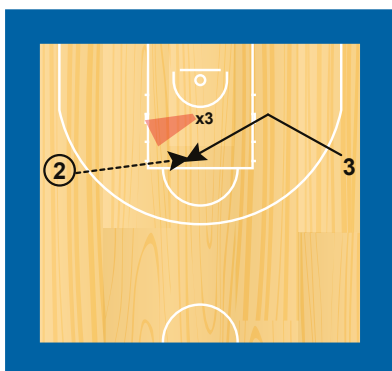
KEEPING VISION

The importance of keeping vision of both the player being defended and the player that has the ball cannot be over emphasized. If a defender is not watching the player they are guarding, they are susceptible to being beaten on a cut.

Here X3 is looking directly at the ball, and is not aware of the cut made by their opponent.

If X3 instead keeps vision of their opponent, they can react to ensure that they do not get open to receive a pass.

1.1.5   STANCE - DENIAL OR OPEN

Players need to be instructed in the two types of stance that may be utilized in defence. A "denial" stance is where the defender's back is to the ball and they are very actively stopping a pass being made to their opponent.

A "floating" or "open" stance is where the defender's back generally faces the baseline. Players must be able to play both techniques.

1.1.6   MOVING ON THE PASS

"MOVING ON THE PASS"

A common mistake made by defenders of all ages is being slow to move in response to the offensive play, or not moving to the correct position. Every time the ball is passed, all defenders must move, even if only a subtle adjustment of position (e.g. in post play). Defenders should reach their "new" position, by the time the pass is caught – it is too late to wait until it is caught before moving.
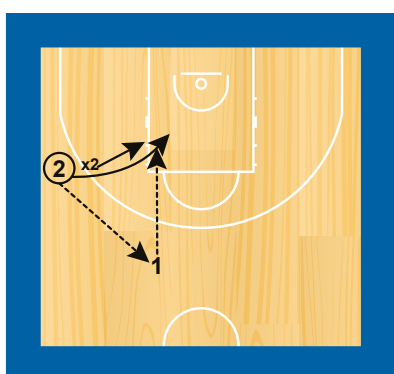
When an offensive player passes the ball, young defenders will often move backwards (or stand still) which enables the offensive player to "face cut" the defender – simply, this means the offensive player gets between the defender and the ball.
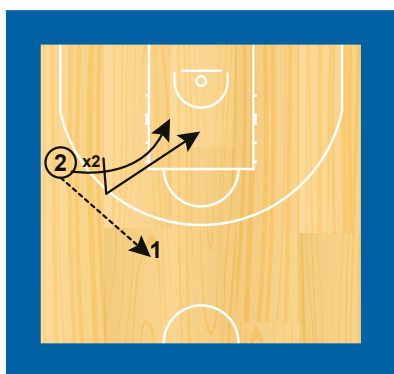
As the ball is passed, x2 should move towards the ball (often called "jumping to the ball") so that they are in position to guard any cut made by Player 2.
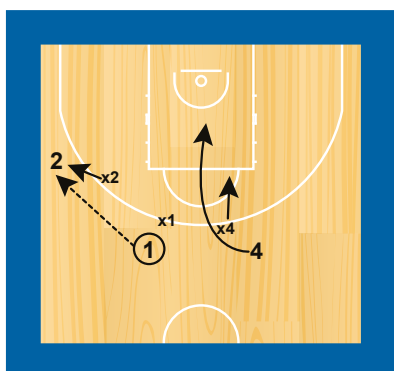
Similarly, if x4 doesn't move, or simply steps backwards, it enables Player 4 to "face cut" them and to receive the ball.
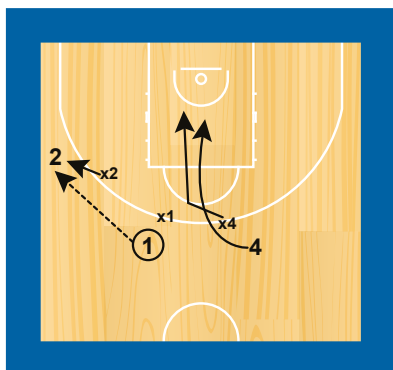
If x4 initially moves toward the ball (moving to the "split line"), they are then in a position to guard Player 4's cut to the basket.

SHELL DRILL

Using 4x4 activities is recommended as an effective method for developing player's understanding and execution of basic team defensive positioning.

With 4x4, coaches can include each of the defensive positions (on ball, one pass away, two or more passes away) that may be encountered during a game.

An activity widely used is "shell drill", which is simply 4x4 in the half court. Initially, offence may simply pass the ball between themselves, with each defender adjusting their position each time a pass is made.
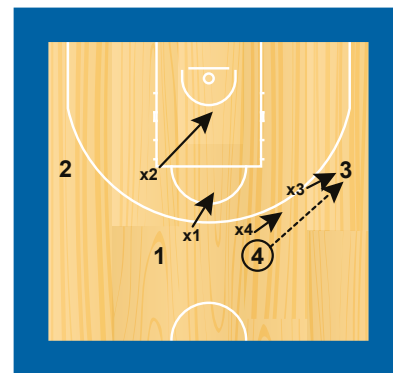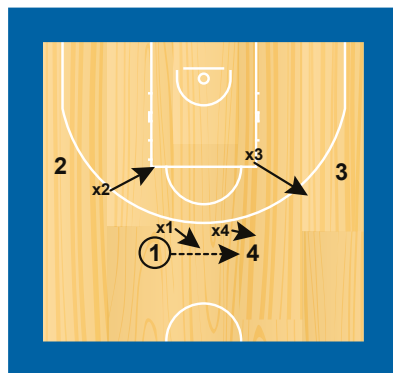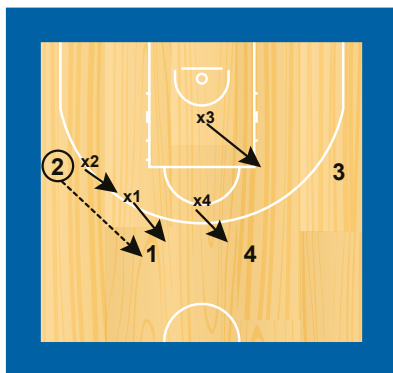
Whilst this defensive movement may initially be practiced with passive offence, it should be quickly progressed to a contested situation. Repetitive drilling in an "artificial" environment is unlikely to translate into game situations. The activity could be progressed as follows:

STAGE 1 - "5 BALL REVERSALS"

Activity is 4x4 in the half court, with offence making 5 ball reversals (passing the ball from one side of the court to the other). Focus is on the defenders moving to the correct positions as the offence plays with restrictions (offence does not shoot, examples are below).

COACHES MANUAL

- offence stationary;

- offence cutting but no dribbling;

- offence score a point for getting the ball into the keyway (by either passing or dribbling), defence score a point for any interception or when dribble penetration has been stopped.

STAGE 2 – "3 POSSESSIONS"

Offence has 3 possessions and score with any successful shot. The offence plays with restrictions:

- offence cutting but not dribbling;

- offence must reverse the ball twice before attempting a shot;

- offence must penetrate the ball into the key (by either passing or dribbling) before they can take a shot,

If the offensive team get an offensive rebound, they may continue with the same possession.

STAGE 3 – "CONTESTED"

Teams play 4x4 for a set time or up to a set score. Points may be deducted (or awarded to the opponents) where defensive position is incorrect. However, rather than stopping the activity constantly, this should be done "on the run".

1.1.7　HELP DEFENCE - SPLIT LINE DEFENCE
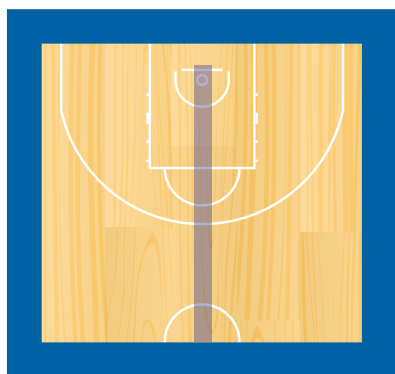
"THE SPLIT LINE"

The next defensive team concept that players must be taught is the "split line", which is an imaginary line that runs down the middle of the court – from basket to basket.

This is also called the "help line" and is an important concept when putting together a team's overall defensive scheme. However, it can be introduced initially without reference to the overall scheme:
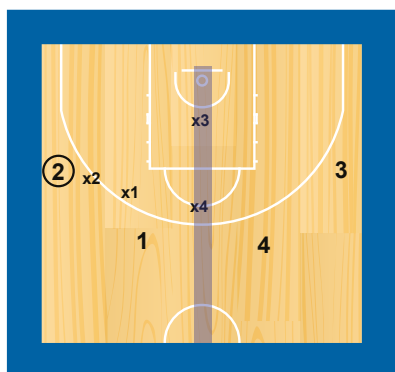
When the ball is on one side of the court, players that are guarding an opponent who is on the opposite side to the ball (x3 and x4) can be instructed to move to the "split line"

This can be simply introduced as an example of the rule that the further an opponent is away from the ball, the further the defender can be from the opponent.

Once players have established a habit of moving to the split line, coaches must ensure that those defenders are active on the split line – and they should regard it not as a specific spot, but as a "thick line".
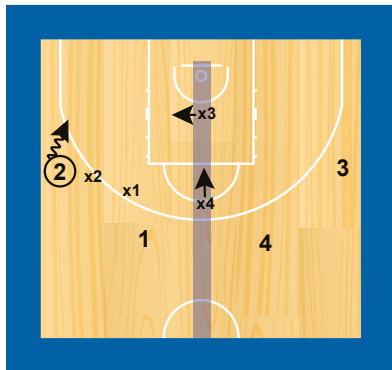
Defenders on the split line should move in anticipation of what is about to happen.

For example, if they anticipate that the player with the ball (2) may drive baseline:

• x3 takes a step towards Player 2;

• x4 takes a step towards the foul line

The players are moving in the direction that they would move to if the player were to drive.
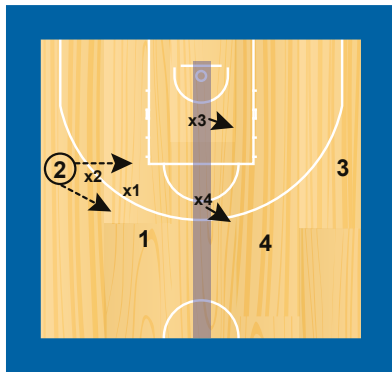
If the defenders anticipate that Player 2 will pass, they should both take a step towards their player, maintaining vision of the ball.
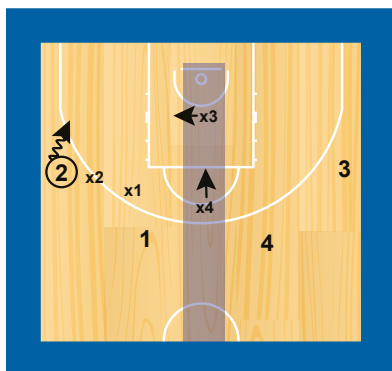
As a visual cue, players can be instructed to regard the split line as being the width of the backboard, and they may move in anticipation from one side to the other.

The movements suggested, very much fit within an overall defensive scheme.

ANTICIPATING THE OFFENCE

Some cues to look for to anticipate what a player with the ball may do are:

• The position of the player's defender:

  • If the defender has their nose on the player's right shoulder, the player is likely to pass / dribble to their left (and vice versa);

  • If the defender is aggressive, with active hands placing direct pressure on the ball, the player is more likely to pass;

• If the player has the ball at waist level, they are likely to drive;

• If the player has the ball above their waist, they are likely to pass (or shoot);

• If the player has the ball above their shoulders, they are likely to pass;

• If the player has the ball on their left hand side, they are likely to move / pass to their left (and vice versa).

The team's defensive rules also help anticipate what the offence will do.

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1.1.8   HELP DEFENCE - HELP TO DEFEND DRIBBLE PENETRATION

"Help" is an essential aspect of team defence, particularly as the individual offensive skills that players possess improve.

Players should be instructed on how to help in the following situations:

- dribble penetration into the keyway;
- passes inside the keyway;
- post players.

HELP TO DEFEND DRIBBLE PENETRATION

HELP AND RECOVER

"Help and recover" (also called "hedge and recover") is a technique that all players must be able to perform, from both the post and on the perimeter. Simply, "help and recover" is where a defender moves toward the person dribbling (but does not lose sight of their own player) and then moves back ("recovers") to guard their direct opponent when the dribbler:

- picks the ball up;
- retreats;
- is covered by their own defender.

