



THREE OF A KIND

Course 01: Coach Ettore Messina

Lesson 08: Transition Game 1

Language: English

TRANSITION GAME 1

The evolution of the basketball played in the Euroleague over the past couple of decades has opened a very wide debate with regards to the use of the transition game by different coaches.

The domination of defense is definitely tied in to the physical conditions modern players have, athletes who in few steps can cover the entire court and it is very difficult to beat 1v1. On the other hand there is the desire that many coaches have to control the game reducing the number of mistakes and the need for offensive sets with numerous options designed to beat complicated defenses have all caused the European game to visibly slow down. I am convinced that the best way to combine practical goals with spectacular play is to employ an aggressive defense and fast break.

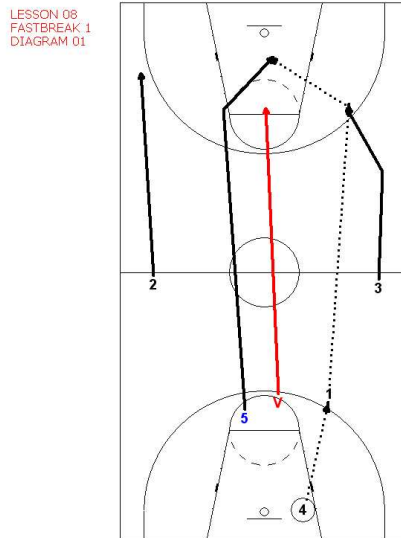
During a competitive Euroleague game a team who can convert on four or five counterattacks has the possibility of creating a margin which will often be decisive. Paradoxically we can then state that a game with few transition opportunities can be decided one way or another with the intelligent use of the fast break.

Our players must be very clear in knowing when we would like to definitely attempt to push the ball in transition:

1. After recovering the basketball (from a steal or a blocked shot and rebound)
2. If an opponent forces a missed field goal
3. If a long rebound is captured by an outside player who dribbles the ball up the court at speed

In these situations we need to push the ball looking for our primary break, which will be possible due to our opponents not being able to balance their defense correctly; in the case of an open shot not being available due to good defensive transition by our opponents instead of forcing our primary break it is wise to look for another option using the trailer (normally an inside player) or sometimes to reverse the ball, our secondary break.

At the highest professional level it is not possible to constantly look for the transition game after being score on unless it is with the aim of forcing your opponent to run continuously to tire one or more of their key players. For example in **diagram 1** we can see that after X have scored, O4 inbounds the ball whilst O5 sprints towards the other basket, forcing X5 to also run at speed. After a few minutes of play we may have caused X5 to commit two or three fouls that he may normally, or at least tired him so that he is less effective on offense.



Once we have made the situations when we wish to push the ball in transition in order to pick up the rhythm of the game clear, we will concentrate on two decisive moments when developing our fast break.

1. The first pass (or outlet pass)
2. The second pass

1. THE FIRST PASS

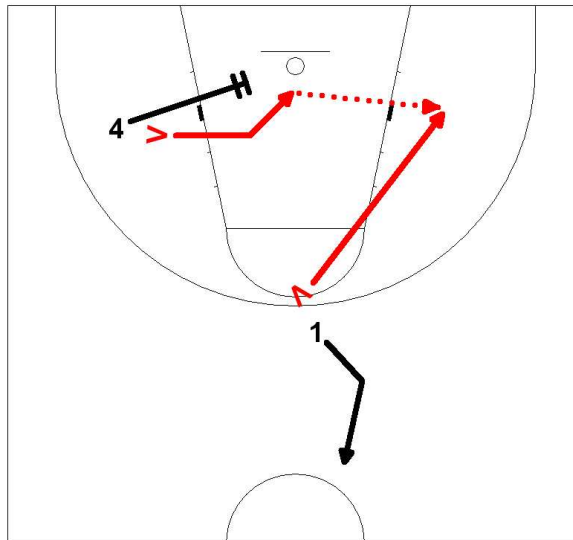
We have already seen that a defense that does not rely on excessive help and rotations is far more solid blocking out and capturing the defensive

rebound, and in particular has the possibility of a greater number of “clean” rebounds.

