



## **THREE OF A KIND**

### **Course 01: Coach Ettore Messina**

#### **Lesson 03: Passing Lanes**

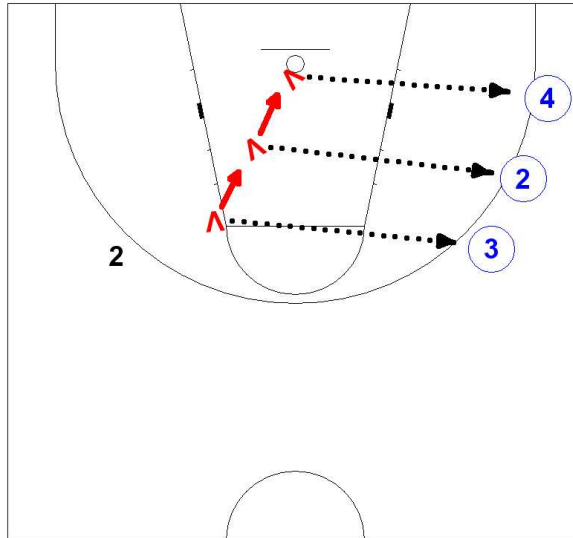
**Language: English**

### **INDIVIDUAL DEFENSE: PASSING LANES**

We have seen in the previous lesson that the first rule when defending an opponent who is not in possession of the ball is to be in a position between your opponent and the ball, preventing an easy pass.

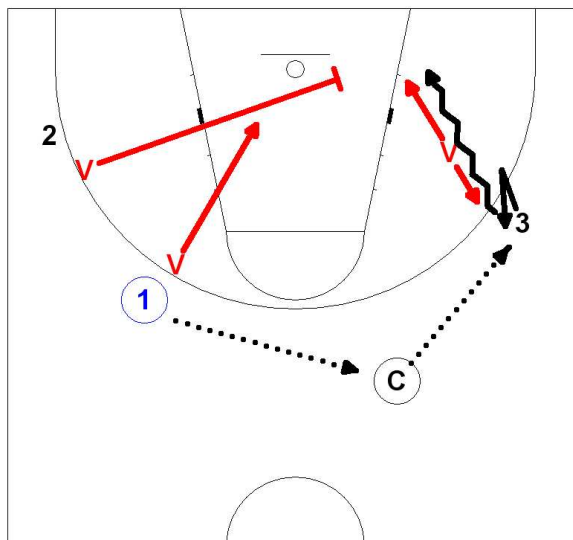
The second (and last) rule states that when the ball is below the free throw line extended, the help side defenders must drop their position so that they are line with the ball, using a line parallel to the baseline as their reference (**diagram 1**).

LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 01



A game situation of this concept can be found in the last drill from the previous lesson (**diagrams 13-15, Lesson 02**) as well as here in **diagram 2**.

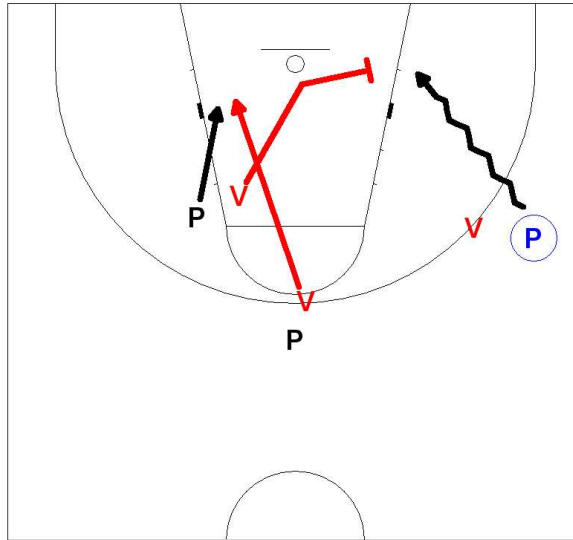
LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 02



As soon as the player on the right side starts his penetration towards the basket, the defender of the offensive player in the corner will try to help his teammate, whilst the defender at the opposite wing will drop so that he is in line with the ball. It is easy to understand that applying the "ball-line" rule, the help side defenders will gain the necessary confidence to make the defensive rotations and complete the play.

