



THREE OF A KIND

Course 01: Coach Ettore Messina

Lesson 04: Defending off ball screens

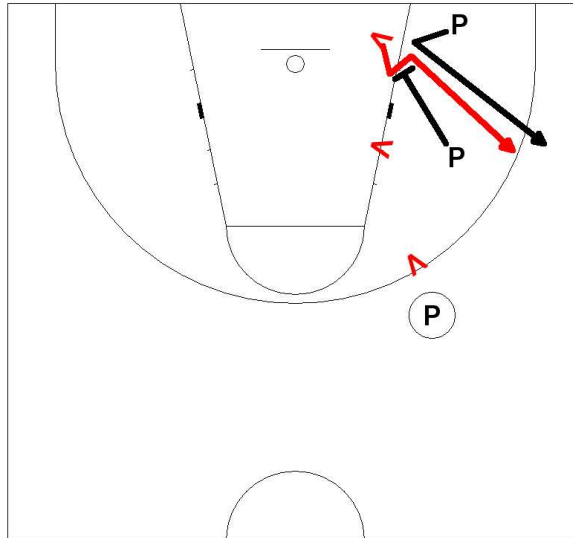
Language: English

INDIVIDUAL DEFENSE: DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS

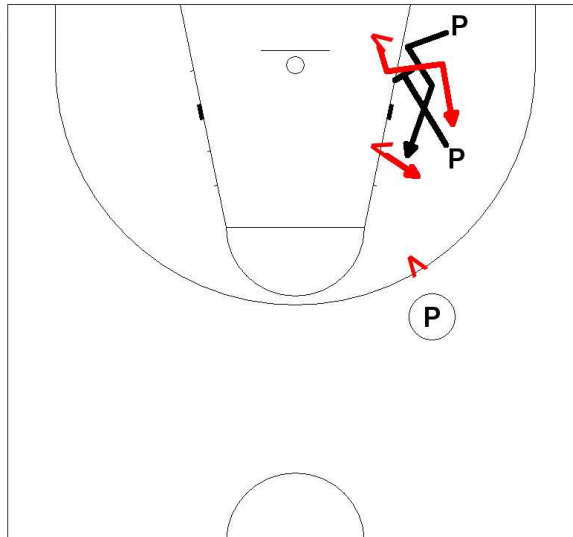
I have already explained that the best way to “break” the timing of our opponents is to take away the passing lanes and angles that they prefer. Having this concept very clear in our minds makes it easier to understand our philosophy for defending off ball screens.

Firstly it is fundamental that the player defending the player for whom the screen is set knows precisely where the ball is. If the ball is on the same side of the court as where the block is taking place we “chase” the shooter along the same path and eventually force him to curl around the screen (**diagrams 1-2**).

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DEFENDING OFF BALL SCREENS
DIAGRAM 01

