



THREE OF A KIND

Course 01: Coach Ettore Messina

Lesson 13: Pick & Roll

Language: English

PICK & ROLL

In modern basketball the pick & roll is used by all teams, usually by having a big man setting a screen for a guard who is in possession of the ball.

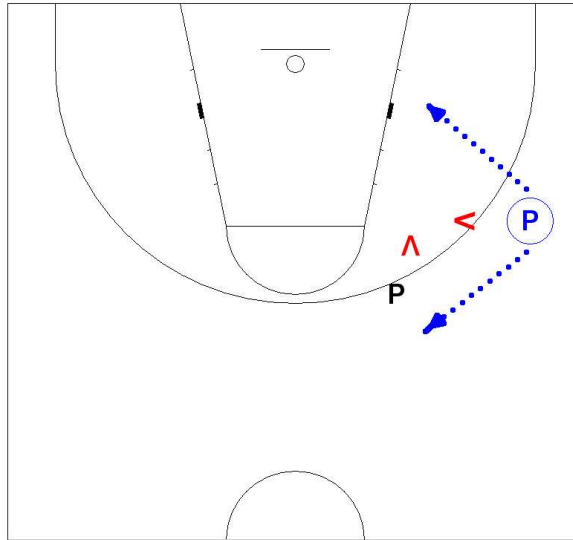
Until relatively recently the pick & roll was used almost always in the last seconds of a play, if the set play had not reached a positive conclusion. Now it is an action that is used often, and not only as a last hope.

A good execution of the pick & roll game should foresee both the play on the ball side and also what happens on the help side with the three players not directly involved in the pick & roll.

The classic hypothesis of the pick & roll wants a player with the ball on the free throw line extended, and a teammate who runs and sets a screen for him. I do not like the action to occur very close to the baseline, because I think that it is more effective to give the dribbler two penetrations lines rather than only one (**diagrams 1-2**).

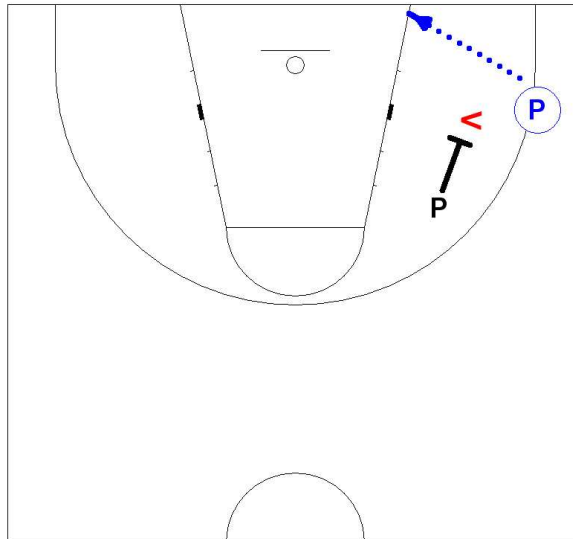
LESSON 13
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DIAGRAM 01

YES



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DIAGRAM 02

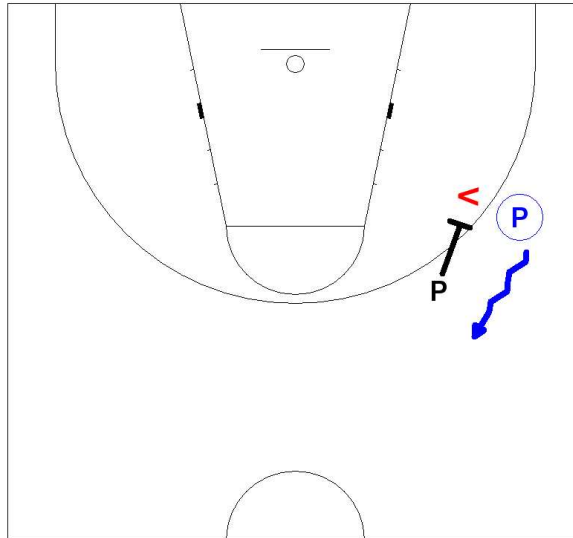
NO



It is important that the screener waits for the ball to get to the player being screened and he will quickly set the pick. Speed is necessary to surprise the defense, and to prevent that they take the correct help position.

I want the picker to take a position very close to the defender, with his toes pointing towards the corner of the court, with the defender's inside shoulder perpendicular to his chest, and so with his shoulder he can "surround" the defender (**diagram 3**).

