BASKETBALL AUSTRALIA FORMED IN 1939

Member

AUSTRALIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, AUSTRALIAN PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE, INTERNATIONAL BASKETBALL FEDERATION (FIBA), FIBA OCEANIA, COMMONWEALTH BASKETBALL FEDERATION, AUSTRALIAN OLYMPIC FEDERATION

Patron: The Hon. Kevin Rudd MP Prime Minister
President: John Maddock
Chairman: David Thodey
Chief Executive: Larry Sengstock
General Manager, Community Basketball: Michael Haynes

LIFE MEMBERS

Dr I. Burge (deceased); A.M. Ramsay, MBE; Mr. K. Watson, BEM;
Mr. R. Staunton, OAM (deceased); Mr. G. Russell, OAM; Mrs. B. Watson;
Mr. J. Small, OAM (deceased); Mr. R. Kidner; Mr. W. Feltham; Dr J. Raschke, OAM (deceased); Mr. A. McRobbie, OAM (deceased); Mr. K. Madsen; Mr. R. Butler; Mr. L. Gaze OAM; Mrs. L. Landon; Mr. R. Elphinston;
Mr. M. Speed; Mr. R. Harvey CVO, AM; Dr. A. Hurley; Mr. J. Martin.

NATIONAL COACHING AND ACCREDITATION SCHEME

The National Coaching and Accreditation Scheme (NCAS) was established in 1978 with the primary aim of up-grading and expanding coaching expertise across a wide range of sports. Basketball Australia has embraced this scheme since its inception.

This Level 1 Manual is a substantial revision on previous editions and many thanks are due to Mr Ian Ellis for his work as well as the numerous other coaches who have been kind enough to have input. The manual remains the basis of Basketball Australia's NCAS Level 1 course however has been produced in separate booklets to make it easier for coaches to identify specific information they are after.

This manual is not designed to have all coaches around Australia doing the same thing, rather it is to allow coaches at all levels to perform more effectively and constructively. The application of knowledge remains flexible according to the talent and ability of the individual coach and the athletes they are working with.

Good luck with your coaching!

Copyright by: Basketball Australia. All right reserved 2005.

Basketball Australia

PO Box 7141 Alexandria NSW 2015
Level 3, 256 Coward Street, Mascot NSW 2020
Telephone: (02) 9469 7200 Fax: (02) 9469 7201
www.basketball.net.au

Basketball ACT

PO Box 3268
Belconnen ACT 2617
Telephone: (02) 6253 3066 Fax: (02) 6253 3060
www.act.basketball.net.au

Basketball NSW

PO Box 198
Sydney Markets NSW 2129
Telephone: (02) 8765 8555 Fax: (02) 8765 8588
www.nswbasketball.net.au

Basketball NT

PO Box 42240
Casuarina NT 0810
Telephone: (08) 8945 3761 Fax: (08) 8945 3862
www.nt.basketball.net.au

Basketball QLD

PO Box 1281
Milton QLD 4064
Telephone: (07) 3377 9100 Fax: (07) 3371 7239
www.basketballqld.net.au

Basketball SA

PO Box 29
Findon SA 5023
Telephone: (08) 8444 6444 Fax: (08) 8444 6488
www.sa.basketball.net.au

Basketball Tasmania

PO Box 21
New Town TAS 7008
Telephone: (03) 6228 1822 Fax: (03) 6228 1844
www.tas.basketball.net.au

Basketball Victoria

Box 3, MSAC
Aughtie Dr, Albert Park VIC 3206
Telephone: (03) 9927 6666 Fax: (03) 9927 6677
www.basketballvictoria.com.au

Basketball WA

PO Box 185
Floreat WA 6014
Telephone: (08) 9284 0555 Fax: (08) 9284 0550
www.basketballwa.asn.au

Australia has a proud history in basketball and in 2004 was ranked 3rd amongst all nations. This success is due in no small way to the tireless work of coaches throughout the country, from "learn to play" programs right through to the Boomers and Opals.

The National Coaching and Accreditation Scheme (NCAS) was established in 1978 with the primary aim of up-grading and expanding coaching expertise across a wide range of sports. Basketball Australia has fully embraced this scheme since its inception and has developed, in conjunction with the Australian Sports Commission, a systematic and on-going educational program for basketball coaches.

Basketball Coaching Made Easy has been formulated to provide the background of knowledge and expertise for aspiring Level 1 basketball coaches. This course applies covers general coaching principles and applies them specifically to basketball, with an emphasis on having sound knowledge of the skills and principles of basketball as well as better organisation of practice sessions, appropriate methods of teaching and correcting techniques and methods of analysing an athlete's performance.

