



THREE OF A KIND

Course 01: Coach Ettore Messina

Lesson 14: Low post game

Language: English

LOW POST GAME

One of the most frequent offensive action is to give the ball to a player in the low post position. This player can be a center or a power-forward, therefore used to playing with his back towards the basket, or he can be a forward guarded by a smaller or a physically less powerful opponent. This last possibility, (usually called mis-match) has been even more exploited by many teams, since the defensive "no hand-checking" rule has been stressed.

Not being allowed to use the hands and arms to oppose an offensive player near the basket, many coaches, in their own offensive system, have looked for frequent possibilities of post-up for the players who are technically and/or physically stronger.

In case we get the ball to these players in the low post position, we have two main goals: to play at or on one with a high percentage scoring opportunity or, in case of defensive helps, to give the ball to the guards for an easy three points shot.

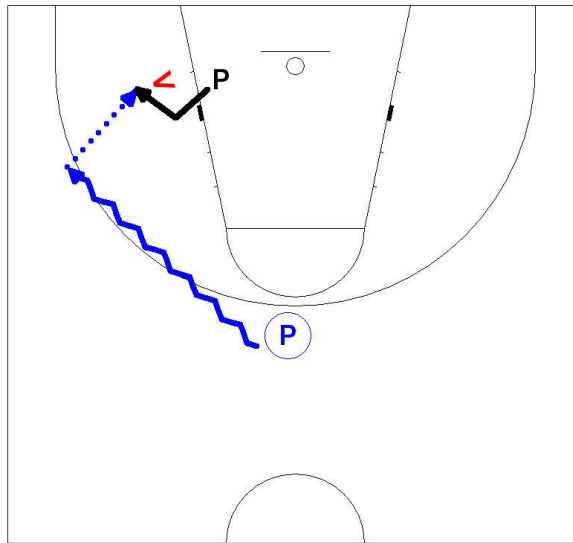
In 1984, the introduction of the three points shot increased the big men participation at the game creation; and if there is defensive help or

doubleteam, they must be ready to read the defensive rotation with an effective out let pass.

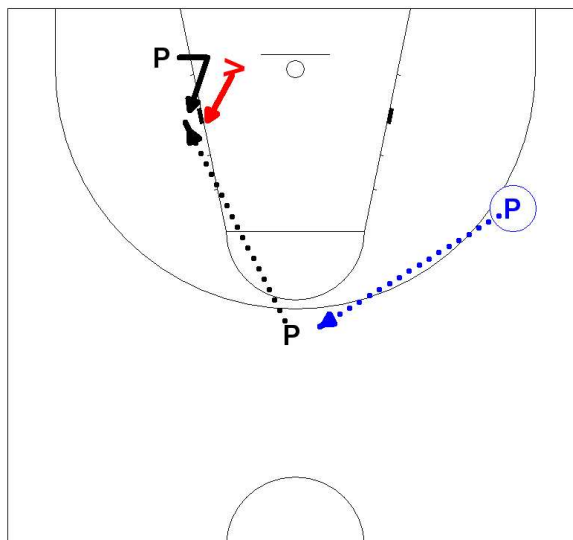
The ball can get to the post (or to the player in low post position) in static or dynamic situations.

In the first case the post is already on the wanted position, and with a small footwork, using above all his physical power, he keeps the defender in a position where he cannot be denied from receiving the pass. In this case the ball, is "brought" ti his side, so he can catch the ball where he prefers (**diagram 1 and 2**).

LESSON 14
LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 01



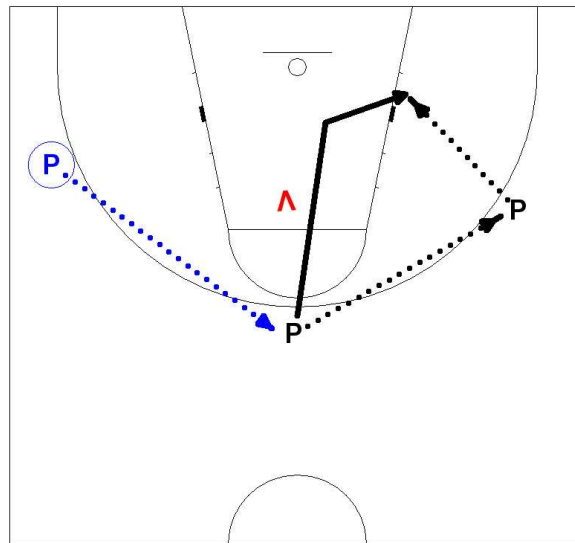
LESSON 14
LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 02