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DIAGRAM 03

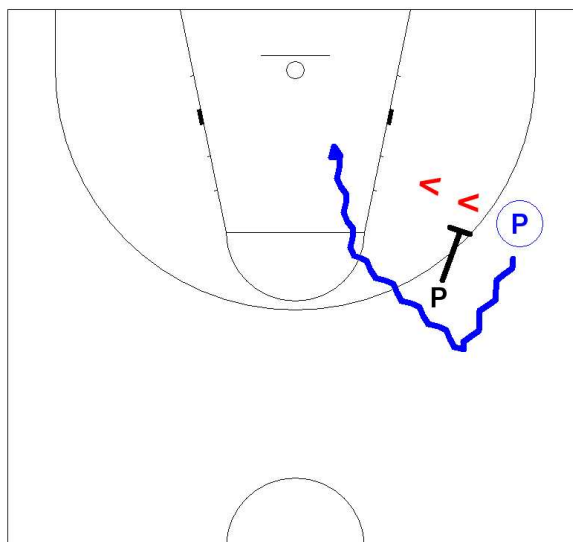


When the pick is set in a good way, I want the ball handler to fake a little towards the opposite direction (to make his own defender off balance), and then to start dribbling towards the pick.

As in the case of a screen for a player without the ball, the ball handler will have different possibilities according to how the defense behaves.

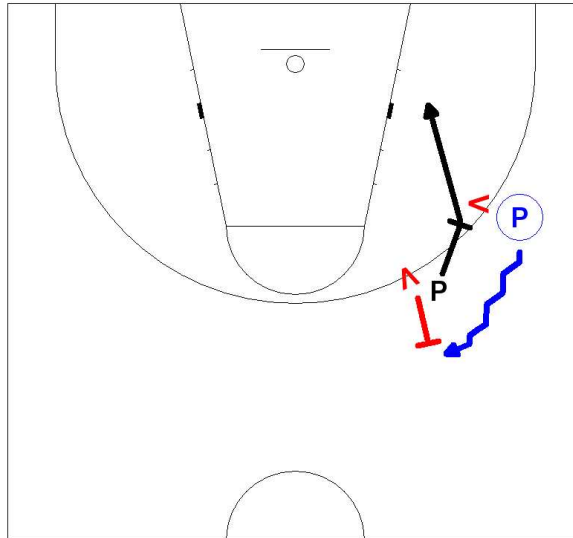
In **diagram 4**, we can see that if the defender is screened off and there is no help, the dribbler can directly turn the corner and attack the basket.

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DIAGRAM 04



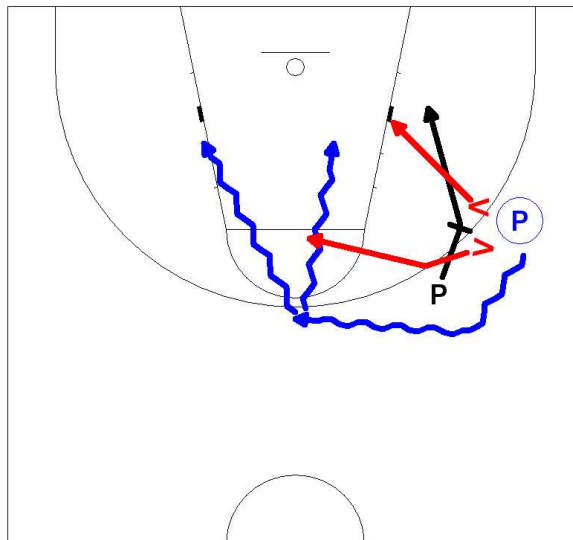
If there is a defensive switch it is vital to spread the court with the dribble and to create a passing angle to get the ball to the big man who is being defended by a guard, as he rolls to the basket (**diagram 5**) or for the guard to play 1v1 against a defender who is usually taller and slower.

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DIAGRAM 05



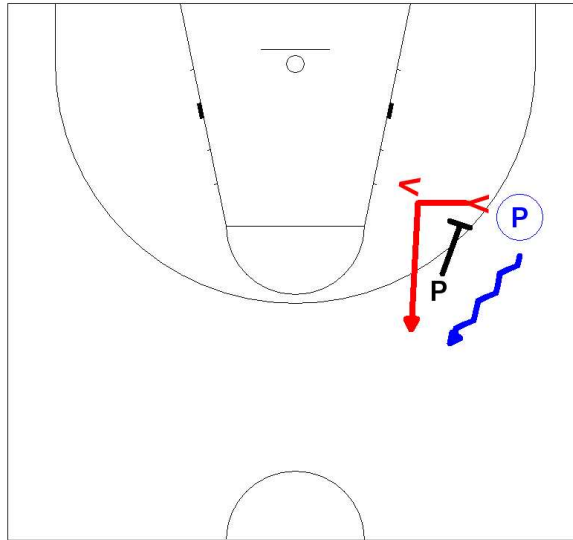
In this second case some guards if guarded by a big man, and if they have enough time, prefer take a central position to play 1v1 with the possibility of different passing lanes, in case of defensive help (**diagram 6**).

