

## **Mike M<sup>ac</sup>Kay - Manager of Coach Education and Development**

I was very fortunate to attend a clinic hosted by the Guelph Phoenix that featured Rick Torbett. His **Better Basketball** DVD's are the best value in the DVD industry. His second DVD on shooting is the best DVD I have seen on this topic, and I recommend it to everyone who wants to teach shooting the proper way.



This article is on teaching a conceptual offence. Many of the concepts will be familiar to coaches. I do like the simplicity of the decision making and the order in which he teaches the concepts. With the advent of the shot clock we need to teach **penetration principles** first. Players need to understand the idea is to attack the basket. The easiest way to do this when you are younger is by dribbling. I cannot emphasize enough that the players must learn mastery of one concept before progressing to the next. You as a coach cannot give into the temptation of jumping ahead too soon.

I apologize for taking the liberty of adding a few of my own thoughts. It is habit I find hard to break. When I feel that I can enhance an idea to teach it better I usually do.

### **Rick Torbett – Read and React offence**

#### **Introduction**

I became a head coach right out of college. Learned a lot the hard way because of this fact. Most joy as a player was when we played by principles. By the time I knew the game I was too old to play.

#### **Too many games**

Schedules and restriction on practice time has not helped elite basketball. Youth / school sport is not held to the same standard as teaching math. The date of the first game forces the coach to forget teaching. Teach to the test which is like the game. Players are becoming good at running plays, but not becoming good players.

Coaches find it hard to rely on the coaches below them in the development system. I become an opportunist not a teacher. I am lucky if I get good players or I go and recruit good players who already have the skills. Who develops the players if everyone is just looking to recruit?

Because of these t and more I wanted to develop an offence where the game is taught by principle. When I first started I knew what I wanted to do, but did not know how to teach it. Studied the European club system and applied it to the North American situation.

As the players played together I wanted them to move like a school of fish. Movement had to become a habit. Did not like the various motion offences. There were too many decisions and requiring too high of IQ and skills before you could play well together. Needed something that I could teach quicker and then build or layer. Did not want the weak players screwing up the better players. Too often in motion this was the case.

**Transferable** - run well at all levels. Use the same language. I want to stand on the shoulders of the coaches below me. Math approach. We continue to build on the concepts we learned before.

Side note: In Belgium it is illegal to run plays in youth level basketball. Run the floor, circle movement and pass and cut is all you are allowed to do. If the coach calls a play it is a technical foul. The coach is to direct his energy to teaching the players how to play not what play to run. They are pretty good at it. Building strong layers. Our players never build a strong offence layers or habits. Allow players to play to strength and avoid weaknesses. Don't go past the first layer until you develop the habits.

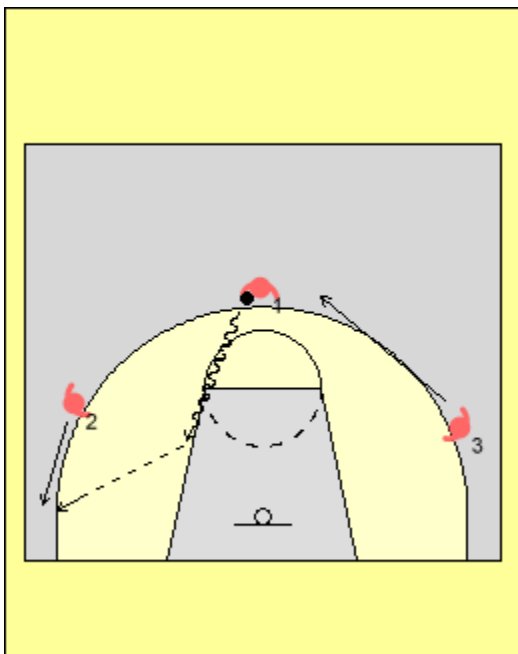
### **Read and react**

Normally everyone watches the ball. The key is what you do when you do not have the ball. There are infinite options. Usually too many choices so the players end up standing. The solution is to eliminate options.

### **Concept #1 – movement off penetration**

The first thing we teach is movement off the dribble. Dribbling is the first things children will do on offence; therefore we need to teach this first.

Chris Mullins former NBA player said he probably would not get drafted into today's NBA. "I don't know how to stand and watch."



### **Circle action**

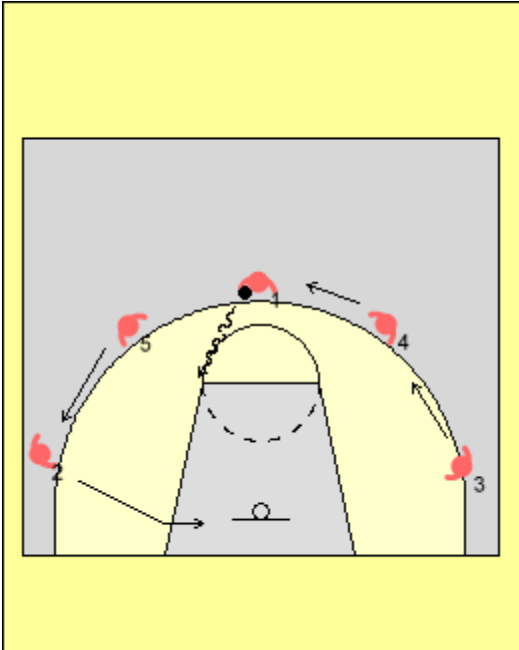
Pretend there is defence on top. Attack the gap. (This is a dribble going north south not east west). As the ball is dribble the other players circle in the direction of the dribble.

### **3 on 0**

- Emphasize the number of dribbles
- ❑ 1 dribble - pass to ball side.
  - ❑ 2 dribbles pass back.

Note: The key to teach the skills that go with these concepts. Rick emphasized that you must be able to:

- ❑ Dribble with the eyes up with both hands.
- ❑ Break down the defender with speed, change of direction, change of speed and fakes
- ❑ Pass off the dribble
- ❑ Catch a pass while moving
- ❑ Shoot off the catch



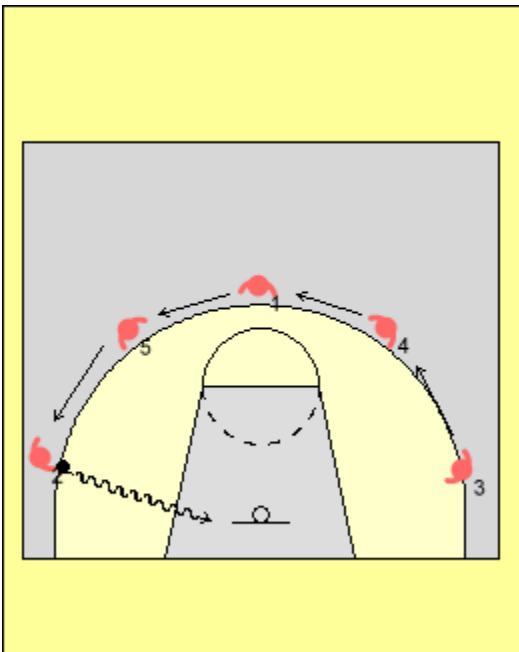
### 5 on 0 circle movement on penetration

Use the NBA 3 pt line for spacing.  
Key is to watch the ball movement.

Note: the player in the corner cuts through since there is no space in the corner to circle.  
This action will be discussed in more detail later.

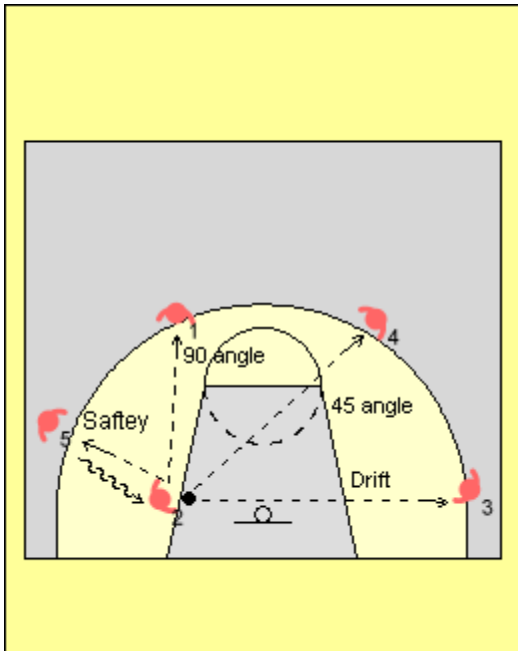
### Terminology

- Pitch is an air pass off penetration.
- Dish is a bounce pass off penetration.



### Problem

On a baseline penetration if we have the circle action we lose the drift pass.

