

Canterbury Cougars coaching hand book

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Cougar philosophies

Overall

The very best basketball coaches have a common trait in that they have an over riding philosophy to build the character of the players under their care. Other than parents and teachers, coaches can have a significant impact on a young person's life.

A recent story says it all. A grade of kids at Canterbury Primary School was told to come to school dressed up as the person they admired the most. While some kids went dressed as sports stars or world leaders, one young girl went to school dressed as Cougars' coach Maggie McBain. What a great compliment and what a positive impact Maggie must be have on this young person. This should be the aim of any coach.

Now Canterbury Cougars has many different coaches with many different philosophies as to how their teams play basketball.

Our aim is to achieve consistency in the way we coach basketball so the whole club plays with the same philosophies.

The recommended philosophies are as follows:

Fairness

- 1) Players must get equal court time. That is a fundamental Cougar philosophy. Coaches should rotate their subs so that the strongest 5 are on the court in the last 3 minutes. The only occasions the equal court time rule should change are: (a) In the finals, but even then weaker players should get some court time. Those on the bench can play a major role encouraging their fellow team members and still feeling part of the "team". This is all about communication, it is better to explain your plan so the benched player does not feel "isolated or ignored" and in turn can respect their fellow team players who are out there doing their job; (b) In games that may get you into the finals. In saying that though, not every game is a chance to get into the finals! We are referring to later in the season & only against the top teams! The coach must also let the kids be aware of his/her decision to do that; and (c) For player discipline for misbehaving at training.
- 2) Rotate the starting line up. Starting the game has prestige and parents and players note who gets to start. If you play favourites with the starting line up then parents and players will get upset. However, as stated above, ensure you have your best 5 start the game in finals, against the top team and in games critical to making the finals.
- 3) Always shake the hand of the opposing coach after the game and ensure your players sportingly shake hands with opponents.
- 4) Always thank the refs and the scorers after the game even if they drove you bananas.

Respect

Respect the refs.

Ensure the players respect you, the coach, their team mates and the opposition. If a player is disruptive at training they are disrespecting you and their team mates. The most power Cougar

coaches have is playing time on Saturday. If a player does not respect the coach or team mates at training, don't start them on Saturday and dock them time – it works.

*If a player is upsetting you and the team, you **must** inform Angela St Clair or Greg McLardie.* Cougars are becoming tougher with kids that upset their coaches.

Don't try to be mates with your players. This is the worst mistake junior coaches make. Start discipline from the first training day.

Self esteem

It is crucial Cougar coaches build the self-esteem of the players we coach. It is our most important job. We cannot build self-esteem until the players have respect, which is why we have mentioned "respect" first.

Coaches build player self-esteem by improving their skill level and giving players the confidence to try new skills in a game situation. Encouraging your players and appropriate constructive criticism are most important.

Everyone notices the scorers, but most miss the really important stuff that wins games. Coaches must acknowledge great passes, defence, rebounds and screens – the stuff that goes unnoticed.

For example, you can say to a kid, "I want you to dribble in the game even if you know the ball may be stolen". Then when they dribble in the game – and they have the ball stolen, "Awesome job Jane **that** is what I want to see". It not only encourages the kid but stops team mates and parents from making negative comments.

Handling common coaching situations

How to be more positive

- Give a lot of **positive feedback**, praising effort as much as results
- Have realistic expectations – don't make your drills either too simple or too difficult
- **Give your feedback as soon as the behaviour occurs!**

How to react to mistakes

- Give encouragement immediately after a mistake. **If a player knows how to correct the error this encouragement may be enough**
- When appropriate, **give corrective instruction after a mistake** – but always do so in a supportive way and not hostile or punitive manner
- Don't use punishment when things go wrong. Making mistakes is a natural part of learning. **Don't every punish children with "you idiot" "your hopeless"**

How to maintain order and discipline

- **Establish expectations early** and involve players in formulating guidelines so that all members feel part of a team, dependent on the efforts of each other
- Strive to achieve a **balance between allowing freedom and maintaining order**

How to deal with team rule violations

- Be **fair and consistent**
- Punish the behaviour and not the person. **Shouting, abusing or embarrassing the player will achieve little**
- Focus on the fact that a team rule has been broken, placing responsibility on the player
- **Don't use physical measures** (such as running laps) as a form of punishment. It is better to restrict involvement in something valued (have the player sit out for a short while)

How to get positive things to happen

- Set a **good example of desired behaviour** both at training and at games. **Remember you will be an important role model**
- Encourage effort, **don't demand results all the time**
- When giving encouragement be selective so that it is meaningful
- **Encourage players to be supportive of one another**

How to create a good learning atmosphere

- Set realistic goals. Have drills that are varied and interesting
- Always give instructions clearly and concisely and in a positive manner
- Demonstrate the correct techniques. Pay attention to your demonstrations so that all players can see and hear

- Maintain a lively pace at training so long periods of inactivity are avoided
- Be patient and don't expect or demand more than maximum effort

How to affirm your players

- Show all players that you care about them as individuals
- Make sure no player leaves a game or training feeling they are worthless or overall losers

How to communicate effectively

- **Be sensitive** to individual needs
- **Communicate** at a time when players are most receptive
- **Keep your talk to a minimum** and don't overload players with too much information at any time
- There is more to communication than just words
- Ask yourself "What have my actions communicated?" and **encourage players to be able to express any concerns**

How to gain respect

- Establish your role as a competent and willing teacher
- Be fair and consistent
- Set a good example
- Don't expect or demand respect...it must be earned

How to get the most from parents

- **Encourage parents** to be part of the team
- Hold a meeting or write a letter before the season to discuss your coaching philosophy and how parents can help form the very important athletic triangle
- **Educate parents.** Many won't know the modified games that are played in junior sport. They will best be able to help the player gain the most from the season if they (the parents) have a knowledge and understanding of both the game and your aims
- **Communicate to parents** that they must support their child's efforts and not put undue pressure on them. This will only jeopardize the potential that sport can have for enjoyment and personal growth
- **Communicate to your players** that the important thing is that they are enjoying playing and developing skills, not that they 'must win' or be a 'star'

Planning practises is a must

The most famous all-time basketball coach, John Wooden, has said “failing to plan is planning to fail”. We can’t agree more.

One of the most common complaints we receive on junior coaches is a lack of a training plan. Coaches, don’t take short cuts, they don’t work and everyone notices.

As a general rule, you’ll want your players feeling like they had a work out. Especially those coaching boys’ teams, ensure the boys are pleading for their drink bottles half way through practise and that they are sweating up a storm at the end of practise. Some girls’ teams don’t mind a chat, but don’t be lulled into a talk fest unless you have big issues to cover. Ensure drills don’t focus on a couple of players at a time otherwise the other players go berserk.

Let’s look at practices for the first week of the season and then for later weeks:

Plan for first week of season

There is always a lot to cover, so the practise needs to be fast and snappy. Essentially, you will want to cover how you want the players to react in certain game situations. Elements to consider covering are as follows:

- ✓ Introduce the players to one another. Apologise ahead of time for forgetting names! Don’t spend long on the intro’s.
- ✓ Set some rules such as ‘no bouncing the ball when the coach is talking’, ‘only those that practice will start’, players will only talk positively to one another’....
- ✓ Shooting practise is a must. Players are always rusty after a break. Choose a drill with plenty of shooting for each player, like Semi-circle shoot out and 3-person time trial drills.
- ✓ Lay-ups should be practised. Again, the players will be rusty.
- ✓ Defence – Are you playing press? Which press alignment? Is your philosophy to push the dribbler towards the sideline? Do you want the players attacking the ball? You should certainly include at least one defensive drill.
- ✓ How do you want your players positioned and reacting on offensive and defensive inbounds plays? Who throws the ball in? Who comes in for the ball and who stays out wide as safety?
- ✓ Foul shooting – third person on the block in defensive foul shot must put a body on the shooter. The other two step in and box out.
- ✓ Consider dribbling and passing drills to determine skill level.

An example of a first week drill follows:

Sample of Session 1 training plan

Welcome	10 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meet the girls!• My role and past experience• Open discussion on strengths and weaknesses – what am I good at• This week is about me looking at your skills to see what I can build on• My attendance – warming up without me• Expectations – Division 2	
Warm up	10 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jogging – fwd/bwd/defense• Maravic drills – with timing	
Dribbling	10 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forward – use wall for extra• Reverse• Speed• Crossover	
Break	2 mins
Layups	10 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• R/L - specify feet/focus on backboard and achieving goal• Add passing & rebounding	
Passing	10 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1/1• team with speed and accuracy	
Games(dependent on time)	
Close:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do we say “team”/”cougars”?• Meeting at game/being prepared for game/trying your best	

Plan for other weeks of the season

The training session plans after the first week must be based on the team’s strengths and weaknesses coming out of the Saturday game. Think about how the opposition scored points. Was it on fast break, did they break your press easily, were they driving in for easy lay-ups, did the players push opposition dribblers to the sidelines, were a majority of points scored from jump shots within 2 metres of the basket? Answers to these questions will give you the defensive drills. Offensively, were lay-ups missed, were the players driving in or just taking outside shots, were passes stolen, do your team have a lot of held balls against it, did you score fast break points? Again, answers to these questions will give you offensive drills.

Always try to incorporate at least one shooting, one lay-up and one defensive drill into every practise.

Basketball Olympics – refreshing your players

Players just love Basketball Olympics and it is a useful tool to refresh your players. It has been found useful towards the end of the season or after an uncharacteristic bad loss. Certainly, do not play Basketball Olympics during the finals or leading into the finals. It can be timed in the week leading to a bye in the second half of the season.

Make sure you continue to teach fundamentals even though the session involves back-to-back games. Make sure the players are executing with excellence. Notice that these games cover all the fundamentals.

Basketball Olympics is as follows:

Split your players into two even teams. ***Do not let your players pick the teams. The last kids picked feel worthless.*** Let the players choose names for their teams (e.g. Gladiators, Thunders,..). The games and the points awarded are as follows:

Game	Points awarded
2-ball knock out: When lined up to start the game, ensure the teams alternate. That is, Team A player, then team B player, A, B, A, B...As players get knocked out, two players from the same team will be together. So the coach will need to say that any deliberate slow play or misses will result in a player be outed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 1st player out scores 2 points ✓ 2nd player out scores 4 points ✓ 3rd player out scores 6 points.....
Dribble relay contest. First right hand from baseline to ½ court and back. Then left hand. Consider putting in obstacles to dribble around. Consider giving the dribbler 5 to 10 metres head start and a person from the opposite team can charge out and knock the ball out of the dribblers hands (knocking out too hard is penalised)	Score 5 points for every second a team wins by.
Passing game played 5 minutes (described below)	Score 10 points for the most consecutive passes achieved.
21 (described under “Shooting”)	Winning team receives 2 points for every point they win by. So if team A scores 21 and team B is on 13, team A scores 16 points.
Lay-up game (described below)	Winning team scores 20 points.
Hamburger – All players are in the key. The coach puts up a shot, intentionally missing so there is a rebound. There can be only one shot with each rebound. Players can dribble in. Anyone can defend the shot. Players score 1 point for each rebound. Score 1 point for each shot made. As players make 3 points they come out of the game (and can put up shots instead of the coach).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 1st player out scores 20 points for their team ✓ 2nd player out scores 18 points ✓ 3rd person out scores 16 points.....
Tummy game – naturally, team A on one side of the court and team B on the other. Give them 30 seconds to get a shot off.	Score 5 points for each basket scored.
½ court game	Each basket earns 10 points.

The bench is coach's best friend

The bench is the coach's best friend to have player's behave or play in a manner desired by the coach.

Capital punishment is no longer available to coach's so the next best thing is to justifiably deny court time. In other words, have the player sit on the bench, or some say sit on the pine, instead of having fun out on the court.

This is especially so for junior coach's where discipline is typically more of an issue.

Examples of good uses for benching a player are as follow:

- You have said no big outside shots and the player does it;
- You have asked for 'no hands' defence and a player steals a ball;
- A player does something undisciplined like throw the ball over the back of their head;
- Swearing at practise or at a game;
- Disrespect to a referee, the coach, a team mate or an opponent;
- Bad behaviour at practise.

The sooner a coach realises the bench is their best friend the sooner they will have more disciplined practise and games and thereby better teams and better game results.

Arguably the best ever basketball coach, John Wooden, understood the bench was a coach's best friend when he had an all-star player on one of legendary UCLA teams. This player would not listen to Coach Wooden's demand for team play and less theatrics. Finally, Coach Wooden called the boy's father to get the Dad's buy-in to benching the son. The player was benched the next game and the player learned he was not bigger than the team. When the player called his Dad to say he wanted to leave UCLA, the Dad supported Coach Wooden 100%. The player changed his habits substantially, became a team player, UCLA won another national championship and the rest is history....

The team manager or parent should be aware of player discipline

The team manager and/or the parent should be aware when you are disciplining a player. You will then have everyone's buy-in and support. It is best to let the parent know directly. But if you do not feel comfortable with speaking directly to the parent then speak with the team manager. If the team manager also happens to be the parent, or you are not comfortable speaking with the team manager, then let your coaching coordinator know.

Recall the example above where Coach Wooden called the player's father before disciplining the son. Notice the father supported the coach 100%. Our experience is that if you let parents know ahead of time you will get great support.

However, if you do not speak with the team manager or parent then the parents will talk amongst themselves as to what is going on and they may question what in the heck the coach is doing.

Remember:

- ✓ The bench is the coach's best friend.
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Offence - Don't be soft on the fundamentals

Overall, Cougar coaches can be too soft on the fundamentals, especially the younger coaches. We see too many Cougar players in game situations taking jump shots or lay-ups with very poor fundamentals. The Coach may think it is kind to be soft of the fundamentals, but you are doing the players and the team a serious disservice.

Players need to know their roles

A very important role of the coach is set team structure. That is, it is important for each of the players to understand what their role is on the team. By doing this you are not constraining the players. Instead, you as coach can say 'Fred, you have some great strengths in rebounding, passing and hustle. However, there are players on the team who are not as good at rebounding and strength under the basket, but they are very strong dribblers. Until I see real improvement in your dribbling at training, I don't want to see you dribbling in a game. Now here's the improvement in dribbling I want to see.....'

The coach needs to structure the team into the following roles:

Point guard

Also known as #1. The point guard is the team's best dribbler and is primarily responsible for bringing the ball up court and, in professional teams, directing the offence. Two other important roles for the point guard are (i) if a team mate gets caught with the ball, the guards are responsible for getting an open passing lane, which means there are no defenders between the ball handler and the pass receiver. It is **not** up to the ball handler, when in trouble, to throw a great pass; (ii) providing defensive balance or the 'safety' position. That is, working with the shooting guard to ensure an offensive person is always playing high to inhibit an opposition fast break.

Shooting guard

Also known as #2. The shooting guard is a very good outside shooter with good dribbling skills. As with the point guard, two other important roles for the shooting guard are (i) if a team mate gets caught with the ball, the guards are responsible for getting an open passing lane; (ii) providing defensive balance or the 'safety' position. That is, working with the point guard to ensure an offensive person is always playing high to inhibit an opposition fast break. The shooting guard will often have point guard duties in a game to give the point guard a rest and to improve the skills and experience of the shooting guard.

Small forward

Also known as #3. The small forward is known for strong drives to the basket, especially along the baseline. The #3 is a good rebounder with a descent shooting range. In junior teams the small forward and the shooting guard are often interchangeable. However, it important the player knows what their role is when they are on the court. As subs come onto the court it is not unusual for the coach to say 'Stu, you're playing shooting guard now'.

Power forward

Also known as #4. The power forward is a very strong rebounder and aggressive under the basket at both ends of the court and scores most points around the basket. In junior basketball the coach often needs to tell the power forward to stay down low (that is, near the basket). In junior teams the power forward and the centre are often interchangeable. However, it important the player knows

what their role is when they are on the court. As subs come onto the court it is not unusual for the coach to say 'Alice, you're playing centre now, give me those boards'.

Centre

Also known as #5. The centre is usually the tallest player on the team. The centre is a strong rebounder and shot rejector and can be the *intimidator* on the defensive end. The centre scores off low post moves and rebounds.

Coaches must set shooting range limits

We saw a Cougars' coach a few years ago who believed in running with the players' spirit. The players took most shots from 3-point range. The players loved it. By half way through the season some of the parents were getting ticked off that there appeared to be no structure and discipline in the side. They did not win a game all season. The coach quit, realising he was not cut out for coaching. The new coach took the team to a grand final the next season.

Give each player specific instructions about how far out they can be before they can take a shot. If they violate the agreement (most players will to test the coach), substitute the player out of the game immediately. All the coach needs to say with a smile is 'you know why you are coming off don't you?' and all the players get the message quickly.

As players grow into U15's and higher they will pester the coach about shooting 3-pointers in a game. The best action for the coach to undertake is to place the onus back on the players as follows:

1. Split the team into two.
2. Have half the players shooting 3-pointers and the other half rebounding and counting shots made and missed.
3. Have the rebounders provide a mild distraction to somewhat simulate a game situation.
4. The shooters take 10 consecutive shots, then the players switch.
5. A rule we have set is that if the player can hit 4 or more out of 10, they can shoot an open 3-pointer on game day, *but only when there are rebounders under the basket!*

Why 4 or more? The chances of scoring are significantly higher when the offence is patient and disciplined. A drive penetration for a lay-up should have an 85% chance of a basket, an opportunity to get the defence in foul trouble and increase the blood pressure of the opposing coach. A short range jump shot should have at least a 60% chance of a basket. In juniors, if every player were to shoot a 3-pointer the percentage would be under 20% in a game situation.

Shooting

Let's become known as a Club where the players' shooting form is fundamentally sound. We want to see players taking *shots*:

- While balanced;
- With their chest facing the basket;
- With "elbow to eyebrow";
- Getting off the ground and releasing the ball at the top of their jump.

The Australian Basketball Association has found that junior girls typically shoot the ball quite flat, thereby reducing the shooting percentage. The ABA therefore encourages shooting drills, especially for girls, that encourage players to put a lot of air, or a higher arch, into the shot. Some of these drills are provided below.

For the youngest age groups, please do not let the players take long shots as it teaches them very poor shooting habits (typically, the shoulder thrusts out and the arms flail all over the place). Tell the players you would prefer they not practise bad habits, even mucking at school, but they simply not aloud to take such shots at basketball training.

Some drills and games follow:

Semi-circle shoot out drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Focusing on fundamentals for young players
- 2) Start of season or after holidays shooting practise
- 3) New coach to assess player shooting ability
- 4) Coach to convey "word short cuts" to players

Set-up – Have players stand in a semi-circle about 2 metres from the basket. There is normally a netball semi-circle the players can stand on. Very young players may need to stand closer. Every player should have a ball. Those without a ball can rebound and rotate in on the coach's call.

Directions for players – It is very important for the coach to teach the fundamentals before the players start shooting. Fundamentals to teach are as follows:

- a) Most of the shot's strength comes from the legs. So it is really important to use the legs and release the ball at the top of the jump. The **major** mistake made by juniors is to heave the ball like a shot put – and this terrible habit stays for the rest of their career. Using the legs will avoid this habit from forming.
- b) The feet should be shoulder width apart or just a touch wider. The same foot as the shooting hand (right foot for right handers) can be half a foot forward.
- c) Knees bent ready to jump.
- d) Chest squared up to basket. This is one of the biggest mistakes players make game day. If the player is not squared up while shooting, it dramatically reduces the shot making percentage.
- e) Tell the players to hold the ball, one handed with the palm up, in their shooting hand. This is how the ball should sit in the hand when taking the shot. Keeping the other hand off the

ball, bring the ball to the shooting position. Make sure there is a gap above the palm, the fingers are curled and all finger tips are gripping the ball.

- f) The shooting forearm should be vertically straight. This is **crucial** as a straight forearm ensures the shot is straight. Then all the player has to worry about is correct distance.
- g) The non shooting hand just steadies the ball. Ex-netballers will often use both hands to shoot. Stamp this bad habit out as it will result in many blocked shots in a game.
- h) In preparing to shoot, the knees bend and the shooting elbow comes down as the body becomes a loaded spring. *A really important feature for the coach to watch here is that the forearm stays perfectly vertical.* Probably the worst habit players develop is to twist the elbow when the player winds up to shoot.
- i) Where should the eyes focus? Some players prefer the back of the rim, others the rear. The rear is probably the most common, but whatever is the most successful for the player.
- j) As the player takes the shot, the non-shooting arm stays in place while the shooting arm is extended so that the *elbow is level with the eyebrow.* A common word short-cut here is “*elbow to eyebrow*”. Another common bad habit is for the shooting arm to spring back as soon as it straightens. This will typically result in the shot falling short. *So a good training technique is for the arm to stay elbow to eyebrow after the ball leaves the hand.*
- k) The perfect shot occurs when the ball rolls off the index and middle fingers as back spin is also added. To do this, the shooting hand should end up in a “*goose neck*” such that the shooting hand is 90° to the shooting arm. *Ensure the shooting hand falls straight.* Another common bad habit is for the shooting hand to fall to the left or right – and the ball will travel in the same direction.

The coach should comment on each player in the semi-circle. The players should move position from time to time to practise shooting at different angles and to restrict boredom. It is probably best to have a couple of players rebounding so the coach can focus on shooting fundamentals.

Sit down shooting drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Focuses on the movement of the shooting arm
- 2) Encouraging a lot of air, or arch, in the shot.

Set-up – Half the players sit down on a bench or chairs, about 1 metre apart. Each of these players has a basketball. The remaining players stand 5 metres and directly in front of the seated player (2 metres for the youngest age group).

Directions for players – The seated players shoot towards their partner. The coach demands focus on straight shooting elbows during the entire shot and getting plenty of air, or arch, into the shot. The standing player does a quick, gentle pass back to the seated player. After 10 shots players rotate.

Elements to watch for:

- a) Straight elbows through the entire shot. Many if not most players have the tendency to move their shooting elbow away from their body during the shooting process.
- b) The coach should be saying ‘give it plenty of air’, ‘get height into your shot’.
- c) Ensure shooting hand ‘goose necks’ and falls directly towards the partner.

Sit down then jump drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Shooting with balance
- 2) Encouraging a lot of air, or arch, in the shot.

Set-up – Half the players sit down on a bench or chairs, about 1 metre apart. Each of these players has a basketball. The remaining players stand 7 metres and directly in front of the seated player (3 metres for the youngest age group).

Directions for players – The seated players jump up and shoot towards their partner. The coach demands focus on straight shooting elbows during the entire shot, getting plenty of air, or arch, into the shot and being balanced. The standing player does a quick, gentle pass back to the seated player. After 10 shots players rotate. The coach can advance the drill a little further by asking players to jump up and take a small jump forward with their shot – again, to focus on player balance.

Elements to watch for:

- a) Ensure the players are nice and balanced when they release the ball with weight evenly on the balls of both feet.
- b) Straight elbows through the entire shot. Many if not most players have the tendency to move their shooting elbow away from their body during the shooting process.
- c) The coach should be saying ‘give it plenty of air’, ‘get height into your shot’.
- d) Ensure players are squaring up to their partner when taking the shot,

‘String music’ drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Shooting fundamentals – ensuring players are getting plenty of height into their shot
- 2) Ensuring players are focused on the basket and not on the distractions around them.

Set-up – It’s great if there are 3 different baskets available. One shooter at each basket. Start by shooting one to two metres directly in front of the basket. One player stands only one shoe length in front of the shooter (this player is the distraction). Have another 1 or 2 players on either side of the shooter getting rebounds and protecting the distracting player. If the coach has only one basket at their disposal, place the teams on either side of the basket. Have two basketballs with each shooter.

Directions for players – The aim of the shooter is to hit ‘nuthin but net’ or ‘string music’. Encourage the shooter not to hit the ring or the backboard. When the player focuses on string music then they are getting proper arch and height into their shot, thereby giving the shot a better chance of scoring. Have the players put quick shots up. Don’t let them watch every shot go through the basket. The rebounders do all the work chasing balls down and passing the ball to the shooter. Shooters should count how many consecutive ‘string music’ baskets they hit. After about 45 seconds the players rotate positions.

Initially, the ‘distracter’ has their arms by their side. As the shooters gain confidence the distracter can ‘do a moose’ by putting hands on top of their head like a moose and move their fingers around to distract the shooter further. Don’t let the kids get too silly.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure players are only shooting using shooting fundamentals, as described above. It is important the coach continually remarks on what the shooting is doing correctly and incorrectly.
- b) Continually remind shooters to hit nothing but net. Some players may need encouragement to get more arch in their shot.

Straight elbow drill

Encourage players to practise this drill at home.

Excellent for:

- 1) Great drill for ensuring players are keeping a straight elbow and follow through

Set-up – Each player has a basketball and lies on the back.

Directions for players – The players place the ball in shooting position and shoot the ball straight up with proper goose neck follow through. Players need to ensure their elbow stays straight throughout the shot and the goose neck follow through is also straight otherwise they will be chasing the ball all over the place. If shot properly, the ball should land straight back to the hands.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Straight elbow throughout the shot.
- b) Goose neck follow through is straight

Up the wall drill

Again, encourage players to practise this drill at home.

Excellent for:

- 1) Having players execute proper shooting motion
- 2) Achieving good ball rotation

Set-up – Each player has a basketball and faces the wall.

Directions for players – Each player stands 2 metres apart and 1 ½ metres from the wall facing the wall. The players will shoot the ball about 10 metres up on the wall so that the ball ‘kisses’ the wall. They are to bend their knees with each shot and use balanced backwards and forwards rotation with the torso so they get into a swaying rhythm. Proper goose neck is required to achieve back spin on the ball.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Bending knees with each shot.
- b) Swaying rhythm
- c) Nice back spin on the ball

3-person time trial drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Getting lots of shots off in a short time – good shooting practise
- 2) Seeing how players shoot and pass under pressure

Set-up – Split players into teams of three. It is best when there is one hoop for each team of three. In the team of three, (a) one player rebounds and therefore stands under the hoop, (b) another player receives the pass from the rebounder and chest passes rapidly to the shooter. This person stand at about the free throw line; (c) the shooter starts to the left or right of the key. Only one ball is required per team.

Directions for players – The shooter has 45 seconds to get off as many shots as possible. The coach can make it a contest as to how many shots are attempted and made. The count should be made by the rebounder so the shooter can focus on shooting. The coach signals when the 45 seconds starts and when it is over. Then the players rotate positions. Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Do not let your players shoot from 3 point range. They can do that in the school yard unless they are very accomplished from that range.
- b) Do not let your players shoot from outside their range. Players will, in general, honestly tell the coach the limit of their shooting range when asked.
- c) The shooter moves around to vary the shot selection.
- d) *Ensure shooting fundamentals are maintained when shooting under pressure.* It is important the coach continually remarks on what the shooting is doing correctly and incorrectly.
- e) Ensure the shooter squares to the basket with every shot. When receiving the ball, the shooter should have their feet and chest squared to the basket while the arms and head are turned to receive the ball.
- f) Shooters should receive the ball in the triple threat position.
- g) Rebounders and passers should execute good, strong chest passes *when the receiver is ready!*

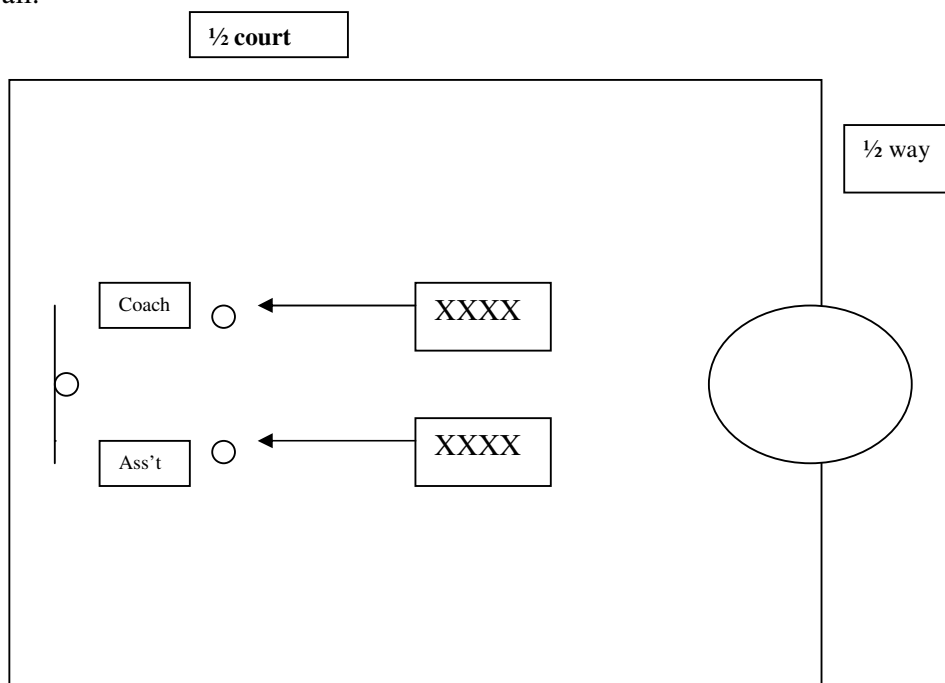
Panic shot drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Getting younger and new players to put up a fundamentally sound shot when under pressure
- 2) Seeing how players shoot under pressure

Set-up – Split players into two teams. Have the players line up, one behind the other, at $\frac{1}{4}$ court, about 5 metres apart facing the nearest end line. A ball is placed on the court in front of each team at a spot that is an easy shot for the players. The coach stands next to the ball. If you have an assistant or a parent on duty, have one of them stand next to the other

ball.



