

CMBA Coach Education & Development

Workbook and Reference Material

ADVANCED



Instructor / Facilitator: **Mark Hogan**, ChPC



Dear Coaches:

Thank you for taking time to volunteer as a coach with the CMBA.

These materials have been prepared as a guide to help our coaches develop an organized and consistent method to teaching the game of basketball to our players at all levels. Our intent is to create a unified coaching system that will emphasize Canada Basketball's "Canadian Style of Play" to develop players that are fundamentally sound, highly skilled and highly intelligent.

We invite coaches at all levels to review and apply these principles to the greatest extent possible. Our expectation is that as coaches and players implement these principles, the quality of basketball and our players' love of the game will increase.

And as always, remember to work hard, have fun and do your best.

Sincerely,



Clark Schow

VP Coaching and Player Development

Hello Coach,

The CMBA Coach Education & Development program is designed to provide you, the coach, with the tools required to better teach the game of basketball as well as observe and correct player performance in a systematic and effective manner.

The emphasis is on implementing **Actions** or a **Style of Play**. As important as individual skill development is, developing a **Style of Play** by implementing **Actions** is now at the forefront of player development.

Understanding the concepts of **Explode, Explore, Execute** will contribute significantly to player development. The CMBA Coach Education & Development program addresses these components, concepts and more.

Enjoy!



Mark Hogan, ChPC

Chartered Professional Coach



Welcome to CMBA Coach Education & Development



The CMBA Coach Development program is designed to:

Promote a ***Decision-Making Model*** (players)

Reference CMBA Website & Coach Requirements

Promote ***Best Practices*** & Effective ***Coaching Methods***

Promote ***Style of Play*** with an emphasis on ***Actions & Concepts***



CMBA Coach Education & Development

How Successful was your **Style of Play** last season?

1.

2.

3.

Share your **Style of Play** with another coach.

1.

2.

3.

What would you do differently this coming season?

1.

2.

3.



CMBA Coach Education & Development

CMBA Requirements

1. Coaches must know and follow the CMBA **Participation Agreement**.
2. Coaches are to let players and parents know about the CMBA **Participation Agreement**.
3. Coaches are to complete the online portion of the CMBA Coaching clinic / on the **CMBA website**.

EXPECTATIONS

1. What are **your expectations** of the CMBA Coach Education & Development program?
2. Are you familiar with the concepts of **Explode-Explore-Execute** (E3)?

CMBA Administration

1. Complete the online course to familiarize yourself with CMBA requirements and administrative responsibilities.
2. Score Reporting; Game Report; White Whistle Program; Seeding Round Rules; Discipline & Suspensions; Score Sheets; Pre-Game Meeting; Court Monitor; Parent Meeting; Modifications; Rules; and more...

Parent Meeting

1. Recommended or Requirement?
2. Suggestions to dealing with challenging adults/parents.





Fall 2023 / Winter 2024 League

On-line Orientation for Coaches & Team Managers

1. Where to find your team's schedule.
2. How to report a score. (*Important to click: "Game is Finished"*)
3. Where do I fill out score sheets and print them off? There two different kinds of scoresheets:
 - a. U11 score sheet with substitution chart
 - b. U13/U15/U18 score sheets
4. Where to find youth basketball "Rule" modifications for your age group.
 - a. Explanation the CMBA League follows Canada Basketball's Athlete Development Model
http://cloud.rampinteractive.com/calgaryminorbasketball/files/Canada_Basketball_LTAD_Model.pdf
 - b. Section 7 Youth Modifications
 - c. New! U11 Rules of Play
 - d. Seeding Round Rules
5. Coaches Corner – Resources for practice planning and drill options
<https://sites.google.com/cmba.ab.ca/cmbacsp/home?pli=1>
6. 40 Point Mercy Rule - Strategies to help Coaches in lopsided games.
7. League Participation Agreement
 - a. "Respectful behavior is required before, during, and after the game."
 - b. "All persons connected with basketball are entitled to equal treatment and respect."
8. What is a "Game Report"?
9. How & Where to file a "Game Report".
10. What happens when someone is ejected from the gymnasium for unsportsmanlike behavior?
11. Section 8: Rules of Discipline
12. Jewellery Rule
13. Concussion Policy
14. Rule of Two
15. Social Media Postings are always to be positive in nature.
 - a. All who participate in online interactions are subject to the same behavior standards as listed in the Participation Agreement

CMBA Coach Education & Development

The following
are important concepts to establish an effective

Style of Play

These concepts are a review from
ESSENTIALS & INTERMEDIATE



CMBA Coach Education & Development

Effective Teaching Technique

A-B-C-D Teaching Progressions (NCCP & Canada Basketball endorsed)

- A** No Defense (Air)
- B** Guided Defense (Coach)
- C** Live Drills (1v1 / 2v2 / 3v3)
- D** Live 5v5 (1/2 – Full – Full / 1/2 – Full – Full x 2 / Games to 3-5-7)

Progression Technique | Loading a Drill & Unloading a Drill

- Individual / Partner / Small Group / Team
- Drills often are introduced in A Phase – get to B Phase & C Phase quickly
- Unload back to C-B-A Phase if necessary
- Player understanding/success is required before entering C Phase
- **Training Ugly** is a new coaching approach to skill development | Accept it! | Manage it!
- D Phase is encouraged even if it is **Ugly** to start!
- It is not necessary to run drills sequentially from A to B to C to D / sometimes start with C (compete)
- Sometimes you can demonstrate a **Concept** or **Action** in A Phase and then go directly to D Phase
- Mix it up—utilize a variety of ABCD Phases throughout practice or from one practice to another
- If a drill appears too simple, **load** it (make it more difficult) / If a drill is too difficult, **unload** it (simplify it)
- Engage players in D Phase a few times throughout practice—do not wait to scrimmage at the end of practice



CMBA Coach Education & Development

ABCD Debrief—Coaching Decision-making & Increasing Basketball IQ

What is the ABCD Debrief Technique?

- A** – Agree (What went well? Something positive...)
- B** – Build (Why did it go well?)
- C** – Challenge (What went wrong? How do we fix/correct/change the problem?)
- D** – Deeper (Usually reserved for the coach—coach's input is D)

How to implement the ABCD Debrief into Practice

1. Players must be taught what ABCD refers to (see above).
2. Coach can lead the initial debrief to ensure players begin with A, transition to B, then players can discuss what went wrong or what needs to be fixed. Far too often players & coaches begin with C and positive results do not get discussed often enough.
3. After the first 1-2-3 debriefs where the coach oversees the discussion (and hopefully directs the discussion as opposed to leading the discussion), the coach then steps aside and lets the players run the debrief themselves.
4. The debrief is to only last for 45 seconds—this short length of time mirrors the length of a time-out in a game, therefore, players have the same amount of time in practice.
5. If the coach has something brief to add (D) after the players go through their debrief, then do so ever-so-brief—the approach of **Less is More** goes a long way here.
6. When observing the debrief from a distance, pay attention as to whether or not all players get a chance to speak—the debrief is for everyone, not just the talkers.
7. Have confidence in your players—you will be surprised at how their game improves simply because they have the opportunity to share, problem-solve & think critically.



Every Practice Needs a Little TLC

In order for a coaching staff to run effective practices, coaches need to apply a little TLC.

T- Teaching – When teaching in A Phase, the intensity will be low and the concentration will be high. **Key Performance Factors** (KPF's) are to be identified and agreed upon by the coaching staff. There needs to be an agreement among the coaches as to **what** the KPF will be, **how** they will be taught and **how** they will be emphasized.

One problem that occurs during the teaching phase is that different coaches may load the athlete differently and/or may stress differing KPF's – this may cause confusion or frustration for the athlete. Discussions need to be held prior to training as to how the **“loading”** of the drill will occur. Will the load be physical, mental, emotional or a combination of the three?

Coaches are to utilize the 5 Stage Teaching Method to enhance learning effectiveness.
Explanation * Demonstration * Application * Correction * Repetition

KPF Example: The following may be identified as required KPF's for the jump shot off the dribble:

- Proper grip; High release point; Eyes on target; Freeze the follow through; Load the legs; Quick feet (1-2); Diagonal lifting of the ball; Jump (pop the hips); Hard last dribble; One-piece motion; Get under the ball, don't reach; Turn, Dip & Sway

When players are being introduced to the jump shot for the first time, coaches are to choose only a couple of KPF's at a time and load from there:

- Example: High release point; Load the legs; Jump (pop the hips)

Coaches are to then focus on and emphasize the KPF being introduced or taught. If coaches decide to emphasize a KPF that has not yet been taught, players may become confused and/or overwhelmed. Keep it Simple & Less is More...

L- Learning – In a learning activity the intensity is approaching game like – B Phase or C Phase is highly recommended. The concentration is on the application of the skill whereby players can experience success. **When** to use this skill now enters the activity – Decision Making Model.

Guided defence/offence may be involved which forces athletes to make a decision (B Phase). Feedback is given on the fly – keep the players active during feedback to ensure that athletes get multiple reps.

Each coach should know what he/she is watching for (the KPF or the Decision). One problem that occurs is that coaches will be coaching little details pertaining to KPF when in fact the focus was to be on Decision Making.

For example: if we are working on the decision to drive right or left based on the position of the defence it is the decision that we should be focusing on not the footwork. The only time the drill should be stopped is when the majority of the athletes are struggling with a concept. If an individual is having problems, pull him/or her to the side to correct. Keep the activity flowing.

C – Competition – In a competition activity the intensity and concentration are game like – D Phase is highly recommended. Some competitions may be shooting drills, therefore, D Phase is not required. The players need to treat the activity like the game. Coaches should not stop the activity except at the designated time. For example: start at one basket and play out two transitions (1/2, Full, Full). Feedback would be similar to the type given in the game. It is very important to debrief the activity to draw from the athlete's key learnings (ABCD Debrief).

Coaches may or may not act as officials during D Phase – this is to simulate the game.



Creation of a Style of Play



General Summary

2012 – London Olympics Observations

What were the best teams in the world doing that Canada was not doing?

1. The best teams shot the ball approximately 100 times per game.
Canada shot the ball approximately 80 times per game.
2. The best teams took more early shots in the shot clock than the lower seeded teams.
3. Late shot clock is considered shooting in the “Danger Zone” – last 6-8 seconds.
Canada took more shots in the danger zone than most other teams.
4. The best teams rebounded the ball very well – Canada was one of the weaker rebounding teams.
5. All of the best teams shot more free throws than the lower seeded teams.
6. The best teams took care of the ball. Canada had too many turnovers.

Canada then began to develop their unique *Style of Play*

Canada’s success since 2012 has not been an accident!

