



by Ryan Kruger

FIBA

We Are Basketball

THE PICK-AND-ROLL: ALL OF THE SOLUTIONS

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PICK-AND-ROLL PHILOSOPHY

Guard Notes

The guard must set up his defender. If he wants to use the screen and get to the middle, then his setup is to fake to the baseline, the opposite if he wants to go to the baseline.

With the dribble I like to teach the inside-out move to get the defender leaning away from the screen. Now, with him off balance, I like teaching a quick crossover dribble to run the defender right into the screener in the direction he wants to attack. I want my players coming off "clean" in every pick-and-roll.

If a player is coming off "dirty" (where his defender is able to stay attached to him), the ball handler is now forced to attack two defenders (his defender and the screener's defender, since he was never screened), instead of one.

If the ball handler has not used his dribble, I teach two ways to set up his defender without a dribble. If the defender is crowding him, taking away his airspace, I teach the "step across." This move backs the defender off him, so he has space to manoeuvre and also get him leaning away from the screen. If the defender is giving him space, I teach a quick "rip-thru" away from the screen, a violent ball and foot fake away from the screen.

The ball handler must always come off shoulder to shoulder with the screener, as not to allow his defender any room to fight over the top of the screen.

Waiting for the screener to be set is vital. If he does not, he will get the screener called for an illegal screen. The ball handler should be setting his defender away from the screen (with an in-out dribble, a step across or rip-thru), exactly as the screener's feet are hitting the ground to set the screen. This insures that the big man is not moving when the guard comes off and that the big man will be able to set the best possible screen for the guard.

He must "turn the corner" like he is running downhill, picking up speed and cannot be stopped. He must run off the screen in attack mode!!! All he is thinking is attacking that big man, getting into the paint by either splitting the pick-and-roll or getting around the screener's defender outside shoulder.

When he comes off the screen, the ball handler must drive it at least two dribbles. He "bails out" the defense, if he takes one bounce and picks up his dribble. Even if the defense is "blitzing" him (trapping), he must "stretch" the defense by taking a minimum of two dribbles, and dragging the screener's defender as far as possible, so the distance he must recover is greater.

"Bingo" is a term I use to describe the ball handler beating his defender away from the screen.

I do not like backing his defender down to get into a pick-and-roll. Backing down a defender takes away the ball handler ability to quickly "bingo" the pick. To do so, he must spin away from the screen, which, in my opinion, is too slow. To

"bingo" a pick I want a crossover (or thru the legs) dribble, because it's the quickest change of direction move.

The first look in the pick-and-roll is always the ball handler. I want him to scoring or making a play 80% of the time. In any pick-and-roll the ball handler's first thought is "attack the big man". His options are always drive first, shoot second, and pass third. If you do not want the ball handler to shoot it, you should not be running the pick-and-roll with him. The ideal situation is to get the ball handler penetrating to the rim out of any pick-and-roll.

Pick-and-rolls "create offense". The ball handler must come off the pick-and-roll to score. He must go hard to the rim, with the chest facing the basket, as opposed to the sideline: he must go north-south, not east-west. If the ball handler has confidence in his reads, he can overcome a lack of quickness.

Big Men Notes

The key of a great pick-and-roll starts with how the big man sets his screen. I am a huge believer in drilling "screening angles" into the heads of our big men. If the center or the big forward "telegraphs" his route and saunters into it as a snail's pace, it makes the defense's coverage very easy. What is hard to guard is when the big man sprints into the screen and puts separation between himself and his defender. It's hard to give an aggressive "show" at the level of the screen, when you are trailing the play and cannot get there in time!

What is also hard to guard is when a defender does not know on which side of the pick to give his "show". The guard must help the situation by keeping the ball in the center of the floor. If he



declares a side, it's to the benefit of the defense, because now it is easy to know which side to give a "show". "Telegraphing" the screen is when everyone in the building knows which hand the defender is bringing the ball handler to. I like the big man starting with his head under the rim and coming up through the lane. Now no one knows which side the big man is going to set the screen. We call this "changing the angle late". The big man must run into the screen and set it with his back anywhere between the "flat to the baseline" and, at the very worst, "back to the corner". Setting the screen with his chest to the sideline, just make to easy to go under. I care less about "laying wood" on the ball handler's defender, than I do

make sure he goes over the screen, if the ball handler's defender has to go over the screen, he is no longer guarding our ball handler. That means that, for a short period of time, we have created a situation where our guard can play one-on-one with their screener's defender.

