2.3.3 SCREENING ANGLES AND ALIGNMENTS - ADVANCED PICK AND ROLL

The "pick and roll" (or "on ball screen") is one of the most common plays in basketball.

There are many different angles and alignments that can be utilised by teams using the "pick and roll".

Importantly, despite the name, the screener does not always "roll" (cut to the basket) and may "pop" (move to the perimeter) or re-screen. Some fundamental rules for both screener and dribbler are:
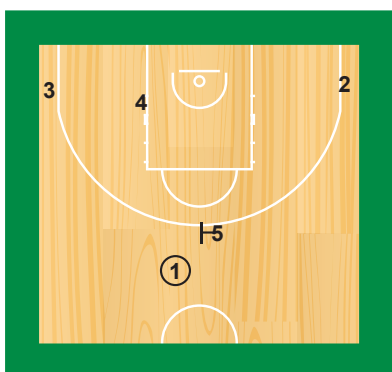
SCREENER:

- "Set-up" – be a threat before going to set the screen
- Sprint into the screen – arrive to set the screen before the defender is there
- Screen angle is important
- Separation after dribbler uses the screen – either pop or roll

DRIBBLER

- Starting point – this will be relative to where the defence is. Move the defender to the screen.
- "Set-up" – be a threat before using the screen. Beat the defender away from the screen and then use the screen
- Separation away from the screener
- Score – be a scoring threat and force the defence to react to you.

Below are descriptions of various alignments that can be used for "pick and roll" or "on ball" screens.

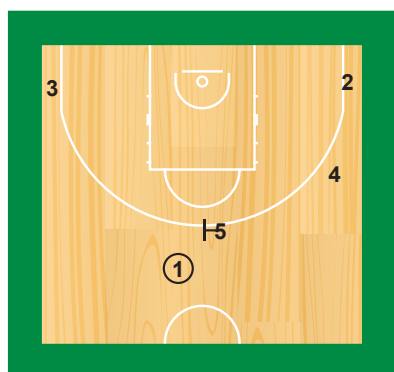"Mid Pick and Roll", which can be set on either side depending upon the dribbler's preference. The screener has the back to a sideline, or may be slightly angled toward the baseline corner.
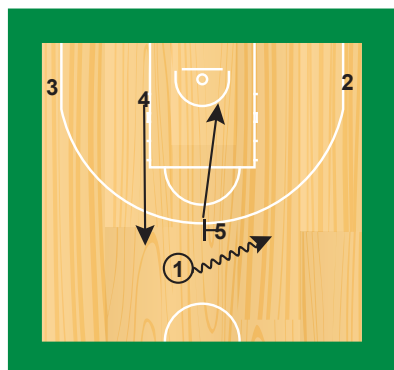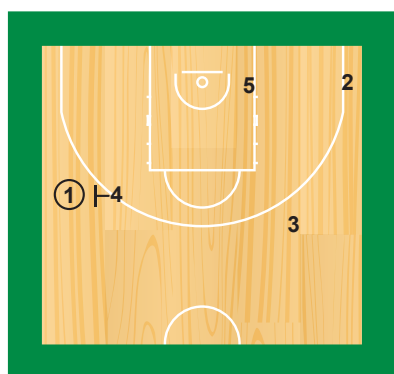
As a general rule, if the screener "rolls" and moves toward the basket, the other post player replaces them.
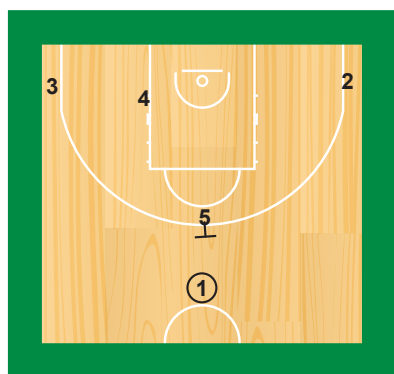
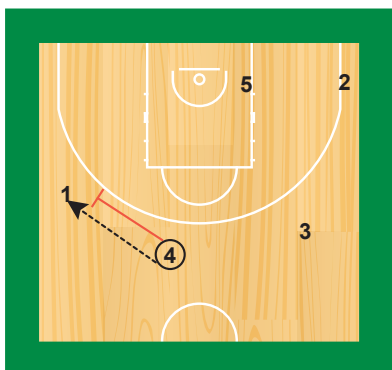"Flat" pick and roll, where the screener has their back to the basket.

"Lifted Middle Pick and Roll", where the other 3 players are on the perimeter.
This creates more space for the screen to roll and for the dribbler to "attack the rim".

"Side Pick and Roll", with a triangle on the opposite side. The low post player starts below the block.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
BASKETBALL
COACHES

The screening angle must allow the dribbler to play "downhill" (i.e. moving toward the basket. Accordingly, the screener does not move from the point directly to the wing, as this is a poor angle. The dribbler (to use the screen) would be moving away from the basket.
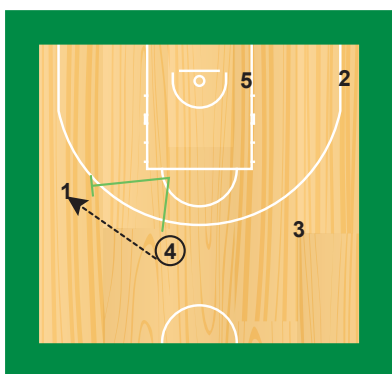
The correct angle is set by initially attacking the basket and then moving to set the screen. This is an example of the screener "setting up" the screen by first being an attacking threat.

When the dribbler uses this screen they are attacking the elbow.
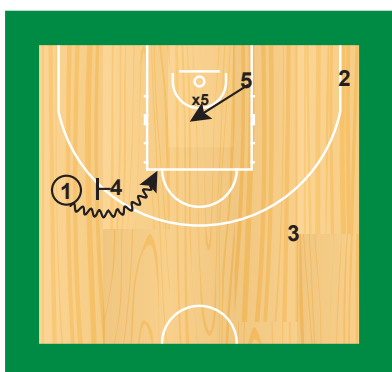
As 1 uses the ball screen the low post player on the opposite side "reads" the defence.

If their defender (x5) is low, 5 may "duck in" to establish position in front of them.
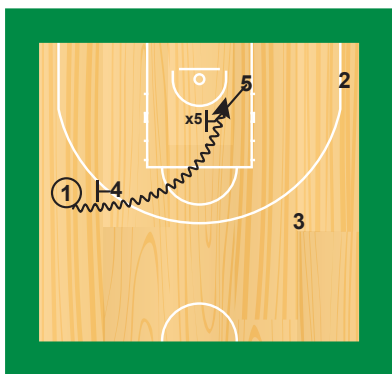
If x5 plays higher, 5 can set a screen to the side, enabling 1 to penetrate to the basket. This is most effective if the defenders of 2 and 3 are not collapsing and instead are "sticking" to their player to stop open perimeter shots.

5 can also set a screen on x3, to enable 3 to get an open shot on the perimeter.

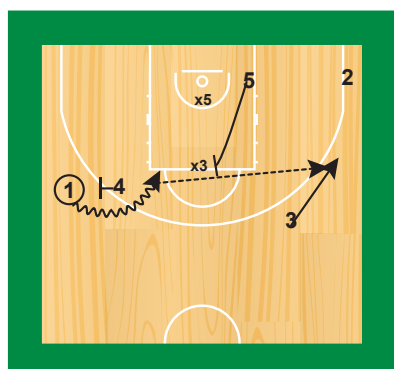Finally, 5 could "flash" high, to receive a pass at the top of the key. Again, this is most effective if x3 is not playing on the help line (and accordingly the high post area is clear).
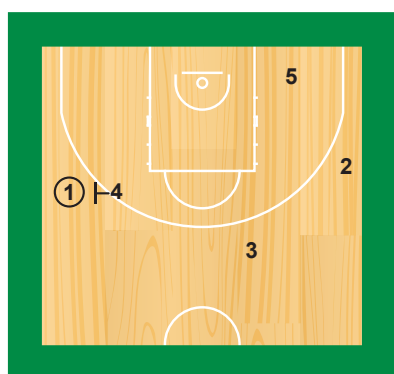
"Spread Side Pick and Roll" places the low post player in the short corner. Again, this is designed to move help defenders away from a position where they can help either defend the dribbler or the screener rolling.
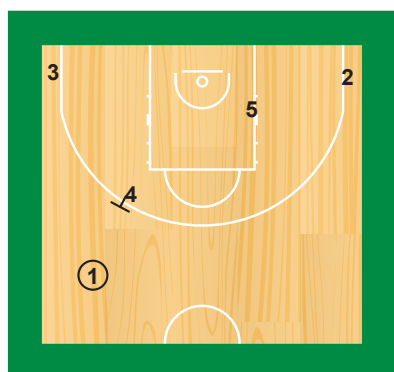
"Angle Pick and Roll", where the screener faces the corner at half way and sideline.
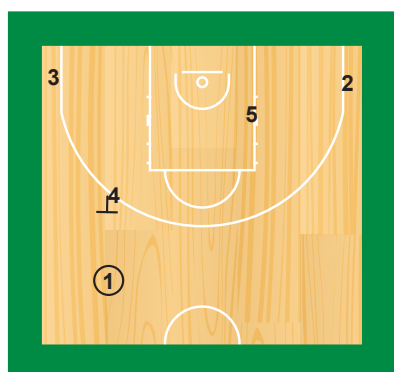
"Step Up" or "Flat Screen", where the screener has their back facing the baseline. This is particularly effective where the defence is forcing the dribbler to the side and the screen defender is stepping off to defend penetration ("Ice" or "Push" defence).

COACHES MANUAL
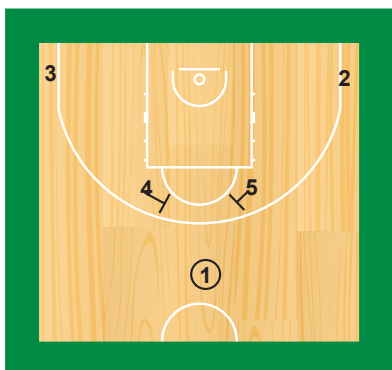
"Horns or 'A-Set" is a very popular offensive alignment. It can be set "tight" (at the elbow) or above the 3 point line.
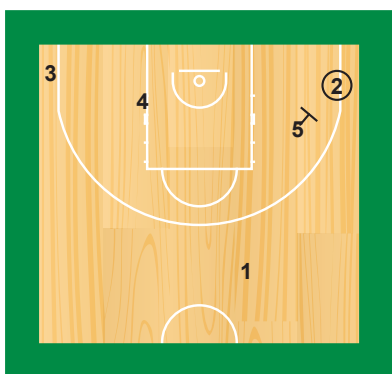
"Corner Pick and Roll" should be used with some caution, as it presents an opportunity for the defence to double or trap the ball in the corner.
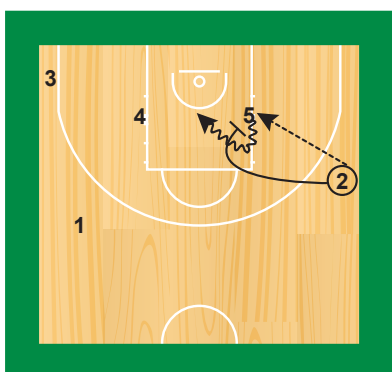
"Brush Pick and Roll" is where a guard passes to the low post, cuts toward the basket and then screens for the low post player. It is a difficult screen to "switch" as it would create a mis-match for the defence.
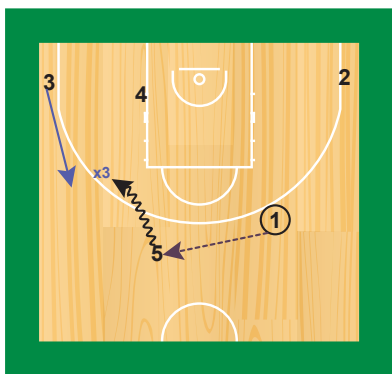
"Dribble Screen" is similar to, but not the same as, a dribble hand off. Here the screener dribbles directly at the defender, effectively adopting a normal screening position but with the ball.
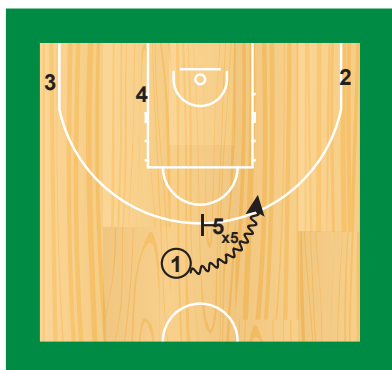
To effectively use the pick and roll, the dribbler must react to however the defence opt to defend the screen.

The screen defender may "strong show", which is designed to make the dribbler flare and create room for the other defender to get to position.

When the screen defender does this, the ball handler must attack the "high" hip of the screener.
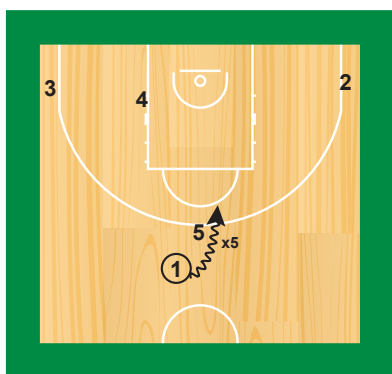
If the screen defender steps away from the screener, the dribbler should "split" the defence and attack through this gap.
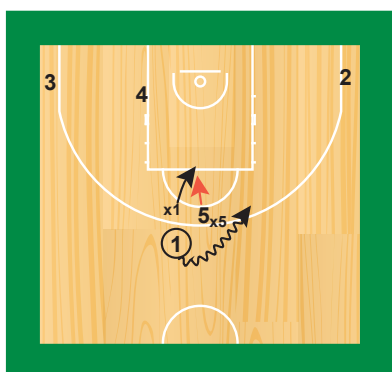
When the defence opt to go under, the screener should roll. This will impede x1's progress to get back to the defender.

If an opponent often goes under ball screens, the screen should be set lower on the court. The dribbler should be ready to shoot.
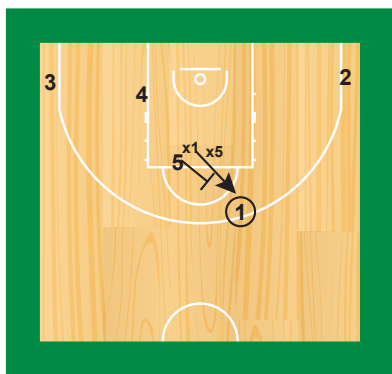
As the defender recovers to the ball handler, the screener can move to re-screen, coming from behind the defender. This will make it very difficult for them to go under again.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
BASKETBALL COACHES
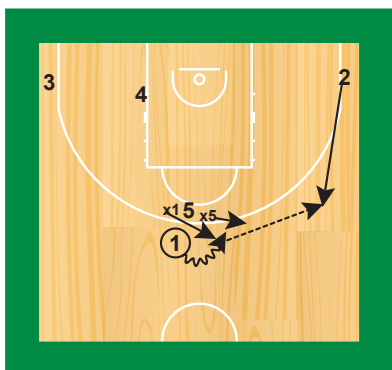
If the defence trap the ball handler, the wing player (from either side) should lift to receive a pass.
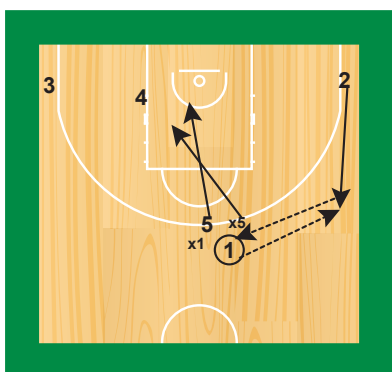
After the pass, the screener rolls to the basket, which will take their defender away. The ball can then be passed straight back to the ball handler, particularly in a late game situation if this is the player the team want to have the ball.
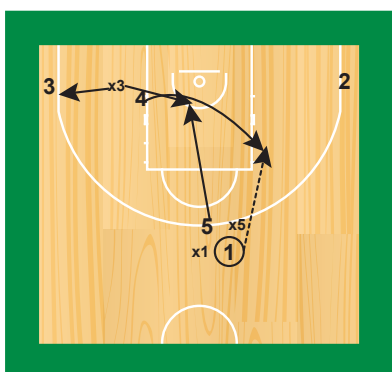
Alternatively, the low post play can swing up to receive a post at the post when the ball handler is double-teamed. The screener also rolls to the basket. This places the help defender (x3) in the situation of either defending the basket (5) or the corner 3. They cannot defend both!
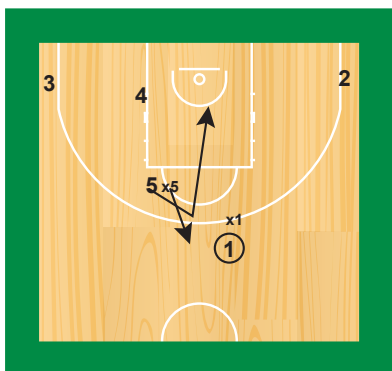
When setting a ball screen, if the screen defender moves above the screener, the screener should dive to the basket. This will often happen when the defence is going to "strong show".
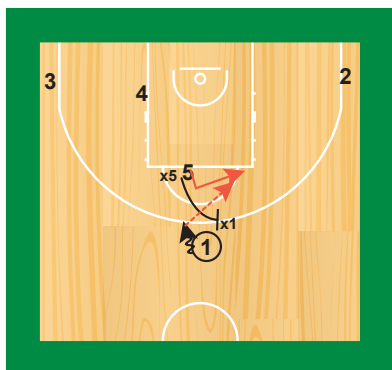
Often the defence will play "weak" – where they strongly force the ball handler to one side. The screener must ensure they set the screen on the correct side.

