THE COMPLETE BOOK

ON

BASKETBALL'S FLEX OFFENSE

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INTRODUCTION

It is widely believed that the **Flex Offense** was invented on the West Coach of the U.S.

The coach who ran it with most success and is known as the "**Father of the Flex**" was **Carrol Williams** while he was Head Coach of Santa Clara University.

Williams' assistant coach, **Dan Fitzgerald**, brought the offense north to Spokane when he became head coach at Gonzaga. It is still a big part of the Zag's success today.

His teams were noted for their **execution of the offense** and their ability to adjust to the particular game situation.. **He was able to use ball control one game and combine it with fast break action the next.**

The offense has since been adopted by coaches throughout the United State and other parts of the world. New "wrinkles" have been added to it and it has become very difficult to defend if it is a team's primary offense.

The flex in some form is even used in the **NBA** though the **24 second shot clock limits using it as a continuity**. **The Boston Celtics** used it in their run **to the NBA championship in 2008.**

The Flex is **structured motion** with **all five players learning to play each position** in the **continuity offense**. It can be used in a number of ways: as a **ball control offense**, a **quick-hitting or "early"offense, or a delay game**. It is also **very easy for the fast-break offense to flow into the flex continuity**.

This offense is most effective against **man-to-man defenses** but, with adjustments, can be used against the match-up and against combination defenses.

 Most scoring opportunities come off the **"flex cut"** inside, or a **jump-shot from the elbows.**

ADVANTAGES OF THE FLEX

The Flex man to man offense provides certain advantages:

1. **Constant ball and player movement**. All five players are cutting, screening, and passing with **options** that enable players to have a **certain amount of freedom.**

2. The flex produces **good high percentage shots** and **encourages good shot selection**. Using **the basic pattern** and the **various entries** to the offense, **the majority of the shots will come from the elbow area and the low post block area.**

3. **It gives continuity to the offense.** Unlike set play offenses, there is no ending. The offense can be run over and over. When set play offenses complete the play with no shot, players tend to go 1-on-1 similar to "pickup" basketball.

4. **It enables a team to control the tempo of the game.** The Flex enables a team to keep **turning the ball over and over in the basic pattern** until they get a **specific** shot, or if they prefer, they can use one of several entries to get a **quick** shot.

5. **It minimizes dribbling. Timing** is essential to continuity and cannot be achieved if a player is dribbling the ball too much. **Overdribbling results in too much 1-on-1 play.**

6. **It requires Team Play.** The offense requires all five players to play together **as a team with discipline and patience.** Each player will move in the pattern to help his teammates to score.

7. **Options to score**. **The Flex** provides **options to score** on each pass. It allows players to **"read the defense"** and react to the **best scoring option.**

8. **Provides instant and constant ball reversal**.

9. **It is difficult to defend**. All five defenders are **required to guard cutters, screeners, and passers both on the inside and outside.**

10. **It can be run from a variety of entries.** While the **basic pattern is a 2-3**, it can be initiated from a low 1-4, a high 1-4, double stack, a 1-3-1, and other imaginative sets.

11. **It is particularly effective for a team that lacks height.** Since the continuity of the offense **requires all five players to play all positions**, small players in the post **can take bigger opponents outside** and **smaller players who know how to play the post can take their smaller defenders inside.**

12. **Defenders are forced to cover other positions on the floor. The post player will have to defend a guard or wing** and **guards will have to guard a post** as the flex continues. **Few players on the defensive team are adept at guarding players both on the inside and on the outside**. The big guy who does not do well **when he comes outside to defend**, or the guard who has to go i**nside and guard someone on the post** are examples of how the Flex can **expose defensive weaknesses.**

13. Despite some coaches' fear of continuity offenses, **the Flex is easily taught**.

DISCIPLINE AND PATIENCE ARE ABSOLUTE ESSENTIALS FOR SUCCESS IN RUNNING THE FLEX

PERSONNEL TO BEST USE THE FLEX

The Flex can be used by all teams; however, it is best used by teams with the following personnel:

(1) **An average size team.** It is particularly good for a team that **does not have a big center**; however, **a big center can play in the Flex,** though some adjustments may have to be made.

(2) **Players who can play both inside and outside.** A **good shooting team** along with some of the smaller players who have **learned to play the post** is very difficult to guard when they are running the **Flex**.

(3) **A team with good 15' to 17' jump shooters**. The **Flex offense** produces a lot of shots from that range, **particularly at the elbows**.

(4) **A good passing team**. Since the ball will be passed from side to side and **fed into post players when they are open**, a good ball handling team is required. This requires daily drill on **passing fundamentals.**

INITIAL POSITIONS:

 # 1 – The **Point Guard** will direct the offense most of the time. A premium on **basketball intelligence** will be necessary at this position since **the point guard must initiate the offense** from the various entries and options that are available.

 # 2 and # 3 – The **Wing Players** are interchangeable. They will get numerous opportunities to score from **both the outside and inside.** A good ball-handling wing player can also be used to **initiate the offense from the point position at times.**

 # 4 and # 5 – The **Post Players** are also interchangeable with both playing on either side of the lane. **Good low post players can be kept low** on entries to post up while a good shooting post player can be brought **outside for good jump shooting opportunities.**

One of the **major advantages of the Flex Offense** is that **it forces opposing players who are not used to guarding outside players to have to guard those outside players.** A player who has the **ability to score on the post and to make jump shots from the elbow** will be extremely difficult for anyone guarding in a man to man defense.

A good post player who has learned to shoot the 15' to 17' shot and **has also learned how to drive** will cause havoc with an opposing team's defense.

COACHING POINT: Post players seldom learn how to drive unless they are taught by a capable coach <u>how</u> to drive. Daily work on the drive footwork is essential, but it will pay off with successful drives to the basket and frequent fouls by the opponent trying to guard the driver. This will be covered in detail later in the book.
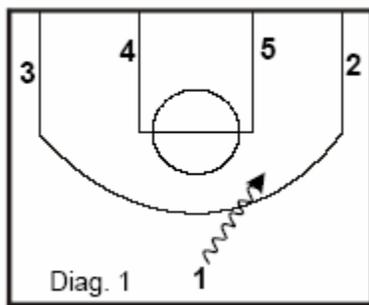

CHAPTER 1

THE BASIC FLEX

STARTING POSITIONS OF THE PLAYERS:

The **basic starting positions of the Flex** are very important for setting up good scoring opportunities from the various entries.

Correct starting positions will allow the use of cutting angles and will open the floor for individual moves.

Diagram 1. **The Basic Flex set-up.**

Point Guard #1 must keep the ball in the center of the court while **reading the defense**. He then dribbles to a side according to (1) **defensive pressure** or (2) **where he would like to pass the ball.**

#4 and #5 set up just above the block and face #1 as the ball is advanced.

#2 and #3 establish their position one step above the post players #4 and #5 and **one step off the sideline.**

These positions will **spread the defense** and give #1 a better chance of reading the defense correctly. This will help #1 determine which entry or option that would be best used.

These offensive positions also give #1 the **freedom to go one on one**. The post players (#4 and #5) will have room to operate if they receive the ball. The wings (#2 and #3) will be in good position to set their defenders up for a baseline screen by a post player

THE HEART OF THE FLEX

The "Power Triangle" is the basic "Heart" of the Flex.

It is from the **Power Triangle** that the **defense has the most trouble defending**.

It is from the **Power Triangle** that the **basic Flex cut is made and the resulting "screen the screener" action occurs.**

It is from the **Power Triangle that most effective cuts are made** and **most opportunities for getting the ball inside occur.**
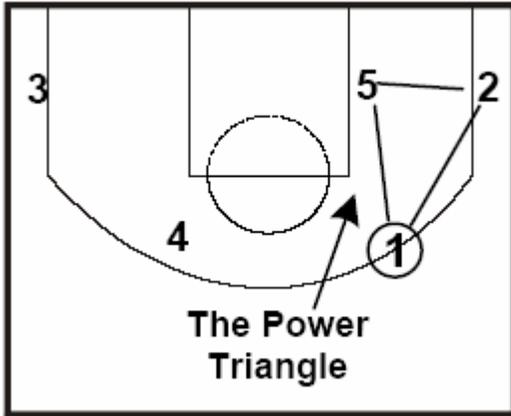
Diagram 2. The Power Triangle.

The Power Triangle shown here by the positions of #1, #2 and #5 are positions that must <u>always</u> be filled on one side of the court for the Flex to be initiated.

BASIC PATTERN:

The basic flex pattern will involve players filling five spots on the floor and then using cuts, screens, and clever passes to get an open shot.

Screen the screener action always occurs when the basic flex cut is made and is the most difficult part of the Flex for the defense to guard.. **A player sets a screen for a teammate, then receives a screen for himself.**

INITIATING THE BASIC OFFENSE:

The point guard will advance the ball, **either left or right, dependent on the defense** and entry play called. Notice that #1 has advanced to the **power triangle** position.
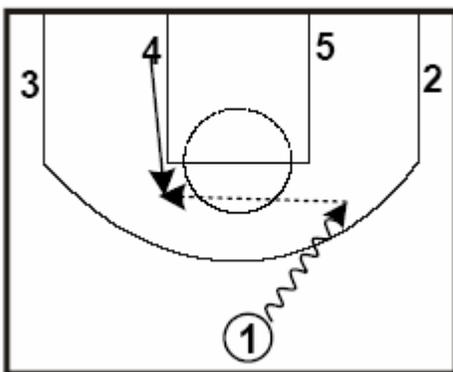
Diagram 3. Entry pass to Offside Post

In this case, #1 has advanced the ball to the **power triangle** on the right side of the court.

#4 **cuts to a spot just above the free throw line** and receives a pass from #1.
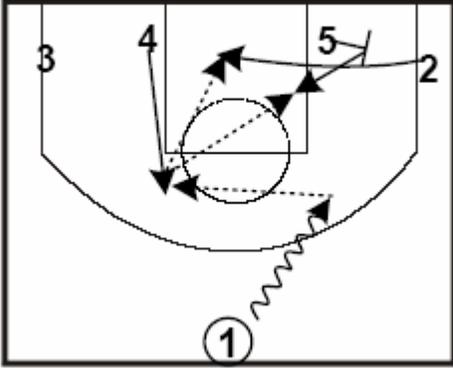
Diagram 4. Basic Flex Cut.

As #1 makes pass to #4, #5 sets **flex screen** for #2 who will **read the screen** and cut either high or low into the middle of the lane looking for a pass from #4. This is **the basic flex cut**.

After the screen, #5 will step into the lane for a pass **if his defender has helped too much defensively on #2.**

This cut by #2 is called the **"Flex Cut"**. #2 can cut **over the top or on the baseline side of #5 dependent on how the defense may play him.**

COACHING POINT: Until players are thoroughly coached the screener often leaves **too early** in his anxiousness to receive a pass. In this case, #5 must set a good screen for the cutter #2 and **have the patience to hold it** until #2 cuts on by the screen. Then and only then can #5 duck in and look for the inside feed.
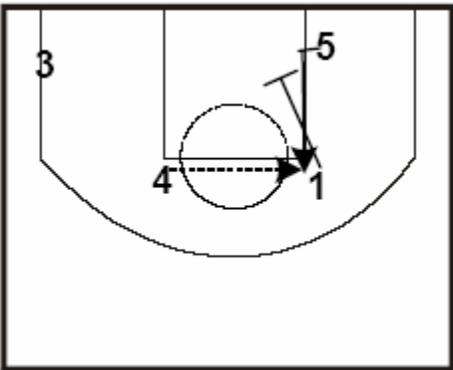
Diagram 5. Screen the screener action.

After #2s cut, #5 will step in, look for a possible pass from #4, then **accept a screen** from #1.

#5 then cuts to the free throw line area for a **possible open jump shot,** or a **drive** to the basket.

COACHING POINT: It is extremely important that #5 **wait on the screen by #1**. If he comes too quickly, he **will not get open until he gets above the top of the circle area**. It is also very important that the coach work with #5 teaching him the **correct footwork** for **catching to shoot** and **catching and driving**.
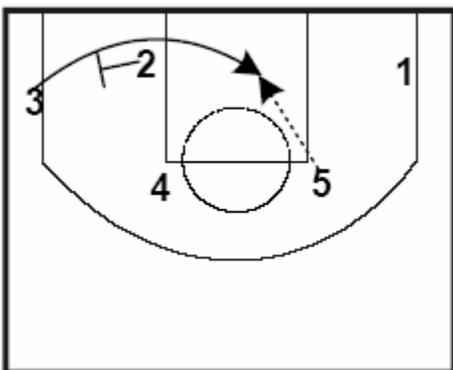
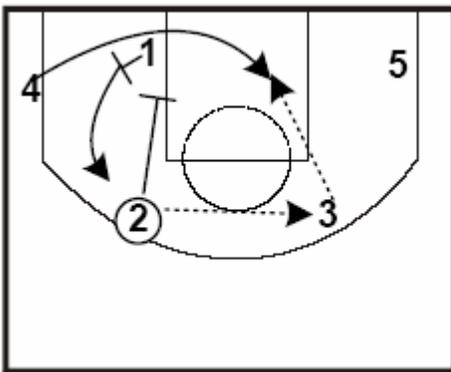**Diagram 6. Flex pattern continued.**

As #4 makes the pass to #5, #2 sets a screen for #3 who r**eads the defense** and cuts to a spot **slightly to the right of the basket** for a possible pass from #5

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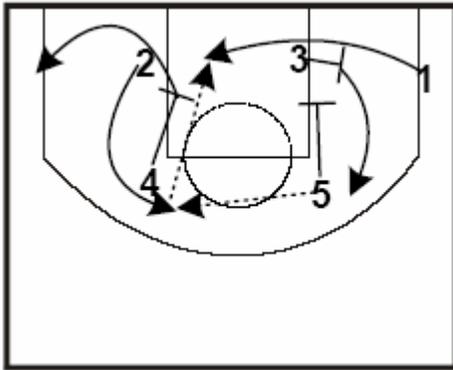
Diagram 7. Screen the screener action.

If #3 is not open, #5 passes to #2 for a **possible jump shot or drive.**

#3 sets screen for **Flex cut by #1** as #5 moves down to screen for #3 in **"screen the screener" action.**


Diagram 8. Continuity action.

Continuing the continuity, #1 sets screen for #4 who **reads the defense** and cuts to the lane for possible pass from #3. After making the pass to #3, #2 moves down to set a **screen for the screener for** #1.

This is the **basic Flex continuity offense**. It is based on **screen the screener action** and can be continued until a **scoring opportunity** occurs.

If the motion continues, **all five players will end up playing at all five spots**.

BASIC SPOTS TO BE FILLED:
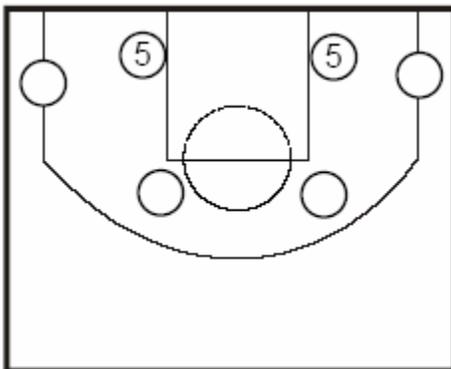
Diagram 9.. Basic Flex Spots

In reviewing the basic pattern you will notice that there are **five spots on the floor** that need to be filled by a player in order to execute the offense. **Two players at the guard areas and two players at the wings. The fifth spot (#5) can be filled on either side of the lane.**

Whichever side #5 sets up becomes the **Power Triangle side**. It must be set up for the **Flex to begin.**

Though the point guard usually initiates the offense and the post players play the spots near the basket, **any player can fill any position to start the offense.**

Example: A loose ball may be recovered by a forward near a guard position. He can start the offense from that position and other players may quickly fill the other spots.

**THE FLEX OFFENSE MUST ALWAYS BE RUN WITH A <u>PURPOSE</u> AND WITH <u>DISCIPLINE</u>**

CHAPTER 2

ENTRY OPTIONS

With the ball in the hands of the point guard, he has a **possible four passes** that he can make to start the basic Flex—(1) To the **off post cutting high**; (2) To the **ballside wing**; (3) A skip pass to the **offside wing;** and (4) To the **strongside low post**. We will look at each.

A variety of patterns can be used to get into the **basic flex pattern** from each of the entry passes.

The pass to the offside post has already been diagrammed. The **other basic entries** are shown in the following diagrams.
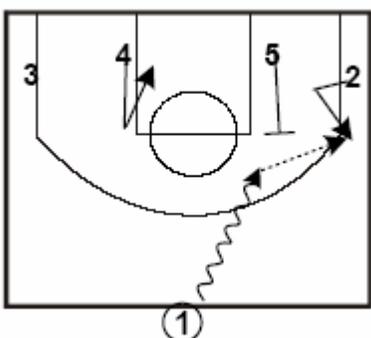
Diagram 10. Entry pass to the ballside wing.

An imaginative coach can create a number of cuts to enter into the Flex.

For our purposes here, we will use the **UCLA cut by #1 to start the Flex**.
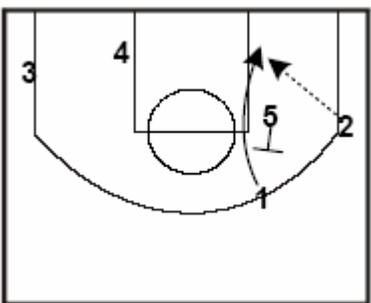
Diagram 11. UCLA cut after wing entry.

#1 makes a **UCLA cut** off screen set by #5.

#2 may pass to #1 for **possible lay-up**. This will not happen often, but **must always be a threat.**
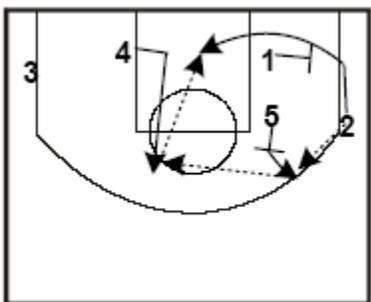
Diagram 12. Pass to begin basic Flex.

#1 is not open. #2 passes to Post #5 stepping out who relays ball to Post #4 cutting outside. #1 sets screen for #2 who again **reads the defense** and cuts into the **the lane for possible pass from #4**.

The offense is now in the **basic flex** as **#5 moves down to screen for #1.**

The pass from #5 to #4 which **actually begins the Flex** is called a **"guard to guard pass"** and is necessary to begin the Flex.

On occasion the defense will deny this pass. When they do, #5 looks to pass to #4 on a backdoor or he can dribble over to the #4 spot instead of pass. If he dribbles over to the #4 spot, #4 can loop back to the #5 spot, or one of the other players can rotate to it.

If #5 cannot pass to #4 he is not limited with only dribbling over. If, for example, a #5 man did not have the ability to drive over, he could take a dribble toward #2 and make a dribble exchange. Then #2 could dribble to the other side.

This guard to guard denial is something that should receive daily practice.
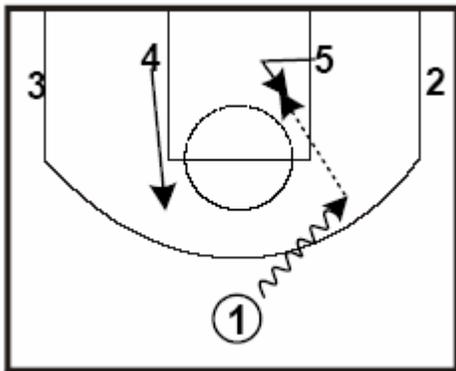
Diagram 13. Entry to the Ballside Low Post.

#1 makes his **normal dribble entry** as #4 makes his **normal cut to the top.**

#5 **"ducks in"** in an effort to **get position on his defender**. If he does get position, #1 can pass directly to him and let him try to score immediately.

If #5 does not get into receiving position on his man, he simply moves back out of the lane to **set a screen for #2 as #1 passes to #4** to begin the **basic flex** pattern.

This entry should be practiced often, particularly if #5 (or #4 on the other side) is **a good post scorer.** There is no better way to score than to get the ball close to the basket and let **a good scorer operate**. Not only is he operating from a high percentage area, but **his offensive moves can end up creating fouls against the opponent.**
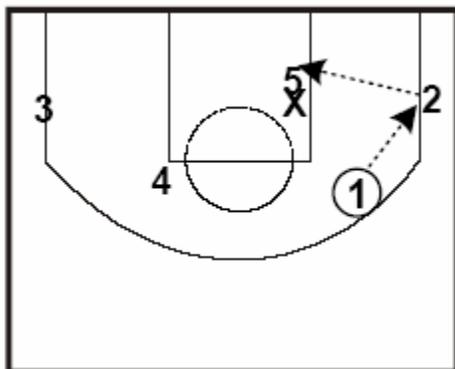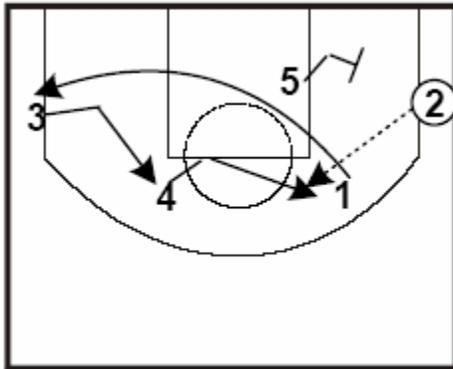

Diagram 14. Low Post Entry Option.

If #5's defender plays on **the high side** and prevents #1 from passing to #5, #1 can pass to #2, #5 can **"pin" his man**, and **#2 can make the entry to #5.**

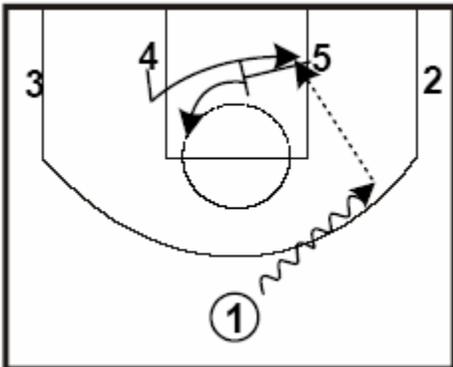**Diagram 15. Low Post Entry (cont.)**

After passing to #2, #1 cuts to opposite side to take the #3 position.

If #2 cannot feed #5, #4 cuts to take #1's spot and #3 cuts out to the #4 spot. #5 gets out of the lane and **gets ready to screen for #2.**

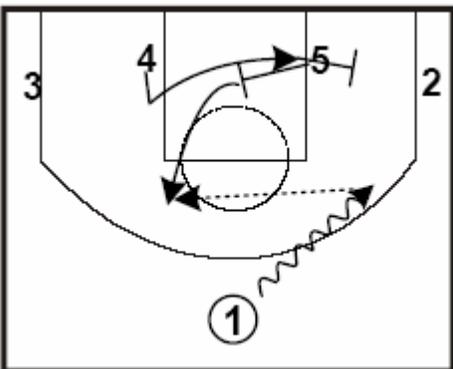The offense is now in the **basic flex entry** formation.

Diagram 16. **Low Post Cross-screen entry.**

#1 dribbles right and can pass to #4 **coming off cross screen by #5**.

#5 curls toward top, **but looks to #1 for pass** in the lane if the defense makes a mistake

Diagram 17. **Low Post Cross-screen entry into Basic Flex.**

If #4 nor #5 are open, #5 cuts to the top elbow area and receives pass from #1. #4 readies for screen for #2.

The offense is now in the **basic flex formation. #1, #2, and #4 are in the Power Triangle.**

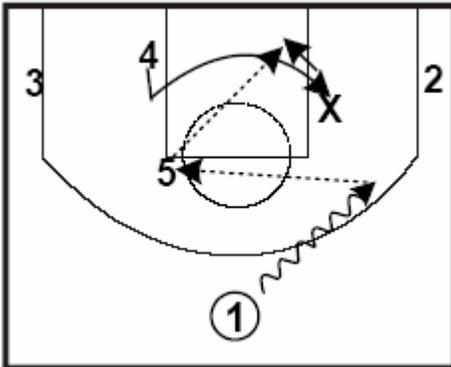**This entry also works well when #4 screens for #5 from the same positions on the opposite side of the court.**
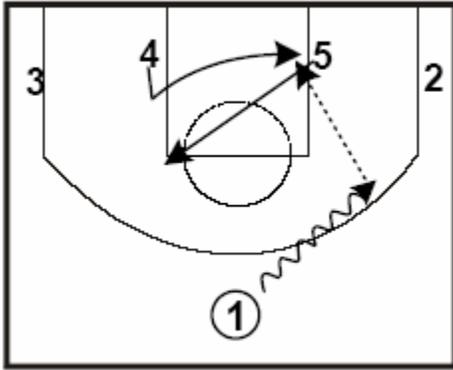
Diagram 18. Low Post "Flash" Entry.

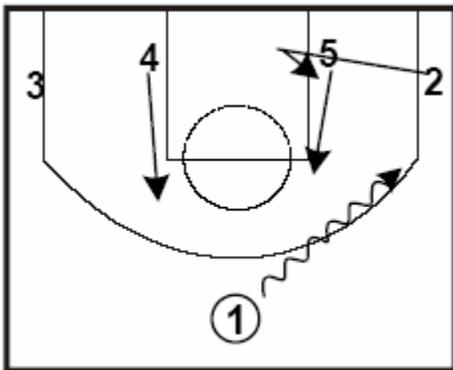#5 cuts hard to left elbow **without screening for #4**.

#4 **fakes to left elbow** and **cuts across lane** looking for pass from #1.

This is a very effective counter when the defense gets used to #4 cutting high and when they are denying the ball to #4.

Diagram 19. "Flash" entry continued.

If #4 is fronted and #1 cannot make the pass, #4 **"pins" his defender** as #1 passes to #5 who **relays to #4 in the low post.**
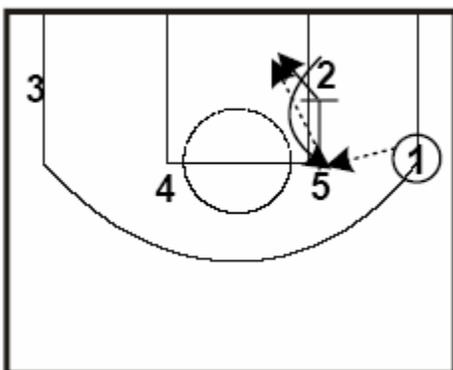

Diagram 20. Dribble Entry.

#1 advances a little deeper than normal as **# 5 and #4 cut hard to the high post areas.**

#2 cuts into lane, then **posts up** looking for a pass from #1.

This is very good action when a team's #2 player is a **good post player.**
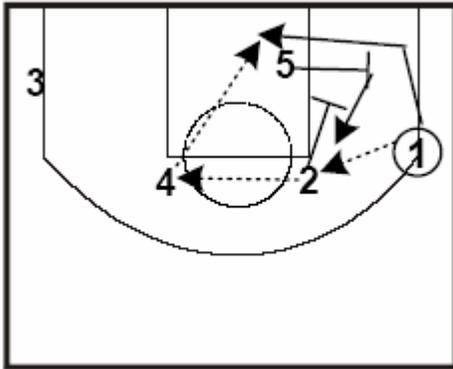

Diagram 21. Dribble Entry Option..

#5 waits for a two count, then sets
 downscreen for #2

 #2 cuts to high post area, receives pass from #1, and **looks to pass to #5 moving off the screen to the basket.**

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Of course, when the downscreen is made from the left side of the lane, #5 would pivot on his right foot.


Diagram 22. Dribble Entry Continued..

If #2 is not open for a shot or pass to #5, #2 passes to #4 as **#5 moves out to set screen for #1 for a flex cut.**

#4 can pass to #1 if he is open.

After pass to #4, #2 has moved **into screening position** on #5 who will cut to the top of the key after his screen for #1.


It is important to continue to stress the importance of #5 waiting until #1 cuts by before he moves up off #2's screen.

This **fundamental mistake** will occur often if the coach does not constantly stress **patience** on the screen. Players setting the screen know that they may be open after they cut to the top and **it is only natural for these players to leave early in their eagerness to get a shot.**
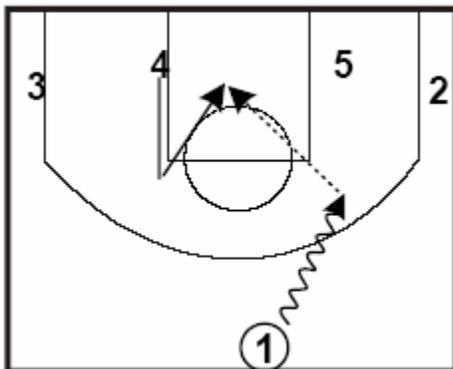
Diagram 23. **Backdoor and Fill Entry**.

