



TEX WINTER'S

TRIANGLE OFFENSE

SECRETS REVEALED

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF SOUND OFFENSE

These are the seven principles of a sound and effective offense.

1. Penetration of the defense. You must penetrate the defense, and the best way to do this is the fast break, because basketball is a full court game, from baseline to baseline.

2. Spacing. I am literally a fanatic of spacing. The floor must be spaced, so it is difficult for the defense to help as well as to trap. The players must be distant from each other a certain number of meters (feet), and the distance varies. In the high school, I would recommend from 4 to 5 meters (about 12 to 15 feet), at the college from 5 to 6 meters (15 to 18 feet), and in the NBA from 5 to almost 7 meters (15 to 20 feet). With this proper spacing, if the defense tries to trap there always will be an open player.

3. Ball and Player Movements. The players must move the ball and move themselves on the court, but with a purpose, because there is only one ball and the players will play almost 80% of the time without the possession of the ball.

4. Options for the Ball Handler. He must be able to pass the ball to all the other four teammates, so the players must be in constant move.

5. Offensive Rebound and Defensive Balance. On all the possible shots, the offense must provide a strong offensive rebounding, as well create a defensive balance to avoid the opponents' fast break.

6. To fill any spot. The offense must offer to any player the chance to fill any spot on the court, independently by his role. All the position should be interchangeable.

7. Utilize individual talents. Take advantage by your best players, but always with the respect of all the other teammates on the court.

PASSING

One underrated skill today is passing, and passing is one of the basic of the triangle offense. For this reason I think it's important that the player really understand the principles we want to apply on passing.

No more than one meter (three feet) should be the distance between the passer and his defender and preferably less. The closer the defender covers the offensive player with

the ball and less time he has to react to the passer movement, giving to the passer the chance to recognize what the defender is doing. This principle of good passing is violated more than any other.

He must see the passing lanes and the receiver, but not look at the receiver, unless the pass is preceded by an effective fake, and do not turn and face "peripheral" vision, but without making a blind pass.

He has to use fakes with a purpose, not over fake, because he will not be able to recognize what the defender is doing with the hands. He must make a fake and react with poise, seeing the lane of passing.

He must eliminate all the unnecessary moves in ball handling and passing, using quick wrist and finger action, shortening as much as possible the action of the pass.

He has to pass quickly the ball to an open teammate, who has no more than three seconds after he received it, to make his play, such as passing, shooting, faking and driving, or passing an cutting. For every second under the three second it takes to the receiver of the pass to execute the play, the better basketball player he becomes. For every second over the three seconds, he becomes a poorer one. All the players on the court must move quickly the ball, so the defense will be occupied, opening the chances of passing lanes and scoring opportunities.

He must pass the ball to a teammate's open side, a rule often violated also by the best players. The passer must have the vision not only of his defender, but also of the passing lane and the receiver's defender. Naturally also the receiver must help the passer offering him good target, as well as keep his defender away from the passing lane or freezing or sealing him for a second for giving to the passer the change to pass safely the ball.

He must anticipate when he may receive the ball and have enough intuition to know in advance the best places to pass the ball. And this is a skill the best players have. This is the reason why some pro teams are outstanding also if they appeared to have very little definite team pattern. If the players do not have this ability, it is necessary to build an offensive pattern that gives to the players the chance of keeping busy the defense.

LINE OF DEPLOYMENT

One of the asset of the triangle offense is the chance to isolate the post and attack his defender. We would like now to talk of the "line of deployment", a basic concept. With this terms we mean in imaginary line which is traced from the forward with the ball, to the center in the low post, his defender and the basket. For playing a standard defensive position between the center and the basket, the defender of the center must play behind the center, as long as the center remains on the line of deployment (diagr. 2). But, defending in this way, it is easy for the forward to pass the ball to the center. If the center's defender wants to prevent an easy pass, he must overplay the center, on the baseline side or the high side, losing in this way his alignment with the center and the basket, so the forward can make a quick pass to the open side of the center. The center must master the good technique of shaping up on the post, it means playing the line of deployment (diagr. 3). We stress this theory and we were and are successful to pass the ball to the center, either for a shot or for a pass out to a teammate, who is in a position to do something constructive with the ball when he receives it. By thoroughly indoctrinating the players on the line of deployment theory, we feel we have been very successful in getting the ball to our center, and this has been true despite a concentrated effort by the opponents to prevent the pass to the post.

DIFFERENT METHODS OF FORMING THE SIDELINE TRIANGLE

The triangle offense can start in several ways, depending by the defensive adjustments or offensive strategies.

BASIC WAYS TO FORM THE TRIANGLE

"N. 1" Pass from the Triangle. We call this N. 1 pass because it is this first pass that is done for forming the triangle, and after this one we form the triangle.

STRONG SIDE FILL

Guard

Outside Cut. 1 dribbles on the lateral lane, passes to the wing 3, cuts outside him and goes in the corner, forming a triangle with 5 and 3. The wing 3 must set himself with the proper space, away from the sideline for letting 1 cutting behind him, as well as the other types of cuts, which we will explain on the next paragraphs. Slice Cut. 1 passes the ball to the wing 3, goes toward him and then cuts away and goes in the corner (diagr. 4). Blur Screen Cut. 1 passes the ball to the wing 3, cuts inside, brushing off the center 5, and goes in the corner.