Alternatively, the screener can simply slip to the post to receive a "pocket pass" and then turn to look for (a) shot, (b) drive, (c) "high low" action with low post, or (d) pass to opposite corner.

FOLLOW-UP

1. How would you defend a team that used "Elevator Screens" to create a 3 point scoring opportunity at the top of the key (the screen set at the foul line)? What adjustment might the offence make to this tactic?

2. How do teams in your competition tend to defend the "pick and roll". What adjustment needs to be made by the offences against these tactics?

2.4 OFFENCE AGAINST ZONE DEFENCE

2.4.1 PICK AND ROLL (ON BALL SCREENS) AGAINST A ZONE

Many coaches advocate having an offence that can work equally well against "man-to-man" defence and zone defence.[17] The advantage of this approach is that the team does not need to specifically identify the type of defence the opponent is playing.

PICK AND ROLL (ON BALL SCREENS) AGAINST A ZONE

One of the most common offensive situations used at the moment is the "pick and roll" (or "on ball" screen), particularly in the middle of the court. Whilst this has traditionally been used against man to man defence, it can be equally effective against a zone defence.

INITIAL ALIGNMENT

One of the most important aspects for any offence to be successful is for there to be good "spacing" between players.

With an on ball screen in the middle of the court, spacing can have a player in each of the corners and also on one wing.

17 For example, Zeljko Obradovic in his clinic Match Up Offence, which is available on FIBA's YouTube Channel.
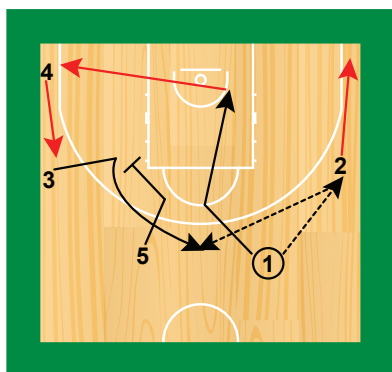
To get into this alignment early in the offence:

- 1 passes to the wing and runs to the opposite corner
- 5 sets a down screen for 3, who cuts to receive a pass from 2
- 4 lifts to the wing, 1 and 2 are in the corners.
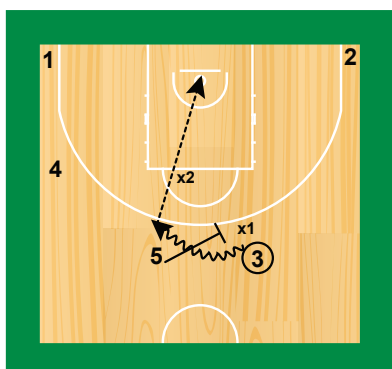
SETTING THE ON BALL SCREEN

In a zone, the defence will often not have a defender on the screener. In this situation, 3 must be prepared to shoot as they use 5's screen.
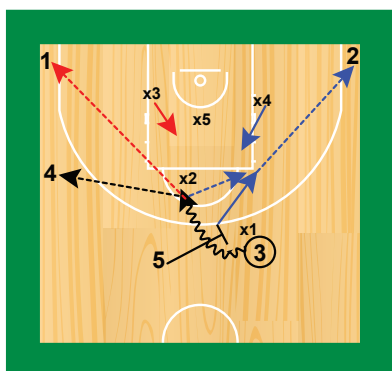
Alternatively, 3 can look to penetrate into the key:

- If x2 stops the dribble, pass to 4 (black)
- If x3 moves to help, pass to 1 (red)
- Pass to 5, if x4 moves to defend, second pass to 2 in the corner (blue)
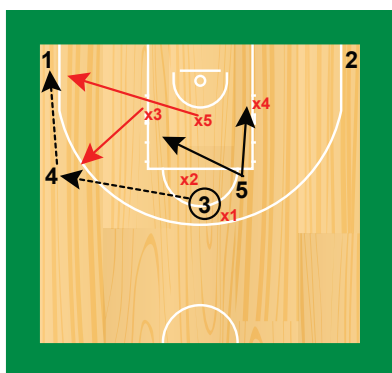
CREATING 2X1 OPPORTUNITY

A pass to 4, creates a situation of 2x1 between the offensive players 1 and 4 against defender x3.

If x3 rotates to the wing, a quick pass to 1, forces x5 to rotate to the corner. 1 must be prepared to drive, as this is clearly a mismatch.

READ THE DEFENCE

If 1 does not drive, 5 can cut to the basket and can:

- "Seal" x3 as they rotate back to the key;
- "Seal" x4 before they can rotate across the key.
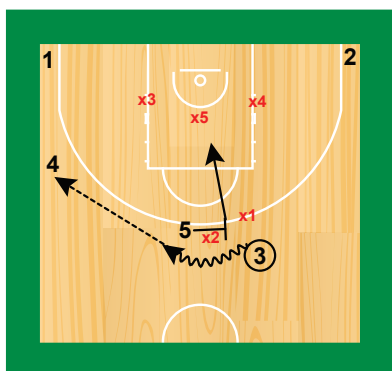
Particularly once the screen has been used effectively, the defence may lift the high post defender (x2) to "hedge" or even switch at the screening action.
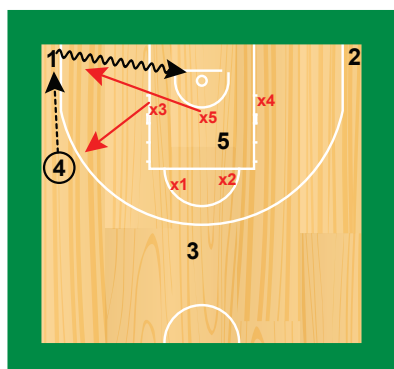
When the defence does this, a quick pass to Player 4 again creates the 2x1 situation between 4 and 1 and defender x3.

If x3 rotates to Player 4, x5 must close out to Player 1. This creates a great opportunity for Player 1 to penetrate or for Player 5 to seal either x3 or x4.
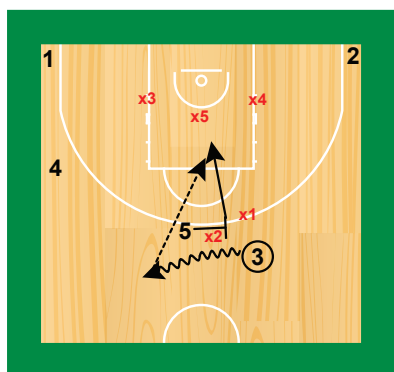
Player 3 can also pass to Player 5 as the cut to the basket. Often to make this pass, Player 3 should separate (dribble away) from the defenders.
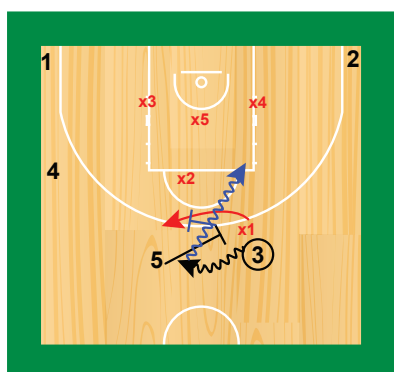
USING A RE-SCREEN

If x1 goes "under" the screen, Player 5 should turn to "re-screen", allowing Player 3 to change direction and penetrate to the elbow.
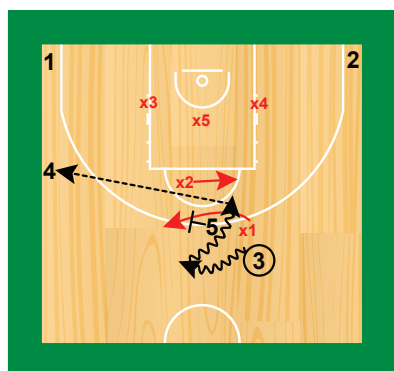
If x2 rotates to guard Player 3, a pass to Player 4 again creates the 2x1 situation with Player 4 and 1 against defender x3.
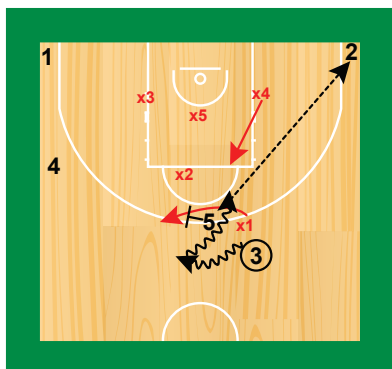
If x4 rotates to stop the penetration, a pass to Player 2 creates a shot or an opportunity for Player 2 to drive as x5 rotates to defend the corner.
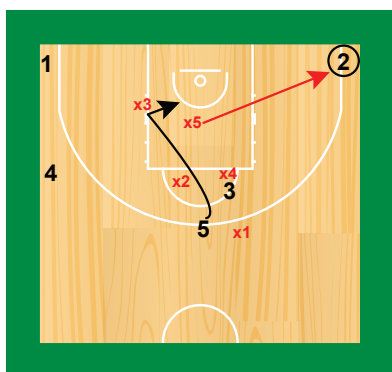
Player 5 can "seal" x3, rather than simply cutting to the basket.

If x5 rotates to stop penetration, this creates a mismatch with Player 3 possibly being able to drive past x5. Player 3 could also pass to Player 5 as they "seal" x3.
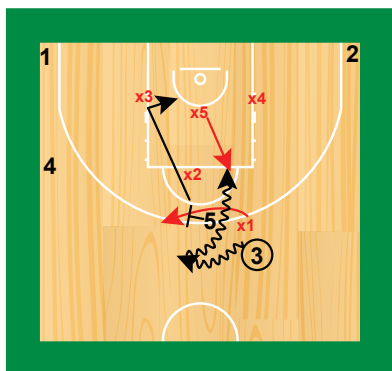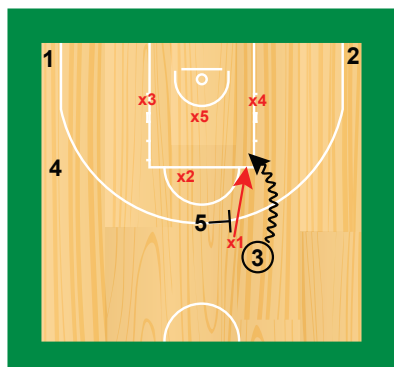
WHEN DEFENCE FORCE SIDELINE

An increasingly common tactic is for the defender to force the dribbler away from the screen. x1 stands next to the screener, facing 3 – making it impossible for 3 to use the screen.

In "man to man" whoever is defending the screener (5) would move to the basket to help guard any penetration. In zone defence, no defender specifically guards the screener.
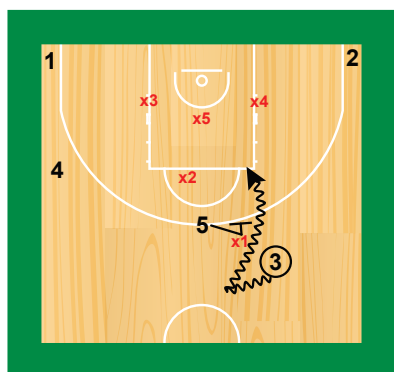
The screener faces the basket, making contact with x1 with the lower body. 3 penetrates, and 5 cuts into the key.

This form of defending the ball screen can be particularly effective closer to the sideline. When in this position, 3 should retreat dribble toward the middle of the court, 5 re-establishes position and then Player 3 drives at the basket.

3 must make sure that 5 has established position before driving, otherwise 5 is likely to be called out for an offensive blocking foul.

As demonstrated, the on-ball screen can create multiple scoring opportunities against a zone defence. Often the "second pass" is crucial in creating scoring opportunities as the zone will make an initial rotation effectively but a second rotation will often create mismatch opportunities.

2.4.2   DRIBBLE DRAG AGAINST ZONE DEFENCE

A simple entry to get into position to use a ball screen in the middle of the court can be used in conjunction with dribbling against the zone.
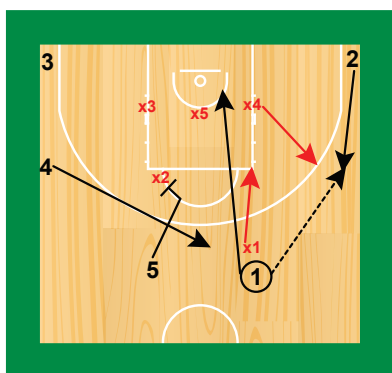
1 passes to the wings and cuts to the basket. 5 screens for 4 who cuts to the top of the key. Importantly, against a zone, 5 must "find" x2 to make the screen effective.
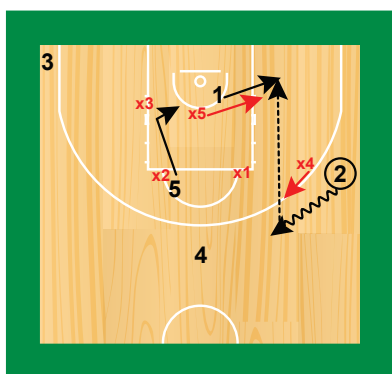
Rather than 2 passing to 3, they can dribble out of the wing – this is the "dribble drag", attempting to engage a particular defender. In most cases x4 will continue to defend, although may hand over to x1.

On this dribble, 1 moves to the strong side short corner to receive a pass. As x5 rotates to defend 1, 5 can dive to the basket and may receive a pass. 1 can also drive against the bigger defender.
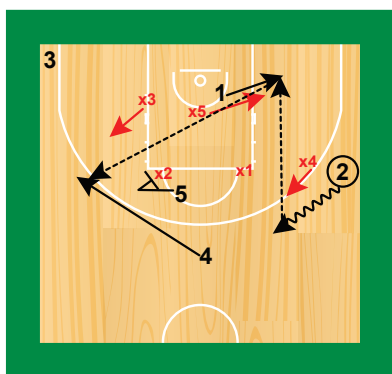
Often x2 will "front" 5 to stop the dive to the basket. This enables 5 to screen x2 allowing a pass to 4, which creates a 2x1 situation with 4 and 3 defended by x3.
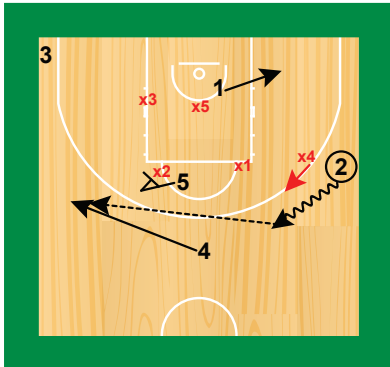
The same option can be created with a pass direct from 2 to 4, with 5 again screening x2.

2.4.3   1-3-1 ALIGNMENT AGAINST ZONE DEFENCE

Many teams when facing a zone defence resort to shooting from the outside and this is a significant part of the reason why FIBA recommends that children do not play zone defence until the age of 14.

However, a well constructed offence against a zone should create:

• Opportunities for penetration off the dribble;

• Shots inside the key and both high and low post play;

• Opportunities to shoot from the perimeter.

Below is a 1-3-1 offensive alignment that can achieve this.
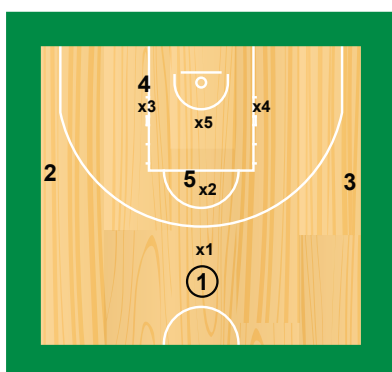
INITIAL ALIGNMENT

The 1-3-1 alignment is commonly seen. Against a zone it is particularly important for a player to be in a baseline position – behind the zone defenders.

If defenders "ball watch" it will often provide an opportunity for 4 to cut.
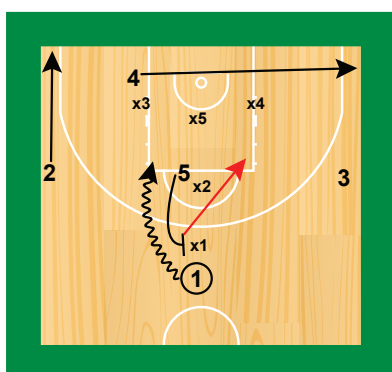
ON BALL SCREEN

The high post can set a screen for 1.

As 1 dribbles, 4 moves to the opposite corner and the strong side wing player also sinks to the corner.

The high post player steps into the key, but allow 1 room to penetrate.
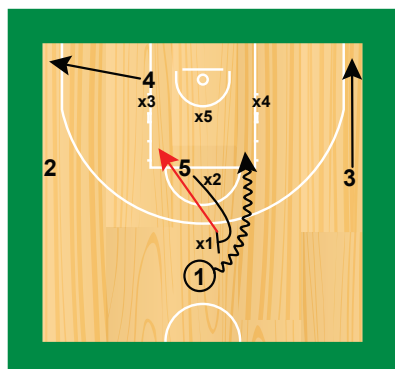
ON BALL SCREEN CONTINUED...

Whichever side that 1 dribbles has two players and the opposite side ("weak" side) has 2 perimeter players and the high post player.