There is a wealth of resources available to coaches – a simple search on the internet will identify many hundred websites with an amazing array of information. There are books and videos on all aspects of basketball coaching and a visit to the National Sports Information Centre at the Australian Institute of Sport is a must for any coach visiting Canberra. Indeed your local library is often a great source of coaching material.

With all this information available a coach could easily find enough drills to fill many years of training sessions! Drills are the "tools of the trade" for coaches but the art of coaching is about the teaching points that you highlight in a given drill. Coaches must focus on the teaching points as these are what make their players better!

The National Intensive Training Program is the key component of Basketball Australia's national player and coach identification and development strategy. There are full time coaches in each state and territory who deliver the program with the assistance of a strong network of coaches. The NITP has a heavy emphasis on developing individual offensive and defensive fundamentals as well as team principles of play. Coaches interested in learning more about the NITP should contact the head coaches through their state associations.

Whether you are coaching a team of beginners who are just learning to love the sport or a representative team "Basketball Coaching Made Easy" has information relevant to you. For further information on coaching clinics or resources contact your State/Territory Association or log onto the Basketball Australia website, www.basketball.net.au.

Enjoy your coaching!

Rebounding is a vital component of basketball. In nearly every game played more shots are missed than made. This creates many opportunities to gain possession of the ball if a team can rebound effectively. More possession will inevitably increase the number of opportunities a team has to score. So it can be suggested that the team that controls the rebounding will control the game. Players should assume that any shot will be missed, so that they can achieve good rebounding position as regularly as possible.

Rebounding comes down to good footwork, a low balanced stance and a strong desire to want the ball. Often it does not matter if players are tall, short, quick, slow, strong or even how high they can jump. Rebounding often comes down to blocking out your opponent and wanting the ball more than your opposition.

Helpful hints for rebounding

• Assume every shot will be missed.

• Locate your opponent or the one closest to you.

• Make contact with your opponent by using your forearm.

• Use a forward or reverse pivot to block out your opponent.

• Maintain a wide and balanced stance, make it hard for your opponent to move around you.

• Locate the ball watching its flight, anticipate where it will rebound.

• Use two hands when rebounding the ball. Keep your hands at approximately head height.

• Desire and aggression. Want the ball.

Defensive Rebounding

Defensive rebounding is the result of your opponent missing a shot. Once a shot has been taken defenders must make contact with the opponents and block them out. Defenders should position themselves between the opponent and the basket after every shot. This will automatically provide inside position with a greater chance of gaining possession.

The biggest mistake that player's make is to watch the ball rather than finding their player.

Rebounding or blocking out commences as soon as an opposing player takes a shot. Here the player defending the shooter must call "shot" to alert their team mates they have to block out. It is then important for each defender to read the intention of their opponent. Each rebounder should then make contact with their player with their forearm and pivot in the appropriate direction usually using a reverse pivot. Once the defender has their opponent on their back they should look to find the location of the ball and move to gain possession.

To maximize the effect of any block out, the feet should be spread at least shoulder width apart. The arms after the initial contact should be straight outward with the elbows at 90 degrees. Both hands should be ready to gain possession of the ball. The head should be up and eyes focused on the ball. If the opponent attempts to move around the defender blocking out, the defender should use short shuffling movements to keep them on their back.

Good rebounders will watch the angle of where the shot was taken as this will affect where the ball will end up. They will judge how far out the shot was taken, was it hard, flat or a high shot? Are the rings and backboards springy? It is important to observe these areas, as this will effect the outcome of where and how the ball will rebound off the ring or backboard.

At times a defensive player will be in a position where the offensive player is closer to the basket. In this situation, the defender should at least move to the side of the offensive player (if they cannot get to the front) or attempt to force the offensive player behind the backboard.

In some situations the defender will be in the key when the shot is taken and the player they are guarding is on the perimeter (when the defender is playing in a team "help" position). In this situation the defender should step at least to the side of the key to determine if their player is chasing the rebound. If they do contest the rebound, the defender must get contact. If they do not, they the defender can turn to the basket and look to rebound themselves.

Key teaching points

• Assume every shot is missed

• Make contact with your opponent using your forearm

• Reverse pivot to block out opponent

• Stay low and balanced

• Anticipate where the ball is likely to rebound

Offensive Rebounding

An offensive rebound results from either rebounding your own shot or a shot taken by one of your teammates.

