



THREE OF A KIND

Course 01: Coach Ettore Messina

Lesson 11: Penetrate & Kick

Language: English

OFFENSIVE PHILISOPHY PENETRATE & KICK

In the previous lesson we underlined the correct mental approach to the subject of the 1v1: the player with the ball must always be absolutely sure if he has to shoot, to drive to the basket or to pass to an open teammate.

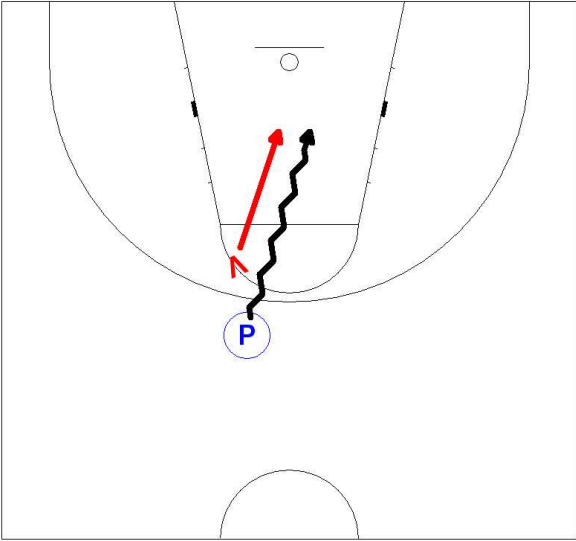
It is clear that the 1v1 is always the key of our offensive team game because if it is played well it allows us to keep control and be a step ahead of the defense. Also the most effective plays, if executed well can completely free one of our players for a high percentage shot.

In other common scenarios, using a play or tactical organization, we can free up another player because the defense is excessively out of balance on the best shooter, or that player to whom we want to pass catches the ball only with a little advantage which he must exploit at his best, driving to the basket, and afterwards shooting or passing the ball.

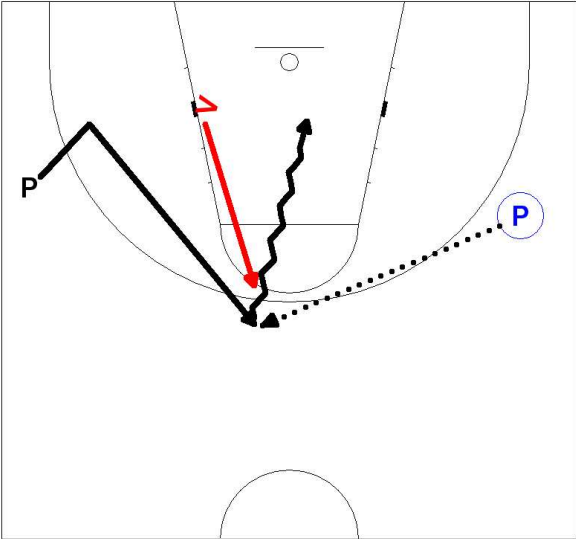
It is therefore possible to summarize by saying that an offensive player can start dribble penetration if he is quicker or technically more skillful than his opponent (**diagram 1**), having player well without ball, catching it therefore

ahead of his opponent (**diagram 2**), or having received a good screen by a teammate who has caused his opponent to be delayed (**diagram 3**).

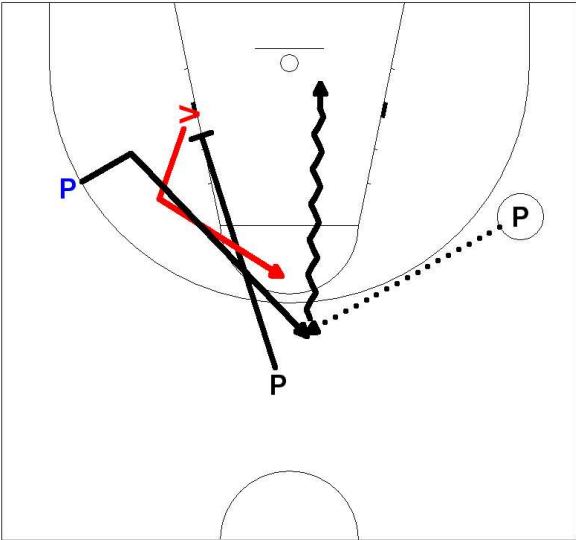
LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 01



LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 02

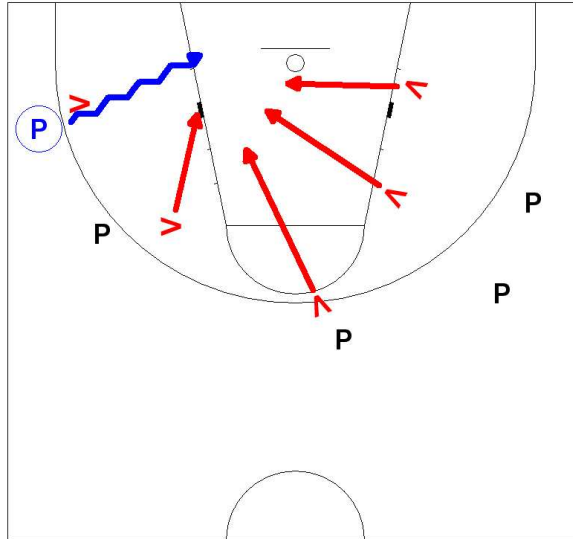


LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 03



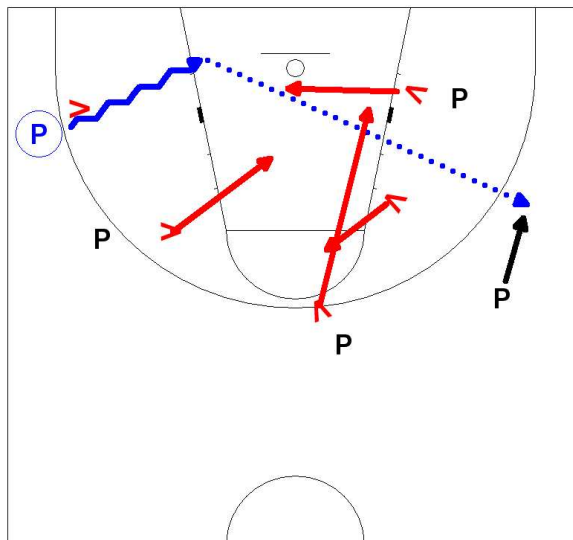
In the 1v1, when an offensive player beats a defender, every good defense will act together to stop the penetration and to force the opponent to pass rather than give up an easy shot. We know that the basic principle of the team's help wants the remaining four defenders to go towards the "line of the ball" i.e. they move away from their man, to place themselves nearest the player who is driving to the basket (**diagram 4**).

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 04



So we try to make a wall in front of the player who is driving to the basket, in order to force him to pass the ball to the furthest away player who's left free (**diagram 5**). If we are able to stop the penetration, forcing the pass to the opponent furthest away from the ball, not only will we avoid a basket, but also to "steal" some seconds to allow the player who had been beaten to recover to his man or eventually rotate to another opponent.

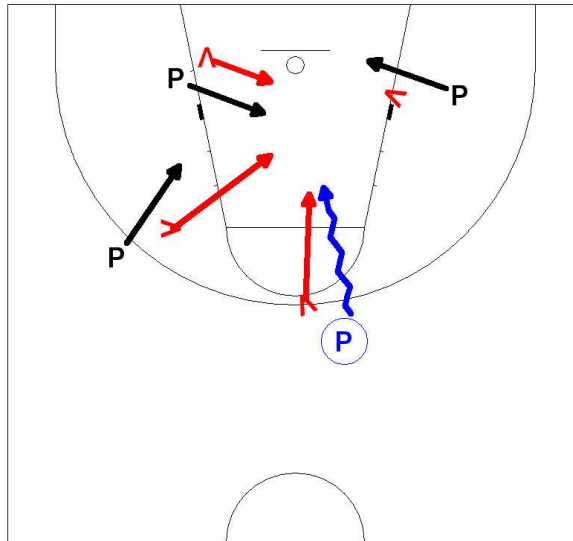
LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 05



Obviously, if the offensive players crowd together in a small space on the court, while there is still a penetration and defensive rotation they will help their make their opponents rotation a lot easier.

In **diagram 6** a "border" situation is shown which often happens with young players: while a player is driving to the basket through the middle, a number of his teammates go to the baseline, near the basket, to catch the ball or to capture a possible offensive rebound.

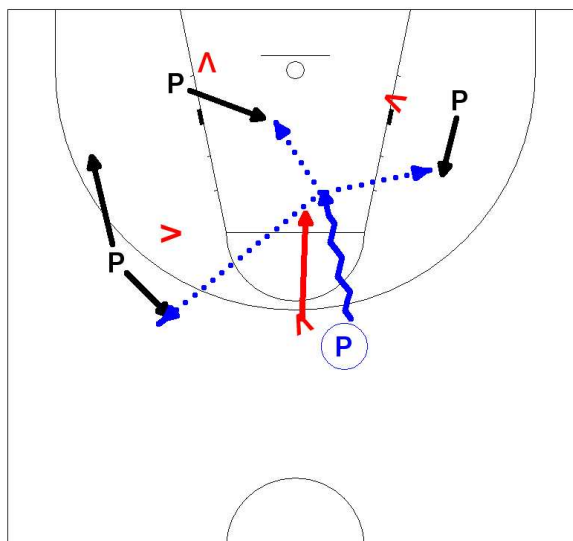
LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 06



Their position is too overcrowded, obviously favoring the three defenders in their attempt to make a wall that stops the penetration, making a pass almost impossible, and favoring the recovery for the beaten defender. In similar cases, the defense won't have any problem recovering, even if this occurs close to the basket.

