

# Rick Torbett

## The Read & React Offense

Notes by Scott Bullock

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## Introduction

Coach Torbett states that this is not an offense he has used to win championships but rather an offense that he has developed after retiring from coaching. It is an offense that he has tested out in camps and shared with coaching colleagues.

## What It's Not

The Read & React is not suited for a specific type of player. It is not a collection of set plays. In reality it is really not a set offense.

## What It Is

Ultimately the Read & React is offense. It is a principled framework out of which players can play. It is a system of 2 man reads and reactions that can be drilled into habit. It ties the 2 man reads into a seamless five man offense.

## What It Can Be

It can be your entire man to man and zone offense. It can be the principled foundation of your offense. It can also be a system of development taught in layers.

## Goals of the Read and React

- 1) Easily taught and transferred from coach to coach or coach to player
- 2) Simple enough to master with repetition
- 3) Built on habits and not high IQ
- 4) Provide freedom and excitement for players. Encourage attacking skills
- 5) The system would build 5 man coordination
- 6) Simple enough for kids but contain potential for as much complexity for highest levels
- 7) Two edged sword : the better the fundamentals the better the execution and vice versa.

## Secrets of the Read and React

The real secret to the read and react is the build-up drills contained on the third DVD. Getting in a high amount of repetition with these drills is the key to being successful with this offense.

## Is the Read and React Another Motion Offense?

The Read and React is not another motion offense. It is a developmental framework that can help build skills a piece or layer at a time. Motion offenses tend to provide complete freedom and endless choices to players. The read and react has specific reactions for specific reads. It has freedom but requires disciplined habits.

## **Flexibility / Adaptability**

If this offense was not named the Read and React offense he could call it the Adjustable offense. It is completely flexible depending on the types of players that are in your system. It can be used with no post players or very skilled post players. It can be used with quick penetrating teams or teams with more deliberate style of play. It can be use with a 5-out, 4-out 1-in, or 3-out 2-in set. It can be used with screens or no screens.

## **Definition of Read and React Habits**

This is a game played by instinct not like chess where you have to think about each move and weigh all the different options. The read and react is system of habits taught through drill and repetition. The habits taught build on each other. The less the players have to think the better. The less they think the quicker they move and react. Be patient in teaching these habits. Sometimes less is more. Master each layer of habits before moving on. There is a difference between understanding something and being able to react to something. The key here is reaction and not just understanding.

## **Keys to Read and React**

The Read and React offense is keyed off of what the ball handler does. The ball handler is clearly the initiator and the rest of the players are reactors. The players without the ball are not just free to react as in a motion offense. They have a single trained response for each specific action of the ball handler.

## **Youth Coaches**

Traditional Offenses have one thing in common. Master of the whole is necessary in order to be useful. This is not true of the Read and React offense. This makes it the perfect offense for youth teams. You don't need the entire 17 layers to be successful at the youth level. The first 5 levels are sufficient to the success of a youth team. This is actually true for all coaches at all levels. You don't need to teach all layers of this offense to be effective.

## Teaching the Offense

### Layer by Layer

The offense is built in layers. There are 17 total. You can't add the next layer until the previous layer is mastered. Don't go to the next layer until the players are bored with the layer that they are on. Drill them until they hate the drill and they are rolling their eyes at you. You want the read and react habits to be so automatic that players can focus all their energy on their defender and reading the defense. If players are constantly stopping and asking what to do then you are moving through the layers too fast.

### Read and React

Each layer is made up of two-player read and react habits. Each layer is taught with drills to reinforce these habits. Look at the offense as two halves making up the whole. One half is made up of the 2-player read and react habits. The other half is the 5 player teaching layers.

### Level A - Laying the Foundation

He teaches these layers in a 5-out set but that does not mean they have to be run in a 5-out set. He does it for simplicity.