I want constantly put the defensive center or power forward in positions where they are unable to get a "show". It is much easier to attack a big man, who is "loose," than it is to turn the corner versus a hard show.

It is unacceptable for teams to go under your pick-and-roll. The job of your screener is to set the screen at such

angle as to force the ball handler's defender to go over the top. It is to the defense's advantage to go under and let you shoot a jump shot. They have kept you out of lane, kept you from getting the shot at the rim, and kept you from "sucking in" their perimeter defenders (which creates wide open spot up of the small forwards), all because we allowed them to go under. Pick-and-rolls should be great "attack" situations for your aggressive/athletic ball handlers (hopefully you have some!).

With flat angle high pick-and-rolls, we want to set a screen outside of the three-point line, because it gives the ball handler more room to manoeuvre and more space to get "a head of steam" and

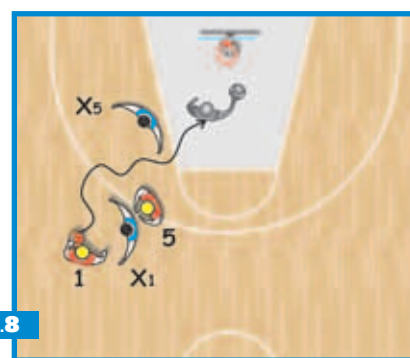
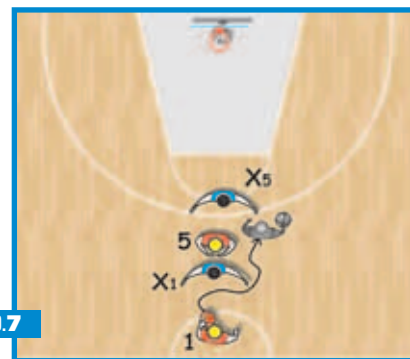
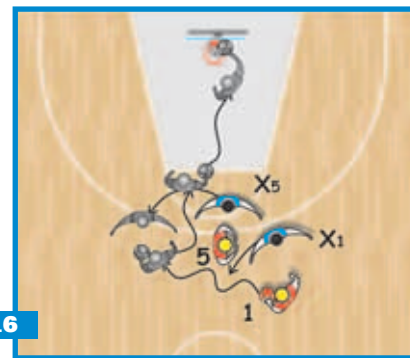
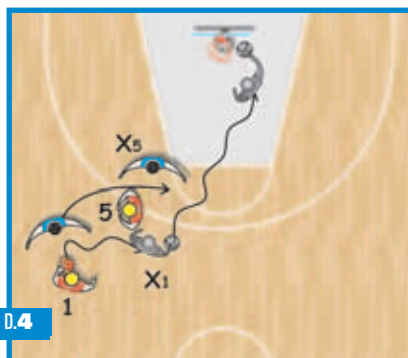
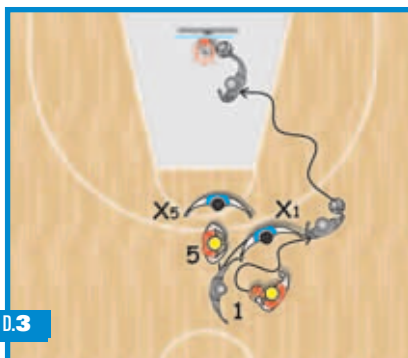
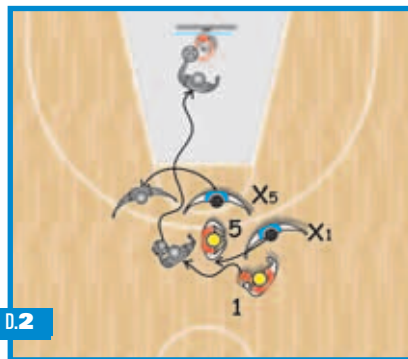
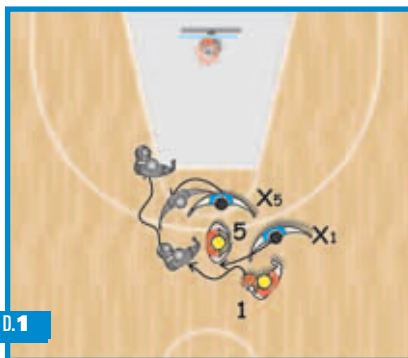
be in a dead sprint coming off the pick, as opposed to starting from a stationary position.

