



by Carlo Recalcati

PLAYING NEAR THE BASKET

After a prestigious career as a player, Carlo Recalcati began coaching at Bergamo, Italy, bringing the team from the B to the A1 Serie. He then coached in Reggio Calabria, Ambrosiana Milan, Bergamo again, Varese (winning an Italian Serie A title in 1999), and Fortitudo Bologna, the following year, again winning the national title. Moving to Montepaschi Siena, he won his third title and the SuperCup in 2004. Since 2002, he has been the head coach of the Men's Italian national team, winning the bronze medal at 2003 FIBA European Championship, and the silver medal at the 2004 Olympic Games.

Post play today is mainly focused on the pick-and-roll and on setting different types of screens to get shooters open on the perimeter. While these are effective strategies, it has greatly reduced the effectiveness of the post player and taken away a very powerful offensive weapon. In the past, the post player played with his back to the basket, and possessed two basic moves and two countermoves, based on the reaction of the defenders.

Since post play has been lost, it is time to restore this role for the big man. I am totally convinced that extra attention has to be devoted in each practice session for post play, not only for the player, who has his back to the basket, but for the guards and forwards, who must learn to pass, cut and drive with their big man. In addition, by knowing what the big man is supposed to do, the forwards and guards should also learn how

to effectively play the low-post position just in case they are ever in a tactical situation where they end up on the low post.

I find that, in general, when compared to working with the perimeter players, practicing and trying to improve big man skills requires more patience and commitment on the part of the coach. With that said, let's see how you can develop a practice plan for your post players.

FOOTWORK

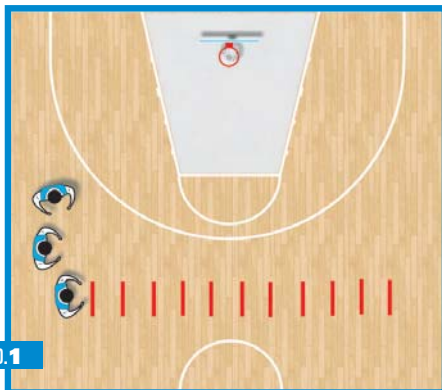
On the court, we set stripes of parallel tapes 50 cm (two feet) distant from each other, from one sideline to the other sideline. The player, facing the stripes, must make quick steps, moving from one stripe to the next one, from the left sideline to the right one and vice versa (diagr. 1).

Now, with the same set of parallel stripes, place one perpendicular stripe every three parallel stripes. The beginning of the exercise is the same, but when the player reaches this perpendicular stripe, he jumps back and forth the perpendicular line and then continues quick stepping in between the parallel stripes (diagr. 2).

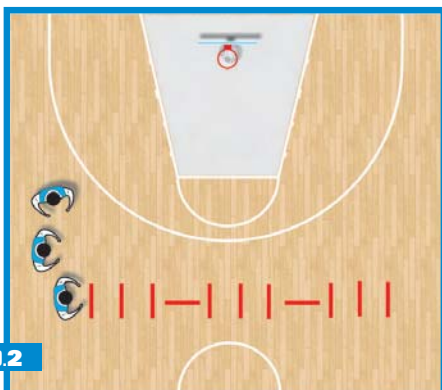
For the third exercise, set one stripe at a 45-degree angle after every three parallel stripes. Once the player reaches this line, he makes a 180-degree turn and quick steps between the parallel stripes (diagr. 3).

