

A black and white photograph of a basketball coach with blonde hair, wearing a white t-shirt with 'EA' on it, leading a team huddle. He is surrounded by young players in a gymnasium. In the foreground, a player in a black shirt with 'ATHLETE' on it is smiling. The background shows basketball hoops and a wooden floor.

# THE EA COLLECTION OF SSG'S

# EA

## ALEX SARAMA



# INTRODUCTION



This book is a collection of some of my favourite small-sided games that I shared on social media over the last year. Recently, we have seen a positive shift in the basketball world with more coaches developing an understanding of motor learning and incorporating more game-like activities into their training sessions. These small-sided games cover multiple scenarios, appropriate for all age-groups, including some specific to Mini-Basket.

All the activities I decided to include have corresponding videos, with the following button at the bottom of each page taking you straight to the video of the original SSG on my Twitter:



**WATCH THE VIDEO**



I have adapted (and continue to adopt!) many of these since the time of posting, with the loads explained on each page. Therefore please note that not all the loads explained on each page will match up to the video you see. The ability to load a drill or game is critical, with this book containing a base of 21 SSG's with over 80 different loads. It is these loads which help deliver a great experience for the learner, transforming an ordinary game into something that can really have an impact on the training environment of an athlete.

If you use any of these, I would love to receive feedback from both yourself and your athletes. I'd be particularly interested to hear about any constraints or loads you have used to improve the original idea. My Twitter is @AlexJSarama.



It's a big 2020 coming for Elite Athletes and Elite Academy. We're looking forward to share more of our ideas with coaches that see the value in these training approaches! If you like some of these ideas, you can read more by visiting [www.eliteathletesonline.com](http://www.eliteathletesonline.com). We also regularly welcome coaches from all over the world to our HQ in Antwerp, Belgium, in addition to travelling internationally to work with clubs and federations delivering camps and coaching clinics.

Thanks for your support!

Alex Sarama

Co-Owner, EA



# BASKETBALL RONDO



**Location:**  
Antwerp, Belgium



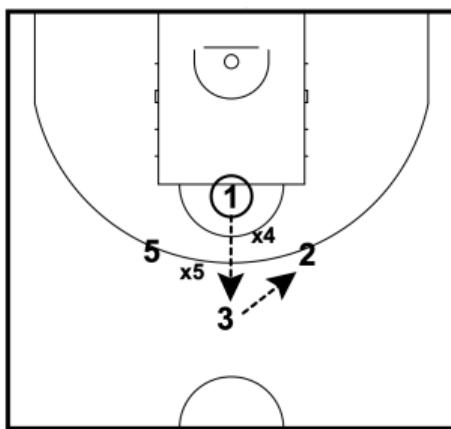
**Good For:**  
Passing, Quick Decisions,  
Connections, Laughter!



**Ages:**  
All



*This was a few years before I knew I would end up joining EA at the annual 'Elite Europe Sleepover Camp.' This is when I was first getting into the concept of small-sided games etc. I actually got this idea from soccer warm-ups, and the 'Rondo' which is commonly used for improving the first touch.*



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

This can be done 4v2, 5v2, 5v3 etc. Offense must pass the ball without the defense touching the ball. On any deflection or steal, the passer becomes the new defender and the defender swaps out. You can introduce a constraint, such as 1 or 2 seconds on the ball, to speed up the pass decisions. Floor markers work well here, as without the players will self-organise by making the area bigger, which is too easy.

**LOAD 1** = Offense must connect by using names. You can either encourage a one-way connection (player that is open calls the passer's name) or a two-way connection (the passer has to call the name of the receiver too).

**LOAD 2** = Defense can tag the passer while in possession of the ball. If they complete a 'two-hand touch' while the passer is holding the ball, then they also swap out. This means the "ball don't stop!"

**LOAD 3** = Offense can't look at who they are passing to. No-looks only, otherwise become the new defender!

**LOAD 4** = The Rondo has to keep moving clockwise or anti-clockwise! When the coach says change, change direction.

**LOAD 5** = Make the area bigger and give offense one dribble, removing the tag rule. Offense can use their dribble to advance inside the rondo and create a passing angle. The defenders can steal the dribble so it must be protected. With older kids, encourage a one hand pass. If they touch the ball with their second hand, become the new defender.



[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)



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# MIRROR DRIBBLING



**Location:**  
Gothenburg, Sweden



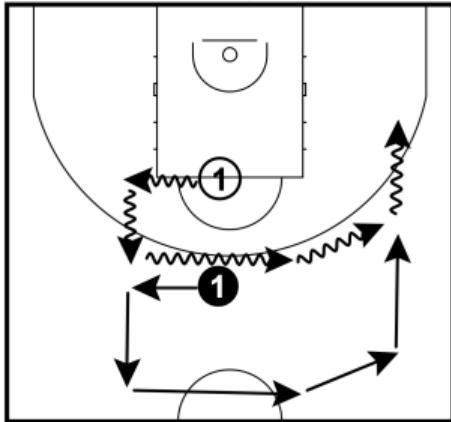
**Good For:**  
Dribbling, Control, Warm-Ups



**Ages:**  
All



*This works well as an alternative to static dribbling, which has very little benefit for retention and long-term learning. This can work well in a large camp setting if you have space.*



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

Players partner up, with one person designated as the lead and one as the 'mirror.' The mirror must copy the lead who is moving in different lateral, forwards, backwards and diagonal planes. This can be done one ball between two, or ideally a ball each to keep everyone on task. Coach will let players know when to change.

**LOAD 1 =** Experiment with some different constraints. E.g. weak hand only, make a move on every change of direction, can only move skipping etc.

**LOAD 2 =** When partner 'connects,' the mirror must pass the ball and then get it back. For younger kids, this can be a verbal connection by using the partner's name. For older kids, the cue can be verbal only, and much more subtle (e.g. showing a hand). Can also load in a dribble move into the pass (e.g. cross-over before a one hand push).

**LOAD 3 =** Vary the passes (e.g. scoop, push, wrap, behind the back, hook etc). This could be based on a signal given by the receiver (e.g. hand up high = hook, hand in front = push, hand to side = behind back).

**LOAD 4 =** Upon a trigger word by the coach, the mirror has 6 seconds to try and tag the lead. The lead can go anywhere on the court, but not of bounds, to escape. This is a fun way of increasing intensity within the warm-up and building spatial awareness.

**LOAD 5 =** If you are doing this with a ball each, the lead can initiate an 'exchange' where both players have to swap balls attempting not to drop them. You can also integrate two-ball dribbling. I don't do much two-ball stuff as don't see much transfer from it, but it can help kids with confidence and motivate them to practice.