On traditional angle high pick-and-rolls, the big man should set the screen with his foot touching the three-point line. It's the guard's job to run his defender off the screen, not the big men's job to adjust to the guard. Whenever possible, I would prefer to set a flat angle pick-and-roll, as opposed to a traditional angle, because it causes a great deal of confusion for the defense, and consequently, much harder to defend.

A very tough situation to get a "show" on is when the big man starts on the right block, sprints up through the right elbow, and then changes the angle of the pick at the last minute, bringing the ball handler to his left hand. It makes very tough for your screener's defender to get a show, because they expect the pick to be set bringing the ball handler to his right hand. I call this coming up "thru the elbow" and setting a "banana screen."

On traditional side pick-and-rolls, I want my big men to be somewhere between setting the screen with their back to the corner and chest to the sideline (worst case scenario). This is easy when the big men start low (below the free-throw line), because of the path they take to set a screen. Where they run into a problem is in transition setting "drag" screens and when they are on the perimeter outside of the three-point line. When they run into a side pick-and-roll from the top of the key, their path ends up being a straight line to the ball, which means their back is to where half court and the sideline meet (the exact opposite angle of what we want!). In this situation, the angle the big man takes invites the under, which cannot happen. When the big man setting the pick-and-roll starts high, he cannot take a straight line path to the ball. He must take his path towards the rim and then veer out to set the screen at an acceptable angle. We tell our big men to "circle under the ball" in this situation. All this means is they must get even or below the ball, before they break off their route and go set the side pick-and-roll. Against the team that you know they will go over, chest to the sideline is ideal. When teams are going under against you, I teach setting the screen in the same spot, but adjusting the angle such that the center's back is facing more towards the opposite corner, as opposed to the sideline, forcing them over the top.

When setting a "hat" pick (a side pick, but instead of having the screener with his



chest to the sideline, bringing the ball handler to the middle, the screener has his back to baseline, bringing the ball handler to the baseline as well), we obviously want the screener to have his back flat to the baseline, no exceptions. The key here is to make sure the "hat" picks are set slightly more towards the middle of the floor than a traditional side pick. Since you are bringing the ball handler to the baseline, it simply gives him more room, if the screen is set more towards the middle of the floor. With this, we just tell our players we want them to "stay off" the sideline, when setting "hat" picks.

TEACHING THE PICK-AND-ROLL

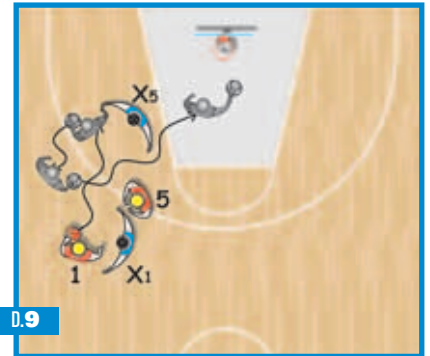
I would estimate that 75% of the basketball played in the NBA involves some sort of pick-and-roll action. So, I like teaching it, drilling it, and reinforcing what we want out of our ball handlers (and the big men) a lot in practice. If it's occurs, 75% of the time we have the ball, we should spend a lot of our practice time perfecting it! The most important



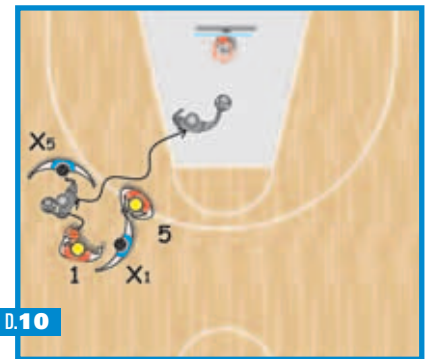
thing I want our guards to understand are our reads on how the defense is playing us. The pick-and-roll is very much a mental exercise. Many players are able to get away without having a great understanding of concepts, because of their amazing athletic ability. If you can combine that with a basic understanding of how you want to attack, as a result of how they are playing you, it

would be a scary combination.