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DIAGRAM 06

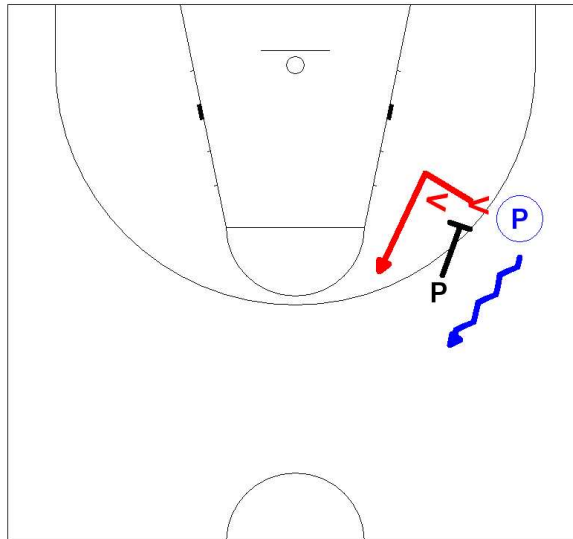


As an alternative to the defensive switch, the dribbler's defender can pass between the screeners and the screener's defender (**diagram 7**), or even go behind both the screen and his teammate, especially if the ball handler is not a good outside shooter (**diagram 8**).

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DIAGRAM 07

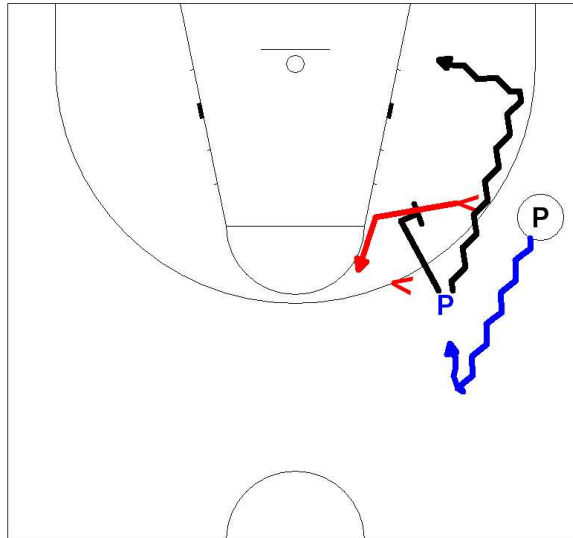


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DIAGRAM 08



In both cases we ask the dribbler to be ready to take his jump shot behind the pick, or we will teach the picker to “re-pick” and immediately set another pick (**diagram 9**).

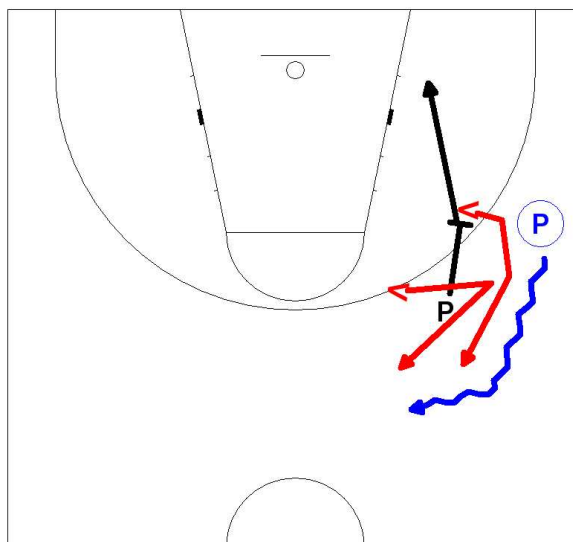
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DIAGRAM 09



The use of this new pick usually opens a penetration lane towards the basket or, in the worst case allows the dribbler to at least finish with a jump shot from a closer distance compared to the position he was originally. It is fundamental, especially with younger players to teach how to “re-pick” the defender who attempts to take advantage of our teammate's poor shooting ability.

