



## **THREE OF A KIND**

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

#### **Lesson 10: 1v1 In Motion**

#### **Language: English**

### **OFFENSE INTRODUCTION**

The subject we want to talk about is the construction of an offensive game. It's true that every coach will try to model his own offense on the individual characteristics of his players, looking for a system of cuts, screens and spaces that helps the athletes take advantage of their own abilities. It's also true that a coach can choose a different kind of offense (the "continuity" game, set plays, the passing game), different rhythms of the game (a controlled game without fastbreak, a game with occasional fastbreak, a game with systematic fastbreak even after an opponent score).

Anyway, when every offense gets into the opponents half court, it is based on four basic principles:

1. The movement of the men and the ball (to play 1v1)
2. The use of screens
3. Penetration and the outlet pass
4. The low post game

All the offensive plays are created by the combination of two or more of these principles, which are then connected to the fastbreak.

Stressing one principle over another, it's possible to build offensive sets which use different spaces and rhythms, but are very effective if suited to

the players' characteristics. On the contrary, a very effective theoretical game can be unproductive if it is carried out by players who do not have the necessary technical and/or physical characteristics.

I think that, when a player is young, he must be instructed on individual basic principles (ball handling, passing, shooting) as well as in the basic principles of the team's offense.

When the player has a mastery of these concepts, he could play for every coach, finding his own position inside different offensive philosophies.

As instructors teaching how to play, we must give the young athletes the knowledge to contribute to the training of all-around and non specialist players.

To teach team fundamentals (for example, how to set a screen, and how to use it) means not only teaching the player "how" to do it but also "when" and how to recognize the different defensive behaviors, especially the right ones so the player can take advantage of that, taking the personal initiative, that is the basic key of an offensive game.

In the next lessons I'll try to explain the four basic concepts of the offensive game by analyzing the technique and suggesting some drills to use out in practice.

## **1v1 IN MOTION**

Whatever the offensive philosophy of a team may be, by moving the players and the ball, we will get a very favorable position with a 1v1, with an offensive player open for a shot or getting a little advantage over his own opponent; so he can try to beat him off the dribble, and to finish the play or make a pass to his teammate, who is in a better position in case of defensive help.

The first concept we wish to keep in mind, is to play 1v1 in motion and not in a steady position.

I want to create a very simple idea in my players' mind: "play to receive the ball in a position where you can shoot with good percentages" (the personal concept of "shooting range", that is the distance from the basket in which a player is dangerous with his shot and therefore is probably guarded by his opponent).

If we teach the players without the ball to take advantages of the space the defender gives him (due to a mistake for example because the defender is off balance in helping his teammate) when he receives the ball, he will have three possibilities:

5. To catch the ball, eyes looking at the basket, and shoot (if the defender is very late)

6. To catch the ball, eyes looking at the basket, put the ball on the floor (if the defender is off balance when recovering: with a shot fake the player could make the defender's position worse)
7. To catch the ball, eyes looking at the basket and pass without the defender's pressure if a teammate is open or if the player has lost the space to get a shot off

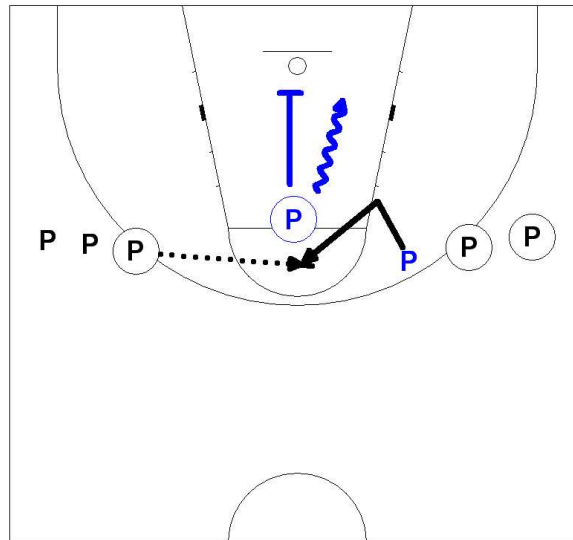
Working on 1v1 in motion, instead of 1v1 standing still (with a lot of dribble penetration or shot fakes) we want to emphasize a basic concept of the team offense: to avoid keeping the ball stationary, not to block the offensive fluidity, trying to play 1v1 against a defense which is late, rather than against a defense that is already in position.

