



FIBA

We Are Basketball



by Oktay Mahmuti

# THE SECONDARY FASTBREAK

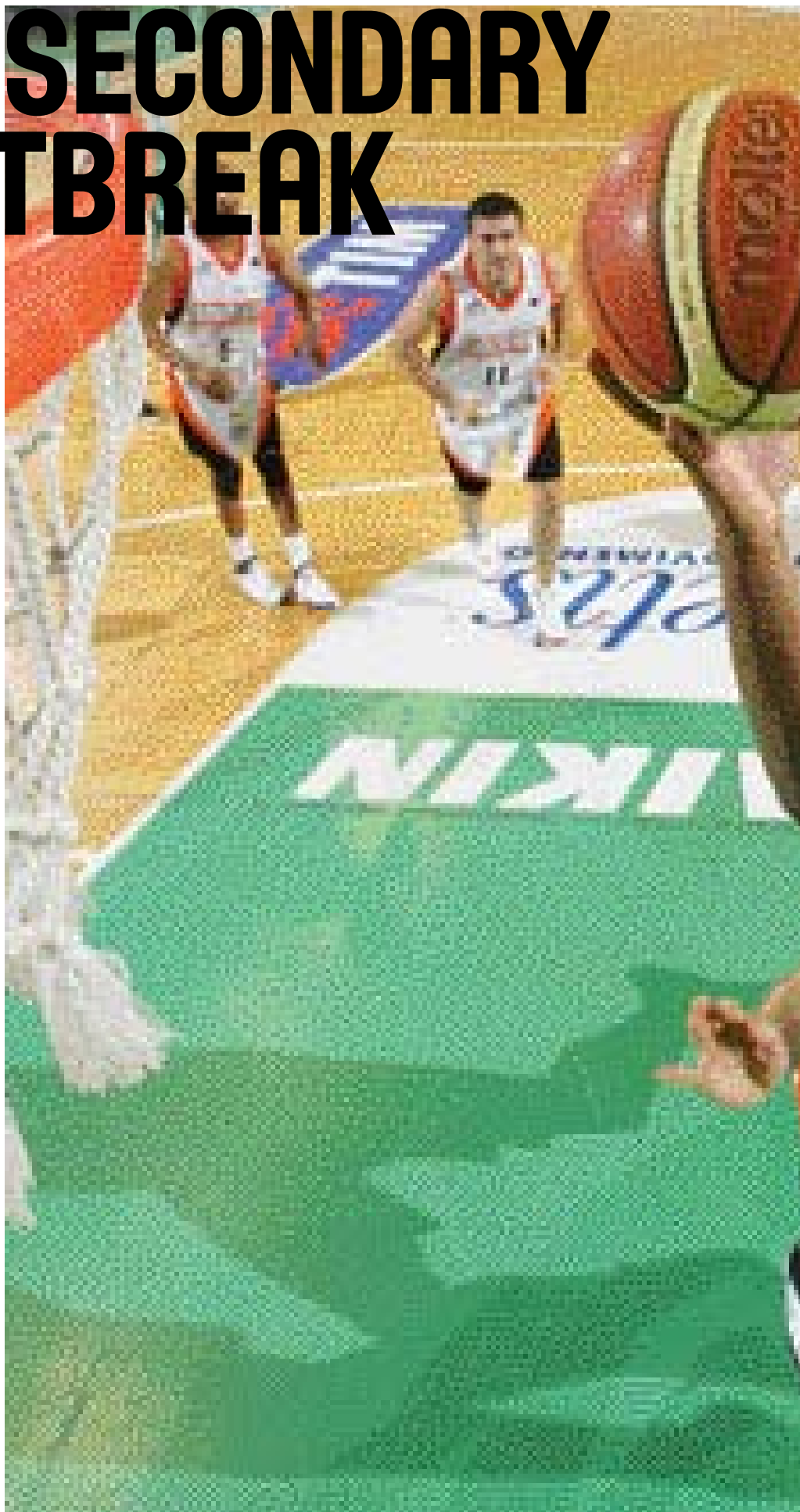
**Oktay Mahmuti is currently the head coach of Benetton Treviso, the Italian Division I League team. He was head coach of the Efes Pilsen Istanbul (Turkey) from 2000 to 2007, where his teams won two Turkish Cups, four Turkish Division I League titles, and one Turkish President Cup.**