WORKING WITH THE MEDICINE BALL

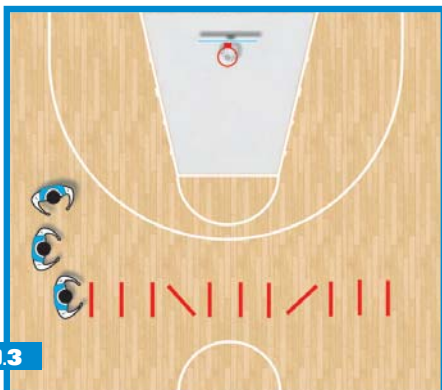
Two players face the backboard, one on



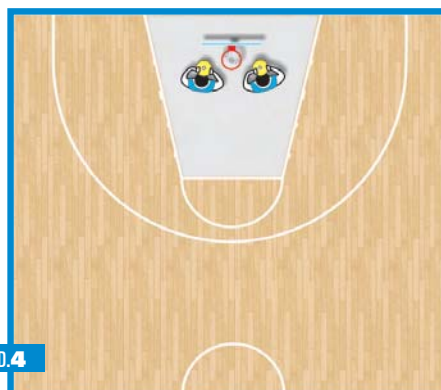
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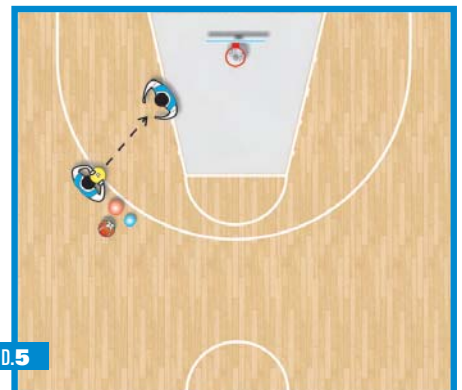
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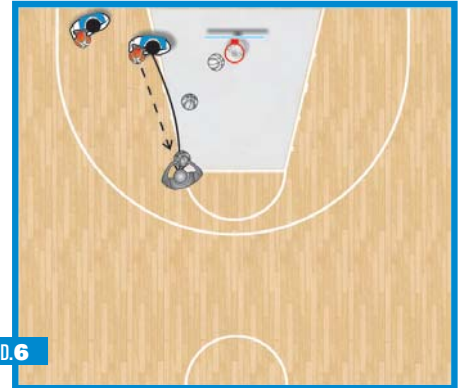
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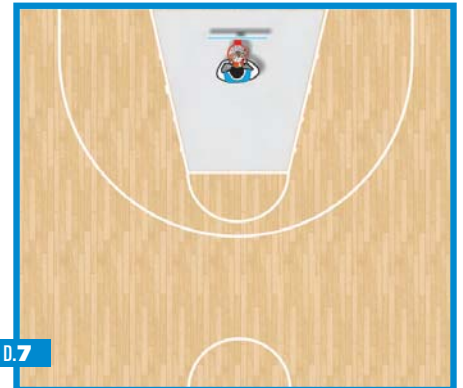
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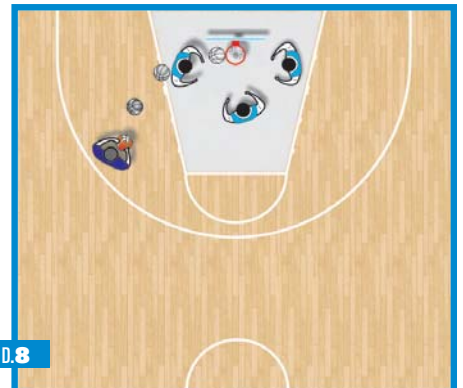
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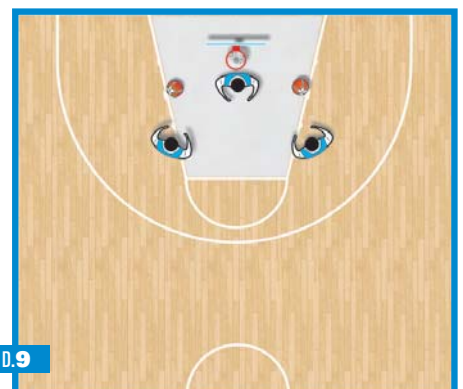
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D.7



