

**FIBA**

We Are Basketball

# ASSIST 31

FIBA ASSIST MAGAZINE FOR BASKETBALL ENTHUSIASTS EVERYWHERE MARCH / APRIL 2008

**OKTAY MAHMUTI**  
THE SECONDARY  
FASTBREAK

**ERNIE WOODS**  
STATISTICALLY  
EVALUATING DEFENSIVE  
PERFORMANCE

**MAURIZIO GHERARDINI**  
THE TWO SIDES  
OF BASKETBALL

**MICHAEL GONZALEZ**  
**JORGE MIRANDA-MASSARI**  
DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS  
FOR PLAYERS

# FLIP SAUNDERS IGOR KOKOSKOV THE DETROIT PISTONS "50" DEFENSE





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**Editor-in-Chief**  
**Giorgio Gandolfi**

**Editorial Office:** Cantelli Editore,  
V. Saliceto 22/E, 40013 Castel Maggiore (BO),  
Italy, Tel. +39-051-6328811,  
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## 2008 FIBA CALENDAR

### APRIL 2008

- 04 - 06.04 NCAA Final Four for Women in Tampa, USA  
05 - 07.04 NCAA Final Four for Men in San Antonio, USA  
15 - 22.04 Military World Championships for Men and Women in San Antonio, USA  
19 - 26.04 Olympic Test Event for Women's Teams in Beijing, P.R. of China  
25 - 27.04 FIBA Central Board in Beijing, P.R. of China  
26. 04 Draw for the Olympic Basketball Tournaments in Beijing, P.R. of China

### JUNE 2008

- 09 - 15.06 FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament for Women in Madrid, Spain

### JULY 2008

- 14 - 20.07 FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament for Men in Athens, Greece  
29 - 01.08 FIBA Diamond Ball for Men in Nanjing, P.R. of China

### AUGUST 2008

- 02 - 05.08 FIBA Diamond Ball for Women in Haining, P.R. of China  
09 - 24.08 Olympic Basketball Tournaments for Men and Women in Beijing, P.R. of China

## COACHES

### FUNDAMENTALS AND YOUTH BASKETBALL

Neglected Fundamentals 4  
by Mario Blasone

How to go to the Rebound 8  
by Pete Newell and Swen Nater

### OFFENSE

The Secondary Fastbreak 12  
by Oktay Mahmuti

### DEFENSE

The Detroit Pistons "50" Defense 16  
by Flip Saunders and Igor Kokoskov

Statistically Evaluating Defensive Performance 26  
by Ernie Woods

### HOOP MARKET

Life is Elsewhere 30  
by Raffaele Imbrogno

## REFEREES AND GAME ADMINISTRATION

What did you say? 32  
by Tom Lopes

Right or Wrong? 34

## SPORT MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT

### EXECUTIVES AND MARKETING

The Two Sides of Basketball 36  
by Maurizio Gherardini

Increase the Attendance and Overall Experience 40  
by Sara Daniel

## DOCTORS, CONDITIONING COACHES AND TRAINERS

### DOCTORS

Dietary Supplements for Players 42  
by Michael Gonzalez and Jorge Miranda-Massarri

## NEWS

### ONE-ON-ONE

Melnichuk: Winning Habit and Smile 44  
Back to Ukraine

Lakovic: "Olympics would be much Easier than FIBA EuroBasket." 45

### PLANET BASKETBALL

The World in Brief 46

### OFF-THE-COURT

The Odd - The Funny - The Unusual 50

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**FIBA**

We Are Basketball



by Mario Blasone

# NEGLECTED FUNDAMENTALS

Mario Blasone started his coaching career with the youth teams of Udine, Italy, where he then became head coach of the Division I team in 1977. He was head coach of the Italian National Youth teams, winning a gold medal at the FIBA European Junior Championship in 1990 and another one at the Mediterranean Games in 1991 with the Under 22 team. He also won a silver medal at the 1991 FIBA Junior World Championships. In 1991, he was the head coach of Verona, the Division I Italian team. Back with the Italian National Youth teams, he won a gold medal with the Military National team in 1994 and the silver medal at the FIBA Under 22 European Championships. After a stint as the technical director of Verona, he became head coach of the Egyptian mens' national team, winning a bronze medal at the FIBA African Championships and at the Arabs Games. In 2006, he won the Division I title with the Al Gezira team. Since 2007, he has been Director of International Scouting for the Italian Division I team, Virtus Bologna.

Traveling, visiting, and coaching in many countries around the world, I've noticed that some fundamentals are neglected. In the first part of a practice session, I often use some drills that I created to incorporate these missing fundamentals. The first of these drills arrives... from Egypt, where I coached two years ago. I gave the drills some fantasy names, making use of Egyptian words for some.

## "SCIP SCIP" DRILL

**The aim: To practice defensive slides.**

The players form a line (diagr. 1), make a tap-in against the backboard, and then, after zigzag sliding, come back to the end of the line. The drill goes on for two-three minutes, but coaches have to base the intensity and the length of the



drill according to the age, level, and to the sex of the athletes.

Important: The coach must emphasize sliding with both feet remaining in contact with the ground. When players become good at sliding, we can insert a tool I call "hard to tame." It incorporates a basketball, as in the second drill.

### "PASS AND SLIDE" DRILL

**The aim: Sliding and boxing out the shooter.**

The players form a pair, each player at a distance of 5 to 6 meters from each other. They pass the ball back and forth while sliding down for all the court. After the pass, they execute a 180° turn, always keeping their eye on their teammate. Once they get to the basket, the player with the ball passes it out to the other player, who shoots the jumper and goes for the offensive rebound, while the passer boxes out. They take the rebound and continue to slide and pass to the other basket, where they shot and box out again (diagr. 2). It's important that the coach monitors the pace of the drill so there is good execution by both players.

Let's now increase the speed of the warm-up session with the:

### "BEKALLEM" DRILL

**The aim: To have the player alert, and not waiting passively for their time to shoot.**

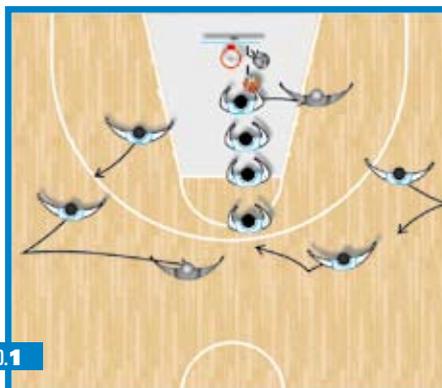
Two lines of players in the wing positions, one line with the ball and the other one without. The first player shouts the name of one of the players on the other line, which then sprints to the basket, receives the ball, and makes a lay-up. (diagr. 3). The shooter recovers his own shot and dribbles to the opposite line.

While talking and sliding, it's not easy to use the arms, but the next drill will help you to do just that:

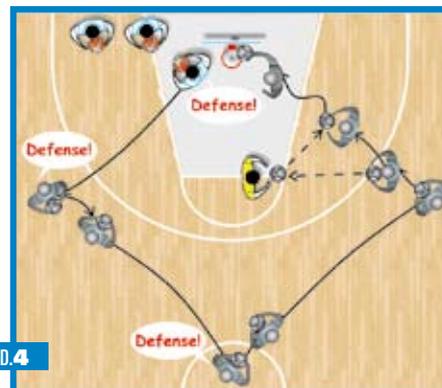
### "RHOMBUS" DRILL

**The aim: Moving the arms (while holding a ball), sliding, and shouting, "defense!"**

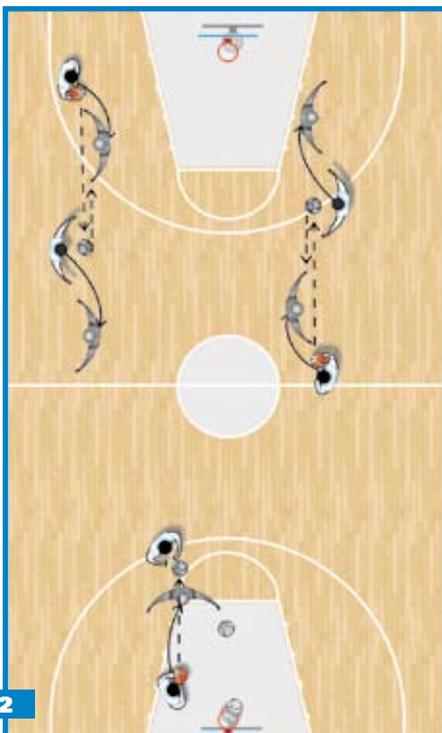
A line of players, each with a basketball, forms near the baseline. They slide, forming an imaginary figure of a rhombus, sliding first to the sideline, then sliding to the mid-court line, and then to the other sideline. Each time they reach the sidelines and mid court line, they drop the ball hard to the floor, shout "defense", make a 90° pivot, and go to the next angle. In fast sequence, every-



D.1



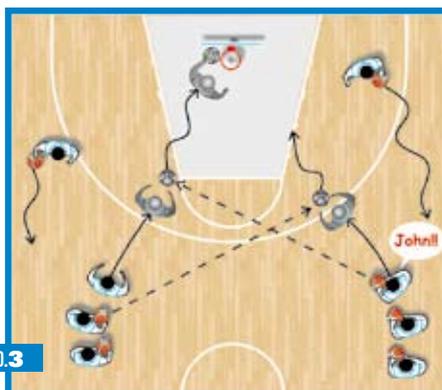
D.4



D.2



D.5



D.3



D.6

one makes a rhombus route (diagr. 4). They shake the ball and make circles with it around the with the legs and touch the back and down through the legs with the ball to develop arm movement. When they arrive at the other sideline, they pass the ball to the coach, who passes it right back so the player can go in for a lay-up.

When using this drill, make sure it's performed at a pace that ensures proper execution. This is a physically demand-

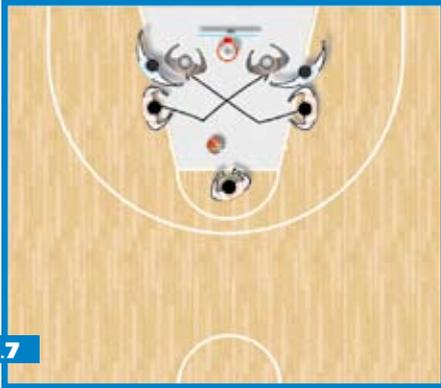
ing drill. You will need to have four to five players involved, with others recovering on the sidelines.

Finally, the last warm-up drill: a very demanding one-on-one.

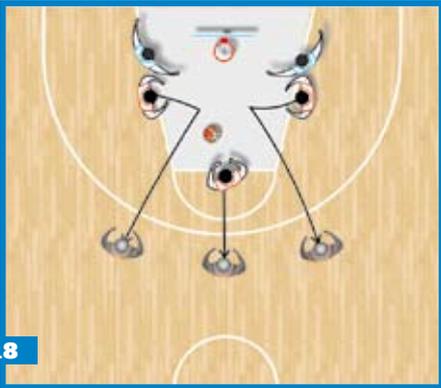
### "SHEMEL" DRILL

**The aim: To force the offensive player to use his weak hand.**

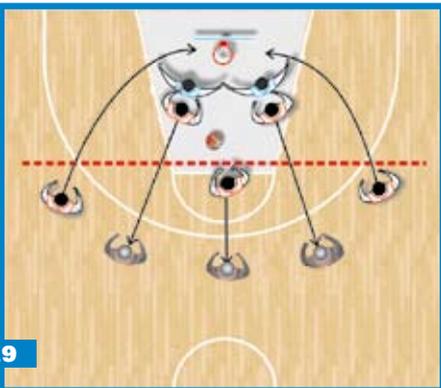
The coach is positioned at half court with the ball, while two players set up out of the half-court circle. The coach



D.7



D.8



D.9

can throw the ball to either half court (diagr. 5): the player who recovers the ball is on offense, while the defender moves in and tries to force him to use his weak hand while he dribbles. The drill ends when one of the two players scores. Important: 4 or 6 players work, while others recover.

#### OFFENSIVE REBOUND AFTER A FREE-THROW

Now let's go to the end of the training session. I happen to hate free-throws.... free or with soft aims (for example: if you score 5 you can end the practice and go to the shower). I want to capitalize on the last part of the practice session. Have you ever asked to yourself why a player on offense usually doesn't catch the offensive rebounds after a free-throw? Because offensive players only think to push against the defenders and quickly get boxed out. I suggest this solution: our re-





bounders should avoid contact with the defender, setting themselves up as far as they can from the boxes assigned to them.

In every practice, when we shoot free-throws, we teach the “take away the contact” technique (diagr. 6). Players dive in the spaces created under the basket with the help of the teammate on his side, who will make an identical and opposite move (diagr. 7). The aim of this move is to draw “up” the defender. After

the move “inside-up”, the offensive player dives under the basket from the opposite side (again diagr. 7).

During the game, we use another combined move: the shooter and two false rebounders come back to defend (diagr. 8). When the ball touches the rim, two small and fast players plunge in the space created under the basket (diagr. 9). This teaches our players to always be aggressive. I ensure you that in every game, you will earn a pair of easy baskets.



by Pete Newell



by Swen Nater

# HOW TO GO TO THE REBOUND

**Pete Newell is considered one of the greatest coaches in the United States. He coached the University of S.Franisco, Michigan State and California-Berkeley, that led to the NCAA title. He also coached the National team of the United States, winning the gold medal at the Olympic Games in 1960. Awarded as Coach of the Year in 1960, Newell was also enshrined in the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame in 1979. He run his Big Man Camp since 1976 and his Tall Women's Camp since 2001. Moreover, he's author of several videos and books.**

**Swen Nater is a former UCLA player, where he won two NCAA titles. After college, he played in the NBA and ABA, leading both leagues in rebounding. Nater runs his own Big Man Camp in Seattle and is often consulted as a big man's coach for developing high school and college players. He's also author of three books, including one on rebounding.**

## INDIVIDUAL DEFENSIVE REBOUNDING

Players must be taught the proper technique for defensive rebounding. When playing man-to-man defense, each player must realize the importance of screening the immediate opponent from the rebounding ball. We teach players to assume a low stance with the arms spread up and away from the body as soon as the shot is taken. If the defensive rebounder loses contact with the opponent because of premature advancement toward the basket, many problems will be encountered. For that reason, immediate contact must be made. The defensive rebounder must be proactive. If there is space between the screener and the offensive rebounder, the latter is able to go toward the basket with momentum that can help the height of the jump and increase timing. An immediate screen will deter the offensive rebounder from making an uninterrupted move to the ball. It also creates space for the defensive rebounder to make the move toward the rebound at the right time.

Space allows the defensive rebounder to jump at a 45-degree angle to the ball. This angle enables the rebounder to protect the ball when returning to the floor after gain-

ing possession. If the release from contact is made too soon, or the rebounder goes to the ball without blocking out, the jump will often be vertical, making it difficult to bring the ball down to the chin for protection. When this occurs, opponents who are close by will be able to jar the ball loose. In other words the ball will be exposed. However, if the angle is 45 degrees, the ball is protected. In addition, this position often induces a rebounding foul by the opposing rebounder for reaching over and making illegal contact.

Because of their height advantage and proximity to the rim, exceptionally tall players do not need to hold the block out quite as long as shorter players because their height has already created space between their opponent and the ball. However, the player who is significantly shorter than the player to be blocked out must make the aggressive initial contact, hold the opponent away from the rim to create space, and move to the rebound at a 45-degree angle. Make no mistake: we are not talking only

about centers and inside players; every player must practice blocking out as described, no matter where they are on the floor in relation to the hoop. The greater the mismatch in height, the sooner contact is made and the longer it is held.

One of the shortest centers to play professional basketball was Wes Unseld at 6 feet, 7 inches (almost 2 meters). A rookie in the 1968 to 1969 season with the Baltimore Bullets, was found himself on the shorter end of the height stick every night. Wes became extremely skilled in making initial contact and maintaining inside position, all the while moving to the rebound. For those who were matching up against him, the word around the league was "Your legs will hurt after the game." Wes Unseld's method of making contact was to thrust his backside into the thighs of the opponents, often freezing them because of the impact. Opponents often backed away from him to avoid the collision, leaving them in horrible position for the rebound. During his career, Unseld averaged 14 rebounds per game. Not only was



1



Wes named Rookie of the Year, he was also the league's MVP during the same year. As a Washington Bullet, he won the NBA crown in the 1977-78 season.

But no player in NBA history illustrated the perfect blocking out technique and 45-degree trajectory better than the Boston Celtics' Dave Cowens. At 6 feet, 9 inches (206 centimeters), Cowens competed against much taller players such as Wilt Chamberlain, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Bob Lanier, who were skilled offensive rebounders. His height disadvantage forced him to practice a defensive rebounding method that was identical to Unseld's; he blocked out quick and hard and jumped like a jet to the rebound. But his rebounding technique had one additional characteristic: when obtaining possession of the ball in midair, Dave flared his legs as an eagle spreads its wings. This discouraged offensive rebounders from coming near and prevented immediate pressure.

#### **INDIVIDUAL OFFENSIVE REBOUNDING**

An offensive rebound is like a turnover for the other team. Being a good offensive rebounder takes initiative, resourcefulness, aggressiveness, and the relentless desire to come up with the ball. Contrary to what many may think, some of the greatest re-



bounders at both ends of the court seldom dunked the basketball. This shows that these players were workhorses and cared little about flare and flashiness. It may also imply that they were not the tallest players on the floor, and that was often the case. Effective rebounding has more to do with zeal than size. It has been estimated that 75 percent of all rebounds are recovered below the rim. Offensively, the rebounder should initiate motion at the moment the shot is taken -or preferably, before the shot is taken. Great offensive rebounders are cunning and deceptive. First, they are extremely accurate in assessing what direction the ball will take after it hits the rim. Second, they make the initial move away from that direction, tricking the defensive rebounder into thinking they are going that way and opening up the area where they eventually want to end up. This is called deployment of rebounding. Before Moses Malone and Dennis Rodman entered the NBA, many considered Paul Silas to be the best offensive rebounder in history. We consider him to be the most resourceful rebounder. Not only was Silas skilled at using fakes to get the position he wanted, but when he was unsuccessful, he was known to go out of bounds and then come back in to take the inside position. This certifies that he was a rebounder with the passion to get the ball any way he could. When Dennis Rodman entered the NBA in 1986, fans witnessed a dimension of offensive rebounding they had never seen before: incredible footwork and an unequalled pursuit of the basketball. On the defensive end of the floor, he was primarily concerned with stop his assignment, who was often the most dangerous offensive player. Rodman was named the NBA defensive player of the year twice. Rodman possessed great anticipation. Most offensive rebounders begin thinking about the rebound when the shot is taken or perhaps just before. Not so for Rodman. He was ever mindful of the ball and his position in relation to the man who was guarding him; therefore, he was ready to make his move when he had the greatest advantage. Often that move was initiated well before the shot was taken. Some offensive rebounders can be stopped with the quick block out and hold, but players who were matched up against Dennis Rodman knew that the defensive rebound was never secured until it was secured. Dennis possessed another trait unique to him; in addition to being able to jump in all directions -as all great offensive rebounders can- the square footage he could cover was unequalled. Any opponent who casually went for what seemed like a sure rebound often found Dennis Rodman flying by him and stealing the rebound. Den-

nis was known to go so far as to fly horizontally to get the rebound, if need be. Rodman was NBA rebounding champ seven years in a row and helped his teams win five NBA championships. Because of Rodman's antics, ejections, and need for attention, some people may argue that he was an individual who cared little about the team. But who can argue with five NBA championships? Dennis Rodman was a competitor who understood the value of offensive rebounding to team success, and he did his job better than anyone in history. Like him or not, he was a winner. What can be learned from great rebounders such as Unseld, Cowens, Rodman and Ben Wallace? Is it that athleticism is the key to rebounding effectiveness? Hardly! We could provide a list of players who were very good rebounders but were not extremely athletic. These players had great footwork and relentlessly pursued the missed shot.