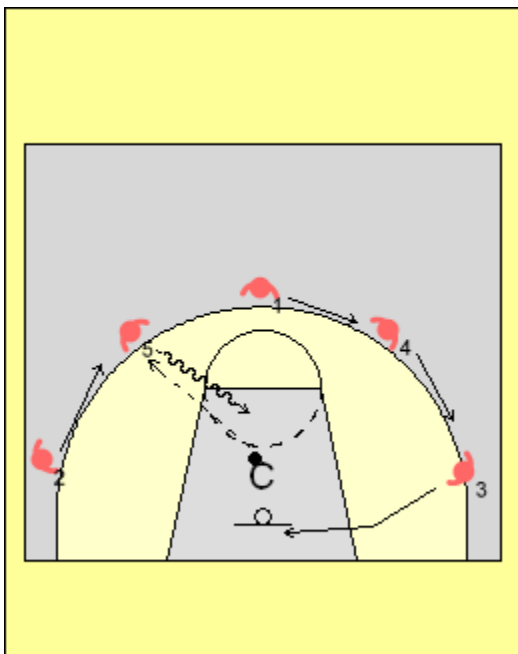


### Baseline penetration - exception to the circle rule

On any baseline penetration we want the following positions filled so the passer has four passing angles.

- ❑ Drift - opposite corner
- ❑ 45° angle - opposite elbow
- ❑ 90° angle - ball side elbow
- ❑ safety - behind the ball

How far away from the basket they are depends on the position of the defence.

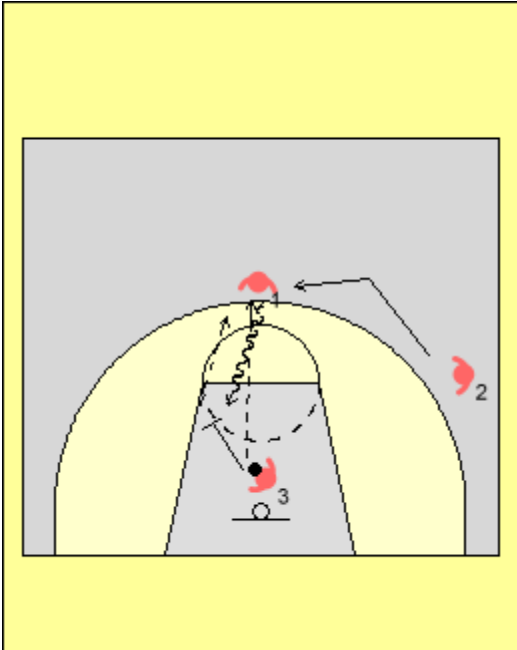


### 5 on 0 vs. coach

The coach starts with the ball and makes a pass to one of the 5 players spaced around the perimeter. The player who receives the ball drives at the coach. The other players must work on their circle action.

#### Timing note:

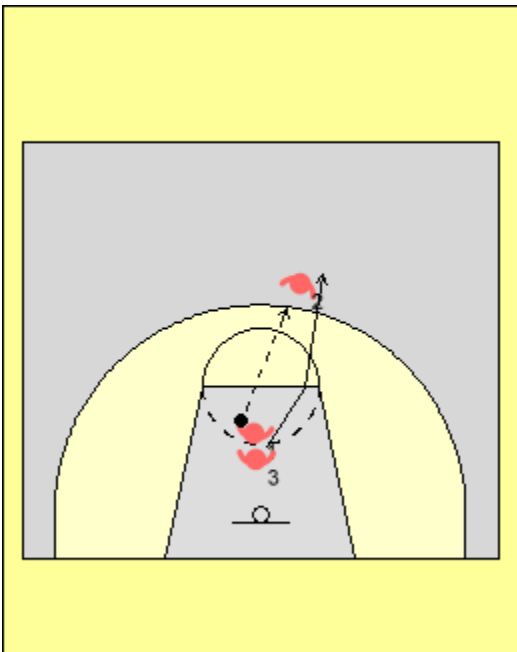
The feet of the perimeter players should be moving before the ball hits the ground on the first dribble. This makes the decision of the passer much easier as he/she will see the movement. Also it makes the decision of the help defender more difficult.



### Safety valve drill

The player in the key passes to ball to one of the perimeter players. This player drives the ball at the defence. The pass is made back to the player circling behind.

There is always someone in the "hole", the place you just left. This gives confidence to the penetrator. Know where your bail out is located.

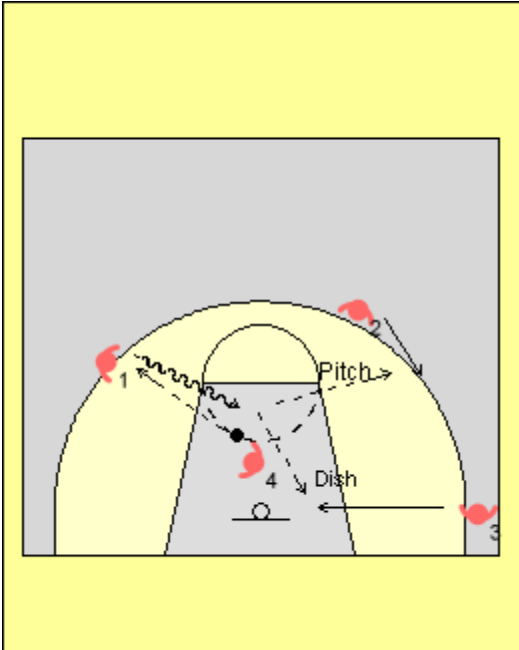


### Fly by

On the pass back out the defender runs out and fly's by the shoulder of the shooter. This is excellent for teaching both offence and defence. The offence player works on:

- ❑ Being ready to shoot.
- ❑ Shooting under pressure.
- ❑ Attacking the close out – fakes, drives.

The defence works on good close outs.

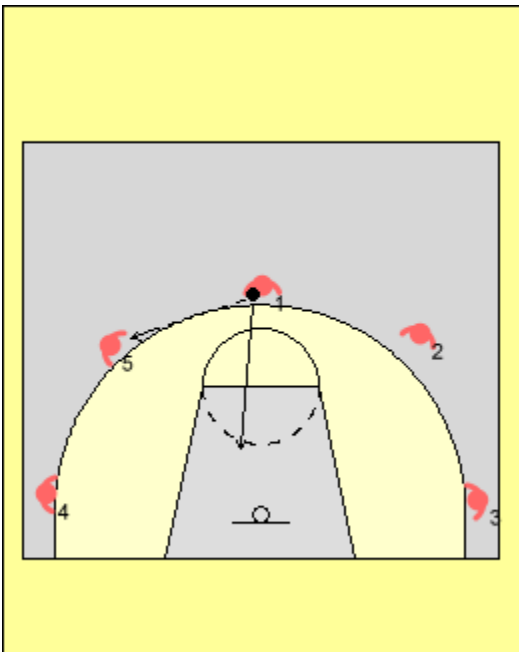


### **Middle penetration**

Attack the key. Everyone is moving to a new spot. The decision is made after one dribble.

Note: in this diagram the drift player decides to cut to the rim. This is because there is not space to slide and the basket is open.

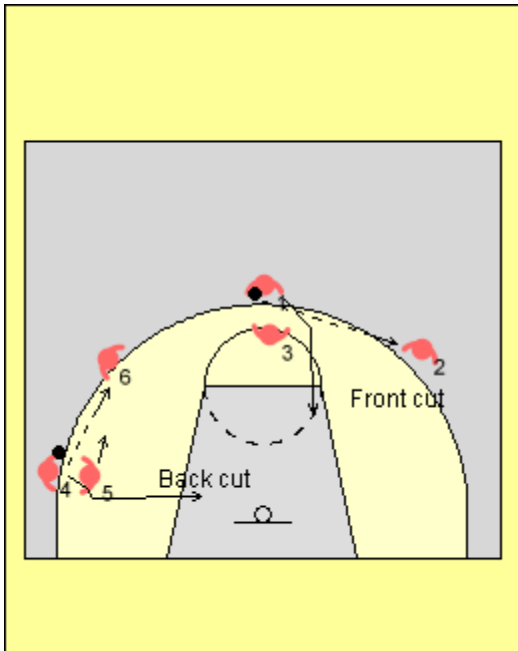
These drills need to be done from all of the perimeter positions.



### **Concept #2**

The second most common move in basketball is to pass to a team mate one pass away.

Passing builds unselfishness. After passing run a basket cut.



### Front cut

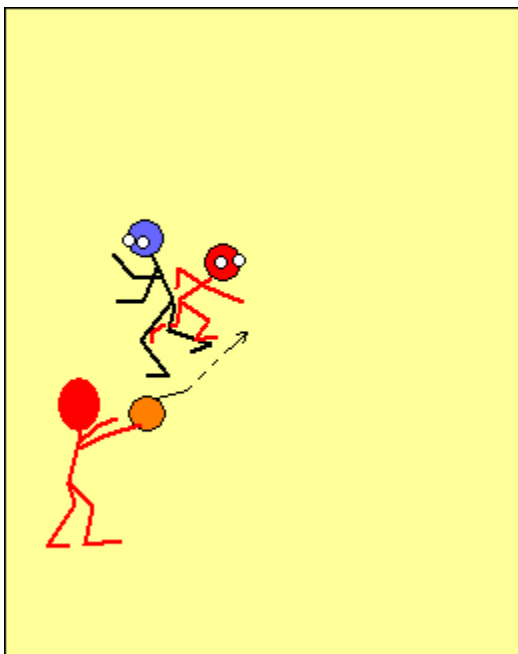
On the pass if the defence does not move make the front cut to the basket.

