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We Are Basketball

CARLO RECALCATI
**IMPROVING THE TEAM BY
IMPROVING THE PLAYER**

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USA TEAM STRATEGY IN JAPAN

DAVID BLATT
**SPECIAL DEFENSE:
1-1-3 MATCH-UP ZONE**

CHUS BUENO
**SPANISH BASKETBALL
PLAYERS ASSOCIATION**

IOANNIS PAPAGEORGIU
AGILITY DRILLS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA OFFENSE

IMPROVING THE TEAM BY IMPROVING THE PLAYER

by Carlo Recalcati

After a long and prestigious career as a player, Carlo Recalcati started his coaching career with Bergamo, a team he helped guide from Serie A2 to A1. He then moved to Cantù, Reggio Calabria (winning an A2 championship), Ambrosiana Milan, and then back to Bergamo. In 1997 he signed with Varese, and two years later his team won the Italian championship. He then moved to Fortitudo Bologna, where he again won the Italian championship. He has been coaching Montepaschi Siena since 2003, winning the 2004 Italian championship and the Italian Supercup in 2005. He's also been coaching the Italian Men's national team since 2002, winning the bronze medal at the 2003 FIBA Eurobasket, the silver medal at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, and the gold medal at the 2005 Mediterranean Games.

The improvement of a team is directly connected to the improvement of individual players. Daily workouts to improve the fundamentals can enrich the technical skills of each player, who will then have more tools to use in various game situations. By the end of every practice session, each player must make some improvement in their skill level-even if it's just a little. And from these little improvements will spring forth a better team.
To make improvements, players need:
- ▼ Will
- ▼ Sacrifice
- ▼ Courage
- ▼ Desire to work.

WHAT TO PRACTICE
- ▼ Running
- ▼ Change of Direction
- ▼ Change of Pace
- ▼ Jumping Ability
- ▼ Dribbling

- ▼ Passing
- ▼ Shooting
- ▼ Defensive Slides
- ▼ Balance
- ▼ Reaction
- ▼ Skills
- ▼ Transition
- ▼ Ability to Read Different Situations.

Improvment will come when drills are properly organized to stress several fundamentals. These drills must always be carried out at game-speed.

DRILL 1
All the players are in motion on a half court without the ball. The coach calls the name of one player and he becomes the "hunter." The hunter must then try to touch another player. Once touched, this player becomes the hunter and continues the chase. This drill helps players run and quickly change pace and direction while moving without the ball (diagr. 1).

DRILL 2
The drill is the same as the previous one, but now a basketball is used, continously kept in motion by dribbling and passing. The coach gives the ball to a player and he will become the "safety." He cannot be touched while the designated "hunter" tries to touch another player without the ball. The aim of the drill is to pass the ball to that player who is about to be touched by the "hunter." (diagr. 2).

DRILL 3
Every player has a ball. While dribbling, the players try to knock each others ball out of bounds. Once a player loses his ball, he is eliminated from the game and leaves the court. As the number of players decreases, the playing dimensions are reduced as well. Part of the half court is used,; then inside the three-point line, and finally into the three-second lane (diagr. 3).

DRILL 4
Every player has a ball. 1 starts dribbling from the baseline and must try to get to the half court line without being touched by 2, who, also dribbling, starts from the three-point line and comes towards him (diagr. 4).

DRILL 5
1 moves from side to side and passes the ball, alternatively to 2 and 3, who act as supports. The drill goes on until an established time or an established number of passes are completed (diagr. 5).

DRILL 6
The coach rolls the ball. 1, after making defensive slides, must recover the ball and pass it back to the coach. This drill is run until an established time has elapsed or an established number of passes have been made (diagr. 6 and 7).

DRILL 7
The coach has two basketballs and alternatively passes them to 1 who, moving quickly to the left or the right side, receives the ball and passes it back to the coach, using only one hand. The drill goes on until an established time has elapsed or an established number of passes have been made (diagr. 8).

DRILL 8
The players are divided in two lines, with each player holding a basketball. The drill begins at half court, with 1 and 2 dribbling at the same time. 1 decides his own direction of dribbling and the timing of his shot. 2 must adjust, always maintaining the initial distance from 1 and then take the same shot 1 has taken (diagr. 9). After the shot, 1 and 2 get their own rebounds and go to the end of the line (diagr. 10).

DRILL 9
Players are divided in two lines and each

D.1

D.2

D.3

D.4

D.5
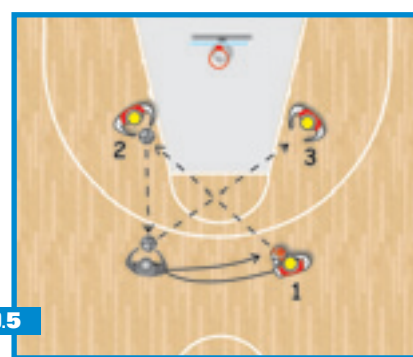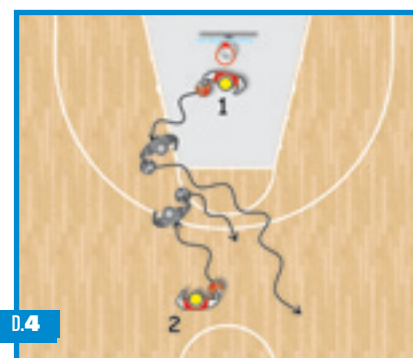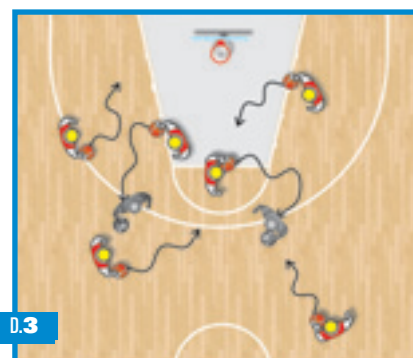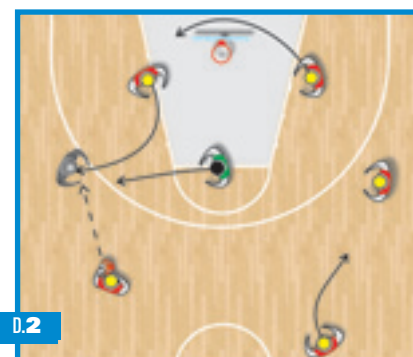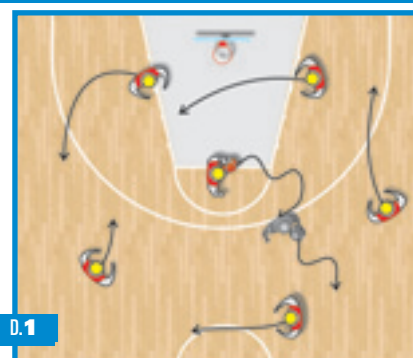
has a basketball. 1 and 2 start at the same time from half court and dribble toward the free-throw line. 1 can either penetrate and finish with a lay-up or else come to a stop and take a shot. 2, after a brief hesitation, adjusts himself to the choice of 1 and executes the opposite shot. This means that if 1 takes a jump shot, 2 must drive to the basket. After shooting, 1 and 2 get their own rebounds and go to the end of the line. (diagr. 11 and 12).

DRILL 10

3 defends on the ball side and, when 2 receives the ball from 1, 2 makes a cross dribble and drives to the basket. If 3 helps, 2 stops his penetration, takes a step back, and shoots (diagr. 13). If 3 does not help, 2 will end the penetration with a lay-up (diagr. 14).

DRILL 11

3 is on the help side of the three-second lane. 2 defends against 1 and gives him a slight advantage. 1 starts dribbling and must find the right time to stop and shoot between the recovery of 2 and the defensive help of 3 (diagr. 15).

DRILL 12

Players line up in a row at half court with a total of three basketballs on one side of the court. 1 dribbles until the three-point line, then changes his dribbling hand and dribbles through his legs, behind his back, or makes a crossover dribble. At the three-point line he makes another change of dribbling hand, then, after a brief hesitation, makes a speed change, and drives to the basket, finishing with a lay-up. He gets his own rebound, dribbles until half court. and executes a running pass to 4. The drill must be executed on both the right and left side of the court (diagr. 16).

DRILL 13

The players form a row on the baseline and each player has a basketball. 2 runs without the ball until half court, changes direction, and receives the ball from 1; 3 runs without ball towards the sideline, then changes direction, receives a pass from 2 and shoots. 1 runs towards half court, 2 towards the sideline, and then 4 executes a pass and continues the drill in continuity. The coach can establish the maximum number of dribbles that can be made . The drill must be executed on both the left and right side of the court (diagr. 17).
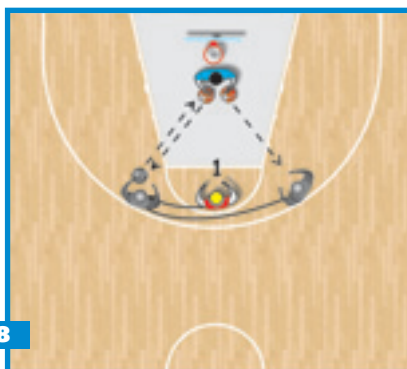
DRILL 14

Every player has a basketball and forms two rows, one in the middle of the court and the other one in a corner. 2 starts dribbling to the right, makes a crossover dribble, changes hands, passes the ball to the coach, then
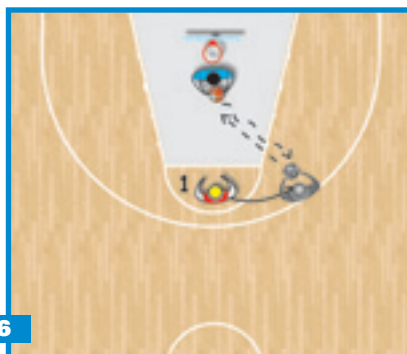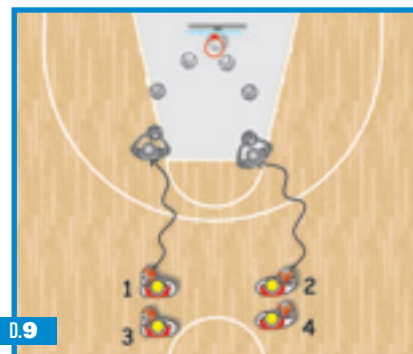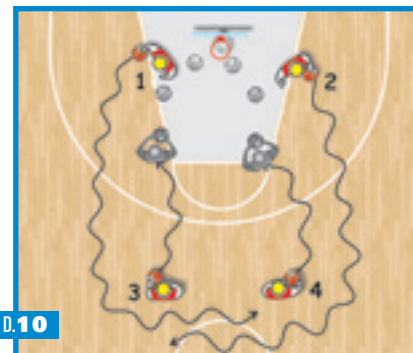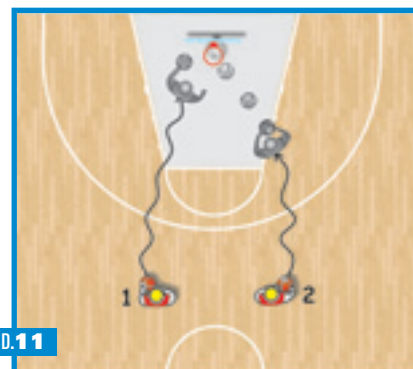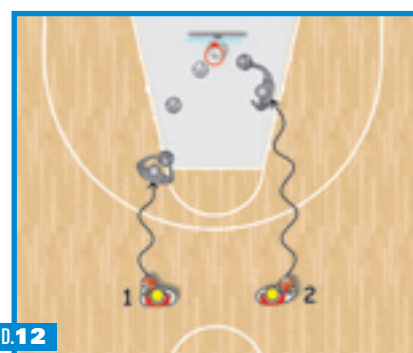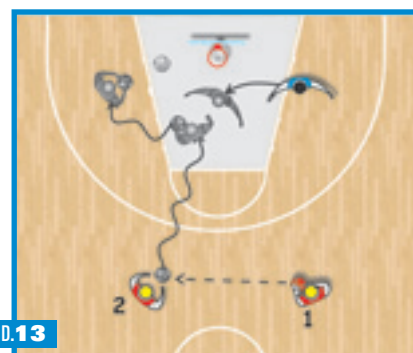

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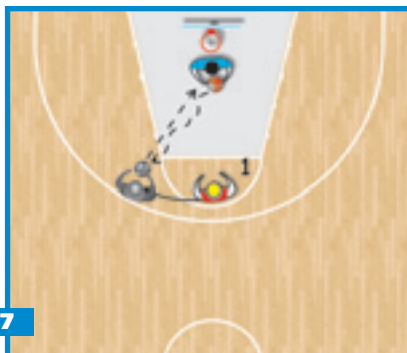
D.8

