

ASSIST20

FIBA ASSIST MAGAZINE FOR BASKETBALL ENTHUSIASTS EVERYWHERE MAY / JUNE 2006



FIBA

We Are Basketball

ZORAN KOVACIC
WOMEN'S U19 SERBIA AND
MONTENEGRO OFFENSE

**ALDO CORNO AND
MARIO BUCCOLIERO**
1-3-1 ZONE TRAP

NANCY ETHIER
THE IMPORTANCE OF
MENTORSHIP

ESTHER WENDER
FIBA EUROPE'S YEAR OF
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

DONNA O'CONNOR
THE "OPALS" STRENGTH AND
CONDITIONING

BRENDA FRESE

THE MARYLAND OFFENSE





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2006 FIBA CALENDAR

MAY		
19 - 23.05	FIBA Women's World League, PR Group A, in Shaoxing, P.R. of China	
31.05 - 08.06	FIBA Asia Champions Cup for Men in Kuwait	
JUNE		
28.06 - 02.07	FIBA Women's World League, PR Group B, in Pecs, Hungary	
28.06 - 02.07	FIBA Americas U18 Championship for Men in San Antonio, USA	
28.06 - 02.07	FIBA Americas U18 Championship for Women in Colorado Springs, USA	
JULY		
04 - 14.07	Wheelchair World Championship for Men, in Amsterdam, Netherlands	
18 - 27.07	FIBA Europe U18 Championship for Men in Amaliada, Olympia and Argostoli, Greece	
21 - 30.07	FIBA Europe U18 Championship for Women in Tenerife, Spain	
AUGUST		
10 - 15.08	Stankovic Continental Champions Cup in Nanjing, P.R. of China	
19.08 - 03.09	FIBA World Championship for Men in Japan	
SEPTEMBER		
12 - 23.09	FIBA World Championship for Women in Brazil	

COACHES

FUNDAMENTALS AND YOUTH BASKETBALL

Women's U19 Serbia and Montenegro Offense by Zoran Kovacic **4**

Shooting Drills by Francis Denis **8**

OFFENSE

The High-Post and the Triangle Offenses by Geno Auriemma **11**

The Maryland Offense by Brenda Frese **16**

The Rational Game by Tamas Sterbenz **20**

DEFENSE

1-3-1 Zone Trap by Aldo Corno e Mario Buccoliero **23**

HOOP MARKET

Women's Basketball by Raffaele Imbrogno **30**

REFEREES AND GAME ADMINISTRATION

The Importance of Mentorship by Nancy Ethier **32**

A Woman on The Refereeing World by Chantal Julien **33**

Right or Wrong? **34**

SPORT MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT

EXECUTIVES AND MARKETING

Fiba Europe's Year of Women's Basketball by Esther Wender **35**

The past and the future of the WNBA **36**

FIBA RESEARCH AND STUDY CENTRE

Behind the Stage by Karen Strahl, FIBA Study Centre **39**

DOCTORS, CONDITIONING COACHES AND TRAINERS

CONDITIONING COACHES

The "Opals" Strength and Conditioning by Donna O'Connor **41**

NEWS

ONE-ON-ONE

Recalcati Expects More Competitive USA **44**

PLANET BASKETBALL

The World in Brief **46**

OFF-THE-COURT

The Odd - The Funny - The Unusual **50**

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FIBA

We Are Basketball



by Zoran Kovacic

Zoran Kovacic is the Technical Director of Youth Women's National teams of Serbia and Montenegro. He coached the Yugoslavian senior and youth women's teams of the Red Star Belgrade, Kovin and Buducnost, winning a total of five senior titles, six Yugoslavian Cups, eleven Under 18, and seven Under 16 Yugoslavian titles. With the former Yugoslavia and then Serbia and Montenegro Women's National teams, he won one silver medal at the FIBA European Championship with the senior team, and two silver and one bronze medal with the Under 18 teams at the FIBA World Championships, one gold medal and one bronze medals at the European Championships. He also won two bronze medals with the Under 16 team at the FIBA European Championships.

The breakup of former Yugoslavian Republics caused a number of new independent states to appear in the Balkans.

All former Federal Republics had by now established their own autonomous state, barring Serbia and Montenegro, which stayed together. The very successful method of work we used until then in the basketball area has changed. Now, we have a much smaller base of players to choose from, and the requirements of competing on the highest level are increasing.

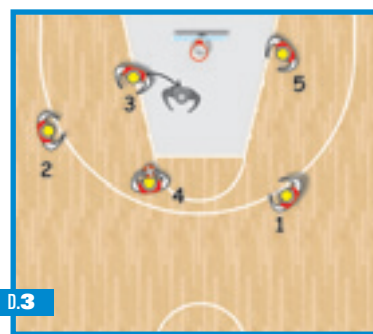
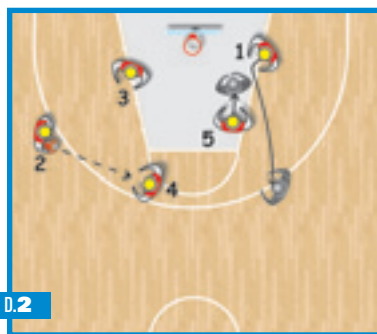
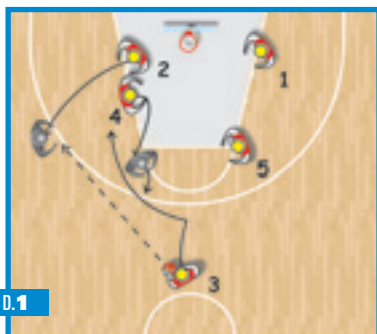
When I became a coach of youth teams, I decided to use the same training approach for all the different age national teams.



Year	Work Description	Number of Micro plans	Days of Practice	Practice Sessions	Exhibition Games	Official Games
2001	Two preparation periods (each 15 days)	4	30	40	6	-
2002	Three preparation period (each 15 days)	7	45	60	9	-
2003	Preparation and Preliminary qualifications for ECW	6	42	51	7	4
2004/a	Preparation and qualifications for ECW	3	21	25	3	5
2004/b	Preparation and ECW	7	49	57	9	7
2005	Preparation and WCW	8	56	62	10	8
Totally		35	243	295	44	24

SERBIA AND OFFENSE





Our staff for the Under 19 World Championship in Tunisia 2005 consisted of:

- ▼ One Head coach.
- ▼ Two assistant coaches.
- ▼ One strength and conditioning coach.
- ▼ One psychologist.
- ▼ One physiotherapist.

We created team offense sets that will be explained further.

TEAM DEFENSE

Let's now briefly review our defense, which is always at the base of a winning team.

Basic rules of our man-to-man defense are:

1. Force the opposing players to the sideline or baseline.
2. When the opposing team reaches our half court, we force the ball handler to one side in order to determine the weak side.
3. Do not allow the opponent to play their regular offense sets.
4. Force the point guard to use weaker hand to dribble the ball.
5. Do not allow the penetration to the middle and make inside passing extremely difficult.

We split our defense to six areas of the half court, so that the players could easily comprehend the defense set.

In addition to this basic defense, we also used these other defenses:

- a) 2-1-2 zone.
- b) Two versions of 1-1-2-1 half court zone press.

TEAM OFFENSE

MAN-TO-MAN

This offense is based on the great individual technical and tactical knowledge of the small forward, 3. This player could play the point guard in some situations against the aggressive defense, and she could play at center, while being guarded by a shorter player. We used these sets during the course of the tournament:

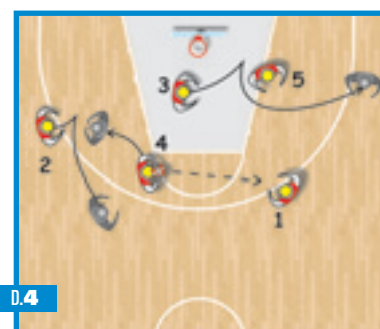
- ▼ 3 plays against man-to-man defense.
- ▼ 2 zone offenses.
- ▼ 3 out of bounds plays (2 from the baseline, 1 from the sideline).

1 zone offense and 1 zone press offense.

This is the description of one of the man-to-man offense sets we used (diagr. 1). 2 and 4 form a stack on the left side of the half court, while 1 is in the low post position and 5 in the high post on the right corner of the free-throw area. 3 passes the ball to 2, and if she is open, she shoots. If she cannot shoot, 4 sets a screen for 3, who goes to low post, where she will back down her defender, if she gets the ball. If she isn't open for the pass (diagr. 2), 2 passes the ball to 4, while 5 sets a screen for 1, who is trying to get in position to receive a pass from 4. If 3 cannot receive the ball (diagr. 3), 4 passes the ball to 1, 3 uses the screen of 5 on the other side of the court, and tries to receive a pass, going outside of the lane. After the pass to 1, 4 sets a lateral screen for 2 (diagr. 4), and 1 has four options: pass to 4 or 5 in the three-second lane, to 2 or to 3 for a jump shot from outside (diagr. 5).

ZONE OFFENSE

The start positions are shown in diagr. 6, with 5 on the low post on the left side of the court, 3 and 4 forming a stack on the right side, and 1 and 2 playing at the same level in the guard positions. 3 opens up to receive the ball from 2, and, if free, takes the shot. If she cannot take the shot (diagr. 6), 3 passes the ball back to 2, uses the screen of 4 and cuts in the three-second lane, also using the screen from 5 (diagr. 8). 2 passes the ball to 1 and 1 passes to 3 (diagr. 7). If 3 cannot shoot, 4 sets a screen for 2, and goes to the high post position at the corner of the free-throw lane. 2 continues her cut to the strong side, uses a screen from 5 (diagr. 8). 3 now has four options: she can pass to 2 coming off the screen of 5; pass to 5 in the low post; pass to 4 in the high post, or pass to 1 in the middle of the court (diagr. 9).

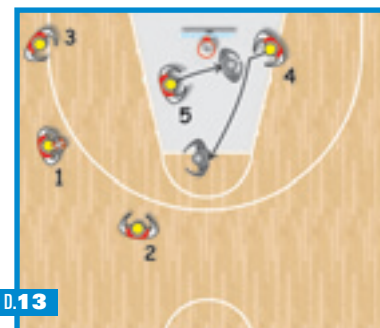
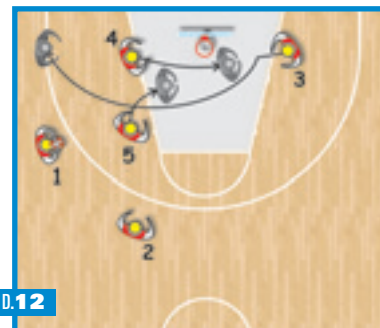
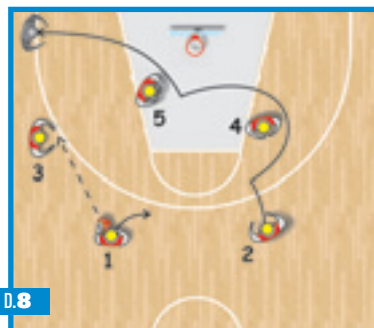
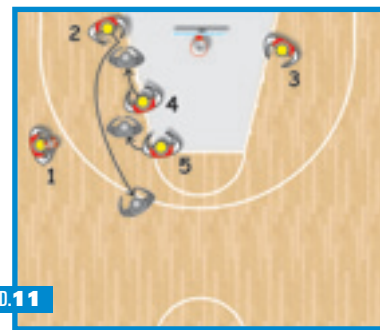
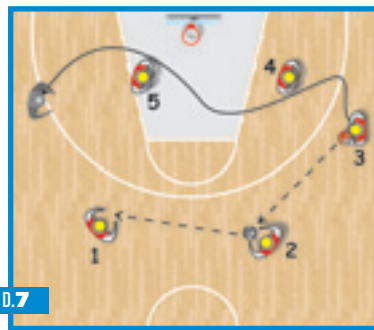
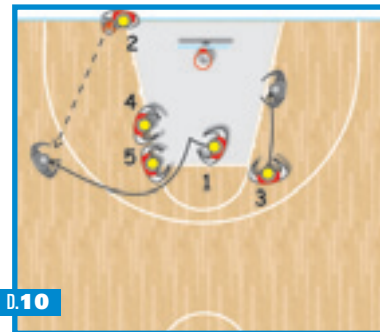
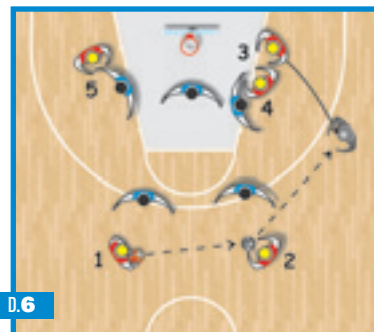


BASELINE OUT-OF-BOUNDS

Here is one of our out-of-bound plays. 2 is the inbounder, and 4 and 5 form a stack on the ball side of the court. 1 fakes to cut in the three-second lane and then using the double screen of 4 and 5, goes outside to receive the ball from 2, while 3 goes low (diagr. 10).

After the pass, 2 uses the stagger screen of 4 and 5 and goes high (diagr. 11). Right after the stagger screen, 4 and 5 make another baseline stagger for 3, who cuts baseline and goes in the opposite corner (diagr. 12). Finally, 5 screens for 4 (diagr. 13).

This method of training provided us another great result: after only 15 days, 10 players from the Under 19 team, which won the silver medal at FIBA World Championships, played in the Under 18 FIBA European Championship, and they went on to win the gold medal.





by Francis Denis

SHOOTING DRILLS

After a twenty-year career as a player, Francis Denis started coaching in 1975 with the Abidjan (Ivory Coast), then with the Ivory Coast National team, where he won the gold medal at African Championship in 1985. In 1986 he came back to France, coaching Grenoble for two years. In 1991 he became coach of the French Women's national team A, winning the silver medal at the 1993 FIBA European Championships. From 1997 to 2002 he coached the French Women's Under 16 national team, winning the bronze medal at the 1999 FIBA European Championship and the gold medal at the 2001 FIBA European Championship. He is the current head coach of the French women's Under 20 national team, which won the gold medal at the 2005 FIBA European Championship.

The preparation for a competition such as the FIBA Youth European Championships requires perfect organization and precise rules. The preparation was extended over a period of six weeks before the beginning of the competition, and was made up of different practice sessions, followed by internal friendly games and exhibition games in different tournaments. The teams played one game a day as a way to prepare for the mental and physical challenge of the FIBA European Championships.

We dedicated a good amount of time to individual skills improvement, with drills based on the spot of the floor, the roles of the players and the game strategies we decided to adopt. These drills, along with goals to achieve, were used as an evaluation index both for the coach and for the players. Described below are some of the many examples of drills we used during the summer of 2004, before the FIBA European Championships played in France, where our national team won a silver medal. They were also used in the 2005 FIBA Under 18 European Championship, where we won the gold medal.

DRILLS

LAY-UP DRILLS

Straight lay-up: 6 running lay-ups, 3 from the right, 3 from the left side (diagr. 1).

Finish the drill with 10 free throws for each player.

Reverse lay-up: The same move, but this time it



must end with a reverse lay-up. It's necessary to make sure the move is made by changing hands (diagr. 2).

Finish the drill with 10 free-throws for each player.

JUMP SHOT DRILLS

One count stop. If a passer is available, 8 jump shots are taken at a 45° angle to the basket after receiving the ball, 4 from the right, 4 from the left side. If there is not a passer, jump shots are made off the dribble. 8 jump shots off the dribble are taken from inside the three-second lane (diagr. 3). For this drill, the coach must take care of these technical details:

- ▼ When finishing the dribble, the legs must be flexed, lowering the center of gravity.
- ▼ The heels must first touch the floor to make a good stop and help maintain body balance.
- ▼ The body must immediately spring up to reach the ideal height needed to execute the shot.
- ▼ The technical sequence must be repeated with a good base and proper flow.

Finish the drill with 10 free-throws for each player.

Change of direction and flare on a back pick. 8 shots, 4 from the right and 4 from the left side (diagr. 4). Again, the coach must take care of these technical details:

- ▼ When finishing the dribble, the legs must be flexed, lowering the center of gravity.
- ▼ The heels must first touch the floor to make a good stop and help maintain body balance.
- ▼ The body must immediately spring up to reach the ideal height needed to execute the shot.
- ▼ The technical sequence must be repeated with a good base and proper flow.
- ▼ For making a good stop on the left side, the heel of the left foot touches the floor first, followed by the heel of the right foot (the sequence is reversed, when the player is on the on the right side of the floor).

Finish the drill with 10 free-throws for each player.

Change of pace. 16 shots, 4 from the right and 4 from the left side of the floor, for each of these two different situations (diagr. 5):

- ▼ After a pass from inside to outside, the player comes out on the short corner (preferable situation).
- ▼ After a pass from inside to outside, the player comes out vertically, after using a screen, faking the different defensive situations and making a curl or flaring out.

It would be preferable to change the order of the shots and situations during this drill.

Finish the drill with 10 free-throws for each player.



GUARDS AND FORWARDS

20 three-point shots (10 from the right and 10 from the left side), after coming out of horizontal and vertical stagger screens (with the chance to come out on the left or on the right side), always paying attentions to foot position and movement (diagr. 6).

- ▼ On the horizontal stagger screen (with the exit on the right or on the left side of the court): the player must make a two-count stop.
- ▼ On the vertical stagger screen (with the exit on the left or the right side of the court): the player must make curl around the screen and make a count stop.

Finish the drill with 10 free-throws for each player.

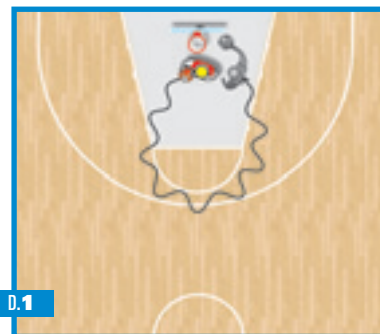
For versatile guards and forwards to develop post-up skills. 10 shots (5 from the right and 5 from the left side) in the following situations (diagr. 7):

- ▼ After taking position in the low post (taking and reading the physical contact);
- ▼ After going up to the high post (to play different situations);
- ▼ After a back-door cut in the low post (cutting along the baseline), an action that begins with a teammate's drive to the basket on the same side of the court (to clear out an area of the court).

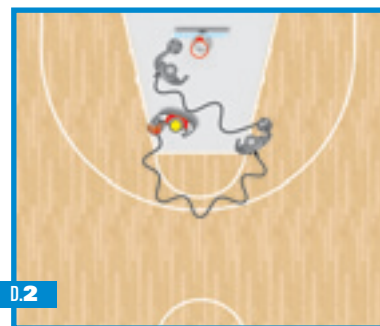
Finish the drill with 10 free-throws for each player.

CENTERS

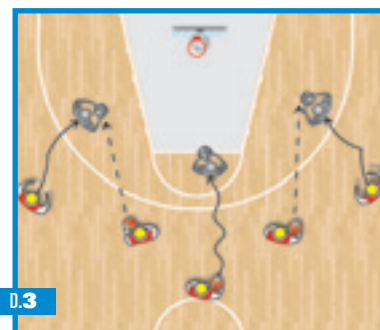
10 three-point shots (5 from the right side and



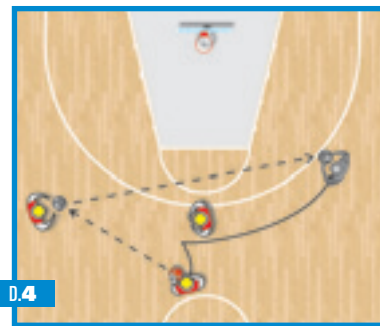
D.1



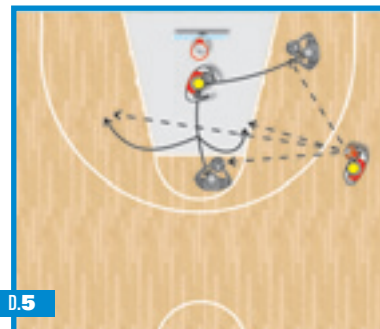
D.2



D.3



D.4



D.5

5 from the left side), after the following situations (diagr. 8):

- ▼ A screen under the basket.
- ▼ Taking position in the low post.
- ▼ To shoot after a normal exit to the three-point line, or after a fake, or after a fake and dribble.