### Back cut

If the defence jumps to the ball back cut to the rim.

The pass must be made early.

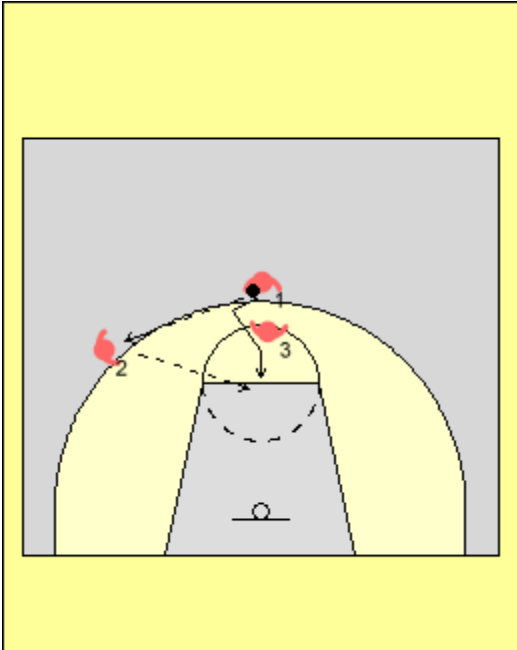
**Tip:** pass the ball just passed the back heel of the defender to the open space.



### Pass early

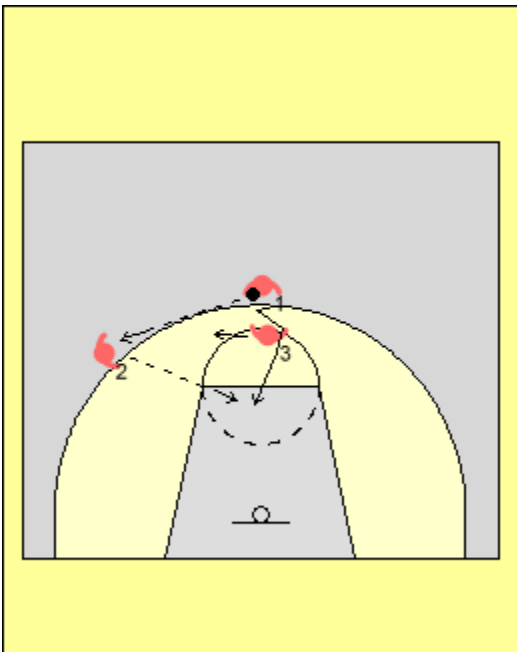
The ball is passed to space not to the player. This is a key concept that all players must master. It allows the offensive player to catch the ball and still have time to read the help defence and find his/her target. Pass by the heel of the defender.

Do not assume that players understand about passing to space. It has been my experience that players who have played hockey or soccer grasp this better than those who just play basketball.



### 3 player drills

Pass to the wing, if the defence does not move front cut. Put the defender on your back. Pass to the heel of the defender.

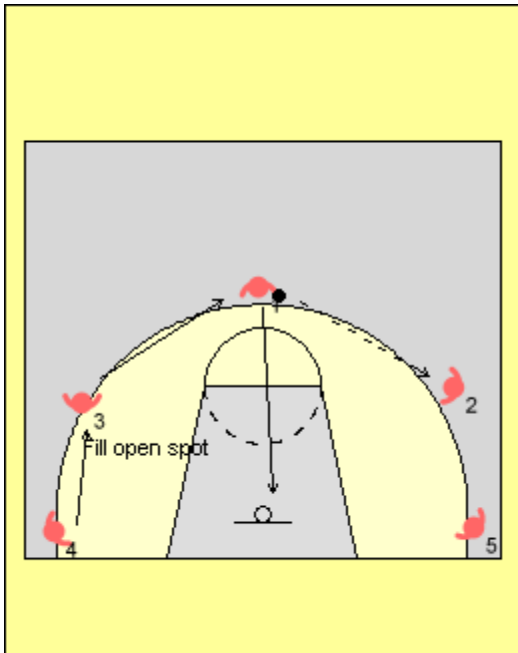


### Back cut

If the defender jumps to the ball back cut. The pass must be early.

Load the drill:

- ❑ Add guided defence to the passer only.
- ❑ Add two guided defenders.
- ❑ Play two on two with passing and cutting.



**5 players pass and cut**

**Concept #1**

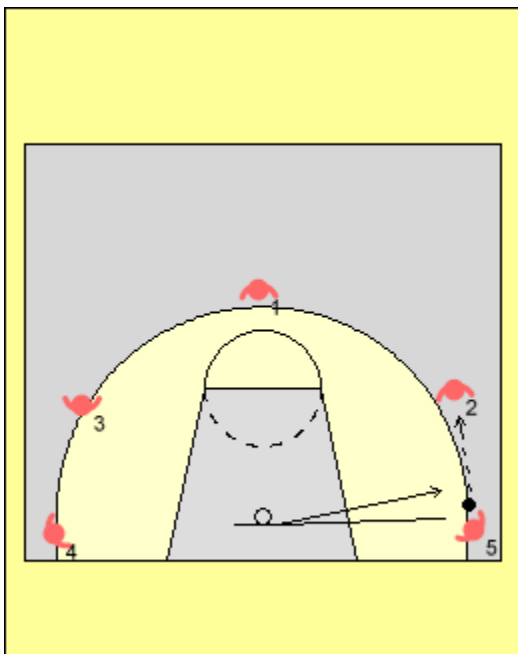
Pass the ball basket cut.

**Concept #2**

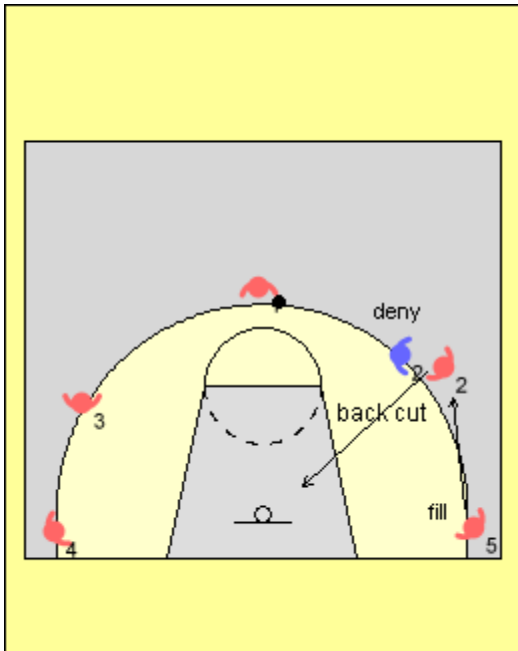
Fill open spots above you. Do not be too quick to fill this space as it takes away the penetration of the player with the ball. Catch the eyes of the player.

**Concept #3**

When leaving the basket find the open spot, usually a corner.



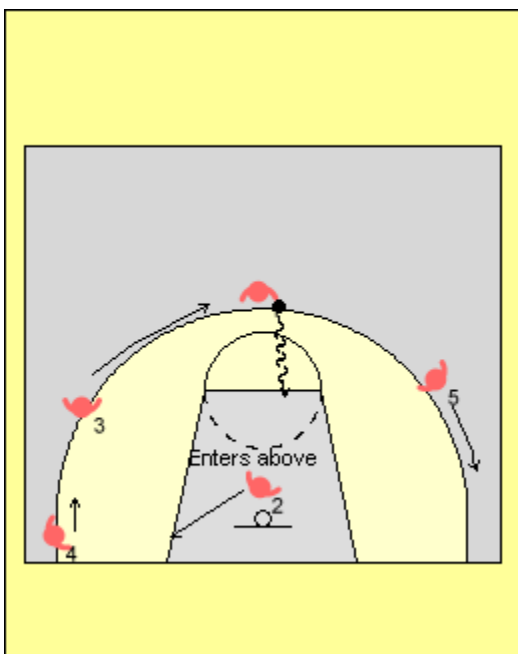
When you pass out of the corner very often you must replace yourself.



### Over play

Anytime your defender has one foot over the 3 point line go back door. We do not want to work so hard to make a wing entry, only to have the ball stolen or the offensive player catch the ball too far from the rim.

Remember with a principled offence you will be better later in the year as long as you continue to develop the skills and decisions needed to make the offence work. Early season the players will be very robotic. If you run plays early you will get some easy scores as you trick the defence. Once the season progresses this will not be the case.