D.9

D.10

D.11

D.12

D.13

changes direction, and receives the ball from 1, who, after the pass, also changes direction, receives the ball, and shoots. 2, after executing the pass, runs towards the coach to receive a pass and then shoots. After shooting, players get their own rebounds and change their initial row (diagr. 18). The drill must be run on the left and right side of the court.
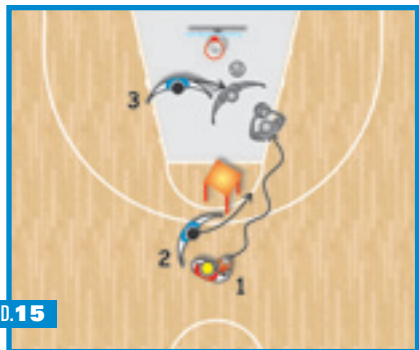
DRILL 15

1 passes the ball to 2, who then passes to 4, takes advantage of the blind screen of 3, receives the ball, and shoots. 4 goes to rebound and passes to 5, who passes to 6 (diagr. 19). 1, after the pass, replaces 2. 2, after shooting, replaces 5. 3, after the screen, replaces 4. 4, after the pass, replaces 5. 5, after the pass, replaces 6. The drill must be run on left and right side of the court.
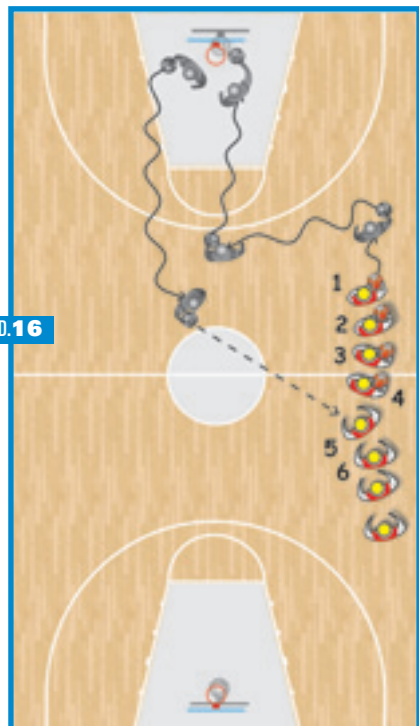
DRILL 16

1 passes to 2, and from 2 to 3. 1 runs towards the free-throw line and receives the ball from 3. 2 contests the shot of 1 (diagr. 20). Then, all the players change

D.14

D.15

D.16

D.17

D.18

D.19

D.20

D.21
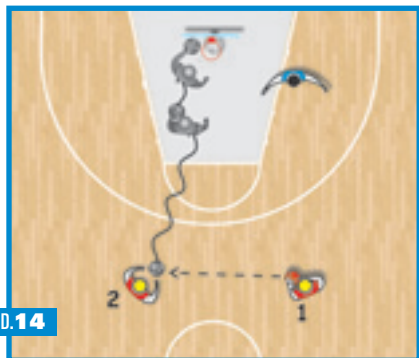
their initial rows, rolling to the left side.

DRILL 17

1 passes to 2, contests his shot, and then changes position so he can receive the next pass. 2 avoids the obstacle of 1 with a dribble, and then stops and shoots. After shooting, 2 rebounds his own shot, passes the ball to 1, and from there he contests the shot of 1 (diagr. 21). The drill must be run on both left and right side of the court.
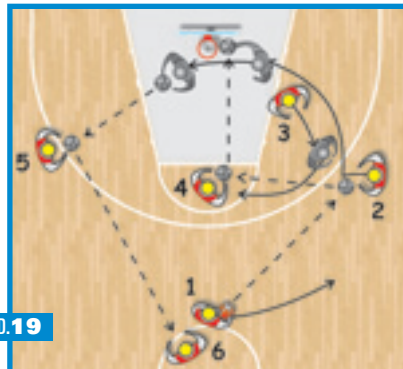
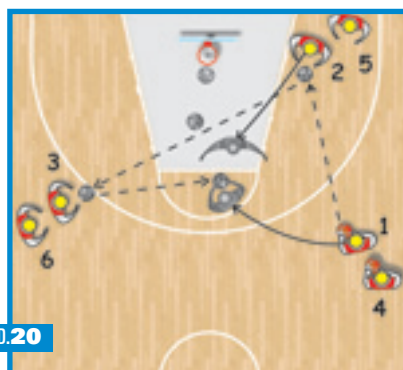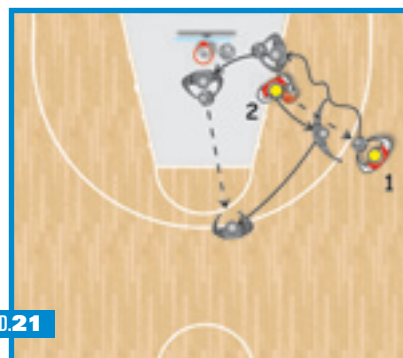### DRILL 18

The players, each with a ball, form two
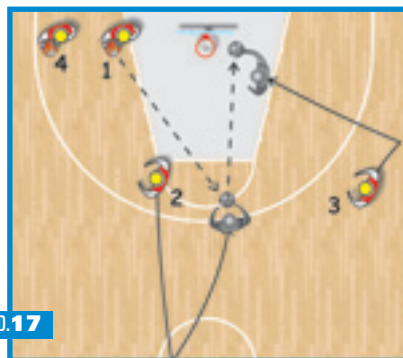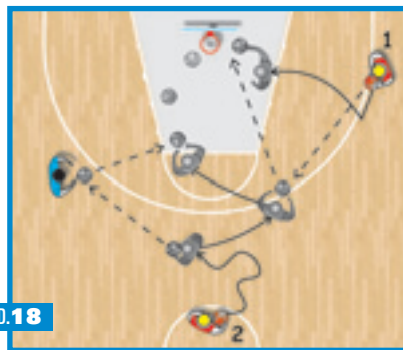
lines. One coach stands outside the the three-point line and the other coach is positioned at half court. 1 passes to the coach and runs down the court. 2 passes the ball to 1, then runs toward the coach and receives a hand-off pass from the coach. 1 passes to the other coach on the other half court and then receives the ball from 2, finishing the action with a lay-up. 2, after the pass, receives a hand-off pass from the coach on the other half court and executes a stop and shoot (diagr. 22). The last repetitions of the drill must be executed without dribbling.

DRILL 19

The players form two lines, one in the lane, and one laterally on the perimeter. One ball is used. 1 throws the ball against the backboard, takes the rebound, and then makes a long pass over the mid-court line to 2, who has run along the sideline. After receiving the ball, he finishes with a lay-up, takes his own rebound, and passes back to 1. After getting the pass, 1, who has run around the two coaches set at the mid-court line, shoots the ball. 3 gets the rebound, passes to 4, and the drill continues (diagr. 23).
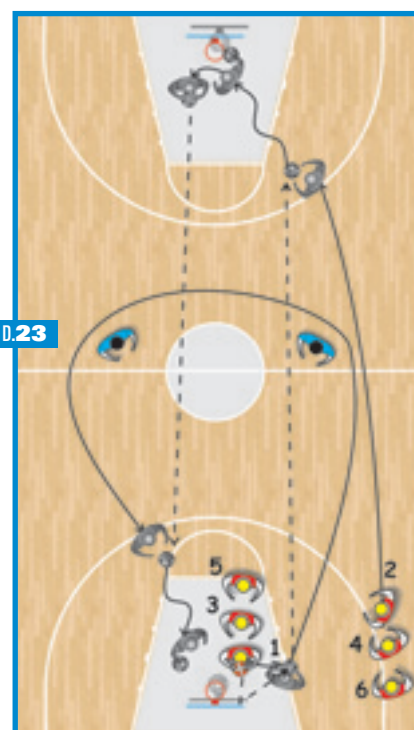
DRILL 20

Three rows are formed at the baseline and the player in the middle row has the basketball. Two coaches position themselves just outside of the three-point line, one on each side. 1 throws the ball against the backboard and then passes to 2. 3 runs on the left lane and then receives the ball from 2 for a lay-up. 1 runs in the central lane of the court, takes the rebound, and passes to 3, who has run outside of the lane after shooting. 2 runs around the coach and receive a pass from 3 to finish with a lay-up. 4 takes the rebound, passes to 5 and the drill continues (diagr. 24). The drill can be finished by 3, who throws the ball against the backboard for 2 that makes the same thing for the "tap-in" of 1.

DRILL 21

Four rows of player are set up in the corners. Three basketballs are used. 1, 2 and 3 begin a passing wave. When 3 passes the ball to the coach, set at the middle of the court, all three players execute zig-zag defensive slides. The coach passes the ball back to 3, who passes it to 1, who then passes to 2 for a lay-up. 3 goes to receive a pass from 4 and 1 from 5 in order to execute a stop and shoot. 2 takes the rebound and beins another weave with 4 and 5. (diagr. 25 and diagr. 26). The drill goes on for an established time or until a certain number of passes have been made.
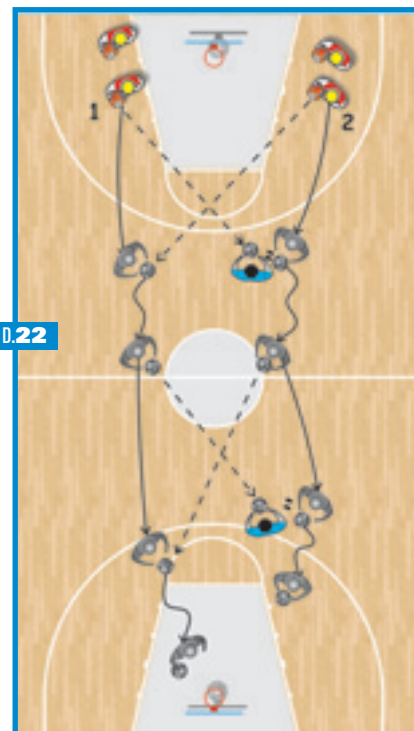
D.22

D.23

DRILL 22
As in drill 21, this drill does not use a coach or zig-zag defensive slides (diagr. 27).

DRILL 23
The players form two rows at the baseline, with the ball in one row and one coach with another ball four or five feet from the mid-court line, with a ball. 1 and 2 pass the ball to each other, then 1 takes the ball from the coach, changes direction, and dribbles towards the basket for a lay-up. 2 drops his ball, which he has received from 1, becomes the defender,

and recovers against 1 (diagr. 28). The drill must be run on both the right and left side of the court.
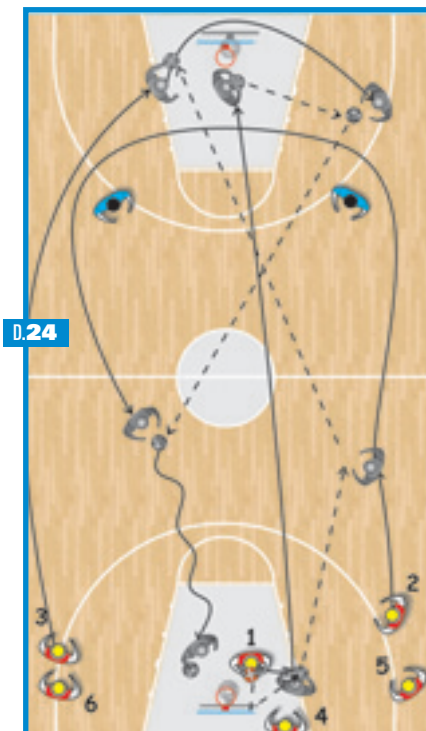
DRILL 24
Two players position themselves under the basket, one behind the other, facing the coach, who is positioned with a ball near the mid-court line on the central lane of the court. The coach rolls the ball towards one of the two sideline. 1 runs, catches the ball and passes it back to the coach. When the ball is returned to the coach, 2 runs to the opposite side of the floor from where 1 has

caught the ball, receives the ball from the coach, and dribbles towards the basket for a lay-up. 1, after passing the ball, becomes the defender and recovers against 2 (diagr. 29).
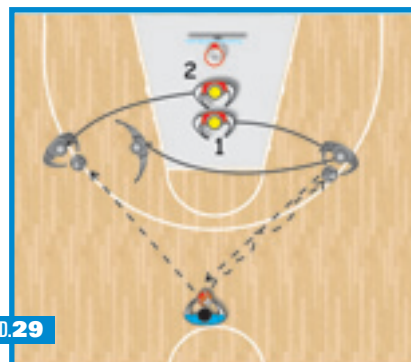
DRILL 25
One offensive player, 1, with the ball, and one defender, 2, line up on one side of the half court. A second offensive player, 3, sets up the other wing position. 1 plays one-on-one against 2. 2, who was the defender, gets the rebound and, if a basket hasn't been scored, makes an inbound
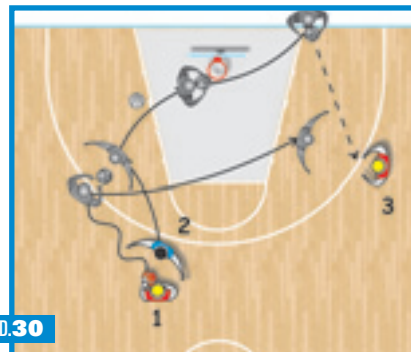
D.24
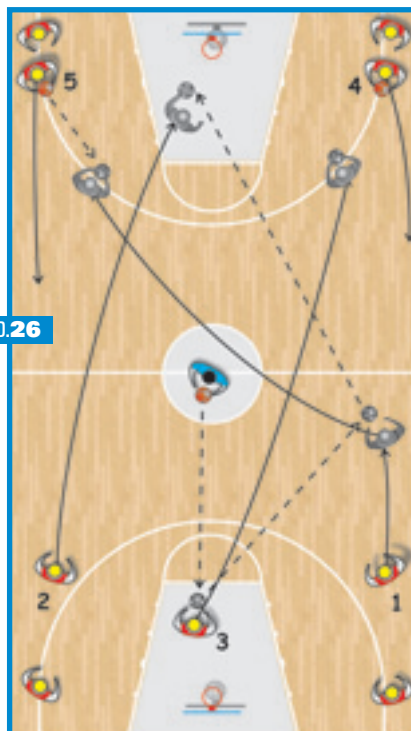
D.26