This creates opportunities for the two perimeter players to have a 2x1 opportunity against one of the "frontline" defenders (e.g. 2 and 4 against x3).
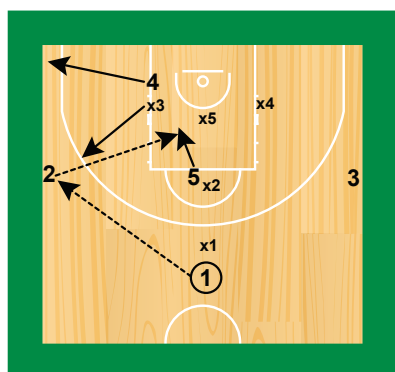
PASS TO THE WING

Many zone defences will defend a pass to the wing by having a frontline player rotate. By having Player 4 move to the corner, this can now create a 2x1 situation.

5 can also seal the high post defender or cut into the key to receive a pass. If x3 has moved to the perimeter, 5 can seal x5 rather than just cutting into space.
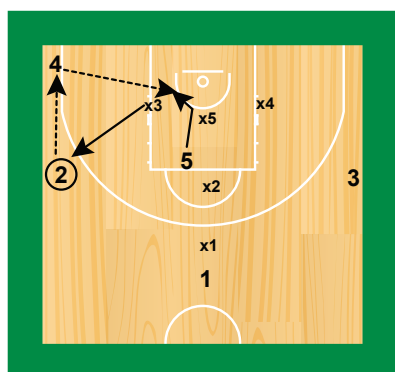
If the ball is passed to the corner, this provides an opportunity to pass the ball to 5 as they dive to the basket, sealing either x3 (as they rotate back to the key) or x4.
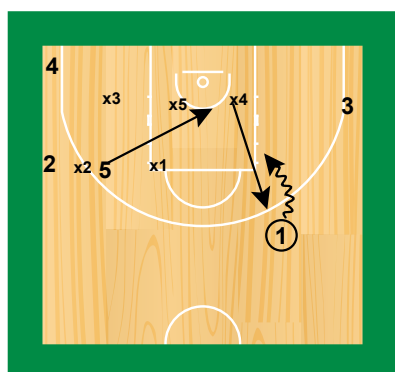
Passing the ball to the corner also provides the opportunity for 4 to penetrate, in which case 5 should delay their cut.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
BASKETBALL COACHES
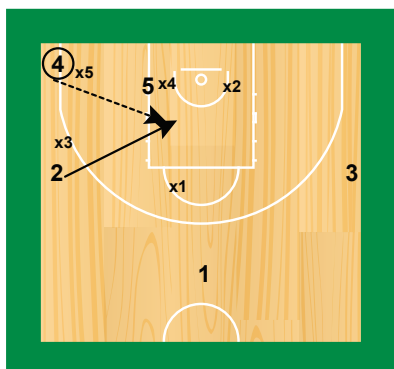
When the ball is in the corner, 2 can also cut to the basket to receive a pass. This is particularly effective if:

• The zone denies the pass back to the wing (x3);

• The post player establishes a low post position.
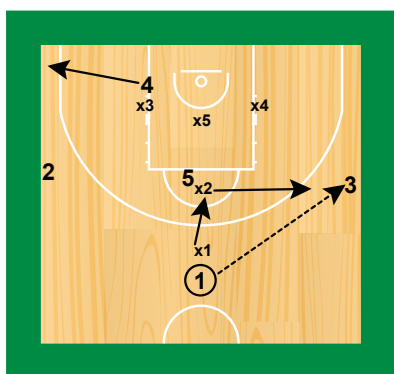
Other zones have the guard (x2) move to defend the pass to the wing. However the same 2x1 situation can still be created by:

• Passing to the wing

• The baseline player moving to the opposite corner

• "skip" passing the ball to the opposite wing
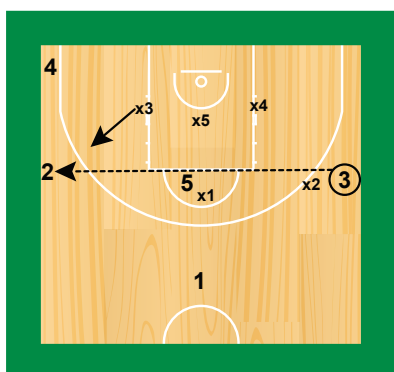
2 and 4 are in a 2x1 situation against x3.
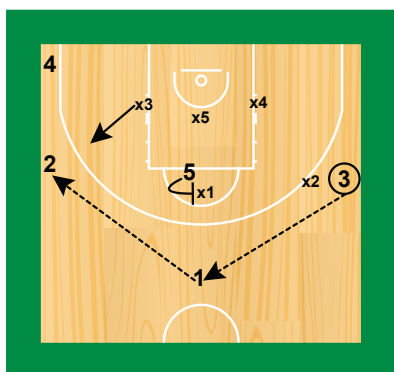
Young players may lack the strength to throw an effective "skip pass". Instead the ball can be reversed by passing to 1 who passes to the wing. 5 can screen the defender at the foul line to force x3 to rotate to the wing.
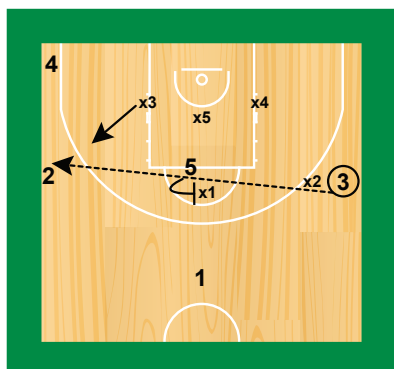
5 may also screen x1 to make the skip pass (if players have the strength to throw it).
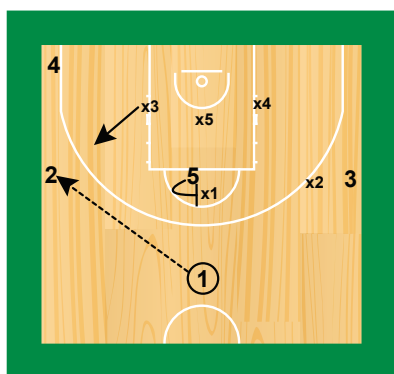
A third and similar way to create the 2x1 opportunity (at any time) is for the high post player to screen the guard on the pass to the wing forcing a frontline player to rotate and defend the wing player.
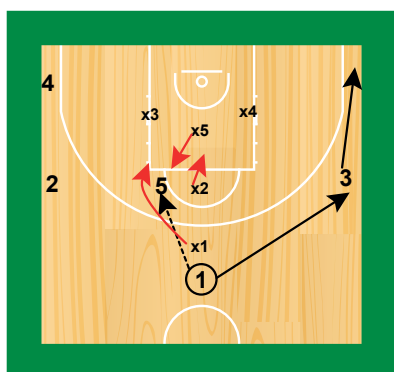
PASS TO THE HIGH POST

The High Post will often be defended by one of the frontline players when they receive a pass. The perimeter players should move to the corners and wing.

The zone is effectively in"man to man" now, with each player responsible for one offensive player. Anytime a player moves to "help" against the high post player, the high post player can pass to that offensive player. For example, if x3 helps, pass to 4.
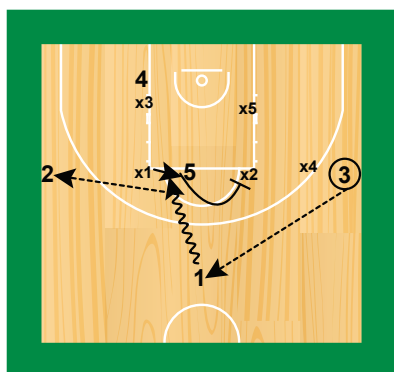
SCREENING OR FREEZING ROTATING DEFENDER

Another effective tactic can be to screen the defender that would normally rotate to defend the ball.

As 3 passes to 1, a screen on x2 forces x1 to be involved - any dribble should look to penetrate past x1. If x1 commits to 1, a pass to 2 creates a 2x1. If x1 slides across to 2, 1 can penetrate into the key.
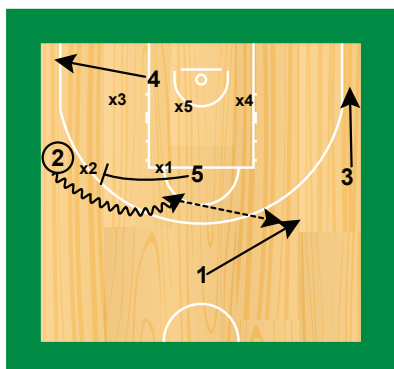
A ball screen on x2, forces x1 to defend penetration from 2.

A pass to 1, forces a rotation by x4 and a further pass to 3 would create a "scramble" as x5 rotated to the corner.
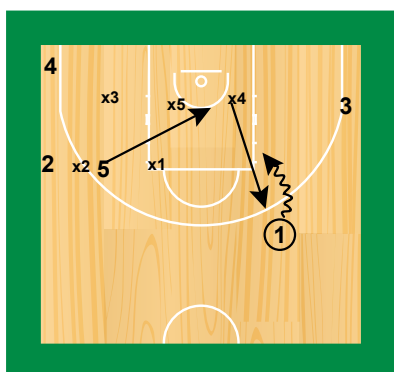
Here, x4 has a long close-out which presents an opportunity for 1 to penetrate, as well as 5 cutting (or "rolling") to the basket after screening for 2.
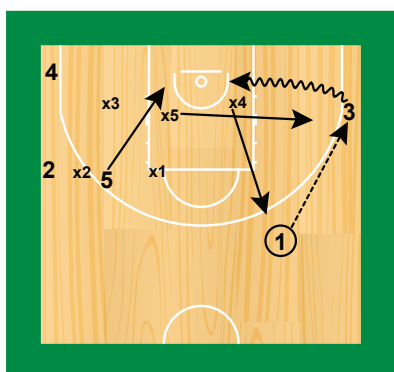
1 can also pass the ball to 3 in the corner, who may have the opportunity to shoot or drive. 5 still dives to the basket.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
BASKETBALL COACHES
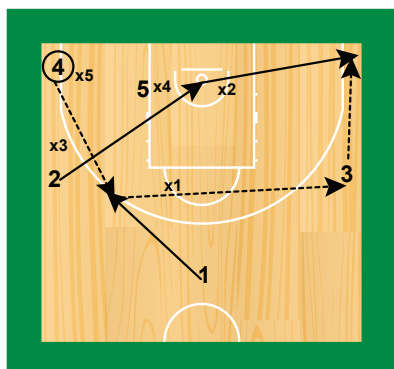
SWING CUTTERS

"Reversing" the ball (passing from one side to the other) can create opportunities to penetrate or get an open shot.

Here as 2 cuts to the basket, 4 passes to 1, who reverses the ball to Player 3. Player 2 follows through to the corner.

Alternatively, 4 could pass to 2 and then "Swing" or cut through to the opposite corner. The cut is often most effective, if they pause in the key and then sprint to the corner.

There are many offences designed to be played against zone defences, and some coaches will create a specific offence for each different zone that they may encounter.

It is recommended, when coaching young people, to have an offensive approach that is more versatile and can be utilized against both zone defence and man to man.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Have you instructed teams to use dribble or on ball screens against a zone defence?
   Do you think that your team could use it effectively? Discuss your view with a coaching colleague.

2. How does your team currently play against a zone defence?

3. Do you think a zone defence would be effective against the teams that you play? What offence do you think they would use?

4. Some coaches prefer to have separate offences for playing against "man to man" and zone offences whilst others have one offence to use against both. Which approach do you prefer?

2.5 OFFENSIVE STRUCTURE FOR SPECIAL SITUATIONS

2.5.1 BASELINE OUT OF BOUNDS

Basketball is a "fluid" game, moving from offence to defence without any "reset" of the play until the end of a quarter and the start of the next quarter.

This is quite different to many team sports that have:

- Play stopping after a score, to be re-started in the middle of the playing area by the other team (e.g. football);
- Play stops and the team that scored then re-starts play (e.g. volleyball).

There certainly are opportunities where play is stopped (e.g. fouls or violations), however generally play is dynamic and fluid, requiring players and teams to make decisions "on the run" within the context of their offensive and defensive rules.

There are a number of "special situations" where coaches may want to implement a different structure or have different rules. The "special situations" under consideration are:

- Inbounding the ball from the baseline;
- Inbounding the ball from the sideline;
- "Late" Shot Clock - offence when there are 10 or less seconds on the shot clock;
- "Last possession" plays – when a team is down by 3 points or less and has the last possession;
- Defending a Lead;
- "Catching Up" when a team is down with a few minutes left.

There are many books, DVDs and websites devoted to "plays" that can be used in each of these situations and many coaches have "favourite" plays or structures that they employ with their team.

This resource does not attempt to be a source for coaches to find various plays and instead the resource looks at the offensive and defensive principles that coaches must address, whatever "plays" they may ultimately choose to use.

Some coaches have intricate "playbooks" with different rules and structures for each situation and infinite variations. This is not necessary, particularly when coaching junior teams. Often, what is required is simply to emphasise a particular aspect of the team's normal rules of play. Whatever "playbook" or amount of rules a coaches wants to have, needs to be realistic having regard to both the experience of the players and the amount of preparation time the team has.

BASELINE OUT OF BOUNDS

This refers to when the offensive team has possession of the ball and is inbounding from the baseline at the basket where they are attempting to score.

There are a number of principles that coaches should consider in choosing how they want their teams to play the baseline out of bounds situation:

1. Focus on the fundamentals – passing, cutting and catching;
2. Moving away from the ball;
3. Moving to the ball;
4. "Little-Big" Screen
5. Screening the Screen;
6. The "safety catch";
7. Inbound player shooting.

FOCUS ON THE FUNDAMENTALS – PASSING, CUTTING AND CATCHING

The inbound passer cannot shoot the ball and has only 5 seconds in which to make a pass. The focus therefore should be foremost on getting the ball into play, not necessarily a scoring opportunity.

Particularly when coaching children, coaches should focus first on the ability for a player to get themselves open by:

- Changing direction and pace;
- Getting "foot advantage" and / or "sealing" their opponent;
- Cutting toward the ball and not standing still (which can allow a defensive player on the move to intercept the pass).
- Knowing that, once a player has cut toward the ball, if they do not receive the pass, they should continue to move so that there is space for a team mate to cut.

Equally, when coaching the passer, the coach should emphasise:

- "Fake a pass to make a pass" – move the defender's hands to create a passing lane / angle;
- Take a step back from the baseline to create space if the defender is standing right at the baseline;
- Not focusing on one particular pass, but instead looking to make the best pass. This is perhaps the worst aspect of using structured plays requiring teams to follow set movement – players get too focused on the option that is part of the play and may not see an open player[18]
- Don't let the referee's 5 second count rush the pass – a violation (which allows for defence to be set) is almost always better than an intercepted pass.

MOVING AWAY FROM THE BALL

Quite simply, there is not enough room on the court for 4 players to all cut toward the ball at the one time. Often a player will need to move away from the ball in order to create a space that someone else can cut into.

Young players in particular will often lack an appreciation of how their movement (or lack of it) affects a team mate. This can be illustrated to players through a simple warm-up activity called the Puzzle Game and the game also develops the player's understanding of how to move as a team to create opportunities.

18 See the discussion in the Section Skill Acquisition for Basketball for more information on the desirability of using broad instructions (e.g. "look for high percentage scoring opportunity) instead of narrowly worded instructions (e.g. "pass to Jane cutting off the screen at the elbow).
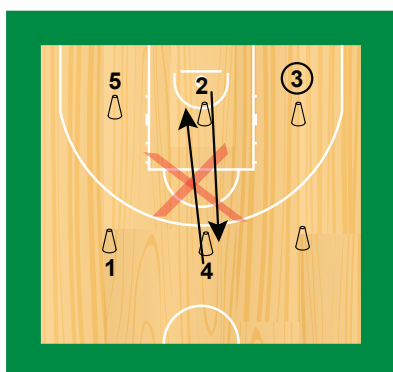
"PUZZLE GAME"

5 players do the activity, standing next to one of six cones. The rules are:

- Player cannot hold the ball more than 3 seconds;
- The ball can only be caught by a player standing at a cone;
- Players can move to the empty cone, but they cannot move past a cone that has a player (e.g. 1 could not move past 4 to go to the empty cone)
- Players can move at the same time but cannot move past one another (e.g. 2 and 4 cannot simply switch cones)
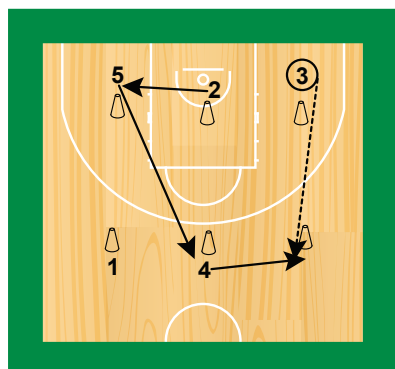
Here is an example of players moving at the same time:

- 4 starts to move toward the empty cone;
- 5 moves to replace 4;
- 2 moves to replace 5.
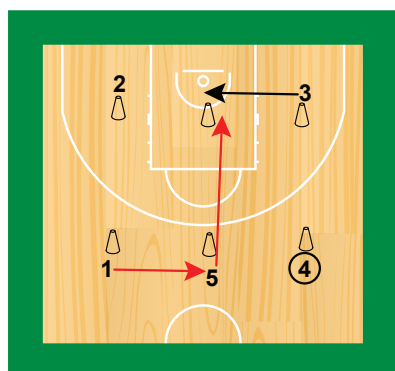
After this movement, the empty cone is now between 2 and 3. If 3 were to move to that cone, 1 would remain "trapped" and unable to move out of the corner.