### Concept #3

#### Combining penetration with pass and cut.

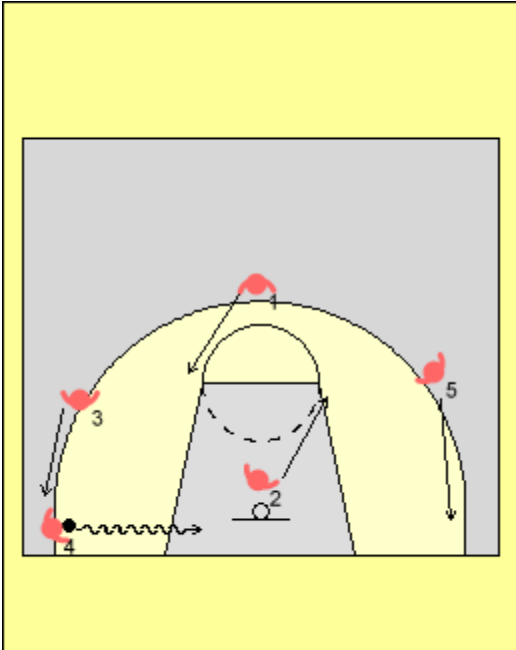
When you start to combined the two concepts you will run into situations where a player will be at the rim as the ball is being driven to the basket. If you are in the key when the ball is being driven to the basket you are considered a post or interior player. What does this player do?

The basic concept is as follows:

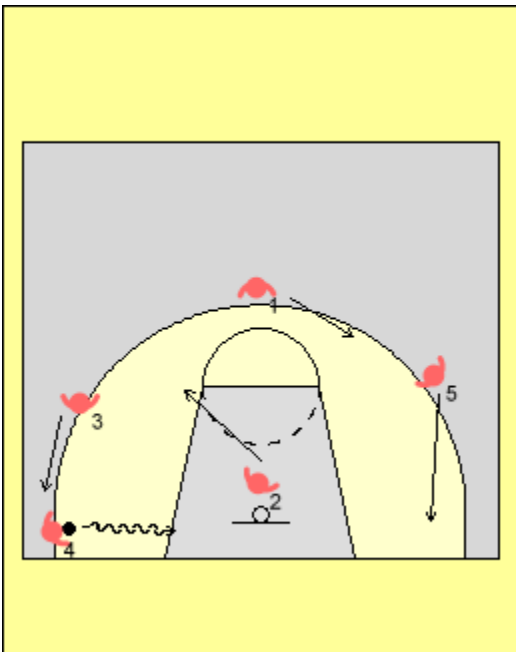
- If the ball enters the lane above you go to the short corner.
- If the ball enters the lane below you go to the elbows.

It is crucial that this movement occurs early. If not ball handler cannot make the easy decision and is vulnerable to getting trapped. Ideally the interior player is moving before the ball hits the ground on the first dribble. This puts the help defender in a difficult position.

In this example the ball is being driven baseline. The player at the basket goes to the far side elbow.

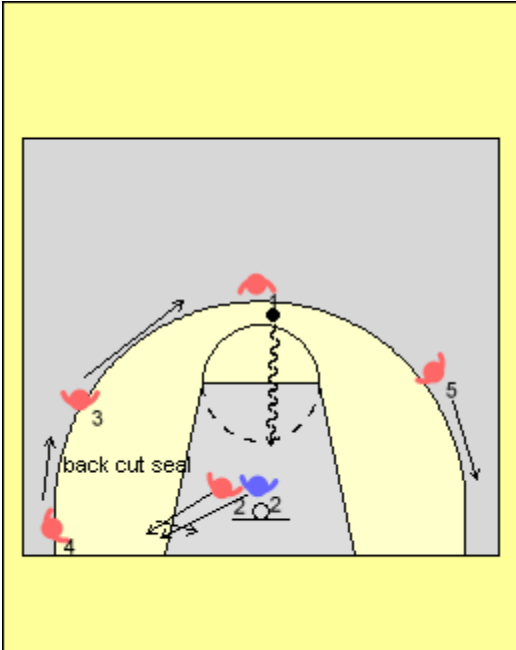


In this example the player goes to the nearside elbow. Remember the positions that need to be filled on penetration.

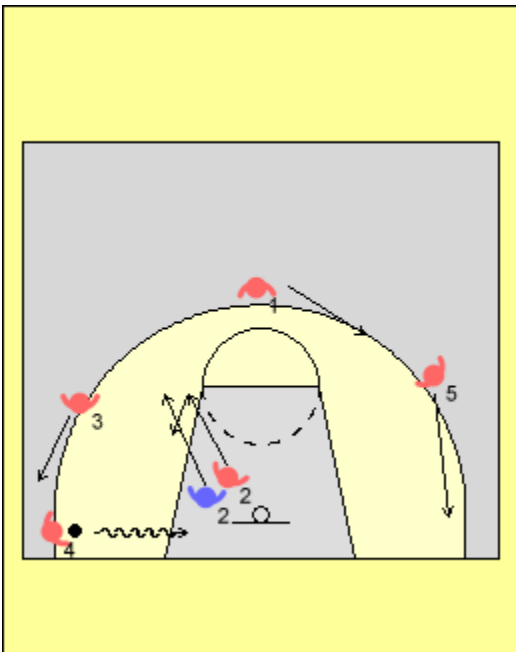


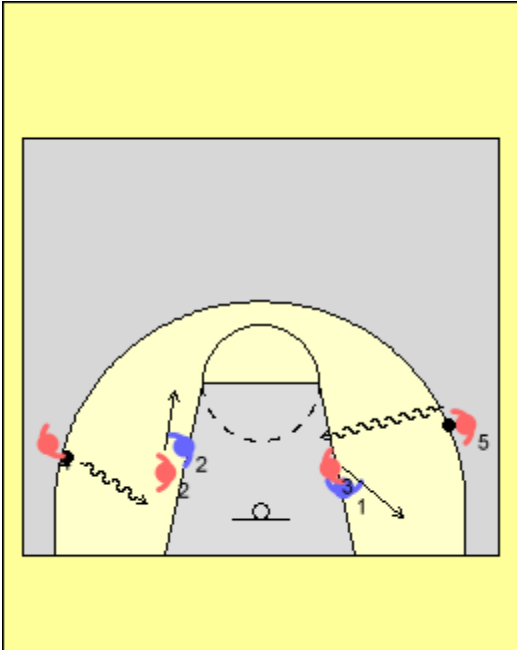
Note: a final option that is not shown is that the post player #2 could back pedal to the drift. Usually the short corner. #5 would fill the 45° angle in the far elbow, #1 would fill the 90° angle on the near elbow and #3 is the safety moving in behind. This is especially effective if #2's check is the player helping.

Note: if when you move to space on penetration your defender stays with you, look to back cut and seal. #2 seals his/her defender as he/she moves to the short corner.



Here is the same example of this concept when the ball is driven baseline.



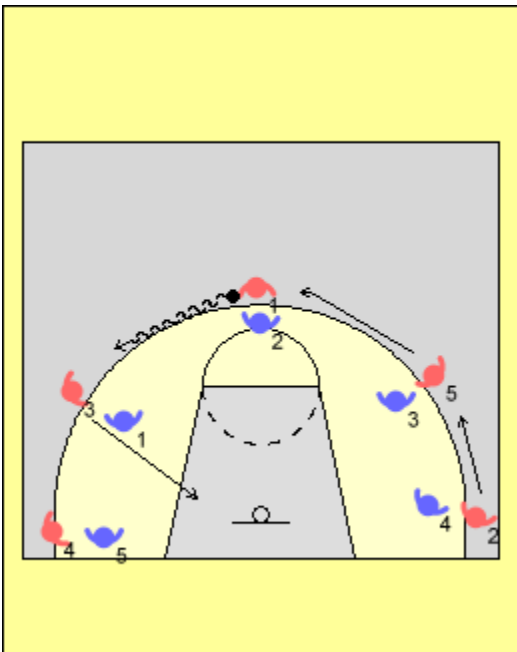


### Advanced concept

The perimeter player drives the side opposite of the post defender. This makes it hard for the post defender to help.

Note: if you drive at the side of the post defender you may find it easier to pass to the post on his/her movement. This works well if:

- ❑ The penetrator has his/her eyes up.
- ❑ The post moves on the first dribble.

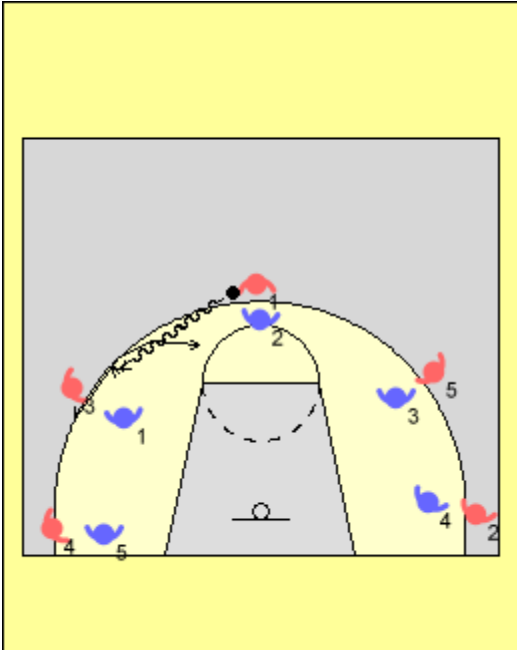


### Concept #4

#### Pressure release

Very often the player with the ball cannot penetrate north south. Usually the defender is too strong. In this situation the player with the ball dribbles at the next perimeter player with a speed dribble. This initiates a back door cut.