D.8

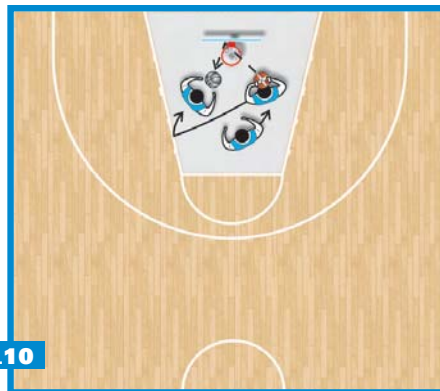


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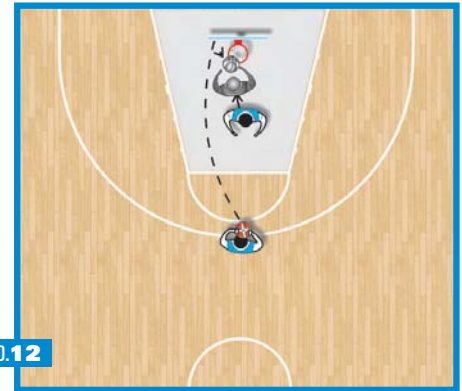
the left, and one the right side of the rim, each one holding a medicine ball. With arms extended, they jump and touch the backboard five times with the medicine ball. That finished, they catch a basketball and do the same drill five more times. They repeat the same sequence on the other side of the backboard (diagr. 4).

TURN AND SHOOT WITH THE MEDICINE BALL

One passer on the wing spot has three medicine balls, one of 5 kg (11 pounds), one of 4 kg (9 pounds), and one of 3 kg (6 pounds) or lighter for the younger players, and one basketball. The player faces the passer on the low post with his back to the basket. The passer passes the first 5 kg medicine ball to the player, who turns to the basket and shoots. The same move is done with the other two medicine balls and, at the end, with the basketball. The same sequence of moves is repeated on the other side of the court (diagr. 5).



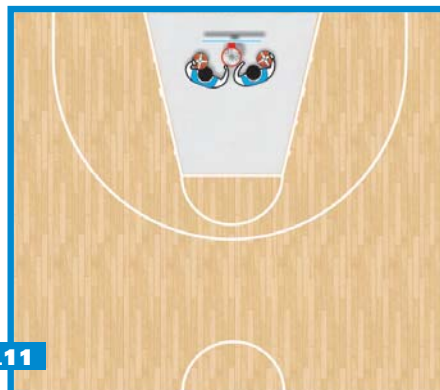
D.10



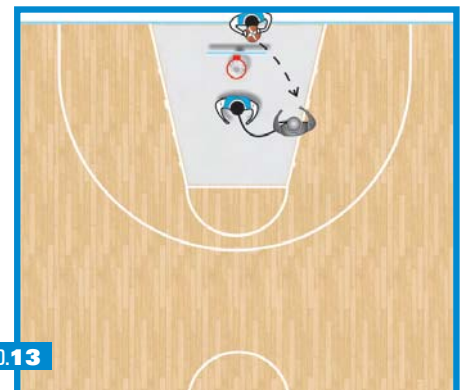
D.12

DIFFERENT SOLUTIONS WITH A SELF-PASS

A line of players on the baseline, each one with a basketball, on the left side of the rim. The first player on the line makes a self-pass at the elbow, follows the pass, makes a stop, and a front turn. He stays low, with the ball kept externally, between the hip and the chest, in the triple-threat position. Starting from this position, the players execute the following moves, with the right foot as the pivot foot:



D.11



D.13

- ▼ A jump shot as soon as they reverse to the basket.
- ▼ A straight drive with the left foot (directly from the turn).
- ▼ A jab step and a crossover drive.
- ▼ A crossover dribble and a reverse dribble.

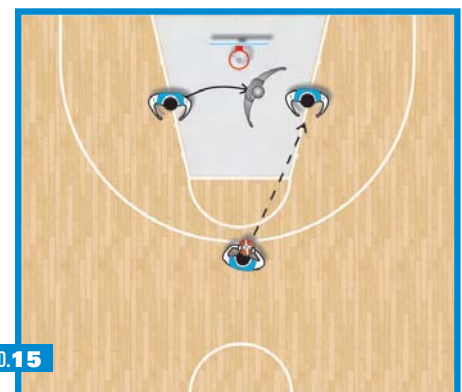
The same moves are made with the left foot as the pivot foot and then made after a reverse turn. The same routine is done on the right side of the court (diagr. 6).