Offensive rebounding applies many of the same principles as defensive rebounding. In most instances, however, if effective defence is being played the defender will generally be in better position to block out. This results in the offensive player having to counteract the objectives of the defender by using quick fakes and sharp movements in an attempt to gain inside position and in turn block out their opponent. Quick changes of direction, changes of pace and sharp footwork are essential. The use of fakes may also assist. If an offensive player fakes as they are about to move in one direction and then quickly changes direction, the player can often catch their defender unaware and gain inside position.

Effective offensive rebounders will be aggressive and have the desire to gain front position. Once front position is gained the fundamentals involved in blocking out your opponent are the same as that for a defensive rebound.

Key teaching points

• Anticipate a shot is about to be taken

• Quick fakes and sharp movements

• Gain inside position

• Anticipate where the shot will go

The modern game of basketball requires all players to become proficient offensively. The principle goal for any coach when teaching individual offensive skills is to provide players with a full range of offensive options to assist their players becoming difficult to defend.

For players to become proficient offensively, coaches must emphasise the importance of assuming a triple threat stance. This provides the player with the necessary balance to shoot, drive or pass. Once established, players must develop the ability to read the defender's actions, then take advantage of any opportunity the defender presents. An important aspect of this is using fakes to move the defender. Players should develop the ability to beat an opponent in either direction using both left and right sides of the body. It is vital for every player to be able to perform the following offensive fundamentals:

1. Create a lead for the ball

2. Read the defender

3. Cut behind the defender where possible

4. Catch and shoot the ball when open and in range

5. Drive fake and/or shot fake to commit the defender

6. Make on-side and cross-over moves to the left or right using either pivot foot

Triple threat stance, front view   Triple threat stance, side view

Creating a Lead for the Ball

Coaches must provide their players with an effective means to create a lead for the ball. This will allow players to catch the ball in a specified area to continue the offence or become a scoring threat. The common method used is the V-cut, which involves a sharp change of direction and pace.

V-Cut from the Forward Spot

A V-Cut is a cut made in a "V" shape executed with a sharp change of pace and change of direction. Execution of the V-Cut from the forward spot begins from the foul line extended behind the three point line, the area known as the wing. A cutter then has the necessary spacing to create a lead for the ball.
To start a V-Cut, the player cuts fast toward the basket and gets both feet into the key. They should stop in the key, before pushing off

the foot nearest the baseline to cut back to the perimeter. The cut to the basket should go through the the block, the cut back to the perimeter should go through the mark above the block. This pattern is shown in the diagram.

On receiving the ball the player must catch and assume triple threat stance. The player should be able to pivot on their inside foot (closest to the middle of the court as they catch the ball) and land in a stride stop to face the basket. This is called "shooting footwork". The player should also be able to pivot on their ouside foot (closest to the sideline) and then "rip" the ball through to the baseline side of their body and step strongly to the basket. This is called "driving footwork".

Key teaching points

• Low and balanced movement

• Head up and eyes focused on ball

• Sharp change of direction and pace

• Target hand is furthermost from the defender

• Stance, strong and wide

• Be able to both "inside foot pivot" (shooting footwork) and "outside foot pivot (driving footwork on

   both sides of the court

• When using shooting footwork the player should pivot on the first foot to hit the ground so that they

   are facing the basket when their second foot lands

Banana Cut

As the player leads toward the perimeter they should start to turn toward the passer. This 'banana cut' serves two purposes:

- it makes it easier to then face the basket as it is only a 90 degree turn

- and it moves them in front of the defender, placing the defender
  at a disadvantage.

Seal and Lead

Sealing assists a player to create a lead for the ball when heavily defended. It involves a V-Cut action. On approaching the block the cutter steps over the top of the defender's lead leg to hold, or seal, their opponent for a brief second before leading out to the wing and presenting a target hand for the passer.

As the offensive player steps across the defenders lead leg, they should also swing their arm (in either an upward or downward motion) to knock the defender's arms out of the way.

If the defender's arm is high, the offensive player should hit it with an upward motion. If the defender's arm is low, use a downward motion.

Key teaching points:

• Low and balanced movement

• Head up and eyes focused on ball

• Seal by stepping over the defenders lead leg

• Sharp change of direction and pace

• Swing arm to knock defender's arm out of the way

Back Cut

A back cut is the first part of a v-cut and is always used when a defender denies the pass to the perimeter. Performing a back cut relies on reading the actions and positioning of the defender. When the defender either lunges towards the passing lane anticipating a pass, or loses vision on the cutter, it is a signal for the offensive player to back cut. To set up the back cut, the cutter should emphasise a target hand (use a "catch fake"), while the passer fakes a pass. This helps ensure the defender will attempt to anticipate the pass. On reading the defender the cutter then pushes off with the foot furthest from the basket and accelerates back to the basket. The first step should be taken with the foot closest to the basket. Often the pass made here will be a bounce pass in an attempt to avoid the hands of the defender as they attempt to recover.