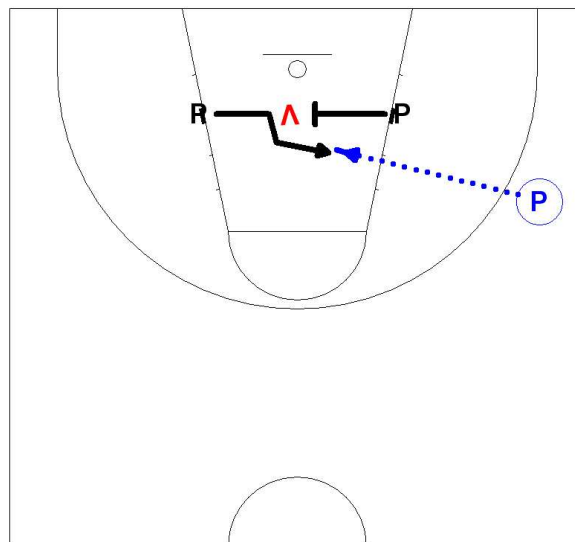
In the second case, the player goes towards the ball with quick cuts to surprise the defense, or a teammate sets a pick for him (**diagram 3 and 4**). Also in this case, the coach must rely on the knowledge he has of his players' technicals and physical characteristics to use the most effective system: generally, also for high level players, I prefer to limit standing one on one situations, and therefore, I like better actions in which, while men

and ball are moving, we try to give the ball to a teammate in low post position.

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DIAGRAM 03

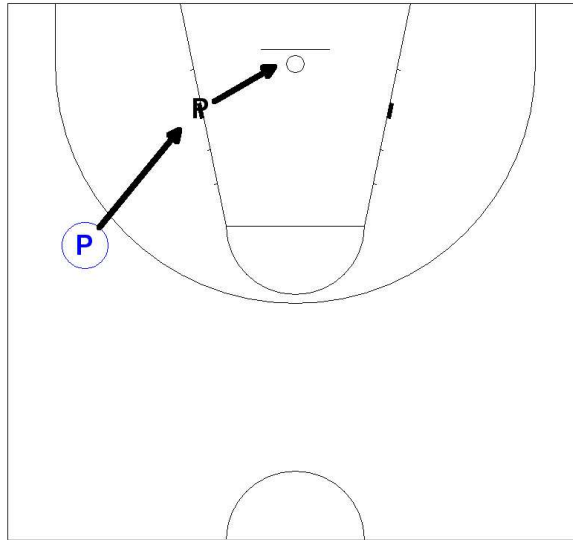


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DIAGRAM 04



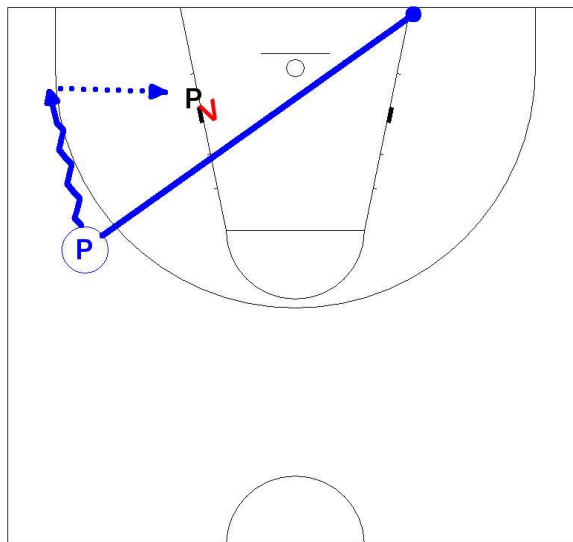
Apart from the fact the low post is already taking position on the ball side, or that he cuts towards the ball, I always teach my players to look for a lining up among the ball, the basket and their position (**diagram 5**).

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DIAGRAM 05

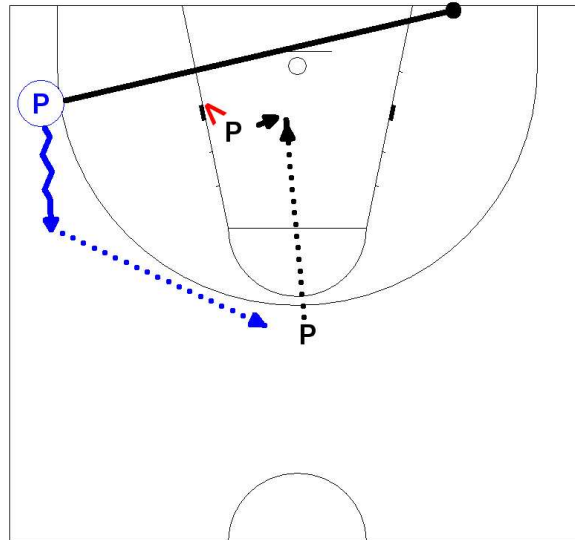


The reason is very simple: if the offensive player takes position over or under this imaginary line, the defender can easily place himself to one side, obstructing an easy catch. The player with the ball will have to dribble or to use a passing triangle with a teammate, in order to find the right passing angle **(diagram 6 and 7)**.

