

# ASSIST34

FIBA ASSIST MAGAZINE FOR BASKETBALL ENTHUSIASTS EVERYWHERE SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2008



**FIBA**

We Are Basketball

**SERGIO SCARIOLO**  
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**PEPU HERNANDEZ**  
DRILLS AFTER THE WARM UP  
PART I

**WILLIAM SUTTON**  
THE PHOENIX SUNS VIRTUAL  
LOCKER ROOM

**ARNAUD GUPPILLOTTE**  
THE INSIDE-OUTSIDE GAME

**DOC RIVERS**  
**ARMOND HILL**  
**"SLICE" AND**  
**"POINT" SETS**





# FIBA

We Are Basketball

## FIBA ASSIST MAGAZINE

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## 2009-10 FIBA CALENDAR

### 2009

#### JUNE 2009

07 - 20.06 EuroBasket Women in  
Latvia

#### JULY 2009

02 - 12.07 FIBA U19 World  
Championship for Men in  
Auckland (NZL)  
23.07 -02.08 FIBA U19 World  
Championship for Women  
in Bangkok (THA)

#### SEPTEMBER 2009

07 - 20.09 EuroBasket Men in Poland  
23 - 27.09 FIBA Americas  
Championship for Women  
in Mato Grosso (BRA)  
24 - 03.10 FIBA Africa  
Championship for Women  
in Bamako (MLI)

### 2010

#### JULY 2010

02 - 11.07 FIBA U17 World  
Championship for Men  
(site tbd)  
16 - 26.07 FIBA U17 World  
Championship for Women  
(site tbd)

#### AUGUST 2010

14 - 25.08 Youth Summer Olympic  
Games with new "FIBA 33"  
basketball tournament in  
Singapore  
28 -12.09 FIBA World  
Championship for Men in  
Ankara, Antalya, Izmir and  
Istanbul (TUR)

#### SEPTEMBER 2010

23 - 03.10 FIBA World Championship  
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**FIBA**

We Are Basketball



by Jay Hernandez

# THE POUND-PIVOT

Jay Hernandez is the founder of Pro Hoops Inc. which is a basketball training company based out of New York. Pro Hoops is considered to be one of the best in preparing players to be Professionals. Pro Hoops has worked and continues to work with players like Wally Szczerbiak (Cleveland Cavaliers), Raja Bell (Phoenix Suns), Jameer Nelson (Orlando Magic) and more. Jay also has a shooting workout on DVD with Wally Szczerbiak and a new set of DVDs that are out on Hoopsking.com that feature Scoring Moves, Point Guard Skills, Heavy Ball Training, Freeze Pull ups and

more. Jay is known for his innovative and fundamental techniques that help players improve at a faster rate and with lasting results ([www.prohoops.net](http://www.prohoops.net)).

At Pro Hoops Inc. we focus on naming and grouping skill sets to make it easier for players to learn more effectively and to utilize the moves more efficiently in game situations. One of our most popular skill sets that we teach are the Pound-Pivots. The Pound-Pivot is a great technique that is being utilized by the top players in the world. These moves are based on creating separation from



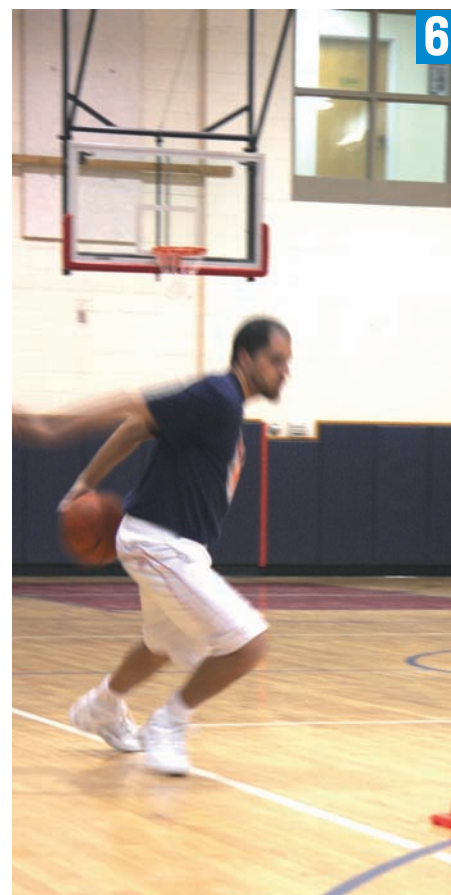


# POUND PIVOT CROSSOVER





# POUND PIVOT BEHIND THE BACK







tough defenders to score, pass or have time to let a play develop from the point guard position.

The Pound-Pivot, if done properly, can give players a couple of feet of breathing room from defenders that like to be



right on top of you and make things difficult. The key is to go hard in one direction and get a defender to start to back pedal, run or get them moving at a fast pace to keep you in front of them. This is the set up for the pound pivot. For the purposes of being a threat and having

an option to make a move for a score these moves will be made approaching the 3 point line.

As you are moving quickly with your right hand you can put on the breaks with your left foot and keep your back foot (your right foot) planted. The key is to dribble at the same time as you break with the left foot.

You will take another dribble where the ball will be going in the direction of the back leg and start to pivot on your right leg. You will pick up the ball with your left hand about 3 quarters of the way around on the pivot and then you will be able to face up without carrying the ball.

Once the Pound-Pivot has been utilized and you have separation you can now look to make a move.

A player is more likely to get beat when they try to recover because their momentum is coming towards you while your momentum is going towards them, making it much more difficult to keep you in front.

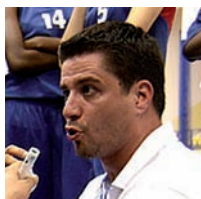
There are many options after you have done the pound pivot. The two we will show in picture format are the cross-over and the behind the back.

This pound-pivot will help players out at all positions get separation and be able to attack again, pass or wait for a play to develop.





# THE INSIDE-OUTSIDE GAME



by Arnaud Guppillotte

Arnaud Guppillotte is the head coach of the French Women's U16 national team, which won the bronze medal at this year's FIBA European Championship, and head coach at the French National Center (INSEP) in Paris. He was also assistant coach of the Women's U16 team, which won the silver medal at the FIBA 2005 European Championship.

The offensive efficiency of a team depends basically on the balance between the outside game (shooting from the 3-point line),

pass him the ball.

It is important that the inside player maintains this position and gives a target to the passer for a few seconds, without letting the defender push him away from his position.

**Create a target to receive the ball:** the inside player should provide the passer a definite visual target to pass him the ball: the outside hand, away from the defender is an excellent target.

## THE POSITION

Coaches cannot teach a definite position for every player.

Positioning will be set based on size and the physical and technical characteristics of each player.

Players will set themselves up in different ways on the court, but even so, there are some guidelines that every inside player should follow:

- ▼ Keep close to the defender: maintain physical contact with him (with the back, arms, hips, and shoulder). This will help lock him into that position and keep him from getting to the ball.
- ▼ Get around the defender if he moves in front: use the "swimming" movement (like the crawl style swimming stroke) to get by the defender, making good use of your arms and legs to gain the best position.
- ▼ Maintain a low center of gravity: have a good, wide stance, which will keep you from being forced to push and fight too much for the position.
- ▼ Move your head: this allows you to watch what is happening behind you as well as what is going on with your other teammates and defenders on the court.
- ▼ Create a wide space: use the legs and arms to create as much space as possible so you can create a good target for the passer.
- ▼ Point your feet: make sure your feet are aimed toward the half-court line so you can offer a secure target for the passer.



the ability to penetrate the defense by dribbling, and the internal game (the post play). This balance provides a team on offense the chance to alternate each of these basic aspects of the offensive game, which allows it to open up the court and create problems for the defense, which is now spread out on the court. As you will see, the collaboration between the perimeter and inside players is an essential key for any successful offense.

I cannot analyze all the aspects of the inside-outside game in this article, but I would like to first describe the play of the post, the 5, on both the technical and tactical side.

## TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL SIDE: A. THE INSIDE PLAYER

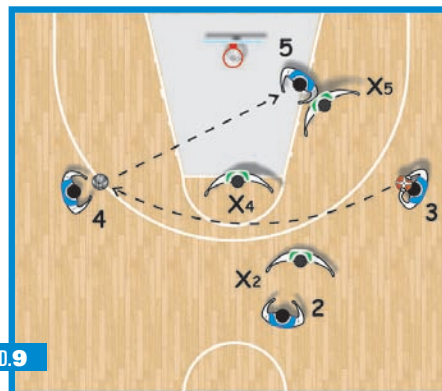
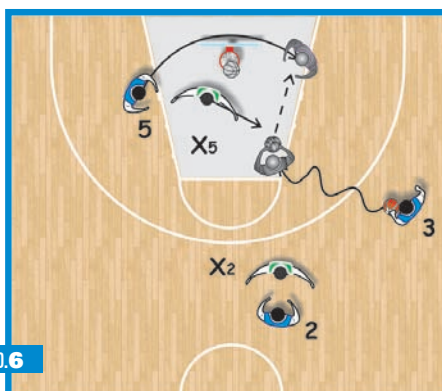
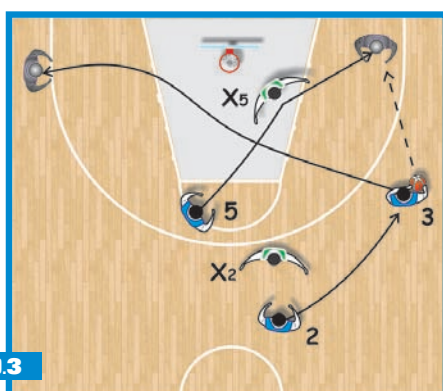
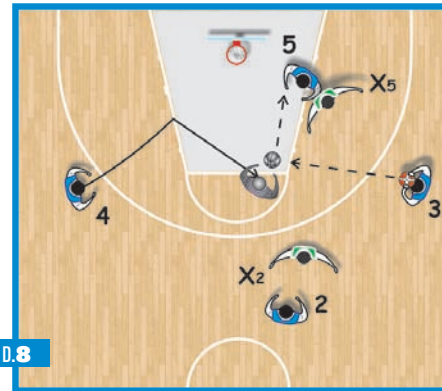
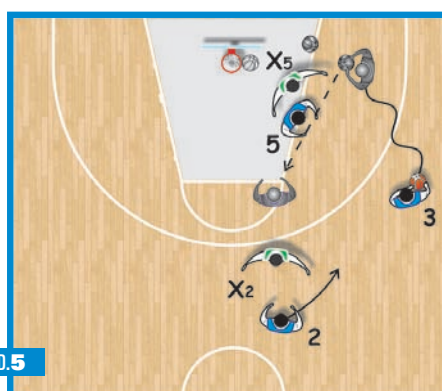
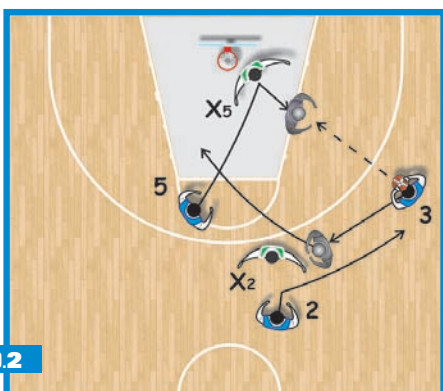
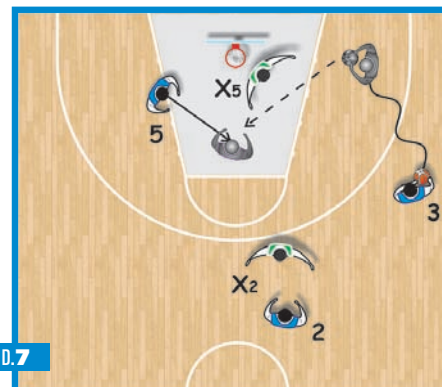
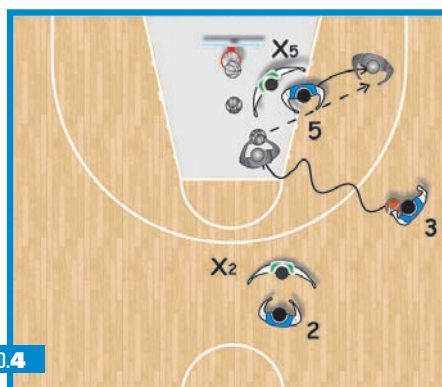
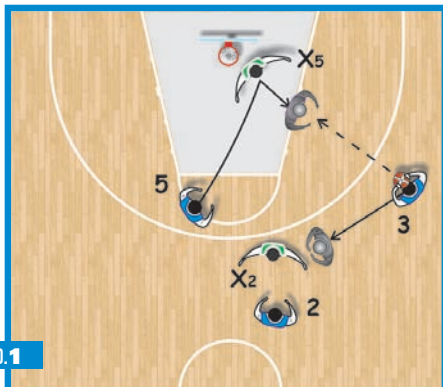
**Create space to receive the ball:** this is a primary aim of the inside player. He must create a space in the middle of the lane, on the low post, or on the short corner, providing a precise target for the passer. This will allow the outside player the best chance to



## B. THE OUTSIDE PLAYER

**The attitude:** The outside player must be able to drive and shoot to keep his defender busy, but he also has to be able to read the stance and position of his defender and use the proper pass (under the defender's arms, at the hips, or head level) to get the ball to the post.





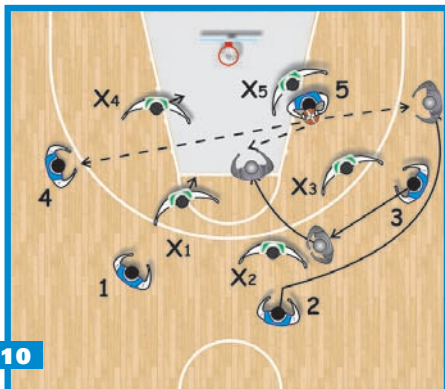
### THE TECHNIQUE OF PASSING

The outside passer must master different types of passes for getting the ball to the inside player, each based on the target offered by the inside player and the position of the defender.

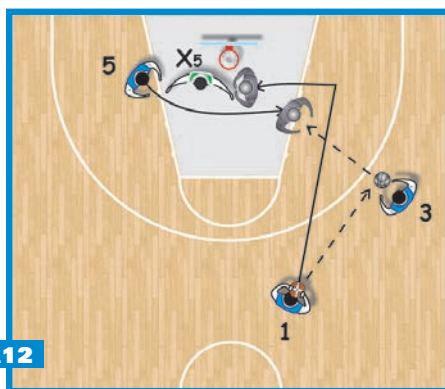
- ▼ Direct bounce pass (same hand, same foot).
- ▼ Direct bounce pass crossing forward with the front leg (right hand, left foot, or vice versa).
- ▼ Pass after a dribble for finding a better angle.
- ▼ Lob pass (if the inside player is fronted).
- ▼ Pass with the external or internal hand, when the outside player drives in the lane and passes to the inside player near him.

Aside from the type of pass used, the passer must be:

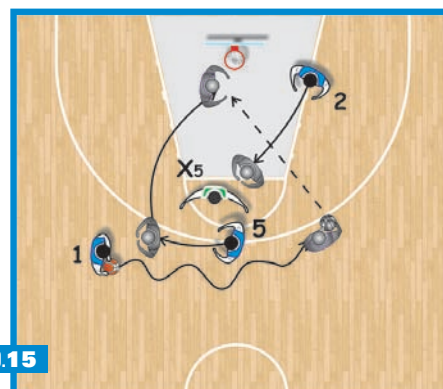
- ▼ Quick.
- ▼ Precise.



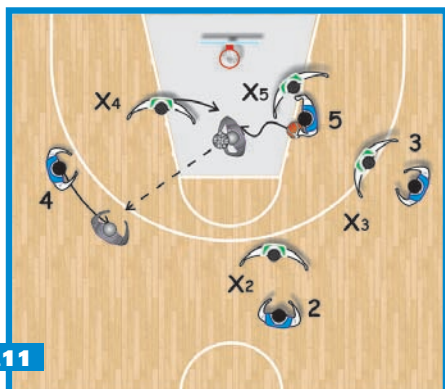
D.10



D.12



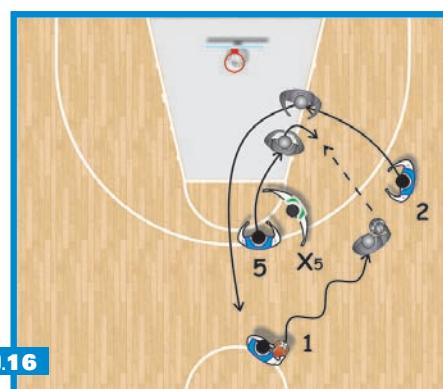
D.15



D.11



D.13



D.16

▼ Able to create space from the defender. He can also fake before passing; for example, fake a lob pass, and then quickly make a bounce pass to the low post.

**Tactical aspects:** the outside passer must also be aware of the different situations on the court before making any pass to the inside player. Most importantly, he must be aware how the inside player is guarded. For example, if the post player is guarded in front, he can make a skip pass to the opposite side, while the inside player seals off his defender and then receives the pass from the other side of the court.

### C. COLLABORATIONS WITH TWO OUTSIDE PLAYERS

There are three types of collaborations that will get the ball inside:

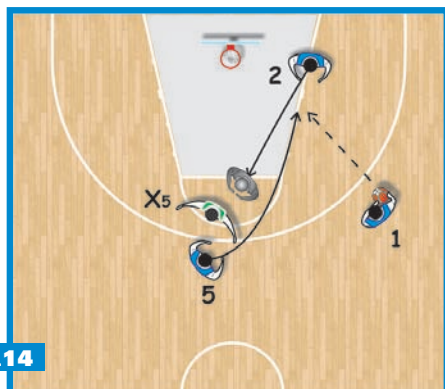
- ▼ With a pass.
- ▼ By a dribble.
- ▼ In an indirect way.

All these types of plays are designed to keep extra defenders from helping out on the post player, allowing the post player to either play one-on-one or else pass the ball back out to the perimeter player.

#### WITH A PASS

From the high-post area on the weak side, 5 cuts in the lane, seals his defender near the basket, and receives the pass from 3, who, after the pass, screens for 2 (diagr. 1).

From the high-post area on the weak side,



D.14

5 cuts in the lane, cannot receive the ball under the basket, so he then posts down in the low-post area, receives the pass from 3, who then screens for 2, and rolls to the basket toward the weak side. At the same time, 2 replaces 3 (diagr. 2).

From the high-post area on the weak side, 5 cuts in the lane, cannot receive the ball under the basket, and then sets himself out in the short corner, and receives the ball from 3, who then cuts in the lane and goes out on the opposite corner, outside of the three-point line (diagr. 3).

#### BY A DRIBBLE

We can also use the collaborations by dribbling to get the ball to the post.

Inside player on the low-post, on the ball side: If the outside player drives to the middle of the lane, the inside player goes to the short corner to receive a pass (diagr. 4). If the outside player drives to the

baseline, the inside player goes to the high-post spot to receive a pass (diagr. 5).

**Inside player on the low-post on the weak side:** if the outside player drives to the middle of the lane, the inside player cuts on the baseline opposite to the path his teammate is taking to the basket (diagr. 6). If the outside player drives to the baseline, the inside player cuts to the middle of the lane (diagr. 7).

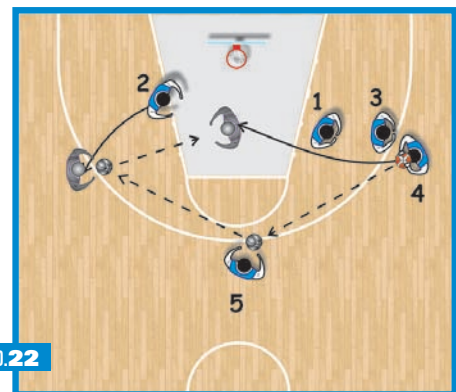
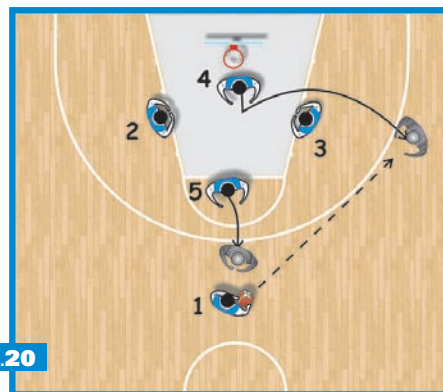
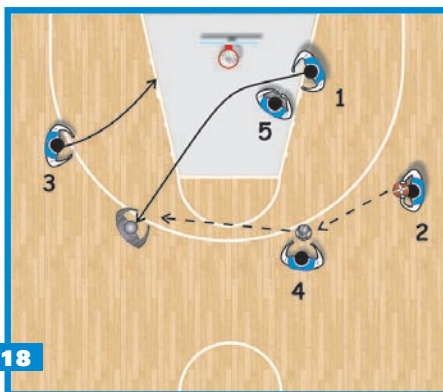
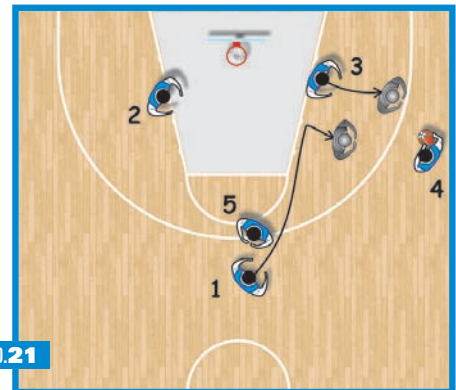
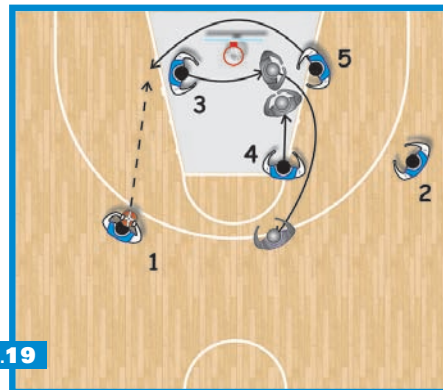
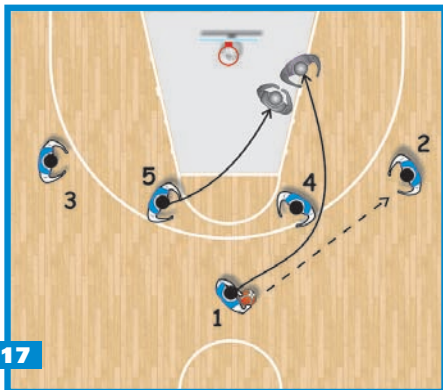
**The inside player on the low post is overplayed in front on the ball side:** the wing on the weak side goes on the high-post spot, receives the ball from wing on the the strong side, and passes to the inside player, who has sealed his defender (diagr. 8).