Style of Play (SOP) Concepts:

1. Increased **Pace & Flow** | initially moved 6 shots from the Danger Zone to the Early Shot Clock (Pace)
2. **Rebound & Go** to initiate Pace (defensive rebounding) | Hot Spot Rebounding (offensive rebounding)
3. **Double Gaps** were introduced | Attack Double Gaps & Pass in Single Gaps
4. **Dynamic 1on1** introduced
5. More **Picks & Screens** were incorporated into the offense
6. Attacking the Basket became a Number One Priority! (**Attack the Rim & Attack the Paint**)
7. **Read & React** Concepts | Passing (4)— Dribble-at (4)—more Ball Screens (Picks) | **B1-E2-C4** (PGC)
8. KPI’s – **Key Performance Indicators** | starts with a hunch, then a performance factor is measured, then it is implemented if the measurement proves to be significant (analytics)
9. Create Advantages with **Actions** | Small Advantage – Big Advantage – Neutral – Disadvantage
10. **Gold Medal Profile** Established | 4 Pillars of Athlete Development
11. Established 4-6 **Shot Priorities**
 1. Attack the Rim & Paint, 2. Corner 3 Point Shots & Top 3’s, 3. Free Throws, 4. Mid-range Shot
12. Actions Create Efficiencies & Actions Create Disruptors | has since evolved into **Actions & Dominoes**
13. Understanding the **Sequencing of Athletic Development** | Windows & Daily Training Environment
14. **Defensive Priorities**: a) Protect the Basket, b) Pressure the Ball (D21 & D9), c) Guard 1.5
15. Building Team Culture | **REP’ing** – Reminders, Encouragement, Praise
16. More **Random Decision-making** activities vs. the traditional **Block Decision-making** method
17. **ABCD Teaching** Phases (new coaching methodology): A = no D, B = guided D, C = Live drills, D = 5v5 Live
18. **ABCD Debrief & Pre-brief** (new Technique): A = Agree, B = Build, C = Challenge/Correct, D = Deeper (for coach)
19. **PVAD**—Positioning, Vision, Anticipation, Decision-making
20. **Explode—Explore—Execute** (the foundation of **Style of Play**)



Coaching Style of Play Outline

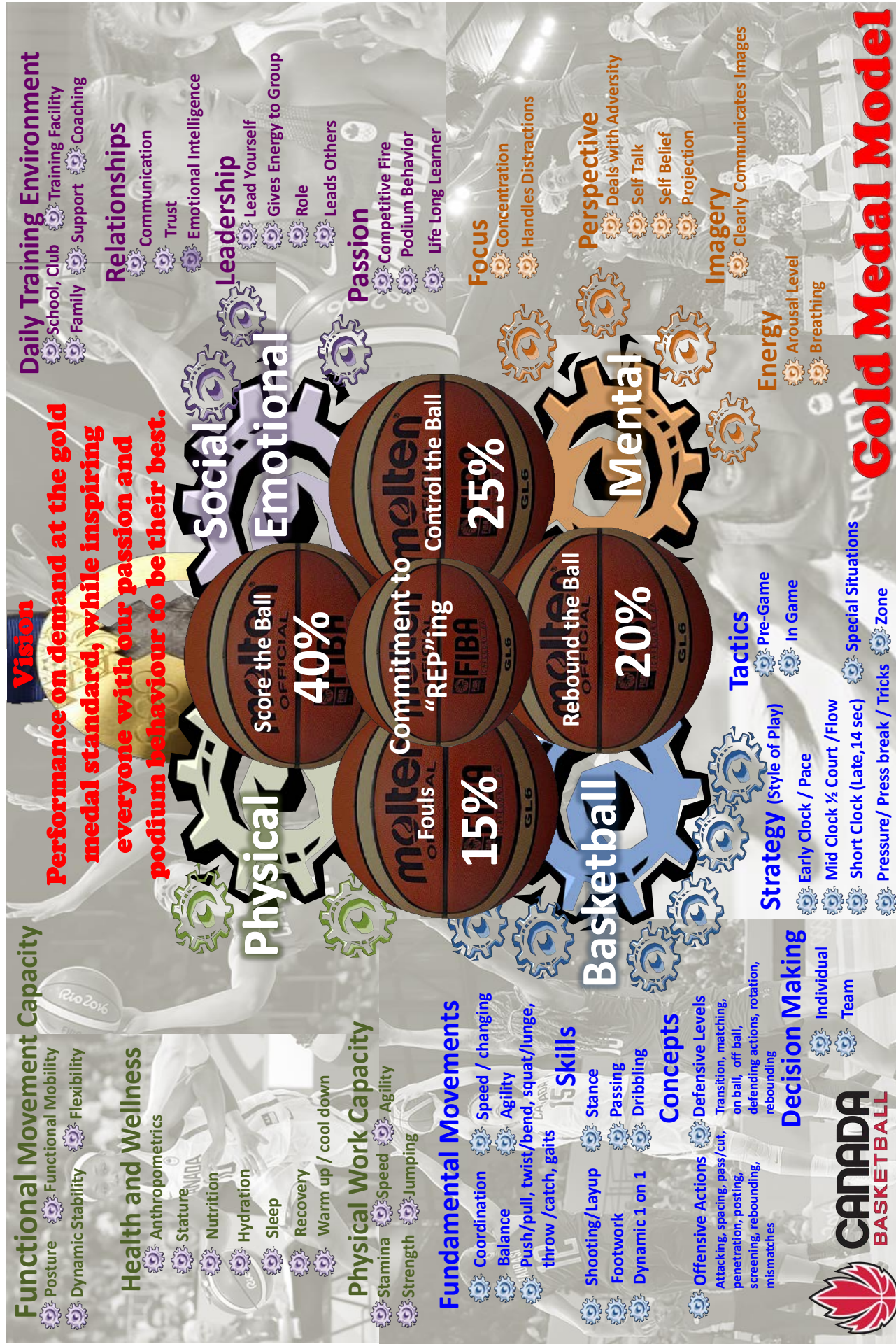


Practice Plan Outline

Introduction	Welcome & Introductions	Style of Play & Expectations (making mistakes are growth)	
Warm-up	Warm-up Games Warm-up Technical	Big Island-Small Island, Rock-Paper-Scissors Football Curl Shooting, P7R—fundamental movement with technical skill	
Main Part	B1-E2-C4	Live Breakdown	C Phase
	Live 5on5	Half-Full-Full	D Phase
	Spacing	Demonstration	A Phase
	Single Gap	Demonstration	A Phase
	Double Gap	Demonstration	A Phase
	Live 5on5	Half-Full-Full	D Phase
	Debrief (<i>teach method</i>)	A-B-C-D	45 seconds
	Pass & Cut / Pass & Pick	2on0	A Phase
	Pass & Slip / Pass & GET	2on0	A Phase
	Passing Actions (4)	2on2 or 3on3 Live (optional)	C Phase
	Pass, Cut, Fill	Pass, Cut, Delay , Fill (2 second double gap)	A Phase
	Live 5on5	Half-Full-Full	D Phase
	Debrief	A-B-C-D	45 seconds
	Dribble-At Backdoor	2on0	A Phase
	D-At Draft Drive or COD	2on0	A Phase
	D-At Post-up / Laker Cut	2on0	A Phase
	D-At Post, Drift & Kick-out	2on0	A Phase
	Dribble-At Actions	2on2 or 3on3 Live (optional)	C Phase
	Live 5on5	Half-Full-Full or Games to 3	D Phase
	Debrief	A-B-C-D	45 seconds
	5on0 Cycles	Multiple Actions with Exit & Fill	A Phase
	DHO	2on2 Live	C Phase
	DHO Combo	3on3 Live	C Phase
	GDP Actions	Demo	A Phase
	Live 5on5	Games to 3-5-7 (points for Actions)	D Phase
	Debrief	A-B-C-D	45 seconds
	Explode-Explore-Execute	Concept Discussion	A Phase
	Live 5on5	Games to 3-5-7 (points for Actions)	D Phase
	Debrief	A-B-C-D	45 seconds
Cool Down	Cool Down	Gym Walk—ABCD Debrief by Players	
Conclusion	Conclusion	Group Debrief with coach—at centre of gym	

Canada Basketball's Gold Medal Model

The heart is *Commitment to REP'ing* / The heart in the newest GMM is *Style of Play*



Rick Torbett's 20 Layers of Basketball

Read & React!



1. Draft Drive & COD Move (Change of Direction)
3. Dribble At (4 Options) & DHO

228 Page Document of Skills & Drills

CMBA Coach Education & Development

Actions, Style of Play & Coaching Concepts (Advanced Review)

ACTIONS

Pass & Cut; Pass & Pick; Pass & Slip; Pass & Get

Dribble-At Backdoor; Dribble-At Post-up; Dribble-At Draft Drive; Dribble-At COD move,
Dribble-At Post-up to Laker Cut; Dribble-At Post-up to Relocate

Double Gap Attack; Double Gap DHO; Double Gap Keep (DHO); DHO Slip; DHO Pick

B1-E2-C4

Transition—Offence & Defence (Pace)

STYLE OF PLAY

Explode—Explore—Execute (E3)

Attack the Rim & Attack the Paint

PACE & FLOW

ROB Shots & BRAD Shots

Spacing—Single Gaps & Double Gaps

Multi-positional Players—Global Player—Positionless Player

COACHING CONCEPTS

KPI's—Paint Touches & Ball Reversal

Increase Scoring %: 1. Reverse the Ball (1st & 2nd Side); 2. Paint Touches (drive or post)

1-2-3-4-5 / 2 Series

Top 6 Scoring Priorities / Top 4 Scoring Priorities for Youth

Top 3 Defensive Priorities / 10 Commandments of Defense

ABCD Teaching Phases

ABCD Debrief Technique—Pre-brief Technique

TLC—Teaching, Learning, Competing



Explode Explore Execute

The team that wins the game is the team that scores the most points. Through analytics we know that the team that takes the most ROB shots (in **range, open** and on **balance**) scores the most points. We also know that it is easier to produce ROB shots when the defence is not set. Defence is set when the three rules of defence are in place:

1. The basket is protected
2. The ball is being pressured / contained
3. The players are matched up or in position

Therefore, offensively, we want to find ways:

1. to attack the defense before it gets set – **explode**
2. to keep the defence scrambling once we have it at a disadvantage – **explore**
3. to break it down once it has been set – **execute**

Explode – When the offence gains possession of the ball. Attacking quickly to score before the defence is set. This can be off a made basket, defensive rebound, steal or inbounds. Our goal is to find a big advantage (ROB) shot early. How do we make it more difficult for the defence to:

Protect the basket	Pressure the ball	Get matched up
Attack the rim with speed	Use small advantages	Keep good dynamic spacing (adjust spacing as the players and ball moves)
- PVAD – be in position to see the basket	- Find open players who have an advantage	- Move the ball – find open players
- Throwing the ball ahead, or to outlets moving down the floor	- Attack bad close out with dynamic 1 on 1	- Move players – back cut, pass and cut, find open windows off penetration
- Vertically sprint the lanes and alleys	- Use break out dribbles to avoid being jammed	- Confuse the defence with screens or picks in flow
- Horizontally stretch the floor to take defenders away from the rim	- Back cut and blast cut to relieve pressure	
- Seal flat defenders or mismatches at the rim		

Explore – Once the defence is in a scramble the goal is to keep them scrambling. Don't freeze the ball until a big advantage shot is produced. How do we make it more difficult for the defence to:

Protect the basket	Pressure the ball	Get matched up
Keep pressure on the rim	Use small advantages	Keep good dynamic spacing
PVAD – be in position to see the basket	- Find open players, don't freeze the ball	- Double, single gaps
- Finish cuts at the rim	- Attack bad close outs, dynamic 1 on 1	- Pass cut fill / penetration principles
- Sprint exit cuts to keep the basket open	- Back cut and blast cut to relieve pressure	- Confuse the defence with screens or picks in flow
- Seal flat defenders or mismatches at the rim	- Use dribble centres	- Know the shots you want
- Maintain dynamic spacing		

Execute – Once the defence is set they have neutralized the offence. Shots taken vs set defence are either, not in range, contested or off balance; therefore will be at a lower percentage than a ROB shot. In order to create a ROB shot the offence must run an action(s) to create a big advantage shot or a small advantage that the offence can use immediately or maintain in order to create a ROB shot. Some teams or players are very good at producing a shot immediately from the action. For example: 1) The team sets a screen and the player comes off the screen to shoot the open shot 2) The player uses a 1 on 1 move to create a shot for herself. Other teams use the action to create a small advantage. For example: The team uses the screen to give a player a small advantage. This player uses her dynamic 1 on 1 to draw help. The ball is moved until the desired shot is found. . How do we make it more difficult for the defence to:

Protect the basket	Pressure the ball	Get matched up
Break down the help defender(s)	Pressure releases	Control the match ups
- Spacing	- Space pivots	- Recognize mismatches
- Movement	- Back cuts / blast cuts	- Run action to achieve the match ups we want
- Distracting	- Hand offs	- Play our best vs their weakest
- Secondary moves	- Control who is pressuring the ball	- Hide our weakest
- Control who is the help defender (make it a small or weakest defender)		- Put their best in a position where she has the least influence

In summary

The great offensive teams are the ones that break down set defence. They do this by exploding (beat them down the floor) exploring (maintain small advantages) and executing (using actions to disturb the defence). When we build or teach offence it is important to consider what the defence is trying to do. We need to ask ourselves:

1. Who is protecting the basket and how can we break her down?
2. How are they pressuring the ball and how can we relieve this pressure?
3. How and who do they match up with and where can we find the best advantages or ways to disturb them from matching up?