"Help and recover" should be practiced from both a denial and a floating (open) stance. By its nature, it is easier to perform from a floating stance, because from a denial stance, the defender must turn around before being able to move towards the defender. Help and recover is a skill used in both half court and full court defence.
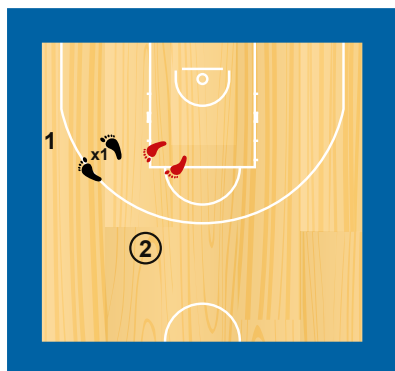
When in a denial stance, the defender's feet are pointing towards their opponent. They must reverse pivot to move into an open stance, before they are able to "help and recover"
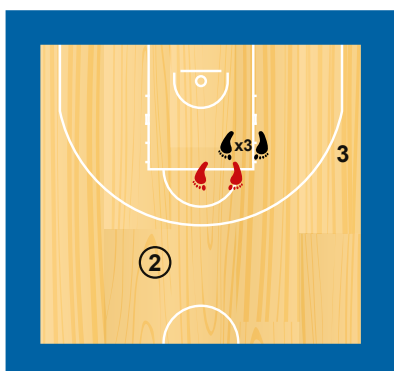
From a floating stance, the defender must step with BOTH feet towards the dribbler. They should take one or two steps, remaining balanced. They should not reach as this will affect their balance. They should also be careful to keep their head in between their feet, not leaning to one side.

The defender's movement toward the dribbler should be fast and is designed to stop the defender from continuing along their path. The defender then moves just as quickly back to a position to guard their own player.

"HELP AND RECOVER" – FROM DENIAL STANCE
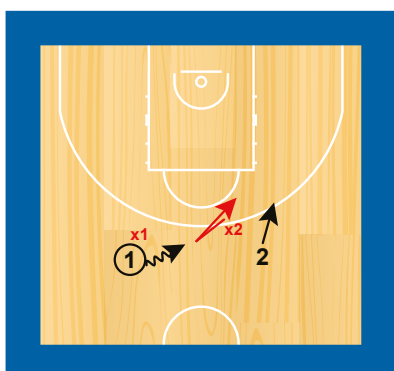
x2 is in a good position to stop 1 from getting into the key.
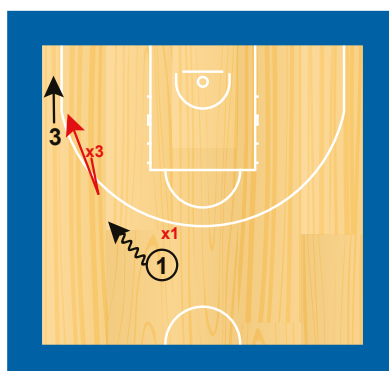
x3 is in a position to stop 1 dribbling to the wing. They are not in a position to stop 1 getting to the basket.
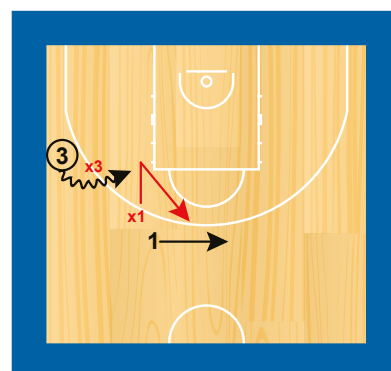
x1 is not in a good position to help because they are above the line of the ball.

"HELP AND RECOVER" – FROM FLOATING / OPEN STANCE
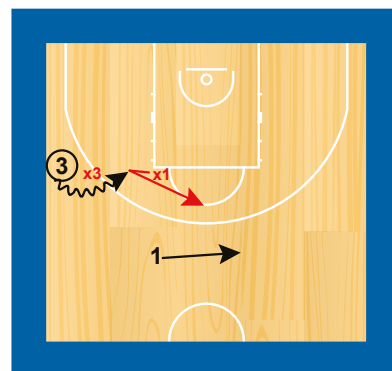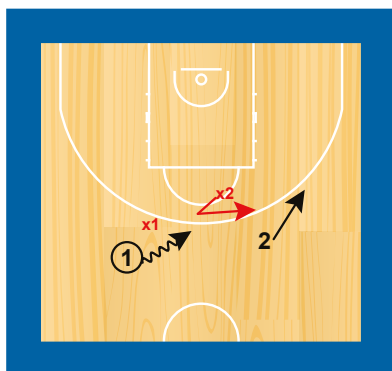
"HELP AND RECOVER" – POST DEFENDER

FROM FLOATING / OPEN STANCE
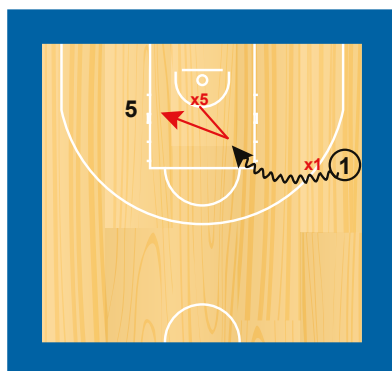
FROM DENIAL STANCE
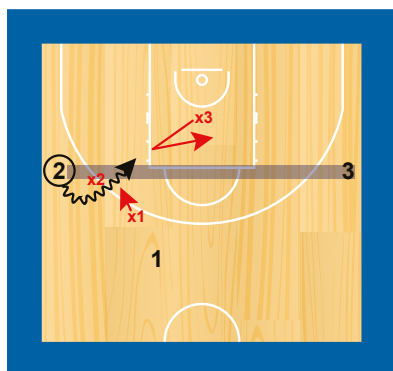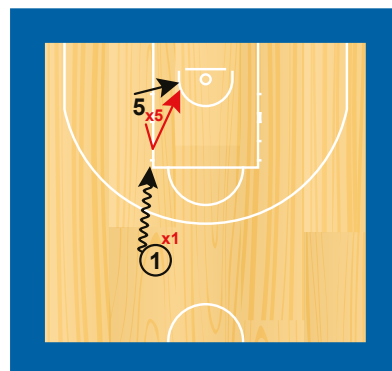
"Help" will be most effective when it comes from below the "line of ball" (the 'line' is a horizontal position on the court at the level of the person with the ball).

x1 is above the "line of ball" and is coming from the side of the dribbler, this is less likely to stop the dribbler than x3 who is coming from below the "line of ball" and is between the dribbler and the basket.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
BASKETBALL COACHES

1.1.9   HELP DEFENCE - HELPING THE HELPER / DEFENSIVE ROTATION

HELPING THE HELPER

Players also need to understand when, and how, to "help the helper". This means being alert to help a teammate that is helping to stop a dribbling penetration. The task of the second helper is to stop their teammate's player until the teammate has recovered. This second help is also performed without losing sight of their own offensive player, as they will recover to guard them.
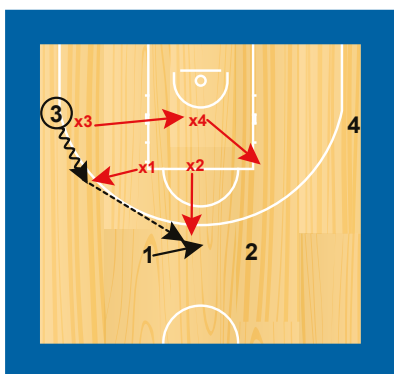
A 4x4 framework is a very good way to practice "help the helper". It is important to remember that this is not a "switching" defence. Each defender ultimately will continue to guard their own player.

Player 3 dribbles to force the nearest defender (x1) to "help and recover". The dribbler passes, forcing the next defender (x2) to "help the helper" and so on.
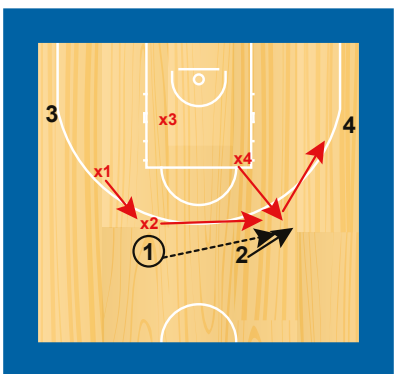
The "help" defender (e.g. x2) stays with the offensive player until their team mate recovers.

When a defender moves to "help and recover" their direct opponent should move, so that it is harder for the defender to "recover". If the offence simply stays in the same position, it is easier for the defender to recover back to their initial position.

DEFENSIVE ROTATION

On occasions it may be necessary not to "help and recover" but to rotate to stop the dribble penetration because the dribbler has beaten their defender. The principles of "help the helper" apply, however defenders will change who they are guarding.
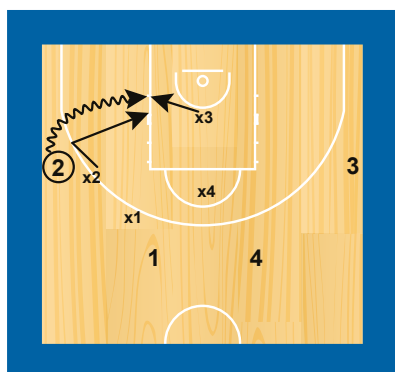
"INITIAL ROTATION"

If x2 is beaten, x3 rotates to stop the dribbler. Their role is to stop 2 from getting into the keyway. Accordingly, x3, must take 2 or 3 steps from the "split line" to meet 2 at the side of they key..

Once x3 sees that their team mate has been beaten, x3 no longer needs to keep vision of 3 – their focus is on now guarding 2. x2 stays "on the hip" of 2, trying to force them toward x3.
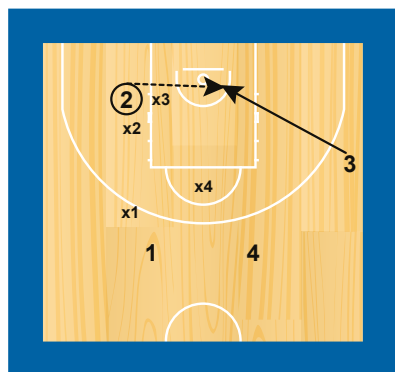
However, if this is the only movement that happens, 3 will be open to receive a pass and get a lay-up!

Accordingly, the team needs to have a "secondary" rotation, which provides "help" to the "helper".
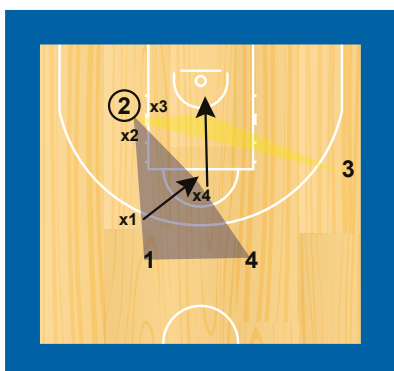
"SECONDARY ROTATION"

As x3 rotates, x4 must also rotate to protect the basket. They are now responsible for guarding Player 3. This is again an example of "help the helper" as x4 is now guarding Player 3.

x1 must rotate to the top of the keyway, to guard any pass and here they are responsible for, and must keep vision of, both Players 1 & 4. They must also keep vision of the player with the ball.
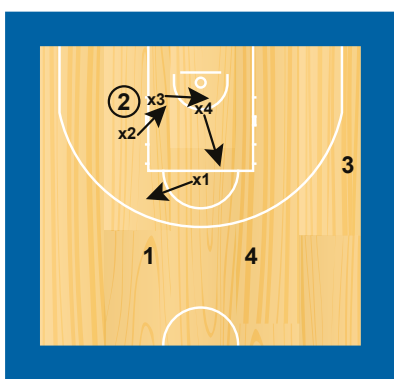
Once Player 2 has been stopped from penetrating into the key, x3 and x2 can double team or players could rotate back to their initial defensive match-ups.
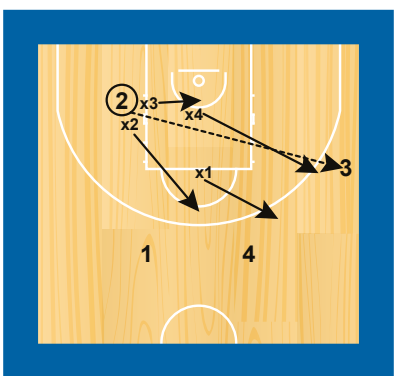
"ROTATION ON THE PASS"

On Player 2's pass to Player 3:

- x4 guards Player 3;
- x3 moves to the split line and is guarding Player 2;
- x1 guards Player 4; (as they are closer to the ball than Player 1)
- x2 moves to the split line and is guarding Player 1.
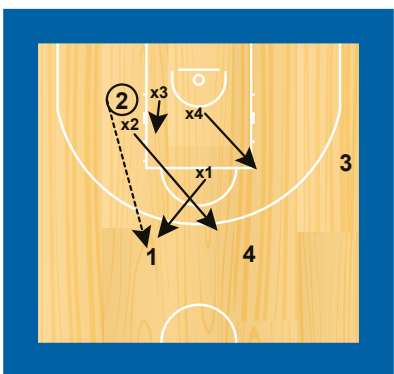
On Player 2's pass to Player 1:

- x1 guards Player 1; (as they have the ball)
- x3 guards Player 2;
- x4 guards Player 3;
- x2 moves to guard Player 4.
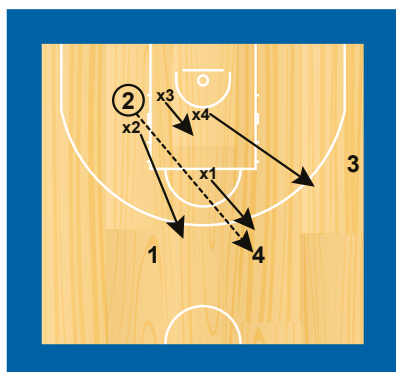
On Player 2's pass to Player 4:

- x1 guards Player 4; (as they have the ball)
- x3 guards Player 2;
- x4 guards Player 3;
- x2 guards Player 1.
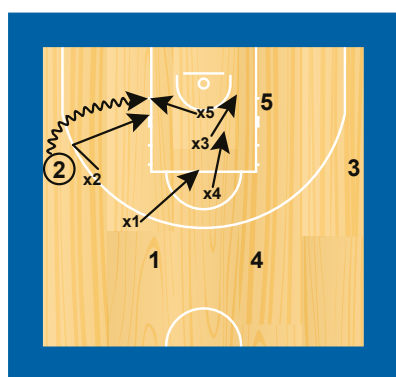
"ROTATION BY POST DEFENDER"

The addition of a post defender does not need to change the rotation – the principle remains the same. The closest player rotates to stop the dribble penetration. Other players then make secondary rotation to "help the helper".