Finish the drill with 10 free-throws for each player.

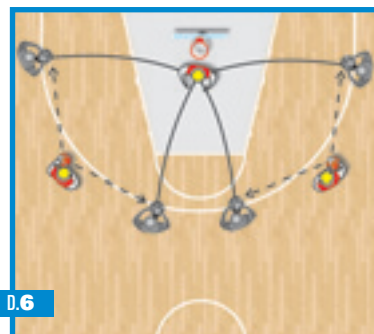
For versatile centers. 20 shots (10 from the right and 10 from the left side), after the following situations (diagr. 9):

- ▼ After taking position in the low post (taking and reading the physical contact).
- ▼ After going to the high post (to play different situations).
- ▼ After a back-door cut in the low post (cutting along the baseline), an action that begins with a teammate's drive to the basket on the same side of the court (to clear out an area of the court).

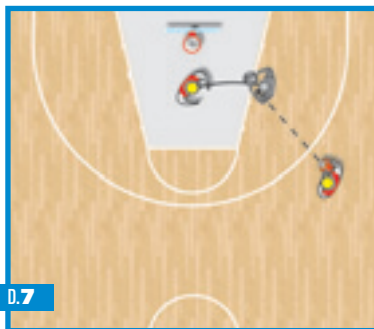
Finish the drill with 10 free-throws for each player.

CONCLUSIONS

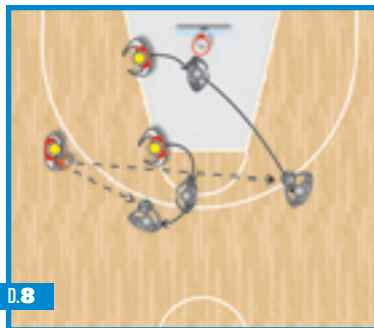
These drills can also be used with players with different levels of skills. To obtain the best results, it's better for a coach to check out the execution of the technical moves, insisting on technical corrections where it's needed (one or two counts stops before shooting, the right flow to shoot, etc.). The coach should also evaluate the success of every single drill. After completing all the drills, a player will have taken a total of 124 shots (including 60 free-throws), but it's possible to modify the quantity of shots for every practice, as well as changing the number of shots from each spot on the court. With our national team, once the players learned the order of the drills, the number of shots increased to 174, and then to 214. Considering the eventual high shooting percentages of our players in the championships, my advice is to increase the number of shots in the practice sessions. This is especially true for the inside players, who must be particularly efficient for this part of the game.



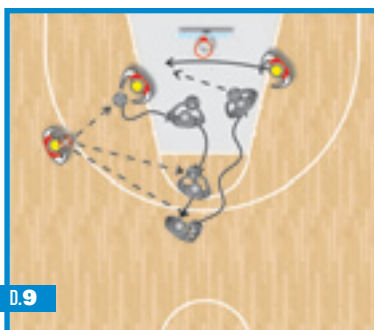
D.6



D.7



D.8



D.9



by Geno Auriemma

THE HIGH-POST AND THE TRIANGLE OFFENSES

Geno Auriemma, 2006 inductee in the Basketball Hall of Fame, was women's team assistant coach at the University of St. Joseph's, and then at the University of Virginia. As head coach of the University of Connecticut, he won five NCAA women's titles. This Italian-American coach was chosen as Women's National Coach of the Year five times by different organizations, and coached six collegiate Women's National Players of the Year. He also won a gold medal as assistant coach of the U.S. Women's National team at the Sydney Olympic Games, and a bronze medal as the head coach of the women's team at the 2001 FIBA Junior World Championship.

The basic move from which we start to teach this offense is the split cut, which is a cut of two players around the high post. The first one, who passed the ball, cuts first (diagr. 1). The center can pass the ball to one of the two cutters, or she can turn, face the basket, and shoot the ball herself.

When I was young, the players were not indicated as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, but simply as two guards, two forwards, and one center. So many times I will mention the two guards, who cross the mid-court line practically at the same time, and one center, who goes in the high-post position whenever it's possible. The reason we cross the mid-court line with two guards is that it's difficult for the defense to double team when the offense moves this way.

After the ball is passed to 1, 2 makes a cross cut and, if she is free, receives the ball from 1 (diagr. 2). If not, 1 goes to the middle of the court. She cannot be trapped here, because there is always a teammate near her, who will punish the trap.

If 1 is overplayed, she makes a backdoor cut going towards the mid-court line, or, if she receives the ball, she can pass to 2 or dribble, crossing towards the mid-court line (diagr. 3).



2's defender cannot trap, because there is immediately a pass back or 2 can easily go behind the ball line and help the dribbler. Besides, we can send the center away from the ball, after the inbound pass, because we do not need her as a safety. In this way, we can avoid to have the center dribbling the ball.

A basic detail: the guard without the ball does not cross the mid-court line until the dribbler herself: she can be a safety valve and receive a pass from 1 (diagr. 4), when the defense gets tight.

When we dribble over the mid-court line and are able to pass the ball to the post, we make the split action with the first passer, who cuts first.

Here are the various options:

- ▼ Pass and cut.
- ▼ Pass and make a screen.
- ▼ Pass, fake a cut, and come back.
- ▼ The center can pass to one of the cutters, or else fake a pass, and then play one-on-one.

The key point of this action is that we want the defenders of the two guards to turn their heads and watch the ball as it reaches the high post. It's difficult to play good defense in this situation because the defenders do not know where the offensive players will go.

I would like to underline that the success of this play does not depend on the quickness of the two guards, because they can beat the defenders even if they are slower: they can count on reading the defense on different options and on the two different cuts.

THREE PLAYER SET

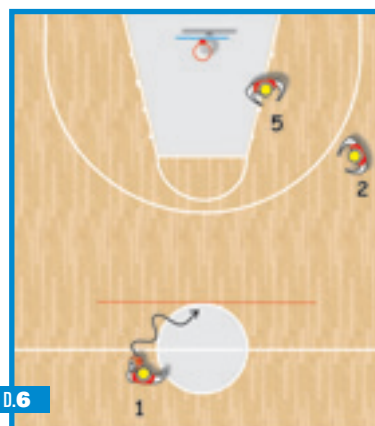
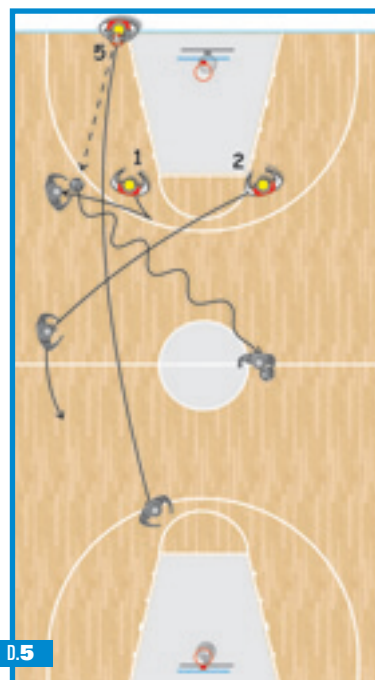
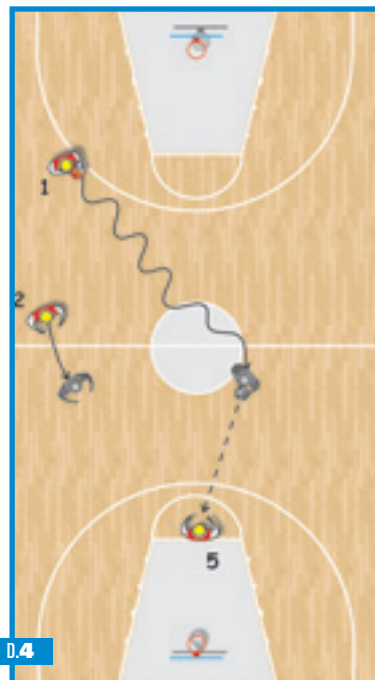
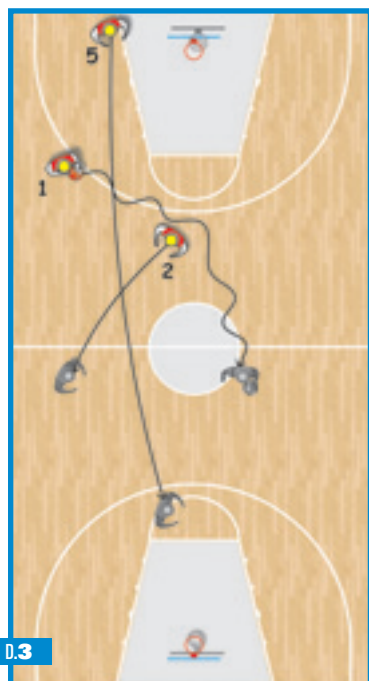
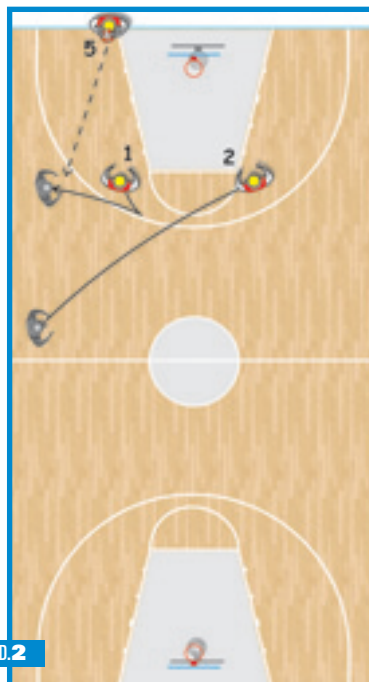
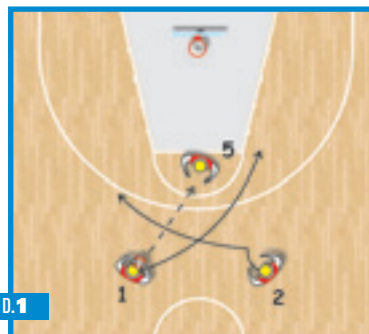
We start to build the split simulating a situation of a rebound, baseline out-of-bound, and then the split at the beginning of a 3 vs 0 and then a 3-on-2 (diagr. 5).

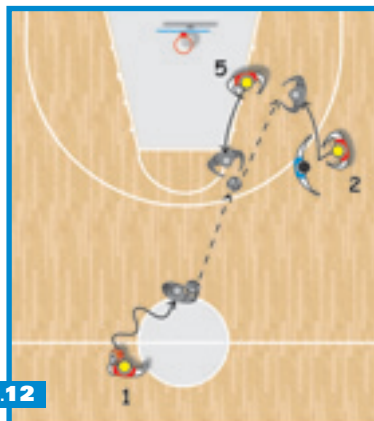
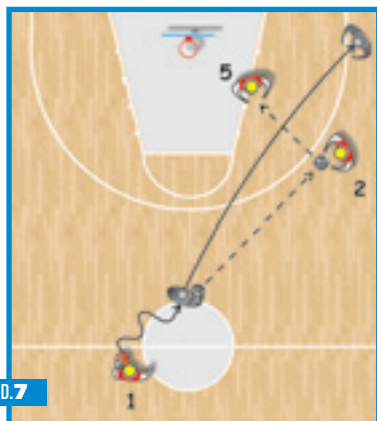
We set the players in three lines, with a guard, who brings the ball on offense starting from over the mid-court. There is also one mid post player and one at the free-throw line extension. 1 crosses the mid-court line and then changes direction. She must pass the ball to the forward before going out with both feet from the center court circle: this is the time for deciding where to pass the ball (diagr. 6).

We set the players in three lines: 1 passes the ball (again, before going out with the feet of the center court circle), and then cuts and goes in the corner on the ball side (diagr. 7).

2 passes the ball to the mid post and then 1 and 2 make the split cut (diagr. 8). The center must be active and smart to read the defenders' moves and capitalize on their mistakes. It's a must to read the defense, both for the cutters, as well as for the center with the ball. It's also very important to have a good alignment between the forward and the center (diagr. 9):

- ▼ The forward must be outside the three-point line, at the free-throw line extension.





- ▼ The center must be at the mid post position, with enough space between her and the baseline for the cut of a teammate. There should also be enough room to let her play one-on-one as a final option.

We say to the players that no move is prearranged, but, again, they must read the defense and let that set up determine what will work best.

Here, for example, are two other options after the pass to the mid post:

- ▼ 1 can anticipate the cut (diagr. 10) or
- ▼ Makes a curl cut around 5, without going in the corner (diagr. 11).

Let's now assume that the forward 2 is overplayed: here are the different solutions:

- Backdoor. 5 comes high at the corner of the free-throw area, facing the midcourt line, and automatically 2 will make a backdoor cut to receive the ball (diagr. 12).

In short, when the ball crosses the mid-court line, the play becomes a three-player collaboration: 5 must read the defense and see if her teammate is overplayed. Then she must offer the choice of the entry pass to 1.

- Hand off. If 2 goes backdoor, 1 can receive a hand off pass and shoots, or drives to the basket, or 5 can always play one-on-one (diagr. 13).
- UCLA cut. 1 passes to 2, makes a cut on 5, and then goes on the opposite corner. 5 then does a pick-and-roll with 2: 2 can shoot, pass to 5 on the roll, or make a skip pass to 1 for a three-point shot (diagr. 14).
- Post up. After the pass to 2 and the UCLA cut, 1 can also stop at the low post position (diagr. 15). 2 goes down to pick 1, after the pass to 5 (diagr. 16). 2 then comes high to back screen 5, after 5 has passed the ball to 1 (diagr. 17).

FOUR PLAYER SET

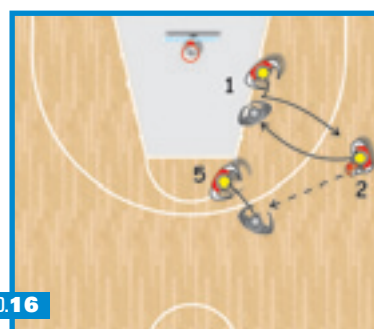
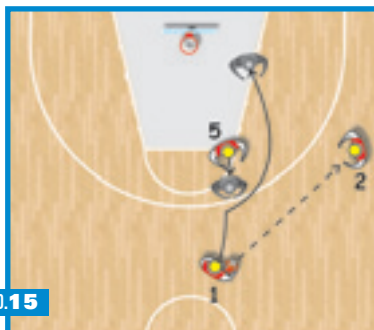
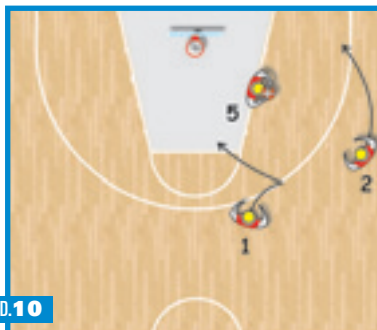
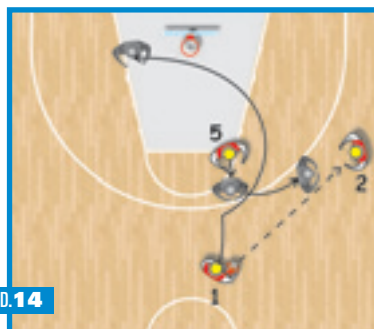
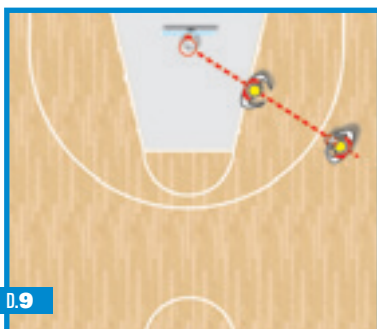
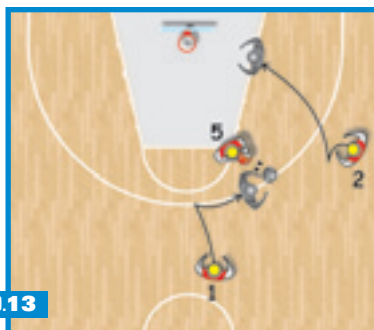
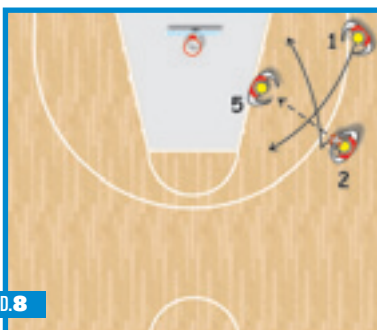
Let's now add another player, playing with three guards and a center. The beginning of the play is the same, with the ball passed from 1 to 3, and from 3 to 5, with 1 going to the corner on the ball side. 2 replaces 1 in the middle of the court, after faking a cut in the other direction (diagr. 18).

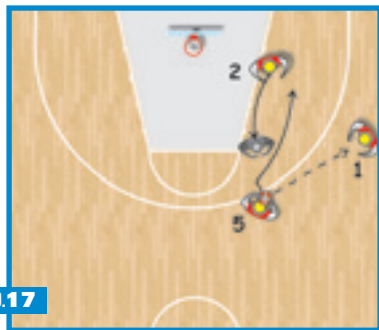
If 5 is aggressively guarded, 3 passes the ball to 1, and 1 passes to 5, who has faked a high cut (diagr. 19). If 1 cannot pass to 5, 5 comes out, makes a back screen for 3, and then plays pick-and-roll with 1 in the corner (diagr. 20).

Spacing is always very important, staying especially outside of the three-point line.

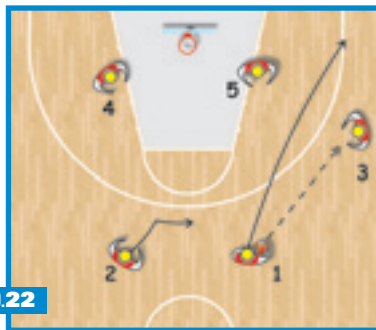
FIVE PLAYER SET

We start with two guards on the line, one forward at

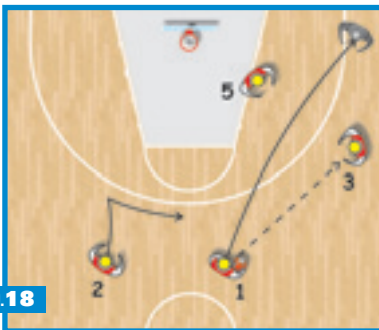




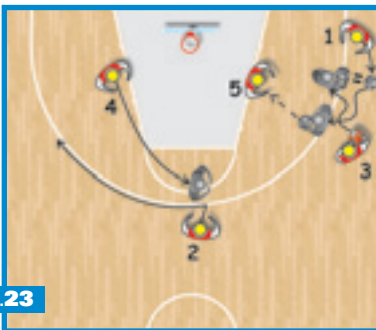
D.17



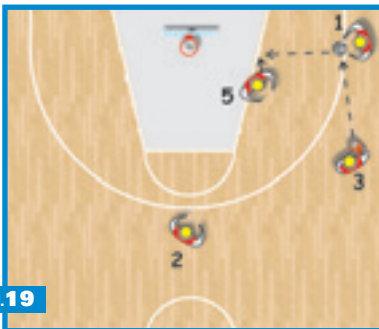
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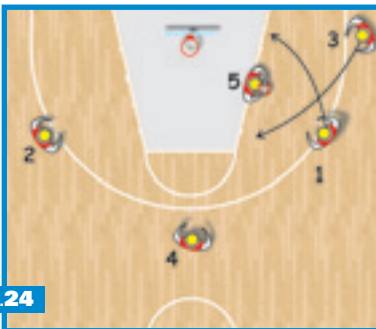
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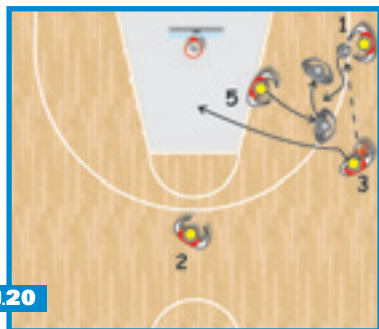
D.23



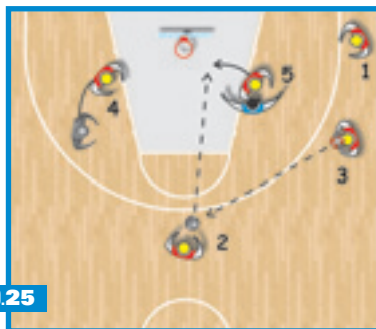
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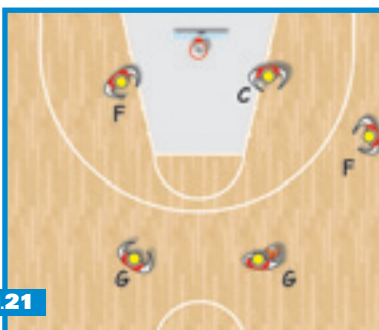
D.24



D.20



D.25



D.21



D.26

the free-throw line extension, one mid-post on the forward side and the other forward at the mid-post position on the other side of the court (diagr. 21).