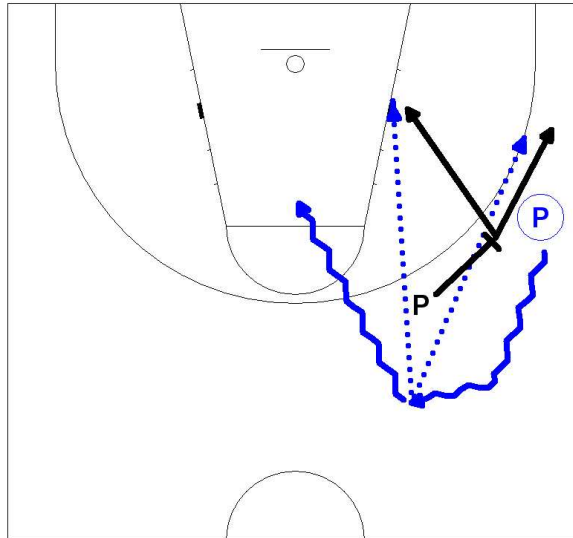
The last choice the defense have is to “hedge and recover” in order to delay the ball handlers dribble, giving his teammate the possibility to recover (**diagram 10**). In this case we teach the dribbler to keep the ball with at least two dribbles, opening spaces on the court with a backwards dribble, then to dribble penetrate so the helping defender will be uncertain about how and when he must recover to his direct opponent.

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DIAGRAM 10



I also ask the picker to keep the pick until his teammate goes past his outside shoulder, and then to turn quickly (with a forward or reverse roll according to his own characteristics) towards the basket (**diagram 11**).

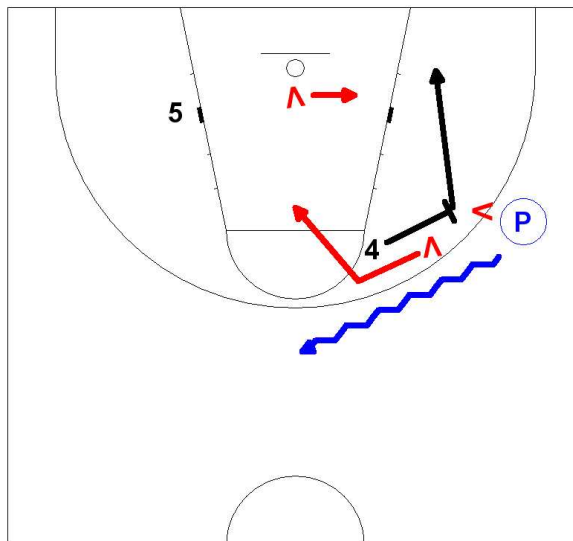
LESSON 13
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DIAGRAM 11



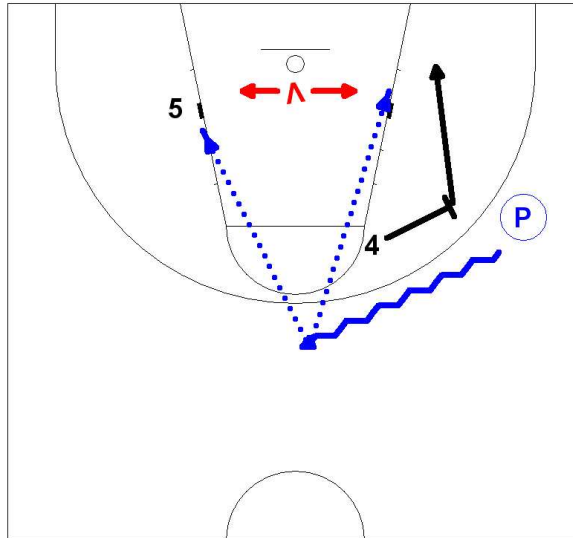
The right moment to pass to the player rolling towards the basket will vary according to his skills, to his shooting range, to his dribbling ability, and finally, to the behavior of the help side defenders.

If there is a center on the help side, and the defense makes a rotation with X5 and X4 switching it is clear that if X4 begins far away from the basket the defensive rotation will be almost impossible (**diagrams 12-13**).

