

ZONE OFFENSE

He won a European Cadet, Junior, and Senior Championships, a pair of World Junior and World Senior Gold Medals with the Yugoslavian National Teams. Pesic also won a European Senior Championship while at the helm of the German National team in 1991. With a club team, he won one Yugoslavian Championship and one Yugoslavia Cup, two German Championships and two Germany Cups. He is now head coach of the team in Barcelona.



by Svetislav Pesic

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the 24-second shot clock and eight-seconds speeded up the pace of the game. Many coaches quickly adopted offensive plays that could be put in motion in six or less seconds. For these reasons, the transition offense has become more and more important; it is organized, quick and simple. Very few teams now utilize offensive strategies, that use all the three phases of offense: early fastbreak, secondary fastbreak and set play. Don't make the mistake of thinking that defense is now less important than in the past. I've never seen a great team or winning coach that did not have a great defense. During the course of the years, we will face more and more organized defenses and more zone defenses, which are used for containing and disrupting organized offenses. The aim is to force a quick shot or to speed up the decisions of the offense. With the 24-second rule, we will not face the classic zone defenses as in the past, but match-up or combination defenses, such as the triangle-and-two and the box-and-one.

ZONE OFFENSE

A team must be prepared for every eventuality. In a world of endless defenses and set plays, a team must have in his arsenal an offense that is useful against man-to-man, as well as zone defense. In the majority of the cases, the best weapon against the zone is the fastbreak. Because one of the weak points of the zone versus the fastbreak is the fact that the defensive players cannot reach their assigned positions before the arrival of the offensive players. We want our players to run quickly to the offensive end, passing the ball up court without giving the defense a chance to recuperate. This way we can take advantage of all the options offered during the transition attack after a steal, a turnover, a rebound, or quick out-of-bounds pass after a field goal made.

EARLY FASTBREAK

These are the rules the players should follow.

1. OUTLET PASS AND RECEIVING THE PASS

We have two options and two solutions. Both guards must be ready to receive the outlet pass. The outlet pass can be made to 1 in the wing position or to 2 in the middle of the floor (diagr. 1 & 2).

2. THE FORWARD SPRINTS STRAIGHT TO THE BASKET

The forward sprints, near the sideline, in a position where he can receive a pass from one of the guards (diagr. 3).

This transition offense has three trailers.

FIRST TRAILER

He sprints opposite the ball. He is the most dangerous player of the fastbreak and must be ready to receive the ball.

SECOND TRAILER

He is involved with the secondary break. He runs the middle lane of the court and must go to the low post area.

THIRD TRAILER

He is the last player who goes on offense. He must change the side of the ball, pass to the low post, and make a screen.

3. THE FIVE LANES

Ideally, the court is divided in five lanes and a player (diagr. 4) must occupy each lane.

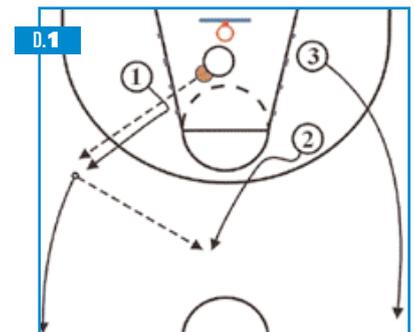
4. QUICK DRIBBLE TO THE MIDDLE OF THE COURT OR A LATERAL PASS

It is better to make a short pass instead of a long one and the best pass is typically the lateral pass. The player on the opposite side, the first trailer, can run over to one of the guards to speed up the fastbreak.

5. INTERNAL PLAY

If we cannot get to the basket on the first try, the offense must immediately create other options.

The second trailer, the player who runs in the middle lane of the floor, must go to the low post area and the perimeter players should give him the ball. If there is not this option, we try to use the third trailer: the aim is to attack the zone under the basket, using the second-



dary break, because this part of the lane is not controlled by the defense during this phase of the play.

SECONDARY BREAK

1 passes to 2 and 2 to 4. 1 after making this pass, cuts in the lane. 5 stops outside the free-throw line area and 3 outside the three-point line (diagr. 5).

If 2 cannot pass to 4, 2 passes to 5 and 5 makes a pass to 4, who cuts in the lane (diagr. 6).

5 can also make a screen for 3, who receives the ball from 2. 4 cuts in the lane (diagr. 7).

After screening for 3, 5 picks for 1. 3 can pass to 1 or 4 (diagr. 8).

1 pass to 5 in the low post, while 4 goes high to screen 3. 2 goes in the middle of the floor (diagr. 9).