This is the next great evolution on offence! We are starting to see more teams use different ways to break down the help and run decoy actions to create mismatches. We can be on the leading edge of this trend.

CMBA Coach Education & Development

Playing the Game (Style of Play) vs. Running Plays (Block or Random)

Gold Medal Profile

Building Team Culture is a high priority (REP'ing) | Coaches, Players & Support Team must be on same page.

Top 4 Scoring Priorities:

(Essentials)

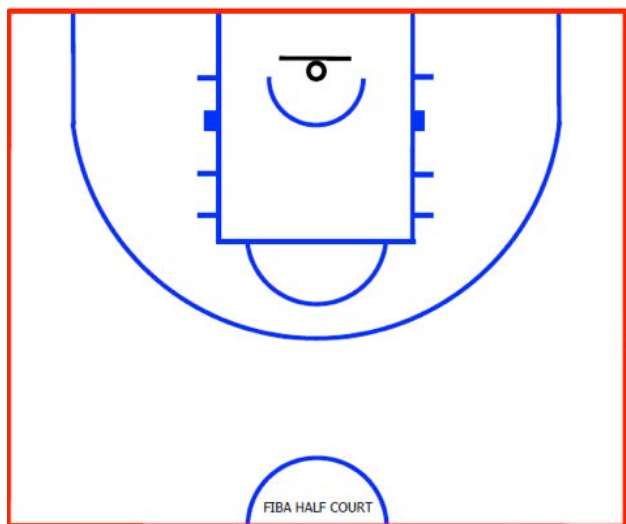
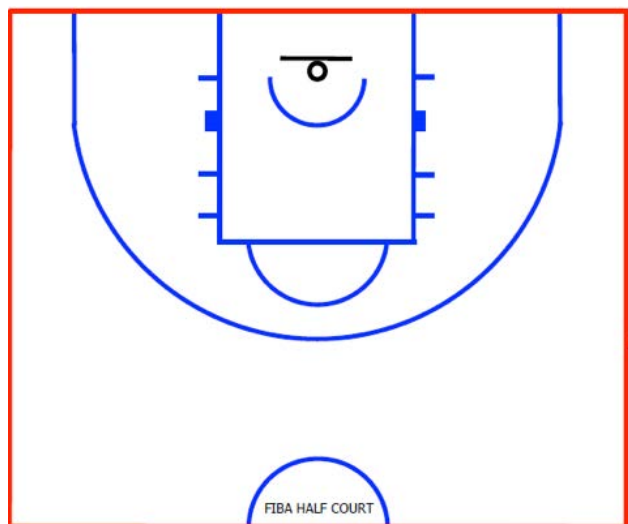
1. Attack the Rim
2. 3 Point Shot—know your **ROB Shot** / take **BRAD Shots**
3. Free Throws—highest % shot in the game
4. Mid-Range Shots—least amount of rewards

Top 6 Scoring Priorities:

(Intermediate)

1. Attack the Rim
2. Attack the Paint
3. Free Throws—highest % shot in the game
4. 3 Point Shot from the Corner
5. 3 Point Shot from the Top
6. Mid-Range Shots—least amount of rewards

What Drills will you do in practice to support these Top 6 **Scoring Priorities**?



P7R Penetration

7 Letter P's & 1 Letter R = P7R

Good Things Happen When You Attack the ***Rim/Paint***! Top Priority Scoring!

Players must be willing to play 1-on-1 for their Team to be successful! (B1)

If a player does not have a good shot, they must then pass to a teammate! (E2)

Players are to always see their four teammates! (C4)

Attacking the Rim is most successful when done in a Double Gap (Double Gap Action)

Players are to look for their ROB Shot: in ***Range***, ***Open*** and ***Balanced***

Players are encouraged to 'kick-out' or look for 'one more' or 'pass-pass' or 'dynamic 1v1'.

Penetration—Attack the Rim/Paint—P7R

1. ***Paint*** – get into the key | Hunt the Paint

2. ***Pull-up*** Jump Shot

3. ***Power Lay-up*** – usually going baseline

4. ***Peek at the Rim*** – 'look' to score

5. ***Patience*** – 3 seconds is a long time

6. ***Power Finish*** (P7R Footwork)

Pivot foot is closest to defender

Land in the key with a two-foot jump stop

Land in a Shoulder-Shoulder-Rim alignment

1. Rip Through;
2. Drop Step;
3. Fake the Drop Step, Pivot Back & Shoot;
4. Fake the Drop Step, Fake the Shot & Step Through (Up & Under)

7. ***Pivot & Pass***—Pivot out of Pressure | Look for an open 3-point shooter (one more, pass-pass or dynamic 1v1)

R. ***Rondo Pivot*** (change the pivot foot – furthest foot from Defender)

1. Top foot - bottom foot Stop (1-2 Stop), Pivot Back & Shoot
2. Top foot - bottom foot Stop (1-2 Stop), Pivot Back, Fake the Shot & Step Through (Up & Under)

P7R Footwork is a great warm-up activity in A Phase followed by 1v1 Live (C Phase).

CMBA Coach Education & Development

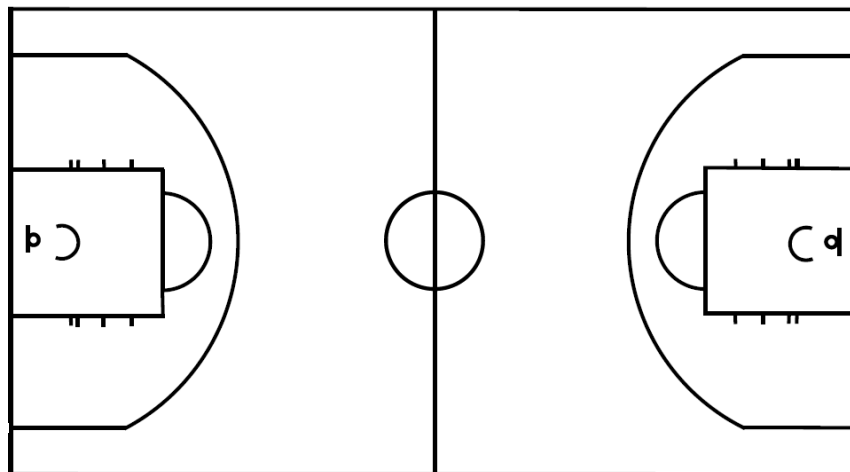
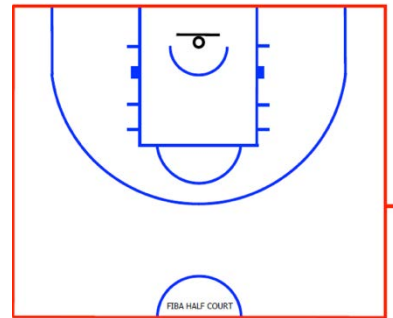
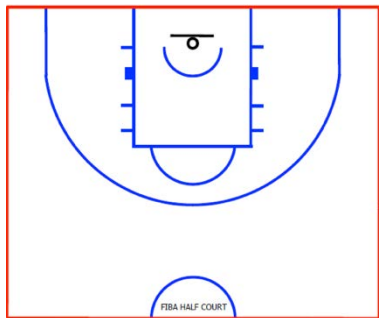
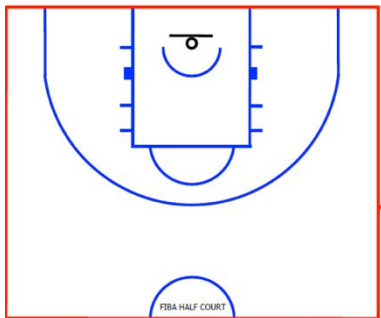
Playing the Game (Style of Play) vs. Running Plays (Block or Random)

Gold Medal Profile

Top 3 Defensive Priorities:

1. Defend the Basket—your number 1 priority / **Protect the House**
All players are required to **Protect the House** at one time or another
2. Pressure the Ball (D21 & D9)
D21 = defending the ball by using 7 angles and 3 distances from the ball ($7 \times 3 = 21$)
- *Shade Left, Influence Left, Force Left, Square, Shade Right, Influence Right, Force Right*
D9 = sending the ball to a player's weak hand—3 angles x 3 distances = 9
3. Guard 1.5 Players—an effective way to teach help-side defence

What Drills will you do in practice to support teaching your Defensive Priorities?

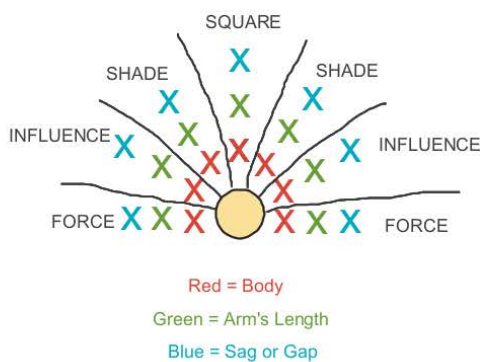


Coach Education & Coach Development

Ball Pressure

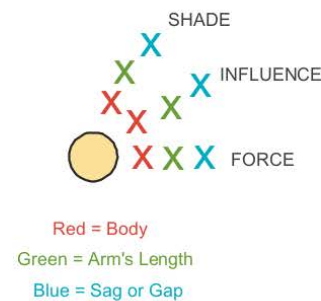
D21

7 Angles
3 Distances



D9

3 Angles
3 Distances
Send to Weak Hand



When pressuring the ball, a defensive player has 21 choices or options to guard the ball (D21).

A great defensive strategy is to send the ball handler to their weak hand.
The direction the ball is sent has 9 choices or options (D9).



10 Commandments of Defense

It has been said that the cornerstone of defense is not just effort but multiple effort.

If defense was just about effort then we could pick up anyone off the street, offer the right motivation and they could get the job done. Defense is so much more than that. You have to know how to guard multiple actions and understand angles, assignments and rotations. That being said, every part of the game involves effort. In fact, that is a baseline for participation at any level of play. If you don't bring your multiple efforts, you won't be great at defense and your game won't be complete.

Knowing that defense isn't that easy, what follows are **10 Defensive Commandments** to help shore up that part of your game.

1. BE COMMITTED

Everyone wants to put the ball in the hoop, but few basketball players find that same joy in getting a big stop, holding a great offensive player below their season average or snagging a pivotal rebound that gives their team an extra possession.

The game truly becomes easier when you can experience equal joy on both ends of the court.

2. DON'T TALK, COMMUNICATE

Too often, players call out a term like "help," "ball," "dead," etc. In a vacuum, those terms mean nothing. You could be helping from anywhere, the ball could be doing anything, and what exactly is "dead?" Instead, players should communicate their position or exactly what they believe the opposing player is going to do on that possession. It would sound more like, "I got your help on the left!" "Shooter right corner!" "Right hand driver, send her my way!"