D.29

D.30

D.25

D.27

D.31

D.28

D.32
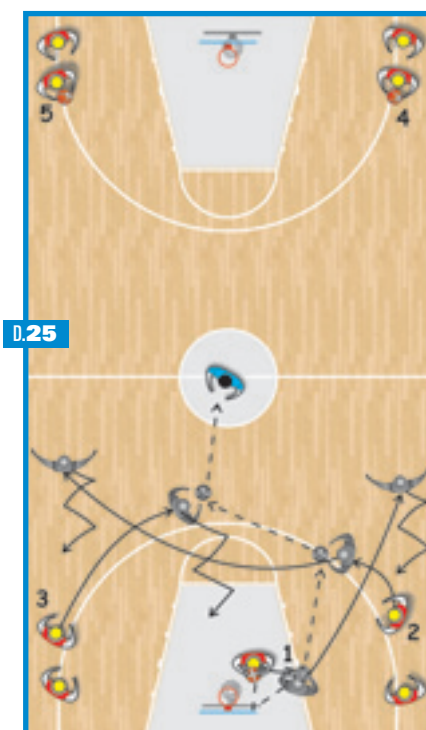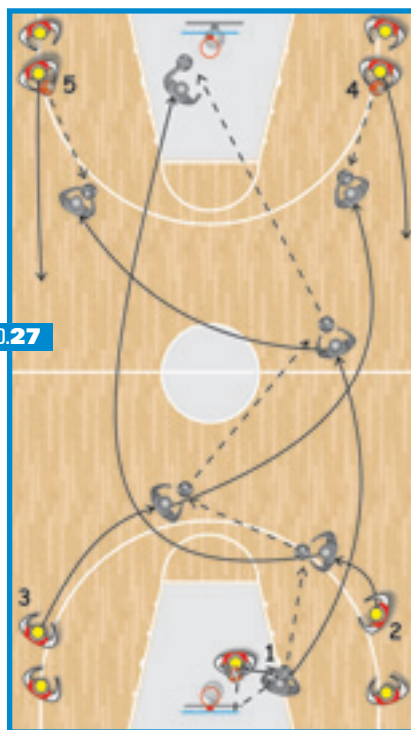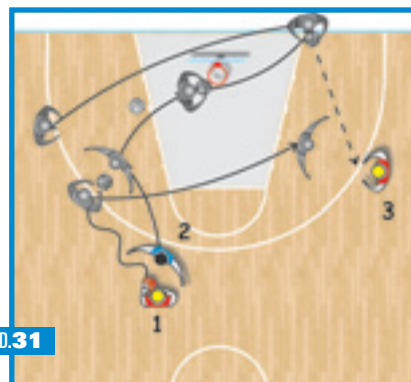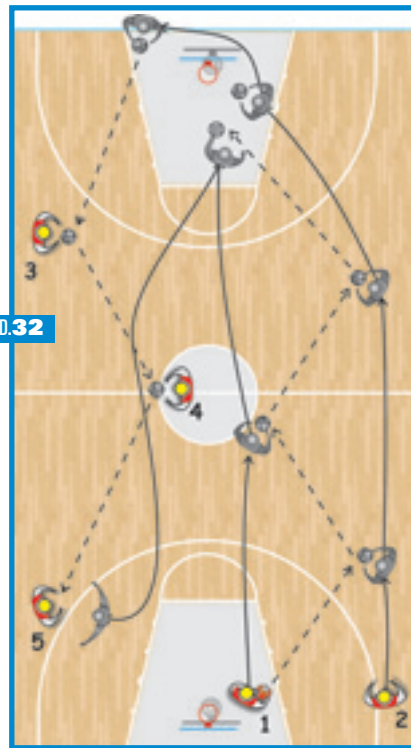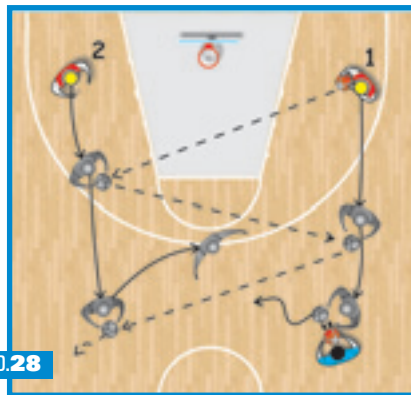
pass from the baseline to 3. 1, after shooting, becomes the defender and tries to anticipate the moves of 3. If 3 receives the ball, then he plays one-on-one against 1 (diagr. 30).

DRILL 26
The drill is the same of the previous one, except that 3 now has a second ball. 1 plays one-on-one against 2, and then becomes defender against 3. 2 takes the rebound and gets ready on the opposite side to play against 3, who becomes a defender (diagr. 31). The drill continues until time runs out or a certain number of baskets are scored.

DRILL 27

Two players, 1 and 2, with one ball, line up on one lateral lane of the court. Player 3, is positioned near the sideline on the opposite half court, while another player, 4, is on the jump ball circle and anotherone, 5, near the baseline and outside of the three-point line on the half court where 1 and 2 start the drill. 1 and 2 pass the ball back and forth on all the court. 1 finishes with a lay-up and then becomes the defender, guarding against 5. 2 takes the rebound and passes the ball to 5. 2, 3 and 4 exchange their spots. 1 and 5, after playing one-on-one, pass the ball back and forth on all the court and the drill continues in this way (diagr. 32).

DRILL 28

Three rows of players are formed near the baseline, with a ball in the hand of the player in the middle row. 1, 2, and 3 pass the ball back and forth until the coach whistles and 1 becomes the defender and must recover, while 2 and 3 attack (diagr. 33).

DRILL 29

Three rows of players are formed near the baseline, with a ball in the hand of the player in the middle row. 1 begins a passing weave. 3 passes the ball to the coach positioned at half court, touches the ball, and runs back to become the defender. 1 and 2 arrive at the half court, change direction, and then one of them receives a pass from the coach and they attack two against one on 3 (diagr. 34).

DRILL 30

Two offensive players 1, with the ball, and 3, and two defenders, 2 on 1 and 4 on 3, and two players on the wings, 5 and 6. 1 and 3 play two-on-two. After a scored basket or a rebound, let's assume that 1 has shot, 2 goes out to the baseline and passes to 5. 1, after shooting, becomes the defender and tries to anticipate 5. 3 becomes the defender and recovers on 6, who, in the meantime, has run to touch the mid court line and comes back. The players play a two-on-two full court (diagr. 35).

DRILL 31

1 and 2 attack against 3 and 4. Then, 1 and 2 become defenders and play against 5 and 6, who are set near the baseline on the same half court, in a two-on-two full court play. 5 and 6, after shooting, become defenders playing against 7 and 8. The drill continues this way (diagr. 36). After a made basket, a defender makes the inbound pass or, if a defender gets the rebound, he will make the outlet pass to someone below the free-throw line extension.

DRILL 32

Two players, 1 and 2 on offense, one player, 3,

D.33

D.34

D.35

D.36

D.37
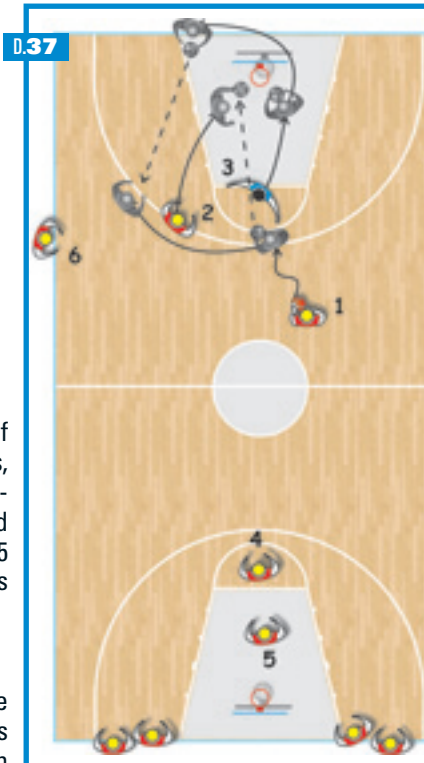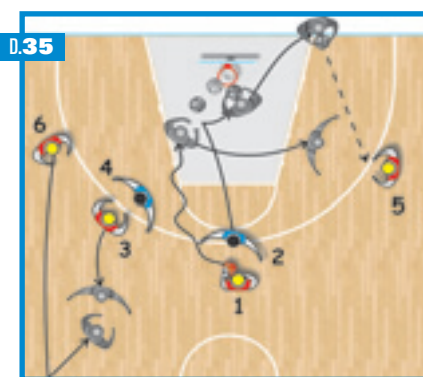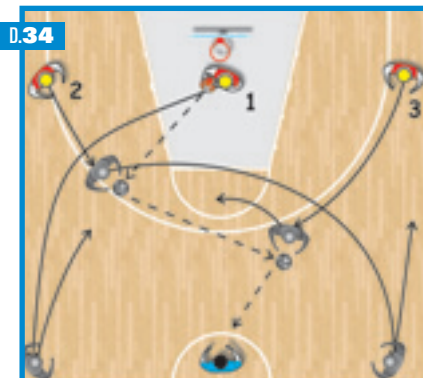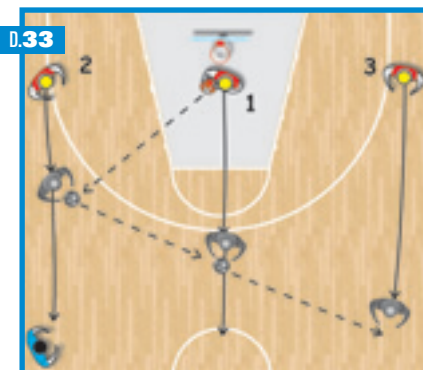
on defense, one player, 6, outside on the half court where 1 and 2 play against 3, two players, 4 and 5, play on tandem on the opposite three-second lane. 1 and 2 attack against 3. 1, 2, and 3 then attack together against 4 and 5. 4 and 5 attack against 6, and the drill continues this way (diagr. 37).

DRILL 33

Four offensive players play against three defenders, who play zone. The four must pass to the ball to the teammate who is open for an uncontested shot. Once the three defenders get the ball, they become offensive players and with 1, who has entered on the court from the baseline, they play against three defenders who play zone defense on the other half court. The drill continues this way. (diagr. 38 and 39). If the defenders play man-to-man defense, they must defend against the player in possession of ball and the two offensive players closest to the ball. After a pass, the defenders must close out the new free offensive player, who has received the ball.