Remember, the circle movement off penetration is when the ball is being dribbled north south to attack the basket.

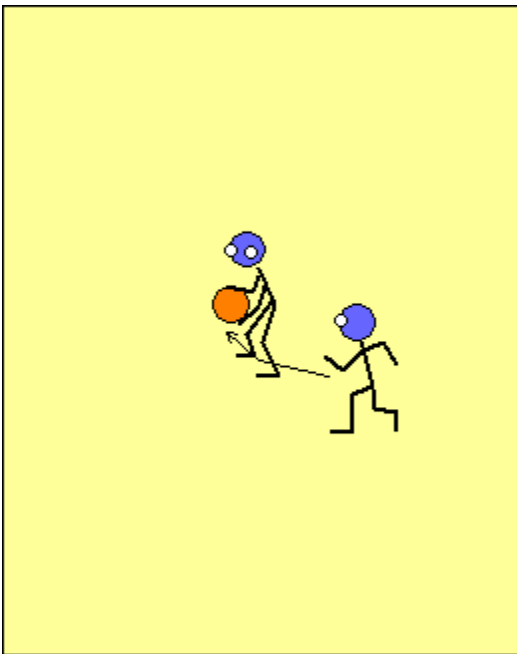


**Concept #5**  
**Crab dribble pressure release**

If the player with the ball dribbles at the next perimeter player with a crab dribble, it initiates a dribble hand off.

To review:

- ❑ Attack dribble - circle movement.
- ❑ Speed dribble at you - back cut.
- ❑ Crab dribble at you - Dribble hand off.

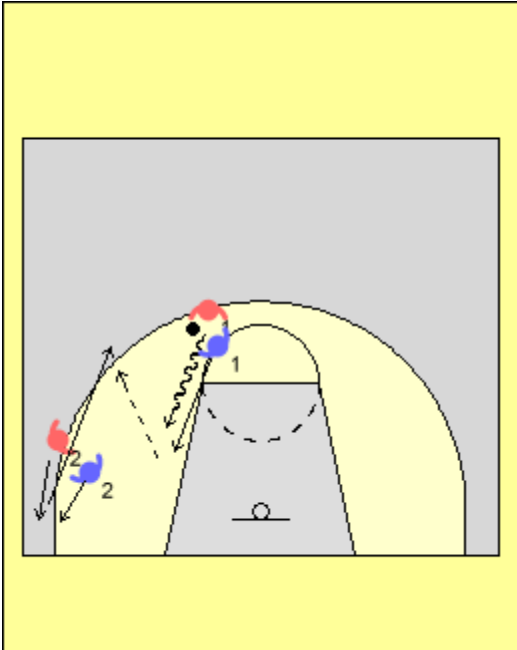


**Dribble hand off**

The player making the hand off does a jump stop and back pivot. The ball is presented to the cutter with one hand on top and one hand on the bottom. Very similar to a QB making a hand off to a running back.

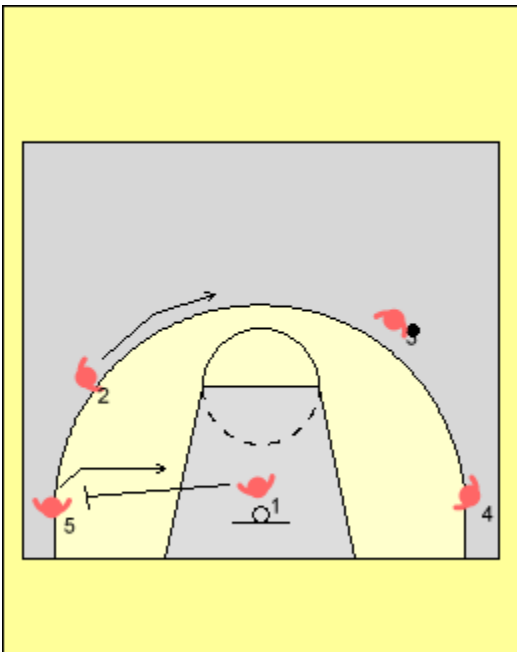
The cutter sets up his/her check first by a jab step at the basket. Go tight to the hand off. Read the defence.

Note: He did not have time to go over all of the reads for a dribble hand off.



### Circle movement pressure release

Often the player attacking the basket can not beat his/her check. Therefore the perimeter defender stays with the sliding action. In this case #2 looks to reverse direction. Especially when the passer is in trouble. The other players react to this movement.



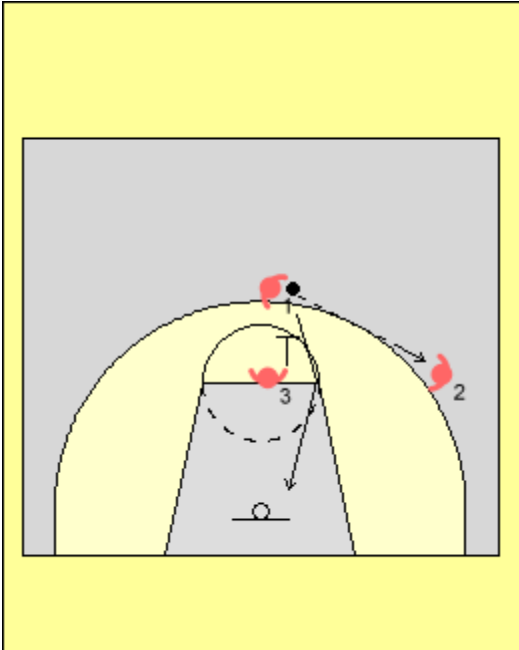
### Advanced pass and cut action

**Note:** coaches are reminded to master the previous concepts and skills before adding in the advanced techniques.

#### Concept #6

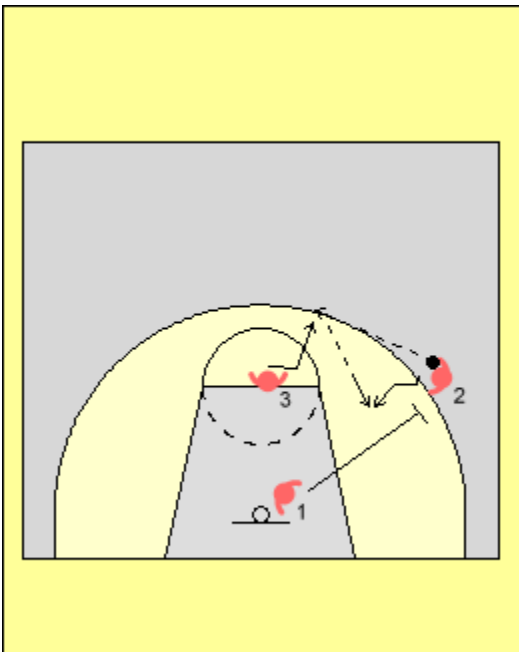
##### Back screen to exit the lane.

The player who cut to the basket must call a perimeter player's name. Execute a two foot jump stop to set the screen. The cutter is not allowed to cut until he/she hears the sound of the jump stop. This prevents a moving screen.



### Three player continuous back screens

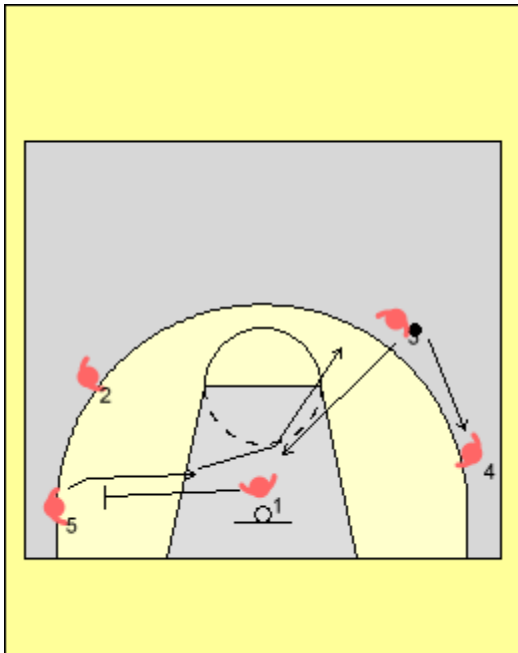
The ball is passed to the wing. The high post sets a back screen for the top player to cut to the basket.



The cutter was not open. The screener is the second cutter (work on sealing the defender for the pass and then an open pivot to square up). On the flight of the ball the player at the basket sets a second back screen for the wing player. The pass is delivered for the score.

Load the drill:

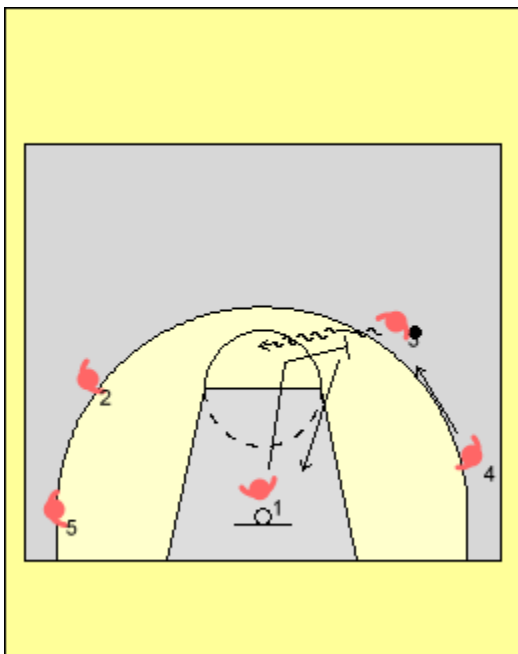
- ❑ Start adding guided defenders.
- ❑ Transition to the other end and see if the players can rebuild the drill.



