



BASIC FAST BREAK AND EARLY OFFENSE



**PROVEN DRILLS AND PLAYS FOR
SCORING IN TRANSITION**

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Introduction

With every passing year it seems that pushing the tempo becomes more and more popular. After the revolution lead by Mike D'Antoni and Don Nelson in the mid-2000's, it seems teams at every level are trying to get out and run the ball as much as possible.

And yes, there is no doubt that it makes it easier to outrun teams when you have the edge in athleticism, the real edge will come on the practice court. The fastest player in the world still can't dribble down the court faster than you can pass it.

It doesn't matter if you hustle back on defense – only to forget to communicate with your teammates, leaving occupying space as little more than five active pylons than a true defense. And really, more so than running fast or jumping high, conditioning is what enables a team to run the fast break at it's best, and the only thing that keeps a player from being in good shape is hard work.

Transition basketball may look simple and easy – but it's not. If anything, it might be more complicated than running your offense in the halfcourt, as you are making just as many reads and decisions, just at a quicker pace.

In this playbook, you'll have the chance to check out drills that will help you build up the skills and conditioning needed, as well as several plays to use in early offense situations, allowing you to take advantage before the defense gets a chance to setup.

Beating the Trail – 5 on 3 + 2 Drill

Purpose

To teach players on offense how to make quick decisions on the break, and to teach players on defense how to help and recover down a man.

Setup

There will be five players on offense and five players on defense, with the offensive players spread out, 1-5 along the baseline, and the defensive players lined up in the same order but out at the foul line extended, facing their matchups. A coach will stand at the elbow with a basketball, out of the way of any of the players.

Execution

The drill will begin with the coach passing the ball to one of the five offensive players, after which he will immediately call out the number of one of the defensive players. After receiving the pass, the offensive players will push the ball down the court as fast as they can. The defensive player whose man received the pass and the defensive player whose number was called out will sprint to the baseline in front of them, touch it with their hand, and sprint back on defense and help the other three players on their team try to get a stop.

Once the defense has gotten two consecutive stops, they rotate to offense with a new five coming in on defense.

Coaching Tips

It is absolutely vital that the defense not only hustle so that they minimize the amount of time they are forced to play at a disadvantage, but also that they communicate effectively. The two most vital aspects of transition defense must be taken care of first, at which point everyone else can matchup accordingly. The first man back needs to protect the rim, yelling out 'I got paint!'. The man closest to the ball in transition needs to yell out 'I got ball!'. The rest of the defense should also call out their matchups, but only once the rim and ball have been accounted for.

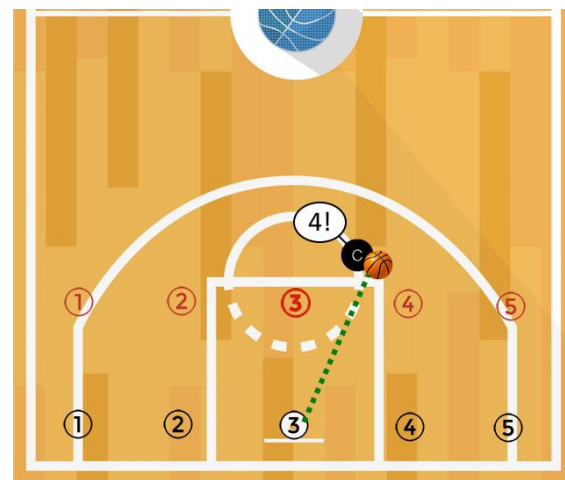


Figure 1: Beating the Trail Drill Pt. 1

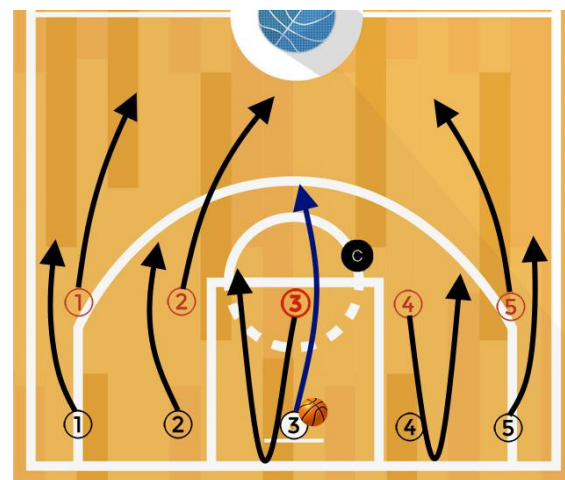


Figure 2: Beating the Trail Drill Pt. 2

Push the Break Drill

Purpose

To allow players to work on speed dribbling in transition, up manning the pass and finishing on the break, all with a little conditioning element.