The wing with the ball can also make a skip pass to the weak side wing, who passes to the inside player, who has sealed his defender under the basket (diagr. 9).

**First Choice:** one-on-one for the Inside Player. The area near the basket is where there will be the best shooting percentage, so the inside player, once he receives the ball, must be able to successfully play one-on-one and score.

Back to the basket: if the inside player has a size advantage on his defender, he must make two or three strong dribbles and step toward the basket to force his defender to step inside the lane.





Facing the basket: if the inside player is smaller than his defender, he must turn and face up to the basket and beat his defender to the basket with his quickness and strength. The inside player must be able to establish and keep contact with his defender, while always maintaining good balance.

**Second Choice:** passing to the outside players. If, after the count of three, the inside player cannot go to the basket, he must be able to see the entire court, and pass to teammates on the perimeter. Once the ball is in the hands of the inside player, the outside players must move to new spots in order to give the inside player the best possible passing lanes (diagr. 10 and 11).

#### D. STRATEGICAL ASPECTS

Let's now see how we can apply the inside-outside game to the offense, showing different basic plays involving three players.

The player in the middle of the court passes to the wing, then cuts to the low-post spot, making a baseline screen on the weak side for the inside player (diagr. 12).

The high post receives the ball from the wing, who then cuts near the high post, receives a hand-off pass, and dribbles toward the other wing. The other wing goes down on the low post (diagr. 13). The wing on the low post then makes a diagonal screen for the high post, who cuts to the basket and receives the ball (diagr. 14).

The high post screens the wing and then, right after, is screened by the teammate in the low post (screen-the-screener). He cuts to the basket and receives the ball from the teammate who has dribbled on the other side of the court (diagr. 15).

The player in the middle of the court dribbles toward the wing, who then goes down to the low post spot to receive a screen by the high post. The wing then comes high and the post turns to face the dribbler and receives the ball from him (diagr. 16).

**Five-on-five with the inside-outside play:** here are some sample of offensive sets based on the inside-outside play.

The first one is a play that is often used by Le Mans, the French Division I team. Starting from a 1-4 set, the point guard passes to one of the wings, fakes to go to toward the ball, and then quickly cuts to the basket, brushing off the shoulder of the high post on the ball side. If the point guard is not open to receive the ball, he is screened by the weak side high post (diagr. 17).

After the screen, he goes outside the three-point line on the weak side. In the meantime, the wing with the ball has passed it to the high post, who popped out. The high post passes to the point guard, while the wing on the weak side goes down on the low-post spot (diagr. 18).

The wing, who sets himself on the low post, screens-the-screener on the baseline, and then receives a vertical screen from the weak-side high post. The ball

handler can pass to the post, who received the screen, or to the wing, who pops out of the vertical screen (diagr. 19).

Here is another offensive set that is often used by Barcelona, the Spanish Division I team. It is still based on the inside-outside play. Four players are in the lane, two on the low post spots, one under the basket, one at the high post, and the ball handler in the middle of the court. A player under the basket chooses to go out, using the screens of one of the low posts. In this case, he pops out on the right side of the court, and receives the ball from the point guard. In the meantime, the high post steps out of the lane (diagr. 20).

Right after he has passed the ball, the point guard is screened by the high post, cuts in the lane, and then starts to set a staggered screen with the low post on the ball side (diagr. 21).

The ball handler passes the ball to the high post, who sets himself outside the lane. The low post pass to the other weak side teammate, who has popped out of the lane. After the pass, the wing uses the staggered screen and cuts in the lane to receive the ball (diagr. 22).

I have only described a few of the offensive sets and detailed when they should be used for inside-outside play. However, the coach must adapt his offense to his players, especially to the skills of the inside players. Finally, he must create an offense that has continuity and proper spacing on the court.

# U16 SPANISH WOMEN'S DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY



by José Ignacio  
Hernández

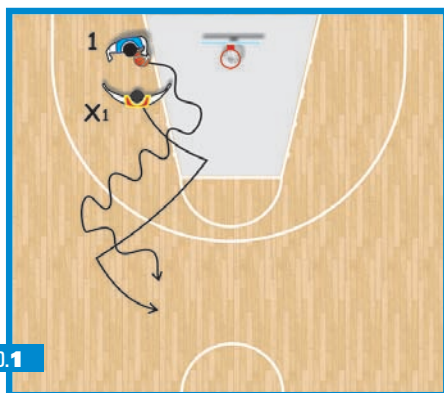
**José Ignacio Hernández was Salamanca's coach in the Female League of Spain from 1995 to 1998 and Perfumerías Avenida's coach from January 2002 until now. With his latest team, he has won 1 Spanish League, 2 Queen's Cups, and 2 second-place finishes in both the Spanish League and Queen's Cup. With the national team, he won the silver medal in the FIBA U18 European Championship as assistant coach in 2006 and won the silver medal in the FIBA U16 European Championship as head coach in 2008.**

## INTRODUCTION

In this article, I will examine the defensive philosophy that I have developed after spending many years of training players from junior level to the elite. There are only slight differences in what's used with professional players during the regular season and the U16 national team that I worked with during the last FIBA European Championship. I always start with the assumption that the talent level of the players that you have each season dictates the defensive concepts that you can use with that team that season. I act accordingly, adapting my ideas or the most appropriate concepts to what I have to work with. In working on our defense, I talk to the players about **MENTALITY, ATTITUDE, DRIVE, and CHARACTER** as starting points. You must be fully aware that when you have a strong defense, the offense will be more brilliant and that when your players defend properly, they will then attack better. Without a doubt, this is the key to success. "A good defense creates a good attack. A bad defense creates a greater offensive insecurity."

I think that it is defense that reflects the mentality and character of the coach. On offense, a good player can solve different problems, because of his individual talents as a scorer and passer. However, it is the contribution of all the members of the team on defense that can help achieve the final success. Therefore, in order to succeed, there are many concepts that must be made clear to the group so that this machinery can work best. I believe in having versatile players, those players who are able to defend not only players in their position, but also able to take some risks or defensive advantages because they can help defend players in different positions. Just think how lucky you are to have a player who can defend against the taller players near the basket, as well as the smaller, quicker players on the outside. In the last few years, I have found that there are more outside players, who are strong and quick and pivots how are very fast.

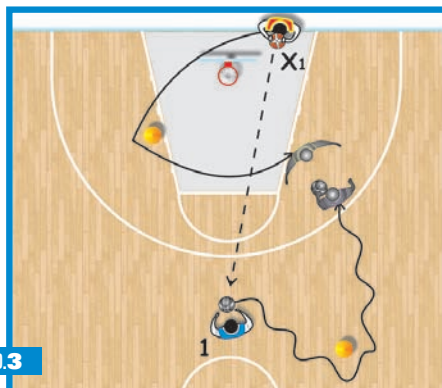
This creates defensive assignments that were hardly thinkable not many years ago. In short, stressing defense has been the key to the success of my teams. In my estimation, winning titles or playing in the finals comes in part from having strong defensive teams. In the last four years, we were among the best defensive teams in our national competition. Likewise, with the U16 National Team, we achieved the best results because of our defense, holding our opponents to 43 points per game in the last FIBA European Championship, which is quite an achievement. Due to the quantity of matches (about 50 or 60 in the last three seasons) in a period of only 28 weeks of competition, the job of constructing a good



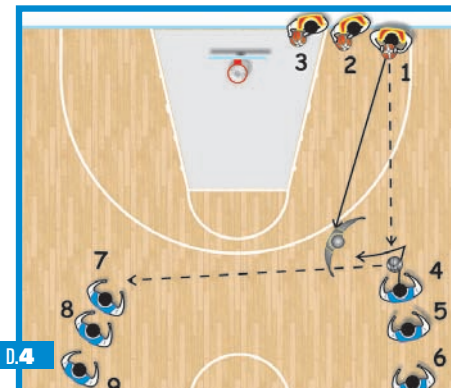
D.1



D.2



D.3



D.4



defense must be progressive. I try to simplify the ideas and the practice sessions. I used this same philosophy with the U16 National Team, because of the short practice sessions and having to work with players from different teams.

## KEYS TO DEFENSE

**1. Aggressive defense on the ball.** I want the ball to always be defended aggressively, with active hands. I want the offensive player to feel that he is being attacked, not defended (diagr. 1).

**2. In half court defense,** we want to force the players towards the SIDELINE, and when we get them there, to the BASELINE. Don't let them drive to the middle. That's our first rule in defense around the 3-point line: NO DRIVES TO THE MIDDLE. In addition, not only with the guards; this rule extends to the post players as well. We always want the ball to go to the baseline. Our defensive helps are going to be there. We like to work on this in small spaces first, then in bigger areas as we improve (diagr. 2 and 3).

Exceptions: In 1-on-1 situations against fast players and great finishers, we change the defensive orientation and the helps, but this is only in specific cases.

In the low post (depending on the player), we can do other things that we will see in the post defense.

**3. When guarding the players without the ball,** we want to be aggressive in the PASSING LANES, and PREVENT THE OFFENSE FROM REVERSING THE BALL. This will slow down the other team's offense as well as make them play far from the basket, limiting their options. To do that, we want to:

- ▶ Be on the passing lane to keep them far from the 3-point line.
- ▶ Prevent them from reversing the ball to slow them down and break their timing.
- ▶ Defend in the low post from the front or 3/4 if we are weaker, and behind if we are equal or stronger, but always aggressively defend against the pass.
- ▶ Get in the passing lane to take away the



angle of the pass into the post (diagr. 4, 5 and 6).

**4. In defensive helps,** we like to flash and not switch when possible. Although we like switches, we do not SWITCH JUST TO SWITCH.

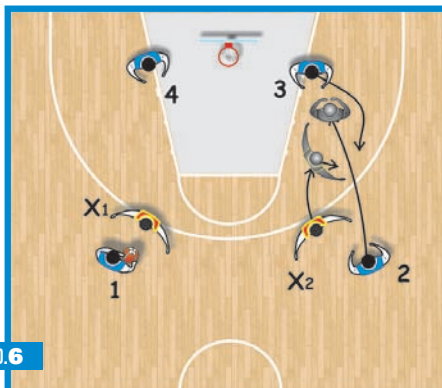
- ▶ If the offense has the advantage, the FIRST HELP always comes from the weak side, mainly from the player closest to the baseline. When the first help



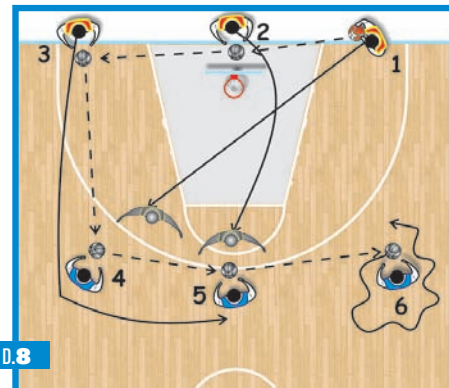
jumps to the ball, the SECOND HELP has to be in the paint already.

- ▶ If the ball goes back by dribble or pass, every player recovers back to his or her own player (diagr. 7, 8 and 9).

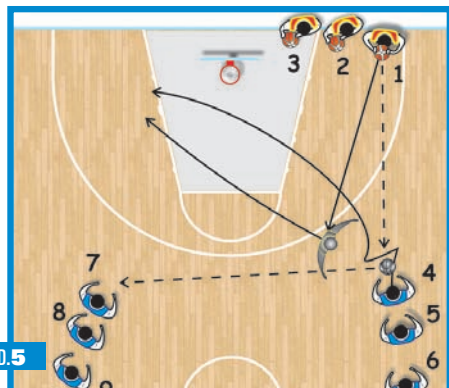
**5. To improve defense,** I like to use drills, especially the 3 on 2 + 1 and 4 on 3. This helps adjust our defense and gets the players used to game situations and matchups, as well as to situations where they are out-



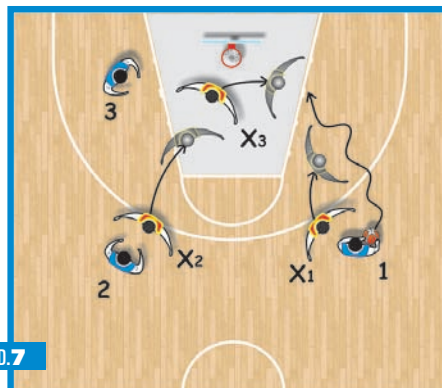
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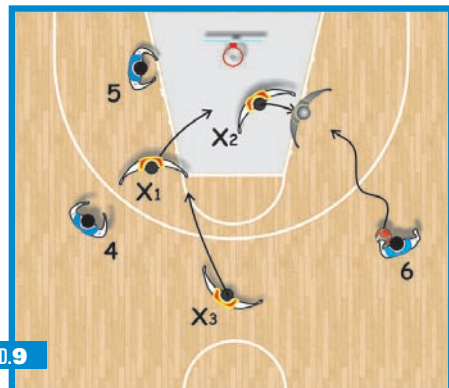
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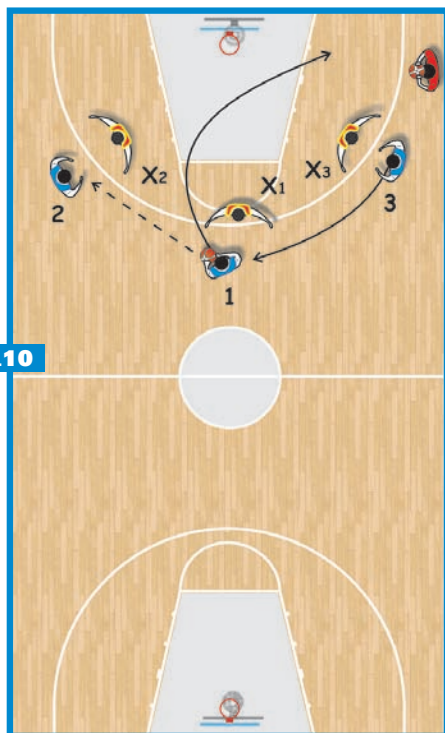


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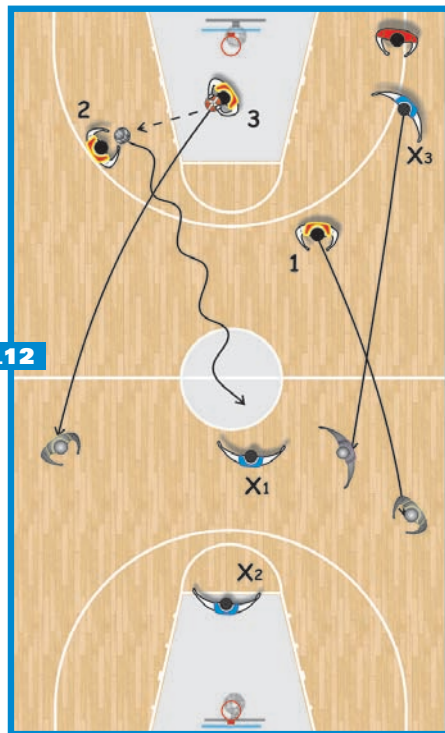


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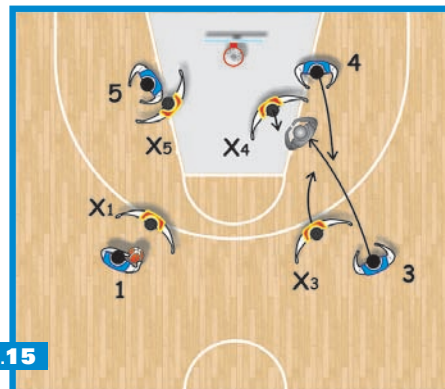




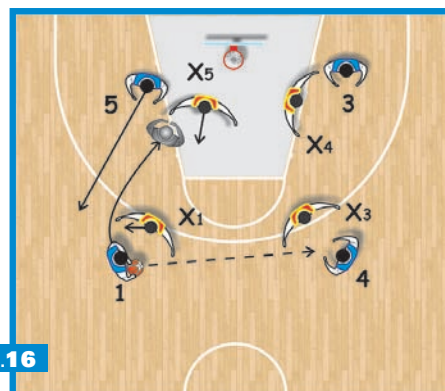
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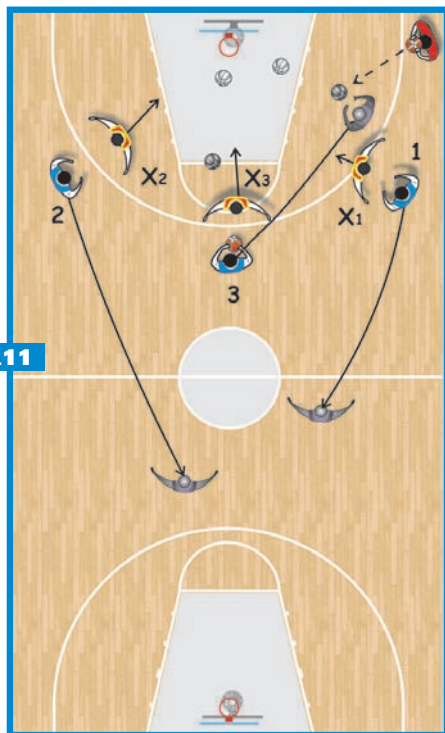
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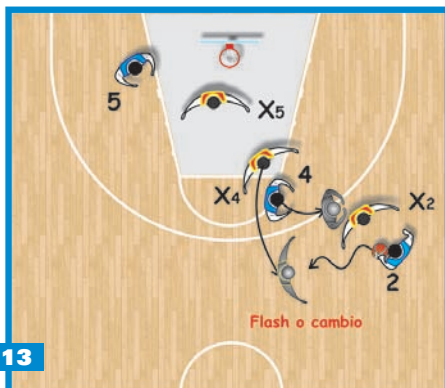
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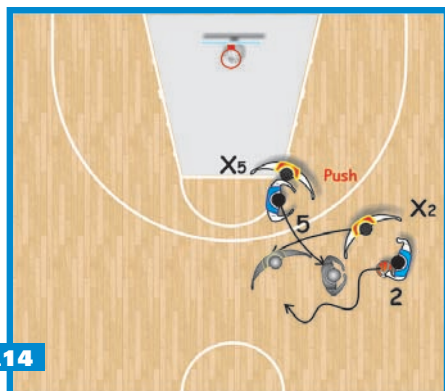
D.16



D.11



D.13



D.14

numbered. This helps us work on helps and rotations. The goals of these drills are: Stop the ball; and use flashes to slow down the offense and create doubt on the offense until we recover.

Playing 3-on-3 or 4-on-4 where the defense can't steal the ball. When the coach blows the whistle, the player with the ball shoots. After the rebound, we play full court but the player who shot the ball has to shoot another ball before going back on defense. The defense has to play outnumbered and slow the offense until the last player gets back on defense (diagr. 10, 11, and 12).

**6. Ball screen defense.** We don't have a set way to guard the ball screen. Typically, we guard it based on our opponents, although this year we based it on the characteristics of our post players. Here are some basic concepts:

- ▼ With post players. Against those players who are big and slow, push with one hand up next to the player with the ball. With small and fast post players, we play flash or switch. In addition, if we have fast post players, who are

very strong, we can play trap or long flash.

- ▼ Guard on guard: screens always SWITCH unless there is a clear physical disadvantage (diagr. 13 and 14).