#### Layer 1 - Dribble Penetration & Circle Movement

The first layer teaches the reaction of perimeter players when dribble penetration occurs. All players on the perimeter circle right or left depending on the direction of penetration. They circle in the direction of the penetration. This leaves the penetrating player with the following options:

- 1) Take the ball all the way to the basket
- 2) Natural Pitch to adjacent player on the perimeter
- 3) Kick back to the safety valve; the player filling behind
- 4) Dish to the baseline cutter

#### Layer 2 - Dribble Penetration & Baseline Drive

On a baseline drive, the opposite corner must not circle up like the rest of the perimeter players. He must stay and fill the opposite corner. This is referred to as the baseline adjustment. It is the natural pitch window for the baseline penetrator. Even if the opposite corner is empty it must be filled with the closest player on that side of the floor on a baseline drive. The remaining players on the perimeters have only minor adjustments. They must fill the 45 degree pitch option, the 90 degree pitch option, and the safety valve pitch option. The opposite corner is the only real adjustment we make on a baseline drive.

#### Layer 3 - Pass and Cut : Scoring and Spacing

Every time you pass the ball to one player away you must always cut to the basket. Every pass must be turned into a scoring threat with a basket cut. Every cut creates good things for your teammates. Every cut

takes one of the immediate help defenders away from the ball. In addition the cut allows your teammates to fill spots and open up new scoring opportunities.

Two Basic Rules for this layer:

- 1) When you pass the ball to a teammate one spot away you must basket-cut. This is rule that the offense will never break. This does not apply to skip passes.
- 2) Open spots are filled from the baseline up as quickly as possible. This will leave the basket cutter with an open spot to fill.

Three Scoring Opportunities:

- 1) Before a pass is made we must be sure the receiver is open. The 19 foot arc is your Read-Line. If your defender is over the 19 foot arc you must basket-cut. Don't wait for a pass just cut.
- 2) When filling an open spot the player without the ball must view this movement as a great scoring opportunity. As soon as your defender steps on or over the Read-line then Rear Cut.
- 3) When the pass is finally made scoring opportunity #3 presents itself. Passer can score on a Rear Cut or Front Cut. If defender jumps in denial position then rear cut straight to the basket. If the defender does not jump to the ball then front cut him. Front cut and Rear Cut must be drilled to point of reaction.

#### Layer 4 – Post Reactions to Dribble Penetration

There are two different post reactions to dribble penetration. The reactions are the same no matter if the post is playing ball side or weak side.

- 1) **Post Slide #1** – When the ball enters the lane above the post player he slides to the short corner area opening up the lane area. You create separation from the defender and prepare to receive bounce pass.
- 2) **Post Slide #2** – When the ball enters the lane from the baseline or below the post player then the post slides up to the free throw line elbow area.

#### Layer 5 – The Speed Dribble

The speed dribble is an east west dribble. There are three east west dribbles used for pressure relievers. The other two are power dribble and circle reverse. These two are more complicated so we cover the speed dribble first. Whenever the ball handler dribbles at another player on the perimeter that signals for that player to rear cut or back cut to the basket. Back door bounce pass can be made right off the dribble.

The speed dribble does three things to open up scoring opportunities :

- 1) It gets the entire team moving
- 2) It can create an immediate post matchup by sending a player down to the block
- 3) It also creates a great opportunity for a scoring option for the person filling the vacated spot.

## **Level B - Completing the Foundation**

### **Layer 6 - The Power Dribble**

The power-dribble signals a dribble handoff and then pick-and-roll. It's a pressure reliever. It's also a safe way for post players to signal a pick and roll on the perimeter. The power dribble must be so obvious that your teammate does not mistake it for a speed dribble. A power dribble is signaled by turning your back to your defender and dribble at a teammate. If the teammate mistakes it for a speed dribble then the ball handler can continue on to next teammate.

### **Layer 7 - Circle Reverse**

Circle reverse refers to the action that takes place when dribble penetration is shut down. As dribble penetration begins, the perimeter players begin to circle. As dribble penetrations is shut down they must reverse the circle giving the ball handler additional options.