The play starts when the two guards cross the mid-court line, and the players move based on the defenders' reactions.

When there is an offensive overload in the corner, 2 must always come in the middle of the court. They can now play three-on-three on one side, and two-on-two on the other side of the court (diagr. 22).

If 3 has the ball and cannot pass to 1 or 5, 3 makes a dribble weave, difficult to defend, going towards 1 and then passes to 1. 1 passes to 5, while 2 receives a back screen from 4, and then flares out (diagr. 23). Then, 1 and 3 make a split cut on 5 (diagr. 24).

If we cannot pass directly to 5, we reverse the ball from 3 to 2, who is set in the middle of the court and outside of the three-point line. 2 can pass inside to 5 (diagr. 25).

If nothing happens, 4 and 2 play two-on-two on the other side of the court. 2 passes to 4, who comes high, and then 2 moves, based on the reactions of the defense, making a hand off, or a pick-and-roll, using different fakes (diagr. 26).

If 2 is overplayed, 4 comes high, 3 passes the ball to 4, 2 makes a backdoor cut and receives the ball from 4 (diagr. 27).

DIFFERENT OPTIONS

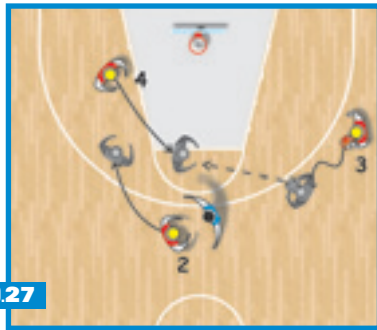
Based on the previous premises, we can build any play. For example, if 3 is overplayed, 5 comes up to the elbow, and receives the ball from 1, who, after the pass, screens for 2, who goes on the forward spot. At the same time, 3 cuts in the lane and goes to the opposite corner (diagr. 28). 5 can make a pass to 2 or 1. We now form a new triangle on the other side of the court, the left side (diagr. 29).

On this side we can create a new three-on-three play, with 1, who passes to 3 in the corner, and then receives a back screen from 4, who then plays pick-and-roll with 3. In the meantime, 5 screens for 2 (diagr. 30).

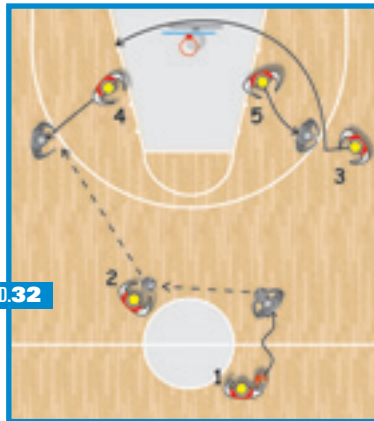
Another option is the entry pass to 4 on the weak side post, with 2, who immediately makes a backdoor cut to receive the ball and goes to the basket (diagr. 31). It's important to underline that 1, the ball handler, must make the entry pass right away, when she crosses the mid-court line.

If 1 does not have any entry pass options to 3, to 5, or 4, she will pass to 2. 4 will pop out at the forward position, and 5 will come out for a back pick for 3, who will cut in the lane, heading in the opposite corner (diagr. 32).

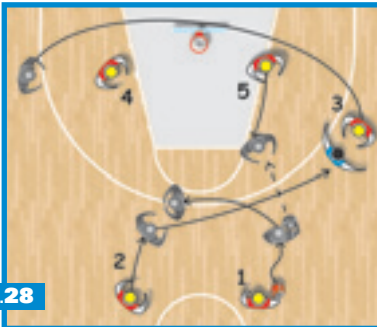
We can also form a triangle with 3, 4 and 5, who,



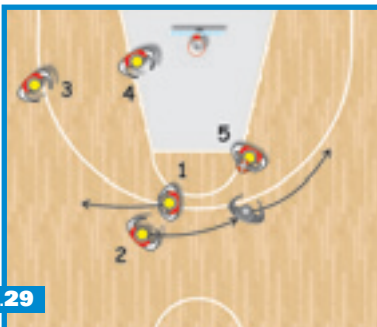
D.27



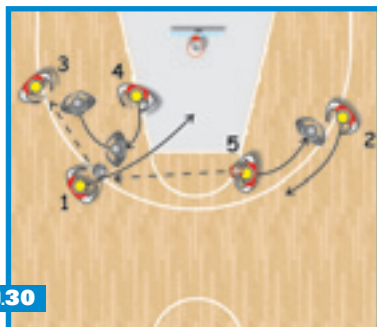
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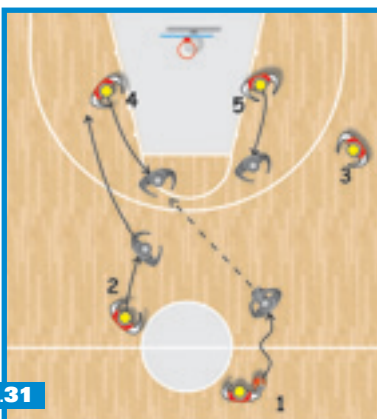
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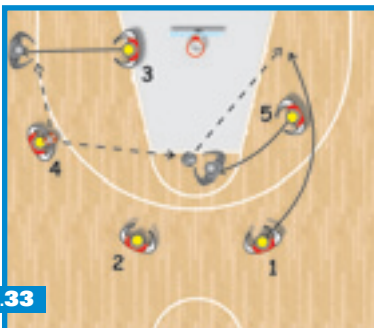
D.29



D.30



D.31



D.33



after the pick, opens up. 4 can pass to 3, or to 5, who can pass to 1 on an automatic back-door cut, right after 5 receives the ball (diagr. 33).

In short, this play can have many options, always has a triangle on one side, and a two-on-two play on the other side.

The keys are:

- ▶ Read the defense.
- ▶ Proper spacing.
- ▶ Patience.





by Brenda Frese

THE MARYLAND OFFENSE



Brenda Frese started her coaching career as an assistant coach at Kent State, followed by positions at Iowa State and Ball State. She became head coach at the University of Minnesota in 1998, where she earned National Coach of the Year honors, and two years later became head coach at the University of Maryland. In 2006, she guided her team to the NCAA Women's Championship and she again won the Coach of the Year award.

I would like to share with you some of our offensive sets that helped Maryland win the 2006 NCAA Women's national title.

MAN-TO-MAN OFFENSE

SET UP

We initially line up in a three perimeter and two inside player set.

The three perimeter players stay outside the three-point line, while the two inside players are set up with one at the corner of the free-throw area and the other opposite to her in the low post position.

CREATING A TRIANGLE

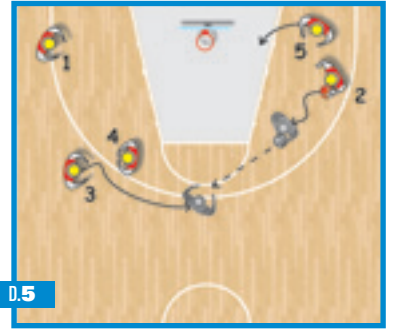
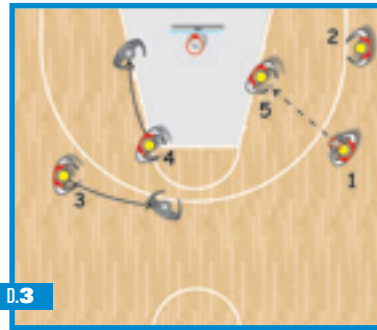
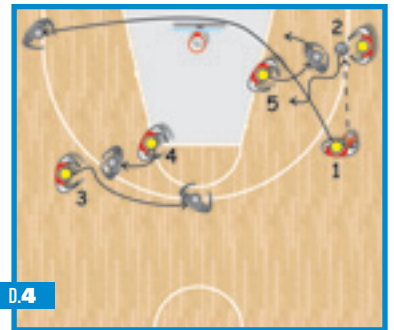
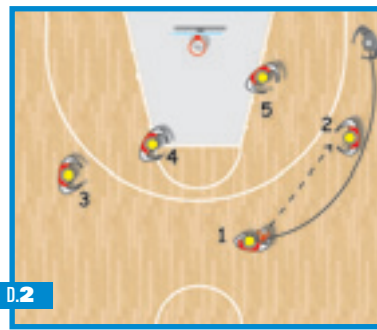
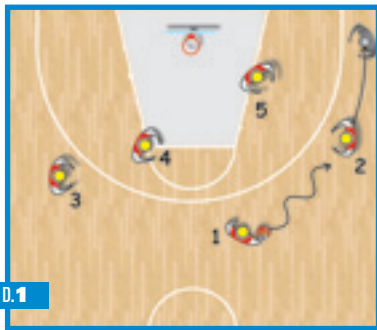
1, the point guard, has two choices for starting this play:

- ▼ If she dribbles towards 2, it means that 2 must go to the deep corner (diagr. 1).
- ▼ If she can pass to 2, 1 will cut and go in the deep corner (diagr. 2).

In this way we start to form a triangle on one side of the court.

ENTRY PASS

Once the triangle is loaded, we are looking for a quick pass to

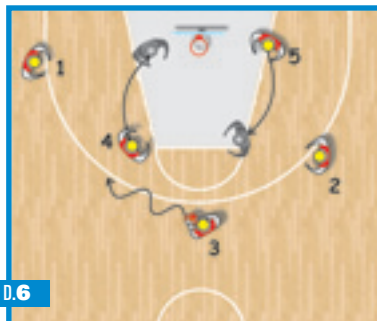


the low post 5, from 1, in this case, or from 2, if 1 is able to pass the ball to 2 on the wing.

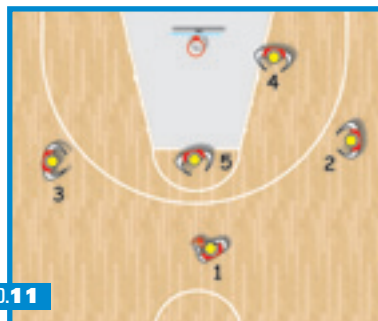
On this pass, 4 will dive hard down to the low post, on the same side of the court, while 3 will slide up (diagr. 3).

If we cannot pass the ball to 5, because she is overplayed on the side, 1 will pass to 2 and 2 will pass the ball to 5.

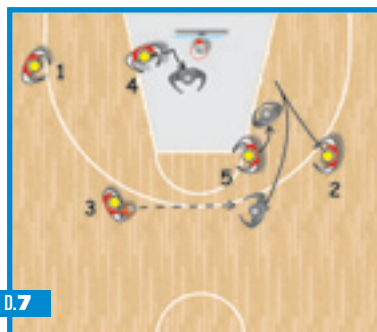
If 1 passes to 2 and 2 cannot pass to 5, 1 will cut in the lane and will go on to the opposite side of the court, outside of the three-point line to clear out the ball side side of the court. 5 will come out and screen on the ball



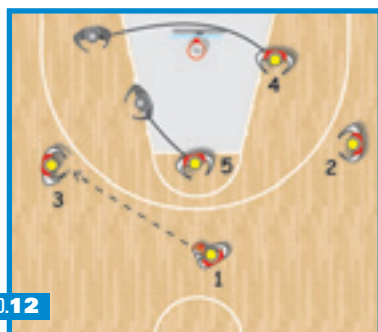
D.6



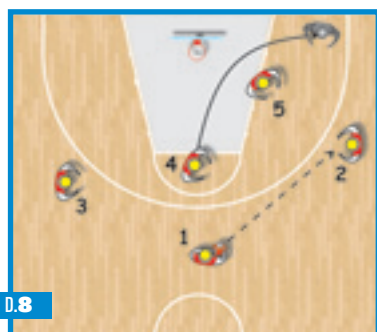
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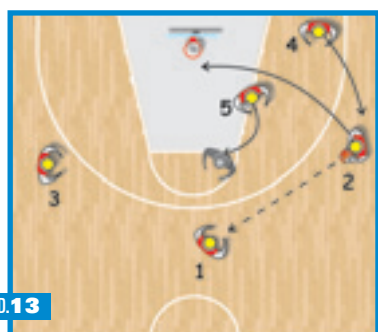
D.7



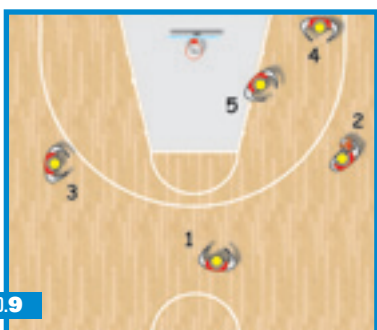
D.12



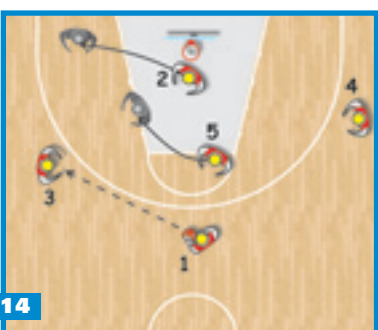
D.8



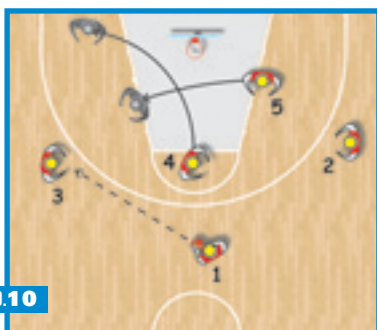
D.13



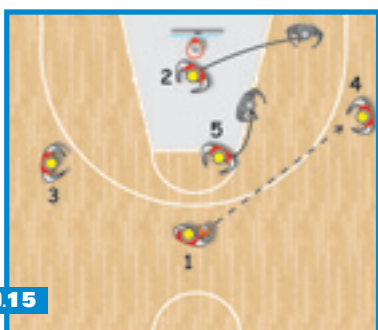
D.9



D.14



D.10



D.15

for 2. 2 will attack the defender and 5 will roll to the basket. As this action is taking place, 4 will screen for 3 (diagr. 4).

If there is no chance of shooting, 2 can come off the screen, dribble towards 3 and pass her the ball, while 5 goes to the low post position (diagr. 5).

3 will now be able to set a new triangle on the other side of the court: she will dribble the ball to the wing position, 4 will go in the low post area, while 5 will come up in the high post position, opposite of 4 (diagr. 6).

If 3 passes the ball to 5, 5 can look to pass to 4, who has cut inside the three-second lane. As an option, we can also do a hand-off pass between 5 and 2 (who must set up her defender before going towards 5 to receive the ball). This offensive play is very hard to guard against and gives a chance to 2 to get open for a shot (diagr. 7).

ZONE OFFENSE

With this offense we want to create maximum players movement that will enable us to use the same basic attack versus various zones and match-ups. I want our team to be able to use dribble penetrations, posts-ups, screens, overload, and slides into the open areas. You can initiate the offense from various sets, such as the 1-4, the 1-3-1 or 2-1-2 set, or out of the transition, with the guards at about 4 meters apart to ensure easy passes between them, if necessary.

ENTRY PASS

On the entry pass, from 1 to 2, in this case, the weak side post 4 cuts to the ball on the short side corner, in an open area on the baseline in the gap of the zone (diagr. 8). The other post, 5, hunts the ball and is in line with the ball and the basket (diagr. 9).

RULE 1

On any point guard to wing pass, the offside post curls to the ball side short corner. The strong side post gets in line with the ball and the basket (diagr. 10).

On a pass to the weak side (diagr. 11 and 12), 5 flashes hard to the ball side and 4 loops to the strong side short corner (it's also possible to start with one of the post players in the short corner).

RULE 2

On any pass from the wing back to the point guard, or from a wing to a wing, the passer makes a skip pass and cuts to the basket, becoming the next short corner player on whichever side the ball is passed. The short corner player replaces the wing that cut, and 5 continues to stay in line with the ball and the basket (diagr. 13).

From here, if 1 swings the ball to 3, then 2 becomes the short corner player on the ball side. 5 stays in line with the ball and the basket (diagr. 14).

If 1 had passed the ball back to 4, 2 would be the short corner player on 4's side, and again 5 would be in line with the ball and the basket (diagr. 15).

BASIC MOVEMENT RULES

When a wing passes to the point guard, or to another wing with a skip pass, that wing first cuts to the basket and becomes the next short corner on the ball side. The short corner player replaces the wing, while the post stays in line with the ball and the basket (diagr. 16 and 17).

RULE 3

On any pass to the short corner, the wing that made the pass cuts to the middle of the lane and becomes the next short corner player on the ball side (diagr. 18).

RULE 4

The short corner player must catch the pass, face up to the basket, shoot, drive, or drag the ball back out to the wing. If a player is double teamed, she should look for the diagonal pass to the point guard or across the baseline to the wing, who has dropped (diagr. 19, 20, and 21).

SCREENING THE ZONE OR MATCH-UPS

Anytime the wing passes to the point, she may screen the strong side back line player in the zone, or match-up. After the screen, 2 slides into the short corner and 4 replaces 2 at the wing (diagr. 22).

Or, the short corner player can back screen the back line of the zone for the alley-hoop pass to 2, cutting to the basket. If the pass is not thrown, then 4 slides out to the wing to replace 2, and 2 slides to the short corner on the ball side (diagr. 23 and 24).