**7. Post defense.** Based on our defense skills, anticipation defense is one of our defensive weapons, both in passing lanes and in the low post. Therefore, defending in front is our way to play the post and the helps come from there. Only when our post players are physically stronger we consider 1-on-1 near the basket. If we have a disadvantage in the post because of height or speed, we trap between the posts for the following reasons:

- ▼ Our 4 is fast in reacting to changes, intelligent defensively, and capable of switching with the guards.
- ▼ Our 5 is big and can help 4 if the opposing 4 is stronger physically.

In our low-post trap, the rule is that we only jump to the trap when the offense puts the ball on the floor, never before. In this way, we allow time for the rotations to get there.

**8. Defensive switches.** We switch every time we can switch without creating a mismatch between any of our players, and always when our strongest players are defending near the basket, especially in:

- ▼ Ball screens
- ▼ Off-the-ball screens
- ▼ Last second situations where we can leave our posts close to the basket and guards far away from it (diagr. 15 and 16).



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# DRILLS AFTER THE WARM-UP

## PART 1



by José Vicente "Pepu" Hernández

**José Vicente "Pepu" Hernández** started his coaching career in 1989 as assistant coach of Estudiantes Madrid. In 1994 he became head coach and led the team to eight playoff semifinals, one final of the championship and a King's Cup win (in 2000). In 2005 Hernández became head coach of the Spanish men's national team. In 2006 he won the gold medal at the FIBA World Championship in Japan and in 2007 he won the silver medal at the EuroBasket.

Except for rare occasions, our daily working routine remained the same when I coached the Adecco Estudiantes team for many seasons. The following exercises that I will describe have different aims and satisfy different practices demands.

### 1. Conditioning

We work with the conditioning coach and choose specific drills that focus on running and speed, as well as duration and intensity.

### 2. Beginning

We add the second level to our own warm-up in preparation to the technical/tactical part of the practice.

### 3. Technical Work

Different working options on individual and collective fundamentals are used during the first phase of the practice. They include the following:

- ▼ Individual Work. Drills have the primary purpose of improving individual fundamentals and giving the players the ability to select the proper options

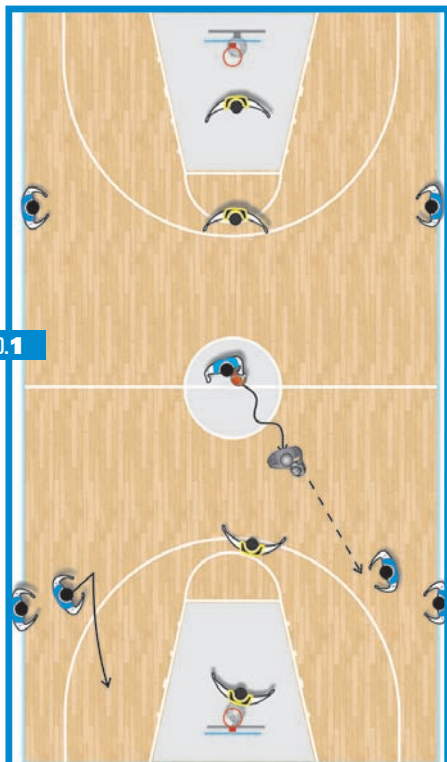


- on offensive and defensive situations.
- ▼ Collective Work. We practice the various collective options on defense and offense.

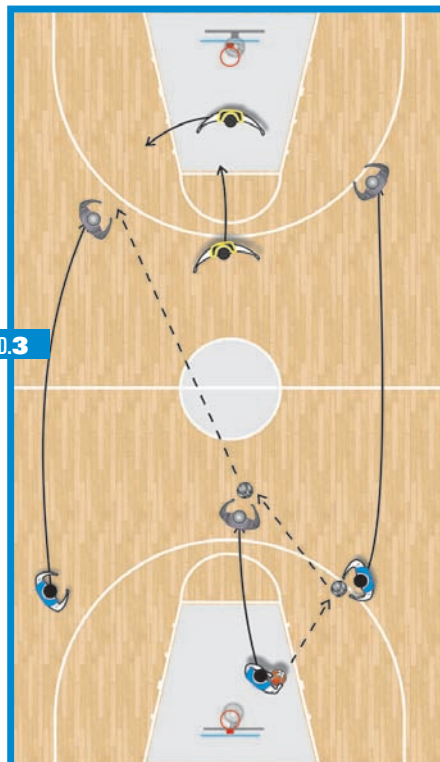
All the drills we run until now are in preparation for what will be the main topic of the practice of that day (a specific offense, the fastbreak, defense, etc.).

In all the offensive drills, we try to emphasize passing and continuous movement without the ball. In addition, I like to add rules that make it more difficult to create the execution of the drills. This forces the players to concentrate and find creative solutions as they are taking part in the drills. This is exactly what hap-

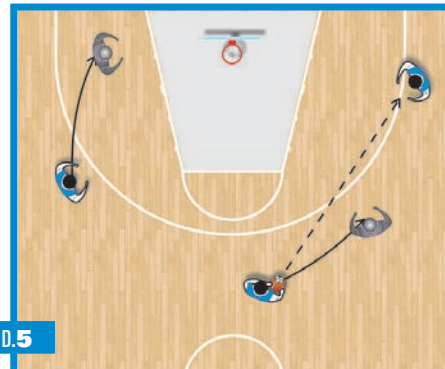




D.1



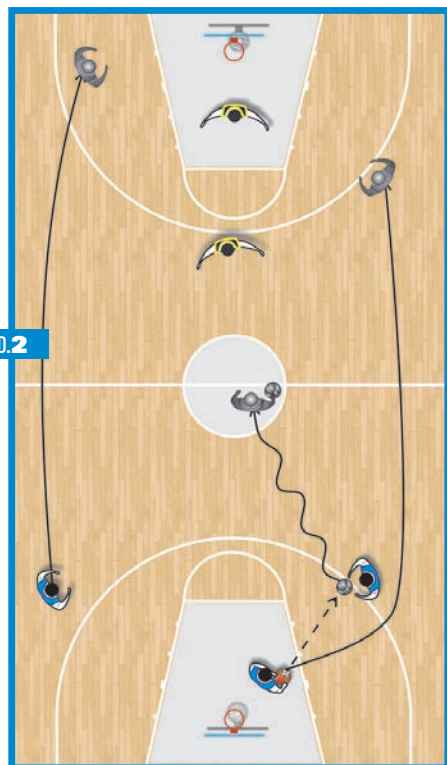
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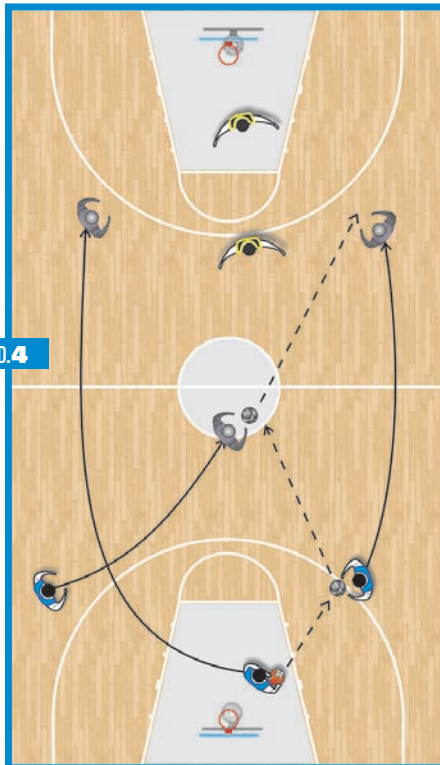
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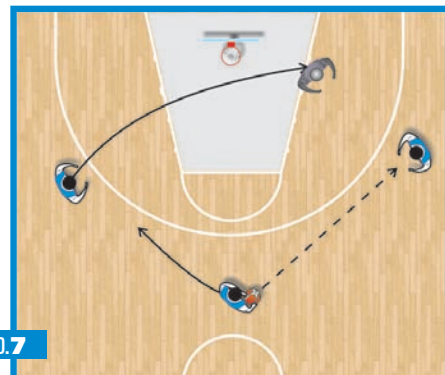
D.6



D.2



D.4



D.7

pens during a regular season game, so this type of drill should have great carry-over effect.

It is important to vary the drills throughout the week to keep the players interested. A good way to do this is to vary the duration and intensity of a drill.

The beginning of our routine was always similar to this one:

- ▼ Warm-up with the ball (different drills)

8-10 minutes.

- ▼ Stretching 4-6 minutes.
- ▼ First drills.

#### DRILL 1: ELEVEN PLAYERS

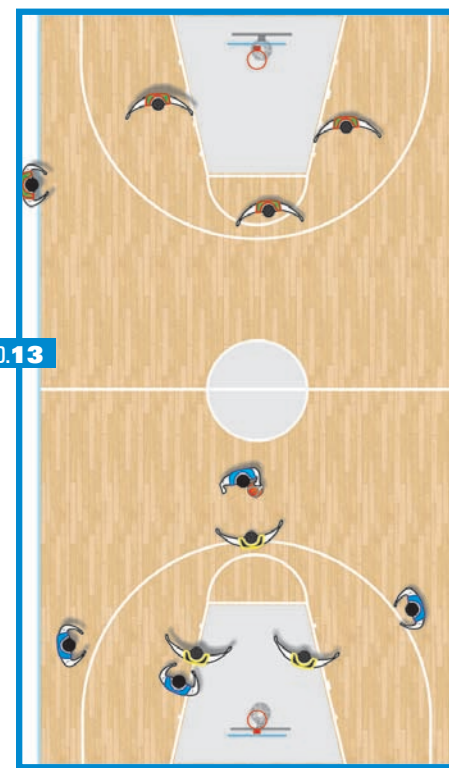
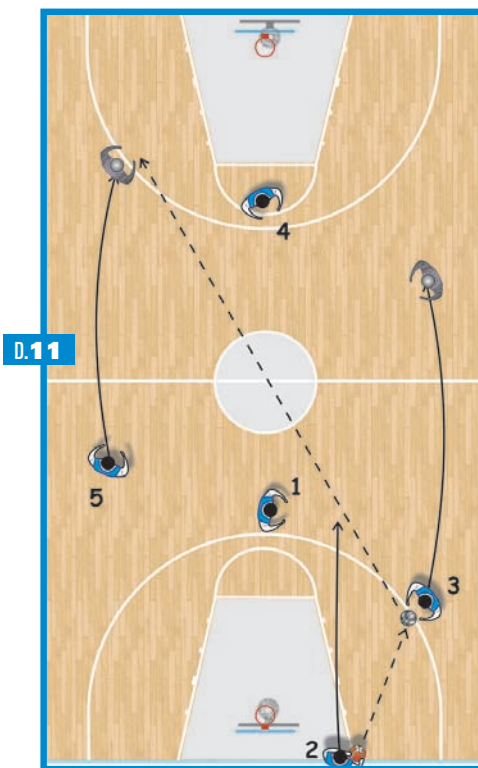
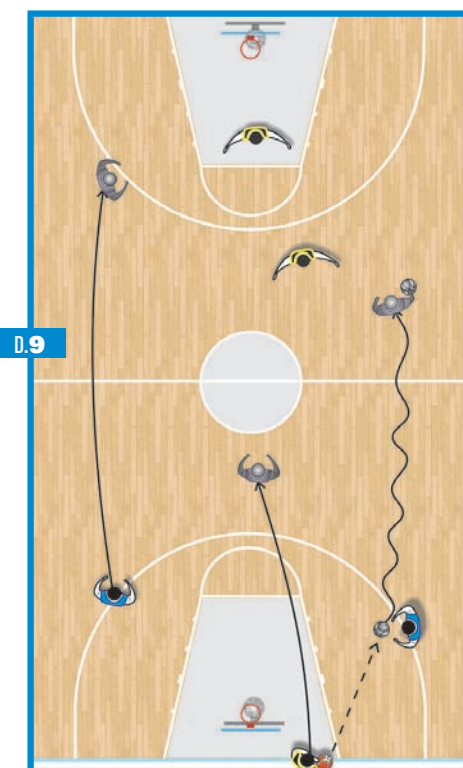
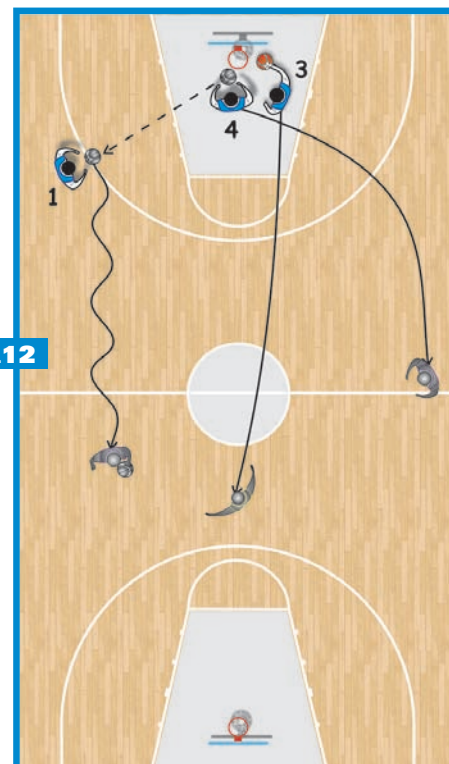
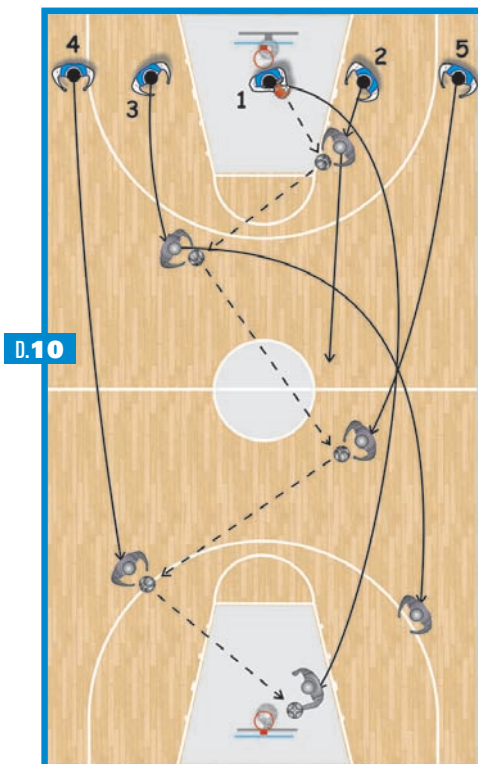
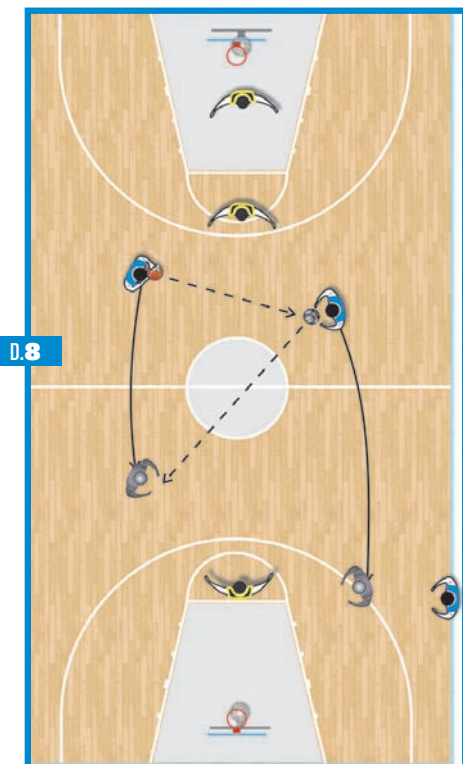
This drill requires 11 players to set up as shown in diagram 1. Three players are on offense versus the two defenders. After the shot, miss, or a score, one of the two defenders passes the ball to the player out-of-bounds (on the right side in this example), and they run the

fastbreak with the other player, who was off the court. They play three-on-two at the other basket. The player, who gets the ball drives to the center of the court, while the passer goes in the lane, where he has passed the ball, and the third player runs in the opposite lane. The other four remaining players set themselves up with two on defense and one each on the left and right side of the half court (diagram 2).

#### Option

Run the fastbreak without dribbling:

- a. The passer passes to the player on his right side, runs in the central lane, receives the ball back and passes it to the player on the left side, who runs along the sideline (diagram 3).
- b. The passer passes the ball to the player on his right side, and runs to occupy the left lateral lane, while the other player on the left side goes in the central lane, gets a pass from the player on the right side, and then kicks back the ball to him (diagram 4).



### Solutions on offense

- Change the side of the ball (diagr. 5).
- Pass and cut in the middle of the lane, with the cutter replaced by the other wing (diagr. 6).
- Pass and go away, while the opposite wing cuts in the lane (diagr. 7).

### DRILL 2: 2-ON-1 / 3 ON 2

The initial set is shown in diagram 8. The two players on the wing start to play a 2-on-1, and then they go to the opposite

basket, playing 3-on-2 with the two offensive players plus the defender (diagr. 9). The play then continues with a 2-on-1, with the player who, shot or lost the possession of the ball acting as a defender, going in the circle at mid-court. While going back 3-on-2, we can add rules, such as no dribbling while playing 2-on-1, or only one dribble allowed per player.

### DRILL 3: WAVE 5 PLAYERS 3-ON-2 / 3-ON-1

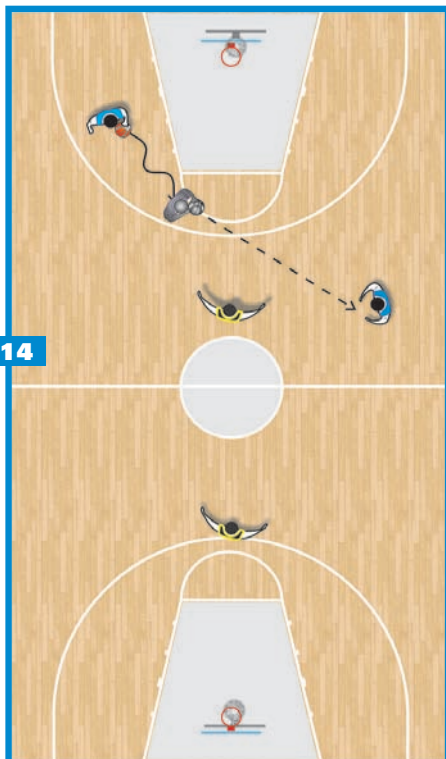
The 5 players start to make a wave, with

almost five passes (diagr. 10). The shooter and the player, who made the last pass run on defense, while the other three players are on offense, and they play 3-on-2 (diagr. 11). The shooter or the player, who lost the possession of the ball, then goes on defense and they come back and play 2-on-1 (diagr. 12).

### DRILL 4: 4-ON-3 CONTINUITY

The set shown in diagram 13 has four players involved, and one of them is in





the low-post area. They play 4-on-3 in continuity. Here are the options:

- ▼ No dribble.
- ▼ No dribbles until the mid court and only one dribble per player on the offensive half court.
- ▼ Pass the ball to the low post.
- ▼ Limit the number of passes.
- ▼ Only the perimeter players can shoot from the 3-point line.

#### DRILL 5: 2-ON-1 / 1-ON-1 WITHOUT DRIBBLES

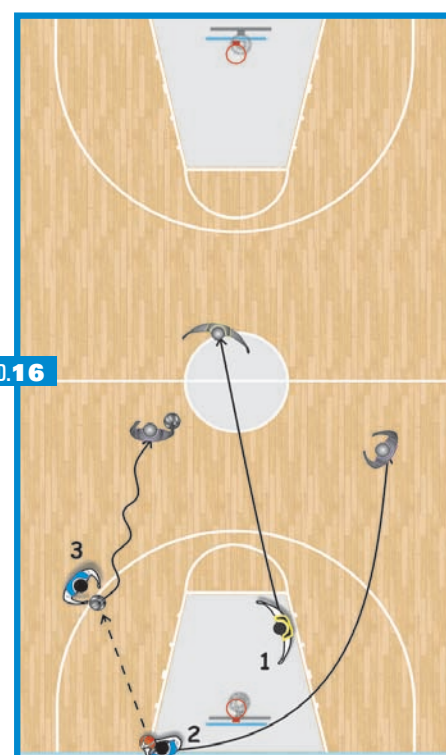
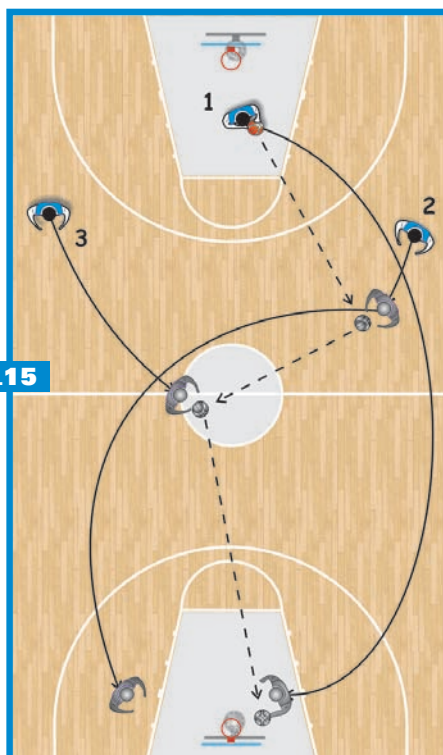
The start of the drill is shown in diagram 14. Players play 2-on-1, and then again 2-on-1 at the other half court. The first defender should try to harass the pass to the offensive player as he goes to the basket.