### **Layer 8 - Back Screens**

Back screens are hard to defend and an important ingredient of a successful offense. He likes to require a back screen after every basket cut. His philosophy is now you've had your chance to score give a teammate a chance to score. Don't hog the lane. Setting a back screen is not entirely an unselfish act though. It can lead to a 3 point shot for the screener. Back screens are also helpful if a player basket cuts and empties out to the wrong side where no empty slots exist. Instead of turning around and vacating just set a back screen to vacate one of the spots. The 2 player read and react habit here is after a pass and basket cut you always fill out with a back screen. He emphasizes calling players name and yelling back screen as you set the screen. You have to get his attention. He doesn't care if the defense hears. You set the back screen by getting both feet in the air and landing on both. Timing is critical. The cutter cannot use the screen until he hears your feet hit the ground. You should be yelling back screen before setting it.

### **Layer 9 - Multiple Staggered Screens**

This is an interesting layer. These multiple staggered screens are not intentional but something that happens when you are setting one back screen and another perimeter player has started a basket cut. It's something that you recognize and then take advantage of the situation. The basket cutter instead of turning around to keep the lane clear for the cutter off the back screen continues on and just sets a staggered screen. The nice thing about a 4 out 1 in is that you always have a second screener down there for the double staggered.

## Level C – Post Play

### Layer 10 – Advanced Post Reactions

He reviews the post reactions discussed in layer four in regard to post reactions to dribble penetration. These reactions are essential so that dribble penetration can occur from the perimeter without the posts clogging the lane. He adds a few twists to each of these slides.

- 1) **Post Slide #1** – When the ball enters the lane above the post player he slides to the short corner, getting out of the way, and opening up the lane area. You create separation from the defender and prepare to receive bounce pass. If the post defender follows you to short corner then you rear cut toward the basket.
- 2) **Post Slide #2** – When the ball enters the lane from the baseline or below the post player then the post slides up to the free throw line elbow area.

### Layer 11 – Post Blocking

He talks about post blocking in regard to a 4 out 1 in offense. The post player can be constantly setting back screens for the cutters. He talks about picking a side of the floor perhaps for the post player to stay on most of the time. He does this first to emphasize their strong hand and also to keep one side open for penetrating lay-ups. In a 4 out 1 in you have the corners empty so wings can drive baseline without getting defensive help from that side. He talks about the wing reading the post in order to decide which way to drive. If the post is being defended on the high side then the wing can drive baseline and vice versa.

### Layer 12 – Post Passing

When you feed the post make one of these cuts...

- 1) Laker-Cut Low – basket cut that must go below the low block along the baseline. Spacing is important so post defender can't guard post player and cutter at the same time.
- 2) Laker-Cut High – basket cut that must go above the ball side elbow
- 3) Relocate – if your defender doubles down to the post then relocate to the corner and prepare for the pass.
- 4) X-Cut – Wing sets screen for guard above you and then cuts to the basket. It is deceiving misdirection.

He will often teach these basket cuts as part of the first couple layers that say you must cut every time you pass. As one player cuts the others must fill spots on the perimeter. As you are filling spots if your defender steps across the read-line you must basket cut.

These rules for feeding the post apply to any position on the floor. If you feed the post from one of the top slots you still must basket-cut.

## Layer 13 – 3 out 2 in Dribble Penetration

### Level D – Icing on The Cake

#### Level 14 – Counter Helping Defense – Pin & Skip

This layer could be taught much earlier if needed. There are no habits or skills previously taught that are necessary for this layer. This layer teaches a pin screen on the weak side of the floor to counter help in the lane. The pin screen is set on the player closes to the ball with the most distance to recover. The PIN screen should yell PIN to alert his teammates to what is happening. He talks about the pass receiver getting the ball handlers attention by doing the PE class jumping jack. Once the skip pass is made you can shoot or feed the pinner who has now sealed in the post. He also talks about this as a natural way to transition from 5 out to 4 out 1 in. It's also great for creating an immediate post up opportunity for the post player. You can start in a 4 out and transition to a 3 out with this same action.

#### Level 15 – Attacking Zone Defenses

He wants to build off the same read and react habits we have discussed to attack zones. He feels that most man defenses are not necessarily true man to man defenses. With help side defense most man defenses turn into some kind of zone defense. In short he wants to take the same habits and make minor adjustments for zone defenses.