Directions for players – On the coaches whistle or call one player from each team sprints as fast as possible to the ball, picks up the ball and takes a shot. But it is not that easy. To place the players under game type pressure, the coach (and assistant) yells at the player “quick, quick, hurry up, you must get off a quick shot.....” Once the player takes a shot, they retrieve the ball and return it to the same spot on the court. For newer and younger players, the shots will be terrible. Once all the players have had a turn, bring them in and explain that they are to be fast with their body but cool, calm and collected in the mind. Even under pressure they should take only fundamentally sound shots as explained previously by the coach. Now go through the drill again, still yelling at the players, ensuring the fundamentals are sound and that their face is focused. Elements to watch for are as follows:

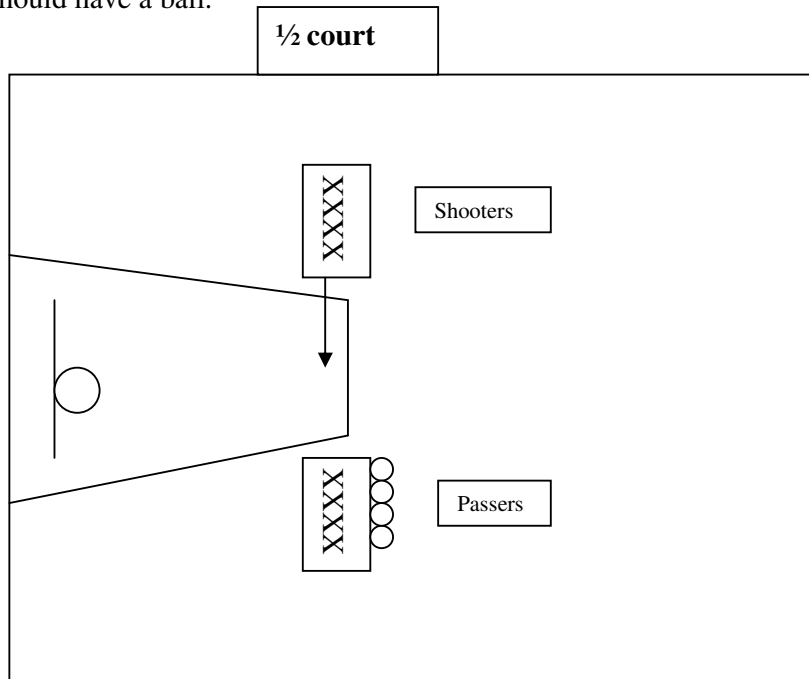
- Watch each player’s face. Are they grimacing and looking panicked or are they focused on the basket and ignoring you?
- Shot fundamentals must be followed.
- After the explanation “fast with the body and slow with the mind” continue to pressure each player, but for players with difficulties consider reassuring statements such as “focus” and “stay calm” when they pick the ball up.

Squaring up drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Ensuring players are already squared up to the basket when they receive a pass, enabling a quicker shot and better execution of the fundamentals.

Set-up – Split players into two teams. Have the players line up, one behind the other, on either side of the free throw line (closer to the basket for younger players). The teams should be lined up parallel to the end line with the teams facing each other. Each of the players on one team should have a ball.



Directions for players – The first player from the team without the ball runs to the centre of the free throw line. As they hit the centre, the player turns their feet and lower body towards the basket. The hands are up ready to receive the pass. The pass is made as soon as the shooter is ready to receive the pass. The shooter and the passer both go in for the rebound. The passer and shooter then swap teams with the new passer taking the ball to the end of the line.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Make the drill fast paced. The shooter should be calling for the ball so that the pass is received the split second the shooter has squared up.
- b) Ensure the shooter's feet and lower body are squared up to the basket **before** the pass is received. The chest must be squared up when the shot is made.
- c) The shooter must have their hands up ready to receive the pass.
- d) Shooting fundamentals must be followed.
- e) The passes should also be following fundamentals:
 - i) Stepping into the pass;
 - ii) Thumbs facing down and palms outwards as the ball is released;
 - iii) Pass from the chest directly to the shooter's hands – right where the shooter wants it.

Jump shot drill

Some players prefer to come to a two-footed stop, with feet parallel and shoulder-width apart, then go up with their jump shot. Others prefer to have their shooting foot in front with the non-shooting foot landing first. From a coaching standpoint, either style is fine as long as the player is balanced and is executing the fundamentals.

Excellent for:

- 1) Shooting in players a manner typical to a game.
- 2) Ensuring players are shooting use all the fundamentals

Set-up – Players are in teams of two. One player on each team goes to the 3-point line while the partner is under the basket with a ball. The youngest age groups should be 2 metres inside the 3-point line. The players at the 3-point line should be spread out.

Directions for players – The rebounder passes to their partner. The shooter immediately gets into triple threat position, takes two dribbles at **game speed** then takes a jump shot. The shooter immediately back pedals to the 3-point line so the shooter is at the 3-point line when the ball is passed back. The partner rebounds and passes the ball back to the shooter. The rebounder must be aware of the balls bucketing down so they don't get hit on the head. The coach should instruct the shooters to go straight in the air and not fade forward, to the sides or back. Explain that fading dramatically reduces the probability the shot will score. After 10 shots the players rotate.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the jump shot is well balanced. Push this point by ensuring the players are moving at game speed;
- b) Ensure the shooter is focused on jumping straight up and is not fading;
- c) Straight elbows all the way through the shot

Jump shot off the backboard drill

Studies have shown that a jump shot from around a 45° angle to the basket have a higher probability of scoring when the backboard is used. This drill gets players comfortable with using the backboard.

Excellent for:

- 1) Getting players comfortable with using the backboard.
- 2) Ensuring players are taking a vertical leap and are not fading to the baseline, sideline or basket.

Set-up – Players line up with a ball beyond the 3-point line and at 45° to the basket.

Directions for players – Players dribble at game speed and take a jump shot about half way between the basket and the 3-point line. The players must bank the shot off the backboard. Start on the left side then move to the right side. Players should be focused on where they are hitting the backboard and not the basket. Ensure the drill is run at a hard pace.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the jump shot is well balanced. Push this point by ensuring the players are moving at game speed;
- b) Ensure the shooter is focused on jumping straight up and is not fading;

- c) Shooting fundamentals. The coach should be commenting on every shot.

Shot after dribble drill (a must to teach)

The drill can be taught to all age groups including players in their first season of basketball.

Excellent for:

- 1) Giving players a better option when they come to a dribble stop, or receive the ball, close to the basket.
- 2) Teaching players to react to the defence.

Set-up – Players line up with a ball at the 3-point line and at 45° to the left of the basket.

Directions for players – Inform the players that basketball rules allow another step to be taken when they finish their dribble. Ensure players are aware of which foot is the pivot foot when they come to a dribble stop (the foot that lands first – if the player comes to a jump stop then either foot can be the pivot foot). The ball must be released from the dribbler's hands before the pivot lands on the floor again. So the players can take one step and then make a second step, and release the ball before the second step is complete.

Players dribble at game speed and come to a dribble stop where the coach is – about 2 metres from the basket. The dribbler immediately protects the ball on the hip then takes a step to their strong side and releases the shot before the completion of their second step. The players must bank the shot off the backboard. Start on the left side then move to the right side. Players should be focused on where they are hitting the backboard and not the basket. Ensure the drill is run at a hard pace.

As the players get better at this drill:

- Have them fake a pass to the middle of the key then step the opposite side for a bank shot;
- Get the players to react to the defence. If the coach is playing defence, defend straight up or over-play the dribble side and coach the players to react accordingly.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

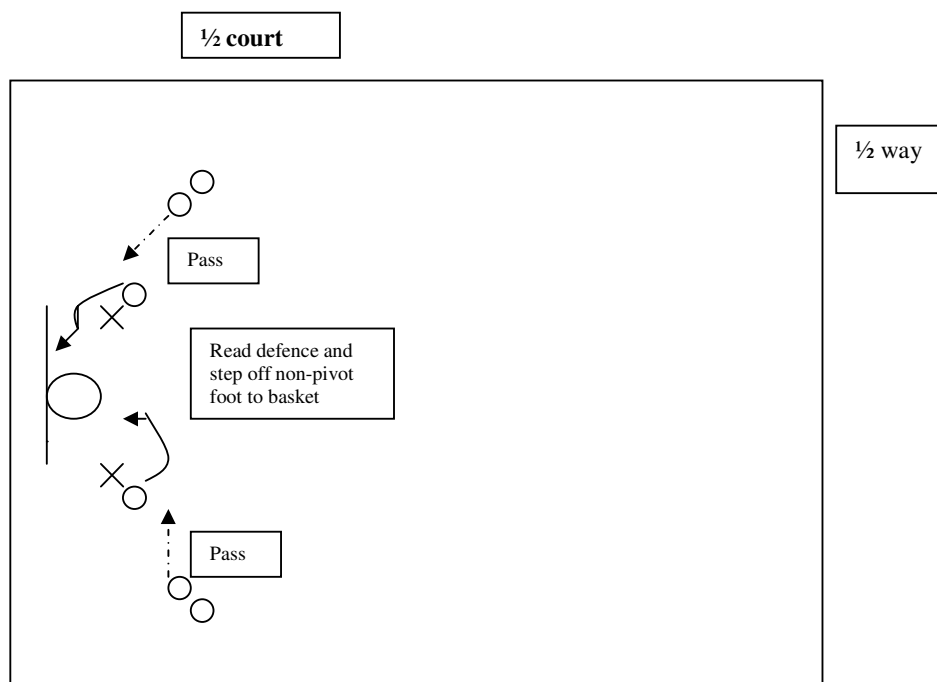
- a) The first step after the dribble stop is fast and towards the basket, not out to the side;
- b) The shot is released before the completion of the 2nd step.
- c) Players first move the non-pivot foot;
- d) Ensure players are using the backboard;
- e) Ensure the shooter is not fading towards the baseline.

Low post turnaround shot drill (a must to teach)

Excellent for:

- 1) Giving players a better shooting options when they receive the ball close to the basket.
- 2) Teaching players to react to the defence.

Set-up – Players set up as follows with 2 defenders on either side of the basket. One offensive player on each defender with the offensive player's back to the basket ready to receive the ball. The passer stands about 5 metres away. Extra player lined up behind the passer.



Directions for players – Inform the players that basketball rules allow a step to be taken after they receive the pass. The player must shoot, dribble or pass before the 2nd step is completed.

The shooter should stand just outside the key so the 3 second clock (5 seconds for U14's and younger) does not start. The shooter reads the defence by sensing where the defender is playing. Is the defender playing straight-up, or over-playing the left or right side? If the defender is not making contact then insist the shooter makes contact. The shooter receives the ball and, without dribbling, steps to the left or right, depending on how the defence is playing.

At the start of this drill, make it easy for the shooter by having the defence over-play the left or right. As players get more experience with this drill they should use their butt, body and one tensed arm to keep the defender out of play. The other arm is out calling for the ball and the passer bounce passes to the free hand.

The passer rotates to shooter, shooter to defence and defence to the end of the queue.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

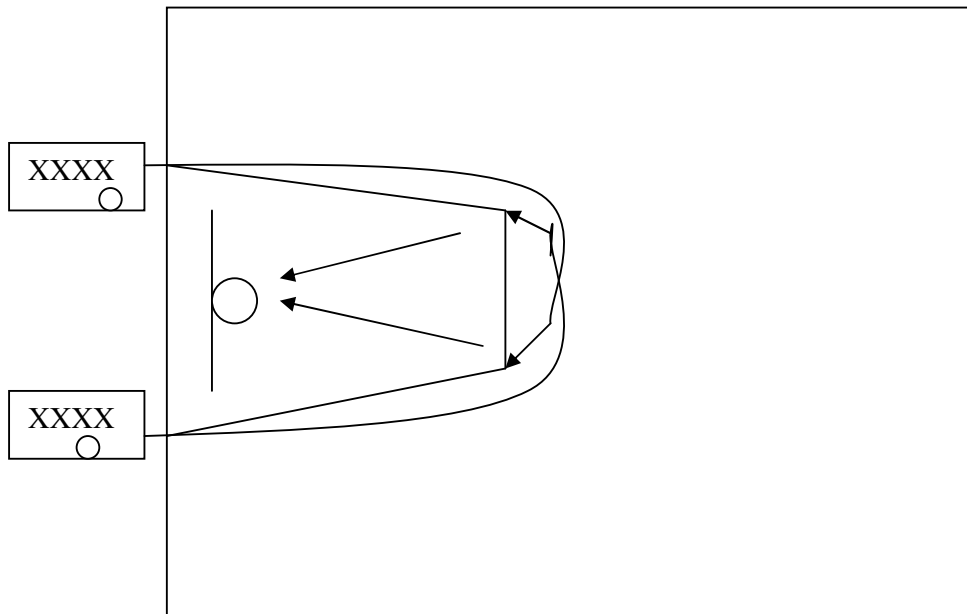
- The first step after the dribble stop is fast and towards the basket, not out to the side;
- The shooter must indicate where the pass needs to be thrown;
- Ensure the passer bounce passes to a spot most advantageous to the shooter;
- Ensure the shot is released before the completion of the 2nd step.
- Ensure players are using the backboard;
- Ensure the shooter is not fading towards the baseline.

Basketball curls

Excellent for:

- 1) Warm up before a game.
- 2) Getting a lot of shots off in a short time period.

Set-up – Split players into two groups. Have the players line up, one behind the other, on the baseline and behind the backboard facing out to the open court. The players line up at the end of the block line that marks the key. Two balls are required. One is held by the first person in one group while the other is held by the second person in the other group.



Directions for players – The person without the ball at the front of the group runs to the key “elbow” in front of them, then without stopping runs to the other “elbow”. Upon reaching the second elbow the player squares up to the basket and receives the ball from the player in front of them. The shooter then rebounds the ball, passes to the player at the front of the group that passed the ball to them, and then joins the rear of the opposite group from where they started. Now the person that passed the ball, as soon as they pass, they run to the nearest elbow then to the opposite elbow and execute as already described. The players continue this drill at a fast but controlled pace. Younger players should be moved closer to the basket.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Players are squared up to the basket when they receive the ball.
- b) Shooting fundamentals are followed.

2 ball knock out game

Excellent for:

- 1) Shooting under pressure.
- 2) Fun way to start of practise.

Set-up – Players queue up behind the free throw line, one behind the other. The two front players have a basketball.

Directions for players – The first player in line takes a shot. This player keeps rebounding and shooting until the ball goes in. The second player steps up to the free throw line and takes a shot as soon as the first player leaves the free throw line. If the first player scores a basket before the second player, the first player stays in the game and joins the end of the queue. If the second player scores before the first player, the first player quickly passes the ball to the third player and the first player is out of the game. When there are only two players left place the players on the “elbows” with the ball at their feet. On the call of “shoot” from the ref, both players take a shot. The first to score is wins. U9’s and U10’s players should be moved closer to the basket.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Players must take fundamentally sound shots. The coach should set the rule that if the shot is not fundamentally correct, the shot does not count.
- b) After the rebound, players must take a proper shot and not just run into the basket without dribbling.
- c) Comment on each player’s shot. This game should not be considered a coach’s time out, but a learning opportunity for the players while having some fun.

21 game

Excellent for:

- 1) Shooting under pressure.
- 2) Fun way to start of practise.
- 3) Having players follow their shot.
- 4) Rebounding

Set-up – Split players into two teams. Each team has one ball with players queued up at each “elbow”, one behind the other facing the basket. The two front players have a basketball. Older teams can be taken back to the 3-point line. U9’s and U10’s players should be moved closer to the basket.

Directions for players – The first team to score 21 points wins. Coaches can vary the scoring, but typical scoring is as follows:

- 3 points for the player makes the shot from the elbow;
- 2 points if the rebound off the first shot is caught on the full and the player scores off that rebound;
- 1 point if the rebound bounces on the floor only once;
- 0 points if the rebound bounces twice or more or if the first rebounded shot misses.

Players can not dribble in, they must shoot from where they caught the ball. As soon as the player shoots a basket or 0 points are earned, the ball is quickly passed back to their next team player and they join the end of their team’s queue.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Players must take fundamentally sound shots. The coach should set the rule that if the shot is not fundamentally correct, the shot does not count.

- b) After the rebound, players must take a proper shot and not just run into the basket without dribbling.
- c) Comment on each player's shot. This game should not be considered a coach's time out, but a learning opportunity for the players while having some fun.

Passing

There is a wise saying in basketball: “The dribble is an alarm bell while the pass is a silent killer”. Train your players so that when they first get the ball, they look for the pass and not the dribble. Passing fundamentals are as follows:

- ✓ Players must step into the pass. Stationary feet will result in a lolly-pop, woosy pass.
- ✓ For **chest passes**, the ball starts at the passer’s chest with hands facing up on both sides of the ball, fingers spread. As the ball is released the palms should face outwards with the thumbs facing down. Step into the pass.
- ✓ Bounce pass – ask the players when they should do a bounce pass. The answers should be to avoid a defender and almost anytime you pass into a zone defence. The bounce is executed the same as the chest pass. The pass should be received at about stomach height.
- ✓ For **overhead passes**, the passer’s arms are above the head. As the passer steps forward the arms also move forward. As the ball is released the palms should face outwards with the thumbs facing down.
- ✓ For the **baseball pass**, the ball starts just above the passer’s preferred shoulder. The preferred hand is behind the ball while the non-preferred hand steadies the ball. As the passer steps forward the preferred hand follows through in the direction of the pass.
- ✓ For the **pivot pass**, the passer steps to the side to avoid a defender. The ball is held in two hands, similar to the overhead pass. The pass is executed the same as the overhead pass except the player does not step into the pass.

Passing fundamentals drill

Excellent for:

- 1) New players.
- 2) The start of a new season as a refresher.
- 3) When your team has had a particularly bad passing game.

Set-up – Split the players into two teams. Players are in two straight lines about 10 metres apart facing each other. The players in one team each have a ball.

Directions for players – Go through each of the fundamental passes discussed above. Before the players practise each type of pass, show the players the fundamentals you expect them to execute. For the overhead and baseball passes, spread the players 15 metres apart.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure each player is delivering the fundamentals. For younger players and girls, stepping into the pass is very important.

Piggy in the middle drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Players at all levels and experience.
- 2) Getting players used to doing fake passes.
- 3) Passing past aggressive defence.

Set-up – Players split into teams of three with one ball per team. It is best for the 3 to do the drill in one of the jump circles on the court (at the top of the key and at the centre of the court). The two passers are diagonally opposite one another. The defender is between the two passers.

Directions for players – The passers cannot move their feet other than pivoting. No overhead passes are allowed. The ball can not go over the defender's head. If the defender touches the ball, the person who threw the pass becomes "piggy". The defender plays aggressive defence. The defender must run to each defender and cannot stay in the middle or back with the other passer. Consider allowing no pivoting for more advanced players. If the passers make 10 passes in a row then they win and the players rotate. Also, consider a variation where, as soon as a pass is made, the defender calls out '1,001..1,002..1,003' to the count of 1,005. If the pass is not made by 1,005 then the passer moves into the middle.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure passers do a true pivot and there is no travelling.
- b) Ensure passers are doing quick, realistic fake passes.
- c) Pass receivers move one step to the ball and are not just sitting back waiting for the pass.

The passing game

Excellent for:

- 1) This is an outstanding drill for passing in a game-type situation.
- 2) Done properly, it is a hard work out for the players.
- 3) Having players move to receive the ball.
- 4) Ensuring passes are only made when there is an open passing lane.
- 5) Having passers face their team mates in the face of aggressive defence.
- 6) Pivoting practise.

Set-up – Players split into two teams using only one ball. Identify a smaller area of the court. If you have four players on each team, consider using the area bounded by (a) the sidelines (b) the base line to just above the 3-point line.

Directions for players – No dribbling is allowed. If there are at least four players on each team, no passes are allowed back to the person who passed it to you. Passers do not turn their back to their team mates. Pivot. Only pass to a moving player and to an open passing lane (an "open passing lane" is where there are no defenders between the passer and the person receiving the pass. *It is not up to the passer to throw a great pass, rather the passer's team mates must get open.* Each team keeps their own tally of consecutive passes. The ball is given to the defence if (i) anyone in the offence steps out of bounds, (ii) the defence steals the ball, or (iii) the defence deflects the ball. If a team is able to do 10 consecutive passes, you have a good passing team. If neither team can achieve 7 passes, you should consider doing the passing game at every practise. If your team is not pivoting on game day, consider forcing each passer to do 2 pivots before the pass is released.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Players don't bunch together like bees around honey. It is really eye opening for players if you blow the whistle and show them how bunched they are and how much of the court they are not using.
- b) Only pass to an open passing lane.
- c) Pass receivers must move to receive the ball.

- d) Guards are expected to help anyone caught with the ball.
- e) Players are stepping into their passes.
- f) Passers must face their team mates and not be intimidated by the defender. Stop the game whenever a passer turns their back.

3 man weave drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching players to pass ahead of a moving receiver so the receiver receives the ball without losing speed;
- 2) Teaching players to pass on the run without taking a dribble;
- 3) Teaching that players can take 2 ½ steps after catching the ball on the run without travelling.

Set-up – Players line up in groups of three spread evenly on the baseline, facing up court. One player is in line with the basket while the other two players are on the intersection of the 3-point line and the baseline. All other players line up behind the three baseline players. Only the centre player has the ball.

Directions for players – When the coach blows the whistle or yells ‘go’ the two wing players begin jogging up court. Start at a slow speed and increase speed as players become more proficient. Explain to the players (i) all passes have to ensure that the receiver does not slow down to receive your pass. The receiver should be able to move at a constant speed to receive your pass; (ii) When you receive the ball you have 2 ½ steps to release it. The ball should be caught in mid-stride. The next step becomes the pivot foot and the ball must be released before the pivot foot lands on the court again – thus 2 ½ steps. The centre player passes to the right and then moves to replace the right side player. When they replace another player they run directly up court and not towards the other players. The original right side player passes to the left side player and then moves to replace the right side player. The players continue to pass and replace up court.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) When new and unskilled players catch the ball, it is effective for the coach to yell out ‘one-two pass’ as each player receives the ball. Call travel when the players travel so they don’t get a surprise at the game;
- b) It is imperative the pass receivers run at a constant pace. Stress that passes must be thrown ahead of the receiver so the receiver has to run onto the pass;
- c) For pass receivers it can be helpful to break into a longer stride between catching and passing the ball. The longer strides helps the rhythm of many players;
- d) Ensure the players don’t bunch up but keep their spacing.

Circle fake drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Learning to fake pass;
- 2) Passing under pressure.

Set-up – Three to four players line up evenly around a jump circle with one ball. Each of the four players has one foot in the circle. One player is in the middle. Use more than one circle so all your players are involved.

Directions for players – For the perimeter players, one foot should be kept in the circle at all times and can't move around. The perimeter players pass the ball around the circle without the centre ball stealer grabbing, stealing or deflecting the ball. The ball stealer can move outside the circle. As soon as the ball stealer grabs, steal or deflects the ball, or 30 seconds has passed, the players rotate. Encourage the players to pass fake or tell them at least one pass fake has to be made for passing.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the pass fakes are genuine – something that looks like a pass is going to be thrown. Too often, players do a silly little fake that would not fool anyone. The fake must go through the motions of being a genuine pass;
- b) Players must keep one foot in the circle;
- c) The ball stealer can place immense pressure on the handler.

Between the legs passing drill

See 'Dribbling and ball handling' below.

Push pass drill

See 'Dribbling and ball handling' below.

Over-under passing drill

See 'Dribbling and ball handling' below.

Catching

Give the players a quiz asking what is required to catch a ball. It's sounds simple, but your answer is fundamentally right and the players get it wrong every time.

What do you catch a ball with first?

Your eyes – There's no way you can catch the ball without watching it all the way to your hands. Not doing this is the key reason players drop the ball.

What do you catch with second?

Your feet – You have to move your feet to where the ball is so you can catch it.

What do you catch with third?

Your hands – Have your hands cupped, bent outwards at the wrist and fingers soft, ready to catch the ball.

Remind the players of these catching fundamentals and you will find the catching improves.

Lay-ups

For *lay-ups*:

- The players should *focus* on where they are placing the ball on the backboard. On game day you can just yell out “FOCUS” and the player will know what to do.
- The final element of the lay-up is a jump, not a continuation of the dribble. If the dribbler ends up way under the backboard, the lay-up has been poorly executed – and the player is not in a position to rebound.
- The ball is placed softly on the backboard – a common term is “kiss the backboard”. Most Cougar players bang the ball on the backboard and, consequently, the ball hits the ring and misses the basket.

Lay up drills at every practise

Lay ups and tough defence win grand finals. Lay-ups should therefore be drilled at every practise. Make sure teams practise the fundamentals discussed above.

‘Knees up Mother Brown’ drill

Excellent for:

- 1) New and inexperienced players.
- 2) Lead in to beginning of season lay-up practise.
- 3) Not a bad warm-up and stretch exercise.

Set-up – Have the players line up on the end line, about one metre apart, looking down the court. No basketballs are necessary.

Directions for players – As the players move down court, they go right foot step then left foot step then they jump, lifting the right knee to at least hip height. Then they go left foot step, right foot step then they jump, this time lifting the left knee to at least knee height.

Repeat to the end of the court and back.

No dribble lay-up drill

Excellent for:

- 1) New and inexperienced players
- 2) Focus on proper form in the final execution of the lay-up
- 3) Ensuring players’ eyes focus on where the ball is going to be placed on the board rather than the court ahead of them.

Set-up – Have the players line up at 45° to the basket on the right side, facing the basket. The players should only be about 1.5 metres from the basket. Each player should have a ball.

Directions for players – Without dribbling, step off with the right foot, take a step with the left foot, then jump. The ball is released by the right hand at the top of the jump. The left arm stays high to protect against intentional fouls. It is crucial that in the jump the right knee is lifted to hip height to assist with the jumping action. The players’ eyes should be focused on the upper right-hand corner of the box that should be painted on the backboard. At the height of the jump, the player places the ball *softly* on the backboard. The player rebounds the shot and returns to the end of the line.

Repeat on the left side of the basket. However, this time the player first steps with the **left foot**, then the right foot, then jump, lifting the **left** knee as high as possible. The ball is placed on the backboard using the left hand.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the players are looking at where to place the ball on the backboard and not the court in front of them.
- b) The ball must be placed on the backboard **softly!** This is the biggest reason for Cougar players missing their lay-ups.
- c) Make sure the correct knee is lifted to hip height.

Correct body positioning for lay-ups drill

Excellent for:

- 1) New and experienced basketballers as bad habits come to lay-ups so easily.
- 2) Finishing off a fast break correctly.
- 3) Finishing off a drive to the basket.

Set-up – Have the players line up on the baseline, level and parallel with the backboard. Each player should have a basketball.

Directions for players – As the players come in for the final lay-up jump, their body turns and squares to the place on the backboard where they will be placing the ball.

When the players have finished “parallel” lay-up drill, have them line up at the top of the key, one behind the other. Now they will be doing a lay-up front on to the basket, similar to a fast break situation. In this instance, the player chooses their favourite side and lay-ups to the side of the basket. Never, ever let your players lay-up front on to the basket.

Finally, line the players up on the base line on the opposite side from which they started. Naturally, they should use the opposite hand to dribble and shoot and the other knee is raised.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the players are looking at where to place the ball on the backboard and not the court in front of them.
- b) Players **must** square up to the spot where they will be placing the ball on the backboard.
- c) Players must go *game speed* once they have practised the fundamentals.

Pass & lay-up drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Less experienced players;
- 2) Having players pass and catch the ball effectively;
- 3) Having players lay-up and rebound effectively.

Set-up – Players split into two teams. One team, the lay-up team, is lined up one behind the other near the right side line at ½ court, facing the basket, with each player having a ball (the drill can be done with only 2 balls). The other team, the passing team, is on the other side of the court facing the basket, also at ½ court.

Directions for players – The first player on the lay-up team dribbles twice towards the basket and then passes to the first player on the passing team who is moving slowly towards the basket.

While still moving forward and without dribbling, the ball is passed back to the lay-up player. The lay-up is executed and the passer comes in for the rebound. Both players then move to their opposing teams and the drill continues. The coach should change lay-ups to the left side after a couple of run throughs.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure players are going at game speed and are executing with excellence. You must have perfect practise before a game.
- b) Ensure passes are passed ahead of the intended receiver so the receiver does not have to stop and wait for the pass.

Lay-up under pressure drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Replicating lay-ups in a game situation.
- 2) Ensuring lay-ups are practised at game speed.

Set-up – Have half the players line up in typical lay-up practise formation. Each player has a ball. The other half of the team, the defence, lines up parallel but 1 ½ metres behind and 1 metre inside (towards the centre of the court) the offensive players.

Directions for players – On the coach's whistle or call, the front offensive player attempts a lay-up and front defensive player attempts to stop the lay-up. After the lay-up the offensive player joins the end of the defensive line and the defensive player joins the end of the offensive line. Ensure lay-ups are performed from different angles on the court.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Don't let the defensive player foul. He/she must play solid, fundamental defence, attempting to get in front of the offensive player.
- b) The offensive player **must** go directly to the basket. Doing a "banana loop" to the basket just makes it easier for the defence.
- c) Ensure lay-up fundamentals are executed – high knee action in the final jump and the ball is placed softly on the backboard.

Lay-up focusing drill

Excellent for:

- 1) More experienced players, especially if you notice they are not converting their lay-ups on game day.
- 2) Leading into finals and you want to take the practise intensity up a notch.

Set-up – Have the players line up in typical lay-up practise formation. The coach stands underneath the basket.

Directions for players – As the players come in for the final lay-up charge at them just before they reach the basket. Consider further distracting them by waving your arm in front of their face as you charge forward. The direction to the players is not be distracted by what the maniac coach is doing, but stay very focused on the basket. Ensure lay-ups are performed from different angles on the court.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Watch the players' eyes to make sure they are focusing on the basket.

- b) The players should not flinch or blink, but just stay focused on the basket and lay-up execution.
- c) If you are a week from the finals or in the finals, consider having the players do push-ups or sit ups if they miss lay-ups.

Five-point lay-up game

You can only play this game if you have more than one basket available to you. Excellent for:

- 1) Having players do lay-up practise without the monotony of another drill.
- 2) Ensure players execute lay-up fundamentals when they are trying to operate at speed.

Set-up – Split the team starting both teams from the baseline corner. Only two balls per team are necessary as this will force players to rebound and pass quickly.