However, if 5 (or 2) moved to the empty cone, it would enable 1 to then move to replace them. 5 moving is an example of moving away from the ball, to create a space for 1 to cut toward the ball.
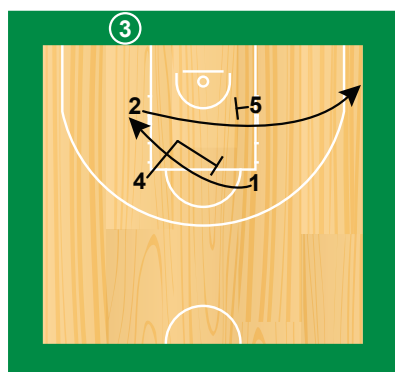
In this example, 2 cutting to the opposite corner creates the space that 1 can cut toward. If 2, for example, "sealed" and tried to receive a pass in the low post position, it would severely limit what 1, 4 and 5 could do.
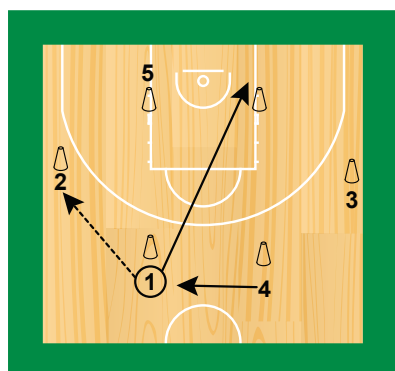
The Puzzle Game can also be used with positions on the court that are more aligned to offensive positions on court.

MOVING TO THE BALL

It is equally important that there are players moving to the ball and looking to receive the ball while they are moving. If offensive players cut and then stop, a pass will often be intercepted by a defender that continues to move.
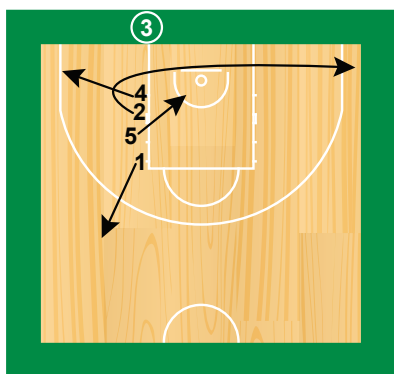
Even though 2 is moving to the opposite corner, by cutting to the basket first, they are likely to get a defensive reaction.

4 then moves away, creating room for 5 to cut to the basket.
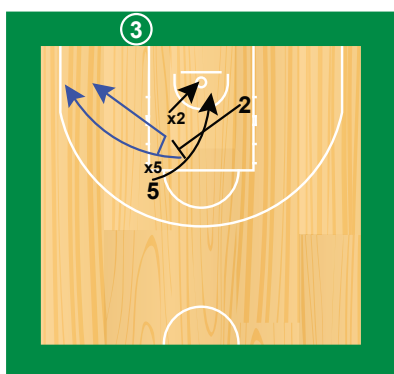
"LITTLE-BIG SCREEN"

Many teams will automatically switch screens on a baseline play. Having a guard set a screen for a "big" in this situation can create a mismatch.

2 screens for 5 and the defence switch. 5 cuts hard to the basket and looks to post against the smaller x2. 2 cuts to the perimeter, looking to isolate the bigger x5.
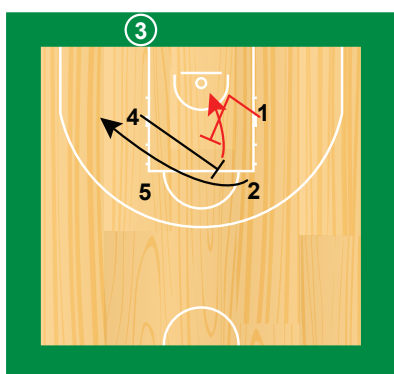
SCREENING THE SCREENER

A common technique in many baseline plays is to set a screen for a player that has just screened – hoping to create confusion amongst the defenders.

Here, 2 creates space moving up to screen for 2, who cuts toward the ball. At the same time, 1 steps toward the ball and then screens for 4 to cut to the basket.

After screening for 4, 1 cuts off a screen by 5.
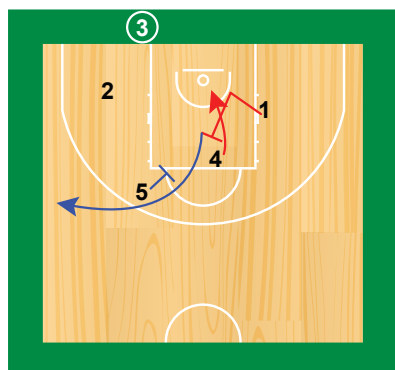
THE "SAFETY CATCH"

In this simple action there have been there has been 3 screens, which will require excellent communication by the defensive team to defend.

Most importantly, offensive players must adjust to what the defenders do – for example, if the defenders focus on stopping 4's cut to the basket, 5 may be able to cut straight to the basket.
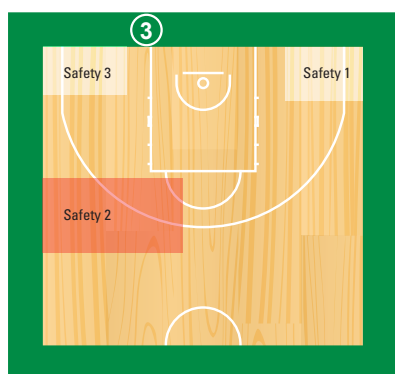
There are three "safety" areas, where players may get open.
Defenders are usually most focused on guarding the key.

• Safety 1 – the "deep" corner. This can be a very hard pass for juniors to make.
  If attempting the pass 3 should step back from the baseline as much as possible.

• Safety 2 – is often thrown as a lob pass, which is again difficult for many juniors.

• Safety 3 – is the easiest pass, although many defences will deny a pass to this area.
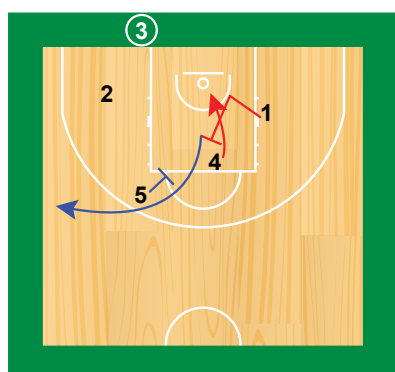
The cut to the perimeter by 1 in the movement shown above is an example of a "safety catch" – presenting an option away from the basket, which is relatively "non-threatening".
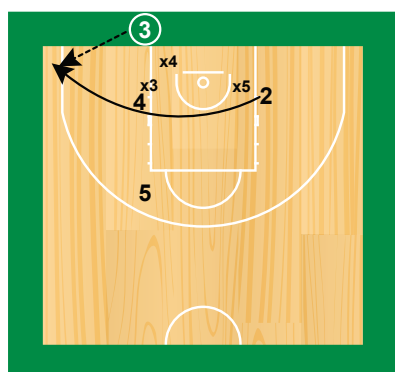
Against a zone defence, an early corner cut can be very effective. If a pass is not denied, then the ball can be entered easily.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
BASKETBALL COACHES
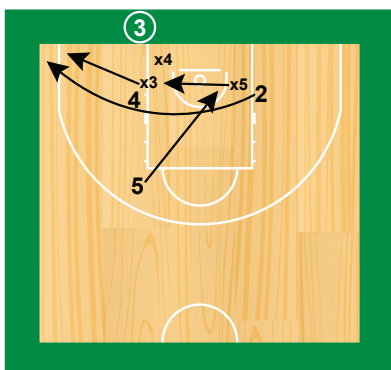
If the pass is denied (x3) this requires a rotation by the frontline (e.g. x5 moving to defend 4) and this can create an opportunity for 5 to cut to the basket.
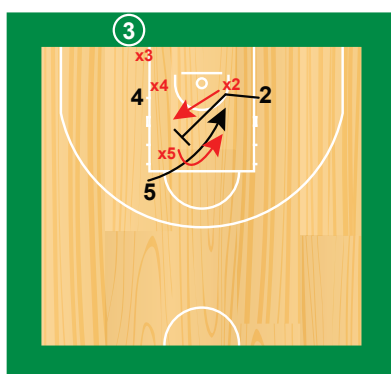
Against "man to man" defence it is often effective for the cut to the near corner to happen a little later.
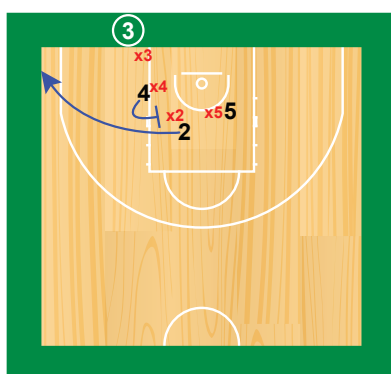
2 then cuts to the corner using a screen from 4.

Having both 4 and 5 in an attacking position near the basket (and they should look to receive a pass) can often draw the defence toward the basket, leaving the pass to the perimeter open.
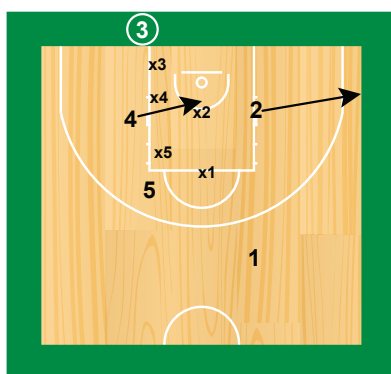
If the defence usually switches on screens, then it can be effective to "clear the space" in the near corner and then have a guard cut into the area.

Initially, both 4 and 2 move away from the ball, creating a space in the near corner.
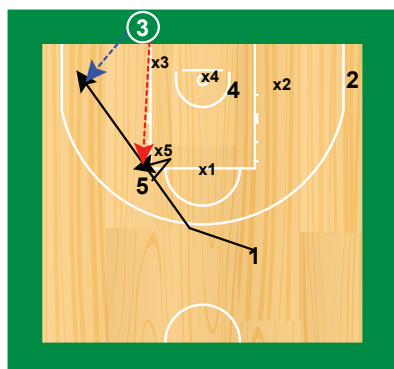
1 can then cut into this space while 5 can look to "seal" their defender to receive a lob pass.

1 could use a screen from 5, noting that 5 would need to find where x1 was - here x1 is at the foul line, not near 1.
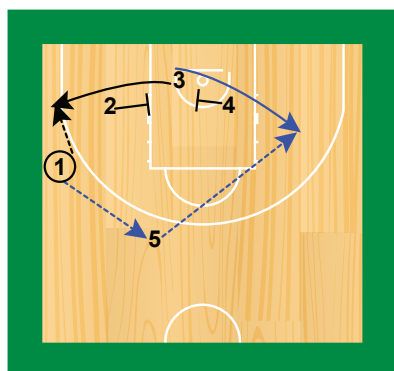
INBOUND PLAYER SHOOTING

This is the final "piece of the puzzle" – determining what the inbound player will do.

It can often be effective to have them move to a shooting position, often on the "weak" side. In this example, 2 and 4 set screens, so that 3 could cut to either corner. 5 also pops out to assist with ball reversal.

2.5.2   SIDELINE OUT OF BOUNDS

Again, there is a considerable amount of material about specific plays that can be used and the same general principles that applied to Baseline Out of Bounds, apply to a sideline play.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Some additional items for consideration are:

- Ensuring that players know where on the court the ball can be passed and, in particular, whether it can be passed into the backcourt. Players need to be particularly aware when passing to a player near the middle of the court, as a badly thrown (or poorly timed) pass may lead to a violation if it is caught by a player moving from the front court to the back court.;

- Knowing from where the sideline pass will be taken, particularly in the last two minutes of the game where an offensive team can call a time-out to "advance" the ball to the front court;

- There is often more scope for defenders to aggressively deny the inbound pass, and offensive players using back cuts can be effective.

SAFETY AREAS

There are two "safety" areas in the context of a sideline play, which, particularly for young athletes will be where most passes are made (see diagram 1) – to the middle of the court or toward the wing on the side of the court the ball is passed from. Few junior players can accurately pass the ball across the court.
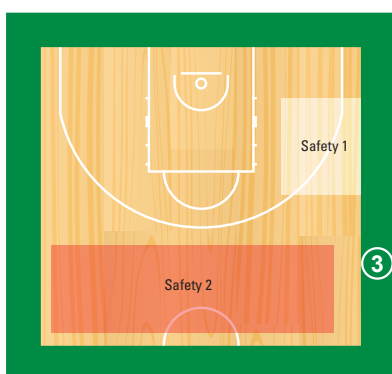
Diagram 1
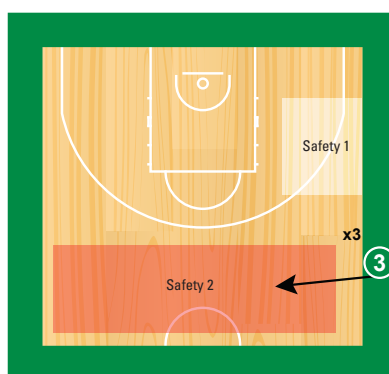
Diagram 2
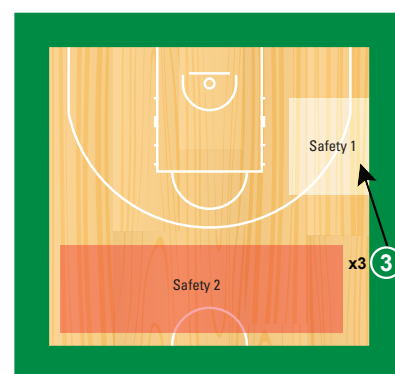
Diagram 3

Players should particularly take note of how the inbounds pass is being defended. In Diagram 2, the defender (x3) has their back to the baseline which means they are preventing the pass toward the basket or wing, so that a pass to the middle of the court may be easier. Whereas in Diagram 3, x3 has their back to the opposite sideline, which makes the pass toward the wing easier.
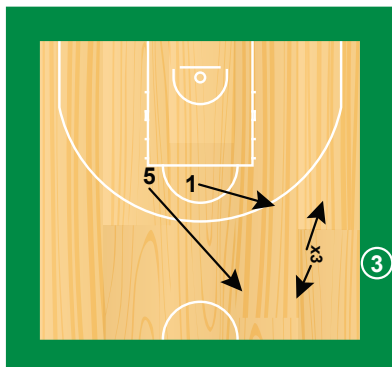
Another defensive method is for x3 to have their back to the inbounds passer so that they can see players cutting toward the ball and can deny those cuts.

This method is often used when the defensive team want to particularly deny the ball getting to one player. Here, x3 may strongly deny 1 from getting the ball, but not 5.

In this situation, having both players cut at the same time can help to have one of them get open.

There are many structured sideline plays, and coaches that want to use a structured play with junior teams should make sure that they emphasise:

• Players should "read and react" to the defence. For example, if a player is meant to set a screen, but their defender loses sight of them, then they should look to receive the ball;

• It is usually more effective for a player to catch the ball whilst they are moving, rather than standing still. If they stand still (or cut toward the ball and stop), the defender will often be able to steal the ball;

• After cutting to the ball, if a player does not receive the pass they need to move away from the area so that another player can lead to the ball.

Below is a simple structure that can be used with junior teams to inbound the ball from the sideline.
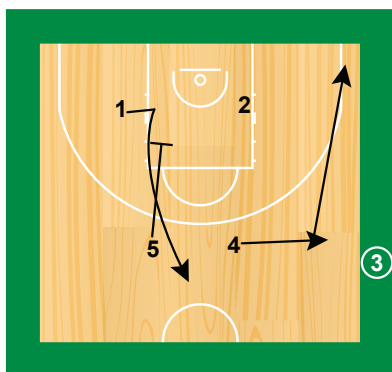
Players 1, 2, 4 and 5 start in a loose"box"alignment.

4 cuts hard toward the ball, while 5 screens down for 1.

1 cuts off 5's screen and 4 moves to the corner (to give 1 space to cut into).
This movement away from the ball will often provide the opportunity to pass to 4.
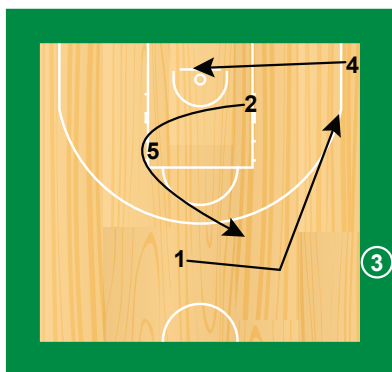
If 1 does not receive the pass cutting to the ball, they also move toward the corner, and 4 moves out of the corner.

2 cuts to the ball, and may move around 5 to create some "traffic" that may make it hard for their defender to continue to deny the ball.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
BASKETBALL COACHES

COACHES MANUAL
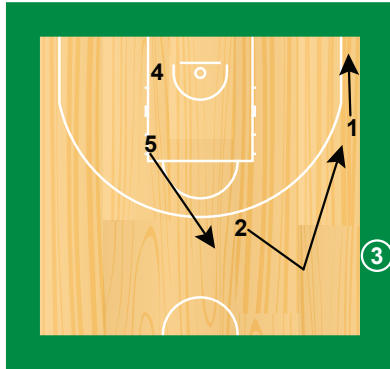
As 1 moves to the corner, and 2 moves toward the wing, 5 cuts toward the ball. This pass is often open because the defender on 5 is not as adept at denying a pass. If they do deny the pass then 5 can stop and "seal" to receive a lob pass.