[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)



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# CROSS-STEP REACTIONS



**Location:**  
Malmo, Sweden



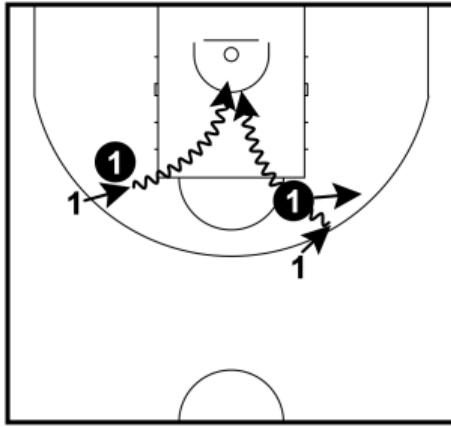
**Good For:**  
Footwork, Attacking Close-Outs



**Ages:**  
U10 - U16



I got this one from Allison and Mike McNeill, and their FIBA Clinic on footwork. Being able to cross-step is a critical skill, and something so many young players struggle with getting called for travels. I built on Allison and Mike's ideas within the below...



## "KPI"

Stands for Key Performance Indicator. Used to give you some ideas as to things to focus on with your players.

## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

Players partner up and go from different spots around and inside the perimeter, being sure to use the corners too. One partner is a guided defender, whose only job is to give the offense the initial decision. The guided defender faces the offense and drops the basketball left or right for offense to catch the ball after one bounce (teach both the hop and 1-2 but let them self-discover first and build a preference). If the defender moves, offense has to catch and cross-step back in the opposite direction. If the defender doesn't move, they just take the straight line to the basket. Have offense stay for x3 reps, with the guided defender giving different directions and decisions for all x3 reps.

**KPI** = The open step is typically called as a travel in FIBA rules with the ball being bounced too late. This is a perfect activity for encouraging the "throw-down dribble" where players don't stop to receive the ball. They simply throw it out in front of them and keep their momentum moving forwards. Spanish players do this very effectively.

**LOAD 1** = Add a shot decision by having the guided defender move backwards on the drop. If this happens, players have to use their hop or 1-2 step to go straight into the shot. Mix this in with the reads above, still staying for x3 reps. Can progress this further by having the guided def take away time and space again after initially sagging. If this happens, offense can shot fake and then attack reading the close-out.

**LOAD 2** = Guided defender places hands up or down if giving a cross-step read. This cues an 'over the top' or under rip. Can also use this to teach ball placement to protect against a defender's hands. Working in Turkey, I had one particularly good youth national team player who was cross-stepping while doing a behind the back wrap. This is a great example of how guided defense leads to different solutions emerging.

**LOAD 3** = Guided defender can follow if giving a drive read, hip turning and riding the hip of the ball handler as they drive. This can cue a separation move such as a side-step, bump-off, pull-back etc. Load up to Live 1v1 with the same advantage start.



[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)



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# TWO SIDE 3V2 INTO 3V3



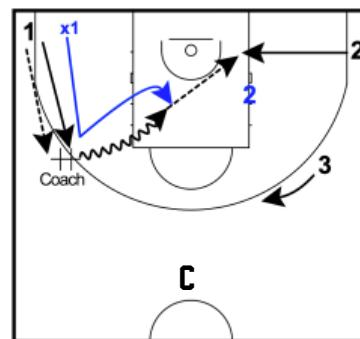
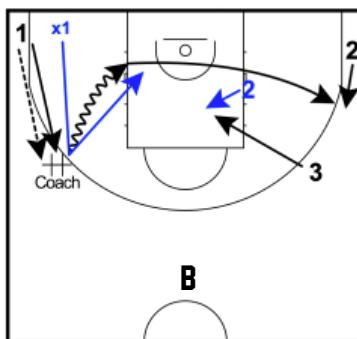
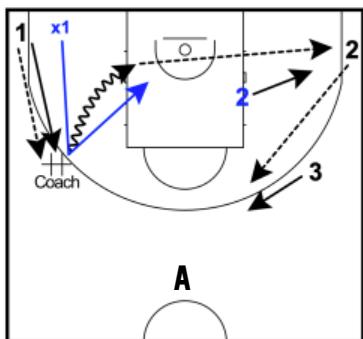
**Location:**  
Bologna, Italy

**Good For:**  
Spacing Concepts, Cutting, First Touch  
Decisions, Into and Out of Space

**Ages:**  
U14+



This is a good advantage SSG for teaching players how to keep the dominoes falling and get a great shot out of the two side. This works on the key 'mid-dominoes' concept of not allowing 1 defender to guard 2.



## "DOMINOES"

Dominoes is a term from NZ Coach Ross McMains. This is the moment an advantage is triggered offensively, where the offense drive and kick or pass the ball to get a great shot

## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

When coach connects with 1 facing the basket in the corner, 1 sends an extra pass and sprints for a 'get' action with the coach. The coach controls the advantage by placing the ball on the outside hip for a baseline drive, with the defender having to hi-5 the coaches's inside hand (distance to defender affects the size of the advantage). The coach can simulate a middle drive by placing the ball on the inside hip, with both players having to chase over. The last option is for 1 to backdoor cut from 1 if x1 overplays the sprint, receiving the pass on the cut.

Stay for 3 reps before rotating, with the players on the two side using a different read for each rep, in any order:

**A** = Separate Read - when the wing player lifts towards the swing to prevent the low man from guarding both players. From here, shot, drive or extra decision when the ball is kicked.

**B** = Backside Breaker - when the wing player makes a cut to the rim, and the corner player makes a short lift to find a window.

**C** = Ghost Cut - when the corner player cuts behind the head of the low man, and like a ghost, emerges in a scary place underneath the basket. Note the wing player could also do this vs a defender that turns to watch the ball.

Place a constraint on the first passer by not allowing them to receive the ball back until they get back outside the 3PT line after their drive and kick. This encourages the concept of getting into and out of space to keep dominoes.

**LOAD 1** = 3v3, offense can now flare screen (flare combined with the baseline drive is known as hammer action). Coach can reduce advantage or make situation neutral by lengthening hand to defender. These situations are when a flare screen works well, as not necessarily needed if playing with a big advantage.



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# TEAM DRIBBLE TAG



**Location:**  
Atyrau, Kazakhstan



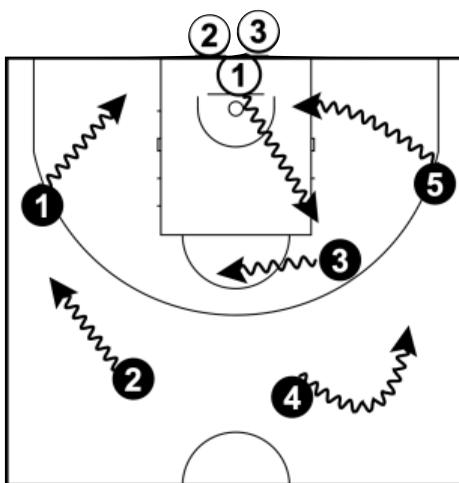
**Good For:**  
Warm-Up, Ball Control, Fundamental Movement Skills



**Ages:**  
All



This version of team tag comes from Brian McCormick, with some tweaks I've experimented with and liked using. Not only is this fun, but a lot more beneficial for improving ball handling as opposed to static dribbling, going through cones, tennis ball drills, Maravich series etc. Check out Brian's books for some more great ideas!