If #4's defender is **overplaying,** #4 can **backcut to the basket** for a possible lay-up.
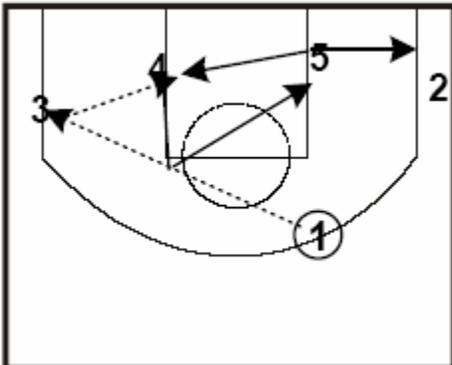
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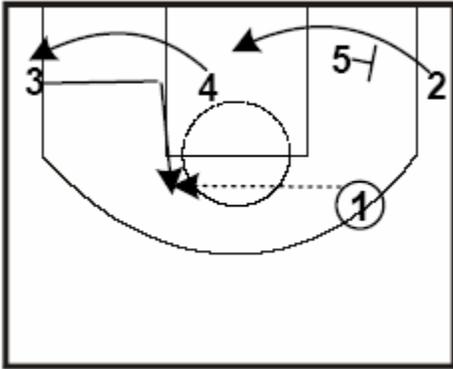
Diagram 24. **Backdoor and Fill Entry (cont.)**

On 4's backdoor move, #3 cuts as shown for pass from #1.

#4 curls outside opening the lane for #2 cutting over flex screen by #5.

(3) After the cutter goes by, **the baseline screener must step toward the ball** in the event his defender has picked up the cutter.
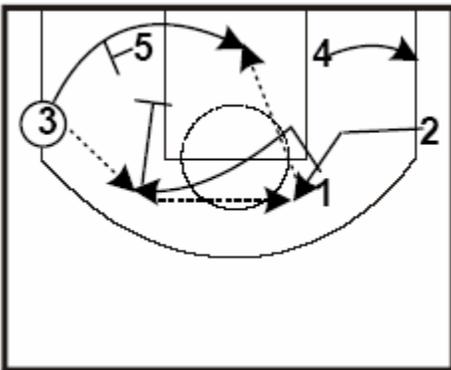

Diagram 25. Backdoor and Fill Entry Option..

When #4 does not get the pass from #1 he cuts to t**he right block.**.

#3 holds and takes a **skip pass from #1** as #5 **cuts across lane** to left post.

With the pass from #1 to #3, the offense is now in the **corner option**. #3 can look for feed to low post #5 or he can pass back to #1 cutting over to the left guard position (**Diagram 26**). The **Power Triangle** is now on the left with **#1, #3, and #5.**
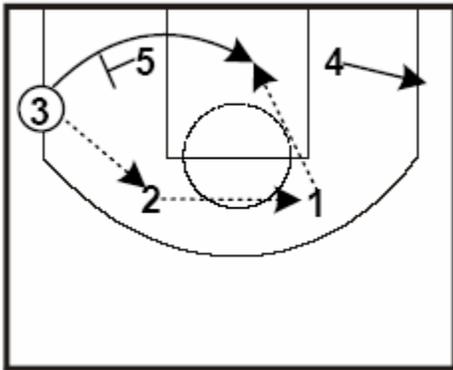

Diagram 26. Backdoor and Fill Entry Option continued.

After the skip pass, **#1 cuts to the left guard position if #3 does not feed #5**.

#3 can pass to #1 who relays to #2 **cutting into the other Flex guard position.**

#2 can feed #3 or continue the Flex.

Diagram 27. Backdoor and Fill Entry Option (continued).

Now that the team is in the **basic flex**, #5 sets screen for #3 who has passed to #2.

#2 passes to #1 as **#3 cuts into lane**. #1 can feed #3 if he is open.

In the continuity, #2 will **set screen for #5** after #3 cuts to the basket. If #3 is not open, he will **then set a screen for #4**.

NOTE: This is just one example of what can be done on the skip pass to the offside wing. A number of other cuts could be used to get into the basic flex.
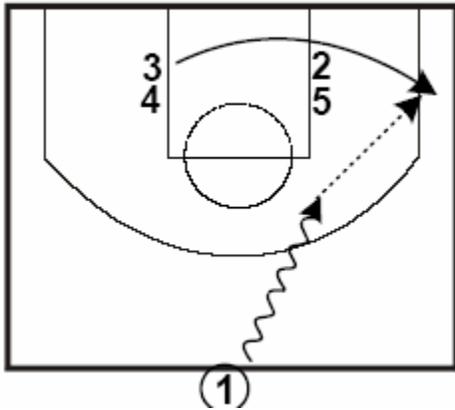
CHAPTER 3

USING DIFFERENT SETS TO ENTER THE BASIC PATTERN

There are a variety of offensive sets that an imaginative coach can use to enter the **basic offense.**

The two most often used sets **other than the low 1-4** are (1) **the double stack** and (2) **the high 1-4**.
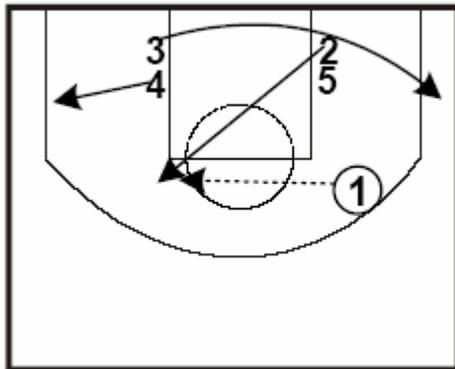
THE DOUBLE STACK

Diagram 28. Double Stack Entry. Players line up on each side of the lane as shown.

If #1 goes right, **#3 cuts off the right side stack** and receives pass from #1.
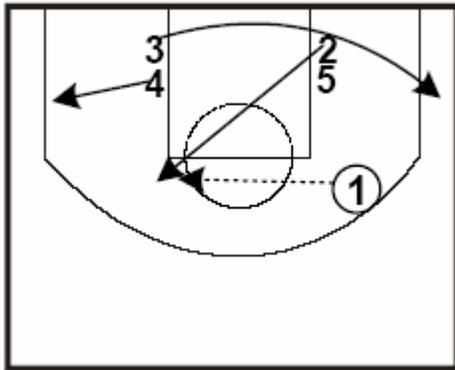
Had #1 dribbled left, #2 would have cut off the left side stack.

Diagram 29. Double Stack Entry (cont.)

**As #3 passes by the double stack, #2 cuts to the left high post area.**

When #3 cuts to the deep wing, instead of passing to #3, **#1 can pass to #2 and the basic Flex offense is initiated with #5 setting Flex screen.**

Diagram 30. Double Stack Entry (Cont.)

**If #1 passes to #2, the flex is initiated.**

However, with both #2 and #3 cutting off #5, the defending post may relax and allow #1 the option of making a direct pass to #5 in the low post area.

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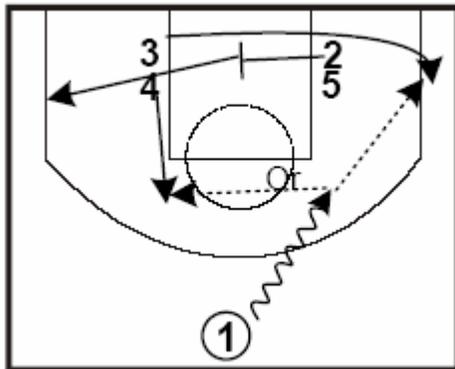
Diagram 31. Double Stack Entry with Crossing Wings.

As #1 dribbles right, **#2 sets screen for #3** coming across to the wing.

#2 pops on out to the left wing as #4 cuts up to the top. #1 can pass to #4 to begin the Flex or pass to #3 for possible inside feed to #5, or as a **corner option.**
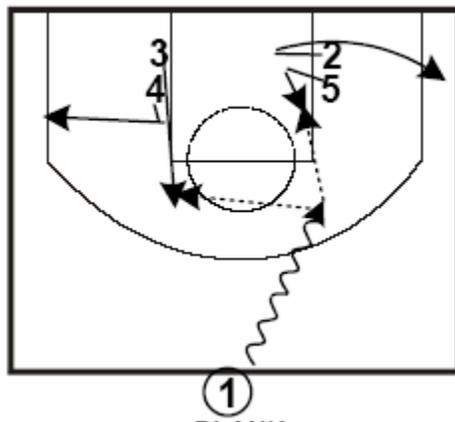
Diagram 32. Double Stack Entry with #3 to Post.

#2 fakes a screen and cuts back to right wing. **#4 fakes coming to the top and cuts out to the wing.**

#3 cuts up to high post area normally occupied by #4. #1 can pass to #3 and **begin the flex pattern** or pass to #5 or #2.

It is important to remember that #1 has the option to go left or right dependent on how he is played by the defense.

If #1 goes left on this option, #5 can pop out to the wing and **#2 cut up to the high post area.**

It is also important to remember that the double stack set does not keep the offense from running some of the options shown in earlier diagrams. For example, in **Diagram 31**, #1 can call **a verbal** and pass to #3, then **run the UCLA cut off #5** as shown in **Diagrams #10 and #11.**
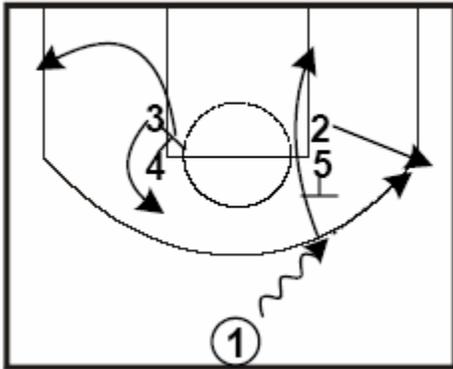
DOUBLE STACK HIGH

Diagram 33. Double Stack High Set.

The stack is moved up from the baseline to the high post area which gives the defense a new look.

Many of the plays run from the low double stack can be run from the high.

Here, #1 passes to #2 and makes a UCLA cut off #5s screen. #4 screens for #3 and cuts to the corner. #3 will move into position to catch a guard to guard pass.
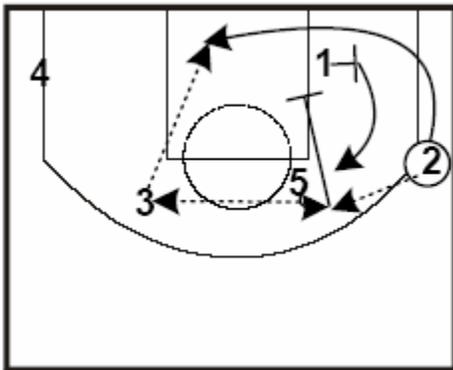

Diagram 34. Double Stack High Play Continued.

After the screen, #5 pops out for pass from X2.

#5 passes to #3 as #1 sets screen for #2s Flex cut.

After the pass, #5 sets downscreen for #1 and the flex has been initiated.
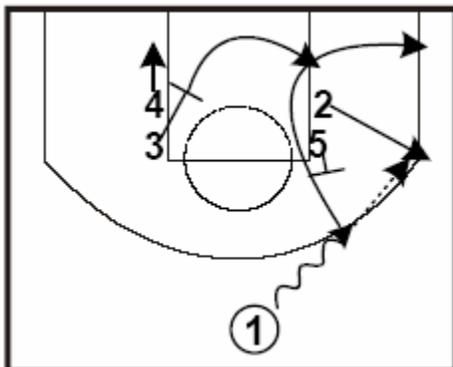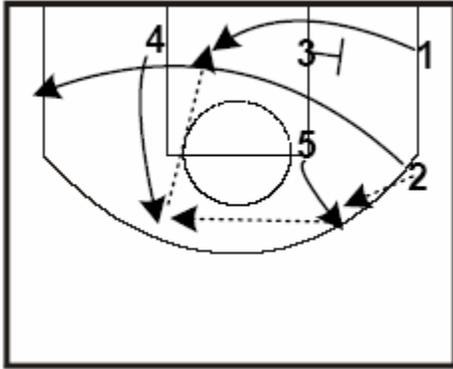

Diagram 35. Changing the Flex screener from the High Double Stack.

#1 passes to #2 and **cuts to basket and continues to the corner.**

#5 steps out for pass from #2 as #3 makes **"brush" screen on #4** and **quickly cuts to the low post** where he may receive a pass from #2.

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Diagram 36. Changing the Flex screener (continued).
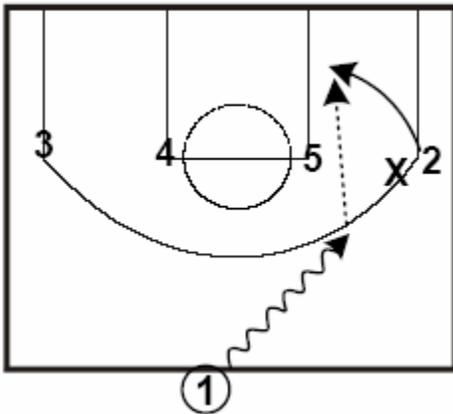
#2 passes to #5 and **cuts through to opposite corner.**

#5 passes to #4 coming high as **#3 sets Flex screen for #1.**

#4 will pass to #1 if he is open or **continue the flex.**
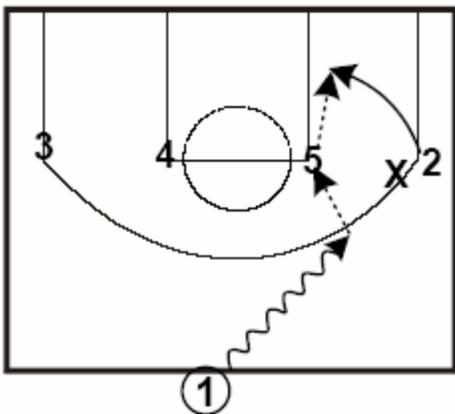
THE 1-4 HIGH

Another set that has **great scoring options** is the **1-4 set** shown in **Diagram 37.**

This set can be very effective when the defense is <u>pressing</u> and the offense needs room for <u>backdoor opportunities</u>.

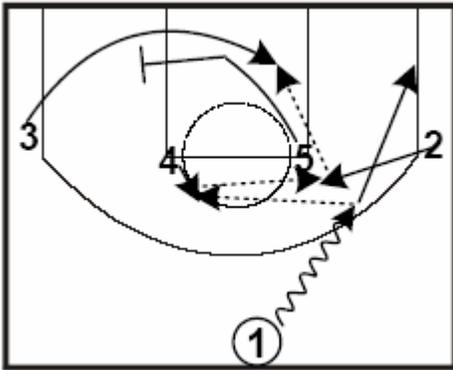**Diagram 37. The 1-4 Set with Backdoor Opportunity.**

With **#4 and #5 high**, the defensive help is taken away when **#2 cuts behind the overplay.**

Diagram 38. **The 1-4 Set with pass to #5 for Backdoor opportunity.**

Instead of passing directly to #2 on the backdoor, **#1 can pass to #5 who can relay the ball to cutter #2.**

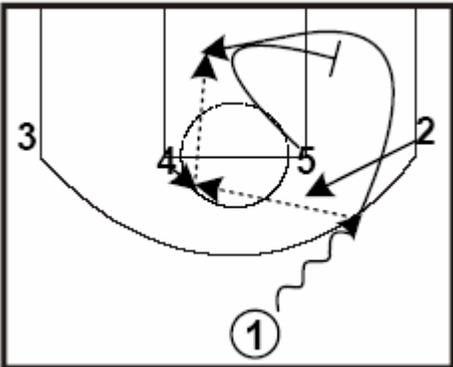This is a common backdoor in many offenses in addition to the Flex.

Diagram 39. The 1-4 Set with entry to #4.

#5 dives to basket for possible pass from #4 in high-low action.

When #5 does not receive pass, he sets **flex screen for #3.** #1 and #2 have **interchanged.**

#4 passes to #2 who can **relay to #3 on the basic flex cut.**

Diagram 40.

Another option from the pass to #4.

On the pass to #4, **#5 has the option to cut down the lane and out the opposite side.**

Here, #5 has set **flex screen** for #1 who makes the **flex cut** into the lane for pass from #4.
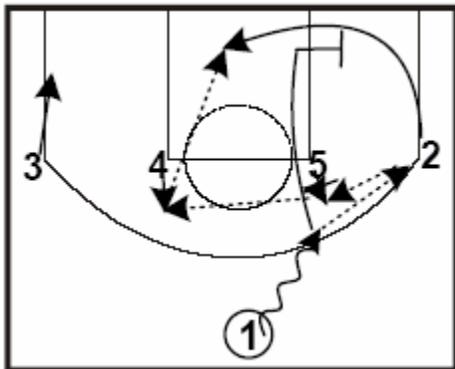
Diagram 41. **High 1-4 Entry with Pass to Wing**.

#1 passes to wing #2 and does what is commonly called a **UCLA cut off #5.**

If #1 is open, **#2 can pass to him for a lay-up.**

If #1 is not open, #2 passes to #5 stepping out   as #1 sets **flex screen** on the baseline. #5 passes to #4 who feeds #2 running a **Flex Cut off #1.**

Diagram 42. **High 1-4 Dribble Entry.**

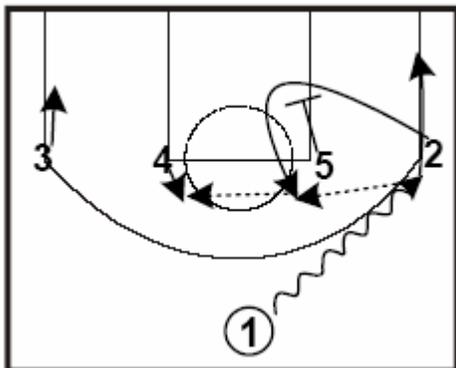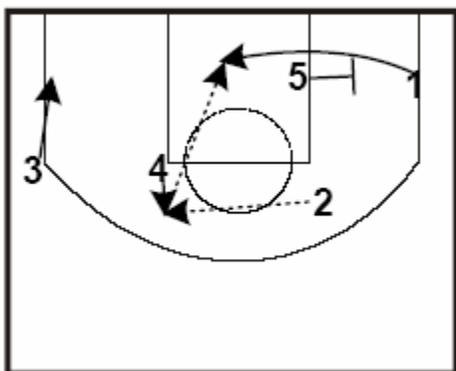#1 **dribbles to wing** as #2 cuts toward basket and **curls up to the high post area off screen by #5.**

#1 passes to #2 and **cuts to the corner to start the basic pattern.**

Diagram 43. High 1-4 Dribble Entry (Cont.)

#2 passes to #4 as #5 sets **flex screen** for #1.

#1 makes **Flex Cut** to lane for pass from #4.

Of course, the continuity would have **#2 screening down for #5 after 1s cut.**
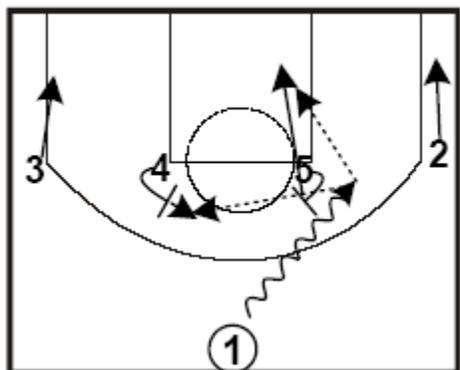
Diagram 44.

High 1-4 with Post Ball Screen Entry.

#4 and #5 set up in screening position for dribbler #1 who **can dribble either way.**

Here, #1 dribbles off #5s screen and either **hits #5 for a roll-out** or **passes to #4 to begin the Flex.**
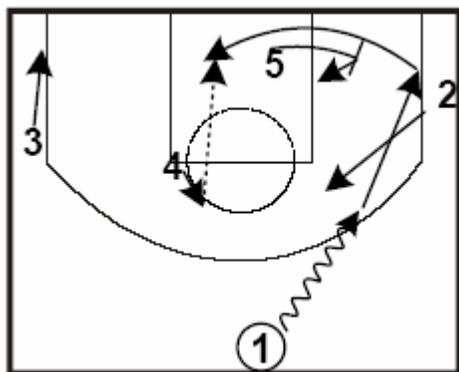
Diagram 45. Post Ball Screen Entry   (cont.)

After #1 passes to #4, #1 and #2 Exchange and #5 sets **Flex screen** for #1 to make a **Flex cut**.

If #1 is not open and a feed cannot be made to low post #5, #4 will pass to #2 and the **Flex continues.**
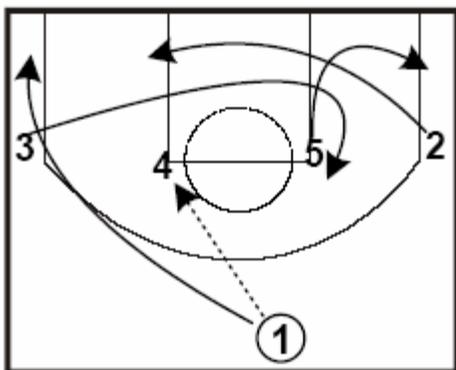
Diagram 46. High 1-4 set with wings cross.

#1 passes to #4 **as wings cross** as shown.

#1 **cuts toward corner** while #5 cuts to **off corner** and #3 **curls to high post area.**
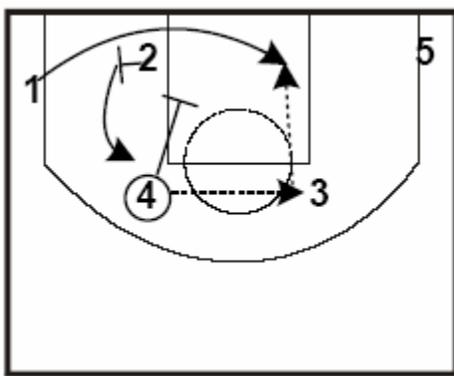
Diagram 47. High 1-4 set with wings cross (continued).

#2 sets **Flex screen** for #1 as #4 passes to #3.

#3 may pass to #1 or **wait for #2 coming off downscreen** set by #4.
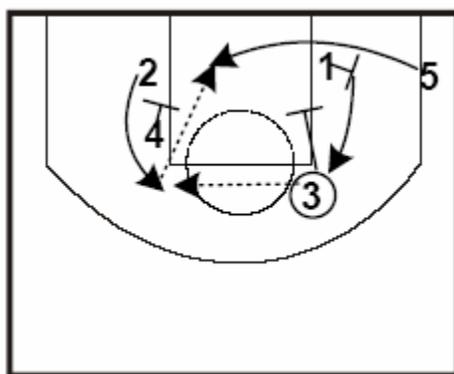
Diagram 48. Flex continuity.

#3 passes to #2 as #5 cuts off **Flex screen** by #1.

After passing to #2, **#3 screens down for #1.**

1-3-1 SET
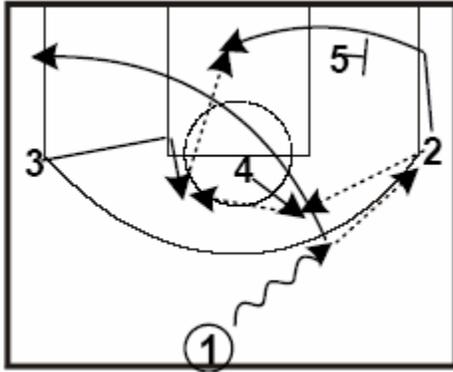
Diagram 49. 1-3-1 Set.

#1 makes pass to #2 and **cuts through to left corner.**

#2 passes to #4 stepping out and **moves to right corner**. #3 makes V cut and receives pass from #4 as #2 makes **Flex cut** off #5.
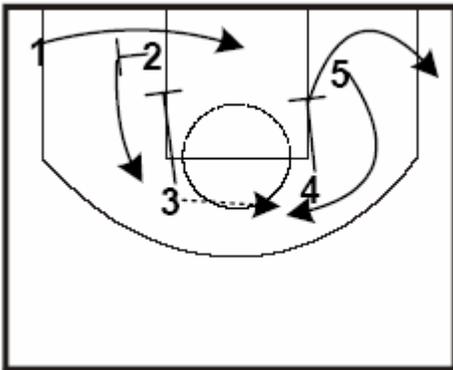
Diagram 50. Flex continuity from 1-3-1 Set.

If #2 was not open, he sets **Flex screen** for #1 as #3 passes to #5 **coming off downscreen by #4.**

After his pass, **#3 sets downscreen for #2**.
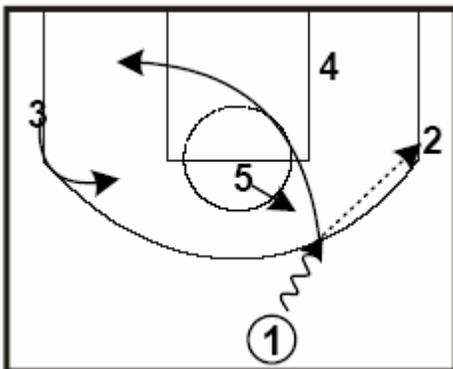
Diagram 51. Another play pattern from the 1-3-1 Set.

#1 passes to #2 and **cuts through lane and to the left side.**

#5 moves in position to take a pass from #2

#3 moves outside.
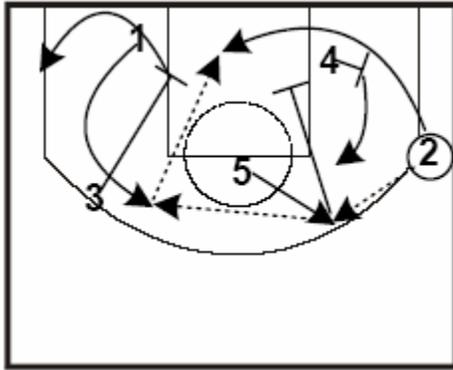
Diagram 52. Completion of the 1-3-1 Set.

#5 steps out **for a pass from #2**.

#3 **downscreens for #1 coming high** as #4 sets **Flex screen for #2**

#5 passes to #1 as **#2 makes Flex cut off #4**.
#5 **downscreens for #4.**

There are other play patterns that can be run from the 1-3-1 set but we will not cover them in this manual. Most coaches who like the 1-3-1 set will have their own favorite plays that they can adapt to the Flex offense.

1-2-2 OR "OPEN" SET

The 1-2-2 set is used by many "motion" teams to get into the Flex. Bob Huggins of West Virginia University uses this to perfection.
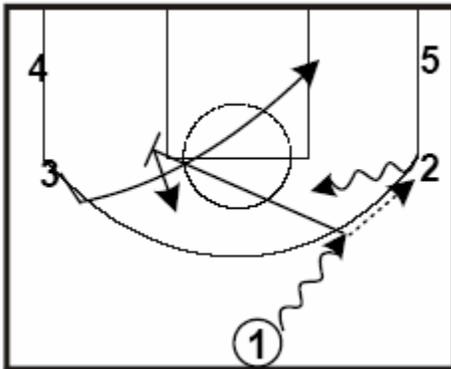
Diagram 53. The 1-2-2 or "Open" Set.

#1 passes to #2 and **sets screen for #3** who **cuts hard to the basket looking for a possible pass from #2**.

#1 will **cut back after setting the screen for #3** as #2 dribbles into a **guard to guard passing position**. Notice that the **power triangle of numbers #2, #3 and #5 is on the right and in position to begin the Flex.**
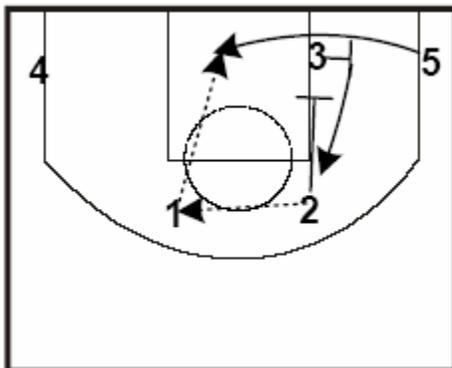
Diagram 54. 1-2-2 Set (Cont.)

#3 sets Flex screen for #5 as #2 passes to #1.