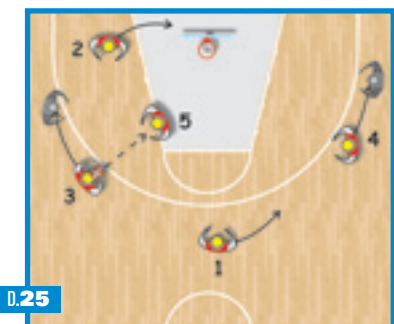
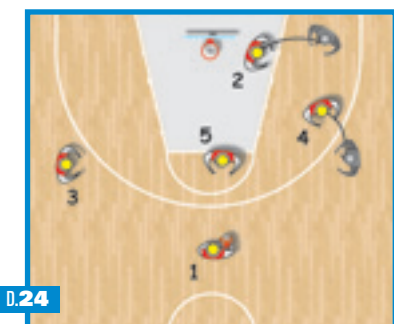
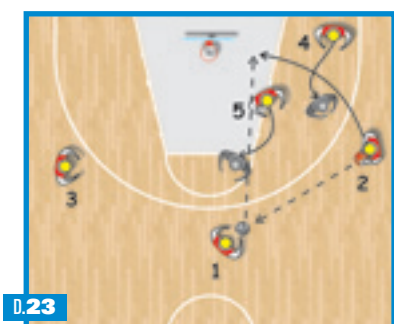
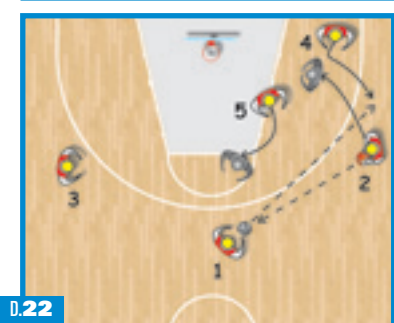
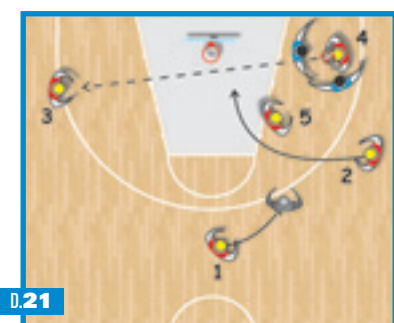
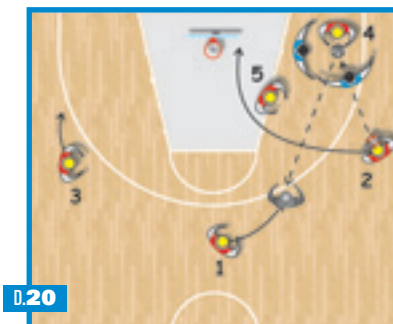
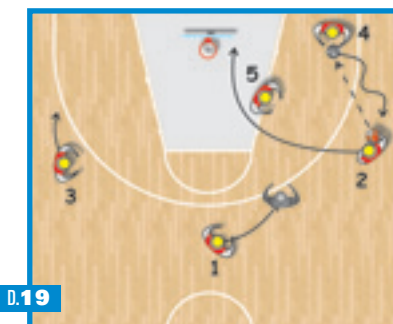
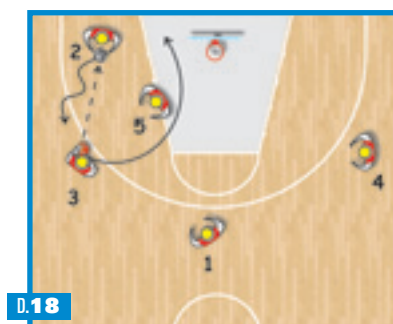
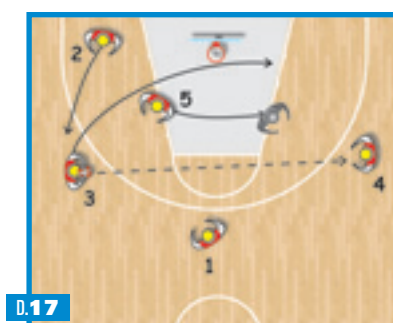
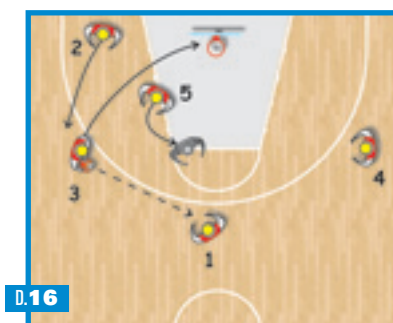
RULE 5

When a pass is made into the post, everyone spots up to shoot. The short corner player changes sides of the floor, looking for the ball (diagr. 25).

OFFENSIVE REBOUNDING

Offensive rebounding is quite effective because the cutters are in excellent position to "get to the glass." In addition, the short corner players have good angles for sneaking in for rebounds. Obviously, we always rebound with both the wings and the posts, while the point guard goes back defensively to prevent the fastbreak.

Against the odd front zones, simply tilt the offense by dribbling the ball off the center court, while everyone keeps the proper spacing.





by Tamas Sterbenz

THE RATIONAL GAME

Tamas Sterbenz is a former player of the Hungarian National Team. He was appointed head coach of the Hungarian Women's National Team in 2004. He teaches economics and management at the Hungarian University of Physical Education. His Ph.D. topic was "Bounded Rationality in Decision Making in Sports Management".

Smart play is a goal of coaches and players in every sport. The winner is always proud of his strategy and emphasizes the correct execution. The loser criticizes the game plan or blames the coach or players for neglecting that. Indeed, do the sportspeople know what should they have done? Do they know how rational strategy should be built the next time? Unfortunately, in most cases they do not know. In this short article, I will analyze the rationality of basketball and describe some strategic principles.

RATIONALITY

A behavior is considered rational if it helps achieve a definite goal. So, first we need to determine the goals in basketball. For example, the goal can be to win a championship, to beat a specific opponent, or in the short term, to score a basket. These goals are simple but they are not the same. Therefore, we need to select one unit to analyze the rationality. In competitive basketball this unit should be the game because performance can be best compared at the game level. During the game the teams alternate possession of the ball. Both teams have equal opportunity to score points and the team that scores more will win the game. We can see the better performance within a game, but if we want to compare several games we need to look at the ratio between points made and number of possessions. To analyze the performance, final score itself is not good indicator. The score should be weighted by the total number of attempts, which also shows the rhythm of the game.

EFFICIENCY

To measure efficiency of defense and offense, methods have been created and used for several decades. Historically, famous coaches such as Dean Smith and Frank McGuire and analysts like Dean Oliver and John Hollinger have worked on developing a measure of offensive rating:

Offensive Rating = Score Points / Possession

Current statistics do not keep count of the number of possessions, but this can easily be counted or estimated. Offense ends with either a field goal or a free-throw attempt or turnover. Obviously, a free-throw will not count for 1 possession. According to the NBA's estimation, a free-throw

should be multiplied by 0.44 to get the correct number of possessions for a whole season (for fast post game analysis 0.5 can be used).

Possession = Field Goal + (Free-Throw 0.44) + Turnover - Offensive Rebound

Offensive rebounds have to be deducted from the equation, because they are still part of the same possession; only the offensive time starts over. This ensures that both teams have equal number of opportunities to score. This does not mean that offensive rebounds are not important, as is described in the next section.

CRUCIAL FACTORS

That team that wins is one whose offensive rating is higher than its own defensive rating, which is equal to the opponent's offensive rating. Both offensive and defensive ratings are good tools for analysis by the coach. Yet, to make the best rational strategic decision, the coach needs to find which elements are the most critical to increase the offensive rating and decrease the defensive rating. According to Dean Oliver, the four basic aspects of a game include:

1. Shooting percentage from the field.
2. Offensive rebounding.
3. Committing turnovers.
4. Going to the foul line a lot and making the shots.

To better understand these crucial aspects, a good guide is that in professional men's basketball the offensive rating is around 1, so a team usually makes 1 point in average per possession (in 1991-92, the NBA's Chicago Bulls reached the highest seasonal offensive score of 1.155 in).

1. If the team finishes all its offenses with a 2-point shot, a 50% shooting percentage ensures an offensive score that is higher than 1. In case of 3-point shots, the team has to have a 33% shooting percentage to reach the same.
2. Increasing the number of free-throws helps the team reach an offensive





score higher than 1. Other than extreme cases, all players make free-throws above 50% success rate.

3. High number of field scoring attempts shows that the team does not commit turnovers. Also, low number of turnovers decreases the defensive rating, because the opponent could not make many easy baskets.
4. Increase in offensive rebounds will lead to more chances to make a close attempt or to get to the free-throw line. Often at the end of the game, following an offensive rebound, the team will get a new 24-seconds on the shot clock, which can lead to winning the game. Offensive rebounds would also increase the offensive rating, and save the game. If the free throws

were missed on purpose, the team would have a chance to make a 2- or 3-point shot.

BOUNDARIES IN BASKETBALL

Every sport is surrounded by rules to make the game more difficult and interesting. These rules, or boundaries, impact the strategies and the decisions in the execution. The following boundaries exist in basketball.

Opponent: in basketball, the goal is not to make many baskets, but to make more baskets than the opponent. The moves don't have to be fast, but faster than the opponent. In decision making, can't neglect the opponent. Success doesn't only depend on a team's decision, but also on the opponent's choice.

Time: there are 24 seconds to finish the possession, and the quarters are 10 minutes long. The remaining time left in the 24-second period or the quarter will always influence the decisions. Rational behavior must take this into consideration. The same shot in the beginning of the possession is irrational compared to the shot at the end of the period, which is necessary.

Space: moves are differentiated by where they take place on the court. Shooting percentage depends on how far the player is from the basket. Rational strategy should increase the expected value of the shooting. The opponent's position on defense affects what the offense should do (rational strategy must differ when playing against press or zone defense).

Personal fouls: the offense must be aware of how the defense can stop the team from scoring. If the defensive team has less than 4 personal fouls, the offensive team should know that rational decision might be to commit a foul.

Result: at all times the actual score will influence tactical decision. Rationality of all tactical decision depends on how it impacts the final score. Decisions throughout the game can be evaluated based on time and score, and risk taking must consider the same factors.

RISK AND UNCERTAINTY

All decision contains risk and uncertainty. Nothing is certain, situations are ambiguous, decisions depend on multiple criteria, and execution depends on the whole team. Even though all these are rational factors, there will be the opponent that will impact the outcome.

In basketball, there are only rational decisions, but not optimal decisions. One must know that success is relative, and it is often affected by good fortune. Rational strategy ensures only long-term efficiency but single actions depend on intuition and anticipation. In a game, both teams have 80 to 90 possessions and sometimes even irrational behavior can lead to success.

During practices, coaches should build boundaries into the drills to teach players to be rational. If both teams play smart and use correct strategy, there still will be a winner and a loser, but basketball will advance!



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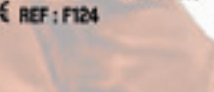
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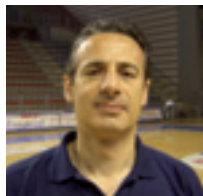
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by Aldo Corno



by Mario Buccoliero

1-3-1 ZONE TRAP

Aldo Corno is the head coach of Taranto, the Italian Serie A1 women's team. He was the head coach of many Serie A1 women teams: Viterbo, Vicenza (where he won 4 Italian titles and 4 European Championships), Como (where he won 8 Italian titles, 5 Italian Cups, 1 Italian Supercup, 1 World Cup for clubs and 2 European Championships), and Schio (2 Ronchetti Cups). As the head coach of the Italian Women's National team, his team won a silver medal at the 2001 Mediterranean Games and at the 2003 University Games.

Mario Buccoliero has been the assistant coach of Taranto since 2000, and his team won a Serie A2 title, the 2003 Italian title, an Italian Cup and an Italian Supercup. He started his career in Taranto as the coach of the men's youth teams.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF 1-3-1-ZONE

I am not at all a "defensive" coach, but I am convinced that without a great defense you cannot build a great team. I started to apply my defensive philosophy more than 20 years ago, and I have used this 1-3-1 zone with most of my teams, either with the clubs, as well as with the Italian National team.

There are different types of 1-3-1 zones:

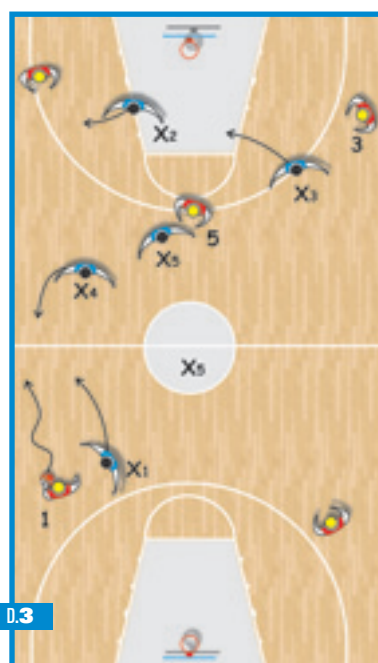
- ▼ Regular: without traps.
- ▼ Half court with the traps only in the deep corners.
- ▼ Three-quarters court, with the traps in the four corners of the defensive half court.

In this article, I will focus on the last two types.

ADVANTAGES

Here which are the advantages this defense can offer:





1. The most important advantage is that this defense is unique in "influencing" the movement of the offense, forcing them to play an unconventional offense, a style of play that is risky and moves them out of their usual offensive spots.
2. It can quickly change the direction of the game and offer decisive breaks for the defense.
3. It's a spectacular defense, that creates excitement with its aggressive traps.
4. It "pumps up" the defense, when well-made stops and steals occur and "shakes" the defense, when players are lazy and not playing aggressive basketball.
5. It creates great problems for the offense to move the ball, forcing them to use lob and bounce passes, slow passes that can easily be stolen.
6. It creates extreme pressure on the offensive perimeter players.
7. It will often create a "paralyzing" effect on the opponents, causing them to make bad passes and force their shots.

DISADVANTAGES

This is a very risky defense (wide spaces to cover, traps), and a little mistake will allow the offense to easily beat you. There is no balance when blocking-out on defense and on the help-side rebounding. It requires a lot of energy, so this zone cannot be used throughout the game. In addition, it's a very technical defense and

requires players with specific skills in order to play it well.

PLAYERS' SKILLS

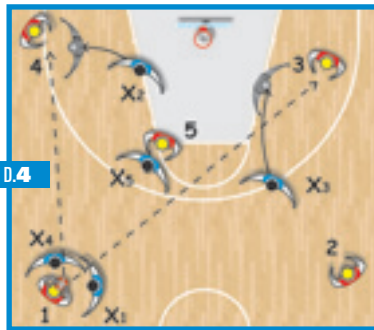
- ▼ This defense requires players, who are able to sacrifice themselves and, from my experience, I find that women will often guarantee that this happens most of the time.
- ▼ Players must totally believe that what they are doing is the best for the team. A coach must be able to sell this defense to the team in order to make it work.
- ▼ Players have to be quick and have excellent athletics skills.
- ▼ Very important aspect: players must be skilled in aggressive man-to-man defensive tactics.
- ▼ You will need months of practice and plenty of patience to build this defense so it can be regularly applied.

INITIAL SET

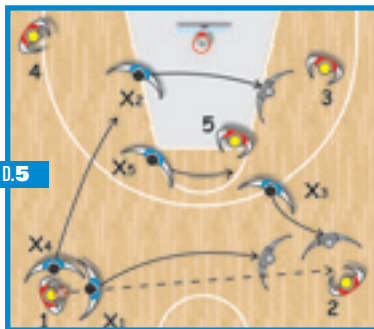
There are not fixed rules for where the players should play. Each coach knows his players best and will have to make individual decisions when assigning positions. Here, for example, is how I set the players when I coached the Italian National team (diagr. 1):

- ▼ X1, Zimerle, the point guard: quick, strong, with quick hands.
- ▼ X4, Balleggi, the power forward: fast, with a great arm span, very agile.
- ▼ X3, Macchi, the small forward: similar to X4, with a good elevation.
- ▼ X5, Paparazzo, the center: tough, good on the passing lanes, intelligent.

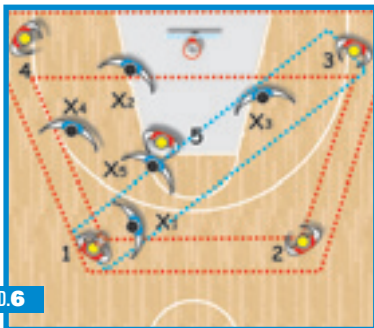




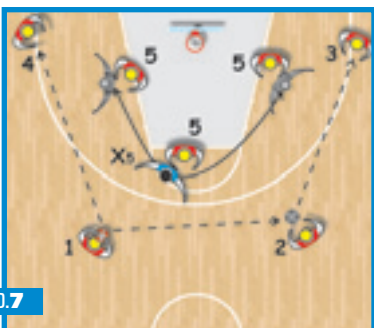
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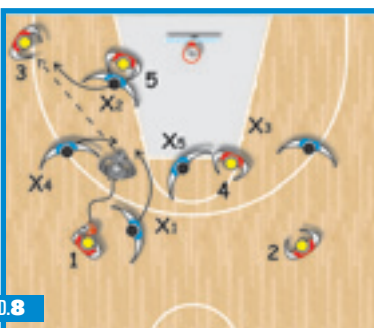
D.5



D.6



D.7



D.8

▼ X2, Masciadri, the guard: quick and powerful, the "playmaker" of the defense, who is positioned in the last row of the defense, sees the entire court, constantly talks with his teammates and alerts them to movements. She is the key for the 1-3-1 defense.

TRAPS ON THE FOUR CORNERS

If we decide to use the three-quarters 1-3-1 trap, we will double team on the four corners of the defensive half court (diagr. 2).

GLOBAL TEACHING METHOD

For teaching this defense, I show how this defense works for all the players (global method), and then I divide the defense into the five parts, so each player will know her role (analytical method), and then go back again to all total defense (global method).

After a free-throw, we run the defense high and we trap right after the half court line (diagr. 3).

Here the individual tasks:

- ▼ X1 forces the ball handler on one side of the court, and does not let any dribble penetration in the middle of the court.
- ▼ X4 slides down and double teams only behind the mid-court line.
- ▼ X5 always plays behind the ball and fronts the offensive player, keeping her from receiving the ball.
- ▼ X2 covers the player in the corner or the low post.
- ▼ X3 slides down to steal the potential diagonal pass.

If the double team is successful, we will be in the situation described in diagr. 4. We will try to intercept the pass with X3 or X2, leaving 2 open, who is the least dangerous of all the offensive players. If we decide to continue with the high traps (diagr. 5): if 1 passes the ball to 2, X3 runs to cover 2, X1 double teams 2, X5 follows the movement of the ball, and fronts 5. X2 covers 3 on the opposite corner, and X4 slides down, looking to steal a possible pass to 4 and to protect the basket.

1-3-1 ZONE WITH TRAPS IN THE CORNERS

When and how to run it (diagr. 6):

If there are no "desperate" situations and we do not want to run too many risks. After the first trap, we double team only in the corners. The main aspect of this defense is to "cover" the passing lanes. This defense then "invites" penetrations in

the middle of the lane. This forces the offense to make slow (lob or bounce) passes. It's very important that the defense relies on their arms and hands. Sometimes, we let the defenders jump to put more pressure on the offense.

X5 must always be behind the ball, and in front on the high post. In addition, he must be ready to slide down and front the low post (diagr. 7).

TRAPS IN THE LOW CORNERS

These moves are fine when you play defense that double teams in all four corners of the half court.

X4 and X1 jam the lane if an opponent is in shooting range or tries to drive (diagr. 8). X4 must be aggressive on the ball. The player must not slide on the pass fake. X2 covers the low post and goes outside only when a pass is made.

If the ball reaches the player in the corner, we run the double team and rotate as in diagr. 9.

First option: if 3 has both feet facing towards the basket, X2 and X4 aggressively double team. X5 runs down to cover 5 in the low post, X1 guards the high post, and X3 jams in the middle of the lane, covering the basket and all lob passes.