2.5.3   LATE SHOT CLOCK

A "late shot clock" play is generally regarded as when there are 10 (or less) seconds remaining on the shot clock.

With the recent change to the shot clock only being reset to 14 seconds on an offensive rebound (instead of 24 seconds) the number of times in a match when an offensive team may be in a "late shot clock" situation is likely to increase.

In preparing teams for "late shot clock" situations, coaches should consider:

• Developing the awareness that players have of the shot clock;

• Offensive structure -
   what shot they want to get

DEVELOPING AWARENESS OF THE SHOT CLOCK

There are many "little things" that coaches can do to help to develop the awareness that players have of the shot clock. It is probably too late if during a game the coach has to yell "shot clock" as it gets below 10 seconds!

Some things that can be done are:

1. Use a shot clock in practice, preferably one that is visual not just a countdown by the coach. iPads or other tablet devices may have a countdown timer that can be used.

2. Have drink breaks at practice that are timed to be 24 seconds – helping players get used to the 24 second time frame;

3. Have players close their eyes and start counting on the coach's signal. They open their eyes when they feel that 24 seconds has passed. Most will raise their hands early;

4. Use a shot clock during scrimmage and reset it at random times. Whilst it is important that players learn the rules as to when a shot clock resets, they also need to be used to checking what is on the shot clock, and then communicating that to team mates. Some coaches place this responsibility on the point guard, however all players should develop it;

5. "Time and score" scenarios – have teams specifically practice "late clock" situations. This can be done by either:

   a. Setting a scenario at the start of a scrimmage such as, there's 12 seconds on the shot clock and the ball is on the wing;

   b. Starting a scrimmage with the rule that the team cannot shoot until the coach starts to count down from 10 – with this the coach can vary where the ball is (both location on the court and who has it);

   c. In any scrimmage, having a 14 second "shot clock" on any offensive rebound (this could also be reduced to 10 seconds).

OFFENSIVE STRUCTURE

Some coaches put in place a specific structure when the team is in a late shot clock situation, such as:

• On ball screen;

• "Flat" – ball to the point guard, other four players along the baseline;

• Dribble penetration and either shoot or pass to the perimeter for a shot;

• Get the ball into the key (either dribble penetration or pass to a post), attack the basket and try to shoot

• Ball reversal (to try to create opportunity for either dribble penetration or a shot).

What a particular team chooses to do will depend upon their level of experience and skill. With a young team, an on ball screen might be disastrous as it only creates a situation where there are now two defenders near or on the ball!

With young teams the rule may be as simple as if you have the ball and are in a position to shoot, then shoot!

Part of the offensive structure might also be for designated rebounders to move toward the key, as a shot will happen soon.

With more experienced teams, the most important element is to get the ball into the hands of whichever player will make the best decision of what to do – whether that is shoot themselves, penetrate or make a pass to a team mate.

Teams also need to know who they want to shoot the ball - which player has the best chance of scoring. This will obviously depend upon the skill of each player but may also depend upon what "mismatches" exist.

2.5.4   LAST POSSESSION PLAYS

"Last possession" plays are where a team is down by 1, 2 or 3 points and has possession of the ball and there is time for "one possession" – up to 24 seconds. There are two different situations:

(a) There are literally only seconds left and a shot needs to be taken very quickly;

(b) There is more time and teams will often "run down" the shot clock until there is 5-7 seconds to go before shooting. This allows some time for an offensive rebound and second scoring opportunity.

Either situation can occur in general play (e.g. taking a defensive rebound and the new offensive team having the last possession) or with the ball to be inbound from either the baseline or sideline.

Whatever the situation, all players on the team need to know how the team is approaching the situation, whether that is a structured play or the application of a rule (e.g. dribble penetrate into the key).

In designing a structure for a team to use, or deciding what to do in a particular situation, coaches should take into consideration:

- Have options for 2 point and 3 point shots. In each situation, make sure that every player knows what the game situation requires. When a team is three points down, the defence may "give up" a two point shot (to avoid fouling and giving the offence a possible "3 point play");

- Have more than one option to receive a pass;

- Make sure options are realistic for the players that you have. Particularly with junior teams, do they have the physical strength to throw long passes? Will a lob pass be effective if players are not able to "play above the ring";

- Have options that are a realistic "catch and shoot" as well as having various elements (e.g. dribble penetrate and pass or reversing the ball). The amount of time left will dictate what options are realistic;

- Choose who should be the passer based on your particular players, not what a particular "play" might say. Often a taller passer may have an advantage, particularly if the passer is defended by a taller player (a common tactic);

- Be confident and believe you can score. The best way to practice that is to practice "time and score" situations.

These considerations are demonstrated in the following simple structure:
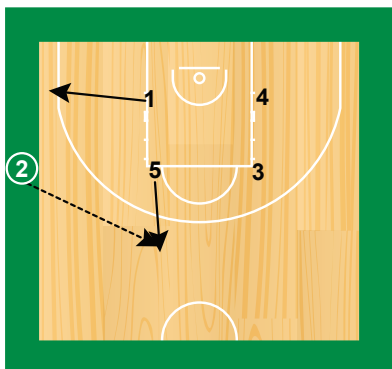
INITIAL ALIGNMENT

Players initially align in a "box".

5 cuts hard to the perimeter and 1 cuts hard to the corner. If there is only time to "catch and shoot" for the two players in these positions to be able to shoot from the perimeter.
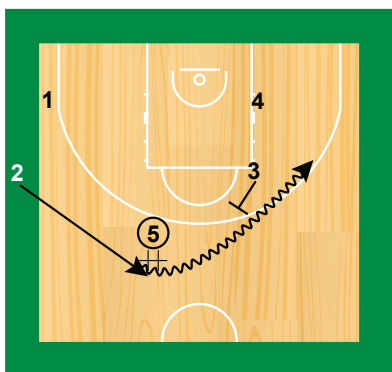
If the ball is passed to 5, 2 can sprint past for a hand-off from 5, looking to shoot off the dribble. Once they have the ball, 2 can also dribble off a screen from 3.
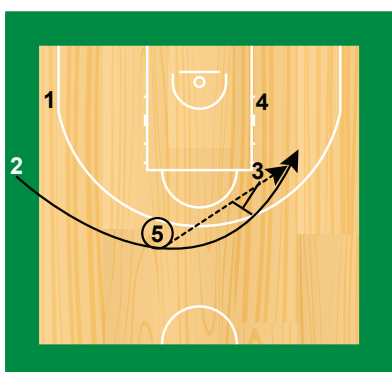
Alternatively, 2 can cut off 5 and a screen from 3, to receive a pass at the wing.
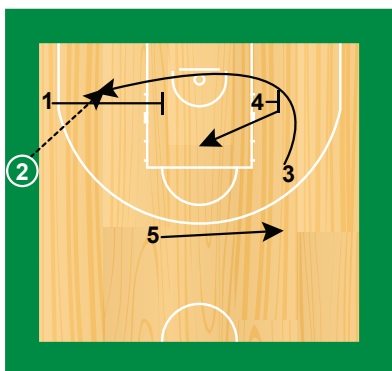
If the ball is not initially passed to either 5 or 1,

3 cut to the corner, off a staggered screen by 1 and 4.

After screening, 4 turns and steps toward the ball. 5 moves to the side.

3 should cut to where they want to shoot – it may be a 2 point shot or it may be a 3 point shot.
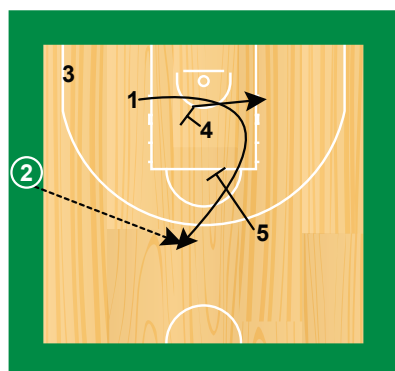
1 now comes off a staggered screen by 4 and 5.

After screening, 5 moves toward the ball and 4 moves to the opposite low post.
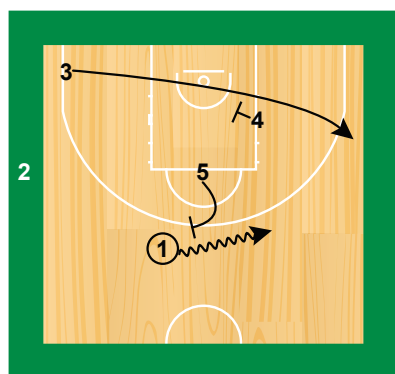
If the ball is passed to 1, they can come off a ball screen by 5, whilst 3 again cuts the baseline off a screen from 4.

2 steps into play and may receive a return pass for a shot.

How much time is left will determine to what extent the options shown are implemented. If there is little time, it may simply be that whoever catches the inbound pass needs to shoot.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Does your team have an automatic rule for offence in a "late shot clock" situation?
   Discuss with coaching colleagues what they do.

2. How often do you think your team gets a good scoring opportunity from a baseline inbounds play?
   Have someone record this at your next game – was your expectation correct?

3. Do you have a sideline offensive play? Discuss with other coaching colleagues their approach?

4. Who on your team would you want to take a "last second" 2 point shot or 3 point shot?
   Discuss with a coach that has watched your team play who they thought would take those shots.

CHAPTER 3

MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 3

MANAGEMENT

3.1 LEAGUE COACHING

3.1.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF LEAGUE COACHING

Coaching in a league typically means that your team:

- Plays in a competition that is played over a relatively lengthy period of time (the exact period very much depends upon the league). The season generally has four distinct phases:
  - Pre-season;
  - Regular season ("home and away" games);
  - Play-offs (finals);
  - Off-season (when players may continue to work with the team or may be involved in other programs (e.g. other leagues or national team commitments) or may take a break;
- Plays half of their games at home, which may include a greater variety of distractions to preparation than when the team is "away";
- Plays the same opponents a number of times during the season;
- Generally has a number of days rest between games;
- May be required to travel between games and this travel may be immediately before the game or be over significant distances;
- At the conclusion of the season in addition to overall "wins and losses", the record against a particular team may determine the team's position on the ladder.

The extent of preparation that a coach does will very much depend upon the team. A junior team may only practice once or twice a week, compared to a professional team where players are at the club every day.

Despite these differences, the context of "league coaching" (as distinct from tournament coaching) does need to be considered.

RECRUITING AND SELECTING A TEAM

A coach must seek clarity from the club about what level of control the club will have over the selection of players. In some contexts (e.g. a professional team) the coach may be actively involved with recruiting players, while other coaches (e.g. a junior team) may not actively recruit and instead must select a team from the players that express an interest in playing.

When recruiting, the coach should:

- Avoid promises of "court time" that the player will receive;
- Discuss with prospective players the role within the team that they believe the player might undertake;
- Consider involving players to assist with recruiting;
- Consider what stage of development the team is at (is playing in finals realistic in the near future?) and develop a strategy (approved by the club) to balance experienced players with young players that are identified as having potential to excel in future years, but not necessarily immediately;
- Determine the style of play that they believe will be successful in the league and recruit players that will excel in that style of play;
- "Recruit people, not players" – take time to get to know the personalities of prospective players, and recruit players that will fit the culture of the club and the personalities of the coach and the team;
- "Listen to the opinion of others but make their own decision" – coaches should seek the opinion of other coaches, managers and administrators regarding potential players, however ultimately the coach must make their own decision as to whether they want to recruit the player.

The biggest difference between recruiting and selecting a team is that the coach that is recruiting can be more targeted in identifying players to fit a particular style of play. If selecting a team it is often prudent to choose the game style after the team is identified.

When selecting a team, coaches should:

- "Not select players based on what they can do now but select them on what the coach believes they will be able to do" – this will include considering how "coachable" a player is and how they will fit within the team culture;

- Clearly state the selection process (and comply with it!);

- Use uncomplicated contested activities as much as possible – many coaches run "complex" activities or patterns of play, which may favour players that have previously been involved in the programme;

- Be methodical and take notes to ensure that all players have been evaluated;

- Seek input from other coaches;

- Spend more time with the players that they have not previously coached (some clubs will have an initial trial that is specifically for players that have not previously been involved).

Particularly when selecting a team, coaches must be prepared to provide some feedback to players that are not selected, and with junior players, this should involve areas for the player's continued development. In giving feedback, the coach should avoid making comparisons with other players and should keep comments in relation to that particular player.

PRE-SEASON PLAY

The length of a pre-season will vary from team to team. Often it is simply the period between team selection and their first game!

A pre-season is an important time to:

- Build aerobic fitness;

- Implement a basic offensive and defensive structure, including:

- Transition – offence and defence;

- Half Court – offence and defence;

- Breaking pressure – offence.

- "Experiment" with different styles of play or different roles for players. It can also be a good opportunity to evaluate new team members as well as see which players have "developed" their game;

- Start to "scout" opponents, particularly what style of game they may prefer and the characteristics of their key players.

Particularly with junior teams the offensive and defensive structure can be very simple. For example:

- Offensive transition may simply be
(a) "run the lanes" (as fast as possible),
(b) pass the ball ahead and
(c) 2v1 and 3v2 play.

- Similarly, defensive transition might be
(a) "Jam" the rebounder (make it hard for them to make a quick pass),
(b) defend the basket first and
(c) then put pressure on the ball handler.

PREPARING THE TEAM – 'WHEN' IS AS IMPORTANT AS 'WHAT'

Given that leagues are played over a number of weeks or months, often much longer than any pre-season period the coach has with the team, it is not necessary for the coach to have "put everything in" before the first game. In their plan, the coach should identify when each of the various concepts will be introduced, and this may include leaving some until the season has started.

It is a mistake for coaches to work first on structured offensive sets without ensuring that the players have the necessary fundamentals to effectively execute those sets.

Obviously the system and structures that the coach can have in place prior to the start of the league will depend upon the skill and experience of the team.

Some coaches also choose not to use various aspects of their playbook in the initial part of the season, so that teams "scouting" them do not see all the strategies that they may have in place.

This is a legitimate tactic to use, however, coaches should also be conscious that often when a team plays in a competitive situation, the coach will recognize different things that need to be worked on, beyond what they see in practice. This may be because at practice all players know what the team is doing and accordingly "cheat" or react not to what is happening but what is meant to happen.

Therefore, if the coach does want to keep some aspects of their play "secret" early in the season, they should look for other competitive opportunities to practice it – perhaps bringing in another team, or some other players, against whom they can to practice the strategy.

PREPARING TO PLAY AN OPPONENT MULTIPLE TIMES

Because teams play opponents a number of times during the season, league play provides an opportunity to be well prepared. However, it is important not to assume that an opponent will play as they did on the last occasion, because:

- They may be implementing patterns of play throughout the season;
- They may change tactics based upon what worked (or didn't work) on the last occasion;
- The last game may have been particularly good (or bad);
- The roles of individual players may have changed due to injury, form (good or poor) or other factors.

Accordingly, coaches should still scout an opponent, even if they have played them before, using video, statistics as well as notes taken after the last game (or series of games).

When preparing to play an opponent again, the coach should review:

- What worked well on the last occasion (e.g. particular screening action, type of defence);
- What tempo did the opponent prefer and how did they attempt to influence the tempo;
- How did the opponent defend key parts of the team's offence;
- Where there any particular "match-ups" where the team either had a particular advantage or disadvantage.

At the end of the season ladder position may depend upon the "split" between teams. Coaches must be familiar with the particular rules of their league, however often if the teams are otherwise equal (e.g. same number of games won-lost) the team that won the most games between them, or has the best points differential between them, will be ranked higher on the ladder. This adds additional importance to each game.

REVIEWING PERFORMANCE AND CHANGING TACTICS

Coaches will constantly review the performance of their own team and should spend at least as much time on their own team as they do "scouting" upcoming opponents. Their review should not simply look at ladder positions or "wins and losses" and instead should look at how the team is performing and how each player is performing.

When a team is not playing well, the coach must form a view on whether:

(a) The tactics chosen for the team are appropriate (but not necessarily performed to standard); or

(b) The tactics for the team need to be changed.

Some factors that need to be considered in reaching this decision are:

- Any injuries that the team has had;
- The player's comprehension of the tactics;
- The physical attributes and skill level of individual players on the team (particularly comparative to other teams in the league);

• The objectives for success for the team – is the focus short term (i.e. win the championship this season) or longer term (i.e. preparing the team to be competitive within a certain timeframe);

• How long does the coach have to make any changes (this includes both; at what point in the season the team is, as well as how often they train).

There is no definitive guideline to determine whether or not a coach should change tactics nor what changes they should make. Changes do not have to completely "throw out" what the team had prepared and instead the coach can consider:

- Changing the starting line-up or substitution pattern;

- Being more prescriptive about what options the team is to use and at what point in the game they will do so (for example, using a particular "start" before moving into motion offence);

- Changing the roles of players (e.g. moving a point guard to the shooting guard position);

- Preferring a particular option within their team's offensive and defensive schemes (e.g. opting to "go under" when defending ball screens).

PLAY-OFFS

Different leagues will have different formats for the finals (or "play offs"). Teams may play a "sudden death" game (e.g. winner of one game proceeds to the next stage) or they may play a series (e.g. first team to win 4 games proceeds to the next stage).