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DIAGRAM 06

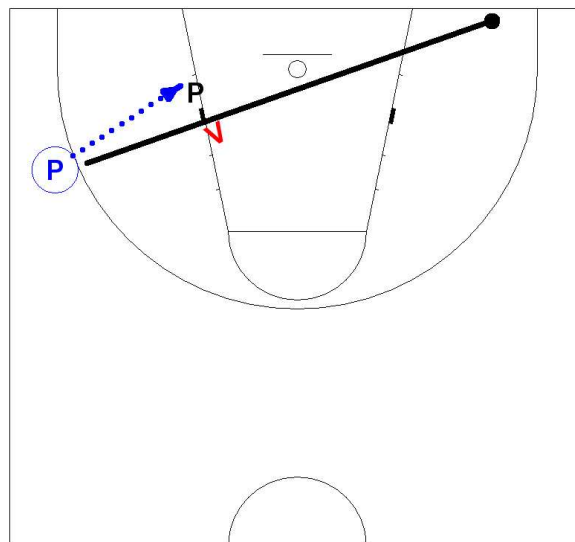


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LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 07



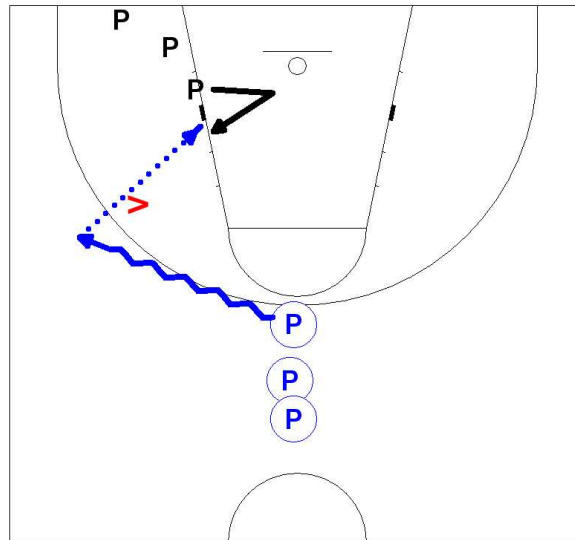
In case the defender is on the side, the lining up of the low post with the teammate with the ball and the basket guarantees an immediate passing angle, making the move quicker (**diagram 8**).

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LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 08



In practice I use a simple drill shown in **diagram 9**.

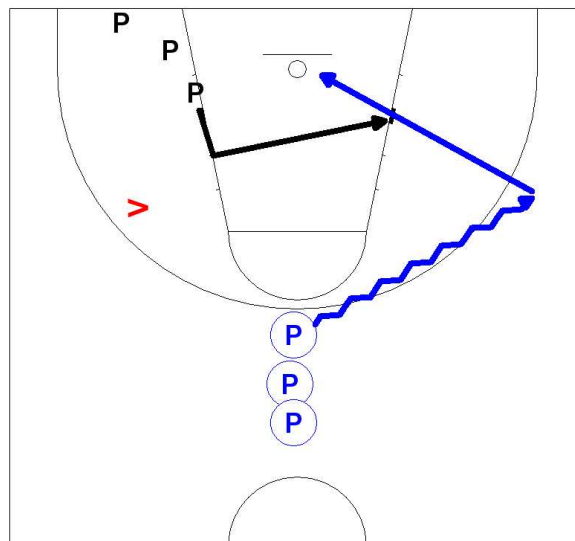
LESSON 14
LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 09



Two lines, balls in the central one: the first player moves dribbling on the low post side, he finds the right lining up and passes the ball while he's passively stopped by a teammate or by an assistant.

If the dribbler moves to the position opposite the team-mate's, this one will cut a towards the ball and so he'll guarantee the lining up (**diagram 10**).

LESSON 14
LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 10



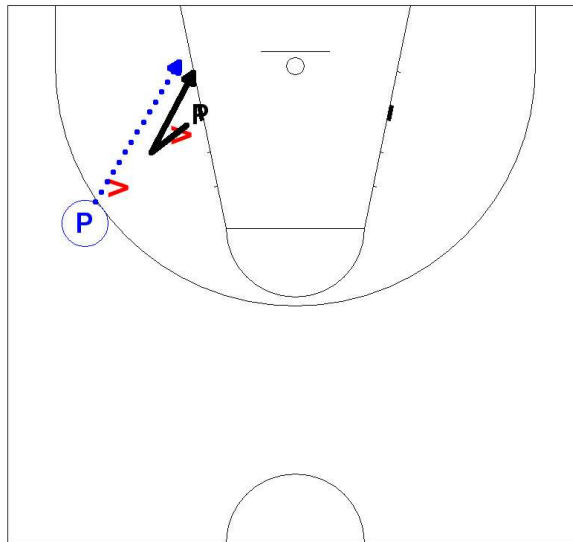
I insist on the fact that, in this second case, both movements are not done at the same time, but always one after the other, in order to make the lining up more simple, because a player will have a clear reference points in his teammate's position.

If the post's defender chooses to stay in side position, the lining up among the ball, the low post and the basket, guarantees that the pass becomes a scoring pass, that is to say a pass that takes straight to the basket, with a simple receiving and continuation to the basket along the side not covered by the defense.

To avoid that, the low post's defender will be able to choose to place himself behind or in front of his opponent.