If the same penetration came about with the teammates positioned as in **diagram 7**, there would be a lot more space to cover by the defenders, and much more evident passing lanes for the player driving to the basket, who could more easily choose between a shot or a pass to an open teammate. It is clear that the work without the ball of the other four players is fundamental to completely exploit an advantage obtained when beating an opponent off the dribble.

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 07

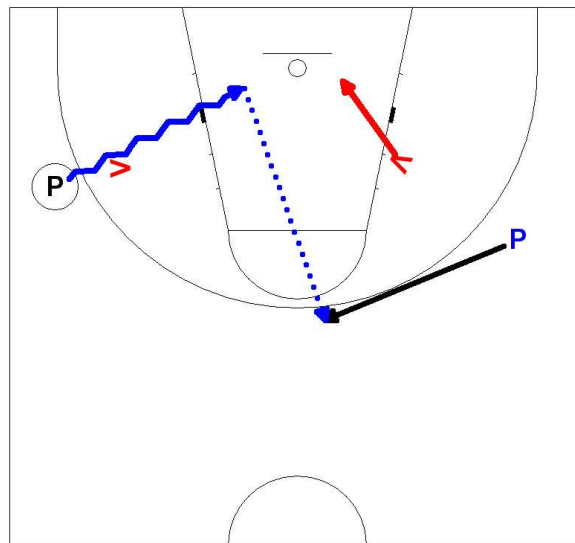


A correct position on the court, with the needed distance among the four players without the ball makes any defensive rotation very difficult, because it makes the recovery after any help almost impossible. If there is the correct spacing, the dribble penetration is doubly dangerous, because the player with the ball will always have the chance to finish the play or to pass to a open teammate.

A first concept which can help to coach young players is that of the "clock rule", so-called by the late Vittorio Tracuzzi, a brilliant Italian coach.

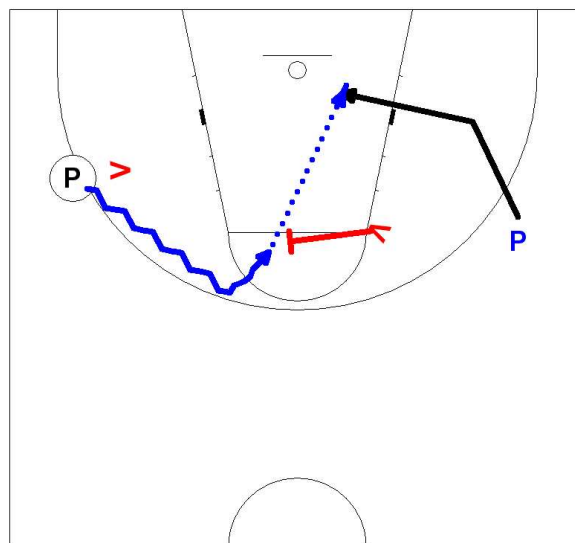
In **diagram 8**, we can see that in case of penetration along the baseline, the player on the opposite side moves in the opposite direction of the line of penetration, giving a correct passing lane to his teammate and at the same time, moving away from his opponent.

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 08



In a similar way as shown in **diagram 9**, in case of penetration in the center of the court, it is better to have movement towards the baseline and behind the defense, because often we can catch the ball near the basket.

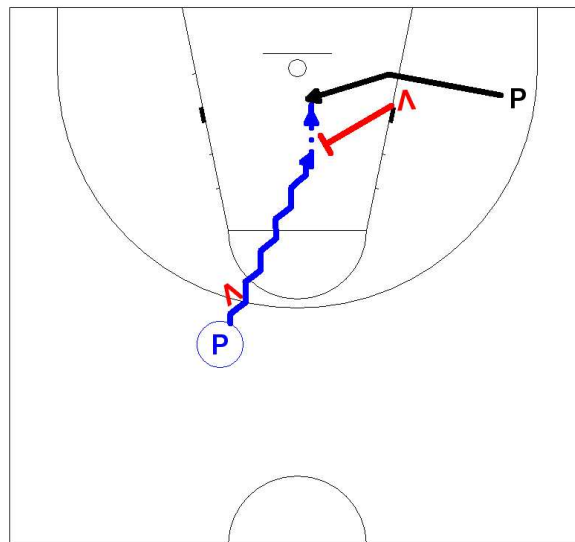
LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 09



The principle to move the ball in a direction opposite to the defensive rotation is the first basic concept to train young players and it is used particularly for inside players, especially when there is dribble penetration in the middle of the restricted area.

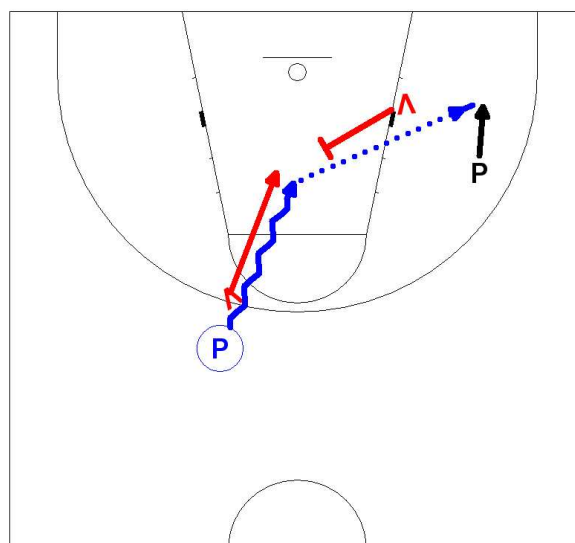
In **diagram 10** we can see that the player in the low post position when his defender moves to stop dribble penetration down the middle, moves along the baseline to receive a pass, so making his opponent's recovery impossible, as he will catch the ball exactly behind the beaten defender and the helping one. Strangely enough, a third defender would need to help in order to stop the offense.