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

Divide your players into equal teams of between 3 to 6 players. Each half-court area can host two teams, or with larger numbers, use cones to divide the court into three equal sectors so you can hold x6 teams at one time. One team (the taggers) are lined up on the baseline, while the other team (the evaders) are spread out anywhere in the HC area. Everyone should have a ball, but if struggling with numbers, give balls to just the evaders and the first person in the taggers line.

As soon as the first player from the taggers team dribbles out, the coach starts keeping time (I usually just do this on my phone because it's fun showing kids the screen with the time at the end). The player must keep their dribble alive and tag one of the evaders. As soon as this happens, they speed dribble back and hi-5 the next person in line for their turn to go. The player that gets tagged waits on the sideline, and the team keeps going until everyone is out. Show the time to your players, and then flip teams. Fastest time wins! If one of the evaders steps out of bounds at any time, they go out and the taggers job is done!

**LOAD 1 =** Introduce constraints. E.g. can only dribble with the weak hand, can only skip or move laterally etc. Chain tag also works well, with the first tagger going back and linking hands with their second teammate. Each tag is one extra person on the chain. If the chain breaks, the tag doesn't count!

**LOAD 2 =** With younger kids I don't like having any of them 'waiting out' because it takes away from time that could be making them better, and also it can harm - as opposed to build - their confidence. Older players enjoy the team competition side of this, but for younger ones the team that wins is the one that gets the highest number of tags in one minute (can't tag the same player twice in a row).

**LOAD 3 =** After being tagged, the tagged player has to go and score a lay-up on a basket the other end of the floor, before coming back into the game. Can take this further by saying that a player has to score a lay-up, free-throw and three pointer. If the other team manage to tag everyone out in that time, then they win.



[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)



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# 'KOB' OR 'PIGGYBACK' 1V1



**Location:**  
Trieste, Italy



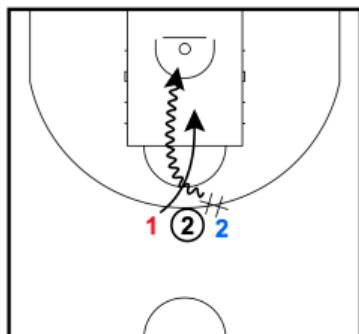
**Good For:**  
Leveraging advantage, ball control,  
change of speed.



**Ages:**  
U12+



Luka Doncic is one of the best players in the world at the "KOB" technique. This stands for "Keep on Back," also similar to giving a piggyback! I like doing this with younger players because it starts introducing them to the concept of creating and keeping an advantage. For older players, this is a key skill needed for P&R.



## KPIs

1 = Using the first step to put the defender in jail is critical. This is an external cue for attempting to encourage the first step being lateral, as opposed to north south, so that the KOB can be successful.

2 = Players can freeze and take a second to slow down while "Kobbing." This is something Doncic does frequently. After freezing, a quick change of speed to the rim will often create great separation.

## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

Players work in groups of threes, staying for x2 or x3 reps before changing roles. The player in the middle serves the ball on a platter to the left or right, determining who is offense and defense. The player who receives the ball on their side grabs the ball, and looks to KOB the defender immediately before exploding to the rim for a finish. Players should be encouraged to take a look at their defender during the KOB so they can alter their positioning if needed.

**LOAD 1** = Increase variability by moving to a new perimeter spot on the floor each time. This will enable a greater variety of finishes from different angles.

**LOAD 2** = Change the distance by starting further away (e.g. at the half-court line). This is slightly harder as there is a greater distance over which the offensive player is trying to KOB the defender.

**LOAD 3** = Add in extra offensive and defense players in different positions (e.g. low post, wing, corner etc). The offensive player now has to make the shot or pass decision coming off the KOB.



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# PYLON EXCHANGE



**Location:**  
Astana, Kazakhstan



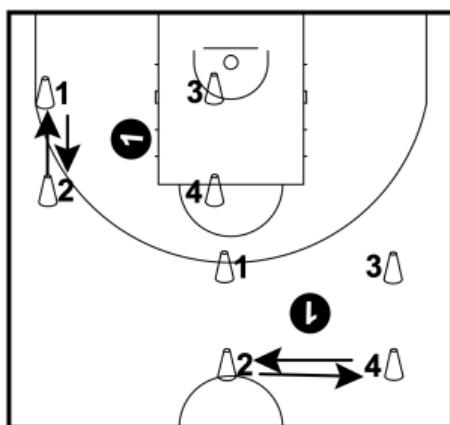
**Good For:**  
Warm-Up, Learning to Cut, Fun,  
Fundamental Movement Skills



**Ages:**  
All, especially U14



I have taken many concepts from Canada's Mike MacKay over the years, including this fun warm-up game. This is boring unless your players take risks, so sometimes it may be necessary to keep time to encourage as many exchanges as possible within the time period.



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

A inside player stands in the middle of the pylon grid. A grid with four outside players and one 'inside' player works well, but you can easily make this bigger if you have more players. The players on the outside have to try and exchange spaces, while the inside player tries to 'steal a spot' by arriving at an empty pylon before the outside player.

The best tactic for this to work is cutting behind the back of the defender's head. This is a cutting concept known as 'ghost cuts,' so a great warm-up game to do if you are emphasising cutting in your practice. I also conduct a debrief after my warm-ups, which are typically linked to one theme from my practice. Within this it is important to discuss what elements of the warm-up can be carried over into the practice, seeing if players can connect the best time to exchange spots in this game compared to cutting vs real defenders in a game.

**LOAD 1** = Introduce connections. Players must connect through verbals (using hands to point) or non-verbals (using name of person they want to exchange with).

**LOAD 2** = Coach says 'scramble.' Upon hearing this, players have 10 seconds to find a new group and start playing again. This is good to use in environments where you want to break the ice and get players learning each others names.

**LOAD 3** = Add a basketball. Players still have to exchange with the added stress of dribbling. Can constrain this further by introducing weak hand only, cross-over or behind the back on every change of direction etc.