Alternatively, the coach may stipulate that the post defender does not get involved in the rotation. In that case, x3 in this diagram would rotate to stop 2's dribble. x4 and x1 would rotate as shown.

TEACHING DEFENSIVE ROTATION

4x4 provides an excellent framework to teach Defensive Rotation and by awarding the offence a point for any dribble penetration into the key (in addition to any baskets that are scored), the coach can create many opportunities to practice the rotation.

Two other activities that can be used are:
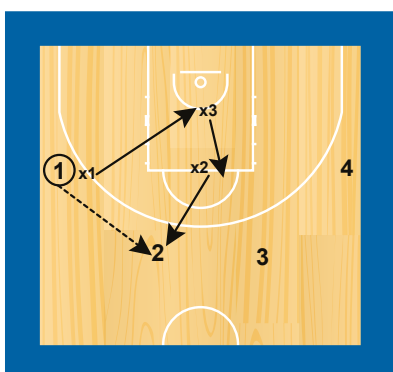
"BASKET-HIGH-BALL"

3 defenders guard 4 – 6 perimeter offensive players. The defenders must always occupy the 3 positions:

• "Basket" – low split line;

• "High" – high split line;

• "Ball" – the Player that has the ball.

Initially, the offensive players pass the ball – defenders must "fly with the ball"[16] and reach their next defensive position as the ball is caught.
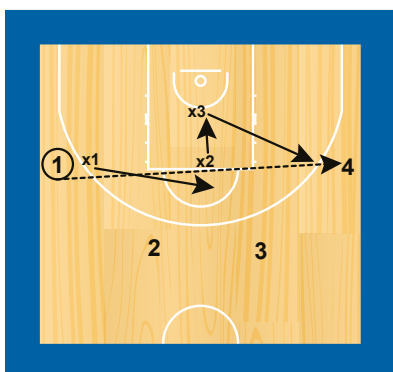
The activity can be progressed to where the offence may shoot (if unguarded) or can dribble to attempt to penetrate the keyway.

Rather than strictly dictate what rotation the defenders are to use, the coach should focus on the outcome (defenders occupying the three positions) and let them "explore" the most efficient rotations to achieve that. The coach can guide players on what might be more efficient. Generally, the player closest to the ball moves to defend the ball!
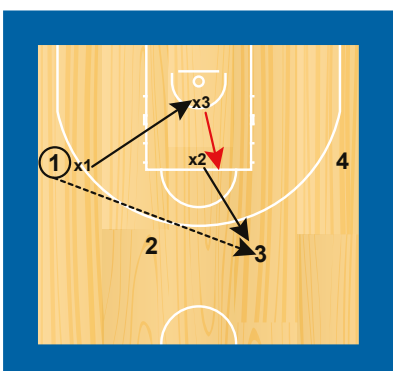
In this rotation, x2 moves to the ball, x3 moves away from the basket to go high and x1 moves to the basket. Coaches may instruct x3 to delay moving until x1 has returned to the basket.

In a game, coaches will often prefer players to defend the basket first and may prefer for x1 to move to the high split line position at the free throw line, leaving x3 at the basket.

16 A term used by former Italian national coach Mario Blasone, amongst others.
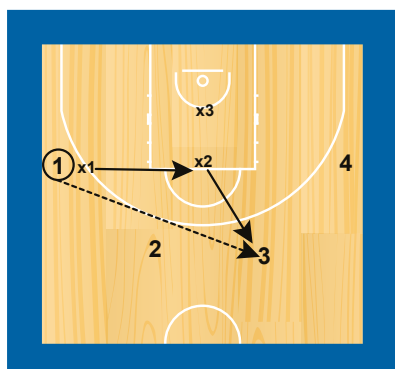
This alternate rotation is shown for x2 who rotates to the ball (as they are closest) and x1 rotates directly to the free throw line.
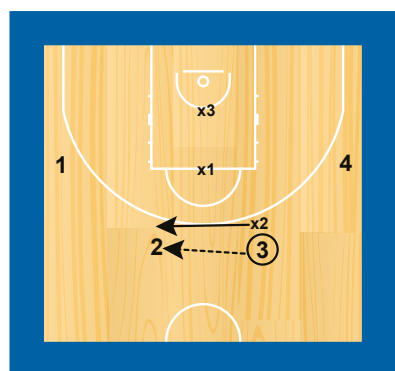
Another situation that can have more than one solution is where the ball is passed across the top of the key.
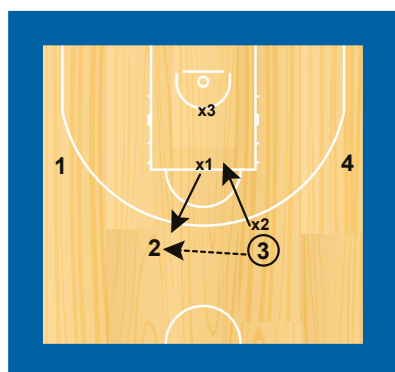
Often the defender on the ball will be able move across and follow the pass. Coaches may prefer not to do this, as it can lead to the other defenders not moving at all.

Accordingly, coaches may prefer in this situation for x1 to rotate to the ball and for x2 to rotate to the free throw line.
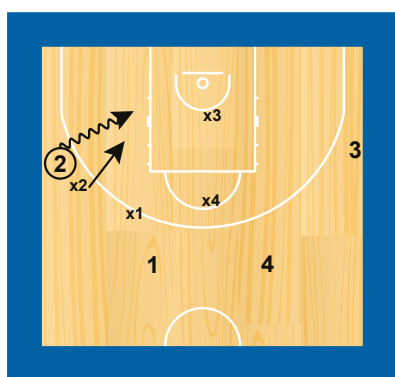
"DISADVANTAGE SHELL DRILL"

The activity commences with x2 next to the player with the ball, giving Player 2 an open drive and forcing defensive rotation. x2 hands the ball to Player 2, and attempts to get into position, but the likelihood is that the team defence will need to rotate.

x3 may become focused on Player 2, and lose vision of their own player, even before the activity starts. Player 3 can be encouraged to cut into the keyway to receive a pass when this happens.

1.1.10   DEFENSIVE COMMUNICATION

"The best defensive technique will fail if a team does not communicate effectively. A team with no defensive technique, but playing with heart, can still succeed if the team communicates effectively. Successful defence is an attitude more than a technique."

MICHAEL HAYNES

"Communication does not always come naturally, even among a tight-knit group of individuals. Communication must be taught and practiced in order to bring everyone together as one."

COACH MIKE KRZYEWSKI

"Effective teamwork begins and ends with communication."

COACH MIKE KRZYEWSKI

Communication is a very important aspect of building team defence. Unfortunately, whilst most coaches recognize this is so, many do not work on developing this aspect.

Talking (and listening) in Defence is essential for defenders to communicate concerning relevant points, such as screens, cuts, being in a help position etc. However, it is not enough for coaches to simply tell players that they must talk. The coach must specify the situation where communication should take place, decide the precise words to be said, and specify which player should be speaking.

Given the fast paced nature of basketball, players cannot use long sentences, instead they need short key words, the meaning of which is understood by everyone on the team. Coaches can facilitate this by using those same key words at practice.

Each coach will have their own words that they want players to use. Key words that have the following characteristics are more likely to be effective:

- Descriptive – describing what the action is (e.g. "Ball" to indicate guarding the ball);
- Analogous – using an analogy to describe what to do (e.g. "Gap" to indicate taking a position that is in the "gap" between two opponents);
- Action Oriented – positive stated action (e.g. "Over" to indicate to a team mate go over the top of a screen);
- Mono-Syllabic – as short a word as possible (e.g. "Box" may be more effective than "Box Out" simply because it can be said quicker).

1.1.11   TRANSITION DEFENCE

One of the best ways to stop an opponent from getting easy baskets from fast breaks is good offensive execution! Turnovers or "poor option" shots will "trigger" fast breaks, and the offence is not in a good position to counter the fast break.

Defensive transition occurs when the other team get possession of the ball and move the ball quickly toward their basket without an opportunity for the defence to establish the defensive positions discussed earlier.

There are three other principles for good defensive transition.

EARLY PREPARATION – DEFENCE STARTS WITH A SHOT
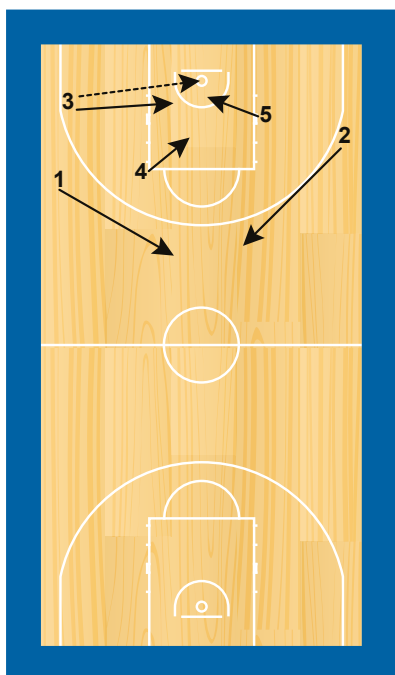
A team must prepare to play defence the moment that they shoot the ball. It may be a mistake for all players to pursue the rebound as that can leave a fast break open.

Accordingly, players should move to one of two positions:

- Into the keyway to contest the rebound;
- To the top of the key to be ready to defend any fast break.

Coaches may designate specific roles for players or may simply require players to make a judgment of where they should go. This can be best practiced by not having activities stop with a shot being taken, but have it move to the next stage – transition.

THE PRINCIPLE OF "BASKET" AND "BALL"

Whenever a team loses possession (whether from a turnover, a score or the other team rebound their missed shot) They are now on defence and must first defend the basket.

As is shown in the diagrams below, if the last defender simply runs toward the person that has the ball, this will allow a simple pass over their head to an opponent to score a lay-up.

Accordingly, a player should not commit to guarding the player with the ball, until someone is guarding the basket.