If 1 cannot pass to 5, 1 passes to 4 and 4 passes to 5 (diagr. 10).

SET OFFENSE AGAINST THE ZONE

Every offense depends on how it is set up and how the plays are executed.

In order to be successful, every offense:

- Must be efficient against every type of defense (man-to-man, zone or combination defenses).
- Must be able to adapt according to the changing defenses.

OFFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

1. The offense must be flexible and balanced, using:
 - a. Passes
 - b. Dribble Penetration
 - c. Offensive Rebounding
2. Must have continuity from the starting pass until the end of the offense.
3. Must hide the offensive weaknesses and exploit the strong points of the team.
4. The players must have excellent technical knowledge.
5. The offense must be usable against any type of defense.

SPECIAL RULES AGAINST THE CLASSIC ZONE AND THE COMBINATION DEFENSES

Perimeter Players

At the beginning of the set play, all the perimeter players must be in physical contact with the defensive players nearest to them.

INSIDE PLAYERS

Both inside players must be positioned externally, one on the left and the other on the right, slightly outside of the three-second area, near the baseline.

Initially, there is no player on the high post area. This spot will be occupied later on.

DRIBBLE PENETRATION

Dribble penetration among two defenders of the zone. All the offensive players must be

ready to receive the ball if:

- a) A teammate makes a dribble penetration.
- b) The low post receives the ball.
- c) The high post receives the ball.

SCREENS

Every time a player screens, he must roll to the ball after the screen.

PASSES

The most efficient passes are the short and quick ones.

INSIDE PLAY

From the beginning, it's important that the ball must be passed under the basket (inside play), before the defense can recuperate. It is not advisable to immediately shoot from the outside, because we like to reserve the jump shot in the second stage of the play.

OPTION A

Start this set play on the left or right side against the two-three zone. 1 tries to make physical contact with X1, as well as 2 and 3 with X2 and X3 (diagr. 11).

1 can pass to 2 or 3: these two offensive players must have physical contact with X2 and X3, before popping out for receiving the ball (diagr. 12 & 13).

TIMING ON MOVEMENTS

Initially, the high post area is free and 4 and 5 stay behind their defensive players X4 and X5. Their movements depend on the position of the ball. They move to the open area near the basket and behind the defensive players and then they continue the cut toward the high-post area (diagr. 14).

CONTINUITY ON OFFENSE

Against the three - two zone defense, 1 dribbles straight against the defensive player nearest to him and then passes to 2, who, after contact with X2, pops out to receive the ball. 3 and 4 cut behind the defense, with 4 cutting high at the free-throw line area, or in the corner. 3 can go on the opposite corner or go also at the free-throw area (diagr. 15).

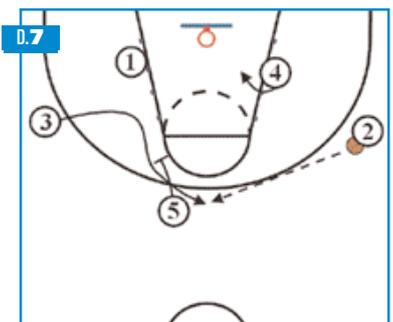
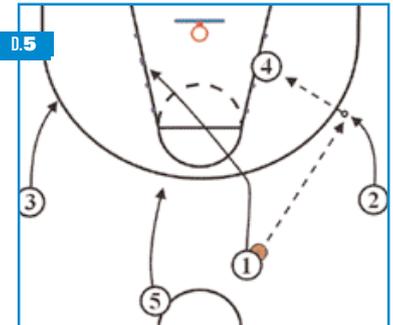
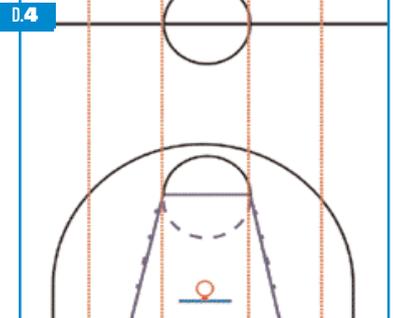
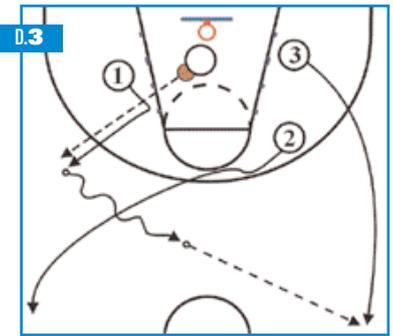
5 can post out or make a screen for 3, if 3 cuts to the opposite corner. 1, after passing to 2, makes contact with his defensive player and goes outside on the wing at a 45° angle (diagr. 16).