- 1) **Pass and Seam Cut** – instead of basket cutting, you cut through a seam and out the other side
- 2) **Add Short Corner as Spots** - Cutters can stop in these spots. If the ball ever enters this spot it's a lot like a baseline drive. All the same things that happen with a baseline drive should happen here. Someone needs to occupy the opposite baseline corner, the two elbows, and the safety valve.
- 3) **Penetrate & Pitch (even more)** – Complete penetration to the basket against zones is usually difficult but it is easy to attract two defenders and pitch to an open teammate.
- 4) **Safety Valve Advantage** – The Safety valve is almost always open on dribble penetration. If the defense adjusts to cover this, then a few extra passes on the perimeter should find the open player.
- 5) **Pin and Skip** – He believes the pin and skip might be the best single weapon against a zone. All zones are ready made for the pin and skip.

**Note:** As long as you don't turn the ball over there is no way to mess things up.

#### Level 16 – Seamless Transition – Fast Break to Half Court Offense

Goal with seamless transition is to never give the defense a chance to regroup. He drills this by having 5

players circle under the hoop while he puts up a shot. He lets any of the players get the rebound. The rebounder then pushes the ball up the court while the others fill lanes. The ball handler pretends the fast break fails and stops at any of the perimeter positions. When the wings hit the arc they make basket cuts and continue on to other side of the floor. He feels it's extremely important for the wings to change sides of the floor in transition taking their defenders with them. The wings can then optionally set back screens for the two trailers coming down depending on the speed of the trailers. He calls this the secondary break.

**Full Court Trips** – Drill with a set number of trips. Each trip is run with some specific type of offensive action. They break back off missed shots and take it out of bounds on made shots.

### **Level 17 – The Ultimate – Flowing Naturally from Set to Set**

He believes the hardest teams to defend would be teams that can flow from 5 out to 4 out to 3 out in a single possession. When a team can flow from one set to the next naturally depending on the defense; this is a sign that your team truly understands the read and react offense.

### **Conclusion**

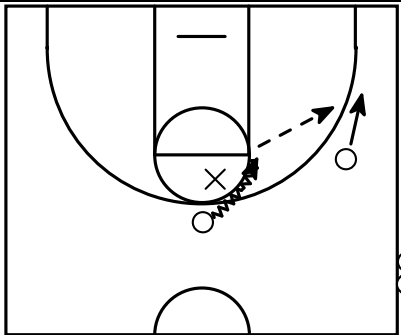
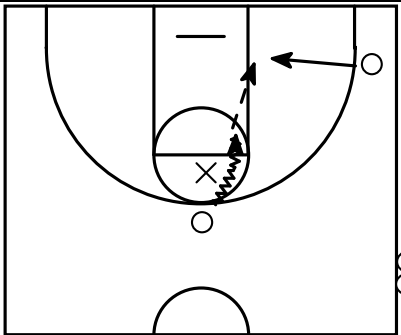
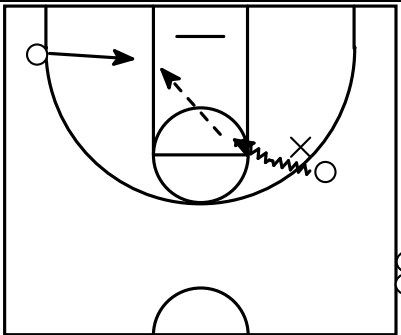
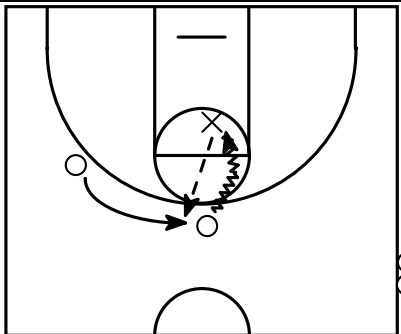
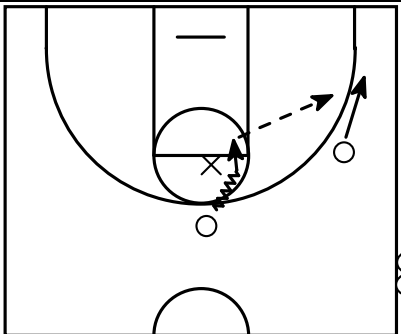
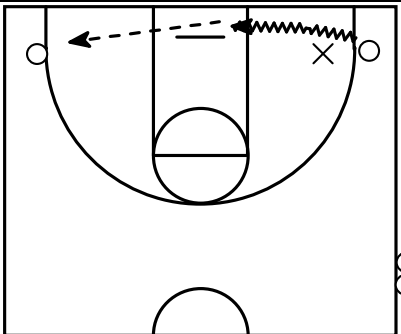
The strength and beauty of this offense is not in any one layer but lies in the combination of these layers.