### REBOUNDING FOOTWORK

Body balance, footwork, and maneuvering speed were discussed earlier in the book as prerequisite movement skills for post play. Footwork includes pivoting and spinning. Developing maneuvering speed requires activities that involve changing direction and pace. The combination of the three prerequisite movement skills provides a good foundation for rebounding footwork. To be an effective rebounder, the player must be able to move and jump in

that order. Defensive and offensive rebounding require different types of footwork.

### FOOTWORK FOR DEFENSIVE REBOUNDING

As previously mentioned, to move to a defensive rebound at the recommended 45-degree angle, the screener must initiate the contact and make the immediate block out before the offensive player begins to make the move to the rim. Making contact with the arm to the chest will stop some opponents, but the good ones need a quick backside to the thighs. Also note that the quick hit will eliminate the effectiveness of faking one direction to go the other, which is a key tactic for offensive rebounding.

### SPIN PIVOT

Initiating contact must be done quickly and assertively; there is no room for hesitation because the offensive rebounder must be stopped before beginning the move toward the rim. The moment the shooter begins the shooting motion, the screener makes a 180-degree spin pivot toward the offensive player and lands the backside into the thighs (photo 1 and 2). When the basketball is about to hit the rim, the defensive rebounder makes the move to the rim (photo 3). Holding position and waiting for the ball to almost reach the rim allows the defensive rebounder to read the direction of the possible miss. This decreases the chances of jumping in the wrong direction.



### FRONT PIVOT

Being proactive and making the first hit is ideal. However, there will be times when the offensive player makes a quick anticipatory move and the screener must react. When making the move to the rebound, the offensive player is limited to going to the middle or baseline. Therefore, the screener must learn two methods of footwork. If the opponent moves to the middle, the screener's baseline foot crosses over, and the front pivot is made. The backside makes the impact on the opponent's thigh. Also notice the position of the hands and the erect posture of the screener. The hands are up and ready for the rebound. The body is in balance, ready to move toward the basket at the correct time. Not only is the backside in contact with the opponent, the screener's entire back is also derailing any ploy to get by, such as a swim move.

### REVERSE PIVOT

If the offensive player makes a move toward the baseline, the screener makes a back, or reverse, pivot. Again, quick impact is made with the backside, but the back is also making contact.

A traditional method of blocking out involves using a reverse pivot no matter which direction the offensive player goes. However, because obtaining and maintaining vision on the ball after it is shot is crucial to knowing when to release the block out and go to the rim, we recommend the

front pivot when the offensive player makes the move to the middle. Besides it possible to maintain ball vision from shot to rebound, this makes the player less likely to be faked in one direction.

### FOOTWORK FOR OFFENSIVE REBOUNDING

With the exception of the amount of contact with the arms and hands, the footwork for offensive rebounding can be compared to that of a defensive end in football who is attempting to get around the block and to the quarterback. It requires faking and an explosive change of direction. It also requires a countermove in case the first move is hindered.

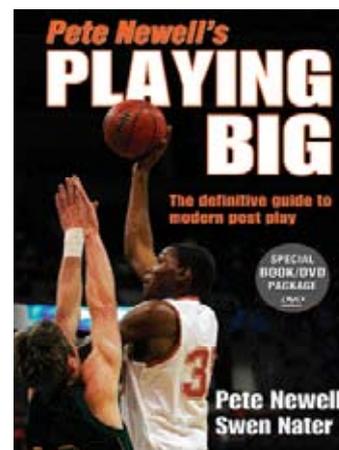
### PLAN A-FAKING AND EXPLODING

Whatever part of the floor the offensive rebounder has determined the ball will bounce to, the player makes a fake in the opposite direction (photo 4). When the screener reacts, the offensive player changes direction by shooting the outside hand past the defender's chin toward the desired area and moving the outside foot over the defender's legs toward that same area (photo 5). When changing direction, the player accelerates toward the desired spot.

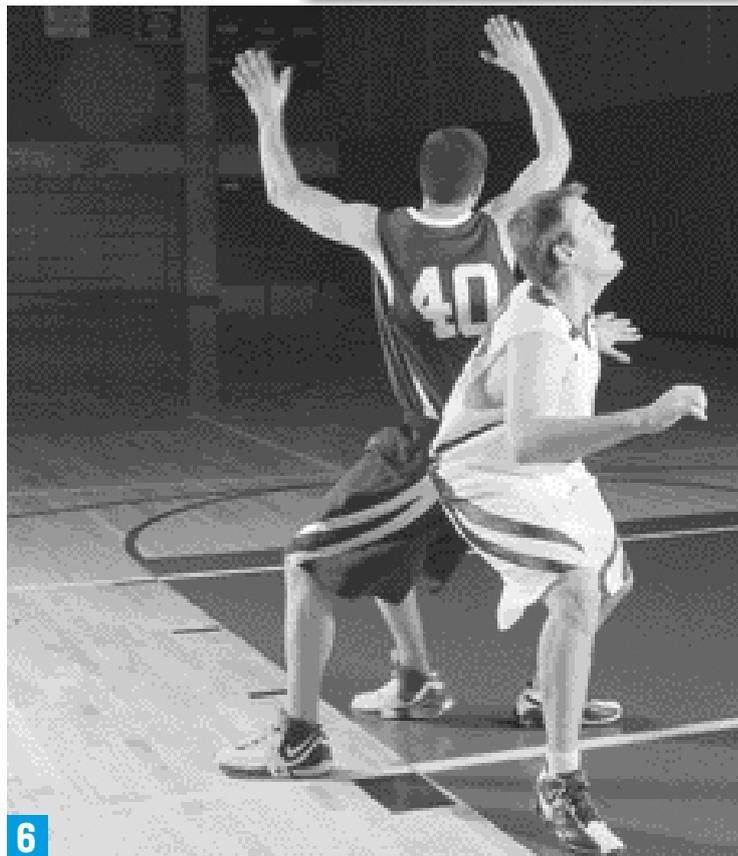
### PLAN B-SPINNING

If the screener blocks the path to the desired area when the offensive rebounder is changing direction, the offensive rebound-

er must not stop and accept defeat; to counter the opponent's move, the offensive player makes a spin in the opposite direction. Position A was taken away, so the counter is to take position B (photo 6). To spin quickly, the player's body must be low and in a vertical position, and the arms must not move too far out horizontally from the body, much like an ice-skater who is increasing the speed of a spin. However, the basketball player is not spinning in one spot; the spin is made simultaneously with motion toward position B.



Taken from the book "Pete Newell's Playing Big", Pete Newell and Swen Nater, Human Kinetics, 2008




**FIBA**

We Are Basketball



by Oktay Mahmuti

# THE SECONDARY FASTBREAK

**Oktay Mahmuti is currently the head coach of Benetton Treviso, the Italian Division I League team. He was head coach of the Efes Pilsen Istanbul (Turkey) from 2000 to 2007, where his teams won two Turkish Cups, four Turkish Division I League titles, and one Turkish President Cup.**

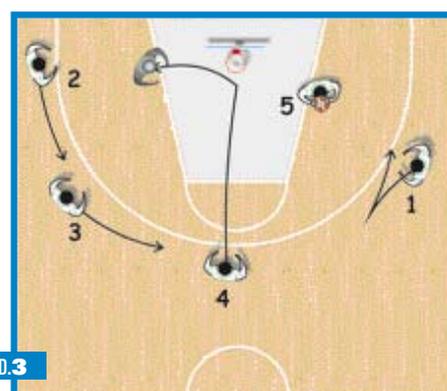
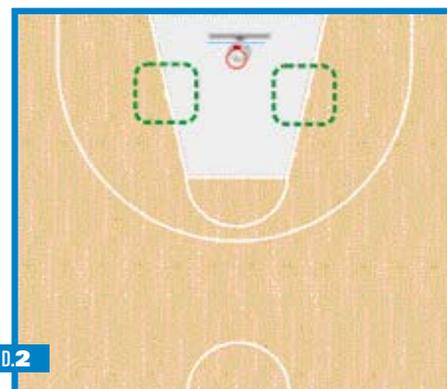
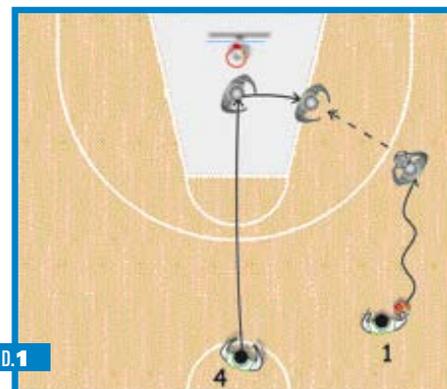
You can find the best and most successful offense in a basketball textbook, but you must always remember that you need to adapt your offensive (and defensive) philosophy to the players you have at your disposal. If an NBA, NCAA, or Euroleague team has success with a certain offense, it does not mean that particular offense can be applied to your team. Every team is different, with varied player talent levels. In short, before talking about my secondary break, I want to reiterate: don't use a certain offense only because it's a winning offense. Use it only if it fits your team profile.

In every type of offensive set, spacing is one of the basic ingredients of an effective attack. With the term "spacing," we normally mean the proper distance between the offensive players, a distance that allows players who receive the ball to have enough room to play one-on-one without other defenders moving over to help out. Spacing is, therefore, a "must" on the primary and the secondary break, which I will describe in this article.

Running basketball is a pleasure for players as well as spectators. However, in order to succeed, your players need certain basic skills:

- ▼ Conditioning is the first brick for building the fastbreak. Players must be ready not only to run, but to finish aggressively with a lay-up or jumpshot. They must have





stamina from the opening tip to the final horn.

- ▼ Running fast while executing the fundamentals of passing, dribbling, and shooting at top speed is another important foundation of the fastbreak.
- ▼ Running, not rushing, is another basic aspect of the primary and secondary break.
- ▼ Reading the defense (as in all offensive situations) is another must. On the secondary break you can take advantage of the mismatches created when the defenders scramble and often do not find their assigned players to guard.
- ▼ Again, maintain proper spacing.

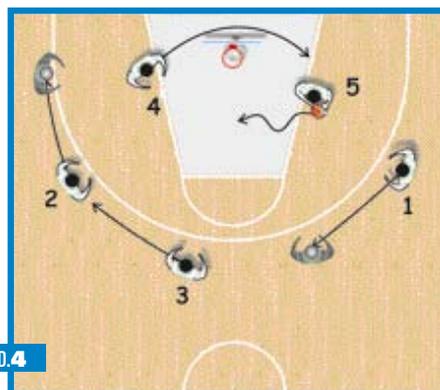
The type of fastbreak I ran at Efes Pilsen of Istanbul, the team that I coached for seven years (and the one I use with my Benetton team), takes into account the abilities of the players. Lacking a big man and players who could shoot well from outside of the three-point line, I instead had athletic players who



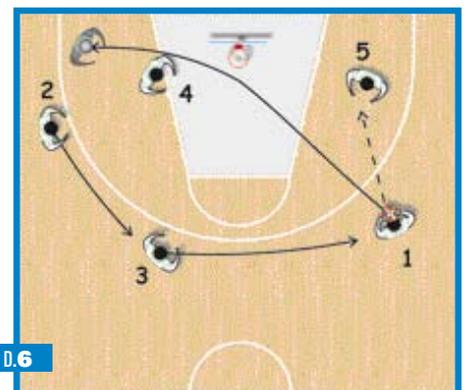
were able to run and quickly occupy the proper spots on the court. Here are some of the rules I adopted for my teams.

Our fastbreak is triggered every time we get the ball: on missed and made field goals, after an opponent's free-throw, from a sideline out-of-bounds pass, and from a steal or turnover. The big men, especially the ones who don't grab the rebound, sprint in the middle lane of the court. Their goal is to get to the offensive basket area as quickly as possible. The first big man who reaches the frontcourt sets up on the side of the court with the ball handler (diagr. 1).

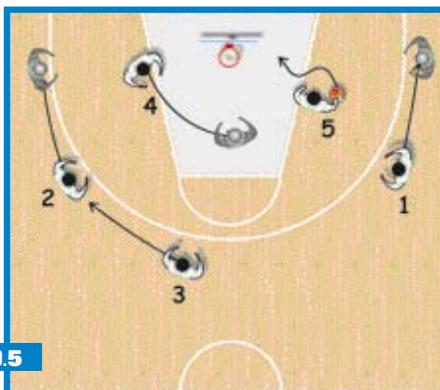
I must now state a premise: the importance of low-post play has decreased greatly over the years, mainly because big men don't have the technical skills possessed by the great post players of years ago. In addition, many teams have switched their offense to include a lot of high and side pick-and-rolls with the big men. That said, I still think a good post player on the low post provides a distinct advantage. I think of him as a second point guard, a player who can see the entire court and pass the ball to open teammates. I tell my players to pass the ball to the low-post player



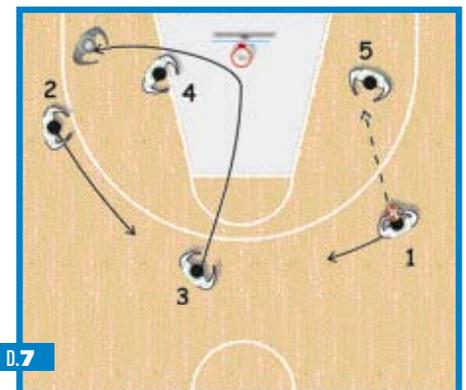
D.4



D.6



D.5



D.7

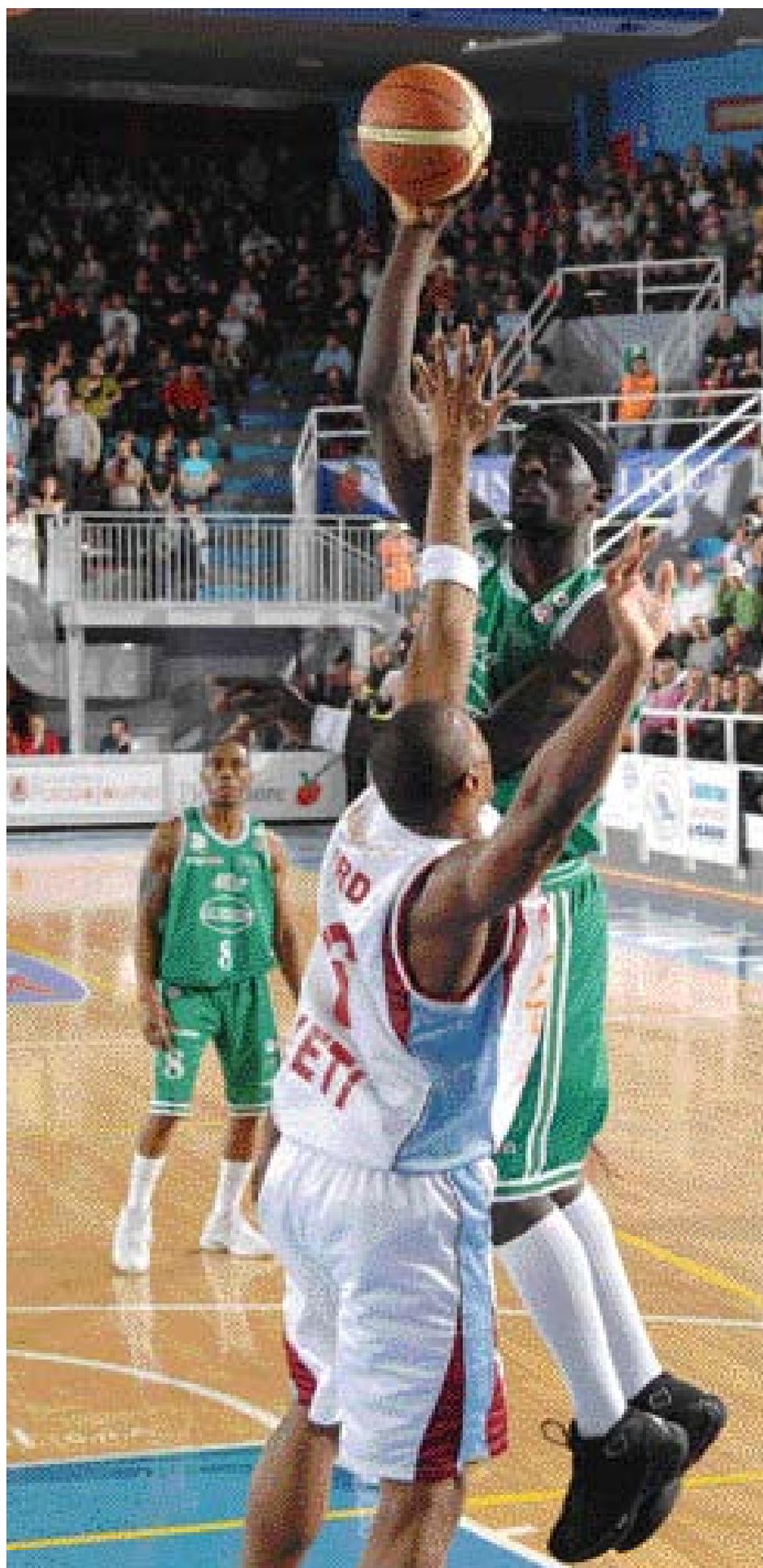
only when he is set up in the proper position: between the last two marks of the free-throw line (diagr. 2). From this position, the post can attack the basket either to baseline or the middle of the lane. In this example, 5 is the first big man who has set himself on the low post. He receives the ball from the ball handler, 1, and the other offensive players move accordingly. If, as shown in diagram 3, 4 is the second trailer and he is not a good three-point shooter, he makes an aggressive cut to the basket. If he does not get the ball from 5, he sets himself up in the low post on the other side of the lane. The other three perimeter players move themselves in the opposite direction, rotating (in this example) to the right side of the court. 1 will fake to go left and then he will slide to the corner. 3 will set himself in the middle of the floor, and 2 will go to the free-throw line extension. Moving in this way, 5 can pass the ball out to an open teammate for a three-point shot.

However, if 5 attacks the basket and drives the baseline, or else drives to the middle of the three-second lane, the other four teammates will rotate in a different way.

▼ 5 drives to the middle of the lane: in this case, 4 will cut in the opposite direction and under the basket, to avoid easy defensive rotations. 1, 2, and 3 will adapt their positions on the perimeter, rotating from the right to the left: 2 will go the corner, 3 to the wing, and 1 up, but not completely to the middle of the court. Again, spacing is important. With these offensive rotations, 5 will have four different passing lanes if he is stopped by the defense and cannot go to the basket (diagr. 4).

▼ 5 drives to the baseline: in this case, 4 will cut high toward the center of the three-second lane, while the other three offensive players on the perimeter will slide in two different directions. 1 will slide to right and to the corner, while 2 and 3 will rotate to the left side of the court. Again, spacing is important. 5 will now have four different passing possibilities. (diagr. 5).