It can be effective though for them to hedge towards the ball, forcing them to think they have committed, and then retreating to the basket to possibly intercept the pass or to defend the lay-up.
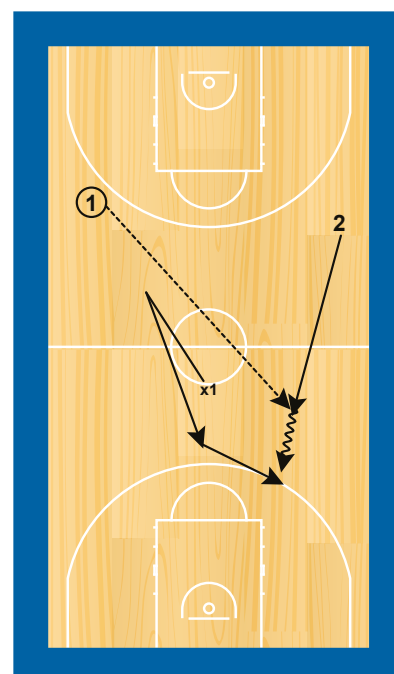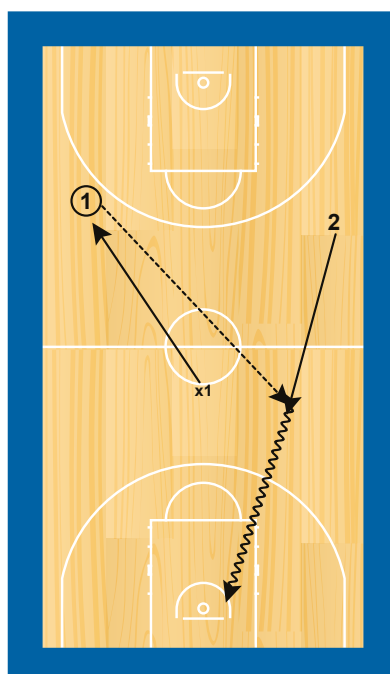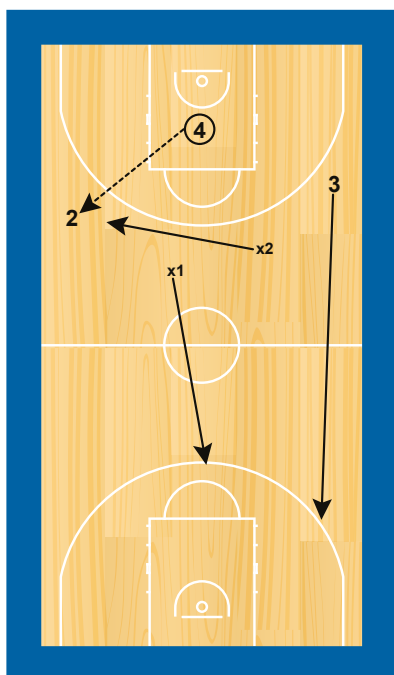
By x1 and x2 first moving to a "safety" position when the shot is taken, they are then in a position to move to the basket.

The person guarding the basket (x1) then has the opportunity of seeing the floor and can direct the movement of other players. Because the basket is defended, x2 may move to defend Player 2.

CONTEST THE OUTLET PASS
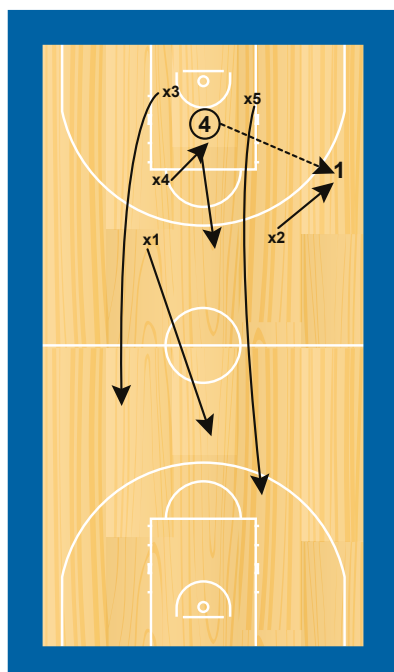
One player who contested the rebound, should "jam" the rebounder, stepping close to them, with arms outstretched. The goal is to slow the pass, rather than steal the ball. The player should resist the temptation to reach for the ball as this often results in a foul being called.

If the basket is guarded, perimeter players may also contest the outlet pass and then place pressure on the ball handler.

1 DEFENDER AGAINST 2
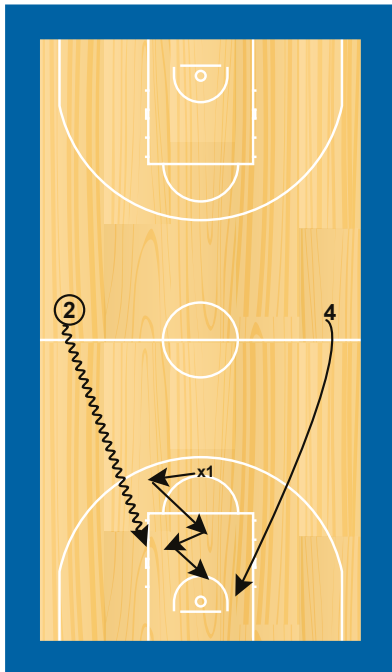
When faced against two offensive players, the defender should move back to the basket as quickly as possible. From there they must try to put doubt into the minds of the offensive players – are they guarding the dribbler or are they guarding the player without the ball?

To do this the defender must be active – moving their feet into the "driving lane" and then back toward the basket. Having active hands can also help. The offence has the advantage and should score - if the defender can slow them down it gives time for another defender to arrive.

2 DEFENDERS AGAINST 3
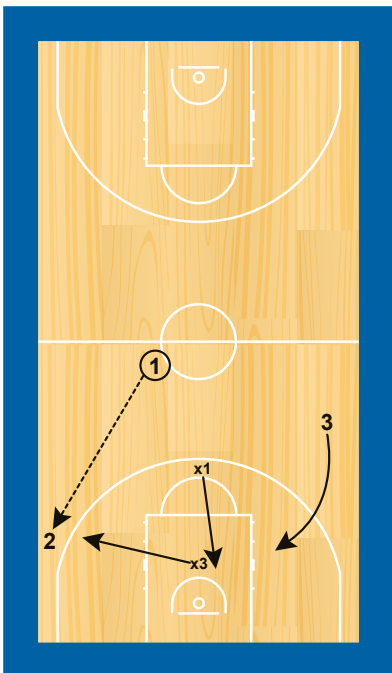
Two defenders should adopt a tandem or "I" formation, the first defender at the inside the 3 point line, the second defender at the basket. This defender must be outside the "no charge" circle.

Their primary goal should be to not allow any lay-up, forcing an outside shot or delaying the offence until more defenders recover.

Generally, as the ball is passed to the wing, the basket defender will move out to guard that player and the top defender will rotate down to guard the basket. The defender moving to the perimeter may initially "hedge", particularly if they do not believe the player is capable of shooting from that position.
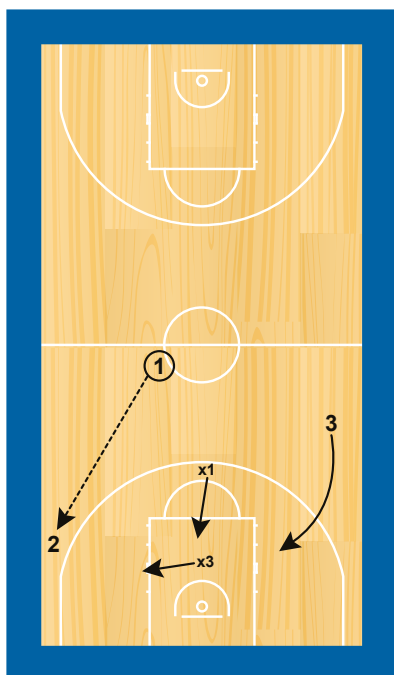
If the basket defender "hedges" or fakes moving to the perimeter, this can give time for the other defender to move to the basket while the defender moves to the perimeter. Alternatively they may continue guarding inside the key. Whilst this can give up an outside shot, that is preferable to giving up a lay-up.
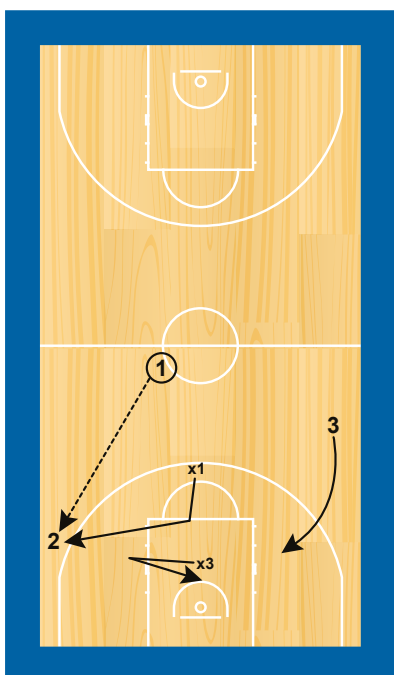
The basket defender "hedging" can also give an opportunity for the top defender to move to defend the ball on the perimeter.

1.1.12 FULL COURT MAN TO MAN DEFENCE

The basic team concepts used in half-court defence, also apply in full court defence (e.g. help and recover, rotation etc.).

POSITION RELATIVE TO THE BALL

The increased space on the full court is an obvious difference to defending on the half court however the principle remains the same - the closer the opponent is to the ball, the closer the defender is to the opponent.

And the further an opponent is from the ball, the further the defender is from the opponent.

Coaches may use activities to improve positioning and moving of the players in the full court context.
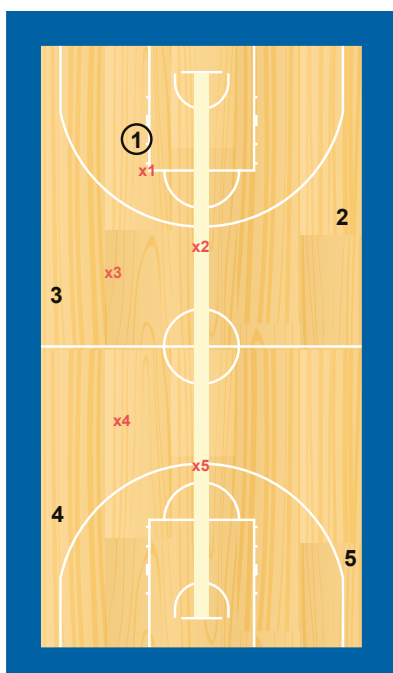
Defenders that are more than one pass away from the ball should be oriented so that their back faces the "base line" enabling them to see both the ball and their immediate opponent.

If the player they are guarding is on the same side of the court as the ball (x3 and x4), the defender may need to turn their back towards the "split line" to maintain vision of both the ball and their opponent. The key concept is that all defenders are able to see the ball and their opponent.

Similarly, the further away the offensive player is from the ball, the further away from the defender can be.

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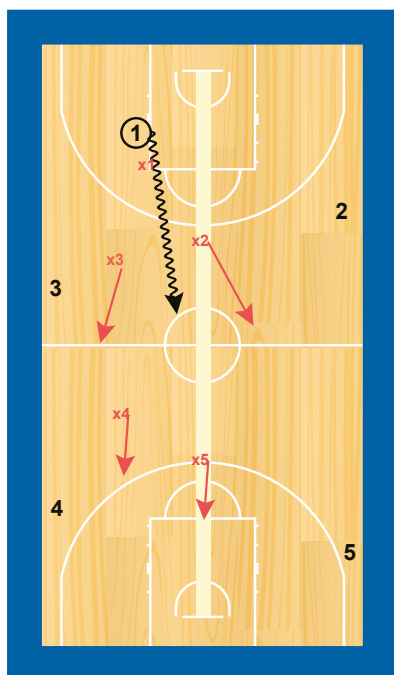
As the ball gets closer, defenders should move closer to the player that they are guarding. Defenders should also move with the "line of the ball" where their opponent is behind the ball (e.g. x2 keeps moving with the ball even though their opponent is behind the ball). This is simply applying the rule that "help defence comes from below the ball".

This positioning is important because if x2 is at the "line of the ball" they can put pressure on the dribbler. However, if they remain above the "line of the ball" (which is where their opponent is) they are not in position to "help and recover".
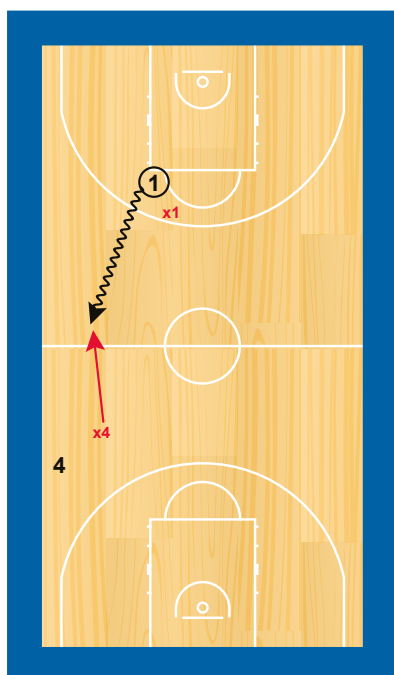
If the ball is moving slowly, the defender may be able to "jump" onto the player dribbling the ball to place the dribbler under more pressure. This can either trigger a double team with x1 and x4 or x4 switching with x1.

Players that are defending an opponent that is more than one pass away from the ball must:

- Be ready to react to a long pass, and be in a position to intercept the pass or, at the very least, "fly with the ball" so that they are in position to guard their opponent as they catch the ball;

- Adjust position every time that the ball is passed;

- Move into the path of their opponent if they are cutting in an attempt to receive a pass;

- Be ready to help and rotate to ensure team defensive pressure.

