



by Pete Newell



by Swen Nater

HOW TO GO TO THE REBOUND

Pete Newell is considered one of the greatest coaches in the United States. He coached the University of S.Franisco, Michigan State and California-Berkeley, that led to the NCAA title. He also coached the National team of the United States, winning the gold medal at the Olympic Games in 1960. Awarded as Coach of the Year in 1960, Newell was also enshrined in the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame in 1979. He ran his Big Man Camp since 1976 and his Tall Women's Camp since 2001. Moreover, he's author of several videos and books.

Swen Nater is a former UCLA player, where he won two NCAA titles. After college, he played in the NBA and ABA, leading both leagues in rebounding. Nater runs his own Big Man Camp in Seattle and is often consulted as a big man's coach for developing high school and college players. He's also author of three books, including one on rebounding.

INDIVIDUAL DEFENSIVE REBOUNDING

Players must be taught the proper technique for defensive rebounding. When playing man-to-man defense, each player must realize the importance of screening the immediate opponent from the rebounding ball. We teach players to assume a low stance with the arms spread up and away from the body as soon as the shot is taken. If the defensive rebounder loses contact with the opponent because of premature advancement toward the basket, many problems will be encountered. For that reason, immediate contact must be made. The defensive rebounder must be proactive. If there is space between the screener and the offensive rebounder, the latter is able to go toward the basket with momentum that can help the height of the jump and increase timing. An immediate screen will deter the offensive rebounder from making an uninterrupted move to the ball. It also creates space for the defensive rebounder to make the move toward the rebound at the right time.

Space allows the defensive rebounder to jump at a 45-degree angle to the ball. This angle enables the rebounder to protect the ball when returning to the floor after gain-

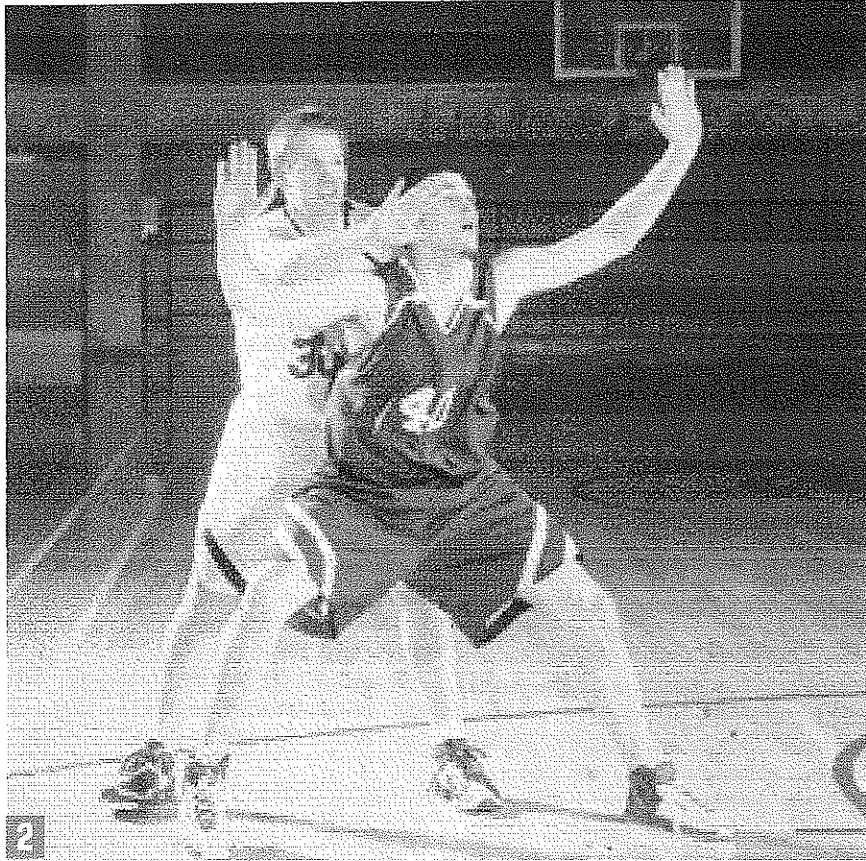
ing possession. If the release from contact is made too soon, or the rebounder goes to the ball without blocking out, the jump will often be vertical, making it difficult to bring the ball down to the chin for protection. When this occurs, opponents who are close by will be able to jar the ball loose. In other words the ball will be exposed. However, if the angle is 45 degrees, the ball is protected. In addition, this position often induces a rebounding foul by the opposing rebounder for reaching over and making illegal contact.

