

# ASSIST 24

FIBA ASSIST MAGAZINE FOR BASKETBALL ENTHUSIASTS EVERYWHERE JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2007



**FIBA**

We Are Basketball

**CARLO RECALCATI**  
IMPROVING THE TEAM BY  
IMPROVING THE PLAYER

**MIKE KRZYZEWSKI**  
USA TEAM STRATEGY IN JAPAN

**DAVID BLATT**  
SPECIAL DEFENSE:  
1-1-3 MATCH-UP ZONE

**CHUS BUENO**  
SPANISH BASKETBALL  
PLAYERS ASSOCIATION

**IOANNIS PAPAGEORGIOU**  
AGILITY DRILLS

# UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA OFFENSE





**FIBA ASSIST MAGAZINE**  
IS A PUBLICATION OF FIBA  
International Basketball Federation  
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CH-1216 Cointrin/Geneva Switzerland  
Tel. +41-22-545.0000, Fax +41-22-545.0099  
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**IN COLLABORATION WITH** Giganti-BT&M, Cantelli Editore, Italy  
**PARTNER** WABC (World Association of Basketball Coaches), Dusan Ivkovic President



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(BO), Italy, Tel. +39-051-6328811,  
Fax +39-051 6328815  
E-mail: fibaassist@cantelli.net  
Printed in Italy.  
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**The magazine is published 6 times per year.**

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mirco Melloni, Corrado de Belvis, Lisa Cavallini, Gastone Marchesi, Alessandro Bollino, Gerald Couzens and Raffaele Imbrogno; Mirko Ocokoljic and Patrick Hunt for the article of the USA National Team.

## 2007 FIBA CALENDAR

### MARCH 2007

31.03 - 02.04 NCAA Men's Final Four in Atlanta, USA

### APRIL 2007

01-03.04 NCAA Women's Final Four in Cleveland, USA

### JUNE 2007

03 - 10.06 FIBA Asia Championship for Women in Incheon, Korea  
29.06 - 08.07 FIBA U21 World Championship for Women in Moscow / Moscow Region, Russia

### JULY 2007

12-22.07 FIBA U19 World Championship for Men  
26.07 - 05.08 FIBA U19 World Championship for Women in Bratislava, Slovakia  
28.07 - 05.08 FIBA Asia Championship for Men in Tokushima, Japan

### AUGUST 2007

15 - 26.08 FIBA Africa Championship for Men in Luanda, Angola  
22.08 - 02.09 FIBA Americas Championship for Men in Las Vegas, USA

### SEPTEMBER 2007

03 - 16.09 FIBA Europe Championship "Eurobasket" for Men in Spain  
20 - 30.09 FIBA Africa Championship for Women in Dakar, Senegal  
23 - 27.09 FIBA Americas Championship for Women in Valdivia, Chile  
24.09 - 07.10 FIBA European Championship for Women in Ortona, Lanciano, Vasto, Chieti, Italy  
tbd FIBA Oceania Championship for Men  
tbd FIBA Oceania Championship for Women

### OCTOBER 2007

11 - 16.10 FIBA World League for Women Final Round in Russia

## COACHES

### FUNDAMENTALS AND YOUTH BASKETBALL

Improving the Team by Improving the Player **4**  
by Carlo Recalcati

### OFFENSE

University of Florida Offense **12**  
by Billy Donovan and Donnie Jones

USA Team Strategy in Japan **18**  
by Mike Krzyzewski

### DEFENSE

Special Defense: 1-1-3 Match-up Zone **24**  
by David Blatt

### HOOP MARKET

Back to the Future **28**  
by Raffaele Imbrogno

## REFEREES AND GAME ADMINISTRATION

Concepts of Modern Officiating Part II **30**  
by Valentin Lazarov

Right or Wrong? **34**

## SPORT MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT

### EXECUTIVES AND MARKETING

The Spanish Basketball Players Association **35**  
by Chus Bueno

### FIBA RESEARCH AND STUDY CENTRE

And now let's Enter on the Court **40**

## DOCTORS, CONDITIONING COACHES AND TRAINERS

### CONDITIONING COACHES

Agility Drills **42**  
by Yannis Papageorgiou

## NEWS

### ONE-ON-ONE

Savane: "It's time for Senegal to get it Together Really Quick." **44**

Kazlauskas: "China can be Much Stronger in the Future." **45**

### PLANET BASKETBALL

The World in Brief **46**

### OFF-THE-COURT

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

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by Carlo Recalcati

# IMPROVING THE TEAM BY IMPROVING THE PLAYER

After a long and prestigious career as a player, Carlo Recalcati started his coaching career with Bergamo, a team he helped guide from Serie A2 to A1. He then moved to Cantù, Reggio Calabria (winning an A2 championship), Ambrosiana Milan, and then back to Bergamo. In 1997 he signed with Varese, and two years later his team won the Italian championship. He then moved to Fortitudo Bologna, where he again won the Italian championship. He has been coaching Montepaschi Siena since 2003, winning the 2004 Italian championship and the Italian Supercup in 2005. He's also been coaching the Italian Men's national team since 2002, winning the bronze medal at the 2003 FIBA Eurobasket, the silver medal at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, and the gold medal at the 2005 Mediterranean Games.

The improvement of a team is directly connected to the improvement of individual players. Daily workouts to improve the fundamentals can enrich the technical skills of each player, who will then have more tools to use in various game situations. By the end of every practice session, each player must make some improvement in their skill level—even if it's just a little. And from these little improvements will spring forth a better team.

To make improvements, players need:

- ▼ Will
- ▼ Sacrifice
- ▼ Courage
- ▼ Desire to work.

## WHAT TO PRACTICE

- ▼ Running
- ▼ Change of Direction
- ▼ Change of Pace
- ▼ Jumping Ability
- ▼ Dribbling

- ▼ Passing
- ▼ Shooting
- ▼ Defensive Slides
- ▼ Balance
- ▼ Reaction
- ▼ Skills
- ▼ Transition
- ▼ Ability to Read Different Situations.

Improvement will come when drills are properly organized to stress several fundamentals. These drills must always be carried out at game-speed.

## DRILL 1

All the players are in motion on a half court without the ball. The coach calls the name of one player and he becomes the "hunter." The hunter must then try to touch another player. Once touched, this player becomes the hunter and continues the chase. This drill helps players run and quickly change pace and direction while moving without the ball (diagr. 1).

## DRILL 2

The drill is the same as the previous one, but now a basketball is used, continuously kept in motion by dribbling and passing. The coach gives the ball to a player and he will become the "safety." He cannot be touched while the designated "hunter" tries to touch another player without the ball. The aim of the drill is to pass the ball to that player who is about to be touched by the "hunter." (diagr. 2).

## DRILL 3

Every player has a ball. While dribbling, the players try to knock each others ball out of bounds. Once a player loses his ball, he is eliminated from the game and leaves the court. As the number of players decreases, the playing dimensions are reduced as well. Part of the half court is used; then inside the three-point line, and finally into the three-second lane (diagr. 3).

## DRILL 4

Every player has a ball. 1 starts dribbling from the baseline and must try to get to the half court line without being touched by 2, who, also dribbling, starts from the three-point line and comes towards him (diagr. 4).

## DRILL 5

1 moves from side to side and passes the ball, alternatively to 2 and 3, who act as supports. The drill goes on until an established time or an established number of passes are completed (diagr. 5).

## DRILL 6

The coach rolls the ball. 1, after making defensive slides, must recover the ball and pass it back to the coach. This drill is run until an established time has elapsed or an established number of passes have been made (diagr. 6 and 7).

## DRILL 7

The coach has two basketballs and alternatively passes them to 1 who, moving quickly to the left or the right side, receives the ball and passes it back to the coach, using only one hand. The drill goes on until an established time has elapsed or an established number of passes have been made (diagr. 8).

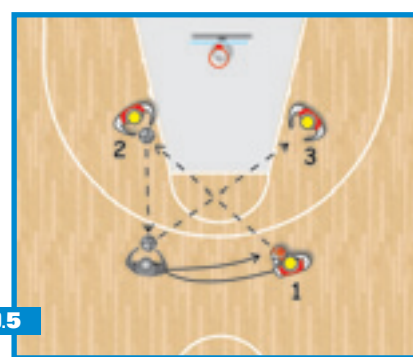
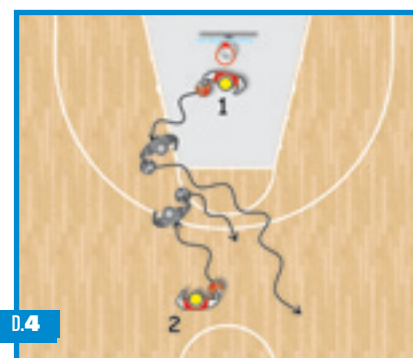
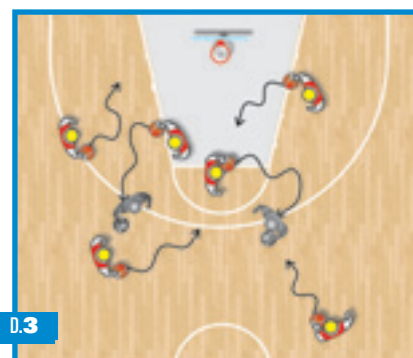
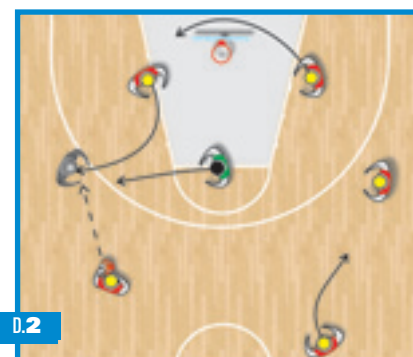
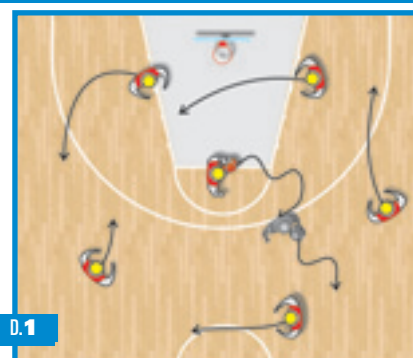
## DRILL 8

The players are divided in two lines, with each player holding a basketball. The drill begins at half court, with 1 and 2 dribbling at the same time. 1 decides his own direction of dribbling and the timing of his shot. 2 must adjust, always maintaining the initial distance from 1 and then take the same shot 1 has taken (diagr. 9). After the shot, 1 and 2 get their own rebounds and go to the end of the line (diagr. 10).

## DRILL 9

Players are divided in two lines and each





has a basketball. 1 and 2 start at the same time from half court and dribble toward the free-throw line. 1 can either penetrate and finish with a lay-up or else come to a stop and take a shot. 2, after a brief hesitation, adjusts himself to the choice of 1 and executes the opposite shot. This means that if 1 takes a jump shot, 2 must drive to the basket. After shooting, 1 and 2 get their own rebounds and go to the end of the line. (diagr. 11 and 12).

#### DRILL 10

3 defends on the ball side and, when 2 receives the ball from 1, 2 makes a cross dribble and drives to the basket. If 3 helps, 2 stops his penetration, takes a step back, and shoots (diagr. 13). If 3 does not help, 2 will end the penetration with a lay-up (diagr. 14).

#### DRILL 11

3 is on the help side of the three-second lane. 2 defends against 1 and gives him a slight advantage. 1 starts dribbling and must find the right time to stop and shoot between the recovery of 2 and the defensive help of 3 (diagr. 15).

#### DRILL 12

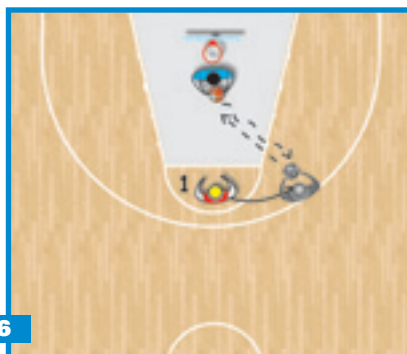
Players line up in a row at half court with a total of three basketballs on one side of the court. 1 dribbles until the three-point line, then changes his dribbling hand and dribbles through his legs, behind his back, or makes a crossover dribble. At the three-point line he makes another change of dribbling hand, then, after a brief hesitation, makes a speed change, and drives to the basket, finishing with a lay-up. He gets his own rebound, dribbles until half court, and executes a running pass to 4. The drill must be executed on both the right and left side of the court (diagr. 16).

#### DRILL 13

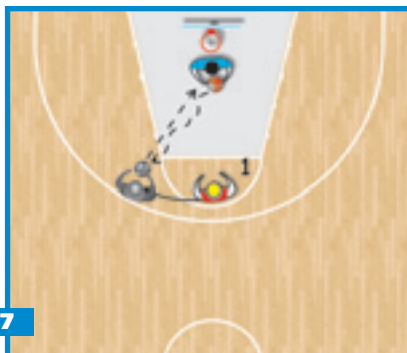
The players form a row on the baseline and each player has a basketball. 2 runs without the ball until half court, changes direction, and receives the ball from 1; 3 runs without ball towards the sideline, then changes direction, receives a pass from 2 and shoots. 1 runs towards half court, 2 towards the sideline, and then 4 executes a pass and continues the drill in continuity. The coach can establish the maximum number of dribbles that can be made. The drill must be executed on both the left and right side of the court (diagr. 17).

#### DRILL 14

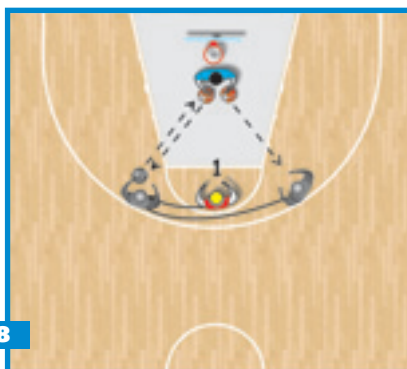
Every player has a basketball and forms two rows, one in the middle of the court and the other one in a corner. 2 starts dribbling to the right, makes a crossover dribble, changes hands, passes the ball to the coach, then



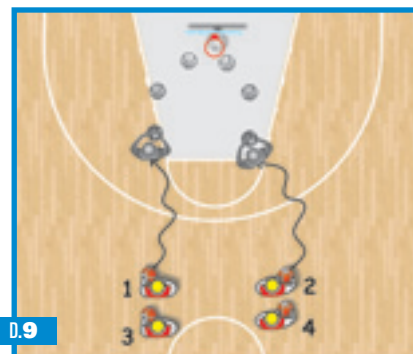
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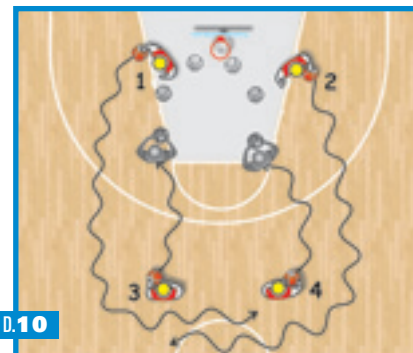
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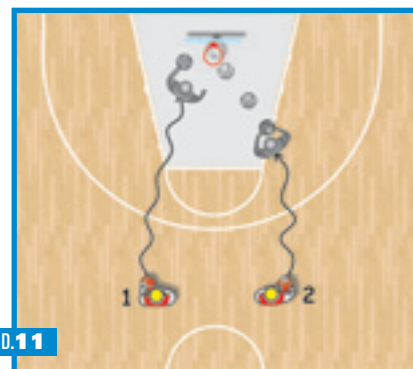
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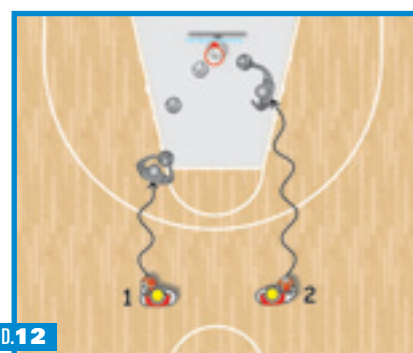
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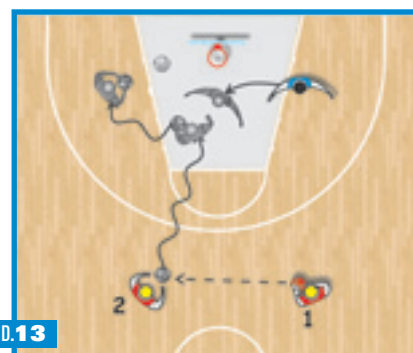
D.10



D.11



D.12



D.13

changes direction, and receives the ball from 1, who, after the pass, also changes direction, receives the ball, and shoots. 2, after executing the pass, runs towards the coach to receive a pass and then shoots. After shooting, players get their own rebounds and change their initial row (diagr. 18). The drill must be run on the left and right side of the court.

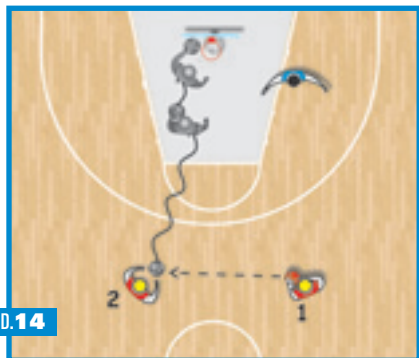
#### DRILL 15

1 passes the ball to 2, who then passes to 4, takes advantage of the blind screen of 3, receives the ball, and shoots. 4 goes to rebound and passes to 5, who passes to 6 (diagr. 19). 1, after the pass, replaces 2. 2, after shooting, replaces 5. 3, after the screen, replaces 4. 4, after the pass, replaces 5. 5, after the pass, replaces 6. The drill must be run on left and right side of the court.

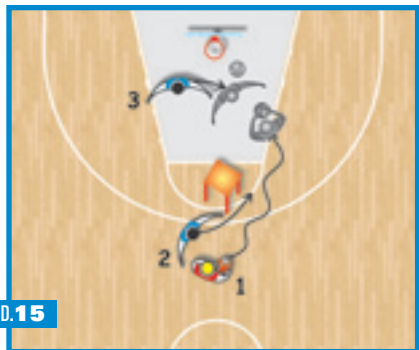
#### DRILL 16

1 passes to 2, and from 2 to 3. 1 runs towards the free-throw line and receives the ball from 3. 2 contests the shot of 1 (diagr. 20). Then, all the players change

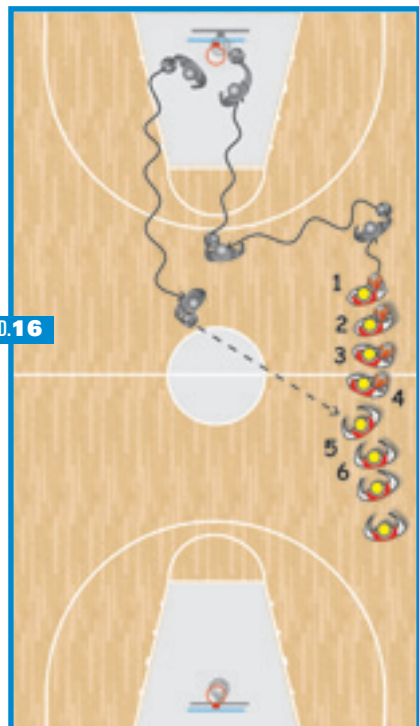




D.14



D.15



D.16

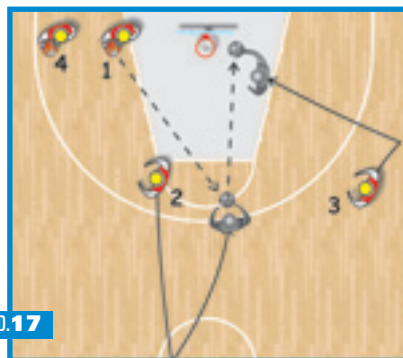
their initial rows, rolling to the left side.