After passing, **#2 downscreens for #3.**
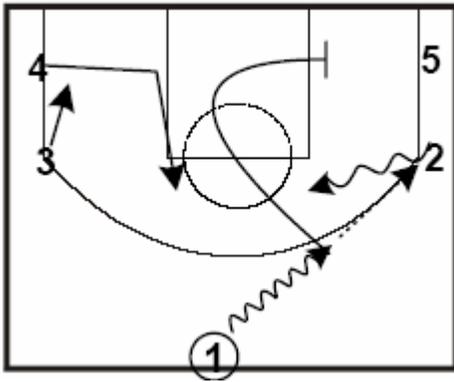
Diagram 55. 1-2-2 Set with #1 Strongside Flex screener.

#1 passes to #2 and cuts down middle **coming out on the strong or "ball" side**.

#3 moves to left corner as **#4 cuts to high post area** and #2 dribbles into passing position. **The players are now in position to start the Flex.**
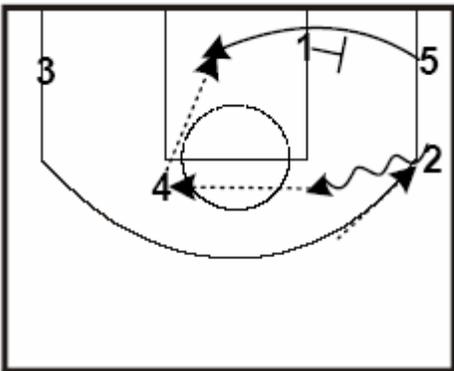
Diagram 56. Flex continuity from the 1-2-2 Set.

#1 sets **Flex screen** for #5 as #2 passes to #4 **who will relay to #5 if he is open.**

If no shot, **#2 will screen for #1 coming to the top** and the **Flex continues.**

Two examples of the 1-2-2 Set are presented with many other play patterns to enter the Flex are available. However, other patterns will not be covered in this manual. Coaches, particularly those that run a lot of 1-2-2 "open" offense or "motion" offense, will easily adapt what they do to Flex entries.

It is important that the reader recognize that any special play he may like to run can probably be adjusted to a Flex entry.

2-3 SINGLE POST SET

Some coaches who have two good guards like to enter the Flex from the 2 guard front or 2-3 single post set.

Actually, getting into the Flex is easier from the 2-3 if your guards are good enough to dribble into position.
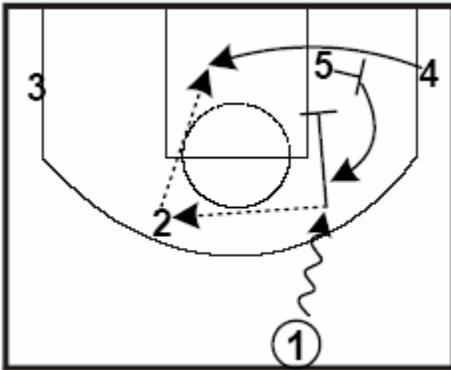
Diagram 57. The basic 2-3 Single Post Set.

#1 and #2 are the guards with #3, #4, and #5 the center & forwards.

#1 simply **dribbles into the Power Triangle position**, passes to #2 and **the Flex is underway.**

Most coaches who run the Flex from the 2-guard front **run some other type of cut to get into Flex position**. **It is easier to defend the basic 2-3 single post set** shown in **Diagram 57** than it is to **defend the flex if other cuts have been made and defenders moved into different positions.**
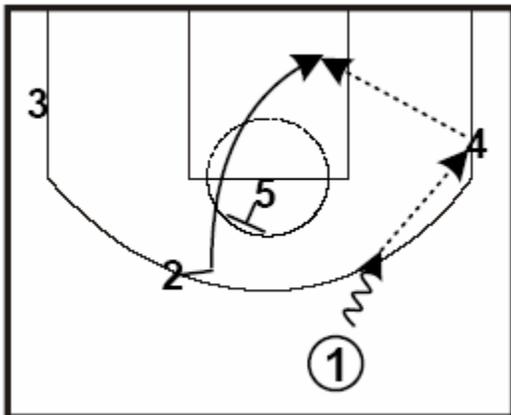
Diagram 58. Off-Guard Cut Prior to Flex action.

This action forces the defense to concentrate on the 2 guard's cut rather than the Flex that will follow.

Poor defense on this action will result in a quick lay-up.
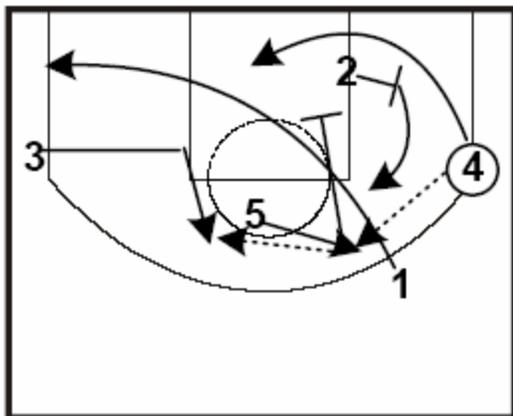
Diagram 59. Initiating the Flex after the cut.

On pass to #4, #1 cuts to **offside corner**.

#5 steps out for pass from #4.

#3 does **V cut to get open** for pass from #5 as **#2 readies screen for #4.** #4 makes **Flex cut off #2 and receives   downscreen from #5.**

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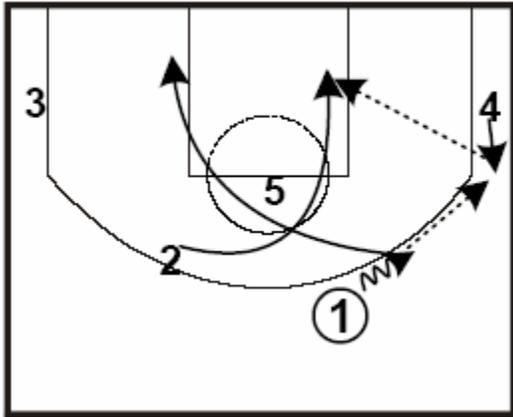
Diagram 60. Split the Post Entry into the Flex from the 2-3 Set.

#1 passes to #4 and **cuts off #5** as shown. #2 cuts **right off of #1** which **in effect he is getting a double screen from #5 and #1.**

If #2 should be open, **#4 passes to him.**
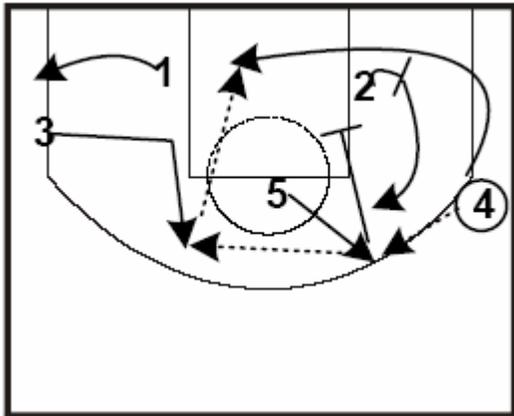
Diagram 61. Split the Post Entry (continued).

After #1 and #2 cut, #5 steps out to receive pass from #2.

#2 sets **Flex screen for #4** as #5 passes to #3.

#3 can **pass to open cutter or continue the flex.**

2-3 SET FROM THE SINGLE STACK

For a different look, the 2-3 set can move into a single stack set-up and possibilities are endless for different options.
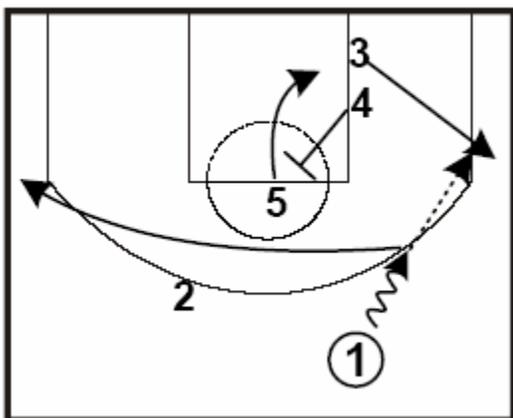
Diagram 62. Single Stack 2-3

#1 passes to #3 **breaking to wing**.

#4 puts **rear pick** for #5 as #1 **cuts to opposite side.**
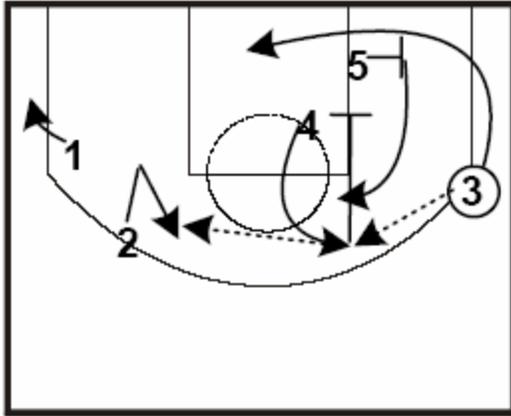
Diagram 63. Single Stack 2-3 (cont.)

After screening for #5, **#4 pops out to receive a pass from #3.**

#4 passes to #2 as **#3 cuts off Flex screen set by #5.**

#2 will pass to **an open #3** or pass to **#5 coming off #4s screen.**

The single stack is easy to execute and the new look it presents to the defense opens up new offensive options. For example, the rear screen set by #4 for #5 is not used in other Flex options but it opens up another option to get the ball <u>inside.</u>

#4 screens for #5 in this play, but in another play #4 may pop outside and #3 set the rear screen for #5. Still another play may put #4 at the free throw line and put #5 in the stack with #3. Different options for screeners and cutters are almost limitless.

THE BOX SET

A variety of plays can be run from the box set and many of them can flow into the flex. This makes an excellent entry to the flex offense.
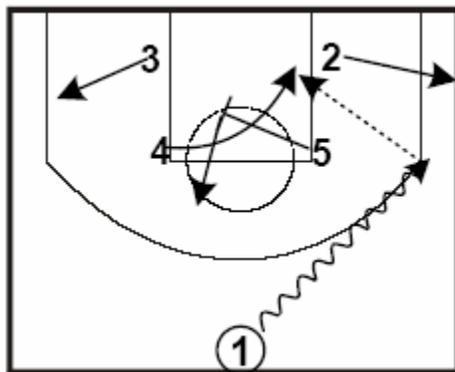
Diagram 64. The Box Set as an entry.

As #1 dribbles to wing, #2 and #3 cut wide.

#5 sets screen for #4 who cuts low for possible pass from #1.
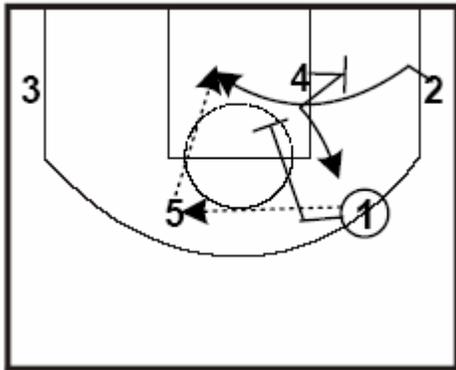
Diagram 65. Box Set (continued).

When #4 did not get ball, he steps out of the lane one step and sets screen for Flex cutter #2.

#5 may pass to #2 if he is open, or pass to #4 coming off downscreen set by #1.

CHAPTER 4

CORNER PLAYS

All of the diagrams that have been presented have been showing the **basic flex pattern**. No plays to the **corner** on the **weakside or strongside** have been shown but they are a **necessity** for a **sound Flex offense.**
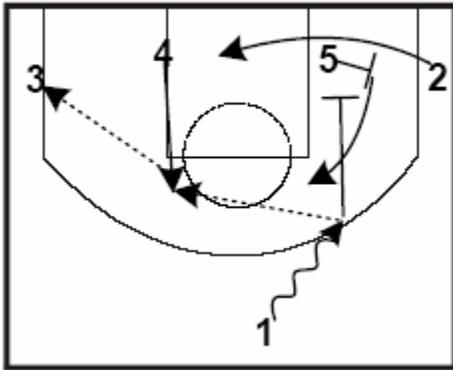
Diagram 64. Pass to the weakside corner option.

In this diagram, **#4 has the ball** but neither #2 nor #5 are open because of defensive pressure. Therefore, he must have **freedom to pass to #3** in the **weakside corner** (or wing).

When #3 receives the ball, **the basic Flex cannot be run, so other plays must be available when this happens.**

When the ball is passed to #3 in the corner, the offense can be very simple and just look to pass to #2 on the post, or #3 can pass to #4 and the regular Flex can begin.
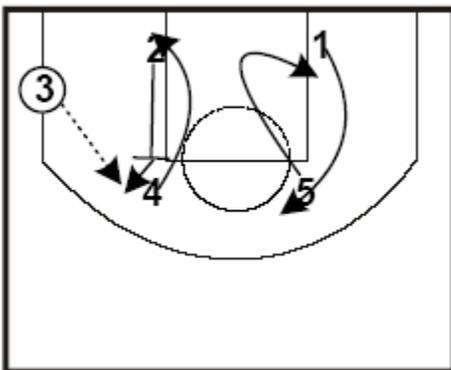
Diagram 65. Enter into the basic Flex.

#2 sets **rear pick** for #4. (Note: an option could be for #4 to set **downscreen** for #2.)

#3 can pass to #4 if he is open on the post.
#5 cuts to basket and #1 fills his spot as #3 passes to #2.

Now the offense is in the regular Flex OR…the offense can run a pre-designed play as shown in Diagram 66.
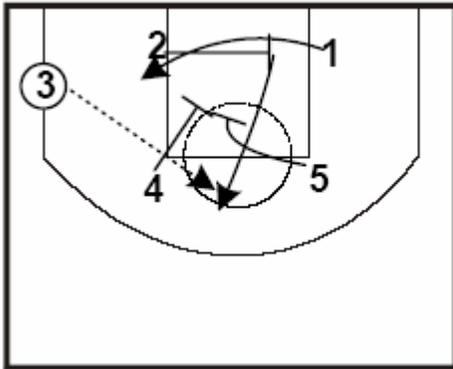
Diagram 66. Special double-screen.

#4 and #5 set a **double screen as #2 sets cross-screen for #1.**

#1 cuts to the **low post** for possible pass from #3. **#2 then comes off double screen set by #4 and #5**.

This play is commonly called **"America's play"** because so many teams run it. Despite its popularity, it can be a **very effective play** especially when a team has been running the Flex and is **not prepared defensively for this play option.**
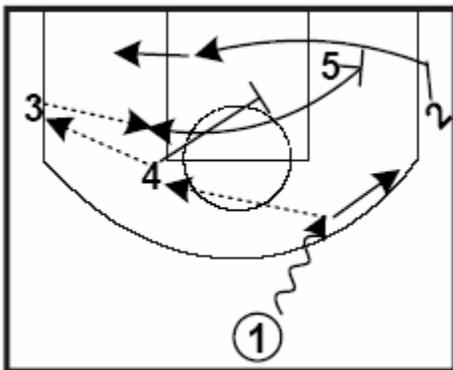
Diagram 67. High-Low Option from the Weakside.

#2 cuts off #5 and, if not open, clears the lane as #4 passes to the corner option #3. #4 then screens down for #5 in High-Low action.

This is particularly effective since #5 would normally be cutting up the lane for a screen from #1 in the **basic Flex action**. When #5 receives the pass, **he may shoot or look for #4 pinning his man in the lane.**
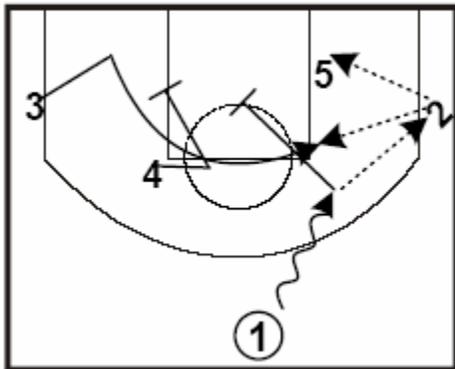
Diagram 68. Corner Pass to the Strongside and staggered screen.

Instead of passing to #4, #1 passes to #2 **who looks to feed #5 in the low post.**

#4 and #1 set **staggered screens for #3** coming from the **weakside** for a possible jump shot.
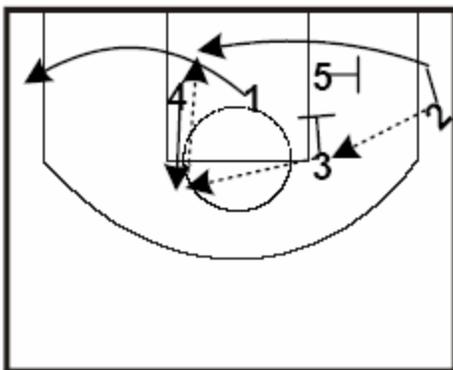
Diagram 69. Continuation of the Staggered Screen Play into the Basic flex.

If #3 does not have a shot, **#1 cuts to weakside corner** while #4 pops back out for pass from #3.

The team is now in the **Basic Flex** with #5 setting screen for #2 and #3 setting a screen for #5.

CHAPTER 5

FAST BREAK OPPORTUNITIES INTO THE FLEX

Most coaches like to fast break if the **opportunity** is there. And if no good shot can be obtained from the break, **they like to get into their offense as quickly as possible**.

Many years ago, most teams would try to fast break and if they could not get a good shot, the point guard would **"back the ball out" and set up the offense**. This caused a waste of offensive time, **did not put pressure on the defense**, and **gave the defense time to organize**. **Coaches today like to make the transition from the fast break into their half-court offense as quickly as possible. Flex teams can make this quick transition and be running their basic pattern after one or two passes**.

There are **two distinct types of fast break**. (1) The fast break that comes **after a rebound, an interception, or a ball-handling mistake** by the offense that enables the defense to have an outnumbering situation and (2) The fast break that comes **after a score by the opponent.**

The **"outnumbering" type of fast break** results in 2 on 1, 3 on 2, 4 on 3, and 5 on 4 situations. This type of break usually results in some type of shot that comes from an open player on the break.

The type of break that comes after a score **seldom results in outnumbering the opposition,** but usually **results in what coaches commonly call the "secondary break."** This type of break can easily flow smoothly into the **Flex offense.**

THE NUMBERED FAST BREAK

There are several different "secondary" breaks that coaches may use. Probably the most common is called **the Numbered Fast Break**.

The **numbered" fast break** evolved from the fast break used by **Cam Henderson at Marshall University** in the late forties, to the relentless break run by **Sonny Allen at Old Dominion and SMU**, on to the devastating fast break run by **Paul Westhead at Loyola University in Los Angeles**.

In the numbered break, **players are assigned a particular lane to run** when a team gets the defensive rebound, a steal, or after an opponent's score.

The **#2 man always runs the right lane** and the **#3 runs the left lane**. Most proponents of the numbered break do not allow any deviation from this. **#2 must ALWAYS run the right lane and #3 must ALWAYS run the left lane.**

There can be some interchangeability for #4 and #5. On rebounds, if #5 rebounds the ball, #4 will run to the middle of the lane while #5 will follow in trailer position. However, **after an**

opponents score, most numbered break **coaches designate the same post to take the ball out every time. The other post then runs to the lane.**

Why do coaches like a post to take the ball out-of-bounds? Simply because the odds are that the post player will be near the defensive basket ready for a rebound and can quickly get a made shot out of the net and into play.

This sometimes has to be changed, however, if the opponent is using a full-court press and the designated post is not a good passer. Then it may be best for a designated perimeter player to take the ball out. When this occurs it may slow down the break somewhat.

On **rebounds or inbound passes**, the ball **always goes to the #1 player** who advances the ball downcourt.
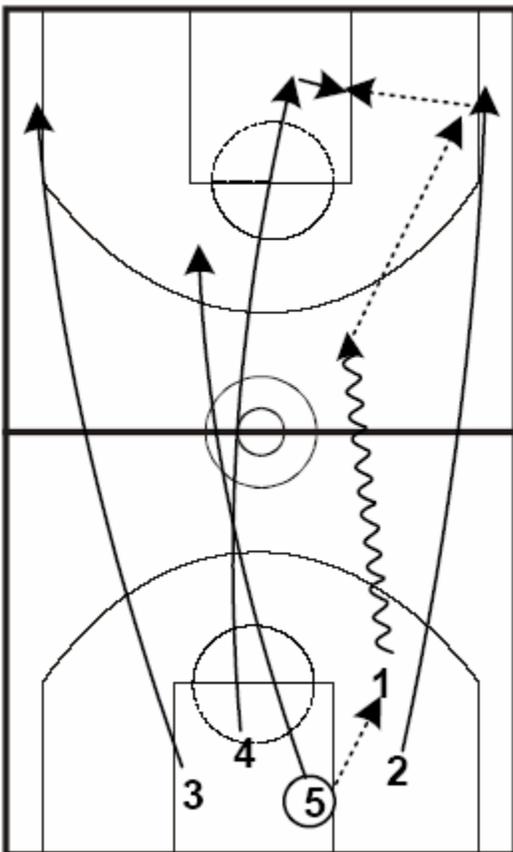
Lane assignments create **player responsibility**. If a break occurs and no player is in the right lane, then the coach knows that **the #2 man did not do his job**.

Diagram 70. A Numbered Fast Break after a rebound.

#5 rebounds the ball and quickly passes it to #1 who advances downcourt as #2 and #3 run their **respective assigned lanes**.

#4, the non-rebounding post, cuts hard downcourt and breaks into the middle of the lane.

In this case, #1 passes to #2 who hits #4 in the lane for an inside scoring opportunity.

It must be remembered that on a break after a rebound, it is often possible to get **an "outnumbering" situation**. (2 on 2, 3 on 2, 4 on 3, 5 on 4).When this occurs, players just "play basketball" and attack the basket.
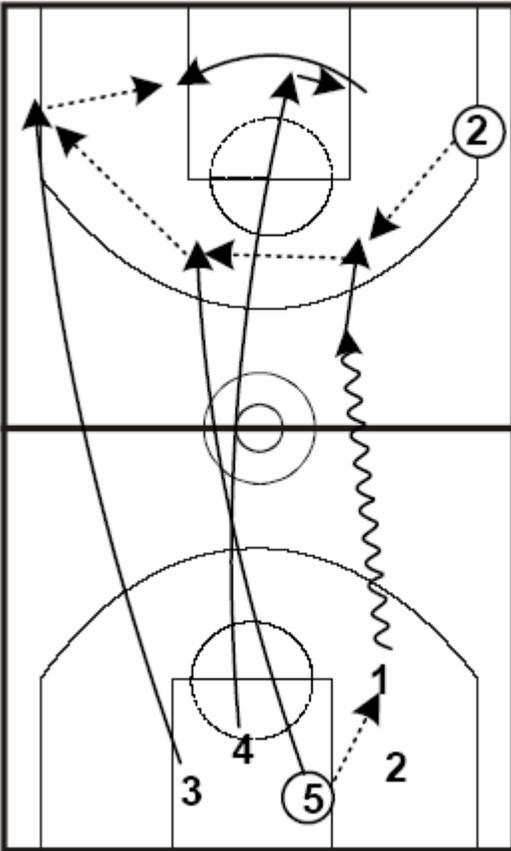
Diagram 71. Front court Flow of the Secondary Break.

If #2 cannot pass inside to #4, #2 returns the ball to #1 who relays it to #5 (**for a possible shot if he has the ability to shoot from outside).**

If #5 does not shoot, he passes it to #3 who looks to get the ball inside to #4 **fighting for position**.

FLOWING INTO THE FLEX FROM THE SECONDARY BREAK
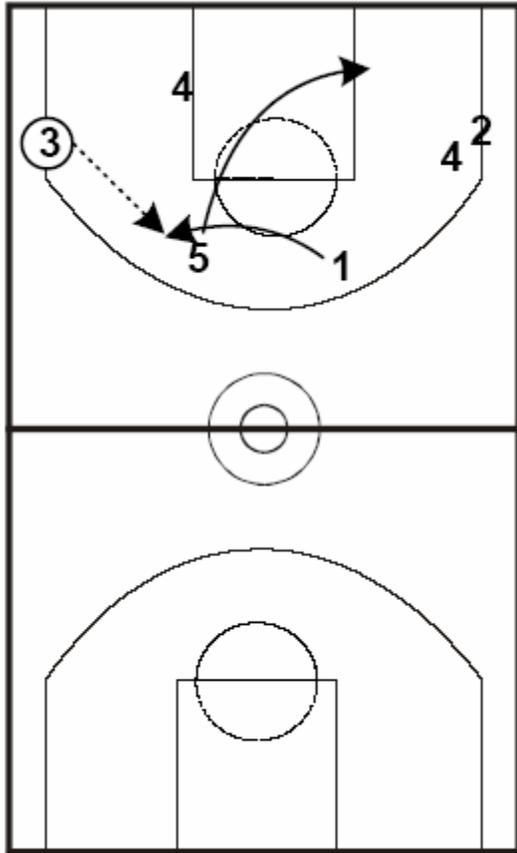
Diagram 72. Beginning to Flow into the Flex.

As #3 receives the pass, #5 is cutting to the offside post and 31 is coming to the ball.

#3 passes to #1 and **the Flex is ready to begin** as shown in the following diagram.
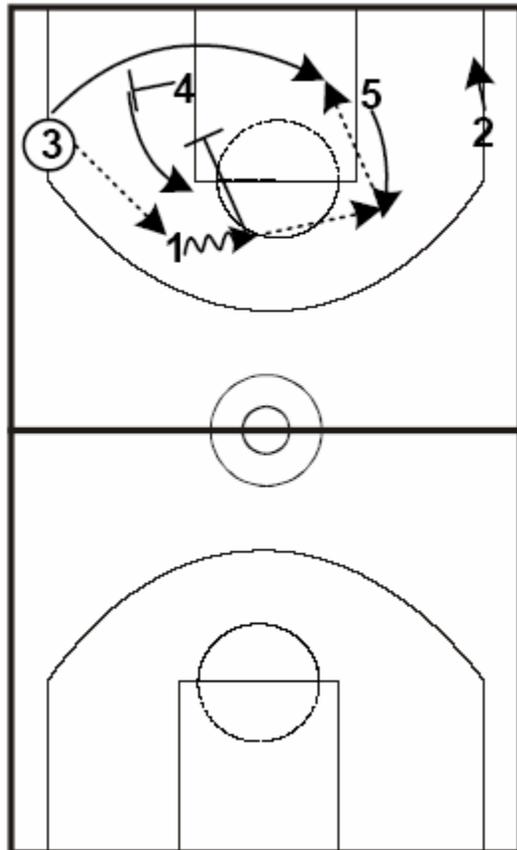
Diagram 73. Offense is now in the Flex.

#1 dribbles into position for a pass to #5 coming to the entry area.

#4 sets screen for #3 who makes a **Flex Cut** into the lane.

#5 will pass to #3 if he is open, or pass to #4 coming off screen set by #1.

Offense is now in the Flex continuity.

Diagram 74. An alternate entry into the Flex from the numbered break.

On receiving the pass from #3, **#1 dribbles to the right side** as #4 moves up the lane.

#5 sets screen for **#2 who cuts into the lane** as #1 passes to #4.

#4 passes to #2 if he is open, or to #5 coming off screen set by #1.

Offense is now in the Flex Continuity.

**Remember that whenever the guard to guard entry pass is denied by the opponent, the ball-handler always has the choice to run a "corner"
option.**

Diagram 75. The Numbered Fast Break after a score.

The **Numbered Fast Break after a score** is almost identical to the break off a rebound.

The basic difference is that **a player must quickly
take the ball out-of- bounds** and pass it in to #1.

This diagram shows #2 feeding #4 as in diagram 70

Methods for flowing into the Flex are the same as when entering the Flex from a rebound fast break.

Diagram76. Another entry into the Flex from the numbered fast break.