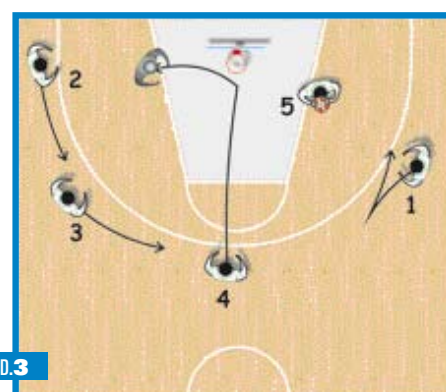
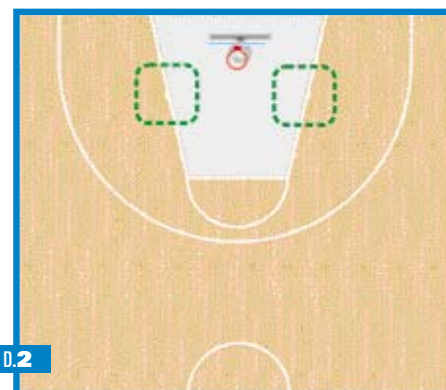
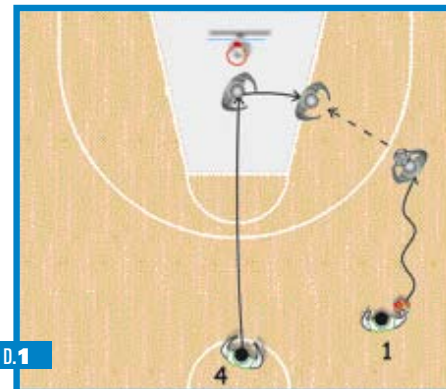
You can find the best and most successful offense in a basketball textbook, but you must always remember that you need to adapt your offensive (and defensive) philosophy to the players you have at your disposal. If an NBA, NCAA, or Euroleague team has success with a certain offense, it does not mean that particular offense can be applied to your team. Every team is different, with varied player talent levels. In short, before talking about my secondary break, I want to reiterate: don't use a certain offense only because it's a winning offense. Use it only if it fits your team profile.

In every type of offensive set, spacing is one of the basic ingredients of an effective attack. With the term "spacing," we normally mean the proper distance between the offensive players, a distance that allows players who receive the ball to have enough room to play one-on-one without other defenders moving over to help out. Spacing is, therefore, a "must" on the primary and the secondary break, which I will describe in this article.

Running basketball is a pleasure for players as well as spectators. However, in order to succeed, your players need certain basic skills:

- ▼ Conditioning is the first brick for building the fastbreak. Players must be ready not only to run, but to finish aggressively with a lay-up or jumpshot. They must have





stamina from the opening tip to the final horn.

- ▼ Running fast while executing the fundamentals of passing, dribbling, and shooting at top speed is another important foundation of the fastbreak.
- ▼ Running, not rushing, is another basic aspect of the primary and secondary break.
- ▼ Reading the defense (as in all offensive situations) is another must. On the secondary break you can take advantage of the mismatches created when the defenders scramble and often do not find their assigned players to guard.
- ▼ Again, maintain proper spacing.

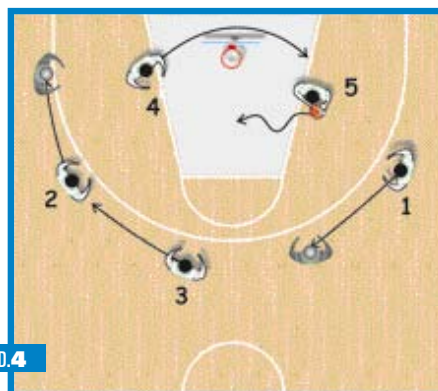
The type of fastbreak I ran at Efes Pilsen of Istanbul, the team that I coached for seven years (and the one I use with my Benetton team), takes into account the abilities of the players. Lacking a big man and players who could shoot well from outside of the three-point line, I instead had athletic players who



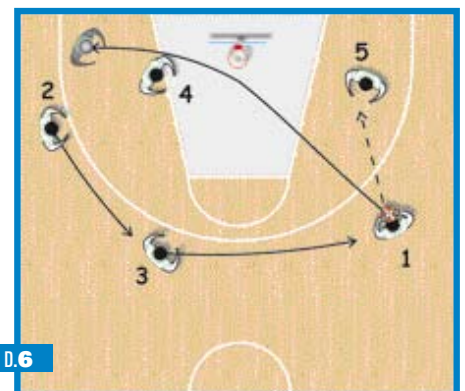
were able to run and quickly occupy the proper spots on the court. Here are some of the rules I adopted for my teams.