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DIAGRAM 12



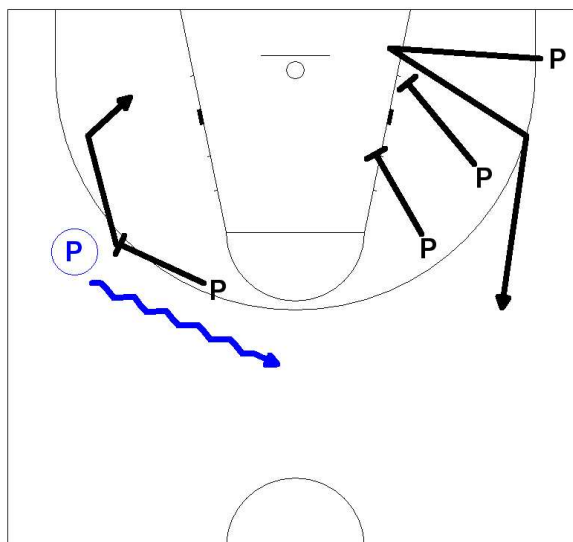
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DIAGRAM 13



If the ball handler does not have the patience to wait until O4 goes towards the basket, or spreads out for a shot or if, even worse, he does not go to a more central position as in diagram 13, there will not be the possibility to spread the offense and so the defense will have an easier job to recover.

Having looked at a first simple defensive rotation, we reach the subject of the other players' position on the help side. I must say that I prefer to see very open players on the help side. These should be ready to take advantage of the spaces given by the defense, instead of setting screens of their own as in **diagram 14**. The action illustrated in this diagram is certainly effective, but at the same time it causes a crowded restricted area. If the ball handler drives to the basket, he might be stopped by the crowded situation, effectively helping the defense.

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DIAGRAM 14

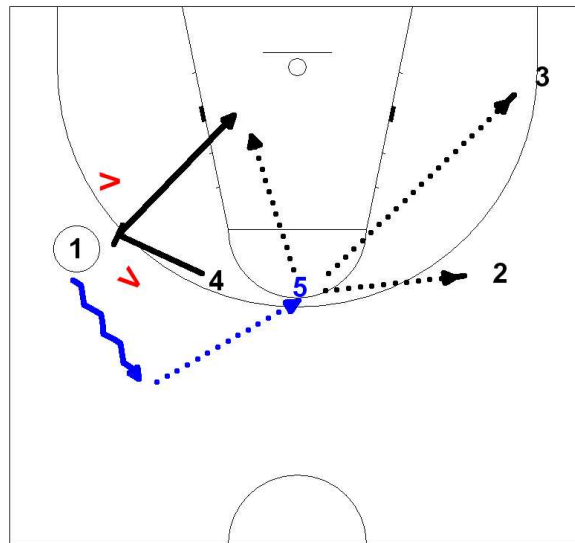


Now that it is clear that the shooters spot up on the help side, let us look at the possibilities for the second big man. If the pick & roll action is on or under the free throw line extended, we can use the second big man in a high post position. This makes a defensive rotation between X4 and X5

almost impossible should the defense double team or play the pick & roll very aggressively (**diagram 15**).

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DIAGRAM 15

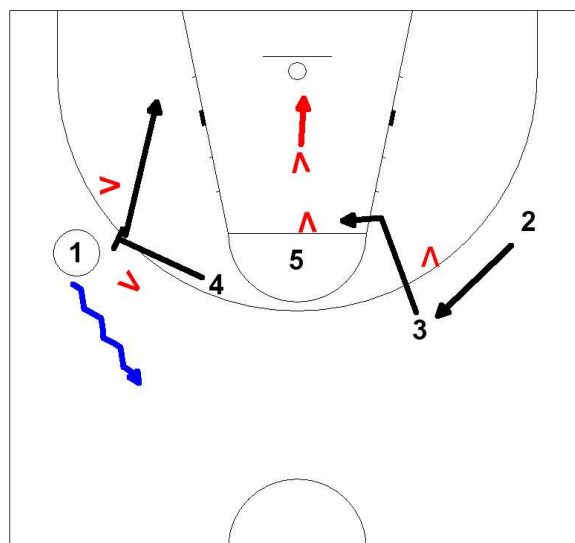
YES



In the illustrated diagram, the two guards without the ball will have to get to the help side in the wing and corner positions, and not the high post, thus allowing the defense to adapt (**diagram 16**).