DOUBLE TEAMING THE BALL

Often teams play full court defence in an attempt to create turnovers by double teaming the ball handler.
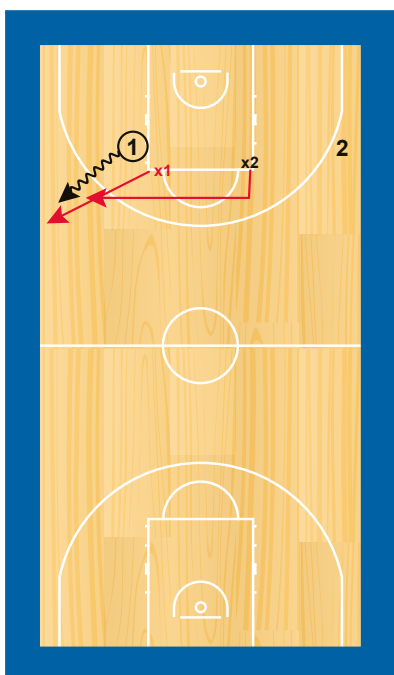
"TURNING THE DRIBBLER" INTO DOUBLE TEAM

If X1 is able to "turn" the dribbler (get in front of them and force them to change direction), this may present x2 the opportunity to double team.
This will be particularly effective if the dribbler turns "blind" by performing a reverse pivot.

The double team may also be possible if the dribbler picks up their dribble. It is important that if x2 decides to double team that they do not hesitate and instead sprint to position. Even if it is not the "perfect" decision, by being decisive their team mates can adjust as necessary.
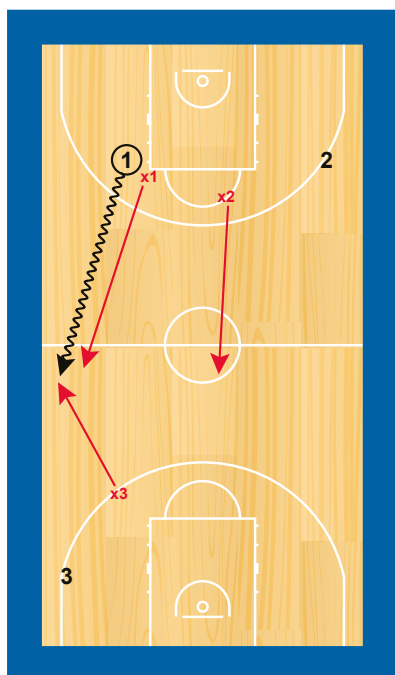
"CHANNELING THE DRIBBLER" INTO A DOUBLE TEAM

Alternatively, if x1 is channeling the dribbler (keeping them moving in one direction), the double team must come from ahead of the dribbler. Again, if they are to double team x3 needs to be decisive and x1 needs to keep up with their opponent so that they cannot dribble toward the middle to avoid x3.

When double-teaming, players must be taught:

- To make sure that the dribbler cannot pass through the middle — they must not leave a gap between the two defenders;

- To keep their hands high to avoid fouling — they do not reach for the ball, they are simply trying to trap the ball handler;

- That their role is not to steal the ball. A successful double team may cause a turnover by:

  - Forcing a bad pass, intercepted by another team mate;

  - 8 second violation (where the double team is in the back court);

  - 5 second violation.

And even if the double team does not create a turnover, it can still be successful by reducing the time that the opponent has to establish their offence and get a shot.

ROLES IN FULL COURT "MAN TO MAN" DEFENCE

After scoring, or when the opposition are to throw the ball in, the defence have an opportunity to establish position to apply full court pressure. When a team is shooting a free throw it is also another opportunity to establish position, even if the free throw is actually missed.

Commonly, the roles in full court defence are:

1. "Point" - defends the player with the ball

2. "Safety" (does not contest offensive rebound) – will deny pass being made up court. Can also be involved in "double teaming"

3. "Rebounding Wing" – contests the offensive rebound and then denies pass being made up the court. Like the defensive safety, can also be involved in "double teaming"

4. "Plugger" – pressures the inbound pass and then can deny a pass back to the inbounder, or apply pressure on the dribbler.

5. "Basket" – retreats to defend the basket.

Each player has a "man to man" responsibility although may defend different players if the offence change roles.
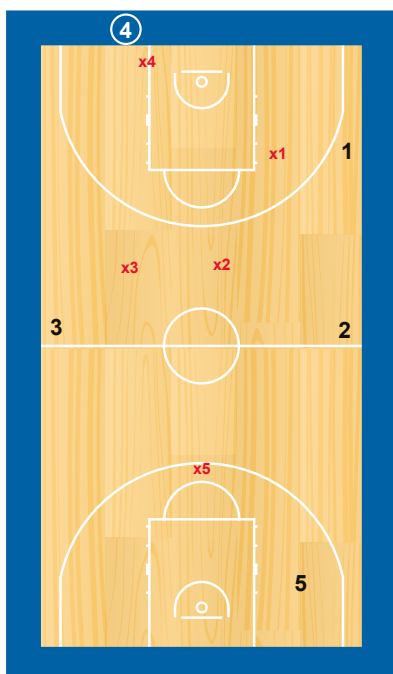
1. "Point"
2. "Safety"
3. "Rebounding Wing"
4. "Plugger"
5. "Basket"
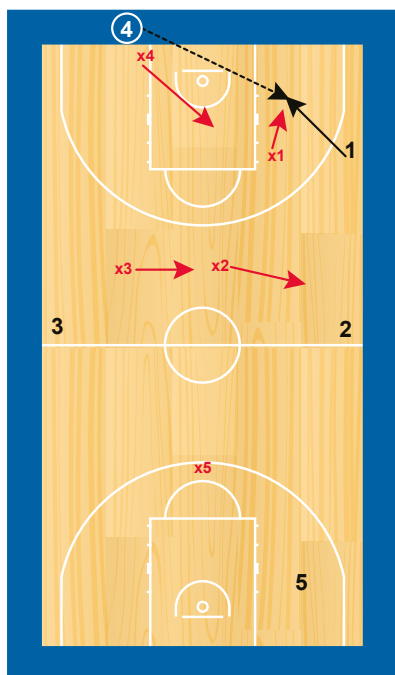
X4 must step to the sideline quickly to deny the inbound pass. They should stand at an angle, in order to influence the pass to one side of the court.

As the pass is made, x1, x2 and x3 adopt a position consistent with normal man to man defensive principles:

- x1 guarding the ball and either channeling or turning the dribbler as per team rules;

- x2 is in a position to deny the pass down the line to 2. They are also in position to double team if 1 is channelled down the sideline. x3 moves to a split line position in the middle of the court. These positions are reversed if the ball was passed to the other side.

- x4 moves to a position that is below the line of the ball – from here they can apply pressure on the dribbler. They are responsible for defending x4.
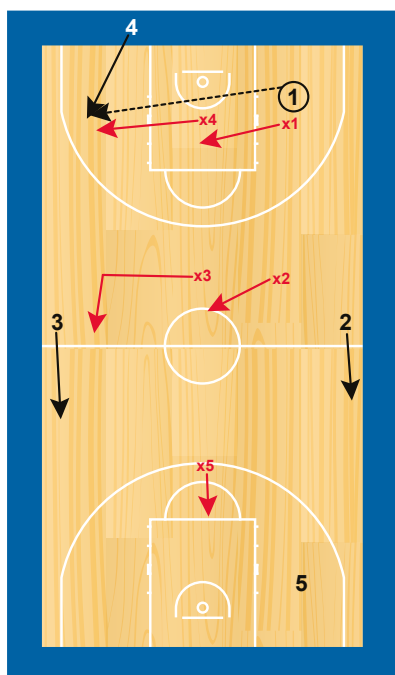
If the ball is passed, defenders continue to adjust in accordance with normal man to man defensive principles. Whilst the relative distances are different, the principles are the same:

- keep vision of both the player you are guarding and the player with the ball;

- be between your player and the ball, remaining close enough that you can get to your player if the ball is passed to them.

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TEACHING FULL COURT MAN TO MAN DEFENCE

Following are some "breakdown" activities that practice the type of movement required by each defender. All players should be familiar with each role.

These activities can be excellent Warm-up activities and then the players should progress to contested situations. A main point of emphasis must be moving quickly – it is not the fastest person that is necessarily the most effective defender, moving early is just as important to being an effective defender.
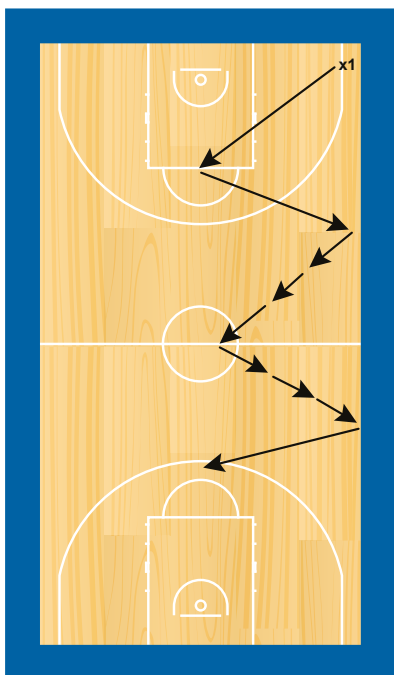
"POINT"

Defender starts in the corner and:

- sprints to the foul line and the baseline;
- sprint to the sideline (can incorporate "closing out" technique)
- defensive footwork to the split line and back to the sideline (as if guarding the ball)
- sprint to the 3 point line ending in defensive stance
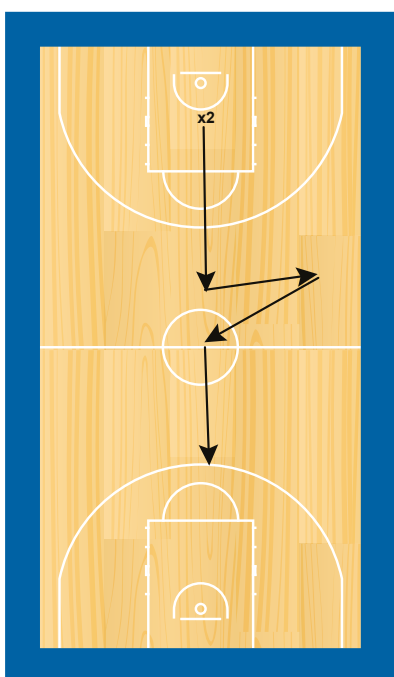
"SAFETY"

Defender starts in key and:

- sprints to the half way circle and turns to face the basket ("safety" position)
- sprints to sideline, into denial stance;
- sprints back to the circle, in open stance
- sprint to the 3 point line and get into defensive stance.

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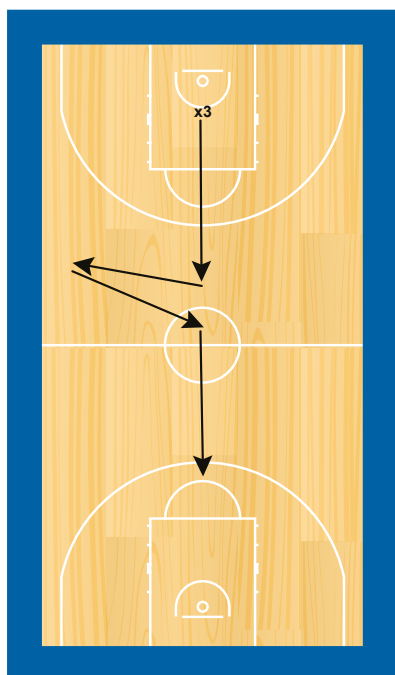
"REBOUNDING WING"

Defender jumps to touch the ring (backboard or net, as appropriate) and:

- sprints to the half way, turns to face the basket ("safety" position)
- sprint to sideline, into denial stance;
- sprint back to the circle - open stance
- sprint to 3 point line and get into defensive stance.
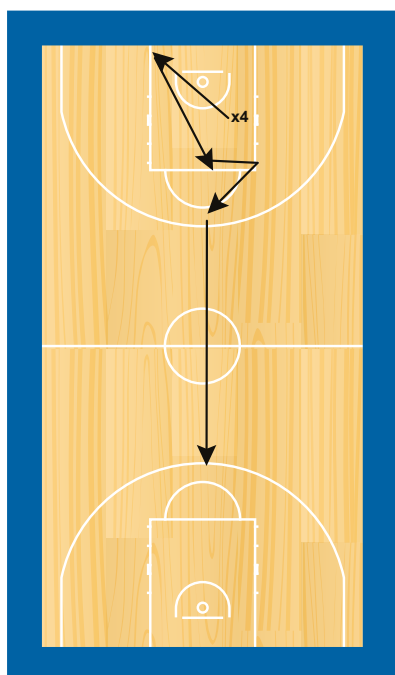
"PLUGGER'