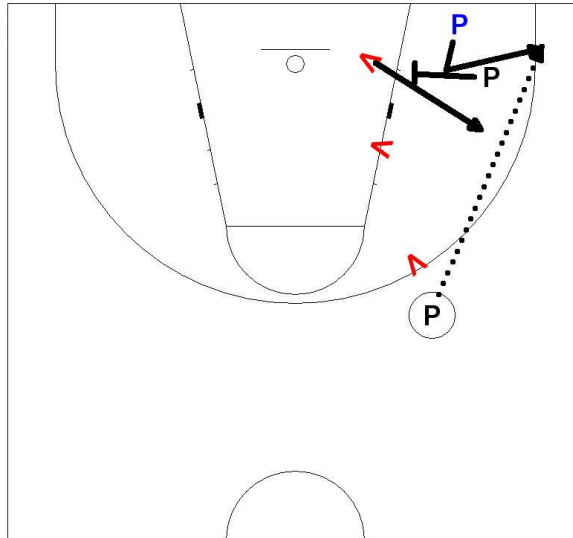


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DIAGRAM 02

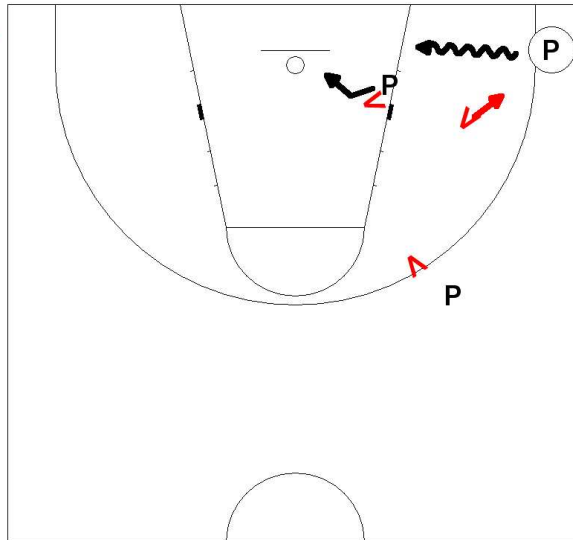


It is obvious in this example that having three offensive players and three defensive players in a reduced space makes the job of the player for whom the screen is set more difficult, as his options are either to shoot a forced jump shot or to penetrate into an already congested restricted area. If the defender were to go over the screen (**diagram 3**), this would allow the shooter to flare towards the corner for an easy pass, and even worse a greater space in which to operate if he were not to shoot immediately (**diagram 4**).

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DIAGRAM 03

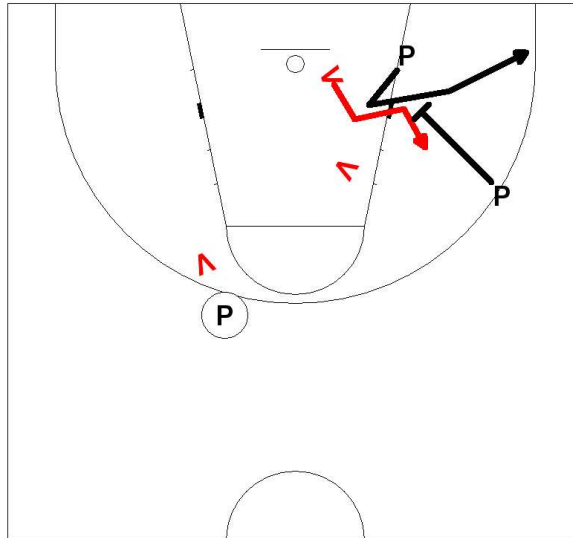


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DIAGRAM 04

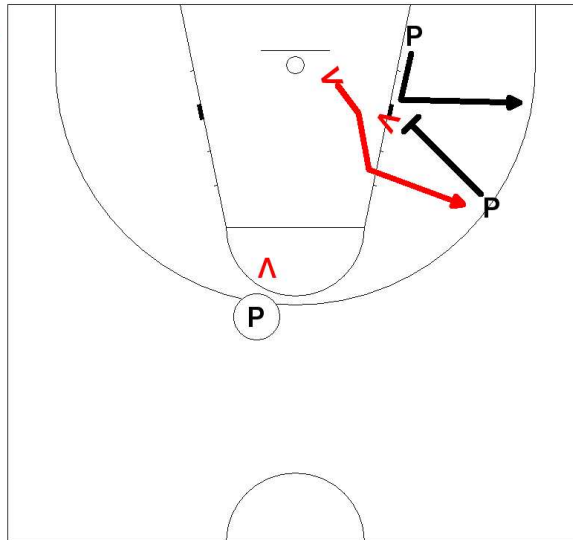


If the ball is on the opposite side of the court from where the screen takes place, the defender will fake cutting off the path of the shooter and then go over the screen either cutting between his teammate and the screener (**diagram 5**) or going over both the screener and his teammate (**diagram 6**). Reading this movement the shooter is likely to flare to the corner, away from the ball where only a skip pass can be attempted, which is a risky pass.

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DIAGRAM 05



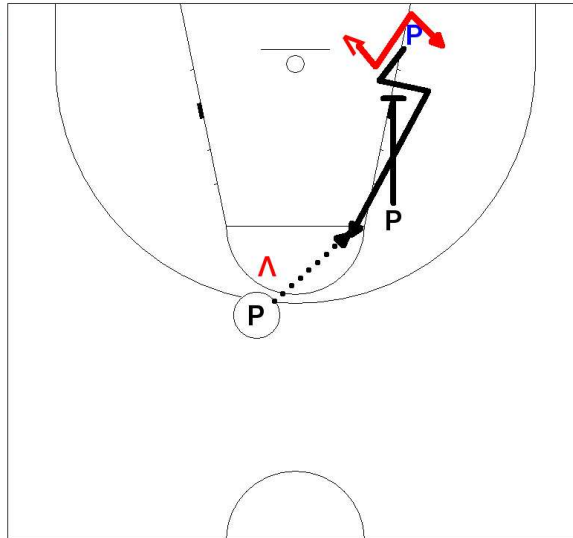
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DIAGRAM 06



It is also obvious that if the shooter's defender were to "chase" their opponent when the ball is on the opposite side of the court they would be making a big mistake.