We prefer to clearly establish which player is in charge of receiving the outlet pass (normally the point guard) and we will ask him to receive the ball slightly on one side of the court, with this back to the sideline in order to have a good vision of the court at the moment he receives the ball.

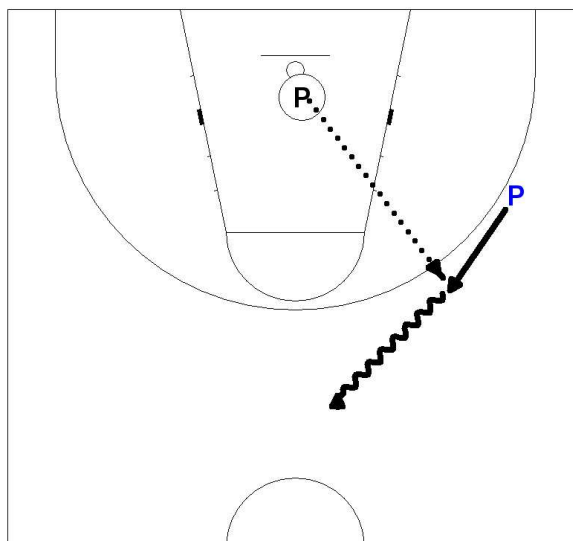
Whilst rebounding the ball, if the rebounder can turn his eyes and possibly his torso towards the side of the court on which his teammate is located whilst maintaining the ball above his head, this will allow him to make an outlet pass sooner (**diagram 2**).

LESSON 08
FASTBREAK 1
DIAGRAM 02



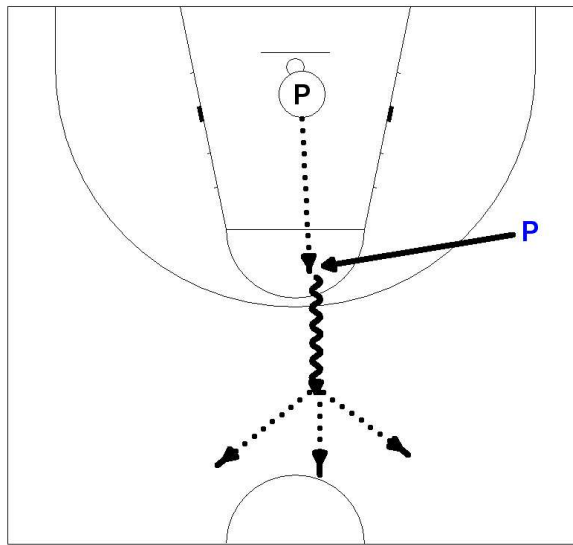
With senior players, I normally make them accustomed to receive the outlet pass above the free throw line extended (**diagram 3**), receiving the ball here in motion enables them to reach the opponents three point line in two or three dribbles.

LESSON 08
FASTBREAK 1
DIAGRAM 03



In general it is beneficial for our point guard to receive the ball in motion heading towards the midpoint of the court from where he can initiate the transition with numerous passing lanes (**diagram 4**).

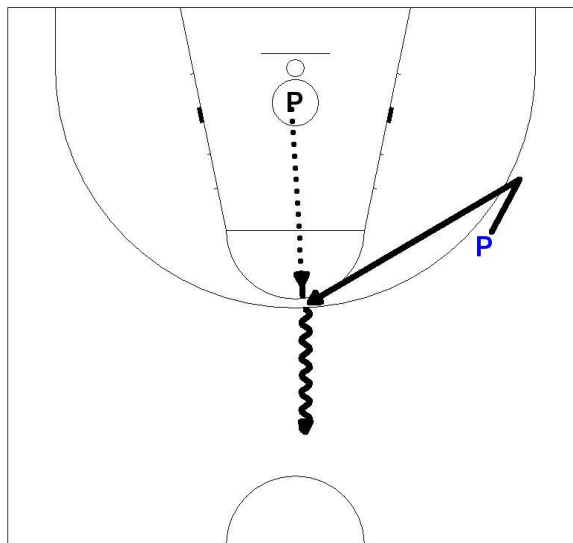
LESSON 08
FASTBREAK 1
DIAGRAM 04



This cut is very efficient against any anticipation by the opponents, more so than attempting to perform a V-cut away from the rebounder, who will probably be afraid to attempt a long pass (**diagrams 5-6**).