#### DRILL 6: WAVE 2-ON-1

Three players make a wave. Then they go back to the same basket. The shooter then becomes the defender and plays 2-on-1 (diagr. 15 and 16). Here are the rules:

- ▼ Limit the number of passes.
- ▼ If a basket is scored, the throw-in comes from the baseline.
- ▼ If there is no basket scored, rebound and fastbreak.
- ▼ No long pass can be made to the second offensive player.
- ▼ Three competitive groups of players.
- ▼ Run a 2-on-1 for the second time with the same group of players.

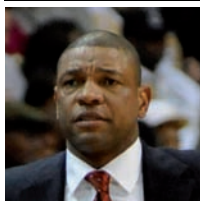
*The second part of this article will be published in the next issue.*






**FIBA**

We Are Basketball



by Glenn "Doc" Rivers



by Armond Hill

# "SLICE" AND "POINT" SETS

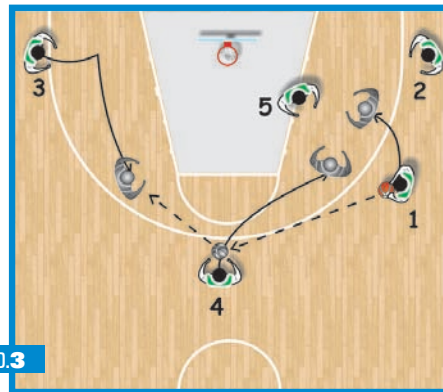
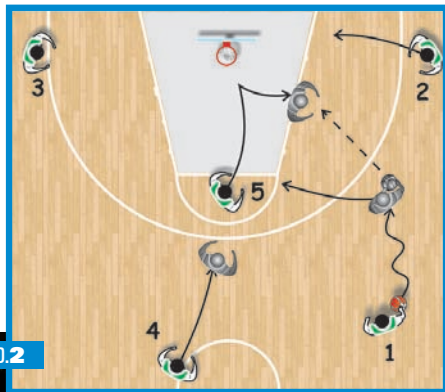
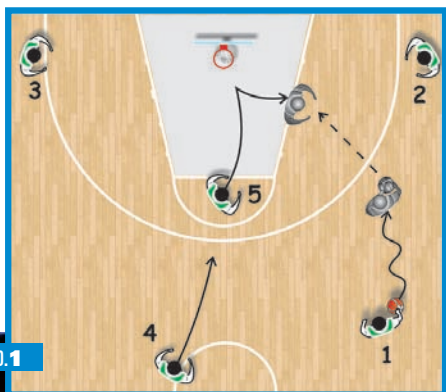
Glenn "Doc" Rivers played in the NBA for 13 years for several teams. He began his coaching career in the 1999 with the Orlando Magic. He remained in Orlando for three seasons, winning the NBA Coach-of-the-Year award in 2000. He has coached the Boston Celtics for the past four years, winning the NBA Championship in 2008.

Armond Hill, a former NBA player, has been an assistant coach for the Boston Celtics since 2004. He has had more than 18 years of coaching experience at all levels. Moving from Frankville High School (New Jersey), he became an assistant coach at Princeton University (New Jersey), and then head coach of Columbia University (New York). He has also served as assistant coach of the Atlanta Hawks.

Last season, we built a team with three superstars, Kevin Garnett, Paul Pierce, and Ray Allen, and another raising star, Rajon Rondo. All the while, we tried to keep in mind the individual talents of these four great players. But there were times when we needed "player and ball movement" to set a tone or a rhythm in order to see how a team was trying to defend us. "Slice" was our basic, secondary offensive set that we got into if we didn't score on our initial push of the ball.







#### **This was our starting lineup:**

1. Rajon Rondo (point guard).
2. Ray Allen (shooting guard).
3. Paul Pierce (small forward).
4. Kevin Garnett (power forward).
5. Kendrick Perkins (center).

#### **And this was our bench:**

- ▼ Eddie House, Sam Cassell, Tony Allen (guards).
- ▼ James Posey, Leon Powe (forwards).
- ▼ Glen Davis (power forward), P.J. Brown (forward/center).

Our big-men, 4 or 5, will occupy the "post" position on the ball side or the "trail man" position at the top of the key, outside the three-point line. Whichever big man gets to the post first has the freedom to make a move if the ball gets thrown into him. Our small men, 2 and 3, will run deep to the corners. If the ball is caught deep in the paint, then the players will remain on the perimeter to allow the post man to make a move (diagr. 1). If the ball is caught above or outside the box, then 1 and 2, will clear out (diagr. 2). This will allow the post player more room to operate.

#### **"SLICE"**

If 1 cannot hit the big man in the post or the small man in the corner, he will look to pass the ball to the other big man "trailing." This pass initiates our "Slice" play. 1 hits the trailing big (4) and walks down towards the post to set a screen for the 2 in the corner. Meanwhile, 3 works his way to the elbow on the weak side to receive the ball from 4. After 4 passes to 3, he screens away towards the opposite elbow for 1 (diagr. 3).

As this action is happening, 2 is running a "slice cut" off the screens of 5 and 1. 2 can cut off the baseline; he can cut between 5 and 1; or he can cut over the top of 1. It depends on how his opponent is defending him (diagr. 4). 3 is looking to pass the ball to 2 for a quick score or a post up.

If 3 cannot hit 2 in the post, then he looks





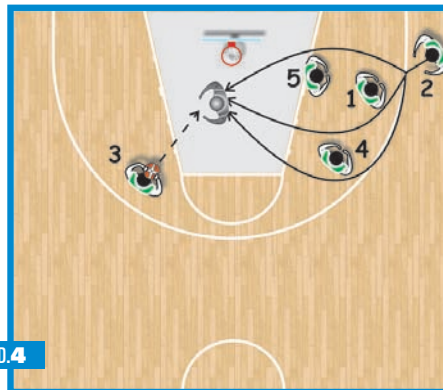
for 1, who has come off the screen from 4 (diagr. 5). Once 1 gets the ball at the top, then 5 and 4 set a staggered screen for 2, who can run his cut to "curl" off the double or "fade," depending on how he is guarded. 1 can also look for 5 "ducking in" after he screens (diagr. 6).

### "POINT"

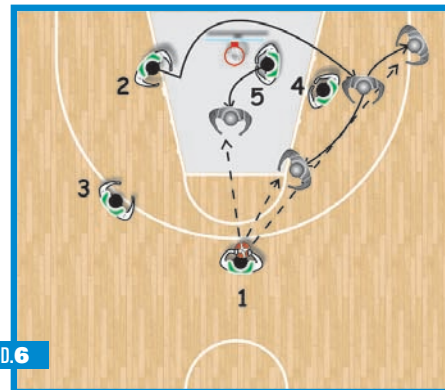
Another set that we try to run to get some movement is called "Point". The formation is easy to get into. The point guard centers the ball at the top of the key, outside the three-point line.

Our big men, 4 and 5, will occupy the elbows and our small men, 2 and 3, will get deep in the corners (diagr. 7).

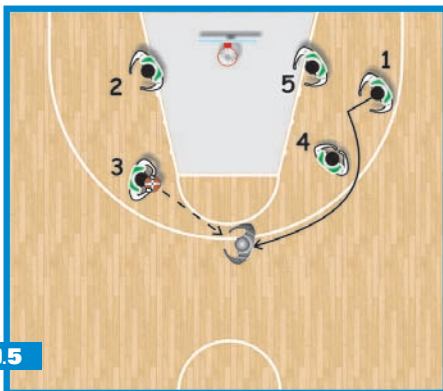
1 can pass to either Big on the elbow to start the play, in this case 4. After he passes, he cuts to set a screen for 2 on the same side (diagr. 8). 2 cuts backdoor or curls over the top, depending on how he is being guarded. 2 can choose to cut behind his defender, if this one tries to anticipate the screen (diagr. 9), or cut to "curl" off the screen. At the same time, 1 rotates exter-



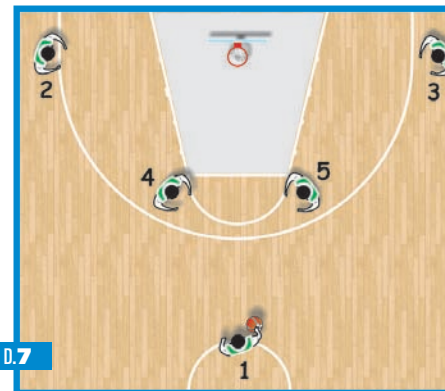
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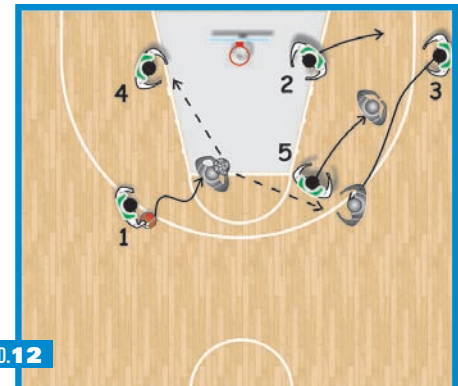
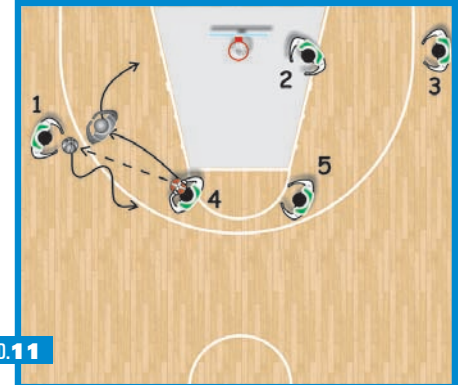
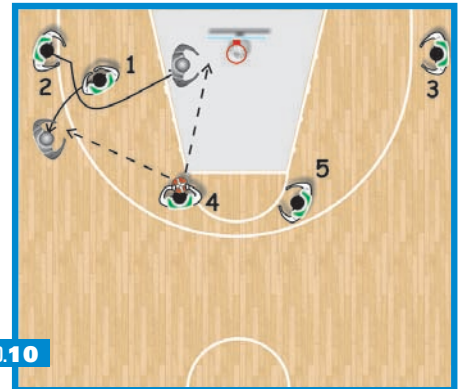
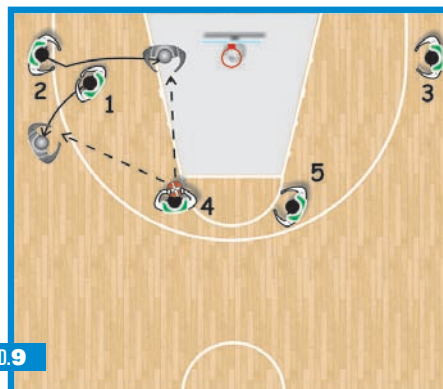
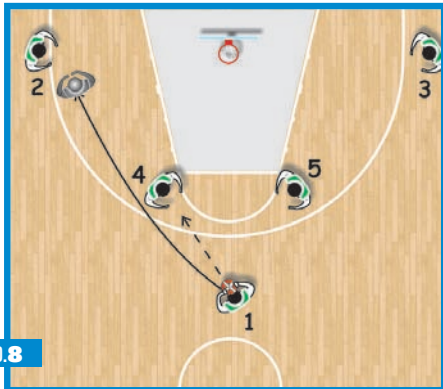
D.5



D.7







nally (diagr. 10), so 4 can pass to 2 near the basket or hit 1, who is hopefully free after the screen. If 4 cannot pass to 2, but hits 1, 4 cuts and goes to screen for 1, playing pick-and-roll with him (diagr. 11). As 1 comes off the screen of 4, 5 goes to screen for 3 in the opposite corner. This creates movement and opens up the middle of the floor. 1 can turn the corner for a shot, pass to 4 rolling to the hoop, or pass to 3 coming off a screen set by 5 (diagr. 12).

As in most offensive sets, spacing and timing is crucial to the proper execution. The more they run the play, the more options they will see. We have them ask themselves: Where are the "isolations"? Where are the "post ups"? Where are the "catch-and-shoot" opportunities coming off screens? This will enable us the full cycle of taking advantage of their individual talents while creating player and ball movement.


**FIBA**

We Are Basketball



by Sergio Scariolo

**Sergio Scariolo began coaching in his hometown, Brescia, Italy, where he began in 1985 as assistant coach of Basket Brescia (Serie A1). In 1987 he became assistant coach of Scavolini Pesaro (winning the 1988 title), before being promoted head coach in 1989. In two seasons as head coach, he won one Italian title (1990) becoming the youngest head coach winning the Italian title, and played a Korac Cup final (1990) and an Euroclub Final Four (1991). In 1991 he moved to Desio, then in 1993 he became head coach of Fortitudo Bologna, where he played one final. In 1997 he moved to Tau Vitoria, where he won the 1999 Spanish Cup and played a final. In 1999 he went to Real Madrid, where he won the 2000 title, then played a final in 2001. In 2003 he became the head coach of Unicaja Malaga, winning the 2005 Spanish Cup and the 2006 title and bringing the team to the 2007 Euroleague Final Four.**

In my career I've almost never used full court zone press defense, and, although I have worked with 1-3-1 half court zone defense, I believe more in man-to-man defense with individual press. However, at high basketball level, sending two defenders against the ball may create too much spaces, and this is a delicate situation.

The possibility of three-point shooting is an important factor that forces us to calculate well the risk that we're going to take.

Moreover, when the ball-possession rule changed by passing from 30 seconds to 24 seconds, on one hand it stimulates pressing defenses, that will look for slowing down offense in order to limit even more the opponents' offensive time to shoot. On

# 1-3-1 ZONE DEFENSE

the other hand, it produces a more aggressive mentality in the offenses that have no more much time, compromising therefore the possibility for the defense to press.

To realize this kind of defense we must say that the players shall have some important characteristics.

## PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The 1-3-1 defense needs to have defenders with good body size. We can afford to have a small player, but in this case our defender at the point of the zone, X1, must be very smart. However, if we have two small defenders on the court, a 1 and a 2, we will find great difficulties to get the rebound against bigger opponents, because our 2 always will suffer mismatches. In this case we can also use a 3 and, even, a 4.

The 3 and 4 must have good body size and be athletic players, because they have the responsibility to block out, almost always to the offensive post player on the weak side. The 5 must also be an athletic and aggressive player (diagr. 1).

## MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

Playing this defense we take risks. The team must have confidence and strong mentality in order to overcome situations in where the opponents score easy baskets. This aspect is very important in the first defenses.

## WHEN AND WHERE TO DOUBLE-TEAM?

Let's start from the concept that we do not wish that the offense get used to be always double-teamed in the same situations and in the same spots of the court. We must remember that when the ball goes out the double-team, our defense will be in trouble.

We establish a rule to make the defensive task easier: when the offense have two players in line before passing the half court, we guess that they want to draw the double-team and change the ball side. For this reason we avoid to make the trap. If they are not lined, we do it.

X1 must force the ball as much as possible near the sideline. We do not double-team before the point guard passes the mid court line. As just as he passes the line, we jump to the trap. The trap has to be smart. The defender, who jumps to doubleteam -X4 or X3- goes out in a strong defensive position (low side-bottom, knees bent) so he can defend the point guard, who's drib-

bling the ball, and with his arms high, over the shoulders, not with his hands down, to avoid any easy pass. X1 also brings up one of his hands to steal the ball, touch it, or make the pass harder (diagr. 2).

The rest of the defenders do not set on the passing lines. X2 tries to invite to pass the ball in order then to touch it. On the weak side X4 sets in diagonal line with the ball. He must calculate the risk and keep one eye on stealing the pass to 2 and the other one on 4 which has not go behind his back. 5 anticipates strongly the pass to the high post, taking the contact with his forearm. We think it will be harder for 5 to make a back door cut behind our X5, athletic and aggressive player.

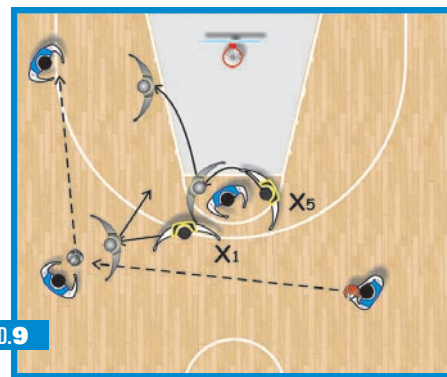
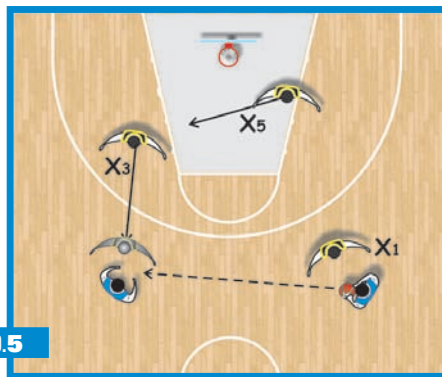
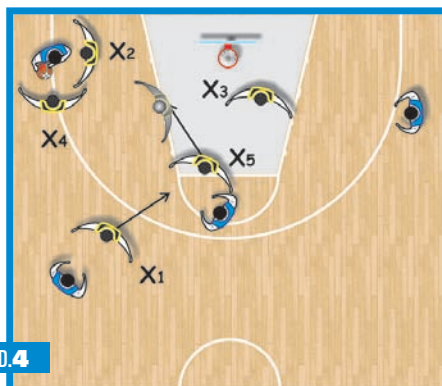
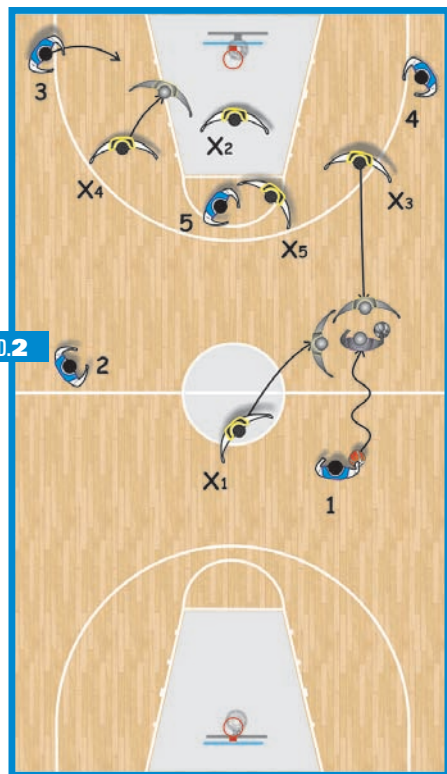
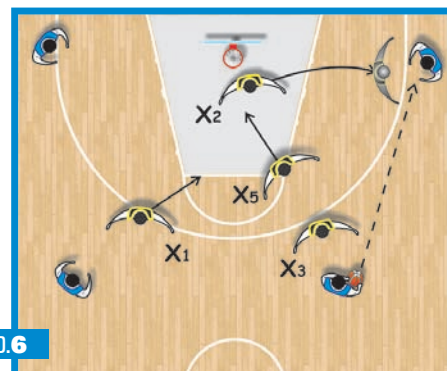
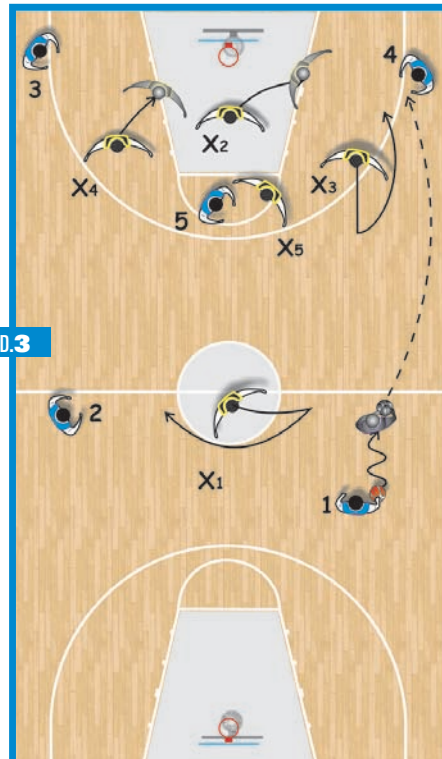
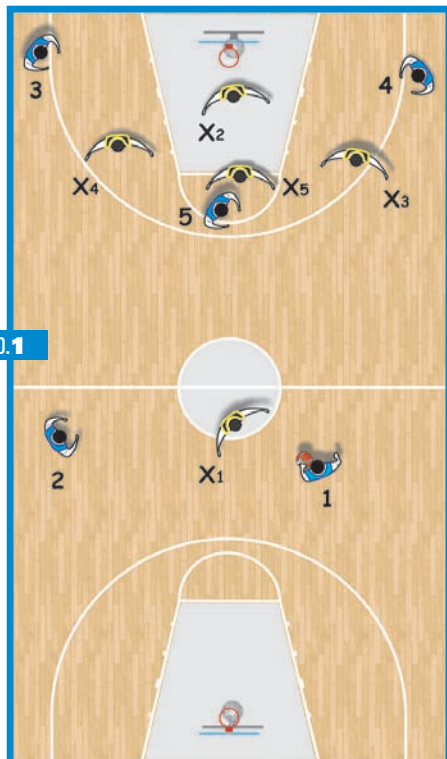
If there are two point guards lined up, we don't trap high. X1 defends by faking in order to create doubts in the offense. He can fake and go back, fake and attack, anyway without double-teaming. His job is to avoid horizontal direct passes. To do this, he puts his body on the passing line. He tries to make the offense spend seconds. X3 and X4 set on the passing line with their arms high, giving the idea that they are jumping to trap although they don't.