Directions for players – Players have to hit “four in a row” or “six in total” before they move to the 45 degree angle – then front on, then 45 degrees on the other side, then the baseline on the opposite side from which they started.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

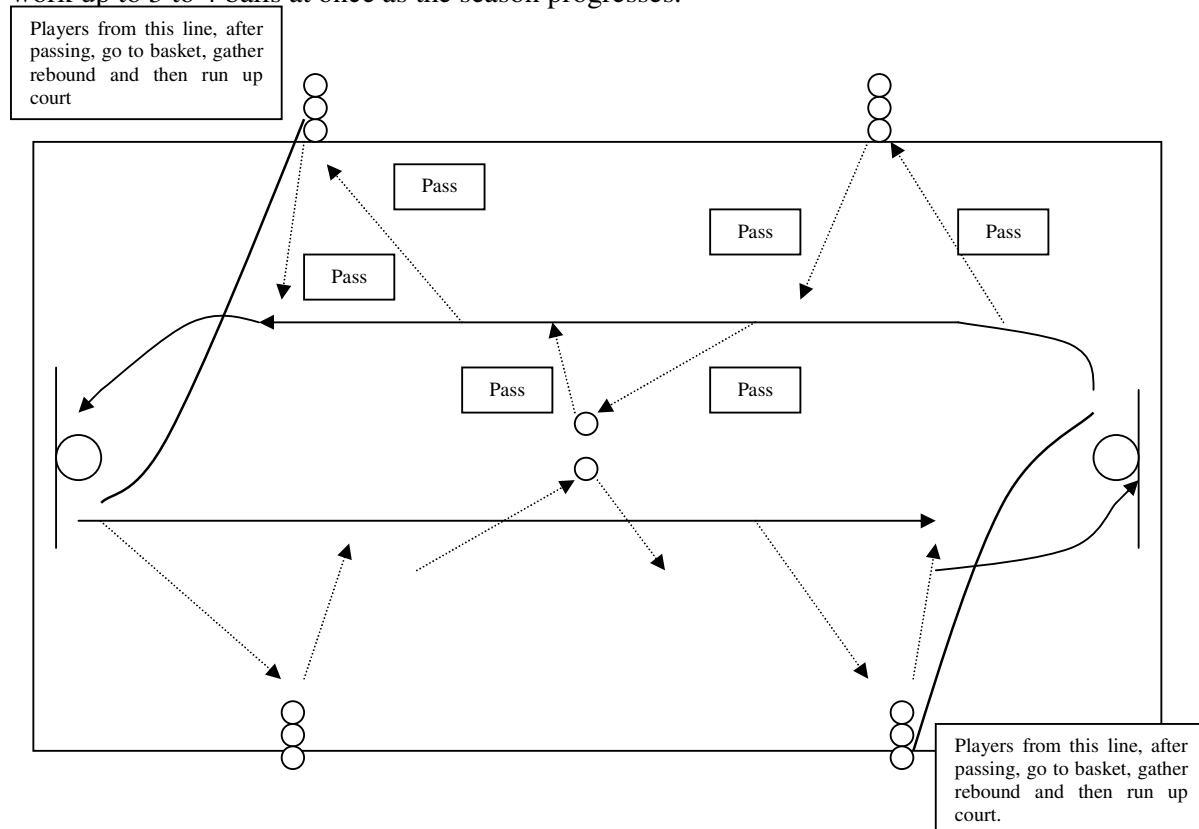
- a) The coach should be commenting on every lay-up.
- b) For the baseline lay-ups, ensure players are turning their bodies towards the back boards.
- c) For front on lay-ups, ensure players are completing the lay-up from the side of the basket and not straight on.

Bob Cat

Excellent for:

- 1) Terrific warm up at the start of practise.
- 2) Lay-ups and passing.

Set-up – You will need both teams training at the stadium to have enough numbers for this drill. Set up the players as shown below. If the players have not done Bob Cat before, start with one ball. Introduce a 2nd ball as soon as possible as one ball is too slow and easy. See if you can work up to 3 to 4 balls at once as the season progresses.



Directions for players – The person without the ball at the front of the group runs to the key “elbow” in front of them, then without stopping runs to the other “elbow”. Upon reaching the second elbow the player squares up to the basket and receives the ball from the player in front of them. The shooter then rebounds the ball, passes to the player at the front of the group that passed the ball, and then joins the rear of the opposite group from where they started. Now the person that passed the ball, as soon as they pass, they run to the nearest elbow then to the opposite elbow and execute as already described. The players continue this drill at a fast but controlled pace. Younger players should be moved closer to the basket.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Players are squared up to the basket when they receive the ball.
- b) Shooting fundamentals are followed.

Big player shooting drills

Mikan drill

The classic big player drill. Named after George Mikan who is arguably the first player to play like a Big Man – the #5 – the space eater – the tall redwood....George was the first MVP of the NBA.

Excellent for:

- 1) Practising shots around the basket so the shots become an automatic 2 points;
- 2) Practising shooting fundamentals for players close to the basket;
- 3) Footwork.

Set-up – One player has one ball starts to one side of the basket, ½ a metre from the backboard.

Directions for players – For 30 seconds the player will be under the basket doing lay-ups, while not letting the ball touch the floor. The object is to make as many lay-ups that you can within 30 seconds. Starting just beyond the front of the rim in the centre of the lane, step to the right with your left foot, jump, driving your right knee into the air. While jumping, hold the ball comfortably with two hands bringing it up your right side, on an angle away from your right hip, as if to keep it away from your left shoulder. Shoot a half-hook off the backboard. Wait for the ball to nestle through the net, then step with your right foot, jump, driving your left knee up and shoot the lefty half-hook off the backboard on the left side of the hoop. Wait for the ball to nestle through and repeat on the right side.

Encourage the kids at home, especially the big players on your team, to do a hundred “Mikan’s” in a row. Don’t dribble. Don’t repeat if you miss a shot, just go to the other side. See if you can make ten in a row without hitting rim.

Next, reverse Mikan lay-up drill. Players do the exact same drill, but now you are working on reverse lay-ups. This is where they face away from the basket. So they do the same quick reverse lay-ups with the same footwork though they are doing reverse lay-ups.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Players must keep the ball high above the shoulders, never bring it down;
- b) Encourage players to get into a rhythm – ‘catch one-two, catch one-two....

Fake spin to lay-up drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Proper execution of spin fake;
- 2) Strong move to the basket without a dribble.

Set-up – Player stands on the block facing away from the basket with a ball.

Directions for players – The player backwards spins the ball to represent a pass. As soon as the ball is caught the player moves into the power position with the ball under the chin, the elbows out to the side and the arms tensed. The high foot (the foot closest to ½ court) is the pivot foot. The player does a fake to the high side while protecting the ball on the hip. The player then steps back low side and with a large step, does a lay-up. Change sides of the basket.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the players do not travel by putting the pivot down before releasing the shot. The key is that the first step is a, fast large step;

- b) The fake should be a real fake and not just a little twist of the body. There should be at least a ½ turn. The defender must believe the player is moving to the spit line;
- c) Ensure the first step to the basket is aimed at the basket and not the back wall;
- d) Players must use the right knee and hand on the right side and the left knee and hand on the left side (to keep the ball away from defenders).

Drop step lay-up drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Strong moves to the basket when close to the basket.

Set-up – Each player has one ball and starts on the block (see ‘Definitions’) facing away from the basket. Two players to one basket with one on each block. If you do not have baskets down the sideline then set up so there is a passer on the 3-point line to the player on the block.

Directions for players – The high foot (the foot closest to ½ court) is the pivot foot. Each player backwards spins the ball to represent a pass (or is passed the ball if there is a passer). As soon as the ball is caught the player moves into the power position with the ball under the chin, the elbows out to the side and the arms tensed. The player performs a reverse pivot and takes a large, strong step with the lower foot (the foot closest to the baseline). Without dribbling the player performs a lay-up, scores, retrieves the ball and repeats. Change sides of the basket.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Players must perform a proper lay-up. When on the right side of the basket raise the right knee and shoot with the right hand. When on the left side of the basket raise the left knee and shoot with the left hand;
- b) Ensure the player’s chest is facing the backboard when they take the shot;
- c) Ensure players do not travel (bring the pivot foot down again);
- d) Make sure the drop step is long and strong.

Drop step power lay-up drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Strong moves to the basket when close to the basket.

Set-up – Each player has one ball and starts on the block (see ‘Definitions’) facing away from the basket. Two players to one basket with one on each block. If you do not have baskets down the sideline then set up so there is a passer on the 3-point line to the player on the block.

Directions for players – The high foot (the foot closest to ½ court) is the pivot foot. Each player backwards spins the ball to represent a pass (or is passed the ball if there is a passer). As soon as the ball is caught the player moves into the power position with the ball under the chin, the elbows out to the side and the arms tensed. The player performs a reverse pivot and takes a large, strong step with the lower foot (the foot closest to the baseline). The ball is bounced hard between the legs then the players come to a jump stop to the strong side of the basket. Again, the player moves into the power position with the ball under the chin, the elbows out to the side and the arms tensed. Shoot the power lay-up. Change sides of the basket.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Players must perform a proper lay-up. When on the right side of the basket raise the right knee and shoot with the right hand. When on the left side of the basket raise the left knee and shoot with the left hand;
- b) Ensure the ball is dribbled with both feet on the ground with the drop step so the pivot foot can re-initiated;
- c) Make sure the drop step is long and strong.

Drop step to reverse side drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaches players strong moves to the weak side of the basket.

Set-up – A player starts with the ball on the block with their back facing the basket. The other players line up on the baseline.

Directions for players – The high foot (the foot closest to ½ court) is the pivot foot. Each player backwards spins the ball to bounce back (or is passed the ball if there is a passer). As soon as the ball is caught the player moves into the power position with the ball under the chin, the elbows out to the side and the arms tensed. The player performs a reverse pivot and takes a large, strong step with the lower foot (the foot closest to the baseline). As the player drop steps the player dribbles from both hands to both hands to create a new pivot foot, then takes two steps to lay-up on the reverse side. Change sides of the basket.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Players must perform a proper lay-up. When on the right side of the basket raise the right knee and shoot with the right hand. When on the left side of the basket raise the left knee and shoot with the left hand;
- b) The first step needs to be a large step to make the lay-up comfortable and to ensure the player does not travel;
- c) As soon as the player dribbles they should be immediately thinking and preparing for the shot.

Post move to weak side drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching reason and execution of the jab step for post (and all) players;
- 2) Strong move to the basket on the high side.

Set-up – Player has the ball on the block with the back facing the basket. The team mates queue up on the baseline.

Directions for players – The high foot (the foot closest to ½ court) is the pivot foot. Each player backwards spins the ball to bounce back. As soon as the ball is caught the player performs a forward pivot and spins around to face the defender, protecting the ball on the hip. The player takes a jab step at the defender as if making a strong, baseline move. *Without stepping back* the player quickly steps to the strong side, dribbles once, and then scores on the weak side of the basket. Change sides of the basket. Add defence.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) It is important the jab step puts the defender on the back foot and off balance. The jab step should be aimed right at the defender's low-side ankle;

- b) It is a natural movement for the player to step back after doing the jab step. It is also important the player does not step back as the defender will then be in the player's face;
- c) Ensure the player does not lift the pivot foot. After doing the jab step the player will sometimes use the pivot foot to explode forward, thereby travelling. It is the same foot that both jab steps and then takes the explosive movement to the strong side;
- d) The first step should be a large step otherwise the shot becomes too difficult or the player will travel;
- e) As soon as the player dribbles they should be immediately thinking and preparing for the shot. The coach should start to see the player left their head towards the basket towards the end of the first step;
- f) It is a tendency for the player to show the ball to the defender when doing the spin move and jab step. Ensure the ball is on the hip at all times.

Spin move from top hash mark drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching players to drive straight to the basket and not "banana";
- 2) Spinning and driving in one step.

Set-up – Players line up in two lines on either side of the key behind the baseline facing up-court. One ball per player although every player does not have to have a ball.

Directions for players – The player throws the ball out with a backward spin so they come to a jump stop at the top hash mark. The inside foot (closest to the split line) is the pivot foot. The player protects the ball on the hip, does a fake to the split line, then spins around so that a large step is taken to the basket. There should be only one dribble to a lay-up. Reverse sides.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the players do not travel by putting the pivot down before releasing the shot. The key is that the first step is a, fast large step;
- b) The fake should be a real fake and not just a little twist of the body. There should be at least a ½ turn. The defender must believe the player is moving to the split line;
- c) Ensure the first step to the basket is aimed at the basket and not the back wall;
- d) Players must use the right knee and hand on the right side and the left knee and hand on the left side (to keep the ball away from defenders).

Drop step inside to outside jump shot drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Clearing the defender away for an open jump shot.

Set-up – Players line up in two lines on either side of the key behind the baseline facing up-court. One ball per player although every player does not have to have a ball.

Directions for players – The player throws the ball out with a backward spin so they come to a jump stop at the block. The high foot (closest to the ½ way line) is the pivot foot. The player protects the ball on the hip, does a fake to the split line, then does a large drop step. The player pounds the ball in to the court between the legs as the foot lands on the drop step. The player then immediately takes a large step away the basket (and defender) at about a 30° angle and takes a nice, balanced jump shot. The player should have moved in the shape of a 'V'. Reverse sides.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) The players must dribble with the drop step completed otherwise they will travel as they step out;
- b) It is most important the players take their jump shot vertically rather than fading to the baseline, sideline or basket. Fading, especially to the baseline or sideline, significantly reduces the probability of scoring;
- c) The fake should be a real fake and not just a little twist of the body. There should be at least a ½ turn. The defender must believe the player is moving to the split line;
- d) The shot must be taken with the player squared up to the basket.

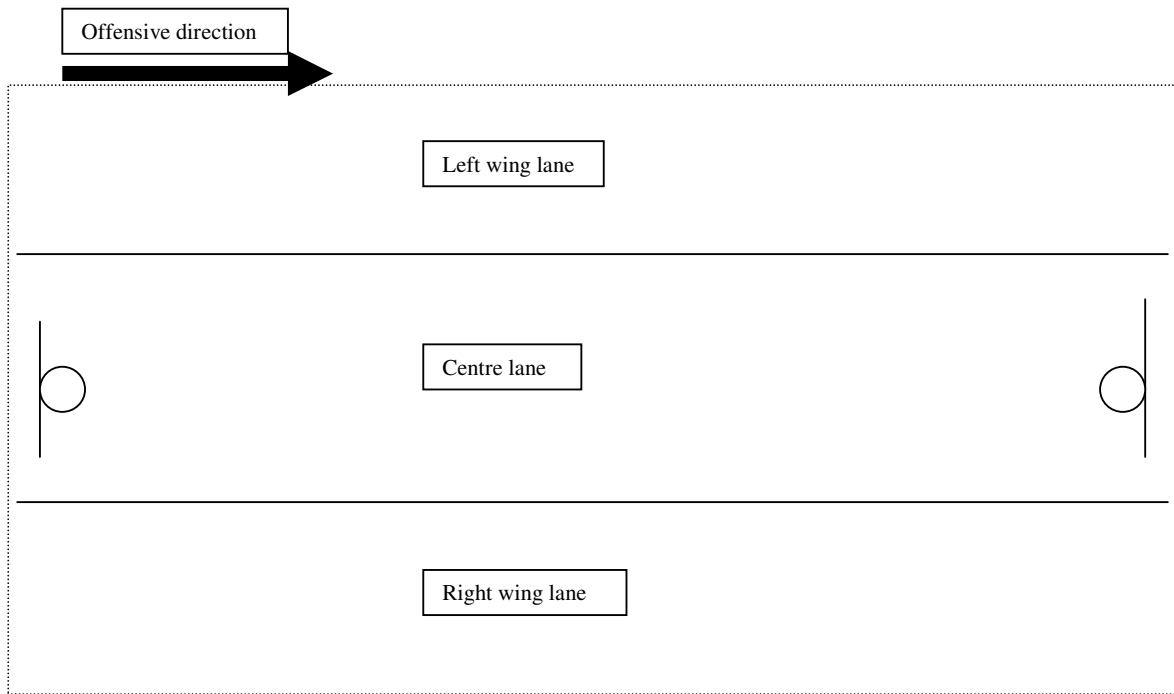
Fast break – the best offence in basketball

The fast break is the best and most successful offensive. However, it takes a while to get it through to your players. The keys are:

- 1) *Forwards always sprint up the court when we steal or take a rebound.* We hate to see forwards hang around in the backcourt when they can be setting up the fast break.
- 2) *One guard hangs back while the other guard rips up court.* Typically, the high guard fast breaks while the lower guard moves to the sideline, “running the lanes”, for the transition up court.
- 3) *Players who hang around the backcourt clog up the backcourt and make it harder to get the ball up court.*
- 4) *When the opponents score, it is critical to sprint out of bounds to inbound the pass as quickly as humanly possible.* We hate to see players stroll out of bounds like they’re thinking of the next SMS message to send. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the defensive is all set and ready and then your team will wonder why it is so hard to get the ball up court!!!;
- 5) *For practise, split your players into two teams – the passers and the “fast breakers”.* Have them start at half court with “fast breakers” on one side and passers on the other. On the coaches whistle or voice command the “fast breakers” take off. The passers must pass so that the “fast breaks” can gather the ball without slowing their pace or moving away from their drive to the basket for a lay-up.
- 6) *On game day the coach becomes very important for teaching the fast break.* As soon as your team gets a steal, rebound or the ball after an opponent score, turn your attention immediately to who is and isn’t ripping up court. Praise those who rip and rip into those who don’t.

Running the lanes

Basketball coaches talk about ‘running the lanes’. The lanes are illustrated below:



We want offensive players to ‘run the lanes’ as it spreads the defence and provides passers with better targets. Typically, the lanes are run as follows:

- Centre lane – The ***centre***, or #5, runs the split line and should be focused on taking rebounds on the weak side at both ends of the court. If you coach for the guards (#’s 1 and 2) to move immediately to the sidelines, the ***weak side guard*** (1 or 2) should move up-court and into the centre lane once the ball has been inbounded.
- Wings – The ***guards*** start on the wings but the weak side guard moves to the centre lane after the ball is inbounded. The ***forwards*** (#’s 3 and 4) should run the wing lanes with one forward in the right wing lane and the other forward in the left wing lane. ***Wing players should only begin cutting to the basket when they reach the top of the key.*** This ensures (i) your offensive players stay spread (ii) the wing players can keep sight of the ball without slowing down; and (iii) it is easier to hit the wings with a pass.

Fast break passing drill

Excellent for:

- 1) New players.
- 2) Players understanding their roles and responsibilities in the fast break.
- 3) Teams that have a bad habit of dribbling as soon as they get the ball rather than looking down court for the fast break pass.

Set-up – Start with only 5 players in the drill with no defence. All 5 players should be around the key, similar to a game situation when the opposition has just taken a shot. The remaining players sit out but listen to the wisdom imparted from the coach.

Directions for players – The coach gives each of the players a role in the fast break. Don't spend long doing this as action is learning. For the sake of this drill no one should dribble, but pass down court as soon as they get the ball. One guard is nominated to sprint towards the sideline to collect the outlet pass. One forward is nominated to rebound. The other 3 players sprint down court, keeping their eyes on the ball and where they are going. To start the drill, the coach puts up a shot and intentionally misses so the ball is rebounded. As soon as the ball is rebounded, the players carry out their responsibilities as instructed by the coach.

It is strongly recommended the coach blow the whistle for all players to freeze so the coach and the players can determine if players are running the correct lanes and have transitioned quickly enough to offence. Blow the whistle after the first pass.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) No one dribbles but immediately looks down court for the pass to a sprinting player.
- b) Ensuring the outlet guard and the sprinting players are all keeping their eyes on the ball. Many a fast break is ruined by a player turning their back to the ball.
- c) It is best not to sprint down the side of the court from which the outlet pass is thrown as it is too hard to look back to see where the ball is and it slows the sprinter up too much. Also, the lay-up is more easily scored with the approach at an angle to the basket rather than straight on.
- d) The coach may consider timing the fast break so players have an objective to beat.

For new and unskilled players

New players and unskilled players can have great difficulty executing the fast break. They will do it practise with the drills identified in this manual, but they just don't get it done game day. Our experience in this situation is to give each player specific roles on court. When we get the ball, each player should immediately do the following:

- The **centre** (5) – Go straight down the split line to the basket. Stand just at the block (refer to 'definitions') but outside the key so the player does not incur a lane violation (too long in the key – 3 seconds for U15's and older; 5 seconds for U14's and younger. For inbounds plays go straight to the block. This ensures the court is spread, making it easier for the guards to bring the ball up-court.
- The **forward** (3 or 4) – The forwards should rip down court and leave it to the guards to bring the ball to the front court. The forwards must rip down the sidelines. For inbounds, ideally one of your forwards is the inbounds passer. You don't want a guard inbounds passing as the guards should be receiving the inbounds pass and getting the ball up-court. The forward that is not passing should stand mid-way between the centre and where the guards are positioned. For inbounds on the defensive baseline, the forward should stand at the centre circle. If the centre is your best inbounds passer then move your big forward (4) to the block and the small forward (3) to the mid-way point. The 'mid-way' forward can help out if the guards have trouble receiving the ball and can set a screen to remove a pesky defender from your dribbling guard.

- The *guards* (1 and 2) – The guard without the ball should move up-court with the dribbler, but spread well out. For inbounds, the guards should be left alone and given plenty of space to do all sorts of cuts to receive the inbounds pass. Make sure they spread out

Fast break is principally taught on game day

The fast break concept needs to be taught at practise, but the fast break is principally taught on game day. The coach does this by:

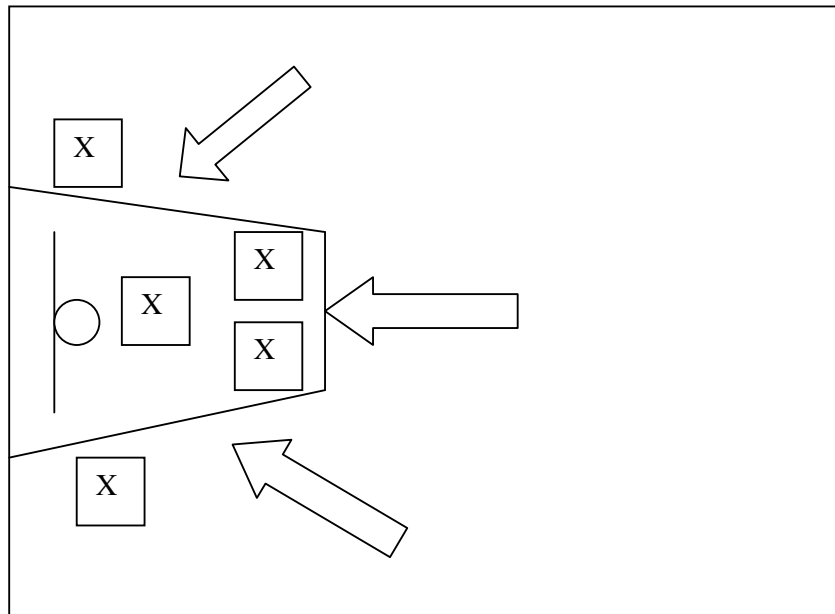
- 1) In your pre-game chat, assign responsibilities to each player. Keep in mind that a rebound or steal can be gained by any player. In essence, tell the point guard to play the transition role and your forwards and centre rip down court.
- 2) As soon as your team gets a steal or rebound, yell out “Number 3, Number 4, SPRINT, Number 1 sideline”. Naturally you use the players’ names. Players will probably need to be reminded at the next break in play.
- 3) While they are learning the fast break, at each time out assign fast break responsibilities just as you did before the game.
- 4) For a player trailing the fast breaker, yell out “get the rebound Number 4” as trailing players sometimes drop their intensity.
- 5) Make sure you congratulate all players involved in the fast break and not just the goal scorer.

Zone offence

Teams play the zone to force their opponents to take the outside jump shot and to dominate the defensive rebounds. ***Don't let the opposition dictate the way your team plays basketball.*** When played properly, the zone offence forces the opposition out of their defensive set-up. The most common zone seen in the HBA is the standard 2-3 zone, meaning 2 guards defending at the top of the key and 3 forwards defending the low post. There are other zones, such as 1-3-1, but we will just focus on the 2-3. A couple of fundamental zone offences and techniques are as follows:

Drive the gap and pass

In any zone there are gaps in the defence, as shown below:

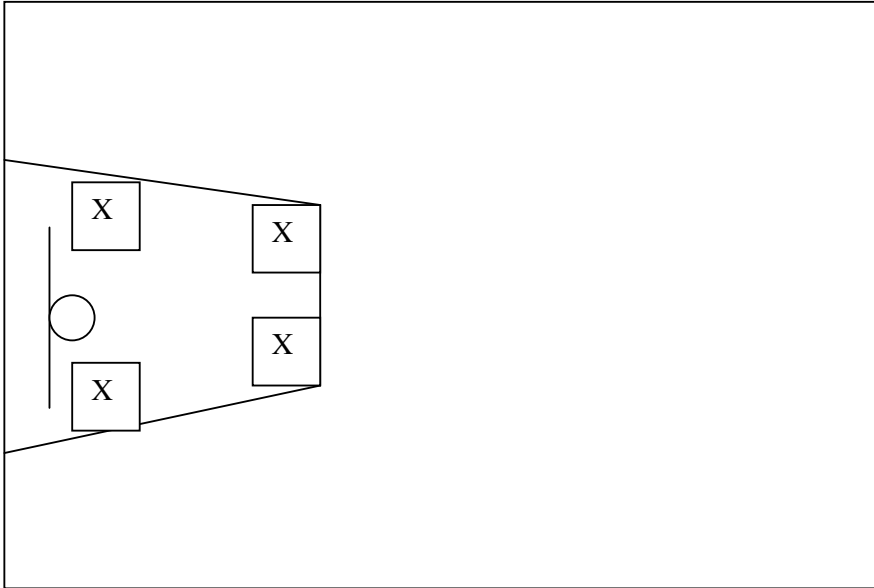


Your aim is to have your better dribblers drive into the gaps. The driver will always draw one defender and will often draw two defenders. As the defenders move to the driver the defence moves out of its 2-3 alignment. Offensive team mates then cut to the gap left by defenders defending the drive. The driver then passes off to the cutter for the small jump shot. However, if another defender moves into defend the cutter, the cutter passes to what should be a bigger gap in the defence.

You know your team is playing great zone offence when the opposition's zone looks like a dogs break fast with a number of defenders out of place.

Principles for offensive players without the ball

Drill these principles into your team at training and game day. Whenever a dribbler enters the key *you must have two other offensive players cutting to the key for the pass and/or rebound*. Some principles to consider are as follows: Whenever the dribbler enters from the high post, one offensive player moves to the weak side low post and another enters the weak side high post. Whenever a dribbler enters the key from the low post, one offensive player moves to the weak side low post and another enters the weak side high post. The areas in the key you want non-ball handlers to cut to are as follows:



Forward cut to the key

Typically, zones have a tough time with any offensive player hovering around the low post base line area. There are two things the zone offence can do:

- 1) On a head signal from the offensive forward (or centre), the forward cuts from the base line wing, down the base line, to the gap between the forward and the centre. The pass is timed to be lobbed to the cutting forward just as he/she arrives at the gap. The cutter immediately squares to the bucket and shoots the short jump shot.
- 2) Have a forward (or centre) lingering behind the defensive forward. As the ball is passed to the wing, the lingering forward cuts from behind the defensive forward to the gap in the key. The **bounce** pass is timed to hit the cutter as soon as the cutter reaches the gap (Bounce passes only into the zone, except for the lob mentioned above).

Low post screen

Get your best shooter to the low post wing, one metre from the defence. A screener comes from the weak side and screens the forward nearest to your best shooter. The ball is past to your best shooter in time for the arrival of the screener.

Zone offence drill up high

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching players the “drive and pass” concept.

2) Ensuring the offence is always in motion.

3) Defensive pressure.

Set-up – Start with 2 defenders at the top of the key as in the 2-3 zone. Three offensive players go to half way. The remaining players do shooting practise on the side basket.

Directions for players – At the top of the key a circle is painted on the court. No offensive player is allowed to take a shot, or move into the area, lower than the low post side of the circle. If a shot is taken below the circle, or an offensive person moves lower than the circle, the defence earns a point. If the defence steals the ball or a poor shot is taken, then the defence earns another point. If the offence takes a good open shot with no defender in their face, then the offence gets a point regardless of whether the ball went in the basket. On the coach's whistle or shout, the offence brings the ball from half court, driving the gaps. The first to 3 point wins, then rotate all players.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) The gaps **must** be driven and the pass made only after a defender has been drawn.
- b) All three offensive players must be in motion. They should have the mentality that they do not stay in one spot for more the 2 seconds.
- c) You want a 3 on 2 contest, not a 2 on 2 contest. Ensure one player does not just stand there and pass from one side to the other.
- d) The defensive 2 **must** communicate. They must know who will take on the dribbler to start the drill. Too often in games you see a dribbler go right through the middle of the zone or both defenders go after the dribbler, leaving a huge gap.
- e) It's a good opportunity for a less confident dribbler to play point guard.

Zone offence drill down low

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching players low post moves against the zone.
- 2) Ensuring the offence is always in motion.
- 3) Defensive pressure.

Set-up – Start with 3 defenders in the low post as in the 2-3 zone. Three offensive players go below the key circle (refer below). The remaining players do shooting practise on the side basket.

Directions for players – At the top of the key a circle is painted on the court. No offensive player is allowed to take a shot, or move into the area, above the low post side of the circle. If a shot is taken above the circle, or an offensive person moves above the circle, the defence earns a point. If the defence steals the ball or a poor shot is taken, then the defence earns another point. If the offence takes a good open shot, then the offence gets a point regardless of whether the ball went in the basket. The coach passes to one of the offensive players to start the drill. The first to 3 point wins, then rotate all players.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure your players try the “Forward cut to the key” and the “Low post screen” as described earlier.

- b) All three offensive players must be in motion. They should have the mentality that they do not stay in one spot for more the 2 seconds.
- c) You want a 3 on 3 contest, not a 2 on 3 contest. Ensure one player does not just stand there and pass from one side to the other.
- d) The defence ***must*** communicate. Make sure there is plenty of talk.

Press offence

Principles

The principle to hammer into your players is to pass through the press, never dribble through the press.