Don't waste energy saying the same thing over and over again. Communicate your message loud and clear once or twice. The game happens fast and you need to be ready to communicate your new position and your player's next move.

3. GUARD YOUR YARD

Your help should typically be about one to two steps away, which is about a yard in either direction. If you can guard your yard, send the ball into your help and keep the ball in front of you. The offense will be forced to take tough, out-of-rhythm, contested shots. Many of those which will be off the bounce (the worst shot in basketball).

Over the course of a game and a season, the percentages will favor your defense and the offense will make fewer shots which will hopefully result in you winning more games.

Sometimes a better player having a great night will hit a tough shot and all you can do is tip your hat and move on to the next play. Keep doing your job, the odds will end up in your favour.

4. HELP THE HELPER

Guaranteed, you will get beat at times. An offensive player will have an incredible peek fake, explosive first step or dribble move that will beat you and you will need help. You can't quit on your play, you must be ready to assume the next help responsibility.

If someone helps you, it is your job to get your head on a swivel and recognize how you can help them and then get on your horse and make a play. One easy way to remember that is to "see a need and fill the need."

Special defenders will help as many times as needed whether it is their responsibility or not. They show up BIG with their voice, body language and mentality and will get the job done.

5. ANTICIPATE

Basketball is a game of chess, and the ones who get caught playing checkers are routinely beat over and over again. You have to be thinking one step ahead at all times. Is there a screen coming? What kind of screen is it? Is he/she about to drive or shoot – and from where? Where is my next help responsibility?

Anticipation is a key ingredient to success on either end of the floor. If you can couple anticipation with advanced preparation (you know your player's tendencies), you will have success guarding them. It will look like you are in two places, but you know that you are just thinking a step ahead.

6. COVER TWO

One of the easiest ways the offense can score is in transition. It's your job to get back and stop the offense in its tracks. The two things you need to cover are 1) the ball and, 2) the streaking offensive player running to the open lane or rim, trying to gain an advantage in the open court before the help is set.

You and one other teammate need to communicate and decide who is going to stop the ball or get their head under the rim and make a stand until the rest of your teammates get back and get matched up.

It's not enough to just get back. Sometimes you have to be ready to make a play and turn what might be a bad situation into a good one by getting a deflection or funneling the offense away from an open lane.

7. GET F.A.T.

When you are on the court, you want to find yourself constantly ***Faking and Threatening*** the offense. Make them think you are playing the drive when you are really anticipating a shot: jab at the ball handler, help early and bait the offense into a bad pass.

Offense isn't the only place where fakes are useful. If you can use fakes on the defensive end, you will take your game to another level. Threaten the offense by showing up big with your body language and your voice. We all know that noise can be used as a distraction and you can't distract anyone showing up small. (If you've ever been to a haunted house before, you know it's always the demonstrative and screaming actor that comes out of nowhere that gets you.)

8. HIT FIRST

When you are boxing out, it's not enough to hit the offensive player. You have to ***hit first*** and get them off balance so you can go and grab a board.

Holding a box out until the ball hits the floor is a poor rebounding drill. There is only so long you can maintain a box out without getting a holding foul called or just getting beat. A good offensive player wants the ball just as bad as you do so ***hit them first*** and then attack the rebound with everything you've got. It's not enough to hit the offensive player, you have to hit FIRST.

9. RUN OPPOSITE

Seventy percent of rebounds come off on the opposite side of the rim. That means more than half of the rebounds you go after will have to be run down.

After you hit your box out, get to the opposite side of where the ball was shot and start attacking the glass. You will turn yourself into a rebounding machine and gain extra possessions for your team just by playing the numbers on this one.

10. SOLVE PROBLEMS

Every time the offense comes down the court they are presenting a new problem for you to solve. Which player is going to shoot it? What set are they going to run? Who might get beat?

Each of these is an opportunity for you to show up like one of three players.

You can be a ***Preventer*** and solve the problem early by making a play on the ball or in help.

You can be a ***Fixer*** and show up like a repairman and start plugging holes like a teammate getting beat off the bounce or a smaller teammate getting posted up.

You can be an ***Eraser*** and at the last second take a charge, show up on a rotation and get a steal, or come out of "nowhere" and block a wide-open shot or lay-up.

No matter where you are in a defensive possession, there is always a problem to be solved – be ready to solve it.

Bonus commandment: ***"Have Fun."*** The best competitors look forward to this end of the floor. They relish the opportunity to beat the offense at their own game of deception, timing and anticipation. It is an opportunity to be disruptive, earn easy possessions and show off your toughness. Lastly, commit to ball deflections. **Canada Basketball promotes the 3 D's of defense.**

Take pride in your ability to not only give someone a bucket but to also take one away.

Hot Spot Rebounding

- a) Hot Spot
- b) Short Spot
- c) Clean-up
- d) Short Safety
- e) Long Safety

Action = Small Advantage → Big Advantage

4 Choices after an Offensive Rebound

- a) Immediate put-back
- b) Quick 1-Dribble Move
 - eg. fake, up & under shot
 - fake, baby hook shot, etc.
- c) Kick Out
- d) Receiver:
 - Three Point Shot; One More Pass;
 - Shot or Dynamic 1-on-1 (Decision Making)



Feedback 101, 201 & 301

Feedback 101: describes fundamentals / focused & direct feedback

Feedback 201: what happens after you give 101 feedback—feedback (101) is to be followed up with feedback (201)

Feedback 301: uses feedback to foster decision-making, critical thinking & problem-solving

FEEDBACK 101

Focused Feedback—stay on point until skill is learned—do not wander too soon to the next concept/skill.

Use Stoppage Strategically—too much is counterproductive—stoppages to be lightning quick.

Slowing down the flow of feedback can actually speed up the rate at which players learn.

- Goldilocks principle

Include **Cue Words** (KPF's) to support *when & how* to use the technical feedback

- Example: Explode; B1-E2; Turn-Dip-Sway; etc.

Words to be kept minimal—**less is more**

Too much information = overloading **Working Memory**

- “When you chase five rabbits, you catch none.”

Apply feedback **quickly** after an action is executed—the speed of **Feedback to Apply** matters

receive-try-reflect rather than **receive-reflect-try**

- Speed from **Feedback to Apply** is more important than *Reflecting* on the feedback
- *Reflection* can be more effective during *Retrieval* at a later time

Feedback to be **Solution** oriented, not **Problem** oriented

- Say what to do, rather than what not to do

Solving a **precise action** is more useful than describing a **desired outcome**

- Example: use the backboard on your lay-up is more beneficial than make your lay-up

Using words such as “**Fix it.**” can be powerful because it gives players confidence to fix it themselves

- ABCD Debrief technique can Fix It or have players Fix It during a Stoppage then reapply the Action

Assuming the Best is powerful because it shows your faith in your players

Tone and **Modeling** are critical for effective feedback

- Most coaches are too harsh too often (too critical)
- The opposite is to offer too much praise too often—too much praise can make it seem like you are surprised a player was successful (interesting concept)
- Again, Goldilocks principle

FEEDBACK 201

What happens **after the feedback** is the key concept of Feedback 201

Taking feedback is different from **Using** feedback

Coachability has more to do with **Using** feedback than **Taking** feedback

Be attentive to their progress—this will result in greater enthusiasm and ultimate success

Rule of 3: give players 3 things max to work on (KPF'S) and also determine what is the **single most important thing**

- When there are multiple coaches, everyone must know the player's *one thing*

And most importantly, **coaches must provide timely feedback on a player's one thing as it occurs**

The consistency of messaging is vital to the learning process.

Correct instead of **Critique**

- If necessary, turn *Critiques* into *Corrections*

Correction (corrective feedback) must then immediately allow for the opportunity for immediate application.

Players are to **Do the Answer**, not just merely **Describe the Answer**

- Words are to be turned into Actions

Teaching happens in the stoppage—**Learning** happens in the Doing/Action—**Retrieval** is integral to **Learning**

Constraints-based Coaching—create specific situations to focus on a particular skill or concept

- temporarily changing the rules to highlight specific aspects of the game or skill

Reflection can be a 201 Feedback technique—is definitely a 301 Feedback technique

- ask questions—players to understand and know the *Why*, not just *What & How*

Shorten the Loop between *Feedback & Action* to achieve optimal learning

- stoppages at opportune times are extremely valuable
- too many stoppages are counterproductive—know the difference between **Teaching & Learning**

Find a Win as soon as possible after the intervention or feedback

Getting it Right is the mid-point of mastery—Do it again, and again, and again...

FEEDBACK 301

The end game of giving feedback is to make it less necessary in the future

We want athletes to make decisions without coaches **telling them to**

301 is about causing or getting players to think for themselves—decision-making, critical thinking & problem-solving

- It focuses heavily on asking questions

Rhetorical Questioning is disruptive, wastes time and is often insulting—it results in ‘crickets’

Questions for Novices and Experts are much different

- Novices generally require more direct feedback—questioning is designed to flush out thinking—as a general rule, fewer questions and more direct feedback
- Experts generally require more latitude to figure things out for themselves—when they can’t, just give them the answer without beating around the bush—experts like to be challenged

“Nothing wastes time and saps momentum like a poor question for which there is no clear answer.”

What players **‘see’** is critical to their learning—seeing quickly is a skill. What do players pay attention to? What did they see?

Perception for an athlete is heavily visual—other learning styles come into play but **visual is number 1**.

Coaches can **Guide** players into what to look at or look for—better information = better decisions

Coaches to teach players to become more **self-aware**... Example: I (coach) am not concerned if you make or miss a shot. I am more concerned that your feet are turned before you shoot.

- Then have players begin to pay attention to the technique correction (self-awareness)

Coaches can utilize **Stoppages** to show the problem or sometimes coaches will have to **Recreate the Situation** to clearly demonstrate the problem—once the problem is clearly known or understood, then the solution is more readily incorporated.

Asking Questions & Showing the Problem work especially well in synergy—this is a proven **Learning** technique

Retrieval Techniques

Research has proven that people learn more effectively when given the opportunity to discuss their findings and/or learnings.

It has also been proven through extensive research that when people ***start to forget*** and are then given the opportunity to ***recall*** or ***retrieve*** information, learning is enhanced.

How does this information influence your teaching and/or coaching?

If players learn more effectively after they ***start to forget***, how might you as a coach integrate techniques that support ***retrieval*** or ***recall***?