Whatever the format, it is likely that you will be meeting an opponent again that you have already played a number of times and accordingly, in preparation need to consider:

- What worked well against them previously (e.g. individual match-ups, tempo or patterns of play) and what adjustments they might make;

- In what areas did they have an advantage previously (e.g. individual match-ups, tempo or patterns of play) and what adjustments can be made to negate this;

- Has the opponent introduced any changes to how they play since the team last played them;

- What is the recent form of the opposition players and, in particular, is it likely that players will have different roles (either time played or positional role) than when previously playing against them?

When preparing for play-offs coaches need to anticipate what changes to tactics the opponent may make and, whilst there may be objective data (e.g. observation of what the opponent has done in other games) it also includes an element of speculation. In addition to watching the opponent's previous games (which, particularly with junior teams, may be difficult), the coach can consider an attempt to identify possible changes of tactics:

- Looking for opposition players that average more shots per game when playing against other opponents – they may take more shots in the play-offs than they did when played against them in the regular season;

- Which teams in the league are most similar and how did the opponent play against them – any difference in tactics may also be used in the play-offs.

OTHER FACTORS THE COACH SHOULD CONSIDER ARE:

- Keep the routine in the play-offs the same as during the regular season as much as possible – consistent preparation leads to consistent performance;

- "Control the controllables" – play-offs often involve short recovery time between games, more travel, more media commitments and these can easily become excuses for poor performance. Elite teams, however, do not let things out of their control impact performance and do not allow any team member to suggest otherwise.

PEAK PERFORMANCE

A season (including pre-season) is often very long and it is often difficult (if not impossible) to play to maximum potential for its entirety. Indeed, a measure of an elite performing team is often how they manage to win even when they are not playing well.

Obviously the team wants to be playing at its best at the end of the season, however coaches should avoid placing too much emphasis on it, after all the team must first qualify for the play-offs! Importantly, part of preparing a team to "peak" for the finals is to expect that performance will vary during the season and to remember that one poor performance does not constitute a "slump".

Some techniques that will assist to prepare a team to "peak" at the end of the season are:

- Use of objectives and measures that are within the control of the team to evaluate performance. For example, a defensive team cannot control how well an opponent shoots the ball, however they can control whether or not every shot the opponent takes was contested. The team may lose, but have contested every shot, or conversely win, but have contested less than half of the shots.

  "Confidence" is perhaps the most important element in determining whether or not a team (or player) is successful, and feeling "in control" of performance is very important to confidence.

- Give players physical rest during the season, which should be done in conjunction with advice from conditioning staff;

- Have conditioning staff work with players that are playing minimal minutes to work on all attributes of their fitness in an effort to keep the players "match fit";

- Make sure that players understand the importance of "physical recover" and that they undertake appropriate activities (whether on their own or as a team);

- Respect the differences between players some players will want to be at the club all day, every day. Others will do the "minimum" but equally value time away from the club;

- Encourage players to have interests outside of basketball and give them sufficient time that they can pursue such interests (including family!);

- Give players psychological "rest" during the season. Have assistant coaches or senior players lead some sessions (both on and off court) and schedule adequate breaks in the schedule;

- Incorporate "cross training" activities during the season, where players do non-basketball activities. For example, many principles of play are similar in other invasion sports (e.g. hockey, soccer) and using such activities can continue to develop the team but also give them a "break" from the long season.

SCOUTING YOUR OPPONENTS

"Scouting" is simply finding out some information about an upcoming opponent. In a league, one of the most effective ways to "scout" an opponent is to play against them and the coach should make notes at the end of each game that can be reviewed prior to playing that opponent again.

There are three distinct parts to scouting an opponent:

1. Getting information about them;
2. Deciding what your team will do in view of that information;
3. Presenting "the scout" to your team.

GETTING INFORMATION ABOUT AN OPPONENT

There are many ways to get information about a team, such as:

- Speaking to colleagues that are coaching in the league and have played them;
- Reviewing statistics and game results;
- Reports in newspapers or information provided by the league (e.g. on a website);
- Asking your own players – they may know some of the players from the other team
- Watching the team.

Which of these you will be able to do depends very much upon the league your are in, the resources that your club has and how much time you have. Most coaches (if they have the time) prefer to see the opponent "live".

Video does not always capture the whole court (particularly a TV telecast which often focuses on the ball) and it is also difficult to hear what coaches or players are saying during the game (e.g. calling a play).

Below are a number of things to take into account when watching an upcoming opponent:

DO	
	Watch the team warm-up. It's a good way to find out which players are left or right handed and an indication of how well they shoot from the perimeter
	Make a note of which players start each quarter and the first one or two substitutions each quarter
	Watch the game initially without taking too many notes – focus on tendencies that the team has (e.g. what defence do they play and is it aggressive?)
	Prepare a simple "scouting" document, so that you can take notes quickly ("ticking" boxes as you see tendencies or concepts of play).
	Use time-outs and other breaks in play to write notes
	Make a note of any particular game situations and what their response was (e.g. 10 points down with a few minutes to play, they went to full court press)
	Listen and see if you can hear what any plays are called

DON'T	
	Be a "fan" – simply observing and analysing the game

When scouting you must consider first, what is the team doing?
Secondly, what impact it may have upon your team? An example scouting form:

OPPONENT		FOR US TO CONSIDER?
TEAM DEFENCE		
"MAN-TO-MAN" DEFENCE		
aggressive or passive?		
pressure on the ball?		
get to the "split line"?		
rotate to "help the helper"?		
"block out"?		
double team post players?		
deny passing lanes		
release early to trigger fast break		
guard ball screens (switch, double, through, over or push)		
guard off ball screens (switch, through, under or over)		
ZONE DEFENCE		
alignment		
trapping?		
do they deny foul line area		
do they deny short corner		
are they easily screened		
PRESS DEFENCE		
alignment		
pick up point		
trapping areas		
trigger (free throw, time-out, score)		

This table is designed so that the coach may "tick" the shaded box when they see a particular defensive strategy or can make a very short note (e.g. "½" may be written in the shaded box if the pick-up point of a press is half way).

In the final column the coach can write notes about what their team might do in response to that defensive tactic.

A similar table could be used for team offence, particularly taking into consideration:

- Fast Break – do they look to break? What triggers it?
- Half Court – what alignment? How well do they move the ball? Do they cut well?
- Offensive sets – do they play any particular set or action (e.g. "Flex" or "Horns"). How do they signify what play to use (verbal or visual signs)?
- Tempo – are they a controlled team or do they prefer a quick tempo?
- Do they chase offensive rebounds – guards, forwards?
- Are they organized against a zone defence – do they look for inside shots or outside shots?
- What screens do they use? Do they "screen the screener"?

In relation to individual players, the coach may note:

- Which is their preferred hand?
- Are they a "shooter" or a "driver"?
- Do they look to pass?
- Which direction do they prefer to drive (often a right hand player may prefer to drive to their left)
- Do they "block out" in defensive rebounding situations? Do they chase offensive rebounds?
- Are they a screener or do they receive screens?
- Do post players turn to their left or right or face the basket?

DECIDING WHAT YOUR TEAM WILL DO

After watching the opponent play, the coach may have some initial thoughts on match-ups or particular principles of play (e.g. playing zone defence or looking to isolate a particular "match up" in offence").

The level of sophistication that the coach can use will depend upon the experience and skill level of their team. For example, the coach may have observed that their upcoming opponent did not play well against a zone defence. However, if their own team has not practiced a zone defence that may not be a strategy that they can use.

The coach's game plan should draw upon what they have been working on with their team. It may also prompt the coach to introduce some principles of play that they were not going to do until later (e.g. if an opponent plays a pressing full court defence, the coach may need to cover team strategies to "break the press").

PREPARING THE SCOUT

In a league situation, a coach will generally have some time to prepare and present their "scout" to the team – to be most effective it is recommended that the scout focus not on the opponent but on what the team will do.

The coach should resist the temptation to tell everything they know about the opposition (as this may overwhelm some players) but instead, need to present as little information as possible.

The Scout can be presented in a number of different ways, and the coach should be conscious of the different learning styles that their players may have.

PRESENTING THE SCOUT

With all information presented, the coach must be careful not to scare their team, even where the coach may believe that their team is unlikely to win the game. In this situation, identifying some key objectives (other than the final score) can be beneficial.

For example, the coach may set targets for rebounds, forcing turnovers or other elements of the game. Indeed, setting a goal such as to be within 4 points of the opposition every 5 minutes, can be a good focus. In the game it will enable the coach to "reset" every 5 minutes, irrespective of the overall game situation.

If a goal of being "within 4 points" every 5 minutes was achieved, the team may still lose by 30 points, however they will be able to gain confidence from achieving the goal.

WRITTEN SCOUT

The coach may prepare notes for their players about the upcoming game which can include information about the opposition or particular players and must include what their own team will do (including any match-ups that the coach may prefer). The level of information included will depend upon the experience of the team – the more experienced the team, the more information they may want.

The coach may work through the report at a pre-practice meeting, but should not simply read the document – the players can read it themselves. The coach should give some key information and then hand out the report, which substantiates those key points.

VIDEO

The coach may have been able to obtain video footage of the opponent and may wish to show some of the tendencies that the opponent has (either as a team or particular individuals). In preparing this footage the coach should make sure that they don't make the opponent seem better.

With experienced athletes they may even prefer to watch the game (either on video or live) or part of the game themselves. If doing this, the coach should then arrange a time to have the athletes talk about what they observed (this can even be done at half time of the game). In this discussion, the coach can make sure that any points that they observed are also included, but should let the athletes do most of the talking.

With junior athletes though, the more effective video may be of their own team, showing examples of where the team has performed the concepts that will be required against this opponent. Such a video should have a balance between successful examples and those where execution was poor.

Video sessions should be kept short and may be more effective with small groups rather than the whole team. Even then, 7-10 minutes would be the extent of concentration of most players.

WHITEBOARD

The coach may simply talk to the team about the scout, perhaps using a whiteboard to show any particular principles of play. Again, this should be kept short and its focus must ultimately be on what the team is going to do, not on their opponent.

"WALK THROUGH"

At practice, the coach can use activities to practice the particular tactics that they want to employ against the opponent. In doing this, it is obviously necessary for the team to also play like their opponent is likely to. However, rather than spending time teaching "this is what our opponent will do", the coach should present that activity based upon "this is what we will do".

A "walk through" session is most effective if it is reinforcing concepts that the team has previously practiced. Introducing a new concept during a walk through is unlikely to be effective, particularly with junior athletes.

SCOUTING YOUR OWN TEAM

It can be useful for a coach to "scout" their own team or have a colleague do it as this can provide useful information on the progress the team is making toward their overall objectives.

If the coach has an assistant coach, it can also be useful to arrange a practice game and let the assistant coach take the team while the coach observes from the spectator seating. This can provide an opportunity to give feedback to the assistant coach, which can be good for their development. It may also be that the assistant coach will make some different decisions that the coach would, which may allow the coach to observe players or the team in a different situation.

If getting videos of your own team, the coach should ask whoever takes the video, not to make comments during the game (which the video often also records). In replaying the video to the team, the coach should always turn the sound off, just in case there are comments heard on the video that may be upsetting to a player.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Discuss with a coach from another sport (that competes in "league play"):

   a. What tactics do they want in place before the season starts;

   b. Do they introduce tactics during the season;

   c. How do they ensure their team is performing at its best at the end of the season.

2. What records do you keep after a game? Do they help you to prepare the next time you play that team? Discuss with other coaching colleagues their approach.

3. What goals would you set a junior team when they are playing an opponent that beat them by 30 points earlier in the season? What goals would you use if your team beat an upcoming opponent by 30 points earlier in the season?

4. Discuss the following statement with coaching colleagues With junior teams (up to age 15) your focus should be on how they play not on changing tactics to suit particular opponents.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
BASKETBALL
COACHES

3.2 TEAM PREPARATION FOR (LONG) TOURNAMENT PLAY

3.2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF LONG TOURNAMENT PLAY

"Long Tournaments" are typically played by representative teams, with players chosen from a range of other teams (e.g. national teams).

"Tournament Play" is unique in many aspects and is characterized by:

- The team being likely to have had limited preparation together and may consist of players that are all "starters" on their other teams;

- Being played in a short time, no more than 2 weeks;

- The team having relatively little rest between games (perhaps 24-48 hours) and in junior tournaments may play more than one game on one day;

- Teams being grouped into "pools" and results in the initial 2-3 games may determine where the team are placed at the tournament. Regularly, a team may lose only one game (quarter final) and not gain a place in the Top 4;

- Variable game times, with games in the morning, afternoons and at night;

- Playing each opponent only once.

"Tournament Play" will often have many distractions for athletes, which are not present throughout a league, such as:

- Living away from home;

- The tournament may be a part of a "multi-sport" event with different sports finishing at different times (typically, basketball continues throughout the event);

- Changes to diet, sleeping routines (with different game times) and possible social interaction problems caused by "living together".

In preparing a team, the main things that a coach must consider are:

- Selecting the team;

- Selecting assistant coaches and "support staff"

- The Team's "Playbook" – preparing for what they will do on court;

- Organising the "off-court" – putting the tournament together;

- Understanding the Tournament Rules.

3.2.2 LONG TOURNAMENTS - SELECTING THE TEAM

A team competing at a tournament is often called an "all-star" team, however it is not simply a matter of selecting the 10 or 12 "best" players.

The coach must consider:

- The style of play they want for the team;
- The team having a "balance" (guards, forwards and centres);
- The selection policy and criteria set by whichever body is responsible for the team.

The coach will have a limited number of sessions with players in order to pick the team. These sessions should allow the players to "play", giving them an opportunity to demonstrate their skills. Most of the activities should be contested, whether that is 1x1, 4x4, an "advantage / disadvantage" situation (e.g. 2x1) or 5x5. The coach may do little teaching during the session, although they are trying to make an assessment of how "coachable" athletes are.

Typically, the coach may "set up" what they want done in an activity (e.g. ball reversal, with down screen) and this may reflect or include concepts that they wish to use with the team in the tournament.

The coaching staff need to assess each athlete in terms of what contribution they can make to the team at this tournament. This will include making an assessment of the player's:

- skill level;
- versatility to play a number of roles within the team;
- attitude – will they "accept" their role on the team, particularly if their role is likely to be as a "non-starter";
- understanding of team concepts and how responsive they are to coaching.

Ideally, the coach will have had the opportunity to watch the player play prior to the selection session, although more likely they have seen some but not all of the athletes. This makes selection particularly difficult because the coach may tend to prefer the athletes that they are familiar with.

The selection policy will include a process that the coach must follow. It is recommended that coaches:

- seek input from a "panel" of coaches;
- that all coaches involved in the selection process make brief notes on each athlete;
- in the selection meeting, work through the complete list of athletes being considered and group them into the role they could play on the team (guard, forward, and centre). Every athlete must be put into a category and this ensures that no athlete will be overlooked. An athlete may be included in more than one category;
- coaches should discuss each athlete after each session, working through the list logically (e.g. alphabetically) as this will help coaches to identify if there are athletes they want to see "more".

3.2.3 LONG TOURNAMENTS - PREPARING THE TEAM PRIOR TO TOURNAMENT

A coach will often have very limited preparation time with a team prior to a long tournament, perhaps as little as a few days.

During the period leading up to a tournament a player may be involved in another team or may be in an "off season" break. In either event, the coach should arrange to keep in contact with the athletes prior to the tournament.

The coach should keep in contact with athletes to:

- Check on their fitness, particularly to understand the progress of any injury rehabilitation or treatment for illness;

- Ensure that the player understands what role the coach wants them to play with the team at the tournament;

- Information about the tournament (e.g. game schedule, accommodation arrangements, travel arrangements etc) – often this may be provided by a team manager.

Whilst social media can be an effective way to keep in contact it is often better for the coach to regularly speak with them as this will help to build a rapport with the player. This may also be shared between the head coach and their assistant coaches, although many players prefer to have contact with the head coach.

Prior to the tournament, the coach may also share technical information with their players, such as:

- A "playbook" of what strategies and tactics the team will use at the tournament;

- Scouting information on likely opponents (both teams and players);

- With senior athletes, the coach may seek their input into team tactics or scouting.

3.2.4   LONG TOURNAMENTS - SCOUTING

SCOUTING OPPONENTS

"Scouting" an opponent in a tournament is similar to scouting them in league play, but there are significant differences:

- Less opportunities to scout them before you play them;

- There is less time to prepare "the scout" and present it to the team;

- At the start of the week, you will not know who you are playing at the end of the week – there may a number of teams that it could be – do you (can you) scout them all?

During a tournament, coaches will spend a lot of time at the competition venue, watching possible opponents. You may be able to get video-footage of these opponents. How useful that is will depend upon what resources the coach has:

- Does the coach have a TV / computer to watch videos on?

- Does the coach have software that enables the video to be broken down into small segments? Does the software do this automatically (by "coding" the video) or is it a manual process?

- If games are on TV, can they be recorded? If recorded, how is it put into a format where the software can break it down?

- Is there an assistant coach that can assist or take responsibility for preparation of the video?

- Do the coaches have time to prepare the video? They may be able to do some, but not all, games.

In most circumstances, the coach will scout an opponent by watching them play.

During a tournament, a coach may have less than 24 hours between knowing who their opponent will be and the game being played. It is not possible in this time to prepare lengthy "scouts", nor would the players be able to absorb that information.

The focus of presenting the "scout" to your team should be on what your team will do. You may set specific objectives that relate to what you have observed of your opponent (e.g. an objective for defensive rebounds, when an opponent is a good offensive rebounding team). You may also choose particular tactics (e.g. play zone, play a trapping defence) based upon observation of the opponent.