Key teaching points

• Push off foot closest to sideline and
   step with foot closest to the basket

• Low and balanced movement

• Eyes focused on ball

• Sharp change of direction and pace

• Target hand furthest from the
   defender (use a catch fake)

• Fake pass

• Read the defender

Reverse Pivot

Athletes should also be able to perform a "reverse pivot", which can be used when the defender has aggressively tried to intercept the pass (and missed!).

The athlete reverse pivots on their inside foot and steps aggressively to the basket. They should dribble the ball well in front of them.

As with any reverse pivot, the athlete should look first, by turning their head (chin to shoulder). The move should be in a low, athletic stance.

Individual Offensive Moves

Once players have the skills to free themselves from an opponent by creating a lead they must then develop the necessary skills to beat their opponent when they receive the basketball. Again emphasis is placed on always being in a low balanced stance (triple threat).

In general, offensive players, once they receive the basketball and have come to triple threat, must develop the skills to be able to shoot, penetrate left and right. All players need to develop the appropriate footwork to be able to catch and shoot with either foot as a pivot foot. Similarly all players need to develop the footwork to be able to penetrate either right or left using either foot as a pivot foot.

Players must develop the skills to set up or commit the defender through use of a drive fake (also known as jab step) or shot fake or a combination of these fakes. A drive fake involves a quick half step which fakes the first step of a drive. The defender may make one of several reactions, retreat, not react at all or step across to cover the drive. Coaches must emphasise the importance of staying low and balanced throughout the execution of a drive fake. The shot fake imitates a shot and is an attempt to make the defender react. This reaction may be in the form of the defender jumping or moving forward to block the shot. When performing the shot fake it is essential that the player stays low and remains in triple threat stance. The ball and upper body move, the legs stay ready to react and do not extend.

This section will detail when to use each move when reading the defender and will focus on being able to beat an opponent in either direction using either hand or creating a shooting opportunity. Once players master the correct technique it is important to have them execute these moves at game tempo. There are several essential moves available to players as they receive the basketball:

• Drive fake and drive (onside)

• Drive fake and crossover

• Drive fake and shot

• Shot fake and drive (onside)

• Shot fake and crossover

• Shot fake and shot

Drive Fake Series

A drive fake is a short (about 20cm) sharp step and is made with the non pivot foot at, or just outside, the nearest foot of the defender. It is very important that the offensive player "sells" the drive fake, which means using their whole body to make it look like they are about to dribble. Accordingly, they should:

- look in the direction of the fake drive

- move the ball outside the knee on the side of the fake drive (because that's where they would dribble) and have their hand on top of the ball – ready to dribble.

Drive Fake and Drive

On executing a drive fake the offensive player must look to read the reaction made by the defender. If the defender does not react, the offensive player takes a further step with the non-pivot foot past the defender. The ball must be released before lifting the pivot foot and should be protected throughout the move. This is achieved by keeping the ball in front of, and outside, the non-pivot foot. Be explosive from the first step. Once past the defender the player should accelerate to the basket to complete a lay up, or pull-up for a shot. Remember to help "sell" the fake by looking at where the drive will be made.

When actually driving, the offensive player should take a long fast step. The phrase "big steps beat people" can emphasise the difference between the smaller drive fake step and actually going.

Another useful teaching point is that the ball must hit the ground (on the dribble) when the big step hits the floor. This will help ensure the ball leaves the hand before the pivot foot lifts.

When driving past the defender, attack their feet and hips – going as close to them as possible.

Key teaching points

- Stance, strong and wide

- On jab step eyes look at driving lane

- Explosive on-side step

- Move the ball outside the foot that is making the drive fake, with the hand on top of the ball, ready to dribble/

- Low and balanced movement

- Quick half step

- Attack the defender's feet and hips (big steps beat people)

This move can initially be practiced without moving anywhere. Have the offensive player execute and drive fake and then take a big step and dribble, but keep the pivot on the ground. This will help to emphasise avoiding travelling.

Things to watch

Make sure when athletes drive fake that their head remains behind the foot they are stepping with. Their back leg (ie the pivot foot) must remain bent, to give power when they do drive.