They fake, recover and boost the pass to the corner. X5 works for not letting the ball go to the mid court. X2 always has to stay on the ballside, but never on the passing line, and he keeps an eye on stealing the ball, if X3 or X4 manage to touch it. We only risk at most to steal when we double-team.

If the ball goes to the low corner, X3 or X4 trap with X2, who will come first and will have the mission to cover the offensive player with the ball until X3 or X4's arrival. They will close the center with their feet (close the feet) taking a lot of space.

The double team gives advantages whenever it is possible to do it without fouls. We want to force a bad exit of the ball from the trap, with the four arms of the defenders, following up and down the ball. X5 sets himself a step outside the zone, between the ball and the basket. X1 does not anticipate the pass back to 2 unless the team want to force the pass to 5. He closes the high post and then tries to steal the ball when it comes out. X3 checks the weak side from the baseline. If the ball goes to





the other corner, unless he is short to get it, it's better if he faces the ball one-on-one (diagr. 4). The movements have to be done with the body on the passing line and the arms high.

If the offense change the ballside, X3 goes out to search for it, unless the ball receiver has a very high position. In this case X1 would take him and X3 would go back to the corner on the passing line in order to avoid a direct pass.

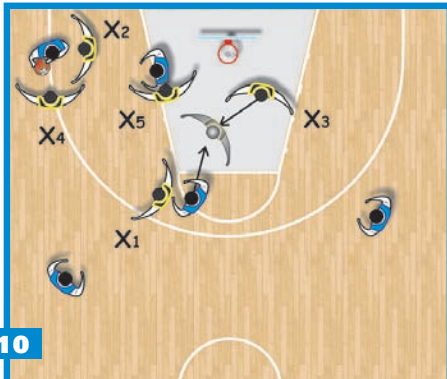
If the ball arrives to the corner, we double-team. If there's no double-team, we defend the ball one-on-one, helping and recovering – only double teaming with the help of the court lines. Being the player with the ball not in a good shooting range, we don't need to face him on defense. If he wants to penetrate, X1 first will stop him, taking him the mid lane, X5 second will guard him (diagr. 5, 6 and 7).

X5 is a very important defender in charge

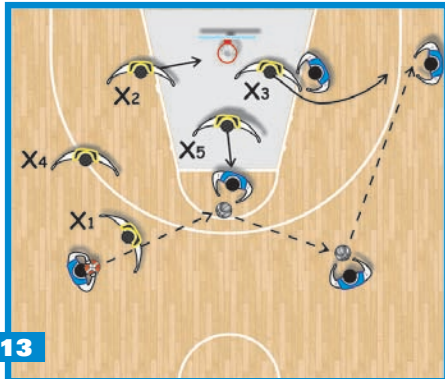
of the penetrations along the borders of lane. I don't want that the perimeter defender gives first helps to the penetrations. X5 helps and the other players set where the ball may go (diagr. 8).

#### HIGH POST - LOW POST

X5 defends by anticipating until the three-point line. We don't face the player until the ball arrives to a shooting spot. If the ball goes to the corner, X5 goes down and the high post is covered by X1. If the high



D.10



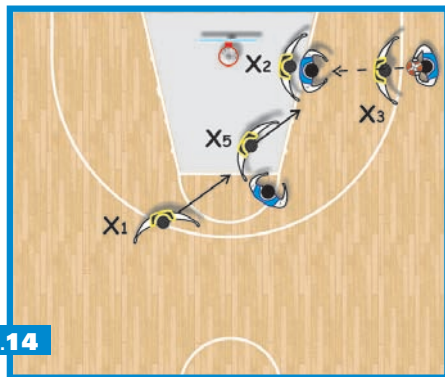
D.13



D.15



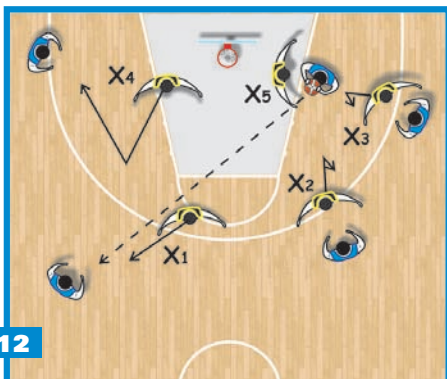
D.11



D.14



D.16



D.12

post cuts, the weak side defender will be responsible to guard him.

If the ball enters to the high post area, we guard him one-on-one. In this case, our defender at the point will not double team the high post. If the high post puts the ball on the floor, X1 will try to get the ball from behind (diagr. 9, 10 and 11).

The low post defender does not defend outside the painted area. If this player gets the ball, X5 faces him one-on-one, with his teammates helping him, but not double-teaming. I think that against zone offense the opposite post players have more passing than scoring mentality. I want the defenders on the perimeters to be very active (diagr. 12 and 13).

There is an exception to this rule when our defender on the baseline, X2 (small), is the one who has to defend the low post. He will try to guard him in front, but if he does not manage to do it, we send X5 to double

team and X1 will replace him on the high post. There are not outside helps when we do the trap, so the trap must be extremely aggressive. (diagr. 14).

If the opponents drive to the basket from the perimeter in one of the spots in which we do not want to double-teaming, we defend one-on-one and X5 must help. For this reason X5 must be a dynamic and active player (diagr. 15).

#### DEFENSIVE REBOUND

The blocking out is a very delicate issue, because it may happen that one of our guards is forced to block out an offensive post. To this point, there is a critical moment for the defense when the ball goes out the double-team. If the opponents shoot while the defense is catching up, we will be in a bad situation for the defensive rebound (diagr. 16).

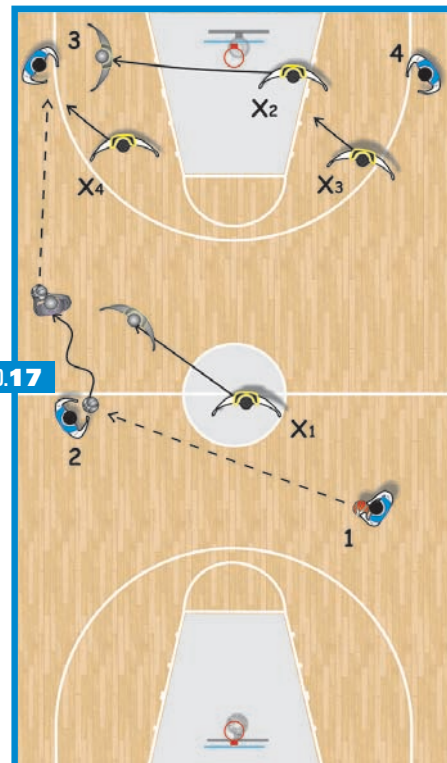
#### DRILLS

**Four-on-four with no posts.** Correcting the positions and working on the details of the two-on-one on the corner. Moving outside until the shooting signal from the coach and block out how the players can. (diagr. 17).

**Same drill, but without two point guards to the backwards.**

See the diagram number 18.

**Playing with the four offensive outside players against X5.** There's no offensive post. It is important to teach the defensive



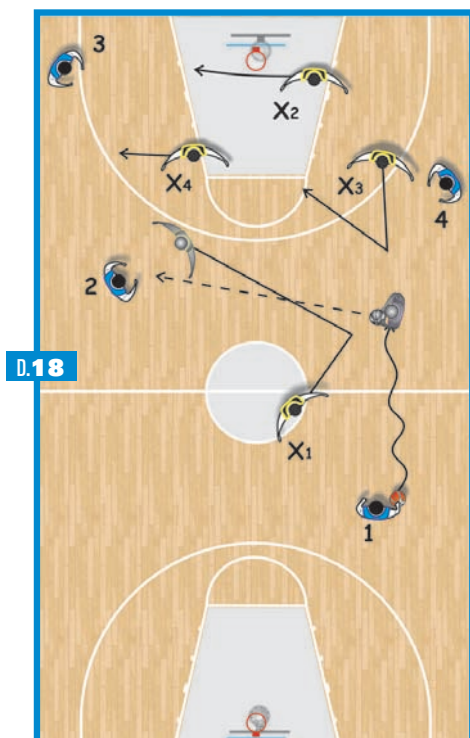
D.17

high post how he has to run. The drill ends with a shot and the players run to the opposite basket to play five-on-zero (diagr. 19).

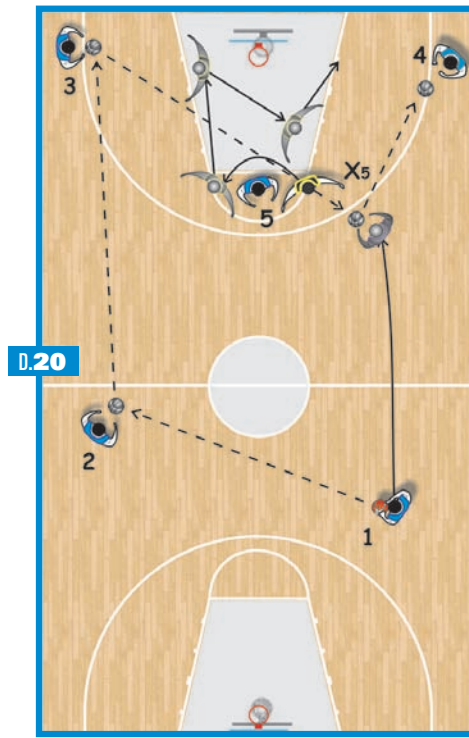
**Five offensive players against X5.** There can be a 1 on 1 situation in the low post; otherwise, the offensive post passes the ball out for a shot: X5 must block out the offensive post (diagr. 20).

**Six players on offense against the central**

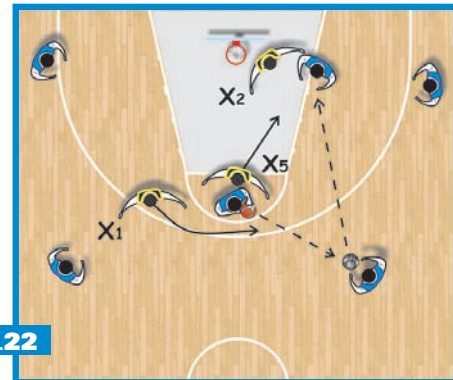




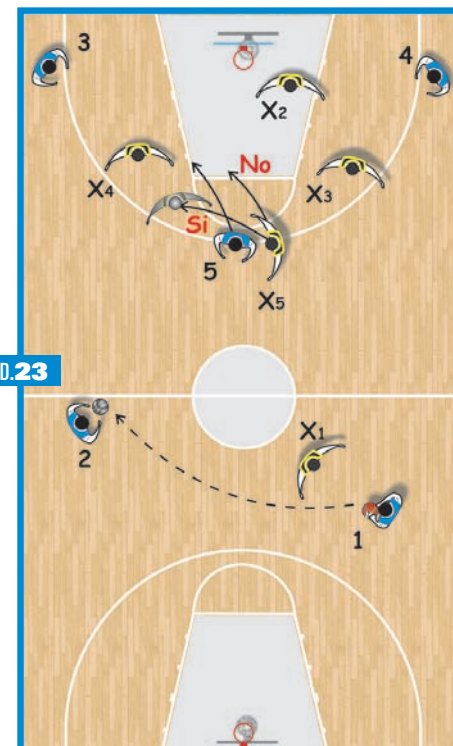
D.18



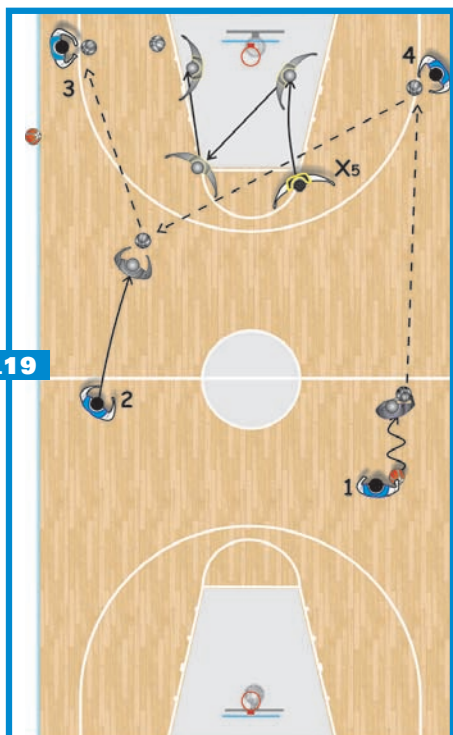
D.20



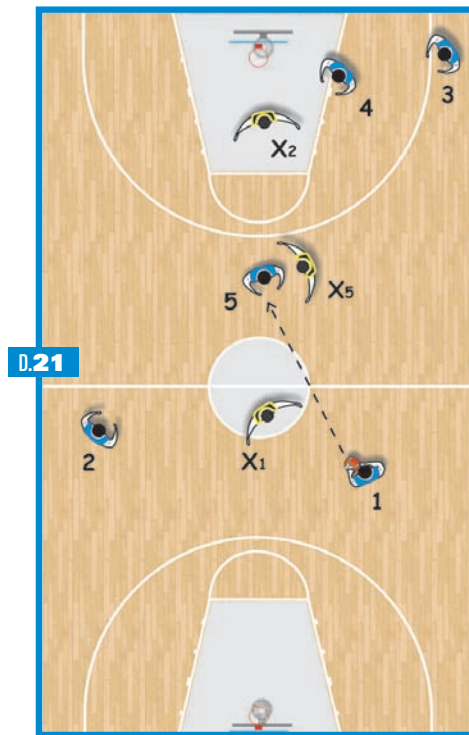
D.22



D.23



D.19



D.21

**ace of the 1-3-1 zone.** We bring the ball to low post to force the two-on-one. The drill ends with a shot and blocking out of the players, who are in the high post and low post. We continue in playing 3 on 2 to the opposite basket: attacking the three defenders and guarding the two posts who went into the area for the rebound (diagr. 21 and 22).

**Four offensive players against five defenders.** Initially we just move the ball. Then, it will be possible to steal the ball and driving to the basket with two dribbles. If the of-

fense drives not aggressively and the player with the ball pick the ball up, we double-team. In general, I think that if the player with the ball dribbles keeping his head low we can force a little more the double-team. After the shot, we run five-on-four to the opposite basket.

**Five-on-five with high post and the offensive guards in line.** This is a more real drill. We play five-on-five in the opposite basket too. Defensive transition is always played man-to-man. I only set my 1-3-1 defense when the ball is out of bounds.

**Five-on-five with the offensive guards in line and the high post who goes down after the first pass.** We work for X5 not covering this cut. He has to stay up to help the penetrations, not to jump to steal the ball. Usually, doing that is a mistake (diagr. 23).

**Five-on-five with the offensive guards not in line.** First, we just let passing the ball. Then, we let two dribbles. Finally, we play at real game pace.

**Free-throw of the team on offense, and the set on 1-3-1.** If we manage to steal the ball or grab the rebound, we run the fastbreak against the man-to-man defense of the former attacking team.

**Five-on-six with a high and a low post.** When we we are able to master this defense -after practicing these simple situations- we play in practice against any offensive system and we create a more difficult situation for the defense, practicing five-on-six, with a high and a low post.





by Raffaele Imbrogno

# NBA COACHES PLAYBOOK

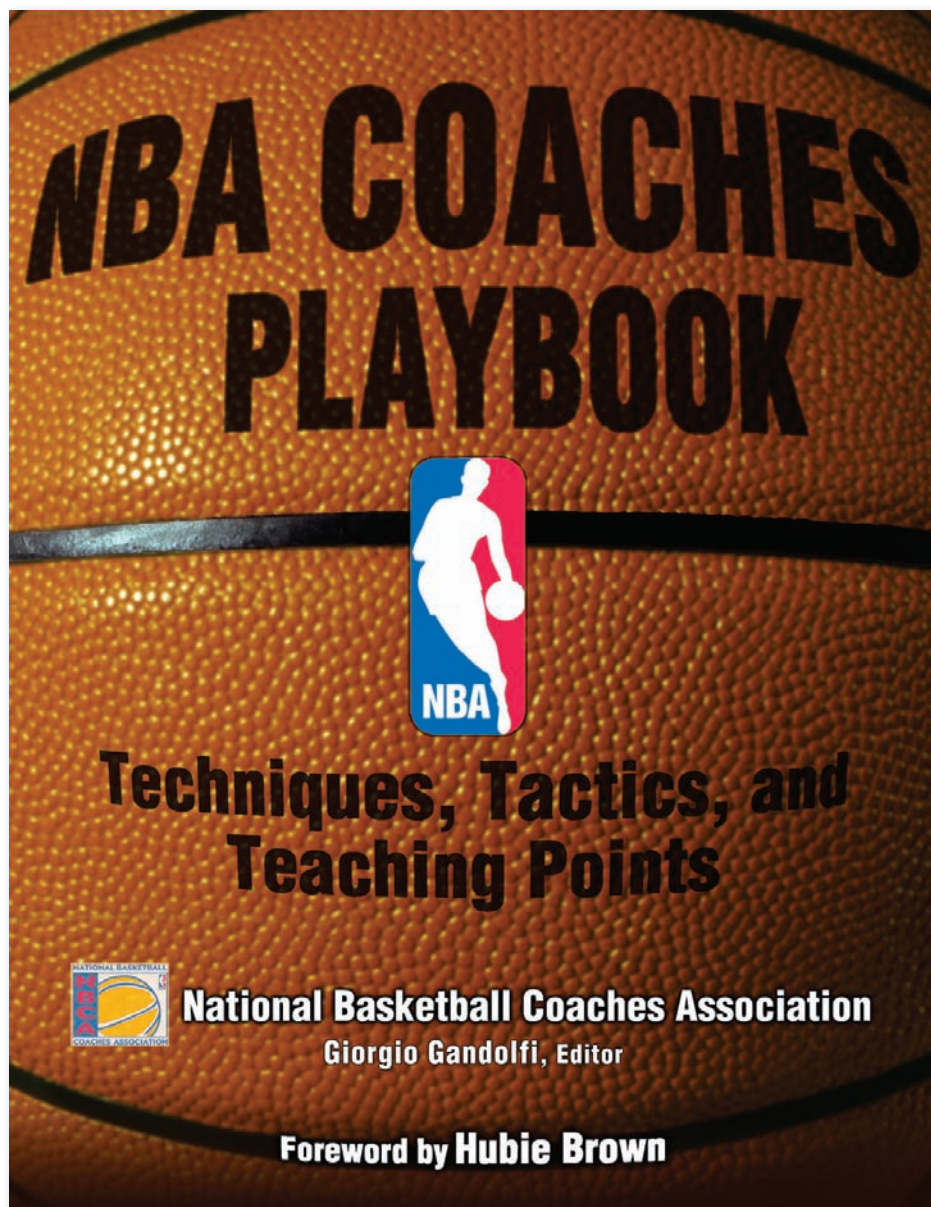
**Raffaele Imbrogno** has been coaching since 1980. He is an Instructor for the Italian National Coaches Committee of the Federation and has been Director of the Italian Basketball Federation Study Center. Imbrogno is also the author of several technical basketball publications.

Giorgio Gandolfi, Editor-in-Chief of the technical magazines *Giganti del Basket* and *FIBA Assist*, has always had a tremendous passion for the game of basketball. For the past three decades, he has traveled the world to watch games, write about great players and coaches, and soak up knowledge and insights from the best coaches at clinics and late-night sessions while sitting around a table in a deserted hotel lobby. Gandolfi has seen it all in the world of basketball, and has written about it as well.

Gandolfi has always translated his new-found knowledge into books. Twenty years ago, he and co-author, Gerald Secor Couzens, wrote, in collaboration with NBPA (Coaches Association of the NBA), "Basketball The NBA Coaches Handbook" (Prentice Hall). The text was very rich with technical contents, with a collection of 16 topics comprised of interviews with the most famous NBA coaches, including the mythical Chuck Daly, the great Hall-of-Fame coach of the two NBA title winners with the Detroit Pistons, and coach of the first (and only) Dream Team; Pat Riley of the Los Angeles Lakers, with Jabbar and Magic Johnson; as well as Jack Ramsay, Dick Motta and many other greats of the NBA coaching universe. The book described how to employ offensive sets and defensive strategies, and teach fundamentals of the game to your players.