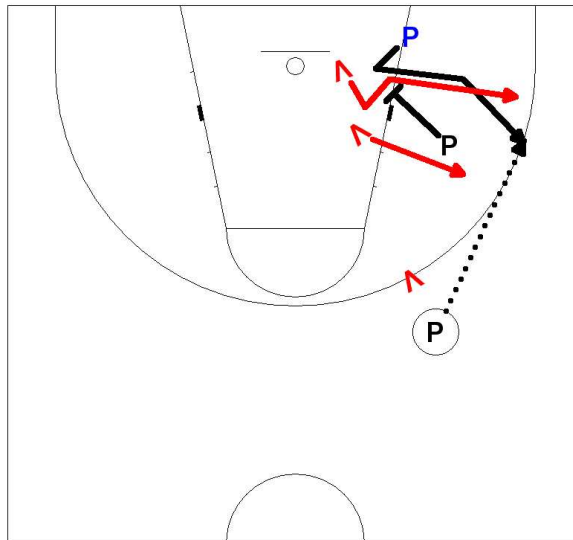
In **diagram 7** the amount of space that the shooter would have after coming off the screen and receiving a pass is evident, or it would force help from the defender of the screener. As a result it is not just the player defending the opponent for whom the screen is set, but also the defender of the screener who have to modify their position depending on where the ball is on the court.

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DIAGRAM 07

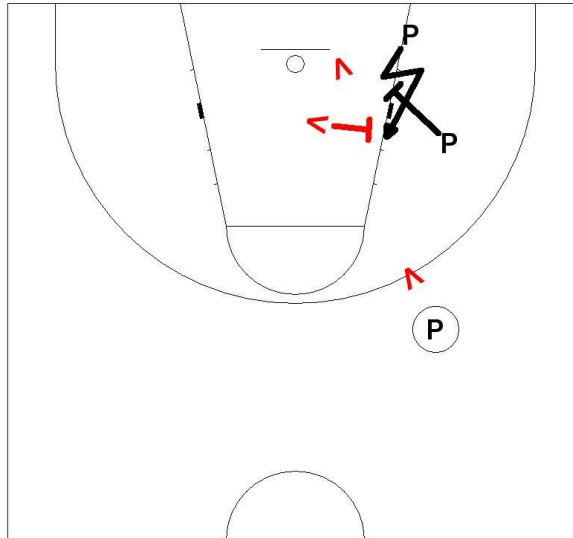


When the screen is set close to the ball, the screener's defender will make contact with his opponent ready to fake a switch (in order to force the player for whom the screen is being set to take a longer path) as illustrated in **diagram 8**, or to perform a body-check should this player try to curl around the screen (**diagram 9**).

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DIAGRAM 08

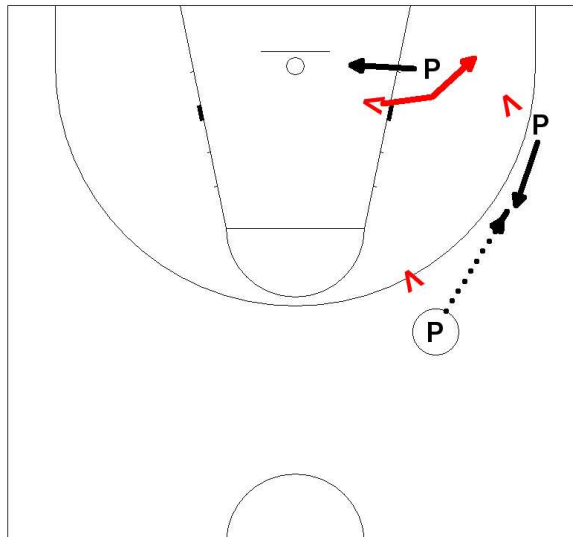


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DIAGRAM 09



It is important to note that if the screener's defender maintains a position between his opponent and the ball, should the ball be passed to the wing he will be able to more easily defend a potential low post feed should the screener roll to the basket after setting the screen (**diagram 10**).