Let's now review a different case in which 5 is aggressively contested, cannot receive the ball on the low post, and must get out of the lane to get a pass from 1, the ball handler. Right after the pass to 5, 1 cuts aggressively in the lane and goes to the weak side corner, while 2 and 3 rotate and replace (diagr. 6). Naturally, based on skill levels, it could be another player who makes the basic cut in the lane and then moves to the weak-side corner. In this example, it's 3 (diagr. 7). If we have a power forward who is a good outside shooter, our offensive spacing will be easier and more complete, because we can set four shooters on the perimeter.





**FIBA**

We Are Basketball



by Flip Saunders



by Igor Kokoskov

# THE DETROIT PISTONS "50" DEFENSE



# TONS



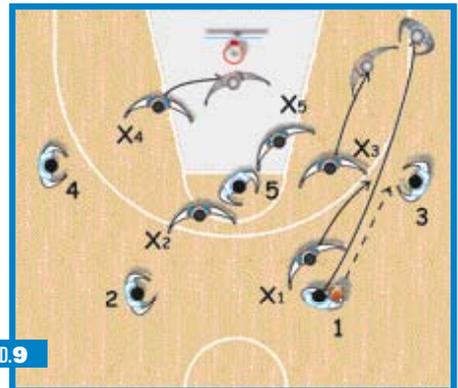
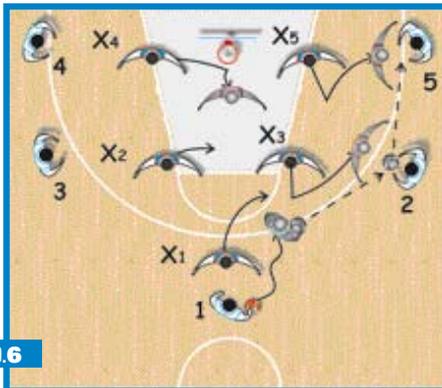
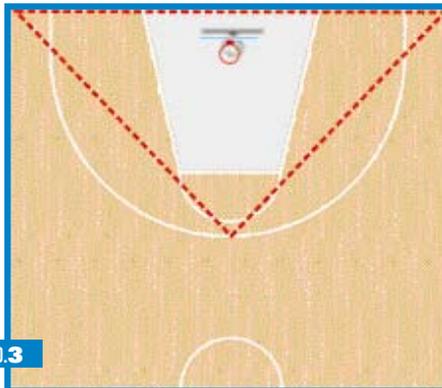
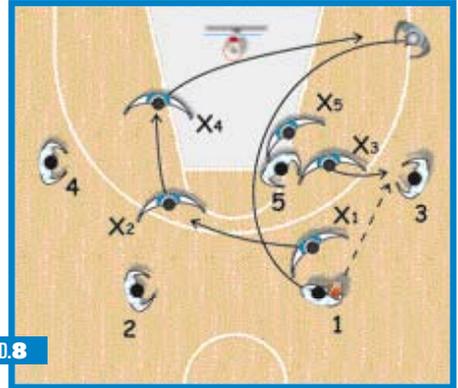
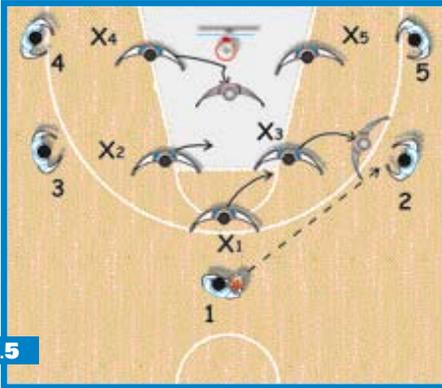
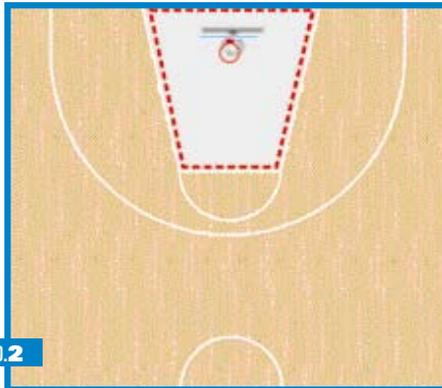
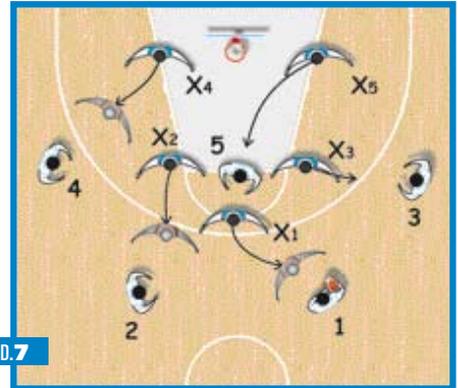
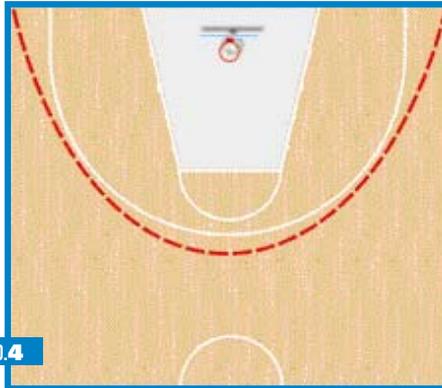
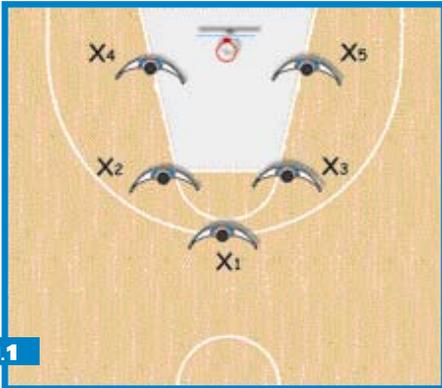
Flip Saunders has been the head coach of the Detroit Pistons since 2005. He coached Golden Valley Lutheran College, and then he became head coach of several Continental Basketball Association teams, winning two titles with La Crosse. He was twice named Coach of the Year in the CBA. He coached on the college level, first as an assistant coach at the University of Minnesota, and then at the University of Tulsa. He was appointed head coach of the NBA Minnesota Timberwolves in 1995, and coached there for 10 years. In 2001, he became the head coach of the U.S. men's national team, which won a gold medal at the Goodwill Games.

Igor Kokoskov has been an assistant coach of the Detroit Pistons since 2004. When he was 24, he coached the BC Belgrade team in Yugoslavia, and later became the first European ever to become an assistant coach of an NCAA Division I team when he worked at the University of Missouri. In 2000, he was hired as assistant coach by the Los Angeles Clippers, becoming the first non-American to become assistant coach on an NBA team. He was also assistant coach of the Yugoslavian Junior national team in 1995, and assistant coach of the Serbian Men's national team at the 2004 Olympic Games.

## GENERAL RULES

We give the players these simple, general rules:

- ▼ Never leave the dribbler alone.
- ▼ Never let the offense penetrate the defense, either with a dribble or a pass.
- ▼ Sag towards the ball, forming triangles on the help position.
- ▼ Cover the low post player, fronting him or in a  $\frac{3}{4}$  stance.
- ▼ Drop as deep as the ball on the back defensive line.
- ▼ Move the ball to the corners or away from the basket.
- ▼ On the shallow cuts or cuts in front of you, switch.
- ▼ Contest every shot.
- ▼ Pressure the ball at the top of the lane, in a ball defensive stance.



- ▼ The inside hand is up to deny any passing lane.
- ▼ The guards pick up their assigned players five feet from the top of the key.
- ▼ Move on every pass and dribble.
- ▼ Sag as much as the defensive rules let you.
- ▼ Try and make cuts to the ball go behind you to "kick him off." That's our terminology for following a cutter and then giving him to another defender.

**INDIVIDUAL RULES**

These are the rules for every defender, based on his role.

- X1:**
- a. Cover the ball handler.
  - b. Initiate all "kicks" and must commu-

- nicate with teammates on defense.
- c. Always drop down on the post to take away any pass down low.

- X2:**
- a. The second guard.
  - b. Covers the first offensive player to the right of X1.
  - c. Makes cutters cut behind him, passing them to X4.

- X3:**
- a. The small forward.
  - b. Covers the offensive players to the left of X1.
  - c. Makes cutters cut behind.

- X4 e X5:**
- a. Are set on the same position on the opposite sides of the floor.
  - b. X4 covers the first offensive player to the right of X2, and, if there is no offensive player there, he looks for

- the low post, then the high post, and then the other low post.
- c. X5 covers the first offensive player to the left of X3, and if there is no offensive player there, he looks for the low post, then the high post, and then the other low post.
- d. They cover in front the mid or low post or in a ¾ stance.
- e. They must communicate each other.
- f. They must work in tandem.

**BASIC ALIGNMENT AND COURT AREAS**

In diagram 1 we can see the basic alignment of our "50" defense, a 1-2-2 half court match-up zone, while in diagram 2, the shaded area shows where all passes and penetrations are denied. In diagram 3 we can see "triangle help." This is the half court where all the defenders are in a triangle position, ready to help. Finally, in diagram 4 we show what we call the "point of ball zone," which means the



area where the players have the inside hand up to contest the shot and the other hand down to contest the drive.

### BASIC SLIDES ON THE PASS AND SLIDES ON THE PENETRATIONS

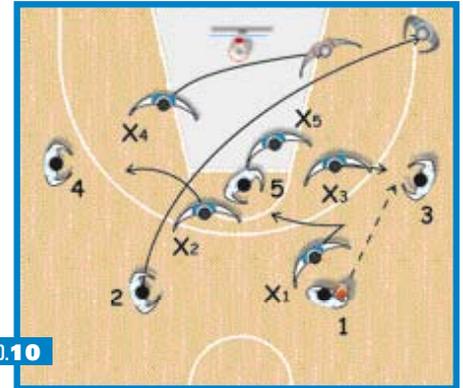
Let's start to see the basic slides of all five defenders the from the 1-2-2 set on the pass to the wing (diagr. 5). The defender yells "ball" every time he is covering the ball, and the other defenders are in the help position. In diagr. 6 we show the slides, when there is a drive penetration, without any cut through the zone.

## DEFENSIVE ROTATIONS ON DIFFERENT OFFENSES

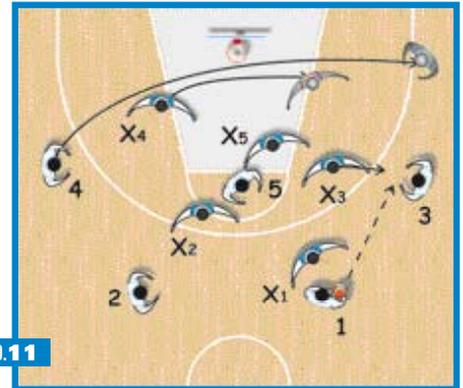
### 2-3 OFFENSIVE SETS

This is the initial defensive rotation to a match-up when we face a 2-3 set offense. X1 covers the player with the ball 1, X2 covers 2, the player to the right of X1, X3 covers 3, the player to the left of X1, X4 covers 4, the player to the right of X2 and X5 covers the high post 5, the player to the left of X3 (diagr. 7).

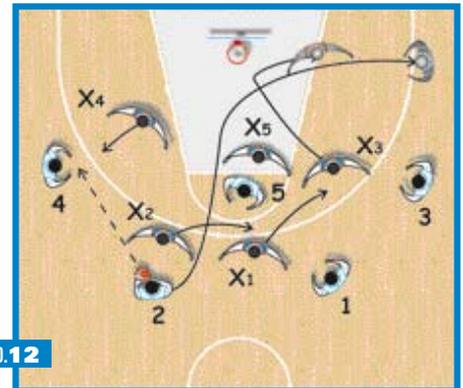
NOTE. Before all the defensive slides



D.10



D.11



D.12



D.13

and match-up, which will be shown in the following diagrams, the defenders initially rotate as shown in diagram 7.

**Cut of the strong side guard to the right strong side corner.** On the pass from 1 to 3, and the cut of 1 to the strong side corner, X1 jumps to the ball, fronts the high post, and then goes to guard 2, who is X2's player. X2 drops back to guard 4 and protect the basket, X4 rotates over and takes the cutter, 1, and X5 sags, but stays on 5 (diagr. 8).

**Shallow cut of the strong side guard to the right corner.** On the pass from 1 to 3, and the shallow cut of 1 to the corner, X1 jumps to the ball and pushes X3 to follow the cutter, 1, to the corner. X3 does not leave his offensive player until he makes contact with 1 (diagr. 9).

**Cut of the weak side guard to the right strong side corner.** On the pass from 1 to 3 and the cut of 2 to the strong side corner, X1 first jumps to the ball and then fronts the high post. X2 drops back to cover 4, X4 follows the guard 2 to the corner, and X5 stays on the high post, 5 (diagr. 10). If, instead, X5's man is in the low post, then X4 will cover the low post and X5 will follow the cut of 2.

**Cut of the forward from the weak side to right strong side corner.** On the pass from 1 to 3 and the cut of 4 to the strong side corner, X4 follows the cut of 4 (diagr. 11). If, instead, X5's man is in the low post, then X4 will cover the low post and X5 will follow the cut of 4.

**Cut of the guard from the strong side to the right weak side corner.** On the pass from 2 to 4 and then 2's cut to the weak side corner, X1 drops to the high post, and then goes to replace X3 and guard 3. X3 follows the cut of 2 in the corner (diagr. 12).

**Cut of the weak side guard to the same side corner.** On the pass from 2 to 4 and 1's cut to the corner on the same side, X1 drops down and picks up 3, X3's offensive player. X3 follows the cut of 1 in the corner (diagr. 13).

**Cut of the strong side guard to the same side corner.** On the pass from 2 to 4 and then the cut of 2 to the strong side corner, X2 jumps to the ball, fronts the high post, and then goes to guard 1, X1's player. X1 drops back to guard 3, X3 rotates over and takes the cutter 1, and X5 sags, but stays on 5 (diagr. 14).

**Shallow cut of the strong side guard to the same left side corner.** On the pass from 2 to 4, and the shallow cut of 2 to the corner, X2 jumps to the ball and pushes X4 to cover 2 to the corner. X4 does not leave his offensive player until he makes contact with 2 (diagr. 15).

**Cut of the weak side guard to the left strong side corner.** On the pass from 2 to 4 and the cut of 1 to the strong side corner, X1 drops and covers 3, X3's offensive player. X3 covers the cutter, 1, to the strong side corner (diagr. 16).

**Cut of the weak side wing to left strong side corner.** On the pass from 2 to 4 and the cut of 3 to the strong side corner, X3 covers the cutter, 3, to the strong side corner (diagr. 17).

**Cut of the strong side guard to the left weak side corner.** On the pass from 1 to 3 and the cut of 1 to the weak side corner, X1 squares 1's cut jumping to the ball, fronts the high post, and then goes to replace X2 on 2. X2 drops low to cover 4 while X4 covers the cutter, 1 (diagr. 18).

**Cut of the weak side guard to the same side corner.** On the pass from 1 to 3, 2's cut to the corner and 4's replacement of 2, X2 drops to cover 4, the offensive player of 4. X4 covers the cutter, 2 (diagr. 19).

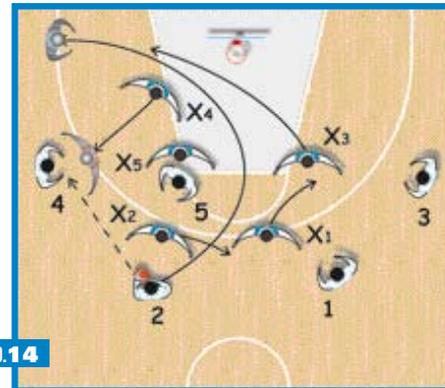
**1-3-1 OFFENSIVE SET**

This is the initial defensive rotation to match-up when we face a 1-3-1 set of offense: X5 comes up to cover 5 (diagr. 20).

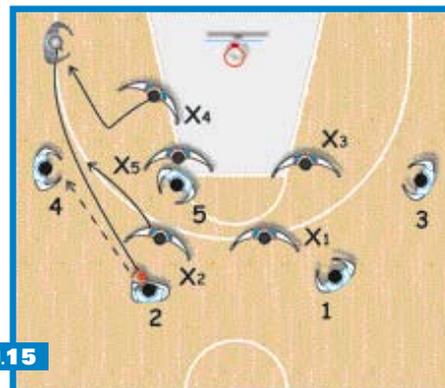
NOTE. Before all the defensive slides and match-up, which will be shown in the following diagrams, the defenders initially rotate as shown in diagram 20.

**Cut of the strong side guard to the right strong side corner.** On the pass from 1 to 3 and the cut of 1 to the strong side corner, X1 squares the cut, fronts the high post, 5, and then, after having pushed X2 to drop and cover the low post, 4, X4's offensive player, he replaces X2. X4 covers the cutter 1 and X5 sags, but stays on 5 (diagr. 21).

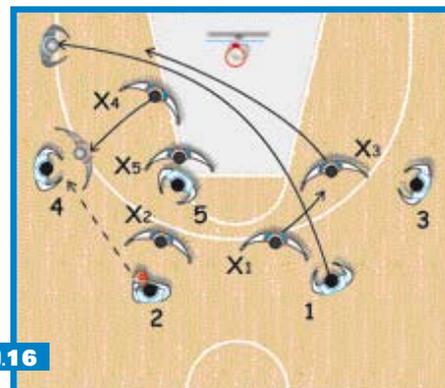
**Cut of the strong side guard to the left weak side corner.** On the pass from 1 to 3 and the cut of 1 to the weak side corner, X1 squares and drops to cover the high post, 5. After having pushed X2 to cover the low post, 4, X4's offensive



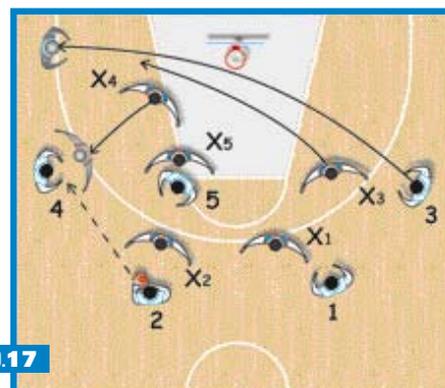
D.14



D.15



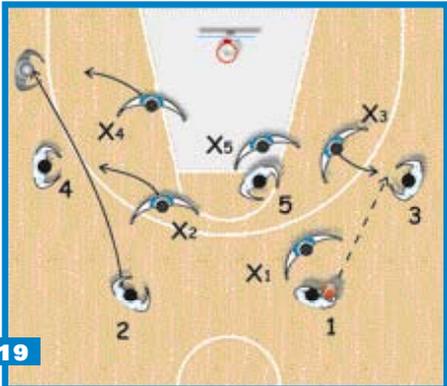
D.16



D.17



D.18



D.19



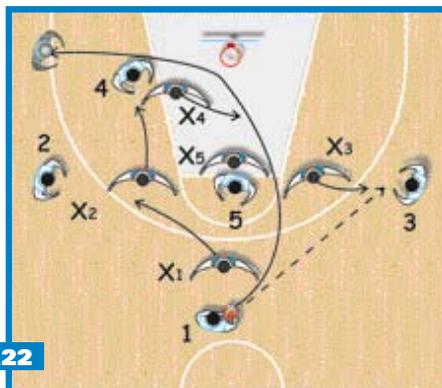
D.20



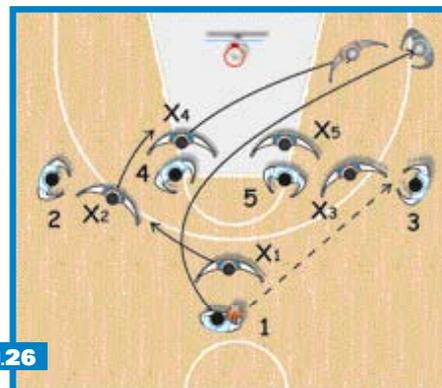
D.21

player, he replaces X2. X4 covers the cutter 1, until X2 replaces him covering 1 (diagr. 22).