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 10



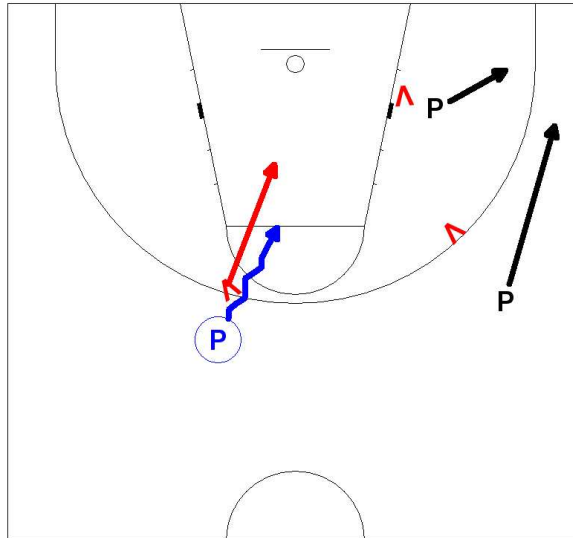
This kind of movement is obviously an alternative to a step outside the paint to catch and shoot (**diagram 11**), which by the way would be impossible if the corner was already taken by another offensive player (**diagram 12**).

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 11



LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 12

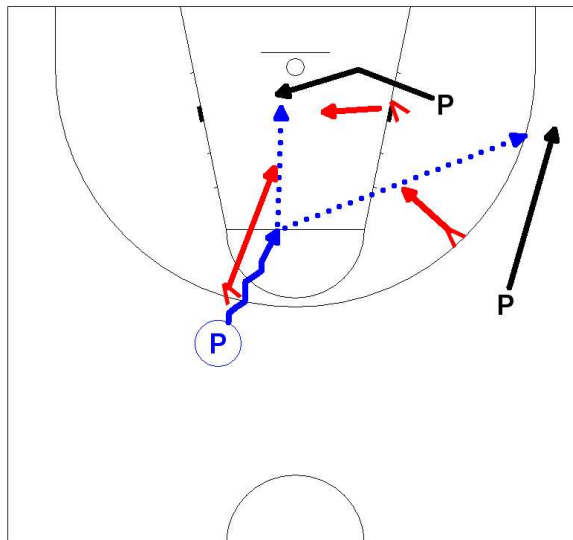
NO!!!!



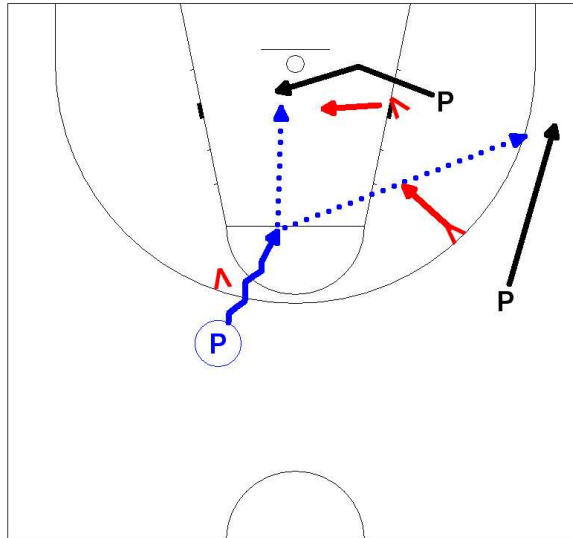
If the “clock rule” is the basis of the movement without the ball, as it is based on the fundamental principles to move in a direction opposite the defensive help and to play behind the defenders, it is also important to remember the behavior of the other teammates without the ball.

In **diagram 13** a common situation is illustrated. There are two guards on the dribble penetration side, and they do not have enough space to move. A solution in these cases can be to have the player closest to the baseline cut when the player makes his first dribble of the penetration (and not after, to avoid a crowded restricted area). In doing this he will leave space in the corner to his teammate closest to the ball. The same mechanism is shown, with a different penetration line, in **diagram 14**.