Setup

The players will form two lines – one at about the free throw line for guards, and another down at the opposite end underneath the hoop for the bigs. There will also be a third player on the right wing on the end of the court with the guard line.

Execution

The drill will begin with the player at the front of the guard line throwing the ball off the back board, grabbing the rebound and immediately hitting the wing player with an outlet pass. The wing player will speed dribble down the court, getting down to the other three point line, at which point he'll hit the post player with an entry pass. The post player will make a move, score, collect the rebound, and pass it back out to the wing player, who will have circled around to the opposite wing. The wing player will again speed dribble, this time all the way down the court, finishing with a layup.

The drill will then continue – the player who made the outlet pass will have slid out to the wing player's position, and the next player in the guard line will grab the rebound and make an outlet pass, continuing the cycle.

The post players will swap out after each layup.

Coaching Tips

Make sure to switch the players around, giving them a chance to work on different roles, especially the younger kids, as you never know how tall or short kids will end up, and it's best for them in the long run to have a solid understanding of the entire game regardless of what position they end up playing down the road.

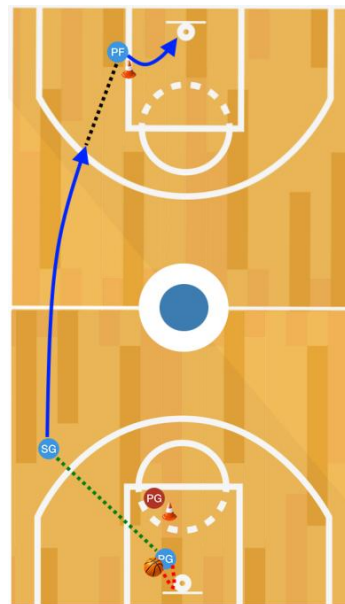


Figure 1: Push the Break Drill Pt. 1

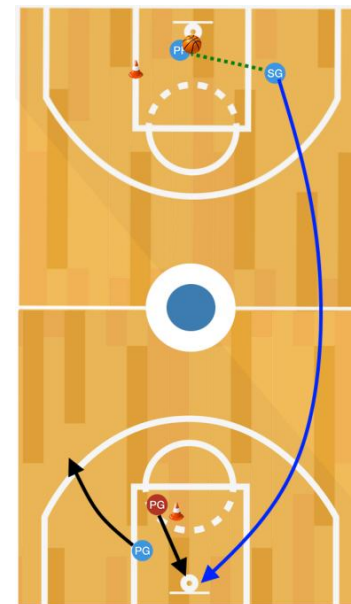


Figure 2: Push the Break Drill Pt. 2

Early Offense Series

Purpose

This is a drill designed to give players a chance to practice their transition offense in a game-like situation. While there's no defense, taking the ball out of the hoop as quickly as possible and getting down to the other end to run one of their transition sets is great practice for the players, as well as being enjoyable and an excellent conditioner to boot.

Setup

To begin the point guard will shoot a free throw, with the center and power forward down on the block to rebound and the wings out behind the three point arc.

Execution

The point guard will shoot the free throw, with the bigs collecting the rebound, make or miss, and getting an inbound pass in to the point guard as soon as possible. The wings and the big who doesn't secure the rebound will immediately sprint down the floor. The point guard will push the ball up, and get into the first play of the series.

Generally, you want to run about five plays a series – getting each player a shot, then getting the next group out and on the court as soon as possible.