Basket Cut. 1 passes the ball to the wing 3 and cuts to the basket, coming off the center 5, and goes in the corner. On all the cuts of the strong side guard 1, the other guard 2 gets in the middle of the floor for defensive balance and for then playing two-on-two on the weak side (diagr. 5).

Wing

Dribble entry: 1 dribbles toward 3 and this is a signal for 3 to go in the corner, while 5 moves to high post and 2 goes in the middle of the court (diagr. 6). Then 4 cuts in the lane and goes on the center position, while 5 replaces 4 in the wing spot with a weak side cut (diagr. 7)

Center

1 passes to 3 and 5 goes to the corner, while 4 cuts, high or low, in the lane and replaces the center while 2 cuts to the weak side wing spot, replacing 4 (diagr. 8). Another option is that 1 passes to 3, 5 goes in the corner and 1 (or 2) replaces 5 in the post (diagr. 9).

WEAK SIDE FILL

Guard

1 passes to 3 and then the weak side guard 2 can fill the corner in two ways:

- With a basket cut.
- After a back pick of the wing 4 (diagr.10).

Forward

1 passes to 3 and 4 makes a baseline or over the top cut and fills the corner, while 2 replaces 4 in the wing position (diagr.11).

"N. 2" Pass from the Triangle

After we form the triangle on the strong side of the court, there are four potential passes that the strong side wing can make. We call these four passing options "No.2" passes, because they are made after the first pass to the wing position, that we use for forming the triangle. Four are the spots on the court where these passes can be directed and from each one of these spots there are a multitude of different offensive options. Assuming that 1 passed to 3 and then filled the corner, the wing 3 must:

- I. First look for the pass to the center 5.*
- II. Second look to the weak side guard 2 on the middle of the half court (diagr. 12)*
- III. Third look on the backdoor step of weak side wing 4.*
- IV. Fourth look to the strong side guard 1 in the corner (diagr. 13).*

FIRST LOOK: PASS TO THE CENTER

Setting the Sideline Triangle

We will show now one of the simplest options of this offense, old as basketball, but still very effective. It is what is called "split cuts", or also "split the post" or "post cuts". The play starts with the entry pass from 1 to 3 and the outside cut to the corner of 1, for forming the sideline triangle, while 2 goes in the middle of the court (diagr. 14).

FORWARD TO POST PASS

A. 3 passes to 5, then makes a fake to cut inside the lane and then cuts on the baseline side of 5: The passer is the first cutter and cuts to side of the post 5. 3 can make:

- A fast cut, while 1 is trying to cut as close as possible behind 3 (diagr.15).
- A change of pace cut, with an attempt of a screen for 1 (diagr 16). 2 spots up opposite o the ball and 4 gets near the lane for the rebound.

After the pass to the post 5, 3 can also start a speed cut and then screen for 2 (diagr. 17). He can also start a speed cut and then screen for 4, while 1 speed cuts on the baseline (diagr. 18). The post 5 can also kick off the ball to 2, who has spotted up on the weak side in a spot that we call "garden spot" (diagr. 19).

B. 3 passes the ball to 5 and 1 fast cuts to the baseline and, if open, receives a drop pass from 5, while 3 makes a over the top speed cut (on our terminology we call this action "zone speed cuts"). In the meantime, on the pass from 3 to 5, 2 spots up on the "garden spot" and can receive the ball from 5, and 4 cuts behind the defense to the "freeze" "spot" (diagr. 20)

If 1, 2 or 3 are not open, 1 continues his cut, rubs off the 4's screen and goes high, while 3 cuts in the lane and screens 4 (screen-the-screener action), while 2 replaces 3 (diagr. 21). 4 pops out to the free-throw area and receives the ball from 5, or, if 4 is not free, 5 can also pass to 3, who has rolled to the basket after the screen. If he has no other choice 5 can pass to 2. 3, if does not receive from 5, fills the corner on the weak side (diagr. 22). 2 passes to 4 (or can pass back to 5) and then he moves to the top of the circle. If 4 is not free for shooting, he passes to 1 and then cuts and goes on the low post position, and 5 takes the weak side wing spot of 4. Now we have formed the triangle on the other side of the floor, and we can run again our offense (diagr. 23).

C. After the pass to 5, 3 makes a "rebound screen cut", while 1 step fakes on the baseline to set the defender up and cuts off the 3's screen to a position in front of 5, and 2 and 4

spots up opposite to the ball. 5 tries to pass the ball to one of the open teammates (diagr. 24). If neither is open, 1 continues to the free-throw line area: he can cut in the lane, screen for 2, who has come back to the ball, and then roll to the basket or pop out after the screen. 5 can pass to 1, to 2, or to 3, who, after the screen, pops out in the corner (diagr. 25).

SECOND LOOK: PASS TO THE TOP OF THE CIRCLE (WEAK SIDE GUARD)

A. If 5 is not open, 3 can pass to 2 at the top of the circle and, if 2 is open, he can shot, as the first option, or he can pass to 5, who ducks in the lane (diagr. 26). If 5 is not open on the duck in the lane, 3, after the pass to 2, runs a "rebound screen cut", while 1 step fakes on the baseline to set the defender up and cuts off the 3's screen, on the way back to defensive balance. 2 can pass to 1. 4 fakes cut and comes back, as well as 5. This action keeps the defense occupied off the ball (diagr. 27). 2 can pass to 1 if open, or can dribble wave ball to 1, if the defense is sagging. 2 passes to 1 on the dribble interchange, about at the mid point, or 2 passes up to 1 and 1 passes to 3, who has step back in the corner after the screen. 4 reverses back to the basket area as the dribble weave action takes place (diagr. 28).