I really think that the movement of the ball is of primary importance to improve the offense. Incredibly it is better to have an offense with five players standing still but passing the ball rapidly than an offense with all of the players moving but with the same player always holding the ball. This is because the defensive players must adapt their position to that of the ball, therefore it's probable that at least one of them could do it a few seconds late in comparison with the quick movement of the ball, creating a space in the defense in which an offensive player could cut and receive the ball.

In the second case if the ball is stationary, the defensive movement will be easier even if the players are moving.

A simple drill to prepare the players to play one on one is illustrated in **diagram 1**. Two lines of players have the ball, the first player in the right line is without the ball and cuts to the free throw line to receive the ball from the player in front of him. He must face the basket while he received the ball, ready to shoot or to play 1v1 according to the movement of the Coach who will approach him or will step back a step giving him space. We must take care of our athlete's skill to recognize the situation: while he's receiving and facing the basket he must look at the defender's movement to always do the right thing. The first time most of the athletes will have some problems because they are used to receiving the ball, then to face the basket, then to look at the defense and only afterwards make a decision.

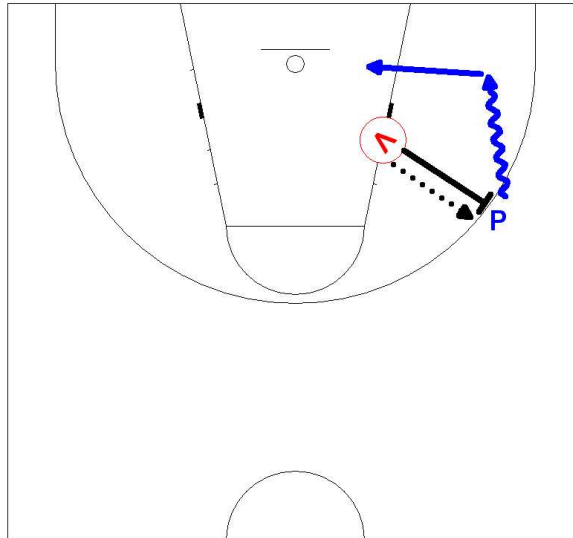
LESSON 10  
1v1 IN MOTION  
DIAGRAM 01



Our aim is to stimulate the player to make a decision while he's receiving the ball, so to be able at the same time to recognize the defender's intentions. To do that, we must explain to the player that he must not stare at the teammate who is passing him the ball, but he must use his peripheral vision to see also his opponent. In the development of the drill, the player in the left line who has passed the ball will cut towards the top of the key to receive the ball from the teammate in front of him and so on. I prefer to be the passive defender (or to put my assistant in this position) because as I know my players, I can attack, for instance, the player who has less talent for penetrating, so that I can induce him to execute this fundamental; or I can give some space to the player who is not ready to shoot, as well as it could happen during the game.

A second drill with similar aims is illustrated in **diagram 2**. Players in pairs, one defender with the ball, about three meters from his teammate ready to receive the ball in the shooting area. The defender passes the ball and closes out defending the offensive player, who is in an obvious advantage. The offensive player has only one dribble, and he must choose among the shot, the dribble penetration and the shot, the dribble penetration and the shot fake and penetration, according to the quick recovery of the defender and therefore to the distance between them, at the time of the reception. The key of the offensive execution is to receive the ball in a shooting position, with the knees lightly bent and so ready to shoot or to penetrate.

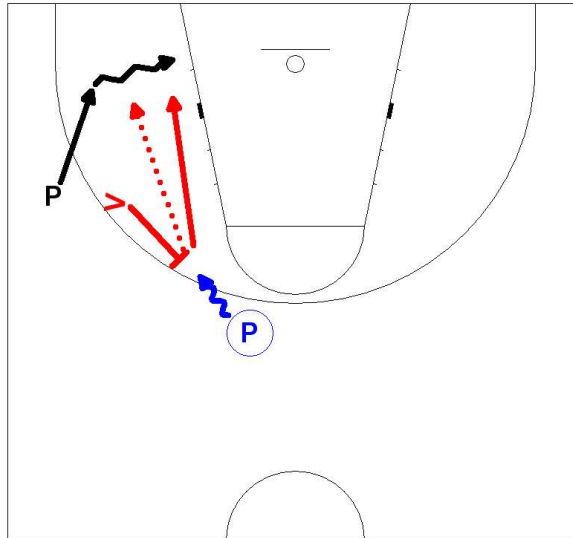
LESSON 10  
1v1 IN MOTION  
DIAGRAM 02



Like in every drill with a teaching aim (to improve the learning of a fundamental or a concept) I leave the same player in for five repetitions, for him to concentrate on the choice of the movement and not on his scored or missed shots. Besides, having five repetitions the defender will change probably his behavior, (for example he could chose penetration to the right or the left). He could fake the recovery allowing an outside shot, forcing the offensive player to perform different movements. Generally all of the defensive drills that let players work in defensive recovery situations are very good to improve the ability to read the offensive situations.