**Shallow cut of the strong side guard to the right strong side corner.** On a pass from 1 to 3 and the shallow cut of 1 to the strong side corner, X1 jumps to the ball and then, after having pushed X3 to drop to cover 1 on the corner, he covers 3, the offensive player of X3 (diagr. 23).

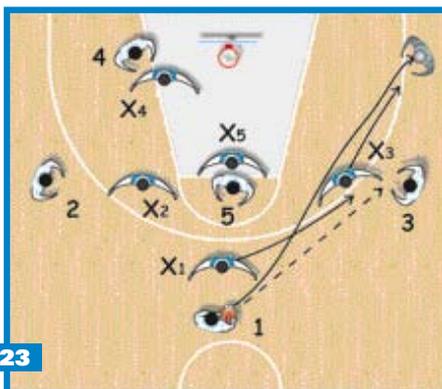


D.22

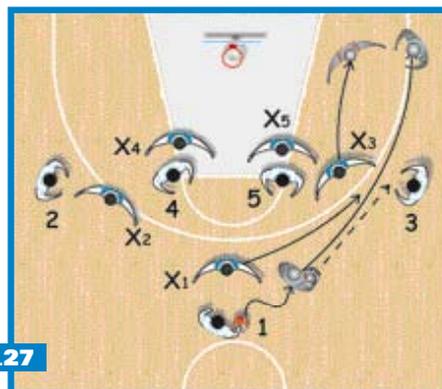


D.26

**Cut of the weak side guard to the right strong side corner.** On the pass from 1 to 3 and the cut of 2 to the strong side corner, X2 drops down and covers 4, the offensive player of X4, X4 covers the cutter 2 and follows him to the corner (diagr. 24).



D.23



D.27

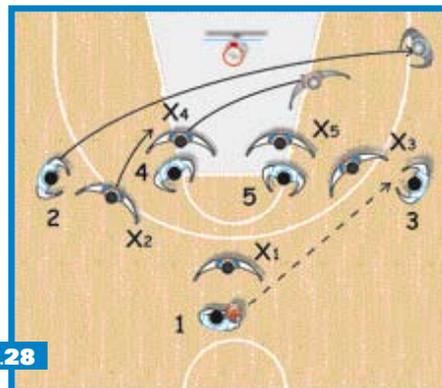
**1-4 OFFENSIVE SETS**

This is the initial defensive rotation match-up we use when we face a 1-4 set offense. X1 covers 1, the offensive player with the ball, X2 covers 2, the offensive player to the right of X1. X3 covers 3, the offensive player to the left of X1, and X4 and X5 comes up to cover the high post 4 and 5 (diagr. 25).

NOTE. Before all the defensive slides and match-up, which will be shown in the following diagrams, the defenders initially rotate as shown in diagram 25.



D.24



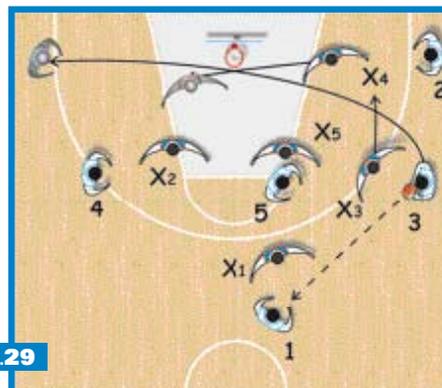
D.28

**Cut of the strong side guard to the right strong side corner.** On the pass from 1 to 3 and the cut of 1 to the strong side corner, X1 squares into the high post area and then replaces X2 covering 2. X4 covers the cutter, 1, to the corner, X5 sags and stays on 5, while X2 drops down to protect the basket (diagr. 26).

**Shallow cut of the strong side guard to the right same side corner.** On the pass from 1 to 3, and the shallow cut of 1 to the corner, X1 jumps to the ball and pushes X3 to follow the cutter, 1, to the corner. X3 does not leave his offensive player until he makes contact with 1. X5 is ready to give help (diagr. 27).



D.25



D.29

**Cut of the weak side forward to the right strong side corner.** On the pass from 1 to 3 and the cut of 2 from the weak side to the strong side corner, X2 follows the cutter, 2, until he gives 2 to X4. In this case, we practically play man-to-man (diagr. 28).

NOTE. Against this 1-4 high set offense, we should play straight 1-2-2 as much as possible. The coverage is the same on both sides of the court.

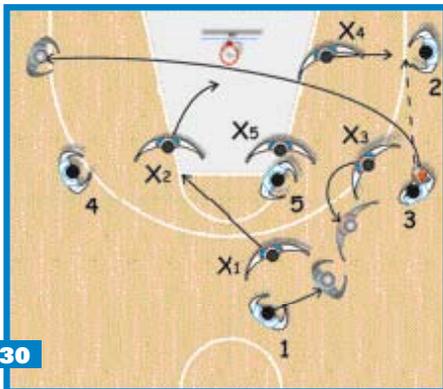
**ROTATIONS ON OVERLOAD CUTS**

In the following diagrams we will describe the cut to overload one side of the court, after the offense has used his initial cut to get into this set.

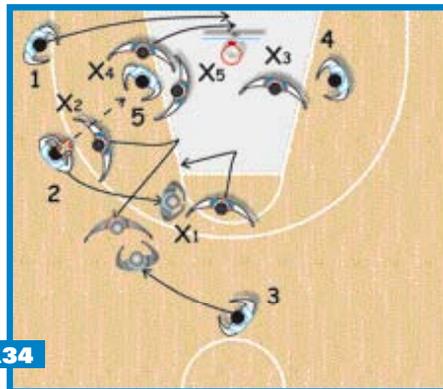
**Pass from the wing to the top and cut to the left weak side corner.** On the pass

from 3 to 1 and the cut of 3 to the left weak side corner, X3 drops down and covers 2, the offensive player of X4, while X4 covers the cutter 3 (diagr. 29). The coverage is the same on both sides of the court.

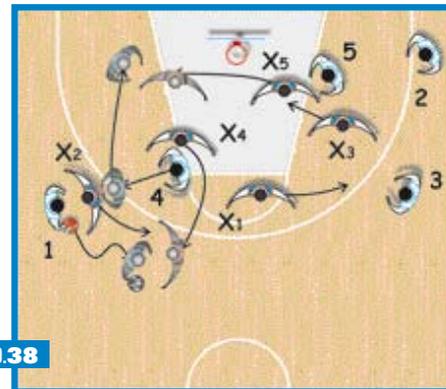
**Pass from the wing to the corner and cut to the left weak side corner.** On the



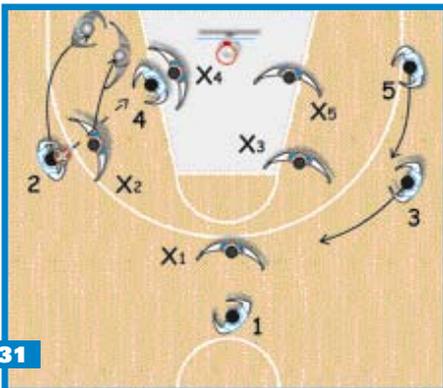
D.30



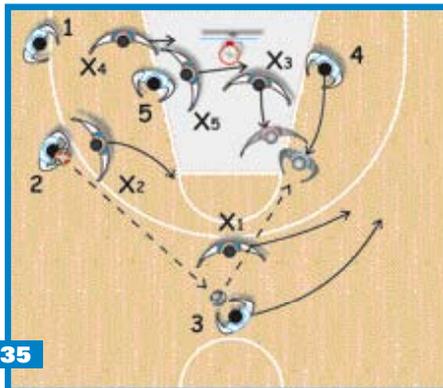
D.34



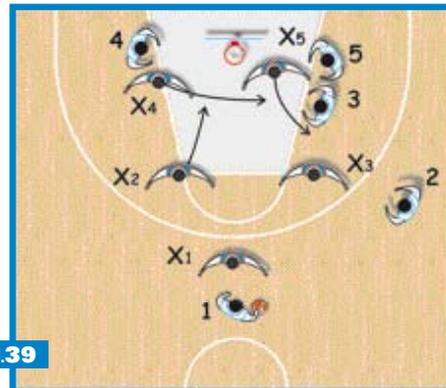
D.38



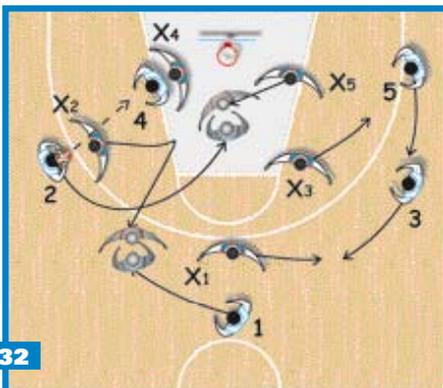
D.31



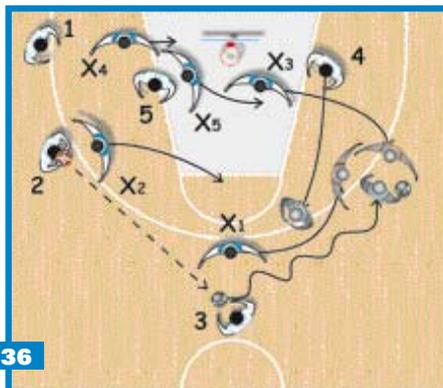
D.35



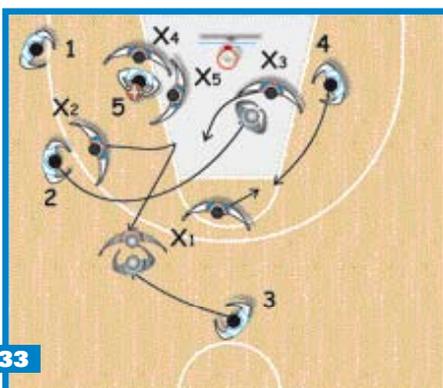
D.39



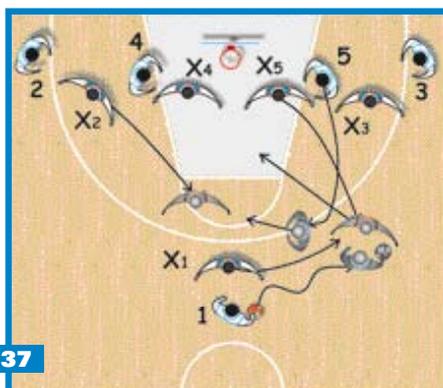
D.32



D.36



D.33



D.37

pass from 3 to 2 in the corner and the cut of 3 to the left weak side corner, X3 drops into the post area and will replace X1, who has first pushed X2 to drop down, and then covers X2. X2 covers the cutter, 3, X4 covers 2 in the corner, and X5 sags, but stays on 5 (diagr. 30). The coverage is the same on both sides of the court.

**TURNOUT BASELINE CUT**

**Pass of the wing to the low post and baseline cut.** On the pass from 2 to 4 in the low post and the cut of 2 to the baseline, X2 follows the cut of 2 to the basket (diagr. 31). If the low post, 4, drop steps, X2 double teams 4 with X4. If 4 kicks the pass out to 2, X2 covers the offensive player in the corner.

**TURNOUT TOP CUT**

**Pass of the wing to the low post and top cut.** On the pass from 2 to 4 in the low post and the top cut of 2, X2 follows the cut of 2, then gives 2 to X5. X2 waits to go out of the lane to cover the wing, in this case, 1. X1 is pushed by X2 to cover 3, as X3 is pushed by X1 to cover 5 (diagr. 32).

**TRIPLE POST**

**TRIPLE POST CUT SCREEN OPPOSITE FORWARD**

**Pass from the wing to the low post and screen for the opposite wing.** If the offense has two low posts and 2 passes to 5 in the low post and then 2 screens on the opposite block for 4, X2 follows the cut of 2 and then gives him to X3. On X4's offensive player baseline cut, X4 follows him as described on the turn out baseline cut. X2 follows the cut of 2 and then gives 2 to X3, and then waits to cover the wing, 3. His main job is to jam the elbow. X1 jams the lane and then gets back to cover 4, and X3 goes over the screen and starts to cover the cutter, 2, in the free-throw circle (diagr. 33).

**TRIPLE POST TOP SPLIT**

**Pass to the low post and screen away.** On the pass from 2 to 5 on the low post and a screen away of 2 for 3, if X4's offensive player cuts baseline, X4 covers 1 (see the turn baseline cut) X2 jumps to the ball and waits for fill and switches on 3. X3 switches to 2 (diagr. 34).

**TRIPLE POST SWING TO TOP AND ELBOW**

**Pass from the wing to the top of the lane and to the elbow.** On the reversal pass from 2 to 3 and from 3 to 4 at the opposite elbow, and the cut of 3 to the ball, X3 tries to anticipate the pass to 4. If 4 receives the ball, X1 must try to fight through or go over the screen (diagr. 35).

**TRIPLE POST SWING AND PICK-AND-ROLL**

**Pass from the wing to the top and pick-and-roll.** On the reversal pass from 2 to 3 and the pick-and-roll of 4 for 3, X1 and X3 trap 3 on the pick-and-roll. X2 is ready to rotate to the top, if 4 pops out, while X5 will cover 4, if he rolls to the basket. After the trap, X3 drops to the basket, ready to cover the offensive player set on the opposite block or on the corner (diagr. 36).

**TOP PICK-AND-ROLL**

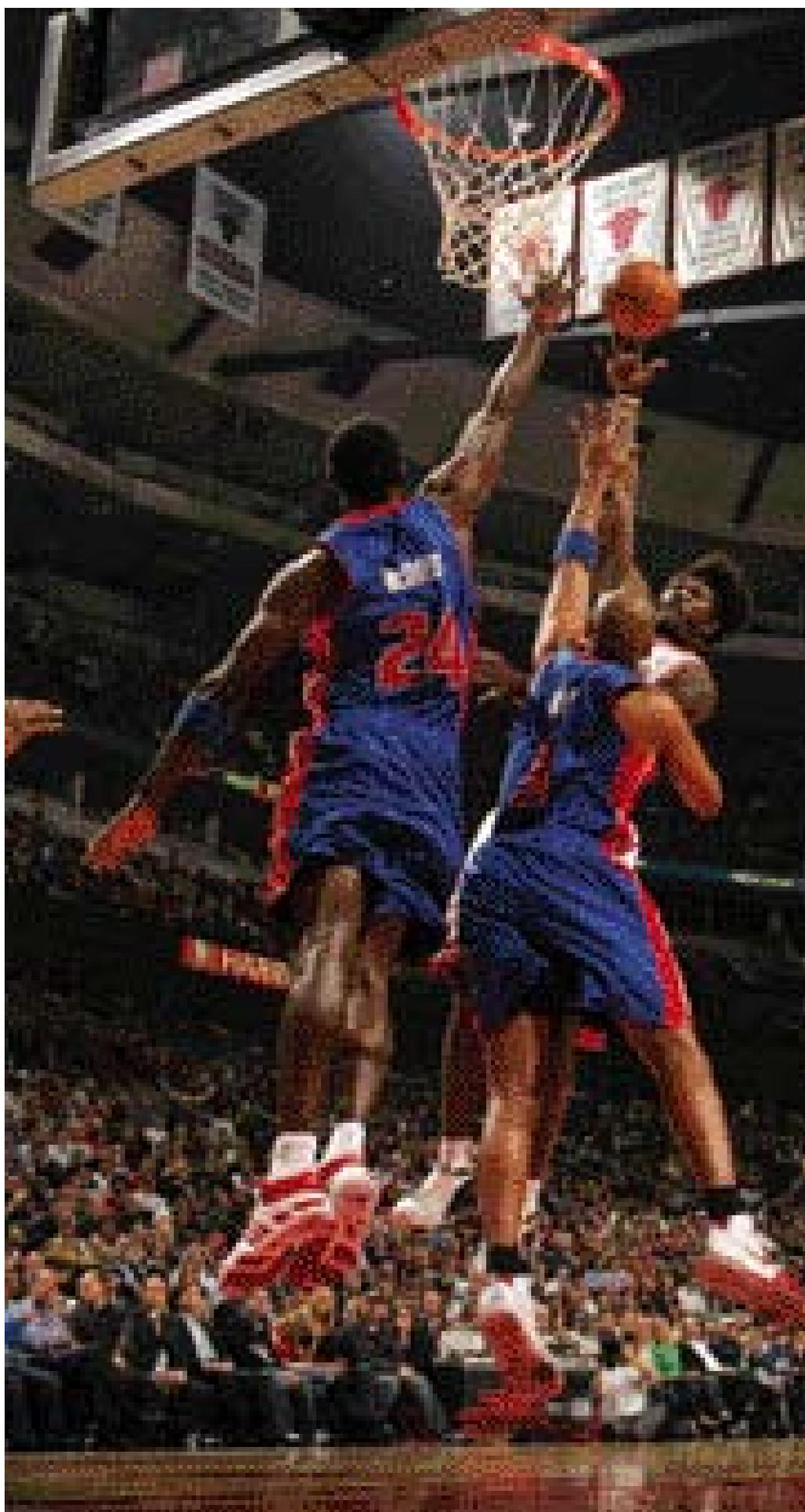
If the offense is set with four players on the baseline and 1, the ball handler, at the top of the lane and 5 sets a top pick-and-roll, X1 and X5 immediately trap 1. X2 looks to rotate if 5 pops out. After the trap, X5 goes to the basket or to the corner (diagr. 37). If we are in trouble, we go straight on our 1-2-2 defense.