B. We call this play "pinch post action." 4 starts to pop to the ball, when 2 receives the ball from 3, but 4 is overplayed, so he reverses to the basket, a backdoor cut, and can receive an over the top pass from 2, while 1 gets up for a defensive balance and 5 keeps his defender busy, moving in and out of the lane. 2 passes to 4 (diagr. 29). If 4 cannot receive on the back door, he gets to the high post area at the elbow, receive the ball from 2, who speed cuts off and receives the ball back, a short flip pass off the 4's front hip. 2 must have the hands in a "ready position" to catch the ball (a two-man play). After the screen, 3 steps back in the corner while 1 gets up for the defensive balance and 5 keeps busy his defender and "freezes" for a second at the block (diagr. 30). 2 drives to the basket, 4 reverses pivot with the pass, it means he opens up to the ball, reads the defense and reacts accordingly. If there is a direct line to the basket, he "dive" cuts to the basket and receives a return pass from 2. If 2 is double teamed, 4 opens up to the ball, with a reverse pivot, and holds for a return pass from 2. 5 "freezes" at the block, ready to receive a possible pass from 2 and 3 spots up for a possible kick off pass or cut to the front of the rim for a pass or to go to rebound (diagr. 31).

THIRD LOOK: PASS TO THE WEAK SIDE WING

A. 3 passes to 4, who has flashed at the elbow on the high post on the ball side, and 2 makes a "backdoor speed cut" to the basket. If 2 has the head and the shoulders over his defender, 4 makes a quick drop pass to 2. 2 should receive the ball with the knee high and reaching ahead for it (diagr. 32). 3, after making the pass to 4, runs a "rebound ,screen cut", while 1 step fakes to the baseline and comes off the screen of 3. 1 goes high for defensive balance and 3 reads the play and prepares for the rebound on the front of the rim. 5 freezes at the block and anticipates a possible pass from 2, if his defenders switches to help 2's defender's on the drive. Then, 4 reverses pivot and reads the defense, staying behind the ball or diving to the basket, ready to receive a pass from 2, if 4's defender drops to cover 2 (diagr. 33).

B. 3 passes to 4, who has flashed at the elbow on the high post on the ball side, and 2 makes a backdoor speed cut to the basket. If 2 is not open, he cuts in the corner and 3 cuts right after him for receiving a pass from 4. 3 can drive to the basket for a lay up or drive and kick off to 5 on "freeze" on the block, or to 2, who spotted up in the corner (diagr. 34). If 2 is not open and also 3 cannot receive the ball, 4 dribbles wave to 1 coming out of the corner, or pass to him on the step back to the corner (diagr. 35). If 1 receives the ball on the dribble wave, he drives straight to the basket, and can also make a jump shot, a kick off pass to 2 or 3, while 5 flashes to the low post on the other side of the floor (diagr. 36). If nothing happens, with the pass to 2 we have formed a triangle on the other side of the court with 2, 5 and 3, with 1 at the top of the lane and 4 on the weak side wing spot and we create continuity on our offense (diagr. 37).

FOURTH LOOK: PASS TO THE STRONG SIDE GUARD

3 passes to 1 in the corner. After the pass, 3 makes a "banana" cut to the basket and can try to receive the ball, while 5 gets to the high post at the ball side elbow (diagr. 38). Right after the 3's cut, 5 screens and rolls on 1, who drives to the top of the key, and can try to pass to 5 on the roll while 3 continues his cut and is screened by 4 on the weak side and 2 spotted up opposite to the ball (diagr. 39). 1 can shot or drive to the basket or pass to 2, who has spotted up. 1 can also pass to 4 or 5 if there is help on the basket penetration (diagr. 40) We so form the triangle on the other side with 3, 4 and 2, while 5 becomes weak side wing, and 1 sets up at the top of lane (diagr. 41).

SOLO CUT SERIES OF OPTIONS

1, after the pass to 3, instead cutting to the corner for creating the triangle, makes a speed cut, and receives the ball at the

free-throw line area, or under the basket, if he is free. 4 moves from 5 to 6 meters (15 to 18 feet) from the basket and holds, while 2 gets to the top of the circle and holds (diagr. 42).

3 gets in the triple threat position and looks at the post 5 for a pass. 1 holds his position in a "freeze" spot opposite to the ball. 3 passes to 5, and makes what we call "solo cut", either side of 5. 2 spots up on the "garden spot", away from the ball, while 4 screens down for 1 and 1 pops out in the corner (diagr. 43).

As 3 cuts on 5, 5 has cleared the area for a shot, 2 works behind the "sweet spot." 3, if does not receive on the cut, screens for 4, who can come high to the free-throw line area or cut to the basket for receiving from 5. 5 can also pass to 2 (diagr. 44).

