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What is Behind the Play



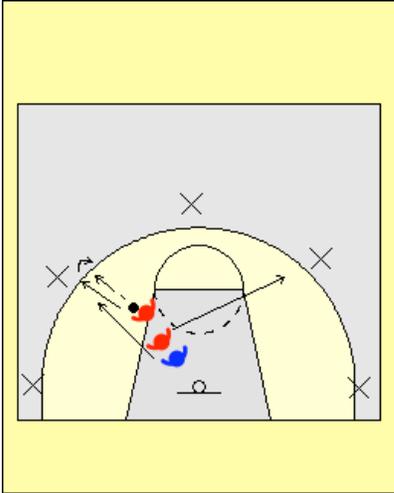
I first heard this term used by Bill Self at the University of Kansas on the Better Basketball Read and React DVD's. As soon as I heard the term, I knew it was an important missing link for how we teach offence. For example, a player drives baseline and his teammates move on penetration to the appropriate spaces to receive a potential pass. The pass is made, but everyone freezes, assuming a shot was going to be taken. What is behind the play? If the pass was a little off target or the defence made a good close out the receiver of the first pass has no play. When the other players stop playing or stand, there is nothing behind the play. The other five players must assume that that the shot was not going to be taken and continue to play. The passer needed to exit to space; other perimeter players need to move to create a pass pass. The interior players may seal for a post up. When running drills do players continue to play or do they stop once the initiate action is complete. You as the coach must constantly teach the players to be think 'what is next'.

With no shot clock or even a long shot clock coaches and therefore players, often used the word "set it up" as the solution for what was behind the play. Run a play if it does not work run another play. Now that we are using the short clock, this does not. Players need to have the ability to continue to attack and probe the defence when the initial action is defended. Also, we want to ensure that the weaker players do not position themselves in spots that will limit the effectiveness of the team. Too often, a non-shooter will go and stand in a place where his/her defender can stymie the offence. Another player will creep in towards the key, which allows the defence to guard the front of the rim or have short help and recovery.

It is so important that the offence can maintain appropriate spacing throughout the entire shot clock. This very action gives the team the ability to have something behind the play at anytime.

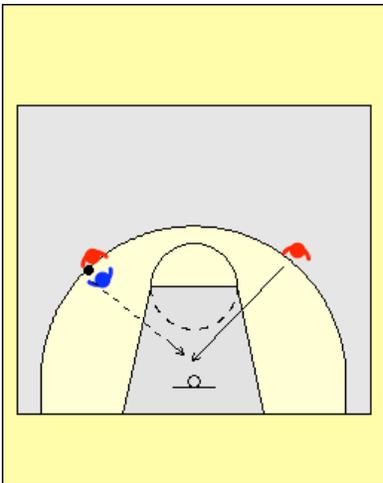
What I want to show are some three player toss drills. These drills assist player in developing the habits that are central to what is behind the play. Do players instantly recognize those brief moments in time when windows of opportunity appear. Also, when the initial attack fails do they maintain their spacing and continue to play.

I want to thank Rick Torbett for sharing many of his ideas with me on my recent trip to Nova Scotia. We spent a good part of a Sunday night moving salt and pepper shakers around at one of my favourite spots, the Chickenburger in Bedford, Nova Scotia. Also, Nathan Schellenberg from Saskatchewan helped me develop the post version of these drills.



Toss and attack the open basket

The players line up three in a row facing out from the basket. The first player in the line has a ball. The first two players are on offence the last player is a defender. The first player tosses the ball out to one of the five perimeter spots; outside the three-point line, (you can have other spots if you wish). The second offensive player runs to a complementary space. The defender can guard either the ball or the player without the ball.