D.38

D.39

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA OFFENSE
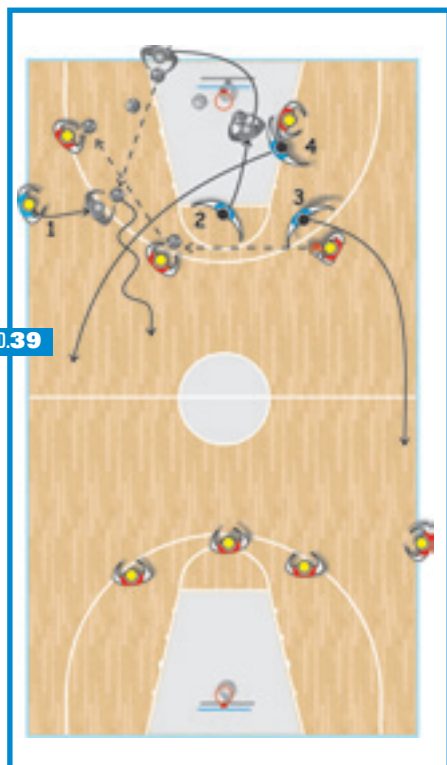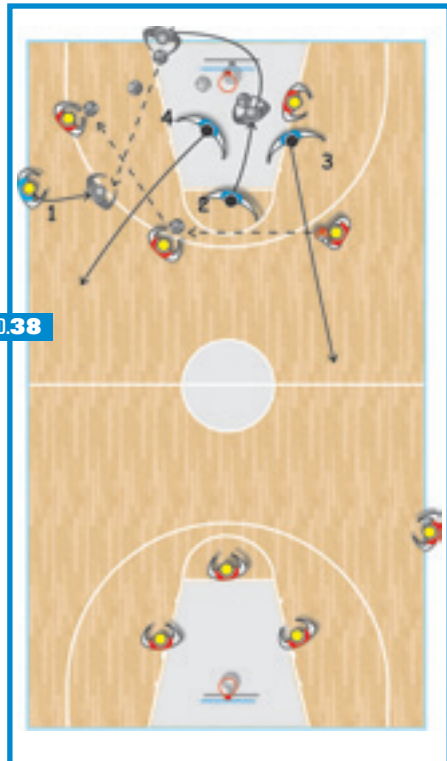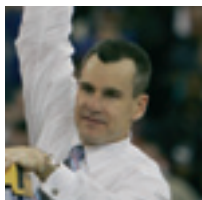
by Billy Donovan

by Donnie Jones

Billy Donovan was assistant coach of Rick Pitino at Kentucky. In 1994, at the age of 28, he went to Marshall University, becoming the youngest head coach in the history of the NCAA. This is his 12th season at the guide of Florida, the team he led to the NCAA Final in 2000 and with which he won the 2006 NCAA Championship.

After being assistant coach at Pikeville College and Marshall University, Donnie Jones is on his 12th year as assistant coach at Florida University, where he is scouting and recruiting responsible, as also leads the training days' planning.

Pressure is the word that identifies the style of playing of the Florida University, because we want to put pressure on both the halfcourts. Our offense has always put pressure on the opponing defense thanks to aggressive screens and back screens, but also with the unselfishness of our players, always ready to make one more pass to have the best shot. The aim of our offense has always been the team play, trying to create spaces and opportunities inside the plays in order to obtain possibilities of easy shots for all the five players. Every college team has great offensive plays, so we believe that what makes a play successful are details.

Teaching individual fundamentals, basic for the development of our offense, is at the base of our plays execution. We work daily with our players to improve their individual skills that are useful for our way of playing. This gives them mental and physical confidence and the knowledge necessary to execute our plays. Many coaches think that a play may win a game, but there are also many valid coaches along all the nation that will find the way to defend on that or those plays. So, you have to teach your own players how to read the defense and the small details that are at the base of each play. Individual teaching therefore has a great role in the development of players and offensive plays.

As technical staff we knew that in this tournament we had to have offensive production by all of guys of our starting five and the key of our success was that in every game we obtained points by everyone of our players on the court: Joakim Noah averaged 14.2 points per game, Corey Brewer 12.7, Al Horford 11.3, Lee Humphrey 10.9. It's unbelievable how much your team success can depend on how much no one of your players is bothered about how many points he scores, but he plays with his teammates. We never exalted or awarded a player for the points he scored, but instead we focused on those intangibles and less underlined aspects of the game, like assists, boxouts, deflected balls. In this championship out team averaged 17 assists, scoring 78 points per game and in many games we had even more than 20 assists.

At Florida University we want to attack defense in two ways:

1. Vertical: execute our plays in the central side of the court, this because with strong defensive teams it is difficult to begin the play passing on the wing, because this position often is anticipated.
2. Horizontal: because it gives us the possbility to change the ball side in order to play in motion and to work for the best possible shot.

The series of offensive plays that we are going to show are of those called "High thumb and Low thumb" and are used as motion offense to make all the five players moving on the court and to create opportunities in low post and three point shot. The other plays we used in this tournament are designed for determined options, when we want that a certain player may shoot in particular moments of the game. Moreover, I would like to underline again the importance of two characteristics of our team:

▼ Offensive pressure, paying attention to the plays execution with the maximum intensity to the unselfishness.

▼ Defensive pressure, with aggressiveness, double teaming as soon as possible and working to put out of rhythm the opponent team.

Here are some key numbers that demonstrate

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D.2

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D.7
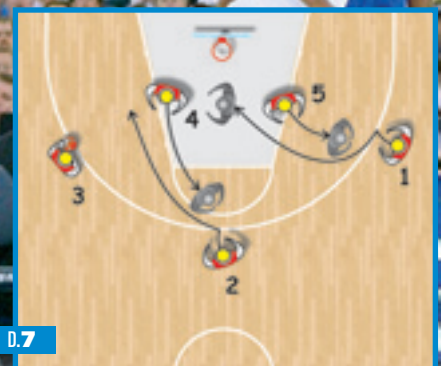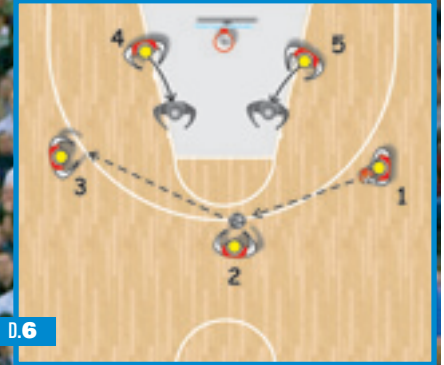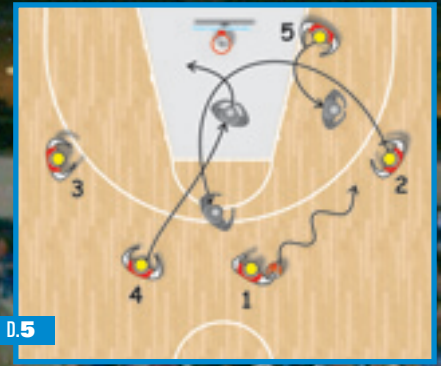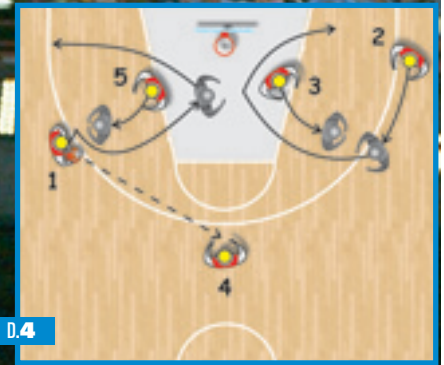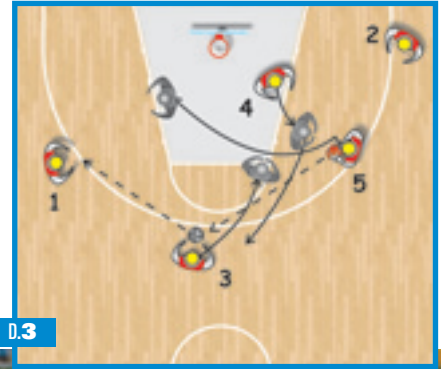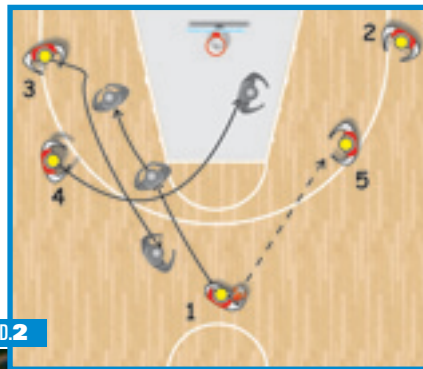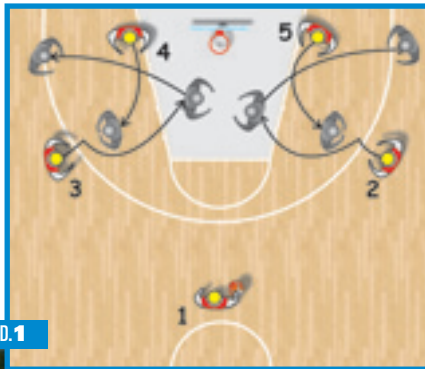
what our offensive and defensive rhythm was able to create to win the NCAA title:

▼ Florida was one of the only four teams of all the NCAA tournament that had all the players of the starting five that scored in double figure.

▼ For the first time from 1968 (UCLA), one of the teams at the Final Four won both the games by more than 15 points.

▼ N.1 in all the NCAA for the field goals percentage (50%).

▼ 39% in three-point shot.

▼ 4th in the NCAA in free-throws (862 against 665 attempted by the opponents).

SERIES "HIGH" - HIGH THUMB

We begin with two players in low post, one pointguard and two forwards. 5 and 4 go out and set a back screen for 3 and 2, who cut in the lane to quickly go out in the corners if the don't receive under the basket (diagr.1).
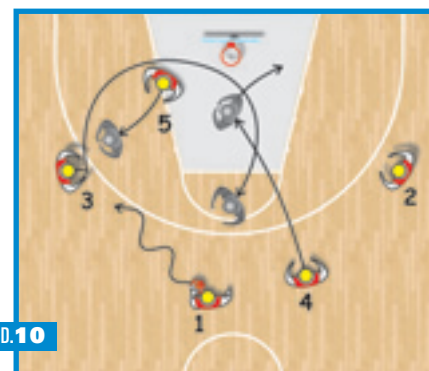
Important details

a. 4 and 5 must set a tough and strong back screen, to get 3 and 2 free. 4 and 5 after the screen get open to be free on wing position.

b. 2 and 3 must look for the ball, addressing the hands tp the ball to receive on the cut and go shooting close to the basket. If they don't receive, they cut while running and go to the corners.

c. 1 can start the game passing to 4 or 5, who got open to the ball after the back screen.

Let's think to 1 passing to 5: after the pass, 1 set a quick screen for 4, who cuts around the screen and goes in the lane. 1 then sets another screen for 3, who gets up and goes out of three point line (diagr. 2).

Important details

a. As soon as 1 moves to the low side for screening for 3, 4 has to cut behind 1 trying to receive the ball for a shot close to the basket.

b. 3 will make a "L" cut, that is to say that he will cut first to the basket to take then advantage of the screen set by 1 for going out of the three point line. It is of basic importance that 1 set a screen that forces the defender of 3 to follow him behind, because we don't want that the defender of 3 passes in middle to steal the ball.