Let's now assume that 3 cannot pass to 5. 3 then passes to 2 at the top of the lane and then makes a "rub cut" off 5, while 5 steps up to pinch post off 3's cut. On the weak side 4 screens for 1, who can pops out flat in the corner, or out or up. 2 has several options of passing: he can pass to 3, to 1, to 4, who has rolled to the basket after the screen for 1, or to 5 on the pinch post (diagr. 45).

PRESSURE RELEASES - METHODS OF PENETRATING THE FRONT LINE DEFENSES

I. "Moment of Truth". We must be able to overcome the problem of the defense, which puts a lot of pressure on our offensive players. Here we will show different methods of pressure releases and penetrating the front line defense. But, before we need to explain some terms we use. On our terminology we has defined "moment of truth" as the position of 3, the wing in front of the defensive player defending the ball. 1 is ready to pass the ball to the wing 3 as he reaches the "moment of truth", and 3 must coordinate his pop out, so he can receive the ball at the wing position as 1 reaches the "moment of truth" (diagr. 46). Then we call "line of truth" the imaginary line across the floor one meter (three feet) in front of the defensive player on the ball handler (diagr. 47).

II. "Lag principle". If 1 reaches the "moment of truth" and 3 is not open on the pop out, we apply the "lag principle", a guard-to-guard pass. 1 passes to 2, as 2 "lags" behind the "line of truth", by one meter (three feet) or more as a safety valve. Then 2 passes to 4 as he pops out to receive the ball. All the three players, who are involved on this two quick passes, must coordinate their moves and timing for a successful wing entry (diagr. 48).

III. "Blind Pig Action". If 2, the player, who should receive the "lag" pass is overplayed, 4 flashes to the top of the lane, 1 passes quickly to 4, 2 speed cuts down back side, a back door cut, and if he is open, receives a drop pass on the cut to the basket (diagr. 49). If 2 is not open he continues the cut to the weak side "freeze" spot, 1 cuts over the top on down back side of 4 and receives the ball from him. 1 drives to the basket or dribbles on the operating spot, on the wing or on the corner (diagr. 50). If 1 is not open on the cut, he continues to the basket area and then steps out and looks for late pass and holds position. 4 then drives on the other side of the court for a dribble weave, and meets 2, coming off the down screen of 3. After the pass, 4 goes in the middle of the court and can play on either sides, or can pass to 2, popping out to the corner and filling the wing spot to form the triangle (diagr. 51).

Options for 4

4 can pass to 3, and, instead screening for him, screens down for 1, who moves up at the top of the floor. 2 holds on the "freeze" position and reads the action, while 3 holds wing position, instead screening down for 2. If 4 goes away to screen for 1, 2 pops out to the corner area and a sideline triangle is formed by 3, 5 and 2 (diagr. 52). 4 can also pass to 1 and set a screen on the ball (diagr. 53). 1 has the following options:

- Make a drop pass to 4 on the 4's roll to the basket.
- Drive right to the basket.
- Penetrate to clear for a jump shot.
- Penetrate and kick off the ball to 5 on the block; to 3, who is holding in the weak side position; or to 2 in the corner spot (diagr. 54).

If no solution is possible, we can form the sideline triangle with 3, 5 and 2. 1 can pass to 3 and then get at the top of the circle (diagr. 55). After the "blind pig" (please see the diagr. 6.50), and the cut of 2, 4, with the ball at the top of the circle, passes back it to 1, and then goes away (diagr. 56). 4 sets a second screen, a staggered screen for 2, who has come out of the lane and has received a first screen from 3. 1 is isolated on one side of the court and can play one-on-one, while 2 continues his cut and has come off the screens of 3 and 4 and is back on the center of the court for defensive balance (diagr. 57). If 1 cannot beat his defender to the basket, he can kick off the ball to one of his four teammates, who spaced out on the weak side. Again, we form the sideline triangle with 4, 5, and 3, while 2 sets himself on the top of the lane and 1 on the weak side wing spot (diagr. 58).

Wing entry on the "blind pig"

4 has flashed to the top of the circle and 2 speed cuts in the lane. But this time 1 cannot pass to 4, so he passes to 3 and

then 1 receives a back screen by 4. 1 speed cuts and 3 looks for a high over the top pass to 1 (diagr. 59). After the screen for 1, 4 sets a sideline screen for 3, who drives around 4 and to the lane (we call this action "wing screen and roll"). 1 spots up to the corner or at the wing spot, or comes back for a dribble weave interchange with 3. After the screen for 3, 4 screens again for the third time, now in the corner for 2, who comes up for the defensive balance. 5 "freezes" on the weak side post area (diagr. 60). After the screen, 4 continues to the weak side rebound position, 3 posts down after the kick off pass to 1. 5 sets himself in the lane for the possible rebound on a shot of 1 (diagr. 61). If 2 is overplayed or he has violated the "lag principle", 2 cuts first and 4 cuts second, right after 2's tail (we call this "blur" screen), 4 receives the ball from 1 and then 1 speed cuts back side of 4. 3 screens for 2, who comes up for defensive balance (diagr. 62). 1 can also make a high pass to 2, if open (diagr. 63).