Thanks to this book, which was written in collaboration with the NBPA (the Players Association of the NBA), Gandolfi and Couzens then wrote "Hoops! The Official National Basketball Players Association Guide to Playing Basketball" (McGraw-Hill), a text of 180 pages, divided in 10 chapters. This covered every-

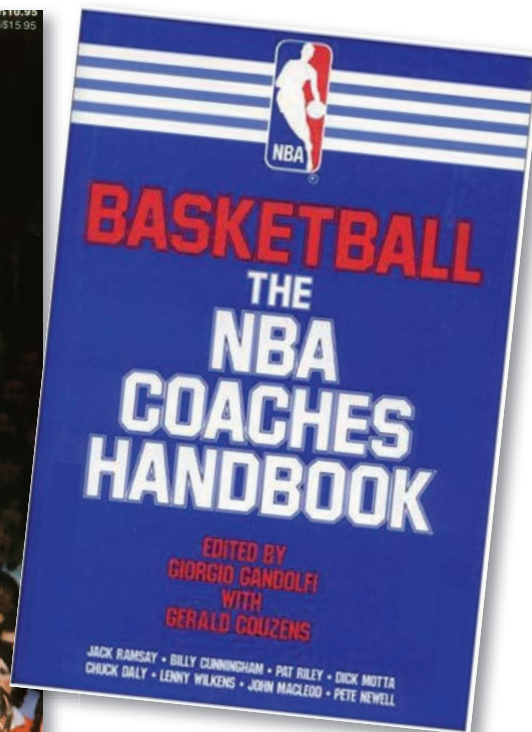
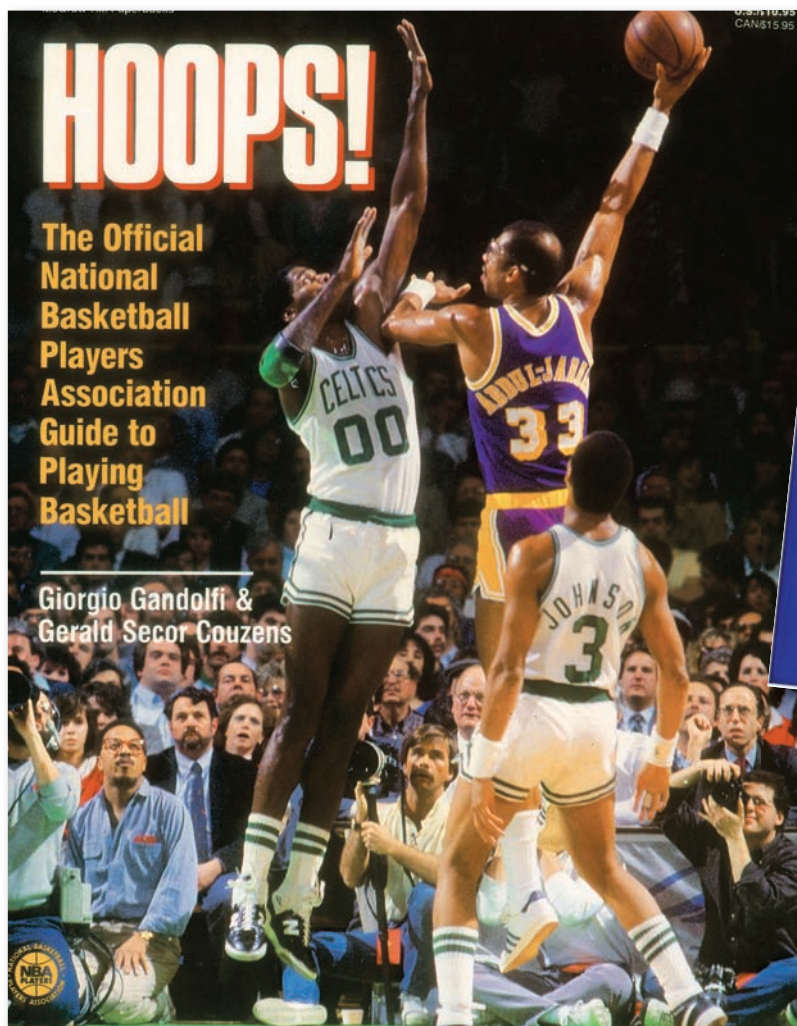
*In this section, we introduce the latest books, videos, CDs, and other tools that are primarily aimed at coaches, but certainly useful for all of our readers. Please send your suggestions and comments about our basketball-related media for review in this section.*



thing a player needed to know about the game, from strength and conditioning to all the important offensive fundamentals. The book was a great success in the United States, thanks its rich wealth of action game pictures, as well as

freeze-action photos taken at NBA team practices. Jabbar, Magic Johnson, Isiah Thomas, Kevin McHale, Bill Walton and many other stars of the 1980s, described their more famous moves on offense as well as the fundamentals that players





needed in order to achieve success on the court. Hoops was later translated into other languages and sold around the world. Gandolfi is now ready to complete a great "Grand Slam" with the top publishing companies in the United States. Human Kinetics Publishers, the world leader in the publication of technical sports books, will release "NBA Coaches Playbook Techniques, Tactics, and Teaching Points" in October. Gandolfi's newest book, written in collaboration with Michael Goldberg, the Executive Director of the NBPA (the Coaches Association of the NBA), and its members, and marketed by the NBA, includes an introduction from David Stern, the NBA Commissioner, and a foreword from Hubie Brown, a member of the Basketball Hall of Fame, and one of the top coaches who ever worked the sidelines.

"NBA Coaches Playbook" is comprehensive in its description of the attack portion of basketball and includes the detailed insights of 27 great head and assistant coaches from the NBA, as well as those from one special guest, a top international coach.

The first chapter, Individual Offense, is from Hal Wissel, the guru of shooting technique, and is dedicated to the fundamentals of setting your team up to attack the basket. This is followed by the basic and advanced moves of the perimeter players (Stan Van Gundy), the post moves (Kareem Abdul-Jabbar), and screens (Phil Johnson). The rich anthology continues with Team Offense, a chapter that covers the offensive sets with detailed information provided by Avery Johnson, Phil Jackson, and Tex Winter (with his famous Triangle Offense). Eddie Jordan and Pete Carril, who designed his very famous attack, the Princeton Offense, provides all you need to know about keeping players in motion and getting the ball to the player with the best chance of scoring. Ruben Magnano, the former coach of the Argentinean national team, is Gandolfi's special international guest, and he describes how to carry out the Flex Offense that gave his teams so much success over the years. The chapter, Fast Break, is dedicated to the running game, with contributions from George Karl and Doug Moe, Mike D'Antoni, and

his former Phoenix Suns assistant coaches, Alvin Gentry and Marc Iavaroni. The chapter, Special Plays, takes care of all the special and out-of-bounds plays, with Lionel Hollins, Brendan Malone, and Dave Wohl describing what needs to be done to get the ball back in play and how to set the team up for an easy basket.

In the chapter, Individual and Team Defense, readers learn of defensive strategies, with Mike Fratello (On-the-Ball Pressure), Jim O'Brien (Full Court Pressure) and Del Harris (Defensive Strategies) showing how to gain control of the game.

With the chapter, Coaching Essentials, Gandolfi has the best in the game show how to create effective practice sessions (Lawrence Frank), prepare for an upcoming game (Mike Dunleavy and Jim Emeny), develop their players (Kevin Eastman), motivate the players and coaches (Scott Skiles and John Bach), and physically condition the players (Rich Dalatri) so they can run non-stop throughout the game and the season.

This 345-page book is a "must" for coaches at every level of the game. As Rick Pitino, the former coach of the Boston Celtics, says on the back cover of the book:

"Technical instruction, practice tips, drills, offensive attacks, special plays, and defensive tactics, all from great basketball minds that know what does and doesn't work. NBA Coaches' Playbook is a must-have in any serious coach's library."



**FIBA**

We Are Basketball



by Jaime Andreu

# 1986: A KEY YEAR FOR MODERN OFFICIATING

**Jaime Andreu first started to referee in the Spanish First Division at the age of 23. He was FIBA Technical Commissioner, as well as member of the FIBA European Technical Commission. He was also instructor in several clinics for FIBA International Referees in Europe and Africa.**

It may have passed unnoticed by many, but in 2006, we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of two important events that have formed the foundation for modern FIBA officiating. In January 1986, the first edition of the FIBA book for referees was published, standardizing the technique to be used by referees. Later that year, in September, one of the most important internal were the top referees and officials -some of them are already occupying lead positions in FIBA and in National Federations- but Lubomir Kotleba, was also there. His keynote lecture, "The modern referee," represented a turning point in officiating basketball games. I would like to comment on these important events in which I had the good fortune to be involved.

## AVOIDING BEING FOCUSED ON THE BALL

Chronologically speaking, the first event was the release of the book on referee fundamentals. Until 1986, all the rules concerning fundamentals were spread among several publications and non-formal instruction; I still remember an excellent manual written by a Turkish international referee, for example. However, in 1986, FIBA adopted a consolidated version of the fundamentals for the first time, and with it came a significant step forward in the evolution of officiating. The new fundamentals







set up several important points that are still valid:

- ▼ The principle of boxing in, which means that the referees must be stationed on the court in a way that they can cover all the players at any moment of the game.
- ▼ The establishment of the six rectangles to facilitate the distribution of responsibilities between the officials, based on the situations on and off the ball, to avoid focusing all eyes strictly on the ball.
- ▼ The principle of out/in position, which means that each referee must be placed with his hips towards the basket, never showing his back to the basket.
- ▼ The new denomination for the referees: "lead" and 'trail' with well-defined particular tasks, depending on the situation of the ball, to avoid calling for contradictory decisions and putting the whole responsibility on a single referee.
- ▼ The principle of perpetual movement: the referees must not stand fixed in a

single point, but must be in constant motion, looking for the gaps between the players, as well as for the appropriate angles to allow them to keep their view on the ball and the players in reference to the basket. This represents the key point of reference for all the actors of the game.

- ▼ The new set of signals and procedures for calling the different violations and fouls; the goal is to provide more consistency to the referee's appearance, homogeneity on the use of signals, and improvement of the referee's communication with the other actors in the game and with the public.

The manual had a visible impact on officials the world over. FIBA's referees acquired much more uniformity in the way of working. Moreover, they strengthened their officiating skills, and officiating was clearly improved. This is directly linked to the new method that provided the referees with better placement and an improved capacity to judge situations and, therefore, make better decisions. The evolution of basket-

ball in the world was growing very fast at this time, reducing the gap with American pro basketball. This evolution required better officiating at games and that's where the new officiating manual played a major role. For the first time, referees had at their disposal a single manual of operations to facilitate their work and make refereeing a much more dynamic and attractive job. Consequently, by eliminating unnecessary calls, the game became more attractive to spectators.

From 1986, the referee's manual has been updated several times. I am not persuaded about the usefulness of some of the changes that were introduced. For instance, I believe that the ball must be between the basket and the referee; and the trail official should always have the basket within his view at all times, but these are my own personal opinions.

#### **THE PUBLIC PAYS FOR WATCHING THE PLAYERS, NOT THE REFEREES**

As I've already mentioned, the other turning point for modern officiating was the

Clinic for International Referees held in Athens in September 1986. This was a very successful event, first because of the high skill level of the participants. For years, the most important games of FIBA had been officiated by officials emerging from this clinic. Some of them are already retired, and are occupying leading positions, not only in their National Federations but also in FIBA.

One of the key moments of the Clinic was the lecture given by Lubomir Kotleba, who was still an active international referee at the top of his career. His clinic talk set the basis for a new philosophy of refereeing. "Lubo" was able to summarize in his lecture the views and ideas expressed for a new generation of international officials, and the content of this address is a permanent source of inspiration.

One sentence summarizes the entire speech: "The public pays to see the players, not the referees." By the mid-1980s basketball was becoming a very exciting game, attracting the interest of young people, captivating TV audiences, and increasing in popularity worldwide. To keep maintain this growth -basketball is in competition with other indoor sports for spectator interest- it is necessary to have skillful players, imaginative coaches, and competent referees.

For Lubo, a referee should not feel like a deus ex machina of the game, but should be an active participant, a basketball technician who is able to solve the disputes between the teams in a fast, equitable, and professional way. Modern basketball must

assume that the officials on the court with the players do not occupy the most prominent place, but rather an important, yet secondary one. This is because the public pays to see the basketball player and not the officials.

Lubo also noted that referees need to keep the game under control and make as few calls as possible; referees need to be ready to intervene, not to interfere. To do such a delicate job, referees need to be in good physical condition and be able to keep up with the players. They need to know the technique of the game and the style of game of each team. They must understand perfectly each rule of the game, why it exists, which principle of the game (individual skill, team skill, behavior) it is intended to protect. Finally, each referee has to remain calm during the game and refrain from all emotional outbursts. Referees must become the quiet force on the court.

This philosophy was detailed in one of the first amendments to the fundamentals book, when at the very end of the text it says, "Even officials may smile". This underlines the notion that officials must have a flexible sense of authority and be able to adapt to each circumstance of the game with a sense of graciousness. The officials can use some key words throughout the course of the game, such as "thank you," "please," or "maybe". If one player, for instance, gives the ball to a referee, saying "thank you" is a simple, useful, and effective way to create a friendly atmosphere on the court. If a referee requires the coach, a player, or a

member of the table officials to do something, adding "please" represents an element of self-confidence and good manners. If after calling a violation a player turns to the referee claiming a wrong decision, if the official answers "maybe," nine times out of ten there will not be room for discussion.

The authority of the officials is not based on the power granted them by the Rules, but in their self-confidence and their behavior during the game. If officials show consistency, integrity, involvement, and spontaneity, the game will flow without major problems. However, if the officials intend to apply the words but not the spirit of the rules, it is possible that they will create artificial barriers, preventing the game from flowing freely, and causing unwanted effects.

The officials need to keep in mind that they have at their disposal a set of infractions for each action during the game:

- ▼ By calling violations, referees are punishing bad individual or collective skills or rewarding good defense; 24-second violation represents rewarding good defense and punishing bad team play.
- ▼ By calling personal fouls, referees are rewarding a good attack or defense movement and punishing those that, thanks to poorly executed basketball movement, gain an unfair advantage.
- ▼ By calling unsportsmanlike and technical fouls, referees are punishing those that are neither playing basketball nor respecting the other actors in order to obtain an unfair advantage.

#### FEEL FREE TO JUDGE THE GAME

Officials should be totally focused on the game, the entire time. Basketball increases in speed every day and the reaction time for the referees -to judge whether an infraction has occurred and has provoked a disadvantage for the other team- has been decreasing.

For this reason, it is crucial that the referees implement their mechanics in an automatic way. It is also important that referees establish their line of behavior, as well as their line of officiating for each game. By doing so, they will be totally focused on the real situations of the game as they occur.

Twenty-two years have elapsed since FIBA adopted its new guidebook for referees, and since then, this manual continues to set the standard for the modern referee. Basketball officiating has been through important changes over the years, but it's FIBA's manual that continues to provide the strength and consistency that has helped shape the modern game of basketball.






**FIBA**

We Are Basketball



by William Sutton

# THE PHOENIX SUNS VIRTUAL LOCKER ROOM

William Sutton is one of the highest experts of Sports Marketing of the United States of America. He was vice president of the NBA Team Marketing. He's professor at the Central Florida University, DeVos Sport Business Program, but also founder and president of the Bill Sutton & Associates, consulting company for NBA, NFL, and Australia and New Zealand's rugby leagues. He is co-author of the books "Sport Marketing" (third edition, 2007) and "Sport Promotion and Sales Management" (second edition, 2008), both edited by Human Kinetics.

In the on-going search for new revenue

streams, I am always looking for ideas that can be easily replicated, expanded upon and most of all that work for the parties concerned. In touring the Phoenix Suns' Virtual Locker Room [[www.nba.com/suns/fans/locker-room-open.html](http://www.nba.com/suns/fans/locker-room-open.html)], I have found that next big idea product placement in a non-intrusive and entertaining setting. According to Jeramie McPeck of the Suns office, "We wanted to give fans a behind-the-scenes look into the Suns' locker room, but do it in a unique and entertaining way. There are a handful of sports teams that have offered virtual tours on their web sites over the years, but they're basically all just still photos,

as fans click from room to room. We wanted to let fans interact with the environment and see our players and personalities in a different light."

Upon entering (through a bank vault which could be branded by a bank sponsor like the Suns' Bank of America), visitors were greeted by the Sun, Shaq, who welcomes the visitors to his crib. Clicking a door marked COACHES, we entered the office of the former coach Coach Mike D'Antoni who was sitting at his desk. Coach D'Antoni greets us and goes back to writing on his pad leaving us free to explore his office. We can click on "hot spots" such as a TV screen, key ring or his







computer. Clicking on his key ring -which contains a Fry's grocery card- takes us to a page where we learn about the Fry's card, Suns rewards for shopping at Fry's and an opportunity to register for our own Fry's card. If we elect to click on the computer screen there is a message from Mike's wife Laurel, asking to him to stop at Fry's on the way home and be sure to use his Fry's card to make sure he receives the discounts. Not exactly subtle, but not intrusive as many of us have similar key rings and receive similar e-mails everyday.

Upon leaving the Coaches' office, visitors can click on another door to enter. This door functions as one of several data base collection sites. There are several doors throughout the clubhouse that when clicked, a message appears encouraging fans to sign up to be notified when new rooms are opened and be entered to win a road trip to the playoffs. According to Scott Coleman, Vice President, Marketing Partnerships Activation for the Suns, "Through the first three weeks since the site launched, we've collected more than 10,000 registrations".

Once the registration has been completed, we are able to tour the Suns' locker room. Many of the "hot spots" will also draw out Suns players and personalities, who walk onto screen via green-screen video and react to the fan. For instance, if you click on the NBA former MVP trophy in Steve Nash's locker, Nash walks onto screen and tells you that Dirk Nowitzki's accent is a fake. Click into the restroom vanity area, complete with what you would naturally find in a locker room – an assortment of men's hygiene products provided by Dial and the Suns' Gorilla will stroll in wearing nothing but a shower cap, only to quickly cover himself up and rush out off screen embarrassed. The Suns have incorporated the personalities of their marketing assets (players and mascot) in entertaining and surprising ways.

How have the sponsors viewed this virtual approach? According to Coleman "The site has been a big hit with our marketing partners, as well. Instead of just a standard banner ad or presenting sponsor logo, we were able to incorporate seven sponsors into the site and do so in some unobtrusive and natural ways. There is a Gatorade cooler on the counter in the locker room, for instance, and a Verizon Wireless mobile phone in one of the lockers that enables the visitor to play a Suns-





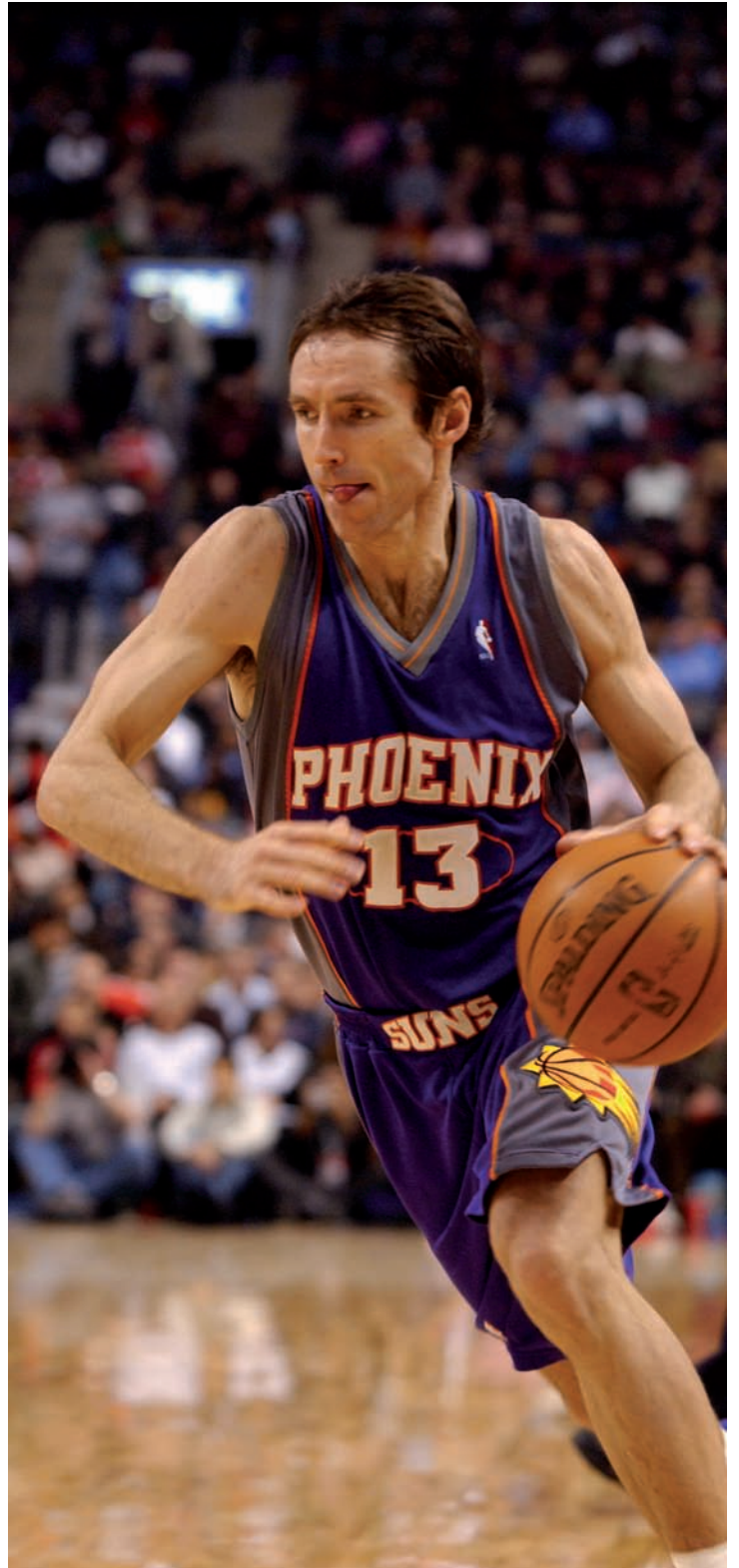
themed video game on a Voyager Phone. If fans click on the Coke fridge in the locker room, our Hall-of-Fame broadcaster Al McCoy walks into the scene sipping a Coke, and delivers his trademark basketball call, SHAZAM!"