5 change the ball side passing to 3, 3 passes to 1 and 4 sets a back screen for 5, who cuts in the lane to receive from 1 and go for shooting close to the basket. Immediately after having passed the ball to 1, 3 screens low for 4 (screening the screener), who goes outside the lane and then beyond the three point line, in the central side of the court to receive and shoot for three (diagr. 3)

D.10
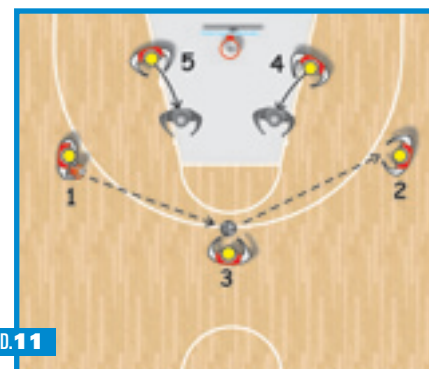
D.11

D.12

D.8

D.13

D.9

D.14

Important details

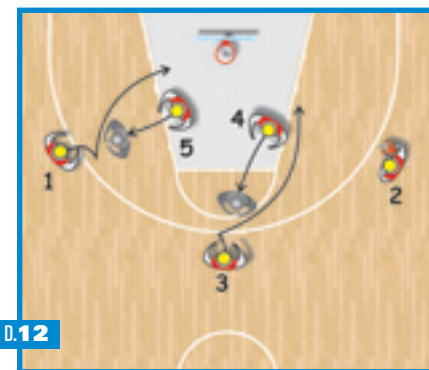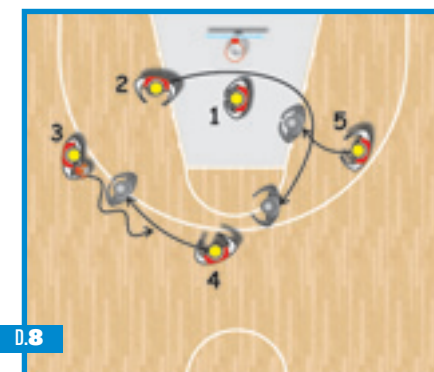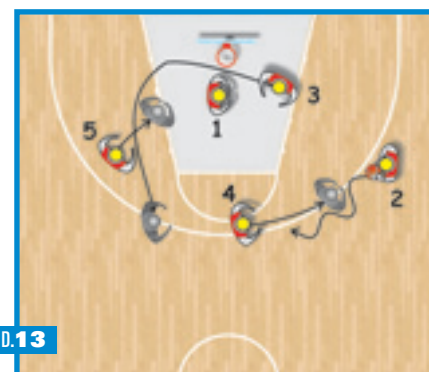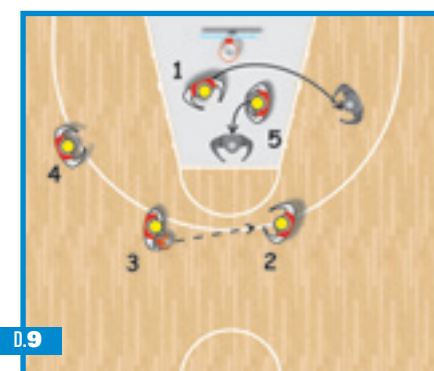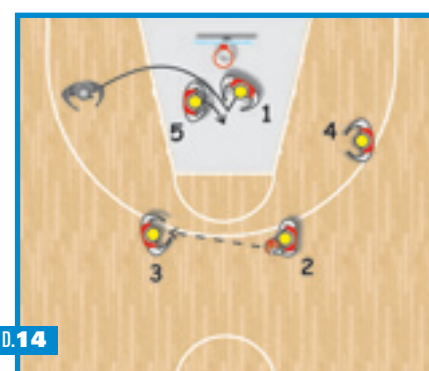a. Ball has to change side as quick as possible, going from 3 to 1.
b. If he doesn't receive after the cut, 4 has to go outside the lane and back screening for 5.
c. 5 first has to make moving his defender in the opposite direction of the screen and then has to go, shoulder against shoulder, on the screen set by 4, trying to cut in the lane to receive and shoot close to the basket (the cut made by 5 depends on his defender's position).
d. As soon as 5 cuts on screen set by 4, the defender of 4 will slide in the lane in order to help, therefore 4 will have more time to get the screen of 3 and shoot.

After these first movements we can carry on our play, with 1 who passes to 4 in the central side of the court and with 5 and 3 who get out of the low post and set a back screen for 1 and 2 (diagr. 4).

Important details

a. Create continuity for the play.
b. Everyone of the players is on a different position than the starting one.

2 HIGH

If 1 calls "2 high" or he's dribbling to 2, it means that the play is for 2.
1 dribbles to 2 and this is a signal for 2, who first receive a back screen from 5, who's gone out the lane, and then a low screen in the lane from 4. After the screen, 4 and 5 go to the low post (diagr. 5).
If 2 cannot shoot, first he tries to pass to 4 or 5 who have cut in the lane and if he can't pass the ball inside, he changes the ball side passing to 3 (diagr. 6).
With the ball to 3, 4 gets up and sets a back screen for 2, who fakes the cut in the opposite direction and then gets the screen of 4, while 5 too sets a back screen for 1, who cuts in the lane.
3 can pass to 2 in the low post, to 4, who got open after the screen, or to 1 who cut in the lane (diagr. 7).
If 3 has not any possibility of passing, he takes a screen from 4 and dribbles to the midcourt, while 2 cuts in the lane and gets a staggered screen, first from 1 and then from 5 and then gets up on the free throw line to receive from 3 (diagr. 8).
3 passes to 2. After the screen for 2, 1 receives a screen from 5 (pick the picker) and goes on the corner, while 5 opens toward the ball to receive a pass close to the rim (diagr. 9).

3 HIGH

If 1 calls the play "3 high" or dribbles toward 3 means that the play is for 3. 1 dribbles toward 3 and it's a sign for 3, who first

receives a blind screen from 5, who got off the lane, and then a low screen from 4. After this screen, 5 and 4 go to the low post (diagr. 10).
If 3 cannot shoot, first he tries to pass the ball to 5 or 4, who have cut in the lane, and if cannot give the ball inside, he changes the ball side and passes to 2 (diagr. 11).

When 2 has got the ball, 4 goes high and makes a blind screen for 3, who fakes to cut in the opposite direction and then uses the screen of 4, while also 5 makes a blind screen for 1, in order to keep busy the defense. 2 can pass the ball to 3 on the cut, or to 5, who opened himself to the ball after his screen (diagr. 12).
If 3 doesn't receive, he keeps on cutting, receiving a stagger screen, from 1 and 5, and gets off the three-point line. In the meantime, 4 makes a screen for 2, who dribbles to the mid-court line (diagr. 13).
2 passes the ball to 3. After screening for 3, 5 brings a screen for 1 (pick the picker) who, after the screen for 3, has come back to use the screen of 5. 1 gets out in the corner (diagr. 14).

4 HIGH

The play is for 4. 1 dribbles toward 2, who cuts in the lane and goes to screen in the paint for 4 who, before the screen, has brought his defender in the opposite direction and then uses the screen of 2. 5 makes a low screen for 2 (pick the picker), who goes high and gets off the three-point line (diagr. 15). 1 changes the ball side, passes to 2 and 2
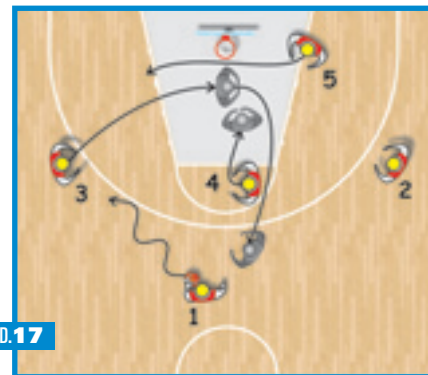
D.17
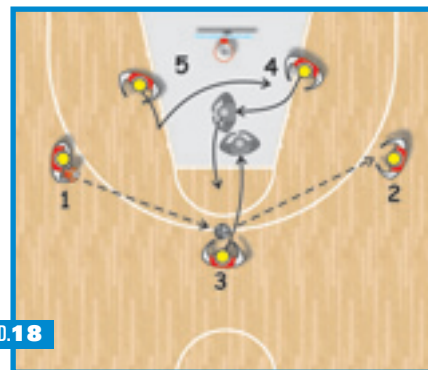
D.18

D.19

D.15

D.20

D.16

D.21

passes to 3. After the screen for 2, 5 keeps on cutting e screens for 4, who cuts toward the ball (diagr. 16).

5 HIGH

The play is for 5. 1 screens toward 3, who cuts in the lane and screens for 5 who cuts in the lane, too, and goes to the ball side. After the screen for 5, 3 receives a low screen by 4 (pick the picker) and goes high, over the three-point line (diagr. 17).
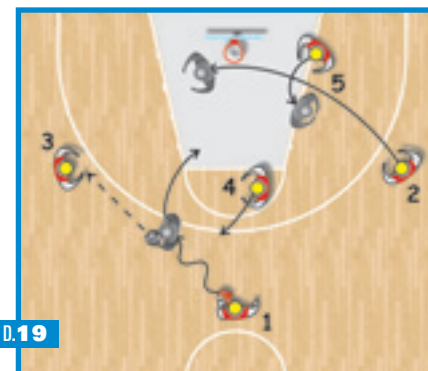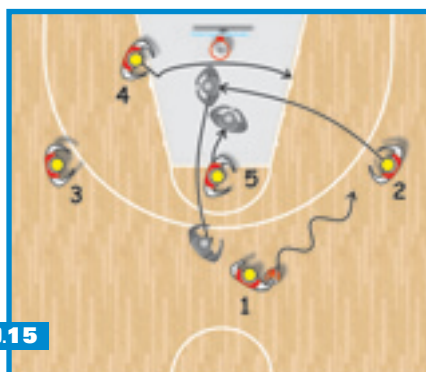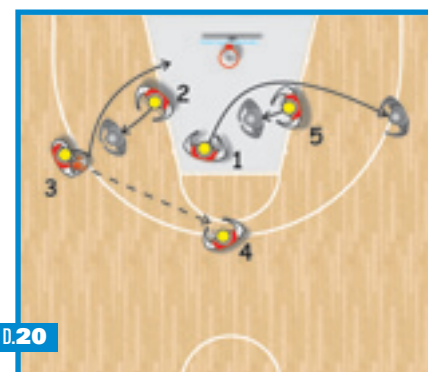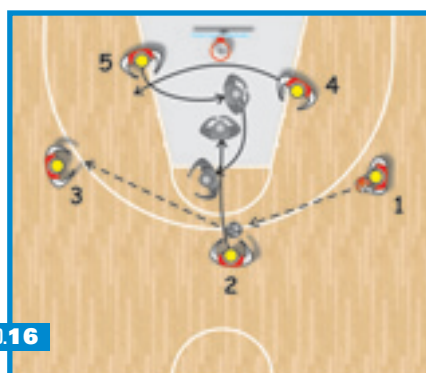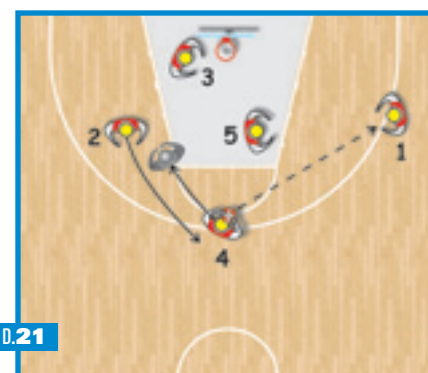
If 1 cannot pass the ball to 5, he changes the side passing to 3 and 3 passes to 2. 4 screens for 5 who, before the screen, has brought his defender far from the screen and then uses the screen. After passing the ball to 2, 3 makes a low screen for 4, who goes to the central side of the court. 2 passes the ball to 5 in low post (diagr. 18).
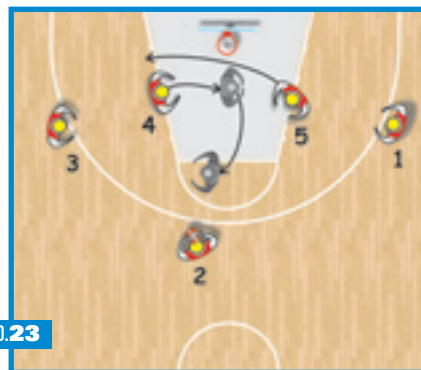
SERIES LOW 2 LOW

The play starts for 2, but every offensive player has got a chance to find a shot. 1 passes to 3 and then makes a give-and-go,

D.22

D.23

D.24
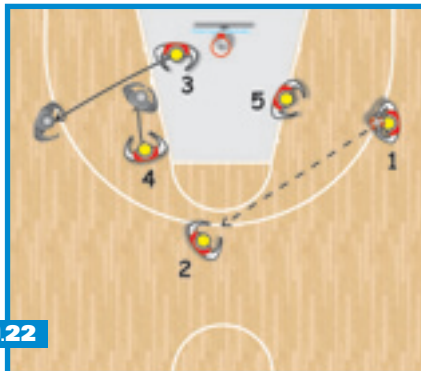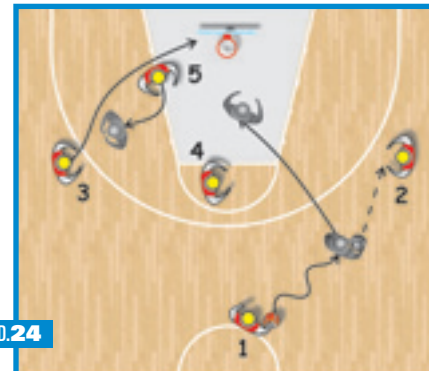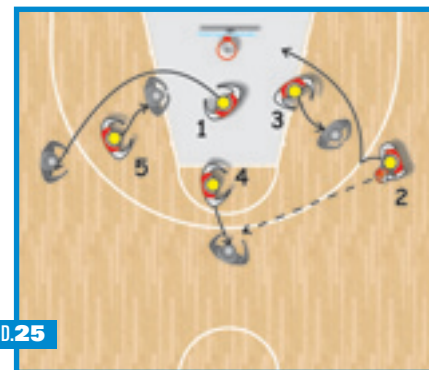
D.25

while 4 gets off the lane and goes to the central side of the court. 5 makes a blind screen for 2 (diagr. 19).