#### DRILL 17

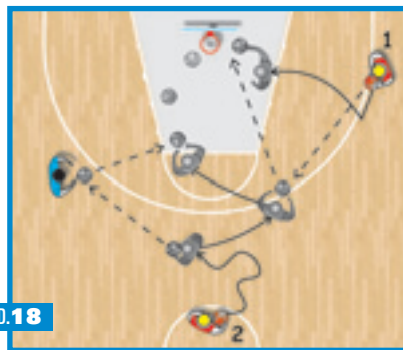
1 passes to 2, contests his shot, and then changes position so he can receive the next pass. 2 avoids the obstacle of 1 with a dribble, and then stops and shoots. After shooting, 2 rebounds his own shot, passes the ball to 1, and from there he contests the shot of 1 (diagr. 21). The drill must be run on both left and right side of the court.

#### DRILL 18

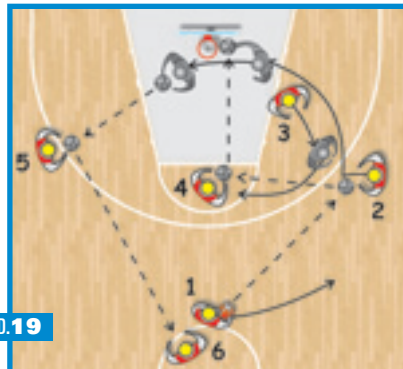
The players, each with a ball, form two



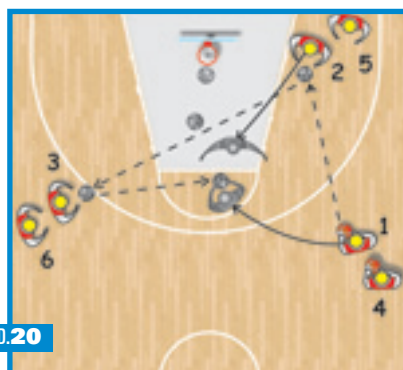
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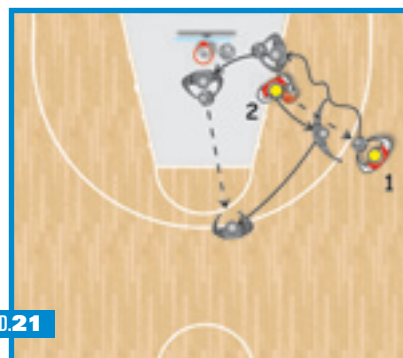
D.18



D.19



D.20



D.21

lines. One coach stands outside the the three-point line and the other coach is positioned at half court. 1 passes to the coach and runs down the court. 2 passes the ball to 1, then runs toward the coach and receives a hand-off pass from the coach. 1 passes to the other coach on the other half court and then receives the ball from 2, finishing the action with a lay-up. 2, after the pass, receives a hand-off pass from the coach on the other half court and executes a stop and shoot (diagr. 22). The last repetitions of the drill must be executed without dribbling.

#### DRILL 19

The players form two lines, one in the lane, and one laterally on the perimeter. One ball is used. 1 throws the ball against the backboard, takes the rebound, and then makes a long pass over the mid-court line to 2, who has run along the side-line. After receiving the ball, he finishes with a lay-up, takes his own rebound, and passes back to 1. After getting the pass, 1, who has run around the two coaches set at the mid-court line, shoots the ball. 3 gets the rebound, passes to 4, and the drill continues (diagr. 23).

#### DRILL 20

Three rows are formed at the baseline and the player in the middle row has the basketball. Two coaches position themselves just outside of the three-point line, one on each side. 1 throws the ball against the backboard and then passes to 2. 3 runs on the left lane and then receives the ball from 2 for a lay-up. 1 runs in the central lane of the court, takes the rebound, and passes to 3, who has run outside of the lane after shooting. 2 runs around the coach and receive a pass from 3 to finish with a lay-up. 4 takes the rebound, passes to 5 and the drill continues (diagr. 24). The drill can be finished by 3, who throws the ball against the backboard for 2 that makes the same thing for the "tap-in" of 1.

#### DRILL 21

Four rows of player are set up in the corners. Three basketballs are used. 1, 2 and 3 begin a passing wave. When 3 passes the ball to the coach, set at the middle of the court, all three players execute zig-zag defensive slides. The coach passes the ball back to 3, who passes it to 1, who then passes to 2 for a lay-up. 3 goes to receive a pass from 4 and 1 from 5 in order to execute a stop and shoot. 2 takes the rebound and beins another weave with 4 and 5. (diagr. 25 and diagr. 26). The drill goes on for an established time or until a certain number of passes have been made.



**DRILL 22**

As in drill 21, this drill does not use a coach or zig-zag defensive slides (diagr. 27).

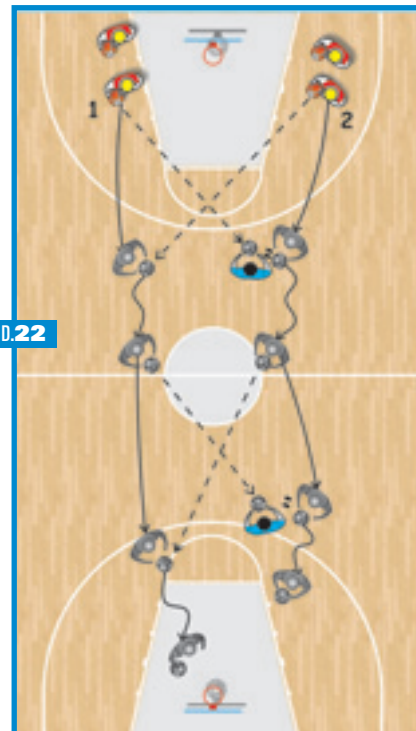
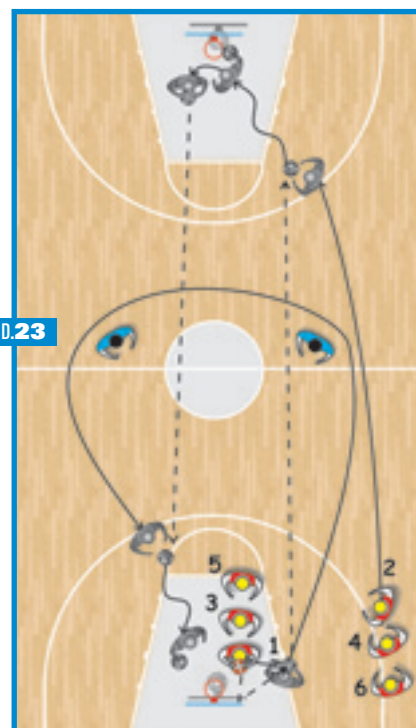
**DRILL 23**

The players form two rows at the baseline, with the ball in one row and one coach with another ball four or five feet from the mid-court line, with a ball. 1 and 2 pass the ball to each other, then 1 takes the ball from the coach, changes direction, and dribbles towards the basket for a lay-up. 2 drops his ball, which he has received from 1, becomes the defender,

and recovers against 1 (diagr. 28). The drill must be run on both the right and left side of the court.

**DRILL 24**

Two players position themselves under the basket, one behind the other, facing the coach, who is positioned with a ball near the mid-court line on the central lane of the court. The coach rolls the ball towards one of the two sideline. 1 runs, catches the ball and passes it back to the coach. When the ball is returned to the coach, 2 runs to the opposite side of the floor from where 1 has

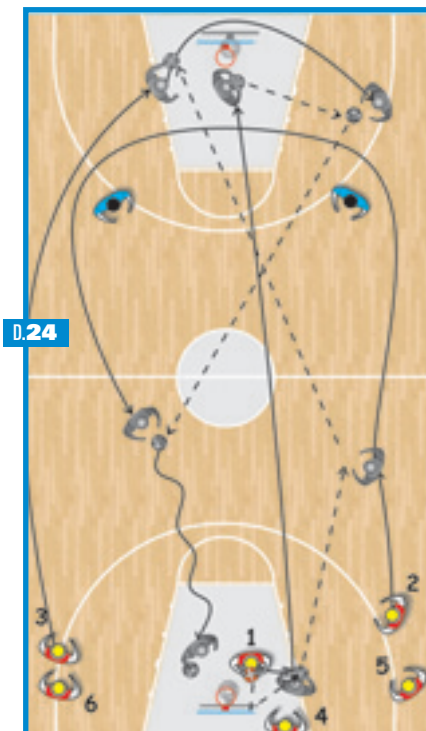
**D.22****D.23**

caught the ball, receives the ball from the coach, and dribbles towards the basket for a lay-up. 1, after passing the ball, becomes the defender and recovers against 2 (diagr. 29).

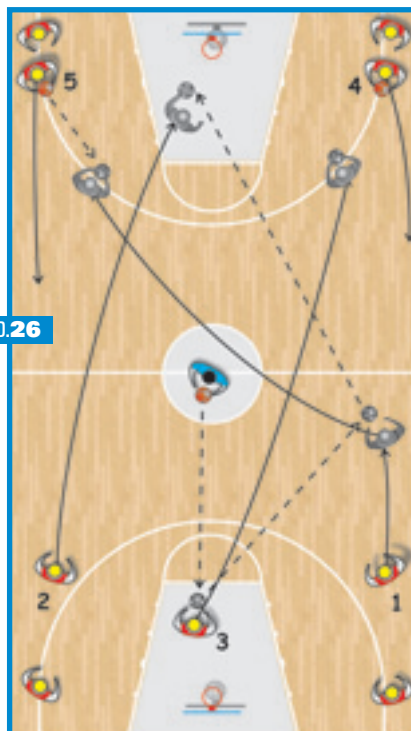
**DRILL 25**

One offensive player, 1, with the ball, and one defender, 2, line up on one side of the half court. A second offensive player, 3, sets up the other wing position. 1 plays one-on-one against 2. 2, who was the defender, gets the rebound and, if a basket hasn't been scored, makes an inbound

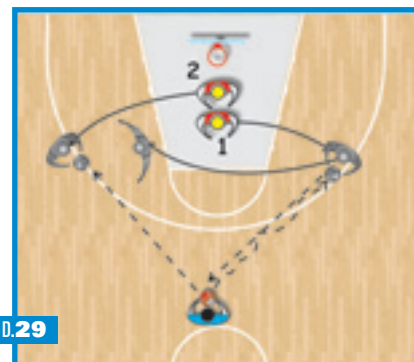




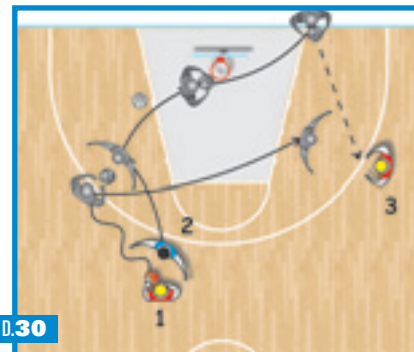
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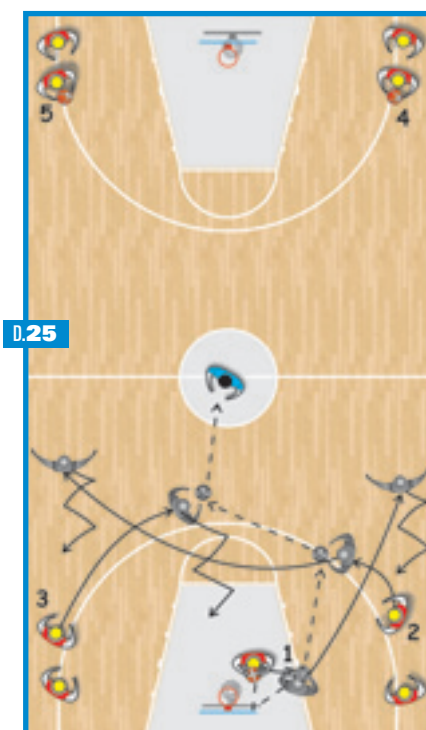
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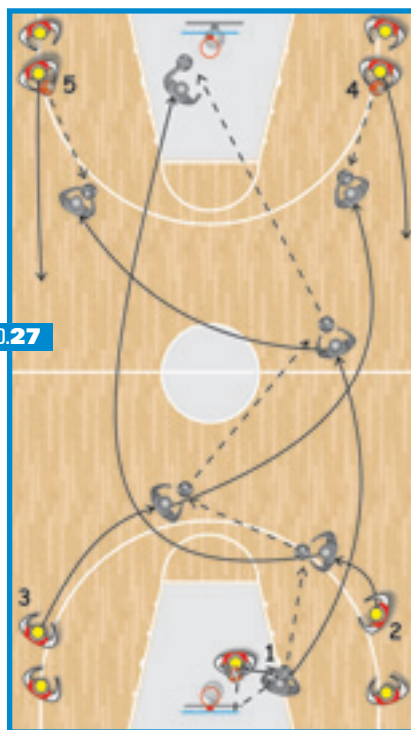
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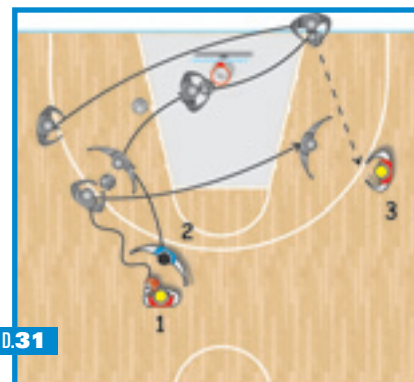
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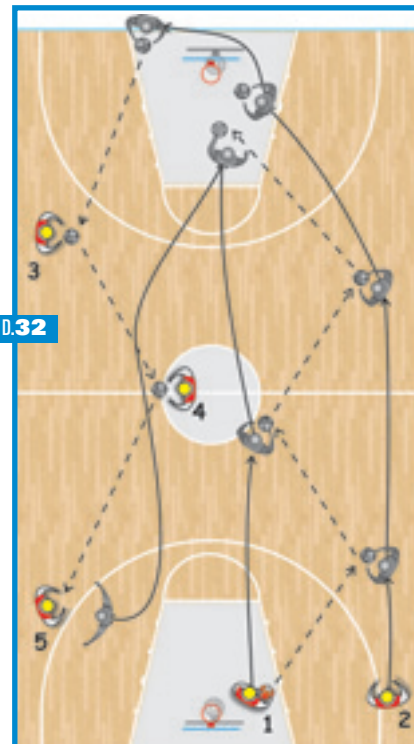
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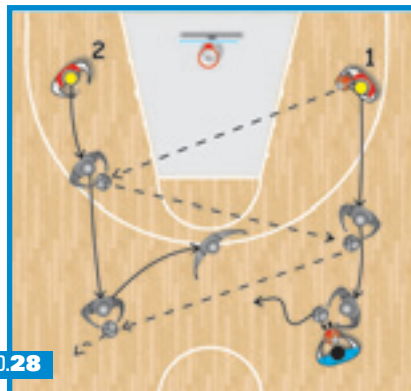
D.27



D.31



D.32



D.28

pass from the baseline to 3. 1, after shooting, becomes the defender and tries to anticipate the moves of 3. If 3 receives the ball, then he plays one-on-one against 1 (diagr. 30).

#### DRILL 26

The drill is the same of the previous one, except that 3 now has a second ball. 1 plays one-on-one against 3, 2, and then becomes defender against 3. 2 takes the rebound and gets ready on the opposite side to play against 3, who becomes a defender (diagr. 31). The drill continues until time runs out or a certain number of baskets are scored.

**DRILL 27**

Two players, 1 and 2, with one ball, line up on one lateral lane of the court. Player 3, is positioned near the sideline on the opposite half court, while another player, 4, is on the jump ball circle and another one, 5, near the baseline and outside of the three-point line on the half court where 1 and 2 start the drill. 1 and 2 pass the ball back and forth on all the court. 1 finishes with a lay-up and then becomes the defender, guarding against 5. 2 takes the rebound and passes the ball to 5. 2, 3 and 4 exchange their spots. 1 and 5, after playing one-on-one, pass the ball back and forth on all the court and the drill continues in this way (diagr. 32).

**DRILL 28**

Three rows of players are formed near the baseline, with a ball in the hand of the player in the middle row. 1, 2, and 3 pass the ball back and forth until the coach whistles and 1 becomes the defender and must recover, while 2 and 3 attack (diagr. 33).

**DRILL 29**

Three rows of players are formed near the baseline, with a ball in the hand of the player in the middle row. 1 begins a passing weave. 3 passes the ball to the coach positioned at half court, touches the ball, and runs back to become the defender. 1 and 2 arrive at the half court, change direction, and then one of them receives a pass from the coach and they attack two against one on 3 (diagr. 34).

**DRILL 30**

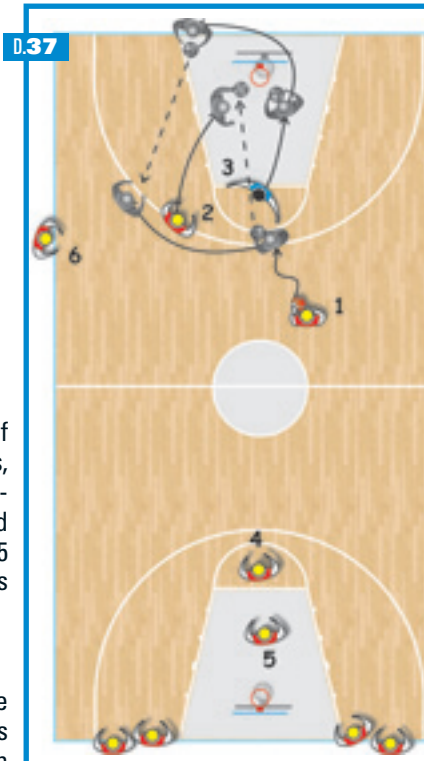
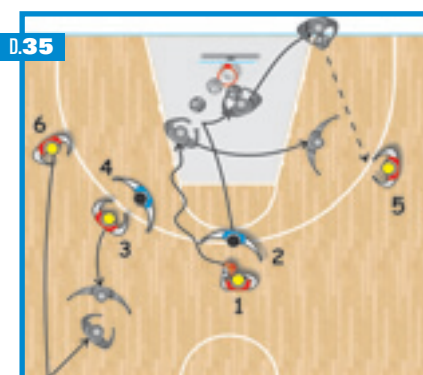
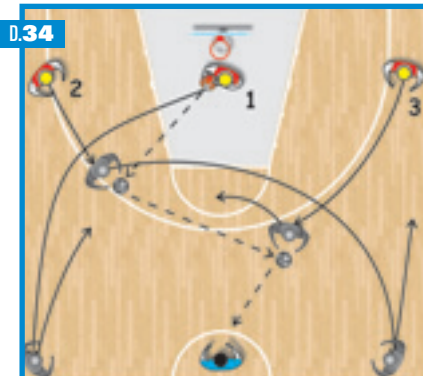
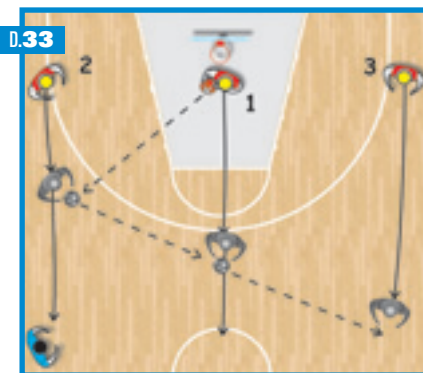
Two offensive players 1, with the ball, and 3, and two defenders, 2 on 1 and 4 on 3, and two players on the wings, 5 and 6. 1 and 3 play two-on-two. After a scored basket or a rebound, let's assume that 1 has shot, 2 goes out to the baseline and passes to 5. 1, after shooting, becomes the defender and tries to anticipate 5. 3 becomes the defender and recovers on 6, who, in the meantime, has run to touch the mid court line and comes back. The players play a two-on-two full court (diagr. 35).