As we have stated earlier, the press is about intimidation. The keys to press offence are:

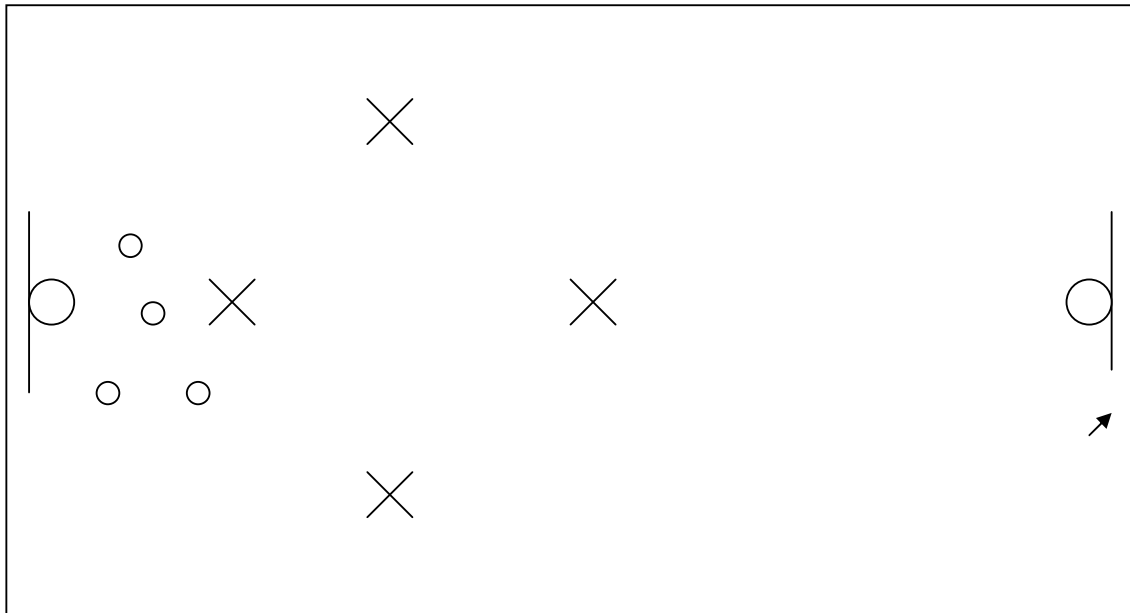
- ✓ Get the ball inbounds as quickly as possible. The longer you take the better the opposition's defence will be set-up. Drill this into your players when playing a pick-up game at training and on game day.
- ✓ *It is critical to read the defence!* There are always plenty of gaps in a press defence. A key role for the coach is to help the players understand where those gaps are.
- ✓ Ensure two of your offensive press players move all the way down court, preferably on the wings of the foul line extended, depending on the passing strength of your players. So often, team mates think they are doing the right thing and stay in the back court to help out. This just makes the back court highly congested and even more difficult for you guards to get up court. Getting two forwards down court extends the defence and widens the gaps available to the press offence. However, the forwards that *sprint* down court need to be ready to V-cut back towards the back court if the guards are in trouble. The V-cut should generally be to the centre circle unless there is a better gap on the centre line wing.
- ✓ The inbounds passer must sprint to a gap as soon as the pass is made. Sometimes this gap may be behind the dribbler on the weak side. However, the inbounds passer needs to look for the opportunity to continue moving the ball down court if possible.
- ✓ If you have a tall centre, they can be a great press offence outlet. If this is an option, the centre should cut to a position on the split line (an imaginary line drawn from basket to basket, *splitting* the court in two) between the centre circle and the foul line in the back court. Once the centre has the ball, the guards should be sprinting down the sidelines for the give-and-go pass.

Press breaker

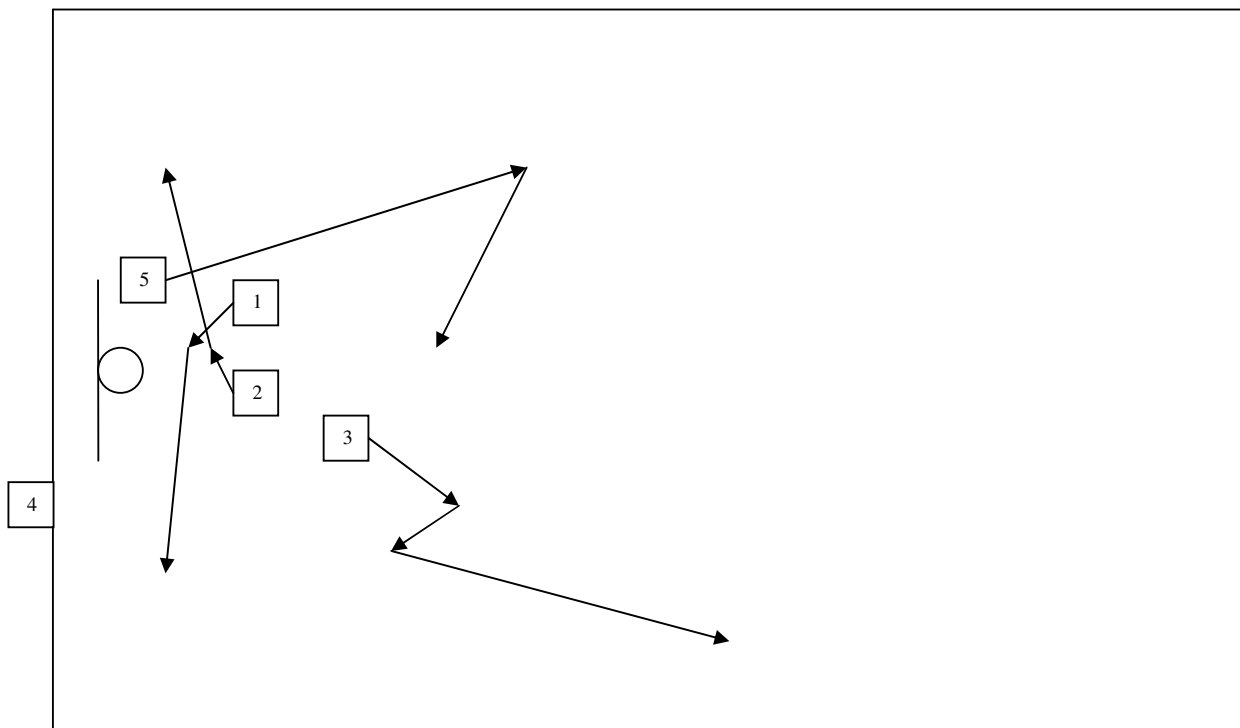
Excellent for:

- 1) Practising the press breaker fundamentals listed above;
- 2) Breaking the press.

Set-up – Nominate 4 players to play defence (If you have access to the full court then you should have 5 on defence). Ensure each player knows their position on defence (refer to “Players need to know their roles” under “Offence” above). The coach should ask the players ‘who is #1, who is #2...?’ to ensure they understand their defensive positioning. The remaining players and the coach act as defence and set-up in a 1-2-1-1 press or another press anticipated to be played by an upcoming opponent.



Directions for players – A shot is taken at the basket. It does not matter whether the shot goes in or not. The players should act like missed shots have actually scored for the sake of this drill. The ball is taken out of bounds with great urgency. The remaining offensive players undertake the following action:



- 4 retrieves the made shot by the opposition and sprints to the baseline for the pass inbounds. It is crucial 4 sprints to the baseline as rapidly as possible to restrict the opposition's ability to set the press. 4 must go to the side of the basket, never under the basket to avoid the ball being thrown into the back of the backboard. 4 will find that 1, 2, 3 or 5 will be open for the pass. As soon as the pass is made 4 sprints up the centre lane;
- 1 & 2 move immediately to the mid to high post. The above diagram shows 1 & 2 flash cutting to either side of the basket. However, it is not difficult for 1 & 2 to become more sophisticated by giving each other signals as to which way they run so they can keep the defence guessing. 1 & 2 should avoid dribbling through the press but instead should be looking for an immediate pass to 3, 5, the other guard or 4 sprinting up the centre lane;
- 3 sprints to the strong-side sideline, V-cuts back quickly for a possible inbounds pass, then sprints up the sideline keeping eyes on the ball. 3 should move and stay in the front court, on the wing, as this area is generally open with the press. Staying in the front court ensures the backcourt is not congested;
- 5 sprints to the weak-side wing then cuts back to the top of the key for a possible outlet pass from 4. If 5 receives the pass from 4 then all other team mates should be sprinting the lanes up court. Upon catching the pass from 4, 5 should spin around to face up court and pass to the open player.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) It is extremely useful for the coach to blow a whistle or yell 'stop!' immediately after 4's pass to ensure all players are running the correct routes;
- b) Drill into your players the importance of getting the ball inbounds as quickly as possible;
- c) Sometimes 4 will not be in the best position to quickly inbound the ball. So 3 and 5 should also practise inbounding the ball. If 5 inbound the ball then 4 runs the 5 route.....;

- d) The guards need to communicate effectively and quickly as to who is running what route. One guard should take the lead and this is typically #1;
- e) There can be good give-and-go opportunities for 4 after inbounding the ball;
- f) 5 should not come within the 3-point line as this will crowd 1 and 2 from getting the ball and provide another defender to pressure the inbounds pass;
- g) The guard that does not receive the inbounds pass should sprint up the centre lane or, if the receiving guard is under pressure, run around the other guard and gather the ball.

Dribbling & ball handling

Ball handling

The following drills will assist in making players significantly better ball handlers. The more frequently the players perform the drills outside training time the better ball handlers they will be.

Hand-to-hand ball drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Ball handling.
- 2) Ensuring players use finger tips for ball control.

Set-up – Players pair up inside the 3-point line, each player having a ball. The player pairings face each other only one arm's length apart.

Directions for players – The players pass each other the ball as rapidly as possible with the balls travelling in a clockwise direction - that is passed out of the left hand. Players should only be handling the ball with the fingertips.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Players should not use their bodies to help control the ball. The ball should only move through the fingertips;
- b) Players should look loving into each other's eyes, not down at the ball. Having the eyes up is crucial to seeing the movement of defence and team mates in a game situation.

Shoot to hand ball drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Ball handling with both hands.
- 2) One-handed ball control.

Set-up – Players pair up inside the 3-point line, each player having a ball. The player pairings face each other about 3 metres apart.

Directions for players – The players have their ball balanced on their right hand as if they are about to shoot. Both players simultaneously 'shoot' the ball to their partner's left hand. The ball is caught with only the left hand with the fingers continuing to point upwards and the ball is immediately 'shot' back to the partner's right hand. The players should continue shooting until the coach calls a stop.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) The players should try and develop a rhythm, passing the ball at an even pace and height;
- b) Players will find it easier to get a little height into the ball;
- c) Ensure the fingers stay pointed to the ceiling. Don't let the players bowl the ball.

Round the world ball drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Ball handling with both hands;
- 2) Hand speed.

Set-up – Each player has a ball with a 2-metre spacing between each player. Again, keep the players within the 3-point line area.

Directions for players – Keep the ball in the fingertips and move as rapidly as possible. If you occasionally drop the ball it shows you are pushing yourself. Initially, move the ball rapidly around your waist clockwise with the right hand passing to the left hand behind the back and then left hand to right hand in front of your body. Reverse. Next, around your head – not above the head but around the head – first clockwise and then reverse. Finally, move the ball around the knees first clockwise and then reverse.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Keep saying to your players ‘eyes up’ – look at what is coming at you down court;
- b) Keep pushing the players to go faster. Reinforce players who drop the ball by saying – ‘that’s really good, you’re pushing yourself to go faster’.
- c) Ensure players are keeping the ball in their fingertips.

Between the legs passing drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Ball handling with both hands;
- 2) Hand speed.

Set-up – Players pair up. Each player has a ball facing each other about 4 metres apart. Keep the players within the 3-point line area or just outside it.

Directions for players – Keep the ball in the fingertips and move as rapidly as possible. The players are bent down so they can pass the ball between their legs. The ball starts in the left hand and is passed behind the same player’s right leg and then passed directly the partner. Both players pass simultaneously and continue passing around the right leg until the coach calls ‘switch’.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Keep saying to your players ‘eyes up’ – look at what is coming at you down court. The temptation is to look down as the ball goes behind the leg.

Push pass drill

- 1) Push passing effectively with both hands.

Set-up – Players pair up. Each player has a ball facing each other about 4 metres apart. Again, keep the players within the 3-point line area or just outside it.

Directions for players – Simultaneously, players step out and forward to their right and pass to their partner using a round arm action. The ball should be bounced passed so that it arrives to the partner at waist height. Switch to the left side.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Make sure the players step out with each pass. A push pass with the feet stuck in cement is useless;
- b) Ensure each pass is received waist height;

- c) The aim is not to do the most passes in a short period of time but to execute each pass with excellence.

Over-under passing drill

- 1) Quick ball handling;
- 2) Thinking while passing

Set-up – Players pair up. Each player has a ball facing each other about 4 metres apart. Again, keep the players within the 3-point line area or just outside it. If you line the players up in straight rows they may start competing with one another which may cause players to forget the fundamentals.

Directions for players – Both players pass the ball simultaneously. One player does a bounce pass while the other does a chest pass (let the players work out who does what). The bounce pass should be received just above waist height. Players should increase speed as the drill continues. When the coach yells ‘switch’ the players reverse who does a chest and bounce pass.

Next, have players follow the coach’s instructions. These instructions involve push passes to the right, push passes to the left and the bounce/chest pass as above. If the coach says ‘right, right, left, both’ the players execute in order:

- Right side push pass;
- Right side push pass;
- Left side push pass;
- Simultaneous chest/bounce passes.

Continue giving the players different combinations.

Finally, back to the chest/bounce pass, the players execute the drill so that players alternate between chest and bounce passes. The trick to this drill is that one ball always does the same pass. That is, one ball is always a chest pass while the other ball is always a bounce pass.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) The players can be thinking so hard that they forget passing fundamentals. Ensure they are executing passing fundamentals as discussed under the “Passing” section;
- b) Ensure players are stepping out to the side with push passes;
- c) Encourage players to increase their speed instead of over thinking the drill;
- d) Getting into a rhythm is important in all these drills.

Dribbling fundamentals

As we have stated earlier, you must be tough on the fundamentals. Don't be shy to say to players 'Until I see your dribbling fundamentals improve at training, I don't want you dribbling on Saturday'.

If you have new or inexperienced players *Cougars has dribbling aid equipment* used to stop players looking down when they dribble. The equipment resembles geeky looking glasses. The dribbling aids can be used in any dribbling drill, for lay-up practise and even for playing a pick-up game at training. Contact your coaching coordinator to borrow them for training.

Fundamentals to focus on are as follows:

- ✓ Keep a firm wrist and the whole forearm goes up and down with the ball. Don't slap the ball. Don't bend the wrist downwards. If anything, the wrist bends **upwards** only.
- ✓ The fingers should be curled so the ball only makes contact with the fingers, not the palm.
- ✓ The dribbler leans forward from the waist to improve speed and balance. The body position for dribbling and defence are very similar.
- ✓ The dribbler should control the ball so that it does not bounce higher than the waist.
- ✓ The non-dribbling arm should be in a similar position to the dribbling arm so that it is harder for defenders to attack the dribbler from the weak side.

Butterfly drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Ball handling.

Set-up – Each player has a ball and lines up in a straight line or in rows if you have a number of players.

Directions for players – To start with, the ball is in both hands comfortably in front of the player's chest. Using only their finger tips, the ball is patted very rapidly from one hand to the other. There should only be a tiny distance the ball travels from one hand to the other. Throughout the drill the players should be watching the court ahead instead of the ball. If one player is doing the drill very well, think about pulling that player out front for the rest to see.

The players are very rapidly patting the ball:

- (i) With the arms straight and directly in front of their chest;
- (ii) Above and in front of their heads; and
- (iii) In front of their shins.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) This is the time to start training players on watching the court ahead instead of the ball. Continue saying to the players 'eyes up court!'
- b) For the 'arms straight out and directly in front of the chest', ensure players keep their arms straight;
- c) Push the players to continue to increase their speed so much that the ball comes out of their hands.

Pistol dribbling drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Ball handling;
- 2) Dribble control using just finger tips.

Set-up – Each player has a ball. The players form a circle with plenty of spacing between each player. The coach is in the middle.

Directions for players – To start with, the players dribble down low with their preferred hand so the ball does not bounce higher than the ankle. The players should use their finger tips and hand movement similar to the butterfly drill above. Switch the players to their non-preferred hand.

Continue challenging the players as follows:

- (i) Have the players do figure 8's around their legs, switching from one hand to the other and keeping the ball no higher than the ankles.
- (ii) The players pair up with one player in each pair having two basketballs. The players dribble down low with both basketballs. Keep pushing the players to increase their speed. Encourage the players to challenge themselves – losing control of the basketball means they are challenging themselves. When a ball sprays away the partner should quickly retrieve it and return it to the dribbler. Rotate.
- (iii) Still with two basketballs, have the players go backwards and forwards with the ball while keeping the ball below the ankles. Rotate.
- (iv) With two basketballs, have the players go from side-to-side with the ball while keeping the ball below the ankles. Rotate.
- (v) Finally, have the players dribble normally with one hand and move the ball backwards and forwards with the other. Rotate hands and then players.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) The coach should focus on players watching the court ahead instead of the ball. Continue saying to the players 'eyes up court!'
- b) Push the players to continue to increase their speed so much that the ball comes out of their hands. Ensure the partners are collecting the loose balls;
- c) Ensure the players are keeping the ball no higher than ankle height.

Figure 8 ball tap drill

Strongly encourage players to do this drill on their own at home as often as possible – even when watching TV.

Excellent for:

- 1) Improving player ball handling and feel for the ball;
- 2) Having players look up rather than focusing on the ball.

Set-up – Each player has a ball and lines up in a straight line down the centre of the court spread 3 metres apart. The players spread their legs apart so they can bend down to dribble the ball very low.

Directions for players – Players are to do a figure 8, dribbling the ball between the legs and around each foot. The ball should bounce no higher than the ankle. However, players will find

there is more ball control and the drill is easier if they push the ball down firmly. There should be only finger tip control on the ball. Players should start the figure 8 by dribbling with the right hand in front of the right leg and passing to the left hand behind the left leg. Reverse direction on the coach's instructions.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Encourage players to keep their eyes up, not looking down at the ball;
- b) Ensure players are only using their finger tips;
- c) Ensure the ball is bouncing no higher than the ankle;
- d) Encourage players to push the ball harder in to the court;
- e) If a player's back is getting sore then they are not using their legs to get low enough – instead they are bending over. Encourage these players, and all players, to bend their legs to get low.

Follow the leader drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching fundamentals to young and inexperienced players.
- 2) Close to game type movement.

Set-up – Each player has a ball and lines up in a straight line down the centre of the court spread 4 metres apart. Make sure the players at the ends of the line have enough room for dribbling to the side.

Directions for players – The players must keep their eyes on the coach because the coach signals the direction in which the players dribble. The players must move at the same pace or the drill gets out of control.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) The knees and waist stay bent, similar to the defensive stance.
- b) The non-dribbling arm stays in a similar position to the dribbling arm.
- c) Poor dribblers will be high dribblers. Ensure these poor dribblers are arm, wrist and fingers to properly control the ball.

Combat drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Getting players used to game-day contact while dribbling.
- 2) Getting players to keep their non-dribbling arm up.

Set-up – Players pair into teams of two with one ball between each team. Each team has a small area they must stay within. The coach identifies the confined area that should be no more than 5 metres by 5 metres.

Directions for players – The dribbler is to keep the defender away from the ball by using their non-dribbling arm. The dribbler can dribble in the same spot if desired, but cannot move outside the defined area. Initially, the dribbler can push away, but as the dribbler gets more comfortable, don't allow any offensive fouls. Have all players start on a whistle or shout. The

dribbler has 20 to 30 seconds. On the next whistle or shout, the dribbler changes hands or the players swap roles.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) The non-dribbling arm is firm and away from the body, protecting the ball.
- b) When coaching boys, don't allow the defenders to get too physical.
- c) Ensure dribblers have their heads up, not down focused on the ball.

How many fingers drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Getting dribblers to look up and not focus on the ball.
- 2) Having dribblers change direction without looking at the ball.

Set-up – Players pair into teams of two with one ball between each team. No defined area is necessary.

Directions for players – The dribbler follows the team mate, whatever direction the team mate goes. The non dribbler should change direction frequently, but should not spend too much time forcing the dribbler backwards. The non dribbler holds up one or two hands and continually changes the number of fingers. The dribbler has call out how many fingers the team mate is displaying as soon as the number of fingers changes.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) The non-dribbler continually changes direction and the number of fingers.
- b) The dribbler is keeping the head up and calls the number as soon as the number of fingers changes.

Chasings game

Excellent for:

- 1) Getting dribblers to look up and not focus on the ball.
- 2) Dribbling at speed while keeping the head up and being aware of the whole court.

Set-up – Split the players into two teams. On one team each player has a ball. (Some coaches play this game with all players having a ball)

Directions for players – The dribblers are to chase the non-dribblers within a defined area, typically the area from the baseline to the line above the top of the key. When a non dribbler is caught or goes out-of-bounds, they must stand still. Change sides when all non-dribblers are standing still. Start with right hand dribbling. When both sides have had turns dribbling, start the game again with left hand dribbling.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Dribblers keep their heads up.
- b) To improve speed, dribblers push the ball further in front of them instead of at their feet.
- c) In their excitement, dribblers are not slapping the ball but properly moving their forearm arm up and down.

Advanced dribbling drills

Excellent for:

- 1) Helping players transition from beginner to advanced ball handlers.
- 2) Providing players with the skills to avoid defenders in open court.

Set-up is the same for all the advanced dribbling drills, except one of the turn-around drills. All players have a ball and line up just inside ½ court between the split line and the side line facing the basket. The players line up parallel to the sideline. The coach stands between the players and the basket, leaving room for the players to approach you at speed.

Stop and go dribble drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Getting past a defender in open court.

Directions for players – Dribble to the coach at speed, stopping about 2 metres from the coach, while maintaining the dribble. Once the coach jumps at the dribbler, the dribbler drives towards the basket. As the dribblers gain confidence, attempt to steal the ball to replicate a game situation.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) The dribbler must move to the coach at speed. Don't allow any half effort.
- b) When the dribbler stops, the dribbler's body is ready to explode past the defender. Knees are bent, the feet are ready for an explosive push off, the ball is kept low and the head is up aware of the defender's movements.
- c) The first step of the "go" is explosive. The dribbler focuses on a very fast first step and the ball is pushed out, not bounced next to the foot. The non-dribbling arm is out to protect the ball.

Hesitation dribble drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Getting a defender on their heels and off balance so the dribbler can explode past.

Directions for players – Dribble to the coach at speed, stopping about 2 metres from the coach, while maintaining the dribble. The dribbler rapidly moves out of the dribble stance and stands up as if about to pass then immediately explodes past the defender.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the dribbler stands up;
- b) Ensure the 'stand up' is executed as if an urgent pass is going to be thrown but is executed very quickly;
- c) Ensure the first step after the hesitation is explosive.

Cross over dribble drill

Directions for players – Dribble to the coach at ½ to ¾ speed. Commit the defender (for this drill, the coach) to the direction in which the dribbler is moving. About 2 metres from the defender simultaneously push the ball to the other hand and side of the body while pushing off hard with the leg that was on the original dribbling side, similar to the V-cut. The coach must

insist that ***the ball must be kept below the knees!*** Also, the ball should be kept close to the body so the defender cannot steal the ball. When pushing off, explode to full speed towards the basket. As the dribblers gain confidence, attempt to steal the ball to replicate a game situation.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the cross-over dribble is kept below knee height. This ensures the dribbler is staying low enough and reduces the possibility of a defender's steal.
- b) Ensure dribblers draw the defender to the dribbler's initial direction;
- c) Ensure there is an increase in intensity and speed when the change in direction is made.
- d) Ensure players push off hard with the original dribble-side leg.
- e) Ensure ball is kept close to the body during the cross over to allow better control and to ensure the defender does not steal the ball.

Strong side fake dribble drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Having the defender believe the dribbler is going in one direction when the dribbler actually explodes in another direction.

Directions for players – Dribble to the coach with the right hand at half speed. At about 2 metres from the coach the dribbler moves the head, shoulders and dribbling arm to the left as if the dribbler is changing direction to the left. There is also a small stammer with the left foot as part of the fake. The key is the ball stays in the same place. The dribble hand moves to the side of the ball and spins it down so the ball does stay in place. With the defender moving to the dribbler's left the dribbler then explodes to the right. Reverse hands.

Typically with this drill the dribbler does not have the correct ball movement to keep the ball in place. It is common to stop this drill after the first run through and have the dribblers use the dribble hand ball movement to keep the ball in place. Reverse hands.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the dribbler moves the head, shoulders, non-dribble foot and dribble arm so that the defender believes the dribbler is moving in the fake direction;
- b) Ensure the dribbler explodes in the other direction.

Turn around dribble drill (also note “Key turn around drill” below)

Directions for players – Dribble to the coach at full speed. Dribble at the defender (for this drill, the coach) to stop the defender in their tracks. About 1 metre from the defender the dribbler swings their body so the dribbler's rear makes contact with the defender with the dribbler's body between the ball and the defender. The ball stays in the same dribble hand. As the ball is brought around, the non-dribble arm wraps around the defender, the dribbler pushes off hard with the right foot (if the ball was brought in on the right hand side) and explodes towards the basket. As the dribblers gain confidence, attempt to steal the ball to replicate a game situation.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) The ball stays in the same hand at all times;
- b) Ensure dribblers do not carry the ball. That is, the dribbling hand does not face towards the ceiling – even slightly!

- c) Ensure players explode off hard with the dribble-side leg;
- d) Ensure dribblers go straight for the basket and don't take the "banana" path to the basket.

Fake turnaround

Directions for players – Dribble to the coach at full speed. Dribble at the defender to stop the defender in their tracks. As in the turn-around dribble drill, about 1 metre from the defender the dribbler swings their body so the dribbler's rear makes contact with the defender with the defender with the dribbler's body between the ball and the defender. The ball stays in the same dribble hand. Begin swinging the shoulders around as if the dribbler is doing a full turnaround. However, as soon as the shoulders start swinging around the dribbler pushes off the **non**-dribble side leg and goes the other side of the defender compared to the turn around. The dribbler explodes to the basket. As the dribblers gain confidence, attempt to steal the ball to replicate a game situation.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) The ball stays in the same hand at all times;
- b) Ensure dribblers do not carry the ball. That is, the dribbling hand does not face towards the ceiling – even slightly!
- c) Ensure players explode off hard with the **non**-dribble-side leg.
- d) Ensure dribblers go straight for the basket and don't take the "banana" path to the basket.

Key turn around drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Getting players used to the body and arm action required for the turn around dribble move.

Set-up - All players have a ball and line up at the Key elbow, facing the baseline. The players line up parallel to the sideline.

Directions for players – Dribble around the key. As players reach a corner they execute a turn-around dribble. Send off a player every 2 metres. All players should be able to fit on the key at the same time. After 2 or 3 circuits around the key, stop the players and have them change direction and dribbling side.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure players follow the lines and do not "banana";
- b) The ball stays in the same hand at all times;
- c) Ensure dribblers do not carry the ball. That is, the dribbling hand does not face towards the ceiling – even slightly!

Behind the back dribble drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Avoiding a defender (and players think it's really cool).

Set-up - All players have a ball and line up on the baseline facing up court about 4 metres apart.

Directions for players – The behind the back dribble is one of four dribble moves for the dribbler to evade a defender. The behind-the-back dribble is executed as follows:

- The player comes to a jump stop with the knees bent that will enable the dribbler to easily move the hips forward during this manoeuvre;
- The ball and dribble hand is swung behind the back so the dribble at about a 45° angle (remember younger kids would not know what a 45° angle is – so you will have to show them);
- The dribble hand should brush the opposite butt cheek on the follow through. For example, if originally dribbling on the right side, the right hand controlling the ball moves well back and out to the side. As the ball is passed the right hand brushes the outside of the left butt cheek;
- The dribbler explodes off at a different direction.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

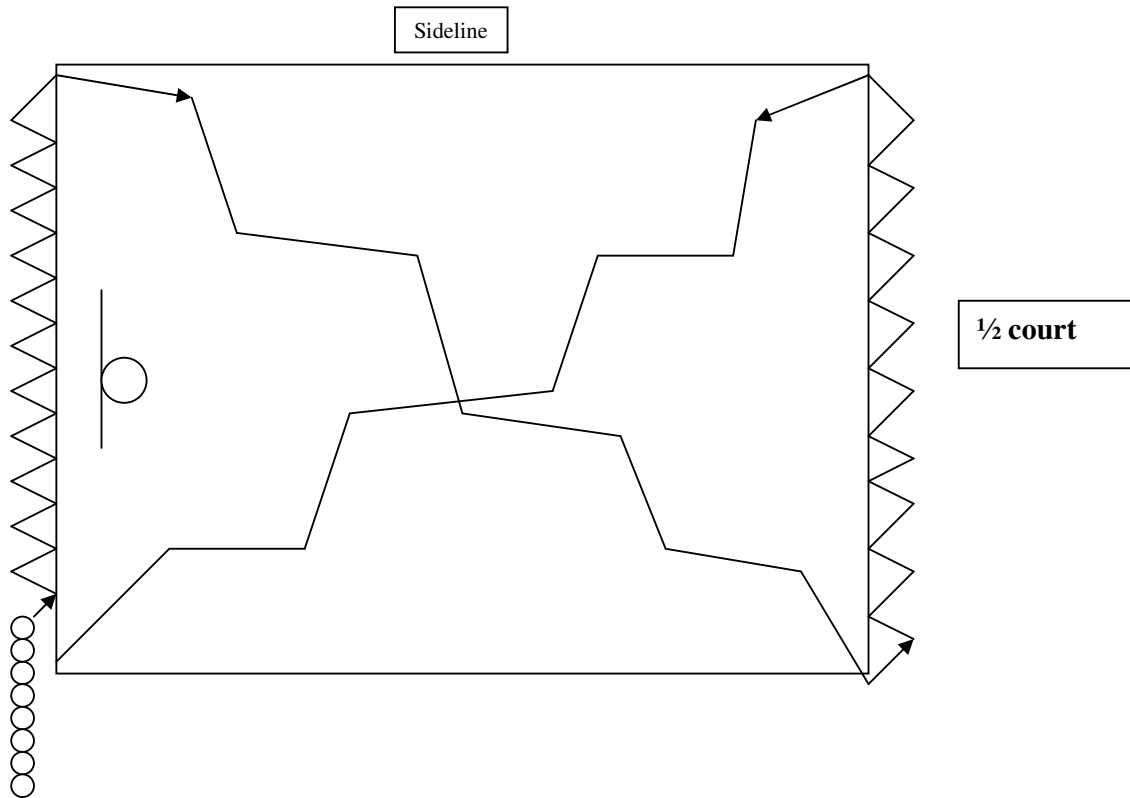
- a) Ensure players come to a dribble stop to execute the move;
- b) The players should have good balance;
- c) The dribble hand should move at a 45° angle;
- d) The player explodes in a different direction.

Combination cross-over dribble drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Dribble control;
- 2) Court awareness while dribbling.