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DIAGRAM 10

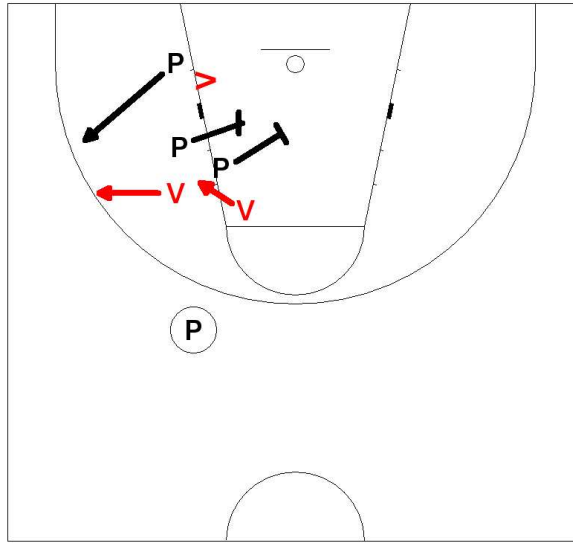


If the screen is far away from the ball, the screener's defender will have to be very sure whether his coach wants his teammate to pass between him and the screener or over both of them (diagram 5 & 6). Depending on this he will either step back to allow his teammate through or body up to the screener.

If the second option is preferred, it allows the defender to stay in contact with his opponent, preventing him from spinning with ease into the restricted area when the ball arrives at the wing. If the screener's defender had separated himself to allow his teammate to pass through he would have given up an important space inside the restricted area (**diagram 11**).

both screeners, preventing them from gaining position inside the restricted area (**diagram 13**).

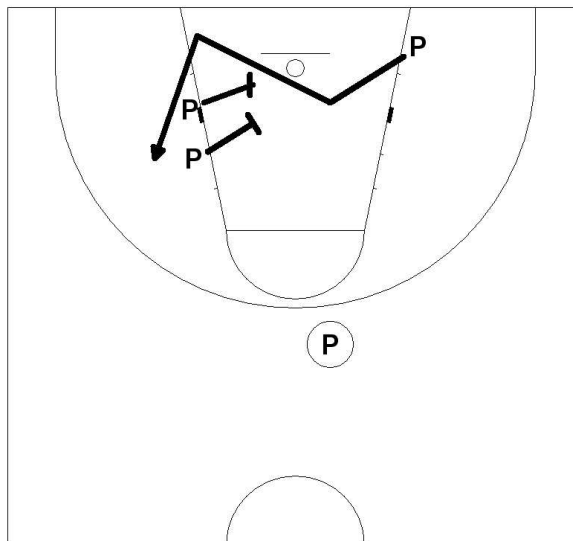
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DIAGRAM 13



It can be seen that even though the defense is momentarily numerically inferior, the tight space makes it very difficult to make a pass into the restricted area to either of the two offensive players who have set a screen.

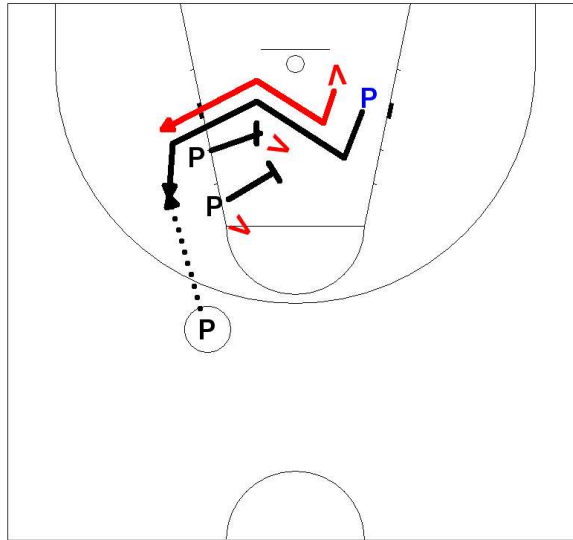
If a double block is set (**diagram 14**) then this is defended differently.

