

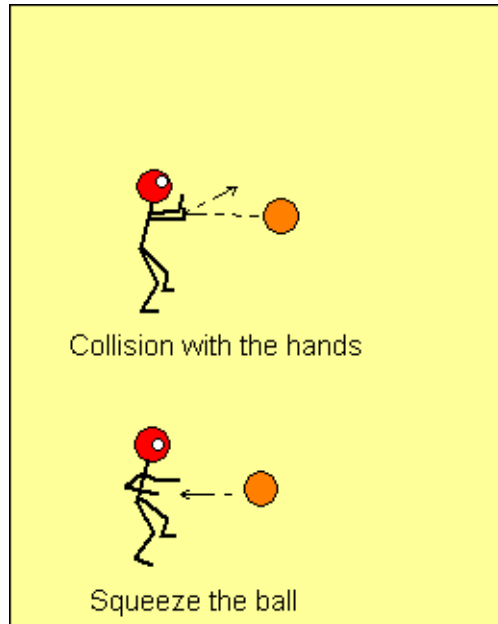
**Mike MacKay - Manager of Coach Education and Development** I have had a couple requests for some thoughts on passing to the post. It has also been something I have been working on a lot with the NEDA players. A lot of time must be taken to help the players with understand the subtle nuisances. Demand and forcing players to “do it right” will only lead to frustration with the coach and players. As a coach this is one skill where you have to get inside their head to understand what they see and think.



### **Catching a ball**

Newton’s first law of motion states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. What does this have to do with catching? Everything! When a moving ball meets the hands it is a collision. If the hands are stationary and rigid the reaction is that the ball will rebound back away from the hands. If we absorb the ball by extending the arms and bending as we catch we slow down the force of the ball making the collision softer and therefore easier to catch.

The other problem is that players will try to squeeze the ball with no back stop. This requires great timing and hand strength to absorb all of the force of the ball.

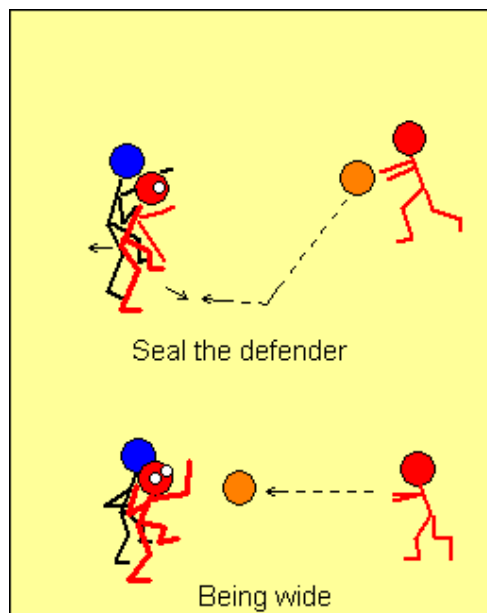


### **Catching the ball in the post**

Too often as coaches we assume this to be an easy skill. The complex nature of the task makes it a high level skill. We are often asking the player to do two tasks that if not properly trained contradict one another.

**Seal the defender** - this often means our weight is leaning into the defender. This makes it difficult to move into the pass and to absorb the ball.

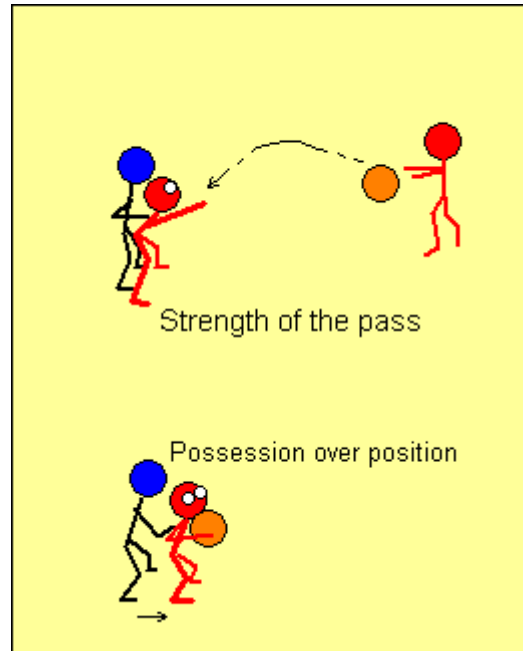
**Be wide** - the act of getting wide often means extending the arms making the back wide. I often call it “Bullwinkle the Moose” for young kids. Your thumbs point to your ears. It makes it tough for the defender to get around.