IV. Wing Reverse. If 1 cannot pass to 2 or 3, he can pass to 5, who has flashed to the high post position at the elbow on the ball side, as usual, respecting the spacing with the other teammates. 3, on the pass to the high post 5, cuts backdoor (we call this action "wing reverse"). 5 passes the ball with a drop pass to 3, if 3 is head and shoulders over his defender 5 (diagr. 64). If 3 cannot receive the ball, 1 screens on 2 (we call this action "guard squeeze action"). 2 cuts off the 1's screen and to a position one meter (three feet) in front of 5, and 5 passes the ball to 2, if open. After the screen, 1 rolls to the free-throw area and can also receive the ball from 5 (diagr. 65).

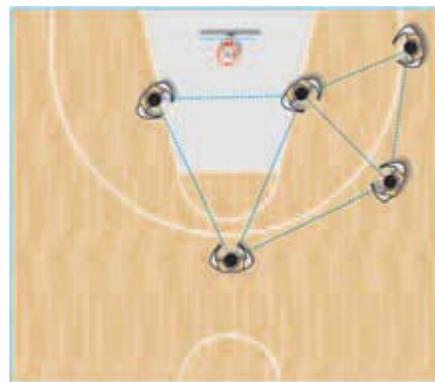


Diagram 1

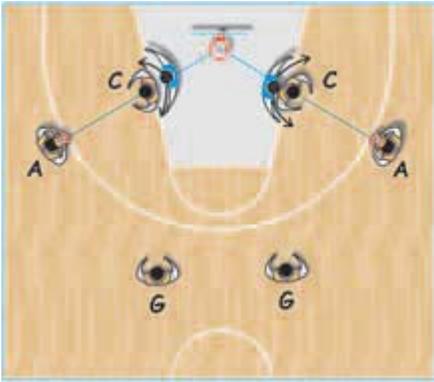


Diagram 2



Diagram 3

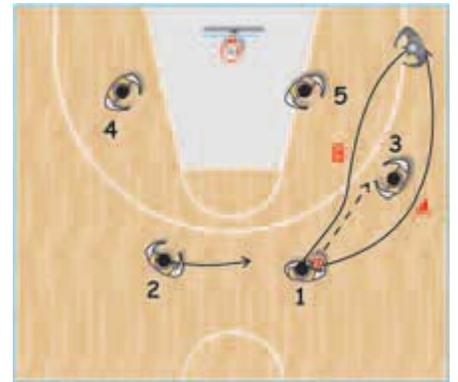


Diagram 4

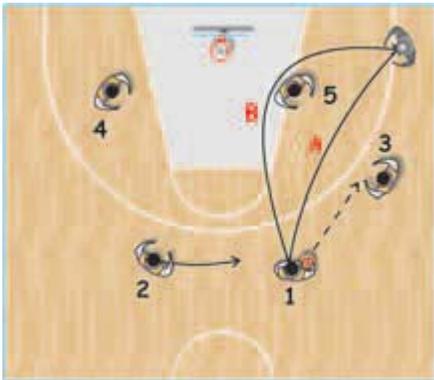


Diagram 5



Diagram 6



Diagram 7



Diagram 8



Diagram 9



Diagram 10

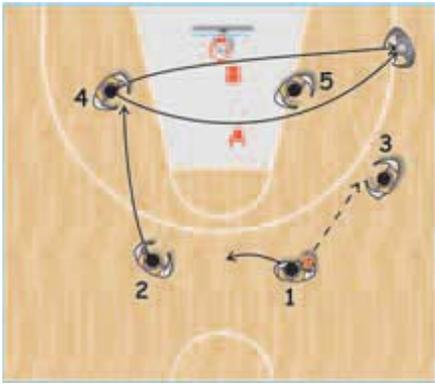


Diagram 11



Diagram 12

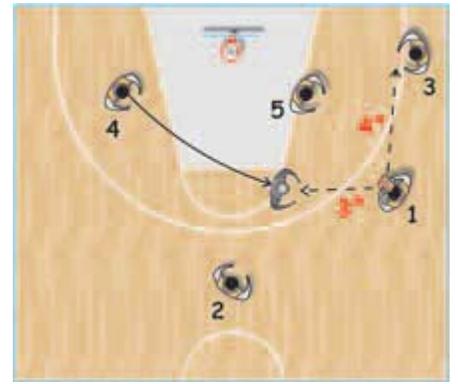


Diagram 13



Diagram 14

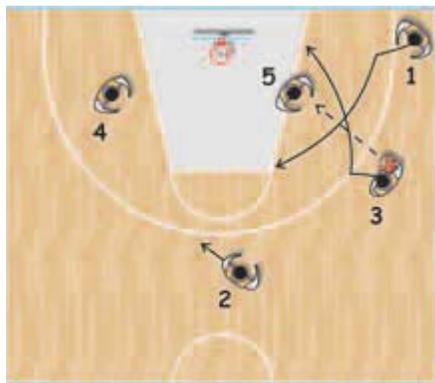


Diagram 15

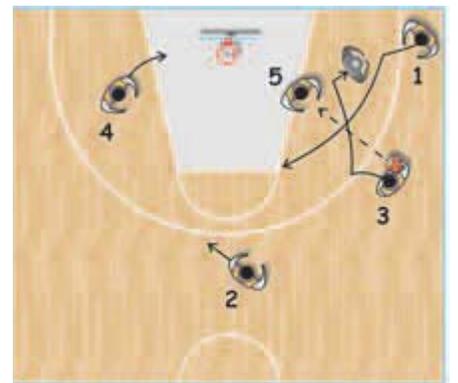


Diagram 16



Diagram 17



Diagram 18



Diagram 19

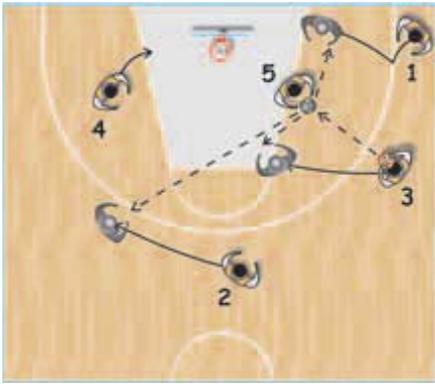


Diagram 20

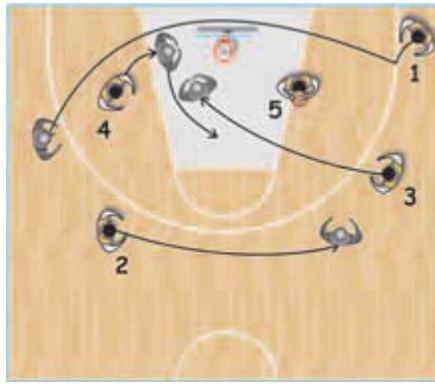


Diagram 21



Diagram 22



Diagram 23

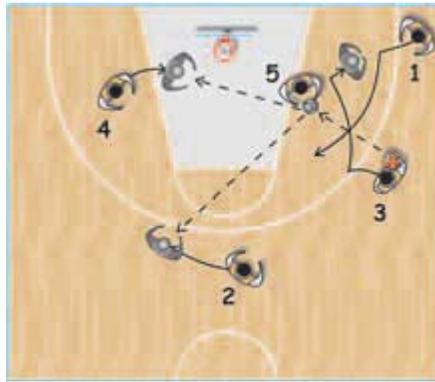


Diagram 24



Diagram 25