[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)





# BLIND CUT



**Location:**  
Bologna, Italy  
Riga, Latvia



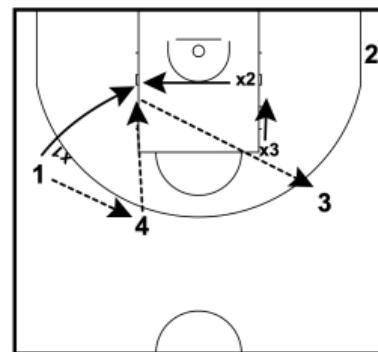
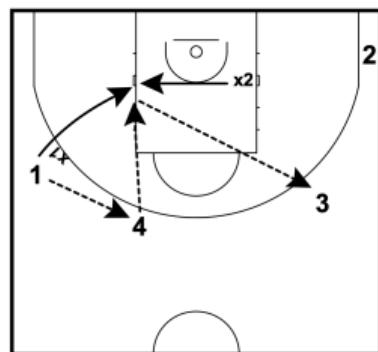
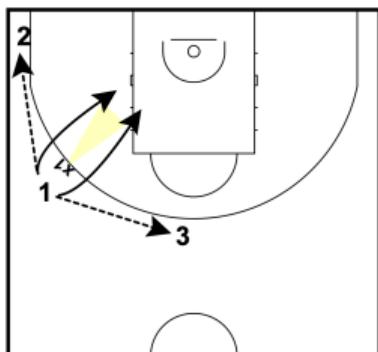
**Good For:**  
Passing to a Cutter, Finishing off a Cut,  
Shot or Pass Decisions



**Ages:**  
U14+



I used this as a 1v1 start, but the same start can be used for any small-sided game, all the way up to 5v5. This is great for encouraging players to go 'through the branches' (straight through the defender's arms) vs 'going around the branches', which gives time for a defender to recover. Many youth players take the long route instead of the short route when basket cutting.



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

The defender stands with their heels on the 3PT line facing the basket, with the offensive player holding the ball. The player connects by looking to the left or right. After sending the pass, they will immediately cut and receive the ball back for a score. The defender can only move once they see the offensive player passing their shoulder - eyes must be towards the rim instead of looking behind to see the offensive player. If using a point system, give 0 pts for a false start to discourage the defender leaving early!

**LOAD 1** = Offensive player starts dribbling, sending the pass to 2 or 3 off the dribble. Even better if they can do combo dribbles (e.g. scissor through the legs) before the pass!

**LOAD 2** = Load to 3v2. Use 4 as a player that merely facilitates. If x2 leaves to help early and take away the pass back to 1, 4 reads the situation and skip passes to 2 or swings to 3. If 1 catches on the cut, they have to shoot or pass based on whether x2 stays or goes, while x1 peels back. This can also be a good situation to encourage the two side concepts from the "Two Side 3v2" SSG earlier on in this book.

**LOAD 3** = Add an extra player to make it 3v3. If the low "In" player helps, the "Out" player (x3) must "take two." This could trigger a "Separate Read," "Backside Breaker" or "Ghost Cut."

**DE-LOAD** = Have both potential passers start with the ball if players are struggling to catch and finish during the 1v1, or not connecting well by showing 'hungry hands.' The player must cut whenever they want and show hungry hands to determine what side passes the ball, otherwise they will not receive it.



**BLIND START 1V1**

**BLIND START 3V2**

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# AROUND THE ARC



**Location:**  
Kaunas, Lithuania



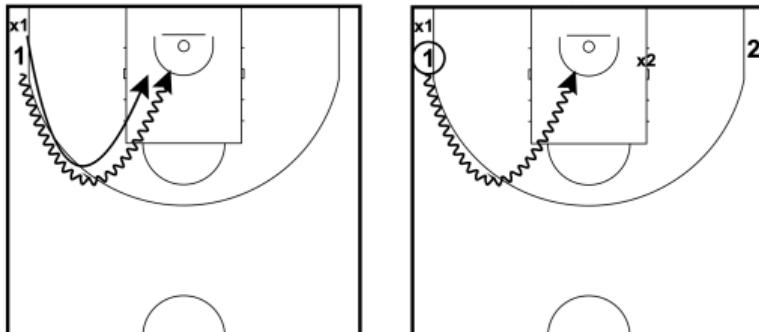
**Good For:**  
Dribbling, Change of Speed, Dynamic  
1v1 Concepts



**Ages:**  
U10 - U16



First used this at a clinic in Kaunas and really liked how loadable this is, in addition to how much the kids seemed to enjoy this. I find it partially useful for players learning how effective a change of speed is in gaining advantage.



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

Start off giving the lead player both basketballs, with the trail player standing behind them. They will do a two ball dribble out of the corner, "around the arc" but being sure not to step inside. As soon as they leave the ball in their outside hand 'floating in the air,' they will explode to the rim with the ball in their inside hand. The player behind will grab the ball, and attempt to score before the player in front of them. The lead player can choose to go any-time around the arc (very early, early, on-time, late etc). Very late would mean driving on the other side of the split line, which is also encouraged - get them to be deceptive! 1pt if the lead player scores first, 2 pts if the trail player scores.

**LOAD 1** = Players now have a ball each. The player in front plays with their speeds, stopping, starting, skipping etc. As soon as they go, it's a race to score first. If the lead player manages to brake suddenly and get the trail player to collide into them while going 'around the arc,' they get an extra point (trail player must stay within an arm's distance).

**LOAD 2** = One basketball. Live 1v1 as soon as the offense enters the 3PT line. They can also fake the drive - if they get the defender to go inside the 3PT arc before they have entered, they receive a bonus point.

**LOAD 3** = A coach now acts as a facilitator for the 1v1. If the coach connects by using their voice and eyes (younger kids) or showing their hands (older kids), the lead player must throw a one hand pass off the dribble to the coach. They can then immediately front cut to receive the ball back, or curl around the coach if he places it on his hip. If the pass is made with two hands, the coach throws it to a spot where the trail player can receive it, giving them the advantage for the 1v1. If no connection, the player can enter the arc as normal at anytime to cue the 1v1 start.

**LOAD 4** = Players must talk their task and say what they are doing during the whole process. E.g. "I'm dribbling, I'm dribbling," "I'm curling, I'm curling," "I'm cutting, I'm cutting."

**LOAD 5** = 2v2 with an additional pair in either the post, corner or wing (change the spots). Exactly the same start, but now playing 2v2. If the coach connects for the pass, they can connect from further away to challenge the passer to make a one hand skip across the split lane. This would now mean the off-ball teammate is on the same side of the ball when it is driven, cueing them to either push, pull or hold the corner.



[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)



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# SCARF EXCHANGES



**Location:**  
Malaga, Spain



**Good For:**  
Warm-Up, Fundamental Movement  
Skills, Fun



**Ages:**  
Mini-Basket - U14



This came from one of my favourite clinics during my time with the NBA. I was coaching a girls group in Malaga, and bought some brightly coloured scarfs (pinks, greens, turquoise etc). They really enjoyed doing something a little bit different, and I think they also liked the bright colours! If you listen to the audio in the video, it's full of laughter. This should always be the main goal for Mini-Basket. Thanks to Mike MacKay for this great idea.