The problem is that the hands are not in a good position to catch the ball. If I put both hands out for a target in front of my chest too soon the defender can slip around. Too often you will see players in this position have no backstop. They will try to squeeze the ball between the hands. More than one player has used their nose as the backstop in this position.

**Strength of the pass** - Normally we encourage players to pass the ball harder or faster; yet when we pass to the post it is often about making a "touch pass". Too hard it is uncatchable, too soft the defense has time to react or steal the ball.

**KOB** - keep on the body - Players often will be reluctant to give up a good seal to get the ball. As Jack Donohue used to say, "Possession over position when playing on offense".

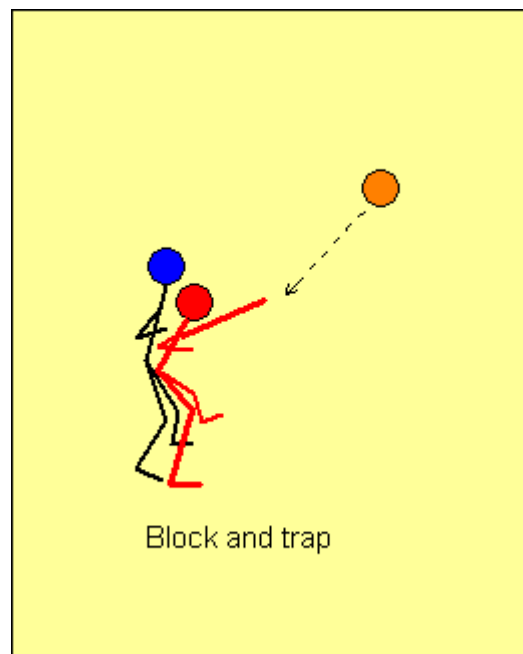


### **Blocking and trapping**

Post players must learn to catch a ball by using the blocking and trapping technique. We often do not practice this skill until there is defense applied. We need to practice the basic mechanics of catching using this technique.

#### **Key points**

- ❑ **Watch** the ball into the hand. When sealing players are very often distracted by the defender or what is going on around them.
- ❑ **Absorb the ball** - To often players do not extend the hand. The extended hand not only provides a target it allows for the speed of the pass to be absorbed and slow down the momentum of the ball. Many players will double catch the ball because there is a rebound off their hands first.
- ❑ **Bring the other hand up** to grasp the ball with two hands. The timing is important. If done too slow the player becomes narrow and allows the defender to slip around them. Too late it is a one hand catch.
- ❑ They need to **seal with the hip**, but remain on balance. If the weight is going backwards they will often not be able to move forward to catch the ball. Perimeter players must read this body language when passing.
- ❑ Possession before position - "crow hop" get the ball on balance. We do not want a reaching step that forces the player to bend forward and lose balance.



## Wall Passing - Blocking and trapping

### First progression - Blocking

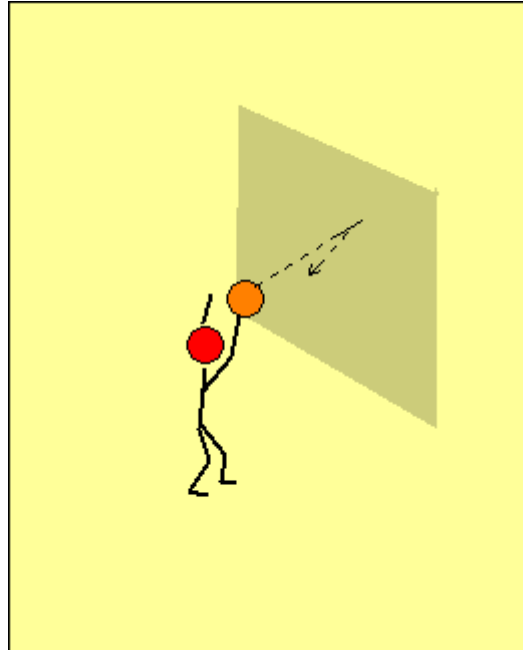
The player makes one handed passes off the wall. The key is to keep the arm extended out in front and above of the head. As the ball is caught the player must watch the ball and the arm should move backwards to absorb the ball.

### Second progression - Trapping

Now the player brings the second hand to the ball to secure it. The ball should be placed in the high triple threat position before the next pass. I also call this a shoulder check.

### Third possession - move to the ball

Now the player must "crow hop" (a simple hop to a two foot stop) to receive the ball.