Set-up – The players queue up at one corner of the baseline facing down the baseline. Each player has a ball.



Directions for players – The players go down the baseline in a low crouch doing cross over dribbles. The dribbles are very tight with the ball pushed hard onto the court, making the ball very hard to steal. When they reach the corner they explode across the court at a hard sprint alternating the dribble hand but ensuring the ball does not go above waist height. At 1/2 court the players go back to crouched over, very tight, cross-over dribbles. At the other side of 1/2 court the players explode into a cross-over dribble sprint again, watching that they don't run into players coming from their right.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) In the low cross-over dribble, the players stay low to the ground and are really pushing the ball hard into the court;
- b) For the cross-over dribble sprint ensure the ball does not go over waist height.

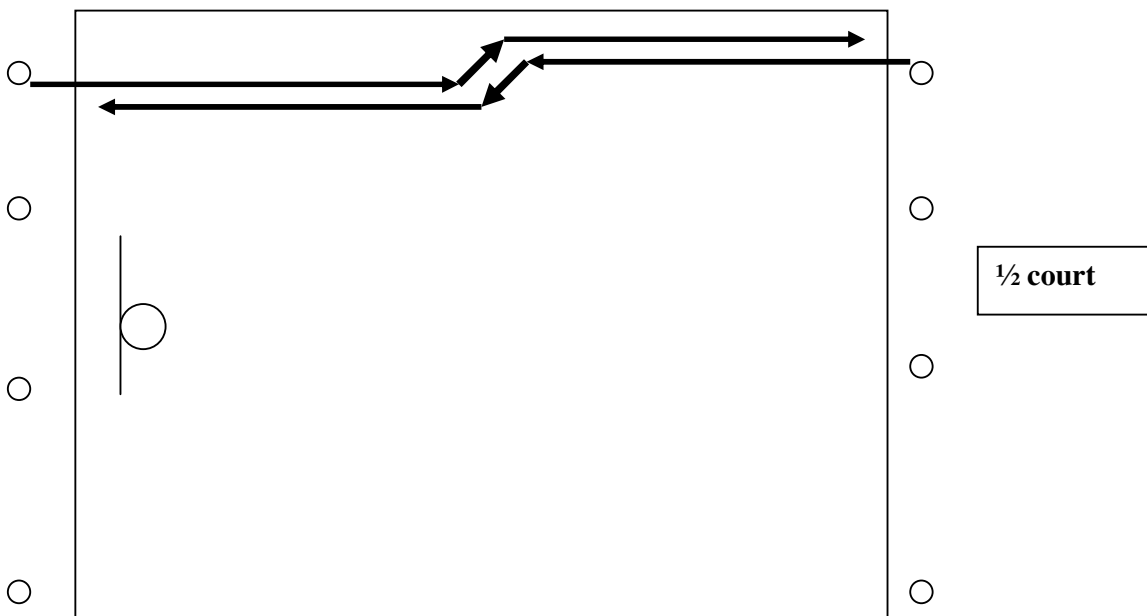
Dribble combat drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Dribble control;

2) Court awareness while dribbling.

Set-up – Each player has a ball. Half the team is on the baseline facing up court. The rest of the team is at ½ court facing down court. Players should be evenly spread out but each pairing should be directly in front of one another.



Directions for players – Warn the players they must look up and concentrate as they can smack heads if they don't. The players dribble at speed at one another with their right hand. Just as they are about to collide with one another each player does a cross-over dribble to their left. Repeat with opposite hand. Repeat with turn around dribble and behind-the-back dribble.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

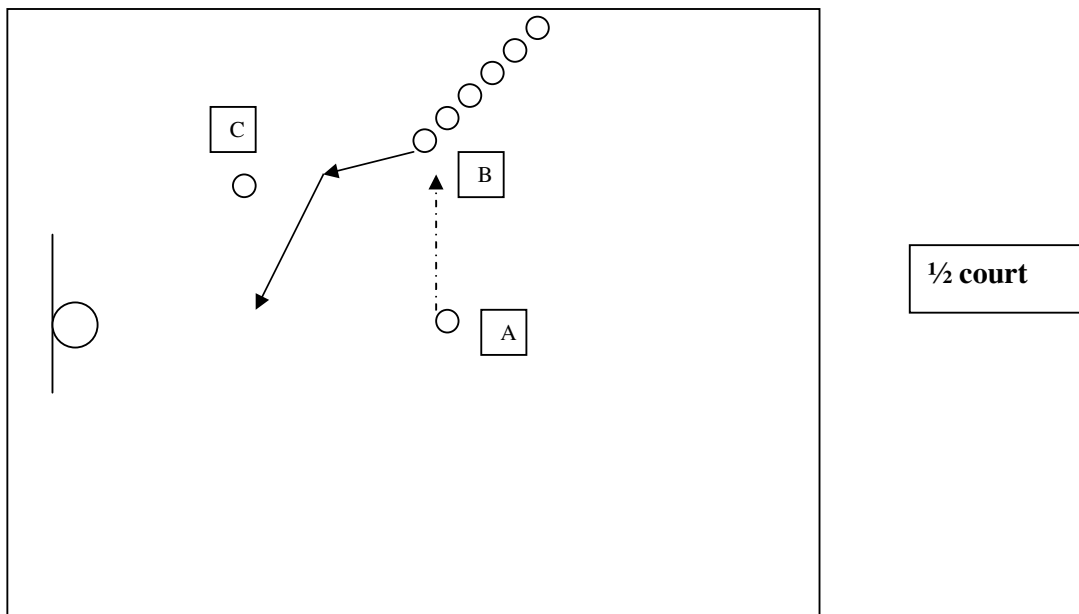
- Ensure players are looking up as they dribble;
- Ensure players don't cheat by doing the cross-over well before their opposite number arrives. The cross-over should be executed at speed and immediately before the players meet.

4 ways to beat a defender drill

Excellent for:

- Advanced dribble moves in a game type situation;
- Court awareness while dribbling.

Set-up – Each player has a ball and lined up beyond the 3-point line at 45° to the basket. One player, the passer, is at mid-court at the top of the key. Another player is in the high block position acting as the 2nd line of defence.



Directions for players – Ask the players the 4 ways a dribbler can beat a defender in the front court (stop-and-go can be used in the back court). The ways are:

- (i) Cross-over dribble
- (ii) Between the legs dribble
- (iii) Turn around dribble
- (iv) Behind-the-back dribble

In this drill, A passes to B. B pulls through strongly (brings the ball low –shin height - and strongly brings steps forward and dribbles) as if there is a tough defender on him/her. Defender C is the 2nd line of defence and moves forward to take on the dribbler. Initially, C provides intimidation but no stealing. B uses the dribble move specified by the coach to avoid the defender.

For rotation, B moves to C, C moves to A and A moves to the back of the queue.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) The cross-over dribble must be kept to knee height and close to the body;
- b) When on the right side of the court the between the legs move is performed with the left leg forward;
- c) With the turn around dribble it is effective to put a body on the defender mid-way through the turn around;
- d) The dribbler's eyes should be up and reviewing the opportunities to score rather than looking down at the ball.

Rebounding

In junior basketball, the lack of scoring from offensive rebounding is stunning. Many junior teams can gain an extra 6 to 8 points per game or more with well executed shots from offensive rebounds. Typical mistakes are bringing the rebounded ball down to chest height so the defensive can steal it or being so worried about contact there is no focus on the shot itself. There will always be a lot of contact under the boards, players just have to get used to it.

Rebound match-up drill

We have found this to be an outstanding drill to have players think about their positioning for the rebound and to initiate physical contact to box out. The coach should place heavy emphasis on weak-side rebounding positioning. The definition of “weak-side” is covered at the end of this manual. Players need to know the meaning of ‘weak-side’ and ‘strong-side’, even in the youngest age groups.

Excellent for:

- 1) Players at all levels and experience.
- 2) Having players think about their rebound positioning depending on the type of shot taken.
- 3) Creating heavy physical contact necessary to be a dominant rebounding team.

Set-up – It is ideal if you have 2 baskets with which to work. Split your players into teams of two and try to make the teams as even as possible. We typically match the strongest rebounder with the weakest, next strongest with next weakest...until all players are matched. Have two teams of two at one basket and two teams of two at the other basket. If you only have one basket with which to work then rotate teams into the drill.

Directions for players – The players’ aim is to win the rebounding battle. The coach moves around taking shots (a) on either side of the basket and (b) close to the basket or a long way from the basket (try not to actually shoot the basket – it’s a rebounding drill!). The first team of 2 to reach a total of 7 rebounds wins. The winners of the two simultaneous games play each other. The losers play each other. Remind players to move to the weak side and to position themselves close to or away from the basket depending on how far from the basket the shot is being taken. Encourage the players to make heavy physical contact. When drilled in the correct spirit there will be complaints about the level of contact. Remind the players these are the exact complaints you want to hear from Saturday’s opponents. Don’t let them shoot as you will lose too much drill time.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Don’t let the other 2 players get too silly with the contact. It should just replicate game-day contact. When we know we are playing a very physical side we can use this drill to get the players prepared in the training before the game.
- b) Ensure the players are moving around consistent with the position of the shooter. Ensure at least one player from each team is on the weak side at every shot.
- c) Small players can get disheartened. Explain their job is to chase down any ball then goes to the floor and praise them when they get that rebound.
- d) Watch the face of the rebounder. The eyes must be open, focused on where they are placing the ball. Don’t allow the rebounder to grimace, shut the eyes or blink.
- e) Ensure the rebounder keeps the rebounded ball well above the head.

Offensive rebound shooting drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Players at all levels and experience.
- 2) Achieving the player mindset where they keep the ball above their heads when they rebound.
- 3) Getting players used to being bumped when they take a shot.

Set-up – Line up 3 players on one side of the basket, just under the backboard so they can achieve a rebound. The coach stands on the other side of the basket. Have an assistant coach or parent set-up another 3 players at another ring. Only one ball is required for each team of 3.

Directions for players – The coach will put the ball upon the backboard so that it rebounds towards the 3 rebounders. As the ball leaves the coach's hands one of the 3 player's name is called. That player takes the rebound. The other 2 players allow the rebound to be taken. However, the other 2 players make game-day-type contact with the rebounder as soon as the rebound is taken and until the shot is made. As soon as the rebounder catches the ball the player keeps the ball outstretched above the head, bends the knees quickly and puts the shot up, focusing intently on the basket the whole time. Rotate randomly which players you call.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Don't let the other 2 players get too silly with the contact. It should just replicate game-day contact. When we know we are playing a very physical side we can use this drill to get the players prepared in the training before the game.
- b) Watch the face of the rebounder. The eyes must be open, focused on where they placing the ball. Don't allow the rebounder to grimace, shut the eyes or blink.
- c) Ensure the rebounder keeps the rebounded ball well above the head.
- d) The shot must be executed quickly by bending the knees as soon as the ball is court and putting the ball straight up.
- e) Encourage rebounders to use the backboard when putting the shot up.

Hamburger game

Excellent for:

- 1) Helping players understand they must fight to get a rebound. Rebounds go to those most hungry to receive the ball;
- 2) Getting players used to being bumped when they take a shot.

Set-up – All the players stand in the key, ready to box out so they can get the rebound.

Directions for players – The coach puts the ball up so that it does not go through the basket but rebounds off the ring. The player to cleanly catch the ball gets 1 point. If that same player immediately scores a basket (dribbling is allowed) another point is scored. As players score a total of 3 points they come out of the game and can help the coach put shots up.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Don't let the other 2 players get too silly with the contact. It should just replicate game-day contact. When we know we are playing a very physical side we can use this drill to get the players prepared in the training before the game.

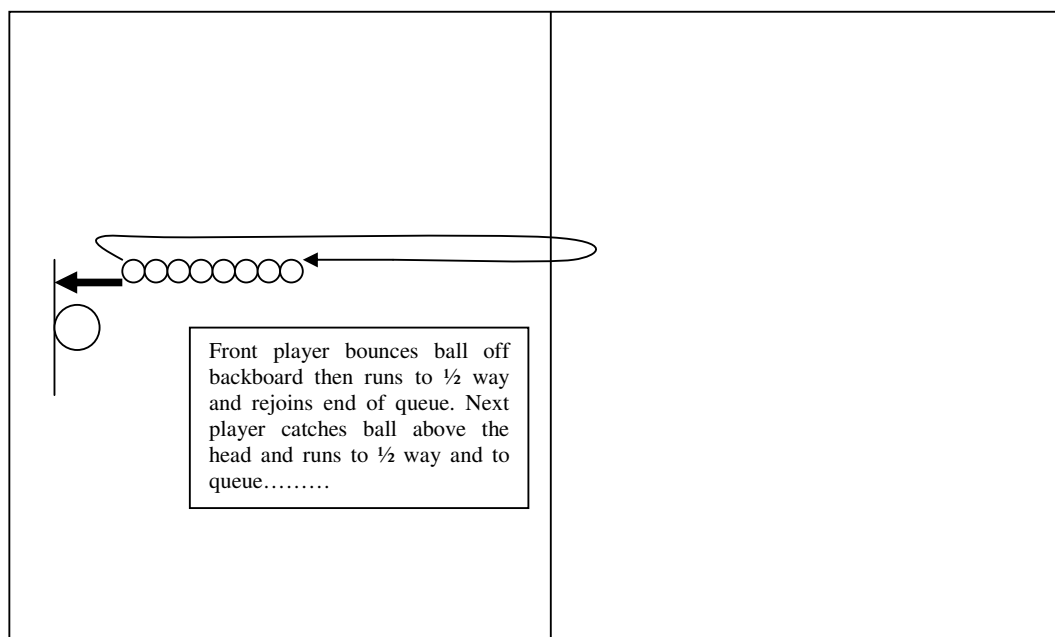
- b) Tell the players to be aware of where the shot is being taken. Long shots rebound further away from the basket the close shots. Rebounds tend to fall on the weak side of the basket.

Salt & pepper drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Getting players to keep the ball above their head and putting the shot up immediately following a rebound;
- 2) Taking the ball in two hands.

Set-up – The players line up on one side of the basket, facing the basket about 2 metres from the board. The first player has the ball.



Directions for players – The aim is to set a team record for consecutive rebounds. The first player throws the ball onto the backboard so it returns to where he/she was standing. After throwing the ball onto the backboard the player sprints to ½ court and sprints back to the end of the queue. The second player catches the rebound above the head and, while keeping the ball above the head, bends the knees and throws the ball onto the backboard so it returns to where he/she was standing, and then follows the first player to ½ court and to the queue. This continues until the ball is dropped or miscued.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure players keep the ball above their head. If you want to be more disciplined you can set the rule that if the ball is brought down below the head the game, and the count, restarts;
- b) Players must watch the ball all the way to their hands.

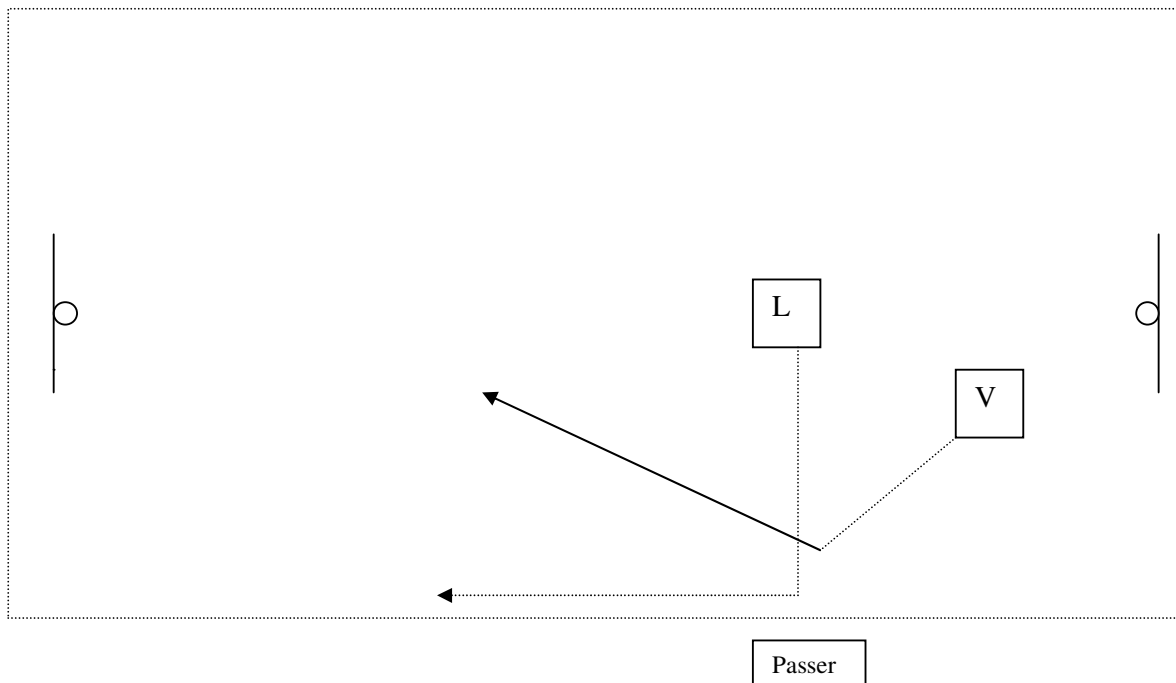
Cutting and the inbounds pass

Cutting is undertaken by an offensive, non-ball handler. The cut is a sharp change of direction to remove defensive pressure so the non-ball handler can receive the ball with an open passing lane (defined in 'Definitions'). Learning to cut well is frustrating to coach as players typically learn the cut quickly in practise but it takes time for the coach to see effective cuts at game time.

For both new and experienced players, emphasise that the V or L cut must be executed as a sharp move. 'It's not U cut, it's a **V cut**' is a frequent coach's phrase.

For new players to the game

We have found the most effective way to teach cutting to the youngest age groups and new players is to explain the concept of cutting but importantly to tell which players to do a 'V' and which to do an 'L'. The coach must ensure the players already know their roles as explained above in the section "Offence - Players need to know their roles". The coach can ensure the guards cut by saying 'Simon L, Connor V'. This means the following:



The coach should teach the passer to pass the ball ahead of the cutters so the cutters are running at full speed and not stopping for the ball. This will mean the cutters may have their back to the passer when the ball is passed.

The other two offensive players should keep well away from L and V's running lanes.

The L and V moves can be done anywhere on the court. When calling L and V under the scoring basket the V player actually executes an upside down V so the cut is performed running at the basket.

For more experienced players

Different cuts

- a) '**V-cut**' – the bread and butter of cuts. As the name suggests, the player cuts in the shape of a 'V'.
- b) '**L-cut**' – The player cuts in the shape of an 'L'.
- c) '**Flash cut**' – A player 'flashes out of no where' typically towards the basket. The 'give and go' move is a common example of a flash cut.
- d) '**Basket cut**' – Move towards ball handler then cut to the basket.

Players should not always cut at the same pace. Varying the pace keeps the opponent off balance. It can be very effective for the player to start the move at ¼ pace then cut at full speed.

The cut is most effective when the player pushes off with the outside leg as explained in *Cut to the wings drill* under point (b) of 'elements to watch'.

Execute cuts with a slash

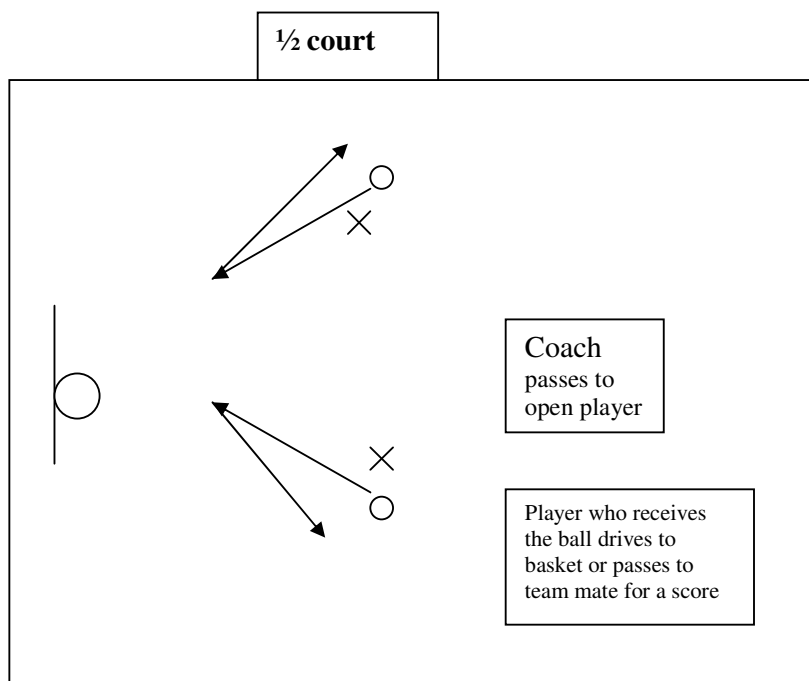
With every cut players must execute a '**slash**'. As the offensive player turns to make the cut, the arm nearest to the defender straightens and windmills round to take the defender out-of-play. It is important the cutter does not push off and incur a foul.

Cut to wings drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Ensuring offensive players are cutting hard and fighting to get open while under defensive pressure.
- 2) Ensuring defence has their arm in the passing lane applying tough pressure.

Set-up – Split players into teams of 2. Have the players line up on both sides of the foul line extended as shown below. The defensive player takes inside position. The coach stand at the top of the 3-point line with a basketball, ready to pass to the open player.



Directions for players – The offensive players cut towards the basket then back towards their original position. As the offensive players cut they should slash with their inside arm as discussed above. The defensive players have their arm in the passing lane and move with their opponent to block any pass. Players rotate into defence, then move to offence.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

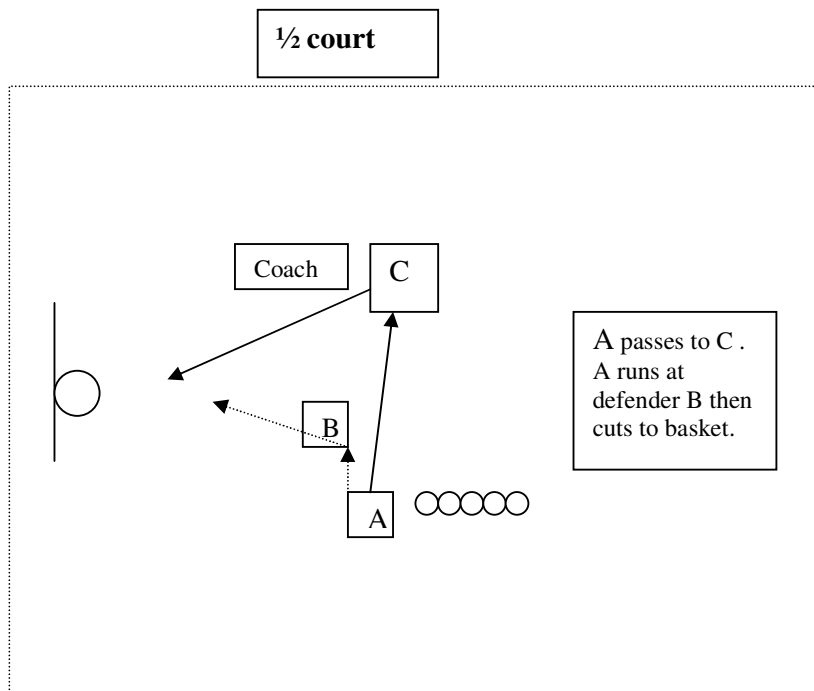
- a) Make sure the players execute a v-cut and not a u-cut.
- b) Ensure the offensive players are pushing hard off their one leg. The player on your left performs the cut by pushing off left leg. Similarly, the player on your right pushes off with right leg.
- c) Ensure offensive players are fighting to get open.
- d) Offensive players should run different length cut moves to keep the defence guessing.
- e) The defensive player should keep an arm in the passing lane

Basket cut drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Taking the defence out-of-play with effective cutting technique.
- 2) Cutting using different speeds.
- 3) Passing ahead of the receiver.
- 4) Making a step pass (passing with a large step to the side)

Set-up – As shown below, player A has the ball and stands off the split line at around the 3-point line. A has a defender B. C stands on the other side of the split line. The coach is a non-active defender on C. All other players line up behind A.



Directions for players – A passes to C. A then runs at defender to put defender off balance, uses an arm slash and burst towards basket. Initially, B is not to follow A to the basket. B moves towards A and puts left arm in the passing lane in denial defence. C bounce passes ahead of A so A has to run to ball. The pass should be made so A can lay-up to the side of the basket, not directly in front of the basket. The coach stands in front of C as a passive defender, forcing C to make a step pass. Players rotate with A moving to B, B moving to C and C moving to the back of the queue. Coaches of older teams may just want the guards rotating into C.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) A pushes off with the right leg with notable change of speed.
- b) B plays proper denial defence.
- c) C executes a step pass
- d) C passes ahead of A forcing A to work hard to get the ball
- e) A executes lay-up fundamentals. While this is not a lay-up drill the lay-up must be executed with excellence.

Inbounds defence

The offence has 5 seconds to inbound the ball otherwise it is a turnover and the defence inbounds the ball. This provides an outstanding opportunity for the defence, especially when the score is close, your team is behind by a couple of points and the clock is down to the last couple of minutes of the game.

The coach should choose only one of the following inbounds defensive options.

Arm-bar

The defence recommended for the sidelines and under your offensive basket is the arm-bar defence. The arm-bar defence is described under “man-to-man defence”.

For inbounds, the arm-bar can be used to inhibit an opponent from moving to the ball. Equally, the arm-bar is useful to feel the movement of the opponent away from the ball or movement in a different direction.

As described under man-to-man defence, the arm-bar should be placed on the opponent’s lower chest with the other arm in the passing lane denying the entry pass.

Face your opponent

This defence was employed by Ray Thompson, who coached the Opals and the Melbourne Tigers women’s teams in the 1990’s. It has also been successfully employed by some Cougar coaches.

In this defence the defenders stand between the passer and their opponent and they directly face the opponent with their back to the passer. By focusing on the eyes and body language of their opponent the defender can determine if a pass is coming their way. If the opponent cuts towards the passer then the defender cuts off the offensive move by moving in front of the opponent. As the opponent moves the defender places a denial arm in the anticipated passing lane. If it appears a lob pass is being thrown over the defender’s head, then the defender puts the right or left arm in the air, depending on where the defender indicates the pass is being thrown.

The worst thing the defender can do in this defence is to turn their head to look at the passer. Turning the head and looking away from the opponent creates a perfect opportunity for the opponent to back-cut and get a clear break.

Inbounds defence competition drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Denying the inbounds pass.

Set-up – Split the players into two even teams. The coach acts as the referee on the sidelines, handing the ball over to the passer for a sidelines pass. The remaining offensive players spread out as discussed in “cutting and the inbounds pass” above. The defence plays arm-bar or “face-your-opponent” as required by the coach.

Directions for players – The coach ensures the offence is spread and no players are running around like chooks without heads while the coach (referee) still has the ball. This drill is a competition – which defence can hold out the offence for the longest period of time. The coach should be demanding a minimum hold-out time of 5 seconds. The coach hands the ball to the passer and begins counting ‘hippopotamus-one, hippopotamus-two....out loud until a receiver has the ball. Run two to three times then switch.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) As offensive players move and cut the defender must have a denial arm in the passing lane;
- b) Do not let any defender cross their legs over. Defenders must only slide or sprint;
- c) For face-your-opponent defence, ensure defenders do not turn their heads to the passer;
- d) If a player is matched up against a faster player, the defender should provide more space so the fast opponent can not cut and get open near the passer. When the defender does provide more space, the defender can cut in front for an arm-bar or with their body, depending on the defence being played;
- e) Ensure only guards are cutting to the passer. Forwards and centres cutting to the passer just clog up the area and makes the inbounds pass even harder;
- f) Ensure offensive players are cutting and not just dancing with their partners.

Double arm-bar under defensive basket

In the Cougars “domestic” (that is, not representative) competition, an embarrassing number of points are scored with an inbounds ball under the defensive basket. The double arm-bar is an effective means to eliminate these scores.

The principles are simple and as follows:

- Absolutely no offensive players whatsoever shall enter the key. Drum this into your players’ heads. “No one in the key” should be a coach’s mantra for the inbounds under the defensive basket.
- If an offensive player attempts to enter the key either before or after the pass, then the defender puts both elbows directly in front with the forearms arm-baring so that the fist of one hand goes above the opposite elbow and the other fist goes below the opposite elbow. The defender then pushes the opponent out of the key using leg, hip and upper body strength. The defender must keep the double arm-bar solid to avoid fouling. Any pushing or up and down movement with the double arm-bar risked being called for a foul.

Keep them out of the key drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Keeping offensive players out of the key for the inbounds pass under the defensive basket.

Set-up – Split the players into two even teams. No ball is required. The offensive players spread out around the key. The defence stands between the opponent and the basket.

Directions for players – The offence is spread around the key and no players are running around like chooks prior to the coach’s whistle or yell to ‘go!’. This drill is a competition – which defence can hold the offence out of the key for the longest period of time. The coach should be demanding a minimum hold-out time of 5 seconds. When the coach signals a start to the drill the coach begins counting ‘hippopotamus-one, hippopotamus-two....out loud until an opponent is in the key. Run two to three times then switch.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Defenders should not be fouling by pushing the opponent away with their forearms;
- b) Defenders should be pushing with intense leg, hip and upper body strength;

- c) When an opponent is outside the key defenders should be using fundamental sliding and sprinting techniques. Continuing to hold the double arm-bar in open court is too slow. The double arm-bar is only to be used to keep opponents out of the key;
- d) The offensive players should not be silly running around. Their movements should represent game-day.

Screening

The three fundamental screens are:

1. On the ball;
2. Down screen;
3. Back screen.

There is also a “cross screen”, but that is probably getting too advanced for HBA basketball.

We strongly advise coaches not to teach screening until the other offensive fundamentals of dribble driving, V-cuts, passing, and cutting to the key when a team mate drives into the key are in place.

At the junior level, and with the less intense aspect of HBA basketball, screening works best when players are given the screening role. As stated elsewhere in this manual, have your players acknowledge who are the best shooters and dribblers on the team. Then the coach can state that a very important role for those players that are not the best shooters or dribblers will be expected to set screens to get the shooters and dribblers open. You can encourage screeners by stating that screening gives them an excellent opportunity to score points. The screen should be held for no more than *2 seconds*. When the screen is released the screener should cut straight to the basket. It is amazing how often the screener will be wide open for an easy 2 points.