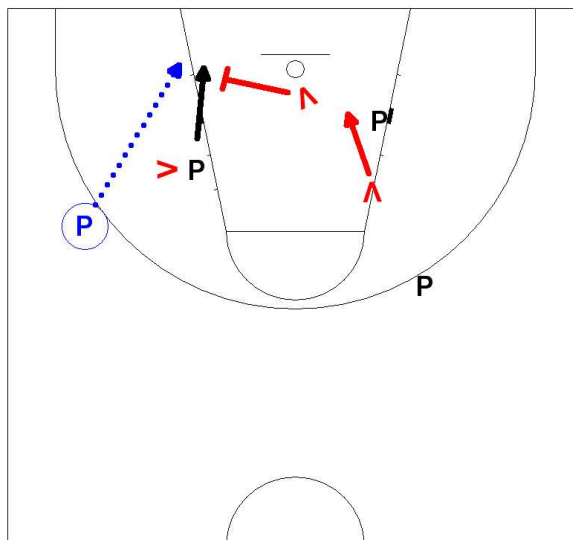
In this second case, we have two possibilities to give the ball to our center. In the first case, **(diagram 11)**, the low post makes a "sealing" movement (whose techniques is not subject to debate in this moment) to receive a lob pass towards the baseline. This solution can bring to an easy scored basket, but in my opinion it has a big handicap: the low post concentrates his attention on the ball, turning his back on almost the entire court, risking not to notice how the defense behaves, in case of defensive help on the weak side, making therefore charge fouls, or however, taking shots from difficult positions **(diagram 12)**.

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LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 11



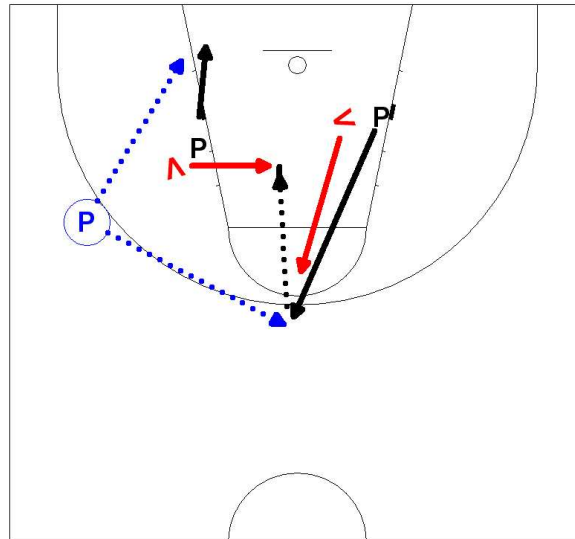
In **diagram 12**, obviously when the low post is catching the ball, he can be closed in a grip by the defender of the low post on the weak side, finding himself with his back turned to most of his teammates, and therefore he will have a lot of difficulty both to shoot and to pass the ball. So, in case the low post is frontally guarded, I think it's easier to try to give him a "side" at the top of the key or at the guard position in order to create a passing triangle.

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LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 12



The advantage of a situation as in **diagram 13** is clear: making a passing triangle, the low post, after making an offensive box out on his defender, will catch the ball having an overview of the whole court, neutralizing possible defensive helps, and being to drive to the basket with major chance of success.

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LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 13

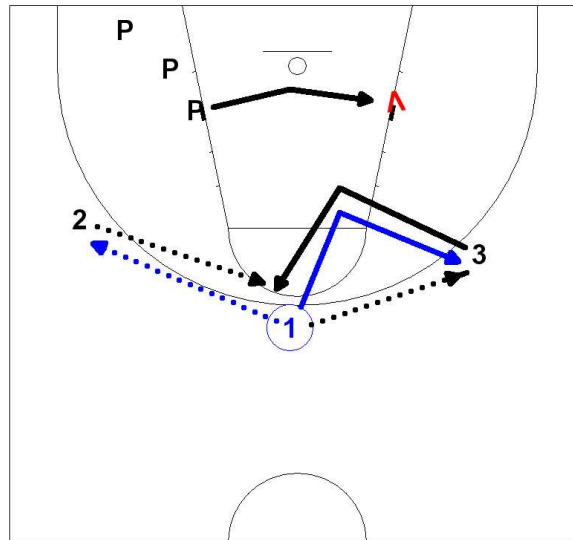


The need to make an extra pass, giving the ball to the low post, is widely balanced out by the major change, guaranteed by the better spacing at the offensive players' disposal.

The passing triangle can be formed with a big man or a guard. If the last pass is from the central position, this triangle can be very favourable, because, with the ball in this position, the defense can't set a ball side and a help side. Therefore, the defender who, in case, must help on the low post, can't be sure of what to do.