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

You can do this with bibs if you have no scarves. Players start by moving randomly around the court - ask them to experiment with different movements (e.g. skips, shuffles, back-pedalling etc). They must connect with their eyes with a teammate, using their name (if they don't know the name learn it on the spot!). After connecting, throws the scarf in the air and catch the other person's before it hits the floor. You can make this a competition by saying first to 6 connections and exchanges, first to 6 connections but touch a sideline or baseline after each exchange etc.

- Load = practice from moving start not static. Walk in while dribbling and then change speed when scarf is dropped.
- Load = score lay-up after exchange.
- Load = throw scarf up on the air after catching and go back and catch original scarf. Accelerate, decelerate, accelerate.

**LOAD 1** = Add a ball. Connections will probably deteriorate so you have to watch for this. Encourage kids to connect in a 'leadership voice.' This means confident projection and loud enough to hear. Can constrain by specifying the dribble hand or stipulating that a dribble move has to be done while the scarf is in the air.

**LOAD 2** = Find a partner, and stand a few metres apart. Drop and catch the scarves at the same time, accelerating forward and, catching the partner's scarf before it hits the floor. This is a fun game for players to learn how to land safely (jump-stop and stride stop). Encourage the loaded step (it will come naturally) - the science shows this is critical for acceleration.

**LOAD 3** = Give one player both scarves. Player has to sprint and catch the first one, while the partner throws the other scarf behind their head as soon as the first one is caught. This means the player has to quickly decelerate and change direction to catch the second scarf.



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# HIP TURN ADVANTAGE



**Location:**  
Trieste, Italy



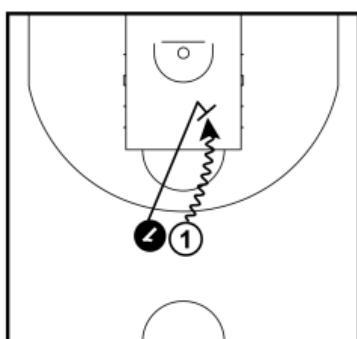
**Good For:**  
Leveraging advantage, ball control,  
change of speed.



**Ages:**  
U12+



If I am doing an advantage game with a static start, I typically use this one because it has the benefit of the defender getting used to the hip turn. This is vital technique used for on-ball defense, and it doesn't come naturally so it has to be practiced. Good memories planning this session on the PiazzaUnità d'Italia, with my good friend and Italian Youth National Team Coach, Alessandro Nocera.



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

Start this 1v1 to build the mindset of the defender needing to recover. The offensive player faces the basket, while the defender is on their side parallel to the half line. I sometimes find that starting 2v2 immediately makes the defender too reliant on the fact that their teammate can bail them out, and they don't attempt the cut-off. Main KPI here is the hip turn can't be too high off the ground - it's a slight levitation (like something out of Star Wars) vs jumping in the air which loses valuable time. As soon as the defender lands, they use the split stance to explode (use another external cue of imagining the floor is lava) to try and recover. The cut-off can be short (i.e. just inside the perimeter) or long (closer to the basket).

For the offensive player, the emphasis is trying to keep their advantage. They have to decide whether to do this through their speed or by 'Kobbing.' If the defender starts on the high side, the offensive player should use some sort of extension finish to keep the ball protected.

**LOAD 1 =** Load to 2v2 with a weakside pair. They can start on the low post, wing or corner. Good opportunity for the off-ball offensive player to 'find the window.'

**LOAD 2 =** Load up to 3v3, adding in a transition trip. This is a good way to start teaching the "In" and "Out" responsibilities with 1 guarding 2. Offensively, teach how to exploit this with ideas from the "Two Side 3v2" SSG.

**LOAD 3 =** Add in extra offensive and defense players in different positions (e.g. low post, wing, corner etc). The offensive player now has to make the shot or pass decision coming off the KOB.

## KPI

This isn't just an offensive advantage SSG, it's great opportunity to two-way teach and really focus on the defense. Whatever you stress from a communication standpoint, the stay or go has to be clear. The low man has to communicate this as the on-ball defender is too caught up in trying to recover. If the low man goes, the original on-ball defender 'peels' off to guard the other player, carrying a high hand.



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# CONNECTIONS GAME



**Location:**  
Riga, Latvia



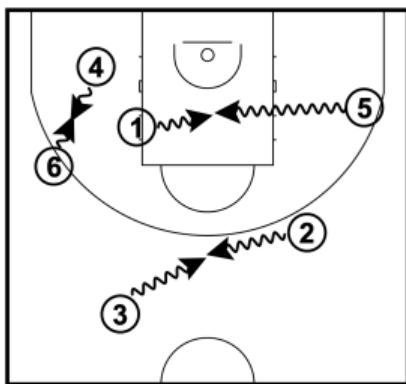
**Good For:**  
Learning names, ball control, breaking  
the ice



**Ages:**  
All (especially girls)



I used this when coaching one of the teams at the NBA's Basketball without Borders Camp. I had a quick practice session and then we were first up playing our first games of the camp. Some of the girls were a little bit nervous, and we went straight into this to break the ice and learn each other's names. It only took a few minutes, but immediately got the laughter going on set the tone for a productive practice session. Dr Sergio Lara is the originator of this - I've added my tweaks.



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

Players dribble around the half-court area. They have to connect with the eyes, saying the name of the team-mate, followed by a hi-five. If they don't know their name, they say "and your name is?" After connecting, touch a sideline, base-line or half-line. First player to connect with 4 different teammates and touch 4 different lines wins.

**LOAD 1** = Only dribble with the weak-hand. As well as using the name, players have to say either what they ate for breakfast, their hometown or their favourite team (etc). After one person finishes first, play it again and players have to use the same connections but memorise what their team-mate said in the previous game! They also have to connect in the same order as before. This will really get them wobbling!

**LOAD 2** = Coach moves around the floor, players have to keep vision of them. If coach puts right hand up, dribble with the right to make connections. Left hand = dribble with the left. If coach does a follow-through = shoot a lay-up. If coach mixes two hands together, play dribble knock-out.

**LOAD 3** = Change the hi-5 sequence (e.g a hi-5 then a low-5) or develop your own secret handshake with each player.

**LOAD 4** = After connecting, have to score a lay-up before the next connection. No normal lay-ups which the players have done since they were 12 years old! Has to be something different (e.g. stride, euro, reverse etc).

**LOAD 5** = If doing as a warm-up, get the players to do different movement sequences for each round (e.g. shuffle, skips etc).