**DRILL 31**

1 and 2 attack against 3 and 4. Then, 1 and 2 become defenders and play against 5 and 6, who are set near the baseline on the same half court, in a two-on-two full court play. 5 and 6, after shooting, become defenders playing against 7 and 8. The drill continues this way (diagr. 36). After a made basket, a defender makes the inbound pass or, if a defender gets the rebound, he will make the outlet pass to someone below the free-throw line extension.

**DRILL 32**

Two players, 1 and 2 on offense, one player, 3,

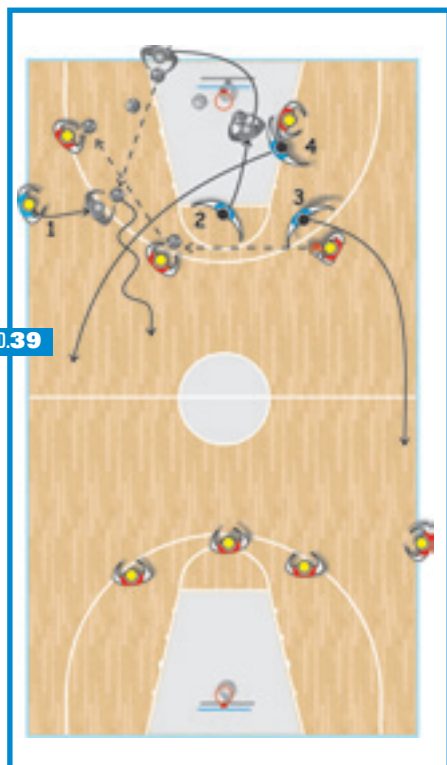
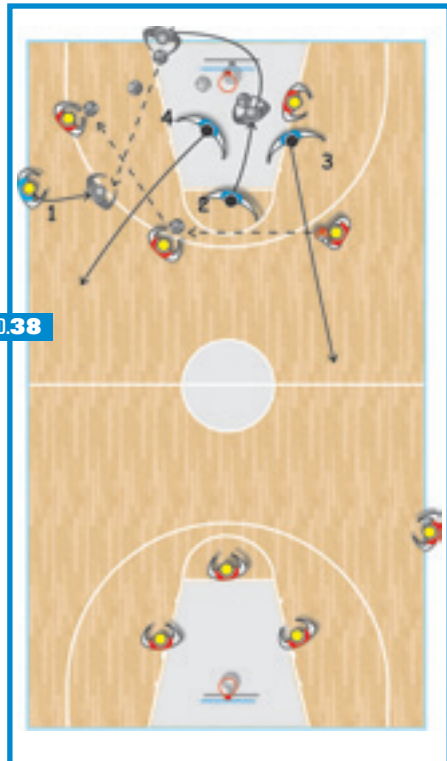


on defense, one player, 6, outside on the half court where 1 and 2 play against 3, two players, 4 and 5, play on tandem on the opposite three-second lane. 1 and 2 attack against 3. 1, 2, and 3 then attack together against 4 and 5. 4 and 5 attack against 6, and the drill continues this way (diagr. 37).

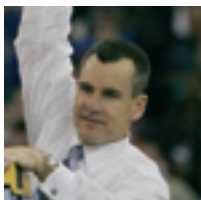
**DRILL 33**

Four offensive players play against three defenders, who play zone. The four must pass to the ball to the teammate who is open for an uncontested shot. Once the three defenders get the ball, they become offensive players and with 1, who has entered on the court from the baseline, they play against three defenders who play zone defense on the other half court. The drill continues this way. (diagr. 38 and 39). If the defenders play man-to-man defense, they must defend against the player in possession of ball and the two offensive players closest to the ball. After a pass, the defenders must close out the new free offensive player, who has received the ball.









by Billy Donovan



by Donnie Jones

# UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA OFFENSE

**Billy Donovan was assistant coach of Rick Pitino at Kentucky. In 1994, at the age of 28, he went to Marshall University, becoming the youngest head coach in the history of the NCAA. This is his 12th season at the guide of Florida, the team he led to the NCAA Final in 2000 and with which he won the 2006 NCAA Championship.**

**After being assistant coach at Pikeville College and Marshall University, Donnie Jones is on his 12th year as assistant coach at Florida University, where he is scouting and recruiting responsible, as also leads the training days' planning.**

Pressure is the word that identifies the style of playing of the Florida University, because we want to put pressure on both the halfcourts. Our offense has always put pressure on the opposing defense thanks to aggressive screens and back screens, but also with the unselfishness of our players, always ready to make one more pass to have the best shot. The aim of our offense has always been the team play, trying to create spaces and opportunities inside the plays in order to obtain possibilities of easy shots for all the five players. Every college team has great offensive plays, so we believe that what makes a play successful are details.

Teaching individual fundamentals, basic for the development of our offense, is at the base of our plays execution. We work daily with our players to improve their individual skills that are useful for our way of playing. This gives them mental and physical confidence and the knowledge necessary to execute our plays. Many coaches think that a play may win a game, but there are also many valid coaches along all the nation that will find the way to defend on that or those plays. So, you have to teach your own players how to read the defense and the small details that are at the base of each play. Individual teaching therefore has a great role in the development of players and offensive plays.

As technical staff we knew that in this tourna-

ment we had to have offensive production by all of guys of our starting five and the key of our success was that in every game we obtained points by everyone of our players on the court: Joakim Noah averaged 14.2 points per game, Corey Brewer 12.7, Al Horford 11.3, Lee Humphrey 10.9. It's unbelievable how much your team success can depend on how much no one of your players is bothered about how many points he scores, but he plays with his teammates. We never exalted or awarded a player for the points he scored, but instead we focused on those intangibles and less underlined aspects of the game, like assists, boxouts, deflected balls. In this championship our team averaged 17 assists, scoring 78 points per game and in many games we had even more than 20 assists.

At Florida University we want to attack defense in two ways:

1. Vertical: execute our plays in the central side of the court, this because with strong defensive teams it is difficult to begin the play passing on the wing, because this position often is anticipated.
2. Horizontal: because it gives us the possibility to change the ball side in order to play in motion and to work for the best possible shot.

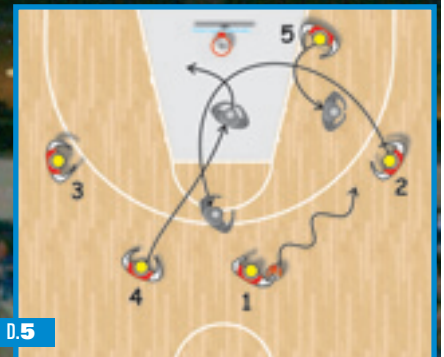
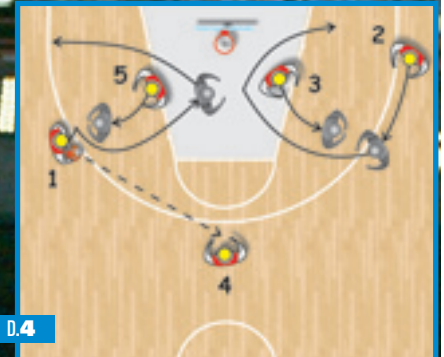
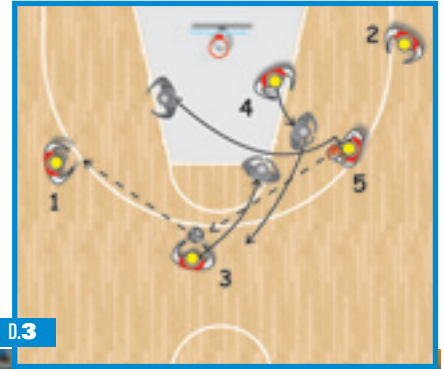
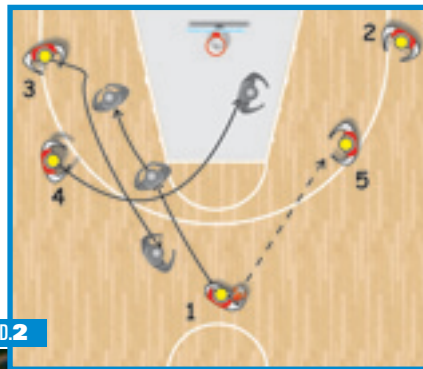
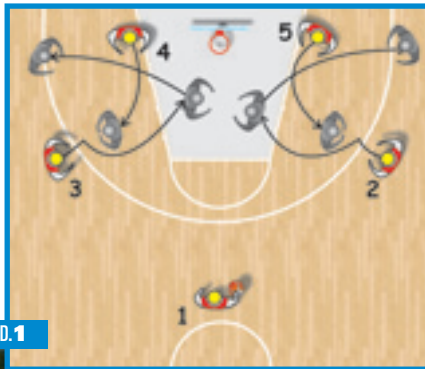
The series of offensive plays that we are going to show are of those called "High thumb and Low thumb" and are used as motion offense to make all the five players moving on the court and to create opportunities in low post and three point shot. The other plays we used in this tournament are designed for determined options, when we want that a certain player may shoot in particular moments of the game. Moreover, I would like to underline again the importance of two characteristics of our team:

- ▶ Offensive pressure, paying attention to the plays execution with the maximum intensity to the unselfishness.
- ▶ Defensive pressure, with aggressiveness, double teaming as soon as possible and working to put out of rhythm the opponent team.

Here are some key numbers that demonstrate









what our offensive and defensive rhythm was able to create to win the NCAA title:

- ▼ Florida was one of the only four teams of all the NCAA tournament that had all the players of the starting five that scored in double figure.
- ▼ For the first time from 1968 (UCLA), one of the teams at the Final Four won both the games by more than 15 points.
- ▼ N.1 in all the NCAA for the field goals percentage (50%).
- ▼ 39% in three-point shot.
- ▼ 4th in the NCAA in free-throws (862 against 665 attempted by the opponents).

#### SERIES "HIGH" - HIGH THUMB

We begin with two players in low post, one pointguard and two forwards. 5 and 4 go out and set a back screen for 3 and 2, who cut in the lane to quickly go out in the corners if the don't receive under the basket (diagr.1).

#### Important details

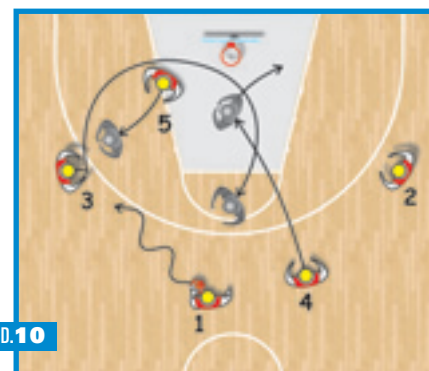
- a. 4 and 5 must set a tough and strong back screen, to get 3 and 2 free. 4 and 5 after the screen get open to be free on wing position.
- b. 2 and 3 must look for the ball, addressing the hands to the ball to receive on the cut and go shooting close to the basket. If they don't receive, they cut while running and go to the corners.
- c. 1 can start the game passing to 4 or 5, who got open to the ball after the back screen.

Let's think to 1 passing to 5: after the pass, 1 set a quick screen for 4, who cuts around the screen and goes in the lane. 1 then sets another screen for 3, who gets up and goes out of three point line (diagr. 2).

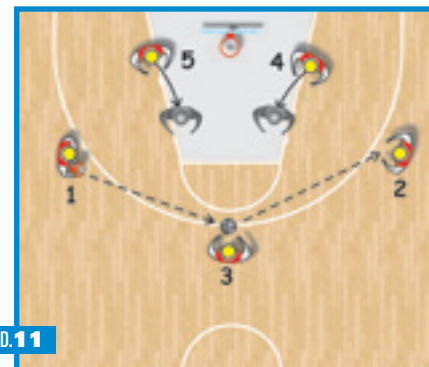
#### Important details

- a. As soon as 1 moves to the low side for screening for 3, 4 has to cut behind 1 trying to receive the ball for a shot close to the basket.
- b. 3 will make a "L" cut, that is to say that he will cut first to the basket to take then advantage of the screen set by 1 for going out of the three point line. It is of basic importance that 1 set a screen that forces the defender of 3 to follow him behind, because we don't want that the defender of 3 passes in middle to steal the ball.

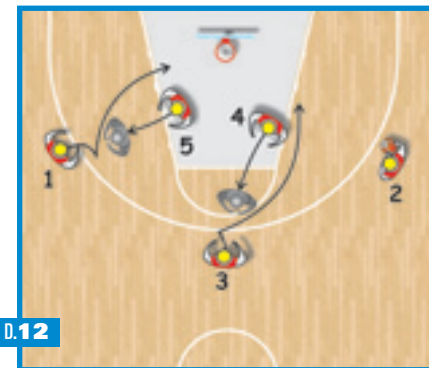
5 change the ball side passing to 3, 3 passes to 1 and 4 sets a back screen for 5, who cuts in the lane to receive from 1 and go for shooting close to the basket. Immediately after having passed the ball to 1, 3 screens low for 4 (screening the screener), who goes outside the lane and then beyond the three point line, in the central side of the court to receive and shoot for three (diagr. 3)



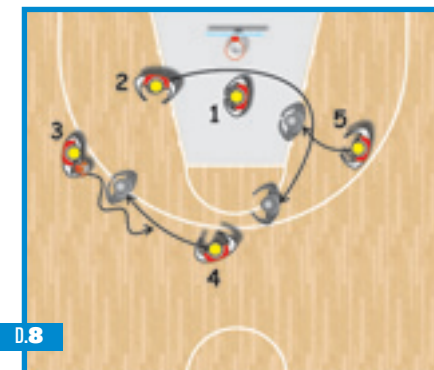
D.10



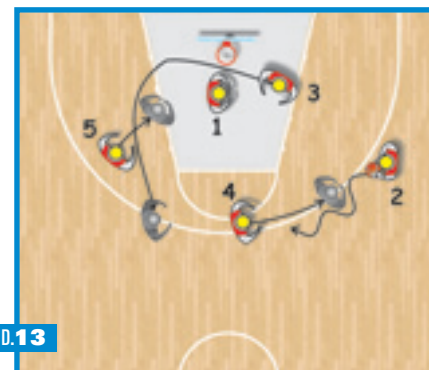
D.11



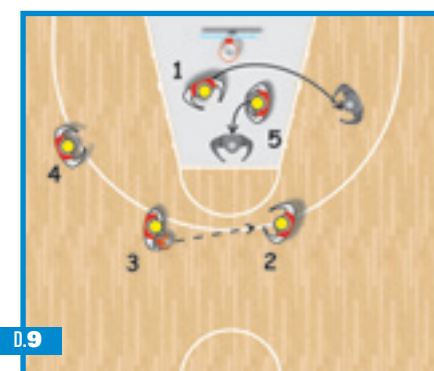
D.12



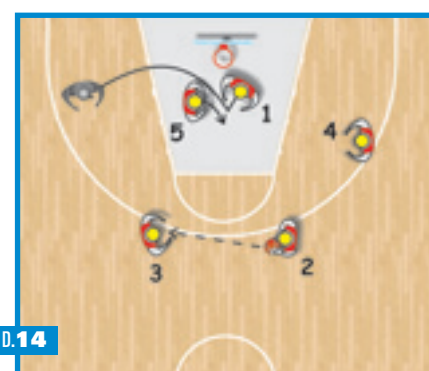
D.8



D.13



D.9



D.14

### Important details

- Ball has to change side as quick as possible, going from 3 to 1.
- If he doesn't receive after the cut, 4 has to go outside the lane and back screening for 5.
- 5 first has to make moving his defender in the opposite direction of the screen and then has to go, shoulder against shoulder, on the screen set by 4, trying to cut in the lane to receive and shoot close to the basket (the cut made by 5 depends on his defender's position).
- As soon as 5 cuts on screen set by 4, the defender of 4 will slide in the lane in order to help, therefore 4 will have more time to get the screen of 3 and shoot.

After these first movements we can carry on our play, with 1 who passes to 4 in the central side of the court and with 5 and 3 who get out of the low post and set a back screen for 1 and 2 (diagr. 4).

### Important details

- Create continuity for the play.
- Everyone of the players is on a different position than the starting one.

### 2 HIGH

If 1 calls "2 high" or he's dribbling to 2, it means that the play is for 2.

1 dribbles to 2 and this is a signal for 2, who first receive a back screen from 5, who's gone out the lane, and then a low screen in the lane from 4. After the screen, 4 and 5 go to the low post (diagr. 5).

If 2 cannot shoot, first he tries to pass to 4 or 5 who have cut in the lane and if he can't pass the ball inside, he changes the ball side passing to 3 (diagr. 6).

With the ball to 3, 4 gets up and sets a back screen for 2, who fakes the cut in the opposite direction and then gets the screen of 4, while 5 too sets a back screen for 1, who cuts in the lane.

3 can pass to 2 in the low post, to 4, who got open after the screen, or to 1 who cut in the lane (diagr. 7).

If 3 has not any possibility of passing, he takes a screen from 4 and dribbles to the midcourt, while 2 cuts in the lane and gets a staggered screen, first from 1 and then from 5 and then gets up on the free throw line to receive from 3 (diagr. 8).

3 passes to 2. After the screen for 2, 1 receives a screen from 5 (pick the picker) and goes on the corner, while 5 opens toward the ball to receive a pass close to the rim (diagr. 9).

### 3 HIGH

If 1 calls the play "3 high" or dribbles toward 3 means that the play is for 3. 1 dribbles toward 3 and it's a sign for 3, who first

receives a blind screen from 5, who got off the lane, and then a low screen from 4. After this screen, 5 and 4 go to the low post (diagr. 10).

If 3 cannot shoot, first he tries to pass the ball to 5 or 4, who have cut in the lane, and if cannot give the ball inside, he changes the ball side and passes to 2 (diagr. 11).