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 13

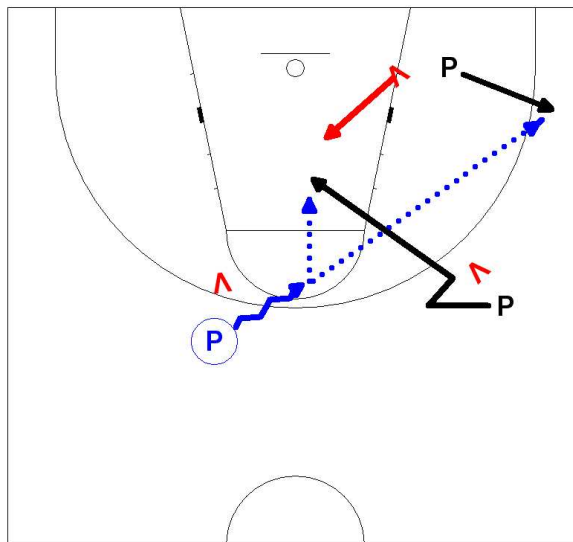


LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 14



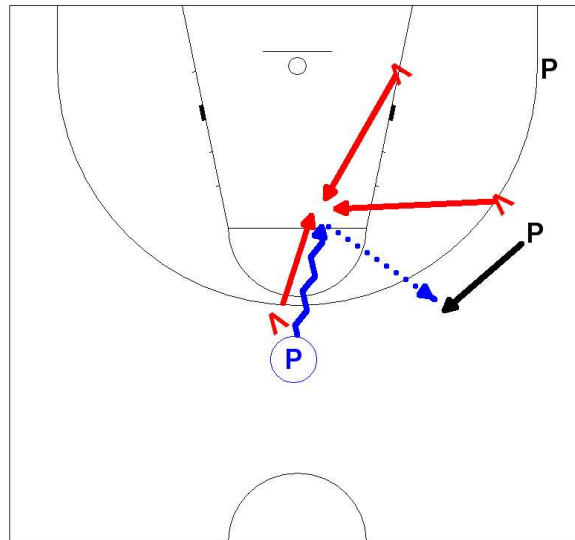
As an alternative to the above mentioned idea, a back door cut could take place, always at the first dribble of the penetration by the player closest to the ball. This cut could also keep the defender of the offensive player closest to the baseline occupied, helping to open up even more space (**diagram 15**).

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 15



In case of penetration on the side where the two teammates are, as a last chance the player closest to the penetration, moves behind his teammate, who is driving to the basket, clearly opposing the help movement of his own opponent (**diagram 16**).

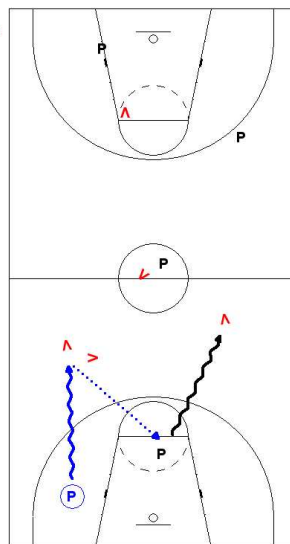
LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 16



This movement, apparently illogical and very similar to the “weave play” used by the Yugoslav and Russian teams since the fifties, is very effective because it frees a player without considering the behavior of the teammate closest to the baseline, it could create an easy three point shot, and it cannot be guarded if the player dribble penetrates with great conviction, attracting his teammate's opponent in a difficult help situation. I think that if there is always an offensive player behind the player driving towards the basket, it is extremely difficult for the defense to defend.

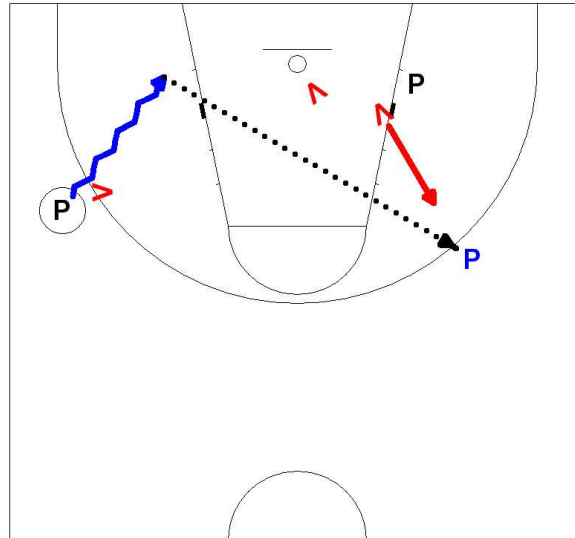
The American concept of a “safety”, used above all against the full court press with double teams in order to give a sure outlet pass to the player who is in trouble (**diagram 17**), is used in a very effective way in the half court.