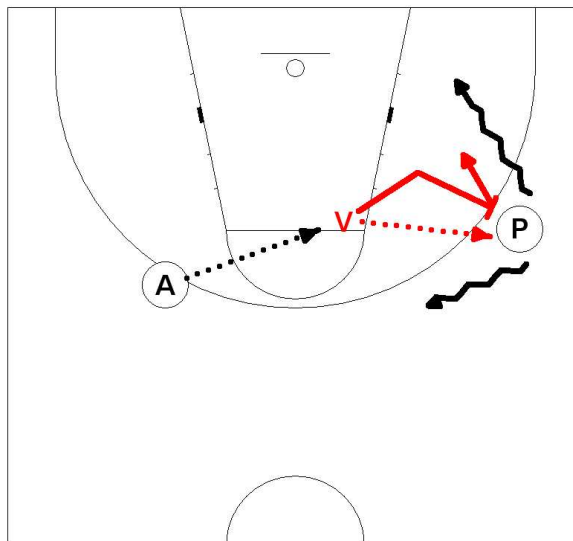
**Diagram 3** illustrates a help situation on a central penetration and a recovery. In this simple drill we can emphasize the defender's work, but at the same time we must insist on the offensive player (in the forward position) to find the right position on the court, to open spaces, so that the defender's recovery will be more difficult. At the same time, when the forward is receiving the ball, he must be in a position to choose among a shot, a dribble penetration, or a pass, according to the position of his opponent. If the player receives an outlet pass in the "triple threat" position (shot or penetration or pass), he has the possibility to choose the better solution, so not only him, but all five players can take the initiative against the defenders.

LESSON 10  
1v1 IN MOTION  
DIAGRAM 03



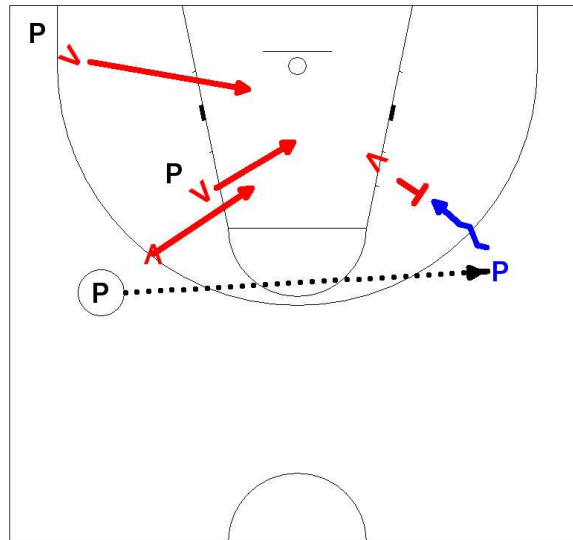
A similar situation is reproduced in **diagram 4** in which we coach a recovery situation on one's own opponent after a skip pass. While the defender is trying to "fly" with the ball in order not to be late, the offensive player must try to receive the ball and to choose as soon as possible what he is going to do. In every situation where the defender is late, it's very important that the offensive player has his eyes facing the basket while he's receiving the ball, choosing to execute an outside shot. In this case, if the defender is off balance, the offensive player could beat him in penetration.

LESSON 10  
1v1 IN MOTION  
DIAGRAM 04



To dribble penetrate as the first choice without considering the distance of the defender, can cause a charge foul to be called (**diagram 5**).

LESSON 10  
1v1 IN MOTION  
DIAGRAM 05

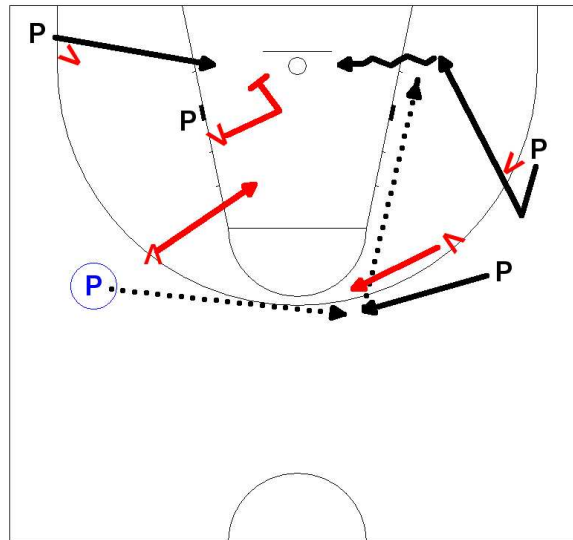


In modern basketball, the players are quicker and also excellent athletes. The use of the outside shot, and the mentality of use the "triple threat" (shot or pass or penetration) with a cleverness at choosing every time the best solution, is very important to get the players the correct spacing (an appropriate distance among different teammates and between the offensive player with the ball and his teammates).