Coaching Tips

You can keep the plays as simple or complex as you like. At the beginning, you can just run a fast break – go 1-5, each getting a pass from the point guard and finishing with a lay-up before running down the floor one more time. You can also run the same play five times, exploring each of the options available. This is a flexible drill, and offers a chance to work on any number of calls in your early offense.

Lastly, don't forget to let players switch positions. Any position a player might end up playing in game is a position that player should be getting enough practice time to be comfortable with any calls you make from the bench.

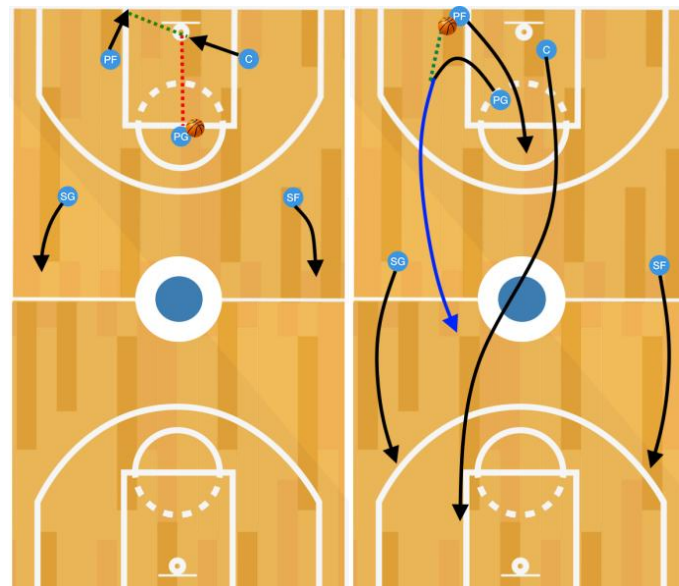


Figure 1: Early Offense Series Pt. 1

Figure 2: Early Offense Series Pt. 2

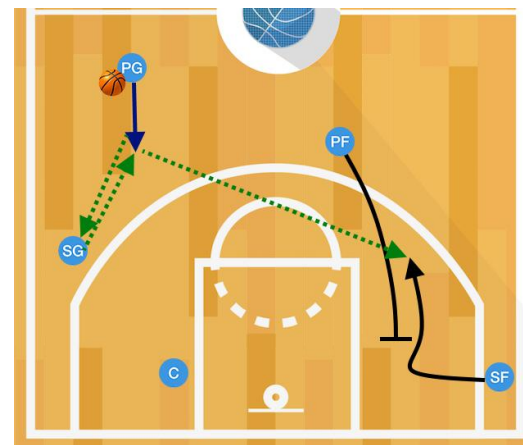


Figure 3: Early Offense Series Pt. 3 – Weak Side Pindown Screen

Early Offense – Weak Side Pindown Screen

Setup

The play will begin with the center down on the right block, the shooting guard on the right wing, the small forward in the left corner, and the power forward up at the top of the arc, where the left free throw lane line would intersect with the three point line. The point guard will bring the ball over on the right side of the court.

Execution

The play will begin with the point guard dribbling the ball into the halfcourt and making a pass to the shooting guard. As this first pass is being made, the power forward will sprint down to set a pindown screen for the small forward just above the left block.

Upon receiving the pass from the point guard, the shooting guard will pass the ball directly back to him. The small forward will misdirect his defender and use the screen curling up top ready to receive the pass from the point guard for a catch and shoot opportunity.

Options

On this quick transition play, there is only really one option – hitting the small forward for the open jumper. If the defense over commits however, the point guard should be ready to hit the power forward slipping to the hoop after the screen.