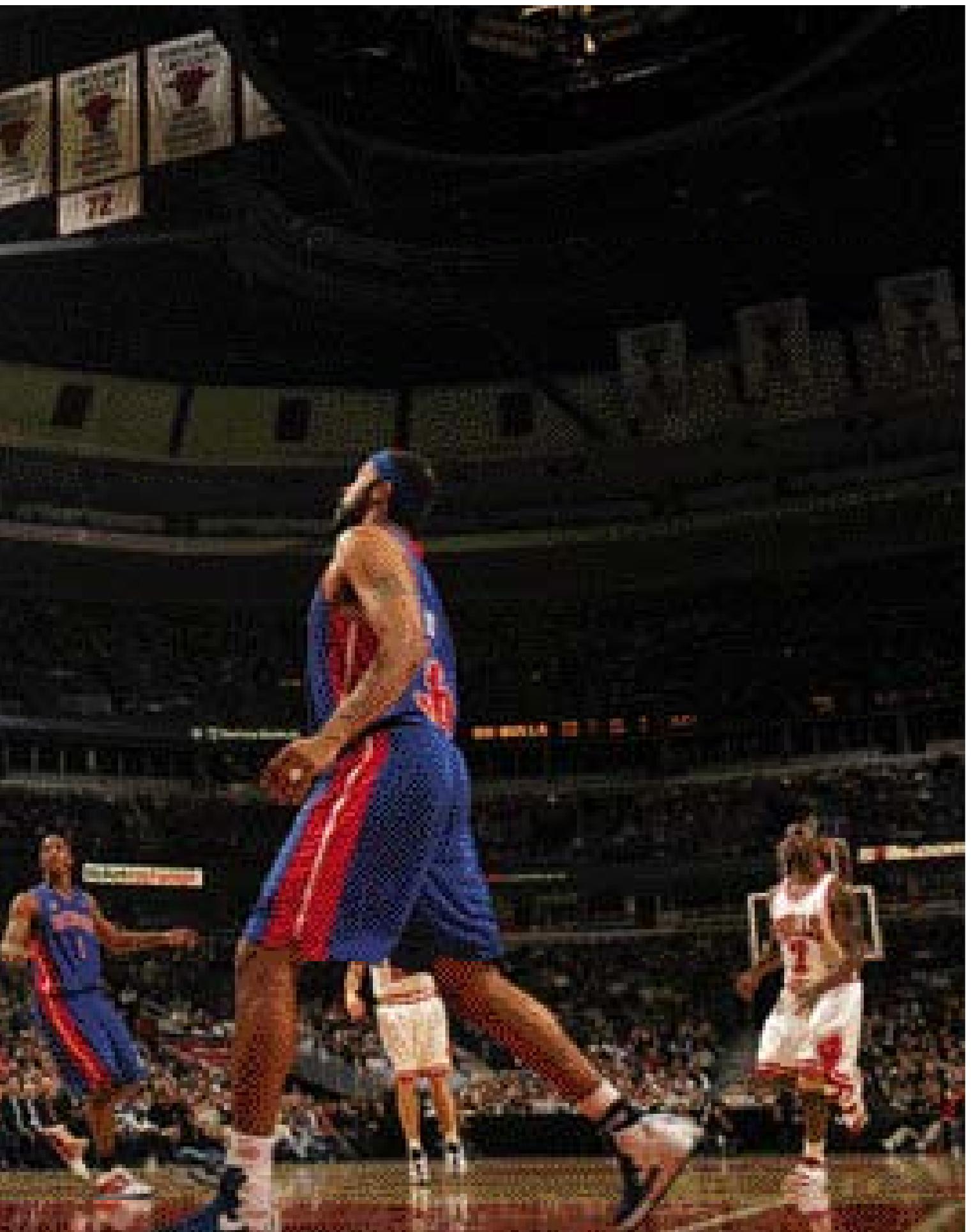
**WING PICK-AND-ROLL**

If 4 pops out and picks for 1, X4 and X2 trap, X5 rotates and covers 4, who has rolled, while X4, after the trap, rotates to the basket (diagr. 38). We are now in our standard 2-3 zone. We will follow many of our principles as in the "50" defense, but just with a defender in the lane.

**STACK OFFENSE**

These are the rotations on the stack offense (when two players set one behind the other). X2 drops to cover the low post, X4 moves to the stack, X5 plays high on the stack, X3 covers the offensive player to the left of X1, and X1 covers 1 with the ball (diagr. 39).





# STATISTICALLY EVALUATING DEFENSIVE PERFORMANCE



by Ernie Woods

**One of the most winning coaches in the state of Washington, he is lecturer at clinics in the US and abroad. He was also scout for NBA teams. Since many years he applies the technology to basketball; he has a web site (hooptactics.com) and he is also designer and consultant for many others basketball web sites.**

Game statistics are a vital tool in analyzing performance, tendencies and preparation for future games. However, most coaches only scrutinize boxscore reports offensively, and base their defensive evaluations predominately on subjective observations.

## DEFENSIVELY WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A BOXSCORE

### OPPONENT FIELD GOAL PERCENTAGE

Field goal percentage is probably the most important single statistic in winning or losing. Although, the percentages will vary according to the level of play, to be successful, you will want to hold the opponent's field goal accuracy under 45% and their three point percentage to less than 33%. Just by having a hand up on shots will reduce the shooting percentage almost 10%.

### DEFENSIVE STOPS

Defensive stops are also a vital statistic and are the number of possessions in which the opponent does not score. If the box score does not show the number of defensive stops, they can be quickly determined by adding the number of defensive rebounds and opponent turnovers.

### DEFENSIVE REBOUNDING PERCENTAGE

Defensive rebounding percentage is what is important, not the number of defensive rebounds. In fact, looking at just the number of defensive rebounding can be very misleading and will vary according to the number of opponent missed shots. Defensive rebounding percentage is determined by dividing the number of defensive rebounds by the sum of defensive rebounds and the opponent offensive rebounds. Defensive rebounding goal should be 67%+.

### OPPONENT OFFENSIVE REBOUNDS

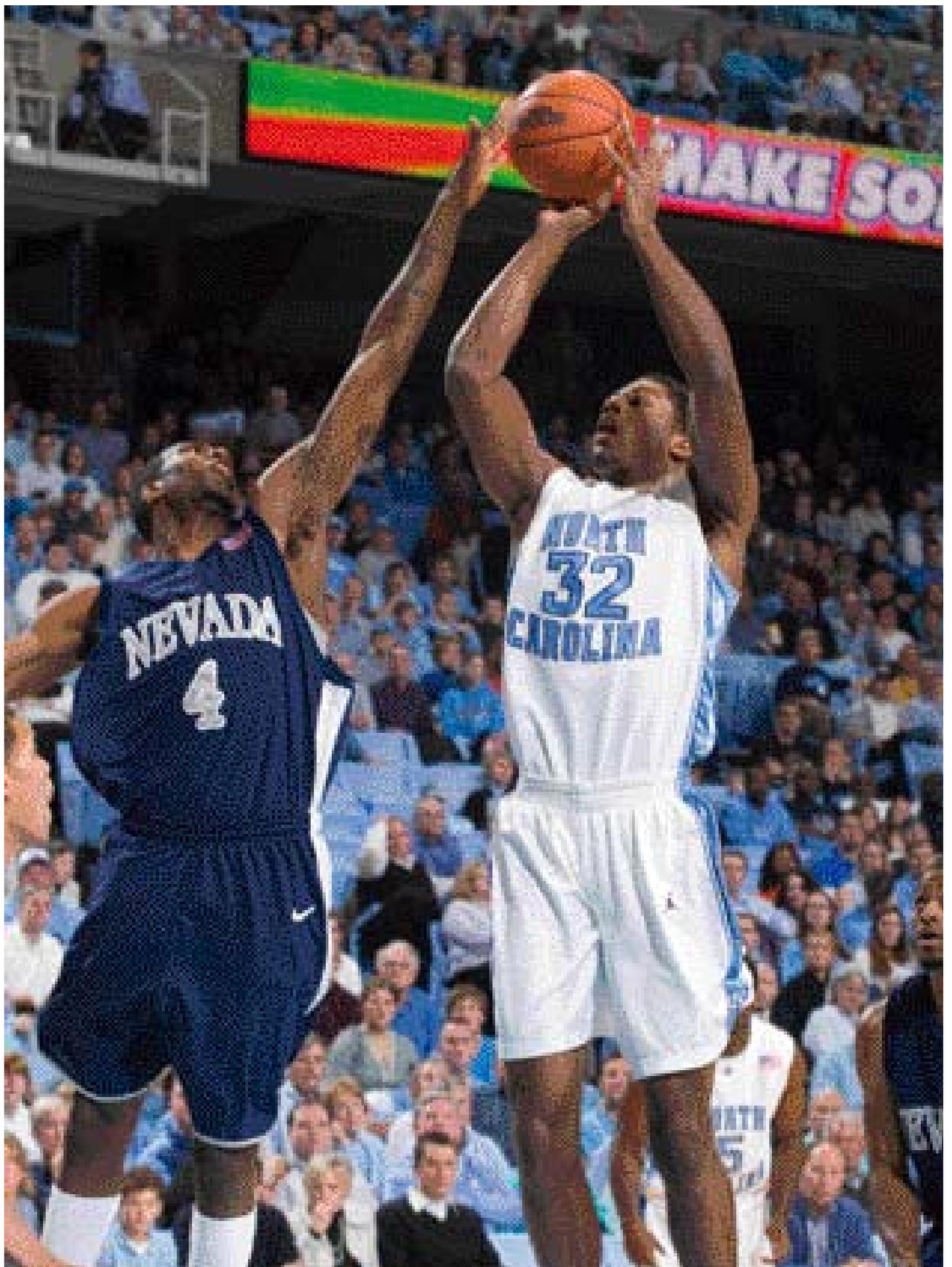
Similar to the number of defensive re-

bounds, looking at just the number of offensive rebounds allowed is not a good indication of a team's rebounding performance at all. However, the number of opponent's offensive rebounds, does have a direct correlation in determining defensive rebounding percentage.

### OPPONENT INDIVIDUAL OFFENSIVE REBOUNDING

Opponent individual offensive rebounding totals are a very important halftime statistic. By scanning the offensive rebounding column and determining specifically which of the opponent's players need to





be boxed out can impact the outcome of the game.

#### POINTS ALLOWED OFF OPPONENT OFFENSIVE REBOUNDS

Although defensive rebounding percentage is very important, an even more important statistic is the actual number of points scored by the opponent on second efforts. Offensive rebounds can be simply erased or cancelled by increasing the defensive intensity and focus and making a defensive stop. Therefore, the only offensive rebounds that hurt are the ones in which the opponent scores.

#### OPPONENT TURNOVERS

The number of opponent turnovers can be used in assessing defensive performance. However, the percentage of ball handling error would be better. The number of opponent turnovers divided by the number of defensive possessions since the tempo of the game has a direct bearing on the number of turnovers. Defensive goal should be force the opponents into turning the ball over 20% of the time.

Caution: forcing turnovers has little value, if you do not capitalize and score off them. To be successful you must finish (score).

#### PERSONAL FOULS

The number of personal fouls is usually a good indication that defenders are out of position and reaching. Points out specific individual defenders that are not moving their feet to establish good defensive position. Cutting down the opponent's free throw attempts definitely impacts the outcome of the game.

#### DEFENSIVE TRANSITION

Do not forget to analyze the number of points allowed after turning the ball over. Making a defensive stop after a turnover is a really big play (RBP) and can determine the outcome of the game. The only turnovers that hurt are the one the opponents score on! The goal for defensive recovery should be to allow less than one point per turnover.

#### POINTS/POSSESSION ALLOWED

The total points allowed is another one of those miss leading numbers. Although, the media, erroneously, uses points allowed in ranking defensive performance, the number of points allowed is meaningless statistic by itself. Points per possession allowed is a more accurate way to determine defensive performance. By accounting for the number of offensive possession it takes into account the tempo of the game. You want to limit your opponent



to under 0.9 points per possession.

#### BLOCKED SHOTS

Unless you are blessed with a dominate shot blocker, this is one statistic you really do not want to win. Block shots are usually an indication of poor defense, since most block shots occur on dribble penetration. Block shots are also worthless, if they go directly out of bounds or if the opponent maintains possession. To be successful, block shots must result in ball possession.

#### OFFENSIVE CHARGES TAKEN

Taking an offensive charge is a really big play (RBP). Really big plays are plays that can actually determine the outcome of a game. In taking an offensive charge, it not only saves a basket, but just as important, gives the offensive player a personal foul.

#### STEALS/DEFENSIVE ASSISTS

Steals are primary an individual statistic.

It is much better to track defensive assists. Defensive assists are credited when a defender's action forces an opponent turnover, such as a deflection that leads to a steal or putting pressure on the dribbler that causes them to double dribble or carry the ball or make a bad pass. Defensive assists are now a mandatory stat in the NBL of Australia.

#### OPPONENT SHOT CHARTS

Shots by location can quickly show the opponent's shot selection. If they are a predominately right side or left sided or if they are mostly three point shooters or shooting in the paint along with how many layups shots were allowed.

Note: with computer programs, such as CyberportsUSA, shots can even be rated as easy, open, contested or bad. Obviously, on defense, you want the majority of shots to be contested or bad and never giving up an easy shot.

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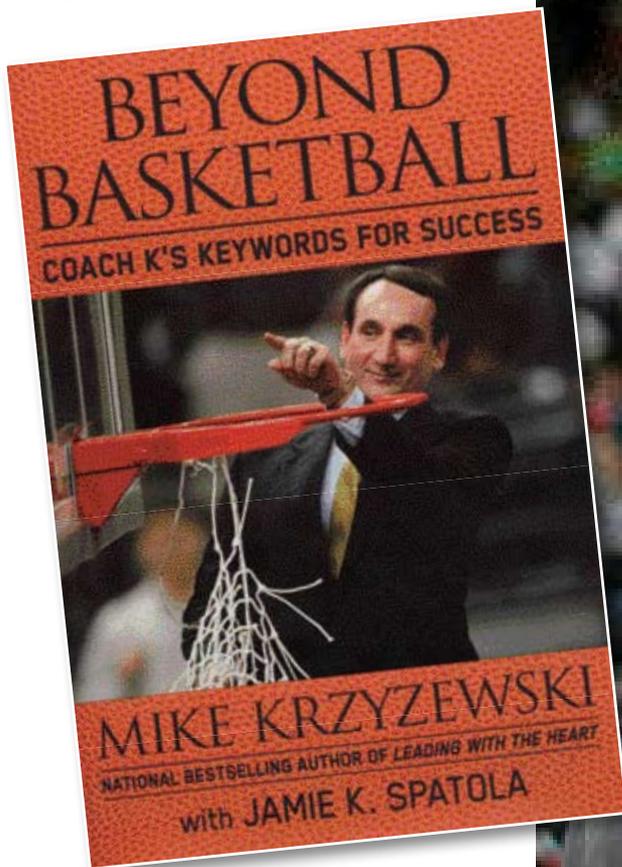


by Raffaele Imbrogno

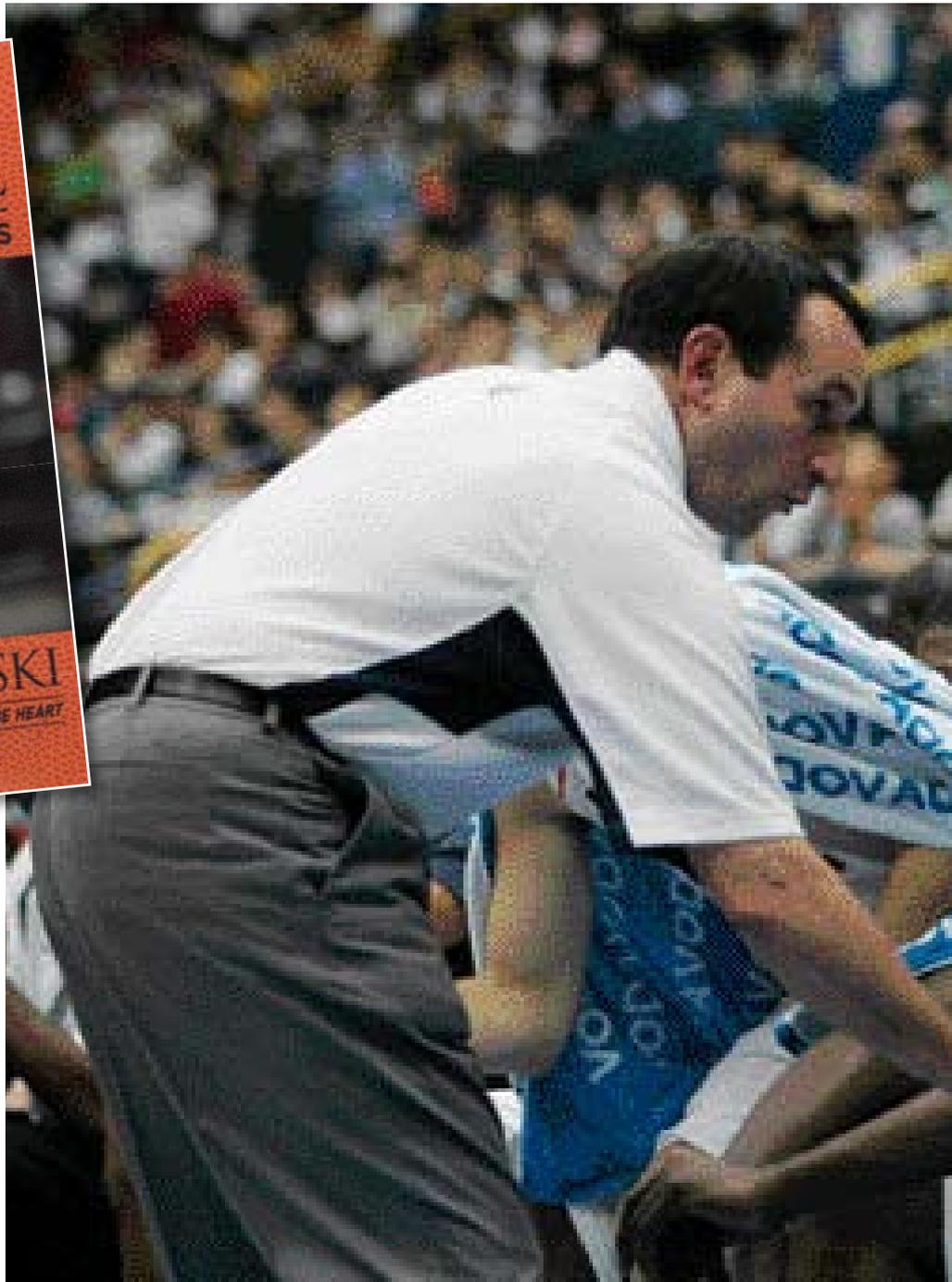
# LIFE IS ELSEWHERE

Raffaele Imbrogno has been coaching since 1980. He is an Instructor for the Italian National Coaches Committee of the Federation and has been Director of the Italian Basketball Federation Study Center. Imbrogno is also the author of several technical basketball publications.

*In this section, we introduce the latest books, videos, CDs, and other tools that are primarily aimed at coaches, but certainly useful for all of our readers. Please send your suggestions and comments about our basketball-related media for review in this section.*



We took the title from a popular book from the writer Milan Kundera, as a way to introduce one of the most famous and successful college basketball coaches, Mike Krzyzewski. For many years, Coach Krzyzewski has been at the helm of the Duke University team, and recently in his spare time began coaching the United States men's national Olympic team. His latest book (written in collaboration with Jamie K. Spatola, his daughter), "Beyond Basketball: Coach K's Keywords for Success", was published in October 2007 by Warner Business Book.



"Coach K", as he is better known, reached a coaching milestone recently when his team beat North Carolina State for his 800th victory. To understand his long and winning basketball road, you can go to the following link: [http://goduke.stats-geek.com/basketball-m/coaches/wins.php?DB\\_OEM\\_ID=4200&cid=19](http://goduke.stats-geek.com/basketball-m/coaches/wins.php?DB_OEM_ID=4200&cid=19)

Coach K started his Duke coaching career with his first win on November 30, 1980 against Stetson University, beginning a long trail of victories that brought him three NCAA titles, 12 Coach of the Year awards, and induction in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2001.

His coaching career is one filled with great milestones and awards, not only in terms of winning, but also in adopting a system of play and a system of behavior, on and off the court. This system has helped create dozens of All-American basketball players, professional players, and university assistant coaches, many of whom went on to become head coaches.

The fame and the image of Coach Krzyzewski go beyond the basketball court. In addition to being the author of several technical DVDs and publications over the years, he is also the author of the best-selling book on leadership, "Leading with

the Heart - Coach K's Successful Strategies for Basketball, Business, and Life", written with Donald T. Phillips and published by Warner Books ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)), in March 2001. He is also in great demand as a motivational speaker at top U.S. companies and educational institutions.