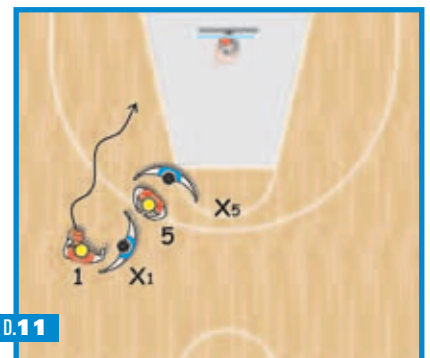
What happens though when we concentrate solely on our "reads" (how the defense is playing us) is that we lose track of the minor points of pick-and-roll. I remind our players of the "3 S's." Stay "square" (staying square as opposed to backing our defending down), "setups" (fake one way to come off another), and



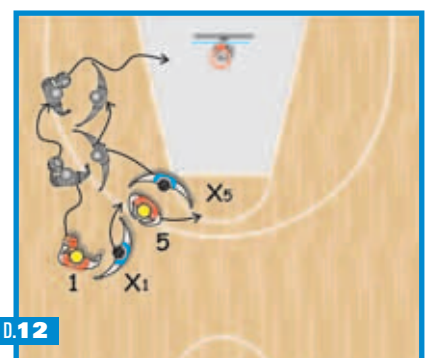
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"shoulders" (come off shoulder to shoulder with the screener). I spend most of my time reinforcing the reads, but I cannot allow the players to slack on these 3 "S's," especially the setups. They more often than anything else determine whether or not our guards are coming off "clean" or "dirty."

I have found that a routine works best when working on our pick-and rolls. For example, when working on side pick-and-roll reads, we go through the same reads



in the same order, with the same verbal commands each day. Our first read is versus "short show." When I say "short show", our players immediately understand that they must attack the big man, turn hard the corner with two dribbles, and get to the elbow of the free-throw area for a pull up jumper. I do not take time to explain every read. The first few weeks I do, because that is our time to implement our entire pick-and-roll philosophy. But, once they know what we want to get done, the commands become shorter, so that we can get more work done with less talk. Because we do the same reads in the same order everyday, it becomes a habit. I will reinforce having "good setups" or certain key points, but I keep the verbal commands to a minimum and I keep them consistent. Same reads, same order, same terminology every day. The simple commands I give to the players are in quotes. All I say is what's in the parentheses and they know what to do. I believe there must be defense in the drill. It is not enough to come off a coach, who is setting a screen and just to know that a defender hard showed, or went under. They have to see and feel it. We will have normally one coach involved in the drill or two coaches on the "red" situation on the high pick-and-roll. The following is the order of the reads we work.

READS ON THE HIGH PICK-AND-ROLL

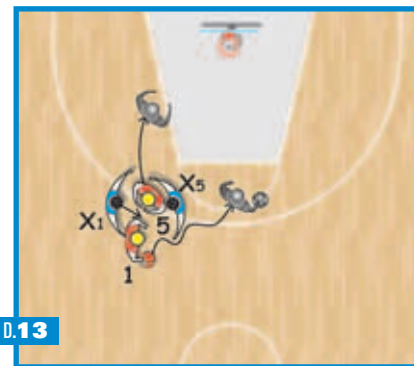
1. **"Soft Show."** When the ball handler sees that the screener's defender makes a soft show (when he makes a short and not aggressive step out) and his defender goes over the screen, this means that the screener's defender must totally contain him with his show. He must attack his shoulder, like a "snowball rolling out a mountain," with a minimum of two dribbles (diagr. 1).
2. **"Hard Show (and Over)."** To contain the ball handler, the big man's defender must show hard and lose contact with the screener. Any time the dribbler sees a "daylight, he takes it," looking to split the screen. The ability to consistently split the pick-and-rolls separates good from great pick-and-roll players. The ball handler throws the ball out in front of him and through the open space, and explodes through the tiny space to get a shot in the lane (diagr. 2).
3. **"Red-Quick Change."** When the two defenders show hard early, almost trapping (we call "red") the ball handler, as he gets at the level of the screen (the screener's defender is showing out hard and the ball handler's defender is running over the top of the screen), can make a quick

change of direction and a spin dribble to go away from the show, and drives to the rim. The ball handler's defender will have a hard time stopping his momentum, changing direction, and containing the dribble.