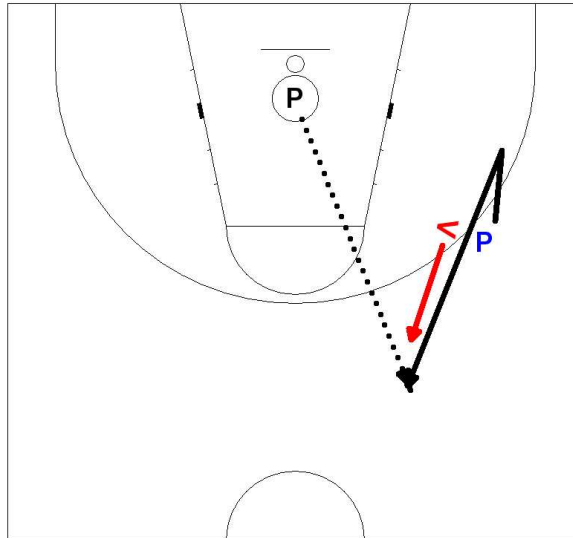
LESSON 08
FASTBREAK 1
DIAGRAM 05

YES



LESSON 08
FASTBREAK 1
DIAGRAM 06

NO



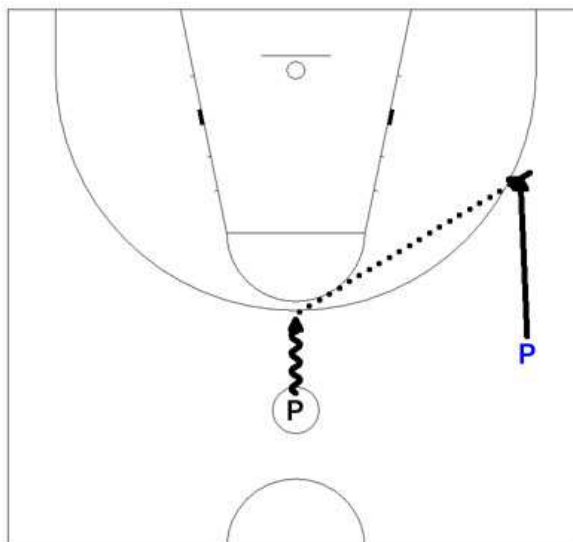
If the rebounder is a player that we believe can dribble the ball under control to start the break himself (including a tall player), then we ask him to push the ball up the court, this way surprising the opponent and foregoing the start of the break after an outlet pass.

2. THE SECOND PASS

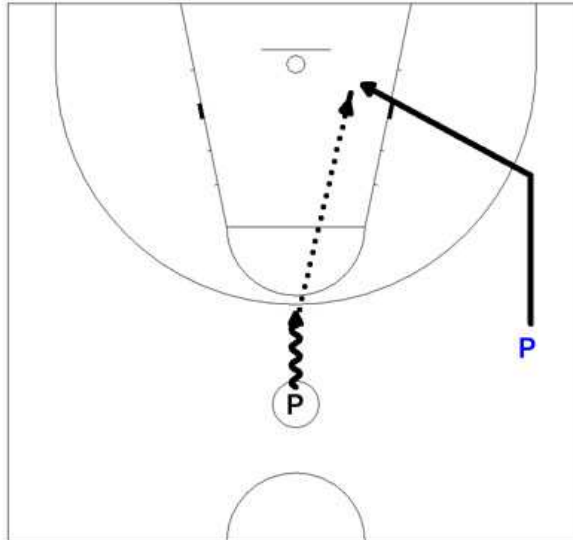
For the break to finish successfully, this is at least as important as the first pass.