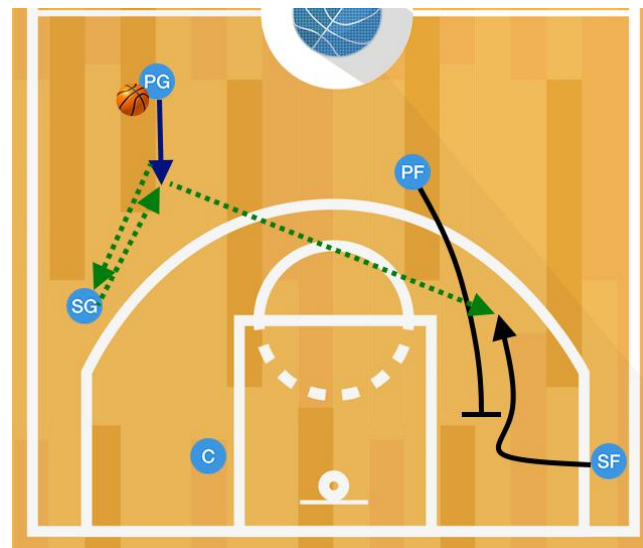


Figure 1: Weak Side Pindown Screen

Early Offense – Baseline Stagger Screen

Setup

The small forward and shooting guard will be down in the left and right corners, respectively. The center will start in the middle of the paint, and the power forward will be at the top of the arc, just offset to the right side. The point guard will bring the ball over on the left side of the court.

Execution

The play will begin with the point guard hitting the power forward with a quick pass just as he crosses halfcourt, who will pass the ball right back to him as he approaches the three point line.

When this first pass is made, both the center and small forward will run over to set staggered screens for the shooting guard – the center setting his just outside the left block, and the small forward right underneath the hoop. The shooting guard will use both screens, sprint out and around to the free throw line extended on the arc looking to receive the pass from the point guard.

Options

The first and only option really on this play is the small forward receiving the wing pass for the catch and shoot. If the defense over helps on the catch and shoot, that will usually mean that the small forward's man is helping on the perimeter, meaning he might be available for a duck in under the hoop for the easy layup.

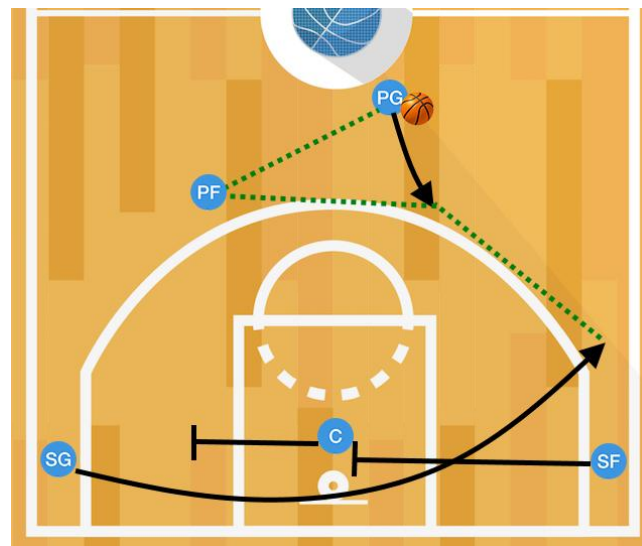


Figure 1: Baseline Stagger Screen

Early Offense – Double Ball Screen

Setup

This play will begin with the shooting guard down in the right corner, the center on the left block, the small forward on the left wing, and the power forward at the top of the arc, shaded over to the left side. The point guard will bring the ball over half court on the right.

Execution

To start, the small forward will begin to sprint up to the top of the arc, so that both he and the power forward can set a double ball screen for the point guard. The power forward will be first in line, with the small forward behind him.

The point guard will come off the edge of the second ball screen looking to get into the paint. The power forward will roll to the hoop after setting his screen, while the small forward pops out at the top of the arc.

The center will space out to the short corner, and the shooting guard will rise up to the right wing.