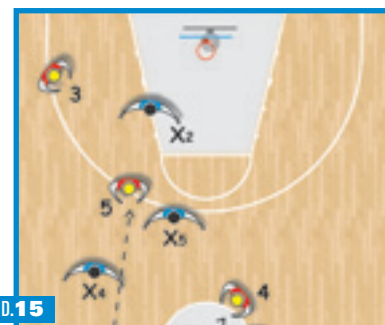
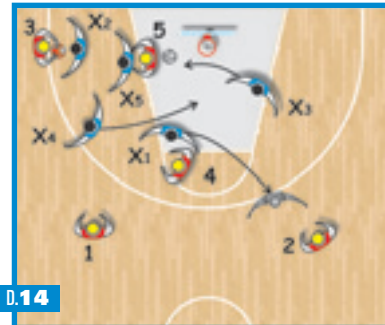
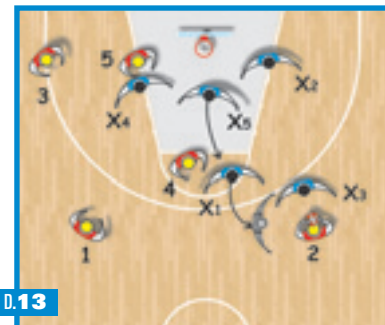
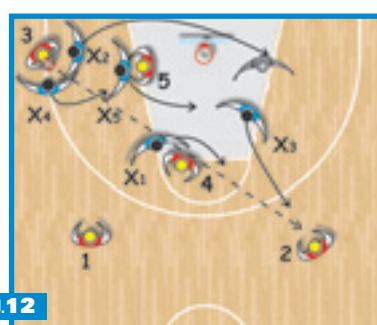
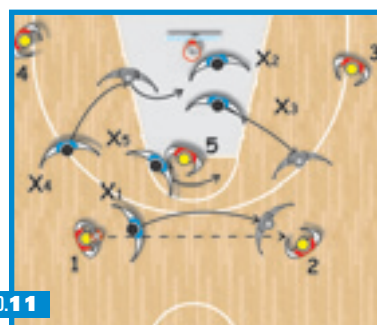
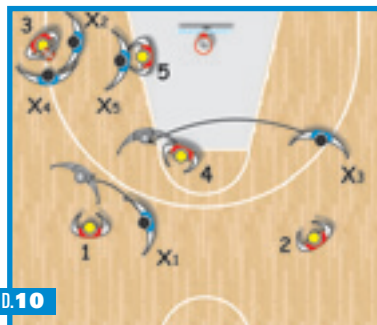
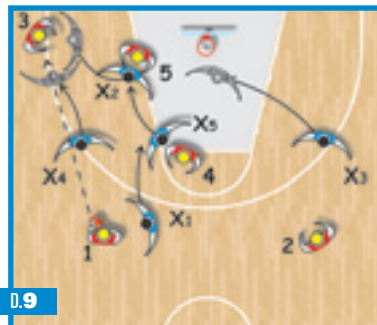
Second option: if 3 is with his shoulders towards the basket (diagr. 10): X1 goes in the passing lane nearest the ball, X3 comes high to anticipate 4 at the high post. We only leave a passing choice to 2 on the other side of the court. This forces the offense to make a long and slow (lob or bounce) pass to this player, who is the most distant and least dangerous offensive player.

Important tips:

- ▼ Convince the players - and coach them with the appropriate drills - that, while they are trapping, they must force a mistake or cause a bad pass to be made while applying pressure on the trapped opponent.
- ▼ Do not ever let the ball enter on the high post area, which is the most dangerous spot on the floor. Once it makes it to the high post, the ball can be passed on both sides of the floor.

PASS FROM GUARD-TO-GUARD

If the ball is passed from one guard to the other, the defenders, who are always covering the passing lane, rotate as shown in diagr. 11.



THE DANGEROUS SIDES

Skip Pass

If there is a skip pass from 3 to 2, the defense is placed in a very difficult situation (diagr. 12):

- ▼ X3 must run to aggressively guard 2 with his arms up.
- ▼ X1 must go around the high post 4, until X5 recovers on him.
- ▼ X5 goes on 5 and X2 runs in the lane, ready to cover 5. At the same time, X4 moves towards the ball.

The following moves are then made (diagr. 13):

- ▼ X1 recovers on the passing lanes.
- ▼ X4 guards 5 in the low post.
- ▼ X5 recovers on the high post.

Blocking Out

If the shot is taken from the corner before the double team, we have great problems because X5 is facing 5, who is now free to go in for the rebound (diagr. 14).

We will react in this way:

- ▼ X3 goes on 3.
- ▼ X1 is of a basic importance on the help-side and blocks out on 4 or on 2.
- ▼ X4 recovers on 4 or 2, who is on the wing.

We will always be with one less defender, but quickness and collaboration between the players should erase this problem.

Double Posts

The most difficult offense to face is one

with two high posts (we also use this offense versus the 1-3-1 trap).

We move in this way (diagr. 15):

- ▼ X5 anticipates 5, who is the "inside" post.
- ▼ X3 anticipates 4, who is the "outside" post. 2 is the most dangerous player, and can hardly be trapped.

If the ball is dribbled in our defensive half court by 2, we will move in this way (diagr. 16): X3 will close and go on the passing line. X5 must recover on 4. X2 will stay behind, ready to guard a post if this player moves down low. X4 closes on 5 or 3 under the basket. If 4 goes low, he will be guarded by X2. Naturally, when we are in this situation, we do not make the first high trap. We will only make the traps in the corners.

ANALYTICAL TEACHING

Now we start to teach in an analytical way to build up the 1-3-1 trap (diagr. 17).

One-on-One Drill

This drill is run for X1, who plays in the first

row of the zone, and must force 1 towards one side of the court. The defender must absolutely prevent the ball being returned to the right side, in this case, of the diagram.

Two-on-Two Drill

We increase the difficulty for the defender, playing two-on-one, and two-on-two (diagr. 18).

X1 must push the ball handler on one side of the court, and also force 1 to make a lob pass to 2.

X3 helps, closing on 2, letting X1 recover.

Contesting the Post Drill

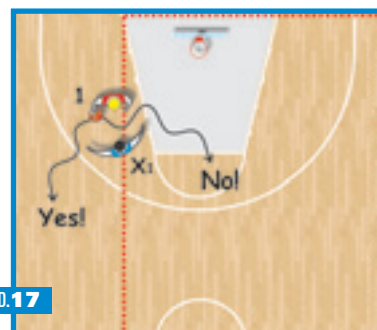
Contesting the pass for low post is basic work (diagr. 19).

The perimeter players pass the ball to each other, and X5 runs to contest the post, always staying between the ball and basket.

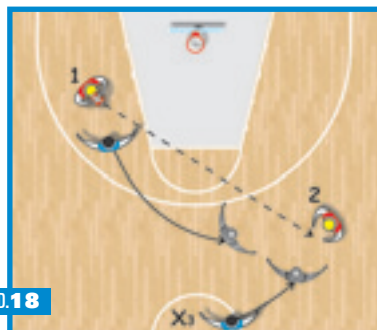
TRAPS

One-on-two Trap Drill

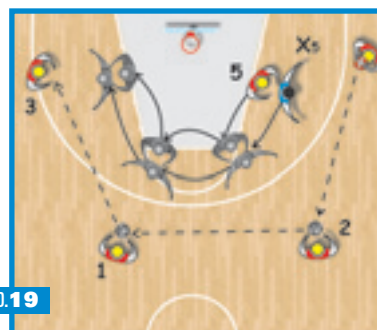
Drills for teaching the proper double teams: 2 vs 1 at three-quarters court (diagr. 20).



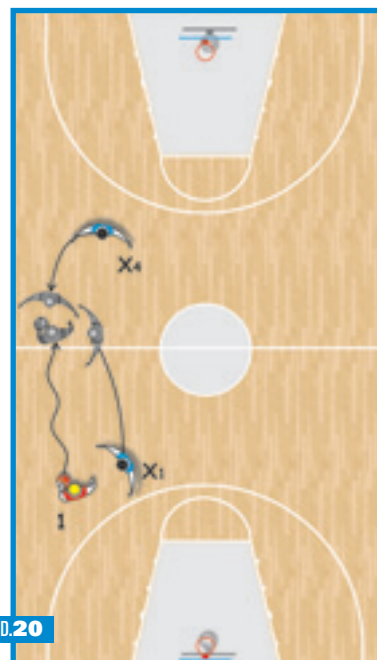
D.17



D.18



D.19



D.20





At the beginning, we facilitate the defense by playing two defenders against one offensive player, giving two or three seconds for getting over the mid-court line. X1 and X4 must force the ball handler towards the sideline and then double team. The defenders must use their legs and arms without making a foul, covering the ball, and trying to force a 5-seconds violation.

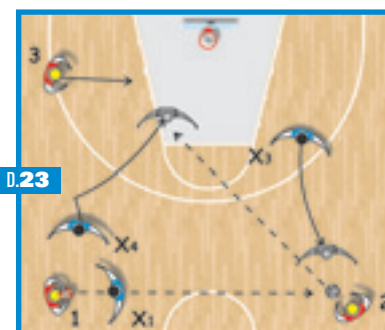
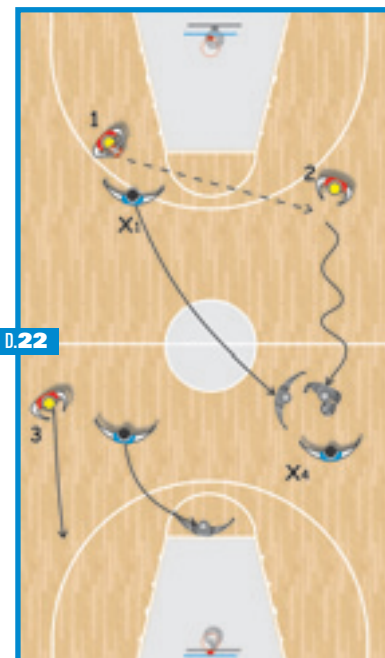
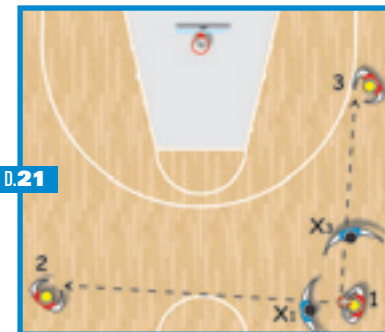
Two-on-Two Trap

We now work two-on-two on different

situations, aggressively contesting the pass to the second offensive player (diagr. 21).

Three-on-Three Trap

We work three-on-three to improve the timing of the traps (diagr. 22). We put limitations on the offense, which now cannot use the post in the middle of the court. Besides, the offense must get over the mid-court line by having one of the guards dribble the ball.



"Goalkeeper"

This is for the defensive forwards X4 and X3. After a trap and a skip pass, they must "dive" behind and recover, possibly stealing the "diagonal" pass. Although this is a very dangerous move for the defense, it is a key moment in our 1-3-1 zone trap.

BACK TO THE GLOBAL TEACHING

At the end of the session, we work four-on-four, and finally we play five-on-five.



Draft some real all stars

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by Raffaele Imbrogno

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

In this section, we introduce the latest books, videos, CDs, and other tools that are primarily aimed at coaches, but certainly useful for all of our readers. Please send your suggestions and comments about our basketball-related media for review in this section.

Raffaele Imbrogno has been coaching since 1980. He is an Instructor for the Italian National Coaches Committee of the Federation and has been Director of the Italian Basketball Federation Study Center. Imbrogno is also the author of several technical basketball publications.



FIBA Europe has created a special program to promote women's basketball over the course of the next 18 months. Here are the main goals:

- ▼ To increase the popularity of the game throughout Europe for women.
- ▼ To increase interest and encourage the recruiting of players of all ages.
- ▼ To increase number of women referees and coaches, in the European championships and International championships as well.

To study in depth the women's basketball, we will now review some of the most popular womens' videos, DVDs, and books.

Geno Auriemma, a 2006 inductee to the Basketball Hall of Fame, is the head coach of the women's basketball team of the University of Connecticut. An Italian-American who emigrated to the U.S. from Montella, Italy when he was seven years old, Auriemma is

one of the most famous and successful U.S. women's college basketball coaches. His teams have won the NCAA Women's championships five times. He has produced several DVDs over the years and Championship Productions recently released two interesting selections: "*Geno Auriemma-70 minute Players Development Workout*" and "*Geno Auriemma-The Simplified Zone Offense*".

In the first disc, Auriemma explains his ideas about how a coach can help to develop a skilled offensive player by using 20 specific drills. He begins with full-court drills, focusing on opening fastbreak passes, long passes, and running layups. He stresses that for a player to be successful, there must be effective communication on the court between teammates. The disc ends with half-court drills featuring jump shots, running lay-ups, proper use of pick-and-rolls, low post moves, and how to properly use a screen.

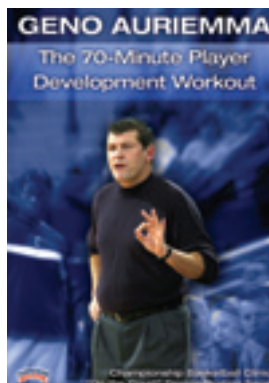
In the second DVD, UConn's coach describes

how to best play against zone defenses, such as the 3-2 and 1-3-1. He offers plays for getting a quick shot and plays developing from from inbounds passes, both from the baseline and the side-line.

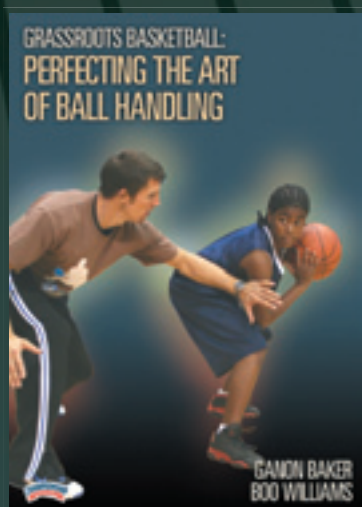
The head coaches of the two teams that played against each other for the 2006 NCAA women's title have published technical material that is now available. The national champion, Maryland, is coached by Brenda Freese, a young rising star of college basketball. After only four years at the University of Maryland, the 35-year-old Freese brought Maryland to the highest levels of women's basketball by employing her particular defensive and offensive ideas. These coaching concepts have been captured in videos produced several years ago. The first, "*The 2-3 Match-up Zone*" was released by Coaches Choice in 2001. In 42 minutes, Freese covers all the principles and techniques needed to create an effective 2-3 zone with match-up principles. Several drills are described to create the zone defense with particular attention paid to proper player positioning based on their individual skills. The second of Freese's videos, "*Championship Shooting Drills*", was released by Championship Production in 2002, and it is dedicated to all aspects of shooting, free-throws in particular. She recommends a variety of drills and practice sessions using three players. The coach of the last NCAA tournament runner up team, Gail Goestenkers, head coach of Duke University, is author of two interesting works: "*Team Chemistry & the Complete to Scoring Opportunities*" and "*Transition Offense & Quick Hitters*". In the first DVD, the coach shows how certain practice drills could be useful to the team. The second DVD focuses on options for

Duke's famous fastbreak and the main solutions that can be employed after the transition.

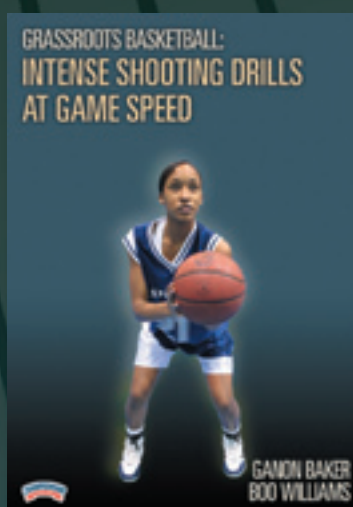
Here some other interesting DVD titles: Doug Bruno of DePaul University has "*Eight Interchangeable Offensive Sets*"; Kay Yow, the coach of the U.S. Olympic champion women's team (1988), Hall of Fame Inductee, and coach of North Carolina State has "*13 Individual and Team Drills for Improvement*"; Tara Venderveer, coach of Stanford University, winner of two NCAA Championships, and elected three-time National Coach of the Year, has "*25 Offensive Practice Drills for Success*"; and Harry Perretta, coach of Villanova University women's basketball team, released "*The Unscoutable Zone Offense*", "*The Wildcat Spread Offense*" and "*The Unstoppable, No Mistake 5-Out Motion Offense*". Finally, Sylvia Hatchell, a college coach for 30 years, has accumulated more than 400 career wins at the University of North Carolina. In 2006, her Tar Heels made the NCAA Final Four and Hatchell was named the Associated Press's Coach of the Year. She was inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in 2004. This July, her 256-page book entitled, "*The Complete Guide to Coaching Girls' Basketball*", will be published by McGraw-Hill.



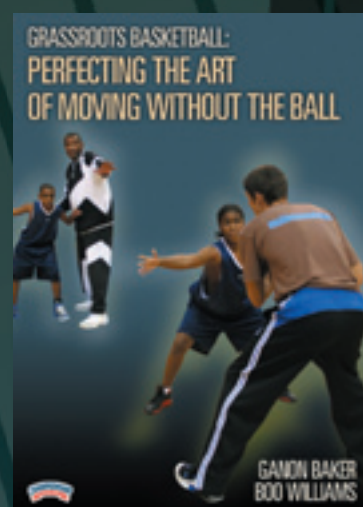
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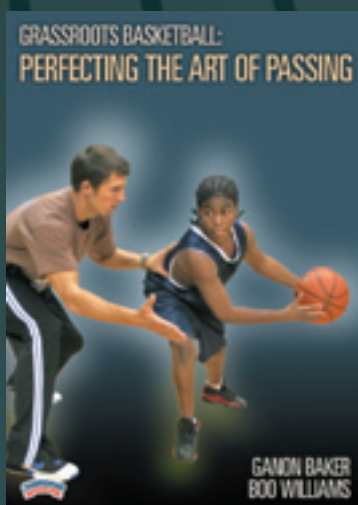
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by Nancy Ethier

THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTORSHIP

Nancy Ethier is a Canadian referee since 1992, and FIBA referee since 1999. She officiated one Pre-Olympic Tournament, one Olympic Tournament, one FIBA World Championship for Women and one Junior Women, one FIBA Asian Women's and Junior Women's Asian Championships and two Championships of the Americas.

Mentorship is a word that has been used to mean many different things. For me, it is as simple as a process of on-going exchange between individuals that allows for one to support the development of another. It is less about deliberate influence, or "power over" another, and more about accompaniment, or "empowerment" of another.

Mentorship has been both a means of professional and personal development for me, as well as a way to contribute to the development of others in the great sport of basketball. It has played a very important role in my development as a basketball official. I have had many mentors over the years; however two have had significant impact at critical times in my career: Pierre Marion and Bill Crowley. I have been involved in refereeing for fifteen years now, seven of those at the international level. It is hard to believe how fast time passes when we start to look back and tell our stories! I started working with Pierre in 1998, my seventh year of refereeing. Canada had decided to identify and fast-track young and promising officials in order to be able to offer suitable candidates to FIBA for international carding selection. At the time, I was both coaching and refereeing basketball. Pierre, one of the best referees in Canada, encouraged me to choose between coaching and refe-

reeing, and expressed confidence in my abilities to officiate at the international level. I decided, after discussion with Pierre, to commit myself to refereeing. I stopped coaching, and began participating in camps to improve my skills and to get to know other referees across the country. In 1999, there was a certification clinic in Canada which I attended, and it was there that I received my FIBA card. Had it not been for Pierre's council to make some choices and apply myself to my choices, I am not sure that I would have developed the requisite skills so quickly. Who knows, this opportunity may have passed me by. The decisions were mine and the effort was mine, Pierre had simply provided a little push accompanied by a big dose of support. It was a small action with a big effect. I only listened to him because we had previously established a sense of trust. I knew that there was nothing he stood to gain by offering his perspective, he was doing so only for what it could mean for me. In my opinion, this is a critical condition for effective mentorship. Pierre has since followed my development as an international referee and is still one of my biggest supporters and most of all a great friend.