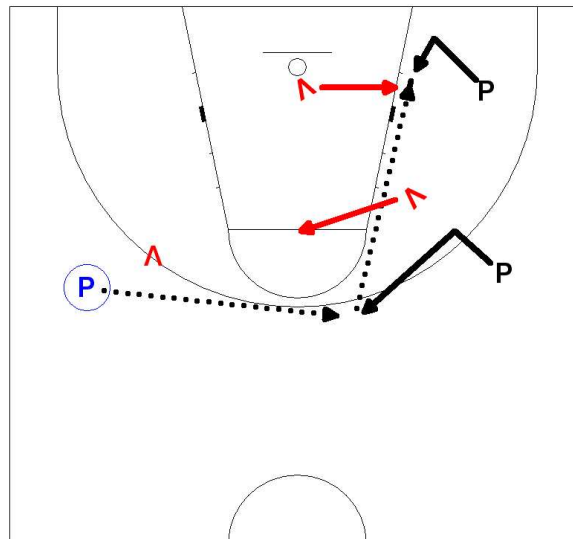
An offensive game that forces too much dribble penetration in the long run causes congestion in the paint; while on the contrary, an offensive game that uses only the outside shot will be progressively like a handball team's offense, with the ball always outside the three point line. I am convinced that a balanced offense is based on the combination of the outside shot with the inside shot in the paint (also by dribble penetration). On this subject, I think that we often forget that the ball can penetrate in the heart of the defense both with 1v1 dribbling and with a pass to a player who cuts, especially against a defense that overplays.

A typical example is the back door cut (**diagram 6**), or the pass into the low post (**diagram 7**). The simple mental approach to the 1v1 I've described until now, will drive us step by step in the learning of the other offensive game fundamentals: to penetrate and to kick, to screen, to play with the inside players. Certainly it's very important that our players learn to be always dangerous when the defense gives them space, in order to use every offensive solution in the best possible manner: the 1v1 with or without the ball is the basis of the offensive game.

LESSON 10  
1v1 IN MOTION  
DIAGRAM 06



LESSON 10  
1v1 IN MOTION  
DIAGRAM 07

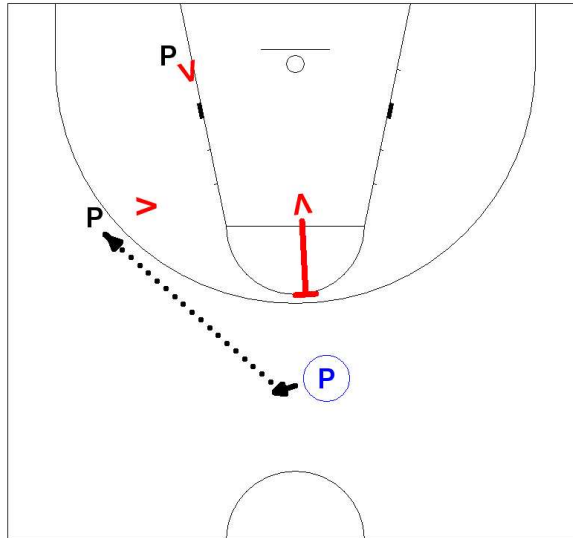


To receive the ball knowing what to do, reduces the time of execution and allows the offense to maintain the initiative, also when facing an aggressive defense. On the contrary, the player who holds the ball, (the worst thing is to keep the ball over his head so he cannot be dangerous) will suffer whether the defensive provides pressure or not; so he will have to make a decision depending on his opponent's behavior. At this point, the defenders will take the initiative, causing serious consequences to the offensive action.

Before I conclude, I want to underline a situation that often happens with young players. When a player, generally a center, finds himself on an area of the court area in which he is not within his shooting range, he is not defended closely by his opponent (**diagram 8**).