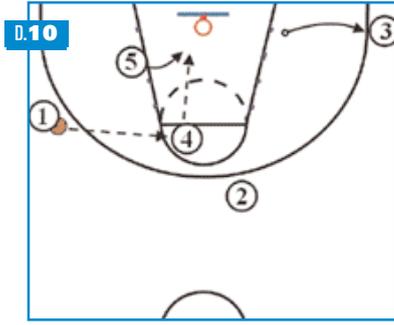
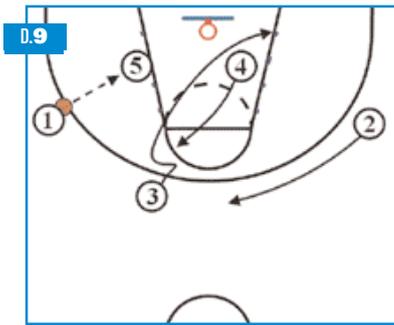
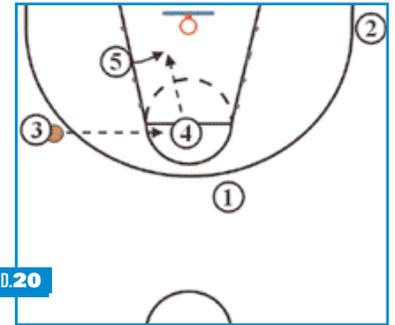
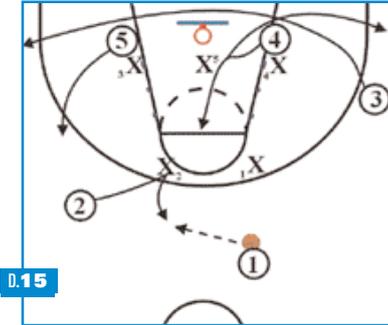
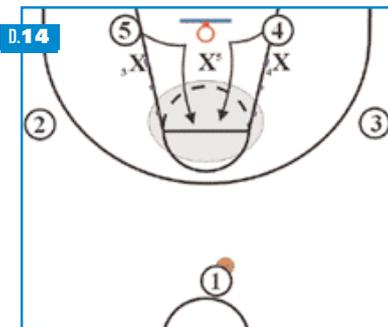
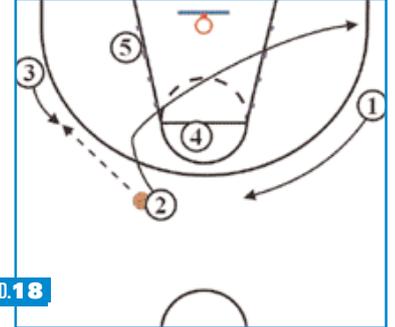
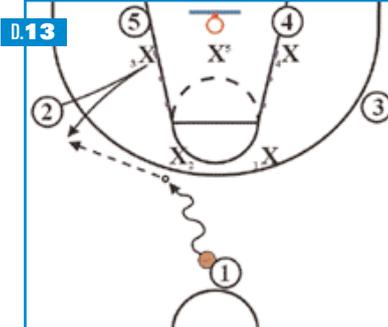
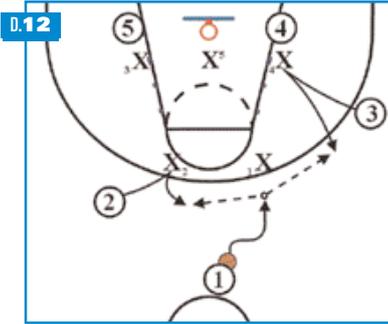
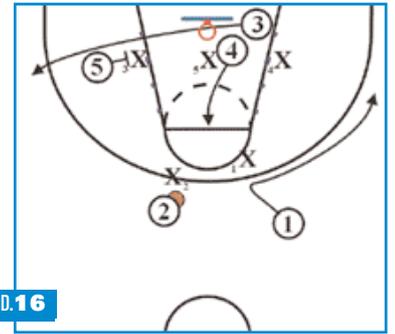
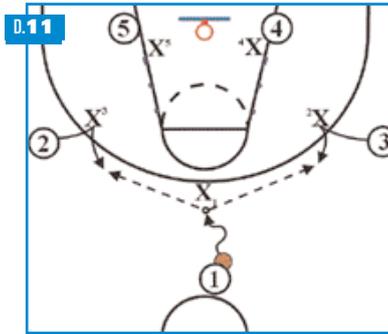
2 has the option of passing to 4 under the basket, or to 5, who rolls after the pick for 3 (diagr. 17).