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DIAGRAM 16

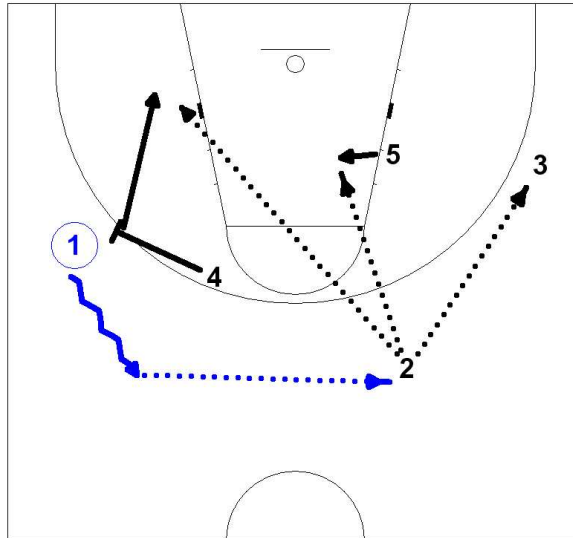
NO



Maybe it is unnecessary to point out that the action in question is even more effective if the two big men are good shooters from the high post position, because this can open big spaces particularly in the restricted area for cuts or penetrations.

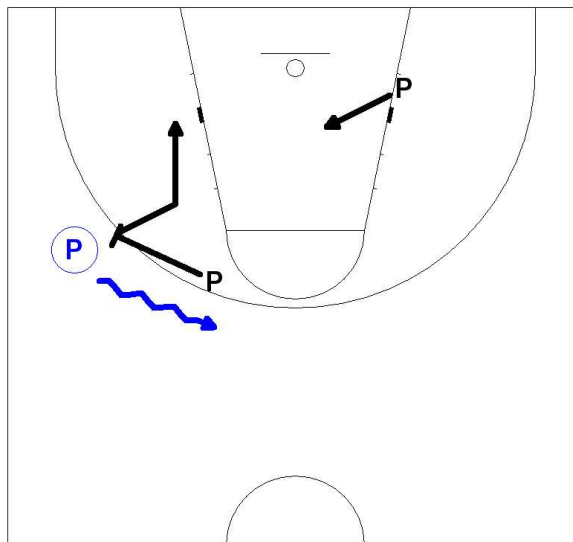
Another change is to have the second big man close to the basket, especially if he is a powerful player. In this case the two guards positions on the help side and the penetration lines with and without the ball will change (**diagram 17**).

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DIAGRAM 17

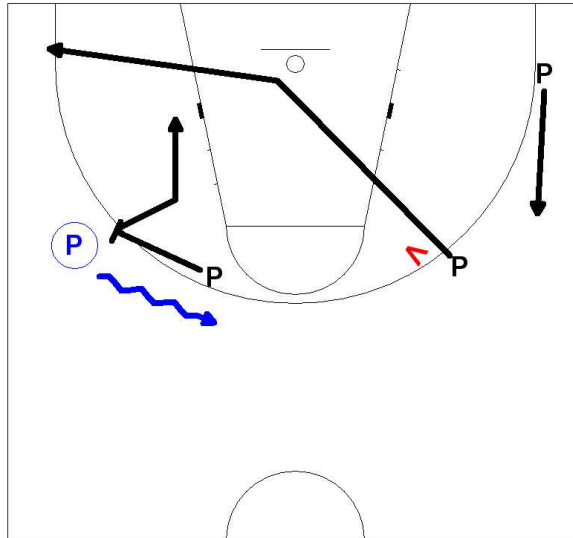


Once we have decided which is our favorite formation based on the characteristics of the available players, in practice we can work both 3v3 (for example a guard and two big men, as in **diagram 18** and 4v4 (**diagrams 19-20**) to improve the “reading” of the defense and to play without the ball.

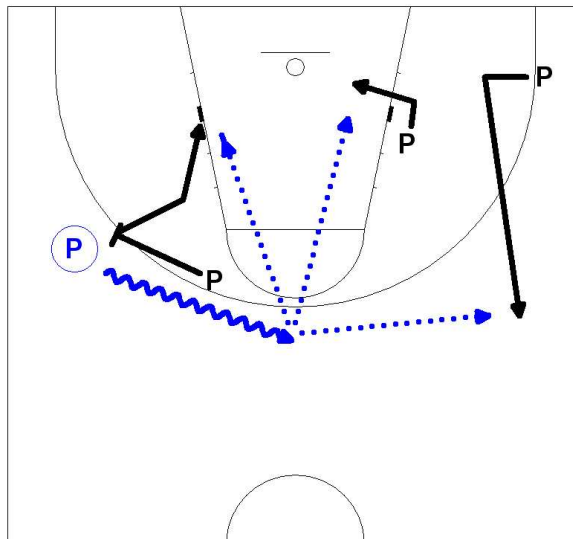
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DIAGRAM 18