3 passes to 4 and, after cutting to the opposite direction, uses the screen of 2, who kept on cutting, while 5, after screening for 2, makes a blind screen for 1 (diagr. 20).

If there is no solution, 4 passes the ball to 1 and makes a low screen (pick the picker) for 2, who goes out to the central side of the court (diagr. 21).

4 goes to screen for 3, who goes off to the corner, and 1 changes the ball side passing to 2 (diagr. 22).
At last, 4 screens for 5 and then opens him-

self toward the ball (diagr. 23).

3 LOW

This time, the play is for 3, but as usual every offensive player has got a chance to find a shot. 1 dribbles toward 2 and then cuts in the lane for a give-and-go, while 5 makes a blind screen for 3, who first brings his defender far from the screen and uses this screen (diagr. 24).

2 passes to 4, who got out of the free-throw line to receive the ball, 5 makes a low screen for 1 and 3 makes a blind screen for 2 who, as usual, first brings his defender to a side and then goes to the opposite one in order to use the screen (diagr. 25).

4 changes the ball side, passes to 1 and then makes a vertical screen for 3, who goes out of the three-point line (diagr. 26).

After the screen for 3, 4 keeps on cutting and screens for 2 under the basket. 1 changes the ball side and passes to 3. 3 can pass the ball to 2 in the wing position or to 4, who opened himself to the ball (diagr. 27).

At last, 4 keeps on cutting and makes a third screen, this time horizontal, for 5. 4, after this screen, opens himself to the ball (diagr. 28).

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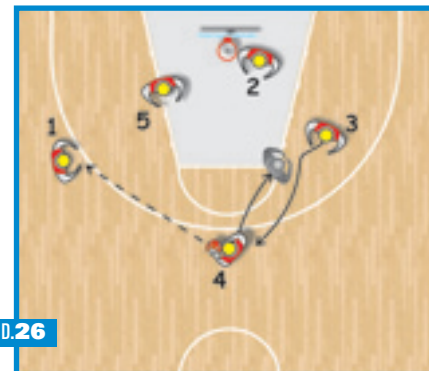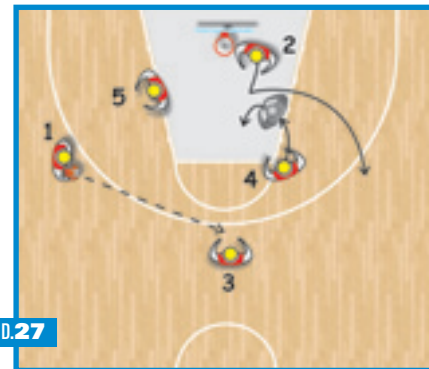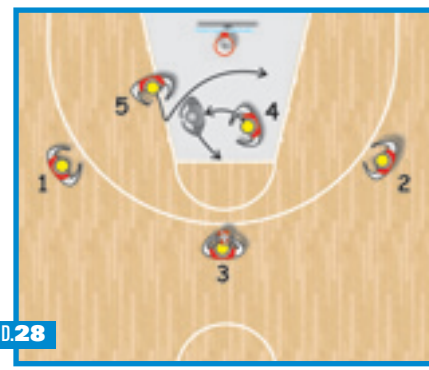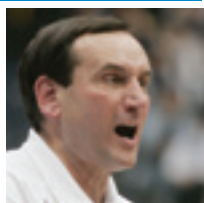
USA TEAM STRATEGY IN JAPAN

by Mike Krzyzewski

In 2005, Mike Krzyzewski was hired to coach the U.S. basketball team for the 2006 FIBA World Championship and 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, China. He had worked for the US team in the past, most notably as an assistant to Chuck Daly during the gold medal winning campaign of the original "Dream Team" at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. As the head coach at Duke University, his program can be measured not only by his three NCAA national championships (1991, 1992 and 2001), but by the numerous players he coached that went on to play in the NBA. Krzyzewski attended the United States Military Academy at West Point, NY, and also served as Bobby Knight's assistant at the Indiana University. He currently has a 75.1 winning percentage (78.1 with Duke), and has won 12 Coach of the Year Awards. He is a member of a small group of coaches, who won more than 700 games. Krzyzewski was inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall Of Fame in 2001.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Soon after starting his tenure as the managing director of the USA Basketball, Jerry Colangelo appointed me as the team's head coach, assembled an excellent team of assistants from both the NCAA and the NBA, and insisted on a thorough process of selecting players with long-term commitments to the national team. The U.S. team travelled to Japan as the favourite to win the gold medal at the World Championships. We didn't achieve that goal (we won the bronze medal), but we did show some amazing improvement when compared to the previous U.S. teams.

We had a serious approach from the coaching staff starting at Day One of our training camp. The conduct of the players (especially the superstars), their commitment to the game plans, superior performances during the exhibition games, along with the fact that this team will stay together for the next two years, can only be a great signal for the future. Our team finished the tournament at 8-1, after winning all five exhibition games (Puerto Rico, China, Brazil, South Korea, and Lithuania). We dominated in almost every statistical aspect of the game — leading all teams with 103.6 point per game (110 during the exhibition games), and shot the ball well—50.3% (also leading the tournament). We also finished first among all teams in assists per game (18.78), free-throws attempted (182), steals per game (10.8), while finishing second in blocks per game (4.9), and fourth in rebounds per game (36.3, 13.1 offensive and 23.2 defensive rebounds per game). Until the semifinal clash with the Greeks, we won all games with an average margin of 25.8 ppg.

The reasons for the defeat in the Greece game are several. Our team faced a competitive and experienced rival, the reigning European champions, a team that had reached its peak in this tournament during this game. Our team allowed 101 points in this game (after allowing just 80.8 in the first seven games). We were unable to pressure the Greek guards down the floor or in the shooting zones. Moreover, we shot an appalling 59% from the free-throw line (20 from 34), 32% percent from three-point range (9 from 28), and managed to steal the ball only four times. In addition, Greek guards and centers caused some serious trouble with their perfect execution of the pick-and-roll. In summary, the win by the Greeks was absolutely deserved.

Considering the fact that there are some big differences in the style of play, game philosophy, and rules between the NBA and the rest of the world (FIBA competitions), some time is clearly needed for our players to adjust before facing well prepared and coached international teams that emphasize team defense and various offensive plays.

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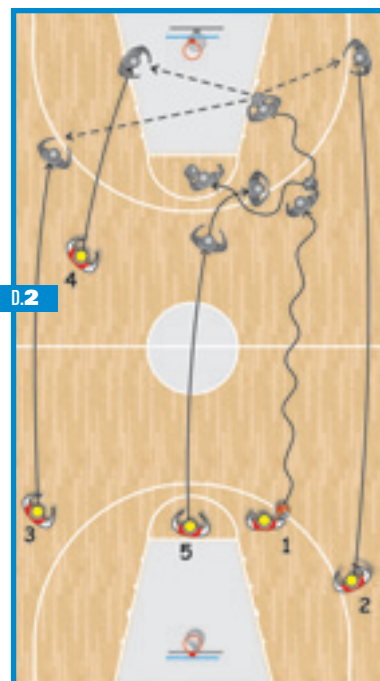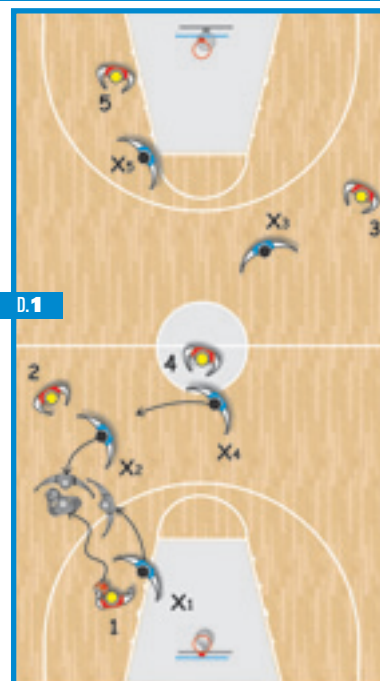
Our coaching staff managed to make the players understand their roles game after game, with the captains Dwyane Wade (19.3 points per game), LeBron James (14) and Carmelo Anthony (19.9) leading the way, along with great help from the cast of supporting players. Those three players carried the load down the stretch, playing most of the time at the guard (mostly shooting guard) position, but James and Anthony were also used as centers, both offensively and defensively, which certainly wasn't a problem, given their size and physical conditioning.

Joe Johnson and Shane Battier were used as backups for two-guard position, Chris Paul (finished second in assists per

game with 5.25) and Kirk Hinrich covered the point guard spot, while Elton Brand, Dwight Howard (1.3 blocks per game) and Chris Bosh shared the minutes at center. Brad Miller and Antawn Jamison were seldom used backups.

The Americans' style of play can be described as a simple game with a lot of running and fast breaks. There was a tendency for flamboyant plays and many one-on-one situations, with a large number of shots taken early in the shot clock. We combined this with an aggressive defense, typically man-to-man.

Following the strategy of previous U.S. national teams, we decided to divide the playing time of players. We set the number of shots for each player, using 10 to 12 players in the rotation with frequent substitutions, sometimes changing three or four players at the same time, while rarely deviating from our game plan.

DEFENSE

When you talk about the U.S. team's defense, the first thing that comes to mind is the aggressive man-to-man. We started every game playing half court or 3/4 court defense, and, after the first substitutions during the first quarter, we would start to be more aggressive, making it tougher for the opponents to move the ball. Chris Paul was the usual starter at the point guard, and after Kurt Hinrich would replace him, at which time we generally used a full court press. While using the full court press, we pressed the dribbler aggressively, closed the lanes for the first pass, forced the dribbler to the sidelines, fronted the players on the low post with a strong help side, defended great from the down screens, and boxed out well after the shots. An important thing to mention was that we were very good at taking offensive charges. During the inbounds we always pressured the guards and tried to make the offense pass the ball to a taller player (in the game against Australia, Andrew Bogut often moved the ball, while Dirk Nowitzki did it during the game against Germany).

We usually used a lineup with only one big player, and given the quality and the potential of the players, we often used two point guards (Paul and Hinrich) on the floor at the same time, sometimes playing without a true center (we started Hinrich, Johnson, James, Wade, and Anthony against Greece), a lineup where everybody would switch on defense. With this style of defensive play, we allowed 83.1 points per game, while

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D.4
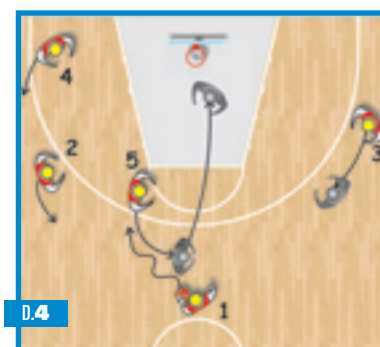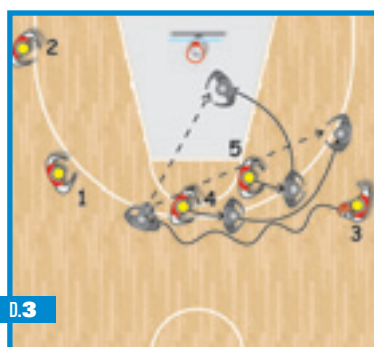
averaging 10.8 steals per game, which made all of our fast breaks and lay-ups possible. During the game against Germany, we used a full court press with double teams (diagr. 1), especially when their point guard (Hamann) was moving the ball.

While defending the pick-and-roll, we often used show-and-go over, and always switched on all screens. However, this was the segment of the game that gave us some trouble, mostly in games with some experienced teams like Italy, Greece, and Argentina, so we would quickly change the way of defending in those games. We stopped showing and started switching on the pick-and-roll. Except for the Greece game, we didn't have problems with defensive missmatches, which is not a strange thing considering the athletic abilities of our players.

During the entire course of the tournament, the U.S. team used zone defense only twice, against Italy, and briefly against Argentina during the bronze medal game. We used a 2-3 zone, but this defense was our secondary option, and we would go back to man-to-man after just a few minutes.