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 17

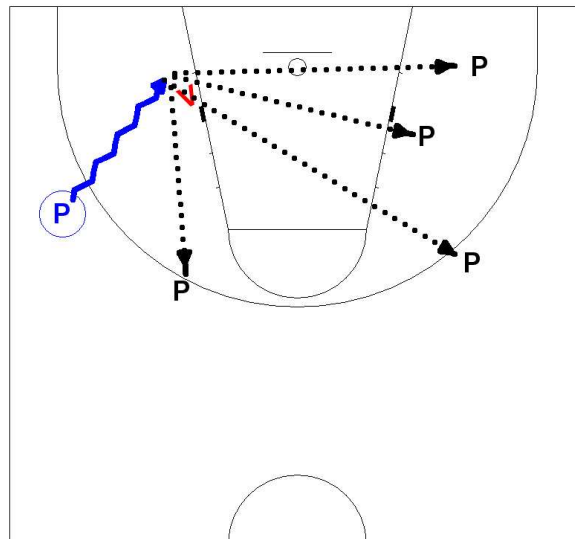


Each time our player attacks driving to the basket, it is very important to give some passing lanes diagonally on the help side (**diagram 18**) but also behind the penetration line, in a position that is almost always left uncovered by the defense (**diagram 19**).

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 18



LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 19

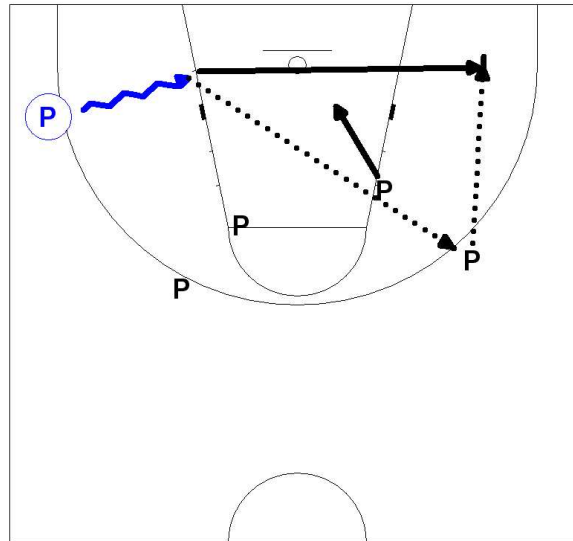


The player who gets behind the penetration line can be on the three point line if he is a good shooter, or he can place himself at the top of the elbow if he is not a good shooter or if he is a big man. He can be an immediate or an indirect danger, immediate thanks to a good percentage shot, indirect because he can offer a quick reversal of the ball allowing to keep the offensive initiative, without giving the defense time to reorganize after having absorbed the first penetration attempt.

Therefore it is essential to underline that at a good defensive level, it will be more difficult for the offensive action to finish with a penetration and kick for a good shot.

The offensive player penetration puts pressure on the defense, forcing it to collapse to avoid an easy basket, then recover and close out. Therefore, the two concepts of team offense become essential. The first one: the dribbling player who drives to the basket after having passed the ball, must continue his cut without the ball, freeing himself immediately to catch the ball in an area in which he can be dangerous. In **diagram 20** a typical action is shown for many valuable point guards and shooting guards.

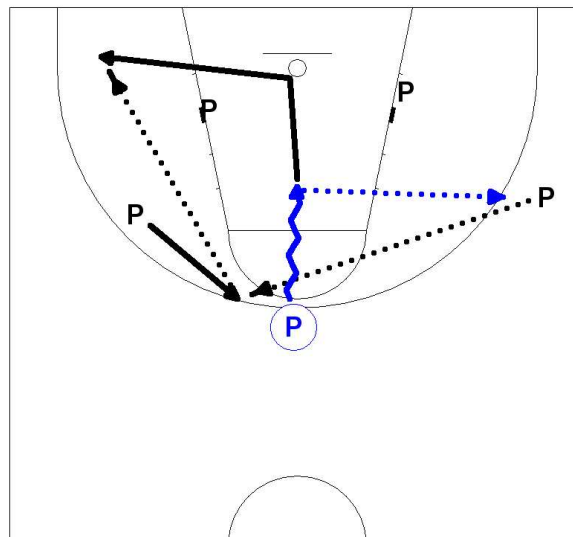
LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 20



The guard, after having penetrated to the baseline and passed to his open teammate diagonally, continues his cut until the corner. Often when the defense is recovering at a disadvantage towards the player who has caught the ball on the first pass, does not defend the player making the initial penetration who can catch and shoot an uncontested shot. Players such as Pablo Prigioni, Marko Jaric or Rimantas Kaukenas are masters in exploiting their own 1v1 in this way.

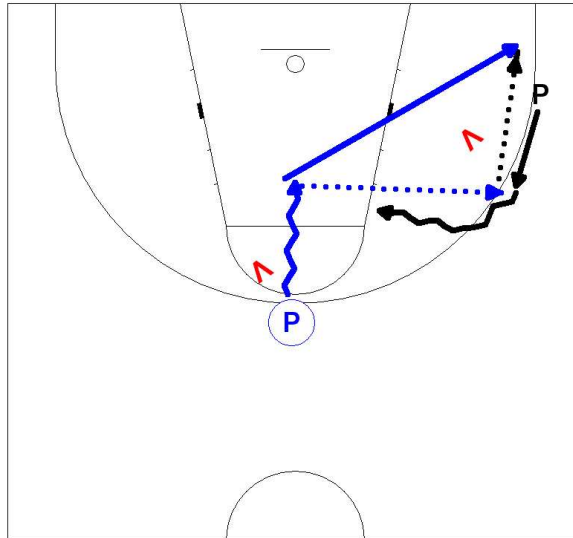
In **diagram 21** there is a similar situation in which the two illustrated principles are combined. After the dribble penetration in the middle and the kick out to the right, the ball is quickly reserved by a player who is behind the penetration line back to the player who, having finished the penetration has gone out to the corner, far away from the ball.