Because of their height advantage and proximity to the rim, exceptionally tall players do not need to hold the block out quite as long as shorter players because their height has already created space between their opponent and the ball. However, the player who is significantly shorter than the player to be blocked out must make the aggressive initial contact, hold the opponent away from the rim to create space, and move to the rebound at a 45-degree angle. Make no mistake: we are not talking only

about centers and inside players; every player must practice blocking out as described, no matter where they are on the floor in relation to the hoop. The greater the mismatch in height, the sooner contact is made and the longer it is held.

One of the shortest centers to play professional basketball was Wes Unseld at 6 feet, 7 inches (almost 2 meters). A rookie in the 1968 to 1969 season with the Baltimore Bullets, wes found himself on the shorter end of the height stick every night. Wes became extremely skilled in making initial contact and maintaining inside position, all the while moving to the rebound. For those who were matching up against him, the word around the league was "Your legs will hurt after the game." Wes Unseld's method of making contact was to thrust his backside into the thighs of the opponents, often freezing them because of the impact. Opponents often backed away from him to avoid the collision, leaving them in horrible position for the rebound. During his career, Unseld averaged 14 rebounds per game. Not only was



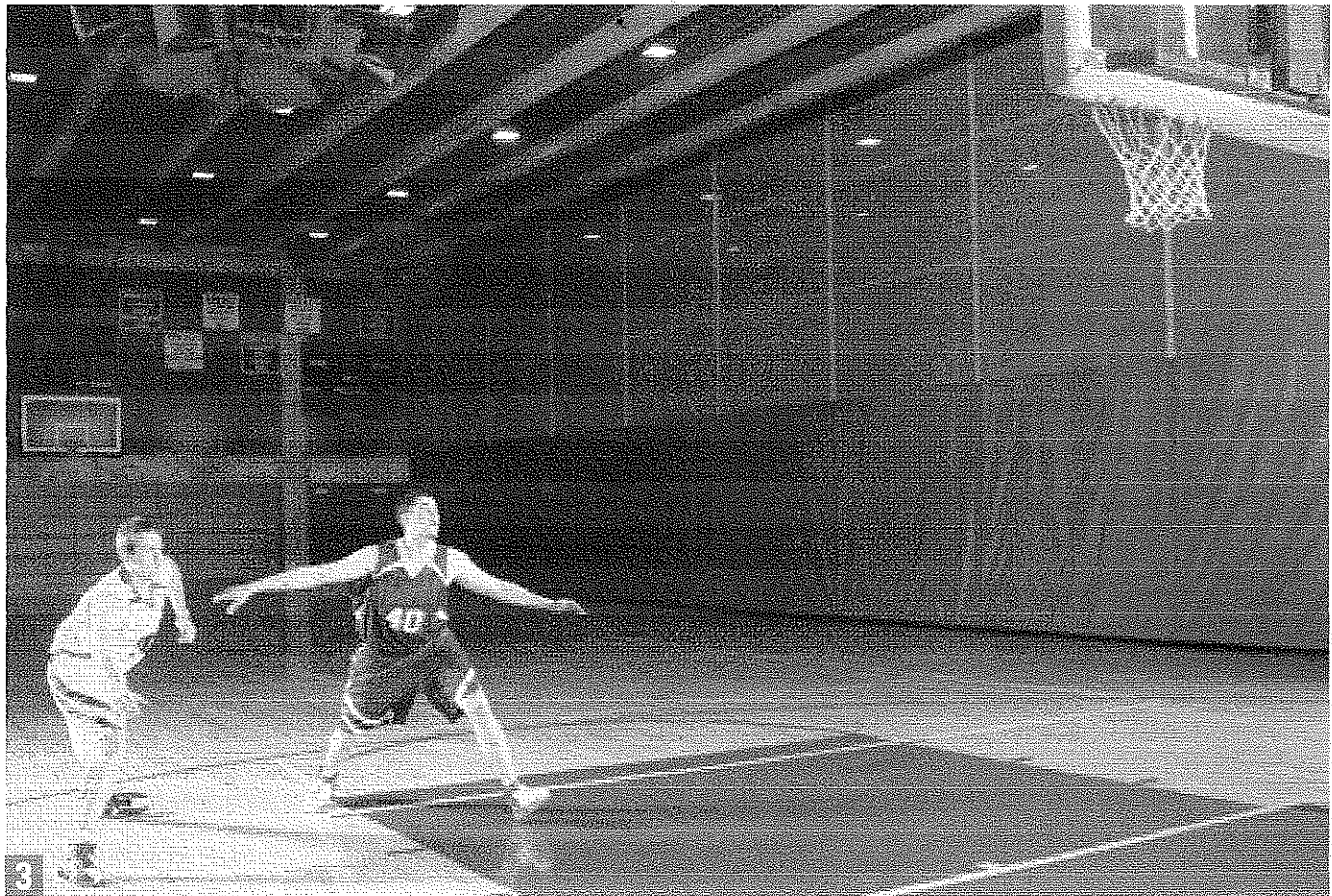


Wes named Rookie of the Year, he was also the league's MVP during the same year. As a Washington Bullet, he won the NBA crown in the 1977-78 season.

But no player in NBA history illustrated the perfect blocking out technique and 45-degree trajectory better than the Boston Celtics' Dave Cowens. At 6 feet, 9 inches (206 centimeters), Cowens competed against much taller players such as Wilt Chamberlain, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Bob Lanier, who were skilled offensive rebounders. His height disadvantage forced him to practice a defensive rebounding method that was identical to Unseld's; he blocked out quick and hard and jumped like a jet to the rebound. But his rebounding technique had one additional characteristic: when obtaining possession of the ball in midair, Dave flared his legs as an eagle spreads its wings. This discouraged offensive rebounders from coming near and prevented immediate pressure.

INDIVIDUAL OFFENSIVE REBOUNDING

An offensive rebound is like a turnover for the other team. Being a good offensive rebounder takes initiative, resourcefulness, aggressiveness, and the relentless desire to come up with the ball. Contrary to what many may think, some of the greatest re-