My second mentor that has accompanied me in recent years has been perhaps one of the biggest supporters of female officials in Canada. Bill and I came to know each other at the first national referee camp in Canada in 1999, four months before I received my FIBA card. At the time, he was the President of the Canadian Association of Basketball Officials. He came to see me referee a game, and after the game, he walked onto the gym floor, looked at me directly and said

these words: "Whatever you want to accomplish and wherever you want to go in the basketball officiating world is waiting there for you to grasp hold off". At first, I didn't believe a word he said. Less than a year later, I was in Australia refereeing the final of the pre-Olympic tournament. I have since come to know Bill as a trusted friend, and have watched as he continues to promote women officials, not just with words but by the assignments he gives as coordinator, and how he models equality in his every day interactions. He has no tolerance for anyone treating another as less than an equal in all aspects. His motto is "Get on the floor and do the job, male or female". This has an incredible trickle effect on everyone with whom he comes in contact. Bill is still one of the first friends and fellow referees I call to debrief after my best and my worst games (admit it, we all have challenging games at times, otherwise known as great learning opportunities!).

When on assignment for FIBA, I have since found myself mentoring other female officials who haven't received the support that was offered me and that so contributed to my journey so far. Often times we spend evenings after games chatting about situations we are experiencing, sharing stories, laughs and ideas. We leave for our respective countries richer for our time together, and stronger for the support extended to one another.

My international road began by others sharing their belief in me, which helped anchor my belief in myself and inspired me to act, thank you Pierre, and thank you Bill. But I think the best thank you I can give is to do for others what you both chose to do for me.



by Chantal Julien

A WOMAN ON THE REFEREEING WORLD

Chantal Julien, the first FIBA female referee, has been a French Men's professional league referee since 1995, and a FIBA international referee since 1997. She officiated one Olympic Women's final, one FIBA Women's World final, one FIBA Women's Junior World Championships, one FIBA European Women's Junior and two Women's Championships, three FIBA Asian Junior and Senior Women's and one Asian Men's Championships, one Final Four Women's Euroleague, and one FIBA Men's European Championship. She also received the 2005 Italian Oscar of Basketball, special FIBA Award.

MY BASKETBALL HISTORY

My father was a division one player for many years. He started bringing me to his games at the tender age of four years old. It was he who inspired in me a passion for the game of basketball. I went on to play for eight years in the first division in France, and then decided in 1993 to switch to refereeing in order to remain involved in high-performance basketball.

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF REFEREEING

Refereeing at the highest level of basketball (World Championships and Olympic Games) brings with it an incredible sense of satisfaction. Though we don't win a medal for our efforts, the reward for being involved as an official in such an event is invaluable. To be offered the opportunity to referee the best players in the world is a great honor, and to have had the chance to officiate the final game at these competitions has represented for me a proof of confidence in my abilities that I cherish. Though the rewards are many, there are also "downs" from time to time that come with high-performance refereeing. Many examples can be found in games where one makes more errors in judgement than one would like; in games where players, coaches or spectators get out of hand;

and in games where conflicts arise and sometimes even a fight erupts. Besides tough times that come with the actual responsibility of a game, there are also those times when an assignment that you are hoping for is eventually not offered.

REFEREEING MEN'S COMPETITION - A MUST TO IMPROVE

Refereeing a men's game is different than a women's game. The satisfaction is the same; however, the approach required to date has not been. Since starting to referee internationally in 1997, I have also been officiating at the Pro A level (first division) in France, the highest level of men's basketball in my country. I attribute much of my improvement as a referee to this involvement. Whether one referees male or female athletes, one must respect both games. I have found the female game to be more technical and tactical, and it is a pleasure to see the richness of the game grow, particularly at the higher levels and as the women's game evolves. Physically, the men's game sees more contact and more play in the air (plays at the rim or when the ball is in the air). Decision-making must therefore be faster because there is less time available to make a judgement. Women's basketball has been closing the gap for some time now with regard to the physical aspect of play; female players block, fight for position in the key, and dunk. More and more, the approach is similar. The criteria used for refereeing, however, have always been and remain the same. It is still a challenge to be on the floor with men. Some players have never been refereed by a woman and assume that I will be weaker, slower, and more error-prone than my male counterparts. It also seems that a mistake made by a woman is worse than one committed by a man. I seem to constantly have to prove that I merit my place on the floor. I have to deal

with chauvinism often. When I referee a women's game, it is easier to establish a respectful rapport and exchange with both players and coaches alike.

The keys to success at the higher levels of officiating in both women's and men's games are to have a strong character, to face players and coaches directly, not to show doubt or fear, and to work hard for respect. It is important to establish a good relationship with players and coaches by demonstrating your understanding of the game, and your appreciation for the flow of the game. There is also no shame in recognizing one's mistakes; this simply shows honesty.

THE SACRIFICES REQUIRED FOR SUCCESS AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL

A career as a high performance referee does not come without sacrifice at both professional and personal levels. I am a physical education teacher in the city of Mandelieu-la-Napoule. The city awards a special status to those involved in high level sport; in my case, a replacement teacher is assigned for me whenever I need to leave to referee in Europe or internationally. The teacher is hired to teach the curriculum that I have planned. On the personal front, it is hard to reconcile life on the road as a referee and a normal family life. I spend every weekend travelling in France during the regular season and two games a month elsewhere in Europe as well. Time must also be invested in preparation and professional development. To be effective as a referee requires dedication and goal setting. To stay current and sharp one needs to watch video, study rules, and train to stay in shape. To progress, one must stay humble and spend time in critical reflection after every game. A good referee is one that makes the least mistakes, not the one that believes he or she makes none!

RIGHT OR WRONG?

QUESTIONS

1. During the last two minutes of the 4th period, A4 shoots a successful final free throw, after which team B is granted a time-out. Following the time-out, shall play resume with a team B throw-in at the free-throw line extended, opposite the scorer's table?
2. On a throw-in by A2, the ball passes through the team B basket. Shall team B be awarded a throw-in at the free throw line extended nearer the team B basket?
3. After the ball has been placed at the disposal of A5 for two free throws, B8 asks to enter the game as a substitute for B4. Following A5's successful first free throw, a technical foul is charged to a team A player. Shall B8 be permitted to enter the game immediately after the technical foul has been reported to the scorer?
4. The ball has not yet touched the frontcourt when A3 ends the dribble while straddling the centerline. A3 then fumbles the ball, after which the ball lands in the backcourt and is again controlled by A3. Has the ball been illegally returned to the backcourt?
5. A2 accidentally scores a field goal in the wrong basket. Shall two points be recorded as having been scored by the team B captain?
6. A3 is awarded two free throws, both of which are successful. Following the final free throw but before the ball is at the disposal of a team B player out-of-bounds for the resulting throw-in, team A requests a time-out. Shall the time-out be permitted immediately?
7. Must an unsportsmanlike foul always involve contact with an opposing player?
8. Following a successful field goal during the last two minutes of play, team B is granted a time-out. Following the team B time-out, team A is granted another time-out. Shall play resume, following the team A time-out, with a team B throw-in at the centerline extended opposite the scorer's table?
9. During a dead ball, a jump ball situation occurs. Team A is entitled to the next alternating possession throw-in. Before the ball is placed at the disposal of a team A player for the resulting throw-in, B4 fouls A4. This is the third team A foul in that period. Shall play resume with the team A alternating possession throw-in?
10. After the ball has been placed at the disposal of A3 for the alternating possession throw-in that will begin the 2nd period but before the ball has touched a player on the court, B4 fouls A4. Has the B4 foul occurred during an interval of play?



ANSWERS

1. Yes. (Changes to Official Basketball Rules, October 2005)
2. No. The throw-in shall be administered at the sideline or endline place where the original throw-in occurred. (Art. 17.3.1, 17.4)
3. No. B8 may not enter the game until following the completion of A5's final free throw (Art. 19.4.1)
4. Yes. (Art. 30.1.1, 30.1.2)
5. Yes (Art. 16.2.2)
6. Yes (Changes to Official Basketball Rules, October 2005)
7. Yes. (Art. 36.1.1)
8. Yes. (Changes to Official Basketball Rules, October 2005)
9. No. Play shall resume with a team A throw-in resulting from the B4 foul. Team A shall not lose its right to the next alternating possession throw-in in the next jump ball situation. (Art. 12.4.8)
10. No. (Art. 12.4.8)



by Esther Wender

FIBA EUROPE'S YEAR OF WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Esther Wender is the FIBA Europe Year of Women's Basketball Project Manager. A former player at the club and national level with the Netherlands, she has 10 years of experience in public relations with various basketball organizations. She is currently the Head of Communications and Public Relations at the Netherlands Basketball Federation and a member of the FIBA Europe Women's Commission.

It is an interesting time for women's basketball in Europe. There is more money than ever before in basketball clubs and the EuroLeague Women can boast some of the top players in the world among its ranks. National team competition has also prospered from the rise in the level of play at the club level, as was witnessed at last year's EuroBasket Women in Turkey.

In one regard, the women's game has come along way since I stepped on to the court with the Dutch national team over 20 years ago. While there are many positives, it is clear that women's basketball does not enjoy the same standing as the men's game, in the eyes of basketball fans and organizing bodies.

That is why FIBA Europe has decided to launch the Year of Women's Basketball. One of the main goals of the Women's Commission is to raise the profile of the women's game. The Commission came up with the idea for the Year of Women's Basketball and FIBA Europe agreed to fund the project.

The goal of this 18-month campaign is to bring focus to women's basketball in order to improve recognition and respect for the sport in Europe and all female participants in basketball.

That means working with the national federations and clubs to gain more exposure

launching the Year of Women's Basketball, which took place on International Women's Day (8th March) at the EuroLeague Women All-Star Game in Pecs, Hungary.

Russian national team captain Ilona Korstin unveiled the logo at the launch and she will be the "face" of the campaign until the climax of the project at the 2007 EuroBasket Women in Italy.

We had the top 24 players in the EuroLeague Women at the All-Star Game and they not only showed their skills on the court, but took time to speak to the media, participated in a photo shoot and conducted autograph sessions for young fans.

The EuroLeague Women All-Star Game was a great springboard for the Year of Women's Basketball, but there will be plenty more to come in the next 18 months.

Throughout the project, the Year of Women's Basketball will be promoted at FIBA Europe events and at a more localised level through collaboration with national federations. Various organizational clinics, conferences and educational activities will be held throughout the duration of the project.

We will do everything possible to promote the game and our top female players with the goal of attracting a new generation of stars to women's basketball.

For more information, visit the women's basketball section on fibaeurope.com.



sure for our top players in their communities and encouraging young girls to take to the courts and play basketball.

This also entails collaborating with our partners to increase participation in all areas that make up basketball, such as coaching, refereeing and administration.

The first step in this process was

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE OF THE WNBA

The Women's National Basketball Association, or WNBA, is the organization governing the professional basketball league for women in the United States. Formed 10 years ago as the women's counterpart by the NBA, the official league play began June 21, 1997, shortly after the NBA championships had finished. Eight teams were involved that first season and the best women players in the world signed on to play. Ten years later, the professional league has 14 franchises playing from May through August. David Stern, NBA Commissioner, is confident the WNBA will succeed in this tenth season and for many seasons to come. "We are determined - and this is why it's going to succeed - to make this a successful business proposition. This is not an altruistic endeavour. This is a business model, and we think the business model is in the right time and the right place." There are many reasons why the Commissioner is right, among them:

- ▼ The WNBA will host their 20 millionth fan this season.
- ▼ A random poll conducted by ESPN reported that the WNBA is the most popular women's sport, ahead of tennis, golf, and volleyball.
- ▼ In-arena fans are 80% women and girls, while TV viewership is closer to 50-50 male/female.

Of the tremendous fan support, WNBA superstar Lisa Leslie, center of the Los Angeles Sparks (one of the few players able to execute a slam dunk) said, "Just watching the growth of the league, we can see the league is still growing up in a good way. It's also letting professional women athletes become role models for little girls and boys."

Donne Orender, the President of the WNBA, is very happy about the growth of the League and of future prospects. "In the case of the WNBA, you have to look at the overall fan base. It's up and continues to show signs of greater growth. Our ratings were up last year, particularly in the playoffs. Our draft traffic doubled, and we had large num-



bers to begin with. Our daily traffic is up 20 percent on the website. People are calling us about new franchises. We have a number of new corporate partners, among them Toyota, T-Mobile, and McDonald's. This is in addition to the long-standing partnerships we have had with Coke, Gatorade, Nike, America Online, Spalding, and Southwest Airlines. There is a lot going on that is very positive for the WNBA. I think what we've really been able to get our arms around is what motivates people to be aligned with and participate with the WNBA. Interest in the WNBA spans across all demographics and genders. We're really focusing on this whole idea of being inspirational. You can be a 9-year old girl, who gets inspired by the WNBA. You can be a 50-year old guy, who loves this pure brand of basketball. You could be a woman, who loves sports. You could be a teacher, coach, or parent, who loves the accessibility of our players and the role model nature of our players. When you look across all of the-



se different groups, and we know that they're there in great numbers, we've only begun to scratch the surface in terms of how much broader our base can be. We will continue to be very bullish about this property of ours."

Marketing and advertising campaigns over the years have allowed the WNBA to catch the attention of the American sports fan. Community initiatives have played a large role here. For its tenth season, the WNBA has launched a season-long campaign called "10 Years of Caring," with events scheduled throughout the country. This campaign celebrates the WNBA's ten seasons of commitment to creating programs that improve the quality of life for all people,



with a special emphasis on promoting a healthy lifestyle and positive body image, raising awareness for women's health, family development, and education.

This program is tailor-made for the WNBA because its teams are already extremely active in their respective markets engaging with fans in a variety of programs, including "WNBA: Be Smart, Be Fit, Be Yourself" clinics; "Read to Achieve Reading Rallies;" Junior WNBA clinics; "Habitat for Humanity" community building efforts; and school visits by local team members.

"We take pride in the role that WNBA teams and players have undertaken in their communities," said Donna Orender. "Our athletes are strong, passionate, and determined individuals, who are positive role models for people who aspire to great things. Through the "10 Years of Caring" initiative, players will demonstrate off the court the very same fundamentals that make them special on the court: teamwork, dedication, and determination."

The growth and popularity of the WNBA has also increased greatly, thanks to international television and the excellent TV partnerships that have been formed in the United States. Last year, WNBA

games were televised in 193 countries and heard in 31 languages, in countries ranging from China to the Middle East, throughout Europe and Australia. This year, the WNBA TV partners include Disney, the American Broadcasting Company, and ESPN, with a total of 36 games telecast nationally. NBA TV will also televise an additional 54 games.

The WNBA is like the NBA in a lot of respects, but still has its own particular rules and regulations. The league uses a 30-second clock, a 19-foot, 9-inch three-point line (6,02 m), two 20-minute halves, 11-player team rosters, and a collegiate-regulation size ball. The WNBA's signature orange-and-oatmeal basketball by Spalding is 28,5 inches (77,5 cm) in circumference, which is slightly smaller than the NBA's regulation ball.

"I'm thrilled about the WNBA," said the NBA's David Stern. "We are setting up a new model for young women to participate in sports and really have their own gender role models. We couldn't be happier about this new frontier that we've opened up."

Yes, as league president Donna Orender noted, it's been a long, but steady climb for the league, with all signs of a bright future still ahead.





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by Karen Strahl
FIBA Study Centre

FIBA

We Are Basketball

BEHIND THE STAGE

The basketball court is the stage for the final showdown of this sport, but behind the stage there are people and companies that work to make the show a success, an entertainment that will satisfy and meet the needs of the spectators, players, and coaches.

I would like to introduce some of the FIBA Study Centre partners which are not as visible to spectators or as spectacular as a dunk or a fancy pass, but they are equally important members of the basketball family.

A PERSONALIZED COURT

For many years, Bresciani Visual has offered a wide range of solutions for outdoor and indoor sports event personalization. Among their contributions include:

- ▼ Tyvek and PVC materials for dynamic systems.
- ▼ Fixed systems.
- ▼ Perspective carpets made of synthetic grass, moquette, and trampoline stickers.

- ▼ Interview area backdrops.

- ▼ Anti-slip stickers for the court floor.

This innovative company also produces supports and printings in stadium and arenas for dynamic advertising systems (rotor) for graphical fitting.

Thanks to its many outstanding efforts for basketball, football, and volleyball games and tournaments, Bresciani Visual is acknowledged for its high-quality products, both in Italy and abroad.

The company specializes in high-quality megaprints and large format digital printing.

They make use of advanced and state-of-the-art technologies for the production of innovative printing products and can meet any need for advertising, exhibitions, point-of-sales, shop windows, postings, mobile communication on vehicle and, sports event venues.



A FABRIC FOR BETTER PLAYER PERFORMANCES

In the sports world today, high performance gear is in constant demand. For this reason the research and development departments of most companies work intensely to satisfy this ongoing need.

The Fillattice Group is one of the most important producers of elastomeric and stretch fabrics. The Italian company has created Feeltex, a new stretch fabric with high resistance levels; light, anti-allergenic and antibacterial, it is ideal for sportswear.

Feeltex is available in two new versions, Feeltex PRO and Feeltex MESH: the percentage of raw material composition makes MESH articles stretchier and lighter.

The high quality content, its lightness and comfort make this fabric specific for basketball, thanks to a high transpiration that assures a pleasant sensation of freshness on the skin.



A SPECIAL SOUND

The Fox 40 whistle premiered at the 1987 Pan American Games, and since then the Fox 40 Pea-less Whistle



has become the whistle choice for international sports federations and conferences across the world.

The unmistakable, penetrating sound of the Fox 40 can be heard in over 140 countries around the world. Fox 40 International has continued to exceed its reputation for outstanding design and quality products.

Fox 40 can be recognized by its piercing tone which never fails.

The harder you blow this whistle, the louder the tone. The ingeniously designed Fox 40 whistle doesn't use a pea to generate sound.

In fact, there are no moving parts whatsoever—nothing to obstruct sound, nothing to stick, freeze, or fail. Fox 40's patented design moves the air blast through three-tuned chambers.

The Fox 40 family of whistles includes the traditional Fox 40 Classic, Pearl & Mini styles with their cushioned mouthpiece or finger grip option.

Visit www.fox40world.com to review the complete line of whistles.

tent, Internet marketing, and Intranet.

Due to their background, they worked increasingly with clients in

A RANGE OF SERVICES

Oiko Service is a dynamic company with a track record of success in the development of integrated communications.

The company works closely with its clients to differentiate their firms and products with regard to target audience, competition, and company vision.

The firm entered the market in 1999 as an Internet company specializing in new media areas, such as web site strategy and content,

the sports sector.

Today, Oiko Service consults with marketing managers and related firms to set a strategy and then invigorate their brands, employing a full range of integrated vehicles, from corporate identity and pitch-books to corporate brochures and event services.

Their creative work with professional leagues and teams, host cities, sporting and entertainment events spans a range that includes international basketball tournaments, Olympic Games, music festivals, and a variety of sports championships.

BASKETBALL BACKSTOPS

Porter's research and development team has been instrumental in the introduction of the Fair-Court, rim testing device to fairly and accurately measure the rebound performance of the flexible rim and entire basketball support system.

Basketball rim testing is essential in order to begin solving the problem of inconsistent rebound performance found in inferior or worn equipment.

This helps minimize the home court advantage and improves the integrity of the game of basketball.

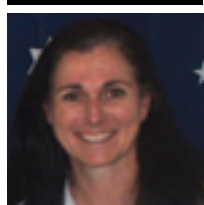
Porter Athletic Equipment Company is a worldwide supplier of professional and top collegiate basketball backstops for arenas, colleges, schools, parks, and recreation facilities.

Porter manufactures backboards, rims, and portable backstops; custom gymnasium equipment; gymnasium divider curtains; outdoor products and many accessories.

Their continuous research and involvement in the sport of basketball contributes immensely to their ability to design, engineer and manufacture products to help basketball grow at all age and skill levels around the world.