Coach K's second non-basketball book, published now in paperback, audio, and CD, has been selling briskly. The book consists of essays that are organized around 40 key words or phrases that have special importance and force. Coach K uses them every day to energize, motivate, and teach his players how to be winners on the court and in every aspect of their lives.

In "Beyond Basketball", he offers 40 short, hard-hitting essays, with each centered on an important keyword and illustrated with anecdotes from his personal experiences that educate and inspire.

From the four most important words in life-"I believe in you"-to coping with losing, relying on one's teammates, the importance of discipline, and the rewards of taking pride in one's work, Coach K guides the reader to success the way he guides his team-with the power of his words.

The first key word Coach K discusses is "adaptability." He wants the reader to understand that every "team" and every work group has a specific uniqueness. If we want to guide a specific group, Coach K says we need to first understand its unique characteristics and then adapt ourselves to these characteristics.

Other key words he focuses on include balance, care, culture, empathy, excellence, love, passion, pride, talent, and work.

The book ends with the classic image and example of this fantastic coach and educator. Coach K points out that the clenched fist, the fingers bunched tightly together, has more power and force than the five individual fingers of each hand.

This is certainly an easy-reading book, but don't be fooled. Coach K provides many things upon which to reflect. His stories educate and inspire, which is exactly what you would expect from one of the best coaches in the history of our favorite game.





by Tom Lopes

# WHAT DID YOU SAY?

**Tom Lopes is the Executive Director for the Collegiate Basketball Officials Association. He is a Division I collegiate basketball official and officiated 20 consecutive NCAA tournaments including three Final Foul appearances. In 1995, he was selected as the Naismith Official of the Year. In addition, he is a clinician for the International Association of Approved Basketball Officials, Inc. (IAABO).**

Depending on the dictionary you choose to use, "communication" can be defined in any number of ways: a technique for expressing ideas effectively; an interchange of thoughts or opinions; an idea imparted, interchanged or transmitted.

Translated as it applies to basketball officials, however, it takes on a meaning that is much more practical application, one that involves having good listening skills and treating people with respect, the same as you would want to be treated yourself. In the simplest of terms, it means little more than knowing how to handle people.

The game of basketball has many stakeholders: players, coaches, officials (not only the floor officials but also those who sit at the scorer's table) and fans. All of these stakeholders have something in common: they are all human, people with strengths and weaknesses and varying moods who sometimes react in some unpredictable manner when under stress. It



is in these moments of stress that the better officials stand out from their less effective counterparts.

A basic fact in the human condition is that the most common set of the reasons for why someone loses emotional control, whether in sport or otherwise, is twofold: first, that person is of the opinion that he or she has been somehow treated unjustly; second, he or she wants to express an objection, in words or actions, to that perceived wrong. Essentially, the person is saying "what you did was unfair and I want you to know how I feel about it."

This reality applies as much to basketball officiating as it does to any perception of having been wronged. When such a situation arises and an official's decision is challenged, the easiest way out might be for the official to penalize the challenge immediately by assessing a technical foul, a technical foul that could very well have been avoided by using effective communication skills and recognizing that what

could be taken as a blatant and very personal insult was really no more than an objection, misguided or otherwise, to a perceived injustice.

This is where communication enters the picture. In officiating, a brief moment's well-placed and effective interaction often makes the difference. Such skill distinguishes the mediocre, "every day" variety referee, the one who is usually assigned to less challenging contests, from his or her fellow official who by contrast seems to draw all the important games. Arguably, they both could be at the same level of knowledge when it comes to rules and floor mechanics, but the official who is in demand is the one who demonstrates an ability to interact effectively with players, coaches and even with his or her partners on the officiating team. It has been said that experience is the best teacher and this certainly applies to officiating. As young and inexperienced referees we all made the common mistake of saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. There are few of us who can't remember that occasion in our early years when we said to a coach, "you coach and I'll referee." In most cases, such a comment only opened the door for a response from the coach, like "when are you going to start?" The rule of thumb that says "for every action there is a reaction" is as true to human relations as it is to physics! Other examples of verbal inexperience are such challenging comments as "sit down", "stop refereeing", "get back into the team bench area" and, the worst of all, "shut up."

All of these declarations immediately put up a barrier to further communication; you and the object of your comment are now in an adversarial role and potentially in line for a long and difficult game. Body language is another form of communication. Staring at someone, putting hands on hips, pointing a finger: all of these present a direct challenge and will normally generate a negative response from the coach or player.

In the early years of learning their craft, officials will experience all of the above and hopefully will make adjustments as they review what happened in individual games. Such reviews are quite natural; how often, as we were driving home, have we found ourselves second-guessing how we handled a disenchanted player or an angry coach, or how we might have answered a challenge differently so as to diffuse rather than escalate the problem.

Even the most inexperienced official knows he or she has the authority to levy

a technical foul if the defiance merits it. The spirit and intent of the technical foul rule, however, is that such a penalty should be used only as a last resort, with the ultimate purpose of restoring the order that is necessary if there is to be fair play.

The problem for less experienced officials, therefore, is recognizing the difference between a behaviour that requires a technical foul and a behaviour that can be more smoothly diffused with a serving of patience seasoned with effective communication and a touch of compassion.

How do the good officials handle situations? The best way to find the answer to this question is simply to ask them. In your area there are probably some very good and successful officials. Talk to them; observe them in action; ask them what it was that he or she said to that frustrated coach or player in the final two minutes of the game that put the coach at ease and prevented a disruption from escalating.

Officials have to anticipate criticism from coaches and players during the game and must not take such comments personally. There are many techniques at our disposal when such situations develop. Try immediately moving quickly to your assigned position on the court after reporting a foul; if the coach has a question, he or she will get your attention without your having to wait around. When it does become prudent to reply to such a challenge, always remember to be a responder rather than an initiator. Don't bother to answer statements (they don't usually require an answer anyway) but if the coach does have a question you should let him or her ask it before you start talking. Always be under control; speak in calm, easy tones, be aware of body language and try to maintain an alert, positive and confident posture. When talking to a coach, make it so no one else can hear what you are saying. When you are questioned on a call, try to keep your answer simple and to the point. Some possibilities are "I missed the call", or "From my angle I'm sure I was correct", or "I think I was correct and you think you're correct, but we'll both have to see the tape to know for sure." Don't try to bluff; it just doesn't work.

Remember also that if a question has been asked or a clarification requested, don't ignore the coach or player. Many times a short, honest answer or explanation will do wonders for your credibility. And when all else fails and the coach or player is clearly out of control, it's time to stop talking and blow the whistle.



# RIGHT OR WRONG?

The following questions focus on the document, "FIBA Official Basketball Rules: Official Interpretations". A free download is provided on the FIBA website ([www.fiba.com](http://www.fiba.com)). For additional clarifications, explanations or examples, please consult this document.

1. A teammate of A3 is dribbling the ball in team A's three-point area when A3 commits a three-second violation. Shall the resulting throw-in be administered at the sideline place nearest to where the ball became dead?
2. A3 commits offensive interference during a shot for a goal in the last two minutes of the 4th period. A timeout is then requested by coach A. Shall the timeout be granted?
3. B3 fouls A4 and A4 must leave the game because of the resulting injury. A10 enters the game to replace A4. The officials rule that the B3 foul is disqualifying. May any team A player who was participating at the time of the B3 foul attempt the resulting free-throws?
4. A5 passes the ball to A3 in the team A backcourt. Shall team B be awarded a throw-in at the centre line extended opposite the scorer's table?
5. The ball is placed at the disposal of A5 for a single free-throw. Before the ball has been released on the free-throw attempt, A4 fouls B5. This is the 5th team A player foul in that period. Shall two free-throws be awarded to B5?
6. Shall the official who is administering a throw-in blow the whistle when the ball becomes live?
7. Team A is awarded a throw-in in the team A backcourt during the last two minutes of play. Before the ball can be placed at the disposal of the thrower-in, an official interrupts the game because of water on the floor. Shall play resume with a team A throw-in at the centre line extended, opposite the scorer's table?
8. A4 is fouled and appears to be injured. The coach of team A enters the playing court but does not administer to A4 who quickly recovers and is prepared to continue participating. Shall A4 be required to leave the game for a substitute?
9. After the names and numbers of the players have been approved by the coach but before the jump ball that will



- begin the 1st period, the scorer notifies the referee that two of the players are wearing numbers different from those on the team list. Shall the numbers on the scoresheet be corrected without penalty, after which the game shall begin normally?
10. When the jump ball is administered, both teams mistakenly face in the wrong directions. Play begins and A5 scores two points, at which time the error is discovered. Shall the two points scored by A5 be awarded to team B and credited to the team B captain?

## ANSWERS

1. **No. (Art. 22.2)**
2. **Yes (Art. 18.2.3)**
3. **No (19.3.8)**
4. **No. (Art.22.2)**
5. **No. (Art. 41.2.2).**
6. **No (47.2)**
7. **No. (Art. 17.2.3)**
8. **Yes (Art. 5.3)**
9. **Yes; FIBA Interpretations 2006**
10. **No, FIBA Interpretations 2006**



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We Are Basketball



by Maurizio Gherardini

# THE TWO SIDES OF BASKETBALL

**Former assistant coach and General Manager of the Italian Division I team of Forlì, Maurizio Gherardini became Executive Director of the Benetton Treviso team in 1992 and was selected the Best Executive of the Division I Italian League in 2000, 2004 and 2006. In 2006 he was appointed as Vice President and Assistant General Manager for the Toronto Raptors, becoming the first European executive in the NBA.**

As soon as I began my work in the NBA, I was asked to outline the differences between the two basketball sides of the ocean, at least based on what I can see from where I sit behind my desk here in Toronto. It's not as simple as it looks since the premises and the sport cultures differ so much when comparing one to another.

That said, here are my impressions. The first basic difference is in the inner nature of the competition system and, consequently, how the leagues are structured and managed. The NBA is a commercial league with 30 franchises. The aim is to have the best players in the world challenging each other. This needs to go along with the financial success of the league itself as each season ends. Only one team is eventually crowned the NBA champion based on winning the NBA Finals, but all 30 franchises share the benefits of being part of such a league: it's both a commercial and technical goal.

The European model on the other hand reflects more the weekly "drama" of national leagues, where there is no certainty based on concepts like "closed league" and "franchises," and where promotion and relegation to a lower division are the keys that define the success of each season and the future expectations of each club. And it's not always easy to find a common ground for the clubs forming the many national leagues.

This being the premise, I would still try to "import" some ideas to benefit the European picture. The "draft" and the "salary cap" are concepts that are easy to explain

but hard to apply: I would definitely get started with a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) for European players. A quality CBA could be the common ground for all the European clubs and would establish in detail the club-player relationship in a situation where each country has different laws and the fiscal pressure is never the same.

The CBA in the NBA is so well structured

and detailed that there are never discussions when time comes for management or players to make a decision. And everybody knows how to read it since they all know that each case is being considered as a possibility.

I've been surprised by how detailed the CBA and the "Operations Manual" of each NBA Club actually is: every possible case is listed and analyzed. Nothing is left for inter-





pretation. The result? There is very little room for discussion. Moreover, when something happens, the league is in total control of the picture and the sanctions are punctual and enforced. No exceptions! I'm through my learning process (and Bryan Colangelo, the Toronto Raptors' President, is an unbelievable teacher) and almost every day I'm dealing with a new case related to the structure of the salary cap: it's not as simple as it looks, not at all. I don't think it would be easy to import the whole system in Europe, but something needs to be done along those lines since the majority of clubs need to be properly managed. Stepping up from my desk, I have been impressed by how everything is organized in detail. We, and I mean us as Europeans, would probably think sometimes that there are just too many people involved with the same project, whether it's a marketing action, a community appearance, or some-

thing to do with television. But, somehow, these people are all necessary and they all have a value in the organization. Don't forget that marketing everything is a priority, taking care of sponsors' relationships is a "must," and that giving something back to the community is important as well. Preparation is very important in this business. At the start of the season in the NBA, every single action is already planned, right through the month of April. I have on my desk every player's schedule (they must make themselves available for a certain number of appearances in the community), as well as the complete list of team appearances. The NBA's busy schedule does not allow any other way since you need to optimize the time available for any marketing action. And, again, each single event is organized down to the most minor detail. The ability to plan ahead is essential. It's not a bad idea, then, going back to a well



structured Players' CBA so you have the possibility to use each player for a certain number of events (on an individual basis or with a teammate or two) and team appearances and be able to plan them so much ahead of time. And all of us, even the players who don't like to speak too much, need to "digest" the marketing aspect right away as being fundamental for the success of the franchise, at least off the court. The same need has to be there in Europe, as each club is always looking for more ways to find resources: the players have to be available and conscious of the importance of marketing. I did not expect, coming over here, to be speaking so often in front of season ticket holders and sponsors' groups on game nights, or traveling with the team on our

charter jet, to have a blog on the club's site, or being on a sport radio program every other day. Again: marketing the product is a priority and every single action must be planned in detail. The marketing aspect is somehow connected to the atmosphere you may find inside an arena during a game. Again, going back to the premise, the sport culture is different, but the effort to have noisy yet "correct" support by the fans in an NBA arena is real. The jumbo screens in stadiums always remind spectators how to act during a game, the speaker does the same, and the fans are pointing at whoever is not acting like he should: watching the game has to be an enjoyable moment and a safe one. I don't think we will ever be able to create that sort of at-

mosphere in Europe, because our crowds are used to living the "drama" of a game in a different way. We enjoy that adrenaline in our blood. Still, an honest effort toward a better way of cheering for your own team can be made everywhere. At the end of the day, I have to admit that it has been a great experience for me in Toronto and I'm sure there are elements from our way of running things in Europe that could apply to the NBA situation here. The opportunity of sharing basketball experiences and ideas needs to become more and more frequent and as proud as I can be to have broken some ground in one direction, I hope that more basketball people enjoy the same chance looking ahead: we would all benefit from that.





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by Sara Daniel

# INCREASE THE ATTENDANCE AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

**Currently in her 10th season with Palace Sports and Entertainment, Sara Daniel is responsible for the group sales of the Detroit Pistons (NBA), Detroit Shock (WNBA), and The Palace of Auburn Hills family shows and events. Under Sara's direction, the Detroit Pistons and the Detroit Shock are consistently recognized in the top 3 in overall group tickets sold throughout the NBA and WNBA leagues. Sara and her staff play a key role in the 215+ consecutive sell outs for the Detroit Pistons.**

Would you like to have a sold out arena for all of your sporting events? This is an obvious answer, so the real question is, what can you do to get more fans to attend your games? The solution is simple: center your marketing strategies on selling to groups.

Group Sales is a key component to the success of every team in the sports and entertainment industry. Typically, selling a group is gathering 15 or more people together and giving them a discount on the price of a ticket to come to a game. Focusing on your group clients will lead to an increase in your attendance, and in turn, generate more revenue.

Most sales teams focus so much of their attention on corporate clients, who typically have more money. This can turn away most families and smaller organizations, with the assumption that attending a game is out of their budget. By making the ticket price more affordable, you can reach a bigger mass of people.

The first step is to look at your ticket prices and current programs to establish a scale for group discounts. Typically the larger the group, the bigger the discount is on each ticket. Depending on your starting ticket price, group discounts can range anywhere from \$3 off for a group of 15 people and up to \$10 - \$15 off for groups of 100 or more people. Now you ask, where do you find these groups? They are everywhere! Think about all of the "groups" you and your family are a part of. For example, can

you think of a group as it relates to:

- ▼ Your church or religious affiliation.
- ▼ Your child's school and/or sports teams.
- ▼ Organizations you are a part of and your work place.
- ▼ The university you attended.
- ▼ Friends you commonly gather with.
- ▼ Birthday parties.

Everyone is a part of numerous groups, so our task is to create the opportunity for them to attend a game by making it

appealing enough through a discount and by offering added experiences.

What are the added experiences that you can offer to a group? Think about the opportunities that you have access to that will create a "wow" moment for the right group. Here are a few ideas:

- ▼ Give them access to get on the court after the game and shoot a free-throw.
- ▼ Have a team play a game on the court prior to your game.
- ▼ Line up a group of kids on the court,





family members. For as long as the Detroit Pistons have offered this program, we have been able to sell this out for the whole season because of the unique experience and its once-in-a-lifetime appeal. Experiences like this enhance the group sales opportunity and can be the basic starting points to establishing your group sales.

How do you get in contact with these groups? To get started you can identify a few types of groups that you want to focus on and market towards them by creating a flyer or mail piece -and, most importantly, making direct contact by calling and/or getting out and meeting with these groups. Always start at the top, so that you can make contact with the person who makes the decisions for a group. The most important part for these conversations is to ask a lot of questions to gather the information so that you can create a program that is specific to their needs and interests.

Asking questions will give you answers to help develop some programs that will hopefully get them interested and excited about coming out to your game. If for example, they have a tournament or awards ceremony, why not hold that prior to your game and recognize all of the winning teams during halftime? You can also have a "Parade of Players" and have all the kids walk on to the court before the game. By getting the kids excited and involved, you will then bring out their family and friends -and, you are also building future fans since the kids will now have a great memory and bond to your team.

A great way to help you focus on different groups is to assign certain groups or themes to specific games so you are able to create programs around them. We have Faith and Family Nights for our church groups, Youth Basketball Nights, High School Night, College Night, Scout Nights for boy scouts and girl scouts, etc. Keep in mind that you can and should have fun with this too!

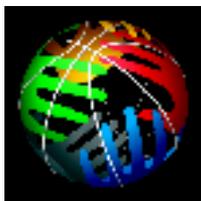
Selling and marketing groups allows you to be creative. Think of ways to get non-traditional fans to attend the game by making it important and appealing to them. Sometimes a group night becomes an overall theme night that the entire game and all fans in attendance can get involved with. The groups and the ideas are endless! You have to find out what is important to the group that you are working with and then create that experience or incentive for them and they will buy tickets and attend your games.

so that they can give the players high-fives as they run onto the court before the game.

- ▼ Have a dance group perform before the game or at halftime.
- ▼ Tour of the locker room or other "behind the scenes" access to the arena.

These experiences are appealing because they allow any ordinary person the extraordinary chance to be on your team's official court and where the pros play. These experiences can and should be sold for each game.

We have a minimum ticket requirement to book one of these. For example, in order to participate in a fan tunnel (where the children form two lines to slap hands with the players) the group must purchase at least 75 tickets to the game. For this program, 20 children are allowed on the court, so the rest of the tickets purchased are typically for friends and


**FIBA**

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# DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS FOR PLAYERS



by Michael Gonzalez



by Jorge Miranda-Massari

**Michael Gonzalez is Professor at the Nutrition Program at the University of Puerto Rico. He also has a Doctorate in Health Sciences (Lafayette University), and another Doctorate in Nutritional Biochemistry and Cancer Biology (Michigan State University). He is a Fellow of the American College of Nutrition. At present, he is a consultant for the Center for the Improvement of Human Functioning, in Wichita, Kansas. He is currently Co-Director of RECNAAC II project, and Research Director of the InBioMed Project Initiative.**

**Jorge Miranda-Massari is Professor at the School of Pharmacy at the University of Puerto Rico. After a Doctorate in Pharmacy at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science, he completed a post-doctoral in Clinical Pharmacokinetics at the University of North Carolina. He obtained a post-doctoral training in Pharmaceutical Care in Nephrology from the University of Pittsburgh, and another one in Clinical Anti-Coagulation from the Medical College of Virginia. He is a consultant for the Center for the Improvement for the Human Functioning, in Wichita, Kansas. He is also Director of the InBioMed Project and Research Director of the RECNAAC-II Project.**

## INTRODUCTION

As today sports nutrition and supplementation are a multibillion dollar industry that continues to grow and expand. Because of this tremendous growth, there is a need for credible scientific information concerning the various ergogenic aids currently on the market. As a consumer you might be

limited in where you can get your information; the clerk of the health food store, a fitness writer with training in journalism, or an athlete paid to endorse a product. The question is... Is this information reliable? When you have the chance to read scientific publications or ask physicians, they will say that more research needed to be done in this area. However, athletes and those who give advice to athletes do not necessarily have the time to wait for scientists and physicians to come to a consensus on what works or what does not. As an alternative a nutrition and supplementation plan can be formulated by using a combination of science, trial and error and intuition to provide the best information that might improve performance. We have to understand that if using a particular supplement or combination of supplements provides even the smallest advantage, it may make the difference between winning and losing.