OFFENSE

With fast breaks as our favourite weapon, the USA team had the most prolific offense of the whole tournament. We always tried to move the ball quickly to the other side of the floor, often followed by a shot from the ball handler, or by a penetration, and a kick out pass for a three-point shot. Our tendency was to continually run fast breaks, especially after defensive rebounds and allowed
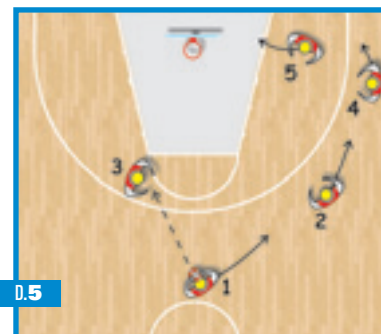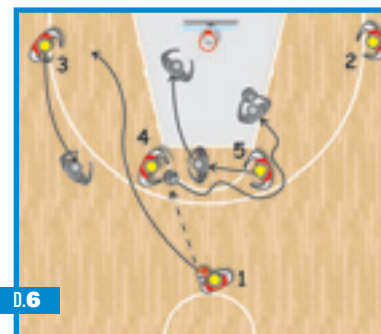
baskets. With this style of play, offensive plays lasting less than five seconds were not rare, but we were very good in "handicap" situations, and on the offensive glass as well. Our team's second offensive solution was the pick-and-roll on the side (diagr. 2), which was most commonly finished by a shot by the dribbler (Hinrich), or with a pass to a player setting the screen (Brand or Howard) on the low post, or a kick off pass to the perimeter player, who spotted up around the three point arc. In transition game situations, we usually didn't have enough patience to try to get a good position for a shot. This meant that our players would typically shoot with a defender's hand in their face, or they would penetrate to the basket with two or three defenders standing in the way. We modelled our half-court offense on NBA standards, executing it with a small number of screens and player movement. Our idea was to create a one-on-one situation where we would try to isolate the player from the help side. Players either easily handled those situations, or improvised the next move. Although the USA's possessions rarely lasted more than 10 seconds (while not setting many screens and passing the ball too much), we were very efficient. Not only did we score 103.6 points per game, but also our two stars—Wade and James - both shot 67 % (leading the tournament in that category) from inside the three-point line.

Sometimes we would use the "On B" play, a play that called for a tall player to play pick-and-roll in most situations at the top of the key (diagr. 3).

Another frequently applied play was "horn," a play where consecutive screens would be set, generally for LeBron James (diagr. 4), followed by one screener cutting to the paint, while the other one would try to get himself open for a shot.

Another play we used for James was "elbow." A player would handle the ball on the top of the key, while the other four players would concentrate on one side, trying to take the defense's attention from the player with the ball, while expecting a pass for a quick shot. Tall players would position themselves near the basket, trying to get in a good position for a rebound (diagr. 5).

An almost similar play was used when the passing lane was open in the corner of the key (usually for James), followed by a point guard's cut next to the player with the ball, and by a screen from the other tall player in the high post (diagr. 6).

Another start of a play that looks much like this one was followed by a down screen for player 3 instead of the pick-and-roll (diagr. 7). The ball was handed or passed to player 3, followed by a shot. As I have already mentioned, the ball was often passed to the low post, and the isolation called for a one-on-one situation (for Brand, Howard, or Bosh). It wasn't uncommon to see Anthony or James in that situation as well (diagr. 8).

Simple plays were called after the sideline inbounds. When the ball was to be put in play from the sideline, a down screen for a guard would be set, followed by a one-on-one play (diagr. 9), with a good positioning of the rest of the players on the floor. In the baseline inbounds situations, a tall player would set the screen for a guard, and both tried to open up and receive the ball after that. If the ball was passed to a tall player who, was not in a position to score, he passed the ball back to the inbounder, who played one-on-one (diagr. 10). If a guard received the ball, the tall player would clear the side followed by an one-on-one play. Considering that all the teams we faced often played zone defense in order to slow down our offense and make us shoot from outside, we had a couple of options in attacking the zone. When we had two tall players on the court at the same time, we attacked with a player on the high post, trying to make the high and the low posts cooperate (diagr. 11).
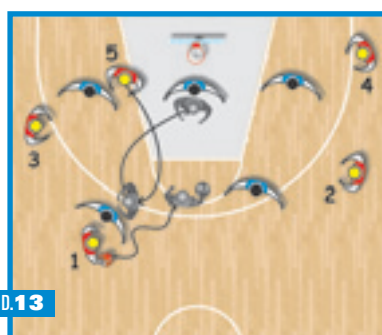

D.7

D.8

D.9

D.10

D.11

D.12

D.13
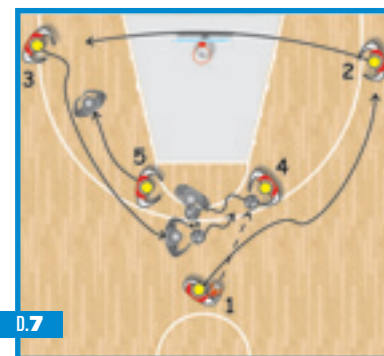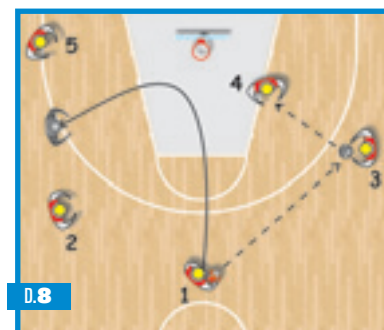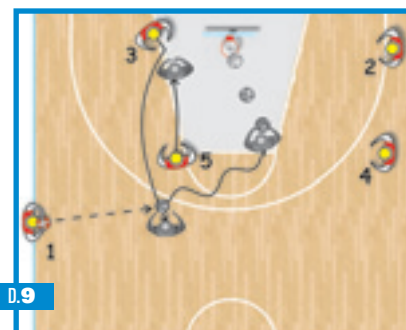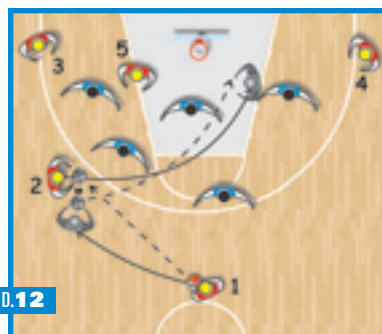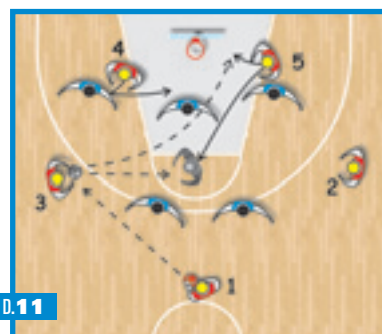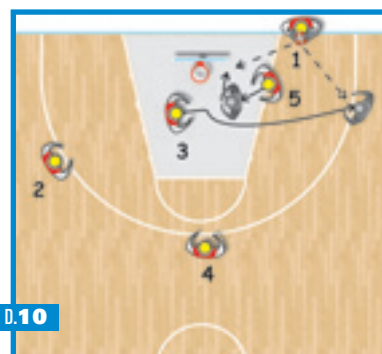
When positioned like this, we often used long pass to the player, who has cut to the low post position (diagr. 12), a play, which usually finished with a dunk (called alley-hoop). While playing against the zone in the game against Germany, we executed this play a couple of times, and the high pass was followed by a cut and a slam dunk. In situations when we used one tall player, the other four players would stay outside, using quick passes and penetrations, while the tall player would come out and set screens to the ball handler, followed by a shot (diagr. 13).

SPECIAL DEFENSE: 1-1-3 MATCH-UP ZONE

by David Blatt

David Blatt began his coaching career in 1993 as the assistant coach of Galil Elyon (Israel). Later, he has become the team's head coach, and stayed there until 1999. He was named Coach of the Year in the Israel National League in 1996. He became also assistant coach of the National team of Israel. In 2000 he went to Maccabi Tel Aviv as the assistant coach, taking over the head coaching duties in 2001 (winning two national titles and playing in the Euroleague Final Four). He was again Maccabi's assistant coach in 2003-04, and then in 2004 he went to Dynamo St. Petersburg, where his team won the 2004-05 FIBA EuroCup and was named Coach of the Year for the Russian League. Since 2005 he has been coaching Benetton (Italy), where his team won the 2005-06 Italian title. He became the Russian Men's National team head coach in 2006.

Nothing can replace solid fundamentals and strong individual and team defense. But there are players and teams with clear problems in their defensive match-ups, or with the inability to deal with the basic defensive situations. The main reason for these problems comes to the difference in technical and physical skills.

A better strategic approach to this concern can help hide these weaknesses, and can change or ruin the opponents' offensive flow.

One of these strategies can be the use of the 1-1-3 zone defense to face the three most common offensive plays of European basketball:

1) Double high post with series of screens.
2) High pick-and-roll.
3) Play with the double exit for the guard.

RULES FOR DEFENDERS

These are the main rules for the single defenders:

▼ The first defender must be in front, putting constant pressure on the dribbler, pushing him to one side of the court.
▼ The defender on the free-throw line must switch on every screen, defend against the high post, or guard the first pass to the high-post player.

D.1

D.2

D.4

D.3

D.5

D.6

D.7

D.8
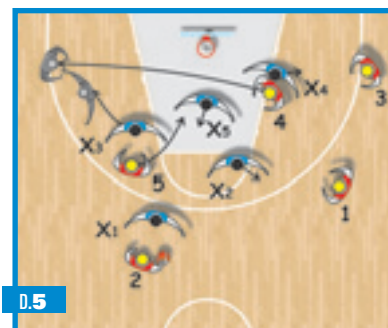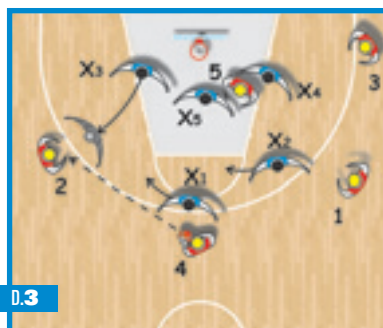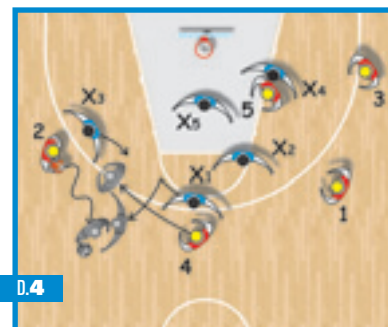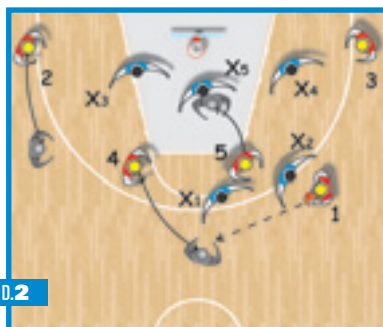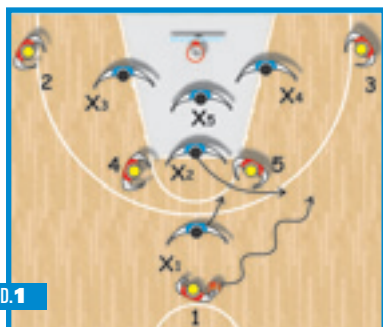
▼ The defender against the low-post player must prevent any pass to the post player, defending in front of him (or 3/4 in front of him, depending on the single defensive system or philosophy).

▼ The player on the wing must play against the offensive player on the wing, forcing him to get higher or lower (depending on how the post player is guarded).

▼ The defender in the paint must protect the rim and be responsible for the defensive rebound on the weak side.

DEFENSE AGAINST THE DOUBLE HIGH POST WITH A SERIES OF SCREENS

On the screen for 1 made by 5 against X1, X2 switches and defends against 1, who comes out of the screen and dribbles in the wing position, while X5 goes high to the free-throw line in order to guard 5, who rolls to the basket after making his screen (diagr. 1).

If 4 comes off the lane and goes to the central side of the court to receive the ball from 1 and change the ball side, X1 goes to guard 4 and X5 defends against 5 (diagr. 2).

When 4 passes the ball to 2 on the opposite side, X3 goes to guard 2, X1 moves to the elbow on the strong side and X2 moves to the free-throw line, while X4 protects the basket (diagr. 3).

If 4, after passing to 2, makes a screen for him, X3 switches and goes against 4. X1 guards 2, while the other three defenders have the usual responsibilities, as explained before (diagr. 4).

If, after our switch, 4 rolls to the basket and 5 cuts along the baseline to the opposite side, X5 goes high to guard 5, X3 goes low to guard 4, X1 guards 2, X2 is on the free-throw line, and X4 covers the paint (diagr. 5).

DEFENSE AGAINST THE HIGH PICK-AND-ROLL MADE BY 1 AND 4

The offense sets up a 1-4 set, with a point-guard and four offensive players on the same line. 4 and 5 go high and make two screens: if 1 uses the screen made by 4, X2 switches and goes against 1, while X1 guards 4 (diagr. 6).

If there is a single screen with 5 going high to pick for 1, X2 must be ready to switch against 1, going out to the right or the left side, depending on which side uses 1 to get out of the screen (diagr. 7).