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DIAGRAM 14



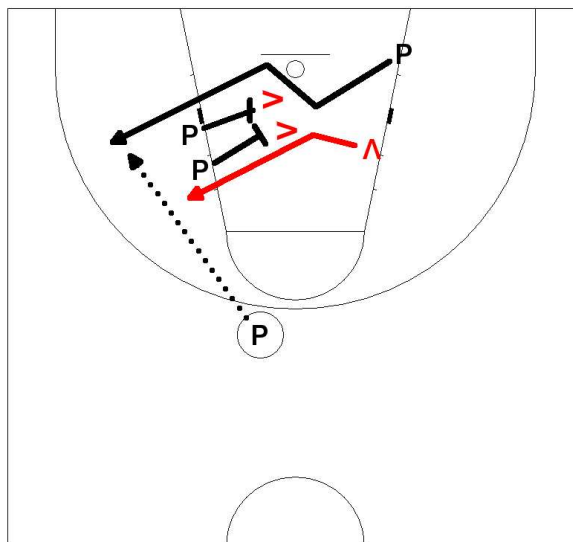
Regardless of the position of the ball on the court, the shooter's defender will always chase his opponent around the screens and the defender of the screener closest to the ball will hedge to potentially help if the shooter chooses to curl around the screens (**diagram 15**).

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DIAGRAM 15



If the shooter's defender tries to go over the screen, the size of the screens will make it impossible to recover if the shooter flares to the corner, and would therefore give up an uncontested shot (**diagram 16**).

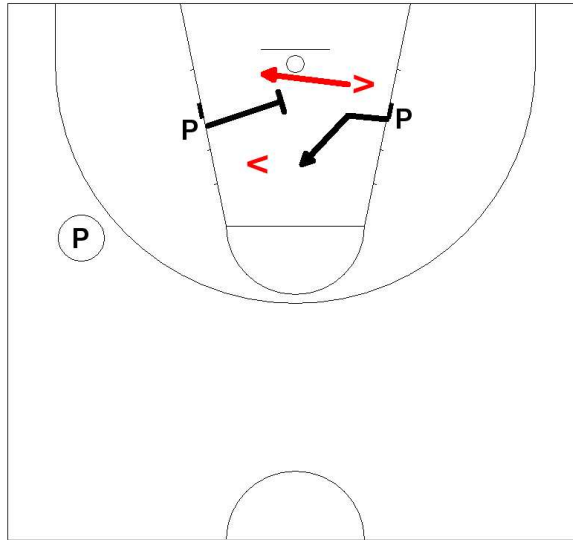
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DIAGRAM 16



Naturally, in the case of a staggered screen or a double screen it is possible to switch, however we will deal with this at the end of this lesson. Before that I would like to illustrate the rule we use when there is a "small-big" screen inside the restricted area. These screens are usually set to allow an inside player to receive the ball at the wing position, and the screen is set by an outside player to prevent a switch.

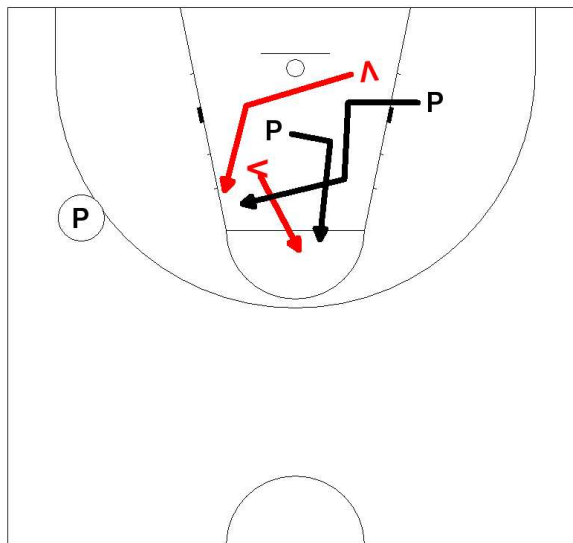
Usually we have the big's defender avoid the screen by going underneath it, whilst the offensive player goes over the screen (**diagram 17**).