## BASKETBALL PHYSIOLOGY

Basketball is a fast paced, highly skilled and physical sport. In relation to energy; it places considerable demands upon anaerobic energy systems with aerobic fitness assisting recovery between bursts of play. Basketball is played in a continuous movement. The movements differ in their mode of activity (running, jumping, walking) and degree of intensity (jog, walk, run). You will need to gather all the energy available to withstand these demands in order to have a great performance. To be able to achieve high levels of energy you will need to: 1. Minimize carbohydrate depletion; 2. Maintain adequate hydration; 3. Take supplements that will opti-

mize intermediary metabolism. It is important to provide the body with proper nutrition: Complex carbohydrates (whole grains, pasta), high quality lean proteins (organic eggs, chicken breast, deep water fish, tofu) and essential fats (omega-3, 6, 9) because these macronutrients provide the necessary bioenvironment and calories to produce energy. It is recommended to be as follows: 60-70% carbohydrates, 15-20% proteins, 15-20% fats.

## BASKETBALL BIOCHEMISTRY

Supplements are not magic pills. The scientific use of nutritional supplementation may improve your biochemical environment or metabolism to help you perform better and recover faster. Nevertheless, this requires knowledge and planning. In basketball high energy production and its proper and timely utilization are important. Concomitant to this the reduction of lactic acid and cortisol concentrations will also boost our performance.

## NUTRIENTS UTILIZED IN ENERGY PRODUCTION

The increase in energy production and oxygenation combined with reduction in lactic acid and cortisol production is the formula we are looking for. In short, here are the most important nutrients to help you achieve energy metabolic optimization.

### 1. B complex vitamins

These nutrients are a class of structurally different components used as enzyme cofactors in human intermediary metabolism. Thiamin (Vitamin B1), Riboflavin (Vitamin B2), Niacin (Niacinamide, nicotinic acid, vitamin B3), Pyridoxine (Vitamin



B6) Cobalamin (Vitamin B12), Folate, Pantothenate (Vitamin B5). These vitamins are the bases of energy production. A dose of 50 mg B complex is recommended (Folate and Cobalamin will be 400 mcg and 25 mcg, respectively.)

## 2. Vitamin C (ascorbic acid)

Vitamin C is involved in a variety of metabolic reactions related to exercise. Physiologically ascorbic acid provides electrons for important enzymatic reactions. In addition, Vitamin C enhances the flow of electrons needed to optimize aerobic energy production (2). A dose of at least 500 mg is recommended (preferably two a day).

## 3. Coenzyme Q10 (ubiquinone)

CoQ10 is a compound directly involved in the production of adenosine triphosphate (ATP), the cell energy molecule. It helps

transport the energy molecules within the mitochondria. A dose of at least 100 mg is recommended. A more absorbable form Ubiquinol is now available.

## 4. L- Carnitine

Carnitine is a compound primarily involved in transports of fatty acids into the mitochondria of the cell, where fat can be used as energy fuel. It is recommended an intake of 2g of L-carnitine, one hour before exercise. Acetyl-L-carnitine is a form of carnitine with a molecule of acetic acid, it is better absorb so you may be able to reduce the dose to 1g if you decide to use this form.

## 5. Alpha Lipoic Acid (Thioctic acid)

Lipoic acid is a dual water and fat soluble oxidation- reduction compound. It supports the Krebs cycle, which is a funda-

mental process in the production of energy and it also supports the production of ATP by acting as a catalyst in the production of acetyl coenzyme A, an important molecule in the pathway of aerobic energy. A recommended dose is 300mg daily.

## 6. Creatine

Creatine phosphate is a nitrogenous organic compound that serves as a reservoir of ATP in muscle and nerve tissue. It helps regenerate ATP. Many studies show that creatine plays a pivotal role in the regulation and maintenance of muscle energy, metabolism and fatigue. Maximal creatine accumulation is attained within 3 days after a loading phase. The loading phase dose is 20g (in four doses of 5g) and the maintenance dose is 5g a day to obtain the most advantage. The recommendation is at least 5g 1 hour prior to competition after the loading phase.

## 7. Ribose

D-ribose is a natural five carbon sugar that is used to make energy for muscle, when a person is very active. It also helps in the recovery process, lessens fatigue and soreness. The recommended dose is 3g prior to competition.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In general the recommendations are as follows:

1. A high dose multivitamin and mineral that will contain the necessary B vitamins and other synergistic nutrients.
2. Vitamin C 500 mg
3. CoQ10 100mg
4. L-Carnitine 2g
5. Alpha lipoic acid 300mg
6. Creatine 5g
7. Ribose 3g

This combination of nutrients together with a proper intake of calorie providing macromolecules (complex carbohydrates, lean proteins and essential fats) will enhance energy production and stamina during competition. In addition there is another group of nutraceuticals (DMG, TMG, Lecithin, Inosine, Succinates, Colostrum, Phosphotidyl serine, Pyruvate, BCAA, Malic acid, HMB, and Chromium) of which there is evidence of either a direct or indirect ergogenic capacity. Some with more evidence than others, but are out of the scope of this manuscript.

Please have in mind that although helpful, supplements are never a substitute for training, diet, and hydration: but are complementary additions of the overall preparation regime for improving performance.



# MELNYCHUK: WINNING HABIT AND SMILE BACK TO UKRAINE

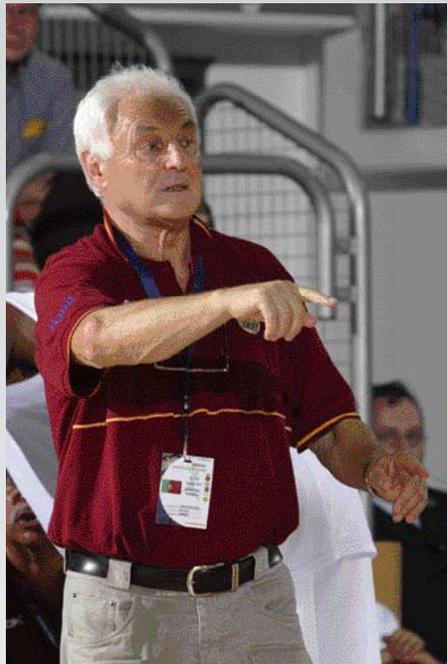
Valentyn Melnychuk smiles a lot. He smiled last year when leading Portugal at FIBA EuroBasket 2007, where they were the biggest surprise at the tournament after knocking out Latvia to reaching the quarter-final round. And he smiled when they walked off the court for the final time following a loss to Greece, when the crowd gave Portugal a standing ovation. Now Melnychuk is smiling because he's back home in Ukraine, after accepting an offer to coach the National team there, and he is looking forward to steering them to big things as well. He recently spoke to FIBA.Com.

**FIBA:** Welcome back to Ukraine, Coach Valentyn Melnychuk. How difficult was it to leave Portugal's national team, especially after their great performance in the past few years?

**VALENTYN MELNYCHUK:** "It was difficult to leave, not only because of the recent success, but also because I spent so much time there. I am leaving behind players that I watched grow up, and numerous friends that I made. When I left Portugal for vacation, the President of their basketball Federation had a feeling I was not coming back and he was not shocked when I told him about my plans in Ukraine. We both understood that staying would not benefit any of the parties and mutually terminated the contract."

**FIBA:** Remind us again of your basketball history. You played the game, and then got into coaching?

**VALENTYN MELNYCHUK:** "Yes, I played for my university team and then for the Lviv Army club, but suffered a very serious career-ending arm fracture at the age of 26. The coach of our team at that time was leaving and I was asked to take over. I was lucky the players, who I had been playing with, accepted me as a coach and made it easy for me at the early



stages of my new career."

**FIBA:** Then what happened?

**VALENTYN MELNYCHUK:** "Later, I went on to coach in Latvia, becoming the youngest USSR Higher League head coach at just 33. Then, before moving to Portugal, I worked in Kyiv Central Army Club, and in Damascus Army Club in Syria. I learned a lot coaching in the USSR Championship - the competition at that time was very high and the league was basically formed of half of the current European countries. This all allowed me to go to Portugal very well prepared."

**FIBA:** Did you have any problems with communicating when you started coaching outside the USSR?

**VALENTYN MELNYCHUK:** "I encountered huge language problems when I started coaching abroad. When I came to Syria, an army officer interpreted for me for a couple of days and later left me on my

own. I was forced to transcribe Arabic words in Cyrillic, trying to memorize their meanings and, when my wife arrived and heard me converse in Arabic with our Syrian driver 6 months later, she was shocked. Luckily, I had Russian speaking kids on the teams I coached, who helped interpreting during practices, but I still tried to use their services as seldom as possible. I think you miss half of a practice if you have to use an interpreter. When I moved to Madeira, Portugal, I was extremely nervous during the first ever practice I had to conduct in English. I think I was sweating more than my players. Luckily, because the island is such a hot tourist spot, everyone spoke English and I had a chance to practice my conversational skills with virtually anywhere with anyone. I spent two years like that and then decided to learn Portuguese, going through all the hassle one more time."

**FIBA:** How did leaving Ukraine and coaching in Portugal change you as a coach, and a person?

**VALENTYN MELNYCHUK:** "Oh, it changed me a lot! Portugal presented a lot of opportunities to grow as a coach - they had clinics for us three times a year. I also used to spend a lot of time in Spain, making friends with local coaches, attending their practices. Also, I had been very emotional and loud coaching the Army teams in the USSR and now, looking back, I think I would have had a better chance to get higher results if I had been as calm as I am now."

**FIBA:** How will you handle your new duties?

**VALENTYN MELNYCHUK:** "I will visit all Superleague clubs, and scout. I will not only be focusing on their skills: their work ethics and their personalities are also very important."

**FIBA:** It's tough in Europe now, with so many good teams, but you proved with Portugal that anything is possible.

**VALENTYN MELNYCHUK:** "I am sure that European basketball is the strongest in the World right now and the most recent FIBA World Championships prove that, and seven of the top nine teams were from Europe. The level of all teams is so high now, that it is impossible to have a wish list of teams you would want to be drawn into the same group with. Therefore, our

main goal will be to advance into the FIBA EuroBasket 2009. We need to select the right coaching staff to create a positive environment to make the players want to play for the national team. We should make sure their good performances for the team will allow them to be noticed by top clubs, which will offer them better contracts. Once we make it to FIBA EuroBasket, we will be able to see what our realistic long-term plans are."

**FIBA:** Looking back at your career, has there been one person you have looked

up to or someone who has had a major impact for you?

**VALENTYN MELNYCHUK:** "Not really, I can't pick one person. I learned a lot from coaches I worked with, but, in addition to that, I learned from players: I was fortunate to have coached six Olympic Champions, such as Rimas Kurtinaitis, Victor Pankrashkin, Alexander Belostenniy, Yevgeniy Kovalenko, Valeriy Govorov, and Ivan Yedeshko. I also coached big-name Ukrainian players Alexander Salnikov and Victor Berezhnoi."

# LAKOVIC: "OLYMPICS WOULD BE MUCH EASIER THAN FIBA EURO BASKET."

The road to the Beijing Games is full of bumps and potholes for Slovenia. Nine teams are already in the Olympic tournament, but three places are still up for grabs. Slovenia will be one of 12 teams competing for those spots at the FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament in Athens from July 14-20. The teams that win the semi-finals will go to China, and the side that wins the third place game will also advance. Slovenia playmaker Jaka Lakovic believes he and his teammates will make that journey successfully. The Barcelona playmaker spoke to FIBA.

**FIBA:** We have to ask you about your thoughts on the draw for the FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament. Slovenia face Canada and Korea in Group C - with potential quarter-final showdowns against Croatia, Puerto Rico or Cameroon from Group D. What do you think?

**JAKA LAKOVIC:** "I don't really know Korea. I know Canada a little bit. But I think we have a strong team and we have to believe in ourselves. Our goal is to go to the Olympic Games. And it looks like the way to the Olympics will be (beating) either Croatia or Puerto Rico in the quarters. We know both teams. We played Puerto Rico at the 2006 FIBA World Championship in Japan. So I think we can do a good job. In the semi-finals, maybe the Greeks are waiting for us. Beating Greece in Greece is hard. But we never lose our faith or confidence. We are very confident, because we play good against Greece. Greece is a good opponent for us and they know we are not a good op-

ponent for them. So we just have to wait and see."

**FIBA:** There were a lot of great moments last year for Slovenia at the FIBA EuroBasket, but you also suffered that horrible collapse against Greece in a quarter-final, losing a 12-point lead in the final 2:30. What did that do to your team?

**JAKA LAKOVIC:** "Yes, that happens in this sport. But, I have to admit, we lost that game, Greece didn't win it. We should learn from that. I just hope we can turn this into a positive for us."

**FIBA:** What does Slovenia have to do to make it to the Olympics?

**JAKA LAKOVIC:** "We have to bring back the chemistry we had in the FIBA EuroBasket, when we really played like a team and moved like a team. I think we were the surprise of that competition. Many coaches told me we were playing one of the best basketballs in the championship along with Spain, Greece and Russia, which means a lot. It proves to us that we can make it."

**FIBA:** Looking back to the FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament draw, it's still unclear if he will play, but what would it be like to face Canadian star playmaker Steve Nash?

**JAKA LAKOVIC:** "It's gonna be so much harder. But, I don't think he's coming. We have the same agent and I think I'm going to tell him to tell Steve not to come."

**FIBA:** Okay, last question. What would it mean for you to reach the Olympics?

**JAKA LAKOVIC:** "For every athlete in every sport, it is the biggest to play in the Olympics and enjoying the Olympic spirit. In the Olympics, there are 12 teams playing for the title. And I think playing in the Olympics would be much easier than playing in the FIBA EuroBasket, where you have many good teams. In the Olympics, you have good teams. But, maybe six, so you can fight through the rest."




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**PLANET  
BASKETBALL**

# THE WORLD IN BRIEF



## **FIBA HOSTS FIBA EUROPE - ULEB MEETING: BASKETBALL STRENGTHENS ITS UNITY**

Upon invitation by FIBA, FIBA Europe and ULEB (Union of European Basketball Leagues) met on 6th March in Geneva to re-frame the European club competition formats for the seasons 2008-2009 and onwards. These discussions followed the crisis in the relationship between FIBA Europe and ULEB after ULEB unilaterally decided in June 2007 to increase the number of teams for the ULEB Cup in the season 2007-2008. Following that decision, attempts to solve the conflict were unsuccessful until the FIBA Central Board decided in December 2007 to encourage a positive solution for European basketball by setting a final deadline to the parties before it would directly intervene and decide in the matter in accordance with FIBA regulations. As a consequence, FIBA Europe and ULEB started again discussions and met for the first time in Munich on 12 February 2008 setting the stage for yesterday's meeting.

After a brief welcoming introduction by Secretary General Patrick Baumann, the two parties met alone and discussed the various conflicting matters during the whole day.

Mr. Vassilakopoulos, FIBA Vice-President

and FIBA Europe President, Mr. Zanolin, Secretary General of FIBA Europe, Mr. Eduardo Portela, President of ULEB, and Mr. Jordi Bertomeu, CEO of Euroleague, reached an agreement in signing an amendment to the 2004 contract between FIBA Europe and ULEB which satisfied both parties and re-organizes the three European Club competitions in a more united and integrated manner. FIBA Europe and ULEB invited FIBA Secretary General Patrick Baumann and FIBA Secretary General Emeritus, Borislav Stankovic to co-sign as witnesses the amendment to the contract as was done in 2004. Both parties will publish the details of the format of European club competitions and inform their respective constituencies of the details of the amendment agreed between them. They have also agreed that more regular meetings between them and with FIBA will be organized to resolve potential issues and to discuss the future development of European basketball.

## **PEREZ COUNTS ON "WINNING CHARACTER" TO CARRY SPAIN'S WOMEN IN MADRID**

Spain coach Evaristo Perez is warning everyone in his homeland not to expect Spain to cruise into the Beijing Games. The Spanish, runners-up to Russia last

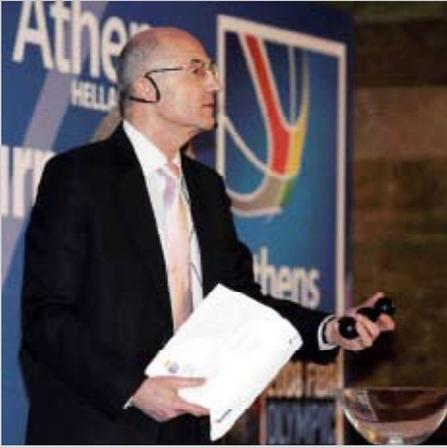
summer at the FIBA EuroBasket Women in Spain, have the advantage of playing the FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament in Madrid, where five places are up for grabs for the Olympics. Perez said: "The fact that we were FIBA EuroBasket runners-up does not guarantee us a place at the Olympic Games. We must play the Pre-Olympic tournament and our aim is to clinch a spot in Beijing. I have the duty to do everything possible and impossible to achieve that but it will not be that easy as many believe it to be." There will be a lot of pressure on all of the teams in Madrid, because making it to an Olympic Games is the dream of every player. "The FIBA Pre-Olympic tournament has cer-



tain peculiar characteristics, because it's a shorter tournament and in two games you play for all or nothing, especially in the quarter-final tie where we could face the likes of Cuba or Belarus and that game gives you either glory or hell," Perez said. "Neither of those two teams, Cuba or Belarus, are easy, nor are they extremely tough, but they are both competitive sides. Although I know we are capable of beating them, I also know they can beat us. We will have to do things well in order to achieve our aims."

## **FIBA OLYMPIC QUALIFIER IN ATHENS**

The FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament for Men will take place, from 14th to 20th July 2008, in Athens, Greece, in the



18,000-seat OAKA Sports Arena located in Maroussi. The remaining three men's berths for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games will be decided in this 12-team tournament.

The draw was held on 31st January 2008 in Athens and brought the following results:

**Group A: Brazil, Greece and Lebanon**

**Group B: Cape Verde, Germany and New Zealand**

**Group C: Canada, Korea and Slovenia**

**Group D: Cameroon, Croatia and Puerto Rico**

The teams placed 1st and 2nd in each group will advance to the Quarter-Finals and will play elimination games (A1-B2, B1-A2, C1-D2, D1-C2) to qualify for the Semi-Finals. The two winners of the Semi-Finals will qualify for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. The two losers will play in the Finals the game for the 3rd place for one remaining Olympic spot. The following nine teams have already booked their tickets for the Olympic Basketball Tournament for Men that will take place in Beijing, China, from 10th to 24th August 2008: Angola, Argentina, Australia, China, Iran, Lithuania, Russia, Spain and USA.