**Use the next cutter as a second screen (stagger)**

Very often a second pass has been made before the cutter off the back screen has completed his/her cut. This action is perfect to create random stagger screens. As the players get better the cutter will learn to look for these situations.

Back screens are my favourite screen because the threat is a lay up. They attack the basket. We are going north / south on all cutting action. Put constant pressure on the basket.



**Ball screen out of the post.**

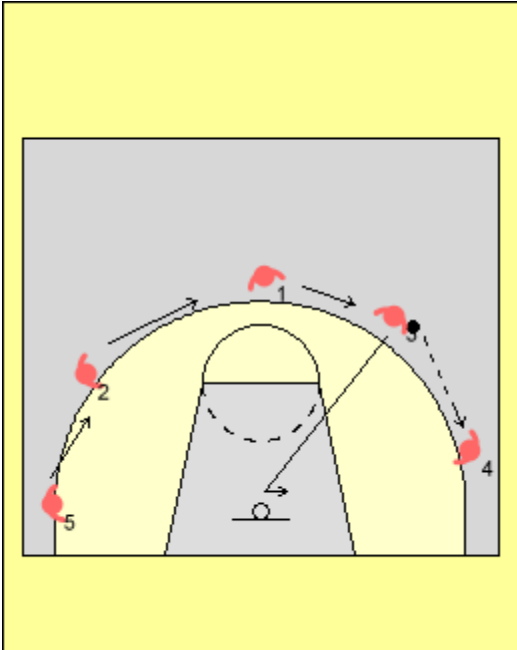
Another advanced concept is to have the post exiting the key set a ball screen.

**Advanced concept**

Getting a specific player into a post up situation.

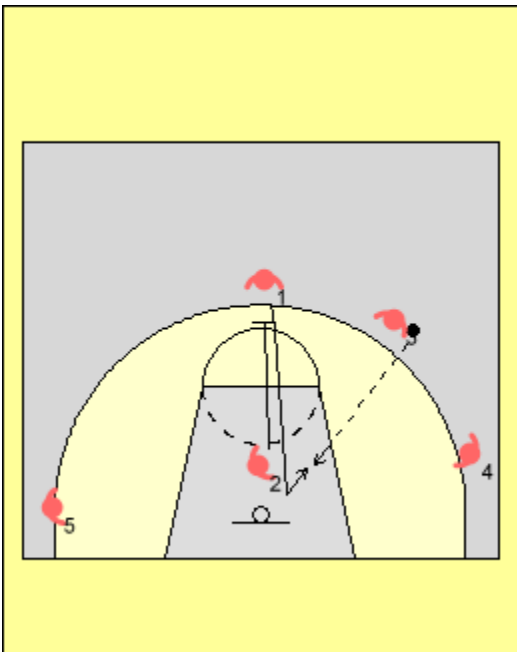
**Option #1**

Pass and cut to a post up.



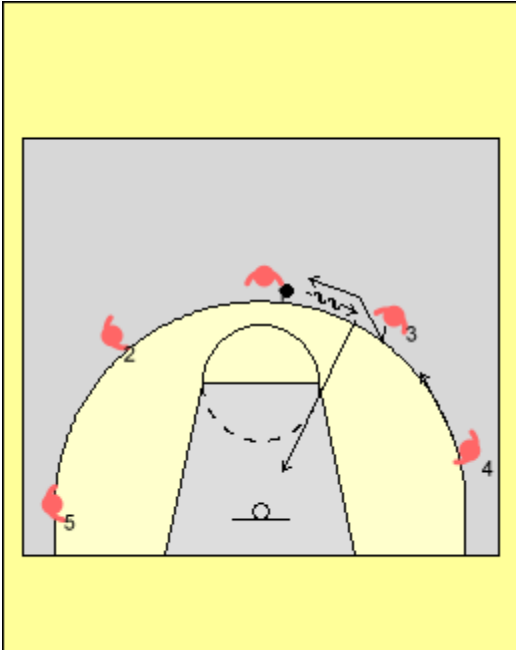
**Option #2**

Back screen to a post up.



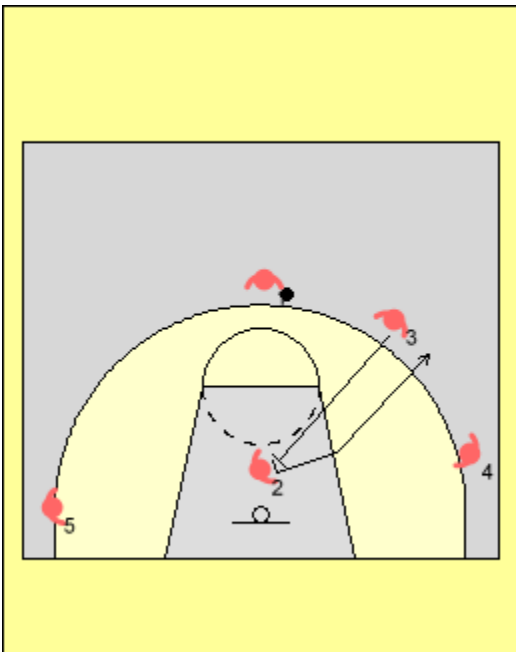
**Option #3**

Crab dribble, dribble hand off and roll to post up.



**Option #4**

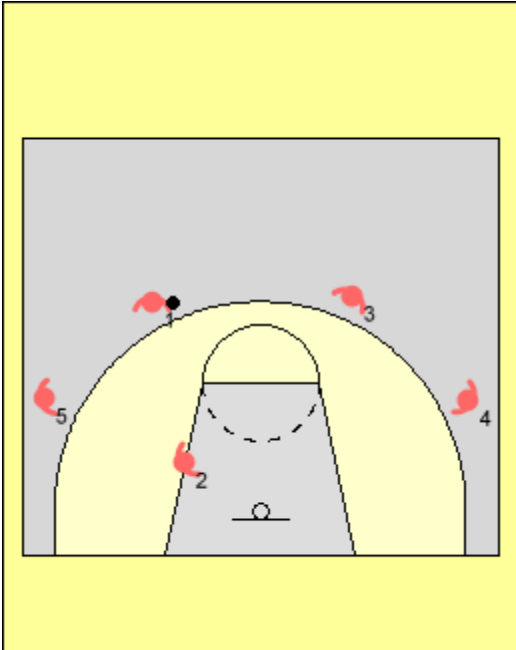
Pin in and post.



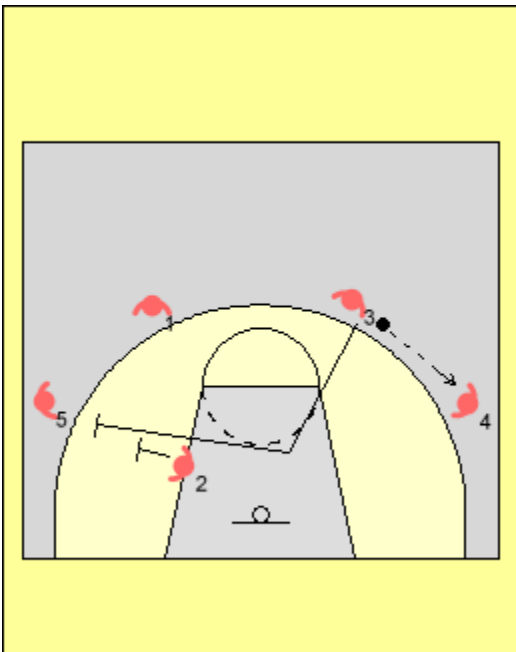
Advanced concept  
**Post play**

Space the floor. Everyone plays above the post player.

We want the post to stay on one side of the floor to keep the other side open for cutters. The post is looking to set back screens for cutters and then be a second cutter and face up. The four perimeter players use the previous concepts.

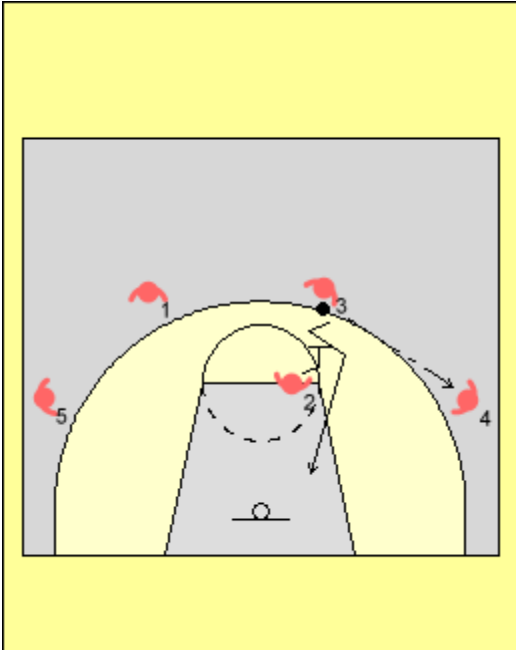


The perimeter players can still set back screens to exit the key. This allows for stagger screens to be set by the post.