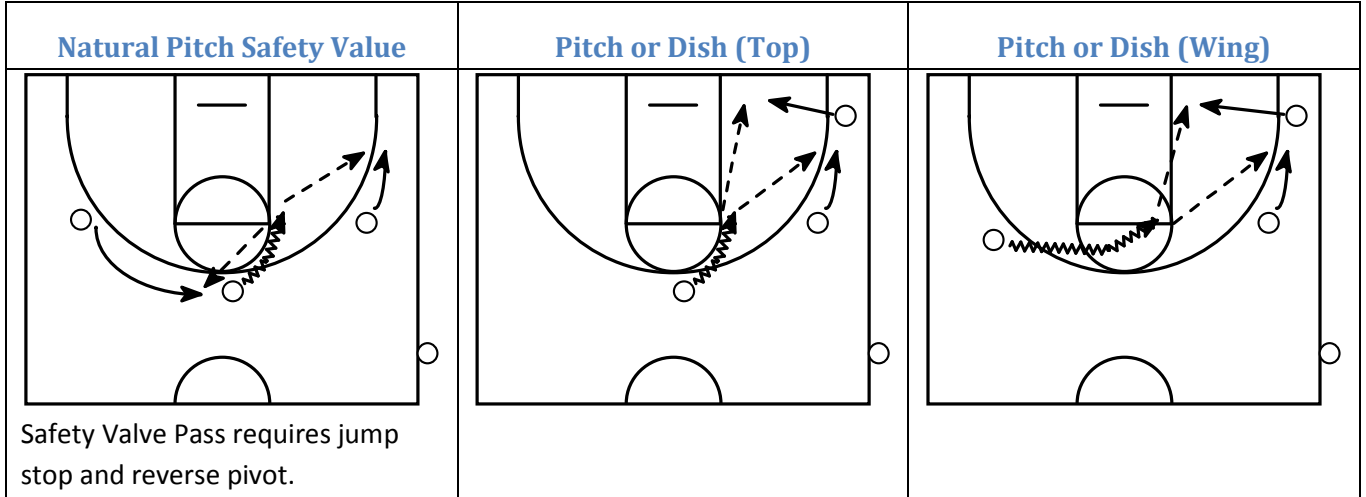
## Drills to Build Habits

### Introduction

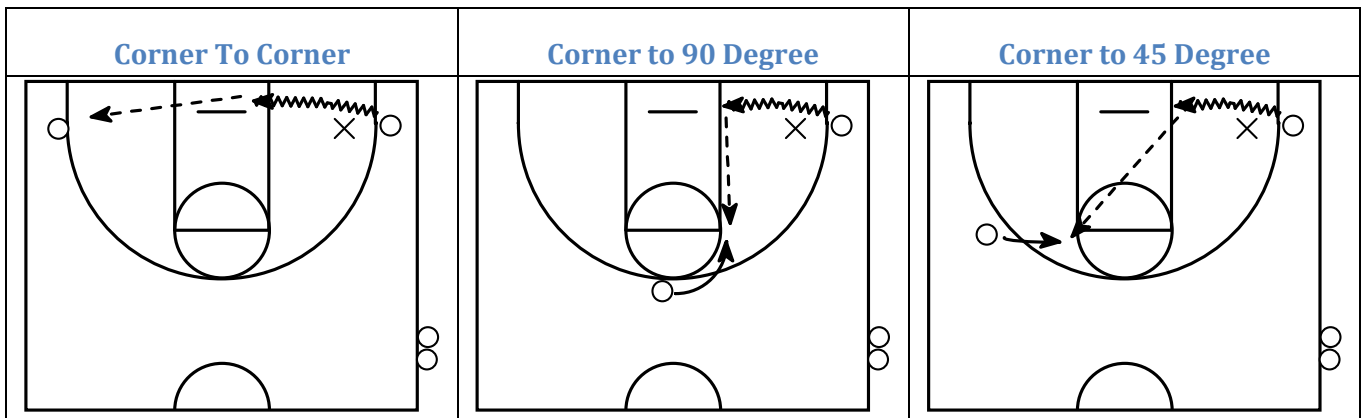
Secret to this offense lies in the drills that teach the read and react habits. You can run these drills with 2, 3, or 4 plays and get high amounts of repetitions. The more repetitions the quicker the reactions turn into habits. You will be frustrated if you try and teach this offense without drilling the habits through these drills. If you see your players thinking on the floor then you know they are not yet habits. They need to be drilled more. You can actually also incorporate lots of fundamental skills (i.e. passing and shooting) into these read and react drills.