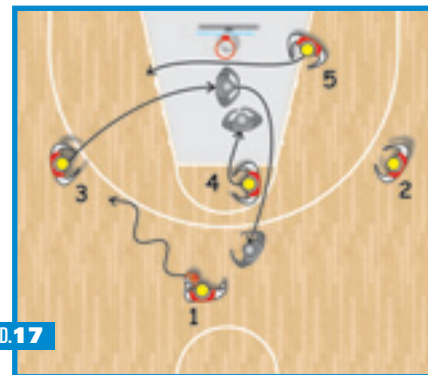
When 2 has got the ball, 4 goes high and makes a blind screen for 3, who fakes to cut in the opposite direction and then uses the screen of 4, while also 5 makes a blind screen for 1, in order to keep busy the defense. 2 can pass the ball to 3 on the cut, or to 5, who opened himself to the ball after his screen (diagr. 12).

If 3 doesn't receive, he keeps on cutting, receiving a stagger screen, from 1 and 5, and gets off the three-point line. In the meantime, 4 makes a screen for 3, who dribbles to the mid-court line (diagr. 13).

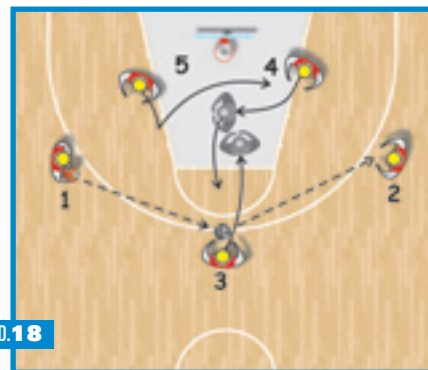
2 passes the ball to 3. After screening for 3, 5 brings a screen for 1 (pick the picker) who, after the screen for 3, has come back to use the screen of 5. 1 gets out in the corner (diagr. 14).

### 4 HIGH

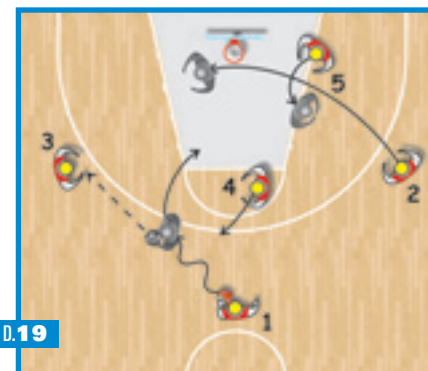
The play is for 4. 1 dribbles toward 2, who cuts in the lane and goes to screen in the paint for 4 who, before the screen, has brought his defender in the opposite direction and then uses the screen of 2. 5 makes a low screen for 2 (pick the picker), who goes high and gets off the three-point line (diagr. 15). 1 changes the ball side, passes to 2 and 2



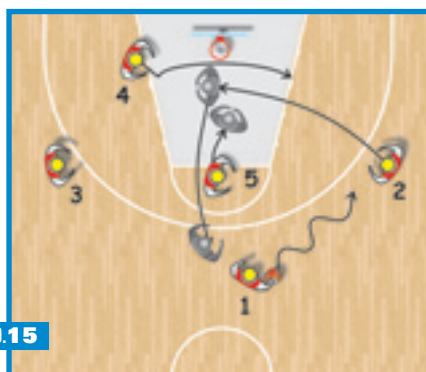
D.17



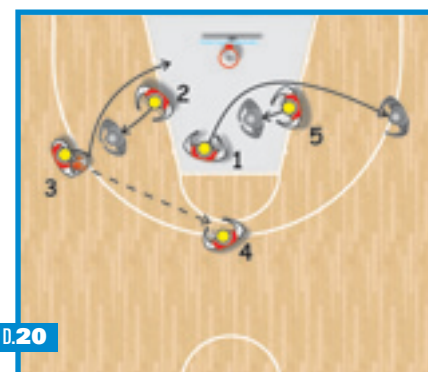
D.18



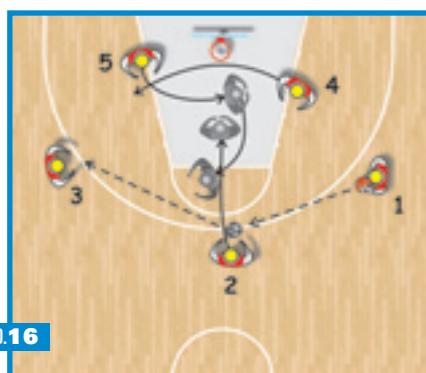
D.19



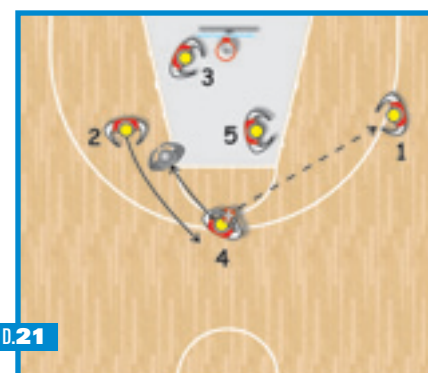
D.15



D.20



D.16



D.21



passes to 3. After the screen for 2, 5 keeps on cutting e screens for 4, who cuts toward the ball (diagr. 16).

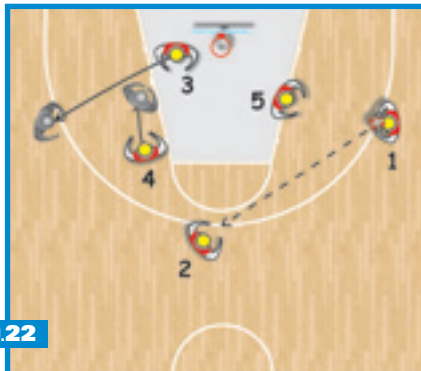
### 5 HIGH

The play is for 5. 1 screens toward 3, who cuts in the lane and screens for 5 who cuts in the lane, too, and goes to the ball side. After the screen for 5, 3 receives a low screen by 4 (pick the picker) and goes high, over the three-point line (diagr. 17).

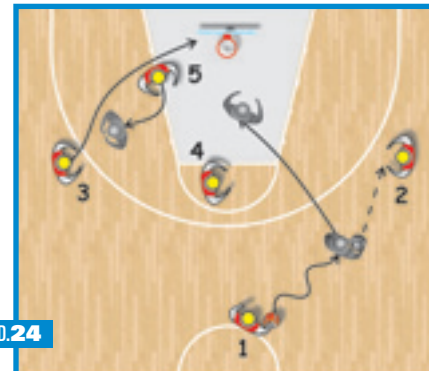
If 1 cannot pass the ball to 5, he changes the side passing to 3 and 3 passes to 2. 4 screens for 5 who, before the screen, has brought his defender far from the screen and then uses the screen. After passing the ball to 2, 3 makes a low screen for 4, who goes to the central side of the court. 2 passes the ball to 5 in low post (diagr. 18).

### SERIES LOW 2 LOW

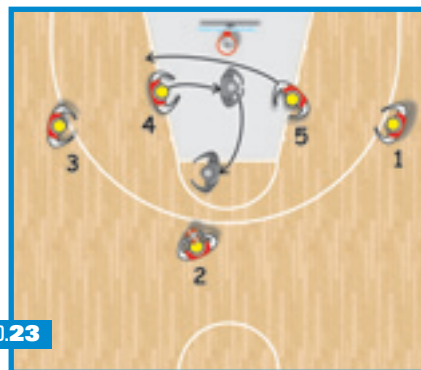
The play starts for 2, but every offensive player has got a chance to find a shot. 1 passes to 3 and then makes a give-and-go,



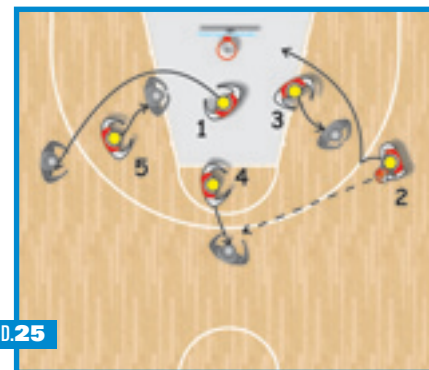
D.22



D.24



D.23



D.25



while 4 gets off the lane and goes to the central side of the court. 5 makes a blind screen for 2 (diagr. 19).

3 passes to 4 and, after cutting to the opposite direction, uses the screen of 2, who kept on cutting, while 5, after screening for 2, makes a blind screen for 1 (diagr. 20).

If there is no solution, 4 passes the ball to 1 and makes a low screen (pick the picker) for 2, who goes out to the central side of the court (diagr. 21).

4 goes to screen for 3, who goes off to the corner, and 1 changes the ball side passing to 2 (diagr. 22).

At last, 4 screens for 5 and then opens him-

self toward the ball (diagr. 23).

### 3 LOW

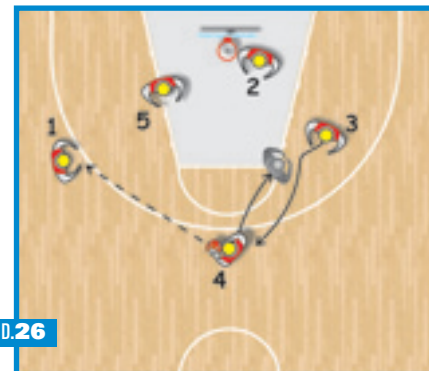
This time, the play is for 3, but as usual every offensive player has got a chance to find a shot. 1 dribbles toward 2 and then cuts in the lane for a give-and-go, while 5 makes a blind screen for 3, who first brings his defender far from the screen and uses this screen (diagr. 24).

2 passes to 4, who got out of the free-throw line to receive the ball, 5 makes a low screen for 1 and 3 makes a blind screen for 2 who, as usual, first brings his defender to a side and then goes to the opposite one in order to use the screen (diagr. 25).

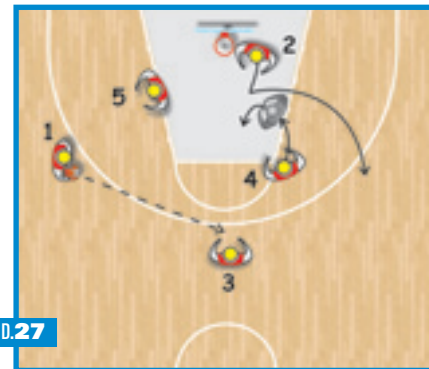
4 changes the ball side, passes to 1 and then makes a vertical screen for 3, who goes out of the three-point line (diagr. 26).

After the screen for 3, 4 keeps on cutting and screens for 2 under the basket. 1 changes the ball side and passes to 3. 3 can pass the ball to 2 in the wing position or to 4, who opened himself to the ball (diagr. 27).

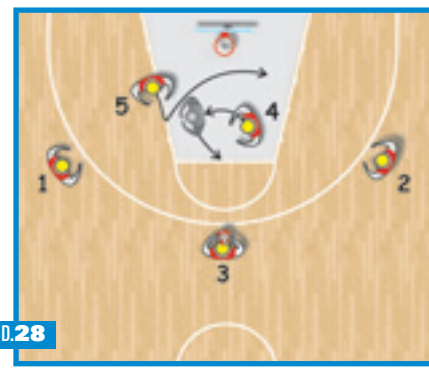
At last, 4 keeps on cutting and makes a third screen, this time horizontal, for 5. 4, after this screen, opens himself to the ball (diagr. 28).



D.26



D.27



D.28





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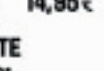
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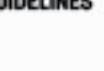
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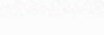
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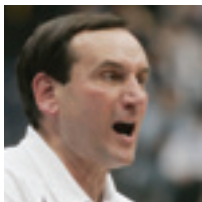


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by Mike Krzyzewski

# USA TEAM STRATEGY IN JAPAN

In 2005, Mike Krzyzewski was hired to coach the U.S. basketball team for the 2006 FIBA World Championship and 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, China. He had worked for the US team in the past, most notably as an assistant to Chuck Daly during the gold medal winning campaign of the original "Dream Team" at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. As the head coach at Duke University, his program can be measured not only by his three NCAA national championships (1991, 1992 and 2001), but by the numerous players he coached that went on to play in the NBA. Krzyzewski attended the United States Military Academy at West Point, NY, and also served as Bobby Knight's assistant at the Indiana University. He currently has a 75.1 winning percentage (78.1 with Duke), and has won 12 Coach of the Year Awards. He is a member of a small group of coaches, who won more than 700 games. Krzyzewski was inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall Of Fame in 2001.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Soon after starting his tenure as the managing director of the USA Basketball, Jerry Colangelo appointed me as the team's head coach, assembled an excellent team of assistants from both the NCAA and the NBA, and insisted on a thorough process of selecting players with long-term commitments to the national team. The U.S. team travelled to Japan as the favourite to win the gold medal at the World Championships. We didn't achieve that goal (we won the bronze medal), but we did show some amazing improvement when compared to the previous U.S. teams.

We had a serious approach from the coaching staff starting at Day One of our training camp. The conduct of the players (especially the superstars), their commitment to the game plans, superior performances during the exhibition

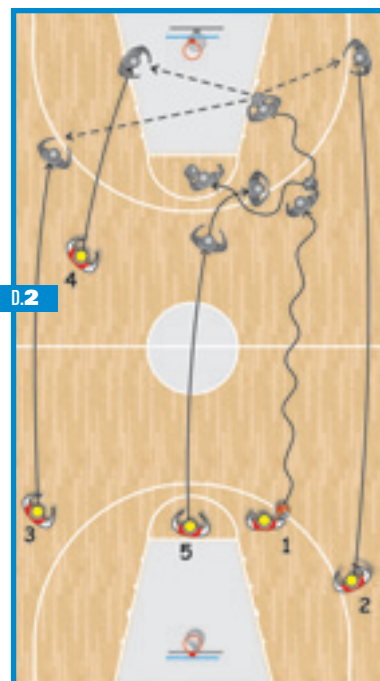
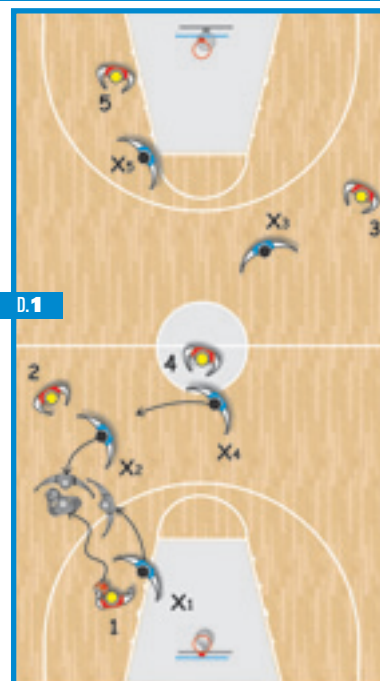
games, along with the fact that this team will stay together for the next two years, can only be a great signal for the future. Our team finished the tournament at 8-1, after winning all five exhibition games (Puerto Rico, China, Brazil, South Korea, and Lithuania). We dominated in almost every statistical aspect of the game — leading all teams with 103.6 point per game (110 during the exhibition games), and shot the ball well—50.3% (also leading the tournament). We also finished first among all teams in assists per game (18.78), free-throws attempted (182), steals per game (10.8), while finishing second in blocks per game (4.9), and fourth in rebounds per game (36.3, 13.1 offensive and 23.2 defensive rebounds per game). Until the semifinal clash with the Greeks, we won all games with an average margin of 25.8 ppg.

The reasons for the defeat in the Greece game are several. Our team faced a competitive and experienced rival, the reigning European champions, a team that had reached its peak in this tournament during this game. Our team allowed 101 points in this game (after allowing just 80.8 in the first seven games). We were unable to pressure the Greek guards down the floor or in the shooting zones. Moreover, we shot an appalling 59% from the free-throw line (20 from 34), 32% percent from three-point range (9 from 28), and managed to steal the ball only four times. In addition, Greek guards and centers caused some serious trouble with their perfect execution of the pick-and-roll. In summary, the win by the Greeks was absolutely deserved.

Considering the fact that there are some big differences in the style of play, game philosophy, and rules between the NBA and the rest of the world (FIBA competitions), some time is clearly needed for our players to adjust before facing well prepared and coached international teams that emphasize team defense and various offensive plays.







Our coaching staff managed to make the players understand their roles game after game, with the captains Dwyane Wade (19.3 points per game), LeBron James (14) and Carmelo Anthony (19.9) leading the way, along with great help from the cast of supporting players. Those three players carried the load down the stretch, playing most of the time at the guard (mostly shooting guard) position, but James and Anthony were also used as centers, both offensively and defensively, which certainly wasn't a problem, given their size and physical conditioning.

Joe Johnson and Shane Battier were used as backups for two-guard position, Chris Paul (finished second in assists per



game with 5.25) and Kirk Hinrich covered the point guard spot, while Elton Brand, Dwight Howard (1.3 blocks per game) and Chris Bosh shared the minutes at center. Brad Miller and Antawn Jamison were seldom used backups.

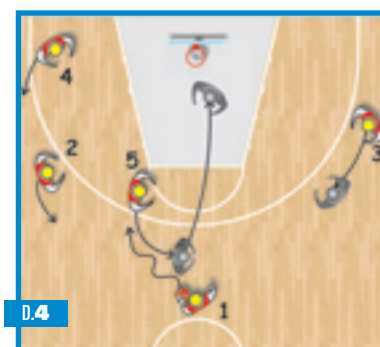
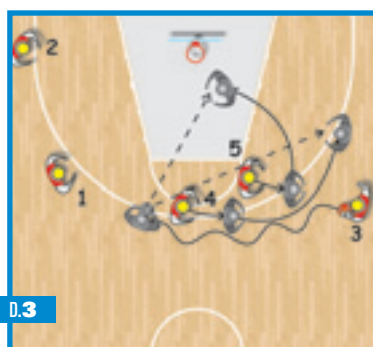
The Americans' style of play can be described as a simple game with a lot of running and fast breaks. There was a tendency for flamboyant plays and many one-on-one situations, with a large number of shots taken early in the shot clock. We combined this with an aggressive defense, typically man-to-man.

Following the strategy of previous U.S. national teams, we decided to divide the playing time of players. We set the number of shots for each player, using 10 to 12 players in the rotation with frequent substitutions, sometimes changing three or four players at the same time, while rarely deviating from our game plan.

### DEFENSE

When you talk about the U.S. team's defense, the first thing that comes to mind is the aggressive man-to-man. We started every game playing half court or 3/4 court defense, and, after the first substitutions during the first quarter, we would start to be more aggressive, making it tougher for the opponents to move the ball. Chris Paul was the usual starter at the point guard, and after Kurt Hinrich would replace him, at which time we generally used a full court press. While using the full court press, we pressed the dribbler aggressively, closed the lanes for the first pass, forced the dribbler to the sidelines, fronted the players on the low post with a strong help side, defended great from the down screens, and boxed out well after the shots. An important thing to mention was that we were very good at taking offensive charges. During the inbounds we always pressured the guards and tried to make the offense pass the ball to a taller player (in the game against Australia, Andrew Bogut often moved the ball, while Dirk Nowitzki did it during the game against Germany).

We usually used a lineup with only one big player, and given the quality and the potential of the players, we often used two point guards (Paul and Hinrich) on the floor at the same time, sometimes playing without a true center (we started Hinrich, Johnson, James, Wade, and Anthony against Greece), a lineup where everybody would switch on defense. With this style of defensive play, we allowed 83.1 points per game, while





averaging 10.8 steals per game, which made all of our fast breaks and lay-ups possible. During the game against Germany, we used a full court press with double teams (diagr. 1), especially when their point guard (Hamann) was moving the ball.