Porter remains dedicated to providing high-quality equipment and services unmatched by anyone.





by Donna O'Connor

THE "OPALS" STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

Donna O'Connor is the Associate Dean (Learning & Teaching) at the University of Sydney, and has been with the Australian Women's Basketball team (Opals) since October 2003.

My role with the team is to assist the head coach by developing training programs to enhance player performance and advise on sport science issues related to player preparation. This involves keeping up-to-date with current research and continually communicating with the coaching and medical staff in planning and implementing training programs.

AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

The "Opals", the nickname of the Australian women's national team, are currently ranked third in the world. Of the 25-30 players in the National squad, approximately 70% of players will be located in Australia, while 30% of players will compete overseas at some stage during the year. This situation makes long term periodised programming difficult for individual players but in recognising that this situation will only increase, we have attempted to put systems in place to support player preparation regardless of where they are located.

In the first instance, the respective player, head coach and myself collaboratively decide general goals and specific fitness targets for the year. Ideally, pre-habilitation and rehabilitation programs are devised in consultation with the player's club personnel as well as Opals staff. I now have contact with all WNBL strength and conditioners and empha-

size the role they play in supporting the opals player within the club environment. We now disseminate information on strength and conditioning, testing and relevant sport science issues. During the pre-season and WNBL season I will consult with the strength and conditioners to collectively design programs for opals players. We have started to have periodic telephone conference calls to discuss progress of squad members. I will also regularly communicate with players either by phone or email during the season.

Due to the limited time the squad is able to train together, clear and consistent communication is imperative. This is particularly paramount outside the WNBL season where large physical improvements can be made. For players not competing overseas, I receive weekly emails that include loads lifted in the gym, times or distances for conditioning drills, and RPE [rate of perceived exertion] etc. From this information I am able to monitor and adjust individual training programs.

Players based overseas have been more difficult to support. We are slowly forming relationships with various clubs and their trainers so we can communicate and have an integrated approach to the overall development of the player.

SPORT SCIENCE ISSUES

Sport science issues that have been researched and influenced Opals training prescription include energy demands of basketball, concurrent training, cross training, warm up (static stretching), hydration, jet lag, and recovery strategies. I

will briefly comment on two of the issues as examples of our approach.

The intermittent nature of basketball and the restricted court size is reflected in the energy demands of this game. Although there are a few studies (McInnes et al., 1995; Rodriguez-Alonso et al., 2003) that have quantified these physiological requirements we have decided to conduct our own research that will then directly inform our training practice. We have monitored heart rates, lactates and movement patterns during international games, scrimmages and training sessions. Interpretation of this data gives an indication of player response to the demands imposed on them. This information provides insight into where each player's level of fitness is at for any given time and assists in individualising player preparation and recovery strategies. However, when interpreting these results it must be considered that the intensity of the game will be influenced by the quality of opposition, the style of play used by the coach and the physiological capacity of the players. By also monitoring these parameters during practice sessions we are able to categorise various training drills and activities as 'light, medium or heavy', which is helpful when determining training demands during different phases of training. This will be particularly pertinent in relation to court work in the lead-up to major championships.

With the previous Olympics in Athens and the next world championships in Brazil issues such as acclimatisation, jet lag and hydration are very important.

Due to the amount of air travel we must do, educating players of the importance of hydration is paramount. To assist with this we will monitor urine specific gravity (USG) levels as an indication of hydration status. Because you cannot rely on the colour of urine as an indicator of hydration levels (due to influence of multivitamins etc) we have found using a refractometer for USG to be a very simple and quick measure. For example, when we are in training camps we can take a sample after training and then monitor the amount of fluid that is consumed prior to the next training when a further sample is taken. Over time each player then has a guide on the amount of fluid that is required to return a reading of < 0.01. We have also been able to make recommendations on how much water should be consumed on various flights. Prior to these initiatives some players were coming to training or games in an already dehydrated state.

STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

PERIODISING TRAINING

Due to the different needs and playing commitments of squad members a variety of different programs are devised. For example, the majority of the 28 players in the current Opals squad would be following one of seven different programs. Consequently, both the frequency and type of training session scheduled for each squad member is determined depending on the background of the player, their role within the Australian team, and their strengths and weaknesses.

During the WNBL (the Australian Division I Women's league), from October to February, players participate in weight training that is tailored to incorporate their club commitments. In consultation with club strength and conditioners, two weight sessions a week are devised. At a player's request I may also add an extra conditioning or cross-training session to their weekly schedule. Players generally will have a short transition phase after the season (active recovery and rehabilitation). For players not competing in the WNBA (the US professional women's league) training during April to June emphasises either strength or hypertrophy while continuing to build an aerobic foundation. During July the focus will move to power and repeated sprint-ability. Agility, core stability and



flexibility are components in all phases of training. August-September has a greater number of court sessions with combined acceleration, agility and ball activities (individual and team). Research indicates that loss of strength and power can occur within two-three weeks if resistance training ceases. We maintain strength and power levels with short, regular training sessions throughout the lead-up to the major championships. To monitor and as-

sist with preparation training camps and international tours are scheduled where possible.

In reality, there are always a number of obstacles and difficulties encountered in planning and implementing these training programs. Depending on international commitments in any given year, a number of different training camps and travel will mean that there will be deviations from the

above planning. Difficulties in periodised planning and group cohesion occur with the unavailability of different squad members at each of these camps while taking into consideration the travel and playing commitments of other players when integrating training sessions or testing into the annual plan.

CONDITIONING

Training sessions are prescribed to focus on the following outcomes: aerobic fitness, repeated sprint ability, speed and agility. Examples of training sessions are outlined in the Table below.

Table 1: Examples of conditioning sessions

Session A: Hill runs

- ▼ 8-12 reps x 150m
- ▼ 2 min recovery between reps

Session B:

- ▼ progressed from 4 to 7 reps x 800m
- ▼ HR > 85% maxHR
- ▼ 4 minute recovery

Session C: beep shuttles

- ▼ 2 min shuttles (L11 & 12) skills/shooting
- ▼ 1 min shuttle (L 13) skills/shooting
- ▼ 2 min shuttles (L11 & 12) skills/shooting
- ▼ repeat above

Session D:

- ▼ 5 sets 10 x 35m on the 30 seconds (jog back recovery)
- ▼ 5 mins recovery between sets

Session E

- ▼ 3 x 4 agility runs (aim at 40-44s) with 1:3 work: recovery ratio
- ▼ work HR > 85% max HR with recovery HR 100-120 bpm

CROSS TRAINING

Cross training is incorporated for a number of reasons: to increase aerobic and anaerobic fitness without the additional impact on the body of continual running and jumping, and to assist with additional energy expenditure for players aiming at reducing skinfold readings. Training sessions include the utilisation of rowing on a concept 11 rowing ergometer (20 min aim at >4500m or 3 x 10 x 60s (aim > 275m) with 60 sec recovery between reps and 5 min between sets), cycling (3 sets of pyramid: 15 sec - 30 sec - 45 sec - 60 sec - 75 sec - 90 sec - 75 sec - 60 sec - 45 sec - 30 sec - 15 sec; 15 sec between reps and 5 min between sets) and ellipti-

cal ergometers (10 x 3 min at level 8 with 30-60s recovery at level 4). Pool sessions involved deep-water running, kicking, underwater swimming and six-packs (6 x 15m maximal sprints with 5 sec recovery).

RESISTANCE TRAINING

Players participate in 2-4 resistance-training sessions a week depending on the time of year and macrocycle. To enhance training adaptations I manipulate the choice of exercise, volume, intensity, rest and training system every 2-3 weeks. Training systems that are incorporated in different cycles include supersets (assisted chins (seated row), giant sets (DB lat raises (Front DB raises (reverse flyes: 3 x 8/8/8), matrix (curls: 3 x 21), cluster sets (Bench Press: 3 x 4/max/max), eccentric (Bench Press: 2 x 6, 2 x 4, 2 x 4(eccentric), pyramids (Squat: 2 x 6, 2 x 4, 2 x 2) and complex training (squats to jumps). At times I will video sessions so I can give players visual feedback on their technique. This has assisted their learning of the more complex lifts and stability exercises. When the players have learnt correct technique I include lifts such as power clean, hang clean, high pull, push press, press jerk and squat to push press. In the power phase I will also include 3-5 medicine ball exercises.



STABILITY

In consultation with the team physiotherapist, core stability is assessed at each training camp. If there is inadequate core stability, rotation & tilting of the pelvis will occur which results in poor technique & inefficient force application. Consequently, a slower athlete will be the result. Prone, supine and lateral holds (straight arms and forearms) are examples of increasing pelvic stability using the athlete's own body weight. Emphasis is placed on contracted abdominals & gluts throughout the exercise as well as having the body in correct alignment (stiff as a board). These exercises were initially 'held' for 3 x 20 s and eventually progressed to 60 s holds for each of the eight exercises (8 mins in total). Other exercises that I have prescribed incorporate the Swiss ball and include the bridge (double and single leg), "jackknives", hamstring rolls, divers pike, hip extension, Russian twist, alternate superman and kneeling (see Collins, 1998).

SPEED AND AGILITY

Due to court dimensions there is a substantial focus on acceleration (0-10m) as players generally do not reach maximal speed during competition. Speed drills (marching, butt kicks, alternate high knees, bounds etc) aimed at training the nervous system are incorporated in the warm up at least three times-a-week. For variety 10 mins of ladder work can also be included (e.g. carioca, zig-zag 2 foot jumps, slalom). Research indicates that speed off the mark is closely correlated to leg power. Consequently, I combine plyometric starts with acceleration runs during this phase of training. Examples include 10 pitter-patters and sprint; 6 straight leg bounds and sprint; 90(jump to left, return to start and sprint 10m (repeat jumping right). An intensity of 95-100% is the target for each repetition. Agility involves the need to decelerate, adjust stride pattern and body position and then accelerate again. Young et al. (1996) demonstrated that speed and agility training are specific and only produce a 25% transfer to the other exercise mode. From this, two agility/footwork sessions are incorporated in the pre-season with at least one session in-season. These were short maximal efforts that involved a number of changes of direction in the one repetition. The duration of each repetition ranged from 3-15 seconds, within a 3-5 minute set followed by basketball specific skill work.



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ONE-ON-ONE

RECALCATI EXPECTS MORE COMPETITIVE USA

A new Italy will be unveiled at the FIBA World Championship 2006 in Japan (19th August - 3rd September) and veteran coach Carlo Recalcati's aim is to mould the "Azzurri" (light blue), as the Italian national teams are nicknamed, into one of the most competitive national sides in international basketball.

Having won bronze at the EuroBasket 2003 in Sweden and silver at the Athens Olympics a year later, Italy needed a wild card to play for the world title in Japan later this year after failing to qualify outright.

Some experienced players are set to travel to the Far East, but Recalcati has also revealed that youngsters will get their chance, including Benetton Treviso's 2,13 (7ft) sensation Andrea Bargnani - a 20-year-old who has captivated the Lega A and Euroleague fans in his first season as a starter.

In a candid interview with FIBA's Cindy Garcia-Bennett, Recalcati took a break from his duties as coach of Montepaschi Siena to discuss the Azzurri and offer his thoughts on the squad announcement made by Group D rivals Team USA.

FIBA: *There is a lot of interest in Italy and the players who will represent the country at the FIBA World Championship which*

gets underway in August. When do you expect to announce your team?

RECALCATI: I will make a selection of 16 players at the end of the Lega A season and I will announce my final 12-man squad just days before we travel to Japan.

FIBA: *One player who has really captured the imagination of basketball fans in Europe this season is Andrea Bargnani. Can you tell us if he is a certainty for Japan?*

RECALCATI: I will include young players and Bargnani is one of them. He has a good chance to make it to Japan.



Bagnani will be very useful to us, he is a modern player, who is a strong forward and can play the game.

FIBA: *Bagnani is just one promising youngster. Marco Belinelli and Stefano Mancinelli of Climamio Bologna have played important roles for the club this season. Are you happy with how these players are progressing?*

RECALCATI: I'm happy that young players are doing very well for the respective clubs and that they are playing at a competitive level. We need young players, who are strong physically and mentally.

FIBA: *One of the teams that you will coach against is the United States. USA Basketball announced the 23 players that are available for national team selection for Japan. Do you have the impression that the US is missing a dominating center like Shaquille O'Neal?*

RECALCATI: A team always needs a great center. But the problem that Team USA had at the last World Championship and in Athens is not that of missing one player or two players but rather the fact that they underestimated the other teams. It is no longer sufficient for them to be just competitive, they now need to work at it, to prepare for this competition just like the rest of the teams have done in the past and continue to do.

FIBA: *Considering the players, who have been named, like 2,13 (7ft) center Brad Miller of Sacramento and Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant, do you see a different approach being taken? Additionally, former Benetton Treviso coach Mike D'Antoni is an assistant to head coach Mike Krzyzewski so surely this will be a problem for Italy since he is familiar with your players?*

RECALCATI: I think they have recognized their mistakes and proof of this is the fact that they have included Mike D'Antoni in their coaching squad. Mike is a person that has a lot of knowledge of international basketball, especially of the European game. After the disappointment in recent years, one thing that I expect from Team USA is that they will be hungry for success. Their players will show more pride to regain the leadership that they always had but have failed to show in recent years.

FIBA: *Italy beat the USA in a warm-up game staged in Germany before the Athens Olympics. What was the secret behind that win?*

RECALCATI: We played a great game against Team USA, we had nothing to lose. There were 10,000 fans waiting to see the Dream Team and it was their first appearance in Europe that year so the pressure was really on them. The difference was that we knew all the players, my men knew who they were facing and that was not the case with Team USA. The majority of their players compete in the NBA and are watched all over the world including in Europe so we obviously

knew their talent while they didn't know much about us.

FIBA: *Are you surprised by the exclusion of former co-captain Allen Iverson from Team USA, especially as he had so much experience and also wanted to play?*

RECALCATI: I think you have to accept the choices, ideas and philosophy of a coach. If he has made that decision there must be a reason behind it. As a coach, you always look at what is best for the team, sometimes you make mistakes or your decisions might be questioned but you have to take difficult decisions when dropping players.

FIBA: *The last time you coached Italy was in Serbia & Montenegro at the EuroBasket and Croatia beat your team in the elimination round. Are you looking forward to getting back together with the national side to set the record straight?*

RECALCATI: I think the World Championship will allow our young players to gain experience at the highest level. Of course, they will not have the maturity due to their age, but this tournament will allow them to gain confidence and it will be beneficial for the national team in future competitions such as the 2007 EuroBasket.

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THE WORLD IN BRIEF



NEW ZEALAND SQUAD NAMED

New Zealand Head Coach Baldwin has released a 29-man extended squad to prepare for Japan, featuring several in-form players from the National Basketball League. NBA performer Sean Marks (pictured), who withdrew from the national programme last year, is not listed at this stage, pending further discussions over his availability. The squad will be trimmed to 20 in mid-June for a training camp beginning July 3. Thomas Abercrombie (Washington State University), Aaron Baynes (Washington State University), Calum Baynes (Bay Hawks), Ed Book (Nelson Giants), Dillon Boucher (Auckland Stars), Gerard Bowden (Savannah College of Art & Design), Craig Bradshaw (Winthrop University), Pero Cameron (Banvitspor), Brent Charleton (Harbour Heat), Mark Dickel (Lokomotiv Rostov), Mike Fitchett (Nelson Giants), Casey Frank (Auckland Stars), Jason Greig (Otago Nuggets), Paul Henare (Bay Hawks/Banvitspor), Leon Henry (Southern Idaho Junior College), Ben Hill (Waikato Pistons), Mike Homik (Harbour Heat), Phill Jones (Nelson Giants/Cantu), Jeremy Kench (Canterbury Rams), Calum Macleod (Valparaiso University), Zane Meehl (Maroochy-

dore Clippers), Aaron Nowell (Manawatu Jets), Aaron Olson (NZ Breakers), Miles Pearce (Otago Nuggets), Kirk Penney (Maccabi Tel Aviv), Tony Rampton (Taranaki Mountain Airs), Lindsay Tait (Auckland Stars), Mika Vukona (Nelson Giants), Paora Winitana (Bay Hawks). The final pieces to the Tall Blacks' FIBA World Championships preparation are in place with a tour to South America and a further domestic series against Qatar confirmed for July/August. "Visiting South America and playing that brand of basketball against some of the world's top teams will be a new experience for our team," enthuses Tall Black coach Tab Baldwin. "We would expect to see players like Ginobili, Oberto and Nocioni from Argentina, and Barbosa and Varejao from Brazil, who are playing very well in the NBA."

ON THE MIND OF NIGERIA'S MERCY OKORIE

On the road to the FIBA World Championship in Brazil (12- 23 September) there are so many items on the mind of Nigeria's small forward Mercy Okorie (pictured). Aside from thinking of a solution to the double-headed task of facing the USA and Russia in the preliminaries, the Lady Tiger is also worried about the public perception of her height. The former Houston Stealth player in the WNBA explains that even though she has taken time to fill in her correct statistics but the errors in some official publications across the world have become a source of worry to her. "I just wish somebody can help me sort this out; it has become worrisome. My height is recorded wrongly on many publications that I have come across in recent times and

I don't seem to understand how it all began. The height of it all being at the Commonwealth Games". "They have me listed at 5'10 but I am 6'0 ft which is about 1.88/1.90cm. I guess they mistakenly confused my height with one of my teammates. I do hope that the right people will take note," she said. In the absence of team captain Mfon Udoka the Turkey based player led the Lady Tigers to the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games where Nigeria finished fourth behind Australia, New Zealand and England.

NOCIONI CAUTIOUS AHEAD OF JAPAN

Argentina forward Andres Nocioni (pictured) is worried soaring expectations of his country's title chances at the FIBA World Championship in Japan could hurt the team's bid for a medal. The Chicago Bulls star helped Argentina win gold at the 2004 Olympics and the country is among the favourites to win the world title. He accepts that one of several teams could win the gold in Japan, though. "We're going to have to work very hard if we want to do well at the championships because we are on a similar level to Spain, France and team USA (United States)," said

Nocioni. The South American giants, in fact, will do well to win all of their Group A games. Argentina will face France, Venezuela, Lebanon, Nigeria and reigning world champions Serbia & Montenegro in the group. "It's a difficult group because there are so many good teams, but we must make sure we win it to avoid getting a tough tie in the next round," he said. Nocioni recently met up with national team coach Sergio Hernandez and discussed the build-up to Japan. "We didn't talk about what position he wants me to play in," he said. "We talked about the





forthcoming friendly games and training camps. In the national team, I play in the position he (Hernandez) needs me."

WAITING GAME WITH SARAS

Lithuania are still in the dark over the availability of national team guard Sarunas Jasikevicius (pictured) for the FIBA World Championship. The Baltic giants are hoping the 30-year-old, who just finished his first NBA campaign with the Indiana Pacers, will play in Japan and recently named him in their preliminary squad for the tournament. "We (federation and Jasikevicius) talked in Houston at the (NBA) All-Star Weekend and agreed to talk after the season, but that has yet to happen," national team general manager Algis Pavilionis told FIBA. "We start from June 8, on the seashore of the Baltics," Pavilionis said. The second phase of preparations will get underway on June 28 with the more experienced players taking part, which is when Jasikevicius would show if he is willing to play. Players invited to first stage of

training camps: Guards: Vidas Ginevicius, Simonas Serapinas, Mantas Kalnietis, Renaldas Seibutis, Darius Pakamanis, Vytenis Jasikevicius, Martynas Pocius; forwards: Arturas Jomantas, Stepas Babrauskas, Aurimas Kieza, Vladimiras Severovas, Jonas Maciulis, Valdas Vosylius; centers: Darius Silinskas, Povilas Ciukinas, Marijonas Petravicius, Antanas Kavaliuskas. Players invited to second stage of training camps: Guards: Sarunas Jasikevicius, Arvydas Macijauskas, Rimantas Kaukenas, Giedrius Gustas, Mindaugas Lukauskis, Tomas Delininkaitis; forwards: Simas Jasaitis, Linas Kleiza, Ramunas Siskauskas, Mindaugas Zukauskas, Darius Songaila; centers: Darjus Lavrinovic, Paulius Jankunas, Ksystof Lavrinovic, Robertas Javtokas.