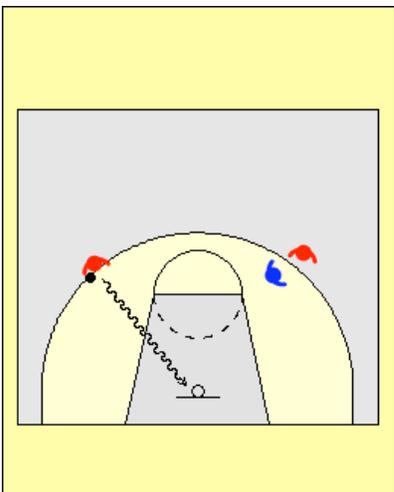


Guard the ball handler

The player without the ball must instantaneously recognize the open basket and make a basket cut. The passer must deliver the ball vs. extreme ball pressure.

Great players see the future. This happens because they learn to predict what might happen. This is accomplished by sneaking a peek before the pivot. The defender puts extreme pressure on the ball. Can you still make the pass?

Be sure to toss to different positions. It is the randomness that aids in the learning.



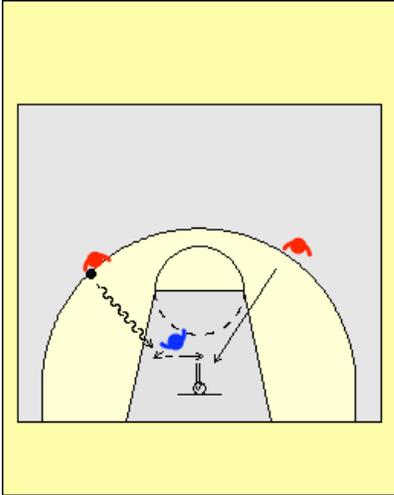
Guard the player without the ball.

The player with the ball recognizes the basket is open and attacks with **ONE** (two with younger players) dribble for the score. Remember to sneak a peek.

In both drills the defender can recover back to challenge the player trying to score.

Be sure that the players mix up the spots that are filled. This creates different angles and passes.

These two drills are very important for younger players to master.

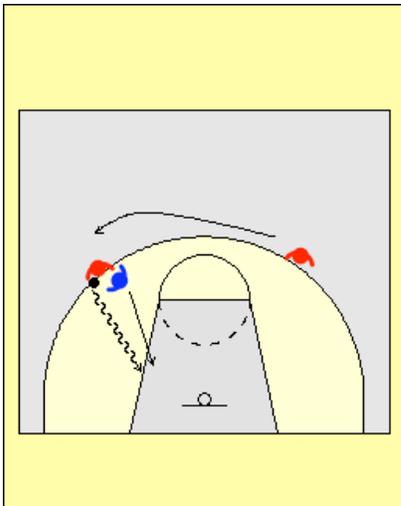


Toss to small space 2-1

The drill is initiated the same as the previous drill. This time the defender guards the basket. The ball handler recognizes the situation and attacks the basket through the baseline shoulder of the defender. The other player attacks the basket through the shoulder in the middle of the floor. The ball handler reads the defender's chest. No chest, score the ball, a chest appears, pass the ball.

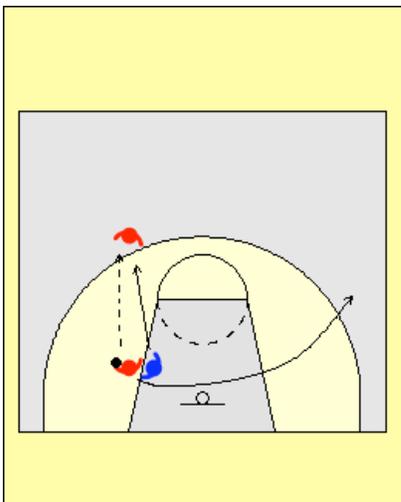
Load the drill

- Work from different spots
- The defender can do three things: guard the ball, guard the other player, guard the basket



Toss to penetration

The drill begins the same as previous. The defender guards the ball. The ball handler must sweep or rip the ball past the defender and drive the ball to the basket. For this drill, we assume that help stops the drive. The other offensive player is reading the dribble and uses circle action to fill the appropriate space. When dribbled away from, you are pulled. When dribbled at, you are pushed.