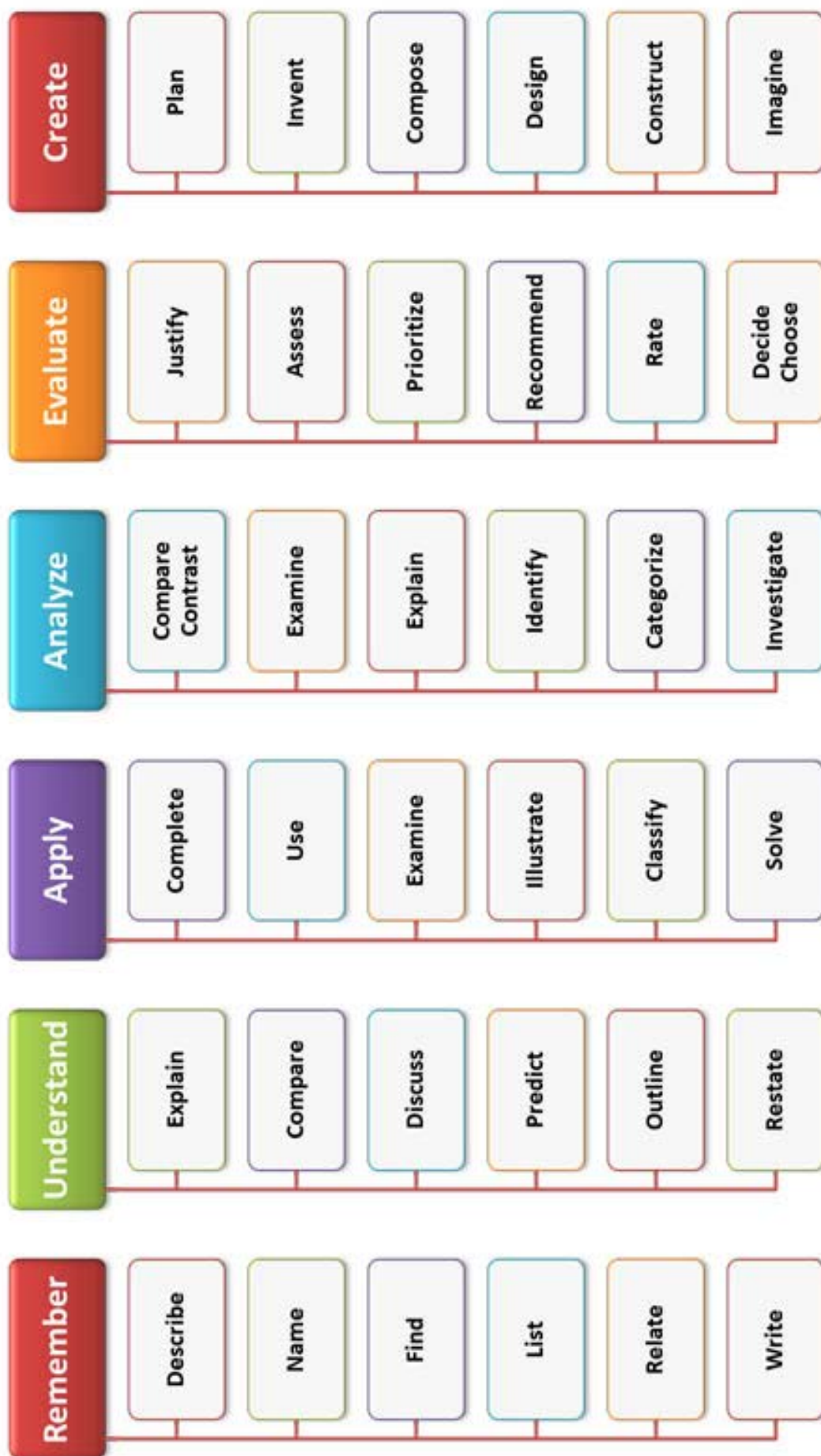
1. Engaging in a ***review*** is a technique that supports recall. After the end of a practice or game, ask players about a particular ***Action, Concept &/or Style of Play*** that was previously taught. The ***Action, Concept &/or Style of Play*** may have been taught earlier that same day or perhaps it was taught in the previous session or perhaps even a couple of sessions or more ago.

It is imperative that you give players ample time to recall on their own as opposed to giving the answers to them. If you are in the habit of providing the answers to the players, they will not have to engage in thought (recall), therefore, effective learning is compromised.

2. Let players start to run a warm-up or drill—***after***, of course, you have taught effective warm-up activities & drills—perhaps players can lead in a ball handling activity. When players are given the opportunity to lead or be self-directed, their recall soars which then results in greater learning.
3. At an unexpected time in practice, ask a player (or players) to share or model a particular Action—this surprise recall technique is fantastic for players to be able to recall quickly without preparation time. Having the ability to think quickly while under a little pressure (peer pressure) is a tremendous growth opportunity.
4. During a pre-brief, ask players to come up with ***Actions, Concepts*** or ***Style of Play*** that have been missing in their game. This provides players with the opportunity to recall what's missing (again, only those Actions you have already taught).
5. Implementing purposeful recall techniques is transformational for player development. Remember, do your utmost to avoid giving players all the answers—provide players with the opportunity to recall on their own.

There are several additional recall techniques you can implement—be creative and come up with a few of your own.

Bloom's Taxonomy—Learning Style



CMBA Coach Education & Development

LTAD—Long Term Athlete Development

5 S's of LTAD

Skills

Speed

Stamina

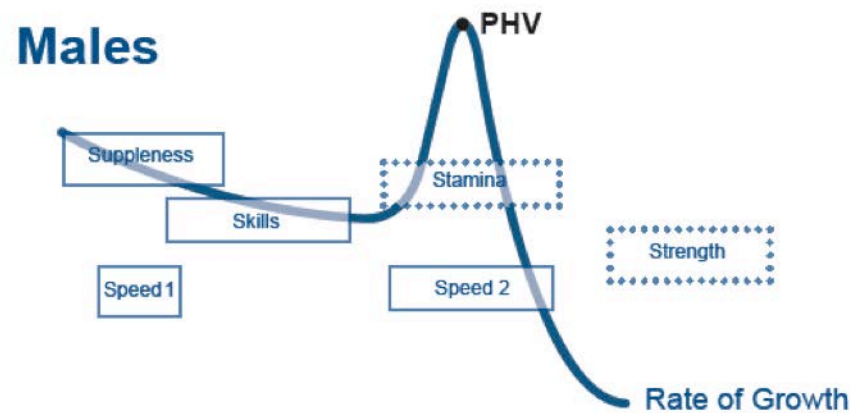
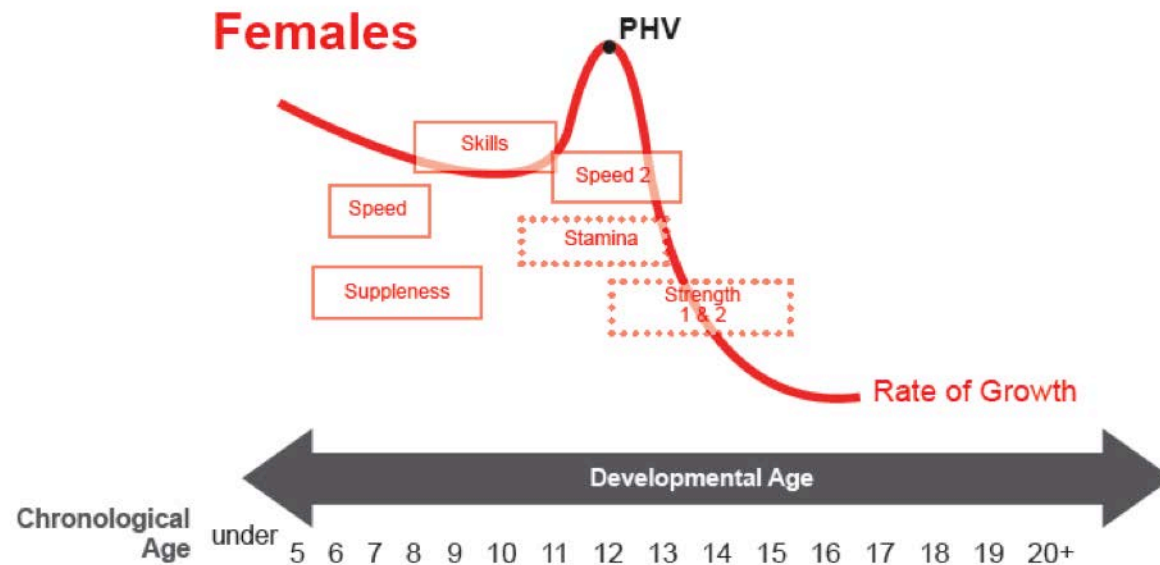
Strength

Suppleness

Not only are you developing ***Basketball Players***, you are also developing ***Athletes!***

Refer to the PHV Chart—Peak Height Velocity





Physical, Mental - Cognitive, Emotional Development

CMBA Coach Education & Development

Actions & Dominoes | Creating Advantages

Advantages

Actions & Dominoes

Actions are to Create Advantages

Small Advantages to become Big Advantages

Neutral may become an Advantage or a Disadvantage

One Action leads to another Action and leads to Another Action

Multiple Actions are Often Required for the Defense to Break Down



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Quick Hits

Phoenix

Shooter

Curry

Hammer Screens

Fist

GDP

Combo

Quick Hits are a part of the game—not to be your go-to offense!

If you need a score, need a 3-point shot, need a post-up, etc.



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Special Situations

BLOB's

SLOB's

Jump Ball

ATO's (After Time Outs)

Quarter Change-ups

Shot Clock

1-2-3-4-5

10 Series

2 Series



CMBA Coach Education & Development

Shot-Clock Phases

Best teams in the world take early shot-clock shots

6 Seconds – 12 Seconds – 6 Seconds

8 Seconds – 8 Seconds – 8 Seconds

Explode—Explore—Execute + Danger Zone

Danger Zone is Late in the Shot-Clock—last 6 seconds

CB Moved 6 Shots from Late Clock to Early Clock after 2012

Results were impressive—became world-ranked #4

Actions, Concepts & Style of Play



Principles of an Effective Zone Offense

ATTACKING ZONE DEFENSES

1. **FAST BREAK** before the defense sets up
2. Line up in the **GAPS** – gapping
3. Attack the **SEAMS** – dribble penetration
4. **OVERLOAD** one side of the court
5. **FLATTEN** the zone
6. **PULL OUT** the low defender
7. Ball **REVERSAL** – make the defense shift
8. **PENETRATE & PITCH**
9. **ATTACK** the **HEART** of the defense – inside presence
10. 1st side, 2nd side, inside, outside – **BALL MOVEMENT**

41 Zone Offense

Middle Touch:	Pass & Cut to HP—Shot, Kick Out, Low Dump
Baseline Touch:	Short Corner Slides—Be Active, Find the Gaps
Penetrating Gaps:	Split 2 Defenders
Crash the Glass:	Hot Spot Rebounding (14 second reset)
Stretch the D:	Wide Spacing

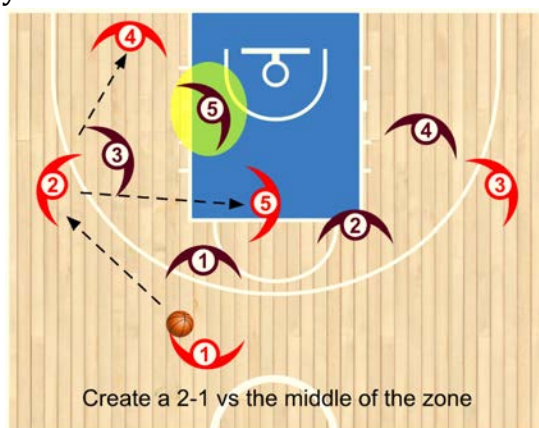


Zone thoughts

Here are some thoughts about attacking zones. A successful zone offence should:

- Creates big advantage shots that fit the personnel of the team
- Relies on skills and concepts that match the players and is easy to teach because it does not require a lot of time and details in its teaching.
- Works vs. different defences
- Is difficult to disrupt without giving up big advantages
- Free the players to make reads; therefore making it difficult to scout
- Attacks the rim; thereby creating fouls, high percentage shots and easier rebounds
- Has rebounding and safety coverage

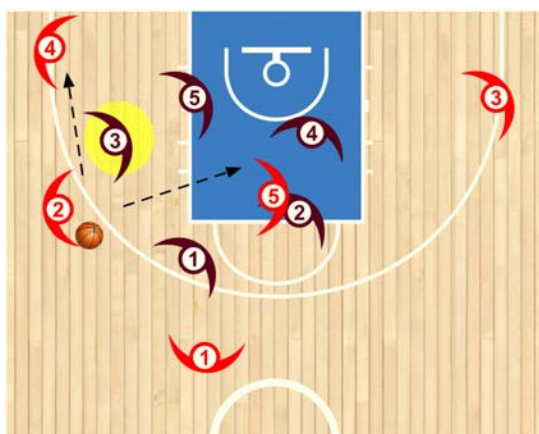
We these thoughts in mind here are some of the best concepts I have seen vs. zones this year.