BOGUT CONFIRMED FOR JAPAN, SCHENSCHER UNDECIDED

Australians Andrew Bogut (pictured) and Luke Schenscher have both completed their NBA seasons with the first round defeats of the Milwaukee Bucks and Chicago Bulls. In good news for Australian basketball, both players emerged from the playoffs uninjured and in good form. Bogut in particular



has impressed this season with his solid work ethic at both ends of the floor. The number 1 pick in the 2005 NBA Draft averaged 9.3 points and 7.0 rebounds per game, shooting at an impressive 53% from the field across all 82 regular season games. Despite the wishes of the Milwaukee Bucks, Bogut has committed to play for Australia at the FIBA World Championship in Japan, and will begin his drive for a medal on June 19th at the Boomers first camp in Canberra. The story for Luke Schenscher may be quite different, however, with the Bulls keen for him to stay in the United States to polish his skills and add muscle to his wiry frame. The 23 year old South Australian is yet to announce his intentions for the August tournament, a decision that will be eagerly awaited by Australian basketball officials and supporters alike. Luke faces a similar choice to countryman Chris Anstey, who refused a Bulls request to remain in Chicago for the summer of 2000, instead competing for his country in the Sydney Olympics. Anstey has not returned to the NBA since declining the Bulls offer. Anstey has

committed to the Boomers FIBA World Championship campaign, however, and will combine with Bogut and Lietuvos Rytas' Euroleague star Matthew Nielsen to give Australia a formidable frontcourt presence.

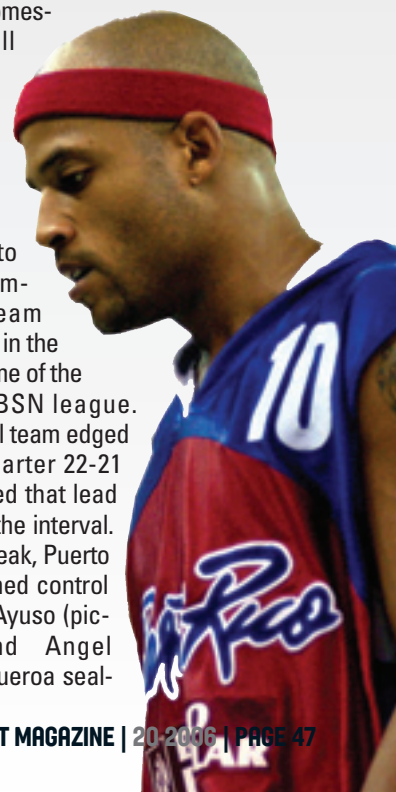
ARGENTINA GATHERS PLAYERS FOR BRAZIL 2006

Five foreign-based players will join up with the Argentina squad in preparation for the forthcoming South American Championship and the FIBA World Championship for Women. Gisella Vega, Carolina Sanchez, Alejandra Chesta and guards Natalia Rios and Valentina Maggi will all link up with Eduardo Pinto's (pictured) squad for training in Buenos Aires. "We do not know when the players will arrive here, but the most important thing is they seemed happy with the project," Pinto said. "Aside from these five, we are thinking about other players who play abroad. Besides the FIBA World Championship, the girls also want to be part of the South American tournament." Vega, who plays for Spanish second division side Real canoe, will arrive at the end of May while Chesta, of Olesa in Spain could also arrive in three weeks. Sanchez will join up in July while Rios and Maggi, who are without clubs at the moment, could link up sooner. The members of the squad who play domestically will meet up on May 27.



WIN FOR PUERTO RICO

Team Puerto Rico hammered Team BSN 108-92 in the All-Star Game of the domestic BSN league. The national team edged the first quarter 22-21 but extended that lead to 54-45 at the interval. After the break, Puerto Rico tightened control with Larry Ayuso (pictured) and Angel 'Buster' Figueroa seal-



ing the win. Alejandro 'Bimbo' Carmona was elected the night's MVP. The centre, who plays for Bayamon-based Vaqueros, poured in 20 points, grabbed six rebounds and handed out four assists in 14 minutes. Ayuso contributed 14 points and Wilfredo Pagan added 13 but the BSN Team had the match's top-scorer in Corey Benjamin, who netted 34 points while Lee Benson managed 27. Elsewhere, Leones' Robert Lazor won the three-point contest, while Criollos' David Anderson prevailed in the dunk contest.

OPALS SQUAD RE-STACKED FOR BRAZIL

The Australian women's basketball team, the Price Attack Opals, have re-stacked their



squad ahead of the 2006 FIBA World Championships for Women in Brazil this September. The Commonwealth Games gold medallists have added international players, Penny Taylor (pictured), Suzy Batkovic and Kristi Harrower to the mix, and Olympians Alicia Poto and Natalie Porter have rejoined the squad after overcoming injuries. Along with stars from the Price Attack WNBL, the Opals squad now stands at 28 ahead of the team's first four-day training camp in Geelong on June 11. "This is a high quality squad that will be a real force at the World Championships in September," Price Attack Opals head coach Jan Stirling said. A team of 12 will be chosen after the first camp in June to tour China from June 28 to July 6.

2006 Price Attack Opals squad:

Suzy Batkovic (UMMC Ekaterinburg, Russia), Tully Bevilacqua (Canberra Capitals), Renae Camino (Townsville Fire), Rohanee Cox (Townsville Fire), Jae Cross (San Antonio Silver Stars, USA), Desiree Glaubitz (Bulleen Melbourne Boomers), Hollie Gri-

ma (Bulleen Melbourne Boomers), Jacinta Hamilton (Dandenong Rangers), Shelley Hammonds (Dandenong Rangers), Kristi Harrower (Valenciennes, France), Katrina Hibbert (Bulleen Melbourne Boomers), Lauren Jackson (Seattle Storm, USA), Kathleen Macleod (Dandenong Rangers), Emily McInerney (Dandenong Rangers), Michelle Musselwhite (Sydney Uni Flames), Erin Phillips (Adelaide Lightning), Natalie Porter (Sydney Uni Flames), Alicia Poto (Sydney Uni Flames), Emma Randall (Dandenong Rangers), Sam Richards (Dandenong Rangers), Jennifer Screen (Adelaide Lightning), Deanna Smith (Perth Lynx), Belinda Snell (Sydney Uni Flames), Penny Taylor (Phoenix Mercury, USA), Laura Summerton (Adelaide Lightning), Kristen Veal (Sydney Uni Flames), Jenny Whittle (Canberra Capitals), Carly Wilson (Dandenong Rangers).

WANG BACK IN CHINA SQUAD

Wang Zhizhi (pictured) has been recalled to the China national team after issuing an apology for his previous refusal to accept a call-up. The former Miami Heat center, who was the first Asian to play in the NBA, will now hope to represent his country at the FIBA World Championship this summer.

The importance to China of securing his return has been increased by an injury to Houston Rockets All-Star Yao Ming, which has put his own participation in doubt. Wang returned to Beijing from Los Angeles three weeks ago to discuss a possible return to the China team, having not played for his country for four years. China have been keen to get their strongest team together as they begin long-term planning for the 2008 Olympics on home soil. Securing the return of the 7ft 1in Wang has been a priority for the CBA for some time. The CBA initially approached the former Dallas Mavericks and Los Angeles Clippers man in 2002, but he was unresponsive, sitting out the FIBA World Championship and Asian Games that year, as well as the 2004 Olympics. However, he made moves of his own to contact the CBA beginning in 2005, culminating in the re-



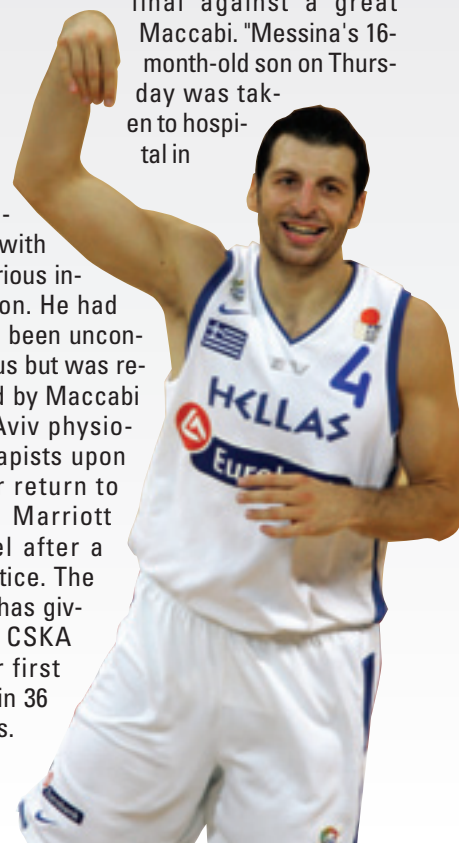
turn to Beijing. His apology and recall are crucial to China given the uncertainty over Yao's situation. Following Wang's return, the CBA released a provisional squad of 18 players - not including Yao - to take part in the national team's preparations. Squad: Xie Libin (Beijing), Sun Yue, Zhang Songtao, Huang Haibei (Aoshen), Yang Ming (Liaoning), Liu Wei, Wang Yong (Shanghai), Tang Zhengdong (Jiangsu), Yi Jianlian, Du Feng, Zhu Fangyu, Wang Shipeng (Guangdong), Wang Lei (Henan), Gong Songlin (Fujian), Mo Ke, Chen Ke, Wang Zhizhi, Hu Ke (Bayi).

CSKA WIN EUROLEAGUE FINAL

CSKA Moscow played a game for the ages to beat Maccabi Tel Aviv 73-69 in Prague's sold-out Sazka Arena on Sunday in the Euroleague title game. Huge underdogs going into the contest, CSKA's defense reigned supreme as Italian coach Ettore Messina celebrated his third title in the competition. He also won twice as the head coach of Virtus Bologna. Greece's Theo Papaloukas (pictured), who scored 18 points and dished out seven assists, was voted Most Valuable Player. It caps a magnificent several months for Papaloukas, who last autumn led his country to the EuroBasket title in Belgrade. "It's important for everyone," Papaloukas said to FIBA, when asked about the impact for CSKA and for Greece. Just before on Greek radio, Papaloukas told people back home: "It feels great. It reminds me of last September when we won the EuroBasket. Of course, that was better, because it was Greece." "I feel so happy," Messina said. "Excuse if I get a bit emotional. Today my son got better and we won the

final against a great Maccabi. "Messina's 16-month-old son on Thursday was taken to hospital in

Prague with a serious infection. He had even been unconscious but was revived by Maccabi Tel Aviv physiotherapists upon their return to the Marriott Hotel after a practice. The win has given CSKA their first title in 36 years.



YAO COULD STILL MAKE WORLDS

China star Yao Ming (pictured) could yet be fit to play for his country at the FIBA World Championship in Japan. Yao's NBA season with the Houston Rockets was cut short by a broken foot on April 10, and it was feared that the injury would jeopardise his chances of playing in the tournament this August. However, after the 2.29m (7ft 5in) center underwent surgery end of April, Zhang Mingji, leader of Team Yao, has told China Radio International that Yao could recover in time to pull on a China jersey. "I believe there is still a possibility for Yao to participate in the world championships," Zhang said. After the surgery, Yao must now begin a long period of rehabilitation. First he must rest following the



operation, but will then have physiotherapy before returning to China for conditioning. Yao is hoping to be back in Beijing by mid-June, and will base himself at the National Training Bureau during his rehabilitation. Yao's injury prevented him from accepting an invitation from the White House to attend the banquet which welcomed Chinese President Hu Jintao to Washington over the weekend.

NEW COACH FOR PANAMA

Guillermo Vecchio (pictured) has been appointed as the new coach of the Panama national basketball team ahead of the upcoming FIBA World Championship. The Argentinian coach's appointment was announced by the Board of Directors of the Panamanian Basketball Federation (FEPABA). He will work with the team for three months, from June to August, in which time Panama will host the Centrobasket Championship (July 4-8), a qualifier for the 2008 Olympics.

They will also play the Central American and Caribbean Sport Games in Cartagena, Colombia, from July 24-30, as well as some interna-



managed Venezuela and Mexico. Vecchio is currently managing Grises in the Puerto Rican BSN league and will be assisted by Reginald and Enrique Grenald, who have each had spells at the national team. The new coach will take over on June 5, according to the Federation. Panama are in the FIBA World Championship's Group B, alongside Spain, Germany, Angola, Japan and New Zealand.

BARBOSA NAMES SQUAD

Head coach Antonio Carlos Barbosa (pictured) has named a 21-strong squad for Brazil's games in the build-up to the FIBA World Championship for Women. "These 21 players form a powerful group," said Barbosa.



"We managed to mix experienced with young players, so it's guaranteeing a permanent renewal. We've got a very balanced group."

Barbosa added: "To host a World Championship carries a great motivation, but also a responsibility. I think the candidates to win the title, apart from Brazil, are the United States, Australia, Russia and the Czech Republic."

Brazil squad: Point-guards: Adriana Moises 'Adrianinha' (Penta Faenza - Italy), Helen Luz (Barcelona - Spain), Claudia Maria 'Claudinha' (Lattes Maurin Montpellier - France).

Shooting guards: Vivian Lopes (Santa Maria/Sao Caetano), Iziane Marques (Seattle Storm - WNBA), Lilian Goncalves (Unimed/Ourinhos). Forwards: Janeth Arcain (Ros Casares Valencia - Spain), Jaqueline Silvestre (Sao Joao/Jundiai), Micaela Jacintho (MTK Polfa Pabiance - Poland), Palmira Marcal (FIB/Semel/Bauru), Karen Gustavo (Unimed/Ourinhos), Silvia Cristina (Ponte Preta), Tayara Pesenti (Yaya Maria Porta XI - Spain). Centers: Isis Nascimento (Catanduva), Alessandra Oliveira (Ros Casares Valencia - Spain), Erika Cristina (Barcelona - Spain), Cin-

tional friendlies in Europe and Asia in early August, before the World Championship, to begin in August 19.

Vecchio managed Argentina in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and has also

tia Santos (Le Schio Club - Italy), Jucimara Dantas 'Mama' (Maddaloni - Italy), Kelly Santos (Santo Andre), Graziane Coelho (Penta Faenza - Italy), Soeli Garvao 'Ega' (Santa Maria/Sao Caetano).

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER FOR NIGERIA'S UDOKA

Breaking into the NBA is not an easy thing to do, but Nigeria international Ime Udoka (pictured) has taken a longer road than most.

Six years after attending a training camp with the Portland Trail Blazers, the 28-year-old has finally begun clocking minutes in the league after signing a short-term contract with the New York Knicks. Udoka is determined to hang around for as long as possible.

"It took a little longer than I expected but I'm here trying to take advantage of this opportunity," he told Hoopsworld.com. "It feels good."

Udoka, whose sister Mfon also plays international basketball for Nigeria, remains passionate about representing his country, and while he will spend the summer doing all he can to earn a return to the NBA next season, he is committed to playing at the FIBA World Championship in August. It will give him a chance to pay back Vincent for his help in realising his NBA dream. "I'm going to play this summer in Japan for the national team," he said. "My coach in the D League (Vincent) coached so that is the reason I went to Fort Worth anyway. Then I ended up here. So hopefully we'll have a successful summer."



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DUEÑAS UNHURT AFTER BREAK-IN

Spain international Roberto Dueñas escaped unharmed after burglars broke into his house in the middle of the night and tied him up.

The 2.21m (7ft 3in) Akasvayu Girona center had money stolen but was eventually able to free himself and contact the police.

Dueñas spoke of his ordeal in the Spanish press on Thursday.

"I didn't hear anything because the intruders entered my house downstairs and I was upstairs" he said. "I only noticed their presence when they came into my room. I got very scared but the important thing is that I'm fine."

Dueñas played for Spain in the Athens Olympics but did not take part in their EuroBasket campaign last year.

He is averaging 5.4 points and 4.2 rebounds in 15 minutes

per contest for

Akasvayu, who is in

sixth place in the

S p a n i s h

L e a g u e

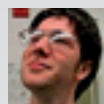
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SURPRISE ENTRY AT THE 2006 DRAFT

A student sportswriter has successfully entered his name for the NBA draft. David Isaacs, a junior at the University of California at Santa Cruz, has put his name forward despite never playing at a level higher than his intramural league at college. The 1.68m (5ft 6in) Isaacs appears in Section B of the NBA's official list of early entrants for the draft. How he got there is the subject of a column Isaacs has written for Sports Illustrated website cnnsi.com.

"My official basketball career is very short," Isaacs wrote. "I played throughout high school - at lunchtime, but there aren't any statistics. I played in an intramural league at college, but no stats were kept for that, either. The day I realized I was going to declare for the NBA Draft was like any other. I had finished playing a series of pickup games at the gym on campus, and the competition was tough as always. I matched up against a shooting guard, who was about 5ft 10in, 180 pounds. This guy tried to pop some outside shots, but couldn't do it with my hand in his grill. He tried to post me up, but couldn't back me down. After three consecutive wins, it dawned on me: I was ready for the show". Isaacs initially placed calls to both the NBA Players Association and the NBA Headquarters in New York, but did not get a response. However, after hiring San Francisco-based agent John Domantay, Isaacs began to make progress. Domantay showed Isaacs the sections of the league's Collective Bargaining Agreement which made it possible for him to enter (Article X), and put him in touch with Ned, a member of staff at the NBA Operations Department. "It was late at night, when I called, so I left a message for Ned on his voicemail. I woke up the next morning and imagined Ned had sat down at his desk, laughed at my pathetic voicemail and gleefully deleted it" Isaacs said. Instead, Ned called back and asked Isaacs to put his declaration in writing. A quick fax later, and Isaacs was on the list, albeit filed under "unknown individuals".



BOL WALKING TALL FOR SUDAN CAMPAIGN

Former NBA star Manute Bol is walking the 300 miles between New York and Washington to lend his support to a campaign promoting freedom in his homeland of Sudan.

Bol has joined the Sudan Freedom Walk, a campaign initiated by former Sudanese slave

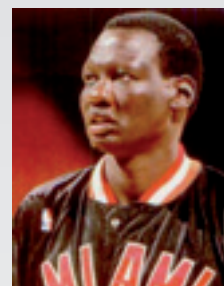
Simon Deng. The walk aims to raise awareness of modern forms of slavery and oppression in the country.

It takes an extra special effort from the 43-year-old, who can only walk with the aid of a cane after suffering serious neck injuries in a car accident in 2002.

Bol, who at 2.31m (7ft 7in) became the tallest player to appear in the NBA when he was drafted by the San Diego Clippers in 1983, is known for his charity work, and has frequently visited Sudanese refugee camps. In 2001, his visits got him in trouble when he was held in custody by the Sudanese government for his support of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army. He was only released after the intervention of United States Senator Joseph Lieberman.

He has given much of his NBA earnings to Sudanese refugees via his Ring True Foundation. In a string of appearances to raise money for the cause, Bol has demonstrated his abilities in other sports, beating former NFL star William "The Refrigerator" Perry in a boxing match, as well as suiting up for an ice hockey game and enjoying a brief stint as a jockey.

Notoriously, his agent used to mention one unusual accomplishment when negotiating his contracts. At 15, the Dinka herdsman killed a marauding lion with his spear as it laid sleeping. It's not clear if any of his clubs paid a premium for this particular talent.



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