Players run their assigned lanes. When #1 passes to #2, instead of holding for a return pass, **#1 cuts through to the weakside corner.**

#5 fills #1's spot and #3 fills #5's spot.
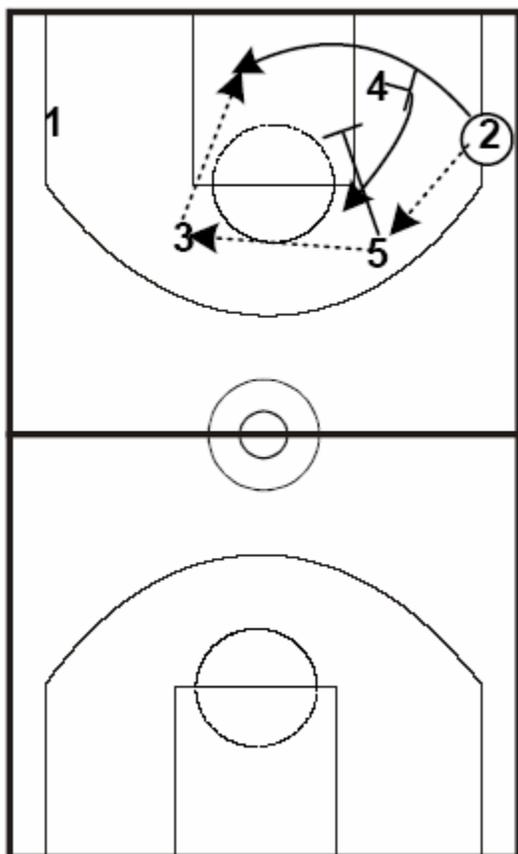
Diagram 77. **The frontcourt phase of the numbered break when #1 cuts through.**

#2 passes to #5 who relays to #3.

#4 is setting screen for #2 who **makes the Flex cut into the lane.**

After passing to #3, #5 sets screen for **#4 who will be coming to the top if #3 does not pass to #2.**

OTHER TYPES OF SECONDARY BREAKS

Of course there are a **variety of secondary breaks** being used by teams all over the globe.

Regardless of the secondary, **virtually all of them involve a player running the right wing, a player running the left wing, a player going to the low post and a trailing post player**.

Virtually all of the breaks can **flow into the Flex** if that is their primary offense.

THE NORTH CAROLINA SECONDARY

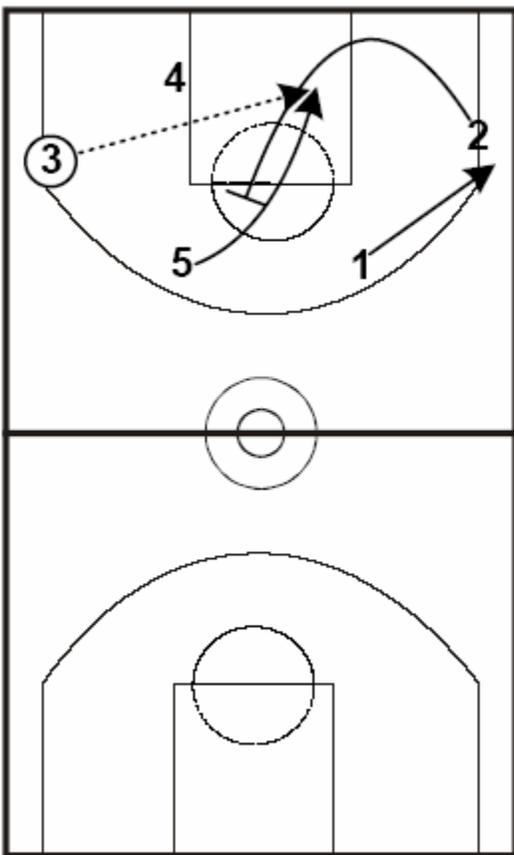One of the most popular secondarys is the one used by **Roy Williams at the University of North Carolina.** (shown in Diagram78). Players fill the lanes as in the numbered break and post players run a similar pattern. However, after the ball is **changed to the weakside,** the **strongside wing sets a rear pick for the outside post player.**

Diagram 78. The front court phase of the North Carolina Tarheel secondary.

#1 has advanced the ball downcourt and has passed to #5 (instead of to #2) who relayed to #3. #3 looks first to #4.

As ball is moved on perimeter, #2 cuts into and up the lane **to set rear screen for #5 cutting to basket.**

Often #5 is open and can receive a high pass from #3.

If no pass is made, **North Carolina flows into their regular offense.**

The Flex team could run this secondary and yet still flow into the Flex.
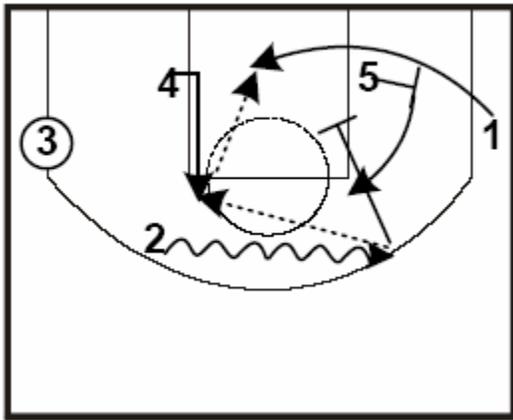
**Diagram 79. Flowing into the Flex from the North Carolina secondary.**

After the rear screen, #2 pops out and **receives the ball from X3.**

#2 dribbles to the right and could enter the ball for a "corner" entry.

Here he dribbles to the right, then passes to #4 cutting high. #5 sets pick for #1's Flex cut and the offense is in the Flex pattern.

THE "TURN-OUT" SECONDARY:

Many teams over the years have crossed their wings on their secondary break.
This is often called the "turnout". One of the most notable teams to run this turnout was the Los Angeles Lakers when Pat Riley was their head coach.
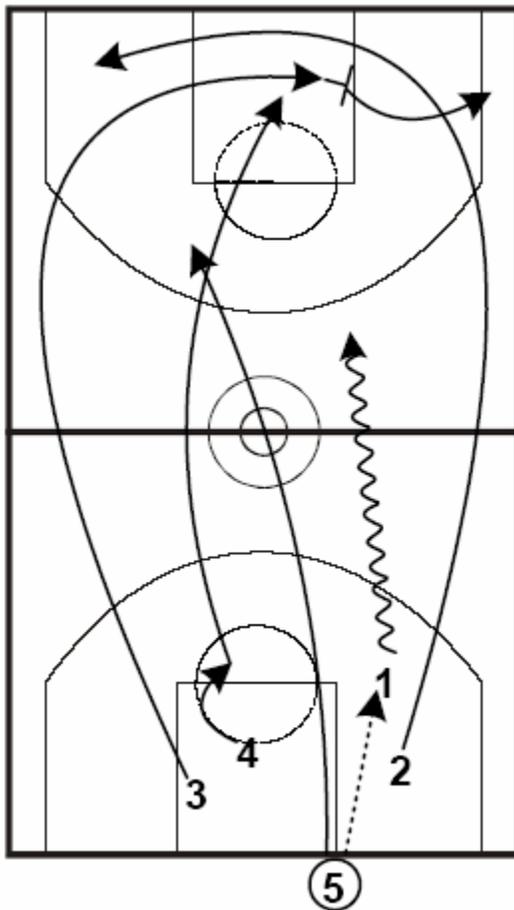
Diagram 80. The "Turnout" secondary after a score.

#5 takes ball out **quickly** and passes to #1.

Notice that **#4 has stopped at the FT line** ready to help **if #1 is denied the pass.**

Here, #1 advances the ball downcourt while **#4 runs to the deep lane.**

#3 runs into the lane and stops to **set a screen** for #2 crossing under the basket.

After the screen, **#3 moves on out for possible pass from #1.**

Here **#1 can pass inside to #4, look to #3 moving off the screen**, or **pass to #5 at the trailer**. #5 can relay the ball to #2 if he is **open for a shot**.
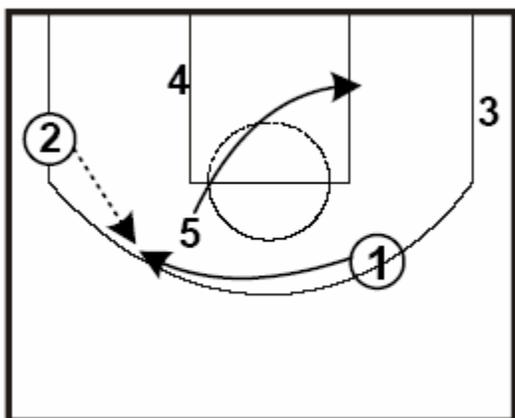
Diagram 81. Front Court Phase of Turnout Break into Flex.

Here, players have swung the ball from #3 to #1 to #5 and on to #2 always looking to get the ball inside to #4.

To enter the Flex, #2 passes to #1 after #5 has cut through. Now #1 can enter by (1) passing to #5 cutting high or (2) dribbling to the right and passing back to #4 coming high.

THE TOM DAVIS SECONDARY

Dr. Tom Davis developed his secondary and flex while coaching at Boston College, Stanford, and Iowa. Gary Williams, head coach at Maryland but earlier an assistant with Coach Davis, further used this at Maryland.
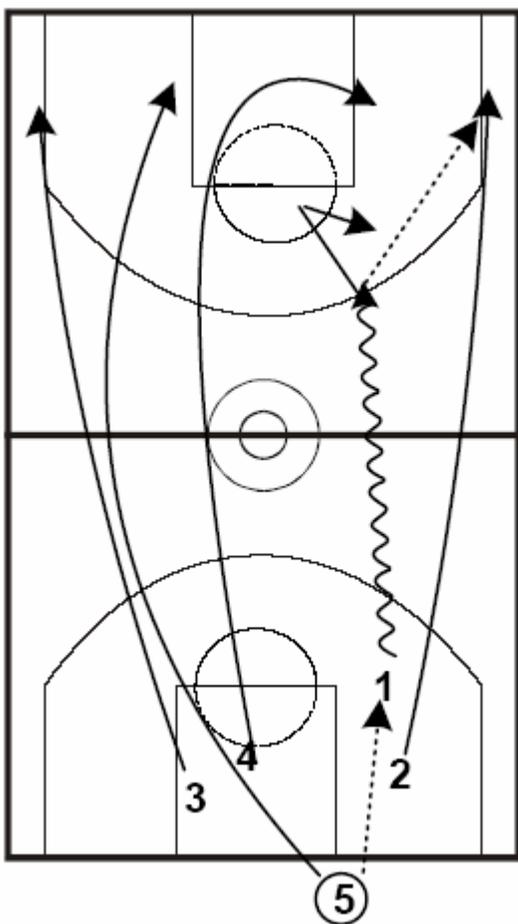
Diagram 82. Initial phase of Tom Davis Secondary.

#5 passes in to #1 who advances ball downcout.

#2 fills right lane and #3 fills left lane. (Davis would allow #2 to go left and #3 to go right dependent on their defensive location).

#4 runs into lane and out to the ballside.

#5 runs to the left block.

#1 can pass to #2 if he is open.

Diagram 83. Front court phase of Tom Davis Secondary.

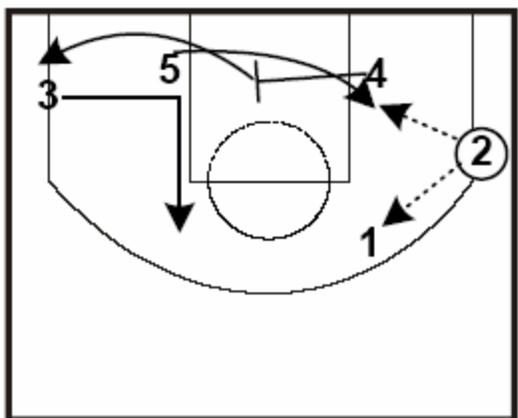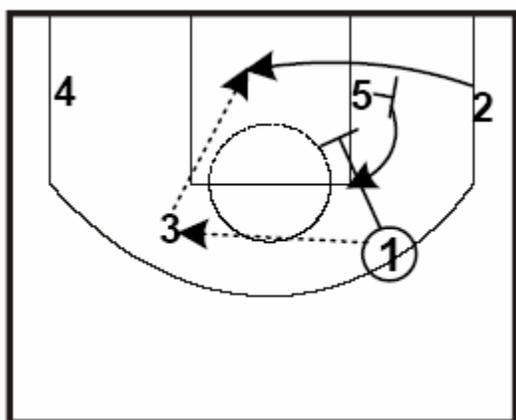#1 has passed to #2 **for possible feed to #5** coming across **cross screen set by #4**.

If #5 is not open, #2 return passes to #1 who **readies to begin the Flex**.

Diagram 84. Front court phase of Tom Davis Secondary continued.

#1 receives ball from #2 and passes to #3 **who has cut to the top** as **#4 cuts outside to corner.**

#5 sets screen for #2 who makes **Flex Cut** into lane. #3 passes to #2 if he is open, or waits for #5 coming off the screen set by #1 as **the Flex continues**.

THE GEORGE RAVELING SECONDARY

George Raveling ran this secondary when he was **head coach at Washington State and Iowa**.

He also used it with the **US All-Stars** that he coached to a **15-0 record at the Jones Cup** in Taiwan and at the **Seoul Invitational**

He put his best shooting perimeter player at the #2 spot and ALWAYS ran the secondary to the right..

. By running it always to the right, he **kept it simple for his players** and they made **very few positional mistakes**.

He utilized his good shooting 2 man by always having him a threat on either side of the court.

He was also able to get the ball to his #3 man in the post quite often. The defender on #3 is usually **not as good a post defender as the post players are.**
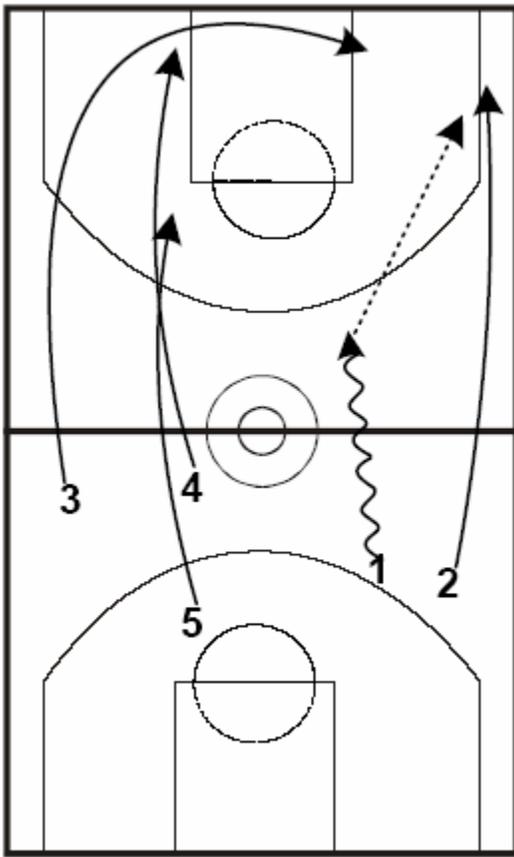
Diagram 85. George Raveling Secondary.

#1 advances **quickly downcourt** as #2 **sprints right sideline**.

#3 runs down left sideline and **cuts through lane to the right block.**

#4 runs to the left block and #5 runs to a **high trailer position.**

#1 can pass to #2 for a shot if he is open. Remember, **#2 was always Raveling's best outside shooter.**

If #2 gets the ball and is not open for the shot, **he can look to feed #3 on the low post.**

If neither option is available he **return passes to #1.**
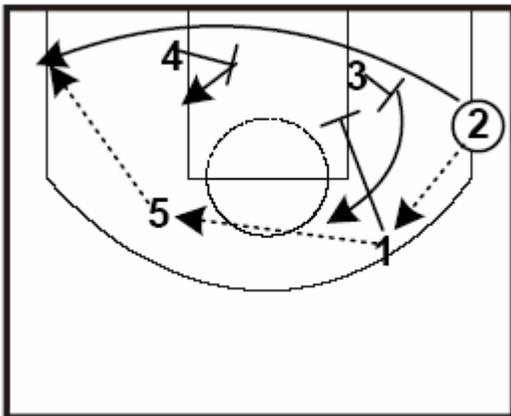
Diagram 86   Frontcourt phase of Raveling secondary.

#2 passes back to #1 and **cuts off screens set by #3 and #4.**

#1 passes to #5 **who will hit #2 in corner for the shot.**

Remember again, **#2 was Raveling's best shooter.**

Diagram 87. Frontcourt phase of Raveling secondary continued into the Flex.

#5 cuts to **opposite side of basket** on pass to #2 to be in **position to rebound.** #2 does not shoot. He passes to #1 as **#3 cuts out high**. #5 passes to #3 as **#4 sets screen**. #2 makes **Flex cut** into lane for possible pass from #3

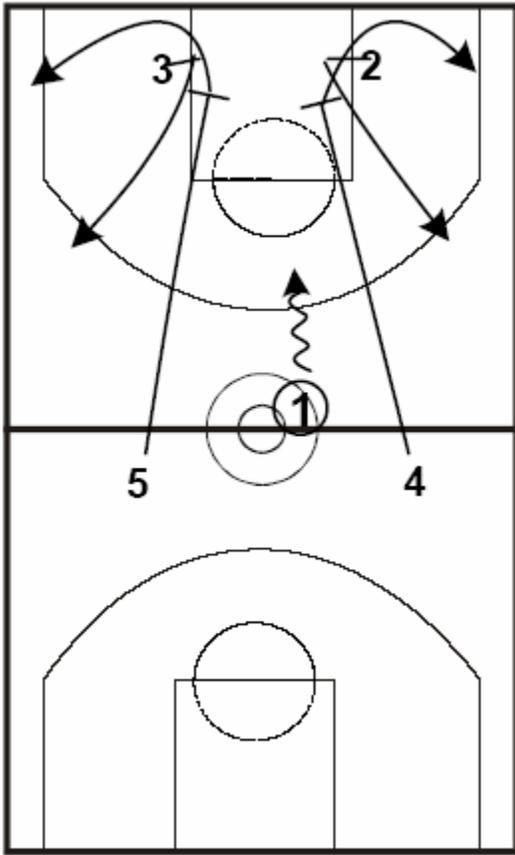**Offense is now in the Flex.** Notice that when #1 passed to #3 that **#1 moved to screen for #4.**

GONZAGA SECONDARY

Dan Fitzgerald took the Flex from Santa Clara to Gonzaga when he took the head job. Since he retired from coaching, other Gonzaga coaches have put new wrinkles into the Flex.

Diagram 88. Gonzaga Secondary

#2 and #3 **run wide to the low post areas**.

##1 advances ball **down middle**.

#4 and #5 run lanes as shown **rather than one running into the low post area and one stopping at the trailer spot.**
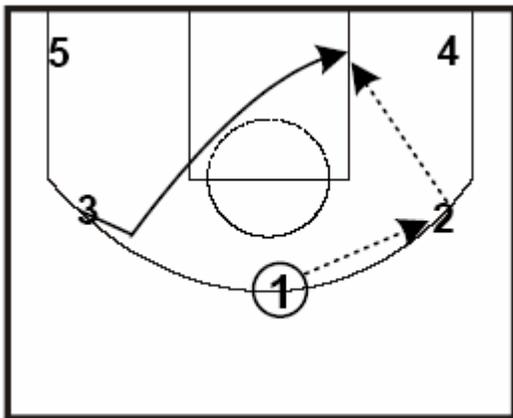
Diagram 89. Frontcourt phase of Gonzaga Secondary.

#1 advances **to near top of circle**.

#4 and #5 set **downscreens for #2 and #3.**

#2 and #3 cut to a **guard position** as #4 and #5 **continue to the corners**.

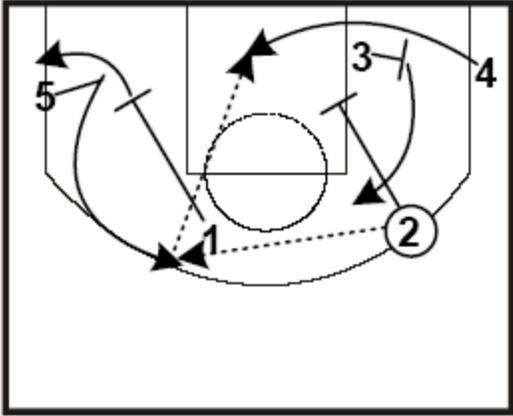These cuts make the five players be in an **open post** offense.

Diagram 90. Frontcourt phase of Gonzaga Secondary continued.

As #1 passes to #2, **#3 fakes toward #1 and cuts to the basket.**

#2 will feed #3 if he is open.

It is surprising how many times #3 can be open, particularly when the defense is pressing.

Diagram 91. Frontcourt phase of Gonzaga Secondary continued.

After #1 passes to #2, **#1 sets screen for #5** to come out to **a passing position.**

#3 sets **screen for #4** as #2 passes to #5.

The offense is now in the Flex.

CHAPTER 6

OUT OF BOUNDS PLAYS INTO THE FLEX

Out-of-bounds plays make it easier to get into the Flex because the point guard does not always have to dribble into Flex position against pressure.

In addition, the out-of-bounds situation gives time for the offense to call a play which may lead into the Flex or be an entirely different play that the defense has not seen.

UNDER BASKET OUT-OF-BOUNDS
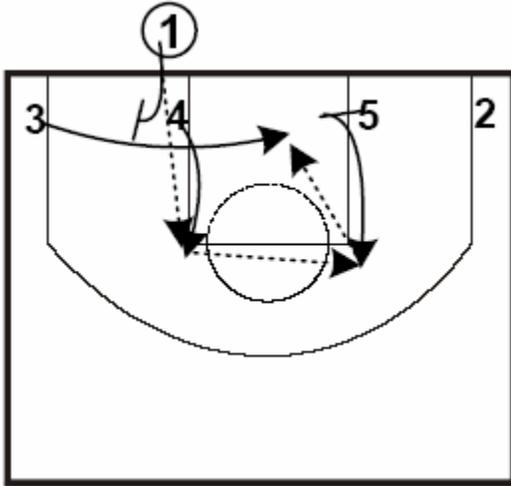
Diagram 92. Baseline OB into Flex.

X1 passes to #4 **breaking out to high position.**

#4 passes to #5 **cutting high as #1 sets Flex screen for #3.**

#5 can pass to #3 if open **or wait for #1 to come off the downscreen that will be set by #4.**

This is a **very popular play** run by teams **whether they are a flex team or not**. **Kirk Spiraw, the excellent coach at the University of Central Florida** has run this very successfully for a number of years.
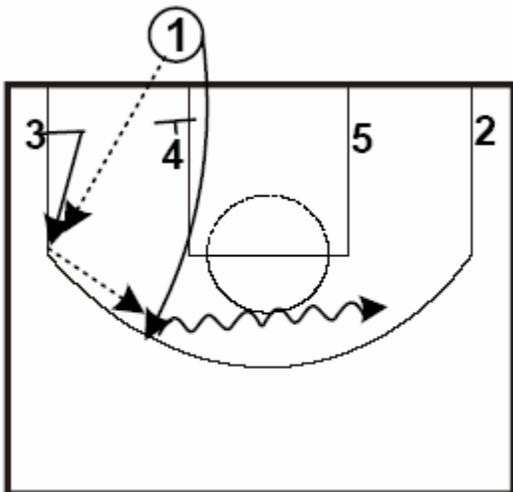
Diagram 93. Another Option for Baseline OB into Flex.

#1 passes to #3 and cuts off screen set by #4 to the top.

#3 passes to #1 who quickly dribbles to other side of the court setting up Flex cut by #2 from opposite side of that in Diagram 92.
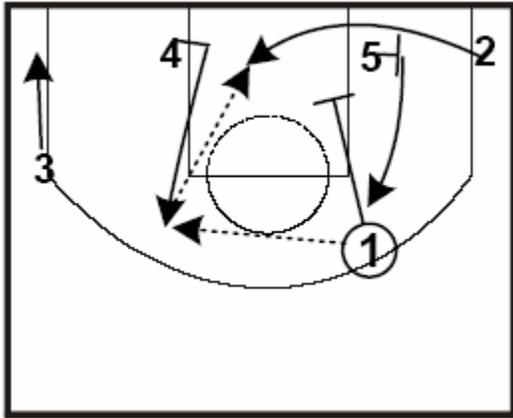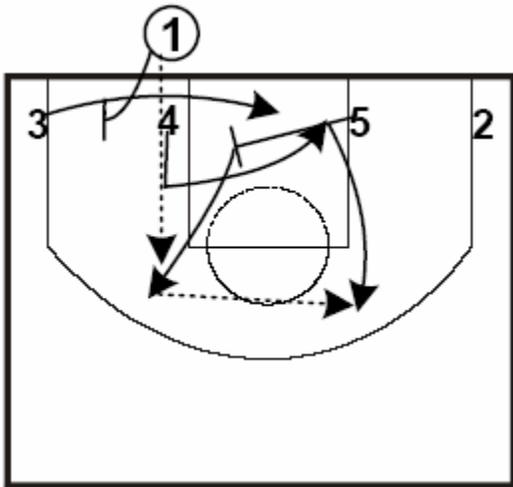
Diagram 94. Baseline OB Option continued.

As #1 picks up his dribble, **#4 cuts to top.**

#5 sets **Flex screen for #2** as #1 passes to #4.

#4 can pass to #2 if open or continue the Flex with a pass to #5.

**Diagram 95. Using Post Cross Screen as an option.**

#5 sets screen for #4 who cuts **looking for a lay-up pass from #1.**

After #5 sets screen he **cuts high to receive pass from #1.**

#4 curls to top for pass from #5 as **#1 sets Flex screen for #3**. #5 can feed #3 or **continue with the Flex.**

A **key strategy** in these out-of-bounds plays is **to change who is taking the ball out of bounds** and therefore **you change who sets the Flex screen.**.

Many other possibilities can be used for under out-of-bounds plays that can go directly into the Flex.
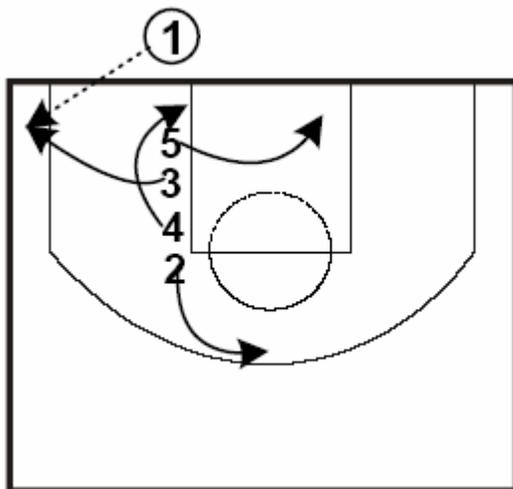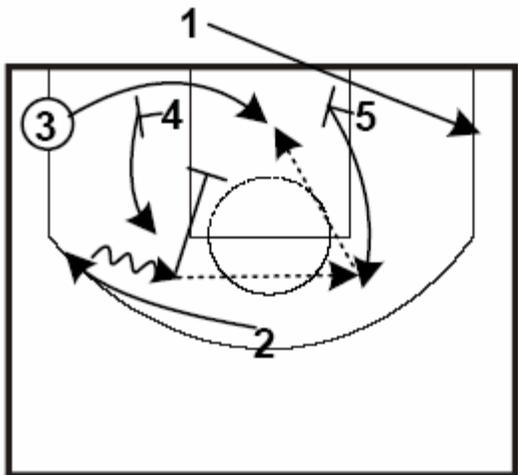

Diagram 96. Using a Stack for Underbasket OB.

#5 cuts across lane **trying to get position** for pass from #1.

#4 cuts to baseline and #3 follows after him with **a cut to the corner.**

#2 clears back as **#1 passes to #3.**

50

Diagram 97. Stack Play continued.

#3 catches pass from #1 and **looks to feed #4 on post.**

When #4 is not open, **#3 passes to #2 as #1 cuts to opposite corner off #5.**

#2 takes **"position dribble"** as #5 cuts high for the **guard to guard pass.**

#4 sets **Flex screen** and #3 cuts to lane. **#5 will pass to #3** if he is open or **wait for #4 to come high for possible jump shot or continuation of the Flex.**

SIDELINE OUT-OF-BOUNDS
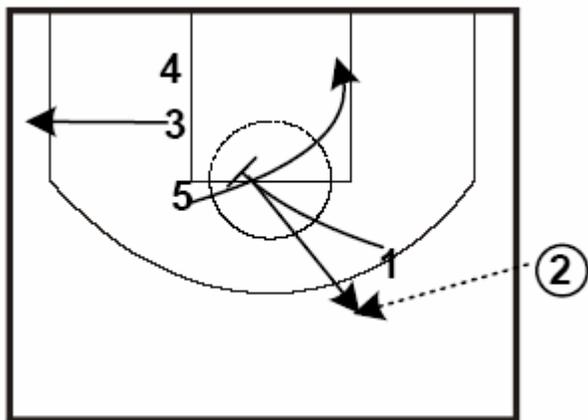
Diagram 98. Sideline Out-of-Bounds into Flex.