2 passes to 3 and cuts to the opposite corner, while 1 goes in the middle of the floor (diagr. 18).

3 can pass, dribble, or shoot. If 3 passes to 5, 4 cuts and goes to the low post on the opposite side to 5 (diagr. 19).

If 3 passes to 4, 4 can shoot, dribble to the



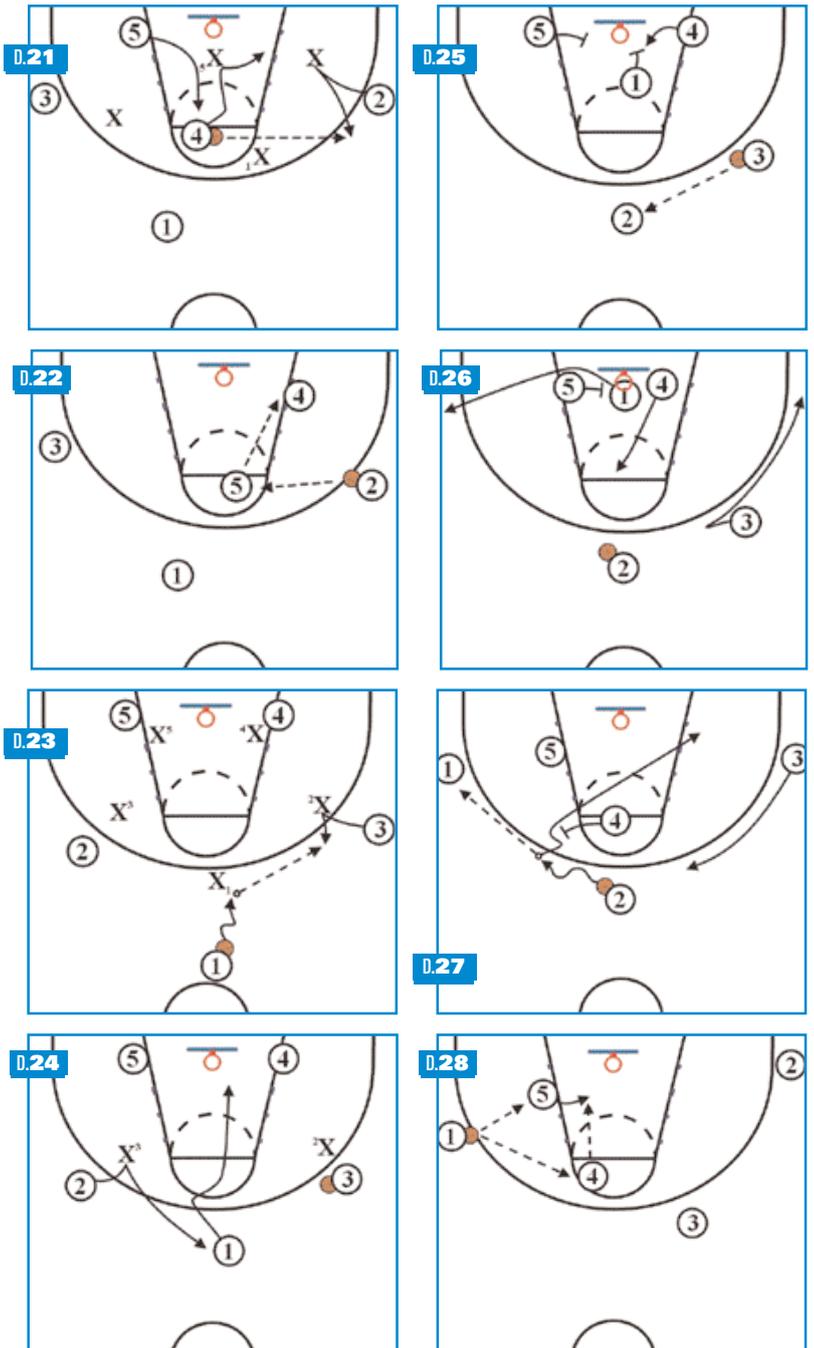
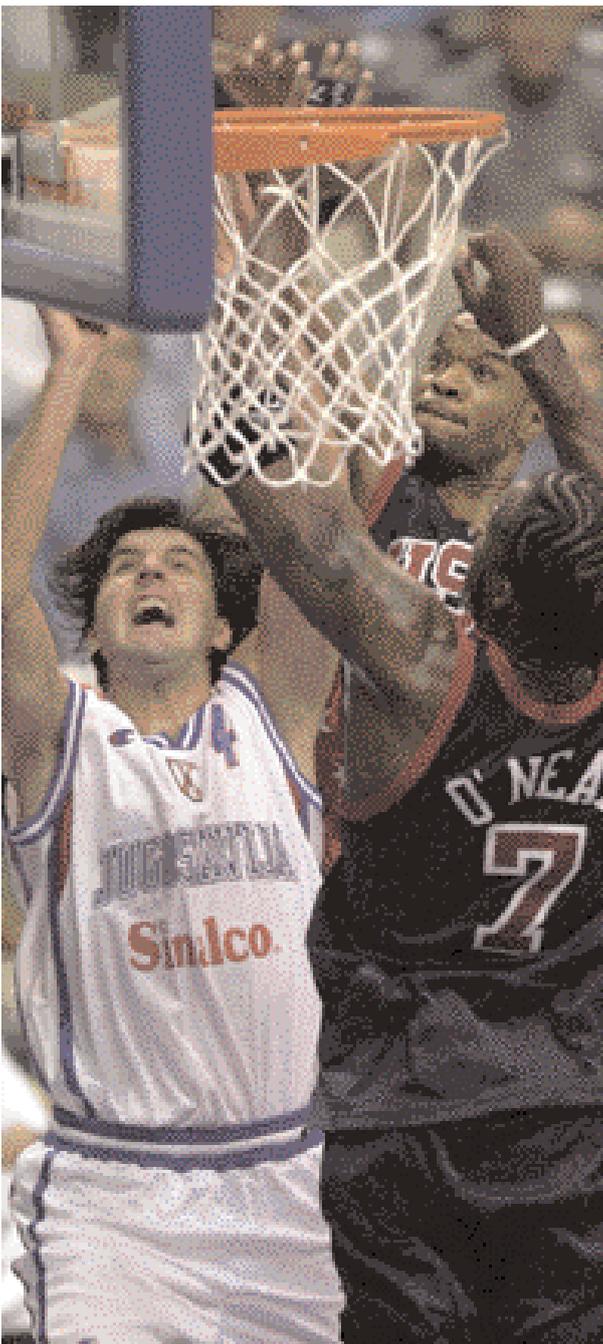