### Layer 1 - Dribble Penetration & Circle Movement

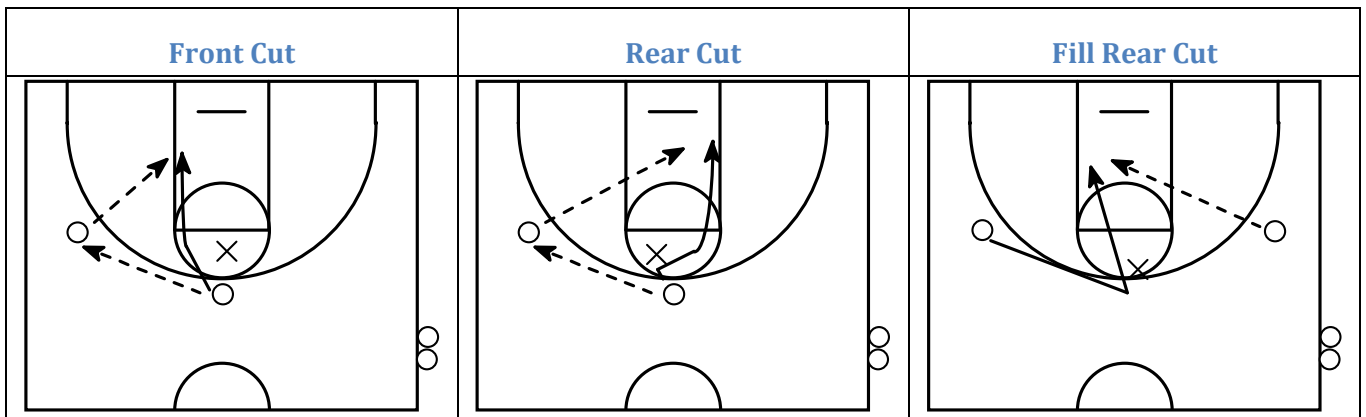
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Natural Pitch</b></p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Middle Drive &amp; Dish</b></p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Wing Drive &amp; Dish</b></p> 
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Safety Valve</b></p>  <p>Requires a reverse pivot and pitch by ball handler.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Read Drive: Circle Movement</b></p>  <p>Combination of Natural Pitch and Safety Valve Drills. Direction of penetration is the key.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Corner to Corner</b></p> 