#1 sets screen for #5 who cuts looking for pass from #2.

#1 reverses out toward the ball and takes pass from #2.

#4 holds on block while #3 cuts out to sideline.
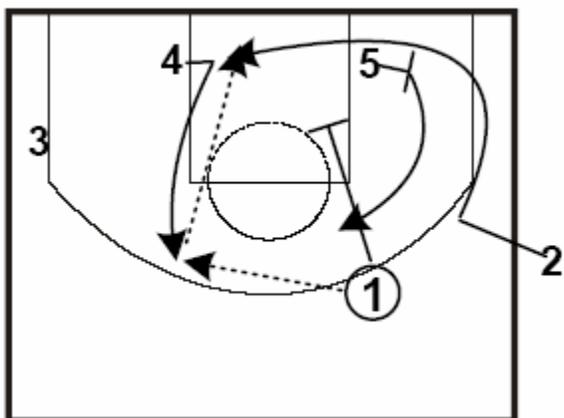
Diagram 99. Sideline Out-of-Bounds into Flex (continued).

As #1 receives ball from #2, **#4 cuts high**, **then receives pass from #1**

#5 sets **Flex screen** and #2 cuts **toward baseline, then off #5s screen into the lane.** #4 can pass to #2 or **continue the Flex** with **a pass to #5 coming off the downscreen.**

Diagram 100 . Another Sideline Out-of-Bounds Play into Flex.

#1 pops out off #4 and takes pass from #2.

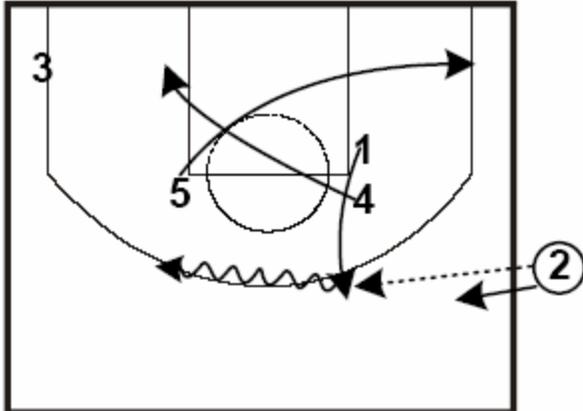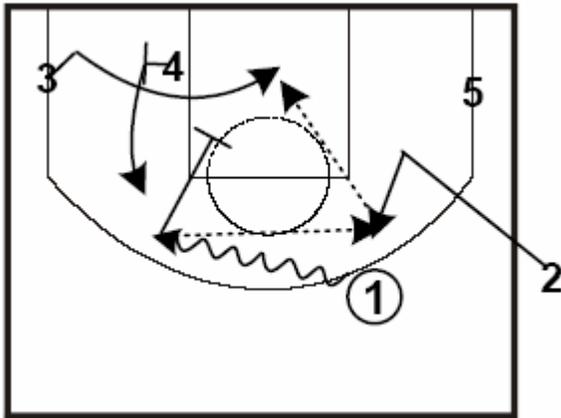**#5 dives to post and on to corner** as **#4 cuts away to the left block.**

Diagram 101. Sideline OB continued.

After receiving pass from #2, **#1 dribbles toward left side as if to pass to #3.**

#2 makes **V cut to take pass from #1.**

#3 cuts off **Flex screen** set by #4.

#2 can pass to #3 if open or look to #4 to continue the Flex.

This is a very effective play because of the use of <u>misdirection</u>. As #1 dribbles left, the play seems to be going to #3; however, the quick pass back to #2 can catch the defense off guard and make the Flex cut open.
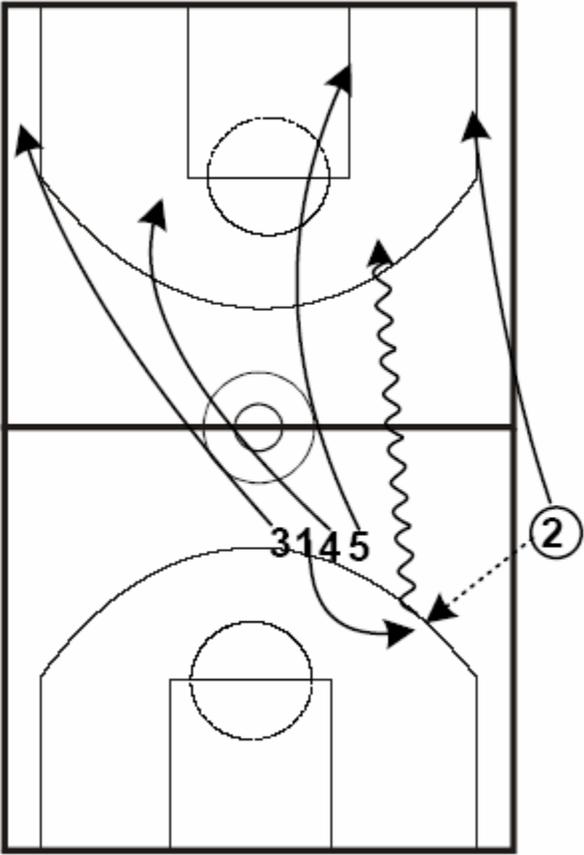
Diagram 102. Sideline Out-of-Bounds from ¾ Court into Flex.

#1 cuts out of the stack to **take pass from #2.**

#3 and #2 cut down sideline and **#4 and #5 cut as in normal "secondary" break.**

#1 advances ball quickly **downcourt.**
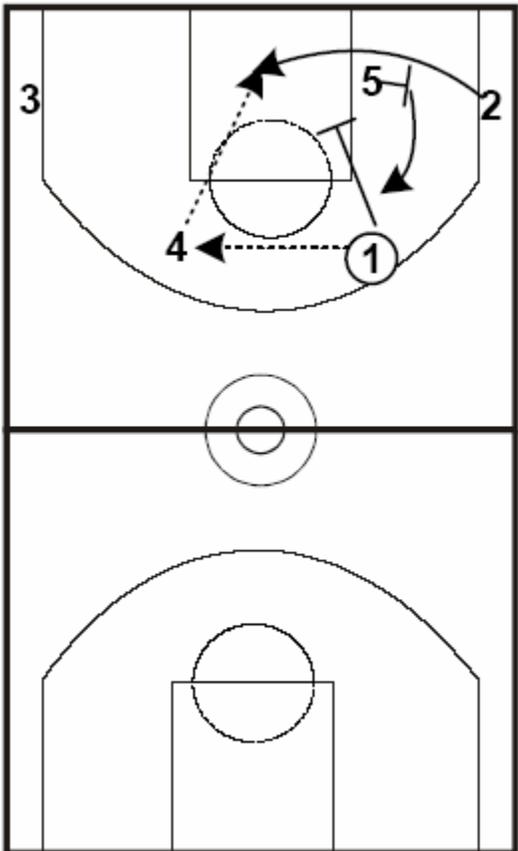
Diagram 103. Sideline Play from ¾ Court (continued).

#5 sets Flex screen for #2 and #1 passes to #4.

#4 can pass to #2 or look for #5 coming off #1s downscreen.

REMEMBER THIS ABOUT OUT-OF-BOUNDS PLAYS: VIRTUALLY ANY OUT-OF-BOUNDS PLAY CAN LEAD INTO THE FLEX. YOU CAN TAKE YOUR FAVORITE OUT-OF-BOUNDS PLAYS AND USE THEM TO GO DIRECTLY INTO THE FLEX.

CHAPTER 7

FLEX STRATEGY OR ADJUSTMENTS

A considerable amount of **strategy** is involved in running the **Flex Offense**.

First of all, the team must master **"patience"** on the offense to be sure of (1) **getting the best shot possible**; (2) **taking advantage of defensive mistakes and mismatches;** and
(3) being able to **dictate the tempo** of the game.

There are **eight (\8) specific areas of Flex Offense strategy**:

1. **Dictating Game Tempo.**
2. **Combating the switch on defense.**
3. **Combating the denial defense.**
4. **Changing starting spots on the offense**
5. **Best players in prescribed positions.**
6. **Changing Flex screener.**
7. **Low post scoring.**
8. **Isolation opportunities.**

DICTATING GAME TEMPO:

Simply running the Flex Offense automatically gives a coach **some control of game tempo** since players must **master patience** to be able to run the offense effectively.

However, there are times when a coach may want to **speed up play or slow down play**.

If an opponent is not as good as your team, it is to your advantage to attempt to speed up play. This means you will look for **more fastbreak opportunities AND** your team will be prepared for **quicker shooting opportunities**.

This does not mean that your team would throw patience "out the window." It simply means **certain players** may be allowed to shoot early and that **certain plays may be run to get quicker shots.**

You may instruct your top two shooters to **"look for the quicker shot tonight"** whereas on another night you might say to them **"we need to turn the ball over from side to side a little more against this team."**

Several plays may be in a team's offensive plans that would result in quick shots. Diagram 104 shows **a play for a quick shot for the good shooting #3 man**. Of course, it could be run to the left **for #2** as well.
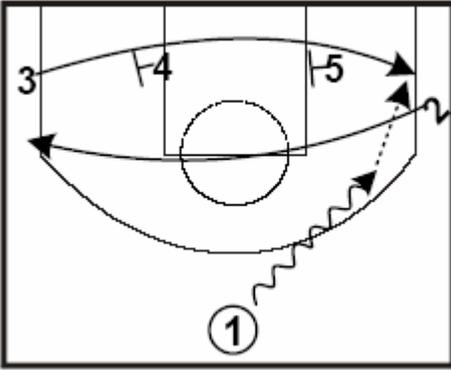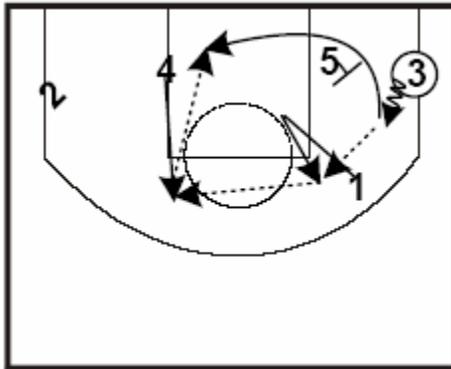
Diagram 104. "Quick Hitter" for the #3 man.

#4 and #5 set **staggered screens** for #3.

#2 crosses high to **avoid a switch**.

#3 looks for an open jump shot OR a **possible drive to the lane**.


Diagram 105. "Quick Hitter" into Basic Flex.

When #3 does not have a shot or a drive, he **takes a short dribble out of the corner** for a **better angle to pass to #1 V-cutting back**.

#4 pops out after his initial screen while #5 sets screen for #3 and the **offense is in the Basic Flex**.

COACHING POINT: When a "Quick Hitter" or special play is run, players should know how to get into the Basic Flex if the play breaks down. This must be learned in practice repetition.
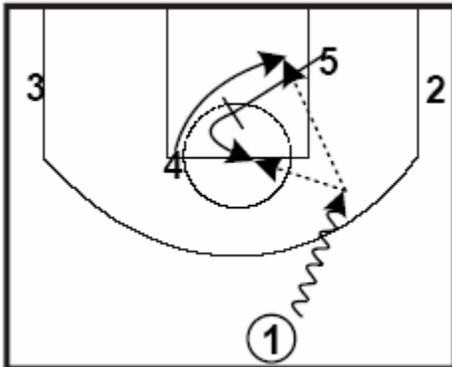
Diagram 106. "Quick Hitter" for Post player.

As #1 dribbles into passing position, #5 sets **rear screen for #4 who cuts to the low post**.

#1 will feed #4 if he is open or **#5 cutting out** from the screen. #5 can **shoot or he may drive**. Because of #4s position, **#5 can only drive left.**
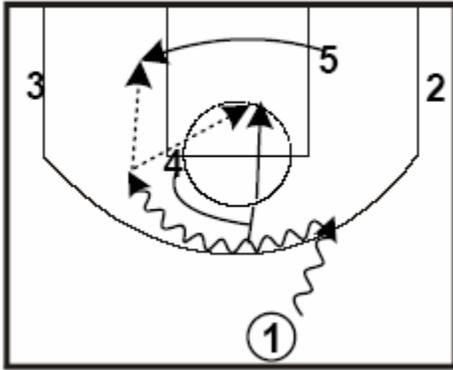
Diagram 107. High Post Screen "Quick Hitter."

#4 sets ball screen for #1 at top of circle.

As #1 dribbles by, #4 rolls to basket as #5 cuts across lane.

#1 can feed either #4 on the rollout or #5 on the low post.

COACHING POINT: It is important to know who is defending #4 and #5. Poorest defender should be involved with the ball screen.

COMBATING THE SWITCH ON DEFENSE

One of the defensive tactics defensive opponents like to use in defensing the Flex is to **switch on defense.**

Switching on defense should actually **help the offense** because it leads to many mis-matches in which big players are guarding smaller players and smaller players are guarding bigger players.

However, the Flex offensive team must have practiced those switching situations and know the best counters to use against any of them.

There are two main play situations in which the defense can switch.

The most often used switch is to **switch on the baseline cutter**. Since the offensive team is looking for a lay-up, the switch has a better chance to prevent the lay-up than the non-switch. This switch actually helps the offense and begins the defensive breakdowns by creating mismatches.

The other switch is made when the player at the elbow **downscreens for the low post screener.**

In **Diagram 108**, the switch can be made when #2 cuts off #5s screen and a switch can be made when #1 sets the downscreen for #5.

Some defensive teams will not switch on the baseline cut but will switch on the downscreen. Of course, it is important for the offense to know what switches to expect.
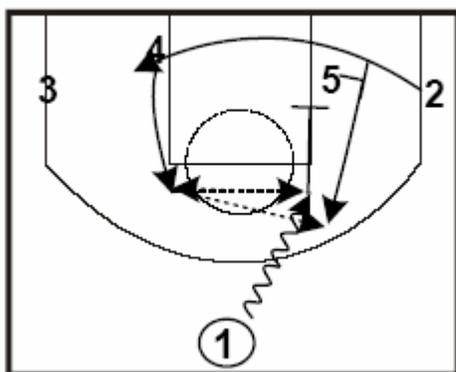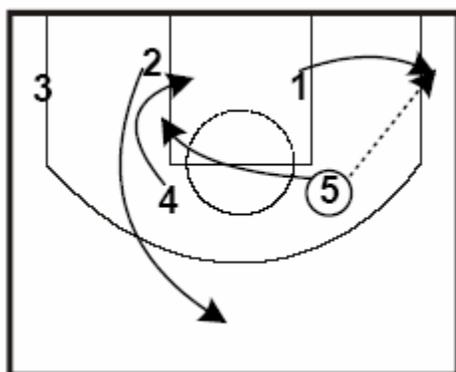
Diagram 108.

Switch by defensive #5 onto #1.

#1 initiates offense with pass to #4 and sets downscreen for #5.

#5 comes to top as defender #5 switches onto #1.

Diagram 109. Switch by defensive #5 (continued).

After screening for #5 and **recognizing the switch**, **#1 cuts out to the corner** forcing defender #5 to either **(1) hang in the low post area and give up a shot by #1, or (2) come out on #1 giving up a drive by #1**

#1 should call out a **verbal key** (ex. "Switch") to alert **his teammates that a switch has occurred** and that he will take the defender #5 **out toward the corner.**

This verbal key helps #1's teammates **recognize the switch** and **stay away from the switch side of the court..**

Few big #5 men can guard a smaller player on the drive. This switch option is very effective provided #1 is a good shooter and driver.

Notice that #2 has cut back out for **defensive balance** and #4 and #5 have moved to the opposite side to **take away the help defense** in the event #1 drives instead of shoots.

The verbal key is extremely important to communicate to teammates that a switch option will occur.
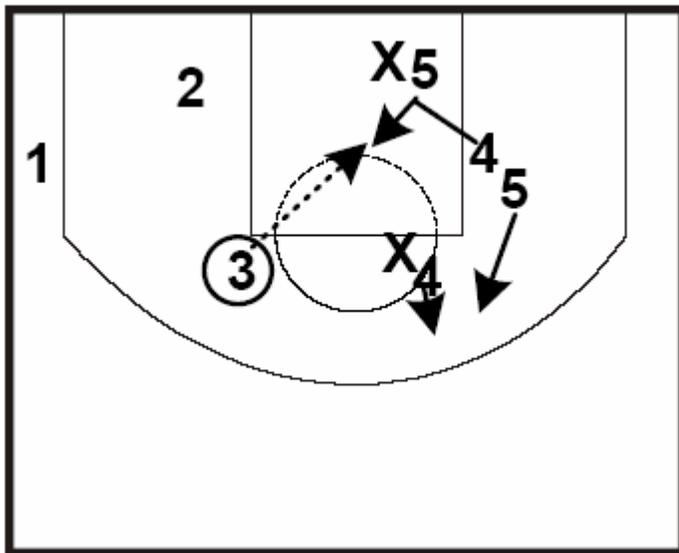.

When the switch is made on the downscreen, the best option is for either #4 or #5 to be at the top of the downscreen.
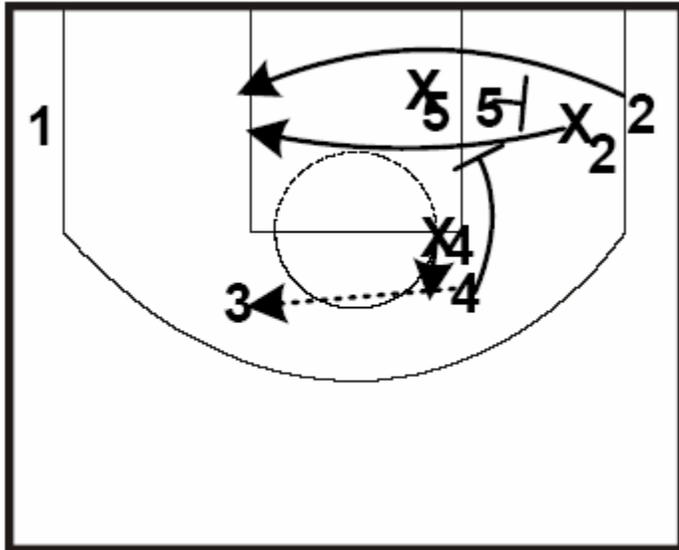
Diagram 110. Switch by X4 onto X5 on the downscreen.

#4 has passed to #3 as #2 cuts off #5's baseline screen.

#4 starts moving down for screen on X5 and **realizes X4 is switching to X5 coming to the top.**

Diagram 111. Switch by X4 and X5 on the downscreen. (continued).

As #5 comes out, X4 switches and gets in passing lane.

X4 has realized the switch and moves straight at X5, **pivots on his left foot** and pins X5 behind him.

#3 passes to #4 for an **inside post move.**

This switch option is very effective in getting the ball inside and into a high percentage scoring area. **Obviously, it is an option used when the player making the downscreen is one of the taller players and is an accomplished back to the basket scorer.**
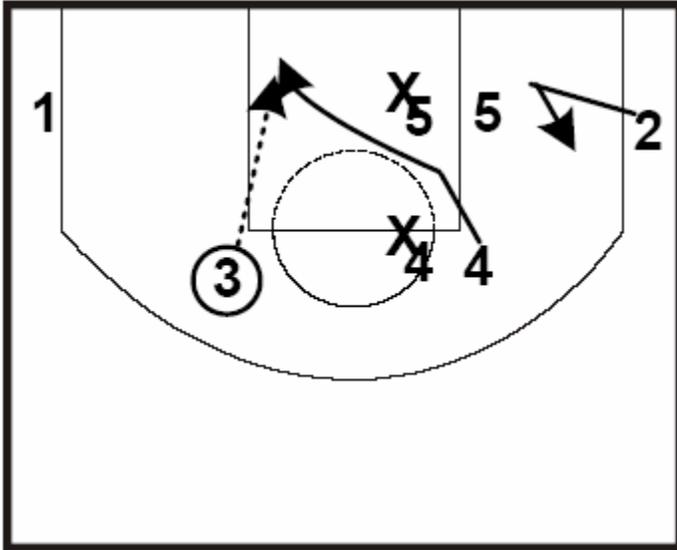
Diagram 112. Switch by X4 and X5 on the downscreen (cont.)

#4 knows his man is going to switch onto #5. #4 calls out a **verbal key** ("Post" or "Cut", etc.) to signal **#2 to fake his baseline cut.**

#4 starts to set a screen on X5, hesitates, then **cuts hard to the left side of the lane** for pass from #3.

There are **other "switch" plays** that can be used by a creative coach. Make sure that they are **kept simple** and that you **do not have too many options** that would create confusion among your players.

COMBATING THE DENIAL DEFENSE

Many good man for man **defenses will attempt to deny passes** so that the **continuity Flex offense** cannot be executed. Therefore, the Flex team must be **accomplished in handling the denial defense and a great deal of practice must be devoted to attacking the denial.**

The **majority** of denial defensive situations will involve **handling the basketball at the top part of the offense in the free throw elbow/top positions.**

First of all, the Flex team must be able to **initiate** the offense and **considerable practice must be devoted to the backdoor situation shown in Diagram 113.**
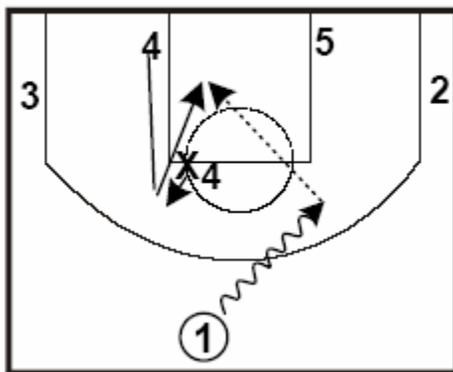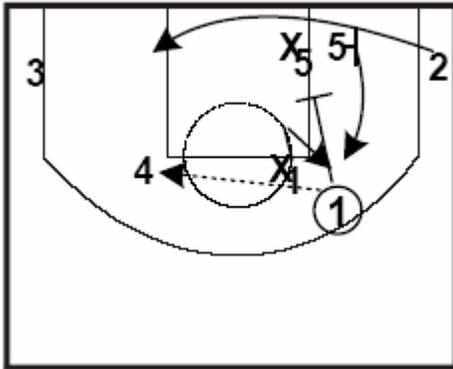

Diagram 113. #4 Backdoor vs. Denial.

X4 is overplaying #4 as he cuts out to the top to iniatiate the offense.
#1 fakes a pass to #4 high, then feeds him cutting backdoor for a lay-up. This requires considerable practice in a breakdown drill.
This is the number one pressure release that must be mastered in running the Flex.

Diagram 114. Denial of the Guard to Guard Pass.

As #1 moves down to screen for #5 after the **Flex basic cut** on the baseline, #1 notices that X1 is holding back to switch onto #5 coming to the top.
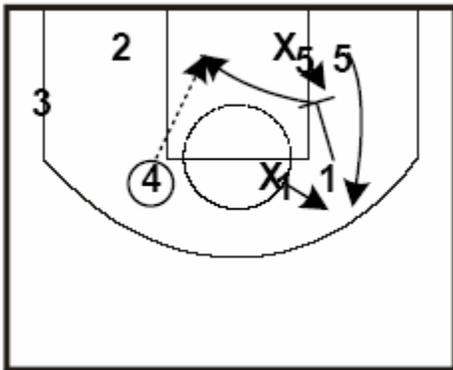
Diagram 115. Denial of Guard/Guard Pass (continued).

When X1 realizes he is not being followed by X1, **he cuts across the lane for pass from #4.**

This option is even more effective when a **tall post player** is screening down and cuts across lane for pass from 04
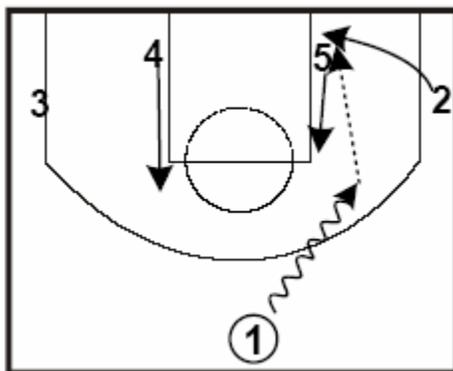
Diagram 116. Wing Denial (Option 1)

#5 cuts high and **#1 passes to #2 for lay-up.**

Diagram 117. Wing Denial (Option 2)

#2 sets up a little higher. **#1 passes to #5 who passes to #2 cutting to basket.**
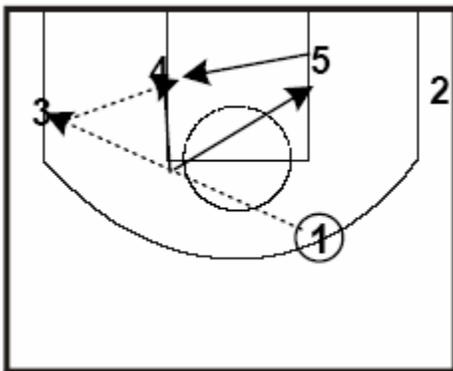
Diagram 118. **Skip pass to the offside wing**.

#4 starts cut to the free throw line vicinity, then **dives to opposite post**.

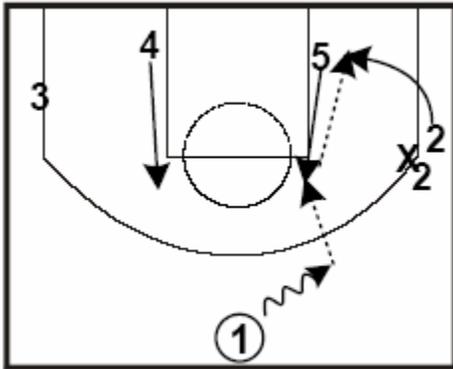When #4 is denied, #1 skip passes to #3 as **#5 cuts across the lane for possible feed from #3.**
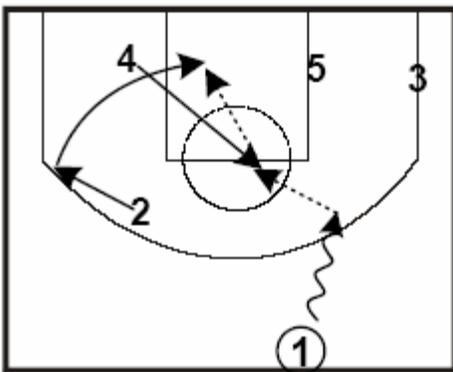
Diagram 119. 2-3 Set "Blind Pig" Play vs. pressure.

#2 is being **overplayed so he drifts left.** #4 cuts to free throw line and receives pass from #1.

#2 cuts and receives pass from #4 for lay-up.

Most experienced coaches who have run a **2-3 set** have used this play before, **one that was popularly called the "blind pig."**

CHANGING STARTING SPOTS ON THE OFFENSE

One of the advantages of the Flex Offense is that all five players can **learn to play at any of the five positions.**

This makes the offense difficult to guard and **opens up many strategic opportunities for the alert coach.**

Tall players can begin in an outside position and **small players can begin in an inside position.**

Look at the offensive set shown in **Diagram 120**.

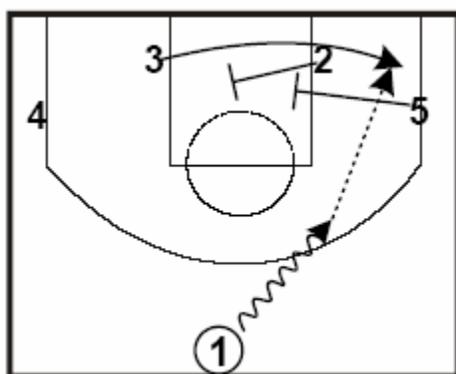

Diagram 120. 4 and 5 to outside positions.

#4 and #5 come downcourt and set up outside as shown. This is sometimes called **"invert"**.

On play call, #2 and #5 put **staggered screen for shooter #3** for shot along the baseline.

This play goes well with the "quickies" shown earlier.

If #1 had dribbled left, #3 and #4 would have screened for #2.
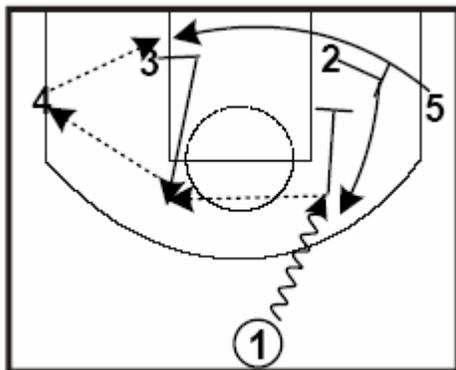
Diagram 121.