The pass is made to the rotating player. The defender closes out to guard the ball.

In most drills, the passer stands and watches. **What is behind the play?** The passer must exit cut encase the new ball handler cannot shoot.

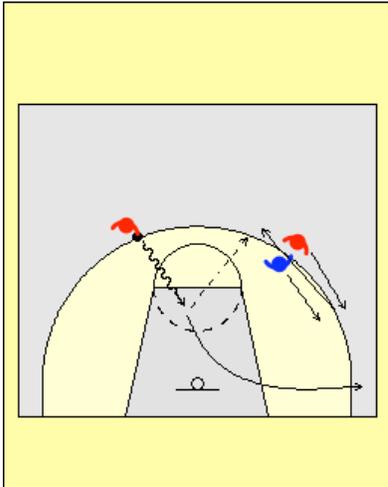
We prefer that the player does not fill back out where he/she came from. By continuing his/her cut a vacuum is often created where new penetration can occur.

The defence is trying to see how many penetration passes he/she can force. He/she will continue to close out on all passes.

Load the drill:

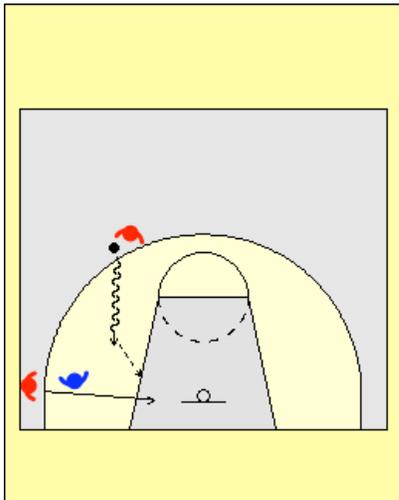
- Be sure to work on different spots.
- All passes must be made to someone outside the three-point line.

- No contested shots

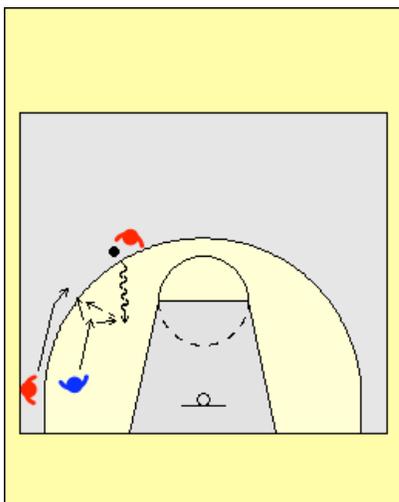


The next progression is to have the defender guard the player without the ball. The ball handler penetrates, but assumes he/she is stopped. Again, the player without the ball reads the dribble with circle action movement on the penetration. As the player is moving, he/she now reads his/her defender. If the player “hugs” or stays tight he/she can cut back into the open space. If the defender over runs a back cut may appear to the open basket.

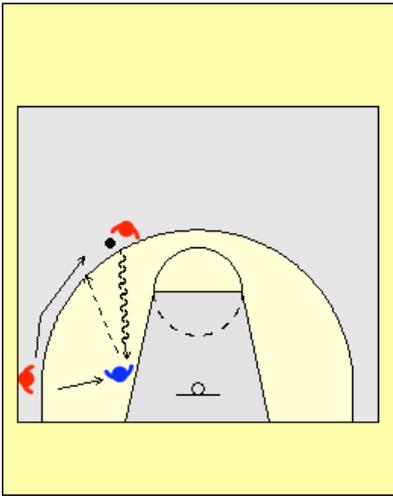
The penetrator is now working on making a good jump stop and a pivot. The pass does not always have to be fast off the dribble. The passer must exit to the three-point line to make sure there is something behind the play.