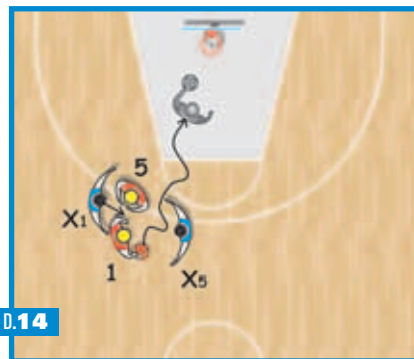
4. **"Bingo."** When the ball handler's defender finds out that the screen is coming, he tries to force the dribbler to the screen. When he does this, he becomes vulnerable to the "Bingo", it means to be beaten away from the screen. The ball handler sets up his defender, as he was going to use the screen, and get to the middle, then he beats him to the baseline. The one caveat with going "bingo" is that if he does so, he must be able to get his own good shot, because there are very few other options as a result of his spacing (diagr. 3).
5. **"Under-Footrace."** Whether the screener's defender shows or not, if the ball handler's defender goes under the screen, he will be unable to gather and contain the ball handler on the other side of the screen. So, if the ball handler attacks hard the rim, there is nothing his defender can do to stop him. He can try to contain him on the other side of the screen, but he will not be able to get back in front of him and control his penetration. It is a footrace to the rim. The ball handler must attack the rim with the maximum intensity, with no more than two dribbles (diagr. 4). A stop and shot behind the screen is always an option in this type of action, but we only mention this option to our players, without using it in the drills, because we want them to attack the rim.
6. **"Under-Rescreen."** The screener's defender shows out and the ball handler's defender goes under the screen. In this case, the ball handler takes one hard dribble, coming off the screen, and automatically the screener rescreens the ball handler's defender, who went under the screen. The ball handler makes a cross-over dribble back to the outside. The screener's defender will not be in a position to show, and the ball handler will be able to turn the corner and drive to the basket (diagr. 5).
7. **"Under-Change Direction."** The defensive situation is the same of "show and under". The ball handler uses the screen, but, as soon as he comes off, he quickly changes the direction. He must attack his defender, who is either loose or on his heels.
8. **"Loose & Over-Attack the Big."** The defense must pay the choice to guard,

even for a short period of time, the guard with a big man. The ball handler drives the ball hard at the outside shoulder of the screener's defender, getting him to slide, and then he spins back to the middle of the lane for a lay up (diagr. 6).

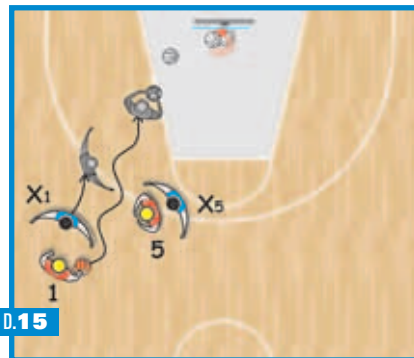
9. **"Flat Angle."** The screen must be set as high as possible, out of the three-point line, to give the ball handler more room to move with the ball. The dribbler must be in a straight line with the screener, because if he is off to one side of the court, the screener's defender can show out and help on that side. The dribbler must force his defender to lean on one side, and then make a cross-over dribble to change the side and attack the basket. Even if the defender tries to force the ball handler on one side (we call this defensive strategy "blue"), he will move on to that side, then spinning back off the pick (diagr. 7).
10. **"Blue-In & Out."** When the defender tries to force the ball handler to a certain side of the court (usually on the weak hand of the dribbler), often times the screener's defender is loose, far from the dribbler. The dribbler will fake a drive between the two defenders, and then he will go to the middle with a hard in-and-out dribble, attacking the outside shoulder of the screener's defender and turning the corner, because the dribbler's defender will not be able to defend or contain the dribble (diagr. 8).
11. **"Blue-Split."** When the defenders tries to force the ball handler on a certain side of the court (usually on the weak hand of the dribbler), often times the screener's defender is loose. The ball handler must attack the outside shoulder of the screener's defender to get him leaning, then he makes a cross-over dribble back to the middle, split him and get to the rim. The ball handler's defender will not be in a stance to guard him or contain his drive to the basket (diagr. 9).
12. **"Blue-Spin, Still Get Middle."** If the defenders try to force the ball handler on a certain side of the court - with the screener's defender at the same height of the screen - then that means there is no help on the opposite direction. The ball handler makes one dribble going to the screener's defender and then makes a spin back dribble to the middle and get and over the top of the screen (diagr. 10).
13. **"Blue-Go Early."** Same defensive situation, but many times the ball handler's defender changes its stance too