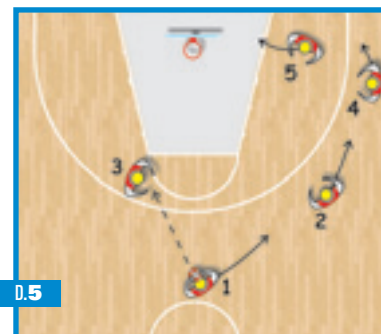
While defending the pick-and-roll, we often used show-and-go over, and always switched on all screens. However, this was the segment of the game that gave us some trouble, mostly in games with some experienced teams like Italy, Greece, and Argentina, so we would quickly change the way of defending in those games. We stopped showing and started switching on the pick-and-roll. Except for the Greece game, we didn't have problems with defensive mismatches, which is not a strange thing considering the athletic abilities of our

players.

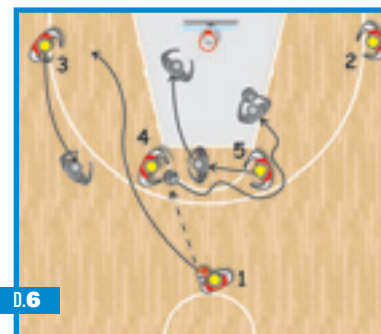
During the entire course of the tournament, the U.S. team used zone defense only twice, against Italy, and briefly against Argentina during the bronze medal game. We used a 2-3 zone, but this defense was our secondary option, and we would go back to man-to-man after just a few minutes.

#### OFFENSE

With fast breaks as our favourite weapon, the USA team had the most prolific offense of the whole tournament. We always tried to move the ball quickly to the other side of the floor, often followed by a shot from the ball handler, or by a penetration, and a kick out pass for a three-point shot. Our tendency was to continually run fast breaks, especially after defensive rebounds and allowed



D.5



D.6





baskets. With this style of play, offensive plays lasting less than five seconds were not rare, but we were very good in “handicap” situations, and on the offensive glass as well. Our team’s second offensive solution was the pick-and-roll on the side (diagr. 2), which was most commonly finished by a shot by the dribbler (Hinrich), or with a pass to a player setting the screen (Brand or Howard) on the low post, or a kick off pass to the perimeter player, who spotted up around the three point arc. In transition game situations, we usually didn’t have enough patience to try to get a good position for a shot. This meant that our players would typically shoot with a defender’s hand in their face, or they would penetrate to the basket with two or three defenders standing in the way. We modelled our half-court offense on NBA standards, executing it with a small number of screens and player movement. Our idea was to create a one-on-one situation where we would try to isolate the player from the help side. Players either easily handled those situations, or improvised the next move. Although the USA’s possessions rarely lasted more than 10 seconds (while not setting many screens and passing the ball too much), we were very efficient. Not only did we score 103.6 points per game, but also our two stars—Wade and James - both shot 67 % (leading the tournament in that category) from inside the three-point line.

Sometimes we would use the “On B” play, a play that called for a tall player to play pick-and-roll in most situations at the top of the key (diagr. 3).

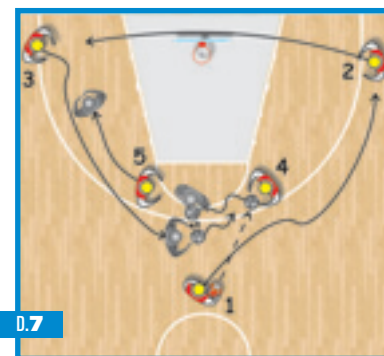
Another frequently applied play was “horn,” a play where consecutive screens would be set, generally for LeBron James (diagr. 4), followed by one screener cutting to the paint, while the other one would try to get himself open for a shot.

Another play we used for James was “elbow.” A player would handle the ball on the top of the key, while the other four players would concentrate on one side, trying to take the defense’s attention from the player with the ball, while expecting a pass for a quick shot. Tall players would position themselves near the basket, trying to get in a good position for a rebound (diagr. 5).

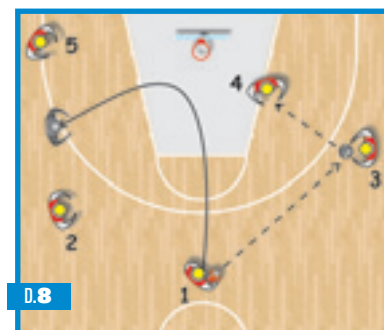
An almost similar play was used when the passing lane was open in the corner of the key (usually for James), followed by a point guard’s cut next to the player with the ball, and by a screen from the other tall player in the high post (diagr. 6).

Another start of a play that looks much like this one was followed by a down screen for player 3 instead of the pick-and-roll (diagr. 7). The ball was handed or passed to player 3, followed by a shot. As I have already mentioned, the ball was often passed to the low post, and the isolation called for a one-on-one situation (for Brand, Howard, or Bosh). It wasn’t uncommon to see Anthony or James in that situation as well (diagr. 8).

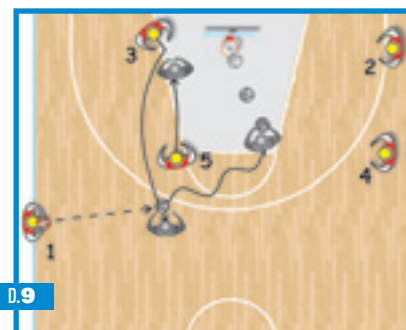
Simple plays were called after the sideline inbound. When the ball was to be put in play from the sideline, a down screen for a guard would be set, followed by a one-on-one play (diagr. 9), with a good positioning of the rest of the players on the floor. In the baseline inbounds situations, a tall player would set the screen for a guard, and both tried to open up and receive the ball after that. If the ball was passed to a tall player who, was not in a position to score, he passed the ball back to the inbounder, who played one-on-one (diagr. 10). If a guard received the ball, the tall player would clear the side followed by an one-on-one play. Considering that all the teams we faced often played zone defense in order to slow down our offense and make us shoot from outside, we had a couple of options in attacking the zone. When we had two tall players on the court at the same time, we attacked with a player on the high post, trying to make the high and the low posts cooperate (diagr. 11).



0.7



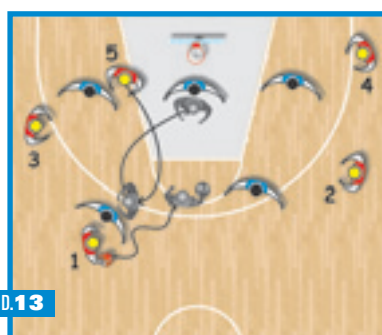
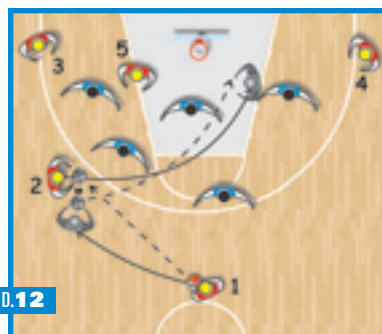
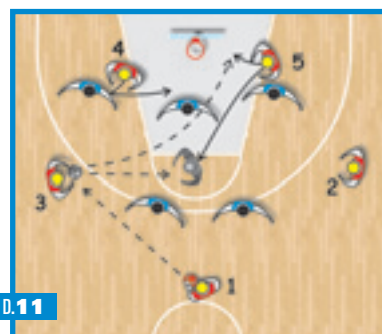
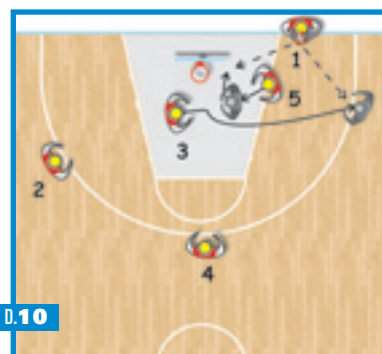
0.8



0.9







When positioned like this, we often used long pass to the player, who has cut to the low post position (diagr. 12), a play, which usually finished with a dunk (called alley-hoop). While playing against the zone in the game against Germany, we executed this play a couple of times, and the high pass was followed by a cut and a slam dunk. In situations when we used one tall player, the other four players would stay outside, using quick passes and penetrations, while the tall player would come out and set screens to the ball handler, followed by a shot (diagr. 13).





by David Blatt

# SPECIAL DEFENSE: 1-1-3 MATCH-UP ZONE

David Blatt began his coaching career in 1993 as the assistant coach of Galil Elyon (Israel). Later, he has become the team's head coach, and stayed there until 1999. He was named Coach of the Year in the Israel National League in 1996. He became also assistant coach of the National team of Israel. In 2000 he went to Maccabi Tel Aviv as the assistant coach, taking over the head coaching duties in 2001 (winning two national titles and playing in the Euroleague Final Four). He was again Maccabi's assistant coach in 2003-04, and then in 2004 he went to Dynamo St. Petersburg, where his team won the 2004-05 FIBA EuroCup and was named Coach of the Year for the Russian League. Since 2005 he has been coaching Benetton (Italy), where his team won the 2005-06 Italian title. He became the Russian Men's National team head coach in 2006.

Nothing can replace solid fundamentals and strong individual and team defense. But there are players and teams with clear problems in their defensive match-ups, or with the inability to deal with the basic defensive situations. The main reason for these problems comes to the difference in technical and physical skills.

A better strategic approach to this concern can help hide these weaknesses, and can change or ruin the opponents' offensive flow.

One of these strategies can be the use of the 1-1-3 zone defense to face the three most common offensive plays of European basketball:

- 1) Double high post with series of screens.
- 2) High pick-and-roll.
- 3) Play with the double exit for the guard.

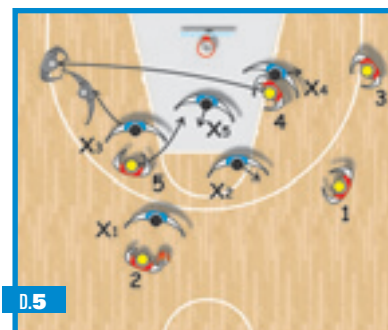
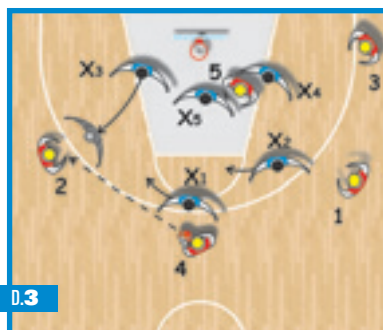
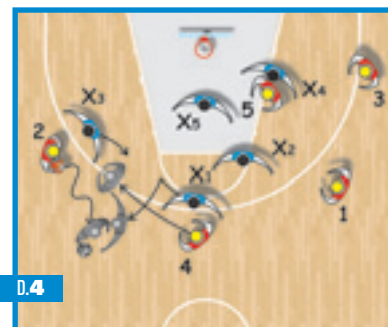
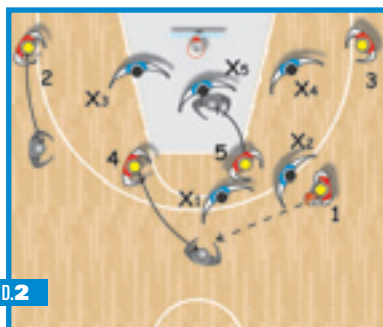
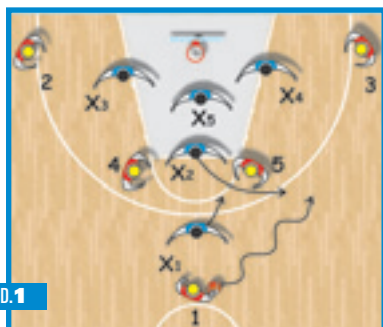
## RULES FOR DEFENDERS

These are the main rules for the single defenders:

- ▼ The first defender must be in front, putting constant pressure on the dribbler, pushing him to one side of the court.
- ▼ The defender on the free-throw line must switch on every screen, defend against the high post, or guard the first pass to the high-post player.







- ▼ The defender against the low-post player must prevent any pass to the post player, defending in front of him (or 3/4 in front of him, depending on the single defensive system or philosophy).
- ▼ The player on the wing must play against the offensive player on the wing, forcing him to get higher or lower (depending on how the post player is guarded).
- ▼ The defender in the paint must protect the rim and be responsible for the defensive rebound on the weak side.

#### DEFENSE AGAINST THE DOUBLE HIGH POST WITH A SERIES OF SCREENS

On the screen for 1 made by 5 against X1, X2 switches and defends against 1, who comes out of the screen and dribbles in the wing position, while X5 goes high to the free-throw line in order to guard 5, who rolls to the basket after making his screen (diagr. 1).

If 4 comes off the lane and goes to the central side of the court to receive the ball from 1 and change the ball side, X1 goes to guard 4 and X5 defends against 5 (diagr. 2).

When 4 passes the ball to 2 on the opposite side, X3 goes to guard 2, X1 moves to the elbow on the strong side and X2 moves to the free-throw line, while X4 protects the basket (diagr. 3).

If 4, after passing to 2, makes a screen for him, X3 switches and goes against 4. X1 guards 2, while the other three defenders have the usual responsibilities, as explained before (diagr. 4).

If, after our switch, 4 rolls to the basket and 5

cuts along the baseline to the opposite side, X5 goes high to guard 5, X3 goes low to guard 4, X1 guards 2, X2 is on the free-throw line, and X4 covers the paint (diagr. 5).

#### DEFENSE AGAINST THE HIGH PICK-AND-ROLL MADE BY 1 AND 4

The offense sets up a 1-4 set, with a point-guard and four offensive players on the same line. 4 and 5 go high and make two screens: if 1 uses the screen made by 4, X2 switches and goes against 1, while X1 guards 4 (diagr. 6).

If there is a single screen with 5 going high to pick for 1, X2 must be ready to switch against 1, going out to the right or the left side, depending on which side uses 1 to get out of the screen (diagr. 7).

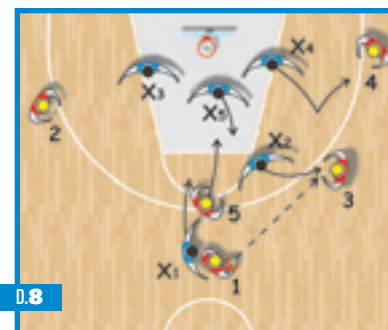
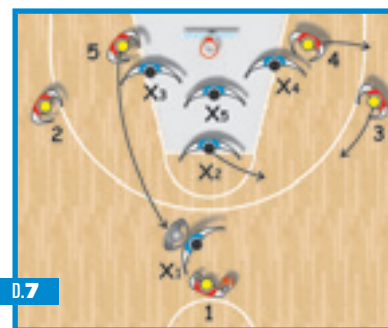
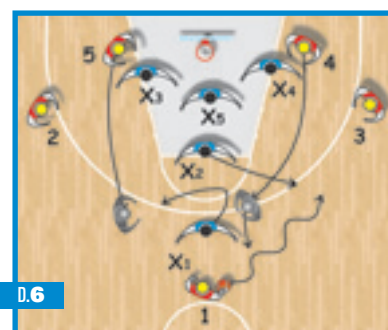
If 1 passes the ball to 3, X1 goes to defend against 3 and X5 guards 5, who cuts to the basket. X4 helps against 3, in order to make easier the recover of X1 and then goes against 4, who has gone out to the corner (diagr. 8).

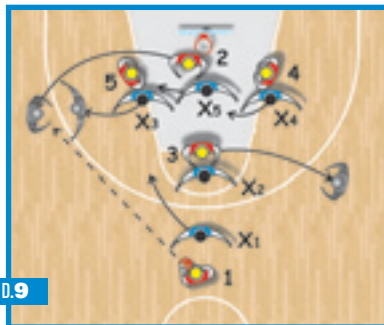
#### PLAY WITH DOUBLE EXIT FOR THE SHOOTING GUARD

2 cuts in the lane and can choose which side to go off the screen, using the screen of 4 or 5. In this particular example, 2 goes to the left and uses the screen made by 4.

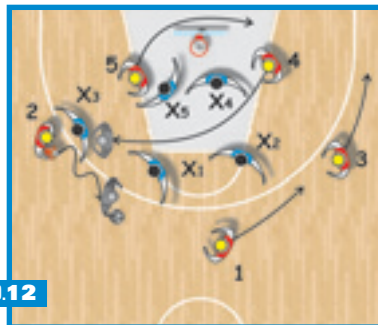
X3 goes to guard 2, X5 goes against 4. X1 then goes to the elbow on the ball side and X2 on the free-throw line, while X4 is protecting the basket (diagr. 9).

If 5 screens against X3, X3 defends against 5 and X1 defends against 2, while X5 goes high to the free-throw line, and X2 goes against 1 (diagr. 10).

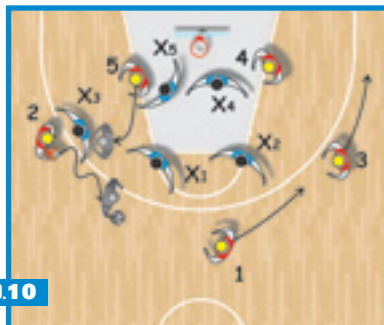




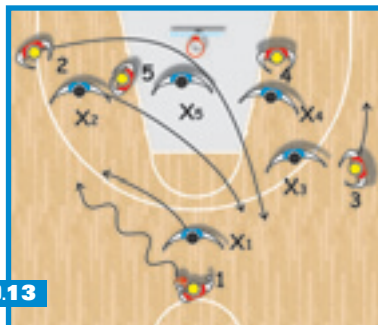
D.9



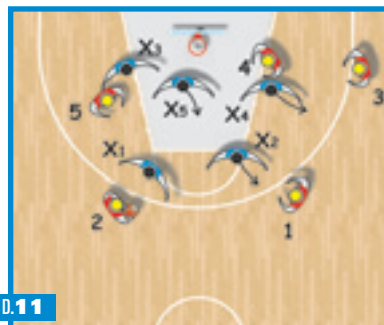
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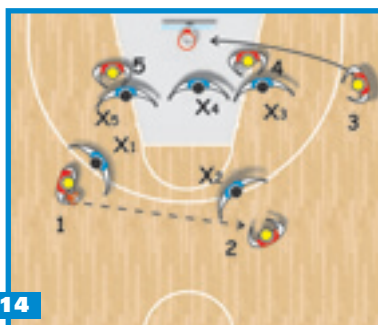
D.10



D.13



D.11



D.14

The new situation will now have X3 guarding 5 and X1 against 2 (the player with the ball). X5 is on the free-throw line, X2 defends against 1, and X4 is low on the help side (diagr. 11).

If 4 cuts from the low post in order to screen on the opposite side, X1 switches and goes against 2. X5 helps in the middle and X4 is on the help side, while X2 stands on the free-throw line and X3 (if the ball isn't close to him) goes back to his position in the low post (diagr. 12).

If 2 goes to the central side of the court, cutting around 5 and 1 dribbles to the wing, X1 defends against 1, X2 follows 2 and stops on the free-throw line, when 2 gets out of the lane. X4 guards 4 and X5 guards 5 (diagr. 13).