D.14

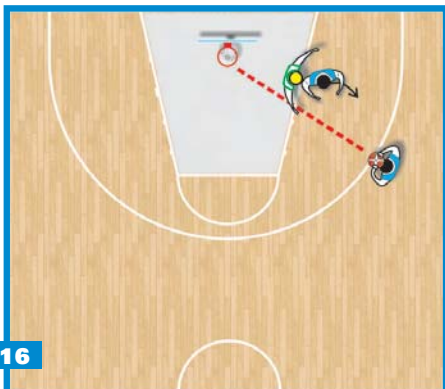
MIKAN DRILL

Named for George Mikan, the great American pivot player from the 1950s, this drill reinforces the basics of the quick hook shot. The player sets himself under the basket, bent slightly at the knees, with the basketball kept tight under the chin. From this position, the player, without lowering the ball, makes 10 hooks, alternatively one to the right and one to the left, using the backboard and without lowering the ball below the shoulders. The player lifts his right leg high on the right side, and his left leg high when he goes up on the left side for helping the move (diagr. 7).

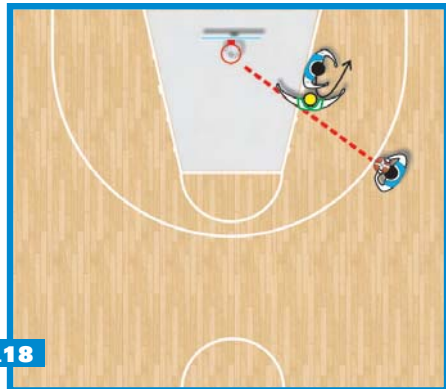


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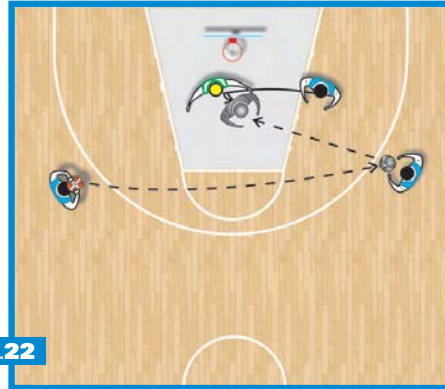
outside on the perimeter. The coach throws the ball against the backboard, and the player who gets the rebound, plays against the other two, who become defenders, double-teaming the player with the ball, keeping the arms straight and trying to prevent him from scoring, hopefully without fouling. If the player with the ball scores, or if the defenders grab the ball, the ball is passed



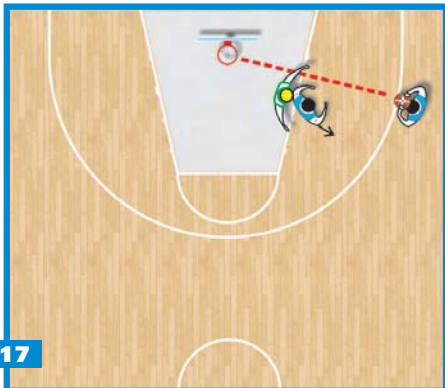
D.16



D.18



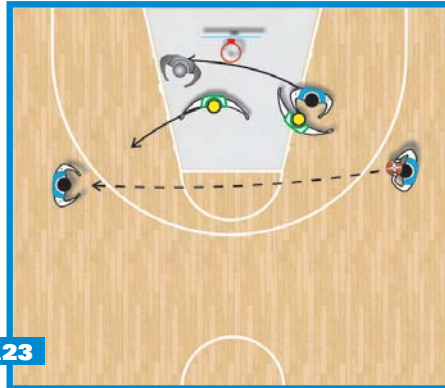
D.22



D.17



D.19



D.23

back to the coach and the drill starts again for a certain amount of time or a number of shots (diagr. 8).

ONE SHOOTER, TWO BALLS

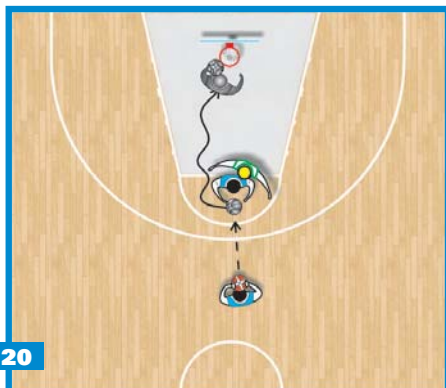
One player is under the rim, with his back to the backboard, with two balls on the floor, one to his left and one to his right. Two players are in charge of recovering the balls and placing them back on the floor. The player picks the first ball on the left, turns, and quickly makes a power shot, then makes the same move with the ball on his right. This continues for five shots on the left and five on the right side (diagr. 9).