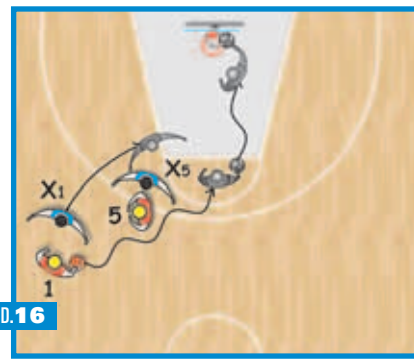
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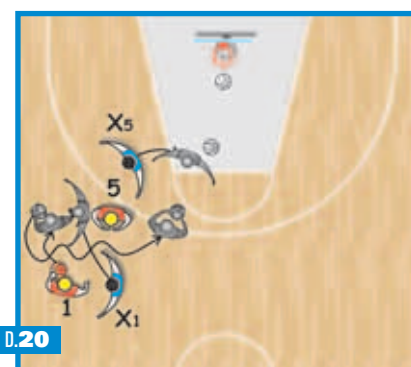
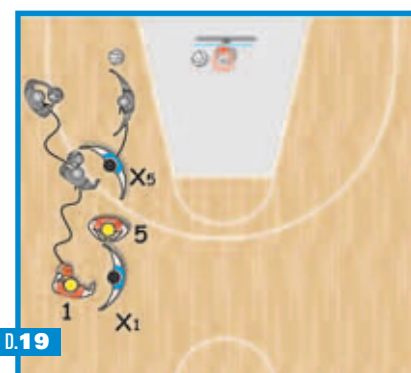
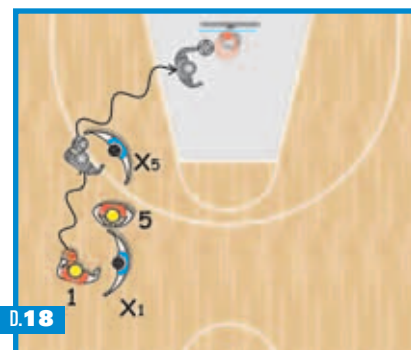
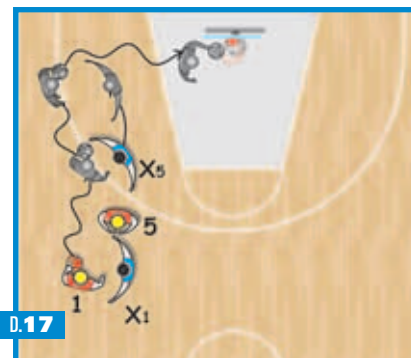
early, before the screener's defender is in position. The ball handler simply attacks the basket. His defender is not on the position to contain the dribble, and the ball handler will run past the screener defender, who will be going in the opposite direction (diagr. 11).

14. **"Switch."** Any time the defenders switch on the pick-and-roll, we want that the ball handler attacks the screener's defender off the dribble. We don't want to give the

ball to the screener posting up a smaller defender down in a wrestling match. As the ball handler comes off the screen and there is a switch, the screener rolls into the post for creating space, while the ball handler takes his time, dribbles back outside the three-point line and then plays one-on-one with the screener's defender to finish with a lay-up, not with a jump shot (diagr. 12).