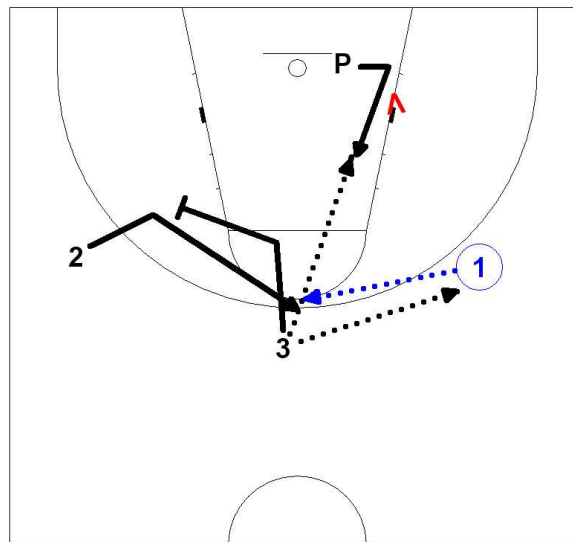
In practice, during the warming up, I often use a drill three lines of guards and three players who alternate in the low post. The player of the line 1 passes the ball to 2, and cuts on the opposite side, while 3 replaces 1 (**diagram 14**).

LESSON 14
LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 14



The ball goes round and the first center flights for the position, guarded by an assistant. If this one defends behind or from the side, thanks to the right lining up, 1 will pass the ball to the position, 1 will pass to 2 who, in the meantime, picked by 3, gets the central position to pass the ball to the low post (**diagram 15**).

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DIAGRAM 15



The drill must be done with rapidity, in short spaces, to avoid the immobility of the ball in the hands of a player. The three guards will be therefore stimulated to have a quick reading of the defense of the low post; and the player who gets into the central position must catch the ball with a clear idea of what to do: to shoot, to pass to the post or to play one on one (see the chapter 1, dedicated to the one on one in motion).

Sometimes I use a second assistant who guards the central player, stimulating the players to read, at the same time, both their defenders and the low post's defender's behaviour.

Always and anytime, who's playing with the ball in central position (a guard or a high post), must know how is guarded the low post, to avoid losing the change of playing high-low.

In the drill rotation, 1 goes to the line 2, 2 to the line 3 and 3 to the line 1.

After few minutes, we alternate the players in low post position, making sure the guards learn how to play back to the basket.

The use of aright lining up with the ball and the basket, and the use of the passing "triangles" make the side or frontal defense of the post very difficult. Therefore, also because of some defense which are mentally lazy, often the low post is guarded "from behind", more or less correctly, then counting on possible help or doubleteam by the teammate who are guarding the other opponents.

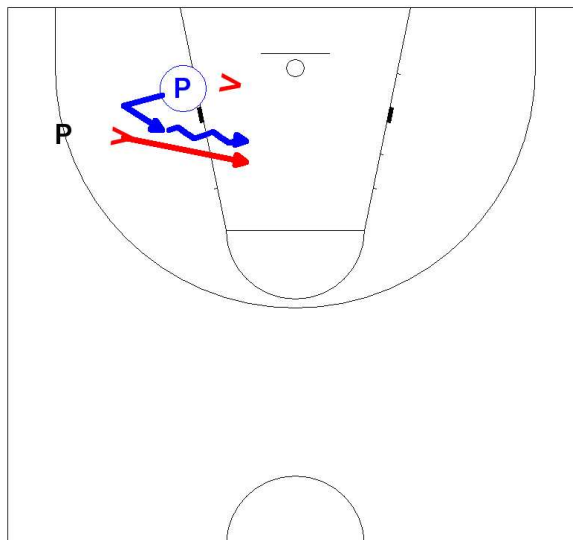
It's quite difficult to teach a player to pass the ball to a teammate, just when he's near the basket during his cut in the middle of the paint, while on the contrary it's easier to pass the ball to a teammate standing in low post position. But the question is: what to do when the low post catches the ball?.

The one on one with the ball is not the subject of this book, but I think it's important to make some interesting tactical references.

I agree with the coaches who teach their offensive player to face the basket also in low position, but on condition that, with a little bit of tactical organization, we avoid to leave, a teammate with his defender behind, because they could cause him a lot of trouble (**diagram 16 and 17**).

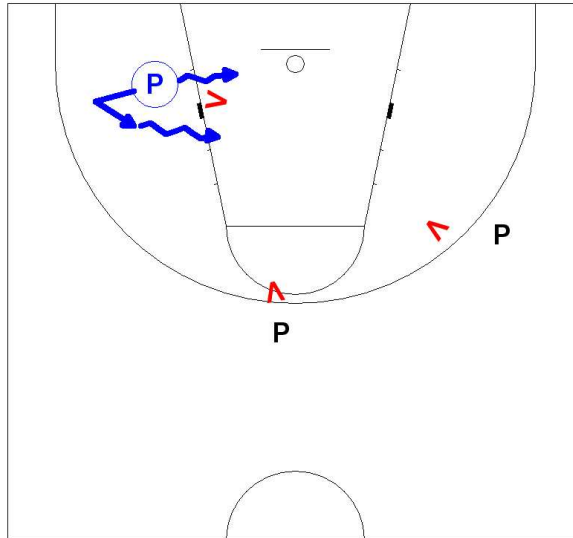
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DIAGRAM 16

NO



LESSON 14
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DIAGRAM 17

YES



If until ten years ago, we forced the center not to dribble to avoid the guards' floating.