If 1 passes to 2, who is on the central line of the court, and then cuts into the lane, X2 keeps on guarding 2 and, if 1 cuts in the paint, X1 prevents him from receiving the ball.

While 1 cuts in the paint, if 3 cuts along the baseline, X3 follows him until X5 can guard 3. X5 can "leave" him to X4 (diagr. 14).







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by Raffaele Imbrogno

# BACK TO THE FUTURE

**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.**

There have been some vocal critics about the situation of teaching basketball in the United States, but, after the third poor result turned in recently by the so-called "Dream Team" during the last FIBA World Championship, the entire American basketball system has been roundly criticized. Critics say that Americans must return to basic fundamentals, teaching players how to pass the ball, dribble, shoot, and play one-on-one.

Some interesting DVDs have been produced in the last few months that can certainly help young players learn the fundamentals of the game.

Kevin Sutton is head coach of Monteverde Academy men's basketball and is also a Nike Skills Academy Instructor. He was in Italy last summer, where he put on a great camp and clinic. Sutton produced two new DVDs: *"Two Ball Passing, Dribbling and Ball Handling"* and *"Fatigue Shooting Drills,"* both from Championship Productions ([www.championshipproductions.com](http://www.championshipproductions.com)). In the first, with the two ball passing, dribbling, and ball handling drills, Sutton takes you through this demanding series of drills, designed to push the players and improve their ball handling. Then he shows more difficult drills. On the "One Man Drills" he introduces 12 drills that underlines ball control, passing and shooting. On the "Two Man Drills" he involves the passer and the receiver of the passes, and, finally, on the "Three Man Drills" he runs a more demanding series of drills that requests to the players to concentrate and communicate. The DVD ends with a fast break series that incorporates catching and

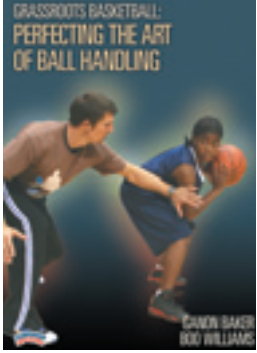
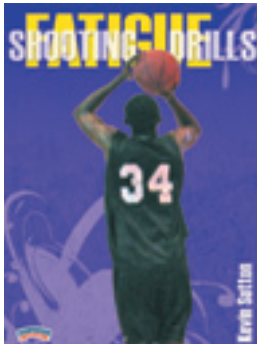
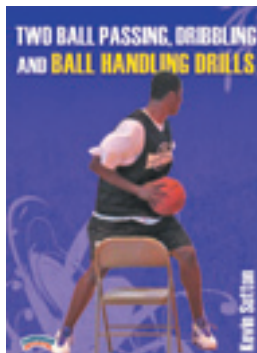
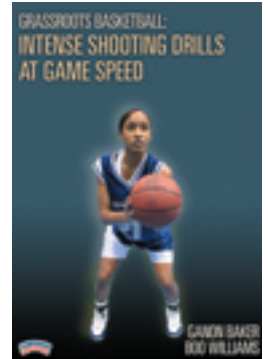
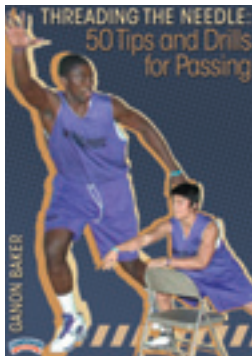
shooting off the break and requires great teamwork.

On the "Fatigue Shooting Drills" DVD this innovative coach begins to show how to stretch in a dynamic way and with ball handling, and then he starts with some interesting drills. Among

them, the "Power 45" drill requests communication and teamwork, as well as shooting and footwork. Then, for the "Around the World" and "M" drills he uses chairs, and the players must run around the chairs while shooting.

Ganon Baker is also a NIKE Skills Academy Instructor. Besides having written a large number of technical articles about fundamentals (for example "30 Finishing Moves You Can Use"), and hosting a website about a variety of basketball topics (<http://www.shakenbakebasketball.com/home.html>), he also produced many DVDs for Championship Productions. His most recent DVDs include a series of five disks called *"Grassroots Basketball"*. These disks include *"Intense Shooting Drills at Game Speed"*; *"Perfecting the Art of Ball Handling"*; *"Perfecting the Art of Moving without the Ball"*; *"Perfecting the Art of Passing"*; and *"Finishing School"*.

The Grassroots series is produced with the collaboration of Boo Williams (legendary coach, clinician, and AAU boys basketball national director), and in more than five hours, Baker covers the complete range of game situations, with a varied and interesting selection of drills to improve fundamental skills. Footwork, shooting mechanics, teaching points, and drills are on display in each of these intense one-hour workouts. For the serious coach and player, these disks help players increase scoring ability and develop a variety of moves around the basket. By taking advantage of these skills and drills, players can become the offensive threat that they've always wanted to be. With repetition and attention to detail, these DVDs can open the way for great strides and improvement in passing, rebounding, and shooting skills. Enjoy the show.





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# CONCEPTS OF MODERN OFFICIATING

## PART II

by Valentin Lazarov

**FIBA referee from 1958 to 1982 and an Honorary Member in 1976, Valentin Lazarov became FIBA Commissioner in 1983. A member of the FIBA Technical Committee since 1976, he received the prestigious Radomir Shaper Award, which is given for outstanding contributions to basketball rules and the game of basketball.**

**(NOTE: THE FIRST PART WAS PUBLISHED IN NO. 23 - NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2006)**

### C. KNOWLEDGE OF THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PLAYERS, COACHES, AND FANS

The basis of the spectacular and attractive basketball game is the quadrangle: players, coaches, officials, and fans. The relations between these four factors are of critical importance for the smooth running of a game. These four groups should exist together with reciprocal tolerance and respect under the slogan: "NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE BASKETBALL GAME!"

Even for the top officials, it is almost impossible to officiate successfully without minimum cooperation from the coaches and players.

Nowadays, the basketball game has become more dynamic, more athletic, and more aggressive than in the past. The influence of the financial factor has also increased tremendously. Sponsors are spending large sums for basketball and they are expecting positive results from their teams.

This is one of the reasons why players try to give their best in their performance on

the court. Together with their coaches, they are often overexcited and hyper-strained like charges of dynamite. Any supposedly wrong decision made by an official can lead to an outburst and quickly provoke a conflict situation.

From here stems the necessity of sound psychological knowledge by the model referee. In a field in which only referees endowed by nature can succeed, the study of the voice, the movements, the gaze, the posture, the signalization, the general behavior, and the human approach are all part of the psychological education.

The official is an educator and a pedagogue, as compared to a merciless combination of judge and executioner. His whistle is a tool and not a weapon! He must act as a "Hand of steel in a velvet glove." A friendly smile, a soft gesture, or a public warning applied at the right moment is often more effective than technical or disqualifying fouls. A warm, calm, and humane attitude is both disarming and relaxing!

It is a well-known fact that some average referees are more wanted and respected than their more talented fellows. I always remember what my teacher, the late FIBA President Robert Busnel, used to say: "I have many times seen a referee leave the court at the end of a closely contested game, who is congratulated by coaches and players. His skill at applying psychological tricks reached such height, that it hid his technical imperfections on the court."



### D. KNOWLEDGE OF RULES, INTERPRETATIONS, POINTS OF EMPHASIS

The basketball game has become so dynamic that an official must react in a split second and make the correct decision in a nearly automatic way. Practically, he has no time to remember details of this or that rule. His fast and timely reaction, however, is based mainly on his continuous and analytical study of the rules and their interpretations, the periodic amendments, as well as points of emphasis and instructions presented by the World Technical Commission of FIBA.

Unfortunately, very often the method and style of the lecturers teaching the rules in





the clinics are not on a satisfactory level. Young officials must be informed about the history of the major rules and the purpose for their origin. Instead, much time and thought is wasted in discussing theoretical play situations that might or might not happen but once in a century!

Consequently, much more important subjects about the educational spirit of each rule are left aside, such as the creative ways of the rules' application on the court or the admissible limits of tolerance. As a result, officials currently named "whistle blowers" are trying to replace sound judgment with tiny details and lack a realistic approach while officiating the game.

#### **E. KNOWLEDGE OF TACTICS IN OFFENSE AND DEFENSE**

It is a key requirement for a top official to have the ability to respond differently and to adapt his positioning on the court in accordance to the character of the game and the different tactics applied by the teams. He must be able to notice changes in the tactics at any moment or the surfacing of new elements in the game. Consequently, he has to know the areas where critical situations may appear. However, all this is possible only if the official has sound knowledge and appreciation of current tactics and techniques in offense and defense, which are applied by the players on the court. For example, to correctly officiate the

numerous screens during the game, the official must be completely familiar with the technique of screening and the tactic based on the screen.

This is the reason why some FIBA National Federations have already approved as a mandatory obligation for new officials to pass some tests for coaches and get acquainted with the basic elements in this area.

#### **F. TEAMWORK WITH PARTNER(S) AND COMMISSIONER**

In contemporary basketball, a close cooperation (i.e. excellent teamwork between official-partner, official-commissioner, and official-table officials) is of first importance.

One must have faith and confidence in his fellow official(s). No one is supposed to dominate since officials must work as a real team. Do not hesitate to ask for assistance from each other any time you are blocked on a play or you are screened-out!

Sometimes, we witness situations of disagreement or double whistling in the officials' decisions. Very often, this could be solved after visual contact, discreet signals, or a very concise consultation (5 to 6 seconds) between the officials, but this should always be at a distance away from players and coaches. During such consultations, mutual confidence and spirit of friendly cooperation are strongly advised and recommended.

Long discussions and explanations between officials while surrounded by players and coaches very often creates critical situations. A brief, but thorough pre-game conference will assist the referees in producing a good team performance.

Young referees should also be briefly advised in the area of the so-called moral code of the officials' partnership on the court, by using some specific examples of what to avoid:

- ▼ Official X calls a foul. While signaling to the table, a player makes some insulting gestures behind his back. His partner(s) is a silent witness, but does not intervene because the unsportsmanlike behavior is not addressed directly to him.
- ▼ Official X calls a foul. While signaling the table, a player contacts the free official insulting his partner. His reaction is: "It was his decision. I have nothing to do with this call."
- ▼ During some critical moments of a tough game, official X hides and does not react to some clear infractions in his vicinity, even though he is in excellent position, thus leaving his partner to take the "unpopular calls."
- ▼ During an interval of play or after the game, official X criticizes some calls of his partner in the presence of players, coaches, or fans.
- ▼ During a game, official X, sitting as spectator between fans, openly criticizes the decisions of his colleagues on the court.

Some officials underestimate the importance of good cooperation with the commissioner. Predetermined during the pre-game conference, discreet signals between officials and commissioners



could be applied successfully in some specific situations during the game. For example, such cases can occur when a basket is scored or a foul is called almost simultaneously with the end signal, and the officials are not quite sure if the action was before or after the signal.

#### H. KNOWLEDGE IN MECHANICS OF OFFICIATING

Recently, more and more attention has been paid to the improved and more competent application of mechanics on the court.

The speed at which the players move individually or in groups creates serious problems for the official's visual perception of the game and total court coverage. Therefore, it is quite impossible to expect from one official that he be able to observe the actions of all ten players and the ball on the court.

The new mechanics for two-and three-men officiating is a practical system created as a working method to eliminate the

problems of the officials in this area, prescribing one official to focus his attention on specific phases of the play more so than others. The key factors of mechanics are:

- ▼ Move to the right spot.
- ▼ Be placed in an optimal way in order to see.
- ▼ Know what to look at or what to observe.

It is strongly recommended that all officials follow and apply all the prescriptions of the official FIBA Mechanics on the court. However, to take a dogmatic position and declare that "This part of the floor is my sole responsibility and that is yours" leads to very poor teamwork. The basic principle for an official should be to make decisions on ANY PLAY if he is absolutely sure in his judgment and if his colleague does not make a call because of lack of courage, lack of concentration, or simply because he happens to be screened out. A comment





such as "It wasn't my call" defeats the very spirit and intent of the Mechanics. Unfortunately, some self-proclaimed lecturers and "experts" are trying to deify this system by transforming it to the most important topic in some Clinics, underestimating the leading role of subjects as: "Feeling for the game," "Criteria for physical contacts," and "Relations between officials, coaches, and players." Much time and thought is wasted on digging up invented hyper-technicalities that are of little or no significance. Thus, Official-Robots are created, who are more concerned about being in "optimal position" and not trespassing the border of their zone than in making a sound and mature judgment. I was shocked by the officiating in some games in a recent continental championship. Imitating some pseudo-evaluators, I could ironically say: "In this game the Officials demonstrated brilliant Mechanics but with some lousy calls they ruined the efforts of coaches and players throughout the year."

#### **H. KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORK OF THE TABLE OFFICIALS**

Normally, this topic is almost never listed in the programs of clinics for officials and such an underestimation has no justification! Obviously, some experts forget that a very small omission of the scorer's table can ruin the effect of an excellent officiating during the whole game! Consequently, that is the reason why a top official should have a sound knowledge of the duties of the table officials. Problems arise very often during the game are connected to the table and they have to be solved. During their first year, some countries use their new referees to work mainly as table officials. Special attention should be also paid to the teamwork between officials and table officials.

#### **"X" - COEFFICIENT FOR TALENT AND PERSONALITY**

To be a PERSONALITY means that, because of your talent, your behavior,

your integrity, and your social status you are respected, trusted, and accepted by players, coaches, and even fans on such a level that some of your poor calls are not criticized or attacked by any of them. For example, when it comes to top players, Michael Jordan presented such a personality. For officials, accepted as personalities, officiating is much easier because they meet understanding and collaboration from players and coaches. Therefore, try to become a Michael Jordan among the referees, but never forget that this is a long and difficult process based on hard work, natural qualities, and serious ambition for perfection.

#### **"Y" - COEFFICIENT FOR AMBITION, STRONG WILL, AND COURAGE**

The worst "crime" that can occur on the court is when a referee is totally aware of an illegal action of a player, but does not have the necessary courage to call it, especially in a decisive moment. If one wants to be respected, one must be tough in tough situations and always be ready to take personal responsibility for a tough call. Of course, hard work and ambition will not alone assure one success, but who is determined to succeed must sacrifice many pleasures of life and be willing to start at the bottom of the ladder.

#### **"MANY ARE CALLED, BUT RELATIVELY FEW EVER REACH GREAT HEIGHTS."**

#### **"Z" - COEFFICIENT FOR PERSONAL CHANCE**

It is a fact that some referees are "born with a silver spoon in their mouth" and are luckier than others. For such exceptions the long way to the top takes less time and is much easier.

#### **FINAL CONCLUSION**

This article is addressed mainly to:

- ▼ Young and progressing officials.
- ▼ Candidates or recently incubated FIBA referees.
- ▼ Lecturers at clinics.

My aim was to prove that in order to meet the new requirements of contemporary basketball, a referee must exercise regularly and act in a professional manner, just like the players.

#### **"HE WHO DOES NOT GO FORWARD GOES BACKWARDS!"**

We have to admit it is hard, very difficult, and sometimes painful, but all efforts are necessary if the official deeply loves basketball and if he is anxious to stimulate and not restrain the progressive development of the game through his officiating.

# RIGHT OR WRONG?

## QUESTIONS

The following questions focus on the document, "FIBA Official Basketball Rules: Official Interpretations." A free download is provided on the FIBA website ([www.fiba.com](http://www.fiba.com)). For additional clarifications, explanations or examples, please consult this document.

1. When players take their positions for the jump ball that will begin the game, the scorer realizes that a team B player's name was not included on the score sheet, but is on the team list that was submitted to the scorer at the appropriate time. Shall the referee direct that the player's name be added to the score sheet without penalty?
2. During the first period, an A5 shot for a field goal is in the air when the 24-second buzzer sounds. The shot for the goal is successful. Team A now requests a substitution. Shall the substitution be permitted?
3. During a live ball, a time-out is requested by team B,

after which a foul is committed by B3. While the official is reporting the foul to the scorer and before the official's whistle that begins the time-out, players go to their respective team benches. Is this permissible?

4. While a shot for a goal by A3 is in the air, the 24-second signal sounds. The ball then touches the backboard but does not touch the basket rim, after which it rolls on the floor. As the ball rolls, it is touched first by B5 and then by A5, after which it is finally controlled by B3. Has team A committed a 24-second violation?
5. On a single free-throw awarded to A5, the ball has touched the rim and is bouncing above it with a reasonable chance of entering the basket when B3 reaches through the basket from below and touches the ball, causing it not to enter the basket. Shall one point be awarded to A5?
6. B5 is given a warning after interfering with a throw-in. Later in the game, B3 again interferes with a throw-in. Shall a technical foul be charged to B3?
7. During the pre-game warm-up, a technical foul is committed by a team A player. Team B is awarded two free throws to be administered before the jump ball that will begin the game. The team B coach requests that B8, who is not one of team B's starting players, be permitted to attempt the free-throws. Shall the referee grant the request?
8. A5 is awarded a free-throw. Team A is granted a time-out before the free-throw is administered. Following the time-out, A2 successfully attempts the free-throw awarded to A5. The error is discovered during the first dead ball after the game has resumed. The officials cancel the one point scored on the erroneous free-throw. Shall play resume with a team B throw-in at the sideline or the endline place nearest to where the ball last became dead?
9. A4 shoots for a field goal near the end of the final period and the signal sounds to end the game. The officials rule that the goal shall count. Coach B insists that the signal to end the period had sounded before A4 released the shot for a goal. The officials are absolutely sure that the ball had been released before the signal sounded. Must the officials use available and approved technical equipment to verify if the goal shall count?
10. A4 is holding a live ball but has not yet dribbled when A4 deliberately throws the ball against a backboard and catches it again before it has touched another player. May A4 now begin a dribble?



## ANSWERS

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Yes; Art. 7  | 6. Yes; Art. 38 |
| 2. No; Art. 19  | 7. No; Art. 39  |
| 3. Yes; Art. 18 | 8. Yes; Art. 44 |
| 4. Yes; Art. 29 | 9. No; Art. 46  |
| 5. No; Art. 31  | 10. No; Art. 24 |





by Chus Bueno

# THE SPANISH BASKETBALL PLAYERS ASSOCIATION



**Chus Bueno is the Secretary General of the Spanish Basketball Players Association (ABP) and Vice President of the European Basketball Players Association (UBE).**

We have come a long way since our founding in 1986 when a group of motivated players resolved to create an association to protect and defend their collective interests. The first years were characterized by a hard fight for a recognition from the clubs until the signing of a collective bargaining agreement in 1989. Today, we can proudly say that the ABP, the Spanish Basketball Players Association, is more than just a union with collective legal objectives, but a union that offers services that benefit the players and the sport as a whole.

## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

The last collective bargaining agreement, negotiated in 1993, regulates many aspects of the professional relationship between the players and the clubs. This agreement provides the players with a minimum salary according to their age, regulates vacation time, includes a disciplinary agreement, and a salary guarantee fund. This has made the Spanish league one of the most professional and respected leagues in the world and, as a result, players are eager to come to Spain to play.