Defender tips the ring (or backboard or net) and:

- pressures inbound pass;
- sprints to the free throw line – open stance
- "hedge" (two steps) towards the ball and return
- sprints back to the 3 point circle
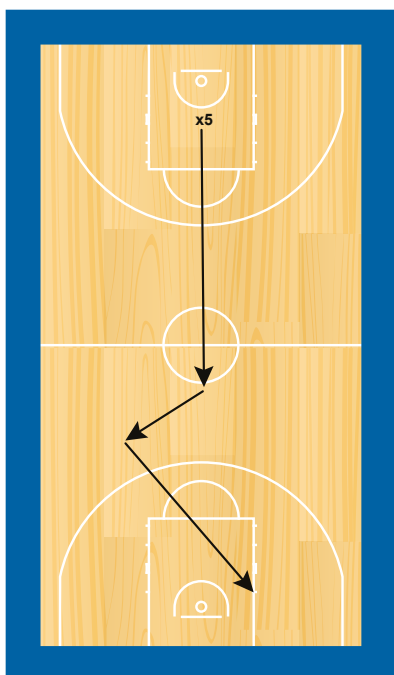
"BASKET"

 Defender tips the ring (or backboard or net) and:

• pressures inbound pass;

• sprints to middle lane to the top of the key

• moves to the opposite elbow

• moves to the "block"

Much of the teaching of full court man to man is simply giving players the opportunity to develop the skills they have previously used in the half court and applying them to the different space experienced in the full court. It is important to incorporate contested activities from an early stage.
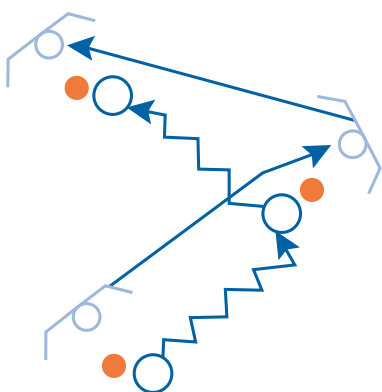
1X1 - "TURNING THE DRIBBLER"

The defender must keep their "head on the ball" and sprint to get in front of the dribbler so that they must change direction. Commonly, the defenders "turn" the dribbler in the back court.

A common mistake that defenders make is to make contact and push into the defender.

This has two disadvantages:

- first it will often be called a foul;

- secondly, it is difficult to get to a position in front of the dribbler.

The defender does need to be close enough to put the dribbler under pressure (an arm's length approximately).
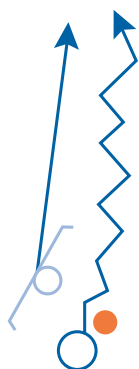
1X1 – "CHANNELING THE DRIBBLER"

When "channeling" the dribbler, the defender has their shoulder on the dribbler's shoulder to ensure that they cannot move into the middle of the court. In this activity, the defender the dribbler along the sideline.

If the dribbler stops or does a retreat dribble, the defender may be in front of the dribbler. They must quickly move backwards to establish a position to stop the dribbler changing direction.
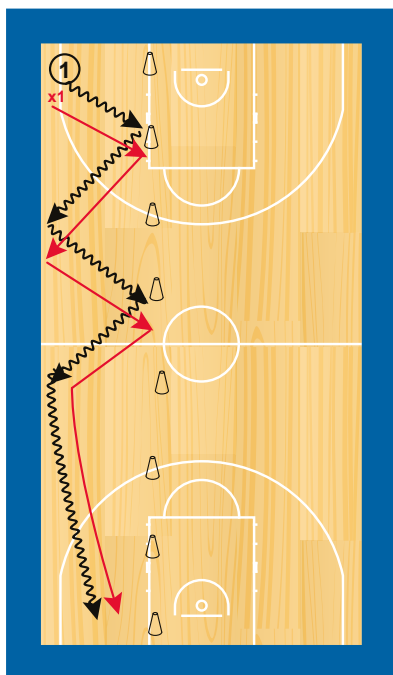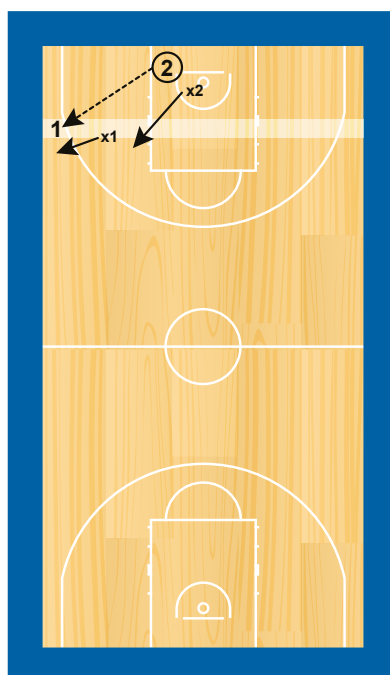

"2X2" – HALF WIDTH OF COURT

x1 attempt to "turn" the dribbler as many times as possible in the back court and then channel them along the sideline (to keep them away from the basket).

It is important that the dribbler attempts to beat the defender and only change direction if they are forced to. They should also use a change of pace and retreat dribbles as necessary.
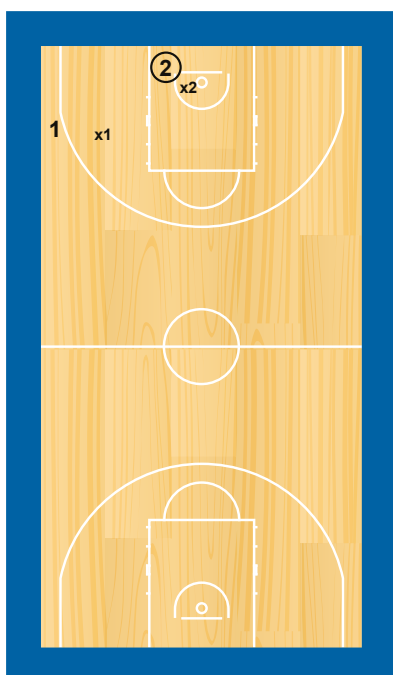
DIAG 1

DIAG 2

2x2 in a half width of the court. "Line of Ball" principle is very important in defence. Simply, even where an offensive player remains behind the ball (as in Diag 2), their defender must get to the line of the ball, which puts them in a position to pressure the ball handler.
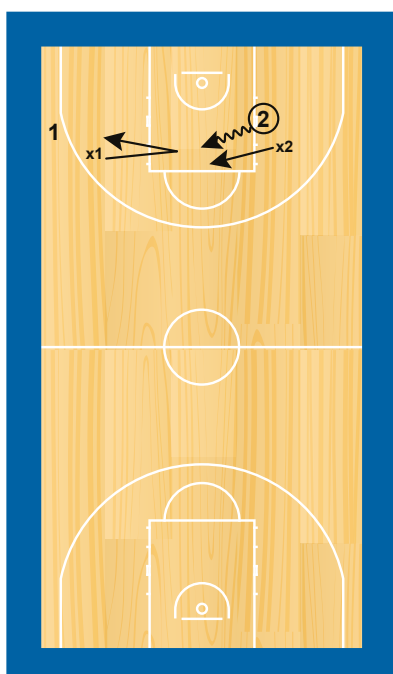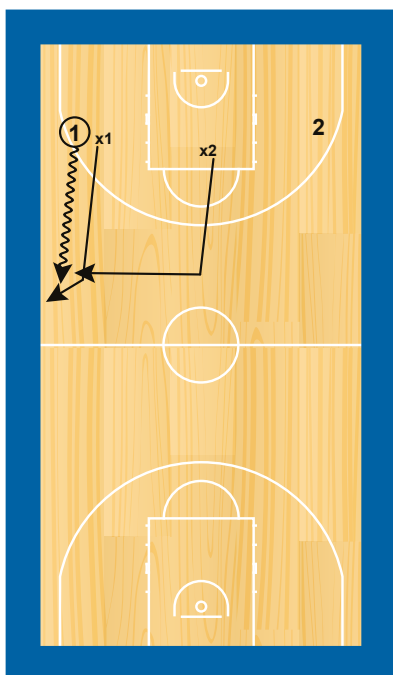

DIAG 3
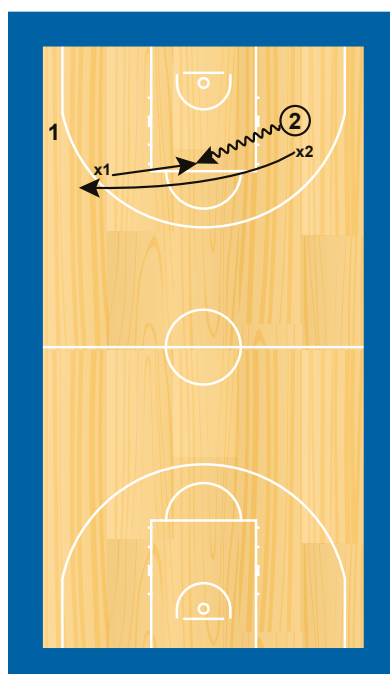
DIAG 4

In Diag 3, x1 takes one or two steps toward the dribbler and then returns to their player. This is an example of "hedge and recover" as used in half court.

In Diag 4, x1 switches and takes over guarding the dribbler and x2 moves to guard the other player. x1 communicates this by calling "Jump" or "Switch".

In addition to using "help and recover" and "run and jump" (switching),the defence may also double team the ball – which requires the defender to get to the "line of the ball".

In this activity, the offence are initially not allowed to move ahead of the ball.
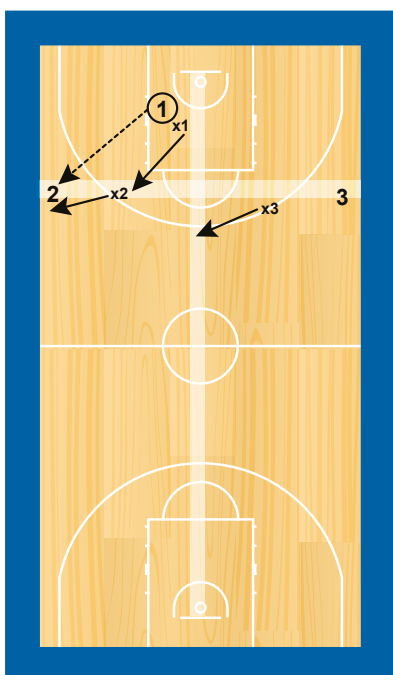
"3X3 FULL COURT"

The two important principles here, also apply in half-court defence:

- "line of ball" (shaded horizontal line) – defenders must be at or below the line of the ball;
- "split line" (shaded vertical line) – defenders guarding a player on the opposite side of the court, must get to the split, maintaining vision of both the player they are guarding and the player with the ball.

   The Defenders use "help and recover", "run and jump" (switch) and double team where possible. Again, restrict the offence from moving two far ahead of the ball.
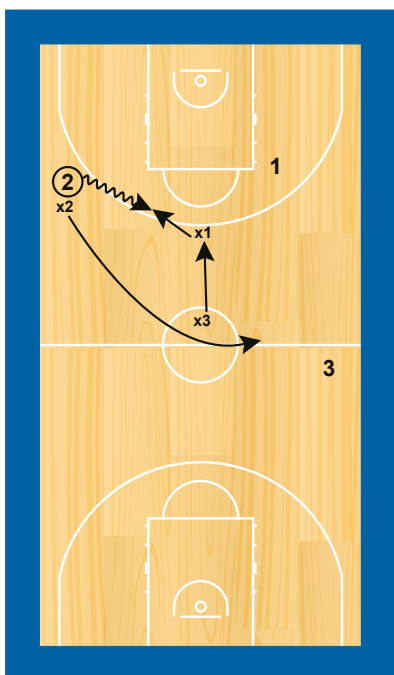
The defenders should also practice the principle of "help the helper":

• x1 has "jumped" or switched to start guarding 2;

• x3 helps the helper and moves to guard 1, x3 may slightly delay moving, to give X2 a chance to move closer to their new position;

• x2 rotates to take responsibility for 3.