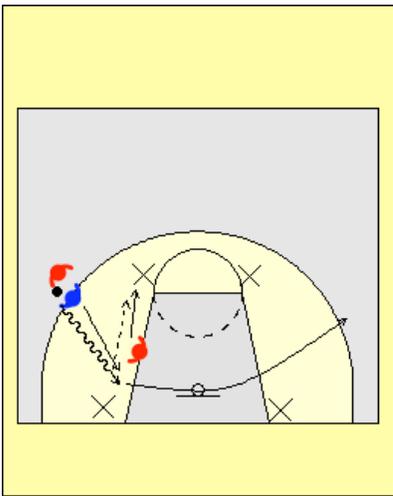
When the ball is penetrated at a corner player, we want the initiate reaction to be the back cut. You will often get an easy lay up as the defender is frozen looking at the ball.



When the offensive player runs behind the ball, it gives the defender a chance to reach for a steal and to steal the pass.

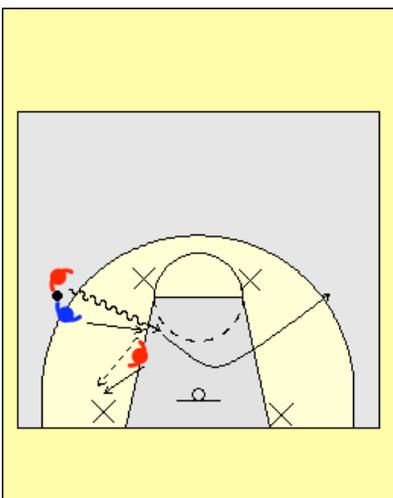


When the defender helps over in the line to the basket, the corner player can rotate behind. This is a more advanced read that should be introduced after the players master the circle action.



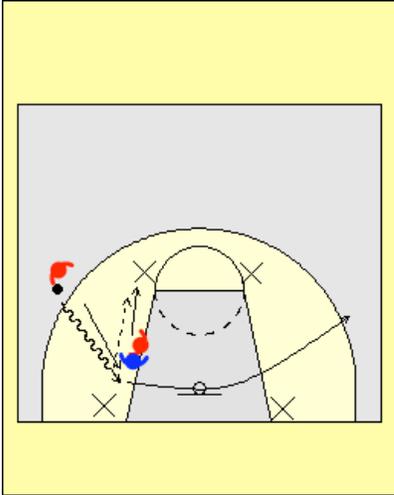
Penetration when a player is inside

Very often penetration occurs when a player is inside or close to the key. It could have been because of a cut or from being a post. The drill starts with the toss, but the second offensive player moves to a position closer to the basket. When the ball handler drives, the post must move. If the drive is below you move up the lane.



If the drive was above you move to the short corner. Again, once the pass is made the passer must exit cut. The defender can guard the post now.

I like to add the rule that the players cannot take a contested shot. It teaches them to find the open player. We will accept a contested shot late in the clock, but not early.

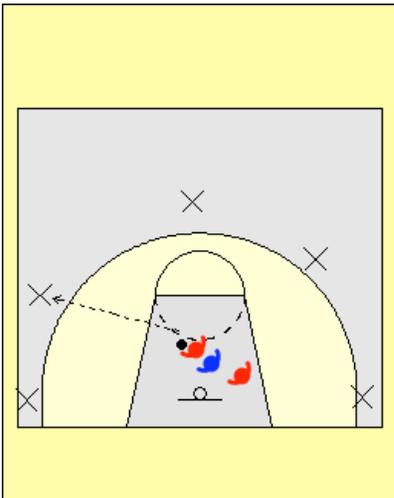


We now do the same drill, but the defender now guards the post. Remember that the rule is to read the ball first and your man second. On the penetration below the post he/she move up the lane. If the defender stayed, he/she may have the uncontested shot. If the defender stayed with him/her look for the back cut after first creating space. The offensive player must be careful not to pick up the ball on the baseline. We prefer a back dribble or continue out the other side.

It is very important to work all different spots for possible penetration and post positioning. This movements need to become habitual.

Don McCrae, the former coach at Waterloo and Senior Women's National Team coach gave me some of the best advice I ever heard. I asked him when should your players break out of a play and look to score. His answer was brilliant. As a perimeter player, you need to attack bad closeouts. If I am a shooter and defender does not get out to contest my shot shoot. If the player comes out and gives a drive to the basket, take it. When on the interior take a seal anytime you can at the front of the rim. This is not just for post players.