The collective bargaining agreement also regulates the collective image rights of the players. The ABP owns the image rights of the players, because they are granted to the ABP when they apply for membership. The ABP, in turn, grants these rights to the ACB, the Spanish Division One League, in return for compensation. This is one of the association's most important sources of funding. Additional funding is attained through agreements with the Spanish Basketball Federation (FEB), the CSD (an important governmental department in Spain), and activities with sponsors and partners (including "Agrupacion Mutua"). This all makes it possible to employ a group of seven professionals dedicated full time to the ABP and its projects, as well as allowing the hiring of additional consultants to assist in camps and other events. For more information on our organization, and to see a copy of our collective bargaining agreement in Spanish or English, please go to [www.abp.es](http://www.abp.es).

#### MEMBER SERVICE

Aside from the traditional collective representation, the ABP has also developed a series of important services for our members that improve their quality of life during their playing years and prepares them for life "after basketball."

A very important service we provide is in the area of continuing education and job placement. We have cooperation agreements with several Spanish universities (UOC, Catalunya University, UB Barcelona University, European University of Madrid, and Johan Cruyff University), which allow players to study for a certain number of careers and postgraduate degrees. ABP members receive a 60% ABP-UOC scholarship and work with special teachers, who understand their specific life situations. Professional athletes are used to working in a highly competitive environment and have developed skills in the areas of working as a team, leadership, motivation, and under pressure that, combined with a formal education, give them great potential to contribute to future employers after their basketball playing days are over. Agreements with job placement companies (Adecco and the "relevo" program, and Bankinter) help the players with their transition from professional basketball.

During the summer months, the ABP offers financial seminars and skills camps for players, while they are on vacation.



The financial seminars last one week and instruct the players on making investments and how to protect their savings. They are led by professionals from different financial companies, who hold lectures for the players and their families in order to increase awareness about the many risks and considerations that must be taken into account when investing their money. Over 160 players have participated in the seminars over the last eight years.

The skills camps are two-week basketball programs for professionals and younger players who might soon become professional. The camp sessions help players improve their skills without the pressure of competition or results. At no cost to the players, the ABP provides the hotel, coaches, and teachers.

With the FEB, we are currently working on a program of short conferences and seminars for players in the younger national team categories that will emphasize the values of humility, generosity, and teamwork. These values are critical to their further development if they are to succeed in a professional basketball career. We believe that if we enable to players to improve their basketball and life skills it will be positive for them as people and for the game of basketball.

The ABP has also made various commercial agreements with hotels (NH Hotels), travel agencies, rental cars (Hertz), sports brands to provide shoes and clothing (Converse), and private medical insurance (Sanitas).

In addition, the ABP participates with all other national athlete associations in the "Mutualidad de Deportistas Profesionales," a national pension plan specifically for professional athletes that was established in cooperation with the Spanish government. Controlled by the athletes' organizations, each athlete may contribute annually up to 24,250 euros to the plan, which, in turn, may be deducted from their current year taxes. When withdrawn after retirement, the contributions will be taxed at a much lower rate, resulting in a savings of up to 40% under current tax law.

#### THE ABP IN EUROPE

On the European level, we are already preparing with the UBE (European Basketball Players Association) for a "made in Europe" program for the summer of



2007. The concept behind the camp which will be realized with the cooperation of players associations from France, Italy, Germany, Greece, and Israel is to bring promising young players together to work in a camp with our professional players as teachers and mentors. Our goal is to bridge the gap between the generations of players and encourage the exchange of experiences and information, hopefully creating meaningful personal relationships between experienced and younger players.

In addition, under UBE auspices, we plan to contribute to the organization of a basketball game in Israel with players from all the UBE member associations. A special group of players from Israel and Palestine will play in a game that will be called "We play for peace."

#### FUTURE PROJECTS

We believe that it is the duty of the players and their association to give back to society. Basketball has a great capacity






to aid integration in marginal areas of the country. Therefore, the ABP is preparing a business plan for ex-players, who wish to work with us and start basketball schools in towns that may benefit from sports as an integration model. We are establishing the first two schools in 2007.

In order to further aid athletes in their transition to the working world, the ABP created Cemp (Enterprises Teams Coaches) in 2006 as a consulting division. After participating in an educational program (160 hours) at the UB Barcelona, players will work as professional consultants for corporations, transmitting the values of leadership, motivation, and teamwork that they have learned during their careers as professional athletes.

I would take this opportunity to say that the ABP and UBE have a great interest in working with FIBA developing ideas to aid the development of the sport of basketball. We believe that we are all members of the basketball family and we should work together. We offer our willingness and assistance to participate in any projects that might be proposed to benefit this great sport of ours. We Are all Basketball.







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# AND NOW LET'S ENTER ON THE COURT

Continuing with our journey to look at the products that are an important part of our basketball world, in this instalment we look at the synthetic flooring companies, which are partners of the FIBA Study Centre.

## CONNOR SPORT COURT INTERNATIONAL

Sport Court, a division of Connor Sport Court International, is proud to have been a member of the FIBA Study Centre since 1994. Sport Court playing surfaces are approved by the top international sporting federations and used by clubs and leagues throughout the world.

Their floors play host to some of the highest levels of competition, but are flexible enough to accommodate both single sport and multi-purpose facilities with high everyday demands. Whether indoor or outdoor, permanent or portable, a Sport Court floor is an excellent solution to court needs.

Sport Court products are the official playing surface of the BJ League, the NBA Jam Session, and include the first FIBA-approved basketball surface designed specifically for outdoor competition. The Sport Court suspended synthetic surfaces are the result of years of research and development to create safe and consistent basketball and multipurpose courts.

Additional benefits are found in improved player safety, reduced maintenance costs, and flexibility for conversion. This allows stadium managers to quickly change the facility from one sport to another, and to easily host a variety of sporting events, concerts and their special events directly on the Sport Court surface.



S P O R T  
C O U R T

Over the years, the quality and performance of Sport Court's patented flooring system has resulted in thousands of installations in more than 60 countries.

[www.sportcourt.com/international](http://www.sportcourt.com/international)

## GERFLOR

With over 60 years of experience in the manufacture of PVC flooring, Gerflor, manufacturer of Taraflex Sports Flooring, has the unique position of world champion in PVC (polyvinyl chloride) indoor sports flooring. With over 1,700 employees worldwide and significant investment in sports research and development, Gerflor is among the leaders on the field.

Through agreements with international indoor sports federations, such as basketball, volleyball, team handball, badminton, and table tennis, Taraflex Sports Flooring by Gerflor have been selected for seven consecutive Olympic Games—from Montreal in 1976 to Athens in 2004— and have already secured their presence at Beijing in 2008.

Here are the "top to bottom" secrets of their winning sports floor:



1. Triple-Action Protecsole helps keep athletes from slipping.
2. D-max surface complex adds resistance to the floor.
3. CXP foam backing gives back energy to the athlete following a jump.
4. Sanosol effectively fights against bacteria and fungi.

All Taraflex products are ISO9001 certified and can be laid as a portable or permanent structure.

[www.gerflor.com](http://www.gerflor.com)



## LIMONTA

Founded in 1981, Limonta Sport specializes in the production of artificial turf and vinyl floor surfaces specifically designed for sports facilities.

The manufacturing activities offer technologies applied in full conformity to the latest safety and quality standards, using only certified raw materials that are compatible with environmental protection policies.

Limonta Sport also boasts a development laboratory and a dedicated technical team that constantly monitors and seeks to improve the quality of products in order to guarantee continual innovations.

The primary business objective is maximum customer satisfaction through quality products and service. The Sport-Grounds range offers a

variety of surfaces for indoor sports facilities characterised by:

- a) Heterogeneous, multilayer, non-delaminable structure that satisfies high shock-absorption standards;
- b) High-energy restitution and playability;
- c) High-density surface that guarantees resistance and long-term durability;



- d) Fiberglass reinforcement that allows optimal dimensional stability;
- e) Excellent athletic performance under maximum safety conditions;
- f) SANALIM antibacterial treatment ensures considerable and permanent hygienic conditions;
- g) Quick and simple maintenance.

The flooring includes a variety of products characterised by a thickness from 2.5 mm. to 7.5 mm. and the possibility to be fully glued or loose laid. These different versions allow Limonta

Sport to have the right answer for all kinds of sports.

The quality of SportGrounds products is recognised by leading International Sport Federations like FIBA (basket), IBF (badminton), IHF (handball) and ITF (tennis).

Limonta Sport is UNI EN ISO 9001:2000 quality certified.

[www.limontasport.com](http://www.limontasport.com)

## MONDO

Among its wide range of products, Mondo, the Italian industrial group specializing in the production of sports, commercial, and industrial floorings of the highest standard, produces outdoor and indoor synthetic basketball surfaces, which are tested and approved by FIBA.

Mondoflex is a modern composite made of three layers; this composition assures outstanding durability and a greater ease of maintenance. The surface provides additional shock absorption by deflecting under impact and guarantees an ideal coefficient of friction; it never becomes slippery, even in contact with sweat.

Mondoflex is made with products that are environmentally friendly and eco compatible. Its anti-glare characteristics assure a perfect optics yield for video shooting.

Mondosport is the perfect surface for multipurpose indoor areas. Its top wear layer, characterized by the special seal-

skin embossing finish, provides optimal traction and proper coefficient of friction for comfortable play; it has a firm surface which allows the ball to bounce approximately 98%, according to the DIN standard 18032.

Moreover, the intermediate layer spreads the force applied by the athlete's foot to the surface while the bottom layer provides additional shock absorption by deflecting under impact.

Sportflex with its molded and vulcanized top layer provides maximum elasticity and unparalleled durability.

The geometrically molded and vulcanized bottom layer has been engineered to improve impact absorption and to increase the athletes' contact time on the surface. Its advanced deforming geometries are only possible with factory manufactured materials.

[www.mondoita.com](http://www.mondoita.com)





by Ioannis Papageorgiu

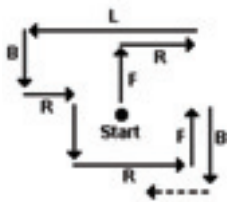
# AGILITY DRILLS

**Ioannis Papageorgiu is the strength and conditioning coach of the Greek national team, that won the 2005 FIBA Europe Championship "Eurobasket" and the silver at the 2006 FIBA World Championships.**

## CHANGE OF DIRECTION

### 2 SETS OF 25" RUNNING ON THE COURT (REST 25" BETWEEN SETS)

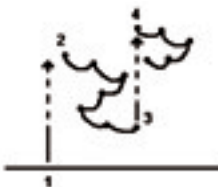
The players start running forward and the coach signals the direction changes that last 3"-4" for each direction, forward or backward, or sideways (defensive position) with random sequence and in a different direction each time. We gave much attention to the rapid and precise reaction of the player for each directional change. The coach must be behind the players so they will not see the change coming.



## RUNNING AND DEFENSE

### 2 SETS OF 25" EACH (REST 25" BETWEEN SETS)

From the baseline (1) the players run toward the mid-court line and after coach's instruction they continue with defensive slides going backward to the baseline (2) and after coach's instruction again they run forward (3) and then again backward with defensive slides (4).

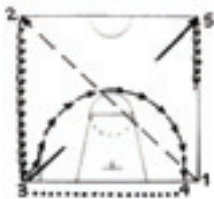


The duration of the different moves must vary, so the players won't expect the change and the trainer must be behind the players so they will not see the change coming.

## SPRINT RUNNING BACKWARDS AND DEFENSE

### 3 SETS (REST 30" BETWEEN SETS)

At half court: The player sprints from point 1 to point 2, then runs backward until point 3 and starts defensive slides to the right at the 6,25 line until point 4. From that point the player continues by jogging until point 3 and then sprints until point 5. Then the player runs backward to point 1 and starts defensive slides at the 6,25 line to the left until point 3.



## JUMP ROPE

### A. DURATION 60"

- ▼ 10" jumping with both feet while moving forwards.
- ▼ 10" jumping with both feet while moving backwards.
- ▼ 10" jumping with both feet while moving sideways to the left.
- ▼ 10" jumping with both feet while moving sideways to the right.
- ▼ 10" jumping up and back with both feet from 4 to 2 and back.
- ▼ 10" jumping left and right with both feet from 4 to 3 and back.

### B. DURATION 50"

- ▼ 5" jumps on left foot.
- ▼ 5" jumps on right foot.
- ▼ 5" jumps on left foot from 3 to 4 to 3.
- ▼ 5" jumps on right foot from 4 to 3 to 4.
- ▼ 5" jumps on left foot while moving forwards.
- ▼ 5" jumps on left foot while moving backwards.
- ▼ 5" jumps on right foot while moving forwards.
- ▼ 5" jumps on right foot while moving backwards.
- ▼ 5" jumps on left foot from 3 to 2 to 1 to 4 to 3.
- ▼ 5" jumps on right foot from 4 to 1 to 2 to 3 to 4.

### C. DURATION 60"

- ▼ 4" running forwards.
- ▼ 4" running backwards.
- ▼ 4" running forwards.
- ▼ 4" running backwards.

Until the end of 60 seconds we continue with regular jumps with both feet while making 5 changes to faster jumps for 5".

## DEFENSIVE SLIDES

Before attempting the next drills, the player should have a good warm up and stretching exercises to avoid possible injuries.

**A.** The player moves sideways on the court in defensive position, while his partner supplies resistance with the resistance bands. (2 sets for each direction - rest 1:1).

The drill is executed for each direction full court while always facing the same side. The drill can also be executed with passes that the other player is giving.



### B. FROM DEFENSIVE POSITION

3 sets of 12" each (rest 15" between sets)

The player does 3-4 defensive slides to the right and 3-4 defensive slides to the left while his partner holds the resistance bands. The player continues the same movements for 12". The slides are performed at high speed and the player makes defensive motions with his hands.



### 3 SETS OF 12" EACH (REST 15" BETWEEN SETS)

The two players both execute 2-3 defensive slides to the right and then to the left and they continue until the time of 12" is completed while facing each





other, using the resistance bands, trying to keep as much distance as possible from each other and doing defensive motions with their hands.

### C. 3 SETS OF 10 JUMPS EACH (REST 15" BETWEEN SETS)



The player stands on one leg, on quarter squat position and performs big jumps from one leg to the other while another player holds him with the resistance band.

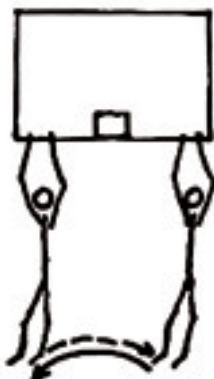


D. From the defensive position and while using the resistance band on the legs, the player moves sideways down the length of the court in both directions and always facing the same side. The drill is executed twice in each direction. Rest 1:1.

The drill can also be performed with two players who are using a resistance band, being face to face, moving parallel to each other and exchanging passes along the court.

The drill can also be executed with defensive slides and quick changes of direction along the court, while the player is staying low and is keeping the knees bent and is doing defensive motions with his hands. 3 sets (rest 15" between sets).

## RIM BOARD TOUCHES



### 3 SETS OF 16 JUMPS EACH (REST 20" BETWEEN SETS)

The player stands under the one corner of the board and while having both hands extended vertically, he jumps as high as possible, trying to touch the board. After he lands, he makes a side step to the other corner, performs a new jump and returns to the other corner to repeat.

This drill can also be done with a ball in the player's hands, with which the player will try to touch the board.

### JUMPS WITH DIFFERENT ORIENTATION



The player stands with his feet shoulder width apart and parallel to each other. He performs jumps from the quarter squat position, and takes care that he takes off and lands with both feet and that his feet have a different orientation each time, front, right, left or with one leg until he makes 12 jumps on the marked positions on the court.

The drill is executed with five repetitions and a 15" rest between sets. The distance of each jump should be around 1,10m and for tall players it could be increased.

The jumps from position 1 till 12 are performed with speed and rhythm.

In every session we can mark the positions in different spots in order to achieve greater agility.

## JUMPS ON CONES - BOXES AND HURDLES

### A. 3 SETS OF 10 JUMPS EACH (REST 10" BETWEEN SETS)



The player stands with a 25cm tall cone between his feet and performs 10 jumps touching his feet on the air above the cone.



The player stands behind the cone and performs 10 consecutive forward and backward jumps over the cone.



The player stands beside the cone and performs 10 consecutive jumps from the one side of the cone to the other.

### B. 3 SETS OF 5 FALLS EACH (REST 15" BETWEEN SETS)



From a box 20cm high, the player lands on a shock absorber surface with both feet together and performs a vertical jump with both feet. When landing again the player performs a second vertical jump. Then again the player steps on the box to continue similarly the exercise for 4 other times. In both jumps the player tries to

jump as high as possible. The drill can also be executed with three vertical jumps in a row.

### C. 4 SETS IN EACH DIRECTION

The player performs 6 jumps in a row above 6 hurdles 40cm tall that are placed in vertical to each other, without changing his orientation.

The player jumps the first hurdle while facing it, the second sideways, the third while facing it...

The player must repeat the drill from the end back to the start.

### D. 3 SETS OF 6 JUMPS EACH (REST 15" BETWEEN SETS)



From a quarter squat position and with feet shoulder width apart, the player performs a double jump with both feet landing on a shock absorber surface and up to a 50cm tall box. After the attempt, the player steps and not jumps down from the box.



# SAVANE:

## "IT'S TIME FOR SENEGAL TO GET IT TOGETHER REALLY QUICK"

**Senegal finished the 2006 FIBA World Championship with five losses in as many Group D games in Sapporo. Things certainly did not go according to plan.**

The Africans' promising preparations took a serious turn for the worse with a series of injuries and personnel problems in the Federation, which resulted in the last-minute appointment of Moustapha Gaye as coach and other top players turning their back on the national team. Playing without NBA interior forces Boniface N'Dong and DeSagana Diop, forward Sitapha Savane was one, who was forced to step up. He ended up as Senegal's third-leading scorer, averaging 8.6 points as well as 3.6 rebounds.

Savane played college basketball at the U.S. Naval Academy, but last year, he truly shot to prominence in Spain with Gran Canaria Grupo Dunas. He is still with the Canary Islands outfit and has helped them to a 9-8 record this season, which is tied for seventh best in the ACB. Savane is averaging 7.6 points and 3.9 rebounds in his third year with the club and seventh season in Spain. The 28-year-old Dakar native has also helped Gran Canaria reach the Final 16 of the ULEB Cup. David Hein spoke to Savane on behalf of FIBA.

**FIBA:** *I know you're in the middle of the ACB and ULEB Cup seasons, but I wanted to get your thoughts on Senegal's disappointing performance at the 2006 FIBA World Championship in Japan.*

**SAVANE:** It was a really rough summer with the Senegal national team because as it was well-documented the preparation was totally botched. There were some injuries and then for the guys, who did come there was really a lack of organisation on the part of the federation and the sports ministry. And at this level you pay for that. You really get what you put in. And when you don't have a correct preparation that's the result you have. And it's sad because there's potential. But, if things keep going this way, players will stop

coming to the national team and the team will never really fulfill its potential.

**FIBA:** *Have you and other Senegal national team players been in contact with the Federation at all since the FIBA World Championship?*

**SAVANE:** Since the World Championship, personally, I have received no phone call from the Federation and no kind of official communication from them. I think they're doing a lot of changes back there and I imagine they're waiting to get that done first before they get in touch with the players.