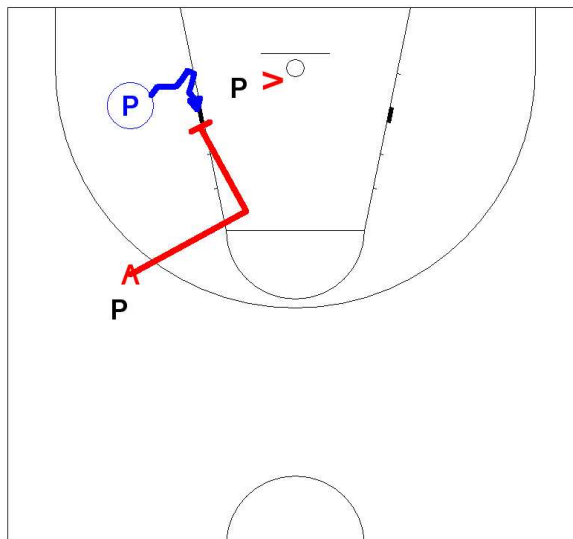
Now, with the three points shot's use, there is the need to use the so-called dribble move.

This is to say a kind of protected, slow dribble, moving back towards the middle of the paint, and subsequently to shoot or to turn towards the opposite direction, or finally, to give the ball again to a free teammate for a good jump shot, after having obtained the defensive help.

In case the low post uses the dribble-move, he must attack the center of the paint and not the baseline, to avoid "blind" helps which could cause a lot of trouble (**diagram 18**).

LESSON 14
LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 18

NO

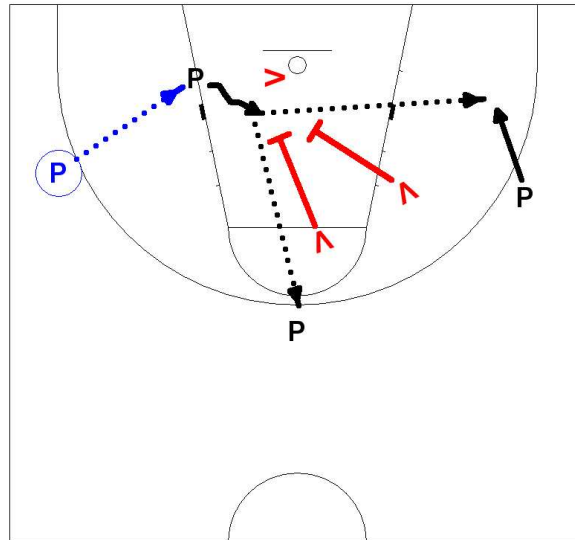


on the contrary, attacking the center of the paint, dribbling with a clear view of what is happening on the weak side, our low post will be able to understand where the help comes from, he can evaluate the possible

defensive rotation (when he has more experience), and thus find the open teammate or try out a solution himself.

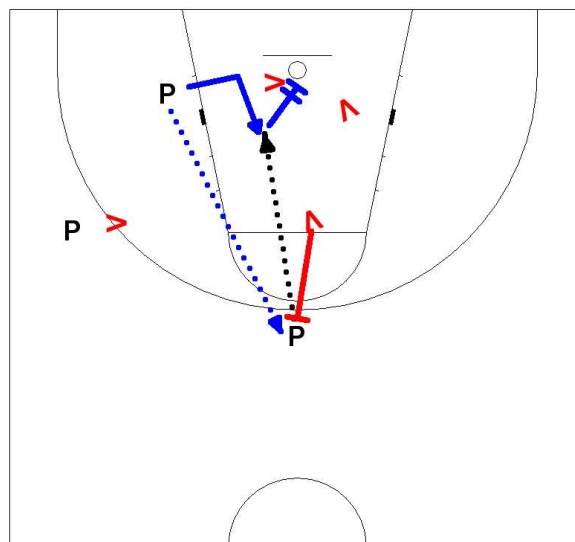
In this way, the player in low post gets involved like a guard in the game creation, adding to our offensive game a very important dimension: the so-called "inside-outside" game, that obliges the defense to compress and consequently reopen itself on the shooters, without giving the defenders the time to get back on their men (**diagram 19**).

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LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 19



With more expert teams and players, the concept only just explained can be used up to the utilization of the "inside-outside-inside" game, when the low post, after having reopened the game, often reposts himself in the centre of the paint, receiving an inside pass and then finishing off (**diagram 20**).