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DIAGRAM 17



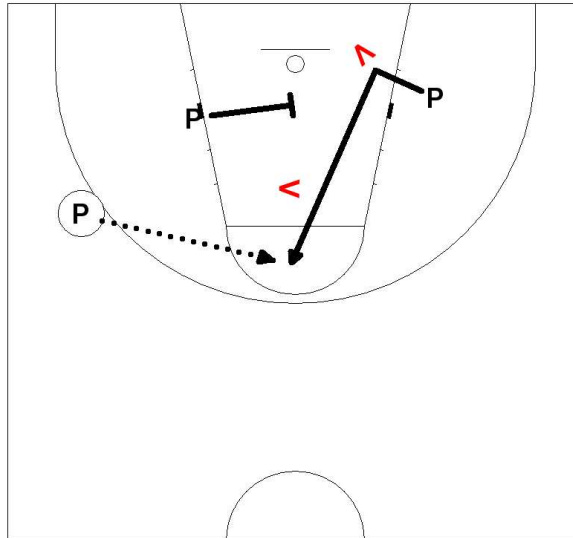
The screener's defender will body-check the big and slow down his cut. The advantage of this option is that it allows us to be in a denial position for the screener if he is a good shooter and after the screen continues to the three point line for a catch and shoot situation (**diagram 18**).

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DIAGRAM 18



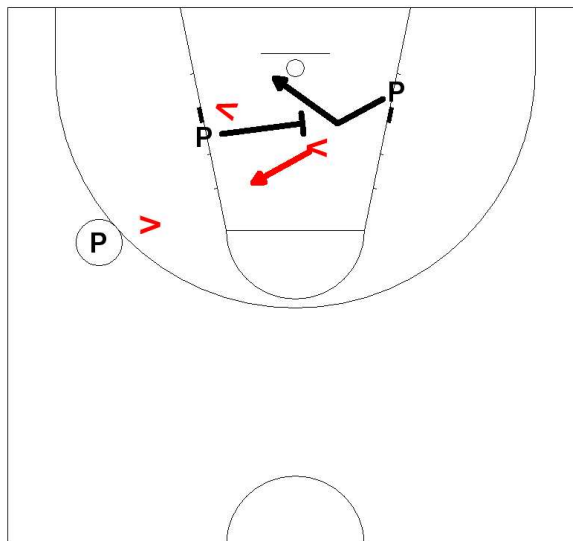
The disadvantage is obviously that the player for whom the screen is set can easily step to the ball side high post for an uncontested shot if he is a good shooter (**diagram 19**).

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DIAGRAM 19



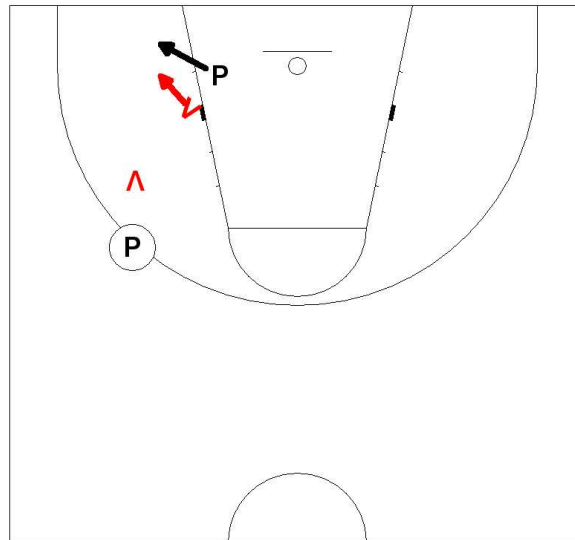
To avoid this problem it is necessary to invert the responsibilities of the two defenders. Making sure that the defender of the opponent in possession of the ball is putting pressure on him to ensure that he does not move below the free throw line extended, it could be advantageous for the defender of the player for whom the screen is being set go over the screen, forcing his opponent to cut under the screen, where the screener's defender will slow down his cut (**diagram 20**).

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DIAGRAM 20



In this case it is true that we could be in a tricky situation if the screener, whilst his defender is body-checking his teammate, runs out to the three point line to catch and shoot, however we have the advantage that once the action has taken place the offensive low post player is very close to the baseline and the offense does not have a passing angle to get him the ball (**diagram 21**).

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DIAGRAM 21



All of the concepts are quite easy to comprehend, and permit our players to deal with all of the situations where our opponents set off ball screens, without needing to switch. For teams that have a roster full of players with a very similar physical and technical makeup, then switching becomes more advantageous. This is something I will cover in another lesson.

REMEMBER

- If the screen takes place on the same side of the court as the ball, we chase the shooter, forcing a curl action
- If the screen takes place on the opposite side of the court the defender will go over the screen or through the screen, forcing the shooter to flare
- It is important to always pressure the opponent in possession of the ball in order to prevent an easy read of the options available to him

Video