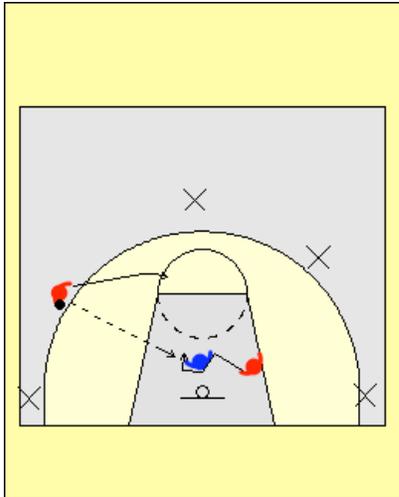
These drills are about looking for the small windows of opportunity that appear in a game. If recognized you can create easy scores. If the player is just looking to make the next pass in the set play these brief windows close.



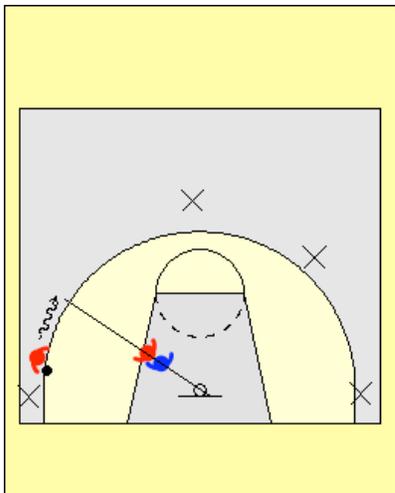
Sealing inside

We will use the same toss drill to start. Some of you may be asking why we just do not start in the static position with everyone already in position. Can't we save time? The randomness of the toss adds to the decision making of the players. Also, the FIBA game is about movement, players need to learn how to flow.

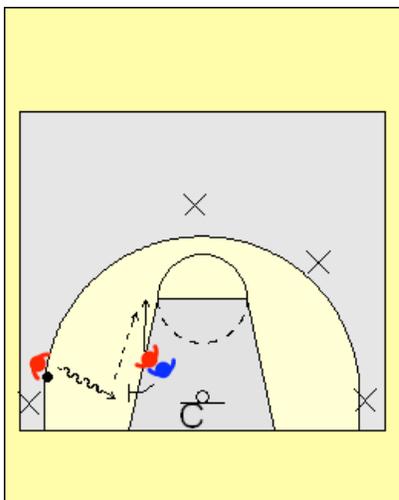
In this version the first player tosses the ball to the perimeter, the second player is a help defender and the third is the second offensive player.



The second offensive players now cuts and seals the defender. He/she is working on faking and using the outside inside footwork that I shared from the Ettore Messina clinic. The perimeter player is working on making the pass. Remember what is behind the play. After passing the player must cut.

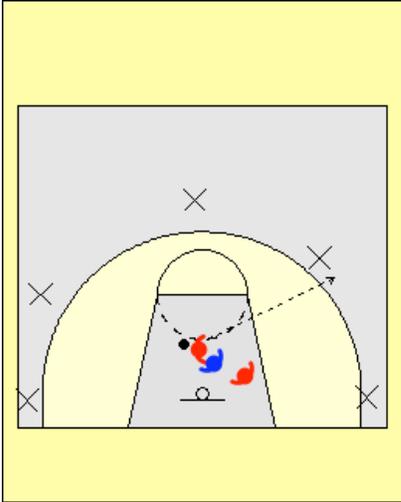


We also want to work on establishing the basket line. The perimeter player may have to dribble the ball to establish the straight line that is formed between the ball, the offensive player and the basket.