Important principles to emphasize are:

• Sprinting to get to the split line and line of ball;

• Communicate – if there is a clear understanding of what each defender must do then there is no gamble. It's only a gamble if defenders are guessing what team mates are doing;
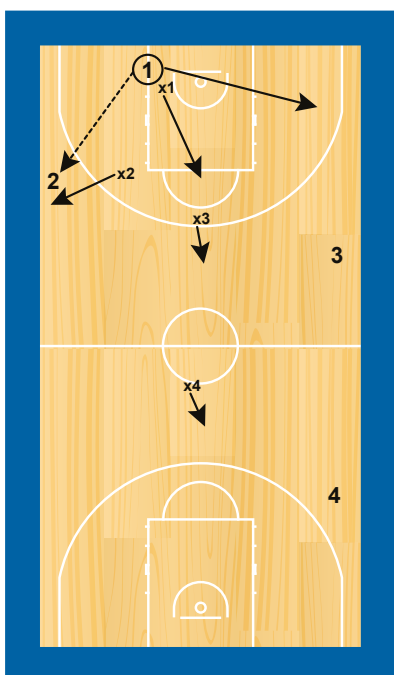
4X4 FULL COURT

4x4 is simply a further extension of the principles used in the earlier activities. Most importantly, all players must move together and "fly with the ball" on every pass, to make sure they get to the next spot, by the time the ball is caught.

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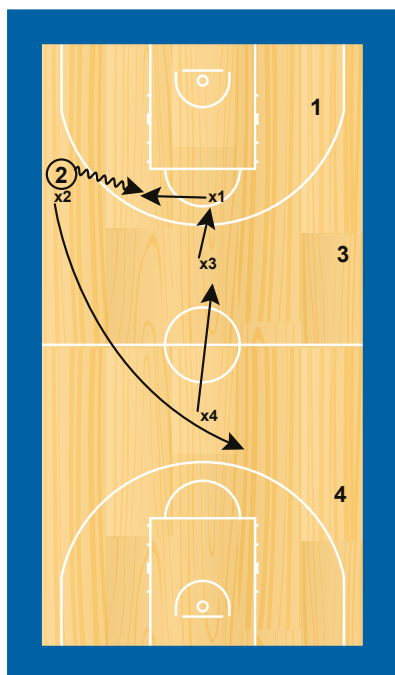
The rotation is simple, with the nearest player helping the helper.
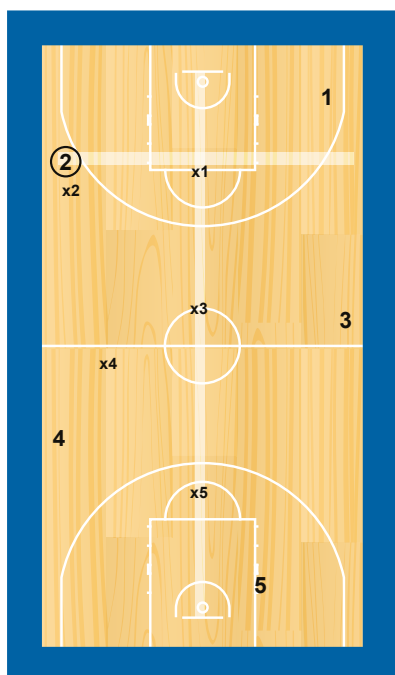

Similarly, with 5x5 the principles remain the same but require dynamic practice to hone. Players down the court must anticipate where passes may go and "shoot the gap" – prepared to intercept the pass.
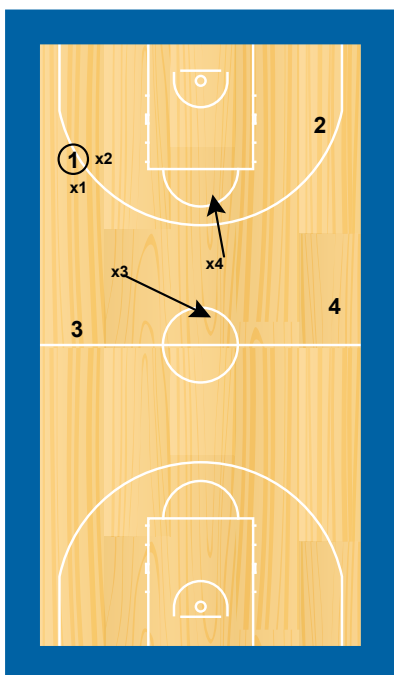
PRACTICING FULL COURT DOUBLE TEAM

Teams should also practice double teams in the full court, which can initially be done 4x4.

With x2 and x1 double teaming the player with the ball, x4 and x3 are "inteceptors" and must read what the offensive player might do. If they believe the pass may go to either 2 or 4, both defenders adjust their position (x4 moving up toward 2, x3 moving toward 4).
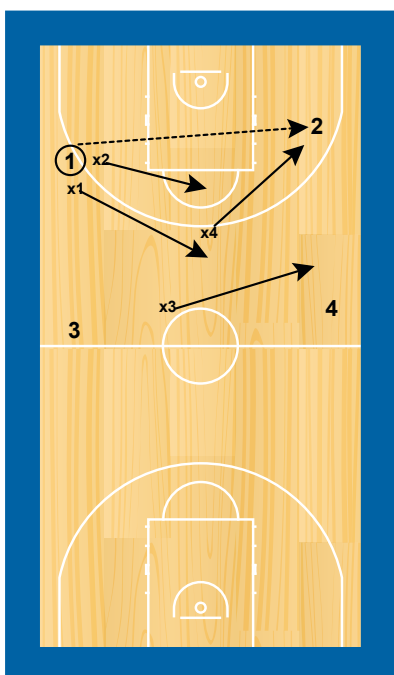
If the ball is passed to 2, x4 moves to defend them and x3 moves to defend 4, who is on the same side of the floor.

Whichever of x1 and x2 can see the pass, moves away from the double team. The pass went over x2's head, so x1 will move.

Accordingly, x2 remains defending 1 (and moves to the split line) and x1 moves to defend the open player (3).
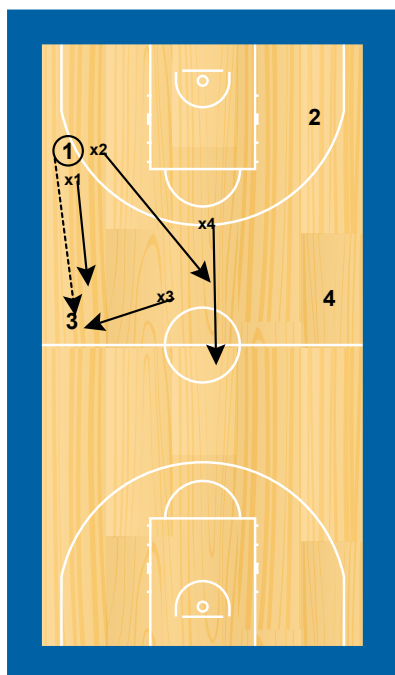
If the pass goes to Player 3, 3 defends the ball and x4 rotates to defend 4 (and moves to the split line).

Both x2 and x1 must move toward the line of ball. x2 can "see" the pass (as it went over the head of x1) so they will defend 2, but must move to the split line at the line of ball.

x1 will defend 1 but again moves to the line of the ball. They may be able to double team 3.
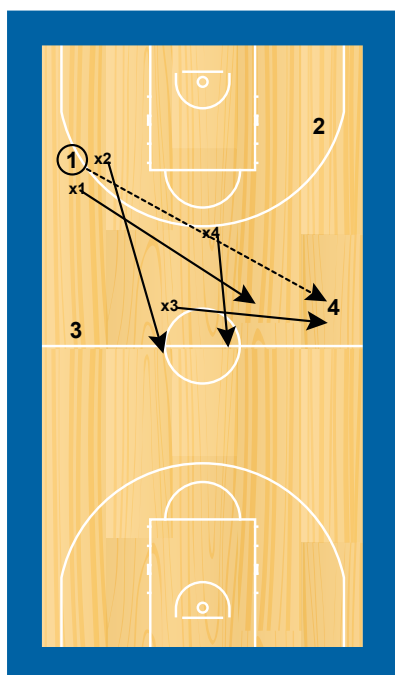
A cross court pass to 4 is very hard to pass, and would hopefully be intercepted by either x4 or x3.

However, if the pass is successful, x3 rotates to defend 4. Even though x4 may be closer, they are not in position to stop 4 from move down the court.

x4 rotates to defend 3.

x1 can see the pass so will be responsible to defend 2. They move to the line of the ball and may be able to double team (given 2 is so far behind the ball).

x2 is responsible for defending 1 and again moves to the line of the ball.

ADDING THE 5TH DEFENDER

With a 5th defender, they would guard the basket and so would not be involved in the double team rotations.

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FOLLOW-UP

1. Organise a short scrimmage during practice. Have two players stand with you, one looking at the offence and one at the defence. Have them provide feedback to the team (or to you), which can help to see their understanding of the team concepts. Do another scrimmage and have a different two athletes standing with you.

2. Conduct shell drill where 4 of your players are the defenders and 4 coaches/parents are the offensive players – passing the ball around the perimeter. Have 4 players on the baseline with their eyes closed and allocate each of them to one defender. After 30-45 seconds of passing (during which the baseline players have kept their eyes closed) and have the baseline players identify where their player was on the court (e.g. defending the ball, high split, low split). They will only be able to do this if the team has good defensive communication.

3. Have each player in your team assess how well they think they understand the help rotation principles in half court defence. In a contested scrimmage activity, what is the correlation between how well players assessed their understanding and their actual performance?

1.2   DEFENDING SCREENS

1.2.1   DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS – "LOCK AND TRAIL"

A screen is simply an attempt by an offensive player to block the path of a defender in order to free their team mate. Screens may be set on ball (to free the dribbler) or "off ball" (to free a cutter).

In this chapter, we describe the action of the two defenders involved in the screen and in Levels 2 and 3 we explore the team's defensive schemes for guarding screens.

Regardless of the type of screen, communication is critical to effectively guarding it. The defender guarding the player setting the screen must:

- Gain the attention of the team mate (who is going to be screened) – "Name";
- Advise that a screen is coming – "Screen";
- Confirm how their team mate is to guard the screen – e.g. "Through", "Under", "Over"

A team may have in place set rules for how a screening situation is to be guarded or it may be at the discretion of the players. In either event, it is the defender of the screener who is responsible for communicating how to guard the situation as depending upon the method used, the actions of the screener's defender will change.

DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS

There are four primary methods for guarding off ball screens:

- "Lock and Trail"
- "Through"
- "Under"
- "Switch"

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DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS
– "LOCK AND TRAIL"

The defender of the cutter establishes "arm bar" contact with cutter forcing the cutter to use the screen and giving room to the defender to be beside or trail immediately behind.

As an offensive technique, players are instructed to "curl" cut if the defender "locks and trail". Accordingly, the screener's defender must step into the path of the cutter to force them wide (enabling the defender to recover position) and not allowing them to curl.

In order to do this, the defender on the cutter must get their hips past the screen. If they lean forward (getting the top part of their body past), they will get caught on the screen and the cutter is likely to get open.
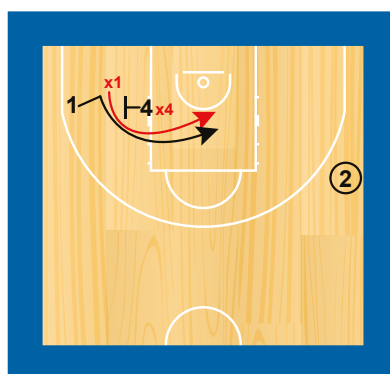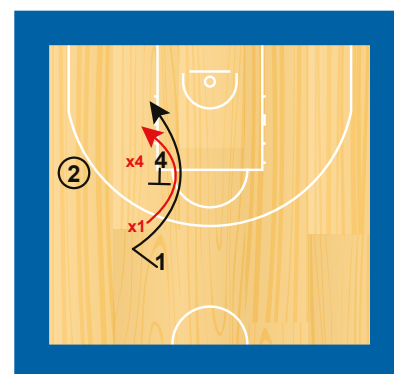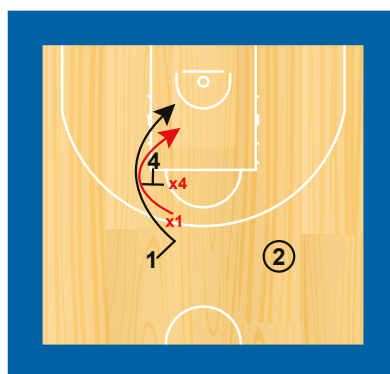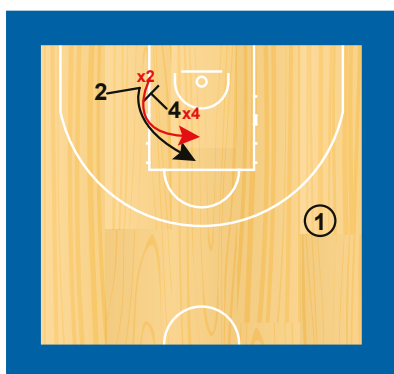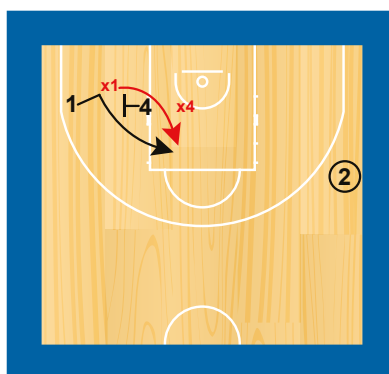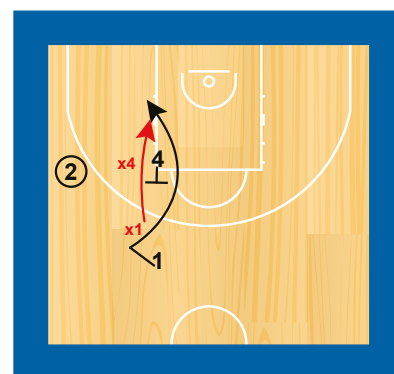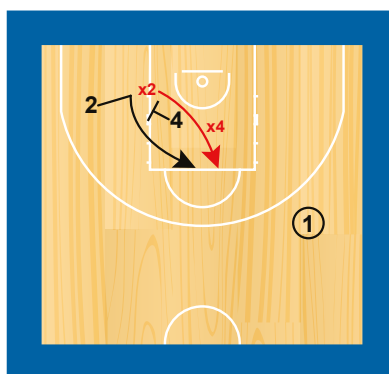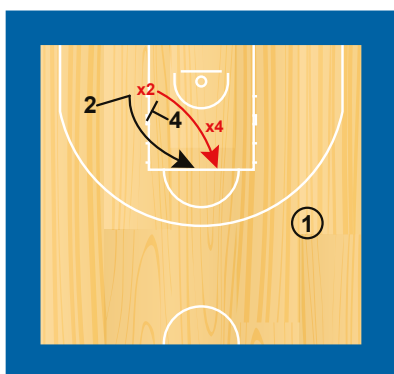
1.2.2 DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS – "UNDER"