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# 1V1 HIPS GAME



**Location:**  
Paris, France



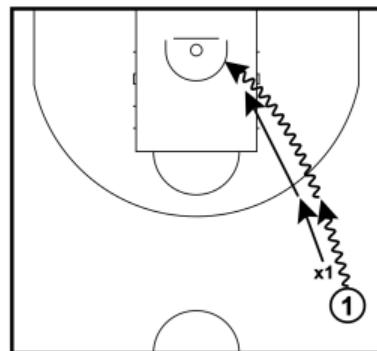
**Good For:**  
Change of speed, converting an advantage, finishing vs pressure



**Ages:**  
U12+



Another person I have learnt a lot from, this idea comes from Chris Oliver of Basketball Immersion. This is a fun advantage start to teach players how to change speed effectively. This also works well for the defender learning how to be deceptive. Check out [www.basketballimmersion.com](http://www.basketballimmersion.com) for more.



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

The defender is attempting to be deceptive, because whenever they touch the offensive player's hips, it starts the 1v1. Therefore the defender fakes and tries to be deceptive to confuse the offense. When the defender finally touches a hip (either side), offense must drive through the open window while the defender tries to recover.

**LOAD 1 =** To change the advantage to make it appropriate for your group of players, change the defender's touch. Touching the shoulder reduces the advantage, while touching the back increases the advantage.

**LOAD 2 =** Do this laterally with the offensive player using either a float or shift dribble. A float dribble is when the player moves the ball from the right hand over to the left, moving to the left. A shift dribble is when a player uses the same hand as the direction they are going in. When the defender touches a hip, they either have to explode in a straight line, or use a change of direction to attack.

**LOAD 3 =** Load in some extra players to add the shot or pass decision.

## KPI

As the offense dribbles in waiting for the hip touch, get them to play with their rhythm and tempo. This could be a mixture of walking, skipping, jogging etc. The reaction has to be 'lag free.' This means as soon as the touch opens, offense uses an explosive stance to attack downhill and build up speed.



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# RONDO FAKES



**Location:**  
Riga, Latvia



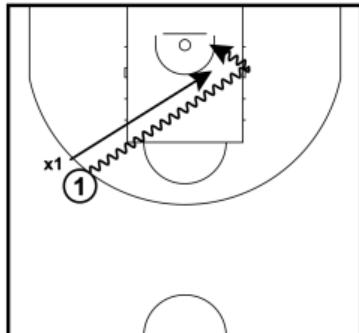
**Good For:**  
Finishing vs a bigger defender,  
footwork



**Ages:**  
U14+



Credit to my guy and co-owner of EA, Joerik Michiels, for this one! This is an example of how we do our skill development at EA, with decisions and technique still integrated. This is something we would typically do as part of an individual or small group work-out.



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

I did this as a station at the NBA's Basketball without Borders Camp. I only had 12 minutes so could only do a couple of loads, but wanted to do this so the kids felt like they were coming away with something, in addition to developing a high level skill which NBA players use as part of their finishing package.

I started with the defense as 'guided light.' This means the defense's job is to make the offense better. They contest but only at 40% effort, so it's therefore more used to help guide the form. The offense starts dribbling the ball, and can explode any-time between their second and fifth dribble. Finishing across the lane, if the defender doesn't ride the hip, they just finish using the straight line. If the defender rides the hip, this cues the stride stop (outside inside footwork), and the subsequent Rondo Fake (using the inside hand to shot fake). From here, we have 3 options with the move:

A = If the defender still trails the hip, split jump after the Rondo fake to bring the outside leg in, finishing the lay-up.

B = If the defender completes a cut-off after the stride stop, Rondo fake, forward pivot and score the hook. This is the move Rondo is known for!

C = If the defender is still in-front of the ball after the Rondo fake and forward pivot, step-through either to the middle or or baseline side of the defender. A secondary fake may be needed here to open up a window.

I started with 3 reads (I feel like anything less than this is too easy and not enough wobbling for it to be retained). Typically, this would be straight line finish, option A and option B. I would then load in C, and any other finishes after (e.g. euro-step or cross-step lay-up vs a cut-off)

**LOAD 1** = Go to Guided Live. This means the defender has to give a decision on the Rondo Fake so that the offensive player uses it, but then they are trying to contest the shot and get a stop. Stay for x3 reps, with the defender giving a different decision every time (e.g. C, A, B, OR straight line, A, C etc). Any combination is fine so long as there is variation!

**LOAD 2** = Live but with an advantage start. Defense stands next to offense, with offense holding the ball on the defender's hips. As soon as they move the ball off the hips, it's live 1v1.



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# FLOAT, PASS, CUT



**Location:**  
Athens, Greece



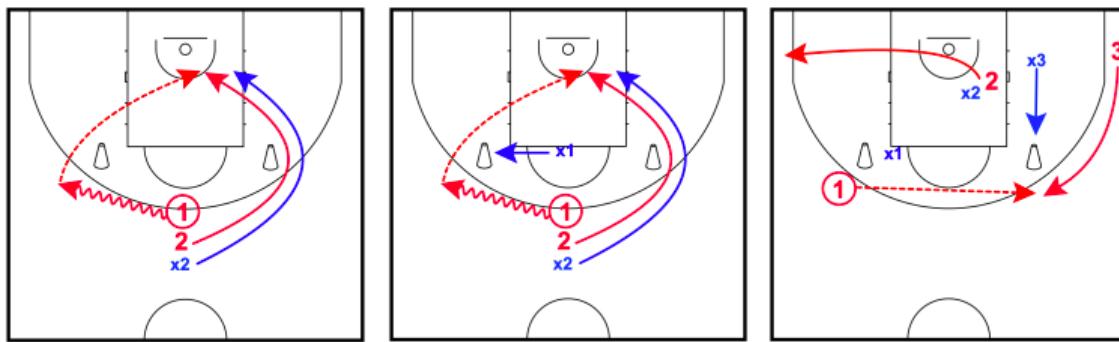
**Good For:**  
Lateral dribbles, making a lead pass,  
finishing off a cut



**Ages:**  
U12+



I love this SSG because it combines so many important skills. S/o to my guy Francesco Nanni, Assistant Coach at Forli Basket in Italy for this one! I trialled it out at a camp in Athens, and also got some great ideas for loads off Sefu Bernard (another must follow on Twitter).



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

Starting with 2v1, the ball handler cues the start by using a float or shift dribble to get in-front of a pylon. As soon as they start to go, the offensive player cuts around the opposite pylon. The defender must trail - they cannot move inside to the pylon. The passer will then send the pass off the dribble, leading the cutter on for the score. If you have players waiting, use them to stand at a pylon to guide the pass, ensuring it is around or over the guided defender.

**LOAD 1** = Experiment with constraints. E.g. cutter can only finish on weakside of basket (ensures pass comes earlier), pass must hit the floor (like a tennis ball pass) etc. Can also change the distance or locations to the pylons to make the pass harder / change the angle.