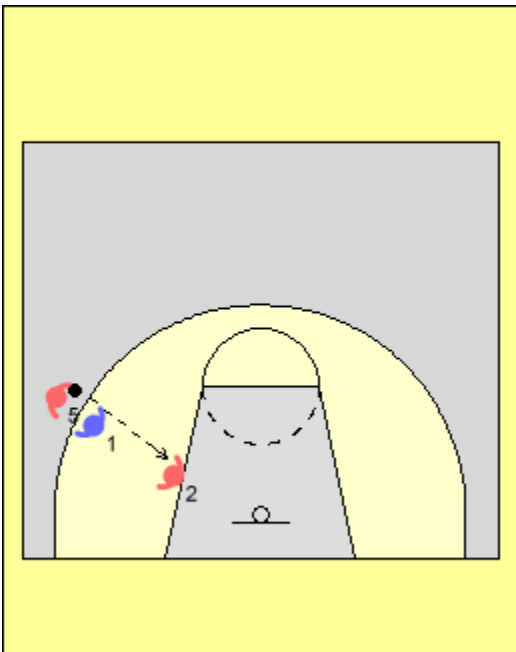


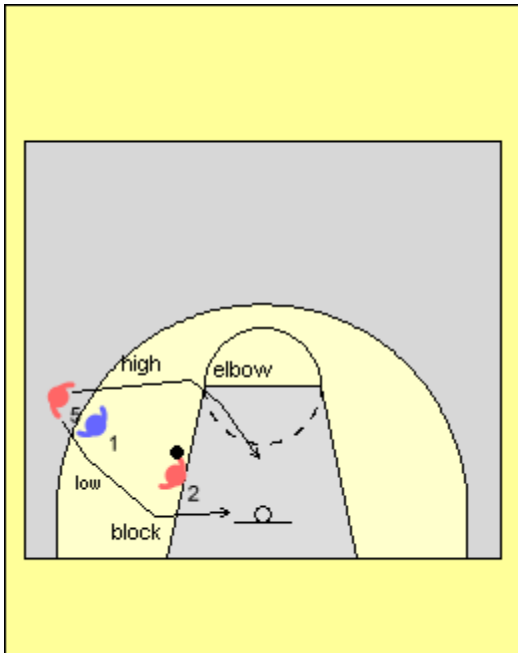
## High post

Look to use the UCLA shuffle cut.



After passing the ball to the post we need to move. If you stand it makes it difficult for the post to go one on one.

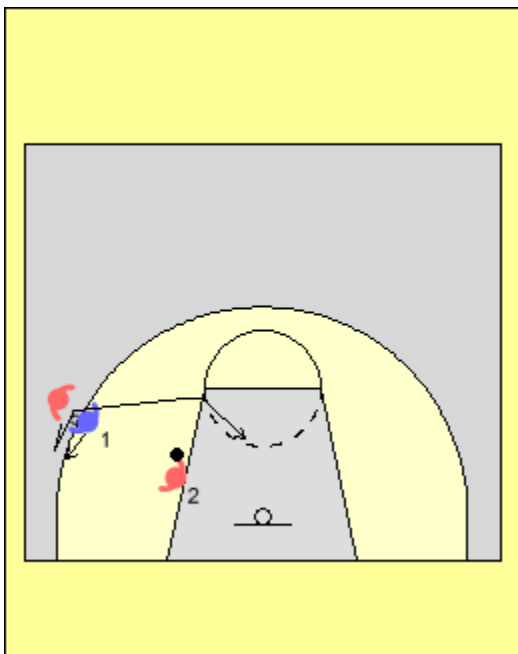




### Level one movement off a post pass.

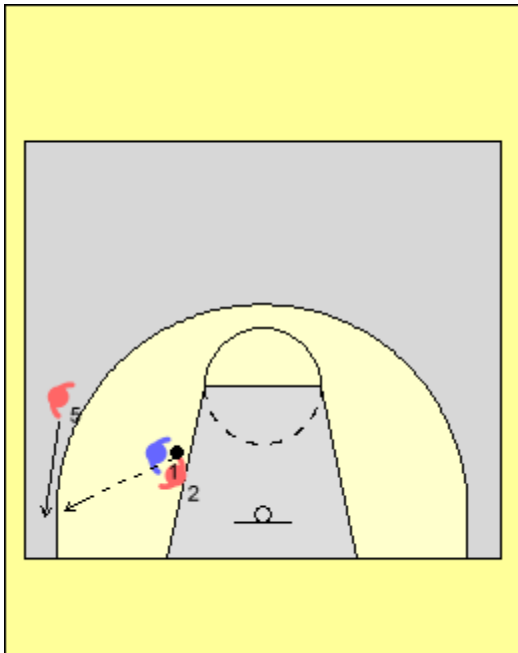
High Laker cut - after passing the ball cut high through the elbow to the rim.

Low Laker cut - cut low through the block.



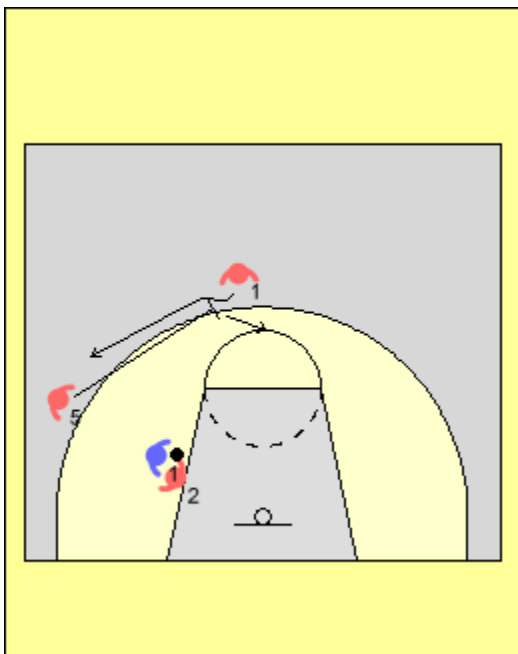
### Level two

If the perimeter defender chests you up, (stays tight and blocks your cut) look use this as a signal to change direction.



### Level three

If the defender doubles down to the post look to slide to the corner.

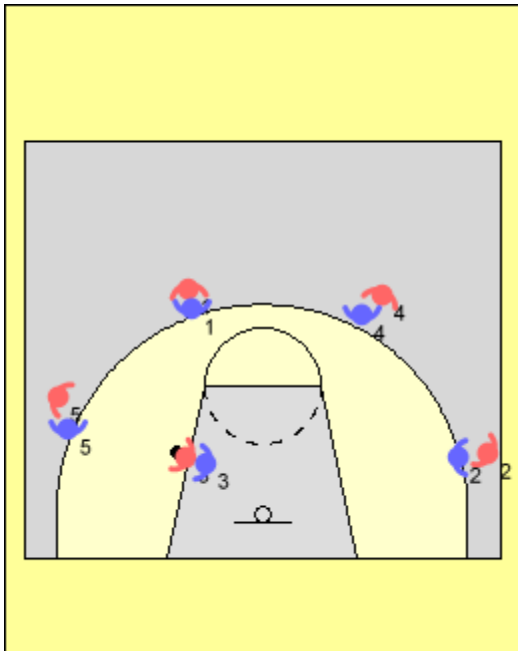


### Level four

The player who passes looks to screen for the next perimeter player (Utah action).

Note: these same cuts can be made off a high post feed. Always remember the back door rule. If your check defends outside the three point line look to backdoor.

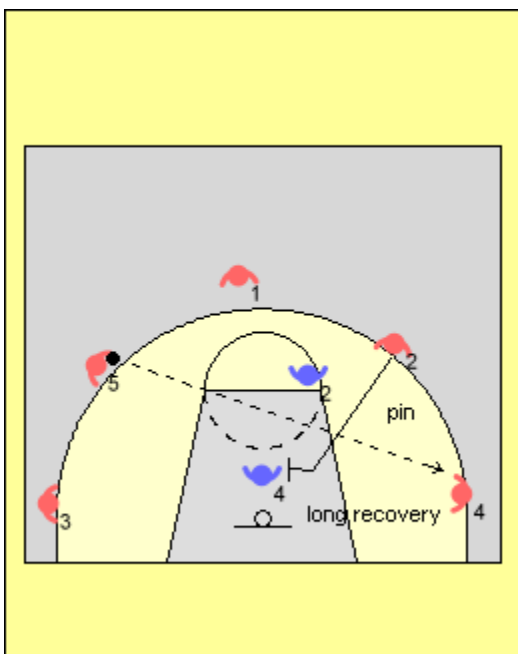
Playing with two post players who cannot score is not a good idea. This limits your offence to 3 point shots or mid range jump shots. You will get few quality lay ups because the defence can defend the rim and not worry about the two offensive post players.