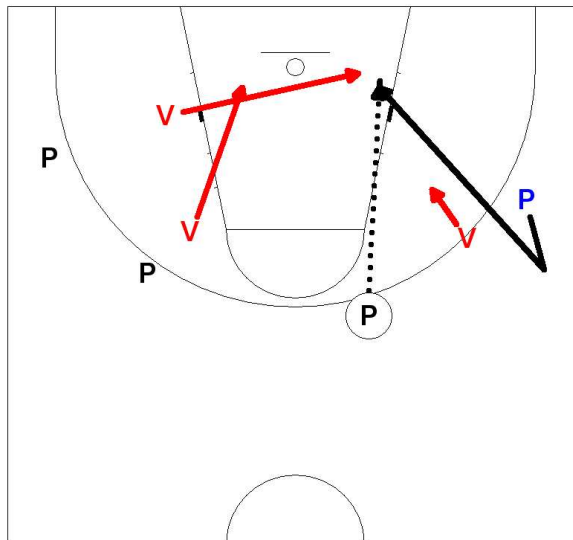
As can be seen in **diagram 3**, when there is an offensive player in the low post and one on the wing at the time that the dribble penetration occurs on the right side of the court, if both help defenders drop to the line of the ball they are ready to help and rotate, eventually but only for a split second leaving the opponent furthest away from the ball open.

LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 03

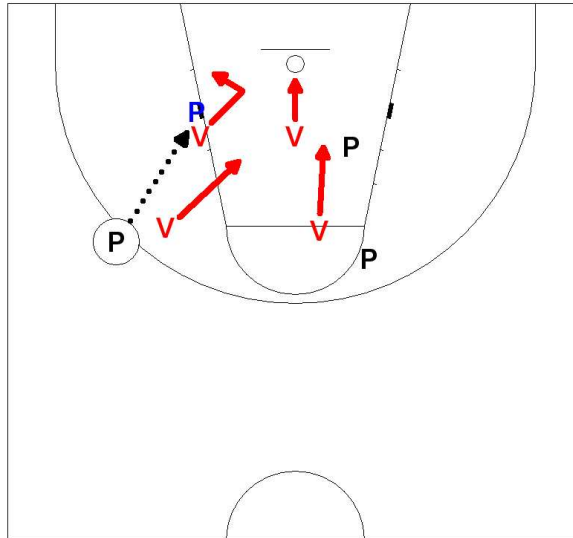


The "ball-line" rule must be applied not only on dribble penetration but also if the ball has been passed towards the basket following a backdoor cut (**diagram 4**) or the ball is fed into the low post (**diagram 5**).

LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 04



LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 05



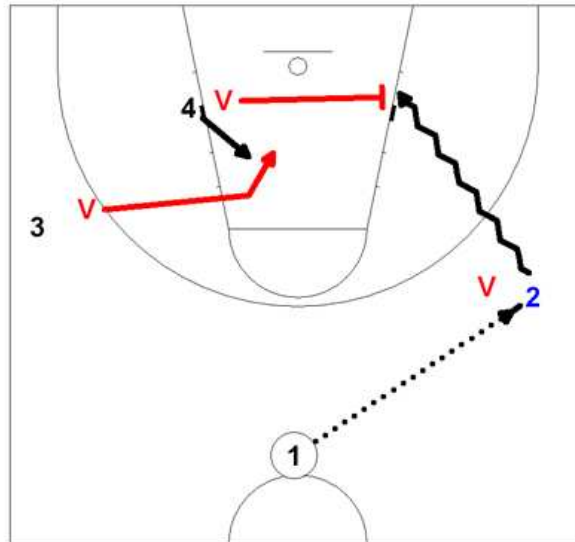
The "ball-line" is therefore a "tendency" to be followed by the off ball defenders, and for the coach an instructional or didactic argument to simplify the many defensive rotation situations that can be found in a game situation. With this concept it enables us to present the overall intention whilst at the same time be specific regarding the rotations that are necessary to strengthen our defense. At a later stage we will look in more depth and detail individually at specific cases that we believe important for our team.

Taking our two fundamental rules, we can simplify our job of correcting errors during practices and games: controlling the position of our players is simplified following these two guidelines, and it allows our players to understand quickly and clearly should the defense breakdown.