Screening stance

Girls

- ✓ Feet shoulder width apart.
- ✓ Feet planted and not moving.
- ✓ Fists clenched and arms tensed and crossed, protecting the chest, with the fists in front of the opposite shoulder.
- ✓ Screener shoulders above the feet and does not lean to one side or the other.

Boys

- ✓ Feet shoulder width apart.
- ✓ Feet planted and not moving.
- ✓ Right hand grabbing the left wrist with the arms fully extended and tensed, protecting the groin.
- ✓ Screener shoulders above the feet and does not lean to one side or the other.

On-ball screens

The on-ball screen is a screen on the defender defending the player with the ball. Points of note are as follows:

- ✓ As the screen is about to be set, the screener should raise a fist in the air to signal a screen and yell the ball handler's name at least twice;
- ✓ The screen should be set for no more than 2 seconds;

- ✓ The ball handler must wait until the screen is set. Players new to screening will always use the screen before it is set, resulting in a foul against the screener;
- ✓ The screener should set the screen on the ball handler's strongest dribbling side;
- ✓ If the defender can see the screener with their peripheral vision, the screener should set the screen right at the defender's body. If the defender cannot see the screener the rules state the screener must be at least one step away from the defender;
- ✓ Whether the screen is used or not, the screener cuts to the basket when the screen is released.

For appropriate drills, see *Down screen drill* below.

Down screen

When the ball is high (say between the top of the key and ½ way), an offensive player sets a screen while facing the offensive baseline in such a way that one of the team's best shooters can receive the ball for an open, short jumper. It is crucial that the screen is set on the *inside* of the player being screened (that is, the player being screened is closer to the sideline than the screener). So practise drills need to ensure the player being screened moves wide on the baseline before the screen is set.

Down screen drill

Excellent for:

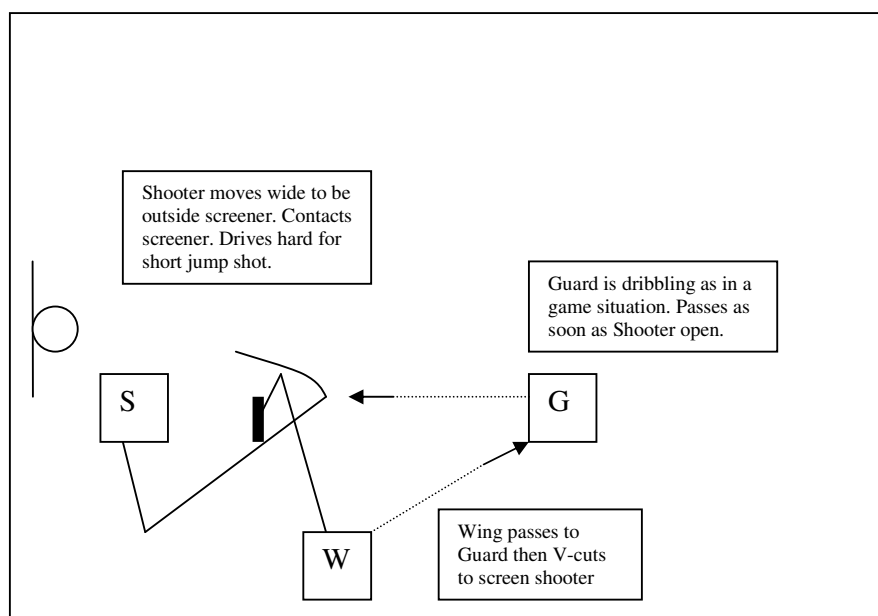
- 1) Having players understand their roles in executing an effective down screen.

Set-up – Split players into teams of three. Three teams of three should be able to fit between the two sidelines.

Directions for players – Wing player passes to guard up high. Simultaneously, (i) the wing player performs a V-cut, ending up facing towards the player being screened; and (ii) the baseline player moves wide along the baseline then V-cuts hard to the screener, ensuring the screener's shoulder is contacted on the way through. It is by contacting the screener that you ensure the defender is not able to slot between the cutter and the screener. The ball must be passed to the cutter immediately on passing the screener. The screener cuts to the basket and rebounds and scores. The players keep the same positions for two complete moves before rotating positions.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) The cutter *must* move outside of the screener;
- b) The cutter must make contact with the shoulder of the screener;
- c) The screener must have the appropriate stance as stated above;
- d) The screener should V-cut, first moving to the opposite sideline the cutting a short distance to the baseline;
- e) The cutter must have the hands up ready to receive the pass as soon as the cutter contacts the screener;
- f) The pass must be received by the cutter as soon as the cutter passes the screener;
- g) The cutter, having received the ball, quickly drives around the screener for the lay-up or short jumper.



Back screen

The screener sets up behind the offensive player intended to get open. The screener should be one short step behind the defender. If screening a ball handler, the screener should not be directly behind the defender but on the side of the defender that plays to the dribbling strength of the ball handler. If screening a non-ball handler, the screener can set the screen to the side that enables a cut towards the centre of the key *or* a cut directly to the basket.

Coaches can develop a drill similar to the *Down screen drill* detailed above.

Tough defence

“Baskets score points but defence wins games”

“There is no glory in defence, just victory”

Your players will put as much emphasis on defence as the coach does. So a defensive drill should always be covered in practise, be emphasised during games at training and emphasised on game-day.

A really important point for players is their mentality on defence. Look up the dictionary and the word “offence” means “to attack”. Tell your players you want them attacking on defence, you want them playing offence when on defence. Be aggressive. Be physical. Don’t react to what your offensive player does. Make your opponent react to your defence!

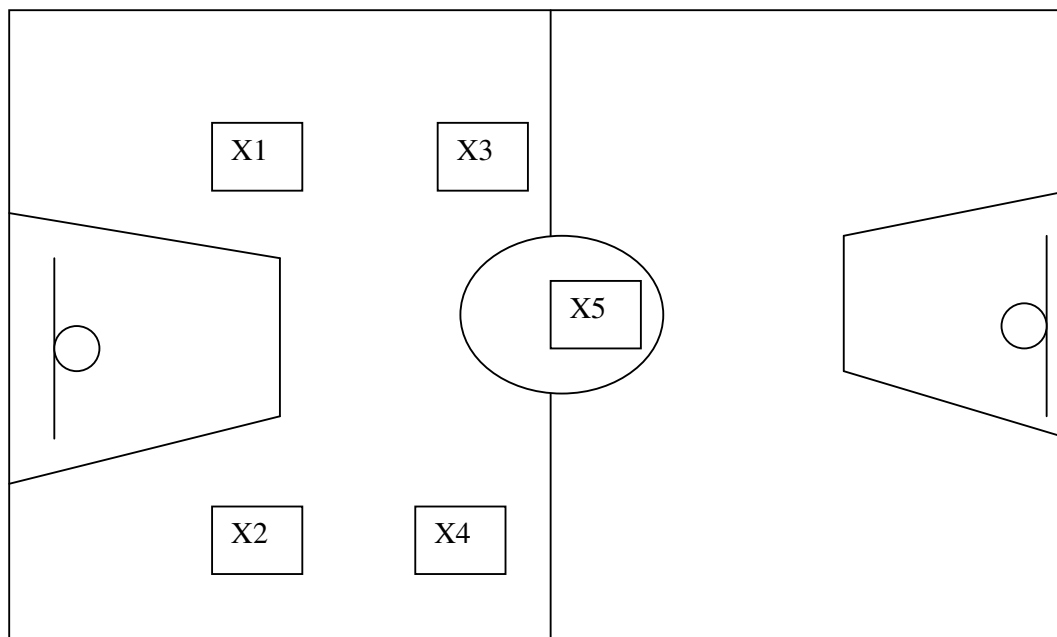
Canterbury Cougar coaches will teach the following:

The Press

- 1) Always *full court press* after Cougars scores a basket if you have the team speed to be able to press. Now it takes a few weeks for the press to be effective for a team that has never played the press. So coaches have to be patient. In full court press no one defends the inbound passer. Think of the press as a form of zone, not man-to-man. The press formation can be:

The 2-2-1 Press

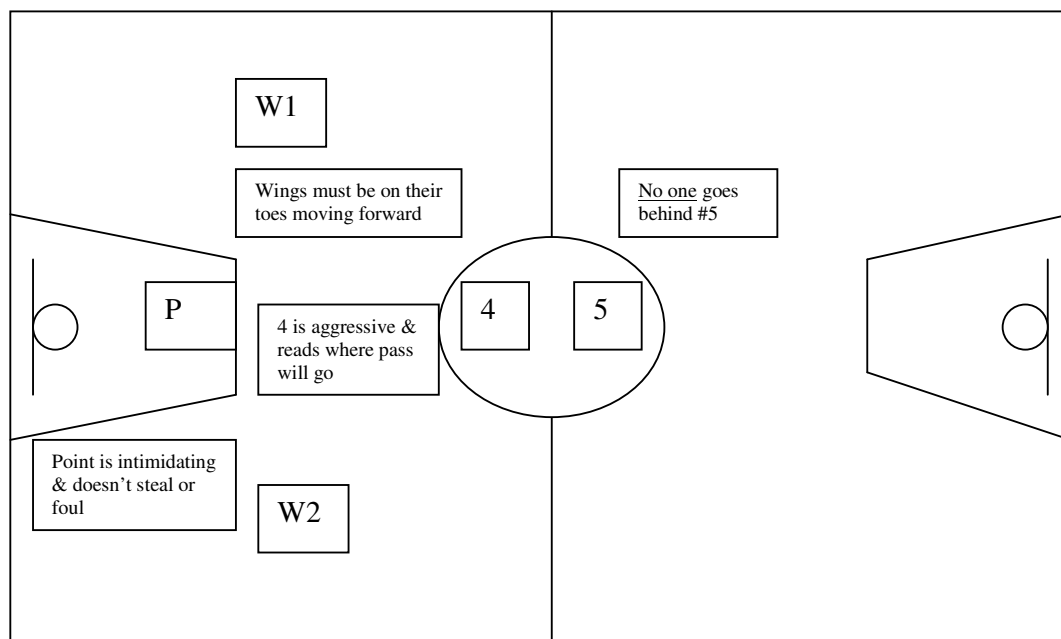
- a) The 2-2-1 press is often best for lower division and younger teams. In 2-2-1 the first 2 line up at about the free-throw line on either side of the key. The second 2 are on the attacking side of half way. The last 1 is at the back of the center jump circle.
 - i) The first 2 are normally your guards. The first aim of the first 2 is NOT to steal the inbounds pass but to push the dribbler to the sidelines in the hope that the dribbler picks up the dribble. As soon as the opponent picks up the dribble, the defender must be in the face of the opponent in an intimidating fashion. It is important the first 2 and second 2 stay in a “zone” until the pass is made. Initially, your players will “have their feet stuck in cement”, especially if they have not previously played press. So, while staying in their zone area, the players need to anticipate who will get the ball and be ready to pounce on that person.
 - ii) When the dribble has been stopped, it is likely a bad pass will be thrown. All other players must get ready to steal the bad pass. They must anticipate which opponent will receive the pass. The players can move out of their zone in anticipation of the bad pass.
 - iii) The last 1 is typically your centre and is the safety for he/she follows any opponent who breaks towards the basket – in other words, the last 1 protects the basket. It is important that no opponent gets behind your safety.



The 1-2-1-1 Press

- b) The 1-2-1-1 is excellent for teams blessed with aggressive players. In coaching the 1-2-1-1 press you need to work hard on aggressiveness and risk-taking. Initially you will take players out of their defensive comfort zone. The 1-2-1-1 is very much about intimidation.
- i) *The point* - The first 1 is referred to as the “point”. The point takes on the dribbler and tries to defend the dribbler towards the sideline. The point, as a part of the intimidation, should yell “I’ve got ball, I’ve got ball” or “she’s mine, she’s mine” and have the arms out in an intimidating manner. The point **MUST NOT FOUL**.
 - ii) *The wings* - The next 2 are called the “wings”. At the start of the game, the wings should position themselves about the top of the 3-point line, on either side of the court. *It is critical that the wings are on their toes, moving forward. The wings must not move backwards on their heels.* In this way the wings are risk-takers – when first teaching this press they will think they are not helping their teammates. But it is crucial that the opponent receiving the inbounds pass is trapped as soon as he/she receives the ball. The wing should attack the dribbler and form a trap with the point. The coach should focus on dramatically shortening the time it takes your players to form the trap. Don’t be afraid to yell out during a game “I want the trap formed much more quickly, wings focus on getting to the trap faster. Only one wing forms the trap – whichever side of the court the dribbler is on. The other wing then positions him/herself to steal the errant pass.
 - iii) *4* – is very important. It should be a player who can read the court well and be aggressive. 4 initially sets up at mid-court. Opponents will often try to beat the press with a pass either up the lane or across court. 4 must read the play to cut off this option. A good 4 player will achieve most of your steals in this press formation. 4 must be willing to let opponents go past – again – risk taking.

- iv) 5 - plays safety and protects the basket. All opponents must stay in front or even with 5.



- c) *Practice the press* by simulating a game situation. Make up two teams. The coach may have to be the inbound passer as this position is not important to the drill. It is important the drill starts with all players are around the basket like a game situation. Nominate which is the pressing team and which is the offensive team. It is important to have at least four pressing players. One player puts a shot up, the ball is then taken quickly out-of-bounds by the opposite team whether the shot made it or not (just pretend the shot went in). If the offense makes it to half way, they win. Then ask the defensive what happened. If the press is broken it is normally due to:
- i) The point and wing try to steal the inbound pass instead of focus on stopping the dribble;
 - ii) The wings get “stuck in cement” or move backwards and don’t move in time to the inbound pass recipient;
 - iii) The first 2 or the wings play man, leaving a huge gap in the defense;
 - iv) The second 2 in the 2-2-1 of the weak-side wing and/or 4 in the 1-2-1-1 are not aggressive enough.

Press trap drill

- d) Another *Press* drill is aimed at speed in setting the trap and ensuring the trap is solid. In this drill, split your players into two teams. For each team you have an inbounds passer, a dribbler and two defenders. The inbounds passer just passes the ball and plays no further part in the drill (until players rotate). The two defenders set up like the *point* and *wing* of the 1-2-1-1 *press*. The dribbler attempts to get past the two defenders. When rotating players, try and keep the *point* as the players you would use for *point* on Saturday.

When not in the *press*, mix up your defences between man and zone. This will keep the opponent's offence off balance. However, please keep in mind that zone defence should only be played in U14's and higher.

Man-to-man defence

Man-to-man can also be mixed up by playing full court man, half-court man and “1/4 court man”.

- a) Let's be known as a Club that *aggressively attacks the ball*. So often our opponents could have a cup of hot chocolate with scones our defence is so mild. Force the opponent out of the *triple threat* stance.
- b) Have your players pick up an opposite “number” so each player yells out which player they are defending. When players come off the court they need to pass on which player they are defending.
- c) The *Shell drill* can be boring but it really teaches fundamentals. As it is not a fun packed drill, don't do it for too long.
- d) A great trick is to set your team in a zone under the key and when the dribbler is within 1 ½ metres of a Cougar defender, your team immediately goes to *man-to-man*.

Defensive stance – the fundamentals

All players from the earliest ages need to know the fundamentals of “getting in the stance” as follows:

- 1) Feet shoulder width apart
- 2) Weight on the balls of the feet
- 3) Knees bent with the legs ready to push off in either direction
- 4) Nose behind the toes
- 5) Head centred
- 6) Arms bent at right angle with palms facing out and thumbs about ear height.

Defensive slide in stance

Fundamentals are as follows (the example is for sliding to the right – it is the exact opposite for sliding to the left):

- 1) Point the right in the direction you are moving
- 2) Push off with the left foot
- 3) Keep the head centred at all times
- 4) Move the body and the right foot at the same time
- 5) The feet are never less than a should width apart
- 6) The right hand is up with palm facing out and thumb about ear height to inhibit a pass
- 7) The left hand is thigh height with the hand and forearm perpendicular to the body to stop a cross over dribble.

Defensive slide drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching fundamental defensive stance and sliding.

Set-up – The team lines up without a ball along the split line one behind the other facing the backcourt. The players need to be about 2 metres apart.

Directions for players – Explain the defensive stance fundamentals. Tell the players to get in the stance. Review each player's stance. Now tell the players the defensive slide fundamentals. When the coach blows a whistle or yells 'slide', the players slide to the sideline required by the coach. At first start slowly ensuring the players are executing the fundamentals. Finish the drill with a competition to see who can move to the sideline the fastest while maintaining the fundamentals. To ensure the players are taking large steps as they slide, think about setting a target for the number of step-slides they take to the sideline.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the players follow the fundamentals itemised above. Take particular note that the head stays centred and that the feet are always a least a shoulder width apart.
- b) Ensure the players' heads are not bobbing up and down but staying relatively level.
- c) Ensure the players have their right arm up and the left hand down when sliding to the right – and vice versa. Ensure the players do not wave their arms about like they are conducting an orchestra.

The defensive drop step

The above defensive slide drill is appropriate if the opponent is moving laterally. It is important the defender stays in stance if the opponent performs a cross over dribble or makes a strong-side dribble move. When this occurs the defender executes a drop step.

To execute the drop step the player, while in stance, takes a big step at 45° in the direction the dribbler is moving. The defender then continues to slide on the diagonal with the lead foot pointing in the direction the defender is moving.

Drop step defensive slide drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching the defensive drop step.

Set-up – The players line up without a ball along the split line one behind the other facing the backcourt. The players need to be about 2 metres apart.

Directions for players – Explain the drop step fundamentals. Tell the players to get in the stance. Review each player's stance. When the coach blows a whistle or yells 'slide', the players slide two steps laterally then they drop step and slide diagonally two steps to the sideline required by the coach. Start slowing then move to game speed.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the players follow the fundamentals itemised above. Take particular note that the head stays centred and that the feet are always a least a shoulder width apart.
- b) Ensure the drop step is a fast big step with the lead foot pointing in the direction the player is moving.

Slide run slide

If the defender is beaten the defender needs to sprint to get back in front of the dribbler. The defender, while in the stance, points both feet in the desired direction. The defender will sprint to get in front then move back into the slide.

Slide run slide drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching a rapid transition from stance to run back to stance.

Set-up – The players line up without a ball along a sideline one behind the other facing the backcourt. The players need to be about 2 metres apart.

Directions for players – Explain the fundamentals to move from drop step, to sprint, back to drop step. Tell the players to get in the stance. When the coach blows a whistle or yells ‘drop step’, the players execute two diagonal drop steps. On the 2nd step both feet face the desired direction. The players sprint 2 metres then move back immediately to stance, sliding diagonally two steps. Do the drill on the other sideline.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the players do not cross their legs;
- b) Ensure the players move back into the fundamental stance.

1/2 court defensive sliding progression drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching stance and defensive fundamentals in game and tougher than game-type situations
- 2) Defence fundamentals under pressure

Set-up – The players pair up at half court, neither player has a ball. Try to pair the players in roughly equal athletic ability. One player is on offence and the other on defence. The players are about 5 metres apart.

Directions for players – The defensive player holds onto their shorts. The offensive player attempts to make the baseline as quickly as possible but can only move within a 2 metre lane. The defensive player attempts to stop the process of the offensive player using defensive sliding and drop steps. Explain this is a very tough drill on the defence, but it highlights the defensive performance under pressure. The players switch.

Secondly, allow the defence to use their arms. The defence can arm-bar but not grab.

Thirdly, the offence now dribbles a basketball and the lane extends to 5 metres. If the defence is able to make the dribbler turn three times, the defence wins. No reverse dribbles allowed for division 1 players. Consider only allowing two pairs at a time for this drill.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) When the defence is under severe pressure in the first part of this drill, ensure the defence does not hop or jump backwards. Instead, the defence must follow stance, sliding, drop step, and run-step-run fundamentals;
- b) Ensure the defenders head is locked and the appropriate arm is raised or lowered depending on the dribbler’s direction. Remember, when defending to the right the right hand is raised

to ear height and the left arm is down to prevent the cross-over dribble. It is vice versa defending to the left side.

Closing the gap (close out)

This is a crucial defensive concept and must be clearly understood for effective defence. The term is used for defence on the ball handler in two ways:

- 1) If an offensive person receives the ball in shooting range the defender needs to effectively close-out to defend against a shot or drive to the basket;
- 2) As the ball handler drives towards the basket, the defender continues to 'close the gap' until the defender is in the face of the ball handler when 2 metres from the basket.

Closing the gap drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching defender to be the aggressor, not the ball handler.
- 2) Teaching defenders to move out of their comfort zone by getting in the personal space of the dribbler.
- 3) Teaching defenders the concept of continually closing the width of the gap with the dribbler as the dribbler gets closer to the basket.

Set-up – Split players into teams of two, one ball with each team. Try to make even teams – guard on guard, forward on forward, speed with speed. The dribbler is at the 3-point line facing the basket. The defender has the ball ½ a metre from the dribbler. Only 2 teams should be on the court at a time, either side of the split line. If the court has side rings then use those rings as well.

Directions for players – The defender gets into defensive stance prior to releasing the ball. The defender drops the ball in front of the dribbler. As soon as the dribbler picks the ball up the defender should be attacking the ball. The defender's stance should be such that the dribbler's only option should be to go down the sideline – never into the centre. An important point to emphasise is that by the time the dribbler reaches 2 metres from the basket the defender should have totally closed the gap so the two players are toe-to-toe. As the dribbler comes within 2 metres of the basket, the defender's outside arm needs to be extended straight up to put the dribbler off executing a quick shot.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Some points of basketball rules need to be emphasised here:
 - i) The rules state that if the ball handler comes into contact with the defender's body and the defender is moving laterally (to the side) or backwards, then it is a foul on the offensive player;
 - ii) If body contact is made on the defender with the defender moving forward then it is a defensive foul.
- b) Defenders need to be the aggressor and not wait for the dribbler to make all the moves. Typically defenders react to offensive moves. Tell defenders you want the dribblers reacting to aggressive defensive moves.

- c) If one of your defenders is against a much faster player, teach the defender to open up the initial gap to take the drive away as a threat.
- d) With good defence, the dribbler will often take a back step to achieve an open shot. Teach the defenders to stay in the face of the dribbler, even when a back step is taken.

Close-out drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching fundamental defence when a defender has to rush to cover an open offensive player.

Set-up – Split players into teams of two, one ball with each team. Try to make even teams – guard on guard, forward on forward, speed with speed. The dribblers are on the sideline about 2 metres apart. The defenders are in front of the dribblers about 15 metres away. The defenders start with the ball.

Directions for players – The defender chest passes to the dribbler. The defender sprints 2/3rds of the distance to the dribbler and comes to a jump stop in perfect, low defensive stance. The defender then rapidly and aggressively moves closer to the dribbler so the defender can defend a shot or drive. The defender's front arm is vertically in the air to protect against a shot or pass. The dribbler, for this exercise, does not move except to get immediately into triple threat position. Do three times then rotate players.

Extend the drill by (i) having dribblers drive to the left 5 metres with defenders sliding with them; (ii) dribblers driving to the right metres; and (iii) spread the teams further apart and the dribbler can move in any direction for 10 metres.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Defender must end the sprint in a classic, low defensive stance
- b) Don't let the defender jump stop too close to the dribbler as they would be blown away in a game situation.
- c) Think about adjusting the distance between the players so they understand the 2/3rds rule applies in all situations.
- d) Make sure defenders never ever cross their legs when under pressure. Defenders are either sliding or sprinting.

Swing step

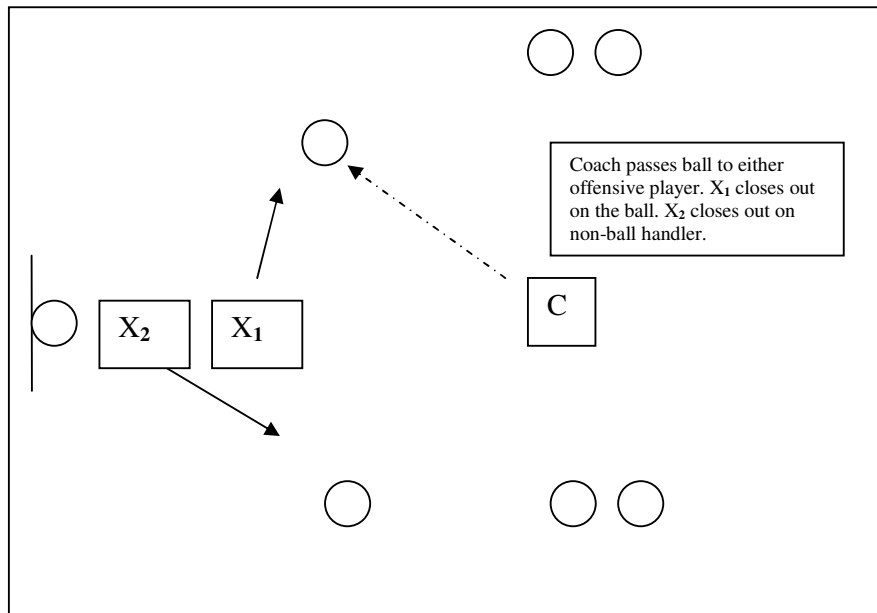
While in the stance, defender takes a small step towards an opponent pointing the lead foot in the intended direction. The swing step is used when needing to close out on an opponent.

Two down low close out drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching close out in a game-type situation;
- 2) Teaches the 'swing step'.

Set-up – Two defenders and two offensive players set up as follows:



Directions for players – The coach passes the ball to either offensive player. X₁ will close out on the ball handler and X₂ will close out on the non-ball handler. The defence should take a 'swing step' towards their opponent. The offence is not allowed to take an outside shot but must try and enter the key. The defence cannot let the offence enter the key with the ball. Next, to make it more game-like, the offence can take an outside shot. The offence rotates to defence. Players in the queue rotate into offence.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

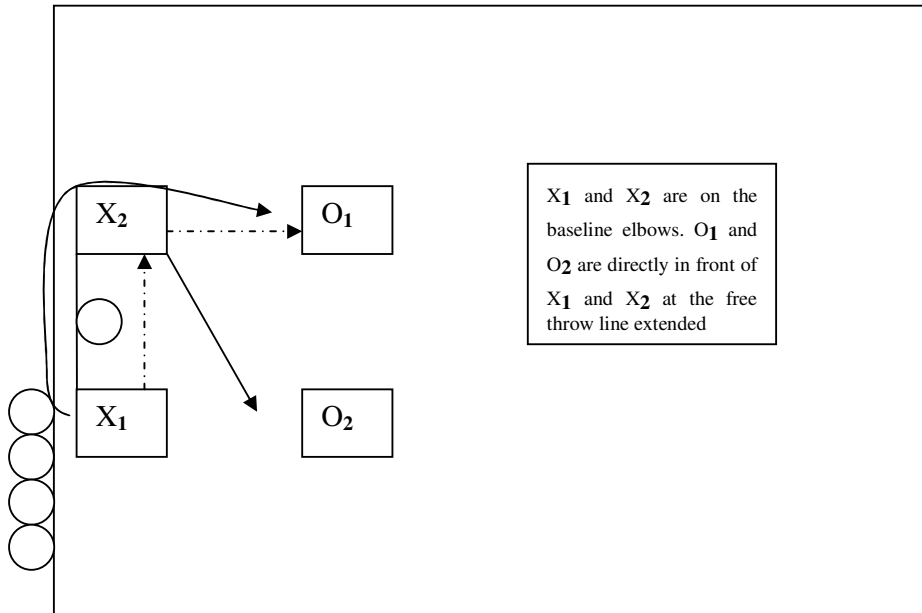
- a) Ensure the defence closes out 2/3rds of the distance. They arrive with a stutter step with one arm up to protect against a shot, then very quickly into the stance;
- b) X₁ should defend against a straight lay-up to the basket with the classic man-you-basket defence.
- c) X₂ should be pointing the pistols ready to "fly with the ball" to defend their opponent in the case of a pass or be positioned to help out if X₁ is beaten.
- d) For the offensive players, if the defence is closing out from the left, go left and vice versa.

Two-on-two close out drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Closing out under pressure in a game type situation;

Set-up – Two defenders and two offensive players set up as follows:



Directions for players – X₁ passes to X₂ and then immediately runs around X₂ to close out on O₁. X₂ immediately passes to O₁ who immediately passes to O₂. As soon as X₂ passes to O₁, X₂ closes out on O₂. The offence then quickly tries to score without moving further away from the basket.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

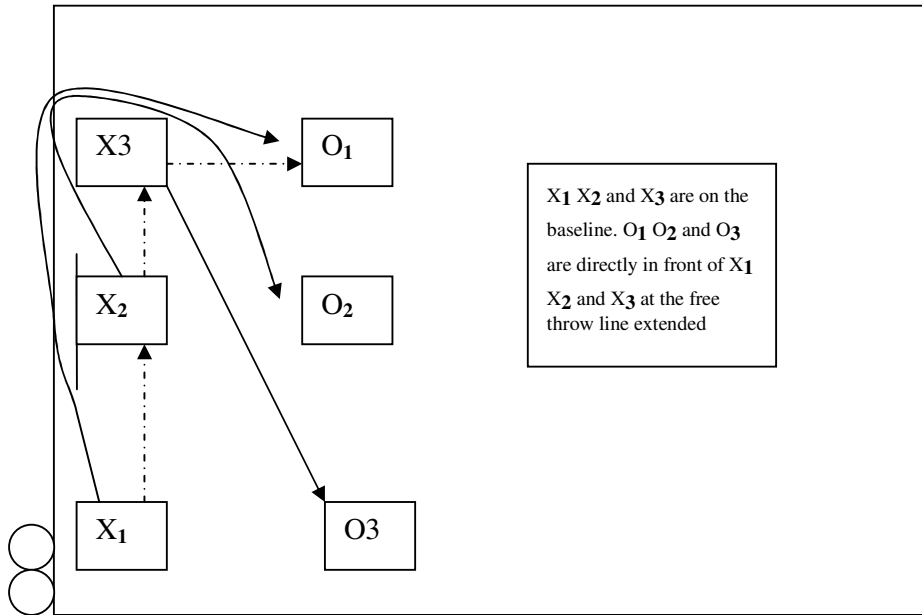
- a) Ensure the defence closes out 2/3rds of the distance. They arrive with a stutter step with one arm up to protect against a shot, then very quickly into the stance;
- b) Ensure the defence on the ball (X₂) arrives with a stutter step, one arm up to stop the shot then immediately in the stance;
- c) X₁ should close out on O₁ with a stutter step with an arm bar and one hand in the passing lane;
- d) O₂'s first move should be to go right. If X₂ is overplaying the right then O₂ should go in hard for the lay-up.