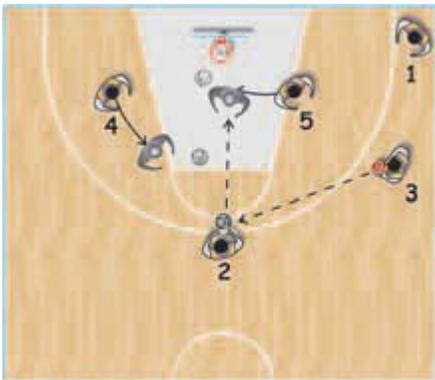


Diagram 26



Diagram 27



Diagram 28



Diagram 29

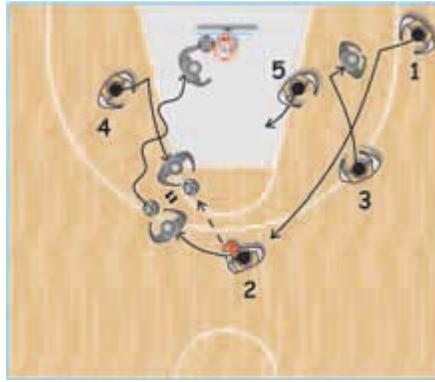


Diagram 30



Diagram 31

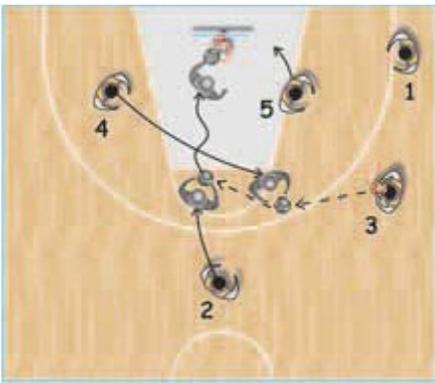


Diagram 32

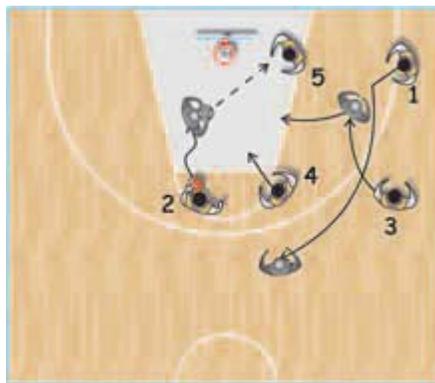


Diagram 33

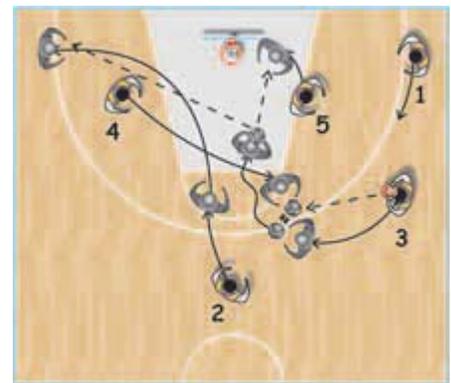


Diagram 34



Diagram 35

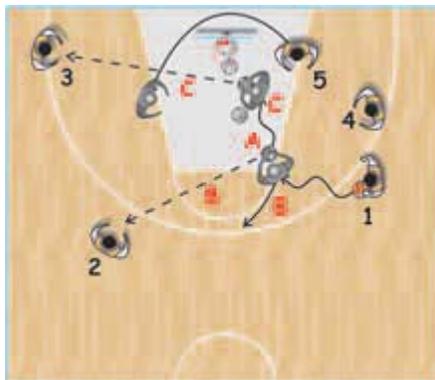


Diagram 36



Diagram 37



Diagram 38

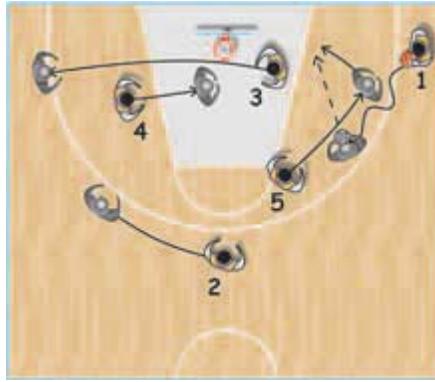


Diagram 39

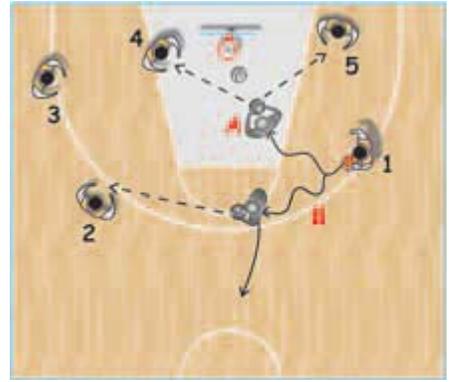


Diagram 40



Diagram 41

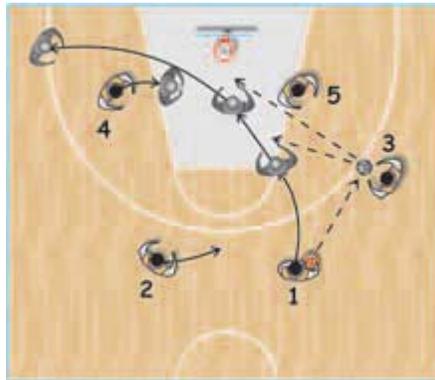


Diagram 42



Diagram 43



Diagram 44

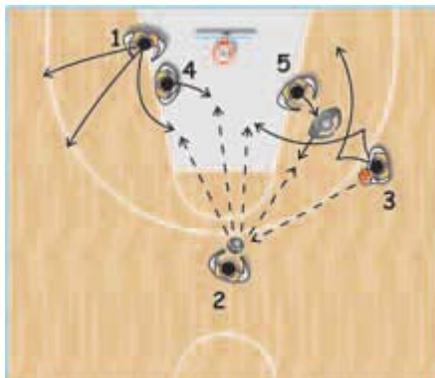


Diagram 45



Diagram 46



Diagram 47

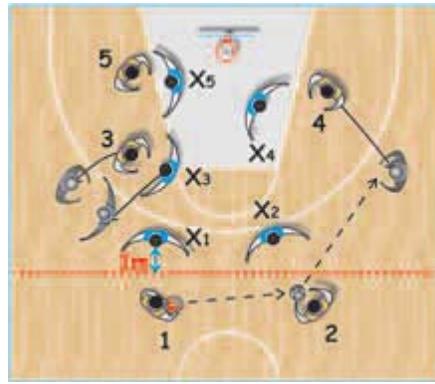