Once our players are familiar with the idea of dropping to the "ball-line", and stepping away from their direct opponent, it is possible to introduce more details into their rotations.

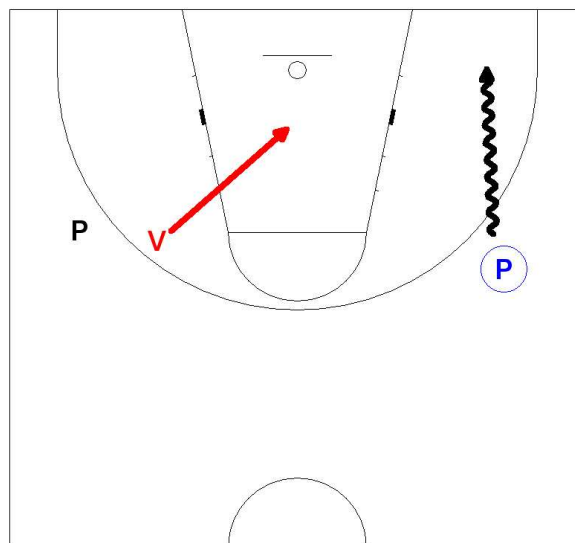
Firstly it is necessary to explain that if a defender helps towards the ball and in doing so enters the restricted area, he will more than likely be defending a large player, and as a result should make a diagonal movement towards the ball (**diagram 6**). It is predictable that when the offensive player with the ball dribble penetrates along the baseline, his low post teammate will try to gain position in the middle of the restricted area to receive a pass or grab the offensive rebound. The help side wing defender will have to "climb" diagonally, trying to get in front of the center to prevent his receiving a pass or to block him out and grab the rebound. This way the player furthest away from the ball will be free, although it will be very difficult for him to position himself within the field of view of his teammate penetrating towards the basket, who at the time will be defended by two-three players.

LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 06



In some situations, the help side defender whose direct opponent is a dangerous shooter must move closer towards the ball without losing sight of his opponent. As can be seen in **diagram 7**, at this time it is necessary to combine our two fundamental rules, dropping towards the ball-line but at the same time staying in the passing lane, this way forcing his opponent to move in order to eventually get open and receive a pass.

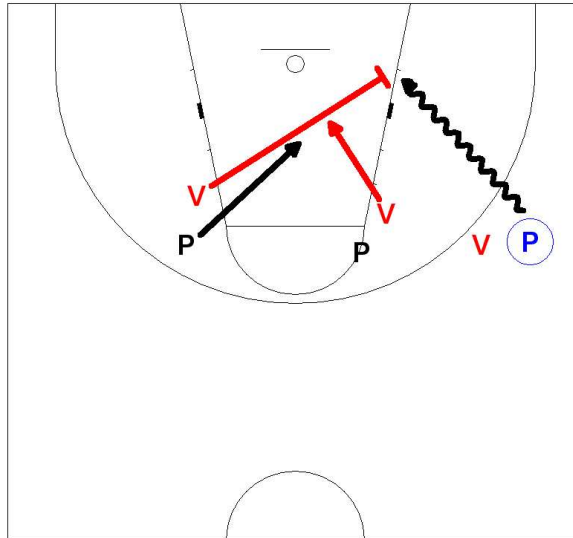
LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 07



When applying our two fundamental defensive concepts, the job performed by any player defending the high post and the teamwork between the two defenders should our opponents play with two players inside requires special attention.

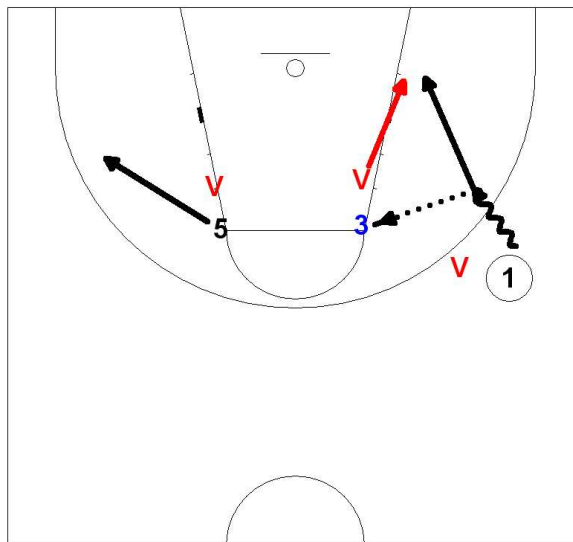
In **diagram 8** there is a lateral dribble penetration from the wing which is stopped by help defense from the help side high spot defender and not the nearest defender. This way it is possible to maintain a strong defense on the ball side high post until the ball reaches the restricted area.

LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 08



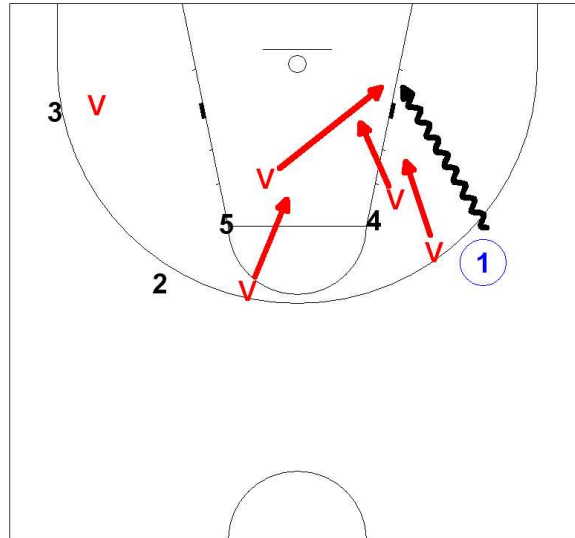
If the ball side high post defender were to help earlier, the player dribble penetrating would be able to pass to the ball side high post with devastating effects for our defense as from this position it is possible to shoot or also have numerous passing lanes available (**diagram 9**).

LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 09



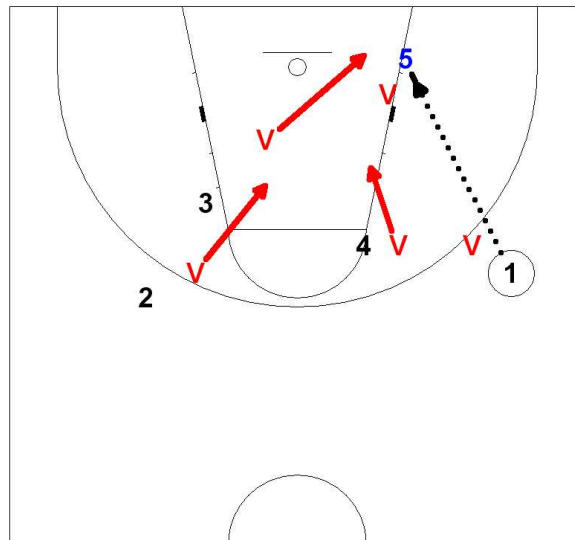
The most symbolic situation with help coming from the help side is illustrated in **diagram 10**, where we can see how once again dribble penetration and the subsequent rotations leave the offensive player who is furthest away from the ball open. An identical situation would occur with help defense coming from the help side if the ball were to be passed into the low post.

LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 10



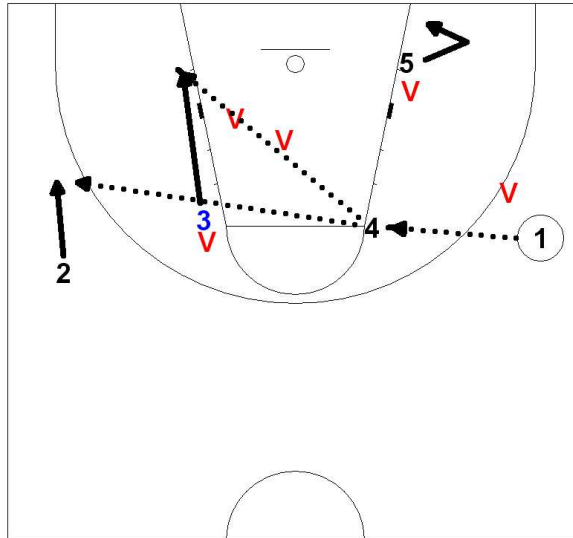
In **diagram 11** it is possible to see that whilst the ball is in the air heading towards the low post (for example an outside player has gained position), the help side high post defender moves to try and intercept the pass.

LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 11



If the help were to come from the ball side high post defender, it is obvious (**diagram 12**) that many more passing lanes would be available, with a devastating effect for our defense. In this situation it is also vital that should there be penetration (dribble or pass) into the heart of the restricted area, the passing lanes from the high post are not left open, even if this means that the opponent furthest away from the ball is left open for a moment.

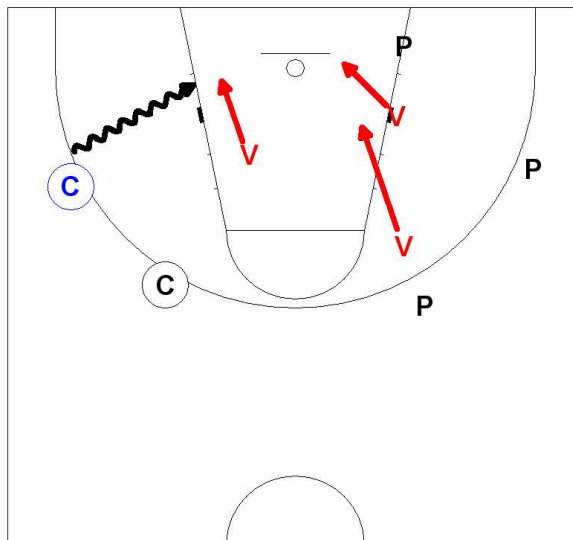
LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 12



Teaching players to move according to the concepts that we have explained is not very difficult: it is more difficult to teach them to extend and become more aggressive once the breakdown (penetration) has been successfully dealt with. "Normal" defenses are characterized by good help which allows a defense to cut off penetration: excellent defenses are those which once the penetration has been stopped are capable of extending and once again being aggressive and in the passing lanes.

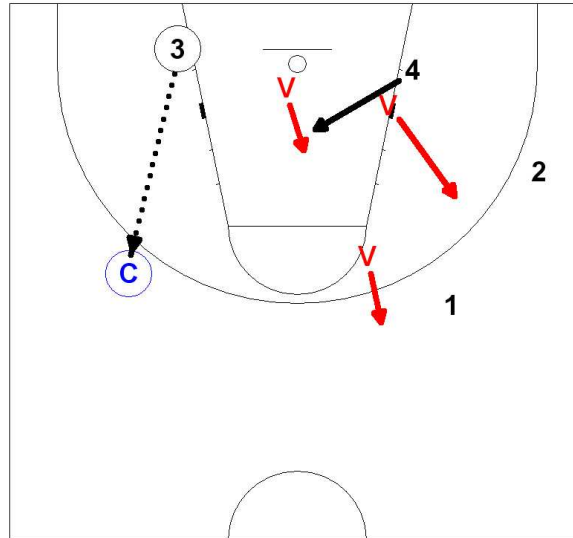
A very efficient drill is illustrated in **diagrams 13 & 14**. Three offensive players with defenders are on the opposite side of the court to two players (or two coaches). A dribble penetration takes place, with the help side defenders rotating. After the dribble penetration is stopped the ball is passed back out, and the three defenders must recover their positions with their respective opponent, preventing any passes and therefore a rapid ball reversal.

LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 13





LESSON 03  
PASSING LINE  
DIAGRAM 14



We can say that in order to have a great defense, we must respect the principles of defending in the passing lanes and dropping to the ball-line not only when collapsing on a penetration towards the basket, but also when the ball is kicked back out, allowing us to recover more aggressiveness towards our opponents and the ball.

**REMEMBER**

- When the ball penetrates towards the baseline the help side defenders must drop to the ball-line
- The movement that takes players towards the ball-line must be diagonal to avoid being cut pinned behind an opponent
- The correct off ball defensive position should be found applying our two fundamental rules: "being between our opponent and the ball" and "being as close to the ball-line as possible."
- A good defense should know how to collapse on an opponent, a great defense should know how to collapse on an opponent and then adjust itself, being aggressive again once the breakdown has been solved

**(Video)**