Three-on-three close out drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Closing out under pressure in a game type situation;

Set-up – Three defenders and three offensive players set up as follows:



Directions for players – X₁ passes to X₂ who passes to X₃ who passes to O₁. X₁ immediately after passing runs around X₃ to close out on O₁. X₂ immediately after passing runs around X₃ to close out on O₂. O₁ passes to O₂ who passes to O₃. As soon as X₃ passes to O₁, X₃ closes out on O₃. The offence then quickly tries to score but must go straight to the basket.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure the defence closes out 2/3rds of the distance. They arrive with a stutter step with one arm up to protect against a shot, then very quickly into the stance;
- b) Ensure the defence on the ball (X₃) arrives with a stutter step, one arm up to stop the shot then immediately in the stance;
- c) X₁ should close out on O₁ with a stutter step with an arm bar and one hand in the passing lane;
- d) O₃'s first move should be to go right. If X₃ is overplaying the right then O₃ should go in hard for the lay-up.

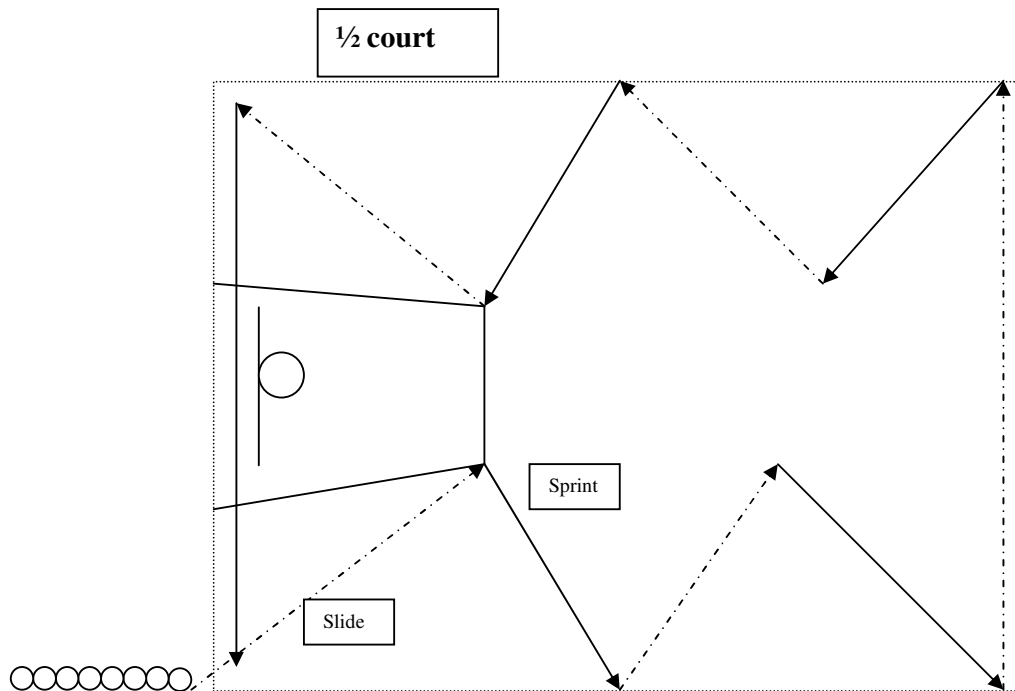
Slide-sprint-slide drill

A fundamental defensive drill every coach should know

Excellent for:

- 1) Player transition from slide to run defence and back again.

Set-up – Players line up one behind the other on the baseline facing up court. No basketballs are required.



Directions for players – Players start in a very low, defensive stance and slide to foul line elbow. Players defensively slide from ‘big to bigger’, keeping their head centred at all times. While sliding their hands should be in a position ready to steal the ball. Alternate the lead foot with the slide as they go around the court (you will need to tell them which way to face). Without stopping the players sprint to the sideline and alternate sliding and sprinting as shown in the above diagram.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

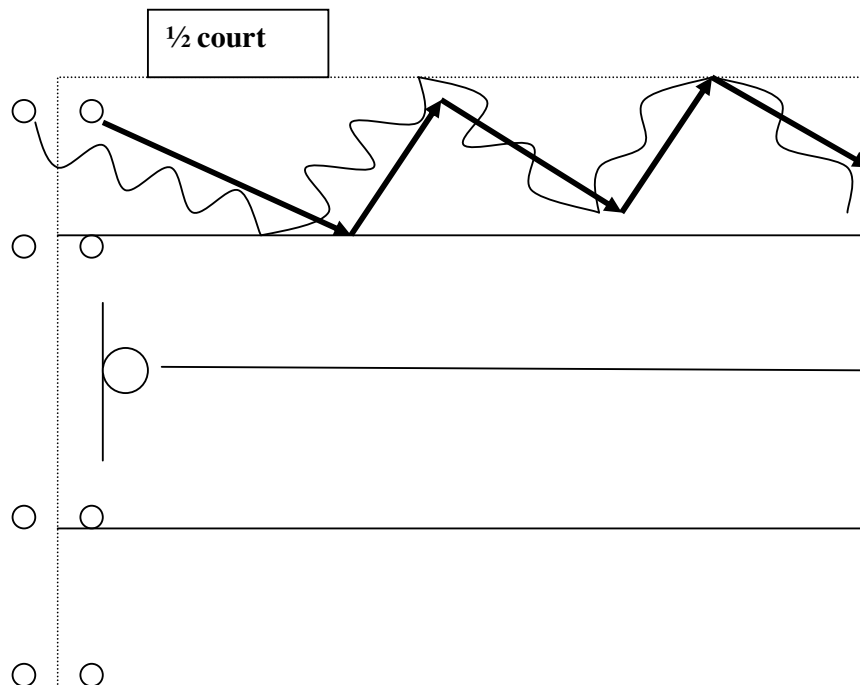
- a) As players get tired, ensure they keep their butts low in the slide and that they are sliding and not jumping;
- b) Ensure the players slide with speed as if they are up against a fast dribbler.

Slide defence with dribbler drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching defenders to accept and absorb hits from a defender;
- 2) Defensive aggressiveness;
- 3) Defensive footwork, which is the key to great defence.

Set-up – Split players into teams of two, one ball with each team. Try to make even teams – guard on guard, forward on forward, speed with speed. Don't be scared to challenge some players with the match-ups in this drill. Players will only be dribbling in a 5 metre lane down the court. So eight players can be drilled at the same time.



Directions for players – Tell the players you want plenty of contact. Dribbler can only move within a 5 metre lane to get to 1/2 court. Defender has hands behind the back to focus on footwork. Defender has to stop progress of the dribbler by absorbing contact on the chest. Girls will often want to put one forearm in front of the chest for protection. Boys must keep their hands behind their back. The defender must only absorb contact while moving laterally or backwards to avoid fouling. At 1/2 court the players rotate.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Defenders stay in a low defensive position at all times. Keep reminding them to get their butts low.
- b) Defenders slide from 'big to bigger' staying balanced and keeping their heads centred at all times.
- c) Dribbles should be trying cross-over dribbles and turn arounds.

Arm bar defence

The “arm-bar” defence is strong advocated by Gary Fox, who is an assistant coach with the Opals (ranked in the top two teams in the world) and has national championships that last two years with his Dandenong team. The arm-bar defence has been successfully taught with teams as young as Under 9.

With the arm-bar defence the defender has the non-leading hand (the “leading hand” is the hand nearest to the ball handler) in an “arm-bar” – that is, the elbow is bent at 90° with the arm tensed as if it were an iron bar.

The arm-bar is placed on the lower chest of the opponent so that distinct pressure is placed on the opponent from the defender’s forearm. Opponent’s find this pressure most aggravating and puts many off their game. The arm-bar can also be effective when an offensive player makes a cut and the arm-bar is applied as the offensive player completes the cut. The offensive player will usually start looking for the arm-bar pressure when a cut is made.

The arm-bar should only be applied on inbounds defence and when defending one pass away from the ball handler.

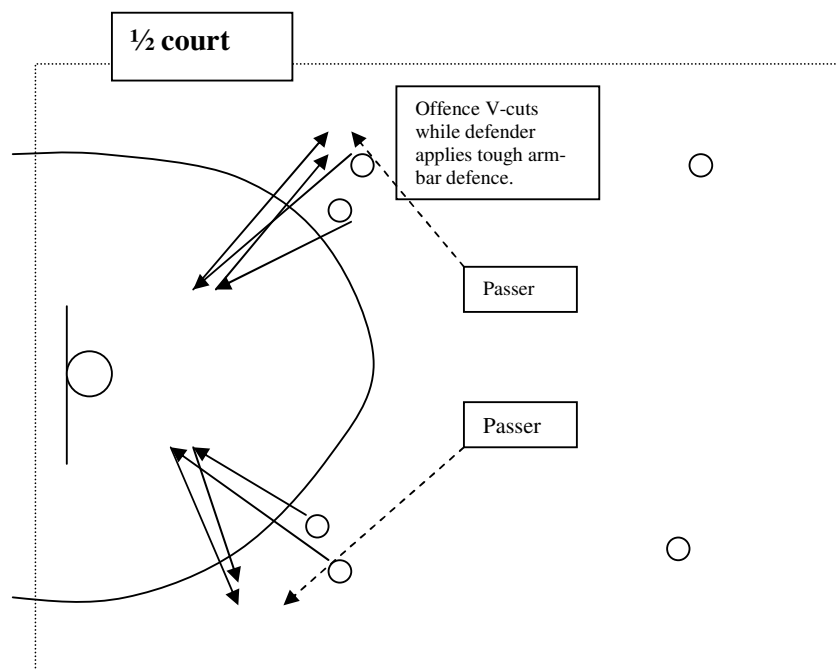
It takes a while for defenders to get used to applying such up close pressure. But coaches should persist as it will pay off.

Arm-bar defence drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching denial defence;
- 2) Inbounds defence;
- 3) Maintaining intensive defensive pressure.

Set-up – The passer is mid-way between the top of the key and the ½ way line with a ball. Above the 3-point line at a 45° angle to the basket on both sides of the basket are 2 defenders and 2 offensive players as follows:



Directions for players – The two offensive players V-cut to the basket and back outside. They continue to V-cut until they receive a pass or 20 seconds is up. The defensive players arm-bar their opponent. They must be very fast on their feet and be tough as 20 seconds is huge amount of time to hold off an opponent. Gary Fox says his best defenders can deny ball entry with arm-bar defence for 30 seconds. Your players will be doing well if they can do it for 10 seconds initially. However, their aim is to build the denial time at subsequent practices. Tell the players you want plenty of contact.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) If defenders lose contact they need to regain contact again as quickly as possible;
- b) Defenders should have an elbow in the passing lane with their lead arm denying the pass entry. The defenders arm-bar with the other arm. The arms doing the denial and arm-bar should change with change of direction of the opponent;
- c) Defenders must not cross their feet but use fundamental sliding or sprinting.

1/2 court defensive positioning

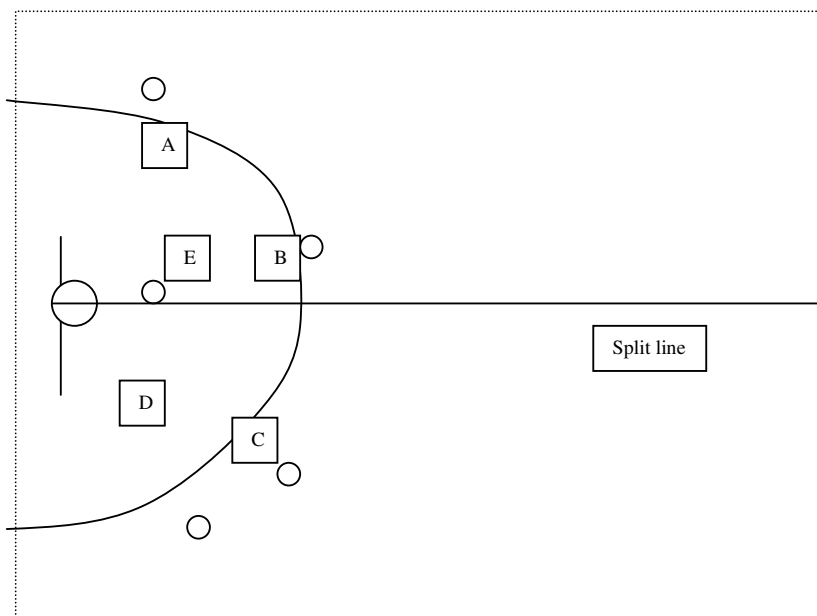
Shell drill – a classic

This is an outstanding drill for teaching junior players defensive fundamentals. The youngest age group usually does not have the patience for this drill. The first time it is explained can be slow so do not spend too long on it but plan to cover this drill in subsequent trainings. Certainly, elite players are expected to spend considerable time on this drill.

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching denial defence.
- 2) Teaching that tough defence is a team responsibility;
- 3) Help defence and quick reaction with help defence.

Set-up – Four offensive players line up evenly spaced around the 3-point line. One offensive player is in the post position. B's opponent has the ball. B and C have their inside arm in the passing lane so that the elbow is in the middle of the passing lane. D is on the block and is using peripheral vision to see both the ball handler and D's direct opponent. E is strong side with an elbow in the passing lane.



Directions for players – As this drill is quite complex when seen for the first time, it is important to first show drill in its entirety on a coach's board so the players understand the whole concept and can better understand what you will explain next.

Initially, there is no dribbling. The defence is not allowed to steal – this is not a stealing drill but a fundamental defence drill.

Here are the shell drill rules:

- ✓ Defenders must use peripheral vision to see both the opponent *and* the ball. The higher focus is to see the ball. Consequently, the head is tilted more towards the ball than the opponent;
- ✓ If your opponent is one pass away you are expected to play denial defence with your elbow in the passing lane but balanced in the defensive stance. The elbow nearest the dribbler should be in the passing lane;
- ✓ If your opponent is 2 passes away (such as D) then move towards the ball and closer to the basket. This defender has two priorities: (1) If the ball handler drives to the basket, D (in this example) is expected to stop the drive or help out on E's opponent; and (2) If the ball is passed directly to D's opponent, D is expected to 'fly with the ball' and be defending by the time the D's opponent catches the ball.
- ✓ If your opponent is 3 passes away (such as D if A's opponent had the ball) then you should move to the split line with your back to the basket so that your peripheral vision can see both the ball and your opponent. Your hands should be 'pistol pointing' (a common coaching term) so you are pointing at the ball and your opponent. As above, your job is to provide help defence or to fly with the ball to your opponent should a skip pass be made.
- ✓ The low post is the toughest place to defend (thus the 3 second lane violation rule). The low post player must be 'bodied' the whole time they are in the key or one pass away. Our courts normally have a netball line which cuts the 3-point semi-circle in half. If the ball is above this line it is considered 'high'. If below the line it is considered 'low'. We also refer to 'strong side' and 'weak side'. Please refer to 'Definitions' for their meaning. Some low post defensive fundamentals can be as follows:
 - If the ball is high and on the strong side, the low post defender (E) needs to be high on the strong side and in front of the opponent with an elbow in the passing lane;
 - If the ball is low and on the strong side, E needs to be on the low on the weak side and in front of the defender with an elbow in the passing lane. E needs to be positioned so a pass cannot be made high side.
 - If the ball is high and on the weak side, E needs to be high on the strong side and in front of the opponent with an elbow in the passing lane;
 - If the ball is low and on the weak side, E needs to be on the low on the weak side and in front of the defender with an elbow in the passing lane. E needs to be positioned so a pass cannot be made high side.

Offensive players should not pass the ball until the coach points to the receiver. As soon as a pass is made watch how the players react.

As the players become more comfortable with the drill, allow a ball handler to dribble around the perimeter to see how defenders react. When a ball handler begins dribbling other offensive players stay in their position.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure defenders one pass away have their elbow in the passing lane;
- b) Ensure all defenders react with great speed when a pass is made;
- c) Ensure defenders 2 to 3 passes away 'fly with the ball' and are appropriately positioned;
- d) Defenders 3 passes away should be on the split line;
- e) The defender on the ball is attacking the ball.

Shell drill with drive

It is crucial this element of the shell drill be taught so your team really understands help defence.

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching team defence.
- 2) Teaching help defence.

Set-up – Exactly the same as the Shell Drill above.

Directions for players – The ball is passed around as the coach points to a receiver, just as with the Shell Drill above. This time, when the coach yells 'drive' the player with the ball drives to the basket and this player's defender does nothing to stop the drive. The purpose is to see the reaction of the team. Communication amongst the defence is crucial. The coach will want to hear 'I've got ball', 'I've got post', 'I've got basket'....With no communication you can have 3 defenders going after the drive penetration leaving a number of the opposition open for an easy shot. As the dribbler gets close to the basket it can be effective for the coach to blow the whistle for all players to freeze. This will enable the coach and defenders see the effectiveness of the help defence.

Don't let the players continue general play. If the dribbler is stopped or a shot taken, the Shell Drill should begin again immediately.

As with the Shell Drill above, the defence is not allowed to steal – this is not a stealing drill but a fundamental defence drill.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- ✓ Really encourage strong communication;
- ✓ Really encourage quick team reaction. The driver should be cut off well before arriving at the basket when the team is operating effectively;
- ✓ The nearest defender, typically the low post defender, will stop the drive. This player should call out 'I've got ball';
- ✓ Watch who replaces the low post defence. It would normally be the defender nearest the split line who is 2 or 3 passes away.

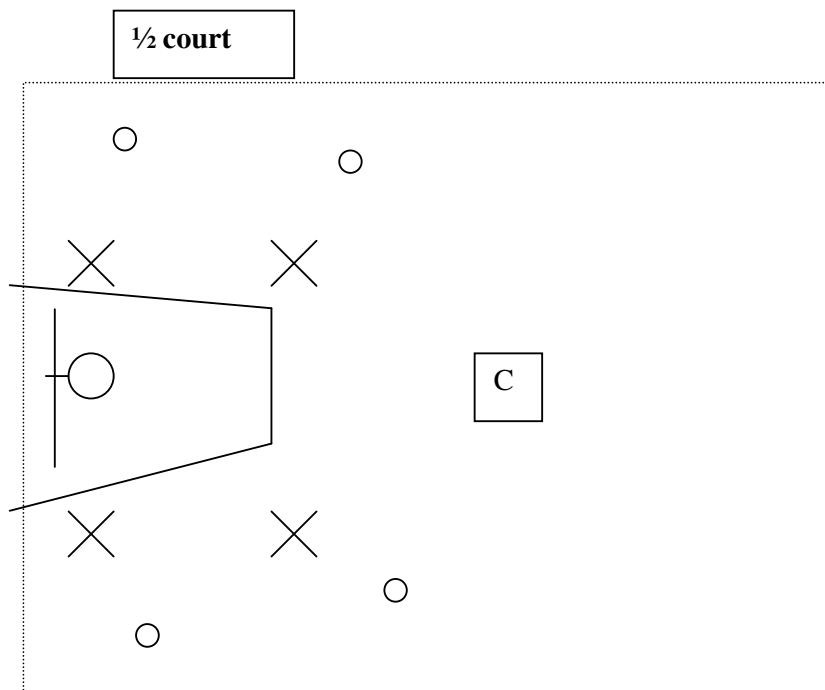
Defensive positioning drill

A fundamental defensive drill every coach should know

Excellent for:

- 1) Gauging how well the players understand their positional play relative to the ball and their opponent's position.

Set-up – Four players line up in offence and four in defence as shown below. The coach has the ball.



Directions for players – The coach passes the ball to any of the four offence players. As soon as the ball is caught the coach blows a whistle or yells stop to review the position of each defender. Upon the 2nd whistle the players go live and have 10 seconds to score.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Defenders on help side must react immediately and move towards the split line and must be able to see both the ball and their opponents;
- b) The defender one pass away must have an arm-bar with an arm in the passing lane;
- c) Ensure help side defence is in the stance;
- d) When the 2nd whistle blows, ensure defenders stay in the stance and are able to see both ball and opponent at all times.

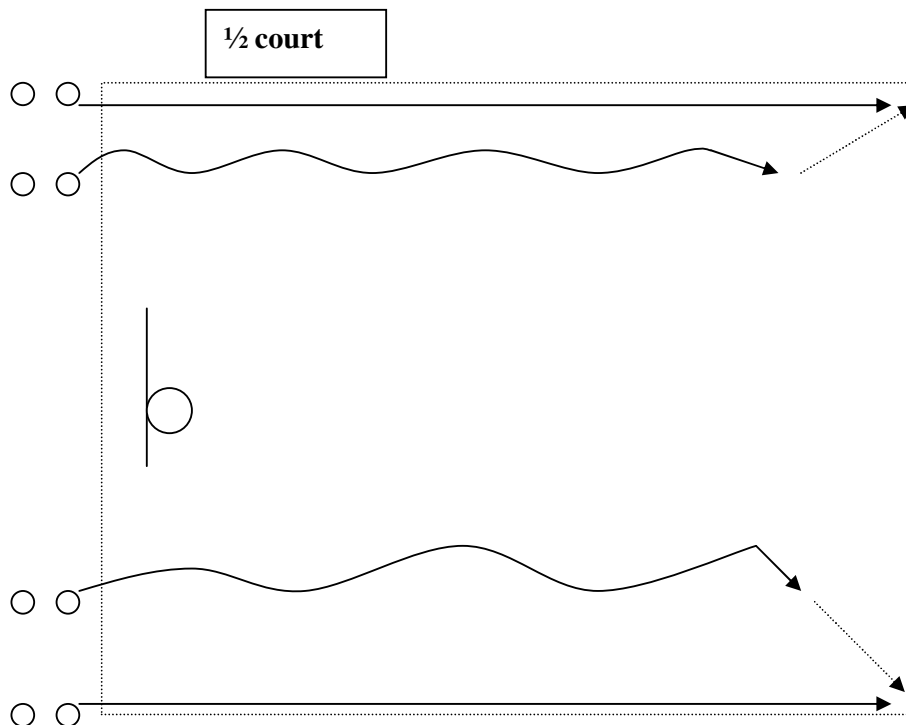
Half-court defensive drill – a classic

This is an outstanding drill for teaching junior players open court defence

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching players to 'get in front' and not reach-in.
- 2) Teaching players the important fundamental of keeping the dribbler against the sideline and not allowing the middle.
- 3) Closing the gap as the dribbler nears the basket.

Set-up – Split players into teams of 2 with one ball in each team. Try and ensure the teams are even in ability. The teams start on the baseline with the dribbler 5 metres in from the sideline. The outside player runs up the sideline.



Directions for players – Inside players dribble to 5 metres from both sideline and 1/2 court. Outside players run up the sideline to 1/2 court. Inside player passes to outside player, who tries to score a basket. The defender does everything possible to stop dribbler moving to the split line. The dribbler should not cross the split line (so they don't get in the way of the other team). If the dribbler makes a break, as is likely, the defender **does not reach in** but picks a point ahead where the player sprints to get in front to stop progress of the dribbler and perhaps steal the ball. The coach should yell out 'get in front' so the players get used to this phrase for game day. Emphasise it is more important to stop the dribble than to steal the ball as this teaches good defensive fundamentals. Attempting to reach in to steal the ball picks up quick fouls on game day. The players rotate.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Don't let the players reach in. Insist they get in front. Players persisting in reaching in should do push ups;

- b) Make sure the defenders continue to close the gap as the dribbler moves across the 3-point line;
- c) Make sure the defender has the dribble-side arm up as the dribbler is within 2 metres of the basket;
- d) An important teaching point – make sure the defender is defending ‘straight up’. Defending ‘straight up’ means that if a line was drawn from the defender to the dribbler, that line would be parallel to the sideline. Straight up defence is an invitation to the dribbler to move rapidly to the split line, which is totally against our defensive philosophy. Stop the drill for these two players as soon as you see straight up defence and show the defender that the only option is to go to the centre. Then show the two players proper defensive position where the defender virtually invites the dribbler down the sidelines.
- e) This drill encourages tough defence. Taking a good shot should be difficult. Don’t let players take undisciplined shots. Insist on shooting fundamentals.
- f) Make sure defenders never ever cross their legs when under pressure. Defenders are either sliding or sprinting.

Defending the fast break

The key principles are as follows:

- ✓ Get back in numbers as quickly as possible. This sounds obvious, but players must have the mental attitude to transition quickly if fast break defence is to work;
- ✓ Pressure the outlet pass. If the opposition is throwing long, accurate passes down court, there is inadequate pressure on the passer;
- ✓ Have a ‘safety’ as a standard offensive set-up. Typically, the coach wants one of the guards to stay high (refer to ‘Definitions’) at all times;
- ✓ ‘Protect the basket’ is a key fundamental that must be taught and should be a catch phrase for Cougar coaches. If a defender is faced with 2 or 3 opponents the defender must protect the basket rather than trying to steal the ball from the opposition dribbler;

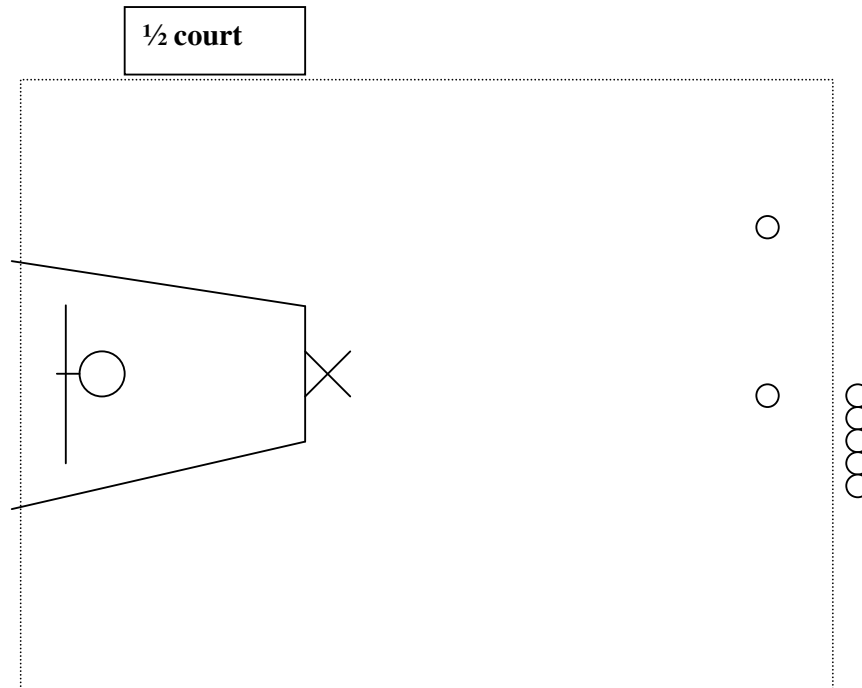
We will now look at drills for fast break defensive situations.

2-on-1 defensive drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching players protect the basket.
- 2) Teaching players to force the dribbler to pass the ball.

Set-up – One defender is at the free throw line while two offensive players are at $\frac{1}{2}$ court. The offensive players have one basketball. The rest of the team waits at $\frac{1}{2}$ court for their turn.



Directions for players – The offensive players are at game speed as if on a fast break. Their aim is to score. The defender is focused on the dribbler. The dribbler must believe the defender is intent on stopping him/her otherwise the dribbler will just go in for a lay-up. Ideally, the defender will force a long jump shot or a pass. It is a sin if the defender allows the dribbler to go all the way from $\frac{1}{2}$ court for a lay-up. As the dribbler gets closer to the defender the defender starts sliding back with defensive slides. The defender should at least once execute a fake move forward to the dribbler. This should entail a quick jab step forward as if the defender is about to begin aggressive defence. If the 2nd player moves behind the defender, the defender remains focused on the dribbler but moves back closer to the basket in preparation for a lob or bounce pass. However, remember the dribbler *must* believe the defender is intent on stopping the dribbler.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

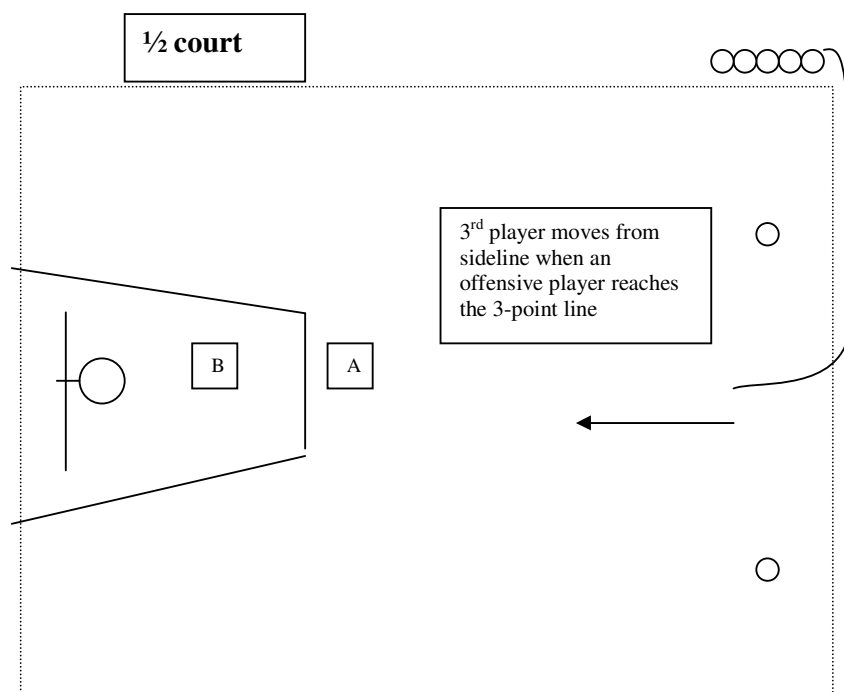
- a) The defender should move back to protect the basket;
- b) The defender should not chase the dribbler and leave the 2nd player open for an easy score;
- c) Generally, the defender should not move out of the key;
- d) Trying to lazily steal the ball off the dribbler is a huge no-no. The defender must protect the basket.

3-on-2 defensive drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Teaching players protect the basket.
- 2) Teaching players to force the dribbler to pass the ball.

Set-up – Defender A is at the free throw line while defender B is directly behind in the middle of the key. Two offensive players are at ½ court. The offensive players have one basketball. The rest of the team queue up at the sideline.