Whether or not a team will practice, or "shoot around" during the tournament is up to the coach (assuming that a venue is available) and will be influenced by when games are being played and whether or not the players would be better served by resting. If the team does practice, it provides an opportunity to walk through the specific tactics the team wants to use in the upcoming game.

3.2.5   LONG TOURNAMENTS - KEEPING PLAYERS FRESH

Long tournaments will be both physically and mentally tiring for both coaches and players and the coach must try to ensure that players are in good health at the end of the week.

Some key considerations are to:

- use physical recovery techniques during the tournament;
- ensure that players get enough rest during the week, including both getting enough sleep as well as resting during the day. Often choosing to go to the movies (which is sedentary) may be a better activity than "sightseeing, which may involve a lot of walking;
- give the players "time off" from basketball;
- allow for the players to have time with family or fans (this is particularly important for junior teams) but not so that it distracts the players;
- provide good meals for the players, keeping the food, where possible, similar to what the players are used to eating;
- only train when necessary (or if the players prefer to train) and to keep sessions short with minimal physical and psychological load.

Coaches should also consider the amount of time that players are involved in games and to provide rest, where possible, for the players that are playing the most time. For example, when winning by a large margin the coach may rest some of the "starters". In addition to giving players physical rest, the coach may also want to give all players in the team some court time, so that if they are called upon to play (e.g. due to foul trouble or injury of other players) they will have some confidence on court.

However, when considering giving rest to players, the coach must also be conscious of the effect that it may have on the team's performance or "momentum" in the game. Specifically, the coach should consider:

- rather than resting all "starters" at the same time, it may be better to rotate players in so that some starters continue to play;
- "win the game and then rest" is a maxim that many coaches follow. Even if an upcoming opponent is thought to be an "easier" game, making large changes to the starting line-up or substitution patterns may disrupt the team's performance. Accordingly, some coaches prefer to establish a good lead and to then make changes to substitution patterns;
- margins of victory can determine placings later in the tournament where teams are otherwise tied on "win-loss" ratio. Accordingly, the coach must make sure that they understand the tournament rules and do not compromise their final placing by having a reduced winning margin (or losing a game) when changing substitution patterns.

3.2.6   LONG TOURNAMENTS - COACHING STAFF

SELECTING ASSISTANT COACHES AND SUPPORT STAFF

Hopefully the coach will, at the very least, have input into who is appointed as assistant coach for the team as well as team managers and other support staff (e.g. physiotherapist).

Overall, the coach should look for an assistant coach that complements their own strengths and weaknesses and broadens the skill set of the coaching staff. For example, coach Phil Jackson utilized Tex Winter's experience and knowledge of the "triangle offence" with both the Chicago Bulls and Los Angeles Lakers.

It serves little purpose to have an assistant coach that will simply agree with everything that the coach proposes. The assistant coach must be prepared to provide feedback and comments to the coach that may offer a different perspective or to suggest a different course of action.

Once a decision has been made, the coaches must be consistent in how that is communicated to the players, even if the assistant coach had disagreed in the private conversations with the coach.

The coach should designate specific roles for the assistant coach to perform in games, at practice and throughout the preparation for the tournament and the period of the tournament itself. This should include the assistant coach having a role "on court" during the preparation period and at practices as this is important for them to build a rapport with, and the trust of, players.

Similarly, the roles given to the assistant coach in the game must be meaningful – if the assistant is to keep a record of certain statistics then the coaches ought to review those statistics and, when appropriate, provide feedback to the players drawn from the statistics.

3.2.7 LONG TOURNAMENTS - ORGANISING THE OFF-COURT

UNDERSTANDING THE TOURNAMENT RULES

The coach must understand the rules of the tournament, particularly if they vary the game rules (e.g. limit the number of time-outs that can be called).

Other rules the coach needs to understand:

- When teams are tied, how is their placing determined;
- Which team wears "light" and which team wears "dark" uniforms in a given game;
- Which changing room the team uses?

In regards to teams that are tied, the placings are usually determined by:

- If two teams are tied – whichever team won the game that they played against each other;
- If three or more teams are tied – Points Difference, but only for the games involving the teams that are tied.

Accordingly, coaches may be conscious in a game of the significance of a potential "points difference" however it is paramount, and FIBA expects that all teams will play within the Spirit of the Game.

There are a number of things that the coach must consider in preparing for each game in the tournament:

- "Scouting Opponents" (discussed earlier);
- Relationship with the Referees;
- Setting Objectives;
- "Player Satisfied" Index;
- Keeping Yourself Well;
- Delegate Responsibility.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OFFICIALS

During the tournament it is likely that teams will have the same referee officiate their game on a number of occasions. Coaches should strive to have excellent relationships with all referees. This starts with speaking with them before each game.

There is no "magic" secret to having a good relationship with referees – it is simply a matter of treating them with respect. Ask them how the tournament is going for them – engage them in a short conversation. Ask what trends they are seeing, they may have even officiated your opponent. The more a coach builds a rapport with referees, the easier it is to raise an issue if that needs to be done.

Each player should shake hands with the referees at the end of the game and do so sincerely and consistently. No coach would like to have players swear or yell at them, and nor should they accept a player yelling at a referee (and the coach must not either).

SETTING OBJECTIVES

In a tournament, there is little time between one game and the next and there may be emotional "highs" and "lows" that need to be forgotten and the next game to be the focus. By setting specific objectives for each game, the coach help the players to remain focused on the next game.

The objectives may be consistent throughout the week (e.g. keep opponents to less than 10 offensive rebounds) or they may be specific to that game, and that opponent. These objectives provide the foundation to evaluate performance in the game and this can be important to "forgetting" an exceptionally good or bad performance earlier in the week.

"PLAYER SATISFACTION" INDEX

This is not an actual index, however another aspect during a tournament is keeping players "happy". Players may be unhappy with the amount of court time (particularly if they are used to playing more minutes than they are at the tournament) or they may be unhappy with their performance.

By setting objectives for the team and for each player, the coach may be able to demonstrate to a player that they are having "success" and, often more importantly, that they have an important role in the overall performance of the team.

A coach may not be able to make the player "happy", and this is part of the mindset that an elite athlete needs to develop. Players need to be able to "move on" quickly from disappointments and should learn not to judge their "worth" based purely on court time. The coach's aim is for each player to be "satisfied" – satisfied that they understand their role on the team and satisfied that they are performing that role.

"Court time" is affected by a number of factors – including foul trouble, "mis-matches" with opponents, team tactics employed etc. The need to develop this mindset is not limited to tournament play, it applies to all forms of the game. However, the compressed timeframes of tournaments, may highlight issues. However, it is pertinent for coaches to recall that "all players will be treated fairly, but not necessarily equally" .

KEEPING WELL

Coaches often plan for tournaments in minute detail, develop intricate game plans and yet forget one of the most important factors – their own welfare!

Coaches need to ensure that they get enough sleep during a tournament and that they have some rest during the tournament – no coach can be "on" the whole time. Coaches also need to ensure that they eat well, which can be challenging when they spend a lot of time at the competition venues. However, it is just as important for a coach to eat well as it is for players to do so.

DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITY

No coach can do everything and no coach should try to do everything. The coach must be prepared to delegate some tasks to others within the team (e.g. assistant coach or team manager), not only because it will provide the coach with more time to focus on the performance of the team, but also because it will help to "engage" the others in the team.

If the coach tries to do everything, the others in the team may feel as though the coach does not trust them or they may feel that their role is unimportant and that there is little point in them being involved.

When delegating responsibility the coach must:

- Set clearly any parameters they have about how the task is done;
- Advise when they want or expect the task to be completed, including any report or feedback that they require;
- y "please" when delegating the task and "thank you" once it is done.
- Most importantly, let the person do the task!

For example, the coach may delegate to the team manager the responsibility for providing team meals. The coach may provide the manager with their pre-game and daily routine (e.g. how long before games they want to eat, what time players are to be in bed). The coach should then not need to make decisions regarding where the team eats or what they have for dinner.

FOLLOW-UP

1. What are the main differences between tournament play and league play?

2. What activities would you use in a selection trial for a team to compete in a tournament?
   What differences would you make if selecting a team for league play?

3. Once the team competing in a tournaments is selected, how would you communicate the structure with the players?

4. Discuss with a coaching colleague who has coached at a tournament:

   a. If they trained during the tournament;

   b. What "scouting" of opponents they did and how they did it;

   c. What adjustments the coaches made during the tournament to either the roles players had or structure of play?

5. Watch a game and get a video of it if you can. Limit yourself to 6 hours to prepare a presentation to your team to and prepare them for a game against one of the teams.

CHAPTER 4

GAME COACHING

4.1   FINISHING THE GAME

4.1.1   DEFENDING A LEAD

DEFENDING A LEAD

Having the lead with a few minutes left in the game is what every team aims to do. In many games the offensive team will seem to have a comfortable lead and the game will finish relatively quickly.

However, as anyone that has seen the video of Reggie Miller scoring 8 points for the Indiana Pacers in 9 seconds of play against the New York Knicks[7] knows the game is not over until the final siren sounds.

Many teams seemingly find it difficult to defend a lead when their opponent starts to catch up.

At its simplest "defending a lead" is just continuing to do whatever it was that got the lead! Obviously, the opponent can only get back into the game if they are able to outscore the opponent. This places maximum importance on both teams getting the best shot opportunity that they can each possession. An excellent activity to practice this is the Two Halves Scrimmage:

- Designate two teams (3x3, 4x4 or 5x5) who will play against each other for two periods (e.g. 3-5 minutes each half). They play in the half court and the coach can stipulate any particular "rules" in order to change the emphasis of the drill;

- After the defence get the ball, either through a steal, rebound or an offensive score, the defence goes to the other end to score unguarded. They can shoot a two point shot or a three point shot and continue shooting until they get a score;

- The defensive team then return the ball to the offence and play to again play contested in the half court;

- At half time of the scrimmage, the defensive team should have a lead – as they scored on every possession! Teams switch in the second half, so that the team that was on offence is now on defence.

- Pressure is placed on the new offensive team (who most probably have a lead) because they know that every time the defensive team have the ball they will score.

As important as "shot selection" is, there are a number of other things which the coach should consider when preparing their team (and also coaching during a game) for preparing to defend a lead.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FREE THROWS

Commonly, a team that is down will foul their opponent so that little time is taken before the team that is down next get a possession. If the team that is fouled makes the resulting free throws, it is harder for the team that is down to catch up.

Teams need to practice free throws every practice and need to do so under "game-like" pressure, such as:

- Taking free throws when tired (e.g. after running);

- Only taking a small number of shots (1, 2 or 3) at a time;

- Imposing a penalty when shots are missed (e.g. have a drink break if made, sprint full court if missed);

- Activities where every player must contribute (e.g. the team must make 10 shots in a row, each player shooting once). This type of activity can seemingly place more "pressure" on the shooter as the team gets closer to the goal.

- Shooting while there are distractions (e.g. playing loud music, allowing players to yell and try to distract the shooter)

Coaches should also be conscious of who are the better free throw shooters in the team and look to get the ball into their hands so that it is more likely to be them that is fouled and has the free throws.

RESTING PLAYERS

Once a team has established a lead it is often an opportunity to rest some starters and to give more court time to players that do not usually play as much. This can be particularly important during a tournament in order to give key players a rest and it is also for the development of the other players.

However, the danger is that the opponent may "catch up" whilst the substitutes are on and then that team has the momentum even when the starters come back into the game. Some coaches avoid any problems by not changing their substitution pattern. This is not the recommended approach as it will both increase fatigue of the "starters" and is also a missed opportunity to develop the other players.

The development of all players on the team must be a key focus for any coach of a junior team. Whilst the coach may plan to use only 6 or 7 players, injury or foul trouble often require other players to play.

The preferred approach is to rotate substitutes in with starters. By all means, once a lead has been established use the opportunity to give substitutes more court time but keep 1 or 2 "starters" on at the same time.

FOCUS ON DEFENCE

Once a lead has been established if the team that is leading stops the opponent from scoring again, they will win. As simple as it is, this should not be overlooked. A number of the strategies discussed here for defending a lead relate to offence, but great defence can be the most effective way to defend the lead!

This does not mean that teams in junior basketball that have a lead, particularly a substantial lead of 20 or more points, should continue to play "high pressure" defence for the whole game. Once a lead is established, junior teams should revert to a half court defence, but it does not have to be a passive defence.

Coaches can give players goals that are based on good defence, such as:

- Containing the dribbler;
- Intercepting passes;
- Denying the ball getting into the key (either by dribble, pass or rebound);
- Stopping shots being taken from particular areas (e.g. low post, corners).
- Forcing 24 second violations by the opponent or 5 second violations by an individual player

The coach should then give specific feedback on these goals, if possible having an assistant coach keep some statistics to demonstrate success. Sometimes the coach may give a particular goal (e.g. "let's get 5 possessions where they don't get the ball into the key") but equally just keeping track (e.g. knowing how many times a defender stopped dribble penetration without needing help) can be worthwhile.

MORE PATIENT OFFENCE

Some coaches will ask a team to be more patient in their offence – perhaps not taking a shot from outside the keyway unless it has first penetrated into the keyway (either by dribble or pass to a post player). The reason for this is because the quicker a shot is taken the more time that the opponent has for their "come back".

If this is different to how the team usually plays, the instruction can be misunderstood or misinterpreted by players. The coach should therefore make sure that the team has practiced whatever "slow down" rules they want to have in place.

Particularly for junior players, it can be hard to understand that the same shot (e.g. 3 point attempt from corner) can be either a good option (e.g. after "penetration and pitch") or a bad option (within 5 seconds of offence starting, without any rebounders in place).

To avoid such confusion, coaches should define "good" and "bad" not by reference to the shot itself (e.g. 3 point attempt) but by reference to the "process" factors (e.g. "after ball reversal", "after post touch").

KEEP DOING WHAT GOT THE LEAD!

This approach may at times conflict with wanting a more "patient" offence and if a team is playing a fast tempo game they need to realise that continuing to play at that tempo increases the number of possessions that an opponent has.

Often when an opponent mounts a "come back" the team that had the lead loses confidence and this can have the impact of making them play worse, giving more momentum to the "come back".

Often the "come back" is the result of the team with the lead changing what it is doing offensively (e.g. taking more shots from the perimeter), particularly if different players are on the floor. In this circumstance the coach needs to re-focus the team to what was working.

At other times, the change may have come about because the defensive team has adjusted to what the team with the lead was doing (e.g. the defence may have started to "double-team" a post player or play zone instead of man to man). In this circumstance, the coach should acknowledge what change has occurred defensively and then make any necessary changes to their offence.

PRACTICE "TIME AND SCORE" SITUATIONS

Similar to the "Two Halves Scrimmage" discussed above, practicing various situations (e.g. having a lead of 5, being down by 10) will give teams confidence that they can successfully "defend the lead".

In doing this the coach may also be able to institute some "rules" so that in a game they do not need to call a time-out to implement a specific strategy (for example, if a team has three possessions without scoring, the next position might run a specific play). This is particularly difficult for a team to scout.

In practicing "time and score" type situations, the coach should consider dividing their squad evenly, not playing the starting 5 against substitutes. The coach could also consider using 5x7 to really increase the pressure on their team.

SLOWING TEMPO

Where a team is trying to catch up they will often increase the tempo of the game, for example by playing full court defence or taking shots more quickly than they may usually do.

The team with the lead may deliberately attempt to slow the tempo, having players take a "5 second" or "8 second" violation rather than throwing a bad pass that could be intercepted. Walking the ball up the court, instead of quick transition (if the defensive team allow it) also slows the tempo, although the offensive team need to ensure that they allow sufficient time to get a good shot.

DON'T LET THEM STEAL SECONDS

A common tactic used by teams trying to catch up, is to make an inbound pass and let it bounce a number of times before picking it up – the reason for this being that the game clock does not start until a player in court touches the ball. Whilst this may not seem to make much difference, a team can easily "save" 2 to 3 seconds on a possession, which is 8 - 12% of a 24 second shot clock!

This is simply avoided by having a defender up court so that the pass needs to be caught immediately and dribbled up court, with the shot clock running!
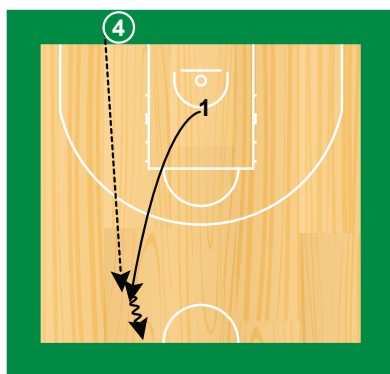
Allowing a team to "steal" seconds.
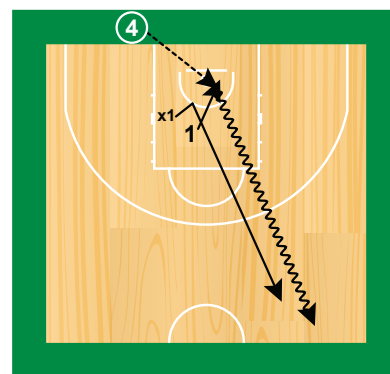
Having a defender up court prevents this.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
BASKETBALL
COACHES

4.1.2 CATCHING UP - REDUCING AN OPPONENT'S LEAD

"CATCHING UP"

No team wants to fall behind, however basketball is a fast moving and fast scoring game so that relatively large leads can be overturned. It's very important for a team to have the confidence that they can make up the deficit. Coaches can build that confidence by:

- Practicing "time and score" scenarios so that they have done it at practice;
- Evaluate performance by reference to "process" objectives, not just the score. For example, the team may have been successfully trapping the low post, or getting shots inside the key (even if they were missed).