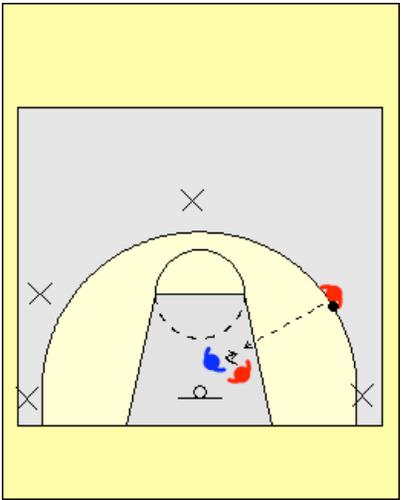


Another way to ensure that players are aware of what is behind the play is to have random drives at any moment. The coach is under the basket and gives a visual signal to the perimeter player to drive. This forces the perimeter player to be keeping his/her head up. The post must react with the appropriate movement to space.

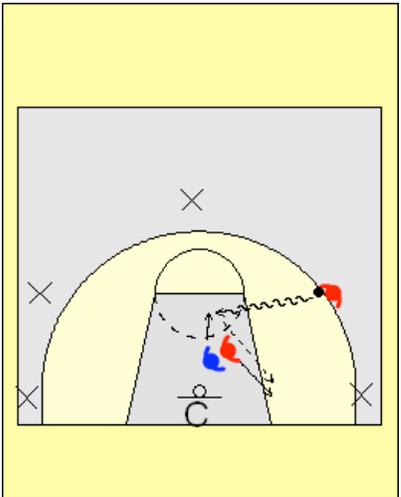
If the ball is tossed to the same side as the post a different sealing action is practiced.

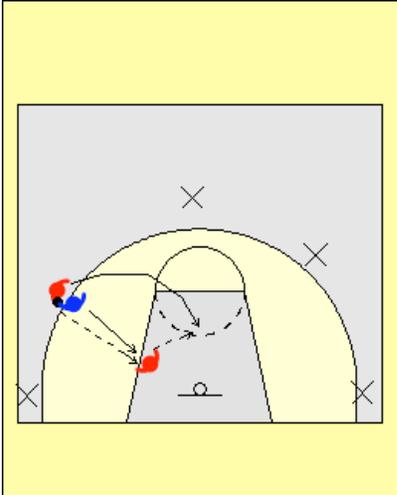


The post must step in and seal the defender trying to catch a piece of the paint.



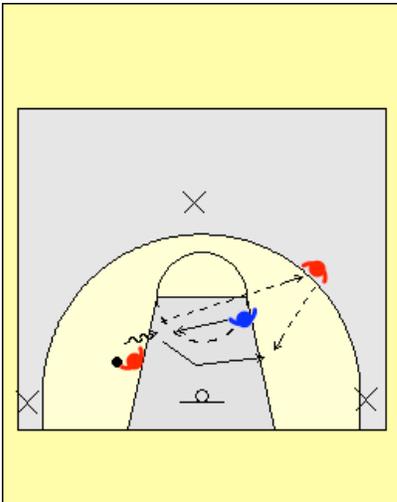
Again, the coach may signal for a random drive. Here the drive is above the post so he/she moves to the short corner.



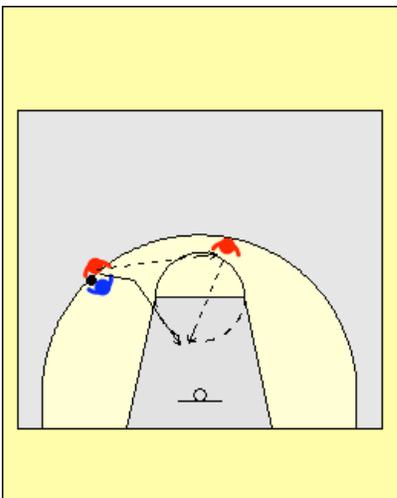


Guard the perimeter

Now we work on guarding the perimeter player off the toss. He must establish the basket line and deliver a good pass. What is behind the play? The perimeter player must cut reading the reaction of his/her check.