Directions for players – The offensive players are at game speed as if on a fast break. Their aim is to score. As soon as one offensive player reaches the 3-point line the first player in the sideline queue runs to the centre circle and joins the fast break.

The defenders line up one behind the other as they would in this situation in a game. Communication between A and B is paramount. Defender A is focused on the dribbler. The dribbler must believe A is intent on stopping him/her otherwise the dribbler will just go in for a lay-up. Ideally, the defenders will pressure the offensive players into bad passes or shots. It is a sin if the defenders allow the dribbler to go all the way from ½ court for a lay-up. A continues to focus on the dribbler while B focuses on the other two offensive players. B must protect the basket. Once a pass is made to the weak side then it is A's job to protect the basket. As the dribbler gets closer to the defender the defender starts sliding back with defensive slides. The defenders should execute a fake move forward to the ball handlers to force the pass or shot. This should entail a quick jab step forward as if the defender is about to begin aggressive defence.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) One defender should be protecting the basket at all times. As the passes are made the defenders may switch basket protecting roles;
- b) Unless it is a 1st division team, A should stay within the 3-point line and not chase the dribbler. First division players should defend the 3-point shot;
- c) Trying to lazily steal the ball off the dribbler is a huge no-no.

Zone defence

Zone defence should only be played in U15's and higher. *Zone* does not teach your players good fundamentals, so it should only be used sparingly. It can be used for longer periods if you're easily beating the other side, if it is a hot day, and if you only have five players on game-day.

The coach must keep the players very physical and aggressive when their team plays zone. What we see time and again is a team that transitions from Man to zone and the players lose their defensive aggressiveness. ***Tell your players you want them to attack even though they are playing zone defence.***

- a) If an opposition player moves through the key, make sure your players give the opponent a hard bump with the hip and/or shoulder. Tell your players it must be uncomfortable for an opponent to come into the key;
- b) If an opponent attempts to set up in the key, insist that your players ***immediately*** push them out of the key with their hip and body. Pushing off with the arms is likely to incur the wrath of the refs;
- c) *Never zone* when defending an inbounds pass under you're the basket you're defending;
- d) *Never zone* when you are down by a few points and there's less than three minutes in the game unless you're getting a great run out of the zone;
- e) *Never allow a dribbler through the center of the zone.* The front 2 (in a standard 2-3) must communicate so they know who is taking on the aggressive dribbler. It helps to yell out 'No one goes down the middle';
- f) *The back 3 must communicate*, letting each other know if there are cutters or someone lingering from behind.

Pivoting

Basketball Victoria is encouraging players to pivot with the most favoured foot. Coaches are somewhat split between having players pivot with the inside, outside or favoured foot. Pivoting with the 'inside' foot means pivoting with the foot closest to the split line. The foot closest to the foul line becomes the anchor. Naturally, the 'outside' foot is the reverse. The 'favoured' foot means that the player always moves their strongest leg and the weakest leg becomes the anchor.

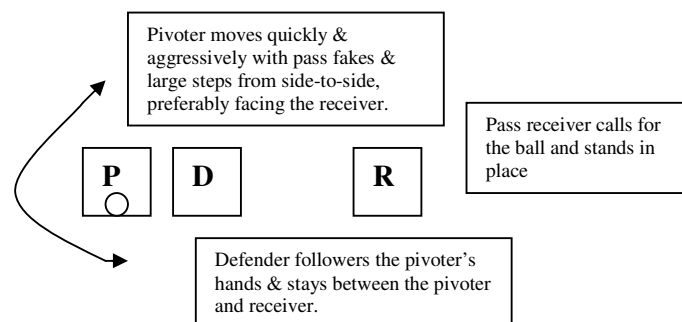
Consequently, Cougar coaches are encouraged to teach the 'favoured foot' pivot.

Two excellent drills are the "*three man*" and the *passing game*.

Three man pivot drill

In *three-man* split you players into teams of three – the pivoter, defender and pass receiver. The pivoter can only pivot and pass. The defender plays tough Man defence with his/her hands following the ball. The pass receiver cannot move, otherwise it is too easy to get the pass away. Ensure:

- ✓ The pivoter is facing the pass receiver. Less confident players will want to turn their back on the defender. Don't let this happen!
- ✓ The pivoter protects the ball at all times;
- ✓ The pivoter, when bringing the ball past the defender, twists the arms so that the pivoter's arm faces the defender and not the ball;
- ✓ The pivoter makes good use of the step;
- ✓ The defender follows the ball with his/her hands.



The passing game

It is important coaches view this as an outstanding training drill rather than a game. This drill is outstanding for teaching players the following:

- ✓ Spread the court – stop the game whenever the players are jammed within 20% of the playing area and show them how silly they look. Yell out 'spacing, spacing' so the players know what you mean on game day;
- ✓ Non-ball handlers move continuously – Players should only be calling for the ball when moving. Consider push-ups if a players receives a pass while just standing and calling for the ball;

- ✓ Pivoting – this is an outstanding drill for teaching players game-situation pivoting. Players must turn and face their players so they know where to pass the ball. Clamp down hard on players who continually turn their back because of defensive pressure.
- ✓ Stepping into the pass – ensure players use passing fundamentals in a game type situation. There has been many a coach who has stopped this game to provide the players with refresher passing fundamentals.
- ✓ Tough defence – man up and play denial;
- ✓ Screens and cuts – to get themselves or team mates open.

Players normally really enjoy the *passing game* as there is action, it is a game and a great drill at the same time! In the *passing game*, split your players evenly. Set a defined area on the court, usually a ¼ court area is fine (using the netball lines that tend to grace our courts). The objective is to get as many consecutive passes as possible. Initially, plays will have trouble getting to 4 consecutive passes. When they can get to 10 you will see vast improvement on game day.

In the *passing game*, the person with the ball can only pivot and pass but cannot pass to the player that passed to them (unless you only have players for three players on each team. No dribbling! The ball is turned over when an offensive player steps out of bounds or the other team steals the ball. As coach you can make the drill tougher by making it a turnover whenever the defence deflects the ball or a pass receiver catches the ball while standing still (you much prefer the pass receiver to be on the move). Stop the drill whenever a pivoter turns his/her back on the defender or when the offensive team is bunching like bees around honey. Ensure:

- ✓ The pivoter does not turn his/her back on the defender but has a clear view of team mates;
- ✓ Good pivoting fundamentals are being used;
- ✓ The offensive players don't bunch around the ball;
- ✓ Pass receivers are calling for the ball while on the move;
- ✓ Pass receivers are using V-cuts to get open.

Jump ball fundamentals

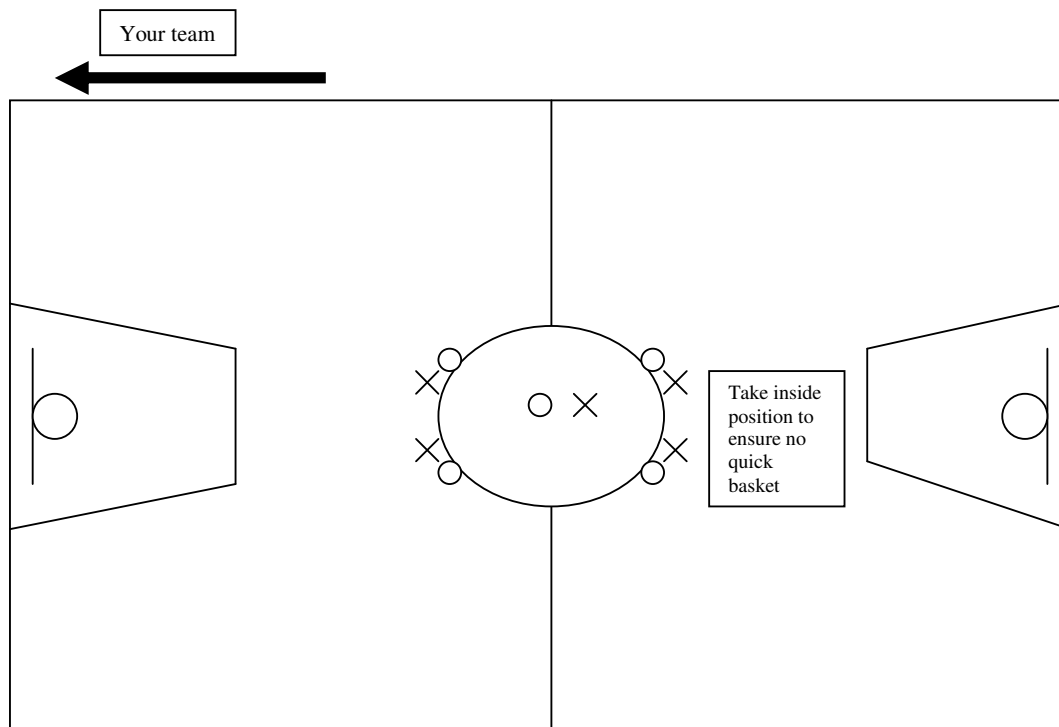
Get defence right first

When the opposition scores a quick basket to start play it is frustrating and demoralising to the opposition. So ensure this does not happen.

Fundamentally, your team must have the inside position on the jump ball. This stops the inside, shortest distance to the hoop and forces the offence to the outside.

Your defenders should have a body on the opposition with their hands up ready to catch the ball.

If the opposition have a jump ball player who is likely to win the jump comfortably, you should move one of your defenders back to the top of the 3-point line to ensure there is no run away lay-up.



If the opposition jumper is much taller

If the opposition jumper is much taller, train your jumper to smack the arm of the opponent on the way up. In this way the ball will dribble down for anyone's possession rather than a clean hit to the opposition's advantage.

Jump ball offence

Again, try and gain inside position so your team has the possibility of a quick score.

If you have a much taller jump player consider running a 'Cathy Freeman' where one of your offensive players brings their defensive opponent to ½ court. As the ball is being tapped your ½ court player sprints towards the basket where the jump ball player will hit the ball.

What to do when you are winning easily

Champion teams play at their best no matter how good or bad the opponent is. Reducing intensity when a team is winning easily: (a) forms bad habits and (b) does not get a team mentally ready for the next game. If your team does drop intensity when winning easily it is a real danger sign for the finals. Really get stuck into your players if the intensity drops and demand they play at their best. Having said that, there are tactics for ensuring your opposition has a chance to score and play offence.

Look Mum, no hands!

On defence, have your players move back to ½ court or the 3-point line. Players, while maintaining Man defence, must hold onto their shorts or grasp their hands behind their back. The only time they can use their hands is to take a rebound. No shot rejections or blocks are permitted. Do not let players head the ball as this can cause an injury. You will usually need to threaten players that are they use their hands they will sit on the bench.

“No hands” has a really positive benefit. It ensures your players are using correct defensive footwork. In this way it is like a very good defensive drill on game day.

Make sure everyone scores

Check to see who has not scored. In a time out tell the players no one is allowed to score until the designated players score. Anyone who scores before these designated players can enjoy the game on the bench. This will let you know if you have good team players. Selfish players will try to score even though you have provided different instructions to the players.

Dribble with “wrong” hand, shoot with “wrong” hand

On offence, tell the players they can only shoot and dribble with the wrong hand. Again, this is excellent experience for the players.

Have forwards and centres play the guard positions

Forwards and centres can often be clumsy dribblers. Having them dribble up court would be a good challenge and good experience.

What to do when getting beaten badly

Speak to refs

As the referee is passing you, ask him/her if the other team could back off full court defence. The referees will usually oblige and speak to the opposing coach. It may help to call a time out soon afterwards to enable the ref to speak with the opposing coach and for the opposing coach to speak with the players.

Change your players' mindsets

It is often necessary to change the players' mindsets that got them to the losing position. Losing teams often feel they are getting beaten up. So it is necessary to have the players thinking positively before they go back out on court.

With boys you can say 'I need you to be much more physical and give it right back to these guys. I want you to think it's footy. You're not going to be scared by contact. You will drive in hard on offence like you are barrelling into a ruck of footy players. On defence we must be really aggressive – attack the ball and attack them.'

For girls you can say 'I need you to be much more physical and give it right back to these guys. Stop playing like girls and get really aggressive out there. You're not going to be scared by contact. You will drive in hard on offence and you won't care that you've barrellled them with your shoulder. On defence we must be really aggressive – attack the ball and attack them.'

Or 'hands up who thinks we can still win this game because their the only people I want on this court'.

Set a goal

If you are down 15 points at ½ time, consider saying to the players, 'let's just set short term goals. Let's really bear down and focus on being down by 10 with 10 minutes to go. We will do it by playing much tougher defence, really attack the ball and driving into the basket on offence.....'

One of our coaches had a team that lost their first game 42 – 0. It happens. Before the next game this coach said to the players 'Let's aim to lose by only 35 points today.' They lost that game 24 – 0 and the players were excited and very happy they beat the goal.

Time outs

Remember, the hand signal for a time out is to form a 'T' with one hand, fingers out stretched with the palm facing the ground. *One finger* of the opposite hand is placed in the middle of the palm, perpendicular to the palm. Many coaches form a 'T' with the fingers of both hands fully extended - This is the signal for a technical foul.

When can you take them?

1. When there is a stoppage in play for a foul or out-of-bounds play or held ball;
2. In general play, when the opposing team scores a basket, as long as T/O is called *before* the ball leaves the opponent's hands. Not a lot of coaches in the HBA know this option.
3. You can call the T/O while the ref has the ball. The moment the ball is handed to a player, a T/O cannot be called. For free throws situations, the T/O can only be called before the first shot.

What instructions?

- ✓ The players feed off your demeanour – how confident you are. If you are over-confident you can bet the opposition will make a run when play resumes. If the players pick up you are nervous then they are likely to tighten up and miss shots they would normally hit.
- ✓ A critical role of the coach on game day is to *read your team*. If your players are intense and the scores are very close with time almost out, try and start the time out with a light hearted comment. If you can get a smile on the players' faces then they will relax and hear what you are saying. Starting the time out with something simple like 'Don't you just love these close games!' with a smile on your face can do the trick. If your team is pumped up and excited coming into the T/O, make sure they stay focused and that they retain their intensity.
- ✓ Provide no more than **two** instructions. If you provide more than two instructions the players will be confused and different players will remember different things.
- ✓ Summarise the 1 or 2 points before the players go back on the court.
- ✓ Try and keep one T/O for the last minute of the game. Then you can provide instructions such as 'absolutely no fouls' or 'foul them the very second they get the ball so we can stop the clock and get the ball back on the inbounds play' or 'I want no long shots. Drive in hard to the basket and get the foul, short jump shot or lay-up'.

Practise a close game with time running out

Players always tend to rush their offence in the last minute of the game. They need to realise 15 seconds is an awfully long time to get a good shot off. A really good drill is as follows:

Last seconds drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Helping players understand they must not rush the offence in the last minute of a game but be patient and wait for the best shot.
- 2) Ensuring players focus on team work at the end of the game.

Set-up – Split the players into two even teams. Have an offensive player stand at half court, near the sideline, facing the backcourt. This player's feet are just touching the $\frac{1}{2}$ way line. A defensive person is right on their back. All other players are behind the top of the key extended.

Directions for players – The offensive team has 15 seconds to score. The coach will count down from 15 to 0 (you will find it easier to count the seconds by moving one hand up and down like the refs do on Saturday). As soon as the coach begins the count, the player with the ball pivots to face their defender and all other players can move around to replicate a game situation. As the offence has already moved over $\frac{1}{2}$ court, no offensive player can go into the backcourt. Let each offensive player have a turn at $\frac{1}{2}$ court, then the teams switch.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) *Players must know their roles in this crucial game situation.* Have the players acknowledge who are the best dribblers and shooters on each team. Those who are *not* the best dribblers or shooters must set screens to get the game winners open. Remember, screens can be set on the ball or away from the ball.
- b) Ensure each player starting the drill turns to face their opponent. Strong pivoting is key. It is just too hard to get a pass off without turning and facing;
- c) Ensure the player with the ball does not incur an “over and back” violation. That is, puts either foot in the backcourt;
- d) There *must* be strong team play. Really get annoyed at the players if they are panicking or taking poor shots.
- e) Good offensive movement is critical. Make sure no one is just standing still calling for the ball unless they are wide open.
- f) The best offensive rebounder should try and stay low. If they are the player starting with the ball at $\frac{1}{2}$ court, they should go straight to the basket after they pass.
- g) Make sure the defence plays with intensity and keeps dribblers towards the sideline.

Finals coaching

Too many number 1 teams lose in the finals!!!!

Time and time again we see the really disheartening result of a #1 team lose in the finals. It is stunning how often it happens to an undefeated team or a team that has lost one or two games.

Absorb what is said below and this will not happen to you.

In the finals, the team that wants it the most will win.

Burn that into your memory banks, write it out 100 times, never forget it.

Who wants the rebounds the most? Who's diving after the ball on the ground like their life depends on it? Who's playing the best defence of their life? Who's converting lay-ups?

This is the message you must get through to your team.

For #1 teams it is crucial that both the coach and the team leaders are desperate to win. The coach may be intense and ready, but if your team leader(s) are cocky then the rest of the team will feed off their cockiness. So in the training session before the finals speak openly in front of the team. Tell the team leaders that they have to be desperate to win.

What is the first and best sign of your team's readiness? The first instance when the ball is on the floor for someone to win, which team desperately dives on the floor to win it? If your team is not scratching and clawing on the floor, yell out for your whole team to hear, 'Sarah you've got to be more desperate. I want you on the floor FIRST ripping that ball for your team!'.
it?

Attitude of the coach

The players will pick up on the attitude of the coach before and during the game. So even though you may be really nervous on the inside, make sure you're outside appearance is relaxed and confident.

If your team starts out slowly

It happens. Don't sweat it. Stay confident and make sure your players see that you are still confident. If the opposition gets a quick lead, call a time out. Typically, in this situation telling the team to bear down hard on defence will stop the opposition scoring and get your team more confident on the scoring end. The opposition may have a player who is hot – it sometimes happens at the start of a final. Have your best defensive player take that player out of the game by playing "tough denial defence" – that is, deny the pass into that player, deny the dribble drive, deny rebounding, deny, deny, deny....

I once had a grand final team that was down 6-0 after about 1-½ minutes. I called a time out smiling at my girls and confidently asking if they were having fun. In the time out I told the girls to really focus on defence – the best they’ve played all season. There was one opposition player scoring the points. I put our best defensive person on her – denial defence. After the time out both teams settled down to a typical, tough grand final game. We won by two points. One Cougar official left after 5 minutes thinking we would get done. He was shocked when he found out the next day we had won – never, ever, ever give up.

Before the game

Players can be very nervous, especially before playing the grand final or the #1 team. The best way to settle nerves is to speak to each player individually about what they need to do to help the team. So you will need to be prepared with notes on each player before the game. Make sure you have specific players focused on rebounding. Who is expected to bring the ball up? Who do you expect to take on the tough defensive tasks? Do you need to set shot limits on some of the players? I have taken certain players before a final and said ‘within this range (I identify on the floor) and you’re open take a shot, but do not take a shot outside that range’. With some players you need to be that blunt – but we’re also being positive by stating where they can take shots.

Never have your team watching another grand final before the game. They must be focusing on their own game.

Reminder for Basketball rules for the finals!

During the finals, only the timing rules have changes. The timing rules below only apply for the Preliminary and Grand Finals. If uncertain in using a time out, use it because the clock stops anyway so you are not wasting time, just make sure you always have a spare time out for the last 5 minutes of each half.

- 2 time outs per half, 3 for the game.
- Clock stops during time outs
- Clock stops on every whistle for the last three minutes of the second half

If in desperate need for more time, when the clock stops in the last three minutes of the second half, remember that the clock starts again only when the ball has been touched by a player inside the court. For example, your player Mary is on the baseline passing the ball into Julie, the clock only starts when Julie touches the ball.

For semi finals, there are no changes of timing rules!

Remember that your coaching got your team this far! Be strong, be smart and have fun!

Game warm up drills

Cincinnati – a perennial favourite

Excellent for:

- 1) Having players perform different passes, lay-ups, rebounds and dribbling

Set-up – Players split into two teams. One team, the lay-up team, is lined up one behind the other near the side line, facing the basket. The other team, the passing team, is at centre court facing the basket with each player having a ball except the first person in line (the drill can be done with only 2 balls). The first person on the passing team runs to the top of the key and faces their team mates at centre court.

Directions for players – Simultaneously (i) the first player on the passing team does a chest pass to the player at the top of the key; and (ii) the first player on the lay-up team moves towards the basket. When the first pass is caught the player moving along the sideline calls for the ball. The player at the top of the key does a bounce pass to the player in motion who drives in hard for the lay-up. The player at the top of the key goes in for the rebound. Whichever player rebounds the ball does a baseball pass to a player in the passing team. Both players then move to the rear of the opposing team. The person at the front of the passing team moves to the top of the key and the drill continues. The coach should get the lay-up team to change sides of the court after a couple of run throughs. The coach can also change the types of passes at each stage of the drill.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure players are going at game speed and are executing with excellence. You must have perfect practise before a game.
- b) Ensure passes are crisp and that the lay-up player does not need to stop momentum to the basket – the passer must pass ahead of the player.

Pass & lay-up drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Less experienced players;
- 2) Having players pass and catch the ball effectively;
- 3) Having players lay-up and rebound effectively.

Set-up – Players split into two teams. One team, the lay-up team, is lined up one behind the other near the right side line at ½ court, facing the basket, with each player having a ball (the drill can be done with only 2 balls). The other team, the passing team, is on the other side of the court facing the basket, also at ½ court.

Directions for players – The first player on the lay-up team dribbles twice towards the basket and then passes to the first player on the passing team who is moving slowly towards the basket. While still moving forward and without dribbling, the ball is passed back to the lay-up player. The lay-up is executed and the passer comes in for the rebound. Both players then move to their opposing teams and the drill continues. The coach should change lay-ups to the left side after a couple of run throughs.

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Ensure players are going at game speed and are executing with excellence. You must have perfect practise before a game.

- b) Ensure passes are passed ahead of the intended receiver so the receiver does not have to stop and wait for the pass.

Basketball curls

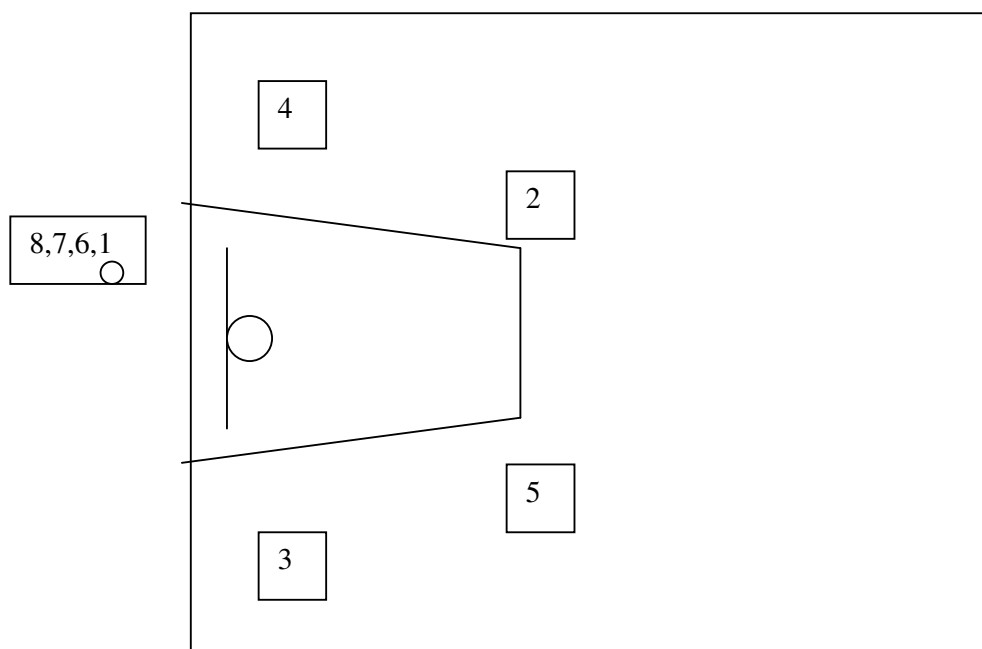
Refer to description of Basketball Curls under “Shooting drills”.

Star drill

Excellent for:

- 1) Warm up before a game.
- 2) Having players think, pass, run, dribble and lay-up.

Set-up the players as shown below:



Directions for players – Passes are made in the order indicated above. As the pass is made the passer runs to the spot to which they passed. So 1 runs to 2’s spot, 2 runs to 3’s spot....When 5 gets the ball the player dribbles in for a lay-up, rebounds and passes the ball to 6 and the drill continues. After a two rotations, consider changing the first pass to 5 to 4 to 3 to 2 who lays up...

Elements to watch for are as follows:

- a) Passes are snappy with fundamental execution;
- b) All execution is at game speed.

Definitions

Anchor foot – The foot that is in contact with the court when the pass is caught, the dribble is stopped or upon landing from a rebound.

Back court – The defensive end of the court, from the ½ way line to the basket your opposition shoots at.

Ball line – An imaginary line drawn through the ball, going sideline to sideline, parallel to the baseline.

Ball side – Same as “Strong side”. The side of the court the ball is on incorporating the area from the split line to the sideline.

Banana – Dribblers who do not go in a straight line to the basket but take a curved “banana” direction, thereby giving defenders a chance to catch them.

Baseline – The out-of-bounds behind the backboard and between the two sidelines.

Block – The area where the players stand on the side of the key when a foul shot is taken.

Centre – Also called Number 5. Usually the tallest player on the team. A strong rebounder and shot rejector. Can be the intimidator on the defensive end. Scores off low post moves and rebounds.

Closed passing lane – One or more defenders are in the passing lane.

Cut – A very quick offensive player’s move, in a short burst, in a direction not expected by the opposition.

Drop step - While in defensive stance, taking a small step to a defender in order to close out.

Elbows – The corner of the foul line where the foul line meets the block line.

Front court – Your attacking end of the court from the baseline behind the basket your team shoots at to ½ way.

Help side - The opposite side of the split line from where the ball is in play. That is, the side of the court where the ball isn’t. Same as *weak side*.

High – As in “go high”. See “High post”

High post – The area towards the foul line extended to the sidelines.

Key – The area between the baseline and the foul line and between the two lines diagonally extending from the foul line jump circle to the baseline. It is in this area that offensive players in U14’s and younger can incur a 5 second violation and U15’s and older can incur a 3 second violation.

Low – As in “go low”. See “Low post”.

Low post – The area near the basket from about ½ way down the key to the backboard.

Open passing lane – There are no defenders between the ball handler and the pass receiver.

Over and back – The Offence cannot move into the back court once it crosses the ½ way line into the front court. It is a violation and the opposition gets the ball out-of-bounds.

Passing lane – A direct line from the ball handler to the pass receiver. See also ‘closed passing lane’ and ‘open passing lane’.

Pivot – Keeping the anchor foot anchored, moving the other foot from side to side to keep the ball away from a defender.

Point guard – Also called Number 1. Usually the team's best dribbler. Primarily responsible for bringing the ball up court and, in professional teams, directing the offence.

Posting up – A player in the key with a very strong stance, leaning into the defensive player in a way that takes the defender out-of-play. The posting up player has enough control to accept a pass.

Power forward – Also called Number 4. A very strong rebounder and aggressive under the basket at both ends of the court. Scores most points around the basket.

Press offence – Offence against a press defence.

Shooting guard – Also called Number 2. A very good outside shooter with good dribbling skills.

Split line – An imaginary line drawn from basket to basket, splitting the court in two.

Small forward – Also called Number 3. Known for strong drives to the basket, especially along the baseline. A good rebounder with a descent shooting range.

Strong side – The side of the court the ball is on incorporating the area from the split line to the sideline.

Swing step - While in defensive stance, taking a small step to a defender in order to close out.

Weak side – The opposite side of the split line from where the ball is in play. That is, the side of the court where the ball isn't. Same as *help side*.

Zone Offence – Offence against a zone defence.

Use one or two words for game-day coaching

You don't have time in a game to say much while the game is in action. So develop one or two words that get a skill across. These words should be used frequently in training so on game day the players know what you want from them. Some examples are:

✓ Spread out	For inbounds offence or offence under the basket for younger players
✓ V-cut	For offensive players to get open
✓ Focus	For lay-ups as players are often too worried about the defender behind them. "Focus" can at the same time convey "high and soft".
✓ High and soft	Most Cougar lay-ups are missed because the ball bounces too hard off the backboard.
✓ Break	Offence sprints down court for fast break. Called the split second you have a defensive rebound or steal.
✓ Post-up	Centre or power forward, gets a defender on his/her back in the key with arm out ready to receive the pass.
✓ Drive and pass	When playing against a zone, drive into the gaps and, when a defender is drawn, pass to the open player.
✓ Box out	Rebounding. Focus on your opponent, put a hard body on your opponent, then focus on the ball.
✓ Elbow to eyebrow	Shooting action. It's a shot not a throw.
✓ Square up	Only take a jump shot square-up to the basket
✓ Goose neck	A common reason for a shot falling short is the bad habit of not "goose necking" (at end of shot, arm straight and hand at 90°) but quickly pulling the arm back as if on a spring coil.
✓ Press	Defence after made, offensive goal or with opponent's inbounds play. Called while the ball is still falling through the basket.
✓ Denial	In Man defence, defenders who are one pass from the ball handler have their arm in the passing lane to deny the pass.
✓ Drop step	While in defensive stance and staying in defensive stance, take a large step at a 45° angle to cut off dribbler
✓ Swing step	While in defensive stance, taking a small step to a defender in order to close out.
✓ Close out	Where a defender closes the gap with an opponent to stop a shot, drive or pass reception.
✓ Stay low	In Man defence, defender stays low and aggressive.
✓ Attack the ball	Defenders, Man or zone, keep constant pressure on ball.
✓ Man-u-basket	Defender must stay between their opponent and the basket.
✓ Wings forward	In Press, Wings must be on their toes, moving forward very aggressively.
✓ Sideline	In defending the open court dribbler, push the dribbler to the sidelines to force the dribbler to pick up the dribble.
✓ Get in front	Get in front of the open court dribbler to stop lay-up.
✓ Full court	Play full court Man defence.
✓ ½ court	Play Man defence from ½ court
✓ Stay low	Tall player stays near the basket for rebounds, rejections and offensive opportunities.
✓ No one in the key	Under defensive basket, defenders have their forearms up and in front of their chest, keeping/pushing offensive players out of the key.