Drive fake and Crossover

This move is used when the player reacts to the initial fake. A short sharp step is made with the non pivot foot at or just outside the appropriate foot of the defender. Following the drive fake, when the defender reacts or looks to step across anticipating an onside drive, the player then performs a crossover step with the non-pivot foot. They must swing the ball fast across the body keeping it as low as possible ("scrape the ground")

Here the non-pivot foot crosses in front of the pivot foot. The ball must be dribbled before the pivot foot is lifted and must be protected throughout the move.

Keeping the ball in front and on the outside of the non-pivot foot. Be explosive from the crossover. Once past the defender the player should accelerate.

Again, the offensive player should attack the defender's hips and feet and drive as close as possible.

Again, this can be practiced without moving to emphasise not travelling. Execute the drive fake and the crossover step (with dribble) but do not lift the pivot foot.

Key teaching points

• Stance, strong and wide

• Low and balanced movement

• Head up and eyes focused on area of fake drive

• Short sharp fake

• Explosive Crossover step

• Scrape the ground as you move the ball quickly from one side to the other.

• Attack the defender's feet and hips

Drive fake and Shot

This move is executed when the defender over commits to defending the fake drive. A short sharp step is made with the non-pivot foot at or just outside the appropriate foot of the defender.

Again, on executing a drive fake with the non-pivot foot, the offensive player must look to read the reaction of the defender. As the defender retreats to cover the drive the player must then re-establish triple threat stance and, if appropriate spacing is available, shoot before the defender recovers.

Coaches must emphasize body balance, as stance is difficult to maintain throughout this move. Stay low throughout this move.

Key teaching points

• Stance, strong and wide

• On executing a jab step eyes should look toward the driving lane

• Low and balanced movement

• Re-establish stance

• Quick shot release

Shot Fake Series

A shot fake is a short, sharp movement, which imitates the typical commencement of a player's shooting action. The grip used is identical to the usual shooting action. The player will look at the basket and raise the basketball to at least eye-level whilst maintaining a low stance.

Shot Fake and Drive

The offensive player then looks to read the reaction made by the defender. The shot fake and drive is performed if the defender jumps or reaches up in an attempt to get a hand to the shot. The player then performs an onside step past the defender. The ball must be released before lifting the pivot foot. Protect the basketball by dribbling it in front and on the outside of the non-pivot foot. The player then accelerates to the basket.

Whilst the shot fake is executed relatively slowly, the ball must be moved explosively into the dribble.

Key teaching points

• Stance, strong and wide

• Low and balanced movement

• Head up and eyes focused on basket to sell the fake

• Raise the basketball quickly but stay in low stance

• Explosive On-side step

Shot Fake and Crossover

The shot fake and crossover is performed when the defender jumps in an attempt to block the shot and the offence determines that the best available driving lane to the basket necessitates making a crossover step. The ball must be dribbled before lifting the pivot foot and should be protected. This is achieved by keeping the ball in front and on the outside of the non-pivot foot. The player then accelerates to the basket.

Key teaching points

• Stance, strong and wide

• Low and balanced movement

• Head up and eyes focused on target, sell the fake

• Short, sharp movement of basketball up to chin/forehead

• Explosive crossover step

Shot Fake and Shot

The shot fake and shot is performed when the defender retreats or does not react to the shot fake. The defender may also jump in an attempt to block the shot. The player then re-establishes triple threat stance and execute a shot before the defence has time to recover.

Coaches must emphasise the importance of staying in a low balanced stance throughout the shot fake so that the shooter has the balance to release the shot quickly.

Key teaching points

• Stance, strong and wide

• Maintain stance throughout

• Head up and eyes focused on target, selling the fake

• Shoot with balance

• Quick shot release

Combination Fakes

Players must be able to execute combination of drive fakes and shot fakes, as defenders often wont fall for the first fake.

The skills outlined in this section are a starting point in the development of effective individual offensive skills. Coaches should encourage players to execute their moves at game pace, reacting more quickly to the defender each time. This involves sharper and more explosive movements out of a strong, athletic, triple threat stance. Players must develop the ability to read or anticipate the defender. This, combined with an ability to shoot or beat an opponent in either direction using both on-side or cross-over moves, along with the capacity to utilise either foot as a pivot foot, is the foundation to effective offence before the basketball is dribbled.

A great way to practice these fakes is to play 1v1, but limit the offence to a maximum of one dribble. It should be played within a range where the offence is comfortable shooting and this will differ with the age and skill of players.

Relatively inexperienced players might play from the foul line, whereas Andrew Gaze and Shane Heal used to play against each other at Australian training camps from outside the three point line.