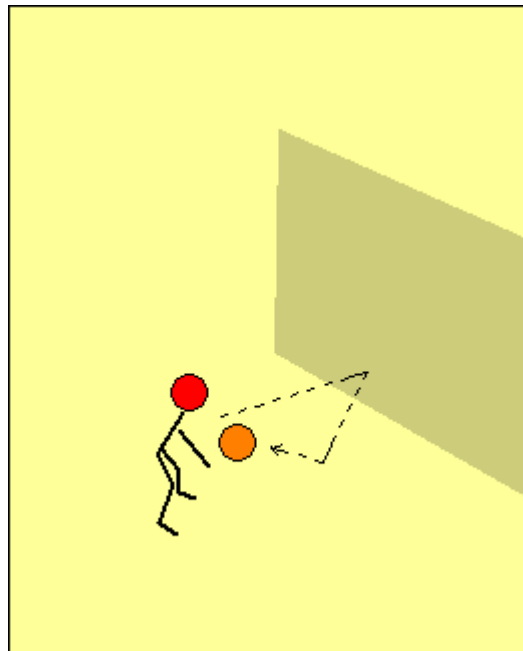


### Bounce pass block and trap

Now we want to work on blocking and trapping a bounce pass. The player throws a pass off the wall so that it will bounce back. You can use the same progressions as before. Note, the player starts almost perpendicular to the wall.

### Keys

- ❑ Extend the arm away from the body to show a target and be ready to absorb the ball.
- ❑ Block and trap the ball
- ❑ Crow hop to the ball
- ❑ Secure the ball with a shoulder check



### Seal and show target

The players form groups of three. The defender allows the offensive player to seal with the hips. It has been my observation that the top post players still give a one handed target. In this drill it is suggested that the post player learn to feel the defender and decide which side to show the target. Posting with both hands up and catching a pass thrown at the chest is not an easy task.

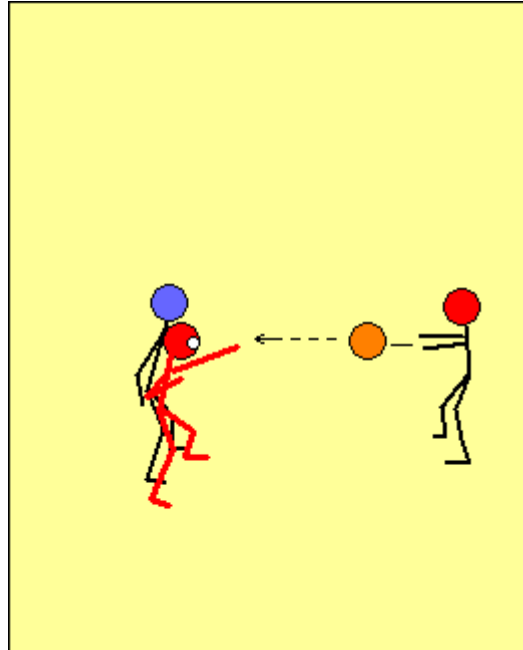
On the catching the ball the player should hop to receive the ball and does a shoulder check before returning the pass. After passing re-seal the defender.

The defender can slowly increase the level of intensity.

The passer has many reads that he/she must make to assist in the type and strength of pass.

- ❑ Where is the defender? - in general pass away from the defense
- ❑ How good is the seal of the post? Can the defender slip the seal and steal the ball?  
A pass fake often helps here.
- ❑ Where is the target hand? - high/low
- ❑ Where is the body weight of the post? Can he/she move to receive the ball or is he/she leaning too much?
- ❑ What is the height difference of the two players? In general pass low when the defender is taller than the post, pass high if the post is taller than the defender.

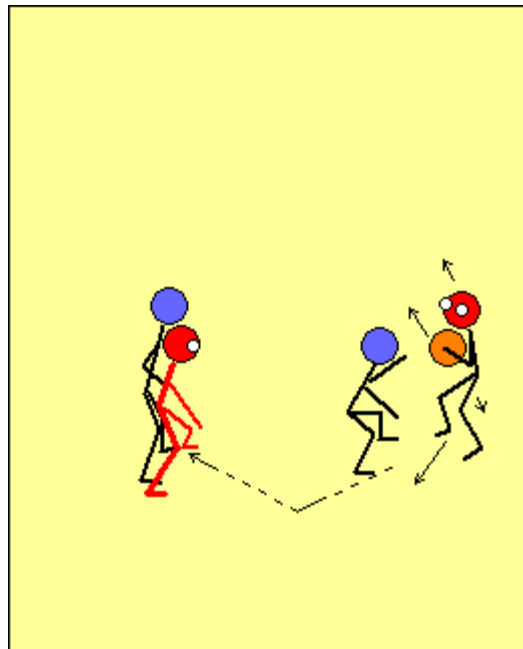
Time must be taken to see what the passer sees. Ask questions.