#5 to the Post from "Invert".

#3 fakes to come toward #2, then cuts high to initiate the Flex.

#2 sets Flex screen for #5 who cuts into the low post area as #1 passes to #3 and on to #4.

This action shown in Diagram 121 is a good opportunity for the offense to feed the low post player.

Diagram 122. One Big, One Little in the Post.

#4 goes back inside along with #2. #2 screens for #4 who cuts to the top in the event #1 decides to initiate the Flex.

#5 screens down for #2 for a shot, drive, or corner option.

Diagram 123. #1 to the Post.
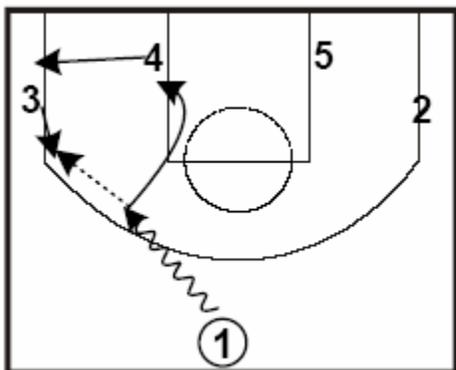
#1 dribbles toward #3, passes, and **cuts to the 4 spot area**. #4 moves outside.

Diagram 124 #1 to the Post (continued).

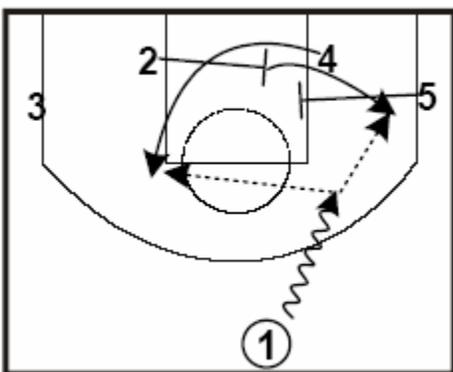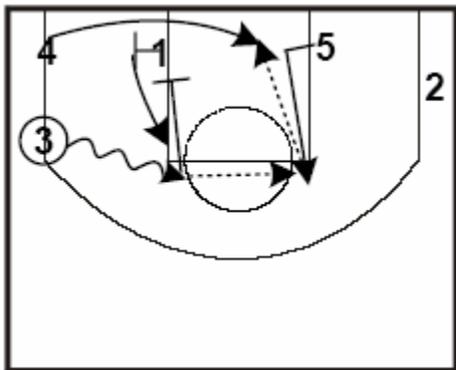#3 dribbles to elbow area and **begins Flex with pass to #5.**

#4 cuts off screen **set by #1** as #3 comes down to set pick for #1 for the **Flex "screen the screener" action.**

If #1 makes a good screen for #4, and #4 makes a good cut to the basket, either #4 should get a shot inside or #1 should be open coming off the screen by #3.

It is also very effective to change player's positions when the Flex is being initiated from other sets like the **Double Stack, the High 1-4, and the 1-3-1.**

BEST PLAYERS IN PRESCRIBED SPOTS
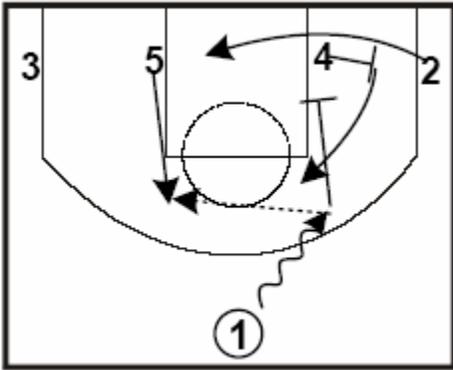
Diagram 125. Best players are 1, 2, and 4. and are positioned as shown.

#1 pases to #5 as **#2 does basic flex cut off screen by #4. #1 sets downscreen for #4.**

#5 can pass to #2 if he is open or pass to #4 coming to the top.

After #4 receives pass **several things may happen according to the strengths of the best players.** **Examples are in Diagrams 126-128.**
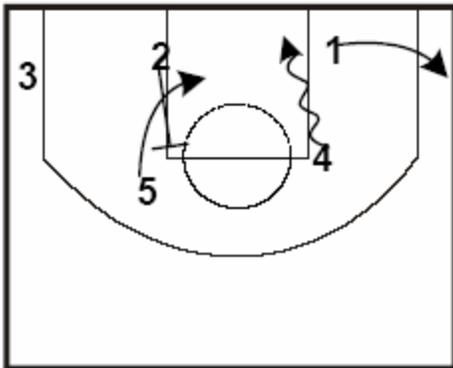
Diagram 126. #4 for a Drive.

Being one of the better players, #4 may be an excellent driver and this gives a good opportunity for a drive situation.

Notice that #1 has cut to the corner and that #2 has back-screened for #5 to keep defense busy and to enable #5 to get to the offensive board.
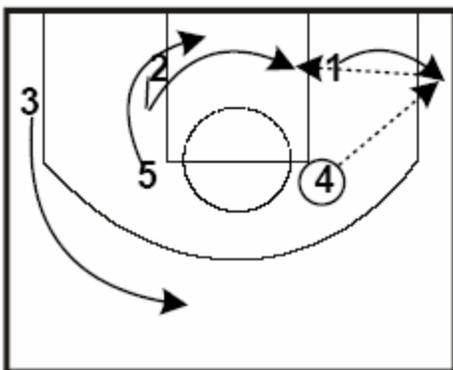
Diagram 127. #2 to the Post.

#2 may be a good back-to-the-basket   player and may be guarded by a weaker defender. #1 can flare to the corner, take a pass from #4 and feed #2 in post.

If #1 cannot make the feed, he will pass back to #4 for high-low action feed to #2. #5 gets into rebound position while #3 checks back on defense.
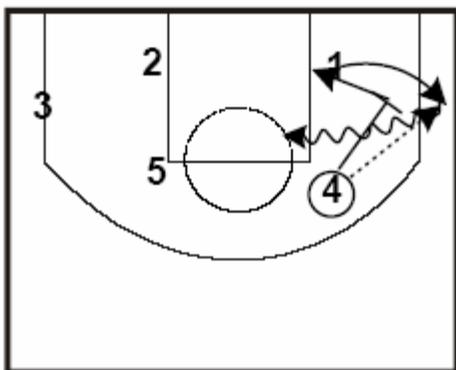
Diagram 128. Ball screen for #1.

  #4 passes to #1 cutting to sideline and then sets ballscreen for him. #1 may drive off the screen, shoot, or pass back to #4 rolling to the basket.

Remember, 1, 2, and 4 are your BEST players in this situation and you can add free lance opportunity for them.

They can begin at any of the positions. #4 and #2 **could have inverted positions** so that #4 would cut off #2s screen. #2 would then come to the top, have the opportunity to drive, pass to #1 for a post feed to #4, or set a ball screen for #1.
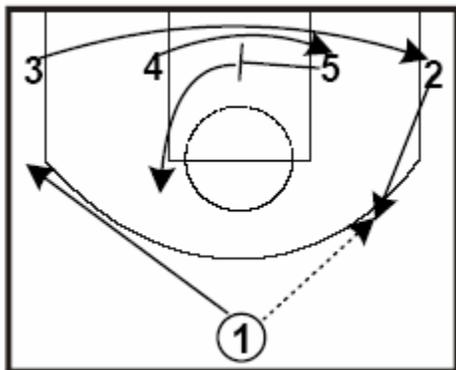
Diagram 129.   #2, #3, and #4 are best players.

#1 passes to #2 and cuts away leaving #2 in the key flex entry position.

#3 cuts crosscourt to the right corner as #4 cuts off #5s screen for right low block. #5 cuts up to elbow.
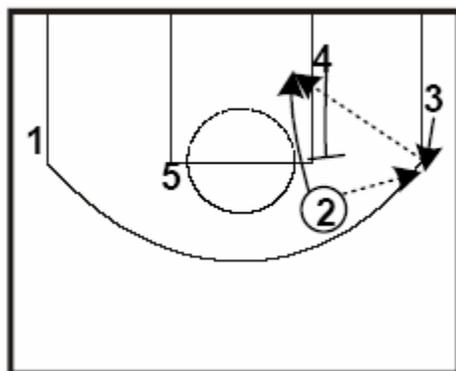
Diagram 130. #2, #3, #4 continued.

#2 passes to #3 and makes a **UCLA cut off #4.**

#3 can pass to #2 if #2 is open.
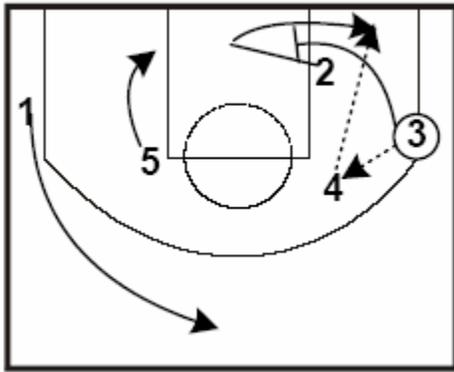
Diagram 131. #2, #3, #4 continued.

X3 passes to #4 and sets **downscreen for #2** (perhaps the team's best shooter).

#2 "puts his head under the net" to set up his defender, then **cuts hard off the screen set by #3.**

Of course, **this is just an example of what can be done by your three best players when playing together on the strong side of the court**. In this case, **#3 could post up and get a pass from #2**, OR **#4 could screen down for #3 to come up the lane for a jump shot**. A creative coach can design plays he prefers to take advantage of playing with your three best players.
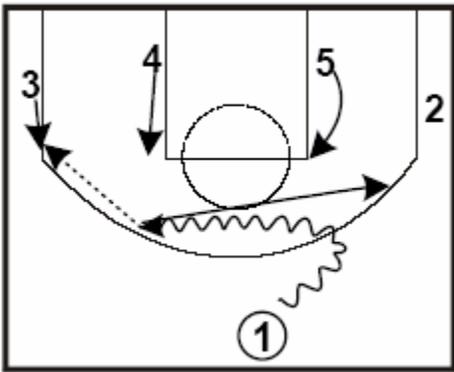
Diagram 132. Best Players are #3 and #4.

Point Guard #1 dribbles to left, **passes to #3, and cuts away. #4 and #5 come high**.

#4 could have remained in the low post for a possible pass from #3.
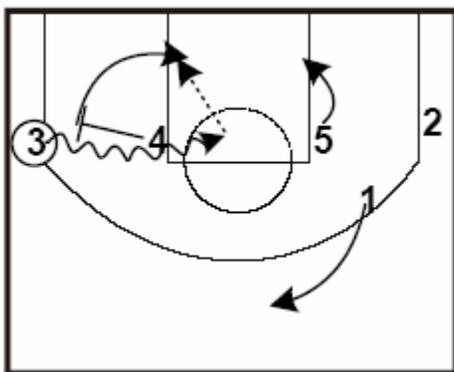
Diagram 133. #3 and #4 continued.

#4 sets **ball screen for #3** and as #3 dribbles toward the lane, **#4 rolls to the basket**. #3 may **shoot the short jumper** or **pass to #4 on the roll-out.**

#5 readies for **rebound position** as **#1 covers backcourt.**

The key strategy here is that you put your BEST players in situations where they will be handling the ball more often and can have the opportunity to use their skills.

This is a strategy that the NBA teams use extensively. They have a number of sets in their offense, but constantly use their better players in the various sets. Each time down court they can call a set that will get the ball to their better players. High school and college teams do not use this strategy very often, BUT WHY NOT?

CHANGING FLEX SCREENER

One of the **most effective strategies** in the offense is to **change <u>who</u> is setting the Flex screen.**

This gives the offense **two distinct advantages**:

   (1) It **confuses the defense** since they must go from **defensing a downscreener or a cut** to **defending the baseline Flex screen**.

   (2) The Flex screener is often **the <u>next</u> shooter**. He **sets the Flex screen** on the baseline, then **accepts the downscreen and cuts to the free throw line area where he may be open for a jump shot.**
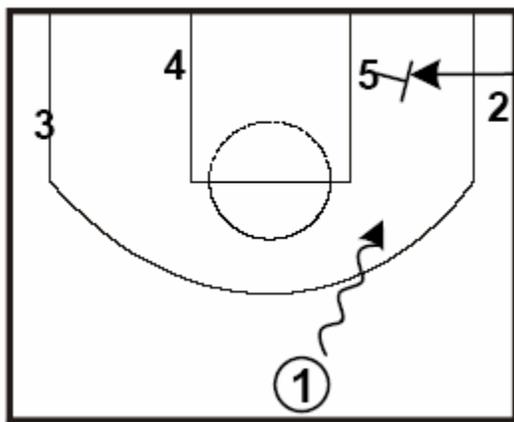
Diagram 134. Flex screener. #5

Many coaches use this set to begin their flex.
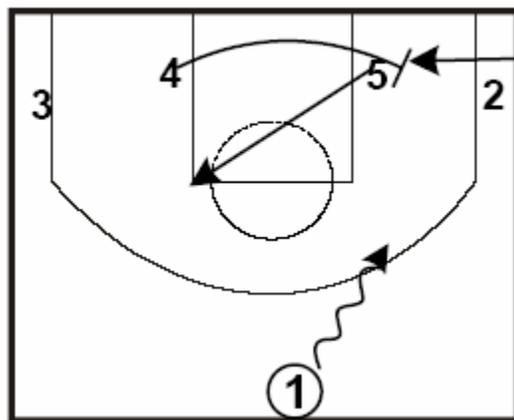
Diagram 135. Flex screener #4.

#5 cuts high and #4 cuts across into Flex screen position.
#5 could set a crossscreen for #4 for a different look.
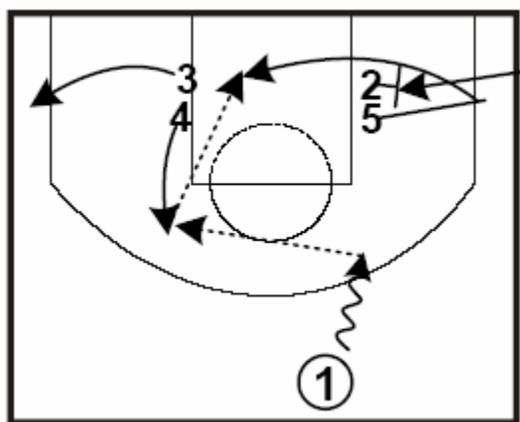
Diagram 136. Flex screener #2 from double stack.

This could be #3 on the left side.

#1 can be the Flex screener on many of the plays diagrammed earlier, <u>particularly</u> <u>after #1 makes a UCLA cut</u>.

Changing the player who sets the baseline Flex screen is very important to game strategy. Don't overlook this tactic and spend time in practice getting different players into the Flex screen position.

LOW POST SCORING

The best offenses in basketball, even in the era of 3-point shooting, usually build their offenses from inside to out. There can be exceptions when a team possesses really good 3 point shooters, but the **inside-out style of play** benefits most teams.

The better a team's ability to get the ball to someone in the low post who has good scoring moves, the stronger the basketball team.

Why get the ball inside?

(1) Higher percentage shooting area
(2) When a team gets the ball in the low post to a good scorer, the defense will usually collapse and doubleteam the ball. This double team enables the ball to be passed out to an open uncontested shooter.

And maybe the **most important reason**, (3) **Defensive opponents usually make more fouls when guarding an inside player than when guarding an outside shooter**. Teams that stress getting the ball inside usually result in **more free throw attempts than the opponent** and **more opposing players in foul trouble**..

The Flex offense is sometimes called a "jump shooting offense." This is because so many shots come from the elbow position near the free throw line. However, **a well coached "flex team" will not depend on those jump shots alone but will have plans for getting the ball inside for scoring opportunities.**

The following diagrams will give ideas for getting the ball inside. **Keep in mind that <u>any</u> player can be put into the low post position, depending on individual strength of the player.**
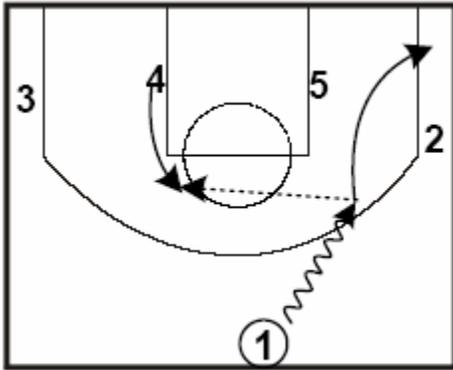
Diagram 137. A "called play" when a team wants to get the ball inside.

#1 advances, passes the ball to #4 and cuts to the right corner.
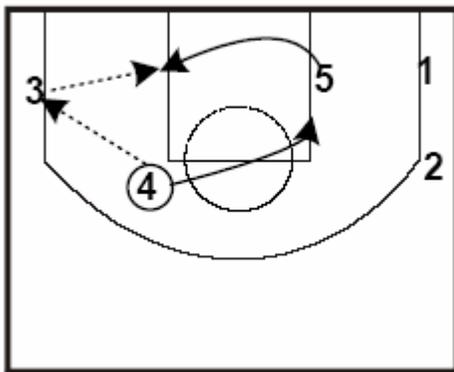
Diagram 138. Getting Ball Inside to #5.

#4 receives the pass from #1 and **reverses ball to #3.** #4 cuts away to be in **rebound position**.

#5 cuts across lane fighting for position on his defender.

If #5 is open, #3 passes in to the post.
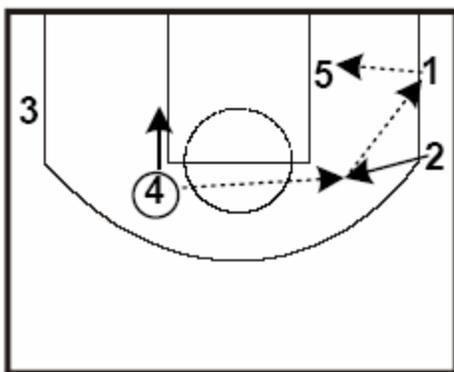
Diagram 139. Passing Triangle.

Instead of reversing the ball to #3, #4 passes the ball to #2 on the **strongside of the court**.

Notice that **#2, #1, and #5 form a triangle** which is **a good set to make an inside feed.**

Here, #2 passes to #1 who can pass inside, or **if the defender is on the low side, #1 can return pass to #2 for a feed to #5 on the high side.**
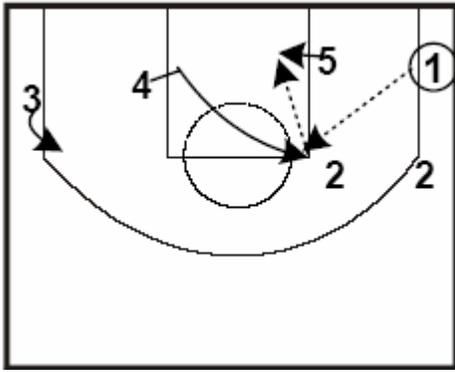
Diagram 140. Getting Ball inside to #5 continued..

#1 cannot make the return pass to #2.

#4 cuts hard across lane, takes a pass from #1 and **passes inside to #5.**

This **high-low action** is used in many offenses to get the ball inside. **The ability of the flex team to involve some high-low action makes the flex team even tougher to defend.**

It is important to point out that this triangle action can be used on either side of the court. When #4 reversed the ball to #3, a triangle could have been formed by #3, #4, and #5.

"OPEN" OPTION FOR GETTING THE BALL INSIDE

Creative coaches have developed what is often called the **"Open" option for getting the ball inside.**

When **"Open"** is called, this simply **means that one player will be isolated in the post** making a **4 out 1 in formation.** It is usually **easier to feed a post from the 4 out formation than a 3 out formation**.
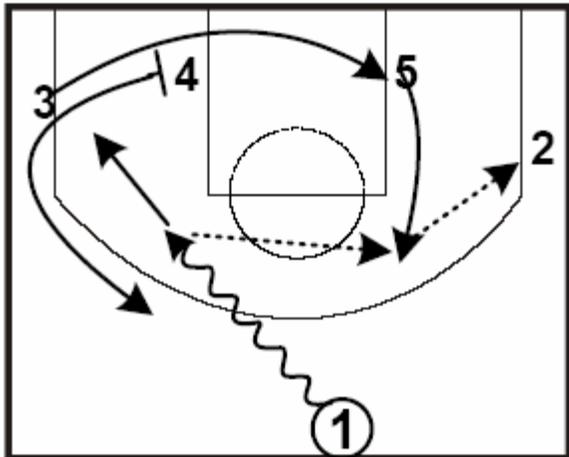
Diagram 141. "OPEN" for #3.

#1 dribbles left and passes back to #5.

#4 sets **Flex screen for #3s cut into the post.**

The call **"OPEN" cancels any Flex continuity** and simply **sends #3 into the post** in a 4 out, 1 in situation.

On pass by #5 to #2, #1 and #4 have **exchanged on the weakside** and **#5 wil**l remain stationary for a **possible pass back out from #2.**
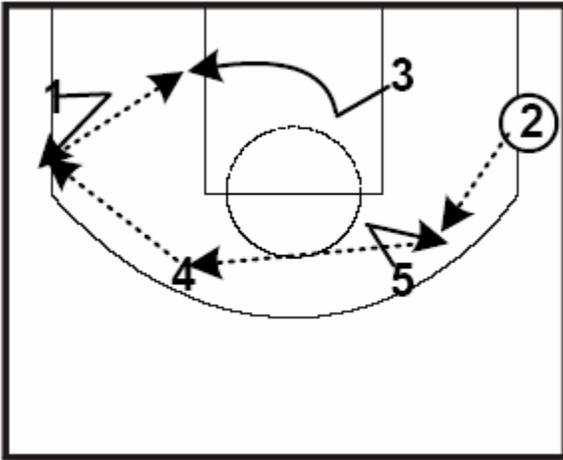
Diagram 142. "OPEN" (continued).

#2 cannot feed #3 and **return passes to #5 who looks inside**.

#5 passes to #4 who passes on to #1 **as #3 fights for post position.**

After passing, **the perimeter players should exchange away** to keep the **defense busy. Strategy will dictate when "Open" is called. A defender may be** in **foul trouble** and you want to take him into the post. A defender may be **smaller and cannot defend well inside**. You may have a **wing player who is particularly good at playing in the post**. Remember, **you can arrange cuts so that any player can go into the post**, even **#1**. In fact, **in many cases, #1 may be the best mis-match on the floor.**

There are a number of other options available to players for inside feeds than the ones shown above. There are **certain fundamental techniques** that can be used to get the ball inside. This is true whether or not a team is running the flex or another offense.

What we are showing here is that the flex team can have **certain "free lance" type opportunities** available that will make the team more difficult to defend.

We are also showing that the flex team **does not have to be just a jump-shooting team**, but with **correct practice**, **the flex team can get the ball inside as well as any other offense.**
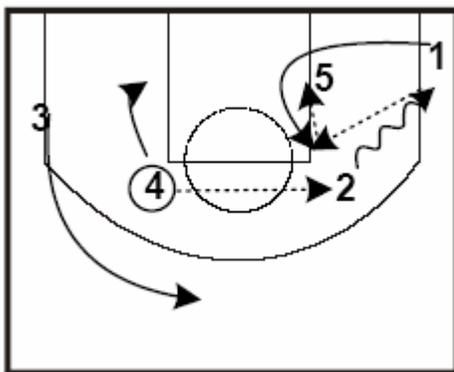
Diagram 143. The dribble "push".

When #2 gets the ball from #4, he may dribble toward #1 **"pushing" him away from his corner spot.**

#1 curls behind #5 and to the free throw area for a pass from #2 and **possible inside feed to #5.**
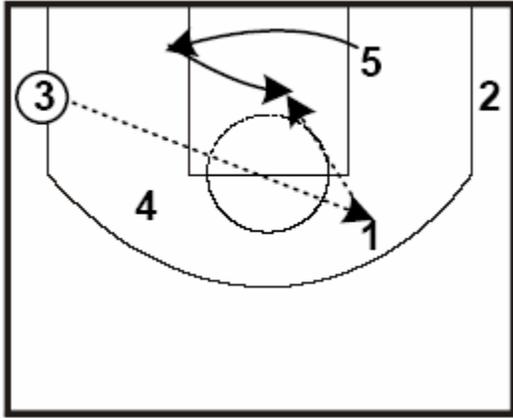
Diagram 144. Corner Option Skip Pass.

X3 in the corner has tried to pass to #5 in the post but the post pass is denied.

#3 skip passes to #1 for inside feed to post player #5.
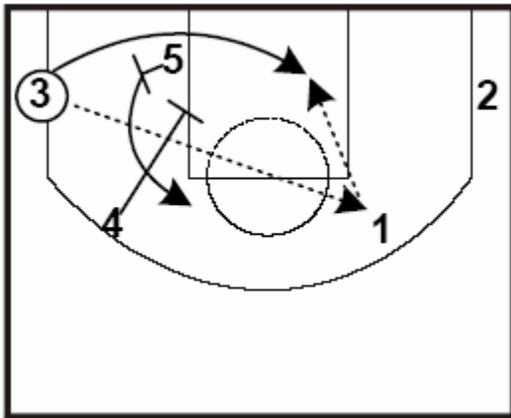
Diagram 145. Corner Option Skip Pass.

#5 does have the **option to set the screen** for #3 **instead of cutting into the post.**

Whether or not #5 uses this screen option **will depend on how the defender is playing #5.** #5 must make the decision.

ISOLATION OPPORTUNITIES:

A team should have situations in its offense to take advantage of 1-on-1 opportunities.

Such 1-on-1 opportunities must be controlled somewhat since the success of the Flex depends a great deal on **the continuity of the TEAM offense**. However, the best 1-on-1 players on a team can be presented with **offensive sets that will enable their strengths to be exploited.**

Study the 1-on-1 drive situation. Many times during a game you will see a player drive to the basket when defenders are on either side of him and in position to choke off the drive or to cause a turnover.

The well-coached team will use a variety of sets that will allow their best 1-on-1 players to have space to drive without going into a congested area.

Why drive? Because **it lets a player get close to the basket for a high percentage shot**; but, more importantly, **it makes the defense commit more fouls than they would defending just the jump-shooter.**

Who should drive? **Obviously a good 1-on-1 player regardless of position**. However, one of the best strategic situations available to a team is for one of their post players to be put into a driving situation.

Few post players know how to drive and even **fewer post players know how to defend the drive.**

Why not (1) **teach your post players the correct footwork and techniques for the drive**, and (2) **present spacing opportunities for them to use this driving ability**.

One of the best drive plays for a post player is shown in Diagram 146.
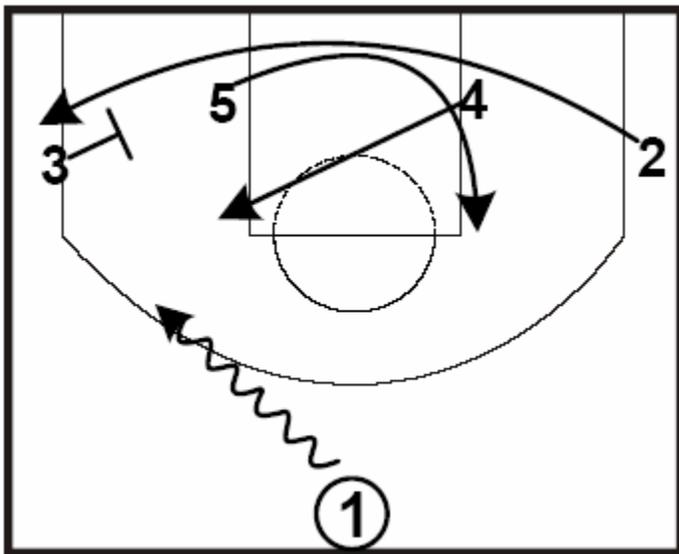
Diagram 146. Drive situation for Post Player #5.

#1 drives left as #2 cuts to left side of court.