LESSON 13
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DIAGRAM 19



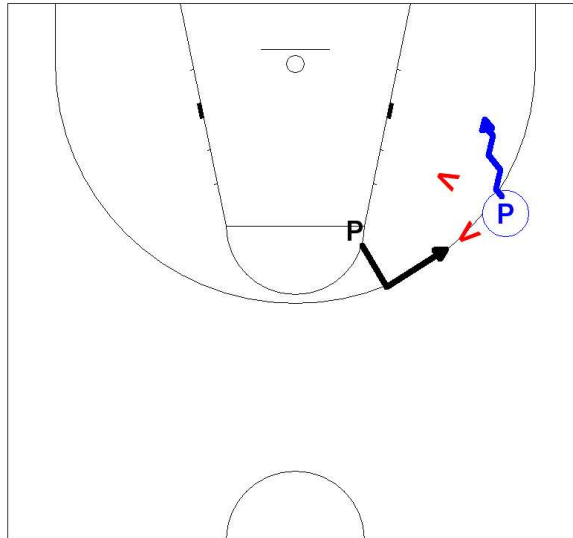
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In diagram 19 we can see, for example, a situation in which the defense, having defended the pick & roll well, strongly denies the receiver. In this case, the player closer to the action if overplayed can go backdoor, creating therefore space for dribble penetration of the ball handler, or for a catch by the player in the corner who will go up towards the free throw line extended.

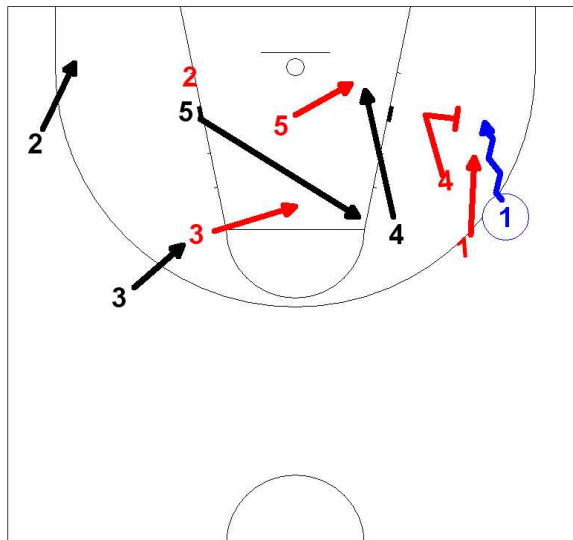
If the defense decides to force the dribbler towards the baseline, away from the pick, keeping the inside help position with the picker's defender (**diagram 21**) this forces a different read by the offense.

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DIAGRAM 21

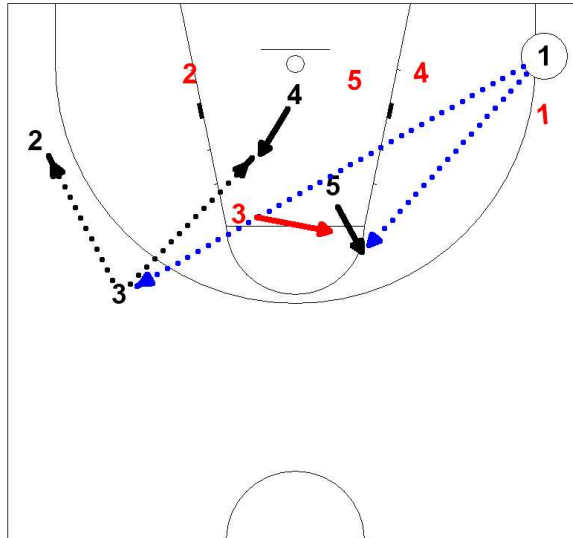


In this case, I think that the offense will surely be more effective if O1 makes two or three dribbles towards the baseline, to bring the defense towards him. This is the automatic signal for O4 to cut towards the basket behind his defender. Obviously X5 will have to help on O4, leaving O5 free to flash towards the elbow on the ball side. O2 and O3 will stay on the help side to catch the ball, thanks to a quick reversal, and then they can shoot, drive to the basket, or pass to a big man in the paint (**diagrams 22-23**). This allows good spacing to take the initiative, so making the defense help and a solid defensive rotation more difficult.