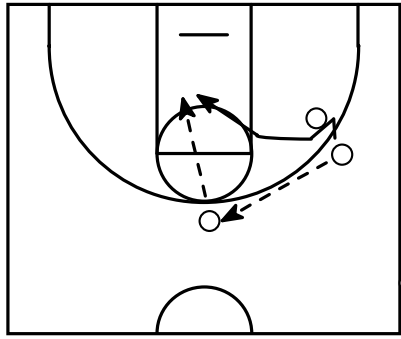
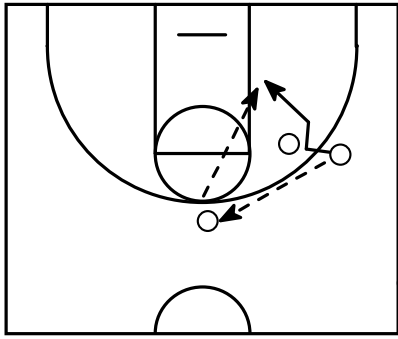
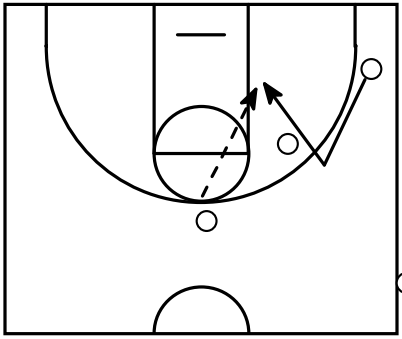


### Layer 2 - Baseline Adjustment

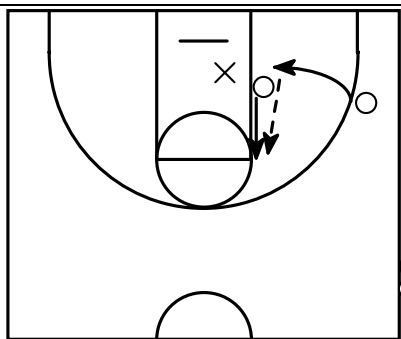
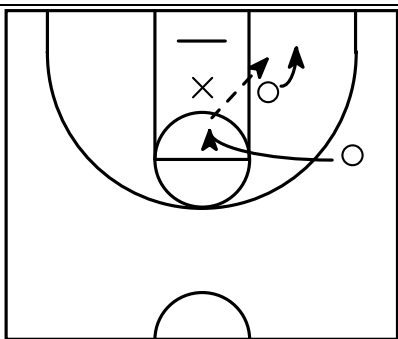


### Layer 3 - Scoring and Spacing

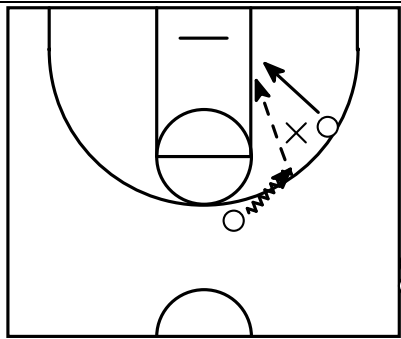


<b>Front Cut</b>	<b>Rear Cut</b>	<b>Fill Rear Cut</b>
		
<p>Do these from all angles on floor</p>		

### Layer 4 - Post Reactions

<b>Elbow Slide</b>	<b>Short Corner Slide</b>	
		
<p>Done with post player on strong and weak side.</p>		

### Layer 5 - Speed Dribble

<b>Backdoor Cut</b>		
		
<p>Important to do this on both sides</p>		

of the floor.		
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**Layer 6 - Power Dribble**