It is vital that at least two players run past the free throw line extended and are capable of realizing whether it is better to stay outside the three point line (**diagram 7**), looking for the three point shot or another pass to a big man (forward) arriving, or perhaps cutting towards the basket looking to finish the play easily (**diagram 8**).

LESSON 08
FASTBREAK 1
DIAGRAM 7

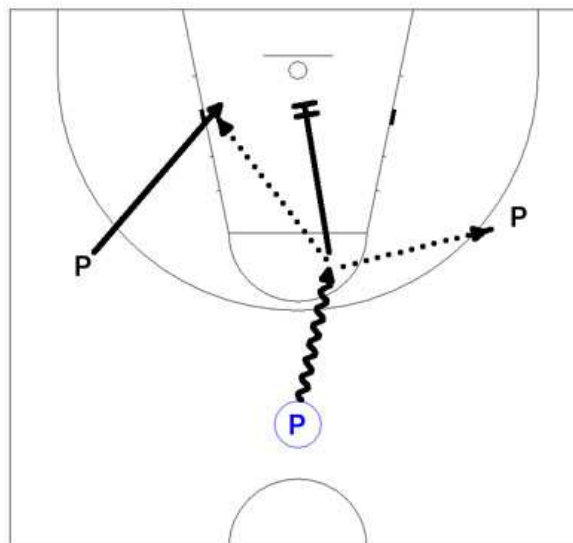


LESSON 08
FASTBREAK 1
DIAGRAM 8



A decision should normally be taken once the ball arrives around the free throw line extended. At the same time, we ask the dribbler if he cannot make a quick pass to keep his dribble alive and stay close to one of the elbows (**diagram 9**) from where he can stop and shoot, pass to the wing, pass to a big man (forward) / trailer, without running the risk of going into the restricted area forcing the play and potentially turning the ball over.

LESSON 08
FASTBREAK 1
DIAGRAM 9

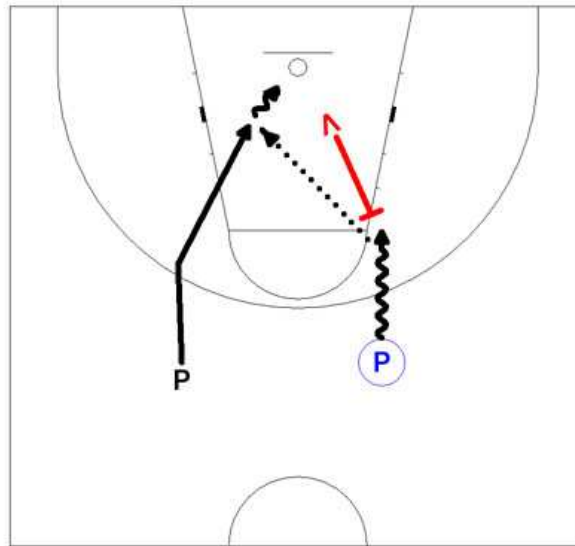


I am always alert to not overloading my players with excessive instructions and particularly in transition, they should not be thinking about what they must do, they must read what their teammates are doing be that cutting to the basket, dribble penetrating or shooting. The decision making is more important than the precise quality of their execution. For this reason in the classic 2v1 and 3v2 situations I am merely worried about my players maintaining good spacing on the court preventing any one defender from defending two players at once, giving themselves space to be a threat.