Again, the defender of the cutter starts low, forcing the cutter to use the screen. The defender then goes on the other side of the screen, moving quickly to intercept the cutter. The defender of the screener has stepped into the screener, so that their team mate will cut behind them in moving to intercept the cutter.
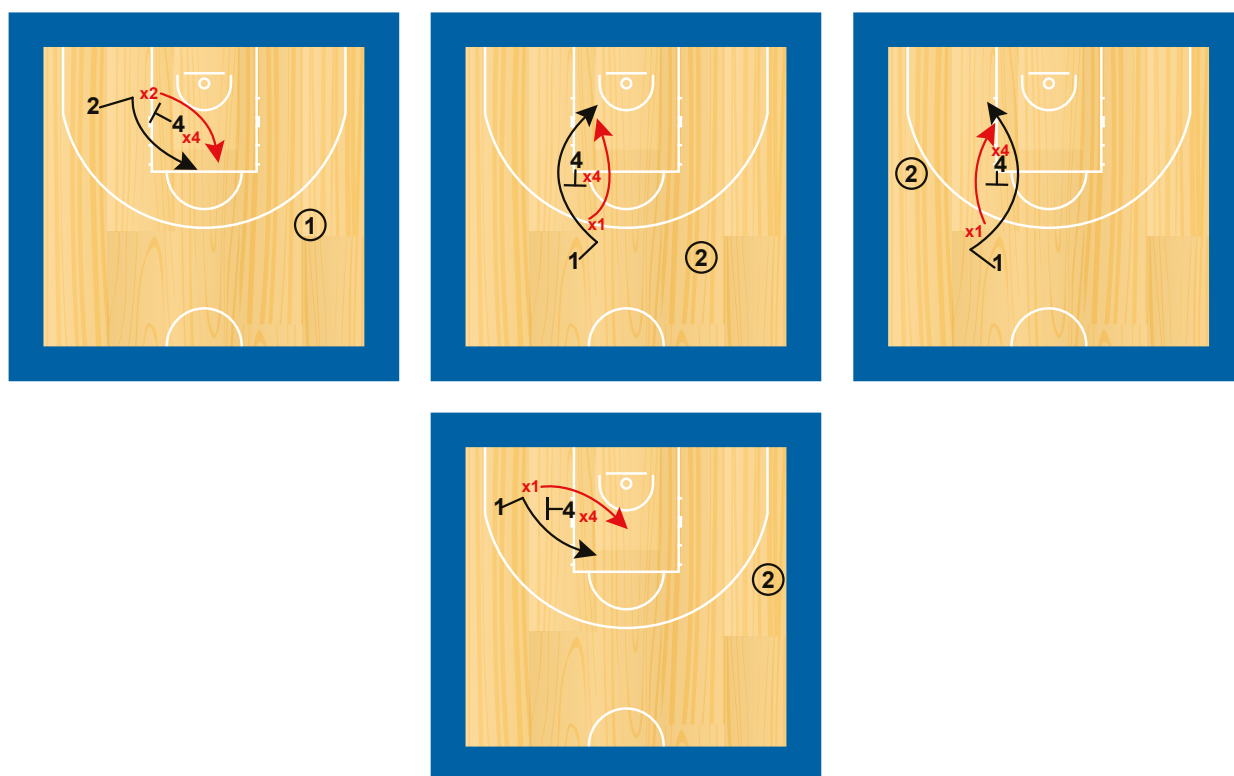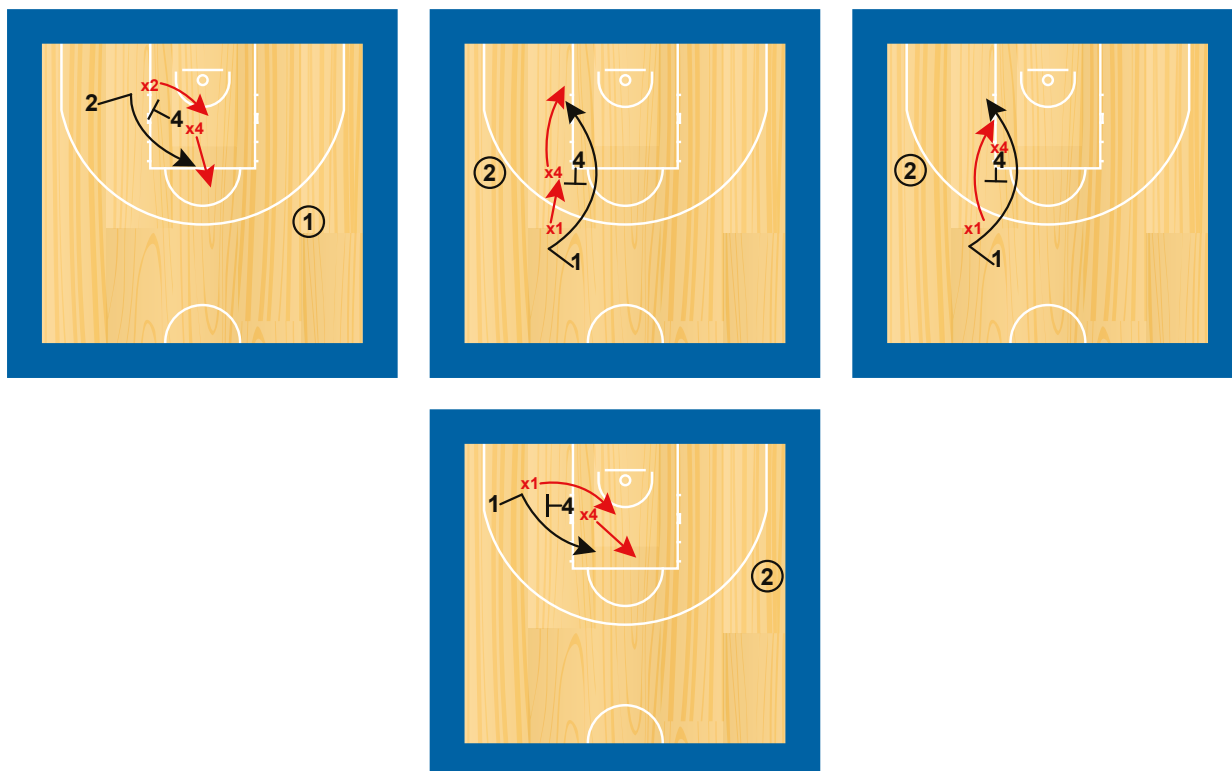
1.2.3 DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS – "THROUGH"

The defender of the screener steps to the ball, creating a gap between them and the screener, which their team mate can move through. The defender of the cutter starts low, forcing the cutter to use the screen and then goes on the other side of the screen, moving quickly to intercept the cutter.

# 1.2.4   DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS – "SWITCH"

In "switch" the two defenders swap responsibility for guarding the offensive players. This is most commonly used where the two offensive players are similar (e.g. a "guard to guard" screen or a "big to big" screen), although particularly late in the shot clock a team may switch all screens. In switching, the defender initially guarding the screener must move aggressively to deny the cutter the ball. The other defender must similarly move quickly to establish a position to defend the screener.

1.2.5   DEFENDING ON BALL SCREENS – "UNDER"

Similarly, when defending an on ball screen there are 5 techniques that can be used to defend:
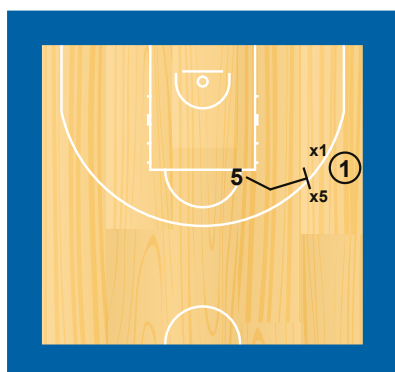
- under
- over
- through
- switch
- double
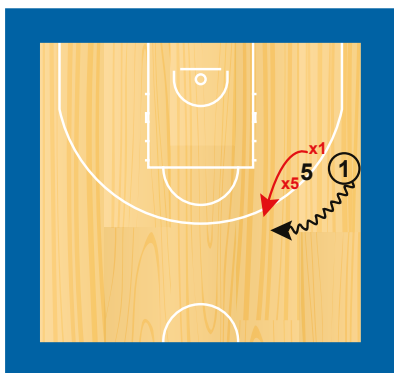
GUARDING THE ON BALL SCREEN – UNDER

x5 plays tight on the screener so that x1 can go underneath the screen intercepting the dribbler before that they can move closer to the basket. Whilst the dribbler should be looking to attack the elbow, x1 must stop the dribbler getting to the keyway.
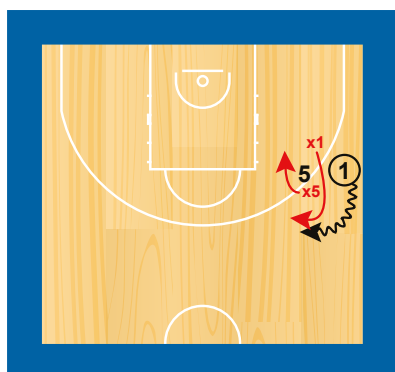
1.2.6 DEFENDING ON BALL SCREENS – "OVER"

GUARDING THE ON BALL SCREEN – OVER

As 5 sets the screen for 1, x1 must move to take away the base line drive, forcing Player 1 to move in the direction of the screen.

x5 has their toes pointing to the sideline and steps out from the behind the screener to "show their number" and force the dribbler wide.

As 1 dribbles, x1 also goes over the top of the screen. They must get their hips past the screen and not simply lean the top part of their body. x5 steps out to ensure that the dribbler must go wide, giving x1 room to recover.

x5 then recovers to guard 5, ensuring that they are on the ball side of that player.

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1.2.7   DEFENDING ON BALL SCREENS – "THROUGH"
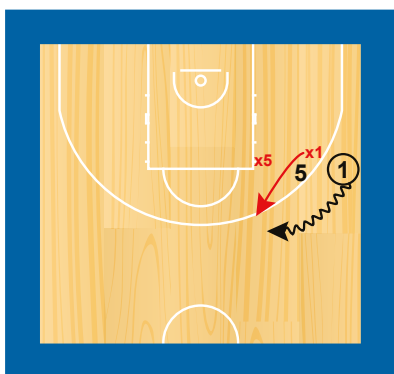
GUARDING THE ON BALL SCREEN – THROUGH

x5 steps back from the screener, so that there is a path that x1 can use to go under the screen to intercept the dribbler before they can make any penetration to the keyway.

1.2.8   DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS – "SWITCH"

In "switch" the two defenders swap responsibility for guarding the offensive players. This is most commonly used where the two offensive players are similar, although particularly late in the "shot clock" a team may switch all screens. In switching, the defender initially guarding the screener must move aggressively to deny the cutter the ball. The other defender must similarly move quickly to establish a position to defend the screener.