Create a 2-1 vs the middle defender of the zone

By occupying the nail (foul line or logo area) and the short corner it forces the middle defender to make a choice. One major problem I see is the short corner player still wanting to post vs. the middle defender. Unless there is a dominant size advantage this does not create an advantage. The player has poor PVAD (position, vision anticipation decision-making)

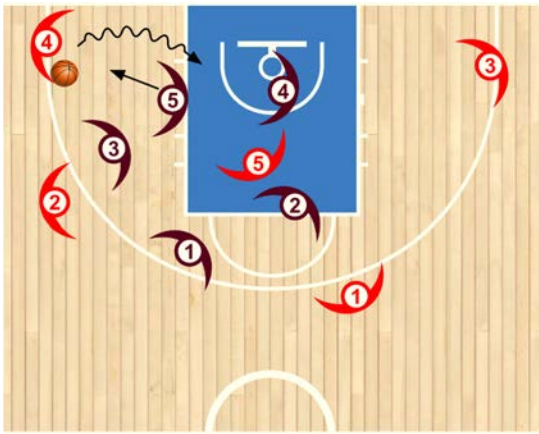
The best way for this to happen is when the bottom defender is forced to defend the wing on the short corner side. The offensive team must have different ways to create this situation. In the diagram above #1 on offence freeze dribbles the top defender. The wing pass now makes X3 responsible for the wing.



Popping the short corner

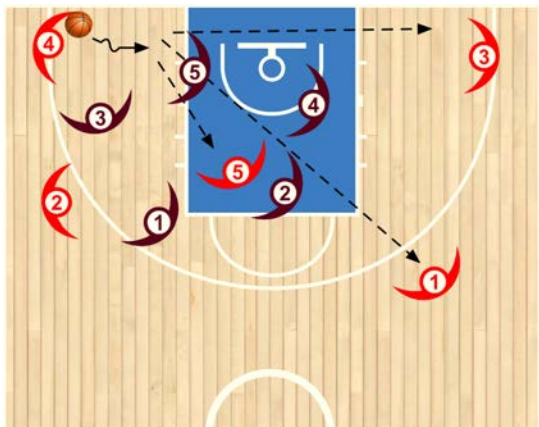
This creates a 2-1 with #3 and #4. This spacing and 2-1 is one of the most important parts of the **explore** phase of the offence, be that player to player or zone defence. When the offence has created a small advantage and has forced the defence to scramble this situation is very common. Can the offence create a big advantage shot or will the defence be able to neutralize? The players need to recognize this situation and find the best solution to create the best shot.

If these two players are three point shooters, who shoot a high percentage the zone is busted. What happens when this is not the case?



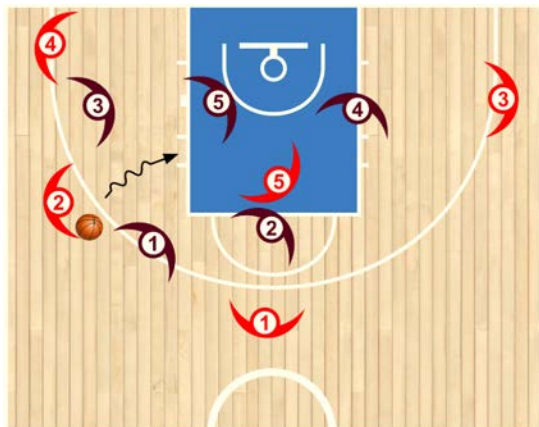
Attacking the close-out

The ability to attack the close-out plays big part of keeping the advantage alive. This is true vs. player to player or zone defence.



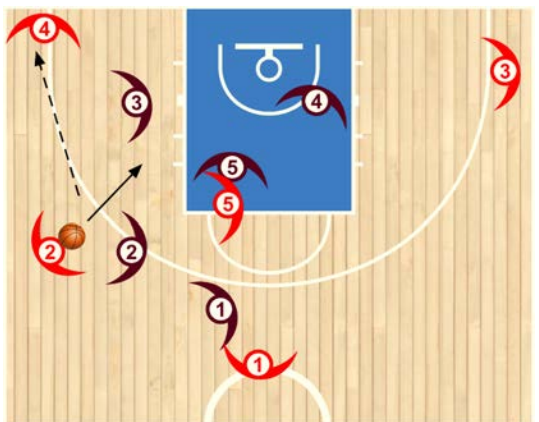
Attacking the side close out from the bump action

Most teams will not have the middle defender close out, but will bump the wing defender back. Can we drive vs. this defensive movement?



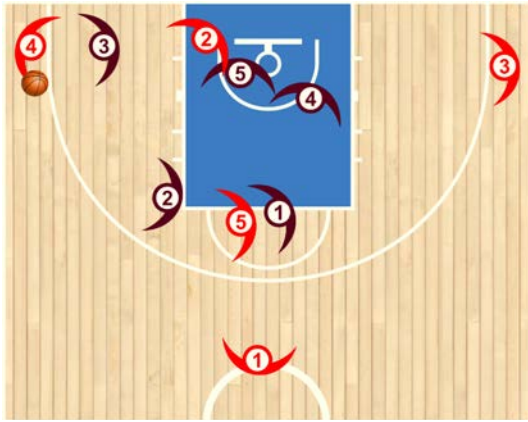
Attacking the middle

We also have to search for opportunities to drive the middle of the zone. Especially in that small gap when the defenders are bumping.



Pass and cut

When the defence is playing to deny the reversal you can often catch them with a simple pass and cut. Especially if the middle defender is playing high.



From the corner position we can use a dribble pull to create a shot for #2.

1. Being pulled out to the ball side corner
2. Look to reverse the ball and #2 can run out to the weak side corner.



When the zone “downs” or forces the wing offensive player towards the baseline

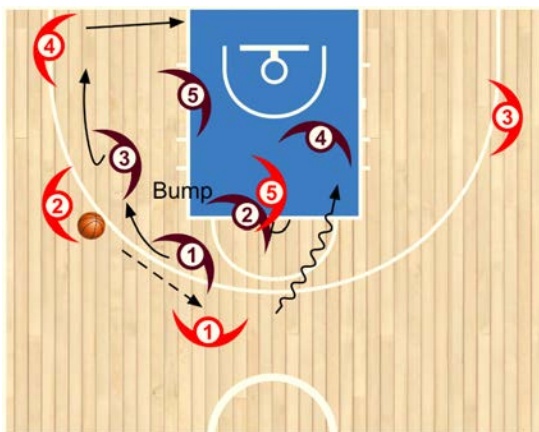
This is a common action that many zone defences will do in order to keep the ball from being easily reversed or running a side ball screen.

The best technique I have seen to nullify this action is to **dribble backwards** to space. If the zone defender continues to move with the dribbler it opens up a gap that can be attacked. If the defender stays it makes an easy angle for the reversal pass or allows the ball screen to be set to

the middle. It is important not to catch the ball on the wing near the sideline. This makes it easy to be trapped and dangerous to dribble.



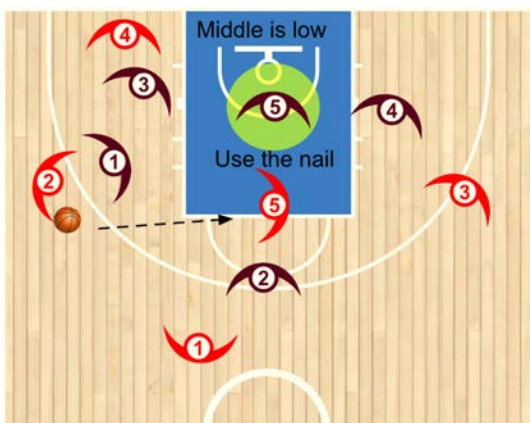
Here we see #5 setting a pick with her back to the defender. This allows her to have better PVAD.



Attacking the bump with quick ball reversal

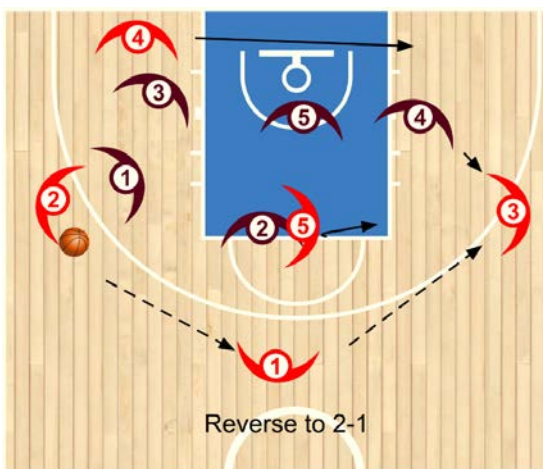
One of the best ways to attack the bump move is to make an immediate return pass to the top. This is very effective because the second top defender is often tied up with defending the high post player.

One action is for the nail, #5 to set a **pick for the top**. If she can shoot a pull up this is very difficult to defend. It also creates the 2-1 on the reversal side.



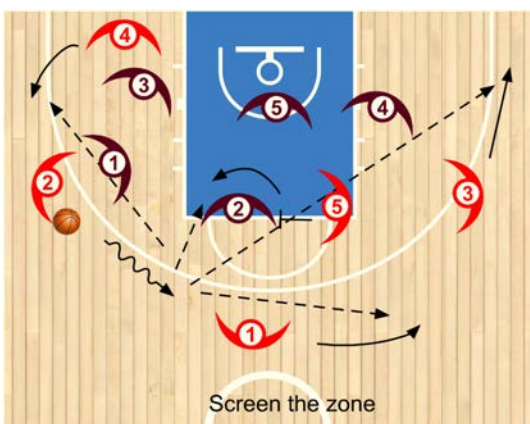
Pass to the nail

If the middle defender is playing low, we must always look to the nail. It is important that she plays with PVAD. This way she can anticipate her next action.



Immediate full reversal

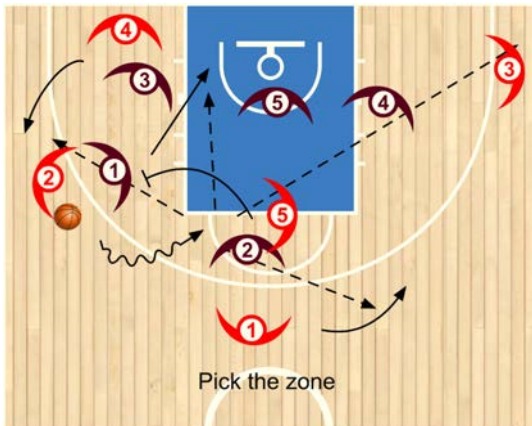
An immediate quick reversal to the opposite wing can create the 2-1. Notice that #4 has run the baseline. One bad habit that too many zone offenses get into is skipping the ball constantly from side to side. Too often the players catching the ball cannot shoot the ball and the interior players get disconnected from the perimeter players.



Screen the zone

The nail, #5, can also screen the top defender. The top player can flare. This works best with a dribble to the screen. #5 is often open on the top, depending on how the defenders react.

Anytime we dribble vs. a zone we must also be aware of the snap back pass. This is especially effective if #4 is a shooter.