#3 sets "decoy" screen for #2. It is not the intention of the offense to get the ball to #2, only to keep his defender occupied. As #4 cuts to the high post, #5 curls under basket
and cuts to the opposite elbow.
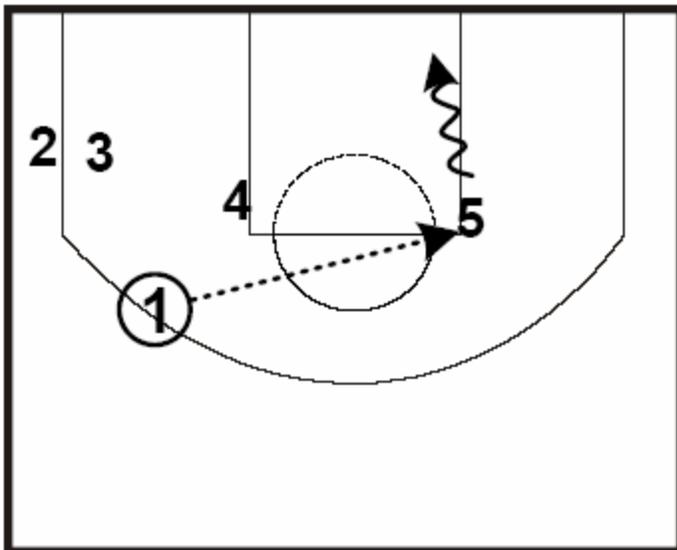
Diagram 147.

Notice how the cuts by the other offensive players have resulted in **an overload and a complete isolation situation for #5.**

#1 feeds #5 who drives for the basket.

This play can be run from either side of the court. A key is for the point guard to dribble to the side of the post player he wants to set up in the drive situation! If he wants to set up #5 as in **Diagram 46**, he will dribble left. If he had wanted to set up #4 he would have dribbled right.

TEACHING POINTS ON THE POST ISOLATION PLAY:
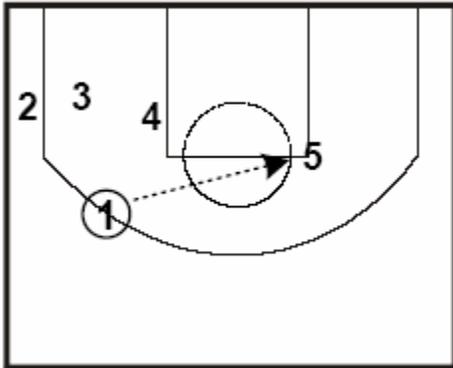
Diagram 148. Point Guard Position

It is important that the point guard #1 dribbles the ball to a spot <u>even with the top of the circle</u> and <u>halfway from the sideline to the left lane line.</u>

This enables the pass from #1 to #5 to be at an angle and **provides room for a backdoor play if #5 is overplayed.**
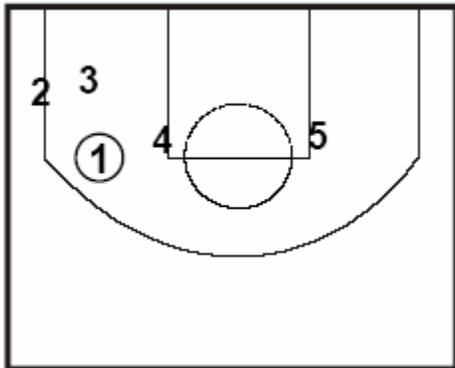
Diagram 149. Point Guard too deep.

In this diagram, #1 has dribbled to **a spot too deep and does not have an angle to make the pass to #5.**

The pass from #1 to #5 could easily be intercepted.
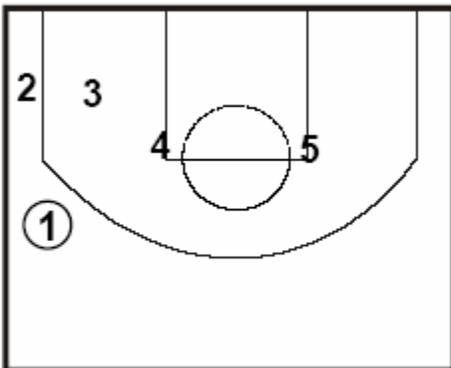
Diagram 150. Point Guard too wide.

In this diagram, **#1 has dribbled too wide** thus making the pass to #5 **longer and more easily intercepted.**
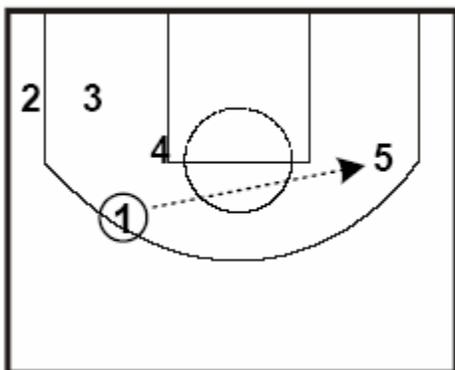
Diagram 151. #5 cutting too wide.

This diagram shows that #5 has cut too far away from the basket to receive the pass from #1. Receiving the ball this far away results in more defensive help toward the ball and prevents a successful drive.

This play can be run from either side of the court. A key is for the point guard to dribble to the side of the post player he wants to set up in the drive situation! If he wants to set up #5 as in **Diagram 146**, he will **dribble left**. If he had wanted to set up #4 he would have **dribbled right**.
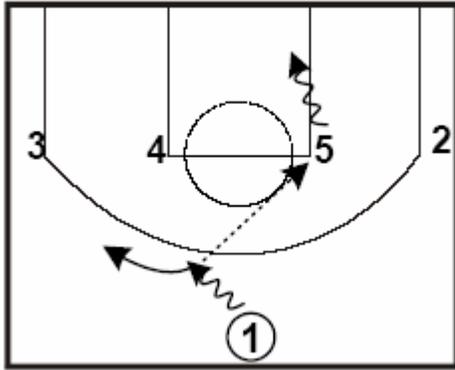

Diagram 152. The 1-4 set for a post drive.

This 1-4 set is ideal for a post player drive.

#1 dribbles left, passes to #5 and cuts away. #5 pivots, faces his defender, and drives.
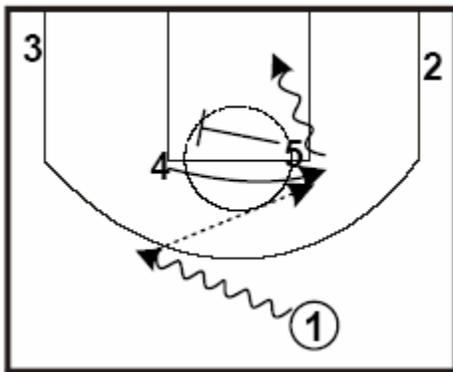
Diagram 153. Another Post Drive Play.

#5 cross screens for #4 as #1 dribbles left.

#1 quickly passes to #4 who has the drive situation.

Care must be taken to work with the post player's drive footwork on this play more than normal. #4 is cutting away from the passer and the footwork is different than normal.
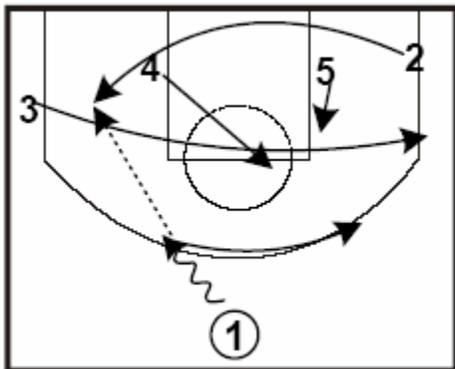
Diagram 154. Isolation for a Wing Player.

The **designated 1-on-1 driver**, #2, cuts along baseline as shown as the opposite wing, #3, **cuts over the top of the posts** to the other wing.

#4 and #5 cut to the right high post area.

#1 passes to #2 and cuts away leaving #2 isolated and in position to drive. He is a little wide but wing players are usually better drivers than post players and can react better to defensive help.
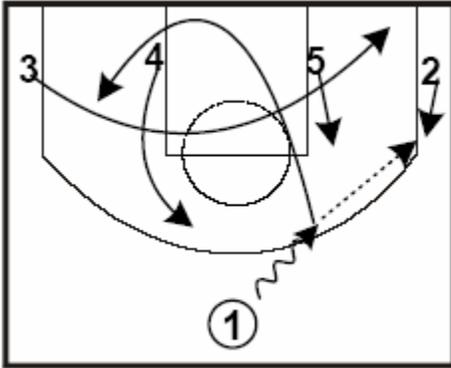
Diagram 155. Isolation for Point Guard.

#1 passes to #2 and cuts as shown.

#3 cuts **over top of #4 and #5** and to the **right corner**.

#5 cuts to high post area as #4 cuts into position for a pass from #2
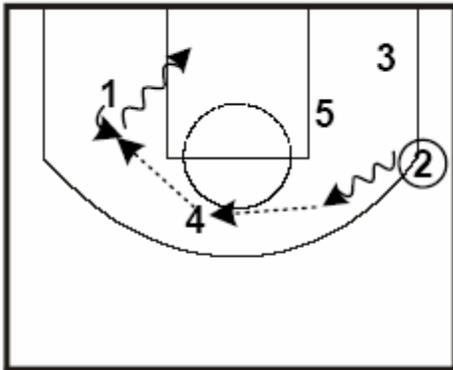
Diagram 156. Isolation for Point Guard (cont.)

#2 dribbles and passes to #4 who **relays the ball to #1 in the "iso" position.**

#3 has **cleared to the right corner and #5 has cut to the right high post area.**

These isolation plays are very effective but (1) they must be practiced and (2) they must be "called" so that other players will avoid cutting into an area that would cause defensive congestion.

Any player that you would like to put in a 1-on-1 position MUST receive considerable practice on 1-on-1 drive technique and footwork.

CHAPTER 8

REBOUNDING RESPONSIBILITIES

For an offense to be successful, **clear rebounding responsibilities** are required. This is no difference for the Flex.

It is probably more important in the Flex than in most other offenses.

Normal offensive rebounding responsibilities would involve some rules involving positions. The great coach Adolph Rupp of Kentucky had simple offensive rebounding rules. He simply said the center and both forwards will always go to the offensive board and both guards will stay back to defend the break.

Many coaches have followed these rules over the years, but it has involved into numbered positions rather than center and forwards.

Coaches today often instruct players playing the #3, #4, and #5 positions to <u>always</u> go to the board and those playing #1 and #2 positions always to be back for defensive balance. Actually, this is the same rules that Coach Rupp used, just said in a different manner.

In my coaching, I adjusted that rule when we were playing against a <u>slow-breaking team</u>. When that occurred, I had my #2 man to also go to the board with #1 always being back.

That required practice. When we were running our 5 on 5 offense in practice, I would always tell my #2 man what type of team we would be playing against. By practice, my players playing the #2 position, starter and subs, learned to adjust from game to game dependent on who we were playing.

Actually that was easy to do since most of the teams we were playing against used the fast break in their offensive weapons.

Sending our #2 man to the glass when we were playing a slow-break opponent often resulted in offensive rebounds that we might normally not have obtained.

RULES FOR THE FLEX TEAM

Coaches running the Flex vary in who they will send to the boards. Some use the same rule Rupp used, others use different rules that they have found to be successful.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. **The Flex cutter should always rebound offensively regardless of position, or unless he is a very small player.**

2. The player setting the downscreen for the baseline cutter should go to the glass if the cutter has passed to the top side of the screen.
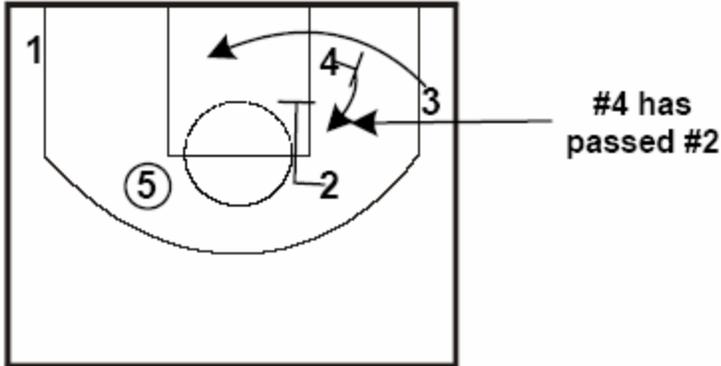
 Diagram 157. When baseline screener #4 passes the screen set by #2, #4 will get back on defense if a shot occurs before he gets the ball. In this situation, *#3, #2, and #5 would crash the board*.

3. If the #1 man is small and a poor rebounder, he should always get back regardless of whether or not he is cutting or screening.

SPECIAL REBOUNDING DRILL
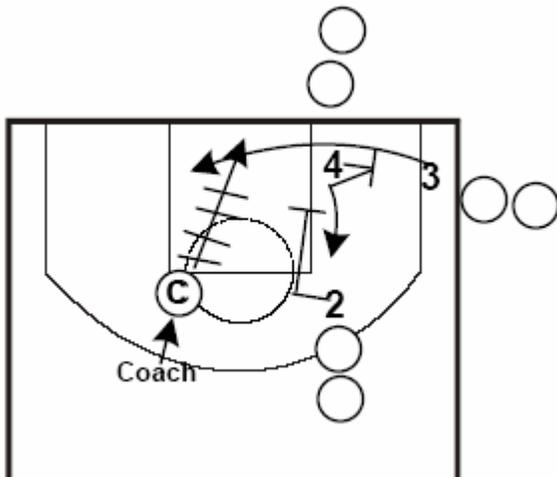
Drill 158. Downscreener Decision Drill.

Three lines with a coach or manager as a **shooter**.

Coach can shoot at any time, as #3 makes his cut and before #2 sets screen for #4 or after #4 has passed #2.

If the coach takes an early shot, #3 and #4 will be rebounders with #4 moving to the middle and #3 rebounding the low post area.

If the coach does not shoot until #4 passes #2, then #3 and #2 will rebound.
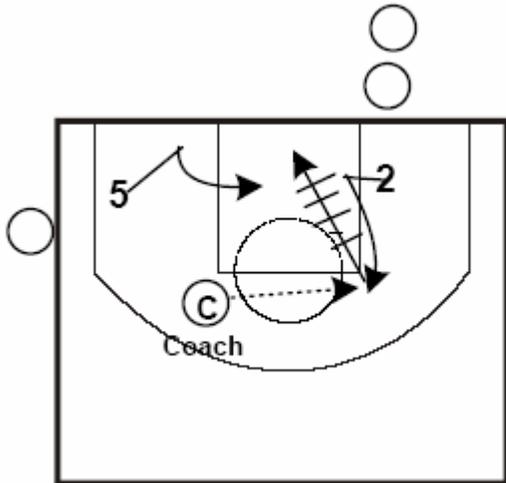
Drill 159. Post rebounding drill.

Emphasis on this drill will be **getting the post player to the offensive board when** he is in the **corner** on the shot attempt. This drill can be combined with **elbow shooting practice**

As #2 shoots, **#5 makes hard move to the basket. Players who play the #3, #4 and #5 position should get corner practice in this drill.**

Put defenders on #5, draw an arc approximately 8 feet from the basket, and make him get inside the arc to rebound while the shot is in the air.

It is important to point out that offensive rebounding takes HUSTLE. Players who are out toward the corner will often not go for the offensive board. It is up to the coach to make them go. Some Flex coaches have the rule that whoever is in the weakside corner always goes to the offensive board.

CHAPTER 9

COACHING TIPS AND DRILLS FOR TEACHING THE FLEX

Daily 5 on 5 drills are necessary for the team to learn the Flex continuity. In addition, a number of **"breakdown drills"** should be used to teach the various fundamentals of each segment of the Flex.

The team should be taught the Flex pattern using all five positions with **NO defense**. They should initiate the offense by **the point guard dribbling from midcourt and making an entry pass to a player cutting to the high post area**. Learn the post entry before going to the wing or dribble entry.

Players should **turn the ball from side to side several times** before they shoot. As they learn the pattern, defense should be added. One of the advantages of the Flex is **instant and constant ball reversal**, the ability to change the **ballside** of the court with **one pass**.

At first, the defense is NOT allowed to deflect or intercept a pass. The offense is still learning the basic pattern and the defense is used so that **the offense can practice setting good screens.**

As players get familiar with the Flex pattern, the defense can become active and make steals of any careless passes.

A good 5 on 5 drill is to let Team A run the pattern against no defense. Then, when a shot is made the team sprints back down for defense with an assistant coach putting them through a slide defensive footwork drill. As Team A sprints back on defense, Team B takes the floor and runs the Flex, repeating the sprint back on defense done by Team A.

As the team begins to master the pattern, defense can be added and the above drill can be repeated.

After a week or so, (1) let Team A run the Flex against defense (Team B), (2) Let Team B **transition whether on a make or a miss** so the Team A can play live defense, then (3) After a shot or steal, Team A takes the ball downcourt again and **runs the Flex**.

After the offense, defense, offense routine, the coach should stop play and make corrections.

TEACHING THE FLEX CUT

Besides teaching the **flex continuity and the discipline to run it**, the **most important thing to be taught is the fundamental technique for running the flex cut.**

So many players are **guilty of bad screens** and **sloppy, incorrect cuts** when running the **basic flex cut**.
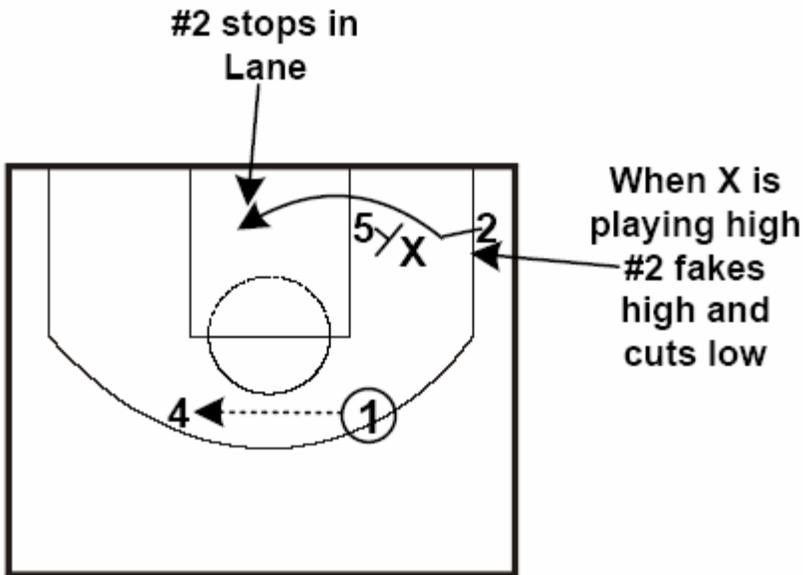
Diagram 160
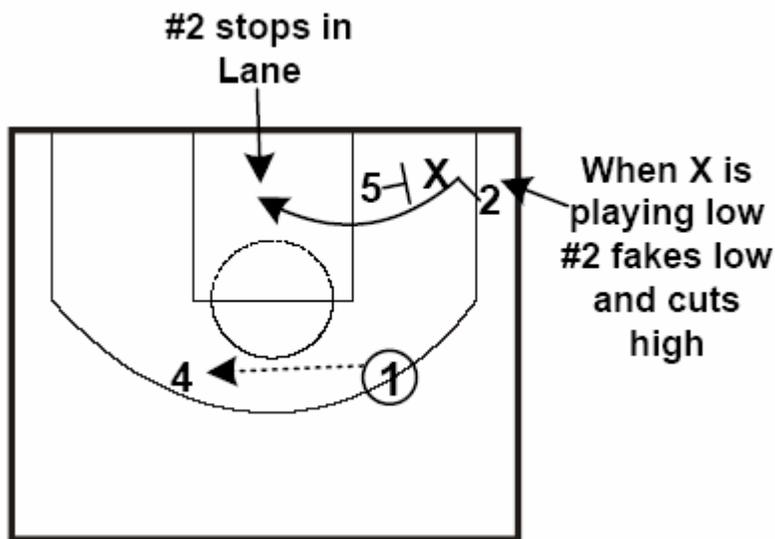
Diagram 161

Since the Flex cut is such an important part of the success of the offense, it is important to **drill regularly on the fundamental technique** shown in **Diagrams 160 and 161..**

To emphasize, **#2 (the cutter) must "set his man up" by faking a cut one direction and cutting the other.**

Coaching attention must be directed at **(1) #2s cut, (2) the technique and legality of #5s screen, and (3) #2 stopping in the lane to give the passer time to feed him.**

   (1) Insist on **#2 faking a cut in one direction, then going the other**.

   (2) **Watch #5s screening technique**. **Make sure he does not set the screen late or move on the screen causing a personal foul.** Work daily on **cut timing** for **both the cutter and the screener share equal responsibility** in avoiding an offensive foul. **It is better for the cutter to be late than early.**

   (3) Consistently insist that #2 **stop in the lane just on the left side of the goal**. (When cutting from the **right corner)** He stops just on the **right side of the goal** when cutting from **the left corner.**

Diagram 157-158 should be used almost daily to work on cutting and the Flex screen.

NEVER ALLOW HALF-SPEED OR "SLOPPY" CUTS

TEACHING THE BASELINE SCREEN

The **key screen** on the **Flex** is the **screen on the baseline for the Flex cutter**.

The baseline screen is more effective **if the screener steps approximately one step out of the lane** and finds the defender.

The screener must be taught <u>how </u>to set the screen. **Teaching points** should include:

(1) When the screen is set, **the screener must remain stationary until the cutter goes by**.This requires a lot of **practice, repetition, patience, and correction by the coach.**

(2) The screener should have his feet **no more than shoulder width apart** and his hands **clasped together in the crotch area.** Many female players are taught to **fold their arms in front of the breast area. ABSOLUTELY NO MOVEMENT OF THE LEGS, KNEES, OR ARMS CAN OCCUR OR THE SCREEN MAY BE RULED ILLEGAL BY THE OFFICIAL.**

(3) After the cutter goes by, **the baseline screener must step toward the ball** in the event his defender has picked up the cutter.
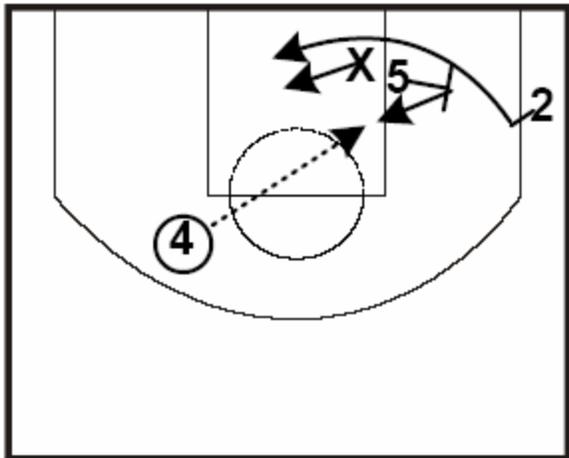
Diagram 162. #5s move to ball.

After the cutter goes by, **#5 steps** toward the ball for a pass from #4 if his man has picked up #2.

THE BOBBY HUSSEY "GO" MOVE ON THE FLEX CUT

Some teams teach the defender on the baseline Flex cut **to leave early and beat the cutter around the screen. To combat this,** outstanding coach **Bobby Hussey** perfected what he called the **"GO' move** while he was coaching at **Davidson College**.
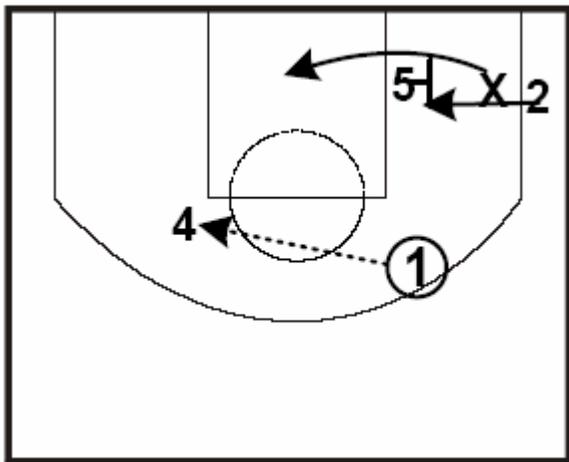
Diagram 163. Defender beats cutter around the screen.

Here, #2 starts his cut but **X has anticipated** the cut and **quickly moves by screener #5 early.**

Coach Hussey would have his cutter yell out **"GO'** and the counter **shown in the following diagram would be used.**
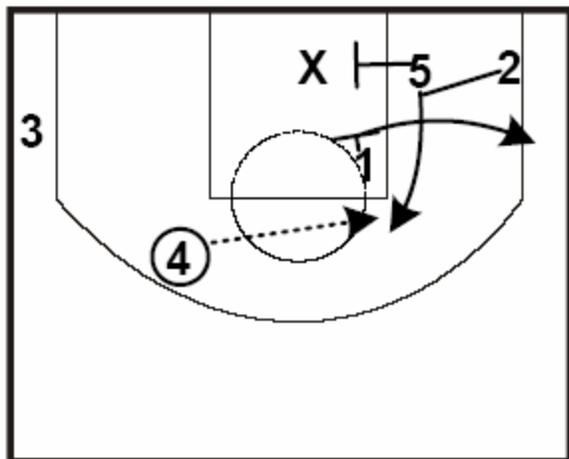
Diagram 164. "GO" Move on the Early Defensive move.

Most Flex coaches today use this move.

#5 pivots and **sets screen on X in the lane.**

#2 fakes his cut, then **cuts to the free throw line area** (where #5 would have cut.

#1 sets his **downscreen** and **quickly moves out toward the wing in the event the defender on #1 picks up #2.**

This **"GO" move** often got **wide-open jump shots for Coach Hussey's teams**.

TEACHING THE DOWNSCREEN

A **good downscreen** can result in **open jump shots** in the free throw line area.

Good downscreen technique must be taught. It won't happen without coaching.

The screener must **look for the defender guarding #5 and go straight at him**. Many screeners have a **tendency to screen an area rather than the defender**. The screener should **go at the defender** and **make a jump stop** before setting the **legal screen**.

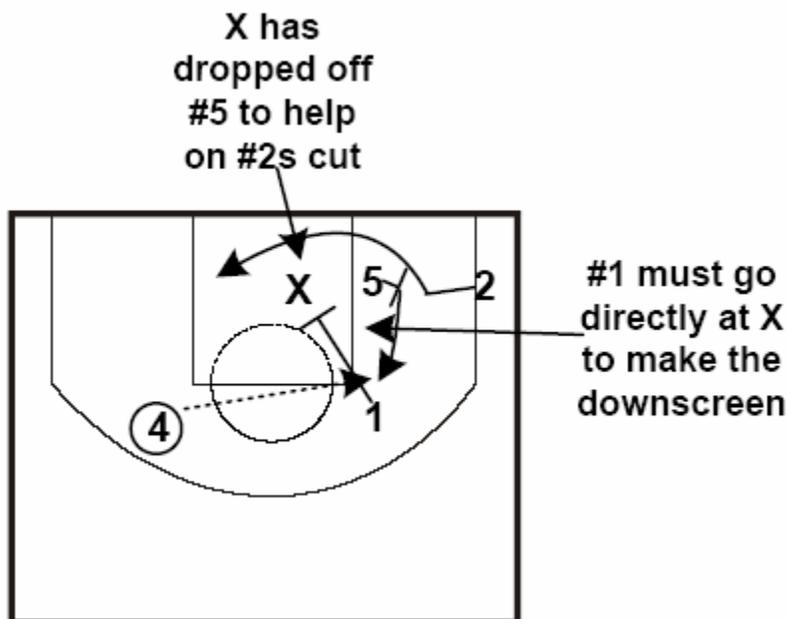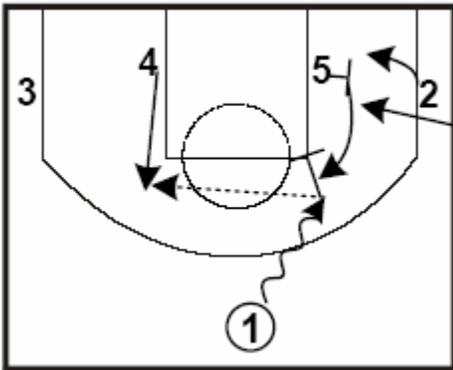**Diagram 165. Downscreen directly at the defense.**

Emphasize to the player (#5 here) coming off the screen to be ready to shoot.

The screener leaving the screen "early". One of the problems in running the Flex is that the player setting the baseline screen, in his eagerness to come to the top for a jump shot, will leave early. He must wait for the baseline cutter to pass him before he cuts off the downscreen.

Diagram 166. Leaving screen early.

The guard will get a better angle in setting the downscreen if he will take a step toward the other guard as he passes.