**LOAD 2** = Load up to 2v2 (middle diagram). Add a defender in a drop at the FT line. As soon as the ball handler moves, it's live. If the defense cheats towards the middle to prevent the pass to the cutter, the ball handler drives the baseline looking to score or pass.

**LOAD 3** = Replace the pylons for players. Offense and defense have to learn how to navigate around the screens. This includes the defender 'getting skinny' to try and navigate around the screen.

**LOAD 4** = If the cutter is not open coming off the screen, they finish their cut and wait in the smile for the screener to come and set a pindown. The screener cannot score, but acts as a facilitator within the 3v2.

**LOAD 5** = 3v3 (last diagram). The cutter needs to get in and out of space as quickly as possible, so they sprint the exit if they don't receive the pass on the cut. As the cut happens, 3 lifts out of the corner looking for the throwback pass. Live 3v3 from here.



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# ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS



**Location:**  
Valencia, Spain



**Good For:**  
Warm-Up,  
FUNDamental Movement Skills



**Ages:**  
Mini-Basket - U14



*A twist on the classic game, adapted for basketball! This is always really popular amongst Mini-Basket age kids.*



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

Start by playing with the feet. Players have a ball each and find a partner. They hop on the spot, timing their dribble with the bounce. On the 1-2-3, they reveal whether they are a rock, paper or scissors:



Rock = feet together



Paper = feet apart

Scissors = split lunge



Players play best of three with their partner. They then have to scan the floor quickly, finding a new parter as soon as they finish their game.

**LOAD 1** = If both players get the same on the reveal (e.g. two rocks), it's a race for the first player to tag the other player's knee to get the point. Can do lots of different things for this - e.g. first player to knock the other player's ball, first to score a lay-up etc.

**LOAD 2** = Now the players are warm, load it up to a tag game. Ensure the players are all on the rim line, facing each other a metre apart. They play rock, paper, scissors, and whoever wins tries to tag the loser. The loser has to 'get to home' which is the sideline closest to them, before being tagged. Safety consideration is to ensure players go in a straight line, avoiding any collisions.

**LOAD 3** = Use the same start for 1v1. Move to a basket, and have a third player with no basketball showing hungry hands. As soon as the players play, the loser has to quickly pass their pass to the third player, before sprinting back on defense. The winner keeps their ball and tries to score first.

**DE-LOAD** = Just have the players dribble and give the Rock, Paper, Scissors command with their free-hand. This works well with younger kids, and then you can load up to the corresponding foot positions.



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# CAT AND MOUSE



**Location:**  
Kartepe, Turkey



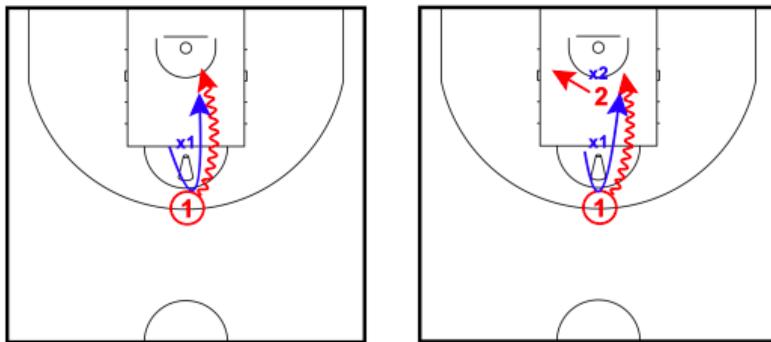
**Good For:**  
Using advantage,  
attacking in opposites



**Ages:**  
Mini-Basket to U14



Came up with this one when working with a Mini-Basket group in Turkey who needed a big advantage to enjoy success. For older groups, just reduce the advantage by placing two pylons in-front of each other, with the defender having to chase over the closest one.



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

Place cones in random spots both in the mid-range and on the perimeter; including off-spots too. The offense starts in a ready position behind the cone, with the defender facing them. The defender cues the start by chasing over the left or right of the cone. The offense has to read this by attacking and passing the cone on the opposite side. The defender has to complete a chase before contesting the shot. Keep playing until a stop or score (defender doesn't have to clear the ball).

**LOAD 1** = Offensive player starts with the dribble, making it slight harder. If they have the ball on the right side of the body and the defender comes over the left of the cone, this means they need to use a throw-crossover to get the ball past the other side of the cone and attack.

**LOAD 2** = Offensive player does combo dribbles on the spot. They move as soon as the defender goes. Can also introduce constraints such as can't score in the key etc (this tends to encourage step-backs, side-steps etc).

**LOAD 3** = The 'cat' can be deceptive and fake. They can suddenly change direction to try and catch the mouse off-guard!

**LOAD 4** = Introduce a passer. As soon as the offensive player shows hungry hands, the passer sends the ball. This cues the defender to pick a side. The receiver can use a 'roadrunner' by starting to move towards the ball already, as opposed to waiting for the ball to come to them, increasing their advantage.

**LOAD 5** = If the defender doesn't move, the receiver shoots the ball as soon as their feet hit the floor. Have the offense and defense stay for 3 reps so they can practice all 3 decisions - drive right, drive left and the shot (but in random orders).

**LOAD 6** = Add in extra offensive and defense players in different positions (e.g. front of smile, block, corner, wing). If placing a player on the smile (right diagram) they have to find a window in a manner that "clears the runway for take-off". This gives space for the driver in-case the help defender x2 stays with their check.



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# "AUSTRALIA" 1V1



**Location:**  
Santiago, Spain



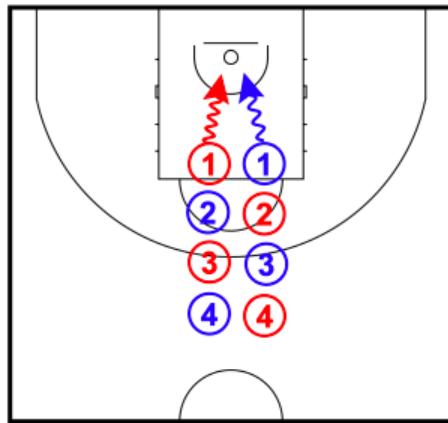
**Good For:**  
Finishes, Soft Touch,  
Warm-Up



**Ages:**  
All



Watched a lot of Basketball Australia Clinics over the years, and this comes from one of these. This is very 'loadable' with endless options here for finishes you can encourage.



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

Players start close to the basket, balancing on their outside foot (right foot if on the right side, left on the left). Players have a ball each, with the competition being first to score. As soon as players bump the ball, the race is on. Start with no dribbles - this means players have to take a cross-step to take their lay-up.

**LOAD 1** = Players have one dribble, but have to shoot landing outside the key. This means they will shoot a running hook, using their dribble to attack the block, shooting high off the glass.