Chapter 3: Individual Defence

Individual defensive fundamentals are essential components of team man to man or zone defences. These skills should be taught as the foundations for all types of team defence. The key areas to be discussed include:

1. Defensive Stance

2. Defensive Footwork ("big to bigger" footwork, also known as "defensive slide")

3. Drop Step

4. Slide, Run, Slide (when a defender is beaten)

5. Defending the Dribbler

6. Defending a Back Cut

7. Closeout Techniques

It should be noted that although the term "slide" is used to describe defensive footwork, players should not actually slide their foot along the floor (as this would slow them down).

Instead "big to bigger" footwork is a series of short, choppy steps.

Defensive Stance

Every player must develop an effective defensive stance. This will allow the athlete to move quickly and effectively, and provide them with the ability to defend their opponent. When teaching this skill it is important to start from a stationary position.

An effective defensive stance is characterised by a strong athletic base. Here feet should be at least shoulder width apart (and they should be wider than the offensive player's stance) with body weight evenly distributed, with one foot slightly forward. As a guide, the toe of the athlete's back foot should at least be even with the heel on their front foot. This is determined by the direction in which the defender is attempting to force the dribbler. Knees should be flexed.

The back should stay straight, with the head and eyes up. It is important to keep the head in the centre of the body with the nose positioned behind the toes, as this helps to maintain balance.

The athlete's arms should be positioned so as to apply as much pressure on their opponent as possible. If defending a player who is dribbling with their right hand the defenders right hand should become the "dig hand" with the left becoming the "trace hand". The dig hand should be positioned ready to apply pressure to any crossover dribble. The palm should be facing up. The trace hand is placed at shoulder level with the palm facing the offensive player to deter a pass or shot.

At all times the head and eyes should focus on the offensive player in preparation for any sudden movements.

Key teaching points

• Feet, at least shoulder width apart (wider than offence)

• Staggered stance – back toe to front heel

• Knees flexed

• Back straight

• Nose behind toes

Defensive Footwork ("big to bigger")

It is vital to teach young athletes the correct method of defensive movement. Developing quick movement of the feet is essential for any player so they can defend any situation that arises in the game. Coaches should focus on athletes taking short, sharp steps while staying in a low and balanced stance.

Defensive footwork is commonly referred to as 'defensive slide' however this is a poor description of the movement. Actually sliding feet across the floor would slow a player down considerably!

Defensive footwork is a lateral movement out of a strong defensive stance. This stance is referred to as the 'big' stance. This movement begins with the athlete pointing one foot in the direction in which the dribbler is moving. This foot is called the lead foot. The defender must then push off with the other foot (the trail foot) while stepping with the lead foot. It is important that if the defender is moving to the left, they move their left foot first (and right foot first when moving to the right). Having taken this step, the defender is in a 'bigger' stance. They now step quickly with the trail foot back to the 'big' stance. The two steps should be the same size and a common mistake athletes make is to take a small first step and a big second step (bringing their feet together).

Defensive footwork is a series of short, fast, choppy steps. This is slower than running, but is used as it puts the defender in a position to take charge – once they have established legal guarding position they are allowed to move laterally to maintain that position and if the offensive player moves into them (even if the defender is still moving) it can be a charge.

It is essential for athletes to keep their nose behind their toes and to maintain active pressure on the ball with their hands throughout. The athlete needs to maintain the trail and dig hands to apply persistent pressure on the dribbler.
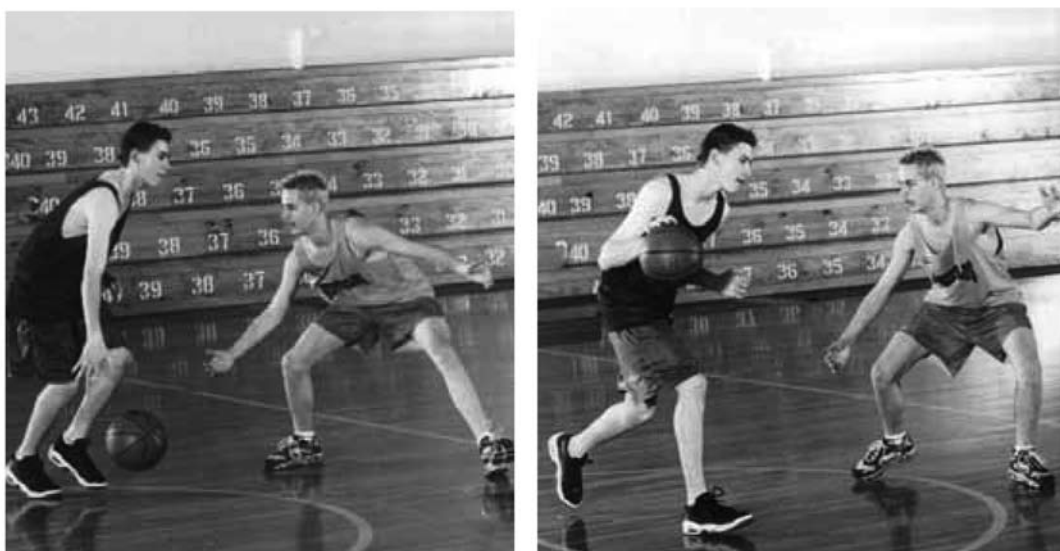
Key teaching points