THREE PLAYERS WAVE

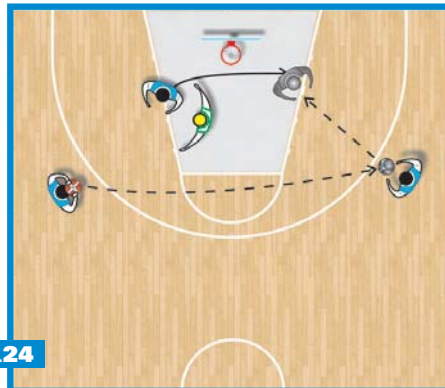
Three players are under the basket, facing the backboard, with one player holding a ball. The player with the ball throws it on the other side of the backboard, follows, touching the lane line with his outside foot (that one nearest to the sideline), catching it and again throwing it against the backboard. The other two players make the same move, practically making a wave under the basket. The drill can be done for a certain amount of time or touches of the backboard (diagr. 10).

TAP-IN CONTINUITY

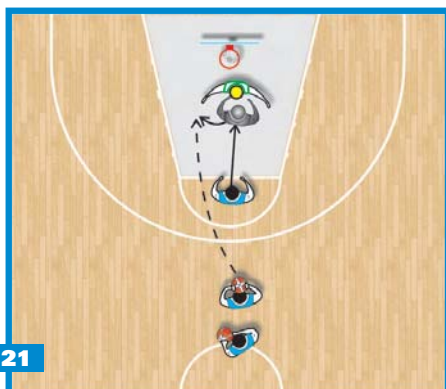
Two players, facing the basket, each holds a basketball. They make four consecutive tap-ins with the right hand. On the fifth one, they put the ball in the bas-



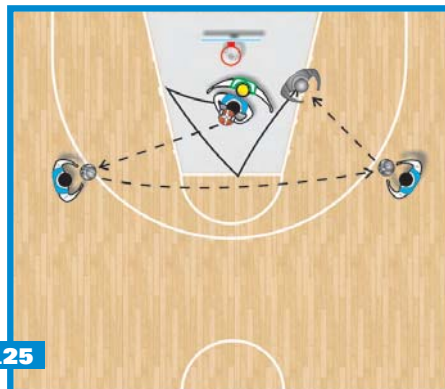
D.20



D.24



D.21



D.25

ket. The drill is repeated with the left hand (diagr. 11).

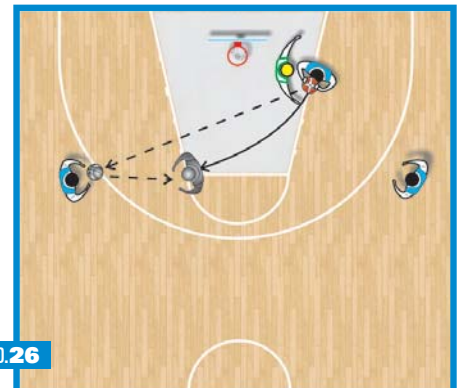
REBOUND AND SHOOT

This is a two-player drill, with one passer outside the lane and one player with his back to the backboard inside the lane. The passer throws the ball against the backboard, the player turns himself, gets the rebound, and scores with a power

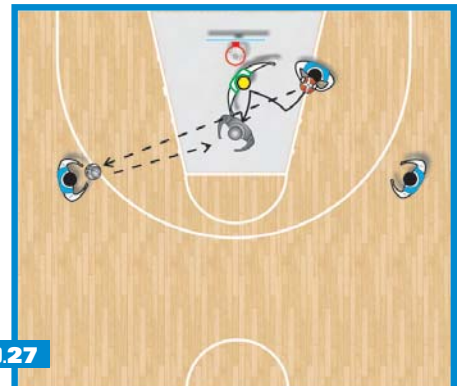
shot, for a total of five times. Then the passer goes under the basket and the shooter becomes the passer (diagr. 12).