bounders at both ends of the court seldom dunked the basketball. This shows that these players were workhorses and cared little about flare and flashiness. It may also imply that they were not the tallest players on the floor, and that was often the case. Effective rebounding has more to do with zeal than size. It has been estimated that 75 percent of all rebounds are recovered below the rim. Offensively, the rebounder should initiate motion at the moment the shot is taken - or preferably, before the shot is taken. Great offensive rebounders are cunning and deceptive. First, they are extremely accurate in assessing what direction the ball will take after it hits the rim. Second, they make the initial move away from that direction, tricking the defensive rebounder into thinking they are going that way and opening up the area where they eventually want to end up. This is called deployment of rebounding. Before Moses Malone and Dennis Rodman entered the NBA, many considered Paul Silas to be the best offensive rebounder in history. We consider him to be the most resourceful rebounder. Not only was Silas skilled at using fakes to get the position he wanted, but when he was unsuccessful, he was known to go out of bounds and then come back in to take the inside position. This certifies that he was a rebounder with the passion to get the ball any way he could. When Dennis Rodman entered the NBA in 1986, fans witnessed a dimension of offensive rebounding they had never seen before: incredible footwork and an unequalled pursuit of the basketball. On the defensive end of the floor, he was primarily concerned with stop his assignment, who was often the most dangerous offensive player. Rodman was named the NBA defensive player of the year twice. Rodman possessed great anticipation. Most offensive rebounders begin thinking about the rebound when the shot is taken or perhaps just before. Not so for Rodman. He was ever mindful of the ball and his position in relation to the man who was guarding him; therefore, he was ready to make his move when he had the greatest advantage. Often that move was initiated well before the shot was taken. Some offensive rebounders can be stopped with the quick block out and hold, but players who were matched up against Dennis Rodman knew that the defensive rebound was never secured until it was secured. Dennis possessed another trait unique to him; in addition to being able to jump in all directions - as all great offensive rebounders can - the square footage he could cover was unequalled. Any opponent who casually went for what seemed like a sure rebound often found Dennis Rodman flying by him and stealing the rebound. Den-