• Body low

• Point toe of lead foot in direction you are moving

• Push off with the trail foot, step with the lead foot

• Big to bigger footwork

• Maintain hand pressure on the ball

Drop Step

After developing an effective stance and footwork it is important to be able to change direction. This is achieved by executing a drop step. This step allows the athlete to keep up with our opponent who has changed direction while dribbling.

To execute a drop step the athlete executes a reverse pivot. The athlete reverse pivots on the trail foot so that the front foot is drawn back becoming the lead foot in the new direction.

The athlete should maintain a good stance with the heel of the new lead foot level with the toe of the trail foot.

As shown in the diagram, many players "open the gate" where they reverse pivot almost 90 degrees. This allows the offensive player to drive straight past.

Correct
Player is moving to the side

Incorrect
Player is "opening the gate" for the offensive player to drive past
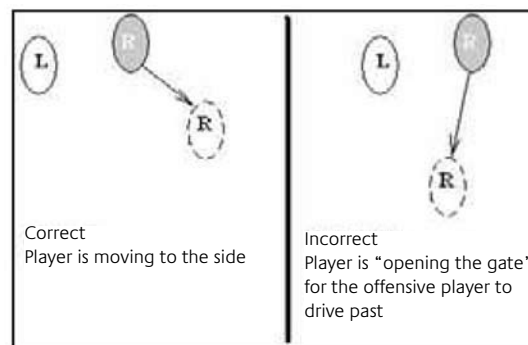
Players should stay low and be balanced throughout the movement, carrying trace and dig hand. Short and sharp movements are essential for quick reactions.

The 'drop step' takes the defender into a 'bigger' stance and they then need to move back to their 'big' stance.

Key teaching points

• Strong balanced stance

• Reverse pivot

• Short, sharp steps

• Trace hand and dig hand switch roles

Slide, Run, Slide

As discussed earlier, "big to bigger" footwork is slower than running but we use it to maintain good defensive position (and hopefully take a charge!) However, there will be times when even the best defender is unable to contain the dribbler with "big to bigger" footwork. To defend this situation the defender has to step out of defensive stance, sprint and catch up.

This is commonly seen when the player dribbling the ball makes a sudden change of direction and gets their shoulders past their defender. The defender must then turn sprint, catch up and resume defensive stance. Have the dribbler change pace and explode past the defender. The defender must then swing their trail foot through and sprint to catch up. It is important for defensive players to get their shoulders past the dribbler before turning and resuming their defensive stance and slide.

Even when guarding an offensive player over a short distance such as driving from the wing to the basket, the defender may need to use 'slide-run-slide footwork.

At all times the defender should attempt to keep adequate spacing to avoid the above situation and therefore contain the dribbler.

Key teaching points

• Strong balanced stance

• Swing trail foot through

• Sprint to catch up

• Get shoulders past the dribbler

• Resume defensive stance

Defending the Dribbler

The defender should be ready to anticipate when the dribbler is going to move so that the defender is not beaten by the first step of the dribbler. Defenders should be ready to drop step quickly if the dribbler makes a sudden change of direction. Defenders may attempt to force the dribbler to their non-dominant hand and then attempt to make it difficult for the dribbler to see available passing options and run the offence.

There are two common methods used defending the dribbler: turning and channeling.