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 21



In **diagram 22** a combination: dribble penetration in the middle, a kick out to a player who has followed behind the penetration, new dribble penetration to further pressure the defense and a quick pass out to the teammate who has gone to the corner.

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 22



Then we can see how the completion of the move without the ball has no impact whatsoever, whereas not stopping in the paint once having kicked out the ball is of fundamental importance to avoid dangerous jams which would favor the defense.

The second important concept is that often the first penetration collapses the defense and not necessarily puts the offense in a position to shoot. It is also true that this has obliged defensive rotation, and therefore the player who has received the pass will probably be guarded by his opponent, while all the other defenders reoccupying a correct defensive position.

Right in the moment in which the defense is reorganizing itself, a second penetration can take place, allowing us to go to the basket or allow a teammate to shoot the ball. So remember that, at a good defensive level, it's never the first penetration that allows us to finish the play, but almost always the second or even the third one.

The Yugoslav and Russian teams have for years been masters in this careful work of penetration, kick out, further penetration, kick out that exhausts the defense from a technical, but even more from a psychological point of view, because here the offensive players show their master level not only technically, but also in the rhythm of the game.

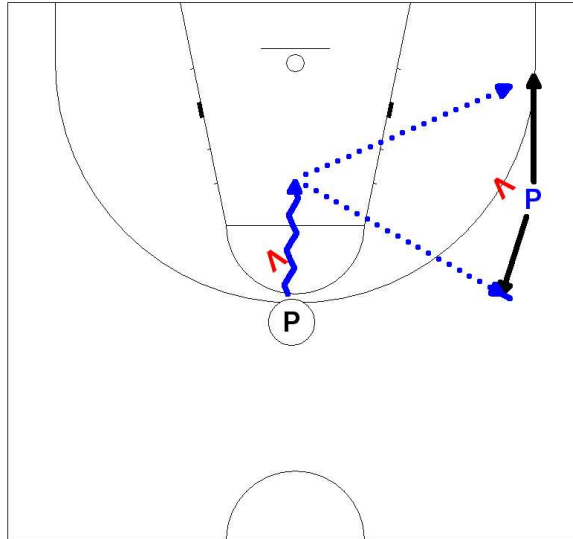
The continuous pressing of the offense (with penetration), and pressure on the guards (with passing), forces the defense to incessantly work on 1v1, collapsing, closing out, recovering, and after some seconds an error will take place that allows an easy shot. In the same respect, a dribble penetration where the offensive player does not have his up almost always leads to a forced shot or a turnover. Patience and rhythm in the offense are essential to be able to play a "penetrate & kick" game well.

There are many situations that can be reproduced using drills in practice from 2v2 to 4v4. Over the years I have found that that only allowing small portions of the court to be used therefore reducing the space available for

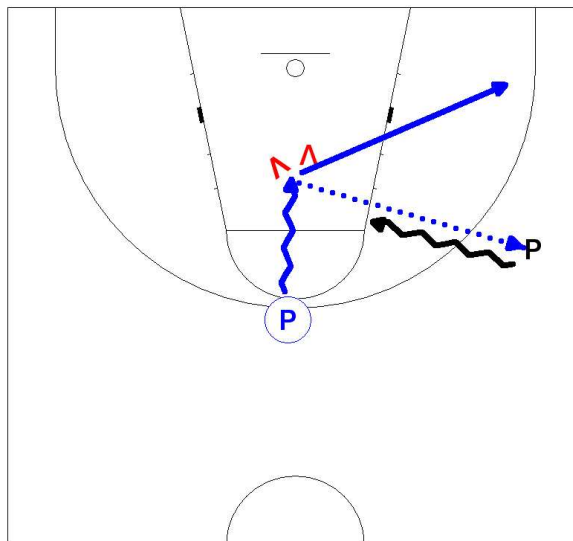
the offensive players is useful, as it insist on players catching the ball and playing in a quick way.

A first possibility is show in **diagram 23**, with 2v2 taking place on a quarter court. After the penetration, the player who passes the ball will have to quickly spread out to not jam the small portion of the court at their disposal, risking to block his teammate's action (**diagram 24**).