Some times the player will cut and space away. The post starts to dribble. The defender comes to double, make the pass. What is behind the play? Continue to cut and repost. Also, the coach could call for a random drive.



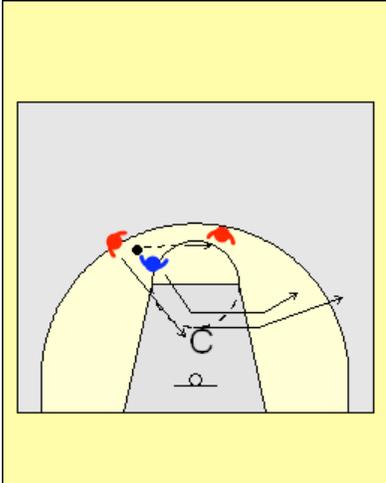
Toss pass and cut with defensive pressure on cutter

The drill begins with the same tossing action. The defender guards the player with the ball. The second player cannot cut to the open basket. The player with the ball passes the ball to the second player and must make a basket cut;

- face cut in front of defender
- back cut behind the defender

We want the pass at the back heel of the defender. This ensures an early catch. The passer is working on passing to space and leading the player to the basket.

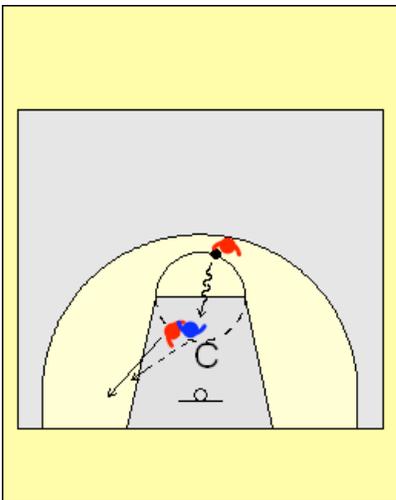
The defender is working on putting pressure on the ball, jumping to the ball and defending the give and go.



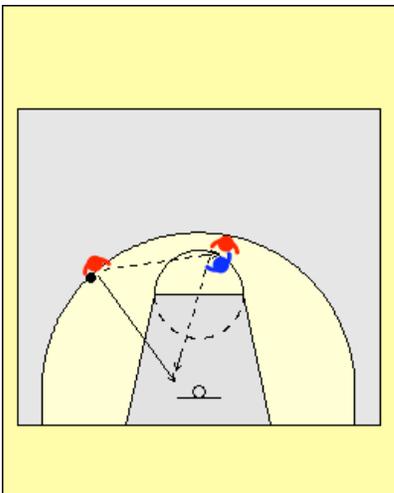
What is behind the play?

The coach steps into the key. The passer must read that help defence is their and the pass cannot be made. The cutter realizes this also and exit cuts to the perimeter.

The key is that the players continue to execute even though an option is taken away.



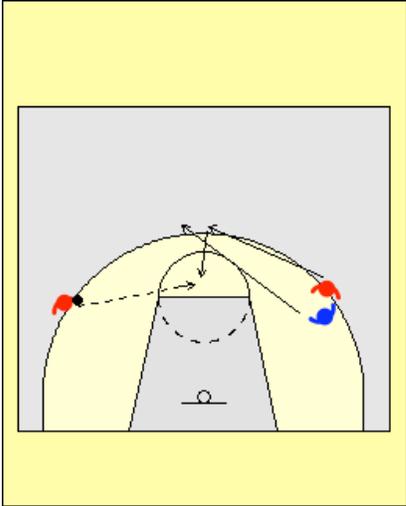
Another option is that the coach can signal for a drive. The cutting player must now act as post player. In these instances he/she slides to the short corner.



Toss pass and cut with defensive pressure on passer

Now the defender guards the pass receiver. The ball handler passes the ball and cuts to the basket. The second player must make the pass vs. pressure.

As with the other drills load in other decisions that, force the players to play behind the play.



Toss to cut

In this drill the second offensive player must leave one open space between him/her self and the ball. The player now cuts to fill the open space. Read you defender.