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DIAGRAM 22

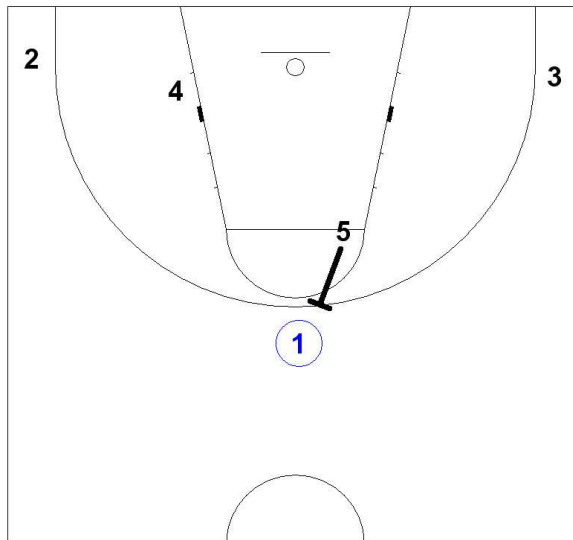


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DIAGRAM 23



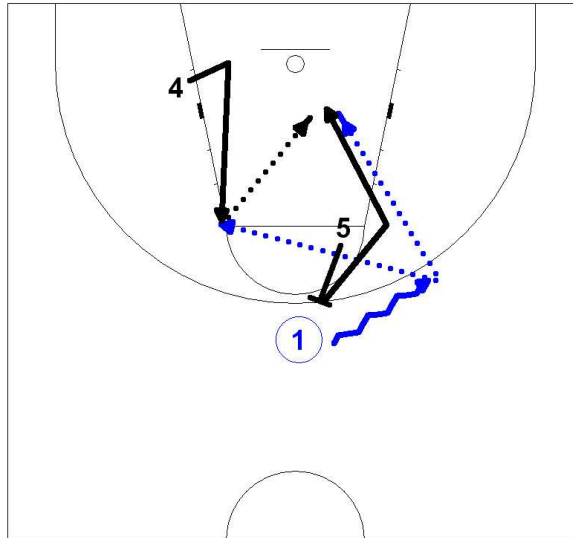
To get favorable spacing, we can use a pick & roll in a central position with two shooters in the corners (**diagram 24**).

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DIAGRAM 24

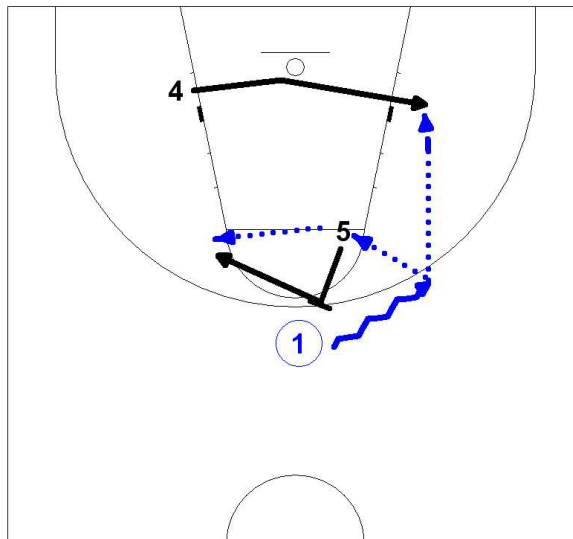


The game amongst O1, O4 and O5 can change if we prefer to reverse the position after the pick & roll (**diagram 25**) or if we prefer the contrary (**diagram 26**). In this case the two shooters will exploit any help on the big men by their defenders.

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DIAGRAM 25



LESSON 13
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DIAGRAM 26



Also in the case of a central pick & roll, the dribbler's action will depend on the defense. If the defense goes behind or over the pick or switches, the ball handler will decide to shoot, drive to the basket or to spread the court using a pass.

The pick & roll position is important, in this case, to be more dangerous, because the defense cannot clearly set a strong side and a help side, so the help defenders will be in trouble.

REMEMBER

- Position on the court: free throw line extended. Picker's position: perpendicular to the shoulder of the defender "surrounding" him with his own body.
- Does the defense go behind? Shoot a jump shot or re-pick the defender on the other side.
- Does the defense go over? Drive to the basket.
- Defensive switch? Spread out for 1v1 (guard against big man) or pass to the big man being defended by a guard.

- Does the defense hedge and recover? Keep the dribble alive and give time to the picker to roll towards the basket or to the wing for a shot.
- Does the defense force baseline? Big men switch and reversal of the ball.
- Help side: it is better for our shooters to spot up and to choose which position we prefer for the second big man (high post or low post).