#### UKIC WARY OF OPPONENTS IN ATHENS

You'll have to forgive Croatia's Roko-Leni Ukic if he didn't jump for joy when the draw was made for the FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament in Athens. Many observers felt Croatia, who was drawn in Group D with Cameroon and Puerto Rico, was fortunate to have avoided some of the giants in the game like Greece, Brazil and Germany in the early stages of the tournament. Roko Ukic, the point guard, who has been outstanding with the Italian Lottomatica Rome this season, believes Croatia didn't get off lightly. "In my country, everybody says the draw is great," Ukic said.

"I'm not so happy about it, because all of these teams are very good teams. Puerto Rico is a great team with great individual players. They've got (Carlos) Arroyo, (Jose Juan) Barea, (Daniel) Santiago, (Larry) Ayuso, who is extra motivated. They've got also (Ricky) Apodaca. For sure, they will be very motivated to beat us."

If Croatia finish first or second, they will advance to the quarter-finals and play Canada, Korea or Slovenia. "If we manage to get to the second stage, we could play Slovenia, one of the best teams in the world, or Canada, so certainly it will be very hard," he said.

"But, our goal is very clear, to get to the Olympic Games. The important thing is to stay healthy."

What would it mean for him to play at the Beijing Olympic Games? "It would be like a dream come true for every sportsman, not just for basketball players," he said. "It's something I've always wanted."

And Jasmin Repesa, his coach in Rome, should have a pretty good idea as to what kind of form Ukic should carry to Athens. Ukic has arguably been Rome's best player this season, helping them contend for honors in Lega A and in the Euroleague.

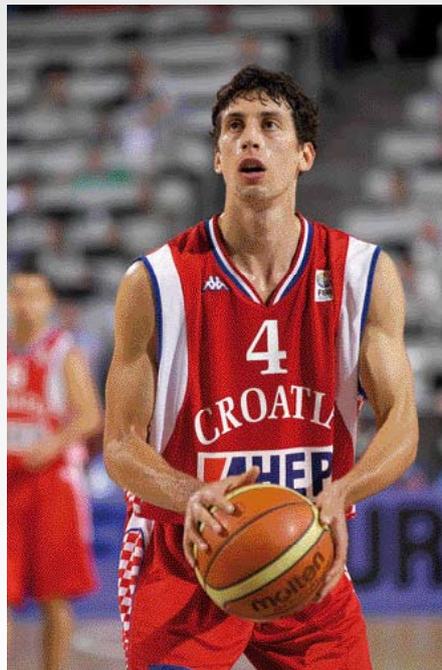
"I think I've been in good shape, good condition so I just need to keep my game on a high level

and try to help my teammates as much as I can," he said. "I'm a point guard, so I need to lead."

#### MAHRAM WIN IRANIAN SUPER LEAGUE TITLE

Tony Madison scored 24 points and grabbed 8 rebounds as Mahram clinched their first ever championship title in the Iranian Super League with a 106-93 win over Saba Battery, the Asian title-holder. It was the sauce-makers' second win in a row after they downed Saba 101-93.

The defending champion Saba Battery played the first game without the services of French point-guard Makan Dioumassi, who was suffering from an injury. He played 40 minutes in his team's second challenge. Mahram's Samad Bahrami scored 20 points, but had to leave the court when he received his second technical. Art Long had left the game earlier, when he continued his aggressive play and picked up his second technical foul.



It came as the coaches of both teams, the bench players and even the fans seemed to be frustrated with the mistakes of referees and their inconsistency in calling or not making calls when they should have, in the last two final games. "There were several major reasons that stopped us from repeating the championship this season," Saba's coach, Mehran Shahintab said, "we lost one of our key players, Aidin Bahrami, who passed away in a car crash before the play-offs; also we had to play 3 or 4 games in a week in the play-offs and finals, due to the squeezed schedule, which made our players too exhausted."

#### FINAL STANDING

1. Mahram
2. Saba Battery
3. Kaveh
4. Zob Ahan



#### STIRLING ANNOUNCES BEIJING GAMES SQUAD

Basketball Australia and FIBA World Champion head coach Jan Stirling has announced its 25 player Australian Defence Force Opals squad for the 2008 Beijing Games. Current World Champions, the ADF Opals claimed silver at both the Sydney (2000) and Athens (2004) Games. This is the 2008 Australian Defence Force Opals squad:

Suzu Batkovic, Ekaterinburg (Russia)  
 Tully Bevilaqua, Indiana Fever (USA)  
 Abby Bishop, Canberra (Australia)  
 Michelle Brogan, Dandenong (Australia)  
 Renae Camino, Adelaide (Australia)  
 Rohanee Cox, Townsville (Australia)  
 Jessica Foley, Adelaide (Australia)  
 Cayla Francis, AIS (Australia)  
 Hollie Grima, Pozzuoli (Italy)  
 Kristi Harrower, Ekaterinburg (Russia)  
 Lauren Jackson, Spartak Moscow (Russia)  
 Kathleen Macleod, Bendigo (Australia)  
 Emily McInerney, Dandenong (Australia)  
 Jenna O'Hea, Bendigo (Australia)  
 Erin Phillips, Adelaide (Australia)  
 Natalie Porter, Sydney (Australia)  
 Alicia Poto, Sydney (Australia)  
 Emma Randall, Bulleen Melbourne (Australia)  
 Samantha Richards, Perth (Australia)  
 Jennifer Screen, Parma (Italy)  
 Belinda Snell, Bourges (France)  
 Laura Summerton, Taranto (Italy)  
 Penny Taylor, Ekaterinburg (Russia)  
 Marianna Tolo, AIS (Australia)  
 Carly Wilson, Perth (Australia)

#### LESLIE ANXIOUS TO REPRESENT USA AGAIN

The United States did not capture gold at the 2006 FIBA World Championship for Women in Brazil, but then again, the US did not have Lisa Leslie. That fact will not be lost on any of the teams that will be taking on the Americans this summer at the Beijing Olympic Games, where Leslie will once again wear the red, white and blue to help her country defend the Olympic title. She has already led the Americans to gold in Atlanta, Sydney and Athens. The 35-year-old star, who took the 2006 summer off with the national team, will indeed be with national team coach Anne Donovan and her fellow Americans in China. "The Olympics is an amazing opportunity," she said. "Talk about representing your country and being able to come together and have the camaraderie that you experience



with an Olympic team is something that most people only get to do maybe once in a lifetime. Anne and I, Teresa Edwards, Dawn Staley and Sheryl Swoopes, a few of us have been able to do it three or more times and it's just great." Going to the Olympics is, not surprisingly, something that never loses its appeal for an athlete. Leslie is not an exception to that rule. "For me, personally, I've been in this system for 20 years now and all we know is to win gold, to strive for the best," she said. "It's been great for me, starting as an 11th grader being in the USA Basketball system and learning from so many great players. Now having that opportunity to be that veteran who can hand it off to our younger

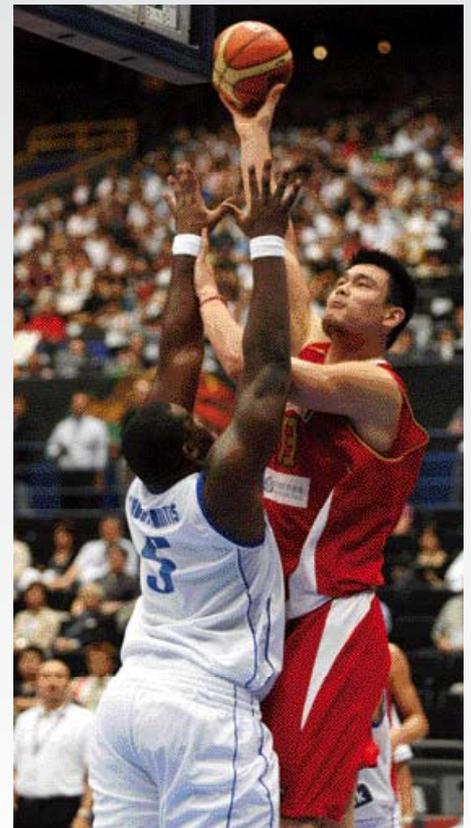
players, that's what it's about - winning and doing it with style and class and representing our country to the best of our ability."

#### YAO ON THE MEND AFTER SUCCESSFUL SURGERY ON LEFT FOOT

China national team center Yao Ming had a season-ending operation to fix the stress fracture in his left foot on Monday. The 7ft 6in Houston Rocket, who is hoping to make it back to the court in time to represent his country at the Beijing Games, said in a news release: "I am very relieved that everything went well with my surgery. I am looking forward to getting better and starting my physical rehab as soon as the doctors say I can."

Yao had screws inserted into the tarsal navicular bone of his left foot, and the Houston Rockets' team physician Tom Clanton, who performed the operation with Dr. Bill McGarvey, said: "Yao is comfortable and recovering well after surgery. We will continue to monitor his recovery and begin an aggressive rehabilitation once he is physically deemed ready."

Yao's agent, Zhang Mingji, sounded optimistic about his client's chancing of taking part in the Olympics in comments made before the operation. "He (Yao) believes those two months are enough time to recover," Zhang said in an interview with the Beijing News. "I believe that by the Olympics, Yao Ming will have recovered 100%."



## RUSSIA, FOURTH CANDIDATE IN IN HOSTING THE 2014 FIBA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

With almost one month still to go until the closing date for the signing of Letters of Intent confirming an interest in hosting the event, FIBA confirmed that the Russian Basketball Federation (RBF) has become the fourth candidate to express an interest in bidding for the organization of the 17th edition of the FIBA World Championship, FIBA's premier competition. Russia joins Spain, France and Denmark in the group of candidates interested in hosting the 2014 FIBA World Championship.

## YOUTH OLYMPICS: IT'S SINGAPORE... AND IT'S FIBA 33!

For the first time ever, the Youth Olympic Games will be held in Singapore in 2010 and for the first time ever, the FIBA will endorse FIBA 33, a new version of the 3-on-3 basketball game, played on one basket by youngsters of less than 18 years of age. 20 boys' teams and 20 girls' squads from as many as 35 countries could compete for the medals in the beautiful Asian island nation. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced that Singapore will host the first Summer Youth Games in 2010. The result was unveiled by the IOC President, Jacques Rogge, at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland. Singapore beat Moscow in the final by 53 votes to 44. When the IOC came forward with the idea to organize Youth Olympic Games (YOG), FIBA instantly began thinking of a new and more youth-driven discipline for its inclusion in these new Games. FIBA started testing with the 3-on-3 game in 2007 and worked on worldwide unified rules following a successful Test Event held in Macau,



November, during the Asian Indoor Games. The IOC embraced and encouraged the concept as did the FIBA Central Board in December. The rules of FIBA 33 are quite simple. A team consists of four players (three players are on the court and one is a substitute) and one coach. The game is played on a half court, on one basket, in three periods of five minutes each. Most of the FIBA rules regarding scoring and fouling are valid. The team scoring at least 33 points or leading the game after the regular game time is the winner.

The FIBA 33 rules will continue to be tested at various events throughout 2008 and 2009 and may eventually be modified taking into account the latest trends in youth and at other similar events. For the complete Draft Rules of the FIBA 33 Game, please refer to the following link:

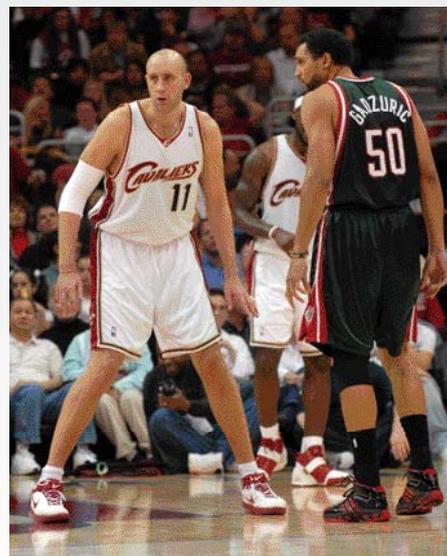
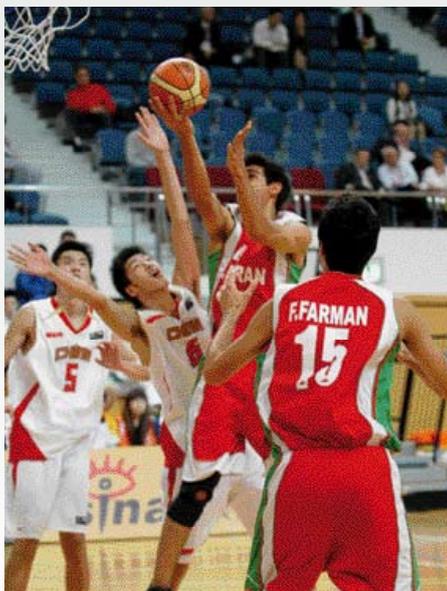
<http://www.fiba.com/downloads/Miscellaneous/DraftRulesFIBA33Feb2008.pdf>

"FIBA 33 offers us and our member federations an exciting new tool to promote the sport especially amongst youngsters, both within our own countries and internationally," said FIBA Secretary General and IOC member Patrick Baumann. "The test event in Macau showed us how much fun the young players had, but also how spectacular and competitive the new game can be. The 3-on-3 concept is certainly not new, but what is new is that it will be played on a national team level, with worldwide valid rules, in top-class international competition, and the whole FIBA structure and family can participate in it. The 3-on-3 concept has all the elements and skills required for basketball, it has inspired and will continue to inspire many great players in the future. At the same time, it is the easiest and one of the most effective ways to bring youngsters to basketball, keep them and promote our game. Finally, FIBA 33 can and will promote key educational and social values to the next generations." There are many more arguments for FIBA to start this initiative. It seems that the game format will allow small basketball countries to be very competitive on the highest level. FIBA 33 will enable emerging basketball nations from all continents to be involved in top international competition and develop successful youth programs. In addition, the simple format will also allow the practice of the game in international competition, but also on grassroots level. The next test events for FIBA 33 will be held in April 2008 in Boca Chica, Dominican Republic, and in October 2008 in Bali, Indonesia, with the respective collaboration of the local national federations, FIBA Americas, FIBA Asia and the Olympic Council of Asia.

## ILGAUSKAS WANTS TO PLAY FOR LITHUANIA IN BEIJING

One of the most repeated questions in European basketball the past decade has dealt with the Cleveland Cavaliers center Zydrunas Ilgauskas. It usually goes something like this. Someone asks, "Lithuania are a really good team, but how good would they be if Ilgauskas played?" After being unavailable for national team duty for most of his career because of concerns about hurting his surgically-repaired feet, the 32 year-old Ilgauskas has told Lithuania he wants to play for them this summer at the Beijing Games. "I've always wanted to do it before I get too old," said Ilgauskas to the Akron Beacon newspaper. "I feel like I have a lot of basketball left in me and I can help, and this is probably my last chance." If 'Z' does play, and that's a big if because the Cavs probably will not be too anxious to see him run onto the floor because of concerns about his feet, the talk in Lithuania is that the world would finally see the Baltic version of the Dream Team. FIBA EuroBasket 2003 MVP Sarunas Jasikevicius would be at the point guard, Arvydas Macijauskas at shooting guard, Ramunas Siskauskas at small forward, Sydney 2000 standout Darius Songaila at power forward and Ilgauskas in the low post.

In fact, last year's side at the FIBA Europe Championship would require just a little tinkering - don't forget the Lavrinovic brothers Ksistof and Darjus, or Denver Nuggets star Linas Kleiza are also in the mix - and Lithuania would be ready to go for gold. "I don't think I would be able to play every summer," Ilgauskas said to the Beacon. "That would put me at a high risk. But I've really taken care of my body. I get beat up like everybody else, but I've been able to avoid major injuries. It's a two-month commitment in the summer and something that I think if I didn't do it, I would regret it."





OFF-THE-COURT

# THE ODD - THE FUNNY - THE UNUSUAL

## TIAGO'S SISTER MICHELLE SPLITTER NAMED IN BRAZIL SQUAD

Tiago Splitter is a dominant force in the paint for Brazil's men's team, and now his 18-year-old sister center could be ready to make her mark with the women's side. Michelle Splitter has been named in the Brazil squad to play at the South American Championship in Ecuador from May 23-29. She has had a far more important fight in her life, however, winning a three-year battle with leukemia. She returned to basketball in 2007 and has been an integral part of Unimed Americana in the Women's Brazilian Championship. Splitter says she is finding it hard to believe that she will now represent her country in Ecuador and could, depending on her per-



formances, make the senior team that will play in the FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament in Madrid in June. "I couldn't imagine that this was going to happen. I was really happy that I could return to playing and try to do a good job."

## JOSE KNOWS HOW TO CHILL IN COLD TORONTO

Most of the time, Jose Calderon is seen racing up and down the floor for Spain or the Toronto Raptors, darting into the lane for an high-flying lay-up or popping from behind the three-pointer arc.

But, what does an emerging superstar like Calderon do when he's not helping leading his teams to win? In Toronto, he does plenty. "Toronto is a spectacular city, but in the winter you don't feel like doing much," he says. "When you are at home and you look out of the window, you think to yourself that maybe it's better if I watch a film. We've recently had -20C degrees. If I go out, it's to go to the cinema with my wife or any franchise event, like bowling, which is one of the 12 events

we have during the year with the team," he says. "But, one of the things that helps me disconnect is cinema." He also confesses to an addiction of Jack Bauer and is anxious for the latest series to start. "Another thing that I'm hooked with are series," he admits. "I'm waiting for the new seasons of "24" and "Lost" to begin."



## A BASKET FULL OF SURPRISES FOR AN AMERICAN PLAYER IN IRAN

Mike Jones is an American player in the Iranian Basketball League. He has been playing professional basketball for 9 years, most of it outside his home country. This is his first season in Iran, a country whose people and culture have given him a shock to kick start his games from a sure point.

### Why did you choose to come to Iran?

I got a number of offers from France and Turkey. And the one from Iran was the best, so I decided to come here.

### How was your idea about the country itself?

I was a little bit nervous at first, but once I got here I realized that the people were very friendly, totally different from the picture I had from the news, so it was a pleasant surprise. I have made a lot of friends and I think I'd really like to stay and play here for a few years.

### What about your social life, do you find it limited in any way?

Social life is limited for me, over here. But, I am occupied with my job... Here, you ought to focus on basketball and actually, that does make the players better.

### So, how do you fill in your spare time in Iran?

Reading books and surfing the Internet ten hours a day instead of two.

## Have you found any similarities between the Iranian and American cultures?

Just that everybody likes to have fun and have a good time, in both countries. I can't think of anything else in common right now.

### Has anything ever shocked you here?

Yes, eating Kebabs everyday and the way people drive over here. That is crazy.

### Is there anything special you might have learnt from Iranian culture?

I think the people are pretty honest for the most part; just nice people. In America you've got to know a person for a bit of time before he becomes nice to you, but here the people just want to be nice, right away.

### When you return to the U.S., how may your experience here change your life over there?

When I speak to my parents, they always ask me if everything is OK and safe here. But, when I go back I will tell them that things are not like what you hear or see on the news. So I think, one thing I would say to the people when I go back home is that the people in Iran are very nice and nothing like what they make of them on the news.

### Do you think that sports bring countries with conflicts together? Can we have dialogue through sports?

That's just like a safe haven. With sports different people can have fun and not worry about the issues that create a gap between them. I think people will have a different idea of the Iranians once they see them in the Olympics and see that they are just like everyone else in the world.





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