nis was known to go so far as to fly horizontally to get the rebound, if need be. Rodman was NBA rebounding champ seven years in a row and helped his teams win five NBA championships. Because of Rodman's antics, ejections, and need for attention, some people may argue that he was an individual who cared little about the team. But who can argue with five NBA championships? Dennis Rodman was a competitor who understood the value of offensive rebounding to team success, and he did his job better than anyone in history. Like him or not, he was a winner. What can be learned from great rebounders such as Unseld, Cowens, Rodman and Ben Wallace? Is it that athleticism is the key to rebounding effectiveness? Hardly! We could provide a list of players who were very good rebounders but were not extremely athletic. These players had great footwork and relentlessly pursued the missed shot.

REBOUNDING FOOTWORK

Body balance, footwork, and maneuvering speed were discussed earlier in the book as prerequisite movement skills for post play. Footwork includes pivoting and spinning. Developing maneuvering speed requires activities that involve changing direction and pace. The combination of the three prerequisite movement skills provides a good foundation for rebounding footwork. To be an effective rebounder, the player must be able to move and jump in

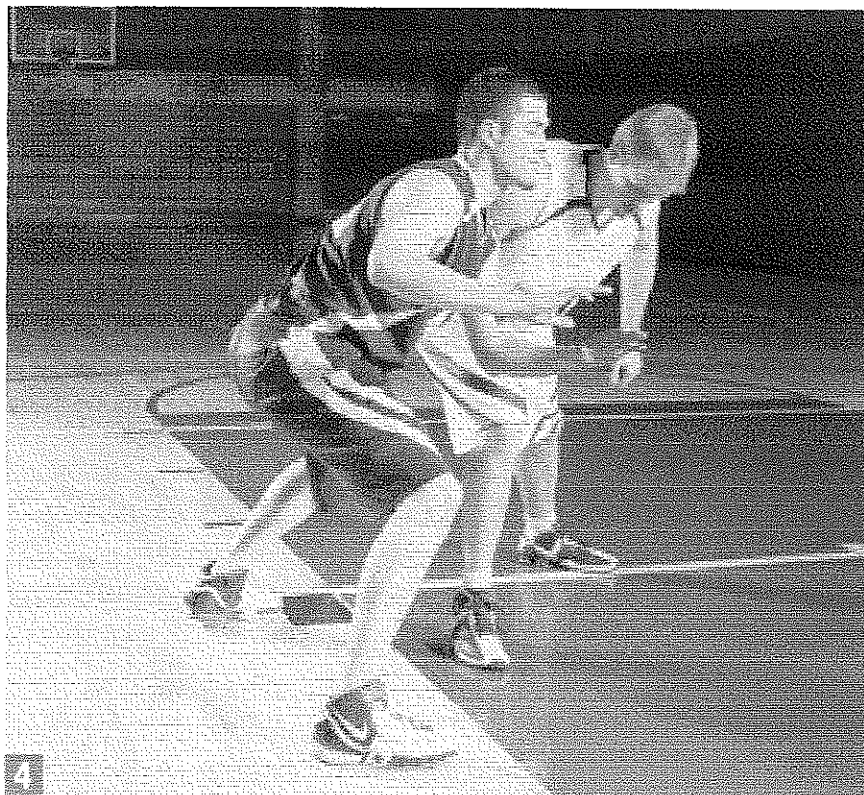
that order. Defensive and offensive rebounding require different types of footwork.