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LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 20



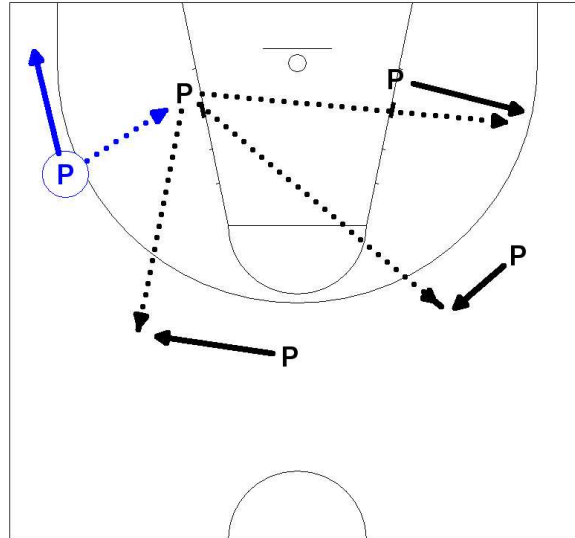
In this case, the ball moves with great rapidity and the foot work of the low post is essential.

When the low post catches the ball, and has not a quick solution (for example the turn and shot) the game freezes for two or three seconds in

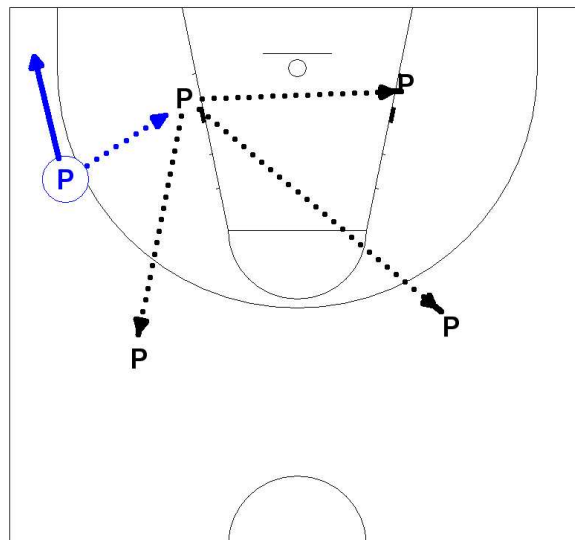
order to evaluate the defender's behaviour, and to occupy the most favourable positions to "pushing" possible defensive helps.

Some coaches prefer the four center's teammate to stop up on the perimeter and then receive the outlet pass (**diagram 21 and 22**).

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LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 21



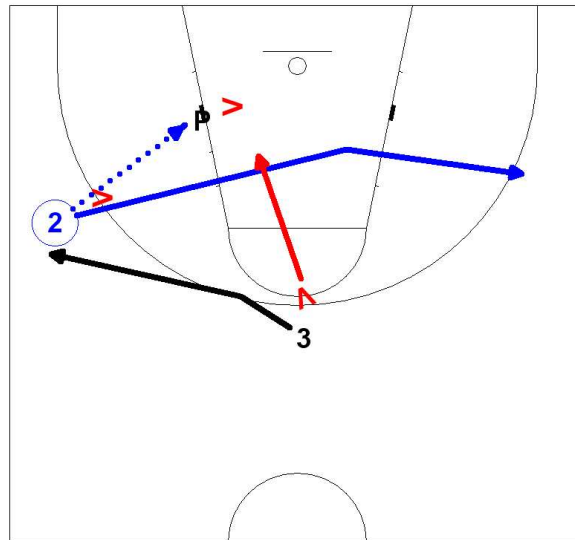
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DIAGRAM 22



Personally, also in case of ball to the low post, I prefer to stick to the two basic principles that must regulate my offensive game: 1 – to seek a spacing that gives all the offensive players a change to play in not overcrowded zones 2 – A minimal movement to avoid, with an excessive stillness, the decisive moment to the defense to decide who must help a particular team-mate.

Provided that, if there is a second big man (for example if we play with two centers) I prefer that this player goes to the baseline opposite the ball, where he will receive a pass if his defender helps, or he will take an offensive rebound, starting from behind the defender's shoulders (**diagram 23 and 24**). The key of the movements are the two players nearest the ball.

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DIAGRAM 25

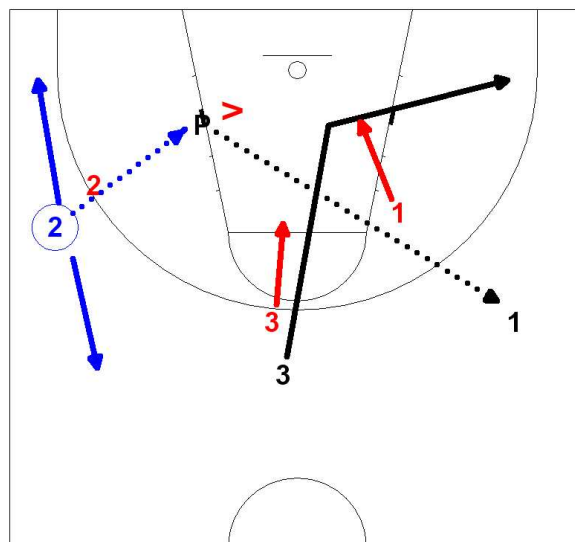


If 2 is not a good shooter, I prefer that he cuts in the middle of the paint, breaking the defensive line between his defender and x3 (avoiding therefore a defensive switch), and then get out on the weak side, whilst 3 replaces him on the ball side in forward position.