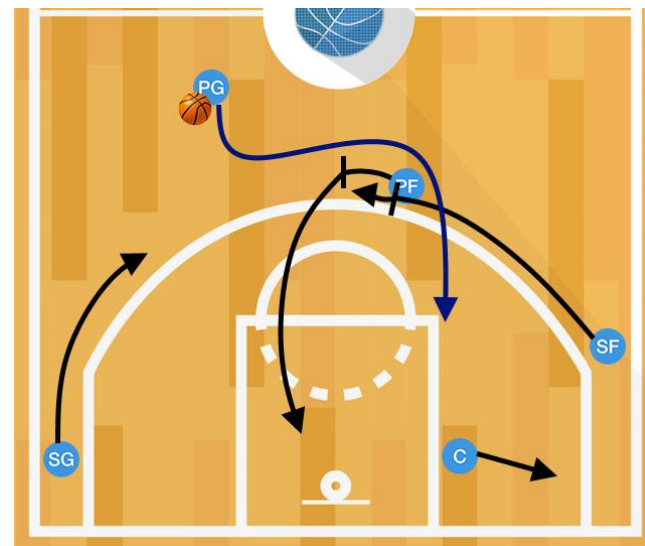


Figure 1: Double Ball Screen

Options

There are a multitude of options available on this play, all to be sifted through by the point guard. The first option is creating his own shot off the pick and roll – he needs to attack the hoop of the second screen to force the defense to collapse in and open up the other players.

He should look first to hit either the power forward rolling to the hoop, and if that isn't there, the small forward popping out to the three point line. If all of these options are covered, he should look to see where the extra help is coming from – likely the shooting guard's man on the weak side corner, leaving him an opportunity for an open three pointer if the point guard can see and make the pass.

Early Offense – Handoff to Ball Screen

Setup

This next play will begin with the shooting guard down and small forward down in the right and left corners, respectively. The center will start down on the left block, and the power forward will line up at the top of the arc. The point guard will bring the ball over the half on the right side of the court.

Execution

The play will begin with the point guard dribbling hard down to the right wing as the shooting guard sprints up to meet him. At the same time, the power forward will begin to move over to the right lane line extended. The shooting guard will take the handoff from the point guard, maintaining his speed, and go right into the ball screen from the power forward. He will attack the paint while the power forward rolls hard to the hoop.

Options

Your first option on this play is the shooting guard attacking off of the pick. He should look to create his own shot or at least penetrate deep enough to force the defense to react, at which point he can look to hit his roll man for the easy lay-up.

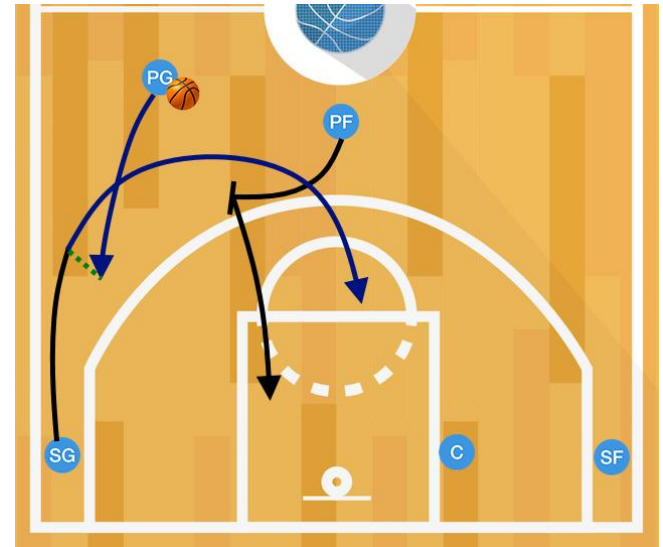


Figure 1: Handoff to Ball Screen

Early Offense – Backdoor to Ballscreen

Setup

Here we'll start with the center in the middle of the paint and the power forward at the top of the arc, lined up where the three point line and right lane line extended would intersect. The shooting guard will setup down in the right corner, and the small forward will take the same spot over in the left corner. Lastly, the point guard will bring the ball over on the left side of the arc.

Execution

The play will begin with the point guard misdirecting, dribbling away from the power forward. As soon as this happens, the center will sprint out of the paint to set a back screen for the power forward. The center will then continue to the top of the arc, at which point he will set a ball screen for the point guard. Once the ball screen has been set and the point guard has begun to attack, the small forward will space up to the wing, allowing the power forward to slide over into the short corner on the weak side.

Options

The first look on this play is the power forward on the backdoor cut. This is why the point guard needs to dribble over to the left side – to allow himself a better passing angle. If that isn't there, he will use the center's pick, looking to create a shot for himself, hit the center rolling to the hoop, or kick out to one of the wings spotting up around the arc.