PICK UP AND SHOOT

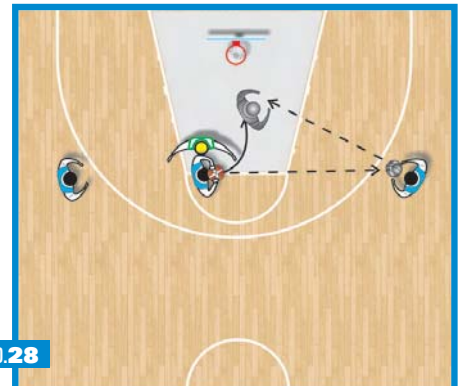
A line of players stand on the baseline and one player in the lane under the basket. The first player of the line rolls the basketball towards the player in the lane,



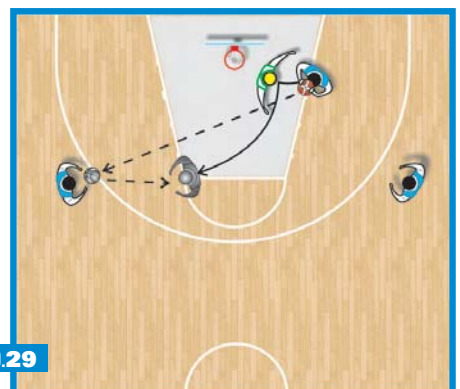
D.26



D.27



D.28



D.29

to his left or his right, and he picks the ball up, spins to the basket, and makes a power shot. The shooter goes to the end of the line, and the passer becomes the shooter (diagr. 13).

ONE-ON-ONE WITH A RECEIVER

A low post player holds the ball, with a defender behind him and a player in the middle of the floor who can work as a

receiver for the post player and pass the ball back. The low post player makes a dribble to the lane and then passes the ball to player in the middle of the court. He tries to get open, receive the ball, and then play one-on-one near the basket (diagr. 14).

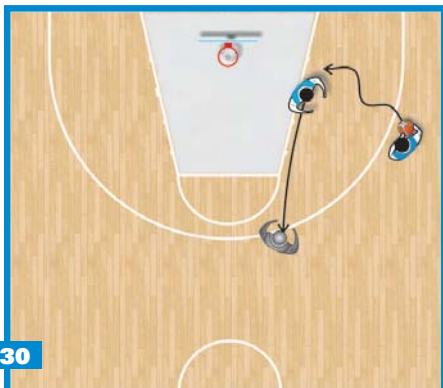
STEALING THE TIME TO THE DEFENDER

There are two players in the low post, one

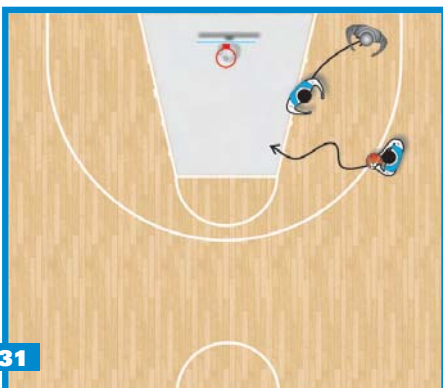
to the left and another to the right side of the lane, facing the passer. The passer passes the ball to one of the two players, who quickly try to score, "stealing the time" from the defender by scoring before he can play defense. (diagr. 15).

GETTING OPEN BASED ON THE POSITION OF THE BALL AND THE DEFENDER

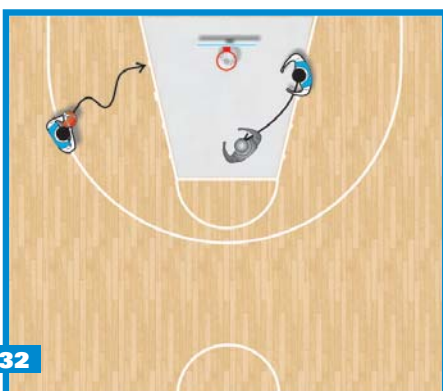
The post must be able to read the posi-



D.30



D.31



D.32

tion of the ball and the defender, and react properly.

Ideally, he should always try to be in a straight line between the ball and the basket, but this is not always possible. Let's now see the different situations and how the post player must react.

Defender behind:

If the post player is in a low post near the basket (for example, on the right side of the half court, with the ball higher than him and his defender), the post will make a step with his left leg toward the ball to get open, receive the pass, and play one-on-one (diagr. 16).

If, instead, the ball is in a lower position than the post and his defender, the post player will make a step with his right leg towards the ball to get open, receive the pass, and play one-on-one (diagr. 17).