Obviously, as with most web-based content – there is a challenge to keep the content fresh and “sticky”. So the Suns have conceived of a very strategic approach to continue to attract visitors back to the site as well as attracting new visitors. According to McPeck,



“The one thing we were concerned about when we started to build the site was how we were going to get fans to come back after they’ve explored the site once. So we decided to open the locker room a little at a time. In our first phase launched in mid-January, we opened the coach’s office, players’ dressing room and restroom vanity area. In phase two, launched the first week of March, we opened the doors to





the training room, players lounge and weight room. Then for phase three, activated prior to the start of the 2008 NBA Playoffs, we opened up the equipment closet, whirlpool/sauna area and a hallway that will lead to a star dressing room, where we will promote the various concerts and family shows that come through US Airways Center. In between the upcoming phases, we refreshed the original rooms with new in-

teractions and videos. So it's a pretty involved process, as you can probably imagine." In reviewing the concept, there are some unique additions for anyone thinking of a similar strategy. For example, have registrants actually sign-up to receive their own locker in the locker room. Sponsors can leave coupons and offers, tickets can be picked up, messages from the team can be left

and the "owner" of the locker can receive an email from the coaching staff reminding them to check their locker for important messages about the upcoming home stand and so forth. In any case – the virtual approach is something every organization should consider and adopt for their own purposes. The possibilities are virtually limitless and virtual revenue translates into hard cash.





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# 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. Team A is reduced to five players, after which A4 is injured. After the team A doctor has treated A4 for 20 seconds, A4 is ready to continue play. Shall A4 be required to leave the game until the next substitution opportunity?
2. B2 fouls A2 while A2 is in the act of shooting. Coach A is then charged with a technical foul. Shall the free throws for the B2 foul and the free throws for the coach A technical foul cancel each other and play resume with a throw-in for team B at the centre line extended opposite the scorer's table?
3. A3 uses five seconds to dribble the ball in his backcourt and then attempts a pass to A4 who is in the frontcourt. B4 in the team A frontcourt deflects the ball into the team A backcourt where A3 again gains control. Shall A3 have only three seconds remaining in which to cause the ball to move to team A's frontcourt?
4. A5 is dribbling the ball from the backcourt when he stops and straddles the centre line while still dribbling the ball. Shall the 8-second count continue?
5. While the ball is in the team B basket as a result of a field goal attempt, A4 contacts the ball while it is still in the basket. Has A4 committed interference?
6. Technical fouls are committed by A2 and then Coach A. May either team substitute following the completion of the penalty for the A2 foul?
7. For main FIBA official competitions, shall the half-time interval of play be ten minutes?
8. Team A has control of the ball in the team A frontcourt when A2 passes the ball to A3 near the centre line. A3 jumps from the frontcourt to catch the pass and then lands with one foot in the backcourt. Has A3 illegally returned the ball to the backcourt?
9. A shot for a field goal is in the air when the 24-second signal sounds. The ball then lodges on the basket support.



- Has a 24-second violation occurred?
10. With team A in control of the ball and five seconds remaining in the 24-second period, technical fouls are called

against A3 and B3. Shall play resume with a team A throw-in and five seconds still remaining in the 24-second period?

## ANSWERS

- |                 |                                       |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. No (5.3)     | 6. Yes (19.3.9)                       |
| 2. No (42.2.3)  | 7. No (8.3)                           |
| 3. No (28.2.1)  | 8. Yes (30.1.2)                       |
| 4. Yes (28.1.3) | 9. Yes (Art. 29, FIBA Interpretation) |
| 5. No (31.2.4)  | 10. Yes (50.4)                        |





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We Are Basketball



by Alan Stein

# GUIDELINES FOR YEAR ROUND INJURY PREVENTION

**Alan Stein is the former co-owner of Elite Athlete Training Systems, Inc. and the Head Strength & Conditioning coach for the nationally renowned Montrose Christian Mustangs boy's basketball program. Alan brings a wealth of valuable experience to his training arsenal after years of extensive work with elite high school, college, and NBA players. He is a sought after lecturer at basketball camps across the country and is regularly featured in publications such as the *Winning Hoops*, *Time Out*, *Dime*, *American Basketball Quarterly*, *Stack*, and *Men's Health*.**

The importance of strength, power, conditioning, and flexibility is quite evident in the sport of basketball. The days of just playing pick-up at the gym are over. If you really want your players to play the best they can, you must encourage them to do things outside of just playing basketball to improve their game; it is important that they participate in a truly comprehensive year round training program in order to reduce the occurrence of injury. As such, your players need to warm-up properly for all workouts and practices as well as perform strength training and pre-hab exercises on a year round basis.

The central purpose of a year round training program is to decrease the occasion for injury. Basketball is very demanding physically. Making the muscles, ligaments, and tendons of the body stronger will lessen the chance

and/or severity of an injury (such as a pulled groin or rolled ankle), and keep your players on the court. The goal of this article is to share the details of a safe, efficient, and productive year-round training program.

## WARM-UP

### "NEVER CONFUSE MOVEMENT FOR ACTION"

Prior to beginning any workout, practice or game, it is important that your team goes through a proper warm-up. If you jump right into a high intensity activity -like strength training or basketball practice- without warming up, you may increase the chance of injury to your players. Please don't confuse warming up with stretching, as they are two completely separate activities. A warm-up should consist of low intensity movements that involve most of the muscles in the lower body. Some examples include jogging or jumping rope. The goal of the warm-up is to raise the body's core temperature 1-2 degrees in order to increase blood flow to the muscles and loosen up the joints. This will help prepare the body and mind for the workout to follow. A thorough warm-up should last 5-8 minutes and result in a light sweat.

During the warm-up it is important to have your players go through the main movement patterns used in basketball: light sprinting, back pedaling, defensive sliding, and jumping. This can be accomplished by performing a variety of basketball specific drills at 50% of their

normal intensity. This will ensure the muscles of the hips, groin, and ankles are sufficiently warmed up. If you do not have access to a court for your warm-up, a series of stationary movements such as line jumps and quick feet will suffice. Your team should be 100% ready to play when they take the floor for their pre-game or pre-practice routine.

Dynamic flexibility is more effective, focused, and productive than the outdated "sit and strength routines". The concept of dynamic flexibility is certainly not new, as track and field coaches have used it for decades. A comprehensive dynamic warm-up does not take any more time than would the more traditional method of stretching. Since your warm-up sets the tone for the entire workout, practice, or game, it is important to implement something that is effective, focused, and productive.

Once your team has completed a thorough warm-up, it is time to move to the next phase of preparation and begin with some dynamic flexibility movements.

Dynamic flexibility exercises are ones that increase the range of motion in a joint or series of joints while continuously moving. There are several benefits to performing dynamic movements. First, by continuing to move, you ensure the body and muscles stay warm throughout this process. Many players will lose the 2-3 degree increase in





core temperature by sitting and stretching for 10-15 minutes. Dynamic flexibility, when performed appropriately, prepares the muscles and joints in a more specific manner than static stretching. Given that the workout, practice, or game is going to consist of dynamic movements; it is important to

prepare the body in a similar manner. I am by no means advocating anything dangerous or inappropriately ballistic (such as severe bouncing and/or jerking); I simply believe that by performing safe and conservative dynamic flexibility movements, you will better prepare the mind and body for the workout that

is to follow and reduce the occurrence of injury.

#### PRE-HAB

**"IT IS BETTER TO LOOK AHEAD AND PREPARE THAN TO LOOK BACK AND REGRET"**

Re-hab, or rehabilitation, is a series of exercises done after a player is injured, and in an effort to get them back in playing condition. Therefore, pre-hab, is a term coined to describe a series of exercises done before a player may be injured, and as a proactive means to reduce the risk and overall severity of an injury by strengthening specific muscle groups and joints. The ankle is the single most injured area for basketball players. Ankle sprains can happen from activities such as landing on another player's foot or having it roll over during a sharp cut. A severe ankle sprain can debilitate a player for several months if it is serious enough, and losing one of your top players mid-year can be the difference between a .500 season and making a run at a championship!

Having your players perform some additional stability exercises for their ankles can help strengthen the tendons





and ligaments of the foot and ankle, as well as drastically reduce the severity of an ankle sprain. Pre-hab can also be done for other injury prone areas such as the groin, hamstrings, low back, and fingers.

Keeping the entire foot on the board/ball/disc, simply balance on one leg thus causing the tendons and ligaments to stabilize the foot and ankle, and balance the entire body. Hold for 15-30 seconds and repeat with the other ankle. If you do not have access to this equipment, the same thing can be accomplished standing on top of a folded bedroom pillow.

Another preventative measure against ankle sprains is the use of tape and/or braces. It is recommended that players get their ankles taped or wear ankle braces any time they are going live (practice and games; including AAU and summer league camps and events). The risk of an ankle sprain during practice and a game is much higher. You may want to make ankle braces or tape mandatory for your team, as it has been my experience that most players will choose not to wear them because they believe it restricts their movement. Please note that It is not recommended for players to get taped or wear braces during strength, conditioning, or running workouts, as that is the right time for them to strengthen their ankles (with the exception of a player who has a pre-existing ankle injury). However, it is recommended that they wear appropriate footwear and tie their shoes fairly tight.

#### STRENGTH TRAINING

##### **"SEVEN DAYS WITHOUT STRENGTH TRAINING MAKES ONE WEAK"**

Safety, time efficiency, and intensity should be the backbone of your year round strength training philosophy. Your main focus should be to improve each player's overall muscular size and strength. By making the tendons, ligaments, and muscles of their body stronger, you will decrease their likelihood for sustaining an injury. Your players are not Olympic lifters or bodybuilders, and therefore shouldn't train that way. Rather, you should have them train their major muscle groups and specifically address their most injury prone areas: ankles, knees, groin, lower back, and hands.

Your goal as a coach should be to minimize risk within the training atmosphere. You should only use the safest exercises available, and do your best to



make sure that all workouts are properly supervised. Players should always perfect exercise technique and form prior to utilizing additional resistance or weight. Additionally, players should perform every movement in a slow, controlled, and deliberate fashion, with special emphasis focused on the lower portion of each lift. Lastly, your players should work within an appropriate repetition range (8-15 reps for most high school and college athletes) and avoid maxing out (seeing how much weight can be lifted in one repetition), as these practices can be very dangerous.

Other than simple genetics, intensity is the most important factor in determining the results for your players. Below a certain level of intensity, strength train-

ing will have very little benefit. I choose to define intensity as the level of effort exerted by the individual being trained. If a player is capable of lifting 100 pounds 15 times and they stop at 10, the exercise was clearly not as intense as it potentially could have been for that individual. Therefore, it is recommended that each set is taken to the point of momentary muscular fatigue (that is, the point at which no additional reps can be completed). It is of equal importance to make sure that there is constant progression. Your players should consistently attempt to lift more weight and/or do more reps with each workout. If a player can lift 100 pounds 15 times one day, yet they are still lifting the same 100 pounds 15 times three months later, then they clearly haven't



become any stronger. It is important to note your strength training program should be implemented on a year round basis (train in and out of season). Strength is an attribute that can be diminished in 3-4 weeks if not done consistently. Your team needs to strength train throughout the year in order to maintain their maximum level of strength and reduce the potential for injury.

In addition to strength training, your team should participate in a comprehensive year round conditioning program too. It is important acclimate the body's muscles and joint structures by practicing the specific motions used in basketball. If a conditioning program only incorporates straight sprinting (a typical track workout), you will not sufficiently prepare the hip, groin, and ankle areas which are all high-risk areas for basketball players.

One of the most overlooked aspects of injury prevention is rest. Many coaches drive their players into the ground with the "more is better" philosophy. Your program should have built in days off each week and a few planned weeks

off each year (it is especially important to give your players a few weeks off immediately following the end of the season prior to beginning their off season workouts). If you notice your players are dragging, give them a surprise day off. The rest will make them more productive and less likely to get injured during an actual workout.

#### PLYOMETRICS

##### **"FACTS DO NOT CEASE TO EXIST JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE IGNORED"**

If plyometric exercises are appropriately picked and supervised, than they can be a safe and productive supplemental training tool. However, the game of basketball itself is already very plyometric in nature, so adding a large volume of additional plyometric exercises can be counterproductive and produce overuse injuries including orthopedic trauma to the joints, tendons, ligaments, and bones that occur from too much impact.

Unlike many other sports, today's basketball players play year round with no real off-season. It has been estimated that the average player will perform between 450 and 500 full speed jumps per week. As such, what will an additional

50 jumps from a plyometric program do? While plyometric exercises -commonly referred to as "Plyo's"- can be implemented carefully into a program as a way to help players with their body-awareness and confidence in performing certain movements, it is imperative to pick only the safest exercises and use as soft of a surface as possible to reduce the orthopedic stress placed on the body during such exercises.

It is not necessarily the jumping that could potentially cause a problem, but rather the landing. Be very cautious when having players jump off of boxes and/or performing weighted jumps.

In summary, your success has a program can be dependent upon keeping your players injury free. In order to reduce the occurrence of injury in your program, you should have your players participate in a comprehensive year round training program.

This includes having them warm-up (dynamic flexibility) before every workout, perform strength training and prehab exercises, limit the overuse of plyometrics, have them wear tape or braces when they go live, and give them ample rest to recover.







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ONE-ON-ONE

# RUDY: "PEPU AND AITO ARE SIMILAR COACHES BUT THEY SEE BASKETBALL IN A DIFFERENT WAY"



**Rudy Fernandez had taken his game to a new level at this summer's Olympics and had proven that especially during the thrilling Final with the USA.**

**Earlier in the tournament he gave an interview after the game against USA and ahead of the quarter-final against Croatia. Here is what he had to say.**

**FIBA:** Rudy, how difficult was it for Spain to bounce back from the humiliating defeat to Team USA?

**RUDY:** Without a doubt, that result affects you psychologically. Team USA is a very good team and they really came out determined to beat us. But I thought the result was unjust, not in terms of play because they beat us easily but had we played better, they would not have beaten us by such a huge margin.

**FIBA:** What does Spain take from that game?

**RUDY:** It's difficult to compete against a team like USA. It has served us to learn from the mistakes we made during the game and we will try to make sure that we don't repeat them again. In a hypothetical

final against Team USA, we will give everything.

**FIBA:** Aside from the defeat to Team USA, what positives and negatives does Spain take from the group stages, where you have won three games and lost one?

**RUDY:** I think the positive aspect is that at no time has this team collapsed mentally. We've had bad games, especially against Team USA, but we have always supported each other as a team and that is good. On the negative side, we have struggled to play well in the first half and maybe against teams like Angola you can afford to do that but certainly not against Croatia.

**FIBA:** Spain had to adapt to the arrival of coach Aito Garcia Reneses following the sacking of Pepu Hernandez not long before the Olympics. Aito is a coach you know well, having played under him at DKV Joventut. But how difficult has the transition been for you and the other Spain players?

**RUDY:** Pepu and Aito are similar coaches but they see basketball maybe a different way. I think Aito has tried to bring new

ideas in the limited time, ideas he also implemented at DKV Joventut. We still haven't been able to adapt to those but we are slowly adapting to how he wants us to play. This is a long tournament and now the good part comes along. We have to compete and if we win the quarter-final, we are within reach of our aim which is to get a medal.

**FIBA:** One thing that has surprised us about Aito is the number of rotations that he makes during a game. We have seen players unhappy to leave the court. Is this one of Aito's techniques?

**RUDY:** Aito's rotations, I have seen them at DKV Joventut. What he wants is the players who are on the court to give 100%. This is why he makes so many changes so that at no time you see tiredness on the court from his players. It's true that this is not DKV Joventut and that in this national team you have very good players who can play many minutes. But the team needs to get accustomed to Aito's philosophy and I believe that we are, little by little, doing it.

**FIBA:** Next up for Spain is Croatia. How do





you rate Spain's chances against Jasmin Repesa's team?

**RUDY:** Croatia is playing a very good tournament and has experienced players. They are very difficult rivals and we already saw that at last year's EuroBasket when they beat us in the group stages. I believe if we play as we know then we will not have problems.

**FIBA:** Rudy, you've enjoyed a sensational tournament so far in a year where you

have also led Joventut to the Copa del Rey and the ULEB Cup title. Are you at the peak of your career?

**RUDY:** I don't think we have seen the best of me yet. I hope not. I am really confident and my aim is to give everything I can for this team. I was lucky to be a member of Spain's team at the Athens Olympics and I was one step away from fighting for the medals. I believe we have a good team here and we have options to win a medal and we have to give everything.

**FIBA:** Another Spanish player that has taken the limelight is youngster Ricky Rubio. Having played with him at DKV Joventut, how good is he?

**RUDY:** I think Ricky is a very talented player. He is making room for himself in Spanish and world basketball. I think he has a lot to improve on but at 17, he has plenty of time to do that. With what he already has, it's incredible to be doing what he is doing.

# OSCAR: "SPAIN CAN PLAY HARD AGAINST TEAM USA..."

Brazil's men didn't qualify for the Olympics, but the country still had a strong presence at the Beijing Games with legendary scoring machine Oscar Schmidt in town to watch the women play. Oscar, who was working as a commentator for Brazilian television, couldn't resist turning up to the Wukesong Arena to watch the rematch of the 2006 FIBA World Championship semi-final between Greece and the United States. The Greeks won the semi two years ago, 101-95, but the Americans rolled to a 92-69 victory in their Olympic encounter. Oscar, after giving a big hug to one of his former opponents on the floor, Greece coach Panagiotis Yannakis, spoke to FIBA.com and he proved some capabilities as a fortune teller...

**FIBA:** Oscar, can you see any side beating Team USA?

**OSCAR:** I don't think so. USA is very potent, strong. Spain can play hard against them but I don't think anybody can beat them. Of course, you can have a bad day and one day you lose, and if that day is the quarter-finals or semi-finals, you lose the championship. But we can already see that this (USA) team is ready to win. If you just look at them during the na-

tional anthem, you see that they are into it.

**FIBA:** Is this USA team better than the one two years ago at the FIBA World Championship?

**OSCAR:** Every time, defense and fast breaks are the best things of the USA, so they were like that two years ago. But the difference is that this team is more concentrated. The coach (USA boss Mike Krzyzewski) will not allow anybody to have fun. They are here to win so they must play hard, serious, make great plays. That is what they have done up to now.

**FIBA:** Do you think that because of the loss of the Americans two years ago that Coach K became a lot more interested in international basketball?

**OSCAR:** I spoke to him yesterday and he told me that he is learning a lot about international basketball. International basketball has really changed and they haven't so they are trying to. He is great, a legend for all of us. Everybody respects him. I think they are the strongest team and they deserve to win.

**FIBA:** Are you looking forward to seeing Spain's 17-year-old sensation Ricky Rubio play against Team USA?



**OSCAR:** I am his fan. I am looking at the Spain game and I am always looking at him. He plays few minutes but whenever he does, he changes the game completely. Ricky changed the game against China and he changed the game against Germany. He is special. I have a son and he doesn't play anymore, but he used to play like him, jumping at the ball (Oscar opens his arms wide), kicking everybody and maybe not making baskets but playing like him. That's the way to play, with heart, a lot of heart. I'm just enjoying watching him play.



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**PLANET  
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# THE WORLD IN BRIEF



## US "REDEEM TEAM" DREAM REALIZED

The 2006 FIBA World Champion Spanish squad brought its best effort to make sure the "Redeem Team" didn't coast through the gold medal game, but the United States still prevailed 118-107 to win back the gold medal on August 24.



"Spain gave us our first test," said United States guard Deron Williams. Both sides racked up fouls early on, which seemed to stunt the defensive patterns of the United States more than Spain, who effectively contained the US side and even outscored in the paint 56-50.

Guard Kobe Bryant admits he got into foul trouble and had to play more cautiously. "But, in the fourth quarter, Coach K [US coach Mike Krzyzewski] told me to let that 'Mamba' [the nickname of Bryant] loose," he said, "and that's what I tried to do."

High-scorer Dwayne Wade said even if star players like Bryant and LeBron James were held back by personal fouls, Team USA was not dependent on any one man. "We're very deep, one through 12," he said. "It's about the whole team. This feels great. We haven't won in eight years. A lot of people doubted that NBA stars could play together."