Turning the dribbler involves continually beating the dribbler where they wish to go and forcing them to change direction. This strategy is generally used to slow down the dribbler and provide opportunities for other defenders to trap and pressure the ball carrier. More errors tend to occur as the dribbler changes hands. The defender must get their head in line with the ball and have their chest facing the chest of the offensive player.
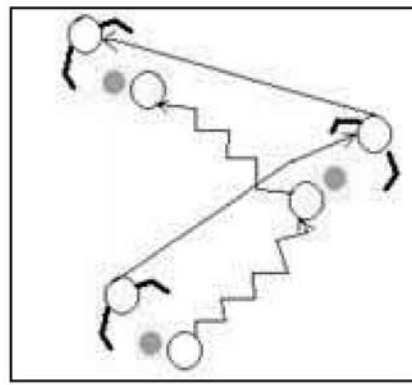
Channeling the dribbler involves forcing the dribbler in a specific direction. In the backcourt it is common for the ball to be channelled toward the sideline and out of the middle. In the frontcourt the ball may be channelled towards the base line. It may also be desirable to channel a dribbler so that they stay dribbling with their non-preferred hand.

To channel the dribbler along the sideline, the defender remains on the side of the dribbler witht their 'nose on the ball' and shoulder just forward of the dribbler.

Key teaching points

Turning the dribbler

• Beat the dribbler to the spot

• Pressure the ball

• Strong defensive stance

• Head on the ball, chest facing chest

Channeling the dribbler

• Force dribbler to non-preferred hand

• Force dribbler to area, help is available

• Strong defensive stance throughout
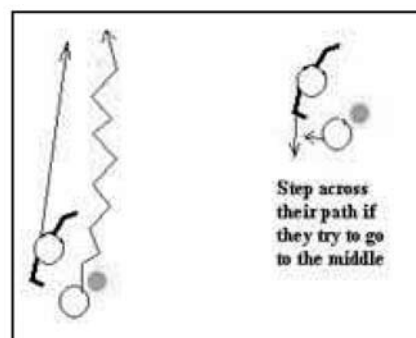
Defending the Back Cut

A back cut is a sudden change of direction behind a player's defender towards the basket. It is important that the defender's first movement is with their trail foot. Simply put, when the cutter goes toward the basket the defender needs to go toward the basket. To do that, first move the foot closest to the basket. There are two common methods used for defending back cuts. These are **opening to the ball** and **head snap** technique.

Head and Hands snap technique involves defenders keeping their back to the basketball throughout. It involves turning the head from one shoulder to turn to look over the opposite shoulder while the arm denying the pass also alternates. This technique allows the athlete to keep vision on their player, however, they loose vision of the ball for a brief moment. Usual defensive footwork is employed throughout.

A defender should 'head and hands snap' if the offensive player gets past the defender's back foot.

Opening to the ball involves the lead foot completing a drop step to allow the defender to face the ball. This is done only for a brief second before the opposite leg completes a forward pivot to resume a closed stance. Here the role of the lead or denial, hand and lead foot change to be a mirror image to how the forward lead was defended. A defender with a left foot and left hand leading to deny the pass, will change to the right foot and right hand as the back cut is defended.

Both techniques have been proven effective for denying a back cut. Coaches should expose both methods to their athletes.

Key teaching points

Head and Hands snap

• Back to passer

• Snap head from one shoulder to the other,

  locate the ball

• Denial hand alternates

• Maintain vision on ball

Opening to the ball

• Drop step to fully face the ball

• Forward pivot back to denial stance

• Mirror image of initial stance

Closeout Technique

Closeout is the term used to describe the defender moving to guard their player as the ball is passed to them.

The first priority for the defender closing-out is to stop player who has just received the ball from shooting. It is therefore essential that players maintain a balanced low stance and have both hands up to pressure any shot (carry a hand) but also be ready to guard any drive. This skill is one of the more demanding aspects of basketball and requires regular practice.

Two methods can be used when closing-out. They are the bunny hop and stutter step. The bunny hop technique involves a succession of small jumps until the defender has reached a strong defensive stance. Throughout this movement it is important for defenders to keep their nose behind their toes so they can drop step and retreat quickly to stop any penetration or drive.

The stutter step technique involves a succession of short sharp steps as the defender slows down into a defensive stance. Again it is important to keep the nose behind the toes. This technique has the added advantage of having the defender moving their feet already so that if the player with the ball decides to penetrate they can contain this more easily.

Key teaching points

• Succession of short, sharp steps or jumps into defensive stance

• Strong defensive stance

• Carry a hand to deny the shot

• Nose behind toes

• Stay down ready to contain drive

There are currently 5 booklets in the "Basketball Coaching Made Easy" series.
Book 1: Introduction, Role of the Coach, Inclusive Coaching and Sports Science
Book 2: Individual Body Movement and Ball Skills

Book 3: Individual Offensive and Defeksive Skills
Book 4: Team Offensive and Defensive Skills
Book 5: Training Drills

Individual
Offensive and
Defensive Skills