


FIBA

We Are Basketball



by Mario Blasone

NEGLECTED FUNDAMENTALS

Mario Blasone started his coaching career with the youth teams of Udine, Italy, where he then became head coach of the Division I team in 1977. He was head coach of the Italian National Youth teams, winning a gold medal at the FIBA European Junior Championship in 1990 and another one at the Mediterranean Games in 1991 with the Under 22 team. He also won a silver medal at the 1991 FIBA Junior World Championships. In 1991, he was the head coach of Verona, the Division I Italian team. Back with the Italian National Youth teams, he won a gold medal with the Military National team in 1994 and the silver medal at the FIBA Under 22 European Championships. After a stint as the technical director of Verona, he became head coach of the Egyptian mens' national team, winning a bronze medal at the FIBA African Championships and at the Arabs Games. In 2006, he won the Division I title with the Al Gezira team. Since 2007, he has been Director of International Scouting for the Italian Division I team, Virtus Bologna.

Traveling, visiting, and coaching in many countries around the world, I've noticed that some fundamentals are neglected. In the first part of a practice session, I often use some drills that I created to incorporate these missing fundamentals. The first of these drills arrives... from Egypt, where I coached two years ago. I gave the drills some fantasy names, making use of Egyptian words for some.

"SCIP SCIP" DRILL

The aim: To practice defensive slides.

The players form a line (diagr. 1), make a tap-in against the backboard, and then, after zigzag sliding, come back to the end of the line. The drill goes on for two-three minutes, but coaches have to base the intensity and the length of the



drill according to the age, level, and to the sex of the athletes.

Important: The coach must emphasize sliding with both feet remaining in contact with the ground. When players become good at sliding, we can insert a tool I call "hard to tame." It incorporates a basketball, as in the second drill.

"PASS AND SLIDE" DRILL

The aim: Sliding and boxing out the shooter.

The players form a pair, each player at a distance of 5 to 6 meters from each other. They pass the ball back and forth while sliding down for all the court. After the pass, they execute a 180° turn, always keeping their eye on their teammate. Once they get to the basket, the player with the ball passes it out to the other player, who shoots the jumper and goes for the offensive rebound, while the passer boxes out. They take the rebound and continue to slide and pass to the other basket, where they shot and box out again (diagr. 2). It's important that the coach monitors the pace of the drill so there is good execution by both players.

Let's now increase the speed of the warm-up session with the:

"BEKALLEM" DRILL

The aim: To have the player alert, and not waiting passively for their time to shoot.

Two lines of players in the wing positions, one line with the ball and the other one without. The first player shouts the name of one of the players on the other line, which then sprints to the basket, receives the ball, and makes a lay-up. (diagr. 3). The shooter recovers his own shot and dribbles to the opposite line.

While talking and sliding, it's not easy to use the arms, but the next drill will help you to do just that:

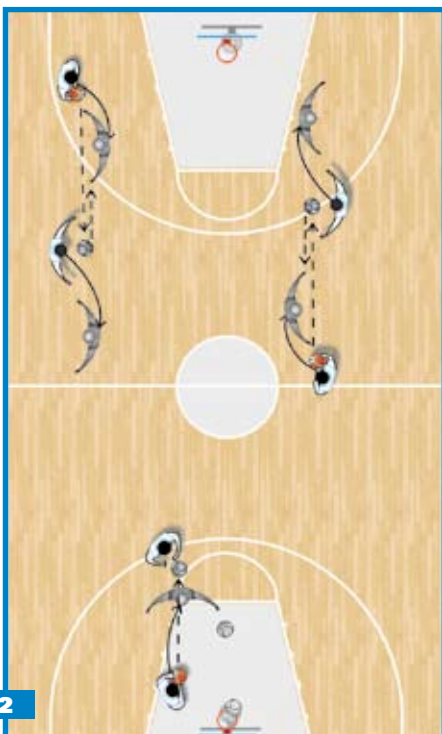
"RHOMBUS" DRILL

The aim: Moving the arms (while holding a ball), sliding, and shouting, "defense!"

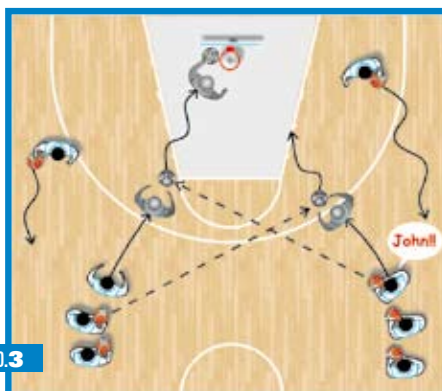
A line of players, each with a basketball, forms near the baseline. They slide, forming an imaginary figure of a rhombus, sliding first to the sideline, then sliding to the mid-court line, and then to the other sideline. Each time they reach the sidelines and mid court line, they drop the ball hard to the floor, shout "defense", make a 90° pivot, and go to the next angle. In fast sequence, every-