<b>Dribble Handoff - Pick &amp; Roll</b>		

**Layer 7 - Circle Reverse**

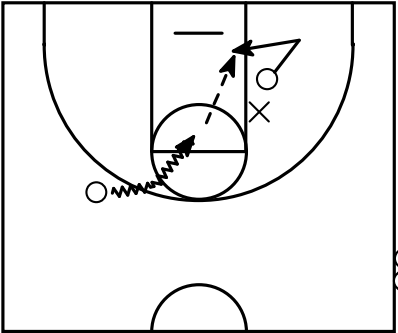
<b>Circle Reverse</b>		

**Layer 8 - Back Screens**

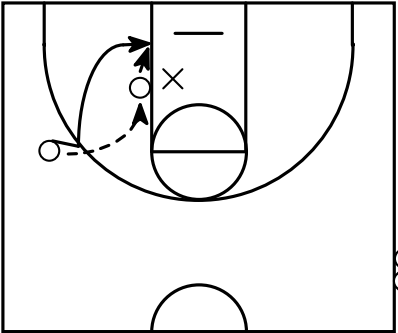
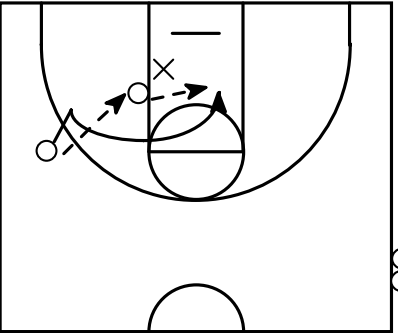
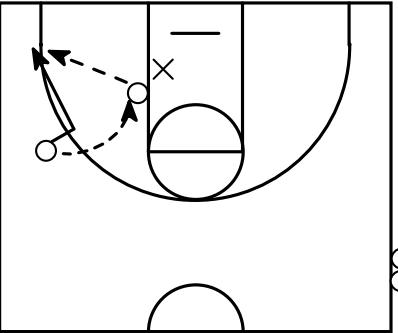
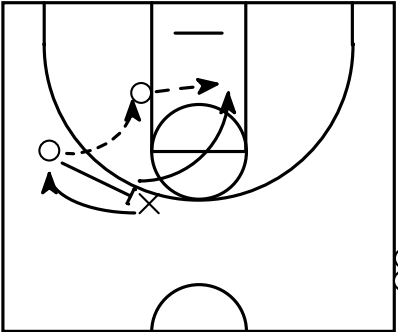
<b>Pass, Cut, &amp; Back Screen</b>		

**Layer 9 - Staggered Screens**

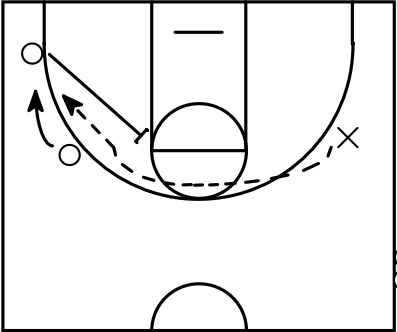
**Layer 10 - Advanced Post Reactions**

Post Rear Cut	Circle Safety Valve	
	<p>Add Circle Safety Valve</p>	

**Layer 12 - Post Passing**

Laker-Cut Low	Laker-Cut High	Relocate Corner
		
<p>X Cut</p>		
 <p>X is the coach in these drills.</p>		

### Layer 14 - Pin Screen and Skip Pass

Pin Screen & Skip		
		

## Strategies and Ideas

### Through the Players Eyes

#### Benefits to Players

- 1) Develop and use your attack skills
- 2) No guesswork – watch the ball and react accordingly
- 3) No plays to learn – you will be learning moves that will help you in any system
- 4) More practice time to get better at game –

### Ideas and Strategies to Fit your Team

#### 3 Out 2 In

#### 4 Out 1 In

Post in Short Corner – great formation for post who is not a great back to the basket player but good to receive drive and dumps.

Post as Blocker – post player is used to constantly screen for cutters.

High Post that Ball screens – post player comes high and sets a ball screen after any pass to the wing and basket cut by one of the perimeter players up top. A lot like UCLA offense.

4 Out Ball Side Triangle –

#### 5 Out

Gut Drive Adjustment – weak side corner player will basket cut before starting his circle movement.

Delay Game –

### Shot Selection and Turnover Control

- 1) **The Know No Rule** - Knowing Your Role equals no turnovers. Each player should play to their strengths.
- 2) **The WWW rule** – When and Where equals Wins. Each player needs to know when and where to shoot.

## **Taking Our Game to a Higher Level**

### **Untraditional Practice Plans**

To really teach this offense you need to move away from your traditional practice plans. Practices need to be totally centered around read and react skills. It can't be something you buy into half way.

Game Warm Ups – Should be a review time of read and react skills.

Fundamental Skill work – teach fundamentals using read and react drills. Do not make them a separate thing. Teach layups with front cuts, rear cuts, Laker cuts, etc. Work on 3 point shooting through a back screen drill with the shooter shaping up.