Our fastbreak is triggered every time we get the ball: on missed and made field goals, after an opponent's free-throw, from a sideline out-of-bounds pass, and from a steal or turnover. The big men, especially the ones who don't grab the rebound, sprint in the middle lane of the court. Their goal is to get to the offensive basket area as quickly as possible. The first big man who reaches the frontcourt sets up on the side of the court with the ball handler (diagr. 1).

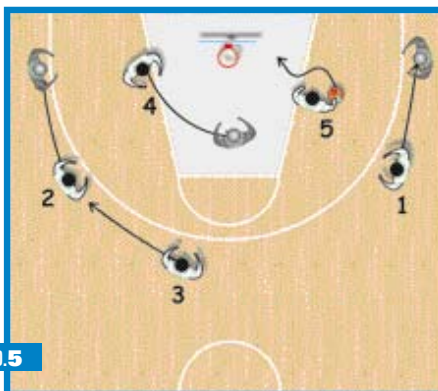
I must now state a premise: the importance of low-post play has decreased greatly over the years, mainly because big men don't have the technical skills possessed by the great post players of years ago. In addition, many teams have switched their offense to include a lot of high and side pick-and-rolls with the big men. That said, I still think a good post player on the low post provides a distinct advantage. I think of him as a second point guard, a player who can see the entire court and pass the ball to open teammates. I tell my players to pass the ball to the low-post player



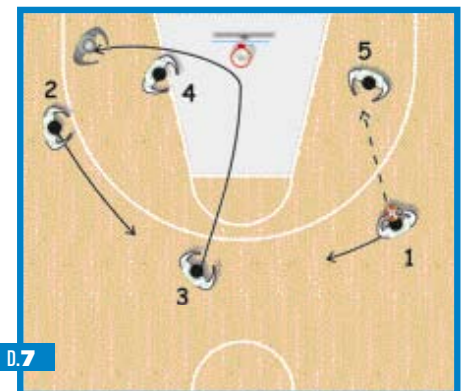
D.4



D.6



D.5



D.7

only when he is set up in the proper position: between the last two marks of the free-throw line (diagr. 2). From this position, the post can attack the basket either to baseline or the middle of the lane. In this example, 5 is the first big man who has set himself on the low post. He receives the ball from the ball handler, 1, and the other offensive players move accordingly. If, as shown in diagram 3, 4 is the second trailer and he is not a good three-point shooter, he makes an aggressive cut to the basket. If he does not get the ball from 5, he sets himself up in the low post on the other side of the lane. The other three perimeter players move themselves in the opposite direction, rotating (in this example) to the right side of the court. 1 will fake to go left and then he will slide to the corner. 3 will set himself in the middle of the floor, and 2 will go to the free-throw line extension. Moving in this way, 5 can pass the ball out to an open teammate for a three-point shot.

However, if 5 attacks the basket and drives the baseline, or else drives to the middle of the three-second lane, the other four teammates will rotate in a different way.

▼ 5 drives to the middle of the lane: in this case, 4 will cut in the opposite direction and under the basket, to avoid easy defensive rotations. 1, 2, and 3 will adapt their positions on the perimeter, rotating from the right to the left: 2 will go the corner, 3 to the wing, and 1 up, but not completely to the middle of the court. Again, spacing is important. With these offensive rotations, 5 will have four different passing lanes if he is stopped by the defense and cannot go to the basket (diagr. 4).

▼ 5 drives to the baseline: in this case, 4 will cut high toward the center of the three-second lane, while the other three offensive players on the perimeter will slide in two different directions. 1 will slide to right and to the corner, while 2 and 3 will rotate to the left side of the court. Again, spacing is important. 5 will now have four different passing possibilities. (diagr. 5).

Let's now review a different case in which 5 is aggressively contested, cannot receive the ball on the low post, and must get out of the lane to get a pass from 1, the ball handler. Right after the pass to 5, 1 cuts aggressively in the lane and goes to the weak side corner, while 2 and 3 rotate and replace (diagr. 6). Naturally, based on skill levels, it could be another player who makes the basic cut in the lane and then moves to the weak-side corner. In this example, it's 3 (diagr. 7). If we have a power forward who is a good outside shooter, our offensive spacing will be easier and more complete, because we can set four shooters on the perimeter.