If 2 is a good shooter, and therefore his opponent won't be able to get away to help on the post, in this case 3 will cut in the middle, behind his own defender.

This cut (that must not be made when the low post quickly drives to the basket) usually makes the floating by x3 impossible and besides, it often attracts x1 in the paint, allowing 1 to catch the ball for a good three points shoot (**diagram 26**).

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DIAGRAM 26

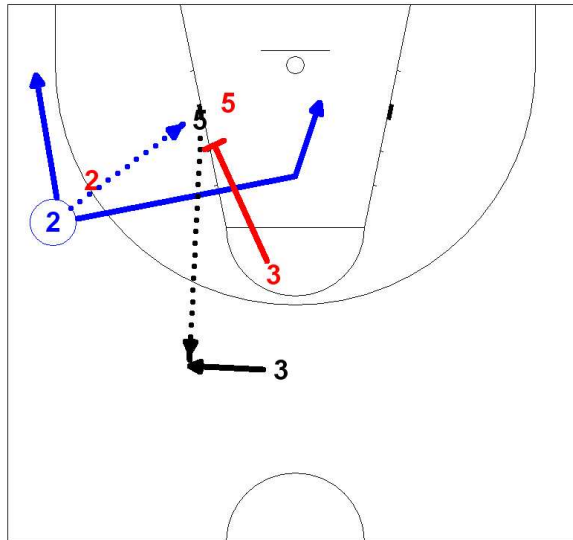


I have learned by experiences that this combination "I stay-you cut" (or "I cut-you stay") between the two players closest to the low post, is very effective, and above all it allows the offensive players to be always dangerous, without considering the defensive choice on who to float.

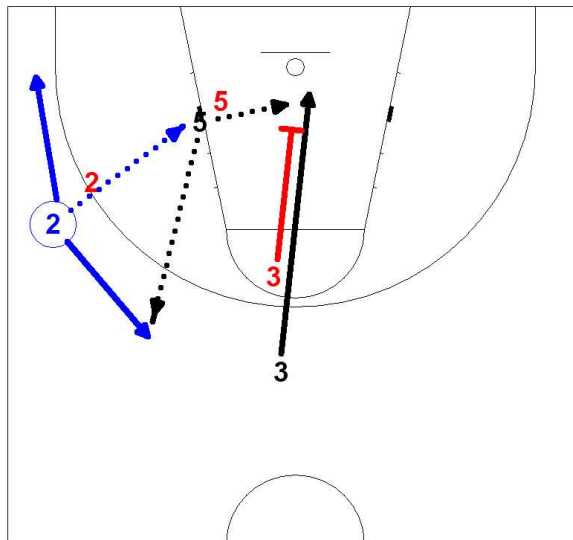
Especially with the young categories, I don't think we can expect that the players make different movements according to the defensive choice, because they'd surely lose any mental aggressiveness, indispensable to exploit any defensive unbalancing.

As we can see in **diagrams 26, 27 and 28**, for example, in case the defender of 3 floats (the central one), both when 2 cuts and 3 stands still or in the opposite case, 5 has the opportunity to pass inside and to pass outside for a shooter.

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DIAGRAM 27

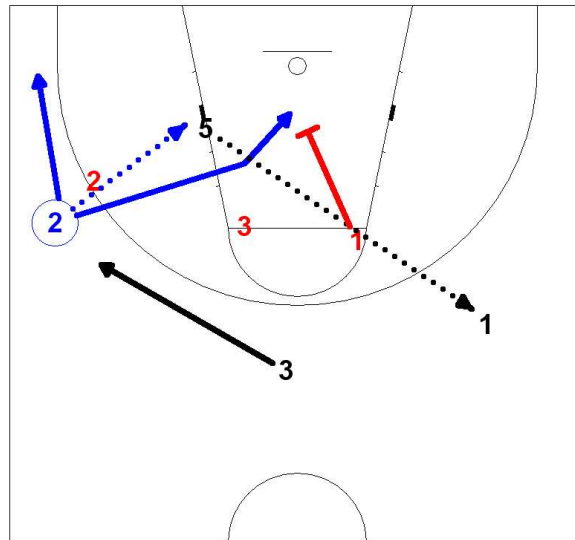


LESSON 14
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DIAGRAM 28



Finally, in case x1 floats from the weak side (**diagram 29**), obviously 2 and 3 will move to the ball side, and won't eliminate any danger for 1 who can catch the ball and shoot.

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LOW POST GAME
DIAGRAM 29



I'd like to stress that the central or side cut must be deep and behind our opponent's back, without going into the post's zone, leaving him the space to play one on one.

REMEMBER

- If the defense is on the side: lining up along the player with the ball, the low post and the basket to get an immediate passing angle.
- If the defense guards the low post frontally: we try to make a passing triangle from above, renouncing to lob pass towards the baseline.
- If the defense plays behind the low post, with the ball immediate passing, and if there is not quick 1 on 1, we use an inside cut (central or side cut). We play "inside-outside" between posts and guards.
- When the center passes the ball outside to a guard, he must repost himself, following his own pass inside the paint.