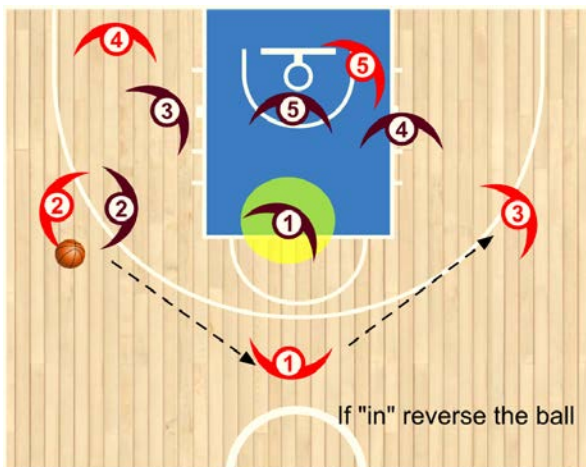
Pick the side of the zone

The nail, #5, can also pick the side of the zone. Remember to use the back-up dribble if the defender attempts to 'down' the ball handler.



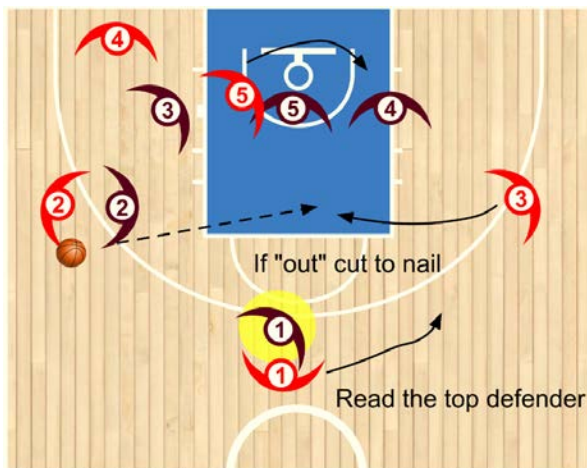
When the middle defender plays high

When this happens it releases the second top defender to play more in the passing lanes. It also makes the ball screen less effective. One of the best counters is to have the nail cut to the basket. This cut must be honored.

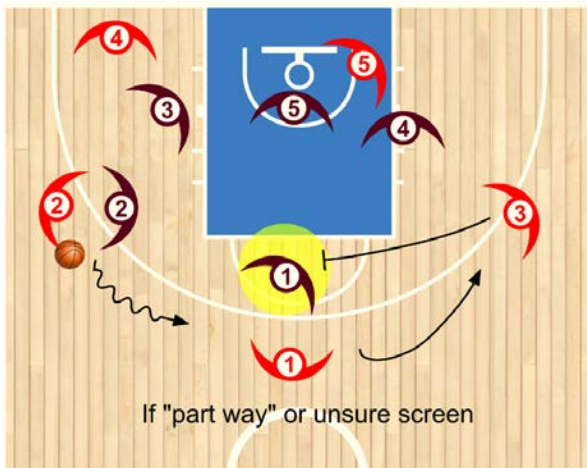


We now have the opportunity to attack this isolated top defender with the weak side wing. Coach Fabian McKenzie has the following concept that works very well if the players play at speed.

When the defender is in (at the foul line), reverse the ball.

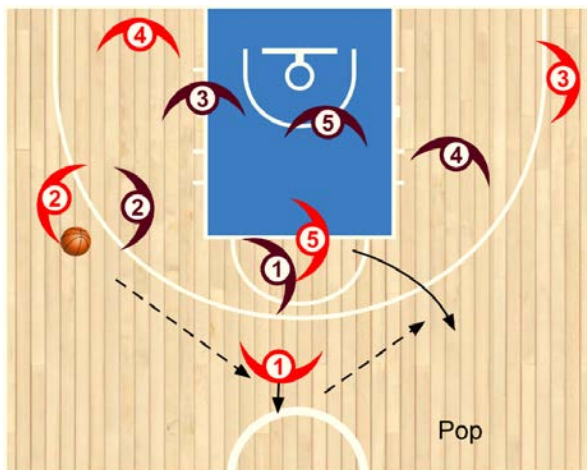


If the defender is out on the shooter the wing can cut to the nail.



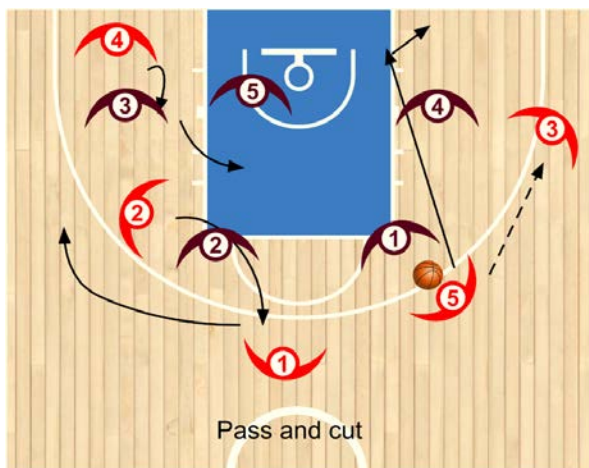
If we are unsure go and screen the defender.

A final option that I have experimented with is having this player go and set the side pick. It works if she moves quickly and you have players rotate out to create the 2-1 on the weak side.

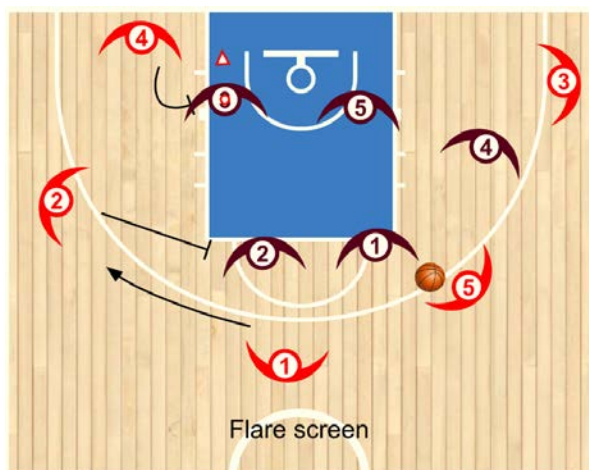


Popping the post

If the nail, #5, is a good shooter, popping to the perimeter causes problems for the zone. They run out of players to defend the perimeter.



If she does not shoot, pass and cut is one option.



A flare screen on the weak side is a great option for a shooter.

How Serbia Produces Great Basketball Players Like Nikola Jokić



Nikola Jokić of Serbia during the FIBA EuroBasket 2022 group D match between Serbia and the Netherlands in Prague on Sept. 2, 2022.

Miloslav Ćuk hasn't slept properly in six weeks. Ever since the NBA playoffs started, he's been watching every Denver Nuggets game he can, most of which start at 2:30 a.m. in Serbia. For Serbians, this year's playoffs are especially exciting since one of their own, the two-time MVP **Nikola Jokić**, has led the Nuggets to the NBA finals for the first time in his career.

"Because it's so early I have to put my headphones on, and I'm biting my face quietly when I'm too excited so that I don't scream and wake everybody up," says Ćuk, who also hosts a podcast called **Serbian Corner** on the American Denver sports media network, DNVR.

Ćuk is one of the most vocal Serbian fans of the Denver Nuggets, but he's far from the only one. Passion for basketball has been ingrained in Serbian culture for decades. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the President of Serbia himself enrolled in a sports college to fulfill his lifelong dream of becoming a basketball coach.

Jokić is easily the most accomplished NBA player to ever come out of Serbia, but his success has not happened in isolation. He comes from a long line of great basketball players from former Yugoslavian countries. That includes Krešimir Ćosić, the 6 ft. 11 in. Croatian player in the 1970s who famously turned down the NBA to play for the Yugoslavian national team; the 7 ft. 1 in. center Vlade Divac in the 1990s, who was inducted into the Basketball hall of Fame in 2019; and Peja Stojaković, the 6 ft. 10 in. small forward who played in the 1990s and 2000s.

“When I speak with Americans, I try to make them understand that Jokić didn’t just happen,” says Miloš Jovanović, a Serbian basketball journalist. “If you trace it back, you’re going to see that we had players like Jokić all the way back in the ‘60s and ‘70s.”

Early Years

Basketball was officially introduced to what was then known as Yugoslavia by an American Red Cross worker in 1923. But the country—which encompassed present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia—really began to invest in the sport after World War II, when the Yugoslavian government began promoting team activities as part of its political agenda.

“Socialist countries such as Yugoslavia would empower team sports as a way of promoting community,” Jovanović says. “There was no better way to make people equal than by putting them into team sports.”

Jovanović believes that the socialist mindset helped cultivate a playing style that would ultimately become known as **positionless basketball** (see below to read the article).

In the United States, basketball players usually trained to specialize in specific positions. Taller players focused on staying close to the rim, dunking, and using their physicality to defend. Shorter players were encouraged to focus more on passing, dribbling, and taking jump shots further away from the basket.

In Yugoslavia, however, things were different. All young players trained using the same drills regardless of height or individual strengths.

“That was a hallmark of the Yugoslav school of basketball. They were not going to profile you based on your size,” Jovanović says. “They were not going to say you’re a point guard so you focus on point guard things, you’re a center so you focus on center things. Everyone learns how to dribble, how to pass, and how to shoot.”

That style of training seemed to make Yugoslavian players highly competitive. Between 1961 and 1988, the men’s national team won five Olympic medals, six FIBA World Cup medals, and 13 FIBA EuroBasket medals. Jovanović, who grew up watching the national team, says that the success was incredible to watch.

“In ’88 we won the Olympic silver, in ’89 we won the Eurobasket, and in ’90 we won the World Cup so we were back to back European and world champions and Olympic silver medalists,” Jovanović says. “It felt good because in the scope of things we were still a small country but we could stick it to these much larger countries like Germany, Spain, and the Soviet Union. We felt that it was our own personal David and Goliath story.”

The Breakup of Yugoslavia

But just as Yugoslavia’s basketball team seemed to be on top of the world, war broke out in the country. The fighting—which involved ethnic conflict, insurgencies, and wars of independence—began in 1991 and would continue on and off for an entire decade. More than 140,000 people were killed and nearly four million were displaced.

The war also resulted in sanctions against Yugoslavia, which meant that its basketball team was suddenly cut off from all international competition. This was particularly frustrating for many Yugoslavian basketball fans since the 1992 Olympics would have offered Yugoslavia the opportunity to compete against the United States’ “Dream Team” that included legendary players like Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, and Larry Bird.

“Speak to anyone who grew up in Serbia during that time and you will hear that same sentiment,” says host Adam Mares in a documentary about Serbian basketball culture for DNVR called **100 Invisible Threads**. “Not a declaration of supremacy but a sadness for an opportunity that was lost.”

YouTube Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EeTmrsVW8qE>

Still, many sports fans like Jovanović needed something to look forward to during those difficult years. So they would focus their attention on Yugoslavian players abroad, playing in leagues like the NBA.

“With all this horrible news of war and people dying, we would try and find a ray of sunshine by seeing what happened with Vlade Divac on the LA Lakers,” Jovanović says. “We would wake up every morning and just hope that sports news would pick up what happened with the Lakers.”

The Aftermath

The breakup of Yugoslavia was a blow to basketball in the Balkans. Yugoslavia was already a relatively small country with a population that hovered around 24 million. Now divided into six countries, each republic had a much smaller population to recruit talent from, and the era of Yugoslavian dominance in international competitions seemed to be waning.

However, the desire to continue the Yugoslav style of basketball lived on. A new organization in Serbia called [Mega Basket](#)—a youth-oriented club that prioritized developing players’ abilities in the long run over winning games—was set up in 1998. The club is based in the country, but trains players from all over the Balkans and Europe. Graduates include current NBA players Ivica Zubac, Goga Bitadze, and, of course, most famous of all, Jokić.