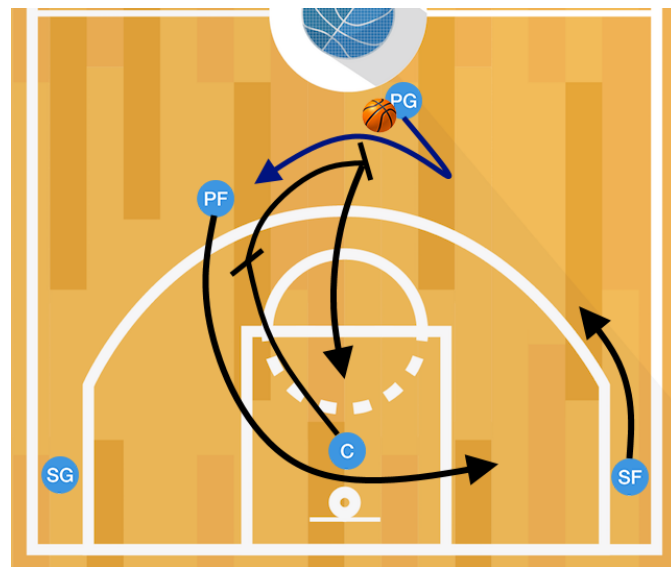


Figure 1: PF Backdoor to Pick and Roll Action

Early Offense – Quick 3

Setup

For this next play the point guard will dribble over on the right side of the court, with the shooting guard and small forward lined up on the right and left wings, respectively. The center will start on the left block, and the power forward will start up at the top of the arc, offset to the left side.

Execution

The play will begin with the point guard making a pass to the shooting guard on the wing. As this pass is being made, the center will step out to set a back screen for the small forward, who will come down around the baseline to use it.

The point guard and power forward will come down to the middle of the free throw line and set an elevator screen – allowing their teammate to run up and through before closing the door on his defender. The shooting guard will hit the small forward as he comes up and through the elevator, spotting up at the top of the arc.

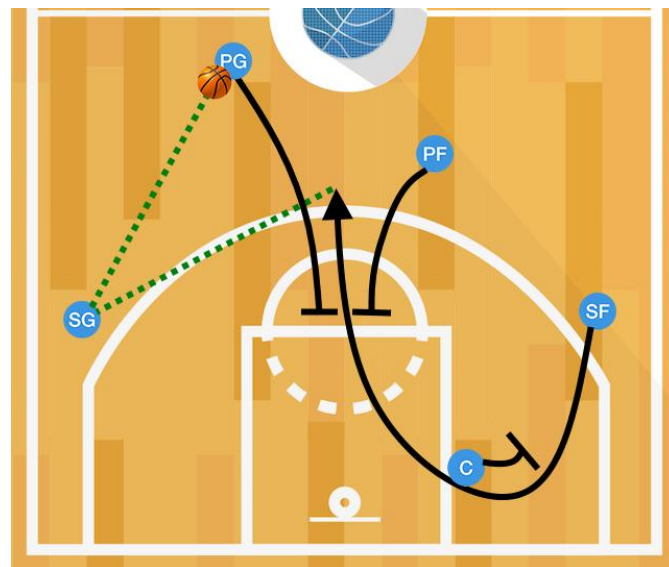


Figure 1: Quick 3

Options

This play is designed to get you a quick look, often best used at the end of a quarter or if you've got a hot shooter who you want to get a good look. As such, there is only one option – the small forward at the top of the arc for the catch and shoot opportunity.

Early Offense – Dummy Ball Screen

Setup

To begin, the point guard will come over on the right side of the court, with the power forward up at the top of the arc in the trail spot. The shooting guard will line up on the right wing, and the small forward over on the left wing. The center will start down on the left block.

Execution

The point guard will begin this play by dribbling towards the power forward. The idea is to trick the defense into thinking the pick and roll is being run to the left side, then very quickly running a pick and roll to the right side.

The power forward will step up – then slide over to the right side without making any illegal contact with the defenders. As soon as the point guard has dribbled past him to the left side of the court, the power forward will turn around and set a real ball screen. This will queue the rest of the player movement, with the shooting guard sprinting along the baseline to fill over in the far corner.