**FIBA:** *Are you disappointed that you haven't been contacted at all?*

**SAVANE:** I'm extremely disappointed because we talked a lot this summer and spent a lot of time and energy discussing all the changes that needed to be made. We're the players. We play abroad in the most professional leagues from the NBA all the way down to Germany and what not. And these things happen and you feel that you have a lot of input, but it's not being used. And it's a shame because smaller countries with fewer resources should use all the ones they do have. But that's not the situation, and that's the most disappointing thing for me.

**FIBA:** *What's the biggest thing you'd tell them?*

**SAVANE:** I'd tell them it's time to get it together really quick, because we have another summer coming up with the team and if they think they can wait until the last second to get moving, they're going to find themselves with no players in hand. And the ones, who are there will have to go through the same situations.

**FIBA:** *Last question about the 2007 FIBA Africa Championship in Angola. You hoping to make it there in August?*



**SAVANE:** It's really far from there right now. And it's hard, since I really haven't talked to anybody from the Federation. The first thing obviously is to be healthy because it's quite important. For example, this season a lot of us came into the season with some injuries and it's affected a lot of players I've talked to in their performance in the regular season. So that's the first step. The second step is seeing if the Federation makes the changes that we had asked for, and from there each person will have to make his own decision.



# KAZLAUSKAS: "CHINA CAN BE MUCH STRONGER IN THE FUTURE"

Wang Zhizhi scored 28 points to help China win their sixth Asian Games men's basketball gold on 14th December 2006 with a 59-44 victory over Qatar. Jonas Kazlauskas' team was rarely challenged throughout the tournament in racking up a perfect 8-0 record for their fifth gold in the last six Games. Without NBA superstar Yao Ming, Kazlauskas relied upon the returning Wang Zhizhi and the nation's top NBA prospect Yi Jianlian. And the dynamic duo dominated in Doha with Wang Zhizhi averaging 19 points and 6.5 rebounds and Yi having 16.6 points and 11.4 rebounds per game. Kazlauskas and his staff now switch their focus to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and how best to integrate Yao into the bond that has formed between Wang Zhizhi and Yi. The Lithuanian, who coached the Baltic country's senior national team, delayed celebrating the Asian Games crown just long enough to talk to FIBA.

**FIBA:** Congratulations coach, could you give us your general feelings right now after winning the gold medal here in Qatar?

**KAZLAUSKAS:** I'm very happy how we finished this tournament. I think the final was a really good level of basketball. And how we beat our opponent today was a very big success for us. Generally we controlled the situation on the court the whole time and we played good defence. We won this game with Wang

Zhizhi and the other guys up front. I'm very happy for the team. And I think this team in the future can be much stronger.

**FIBA:** Wang Zhizhi was by far the most dominant player in the final. What are your thoughts on him?

**KAZLAUSKAS:** He's the most experienced player on our team, he played at the highest level, the NBA. For sure we need him more than others to take those shots and make those decisions. We knew from the situation on the court that we need to attack our opponents under the basket. And both of our guys - Wang Zhizhi and Yi - did a very good job.

**FIBA:** What about nervousness entering the game?

**KAZLAUSKAS:** A final cannot always be a good game. There are exceptions. In general, it was a nervous game. But our opponents fought until the last seconds and this is good.

**FIBA:** Where do you want to take the team now?

**KAZLAUSKAS:** We know our problems. Now China will start preparing for the Olympic Games in Beijing. And this is the right way.

**FIBA:** What would you say is the biggest positive you'll take from this tournament?



**KAZLAUSKAS:** The team started playing defense and realised that defense is very important and that it can bring us to another level. The team is not afraid to make mistakes and they will fight inside. And that's really good. If you look at today's game, you see we didn't have problems playing good defense. It was so good that Qatar had problems getting shots off in 24 seconds. And this showed that we can play good defense.

**FIBA:** Yi is of course one of China's top prospects. How do you think he's advancing?

**KAZLAUSKAS:** He has a very good future. Why are we talking future? He's good now. I like how he plays and works in practice. He's improving. If you saw Wang Zhizhi down low today you also saw Yi was the guy on the perimeter. And that's not easy for a player with his size. But he was very good. And he didn't have foul problems. In all the games he had double figures in points and rebounds. And you heard me say a couple of days ago he played just okay after 16 points and 14 rebounds. That's because I expect a lot from him. But he's better right now than many players playing in the NBA.

**FIBA:** Most of the NBA scouts were here today to watch Yi. But what do you think about Wang Zhizhi's chances of returning to the NBA?

**KAZLAUSKAS:** He's so talented you cannot imagine. In my life, in my coaching profession, only a couple players are as talented as him - Arvydas Sabonis and Yao Ming. He has everything in his hands if he wants that or not. If he wants to (go to the NBA) he can make it there easily.



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# THE WORLD IN BRIEF



## AYUSO JOINS KK SPLIT

Puerto Rico guard Larry Ayuso has signed a deal with Croatian side KK Split.

The 31-year-old has been brought on board in an attempt to reverse a torrid run of form which has seen them lose 15 of their 17 domestic games this season.

Ayuso has plenty of European basketball experience having played for Premiata Montegranaro in Italy, Turkish team Besiktas, Lonikos in Greece and Zalgiris Kaunas from Lithuania.

PAGE 46 | 24 2007 | FIBA ASSIST MAGAZINE

## CHINA PREPARES FOR EXHIBITION GAMES IN EUROPE

China's men and women are desperate to reach the podium at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing so to boost their chances, they will play a series of exhibition games this year, according to the country's basketball Federation.



The Chinese teams will travel to Europe to face national sides gearing up for the EuroBaskets, and then take part in the FIBA Asian Championships in July.

"The teams will play a lot of competitive games because we have very high targets at the Olympics," said CBA official Kuang Lubin to the China Daily.

"We had some very good games last year and I think 2007 is a great chance to improve."

"We are negotiating with the associations in Europe to decide the final schedule. The priority is that they are real national teams with the leading stars."

"We wouldn't compete against their secondary teams or club teams, because we want to compete against the best teams in the world. This is very important for our Olympic goals."

China's men scrapped their way into the eight-finals in Saitama, but lost heavily against Greece, while the women had some bright moments in Brazil, but failed to reach the knockout stages.

Right now, their basketball icon Yao Ming is recovering from a leg injury after the best start of his NBA career with the Houston Rockets. The 2.28 m. (7'5") Yao is expected to return to action in the next few weeks.

Guangdong star Yi Jianlian, who played for the men in Japan and also recently took part in the World University Games, is expected to represent his country this summer although he is understood to be submitting his name for the NBA draft.

## ANTHONY IS USA BASKETBALL'S 2006 MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

The Denver Nuggets' Carmelo Anthony, who helped lead the 2006 USA Men's Senior National Team to a 13-1 overall mark and a bronze medal and an 8-1 record at the 2006 FIBA World Championship, was selected the 2006 USA Basketball Male Athlete of the Year, USA Basketball announced.

"I'm very honored to receive this award," Anthony said. "I want to thank Mr. Colangelo and Coach K and his staff for giving me the opportunity to play for this team. I worked extremely hard over the summer to prepare because I take great



pride in playing for my country. I also want to thank my teammates. They're a great group of guys and we had a lot of fun playing together. I look forward to continuing to work hard for USA Basketball and helping us get that gold medal in 2008."

The USA's leading scorer at the 2006 FIBA World Championship averaging 19.9 ppg, Anthony was the lone American named to the five-man 2006 FIBA World Championship All-Tournament Team.

Selected by the USA Basketball Executive Committee as the recipient of its Male Athlete of the Year award, USA Basketball also submitted Anthony for the U.S. Olympic Committee's 2006 Male Athlete of the Year award, which will be announced by the USOC in January 2007.

"Carmelo was the ultimate team player," offered USA Senior Men's National Team head coach Mike Krzyzewski. "He had an outstanding summer, starting with our training camp in Las Vegas and ending with being a dominant player in the FIBA World Championship. He was a man after victories and showed how classy and mature he was in our one defeat. I love the way he plays the game, but I love the way he carries himself as a leader on the Senior National Team even better. He is very deserving of this award. With Carmelo, Dwyane Wade and LeBron James as the core of our National Team over the next two years, we have a lot to look forward to in USA Basketball."



#### VALDES ELECTED PRESIDENT OF SALVADOR FEDERATION

Alfredo Valdes has been elected as the new president of the Salvadoran Basketball Federation (FESABAL). Valdes has signed a contract until June 2008 and makes the step up after several years working on the national team's coaching staff.

His key objective will be to improve the Federation's financial situation by developing strong ties with the national media and private businesses.

Another former player and coach of El Salvador, Oscar Rank, also stood in the presidential election but failed to impress the voting panel.

#### RODRIGUEZ UNWAVERING IN COMMITMENT TO SPAIN

The way Sergio Rodriguez has collected titles and honours in his life, one would think he might find it hard to pick out the most meaningful accolade. There was the MVP award he claimed at the U18 European Championship Men in 2004 after leading Spain to the gold medal.

He had a terrific couple of years with Estudiantes, playing in the ACB and Euroleague. Then there was the day Rodriguez was a first-round selection in the 2006 NBA draft by Portland. It's another honour that ranks highest for the 20-year-old Rodriguez, though.

"Winning the World Championship was



the best thing in my life," he said on hoopsworld.com. It was a great moment for all of Spain. I enjoyed it, and I want to win more titles with Spain."

And Saitama enjoyed Rodriguez. He was, quite simply, amazing in Spain's thrilling semi-final win over Argentina in Saitama.

In just 15 minutes, Rodriguez turned an already fast game into one that was lightning quick, playing to Spain's strength. He made all three of his three-pointers and finished with 15 points, while also dishing out two assists and grabbing two boards.

Rodriguez was so good that teammate Jose Manuel Calderon, who had sat down for a breather, couldn't get back into the game.

His play in Japan did not allay concerns about his decision to play in the NBA this year. Fans in Spain feared he would not play much. There have been games in which Rodriguez did not get off the bench.

Nate McMillan, the Portland coach who has tried to keep the pressure off his star rookie, may have no other choice but to play him considering his career-high 23 points on 11 of 14 shooting in this season's game against Denver. He had 13 points and six assists in the second period to help the Blazers score 37 points - their most in a quarter this season. Rodriguez's teammate, Juan Dixon, marvelled at his talent.

"Sergio did a tremendous job of setting guys up, we were defending ... that was the best quarter we have played all year. That was beautiful basketball, man."

Speaking of beautiful, nothing is more beautiful than listening to what Rodriguez had to say when asked if he wanted to play at this year's EuroBasket.

"I can't wait to compete," he said. "In Spain, it was a very big thing to go and win the World Championship."

Simply put, it matters.

"Here, in the NBA, it seems that you mostly look at your own play or if you win the NBA title," he said. "In Spain, we look higher than that. Players want to be the best in the world, not just in their own league."

## MARKS RECONSIDERING

New Tall Black coach Nenad Vucinic is hopeful of luring NBA veteran Sean Marks out of international retirement after returning from a reconnaissance mission to the United States.

Vucinic has spent the past two weeks on the US West Coast visiting Tall Black prospects, including several players previously unsighted on the national team depth chart.

But he made a point of stopping in on Marks, who has not played for New Zealand since the 2004 Athens Olympics. Vucinic spent a couple of days in Phoenix, attending the Suns' 113-102 win over Seattle Supersonics.

Marks, the first Kiwi to enter the NBA when he was drafted by the New York Knicks in 1998, did not suit up for the Sonics game and has made just one appearance on court for the Suns this season. He logged seven minutes for two points (1/3 FG) and a rebound against Portland on Boxing Day.



Vucinic does not want to pressure him for an immediate decision, but remains optimistic.

"I think the talks were successful," he assessed. "Sean has made no commitment yet, but he is interested in revisiting his decision to retire. I told him I would like him to play. He was very positive and asked questions about what was happening this year."

The Tall Blacks face a must-win series against Australia in August with the winners claiming the only Oceania berth at next year's Beijing Olympics. It will be the first time since 2001 that both countries haven't been assured of qualifying for a major championship.

Oceania enjoyed the luxury of two berths at both the 2004 Athens Olympics and 2006 FIBA World Championships on the strength of New Zealand's semifinal finish at the 2002 world championships. While the losers of this year's showdown can still qualify through a repechage tournament in Europe before the Olympics, that prospect would be almost as daunting as the Olympics themselves.

During his American jaunt, Vucinic also checked out four up-and-coming players, who might feature in the Tall Black program in the future, including 2006 rookie Jeremiah Trueman. The former Nelson Giant forward is currently attending San Diego Christian College, playing alongside Aussie/Kiwi Rowan Gray. While Gray, who reminds Vucinic of former Tall Black centre Peter Pokai, is one of the top players in the Hawks' conference, he may only qualify for New Zealand as a restricted player as he does not already own an NZ passport.

The same handicap faces 2.18 mt. (7' 2") David Massey, who attends the University of Santa Barbara.

Perhaps the best prospect is 2.08 mt. (6'10") Aron Baynes, a teammate of former Junior Tall Black Tom Abercrombie at Washington State University. Baynes was born in Gisborne before moving to Cairns, Australia, and older brother Callum helped the Easy LPG Bay Hawks to the NBL title last year.

"He seems keen, but wants to concentrate on college right now," says Vucinic.



## FIBA DELEGATION AT ASIAN GAMES

FIBA President Bob Elphinston, FIBA Secretary General Patrick Baumann and FIBA Secretary General Emeritus Borislav Stankovic were part of the FIBA delegation, which visited the Asian Games in Doha, Qatar.

"We were very impressed by the outstanding facilities of the Games," stated FIBA Secretary General Patrick Baumann. The Basketball tournament was played in a brand-new indoor arena and saw continuously sell out crowds throughout the tournament. FIBA President Bob Elphinston was very



pleased with the basketball competition: "This event has an incredible standing in the Asian region and it provides the opportunity to play high level basketball also for countries that normally do not have a chance to play at the FIBA World Championship or the Olympics. It is an excellent occasion to promote the game in all corners of the region."

The basketball tournament drew the highest authorities to the games, also including the royal family from Qatar.

The final game was also attended by the FIBA Central Board member and OCA member Sheikh Talal F.A.J. Al-Sabah, by the President of the International Paralympic Committee and IOC member Philip Craven, who is an avid basketball fan.

Witnessed by its Sport minister Liu Peng, China won the gold medal in the men's and women's tournament, whilst Qatar and Iran were able to reach the podium in the men's and Chinese Taipei and Japan in the women's.

The technical operations of the basketball tournament were led by FIBA Asia under the always present eyes of its President Sheikh Saud Bin Ali Al-Thani and Secretary General Dato Yeoh Choo Hock.

## BARBOSA MAY MISS FIBA AMERICAS CHAMPIONSHIP

Brazil star Leandro Barbosa flopped at the FIBA World Championship and the guard fears he may not get a chance to make amends next summer.

Brazil, who failed to progress from the group stage in Hamamatsu with Barbosa struggling for form, will attempt to qualify for the Olympics at the FIBA Americas Championship.

But Barbosa told GloboEsporte.com: "I want to feel happy for being part of the national team again, but I really don't know if I'll have that opportunity. I am not the one who make decisions and I've signed a very strong contract with my team. What I've heard round here, what they have told me, is that they do not want me to play for the national team. I will have to discuss it and get to an agreement."

Barbosa struggled for form in Japan, especially at the free-throw line where he made just 15 of 29 (51.7%) of his attempts.



## CONCEICAO: WE WILL BE READY FOR AFROBASKET

Deputy chairman of the Angolan Basketball Federation (FAB), Jean Jacques da Conceicao, is still hopeful the country will be ready to host Afrobasket 2007 in August. More than one year ago FIBA Africa announced that Angola, the eight-time African champions, had beaten off competition from Mali to win the rights to host their third Afrobasket.

The FAB had hoped to have the five arenas in Benguela, Huila, Huambo, Cabina and Luanda ready, but with less than a year left, the possibility looms that only two of these will be completed on time.

Yet Conceicao believes that if the government makes good on their promises, things will still be completed on time.

He told FIBA: "The time is going by quickly. We will keep working on it, and we are quietly confident that we'll have everything ready on time - but we are dependent on Government support. Clearly I would like to have all the arenas ready on the proper time, but if we can't get them ready, then at least two will be finished."

When asked if he saw the preparations as a failure, he insisted: "No, not at all, because there are some good building companies in the country, which can finish it on time. Obviously, we want to win the trophy, this is our third Afrobasket at home, and our people are eager to celebrate."



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OFF-THE-COURT

# THE ODD - THE FUNNY - THE UNUSUAL



## PAU GASOL HAS A FLAIR FOR THE DRAMATIC

That was obvious at the FIBA World Championship in Japan, where his performances were so inspirational that fans of the superstar shed tears after Spain's semi-final win over Argentina when it became obvious a foot injury would prevent him from playing in the title game against Greece.

Gasol wasn't acting when he cried as brother Marc, and Jorge Garbajosa carried him off the court.

He has treaded the boards on other occasions, however.

"I'm not bad at acting," he said. "When I was young, I did some plays in my school theatre and I really enjoyed it. I really don't feel embarrassed doing almost anything and they say I have a certain ease when it comes to acting. Now, from that to go to Hollywood there's a long way and I don't see that as being one of my aims. Having said that it would be interesting to have a cinema experience."

Gasol missed the early part of the NBA season recovering from foot surgery but returned to action with the Memphis Grizzlies on December 16.

## SING-ALONG WITH NOCIONI

Andres "Chapu" Nocioni is Chicago's hard-as-nails forward on the court, but off it "he's a prankster."

"In his first season we couldn't get him to say a word because his English wasn't good," said Team USA guard Kirk Hinrich and Bulls teammate Kirk Hinrich, a good friend of Nocioni's.

"But now that he is more fluent, he is one of the pranksters in the locker room. He makes all types of jokes, he always finds a way to make jokes and he doesn't stop."

The Argentinian players and fans often broke out into song at the FIBA World Championship, where Nocioni was outstanding.

Nocioni clearly did not strain his vocal chords in Asia, but he is still chirping away.

"Whenever the team travels to go to games, Chapu sits at the back and he is very funny, because he starts singing songs in Spanish and very loud, too," Hinrich said.



## WALTON HAD A CAMEO IN THE LONG-RUNNING HIT SOAP "THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS"

Walton's a good act on, and off the floor.

Is it harder to understand plays drawn up by Los Angeles Lakers coach Phil Jackson, or to learn a few lines for a daytime soap opera?

LA small forward Luke Walton knows the answer. "I was nervous," Walton admitted.

"I was more nervous than when I go out of the court in front of thousands of people.

But that's what I do all the time. This was new so I had a little bit of nerves, but they went away once I just started doing my thing out there."

If Walton has had to battle nerves on the court, it hasn't showed this season. He is one of, if not the biggest impact players in the league this season and the Lakers' 23-11 record is proof. Walton is shooting a career best 51.7% (153 of 296) from the field and 50% (27 of 54), and his averages in rebounds (5.0), assists (4.1) and points per game (12.4) are also as good as they've ever been. The 6ft 8in small forward isn't surprised by his play.

"I just worked my butt off during the summer to get better at shooting the ball," said Walton, the son of basketball hall of famer Bill Walton.

"But I think a lot has to do with me being comfortable and being in the starting lineup."

Walton is also logging a career-high 33.6 minutes per contest.

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