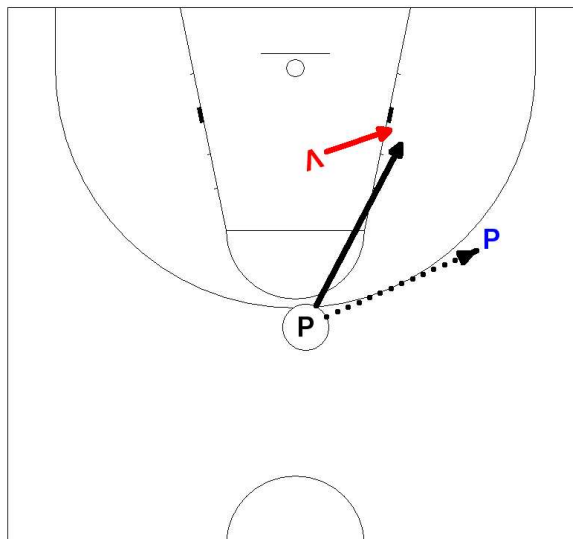


LESSON 10  
1v1 IN MOTION  
DIAGRAM 08



Now the young player has two possibilities to exploit the situation: he can immediately play a give and go with a teammate because his opponent is between the ball and the basket, and it would be difficult to be between the offensive player and the ball in a short time (**diagram 9**).

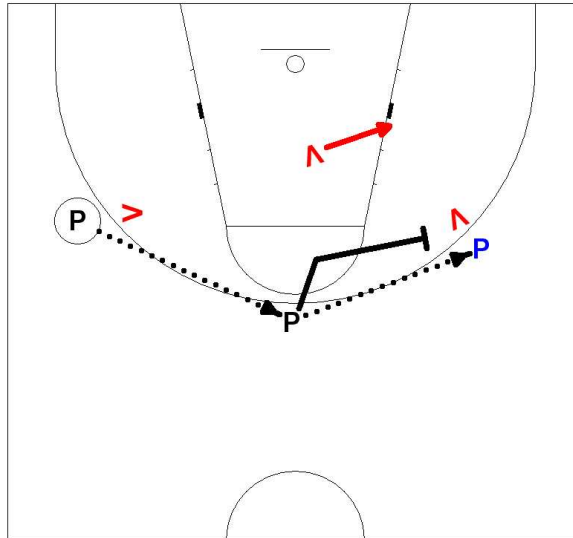
LESSON 10  
1v1 IN MOTION  
DIAGRAM 09



Be careful: it is very important that the player makes the first step of the give and go while he's passing the ball, because if he moves after the pass, he allows his opponent to react in time to reach the correct defensive position.

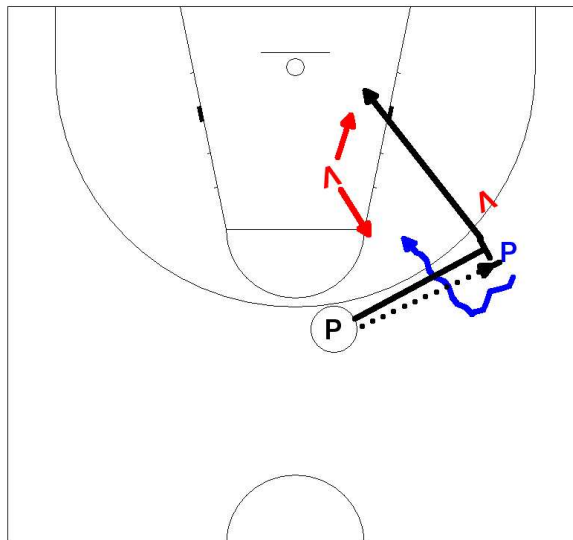
Another possibility for the player who is not guarded closely by his opponent is to play the "pick and roll". In **diagram 10** we can see the player, who is open, passing the ball to a teammate and at the same time following the pass to set the pick. Even in this case our aim is to take advantage of the defender's position, who is between the ball and the basket, so he could not easily step out to help on the player who is being picked for.

LESSON 10  
1v1 IN MOTION  
DIAGRAM 10



The two offensive players will for a moment be in a favorable 2v1 situation (**diagram 11**). Good footwork, correct use of a pass and cut will allow us to maintain the initiative against our opponents.

LESSON 10  
1v1 IN MOTION  
DIAGRAM 11



### REMEMBER

- Playing without the ball, don't fix our eyes on the teammates with the ball. Let's try always to know where is our defender.
- We must receive the ball with our eyes pointed to the basket, ready to shoot, to dribble or to pass.
- If my opponent is close, I beat him off the dribble. If my opponent is behind, I shot or I pass.
- If my opponent doesn't guard me and challenges me to shoot: I play and give and go, or pass and follow, picking for a teammate.
- We want always to take the initiative against our defenders, forcing them to react against our behavior.