Note: If everyone is out denying the perimeter it does allow the post to go one on one. It is not necessary to cut.

Cut if these situations occur:

- ❑ There is an open basket.
- ❑ The defensive player turns his/her head to look at the post.
- ❑ The post is scanning in your direction.
- ❑ The post cannot score off the 1 on 1.



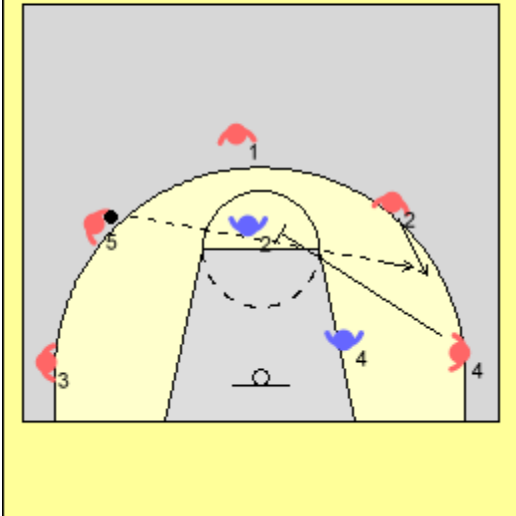
### Advanced concept

What will happen is that the defence will begin to sag to prevent the cutting and penetrating action.

The players on the help side of the floor must read who has the longest recovery on defence.

We want the other player to set a pin screen and look to skip the ball. This creates close outs by the defence.

Who has the longest recovery? Here it is the bottom player who comes and sets a flare screen. Look to skip the ball.

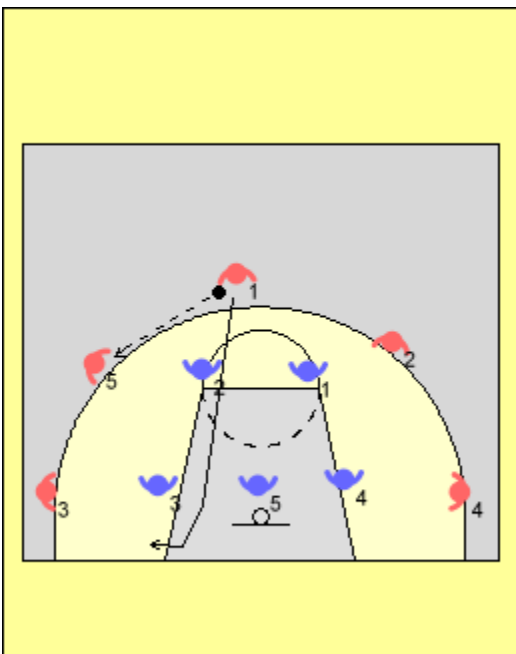


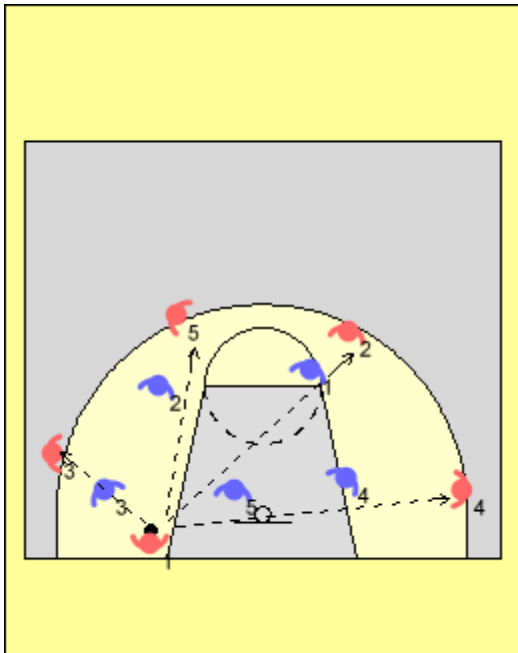
Review the concept:

- Back screens vs. aggressive defence.
- Pin vs. sagging defence.

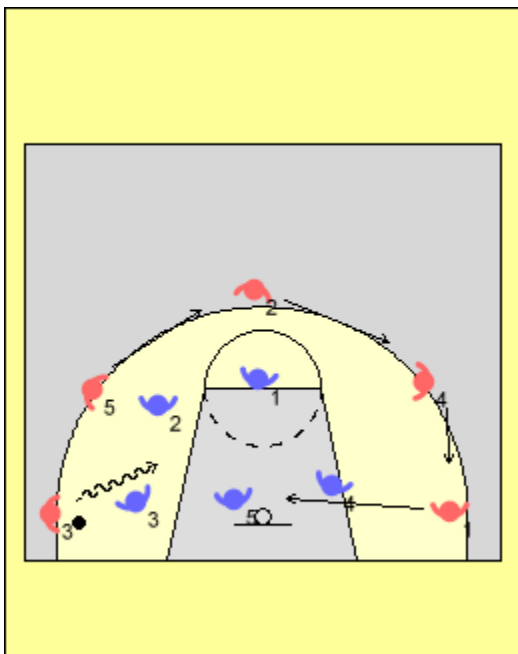
### Zone attack

Cut to the short corner

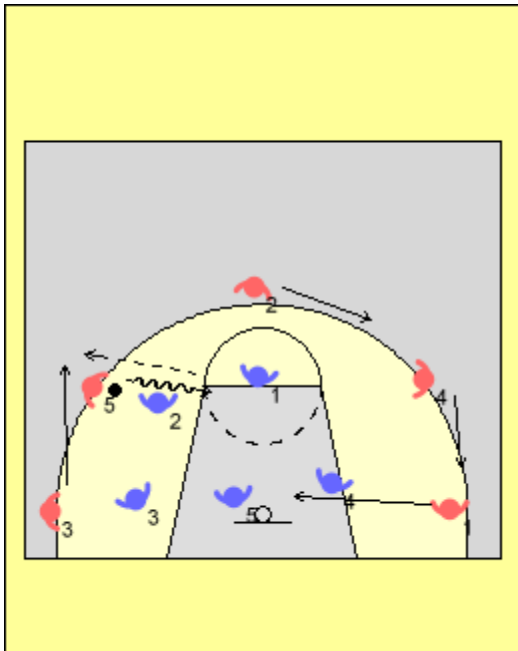




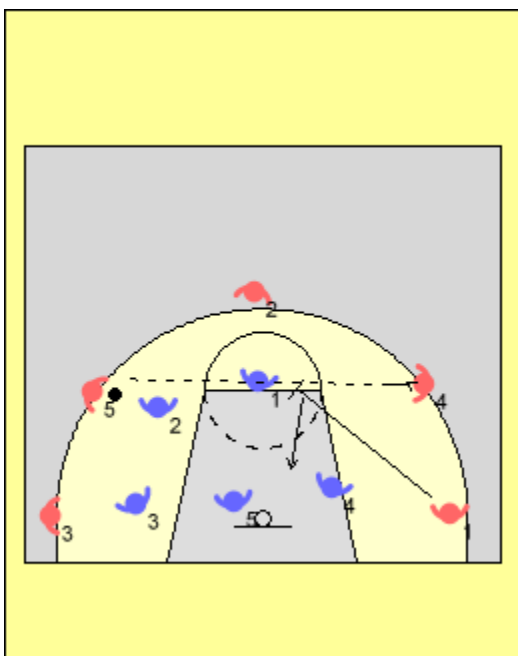
When the ball is in the short corner it is the same as a baseline penetration movement. We want the 90° angle, the 45° angle, the drift and the safety release spots filled. If the defence stays wide and denies look for the cut to the open rim.



On penetration use the same circle cut actions. The player cutting from the corner is often open because the defence is looking at the ball.



The safety player is almost always open vs. the zone.



### Pin the sagging zone

Use the same principle vs. a zone that wants to sag. Pin it and skip. If the player rolls after screening he/she is often open if the bottom player comes out to guard the ball.

Here are some brief answers to follow up questions:

- ❑ Coaches must have some control over shot selection. Go over each individual player and identify which shots are allowed.
- ❑ Off season - players work on the skills to have the green light in the next season.
- ❑ There should be no seams between transition and half court offence. It must flow especially if you are using a shot clock. (Note: I strongly suggest for those coaches playing with a shot clock that you work on flowing into the offence. Don't start the in the static positions. Players need to learn how to get to the spots with rhythm (timing and spacing).

- ❑ Transition - Everyone runs the lanes. Stick your head under the basket if it was open and fill out to open spots. Rebounders need to look to break out dribble.
- ❑ Never have to run suicides. Use 5 on 0 full court and conditioning. Call out options to see if the players can execute the concept. For example: run pass and cut and look for our best shooter coming off a stagger screen.

My note: you will need to emphasize rebounding and defensive transition. You must decide who will be back for defensive floor balance and who will go to the offensive boards. Rick did mention that players crashing from the perimeter are much more difficult to box out than the player who stands.