Diagram 48

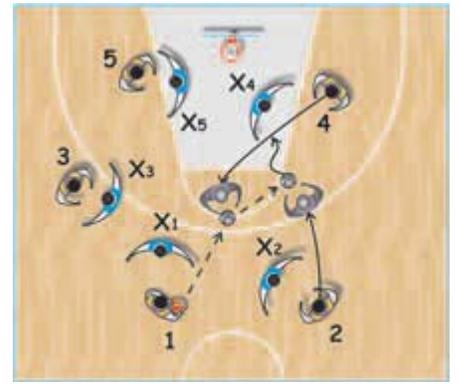


Diagram 49

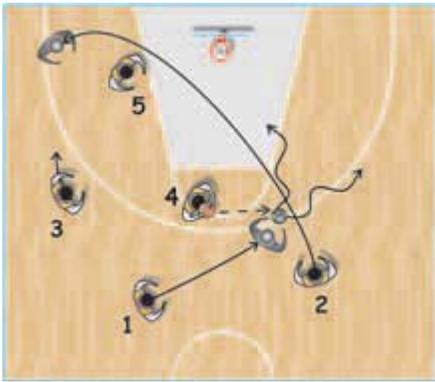


Diagram 50

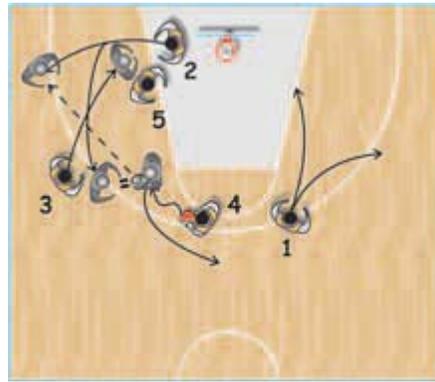


Diagram 51



Diagram 52



Diagram 53

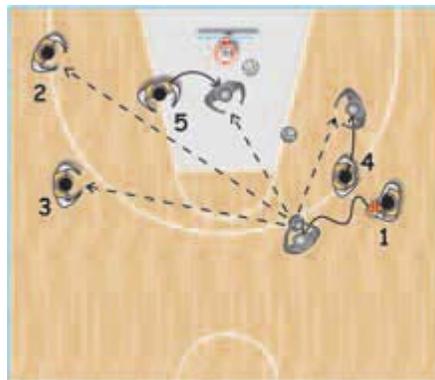


Diagram 54



Diagram 55



Diagram 56

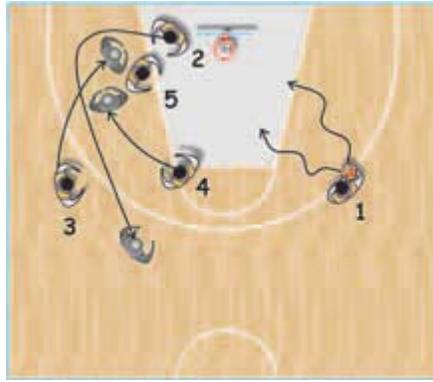


Diagram 57

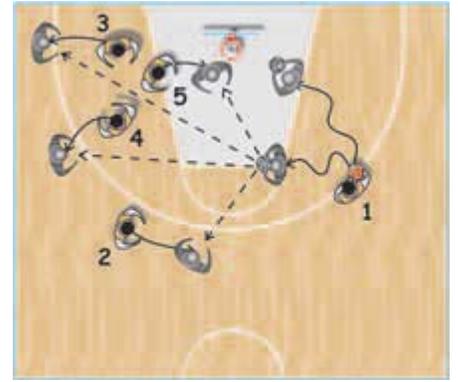


Diagram 58

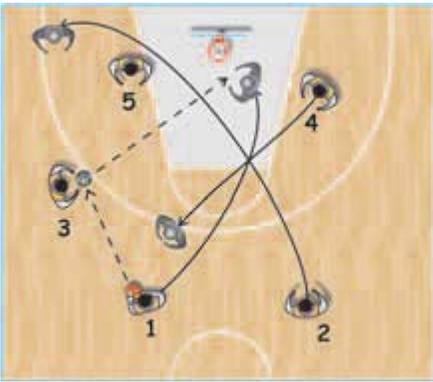


Diagram 59

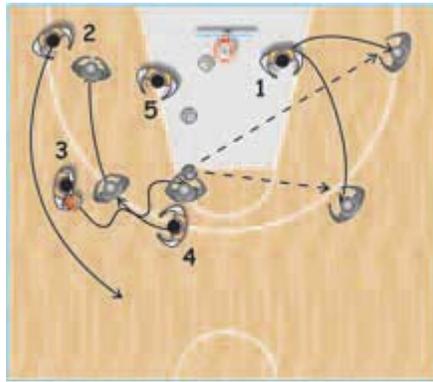


Diagram 60

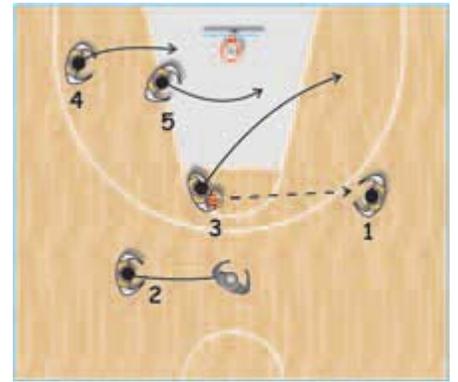


Diagram 61

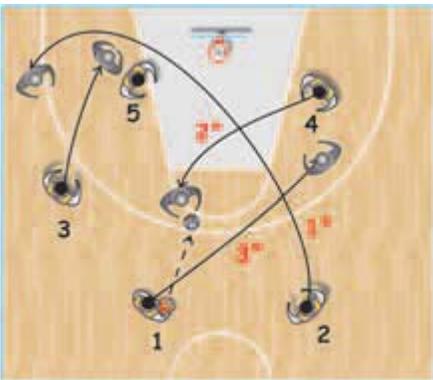


Diagram 62

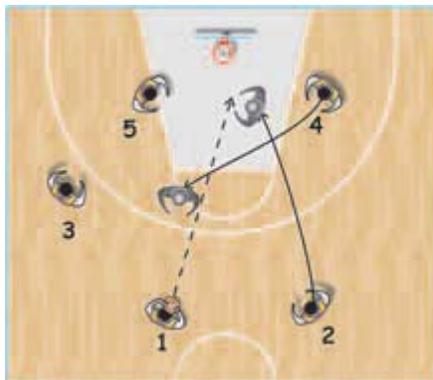


Diagram 63



Diagram 64

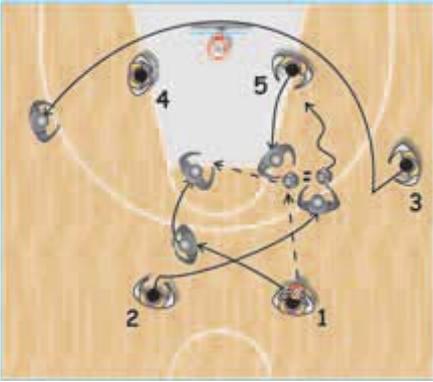


Diagram 65