Some specific factors that coaches should consider in preparing the team for situations where they have to "catch up" in a game are:

QUICKEN THE TEMPO

The clock is the enemy of a team that is behind. Accordingly, if that team can speed up the game, it gives them more scoring opportunities. The tempo can be increased by:

- Introducing full court defence or a high pressure defence;
- Quick inbounds pass and look to push the ball up the court as quickly as possible. There may be a particular guard that does this better than others on the team or it might be putting two guards on the floor so that if one is defended the other can get the ball;
- Some teams will have a specific play structure that is used to create a quick tempo (e.g. early dribble penetration off a ball screen or after a ball reversal);
- "Going small" – having five players on the floor that run the floor well;
- Running "quick hitters" early in the team's offence – for example screening action to get specific shots. These may be specific plays that the coach has or may be a particular option within their usual offensive structure.

There are many examples of "quick hitters" and coaches should choose what they want to use based upon what is suitable for the players in their team.
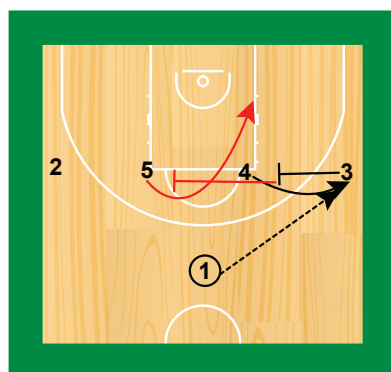
Some examples follow:
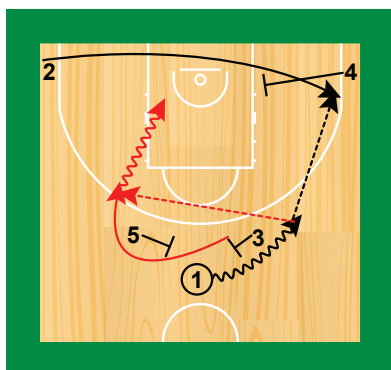
"HORNS" SET

This is run to get a shot for either 2 or 3.

1 dribbles off the screen from 3, who then cuts across the key off a screen by 5. At the same time, 4 sets a screen for 2 on a turn out cut.
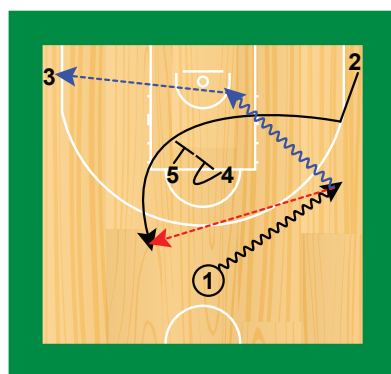
1 has the option of passing to 2 or 3. 3 can catch and shoot or drive to the basket.

LOW POST ISOLATION

Offence starts in a "4 High" alignment. 3 screens for 4 to cut to the wing and then screens for 5. The screens must be placed relative to where the defender is.
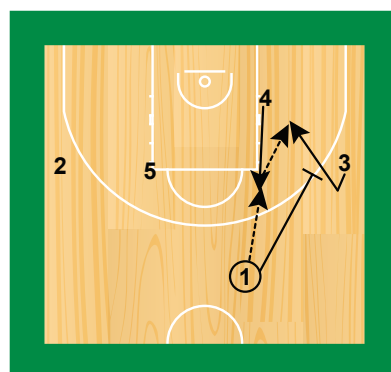
5 cuts to the low post.

DOUBLE FOR SHOOTER

1 dribble entries to the wing, as 2 cuts off double screen from 5 and 4. 1 looks to pass to 2 for a shot. This screen could also be set as an "Elevator" screen, where 2 cuts between 5 and 4.
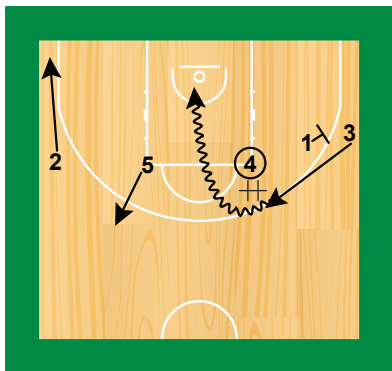
Alternatively, 1 can penetrate to the basket and then pass to 3 in the corner or pass to inside players.


HIGH FLASH

This can be run on either side of the floor.

4 cuts high from the low post and receives the pass from 1. 1 sets screen for 3 who may fake cutting off the screen and instead cut back door to receive a pass from 4.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
BASKETBALL COACHES

If 3 cuts off 1's screen, they receive a dribble hand-off from 4 and then look to drive to the basket.

If the defenders of either 5 or 2 attempt to help on this penetration, 3 can pass to the open player (e.g. if x2 helps , Player 2 is open).
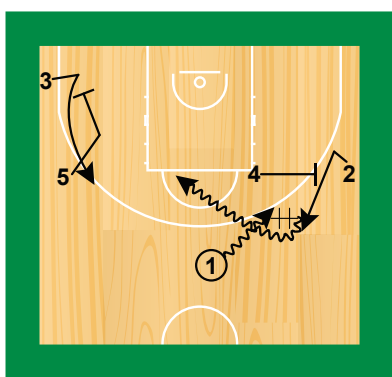
DRIBBLE HANDOFF

1 dribbles towards the wing and 2 cuts off screen from 4 to receive dribble hand off.
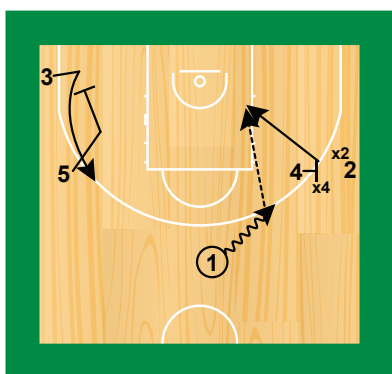
Offence should react to defence:

• If 4's defender helps defend 2's cut, 4 dives to the basket

If 2's defender fights over the screen, 2 may cut back door to the basket.

If 2 gets the hand-off but cannot penetrate to the basket they can pass to either 3 or to 1.
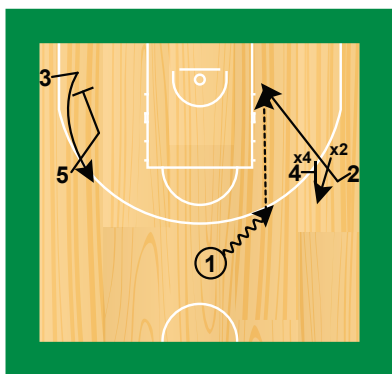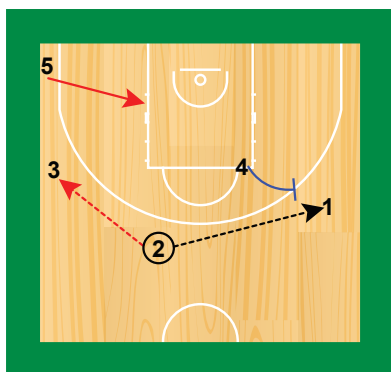
If 3 receives the ball, 5 steps into the low post.

If 1 receives the ball, 4 can set an on-ball screen.
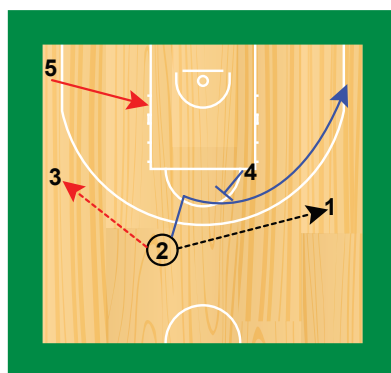
Alternatively, 4 can back screen for 2 to cut to the corner, regardless of which player 2 has passed to.
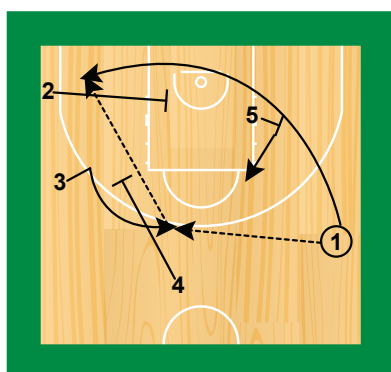
TRANSITION

In transition, 4 (who is "trailing") sets screen for 3. 1 passes to three and then cuts off staggered double screen. An option is a shot in the corner for 1.
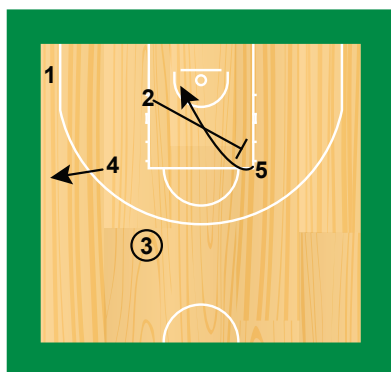
If there is no pass to 1 in the corner, 2 sets screen for 5 to dive to the basket.
If 3 still has the ball, they may need to pass to 4 or 1 for better passing angle to 5.

If no pass to 5 on the cut, look to isolate 5 in the low post, with the overload
(3 offensive players on one side) taking away any help.

PUT THE OPPONENT ON THE FREE THROW LINE

This is perhaps the most commonly seen tactic (and is really a defensive tactic) and is also the most misunderstood. Often teams that are trying to catch up will foul their opponent to give their opponent foul shots. The benefit of this is:

- Very little time comes off the game clock;

- The opponent may miss one or both shots.

The tactic is most appropriate when the score is quite close, there is less than 2 minutes left or an opponent is a poor foul shooting team. Professional teams usually shoot between 70-80% and within the team some players will be better than others.

INTERCEPT THE PASS

Another defensive tactic (that is included here because it can help to create a fast break) arises because the defensive team has an advantage when their opponent is inbounding the ball from either the baseline or sideline – the defensive team have 5 players defending 4.

Accordingly, players should be instructed to attempt to intercept the pass, rather than simply fouling as soon as the pass is made.

If teams are looking to foul straight away, they need to be conscious that it may be called as a technical foul (which means the opponent gets one free throw and the ball back) if fouling players before the pass is thrown in.

GET TO THE FREE THROW LINE.

Scoring while the game clock is stopped can be effective to help a team catch up. Accordingly, getting to the foul line is an important tactic, which is often best done by penetrating the ball into the key (either off the dribble or passing into a post player).

MAKE 3 POINT PLAYS

Many teams trying to catch up resort to attempting 3 point shots and, if they make them, may catch up, but if they miss them it can simply make the deficit greater. Teams should not overlook the 3 point play that can be made by making a basket and making an additional free throw when fouled.

Perimeter shooters rarely get fouled, so for a team to get to the free throw line, they need to penetrate the ball. The other advantage of penetrating the ball is that this can also create good scoring opportunities on a pass back out to the perimeter.

ATTACK THE OPPONENT'S "WEAKEST LINK"

What is an opponent's "weakest link" will be relative to the strengths of each team. It may be a particular "mis-match" between players (e.g. a defender may be slower and unable to defend a player on the perimeter) or it may be a player that is in foul trouble or is prone to fouling.

The role of the coach is to identify where their team has a relative strength and to attack that.

REBOUND THE BALL

Former USA and NBA coach Chuck Daly famously said "No rebounds, no [championship] rings", referring to the importance of rebounding to the success of any team. The nature of basketball is that possession can be equal. One team has possession, shoots and then the other team has possession. If the game goes according to this fashion, both teams will have approximately the same number of possessions.

What disrupts this is offensive rebounds – gaining an additional possession without allowing your opponent to have a possession. Accordingly, a team that is trying to catch up can help their cause by:

- Limiting the team that is in front to one shot every possession;

- Gaining as many offensive rebounds as possible.

To gain offensive rebounds, teams may have an additional player contest the rebound. The risk is that the opponent will still get the rebound and will be successful in transition, however without taking some risk the team that is behind is very unlikely to make up the deficit.

FOLLOW-UP

1. Have you had a team that led by more than 10 points during the final quarter and then lost?
   What factors influenced the result of that game? Discuss with other coaches their experiences.

4.2 EFFICIENCY ANALYSIS

4.2.1 ASSESSING TEAM EFFICIENCY

It is important that the coach evaluates the performance of the team and also the effectiveness of the particular strategies and tactics that they have put in place.

Broadly there are two types of analysis that a coach may use to evaluate performance:

• "Tracking" performance; and

• Measuring statistical effectiveness.

TRACKING PERFORMANCE

Tracking performance records what the team has done and the outcome that occurred. For example, a coach may record the number of instances where a certain offensive play was used and whether or not the team scored. With junior teams, a measure of whether or not a "good shot" was the result may be more appropriate than whether a score was made.

Any particular coach may have particular things that they wish to "track", some commonly tracked occurrences are:

• Use of a particular play or the particular options within a play (both offensively and defensively);

• Whether or not the team "reversed" the ball (moved the ball from one side to another) in offence prior to shooting;

• When in the shot clock shots were taken (e.g. first 6 seconds, last 6 seconds or within 7-18 seconds);

• The number of times an opponent "reversed" the ball prior to shooting;

• Whether the ball was passed or dribbled across half way;

• "Post touches" – whether or not a player in a post position handled the ball prior to the team shooting (regardless of whether the post or another player took the shot);

• The number of times that a team (either offensively or defensively) commenced offence from a particular part of the court (e.g. left side, right side or top).

From these types of indicators the coach can identify trends in how a team plays (either their own team or an opponent). For example, it may identify that the team starts offence on the right hand side of the court most of the time. These indicators can also identify what is more effective. For example, most teams will score more often when they have reversed the ball than when the ball stays on one side.

Typically, these types of measures are not recorded in the standard basketball statistics (standard statistics will, for example, record where a shot was taken and whether or not it went in, but not the "action" that led to it being taken). Accordingly, an assistant coach or parent will need to record these measures if the coach wants them. If the coach is doing a video review, they may also wish to "tag" the same statistics so that the video can be easily obtained.

Using the measures the coach can also determine indicators of success. For example, if a team scores more often after they have reversed the ball in offence, the coach can set targets for ball reversals, knowing that increases the likelihood of scoring. In this way, the measures often allow the coach to set "process" rather than purely outcome goals. The process goals are based upon the impact that "process" has been measured to have on outcomes.

MEASURING STATISTICAL EFFECTIVENESS

Depending upon the level of competition, statistics may be taken and these may also be available during the game. These allow the coach to see individual and team performance in points, rebounds, assists, steals, and turnovers.

The coach can quickly conduct other comparisons:

- How well a team is rebounding defensively using the following equation, which identifies how many of the total rebounds at the defensive end they have taken:

  Team Def Rebs / (Team Def Rebs + Opponents Off Rebs)

- "Ball Control" using the following equation, which gives an indication of how often the team has turned over the ball.

  Turnovers / (Field Goals Attempted + Turnovers)

- "Shooting Efficiency" can be calculated with the following equation, which adjusts for the impact of a 3 point shot:

  (Field Goals Made + (0.5 x 3Points Made)) / Field Goals Attempted

- "Tempo" of the game can be estimated by the following equation and coaches should know the tempo they wish to play at. For example, in a 40 minute game if one shot was taken every 24 seconds (and there were no turnovers), there would be 100 possessions:

  Total Possessions = Total Field Goals Attempted + Total Turnovers

- Free Throw Conversion is calculated simply as Free Throws Made / Free Throws Attempted.

- Compare direct player "match-ups". For example, the coach may have assigned a defender to particularly restrict the number of shots taken by an opponent and this can be assessed.

Basketball is a game of alternating possession, which is only distorted by offensive rebounds (where a team gets two possessions in a row, without their opponent having a possession). It is often more meaningful to assess performance "per possession", rather than just as an absolute number. For example, the points scored from one game to another may vary widely (depending upon the tempo at which the games were played), however the "points per possession" is a good measure of effectiveness.

In most competitions, scoring 1 or more "points per possession" is a good performance. Equally "points conceded per possession" is also important. "Points per possession" is often provided in computerised statistics, however it can also be estimated by:

Points per possession = Total Points / (Field Goals Attempted + Turnovers)

Points conceded per possession = Opponent's Total Points / (Opponent's FGA + Opponent's Turnovers)

Similarly, when comparing the performance of players adjusting statistics to give a "per minute played" analysis may be useful.

The efficiency of players is sometimes evaluated by using a Points Adjusted Win Score (PAWS), which is:

((Points + Steals + (0.5 x Assists) + (0.5 x Blocks) – Field Goals Attempted – Turnovers – (0.5 x Free Throws Attempted) – (0.5 x Personal Fouls)) / minutes played) * 48[19]

In the NBA, the league average player has a PAWS score of 0. Anything above zero is an above average performance and equally below zero is a below average performer.

Whilst statistics can be meaningful they can equally be misleading. What is most important is that the coach develops some method for evaluating performance.

---

19   48 is used for NBA games, where 12 minute quarters are played. Use 40 in FIBA games.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
BASKETBALL COACHES

FOLLOW-UP

1. How do you assess the effectiveness of your team's offence and defence?

2. Discuss with other coaches (including coaches from sports such as hockey or football) how they assess effectiveness.

3. How do you get the data you want to assess effectiveness?