If 1 passes the ball to 3, X1 goes to defend against 3 and X5 guards 5, who cuts to the basket. X4 helps against 3, in order to make easier the recover of X1 and then goes against 4, who has gone out to the corner (diagr. 8).

PLAY WITH DOUBLE EXIT FOR THE SHOOTING GUARD

2 cuts in the lane and can choose which side to go off the screen, using the screen of 4 or 5. In this particular example, 2 goes to the left and uses the screen made by 4.

X3 goes to guard 2, X5 goes against 4. X1 then goes to the elbow on the ball side and X2 on the free-throw line, while X4 is protecting the basket (diagr. 9).

If 5 screens against X3, X3 defends against 5 and X1 defends against 2, while X5 goes high to the free-throw line, and X2 goes against 1 (diagr. 10).
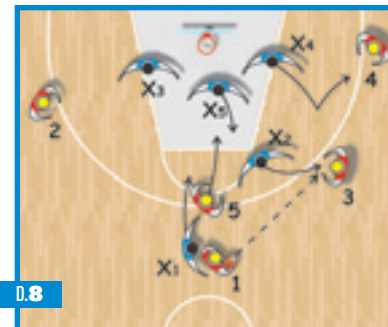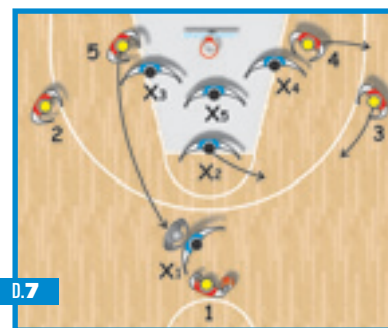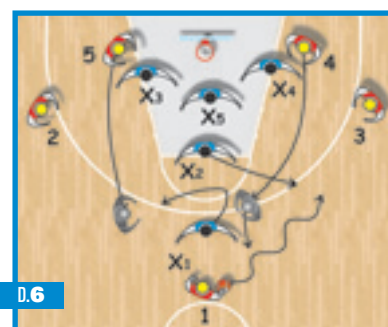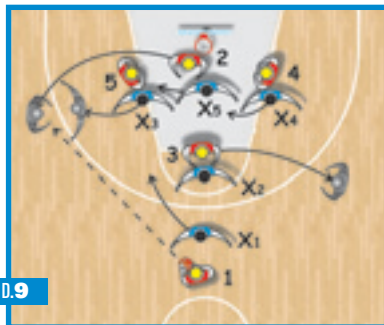
D.9

D.12
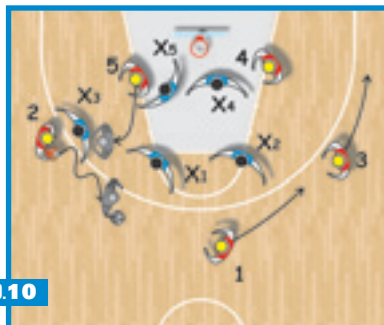
D.10

D.13
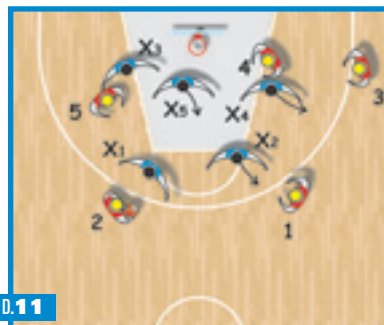
D.11
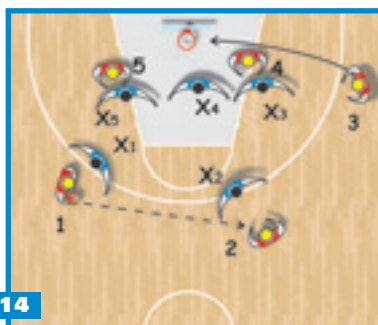
D.14

The new situation will now have X3 guarding 5 and X1 against 2 (the player with the ball). X5 is on the free-throw line, X2 defends against 1, and X4 is low on the help side (diagr. 11).

If 4 cuts from the low post in order to screen on the opposite side, X1 switches and goes against 2. X5 helps in the middle and X4 is on the help side, while X2 st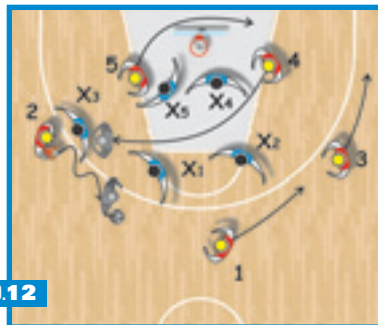ands on the free-throw line and X3 (if the ball isn't close to him) goes back to his position in the low post (diagr. 12).

If 2 goes to the central side of the court, cutting around 5 and 1 dribbles to the wing, X1 defends against 1, X2 follows 2 and stops on the free-throw line, when 2 gets out of the lane. X4 guards 4 and X5 guards 5 (diagr. 13).

If 1 passes to 2, who is on the central line of the court, and then cuts into the lane, X2 keeps on guarding 2 and, if 1 cuts in the paint, X1 prevents him from receiving the ball.
While 1 cuts in the paint, if 3 cuts along the baseline, X3 follows him until X5 can guard 3. X5 can "leave" him to X4 (diagr. 14).

AGILITY DRILLS

by Ioannis Papageorgiu

Ioannis Papageorgiu is the strength and conditioning coach of the Greek national team, that won the 2005 FIBA Europe Championship "Eurobasket" and the silver at the 2006 FIBA World Championships.

CHANGE OF DIRECTION
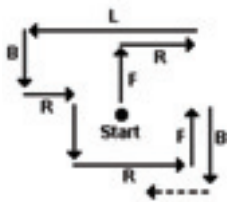### 2 SETS OF 25" RUNNING ON THE COURT (REST 25" BETWEEN SETS)

The players start running forward and the coach signals the direction changes that last 3"-4" for each direction, forward or backward, or sideways (defensive position) with random sequence and in a different direction each time. We gave much attention to the rapid and precise reaction of the player for each directional change. The coach must be behind the players so they will not see the change coming.

RUNNING AND DEFENSE
2 SETS OF 25" EACH (REST 25" BETWEEN SETS)

From the baseline (1) the players run toward the mid-court line and after coach's instruction they continue with defensive slides going backward to the baseline (2) and after coach's instruction again they run forward (3) and then again backward with defensive slides (4).
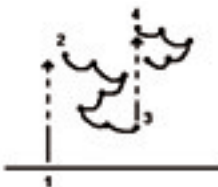
The duration of the different moves must vary, so the players won't expect the change and the trainer must be behind the players so they will not see the change coming.

SPRINT RUNNING BACKWARDS AND DEFENSE
3 SETS (REST 30" BETWEEN SETS)

At half court: The player sprints from point 1 to point 2, then runs backward until point 3 and starts defensive slides to the right at the 6,25 line until point 4. From that point the player continues by jogging until point 3 and then sprints until point 5. Then the player run backward to point 1 and starts defensive slides at the 6,25 line to the left until point 3.
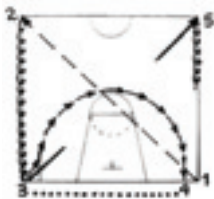
JUMP ROPE
A. DURATION 60"
- ▼ 10" jumping with both feet while moving forwards.
- ▼ 10" jumping with both feet while moving backwards.
- ▼ 10" jumping with both feet while moving sideways to the left.
- ▼ 10" jumping with both feet while moving sideways to the right.
- ▼ 10" jumping up and back with both feet from 4 to 2 and back.
- ▼ 10" jumping left and right with both feet from 4 to 3 and back

B. DURATION 50"
- ▼ 5" jumps on left foot.
- ▼ 5" jumps on right foot.
- ▼ 5" jumps on left foot from 3 to 4 to 3.
- ▼ 5" jumps on right foot from 4 to 3 to 4 .
- ▼ 5" jumps on left foot while moving forwards.
- ▼ 5" jumps on left foot while moving backwards.
- ▼ 5" jumps on right foot while moving forwards.
- ▼ 5" jumps on right foot while moving backwards.
- ▼ 5" jumps on left foot from 3 to 2 to 1 to 4 to 3.
- ▼ 5" jumps on right foot from 4 to 1 to 2 to 3 to 4.

C. DURATION 60"
- ▼ 4" running forwards.
- ▼ 4" running backwards.
- ▼ 4" running forwards.
- ▼ 4" running backwards.

Until the end of 60 seconds we continue with regular jumps with both feet while making 5 changes to faster jumps for 5".

DEFENSIVE SLIDES

Before attempting the next drills, the player should have a good warm up and stretching exercises to avoid possible injuries.

A. The player moves sideways on the court in defensive position, while his partner supplies resistance with the resistance bands. (2 sets for each direction - rest 1:1).
The drill is executed for each direction full court while always facing the same side. The drill can also be executed with passes that the other player is giving.

B. FROM DEFENSIVE POSITION

3 sets of 12" each (rest 15" between sets)
The player does 3-4 defensive slides to the right and 3-4 defensive slides to the left while his partner holds the resistance bands. The player continues the same movements for 12''. The slides are performed at high speed and the player makes defensive motions with his hands.

3 SETS OF 12" EACH (REST 15" BETWEEN SETS)

The two players both execute 2-3 defensive slides to the right and then to the left and they continue until the time of 12'' is completed while facing each

other, using the resistance bands, trying to keep as much distance as possible from each other and doing defensive motions with their hands.

C. 3 SETS OF 10 JUMPS EACH (REST 15" BETWEEN SETS)

The player stands on one leg, on quarter squat position and performs big jumps from one leg to the other while another player holds him with the resistance band.

D. From the defensive position and while using the resistance band on the legs, the player moves sideways down the length of the court in both directions and always facing the same side. The drill is executed twice in each direction. Rest 1:1.

The drill can also be performed with two players who are using a resistance band, being face to face, moving parallel to each other and exchanging passes along the court.

The drill can also be executed with defensive slides and quick changes of direction along the court, while the player is staying low and is keeping the knees bent and is doing defensive motions with his hands. 3 sets (rest 15" between sets).

RIM BOARD TOUCHES
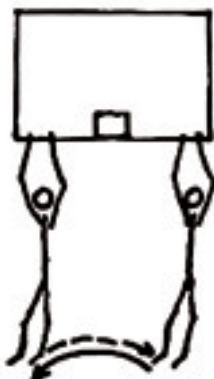
**3 SETS OF 16 JUMPS EACH
(REST 20" BETWEEN SETS)**

The player stands under the one corner of the board and while having both hands extended vertically, he jumps as high as possible, trying to touch the board. After he lands, he makes a side step to the other corner, performs a new jump and returns to the other corner to repeat.
This drill can also be done with a ball in the player's hands, with which the player will try to touch the board.

JUMPS WITH DIFFERENT ORIENTATION

The player stands with his feet shoulder width apart and parallel to each other. He performs jumps from the quarter squat position, and takes care that he takes off and lands with both feet and that his feet have a different orientation each time, front, right, left or with one leg until he makes 12 jumps on the marked positions on the court.

The drill is executed with five repetitions and a 15" rest between sets. The distance of each jump should be around 1,10m and for tall players it could be increased.

The jumps from position 1 till 12 are performed with speed and rhythm.

In every session we can mark the positions in different spots in order to achieve greater agility.

JUMPS ON CONES - BOXES AND HURDLES

A. 3 SETS OF 10 JUMPS EACH (REST 10" BETWEEN SETS)

The player stands with a 25cm tall cone between his feet and performs 10 jumps touching his feet on the air above the cone.

The player stands behind the cone and performs 10 consecutive forward and backward jumps over the cone.

The player stands beside the cone and performs 10 consecutive jumps from the one side of the cone to the other.

B. 3 SETS OF 5 FALLS EACH (REST 15" BETWEEN SETS)

From a box 20cm high, the player lands on a shock absorber surface with both feet together and performs a vertical jump with both feet. When landing again the player performs a second vertical jump. Then again the player steps on the box to continue similarly the exercise for 4 other times. In both jumps the player tries to jump as high as possible. The drill can also be executed with three vertical jumps in a row.

C. 4 SETS IN EACH DIRECTION

The player performs 6 jumps in a row above 6 hurdles 40cm tall that are placed in vertical to each other, without changing his orientation.

The player jumps the first hurdle while facing it, the second sideways, the third while facing it...

The player must repeat the drill from the end back to the start.

D. 3 SETS OF 6 JUMPS EACH (REST 15" BETWEEN SETS)

From a quarter squat position and with feet shoulder width apart, the player performs a double jump with both feet landing on a shock absorber surface and up to a 50cm tall box. After the attempt, the player steps and not jumps down from the box.