


FIBA

We Are Basketball



by Al Westover

THE SHUFFLE OFFENSE

Al Westover is the head coach of the Melbourne Tigers, winner of the 2007/2008 Australian National Basketball League. He started his coaching career as assistant coach at the University of Pacific in United States, then he was player-coach in Australia at Dandenong Rangers, and head coach of the Ballarat Miners. In 1992 he became assistant coach of the Melbourne Tigers and head coach of the junior teams. In 2005 he was appointed as the head coach, and in his first year he won his first ABL championship and was voted "Coach of the Year."

The shuffle offense was a revolutionary offensive strategy which involves the rotation of all five players between all major positions in the half court. It was originally developed in the 1950s at the University of Oklahoma, but has been manipulated and re-shaped meticulously by various coaches across the globe. One perceived downfall of the well-known shuffle offense is its ability to break down an effective zone defense. However, we at the Melbourne Tigers have developed a high-post shuffle of-

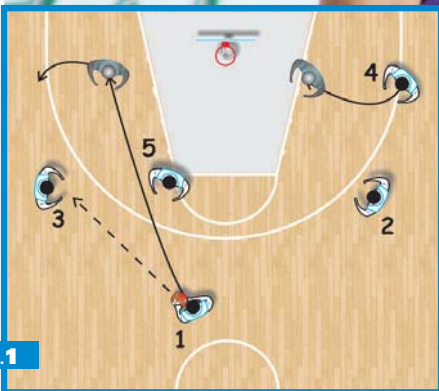
fense which is specific to zone defenses, differing slightly from the traditional form. One of the appealing factors of the shuffle offense is that it can be run by teams which do not have significant height advantages, with all five offensive players needing to be adequate in each position.

This is most likely the reason for the shuffle's success at the USA Air Force Academy under Coach Bob Spear, as the Air Force has a specific height restriction. Although a mobile big man would be the ultimate candidate for the post position.

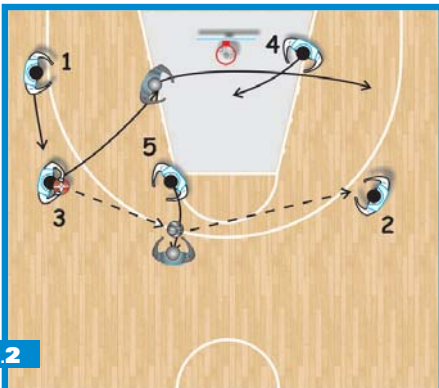
The basic shape of the high post shuffle offense includes the two forwards on the two wings, foul-line extended, the center in the high post on the ball side, the point guard in line with the basket, and the center and the shooting guard in the middle of the floor - all positions with a focus on ball movement, player movement, and getting the ball inside.

Another name for the shuffle offense,





D.1



D.2

which has emerged, is that of “First” and “Thirds”, a nickname for structures “First Option” and “Third Option” (don’t ask me what happened to the “Second Option”).

THE “FIRST OPTION”

The point guard 1 will pass the ball to 3, the small forward at ball-side wing, and cut to the basket and out to the strong-side corner, attempting to drag the low man in the zone out with him (diagr. 1). The small forward 3 now has the option of passing it back to the point guard 1 in the corner, or on to the center 5, who steps off the high post to the three-point line, or penetrating a gap in the zone - an option at any point in the offense.

Irrespective of the direction he passes, the small forward 3 will then cut hard into the gap and through to the opposite

corner. The shooting guard 2 spots up on the opposite wing, stretching the zone as they need to respect his shooting ability.

If the ball is passed to the point guard 1 in the corner, the center 5 will go directly into the ball side post, looking to seal his defender, if the ball is reversed through the top of the three-out-two-in shape, during which the point guard 1 would cut baseline to the opposite corner.

This would result in the weak-side post 5 flash to the ball and look for a high-low with the power forward 4, who is posting up in the strong side low-block.

If the ball was passed from the small forward 3 to the post 5, who is set outside of the three-point line, the power



forward 4 will flash in the middle of the three-second lane looking to get a seal at the basket, as the small forward 3, cuts through to the opposite corner, as indicated earlier (diagr. 2).

From here, whichever way the center 5 passes the ball, he then goes into the vacant low post, resulting in the aforementioned three-two motion (diagr. 3).

An emphasis is on passing the ball through to the opposite of the floor as there is now an established triangle with the power forward 4 in the post and the center 5 ready to cut to the basket should the ball go inside.