In a 2v1 situation (**diagram 10**), the two offensive players will maintain a distance similar to that of the free throw line and the player in possession of the ball when near to the free throw line extended will make a decision

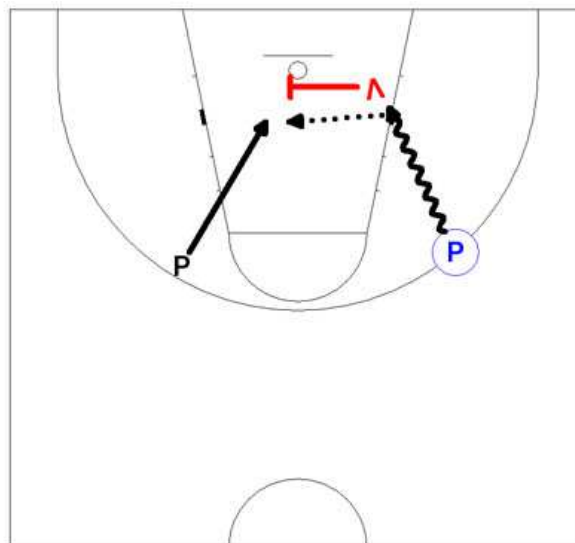
based on where the defender(s) are whether to pass to a teammate or go to the basket.

LESSON 08
FASTBREAK 1
DIAGRAM 10



Making a pass later (**diagram 11**) often allows the defender(s) to recover towards the shooter and at very least commit a foul sending him to the free throw line, if not block the shot attempt.

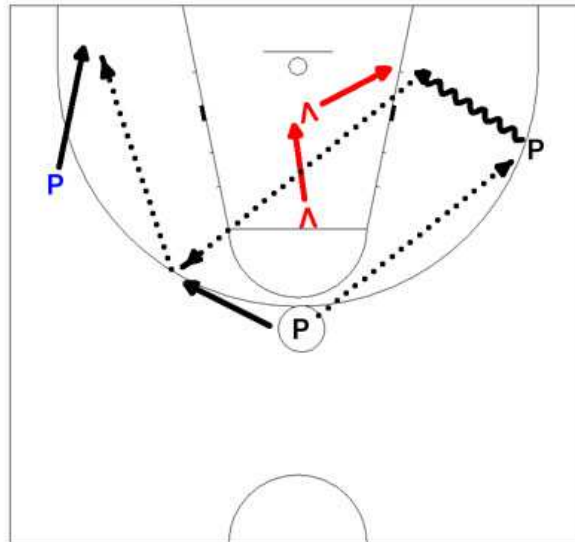
LESSON 08
FASTBREAK 1
DIAGRAM 11



In a 3v2 situation, I believe that it is best to pass the ball forwards to the offensive player who is furthest up the court rather than the dribble keep dribbling towards the restricted area where there are defenders present.

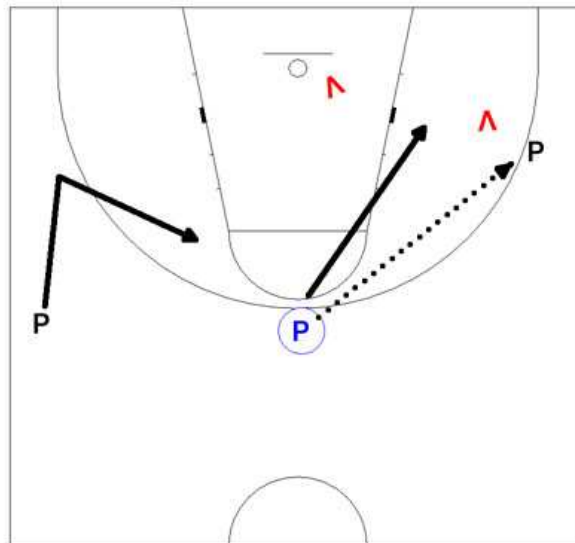
At this point it is a good idea to attempt a dribble penetration and should the defense collapse look to pass to a teammate who will have taken a position on the court where the defense do not have time to recover to (**diagram 12**).

LESSON 08
FASTBREAK
DIAGRAM 12



If after the initial guard to wing pass the defenders maintain a position near to the basket (**diagram 13**), not only will we see that the space to penetrate is reduced, but also that with quick passes the defense that already is numerically inferior will be rendered even more inefficient.

LESSON 08
FASTBREAK 1
DIAGRAM 13



We will continue to look at the Transition Game in the next lesson.

- Clip 1.- First Pass
- Clip 2.- Second Pass