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 23



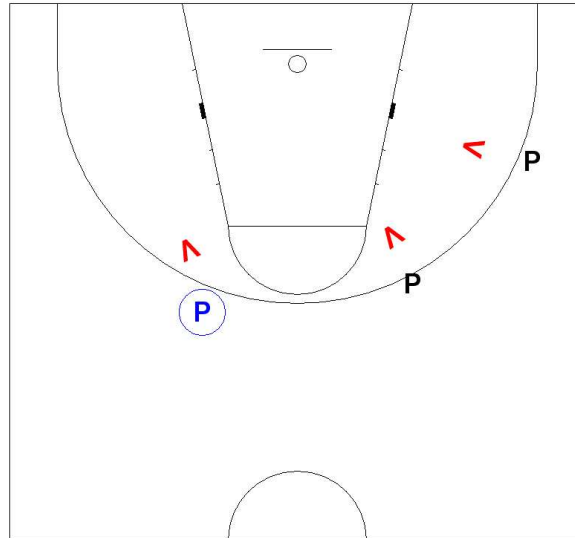
LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 24



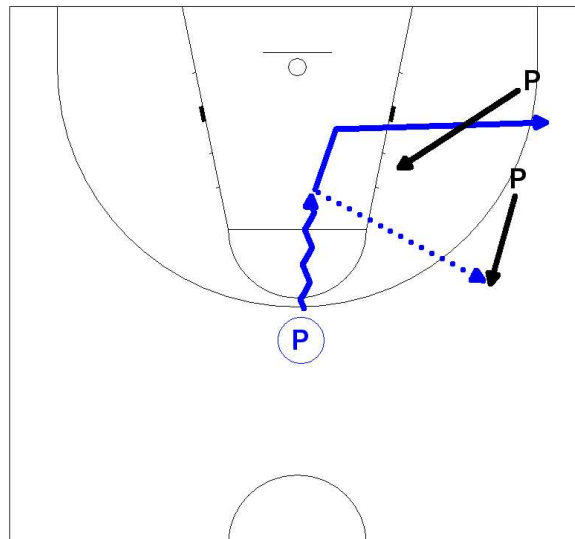
We can further reduce the available space, playing 3v3, always on a quarter court. In this way, the speed in small spaces, both in cutting and in passing, dribbling and shooting, will be considerably put under pressure.

It could also be interesting to diagonally split the half court along an imaginary line (**diagram 25**). In this case, we will have to improvise to find an opening for the offensive movements. The limited space available to the offense is normally needed. This can among other things stress the use of the pass behind the penetration (**diagram 26**).

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 25



LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 26

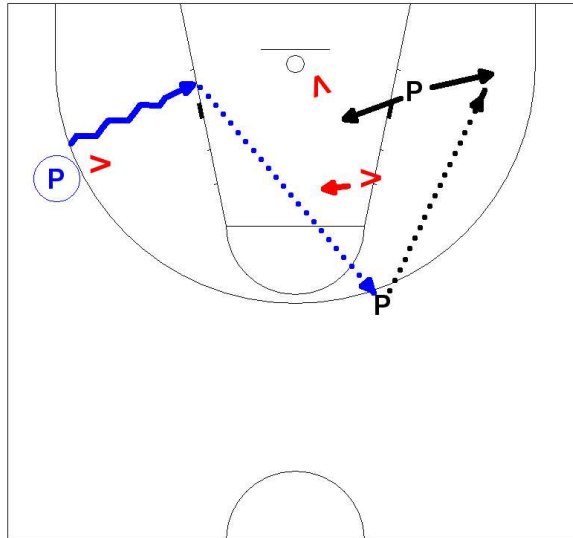


Finally, it is important to distinguish between two situations: the use of the dribble penetration inside a particular offensive mechanism (for example a set play) where the offensive player will create an advantage over his defender, and an offensive philosophy based on the use of the "penetrate & kick". It is not rare to see teams in the second case played too much on the perimeter without any real alternatives to the jump shot.

Also in this kind of game, a right balance between the outside game and inside game is essential: we must teach our players to keep an eye on the inside players, remembering the need to mix passes around the perimeter with passes penetrating into the restricted area.

Very often, the moment in which after making a pass outside, the defense spreads out again is the best moment for our big men to step into the restricted area particularly if their defender has left them to help (**diagram 27**).

LESSON 11
PENETRATE & KICK
DIAGRAM 27



A right mixture between dribble penetrations and penetrations by a good pass to the inside players and outside passes to the shooters can make the offense almost unbeatable.

A last precise definition: a fundamental aid for the player who penetrates in the paint against an aggressive defense is the jump shot off the dribble. A strong one step stop (jump stop) allows physical self control, and an almost always perfect choice between shooting or passing, avoiding a charge foul or a forced solution. The great offensive player always has this third dimension, besides the set shot and the lay-up in his technical background.

REMEMBER

- A correct spacing among players without the ball makes dribble penetration a lot more effective, giving different passing possibilities.
- Concept of the "clock rule": go in the opposite direction of the defensive rotation, to make their recovery very difficult.
- Move in co-ordination with the player who penetrates but also with other teammates. Give a passing lane diagonally compared to the penetration and behind the penetration itself.
- Whoever drives to the basket, after passing must continue his cut running outside the restricted area, to exploit any occasion to receive a pass and shoot.
- The second penetration, if not the third, kills the defense.
- Mix the penetration and kick with inside-outside passes.
- Use a jump shot to finish off the penetration!!!