### Reading the defense on the passer

The next progression is to add a defender on the passer. The players need to be able protect the ball and look through the defense. Some things to consider:

- ❑ How much pressure is being placed on the ball? If sagging you may need to shot fake or dribble to draw the defense out to make room for the pass. If over playing you may need to dribble or jab to make space.
- ❑ Where are the passing windows?  
These are the gaps below and above the hands. It is my observation that most turnovers to the post occur when the pass is released and caught at shoulder height. This is where both

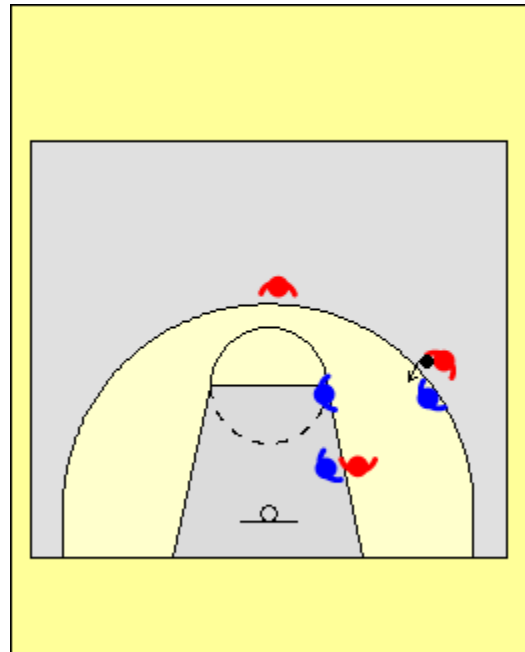


- ❑ Defenders arms are the longest and take the least amount of effort to deflect the ball.
- ❑ Pivot - player must learn to pivot to beat the feet of the defender. If you can beat the feet you can extend further than the defender can reach.
- ❑ Pass/jab/shot fakes - fakes give valuable information about the intent of the defense. They also create better passing windows by raising or lowering the hands or force the defense to move his/her feet.

### Read the help

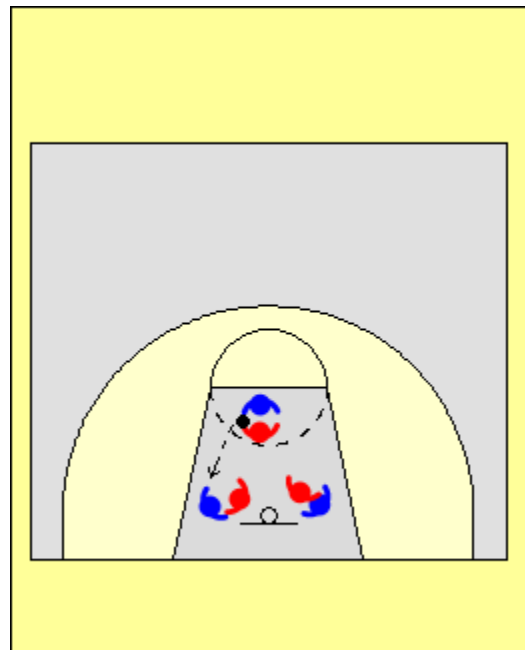
The players must now learn to read the help. Are they ready to double or steal the ball? Awareness can be added by the other offensive players communicating. I call this "being your teammate's eyes". If you see your player sagging to double or steal let the player with the ball know.

This is where eyes fakes are crucial. They make the defense show its hand. Also by pass faking you can make the help defender return to a position where the post pass is now open.



### Keep away in small space

This is an excellent drill to work on passing in a confined space. The three offensive players must see how many passes in a row they can make without a turn over. They cannot receive the ball outside of the FIBA key. They can seal, cut or screen. It gets especially difficult if the defense switch denies all screens.



### **Three on three in confined space**

This is another excellent drill for teaching passing in a confined space. The players fill the swing, wing and post positions. In the first progression they are not allowed to dribble. Encourage the defense to put tremendous pressure on the ball. After passing we want screens. They can work on up screens (UCLA), down screens, Pack screens etc. When the ball is passed to the post the two remaining perimeter players should screen. This is excellent to help players with anticipating a team mate coming open off the screen. It also works on using screens and defending screens.

Add dribbles once they have learn to pivot to protect the ball.