Jokić’s success has ignited a tremendous amount of pride throughout the country and has even united some basketball fans across many once-rival former Yugoslavian countries. But for some fans like Ćuk, there still remains a sense of longing for what could have been.

“I firmly believe that the majority of people in all of the former Yugoslavian republics look at it the same way I do. We all dream of rebuilding that Yugoslavian team, even if it’s just for one game to showcase our strength for the last time.”

Positionless Basketball

How (and why) Position-less Lineups have taken over the NBA Playoffs (2023)

The revolution is being televised. The bedrock of NBA strategy, and basketball in general, has long been its positions on the court. Those positions – point guard, shooting guard, small forward, power forward and center – have traditionally been prescribed according to height, with shorter guards and taller centers.

In a round peg, round hole game, everyone has a role, tall players were guided to go stand under the basket while shorter guards told to dribble and pass the ball.

But athleticism, mixed with a little math, has revolutionized the NBA. “Defensive rule changes – primarily those that decreased physicality – and analytics have allowed for increases in the speed of the game,” says Bill Burgos, former head strength and conditioning coach for the Orlando Magic. A cheat code for NBA basketball, those

analytics revealed the importance of three-pointers and pick-and-roll matchups, allowing a more offensive game to flourish.

This need to be able to dribble, shoot and defend in the open court has spawned an NBA hybrid player, one that frequently fits squarely in the mid-range of the NBA height spectrum. “Basketball is becoming more position-less and more about team basketball,” says Drew Hanlen, NBA skills coach and consultant, “Called isolations are less used and ball movement is valued.”

The Swiss Army knife-like versatility of the NBA was exemplified in the first-round of the NBA playoffs. Notably a San Antonio-Golden State matchup during which Warriors coach Steve Kerr started forward Andre Iguodala at point guard, a move that ignited a sluggish Warriors team. The first round of the playoffs also featured the Philadelphia 76ers 6ft 10in rookie point guard Ben Simmons and Milwaukee Bucks position busting unicorn, 6ft 10in Giannis Antetokounmpo, with both players tasked as playmakers.

While the NBA has seen its share of tall guards over the years – Magic Johnson and Anfernee ‘Penny’ Hardaway to name two of the best – the league has increasingly hybridized its lineups, trying to force mismatches. The true center, the big man who never strayed far from the basket – is a thing of the past. Today’s centers are either yesterday’s forwards or seven-footers that can shoot and run the floor.

Players floating from guard to forward and even sometimes to center, and back, all within the same game. “Players that can guard multiple positions on defense and stretch the floor and play within a free-flowing system on offense are highly valuable in today’s game,” says Hanlen.

The reason for the change, other than the harnessing of a global talent base, has a lot to do with defense. The pick and roll – during which one player, usually a taller player, sets a screen on the ball handler’s defender and the spins to the basket – was once an offensive strategy used by only a few teams. Now most, if not all, teams can run the pick and roll with all five players on the court, and any one of the five can set or use the screen. To effectively defend the pick and roll, players need to be able to both defend quick shifty guards and tall springy big men.

But the position-less revolution hasn’t resulted in the NBA getting taller or shorter. In fact, the average height in the NBA, 6ft 7in, hasn’t budged in nearly 40 years. It’s more that classifications have become blurred, with positions much less defined as they once were.

“Because of the style of play common in today’s NBA – one that puts a premium on speed, spacing the floor and the ability to guard the pick and roll – many NBA players have common characteristics – 6ft 7in to 6ft 9in with a

long wingspan,” says Burgos. Now tall point guards aren’t really the exception, rather the rule, as three players in the top-10 of assists per game were 6ft 7in or taller.

“It’s not how big you are, it’s how big you play,” said John Wooden, coach of 10 NCAA championship teams at UCLA. According to David Epstein’s *The Sports Gene* the average ratio of arms to height in the NBA is 1.06, compared to the average man, which has a wingspan equal to his height. That added reach allows players to play ‘bigger’, enabling them to block shots and rebound like a taller player but move like a shorter one.

A recent analysis of the NBA combined found, not surprisingly, that height, standing reach, and wingspan, in addition to other physical qualities, was predictive of NBA performance.

Hanlen agrees, emphasizing that the best players in the league often fit that body type. “NBA teams love length and versatility. Also, if you look at the NBA All-Star teams, along with the Rookie teams, you see a lot of guys in that category.”

But it isn’t just the hybrid guard-forwards that are changing their game, centers are straying into areas of the court once only reserved for six-footers, contributing in ways not seen in past eras of basketball.

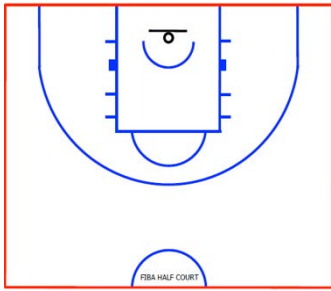
According to basketball-reference.com, in the 1999-00 season, players 7ft or taller combined for just 133 total three-point attempts (Dirk Nowitzki had 116 of those attempts). This season, 15 seven-footers attempted over 100 three-pointers with Lauri Markkanen of the Bulls tossing up over 400 threes (making 145), perhaps perfectly illustrating today’s new age ‘center’.

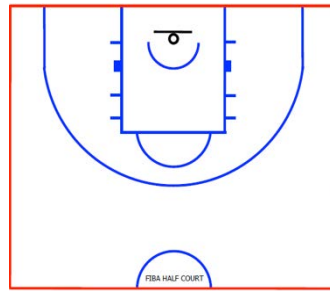
Of course, this has all trickled down to the high school and college level, changing the way young players play and prepare for the NBA. “The new NBA values the three-point line so heavily that we spend more time shooting threes than ever before,” says Hanlen. In recent drafts, Burgos sees players drafted into more hybrid roles, able to slide into multiple positions, not just the one they played in college.

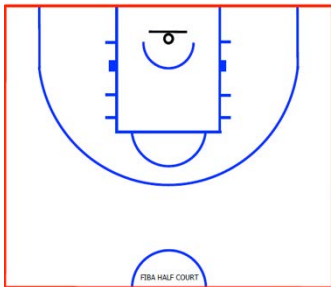
But when every team starts following the same formula, the next great team might just be the one that goes back to the old formula, a classic half-court offense with a dominant big man.

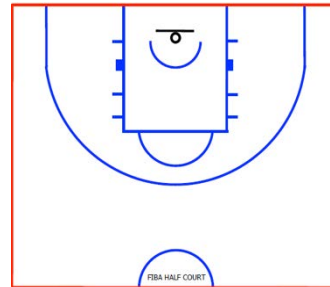
Changing a lifetime of hoops tradition is hard, but a young generation of stars is up to the task. The result is a fast, team-oriented brand of basketball that has the NBA hitting sky-high popularity ratings.

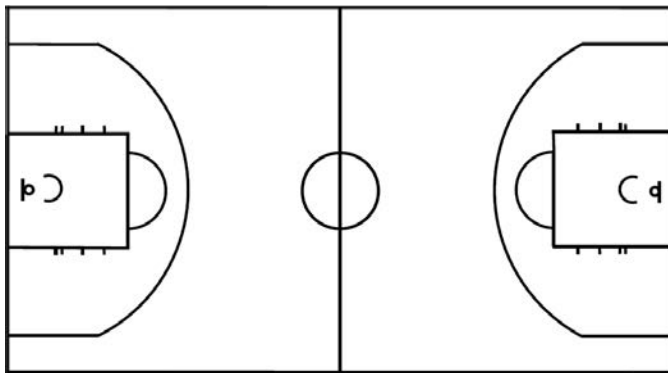
Basketball Court Diagrams & Notes

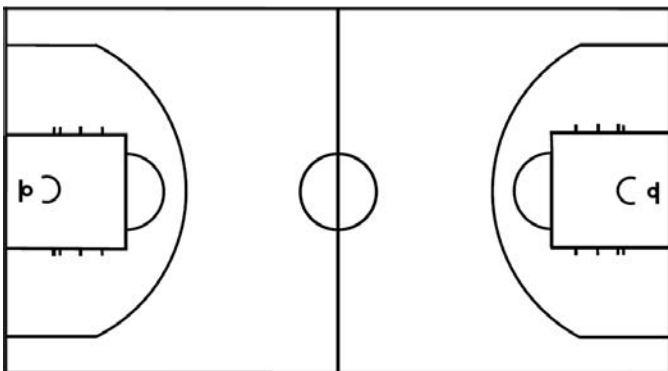




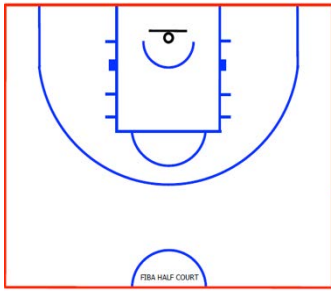


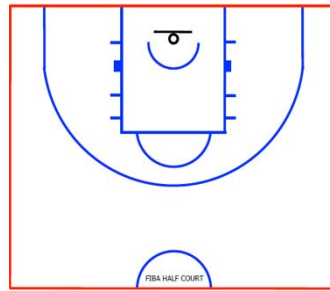


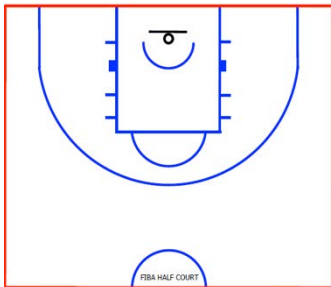


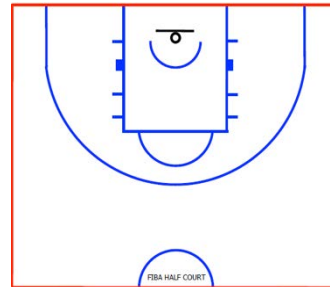


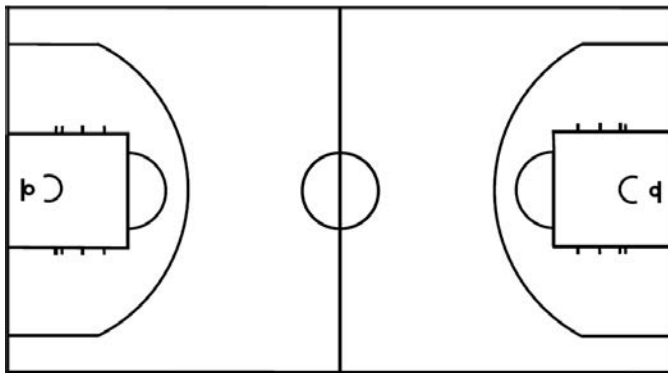
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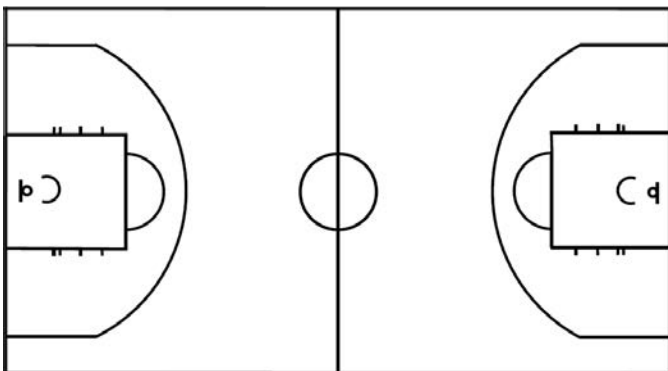












Basketball Court Diagrams & Notes