At this point, the point guard will crossover, attacking wide off the edge. The small forward will slide to the top of the arc, and the center will space to the weak elbow, providing ample room for the point guard driving and the power forward rolling to the hoop on the ball side.

Options

The point guard should look first to penetrate as far as he can, and next to hit his power forward rolling to the hoop. If that isn't available he can look to kick to the small forward, shooting guard, or center, who should all be ready to catch and shoot from their respective positions should the defense collapse.

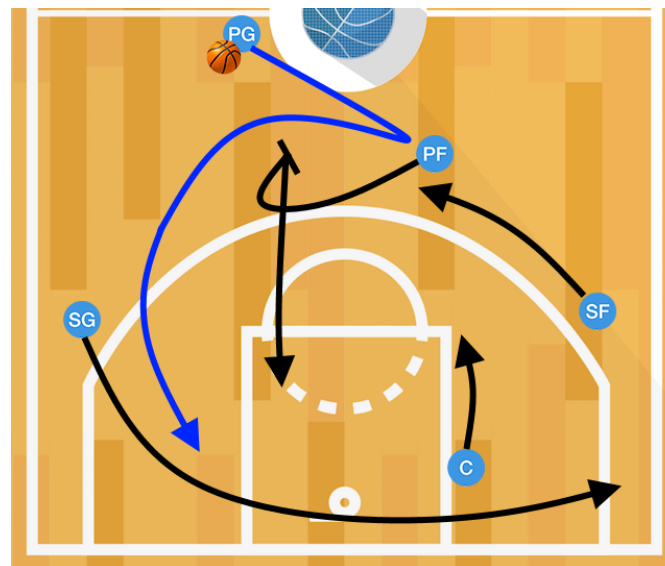


Figure 1: Dummy Ball Screen

Early Offense – Quick Postup

Setup

For this next play we'll have one big down low – the center, underneath the hoop – and one up top – the power forward up at the top of the arc, offset to the left lane line. The shooting guard will take his spot on the right wing, with the small forward taking his on the left wing. The point guard will dribble over on the right side of the court to initiate the play.

Execution

The play will begin with the point guard zipping a pass over to the shooting guard and then sprinting over to spot up on the weak side of the arc, bumping the small forward down to the corner.

The center will come up to set a back screen on the power forward, who will then use it to establish deep position on the right block, at which point the shooting guard will feed him the ball. The center will position himself in the high post, ready receive a kickout or re-post the power forward should he need it.

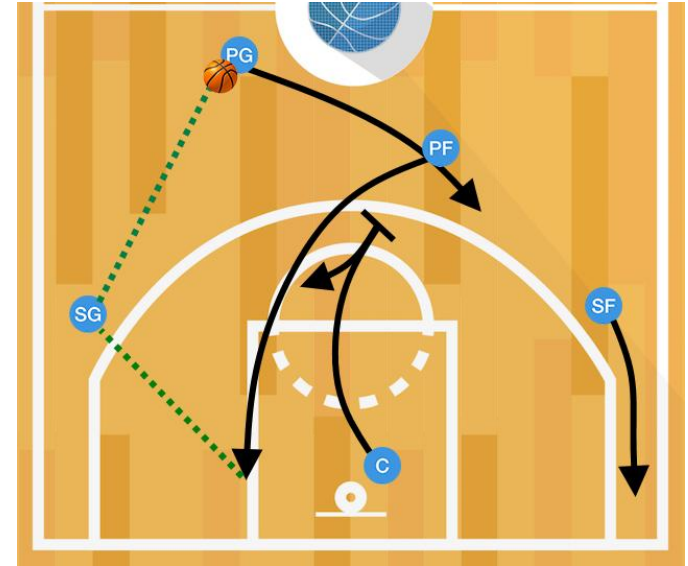


Figure 1: Quick Postup

Options

The power forward post up is our first and only option on this play. If the shooting guard can hit him in stride on the backdoor for a lay-up that's great, but our main goal here is allowing him a chance to get deep post position without having to battle his man for the entire possession leading up to it. If the defense over helps or is able to fight through the screen too easily, we can still get him on the post up by passing the ball to the center and allowing him to make a high-low entry pass.

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