**LOAD 2** = Players now balance on their inside foot. This will result in them shooting a same-hand, same-foot lay-up. This is also known as a 'Kyrie' finish because it is frequently used by Irving.

**LOAD 3** = Move players back to the FT line. They now have to do a quick ball handling sequence (e.g. waist/ankle wrap) before the finish. No constraints on the lay-up.

**LOAD 4** = Players are allowed to block or knock each other's ball away! Introduce a pts system, with the player that scores first earning a point. First player to 4, then move onto the next load. Ensure players keep going until a score - if both players miss, the first player to score gets the point.

**LOAD 5** = Have to finish on the other side of the backboard. This means players will 'X' and must get in front first to get the first shot attempt. Can also change the start sequence - e.g. 3 scissor through the legs before going or place a constraint on the shot (e.g. inside hand only results in a lay-back finish).



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# 5 SPOT 1V1



**Location:**  
Mallorca, Spain



**Good For:**  
Finishing against help,  
Reading 2v1's

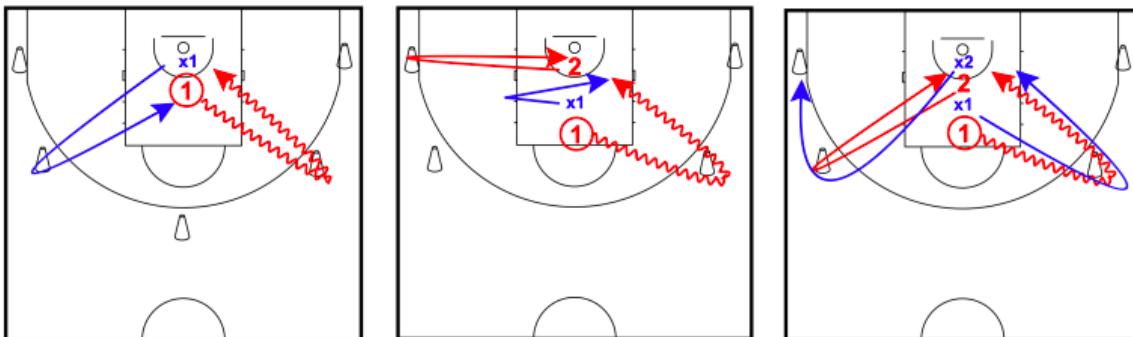


**Ages:**  
U12+



This is an effective 1v1 format for teaching players to finish over and around a help defender. You can use the same starting format to easily load up to 2v1 and 2v2.

5



## KPIs

Use this opportunity to teach players how to safely wall-up and contest the shot - running through the ball is dangerous and likely to be called as a foul. The defender has to try and beat offense to a spot, walling-up and being prepared to get vertical on the shot. If you want to use this set-up to focus more on defense, you can decrease the advantage to encourage more wall-ups by saying the defender only has to get one foot on a pylon, as opposed to fully chasing around it.

## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

Offense starts in front of the smile, with the defender right under the basket (left diagram). The offensive player speed dribbles around a pylon, with a dribble max of 5 dribbles to get around a cone and score from their starting position. The defender has to sprint around the opposite cone on the opposite side. If the offense chooses the top cone, the defender chases over the top.

**LOAD 1** = Offense starts with dribble combos. They can use a change of direction once when inside the key to change direction and choose a new pylon. The defender must also adjust.

**LOAD 2** = Load to 2v1 (middle diagram). This is my favourite 2v1 SSG because of the variability and the fact that the 2v1 always comes from a different angle (as opposed to only going through the elbows with perfect spacing which is how most 2v1 scenarios are drilled). The defender only has to get one foot outside the key before contesting. The other teammate can sprint around the low or high pylon on the opposite side (just ensure they don't only run around the corner spot). For more variability, re-add the pylon at the top so you can practice the 2v1 with the second player running through the trail spot.

**LOAD 3** = Load to 2v2 (right diagram). The first defender sprints around whatever pylon offense goes around. The second offensive player must sprint around the opposite pylon on the weakside, while the defender only needs to get their foot next to it. Decrease the adv by saying the help defender only has to get one foot outside the paint.



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# SHADOW 1V1



**Location:**  
Copenhagen, Denmark



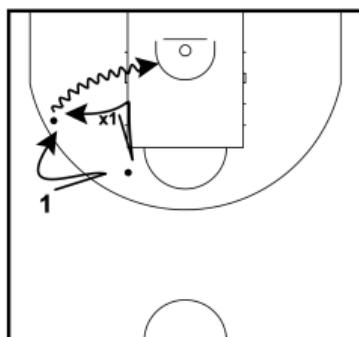
**Good For:**  
Change of Speed,  
Being Deceptive



**Ages:**  
U12+



A 1v1 set-up inspired by the Godfather of Mini-Basket, Mauricio Cremonini. I have taken several ideas from watching Mauricio's clinics over the years, all accessible on YouTube. While being dedicated to Mini-Basket, many of his concepts can be applied to several age groups.



## EXPLANATION AND LOADS

This 1v1 format encourages deceptiveness. Watching young players in many different countries over the years, fundamental movement skills and the ability to use change speed and utilise foot fakes to lose a defender is something not seen in abundance. The small dots on the diagram represent two stationary basketballs - it works better if you can use chairs to place the balls on. The offensive player starts, and has to try and 'shake their shadow' (the defender). The defender has to try and stay in-front of the offense, because the offense can pick the ball up off either chair to score. The one rule is that when the offense retreats to the starting spot, the defender must also move backwards.

**LOAD 1** = As soon as the action is over and the offense scores or the defender gets a stop, leave the ball (a waiting player will come and secure it for safety). The players have to race to the ball on the other chair and play 1v1. This encourages players to quickly sprint into the next action.

**LOAD 2** = Repeat the same set-up on the other side of the floor. The offense starts going as soon as the player on the other side picks up the ball. If the player manages to pick the ball-up early while the other pair are still playing, finish around them. Otherwise if the player picks the ball up while the other pair have finished, it becomes an instant 2v2. This encourages the offense to have vision and survey the floor while they are focussed on their action.

**LOAD 3** = 2v1. Replace the chairs for players. As soon as the offensive player receives the ball through a hand-off, the player that hands-off is allowed to screen (but can't score). Encourage 3's - if the defender goes under, screener is encouraged to twist.

**LOAD 4** = To take this down a different route, remove the balls and place an inbounder on the closest side. The offensive player starts in the corner or top, and uses the players as a stagger to try and get open.

**LOAD 4** = 2v2, next progression from Load 3. As soon as the offensive player chooses a player to receive the ball from, they work together as a pair. The other screener that is not used becomes the second defender. Offense have to try and score before the second defender can get back into the play.



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