Bryant was playing against his Los Angeles Lakers teammate Pau Gasol in this game, and when the buzzer sounded he made sure to give Gasol a hug. "I love him like a brother. I truthfully wish we were

playing someone else in the finals."

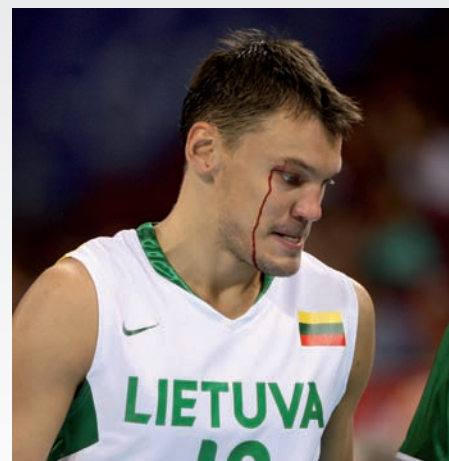
Spain's Alex Mumbru says his team played 100 percent and had nothing else to give.

"This has been the greatest match of the last years. Everyone is saying that. It will be a historical match and we want people to remember this Spanish team for a long while," said Mumbru. With this win, both teams have players reaching a historic mark. US captain Jason Kidd becomes the 13th men's basketball player to win two gold medals, and Spain's 17-year-old guard Ricky Rubio becomes the youngest player to ever win an Olympic Men's Basketball medal. Rubio had six points and six rebounds in Sunday's gold medal game.

In the bronze medal game, a 20-point haul from Carlos Delfino steered an Argentina to an 87-75 victory over Lithuania. Delfino pulled a game-high 10 rebounds and picked up the offensive load for the defending Olympic champions, who were minus their inspirational lead Manu Ginobili due to an ankle injury.

Argentina went into the first break ahead 24-21, but it was a succession of three-point shots midway through the second by Leonardo Martin Gutierrez, Alfredo Paolo Quinteros and Andres Nocioni that proved decisive and gave the team a 44-31 lead.

Lithuania would never recover from that moment, the deficit growing to 24 at one stage in the third quarter. Captain Ramu-







nas Siskauskas paced his team with 15 points while guard Rimantas Kaukenas added 14. Sarunas Jasikevicius, Lithuania's leading scorer heading into the match, was not his usual efficient self, hitting just four of 12 shots for just nine points.

#### Final ranking men

TEAM	GP	W-L
1. USA	8	8 - 0
2. ESP	8	6 - 2
3. ARG	8	6 - 2
4. LTU	8	5 - 3
5. GRE	6	3 - 3
6. CRO	6	3 - 3
7. AUS	6	3 - 3
8. CHN	6	2 - 4
9. RUSSIA	5	1 - 4
10. GER	5	1 - 4
11. IRI	5	0 - 5
12. ANG	5	0 - 5

#### IT LOOKS A LOT LIKE ATHENS

In a repeat of the previous Olympic Games' results, the United States won gold, Australia settled for silver and Russia took the bronze. A red-hot first half shooting performance helped the United States Women's team emerge victorious 92-65 over Australia to claim a fourth consecutive gold medal in the women's basketball competition. The game was effectively

over at the main break, with the US team holding a commanding 47-30 lead off the back of some deadly shooting in and around the key, making 18 of 26 two-point field goals for a 69 percent return. Kara Lawson epitomized the form of the US shooters, coming off the bench to be perfect from the field in her 11 team-high first half points, hitting four for four in the field, and both from the stripe. Equally key was the defensive job done by Tina Thompson on Australia's star center Lauren Jackson, with Thompson restricting the Opals' main offensive weapon to just six first-half points, her first field goal not coming until four minutes into the second quarter. It was Belinda Snell who carried the Opals' offensive load, hitting three from six from beyond the arc to have 15 points at the half. Although Jackson picked up her game significantly to end with a game-



high 20 points, Snell did not add to her tally in the second half and the world champions got no closer than 13 points. "America was better than us tonight," said Jackson. "They are number one, we're number two. We tried hard to get there, but that's the way it goes." First-time gold medalist center Sylvia Fowles added: "I don't think it could have gone any better. Australia was very scrappy and physical, but we kept our composure." The US women are now on a 33-0 winning streak in Olympic tournament play. Captain and center Lisa Leslie, in her final Olympics, capped off a fantastic career by winning her fourth consecutive gold. The crowd, including NBA commissioner David Stern and members of the US Men's team, acknowledged this remarkable feat by giving her a stand-

ing ovation, when she picked up her fifth foul and left the Olympic floor for the final time in the last quarter. "It's not easy being a mom and playing basketball," Leslie said in a post-game interview. "For all those kids out there, I encourage you to write down all your goals." The rest of the US team included many young players, and they left this game fired up to return to London 2012. "Once you get on this level, it's kind of addictive," Thompson said about winning her second gold medal. "You just got to keep chasing it." In night's earlier bronze medal match, a 22-point haul from Becky Hammon steered Russia to a 94-81 victory over China. While Hammon could only manage three points in Thursday's disappointing semifinal loss to the United States, she made it clear as soon as she entered the bronze match late in the first quarter that the US-born point guard meant business. Russia held a 24-23 lead after the first quarter, but a 9-0 run in the second helped produce a 52-39 half-time lead. Hammon was Russia's leading scorer at the break, with 11 points in just over 12 minutes of court time. The win was Russia's second straight Olympic bronze. "It was very important for us to win a medal," said guard Ilona Korstin. "We came here to win the gold medal. We played an unfortunate game against the United States, but we fought for each victory, and we're happy to repeat what we did in Athens." With the home crowd willing them on, China tried to rally in the last quarter but could never cut the deficit to single digits despite a game-high 26 points from Chen Nan, and contributions from guard Bian Lan with 17 points and captain Miao Lijie with 16 points. Minutes after the game, Miao announced her retirement from China's Olympic Women's basketball team. "This is my last Olympic Games. I want to thank many people, including





those who doubted me and those who support me," Miao said as tears rolled down her face. The 28-year-old guard has been with the team since Athens, where China finished ninth. Miao, who averaged a team-high 17.9 points per game at Beijing 2008, was disappointed with not winning a medal at home. "This should have been an enjoyable game, but in front of thousands of spectators who are cheering for us from beginning to the end, we should have done better," she said.

#### Final ranking women

TEAM	GP	W-L
1. USA	8	8 - 0
2. AUS	8	7 - 1
3. RUS	8	6 - 2
4. CHN	8	5 - 3
5. ESP	6	3 - 3
6. BLR	6	2 - 4
7. CZE	6	2 - 4
8. KOR	6	2 - 4
9. LAT	5	1 - 4
10. NZL	5	1 - 4
11. BRA	5	1 - 4
12. MLI	5	1 - 5

#### AUSSIES PIP CANADA TO GOLD IN MEN'S WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Australia trailed at half-time but battled back to beat defending champions Canada and claim their first gold medal in the men's wheelchair basketball tournament at the Paralympics since the 1996 Atlanta Games. The Rollers prevailed 72-60 with Troy Sachs pouring in 19 points, pulling down seven rebounds and coming up with four of the team's 10 steals. Canada led 32-28 at half-time but weren't able to press home the advantage. Instead, midway through the third quarter, they clung to a 39-38 lead. That's when the Aussies went in front, outscoring the Canadians 16-8 over the last five minutes of the third period for a 54-47 lead. The team from North America mounted one last charge and closed the gap to 63-60. Australia then went on a 9-0 run to seal the victory. Pat-



rick Anderson had a game-high 22 points and 12 rebounds for Canada. Joey Johnson also poured in 12 and grabbed 12 boards in a losing cause. "I've never won a silver medal or lost the gold," said Anderson, who was outstanding in the tournament. He averaged 20.4 points and 12.4 rebounds. Australia did a lot of their damage in the paint, scoring 44 points to 24 for Canada. For the Rollers, Justin Eveson contributed 17 points, Shaun Norris 16 and Australia captain Brad Ness finished eight. Ness also had eight assists and five boards. In the bronze medal game, Great Britain won 85-77 over the United States with Terence Bywater leading the way Germany defeated Israel 63-54 in the battle for fifth place.

**Final ranking:** 1. Australia 2. Canada 3. Great Britain 4. USA 5. Germany 6. Israel 7. Japan 8. Brasil 9. RSA, 10. Sweden 11. Cina (Iran was disqualified).

#### USA BEAT GERMANY TO WOMEN'S WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL GOLD

The United States beat Germany to capture the gold medal in the women's wheelchair basketball event for the second consecutive Paralympics, while Australia snatched bronze by defeating Japan. The USA women completed an unbeaten run at 7-0 in Beijing with a 50-38 win over the Germans on Monday. Christina Ripp, playing at her third Paralympics, came off the bench and scored 16 points for the Americans, who trailed 12-9 early in the second quarter but then turned up the intensity on defense and rolled to victory. By half-time, the USA led 23-16 and it was 39-29 by the end of the third quarter. Germany cut the deficit to 43-36 midway through the final frame but the defending champions held on for the triumph. Ripp came up with three of her team's six steals and the USA forced Germany into 19 turnovers in the game. "I don't think I've ever been part of a team that plays defense the way we did during this tournament," Ripp said. "It was a total team effort and everything came together for us tonight." USA coach Ron Lykinssiad: "Our defense has always been the cornerstone of our success. We were just a little out of sync in the first quarter and when the press line-up came in we really settled into our game and started to play at our tempo." Marina Mohnen finished with 13 points and 13 rebounds for Germany. The silver was the country's first medal since the 1988 Seoul Games when the Federal Republic of Germany also came in second. Australia, meanwhile, overcame 21 turnovers to defeat Japan 53-47 in the battle for third place. Australia got 16 points and 14 rebounds from



captain Liesl Tesch. Tesch, playing in her fifth Paralympics, said: "It means I can't retire, because I've got two silver and a bronze and I need one of that other color still."

**Final ranking:** 1. USA 2. Germany 3. Australia 4. Japan 5. Canada, 6. Netherlands 7. China 8. Great Britain 9. Mexico 10. Brasil

#### BASKETBALL IN MOURNING OVER KYRGISTAN TRAGEDY

The Kyrgistan Basketball Federation has released the names of the players and other members of the delegation who died in a plane crash near Bishkek on August 24. According to wire reports, 65 of the 90 passengers on board the Boeing 737 perished, including nine members of the Kyrgistan group that was travelling to Tehran for the FIBA Asia U18 Championship. Eight others in the Kyrgistan group - all players - survived. All of the survivors were taken to trauma units at Bishkek hospitals. One doctor said most had suffered of burns, broken bones and bumps."

Kyrgyzstan is a poor, mountainous country west of China and medical services struggled to cope with the tragedy. Players Abdrakhim Abdrashidov, Ivan Makarchuk, Bilgis Ibraev, Rinat Ihsanov, Emil Kozhamkulov and Elnur Beishenkulov, referee Nazar Kubatov, Kyrgistan Basketball Federation vice president Oleg Kutilov and manager Bilal Chinibaev lost their lives in the tragedy. Essen Kasimaliev, Marat Husseinov, Murat Baibulatov, Sabirzhan Kadirov, Baish Adiev, Zhanish Adiev, Zuravai Hasembaev and Bahtiyar Kadirov all survived.





The world basketball family is mourning and its thoughts are with the families of all those affected by the tragedy.

#### **NINE TEAMS QUALIFIED FOR EUROBasket WOMEN**

Hungary, Israel, Lithuania and Ser-

bia added their names to the list of nine teams that will be making the trip to EuroBasket Women 2009 Final Round in Latvia. Turkey, Poland, France, Slovakia and Greece had already secured qualification before the last group games of the Qualifying Round were played September 13.

The above join the top ranked teams from EuroBasket Women 2007 who have qualified automatically for the EuroBasket Women 2009 Final Round: Russia, Spain, Belarus, Latvia (Organisers) and Czech Republic.

Ukraine, Italy, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia and Germany will take part in an Additional Qualifying Round in January 2009 for the remaining two spots. The EuroBasket Women 2009 Final Round will take place in the Latvian cities of Liepaja, Valmiera and Riga, June 7-20.

#### **MAKING HISTORY: GREECE WINS EUROPEAN U18**

Greece wrote another chapter in their storied basketball history by beating Lithuania 57-50 to capture the nation's first ever gold medal at the U18 European Championship Men. Kostas Sloukas led Greece with 16 points and Kostas Papanikolaou hits two free-throws and tipped in another missed



foul shot over the final 44 seconds to secure the victory for the host Greeks. George Vlassopoulos's team did not score their first basket until one minute left in the first period but controlled the proceedings after gaining the lead. Nikos Pappas added 14 points, Papanikolaou had 10 points and Zisis Sarikopoulos added eight points, 10 rebounds and five blocked shots. "This is an amazing feeling. We played great defense and it's an honour to win this gold medal, especially after missing out on it last year," said Sarikopoulos, who was part

of the Greek U18 side which last summer lost in the gold medal match against Serbia. The gold medal will join Greece's other honours which include 1970 and 2007 silver and bronze in 1998, 2000, 2002. "Now that we have gold here we have a big tournament next summer. Hopefully we can get a medal then as well," said Pappas, referring to the 2009 U19 FIBA World Championship in New Zealand, for which Greece are qualified. Lithuania go home with silver, to match their second-placed finish from 2006. Vitoldas Masalskis's team was hoping to capture the proud hoops nation's first gold medal since 1994. Donatas Motiejunas, who was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player, did everything he could, scoring 17 points, grabbing 12 rebounds, swiping two steals and blocking two shots. But he did not get enough support as the team shot just 2-of-21 from long range and Tautvydas Slezas was held to three points - though he had 14 rebounds. **Final ranking:** 1. Greece, 2. Lithuania, 3. Croatia, 4. France, 5. Spain, 6. Serbia, 7. Latvia, 8. Russia, 9. Turkey, 10. Israel, 11. Italy, 12. Ukraine, 13. Bulgaria, 14. Germany, 15. Belgium, 16. Estonia.

#### **IRAN ROMP PAST KAZAKHSTAN FOR ASIAN U18 TITLE**

Hosts Iran regained the FIBA Asia U18 Championship for Men in style, mauling a hapless Kazakhstan 95-76 in front of more than a capacity crowd at the Azadi Stadium court. Iran had won this title previously in the 2004 edition at Bangalore. Kazakhstan were playing their maiden final. Both Iran and Kazakhstan had already qualified for the FIBA U19 World Championship for Men in New Zealand next year.

Kazakhstan managed to remain abreast of the hosts till the closing moments of the first quarter, but back-to-back baskets from Mehdi Shirjang and Ramin Honarmand - the latter a colossal attempt from the center-line - took Iran 25-19 ahead at the end of the first quarter. Shirjang went on to sink four more three-pointers in five attempts in the second quarter as Iran raced away 35-24 midway through the quarter, which they consolidated to 48-31 before Farbod Farman closed the quarter with a dunk. Iran led 59-37 ahead going into the changing rooms and never looked back. Shirjang finished with a game-high 24 points, off eight three-pointers in 12 attempts. Farman was a darling of the crowd with five dunks for his 18 points. Mohammed Hasanazadeh had only 10 points, but pulled down a staggering 12 rebounds to stand tall in Iran defense. Iran won the battle of boards 44-38. Iran

had a 14/28 (50%) success rate from behind the arc as compared to Kazakhstan's 4/16 (25%). That scoring advantage compensated for a below par shooting otherwise. Kazakhstan shot 23/43 (53%) in two-pointers as against Iran's 24/58 (41%). Alexander Tyutyunik, Anton Arsenyev, and Artyom Skorniyakov shared the scoring honors for Kazakhstan with 18 points each. Skorniyakov also collected 10 boards.

**Final ranking:** 1. Iran, 2. Kazakhstan, 3. Syria, 4. Japan, 5. China, 6. Korea, 7. Philippines, 8. Lebanon, 9. Chinese Taipei, 10. Jordan, 11. Saudi Arabia, 12. Hong Kong, 13. India, 14. UAE, 15. Malaysia

#### **LITHUANIA WOMEN WIN EUROPEAN U18**

Lithuania held off Russia 63-57 to claim their first ever U18 European Championship for Women. Aurime Rinkeviciute saved her best for last as she finished with 27 points, eight rebounds and four assists, but, most importantly, made the right plays at the right time down the stretch to lead her team to victory for the eighth and final time. Marina Solopova added 15 points, five assists and four rebounds and Giedre Pugaite had a double-double. Anastasiya Shilova led Russia with 14 points to go with four rebounds. Lithuania took gold in the tournament for the first time ever and Lithuania coach Ubartas felt the timing was right for the country's basketball tradition. "This is a very important win for Lithuania. It sets an example for Lithuania's senior team at the Beijing Olympics. This will be cause for great celebrations when we get back home. "Russia's silver medal was their best result since last winning the tournament in 2004. Lithuania, Russia, Czech Republic, France and Spain have all qualified for the FIBA U19 World Championship that will take place from 23rd July - 2nd August 2009 in Bangkok, Thailand.

**Final ranking:** 1. Lithuania, 2. Russia, 3. Czech Republic, 4. France, 5. Spain, 6. Serbia, 7. Slovak Republic, 8. Poland, 9. Turkey, 10. Sweden, 11. Ukraine, 12. Bulgaria, 13. Belarus, 14. Italy, 15. Romania, 16. Croatia.



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## CHAT WITH BUSH'S BODYGUARD

August 10th, the first day of the Beijing Olympic Games Men's tournament, was so special not only because of the China-US game which included Yao and other NBA super stars, but also because of the Presidents that made the VIP seats crowded. Just one month before the game, during the G8 Summit Meeting held in Sapporo Japan, US president George W. Bush asked Chinese President Hu Jintao to find some tickets for him, so that he and his family could attend the August 10th game.

The day finally came with the news that at least 6 presidents from all over the world would come to watch. But the 'Basketball Diplomacy' night began with the arrival of a 'Ping Pong Diplomacy' participant, US former secretary Henry Kissinger. Ten minutes later, US President George W. Bush arrived. Another ten minutes later, former US President George H.W. Bush arrived. The President's bodyguard stood just next to the media table, the place where I worked, 8 meters from the reigning President, 7 meters from the former President, 7.5 from the Chinese Foreign Minister. I guessed that his pistol is just several centimetres from me. To make the atmosphere easy, I said 'Hi' and pointed to the statistic sheet,

"Do you need the start list?"

"No."

"Some water?"

"No thanks."

"Well, let me know if you are thirsty and need water."

"Nice thanks."

"Do you watch NBA in the States?"

"Not really."

"So what do you like, baseball, football?"

"No."

The atmosphere became cold again. Maybe he didn't want to make himself too boring, a few seconds later, he turned to the media table,

"I like college league."

"NCAA?"

"Yes. And you have a guy drafted by the Milwaukee Bucks last year. What's his number?"

"No. 11, the one just being introduced, Yi. Do you know that we have another guy who was just signed with the Lakers?"

"Oh really? Which one?"

"SUN. No.9."

The game starts and we both continue with our professional duties. I am not sure that he was able to enjoy the game as much as I was.

*(The author is Tan Jie, the editor of the biggest Chinese basketball weekly)*

## LEBRON & CO. MEET USA OLYMPIC HERO MICHAEL PHELPS

The USA locker room was full of stars during the Olympics. But the brightest star of all wasn't a member of the basketball team that has so far flattened everything in its path in pursuit of a gold medal.

It was USA swimming hero Michael Phelps, the 23-year-old that has set the Olympics on fire by capturing a record eight gold medals here in Beijing to break Mark Spitz's 32-year-old record that was set in Munich. LeBron James spoke about seeing Phelps. "He's definitely one of the greatest athletes I've ever seen in



my life," James said. "It's humbling for me and it's humbling for Kobe (Bryant). It was unbelievable, for myself." Howard had a souvenir. "I got a chance to meet Michael

Phelps and that's why I had the goggles on," Howard said.

## IT'S A SPORT FEST, LITERALLY

Well, it's not only Team USA who were cheering their countrymen (and women) in other sport during the Olympics in Beijing. Manu Ginobili led a couple of his Argentinian teammates to the tennis courts to provide the all needed support to David Nalbandian for his pre-quarter-final match against Frenchman Gael Monfils. Fellow Argentinian tennis player Guillermo Canas, Nalbandian's doubles partner at the Olympics, was at hand to provide the insight into the game. Nalbandian lost that match, but would have surely noted the support from his basketballers. Spanish brothers Marc and Pau Gasol were more fortunate to support a winning cause, again in tennis. The duo rushed to the tennis venue after beating Germany, to witness Rafael Nadal, as the new No. 1 of the ATP Rankings went about his business as usual



beating Austrian Jurgen Meltzer. Argentine super star footballer Messi presented Kobe Bryant with his

shirt during the half time of the game against Serbia. Messi did not take to the field for that game, but his team won 2-0, with Bryant playing the cheerleader in the stands. "He came to watch the game, he waved at me from the stands ... a real master. Kobe showed that he is seriously great," Messi told The Malaysia Star newspaper. The two had already met at the Olympic Village, and Bryant, who spent several childhood years in Italy and played football there, described Messi as his favourite footballer and "a phenomenon".

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