#5 leaves early before #2 cuts by
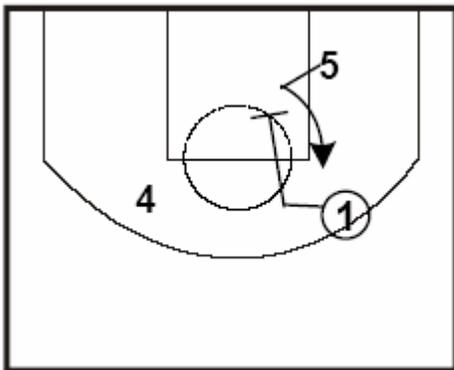
Diagram 167. Correct downscreen angle.

After #1 passes to #4, he moves one step toward the pass receiver, then screens down for #5.

Coaching players to make one step toward the pass receiver will result in a better screening angle.

TEACHING THE GUARD TO GUARD PASS DENIAL OPTION
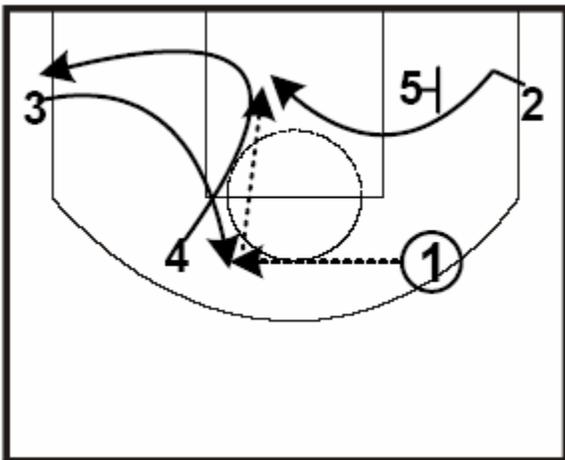
Diagram 168. The Guard to Guard Denial.

When #1 cannot pass to #4 because of pressure, #4 cuts to the basket looking for a backdoor pass.

#3 cuts into the guard receiving position as #4 cuts out to the corner.
#1 passes to #3 and the Flex is underway with #2 setting screen for #4.

BACKDOOR AND FILL DRILL

Diagram 169.

This drill should be practiced regularly so that the action shown in the previous diagram can be executed properly.

Three lines. #1 advances on dribble as X1 overplays #4s cut.

#4 backdoors and may take a pass from #1 or he will cut out to the corner.

#3 fills the #4 spot and takes pass from #1. Players rotate positions so that all will be comfortable at other positions.

TEACHING THE "BUMP"

One of the defensive moves the defender often tries is to **"beat the cutter" around #5s screen.**

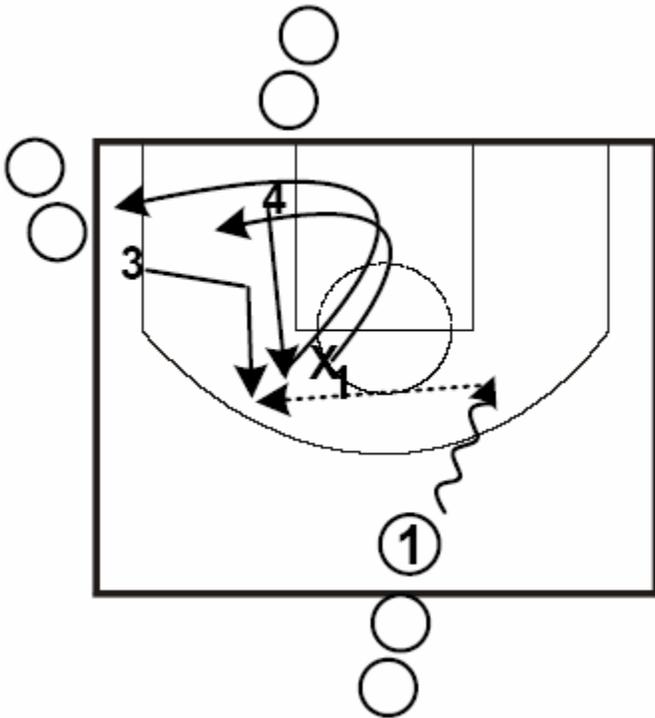Because of this, **the cutter must learn to call out "Bump" to alert his teammates that he is going to fake the cut and flare back outside for a possible jump shot.**
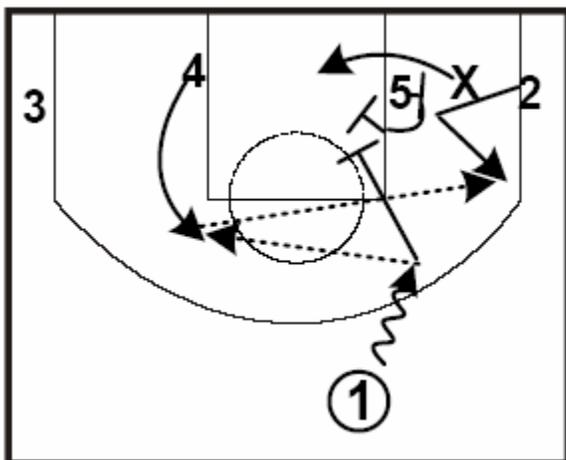

Diagram 170. The "Bump".

#2 starts his cut and **realizes his defender has already cut around the screener #5.**

#2 flares back outside for a pass from #4 as #5 and #1 **set a screen on the defender that had been guarding #2.**

STRONG SIDE DRIBBLE OUT

When the pass is made to the strongside, often the player at the **guard position who should receive the next pass is overplayed.**

The strong receiver must be comfortable with dribbling the ball out and the other players rotating into Flex cut position.
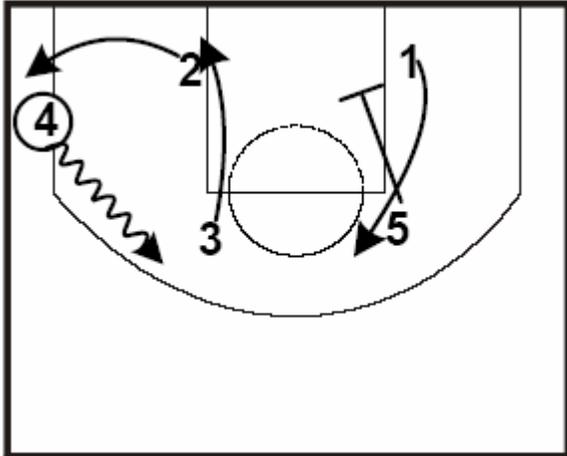
Drill 171. The Strongside Dribble Out.

#4 cannot pass to #3 **so he dribbles out to the guard position.**

#2 fills the **corner spot** and **#3 cuts to the low post spot** as #5 and #1 exchange.
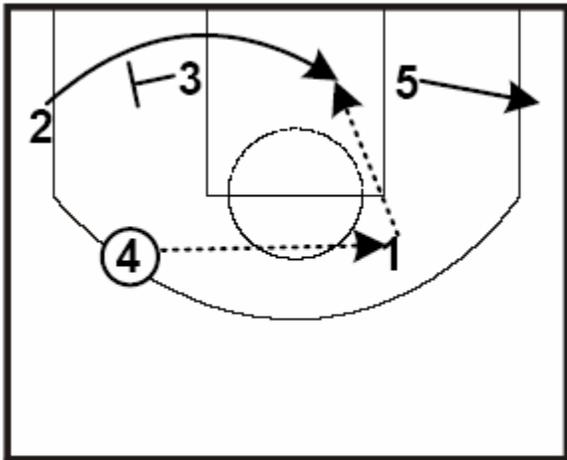
Drill 172. The Strongside Dribble Out (continued).

#4 dribbles out and passes to #1 as #2 makes Flex cut off #3.

#1 can pass to #2 in lane or wait for the Flex continuity.
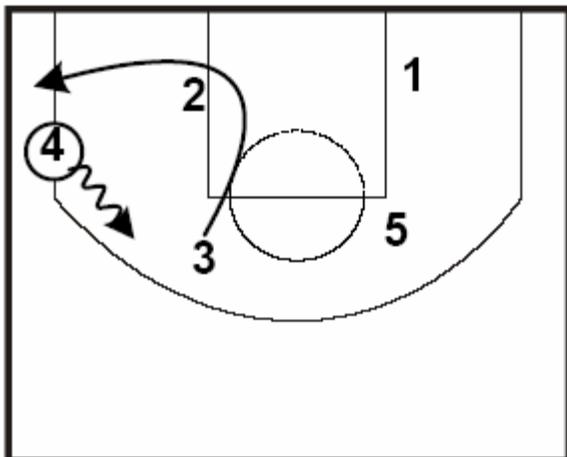
Diagram 173. Strongside Dribble Option.

An option on the Strongside Dribble Out is for #4 to wave #3 through to the corner and leave #2 on the post.
#2 would then become the screener for #3 as #4 passed to #5.

SPECIAL "INVERT" PLAY
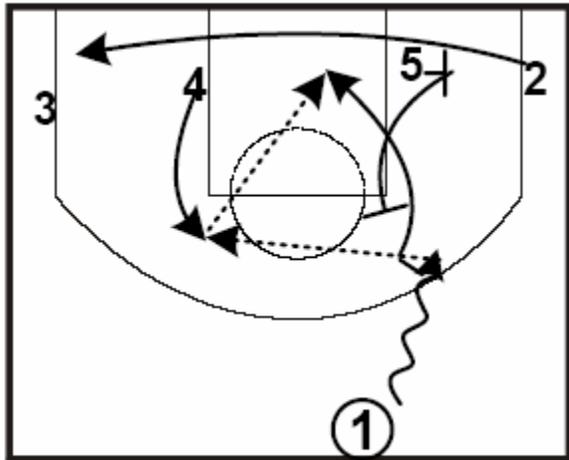
Diagram 174. Special "Invert" Play

A counter to the downscreen action.

Instead of #1 screening down for #5, **#5 will set a rear screen for #1**.

Flex cutter #2 cuts **through the lane and takes his man toward the corner before #5 leaves for rear screen.**

Since the defense has been guarding the downscreen, **they may not be ready for the rear screen reversal move**. #1 may be open for a pass from #4 and **possible lay-up**.

This is a play that can be called **verbally** on occasion and may result in a lay-up. If the offense has been turned so that #5 or another bigger player is **at the top receiving the rear screen**, **the taller player may get a dunk**.

FLEX SHOOTING DRILLS

There are two basic shooting drills that should be used almost on a daily basis.

One drill will teach the shot **off the baseline flex cut**. The other drill will teach **the jump shot at the elbow** that results from the **"screen the screener" action**.
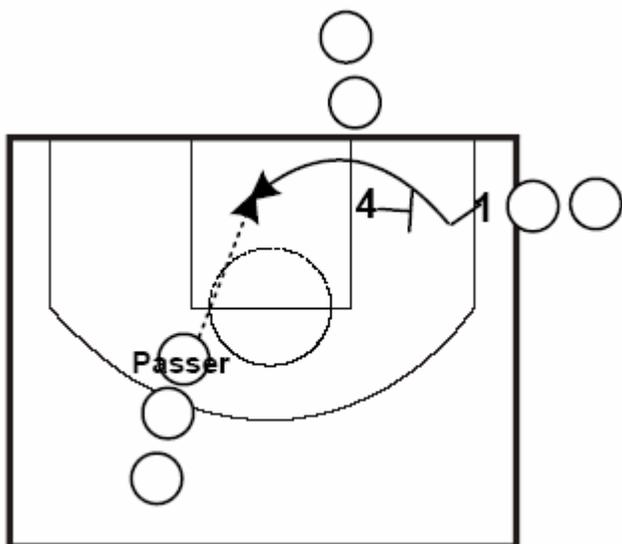
Diagram 175. Basic Drill for Teaching the Cut and Shot off the Baseline Flex Cut.

Three lines as shown. **Use 2 balls**. First two players in passing line have balls.

#4 sets screen for #1 who **"sets his man up"** by faking one direction before cutting the other.

Here, #1 cuts baseline and receives ball from the passer.

#1 receives pass and shoots preferably **a two-footed shot** on the left side of the basket.

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TEACHING POINT: It is extremely important to teach the cutter to <u>stop</u> in the lane.

Many players incorrectly cut on through the lane making the shot after receiving the ball more difficult. The official will not start his 3-second count until after the cutter stops. By stopping, the cutter gives the passer ample opportunity to see if he is open. If the passer does not immediately deliver the ball, the cutter should then continue out of the lane to avoid a 3 second count.

As soon as the first cutter shoots the ball, the next players in line step up and become **ready for the drill.**

This drill is also used to **teach the cutter how to "set up his man" before the cut.** Do not allow sloppiness in this drill. **Correct mistakes quickly.**

Players rotate lines clockwise so that **all players will practice making the pass, making the screen, and making the cut.**
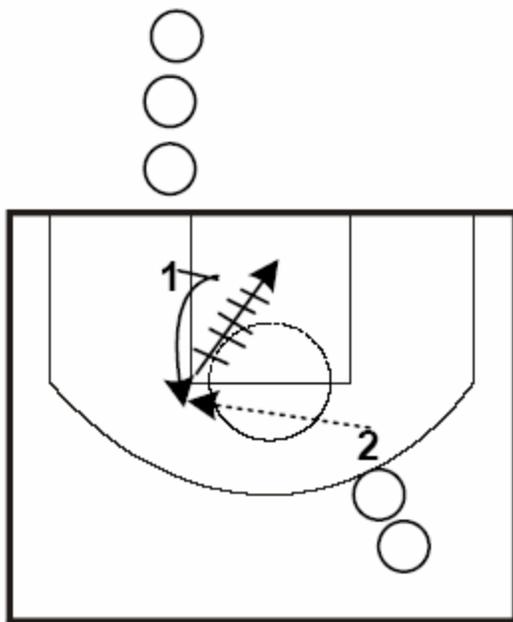
Diagram 176. Basic Shooting Drill for shots at the elbow or high post area.

#1 steps in then cuts to high post area, receives a pass from #2, **squares up and shoots a jump shot.**

#1 follows shot as next players in line prepare to pass and shoot.

Use 2 balls to get more shots.

COACHING TIP: Coaches should teach correct footwork for the square up and shot. Carefully observe the shooter's footwork during the drill each day. Don't let a player get away with a "walk". IF YOU DO NOT CORRECT FAULTY FOOTWORK IN PRACTICE, WHEN A PLAYER USES FAULTY FOOTWORK DURING A GAME AND GETS CALLED FOR TRAVELING, IT IS NOT THE PLAYERS FAULT….IT IS THE COACH'S FAULT!!
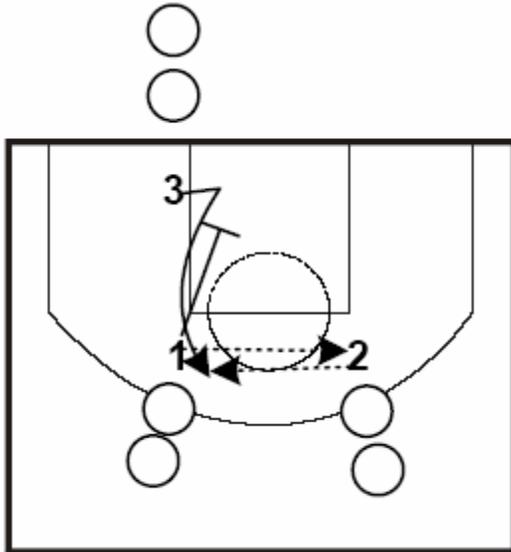
Drill 177. Basic Shooting Drill for shots coming off a screen at the elbow area .

Three lines as shown.

#1 passes to #2 and sets downscreen for #3.

#3 **"sets his man up"** with a **fake cut to the inside**, then cuts to the high post area for pass from #2.

Use 2 balls to get more shots. Players rotate **clockwise**. All players will **practice the shot, the cut to the high post, and the two passes**. Emphasize to the passer in the #2 position to make **a "shooter's pass to #3**.

That means the ball must be delivered in an area **where the receiver can catch the ball and shoot quickly. He should not have to reach for the ball.**
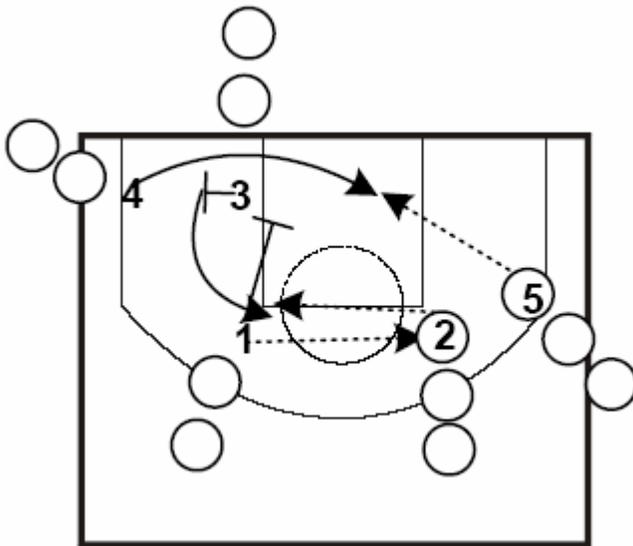
Diagram 178. Shooting Drill getting both the baseline cut shot and the high post shot.

#2 and #5 are **passing lines**.

Ball starts with #1 who passes to #2 as #3 sets **Flex screen.**

#4 cuts off screen and receives **pass from #5 for shot.**

#3 cuts to high post area for pass from #2 and shot.

Use 2 balls and rotate lines clockwise. Be sure to run all the drills both on the left and right.

This drill **enables players to get a lot of shots** from the **primary spots created by the Flex cuts and screens.**

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Diagram 179. Post Backdoor drill.

To initiate the offense, the point guard must be able to get it to the post player cutting to the top. (Of course a guard could be at this position to add variety).
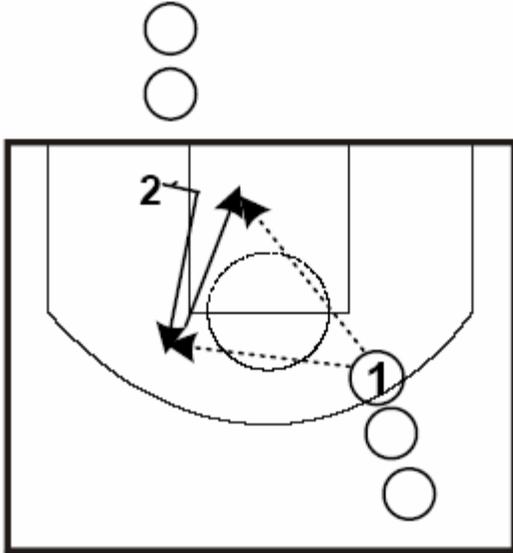
Two lines as shown. #2 sets his man up and cuts to high post area, then plants his right foot and backdoors to the basket.

The shot off the backdoor should be a 2-footed power lay-up to be able to combat any defensive help.

As in the other drills, it should be run on both sides of the basket.

Use no defense at first as you concentrate on teaching the proper footwork for the backdoor and the 2-footed power layup for the score.

As players learn the footwork, add a defensive player on #2. If #2 cuts to the top and is not defended, #1 will pass to him for a shot. If #2 is overplayed, #2 will backdoor and take pass from #1 for a lay-up.

This is an extremely important drill if a team expects to successfully attack a pressure defense.
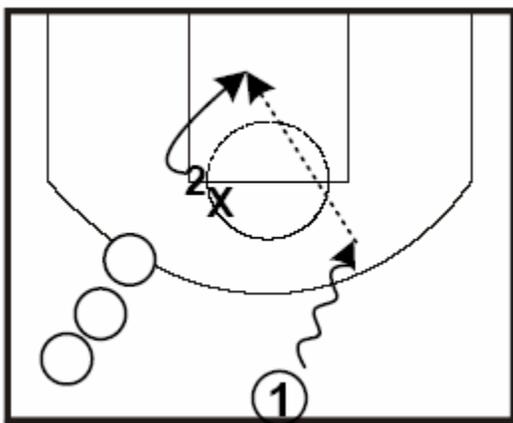
Diagram 180. Backdoor Drill from the High 1-4.

Teams that use the **High 1-4 Offense** should **drill regularly on the post backdooring when overplayed.**

This drill is different from the preceding drill since the player (#2 here) will already be at the high post.

This drill should be used regularly to **teach the post footwork for the backdoor and catch. It is an instructional drill in which a coach can work closely with the high post player's cut, catch, and shot.**
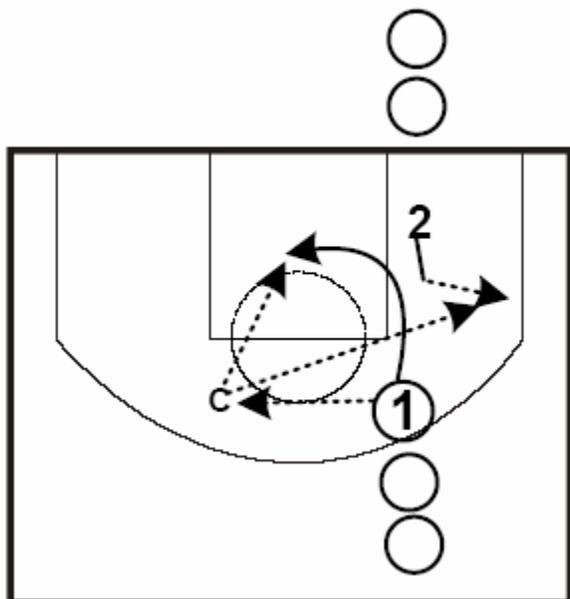
Diagram 181. Switch Drill.

Many teams will switch on the downscreen.

As #1 goes down to set screen, **he anticipates the switch** and **cuts into the middle of the lane.**

As #2 sees the switch and #1s move, **he flares wide.**

C can pass to #1 or #2.

Diagram 182. Point Guard Offensive Entry Drill.

Two chalk circles are drawn even with the top of the circle on both sides.

Point Guard must be able to dribble into one of the circles for making the **entry pass** to the post spot or to the wing.

Point Guard must be able to meet **defensive pressure at midcourt** and **be able to dribble into one of the circles** (where the post or wing pass is easier made).
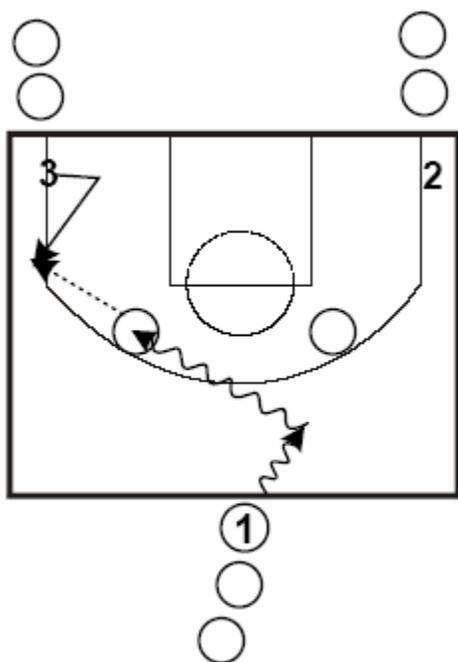
THIS IS AN IMPORTANT FUNDAMENTAL!
Point Guards must do this drill **on a regular basis** so they will know **where they have to advance the ball to make the post or wing pass**.

It is a good idea to **have several players on a team practice this fundamental.** Both **wing players should be able to get into position** to make the entry pass as well **as sub point guards.** If the opponent has a **real good defensive guard that is putting great pressure on your point guard,** then **adjust and let your #1 go to a wing and either your #2 or #3 man advance the ball**.

This drill is a great entry drill. By practicing this regularly, your point guards, or other guards you may use to initiate the Flex, will feel comfortable getting into entry passing position regardless of defensive pressure.
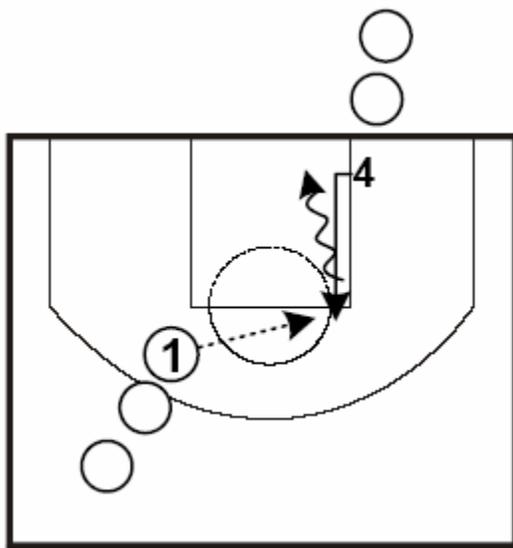
Diagram 183. Basic Shooting or 1-on-1 Drive Drill.

This drill can be used as simply a high post shooting drill or **a drive drill from the high post.**

Two lines are formed with **2 balls**. #4 fakes and cuts to the top receiving pass from #1.

If it is being used as **a shooting drill**, #4 simply squares up, shoots, and **follows the shot** while the next player in line cuts to the top.

If it is used as **a driving drill**, #4 cuts to the top and **uses proper footwork as he faces the basket, and drives for a lay-up.** The lay-up should be **made on the right side of the goal** since **going to the left side would result in running into more defensive help.**

TEACHING POINT: Pay careful attention to the driver's footwork. Many players are called for traveling in this situation simply because they have NOT been taught proper footwork.

To repeat what was said earlier, if a player walks once it may be his fault. If he continues to walk it is the coaches' fault. PLAYERS MUST BE TAUGHT PROPER FOOTWORK!

Isolation opportunities have been discussed in the chapter on Flex Strategy. These opportunities should be a major part of a Flex team's offensive strategy. However, no matter how well you teach the initial phase of the isolation, it will be no good if the referee calls "traveling" on your driver. TEACH HIM PROPER DRIVING FOOTWORK!

FLEX COACHING SUMMARY

- **Run the continuity daily, first with no defense,**

- **Teach the <u>pass fake</u> and the <u>shot fake</u> in running the offense. Demand that players use both.**

- **Teach <u>patience</u>! An impatient offense is an imperfect offense especially when running the Flex. A team will not be patient on offense unless the coach <u>demands patience</u>.**

- **Teach <u>shot selection</u>. Players must understand what is a <u>good</u> shot and must be corrected when they take a bad shot.**

- **Cutters must <u>set their man up for the cut</u> and cut at <u>full speed</u> after the setup. Do not accept a lazy cut to the basket.**

- **The baseline Flex cutter must <u>stop in the lane</u> for a possible scoring pass, then when he doesn't get the ball move on out.**

- **<u>Vary entries</u>. Keep the defense guessing.**

- **Emphasize <u>offensive rebounding</u> on every shot by the offense. Have definite rebounding rules. Assign an assistant coach to watch offensive rebounding on every play.**

- **Spend a great deal of time teaching <u>correct footwork</u>.**

- **Teach<u> proper screening technique</u> and do not accept sloppy or lackadaisical screens. Teach screeners to screen a defender rather than screening a space.**

- **Practice regularly against <u>switching</u> and <u>pressure defenses</u>. Also be ready for any type of <u>combination defense</u>.**

- **Use daily <u>breakdown drills </u>to teach the Flex.**

- **Emphasize <u>crisp passes</u> away from the defense.**

- **In all of your team offensive practice, pay attention to <u>transition defense responsibilities</u>. In working halfcourt, make the offensive team run back to half court after a score or losing the ball. After the continuity is learned, <u>always let the defense run the</u> <u>fast break when they get the ball.</u>**

- **Practice execution of driving opportunities from each position.**

About the Author:

Glenn Wilkes has 41 years of Head coaching experience.

He coached at Brewton Parker College for five years, then coached at Stetson University for 36 years.

He organized the first basketball camp in the Georgia-Florida area and ran it for 37 years. He now conducts the SHOOTING STARS POSITION CAMP in South Carolina.

Since leaving the coaching ranks, he has served as Assistant Director of the Nike All-America camp, the Nike Hoop Jamboree, and the Michael Jordan Flight School (basketball camp).

Prior to this book, he wrote five basketball books:

Winning Basketball Strategy (1959), Prentice-Hall, InC.
Basketball Coach's Complete Handbook (1962), Prentice-Hall, Inc.
Basketball (1970), Prentice Hall, Inc.
Foundations of Basketball Coaching (1972), McGraw Hill Publishers
The Three Point Shot (1978), BasketballsBest.com

He is now President of BasketballsBest.com