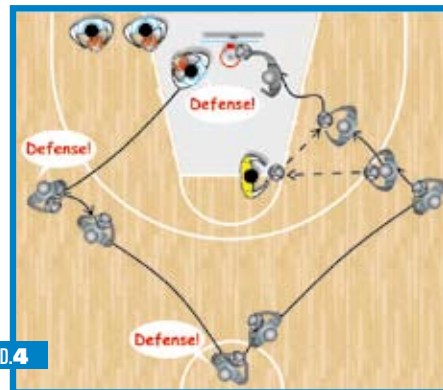
D.1



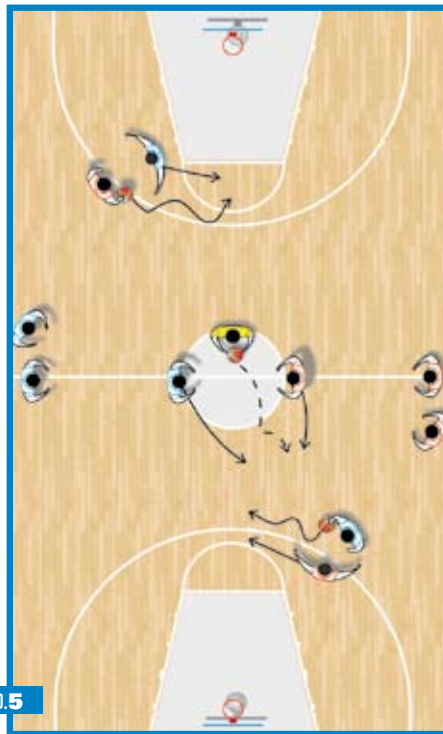
D.2



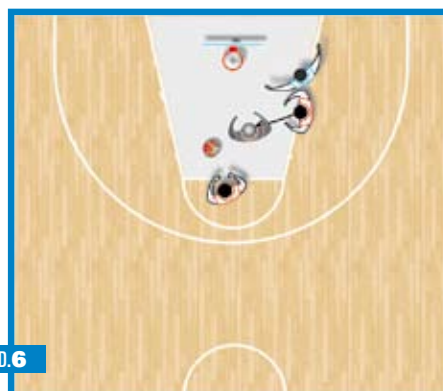
D.3



D.4



D.5



D.6

one makes a rhombus route (diagr. 4). They shake the ball and make circles with it around the with the legs and touch the back and down through the legs with the ball to develop arm movement. When they arrive at the other sideline, they pass the ball to the coach, who passes it right back so the player can go in for a lay-up.

When using this drill, make sure it's performed at a pace that ensures proper execution. This is a physically demand-

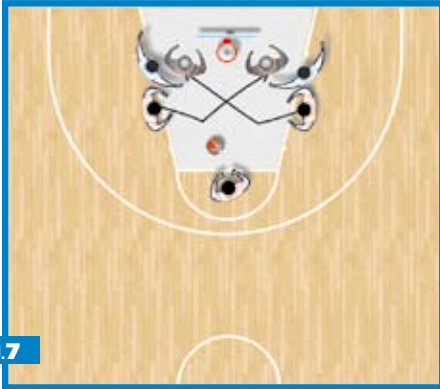
ing drill. You will need to have four to five players involved, with others recovering on the sidelines.

Finally, the last warm-up drill: a very demanding one-on-one.

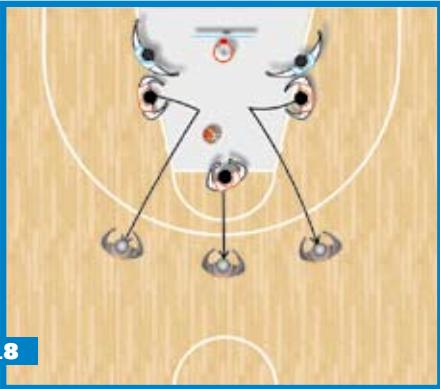
"SHEMEL" DRILL

The aim: To force the offensive player to use his weak hand.

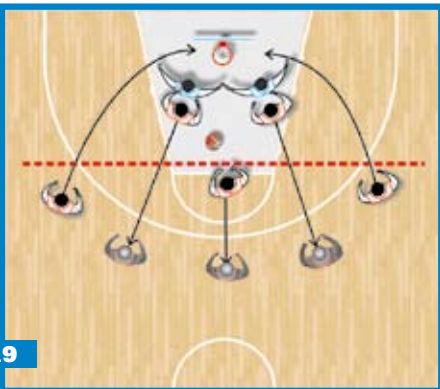
The coach is positioned at half court with the ball, while two players set up out of the half-court circle. The coach



D.7



D.8



D.9

can throw the ball to either half court (diagr. 5): the player who recovers the ball is on offense, while the defender moves in and tries to force him to use his weak hand while he dribbles. The drill ends when one of the two players scores. Important: 4 or 6 players work, while others recover.

OFFENSIVE REBOUND AFTER A FREE-THROW

Now let's go to the end of the training session. I happen to hate free-throws.... free or with soft aims (for example: if you score 5 you can end the practice and go to the shower). I want to capitalize on the last part of the practice session. Have you ever asked to yourself why a player on offense usually doesn't catch the offensive rebounds after a free-throw? Because offensive players only think to push against the defenders and quickly get boxed out. I suggest this solution: our re-





bounders should avoid contact with the defender, setting themselves up as far as they can from the boxes assigned to them.

In every practice, when we shoot free-throws, we teach the “take away the contact” technique (diagr. 6). Players dive in the spaces created under the basket with the help of the teammate on his side, who will make an identical and opposite move (diagr. 7). The aim of this move is to draw “up” the defender. After

the move “inside-up”, the offensive player dives under the basket from the opposite side (again diagr. 7).

During the game, we use another combined move: the shooter and two false rebounders come back to defend (diagr. 8). When the ball touches the rim, two small and fast players plunge in the space created under the basket (diagr. 9). This teaches our players to always be aggressive. I ensure you that in every game, you will earn a pair of easy baskets.