Defender three/quarter high overplaying: If the ball is in a position higher than the post, the post will bring his defender higher and then he will make a step with

his left leg toward the basket to get open. He will receive the ball and then play one-on-one (diagr. 18).

Defender three/quarter low overplaying: If, instead, the ball is in a lower position than the post, the post will bring his defender lower and he will take a step with his right leg to get open, receive the ball, and play one-on-one (diagr. 19).

RECEIVING IN THE HIGH POST

We work again on the concept that the post must have a contact with the defender and move accordingly, this time while on the high post. We have a passer outside of the lane, a player at the free-throw area, and a defender behind him. As soon as the post receives the ball, he will turn on the side that the defender will give him (on the same side from where he has received the ball), and then he will attack the basket, starting the move with the same hand and foot (diagr. 20). The passer will then become the player on offense and the shooter becomes the defender.

POST UNDER THE BASKET

A line of players is in the middle of the court, over the three-point line, with the first player on the line without the ball, while the second one with the ball, and a defender waiting under the basket. The first player of the line runs in the lane and tries to get open, keep the position, receive the ball, and make a power move (diagr. 21). The passer becomes the offensive player, the offensive player becomes the defender, and the defender goes at the end of the line.

COLLABORATION ON BOTH SIDES

Two passers stand on the wing positions, one with the ball and other without the ball. A low post player is on the weak side of the court and must read the defense, get open, keep the position, receive the pass, and go hard to the basket (diagr. 22 and 23).

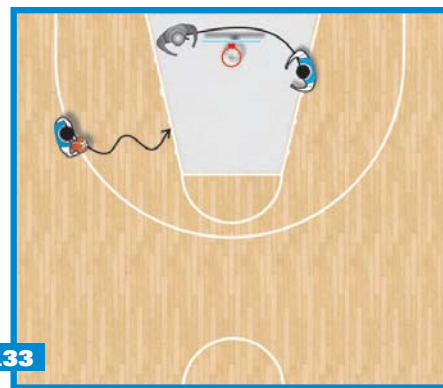
CHANGE SIDES

This time, when the post player receives the ball, he must change side to the ball and then cut to the ball to get open. He must move from the high to the low post and vice versa, receiving the pass, and going to the basket (diagr. 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28).

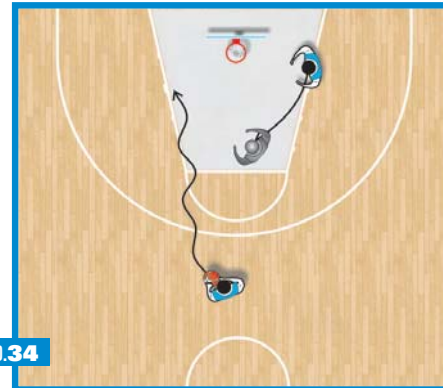
SPACING

It is very important that the post be able to adapt his position based on the drive of the perimeter players.

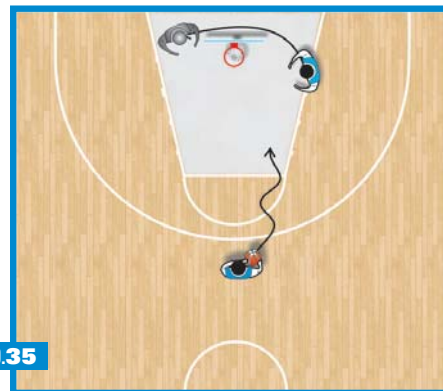
Drive of the wing with the low post on the strong side:



D.33



D.34



D.35

If the drive is on the baseline, the low post goes high to the same side of the drive (diagr. 30).

If the drive is to the middle of the lane, the post slides in the short corner on the same side of the drive (diagr. 31).

Drive of the wing with the low post on the weak side:

▼ If the drive is on the baseline, the post goes high, and rotates in the opposite direction of the drive (diagr. 32).

▼ If the drive is to the middle of the lane, the post rotates to the baseline, in the opposite direction of the drive (diagr. 33).

Drive to the middle of the lane:

▼ If the drive is on the opposite side of the low post, the post rotates high to the opposite direction of the drive (diagr. 34).

▼ If the drive is on the same side of the low post, the post rotates to the baseline, on the opposite direction of the drive (diagr. 35).