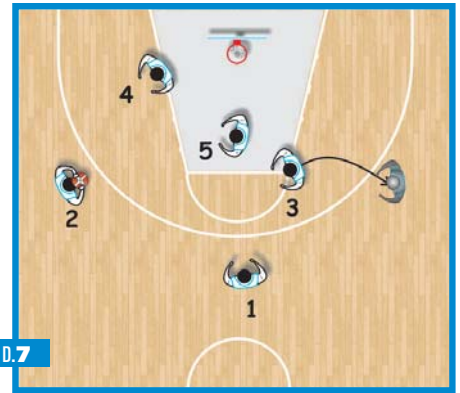
If the initial pass cannot be made to the small forward 3 on the wing, the point guard 1 can dribble-push him to the corner and the offense goes on in the same manner from then on. We call this "first push."

THE "THIRD OPTION"

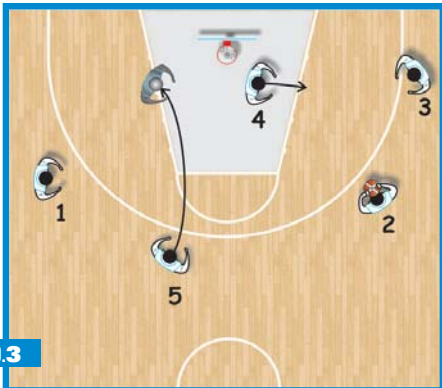
This time the ball is reversed through the shooting guard 2, in the middle of the floor, to the power forward 4 on the opposite wing, as the point guard 1 cuts straight down to the opposite side of the basket and behind the defense, and then through to the ball-side corner, again trying to drag a second-line defender with him (diagr. 4).

The small forward 3 then cuts across the key, trying to find a gap in the zone, as the post 5 moves to the top of the three-point line, and the shooting guard 2 flairs to the weak side wing, again

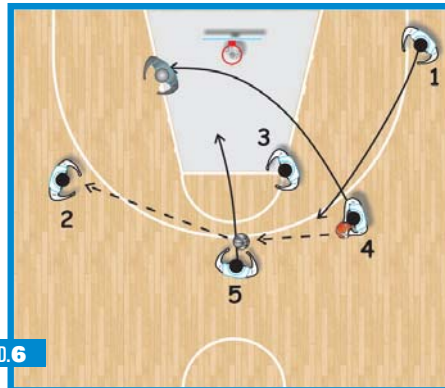




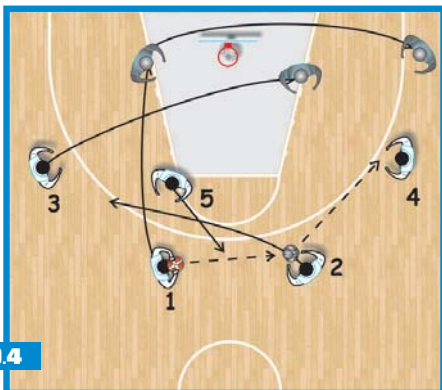
D.7



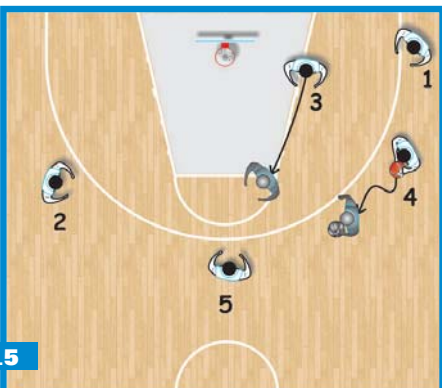
D.3



D.6



D.4



D.5

looking to spot up and spread the zone (diagr. 5).

The main focus of the "Third Option" is to get the ball into the second cutter (the small forward 3), which triggers the reaction of the post 5, diving through the middle of the three-second lane and the shooting guard 2 spotting up on the opposite wing.

If the ball goes to the point guard 1 in the corner, the emphasis is on getting it into the small forward 3 in the low-post, to which the post 5 will cut straight down the middle of the three-second lane zone.

If the ball goes to the post 5 at the top of the key, he may reverse it to the weak-side shooting guard 2, to which the power forward 4 will cut through, much like the original cut by the point guard 1, into the ball-side post as he takes the defense with him, and the point guard 1 and power forward 4 will re-locate into the gaps (diagr. 6).

The main focus of the reversal is the post 5 cutting straight through the key after he reverses it to the shooting guard 2. If the defender at the top of the zone goes with him, there will be a mismatch and the point guard 1 at the top will be open for the shot. If he is left unattended, the shooting guard 2 will have a good angle for getting him the ball in the middle of the three-second lane (diagr. 7).

If the initial pass to the shooting 2 guard cannot be made, the point guard 1 can circle out the shooting guard with the dribble.

The "First Option" and the "Third Option" are merely two options out of many which the shuffle zone offense provides. And the beauty of the shuffle is that for every action, there is a reaction by each other offensive player on the floor. While this may sound physics-minded, the underlying focus is simple ball movement, player movement, and getting the ball inside.