FOOTWORK FOR DEFENSIVE REBOUNDING

As previously mentioned, to move to a defensive rebound at the recommended 45-degree angle, the screener must initiate the contact and make the immediate block out before the offensive player begins to make the move to the rim. Making contact with the arm to the chest will stop some opponents, but the good ones need a quick backside to the thighs. Also note that the quick hit will eliminate the effectiveness of faking one direction to go the other, which is a key tactic for offensive rebounding.

SPIN PIVOT

Initiating contact must be done quickly and assertively; there is no room for hesitation because the offensive rebounder must be stopped before beginning the move toward the rim. The moment the shooter begins the shooting motion, the screener makes a 180-degree spin pivot toward the offensive player and lands the backside into the thighs (photo 1 and 2). When the basketball is about to hit the rim, the defensive rebounder makes the move to the rim (photo 3). Holding position and waiting for the ball to almost reach the rim allows the defensive rebounder to read the direction of the possible miss. This decreases the chances of jumping in the wrong direction.



FRONT PIVOT

Being proactive and making the first hit is ideal. However, there will be times when the offensive player makes a quick anticipatory move and the screener must react. When making the move to the rebound, the offensive player is limited to going to the middle or baseline. Therefore, the screener must learn two methods of footwork. If the opponent moves to the middle, the screener's baseline foot crosses over, and the front pivot is made. The backside makes the impact on the opponent's thigh. Also notice the position of the hands and the erect posture of the screener. The hands are up and ready for the rebound. The body is in balance, ready to move toward the basket at the correct time. Not only is the backside in contact with the opponent, the screener's entire back is also derailing any ploy to get by, such as a swim move.

REVERSE PIVOT

If the offensive player makes a move toward the baseline, the screener makes a back, or reverse, pivot. Again, quick impact is made with the backside, but the back is also making contact. A traditional method of blocking out involves using a reverse pivot no matter which direction the offensive player goes. However, because obtaining and maintaining vision on the ball after it is shot is crucial to knowing when to release the block out and go to the rim, we recommend the

front pivot when the offensive player makes the move to the middle. Besides it possible to maintain ball vision from shot to rebound, this makes the player less likely to be faked in one direction.

FOOTWORK FOR OFFENSIVE REBOUNDING

With the exception of the amount of contact with the arms and hands, the footwork for offensive rebounding can be compared to that of a defensive end in football who is attempting to get around the block and to the quarterback. It requires faking and an explosive change of direction. It also requires a countermove in case the first move is hindered.

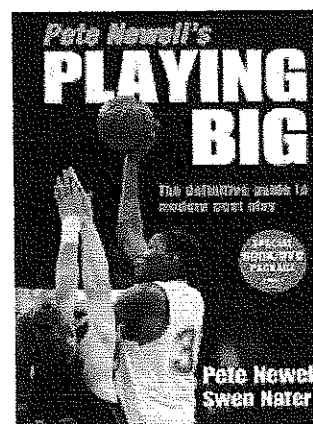
PLAN A-FAKING AND EXPLODING

Whatever part of the floor the offensive rebounder has determined the ball will bounce to, the player makes a fake in the opposite direction (photo 4). When the screener reacts, the offensive player changes direction by shooting the outside hand past the defender's chin toward the desired area and moving the outside foot over the defender's legs toward that same area (photo 5). When changing direction, the player accelerates toward the desired spot.

PLAN B-SPINNING

If the screener blocks the path to the desired area when the offensive rebounder is changing direction, the offensive rebound-

er must not stop and accept defeat; to counter the opponent's move, the offensive player makes a spin in the opposite direction. Position A was taken away, so the counter is to take position B (photo 6). To spin quickly, the player's body must be low and in a vertical position, and the arms must not move too far out horizontally from the body, much like an ice-skater who is increasing the speed of a spin. However, the basketball player is not spinning in one spot; the spin is made simultaneously with motion toward position B.



Taken from the book
"Pete Newell's Playing Big",
Pete Newell and Swen Nater,
Human Kinetics, 2008