READS FOR THE SIDE PICK-AND-ROLL

1. **"Soft Show."** When the ball handler sees that the screener's defender makes a soft exit and his defender goes over the top of the screen, he must attack the outside shoulder of the screener's defender, like a "snowball rolling down a mountain" with a minimum of two hard dribbles (diagr. 13).
2. **"Hard Show."** To contain the ball handler the screener's defender shows out hard and loses contact with the screener. Anytime the dribbler "sees daylight, he takes it." He throws the ball out in front of him and through the open space and explodes through the tiny space to get a shot in the lane (diagr. 14).
3. **"Bingo."** Many times, when the dribbler's defender sees that the screen is coming, he tries to get into the ball handler and forces him into the pick. When it does this, he becomes himself vulnerable to the "Bingo." The ball handler sets up his defender as if he was going to use the screen and get to the middle, and then he beats him to the baseline. The one caveat with this solution is that the ball handler must be able to get his own good shot, because there are very few other options as a result of his spacing (diagr. 15).
4. **"Under-Footrace."** Whether the screener's defender shows or not, if the ball handler's defender goes under the screen, he will be unable to gather and contain the ball handler on the other side of the screen. So, if the ball handler attacks hard the rim, there is nothing his defender can do to stop him. He can try to contain him on the other side of the screen, but he will not be able to get back in front of him and control his penetration. It is a footrace to the rim. The ball handler must attack the rim with the maximum intensity, with no more than two dribbles. A stop and shot behind the screen is always an option in this type of action, but we only mention this option to our players, without using it in the drills, because we want them to attack the rim (diagr. 16).
5. **"Under-Change Direction."** Once the ball handler reads the "show and under", he uses the screen, but, as he comes off, he quickly changes direction and attacks his defender, who is either loose or on his heels.
6. **"Blue-Crossover & Split."** If the screener sets a "hat" pick, a pick with his back to the baseline, the ball handler will attack the screener's defender, creating a one-on-one situation. He will attack his outside shoulder, getting him leaning or sliding to the baseline, and then he will crossover/quick spin back to the middle and get to the rim, because the screener's defender cannot slide with him. (diagr. 17).
7. **"Blue- In & Out to the Outside."** Same "hat" pick. The ball handler will attack the screener's defender outside shoulder, with an in-and-out dribble, drives to the baseline and shots in the lane (diagr. 18).
8. **"Blue-Pocket Jumper."** Same "hat" pick. The ball handler takes one/two hard dribbles right at the screener's defender, and finds that pocket of space, where he can get a jump shot (diagr. 19).
9. **"Blue-Still Get Middle."** Even if the defense tries to force the ball handler to the baseline, it doesn't mean that he cannot try to drive to middle. Often the defender will allow a penetration in the middle. The ball handler dribbles to the baseline, and then spins back to the middle, attacking his defender on the outside shoulder (diagr. 20).
10. **"Blue, Pop, Backdoor."** On this option the ball handler can pass to the screener, who, after bringing the screen, has rolled out. When the ball handler sees that his defender comes out to guard him, but in a hard no middle stance, as soon as he passes the ball to the screener, he will make a quick back-door cut to receive the ball for a lay-up. His defender will be out of position to cover his cut (diagr. 21).
11. **"Blue, Pass & Follow Get."** The ball handler passes the ball to the screener who, after the screen, has rolled out. As the screener receives the ball, he will dribble at the guard to set a dribble screen on the ball handler's defender. The ball handler will drive and turn the corner. There will be no help by the screener's defender, because he is down too far to give any help on the drive (diagr. 22).
12. **"Switch, Drive the Big."** Anytime the defenders switch, we want the ball handler attacks the screener's



defender and we don't want him to pass the ball to the screener in low-post. As the dribbler comes off the screen and the defense has switched, the screener must roll to the post for spacing (not for receiving the ball). The ball handler should take his time and back his dribble outside the three-point line, then go one-on-one against the screener's defender, going to the rim, not making a jump shot (diagr. 23).