basket, or pass to 5 (diagr. 20). 4 can also change side with the ball, passing to 2, then cutting in the lane and going straight toward X4, and then to the low-post position. At the same time, 5 makes contact with X5 and then cuts in the middle of the lane (diagr. 21).

2 passes to 5. 5 can shoot or pass to 4 and 3 rebounds (diagr. 22).

OPTION B
Cutting of the point guard

1 dribbles toward X1 and then passes to 3 (diagr. 23). 1 then cuts to the basket and 2, while 1 cuts, makes contact with X3 and



then pops out toward the ball (diagr. 24). 1 cuts and screens for 4 (diagr. 25). After screening for 4, 1 cuts in the corner using the pick of 5 and receives the ball from 2. 4 cuts and goes in the high post area (diagr. 26). 2 passes the ball to 1, and cutting around 4 goes in the opposite corner, while 3 goes high (diagr. 27). 1 pass to 4 in the high-post area, or to 5 in the low-post. If 4 receives the ball, he can pass to 5, who cuts in the lane (diagr. 28).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is extremely important to run the set in a precise way to break down the normal zones and the combination defenses. We want that the ball to be in certain spot of the floor, with the players in the exact

position. Again, I would like to underline the fact that the offensive players, before popping out to receive the ball, must make physical contact with the nearest defender, and then must occupy the open spaces. If every movement is done as I've explained, we can have a variety of shooting solutions.

The key to success is always how well the players execute the movements, their level of preparation, and their coaching. The advantages of the described concepts are:

1. Unlimited possibilities for our players to create individual shooting opportunities.
2. The possibilities to make a quick shot in every special situation, such as time running out or foul problems for the defense.



INDIVIDUAL OFF BALL DEFENSIVE FUNDAMENTALS



by Ernie Woods

One of the winning coaches in the State of Washington, he is lecturer at clinics in US and abroad. He was also scout for NBA teams. Since many years he applies the technology to basketball and he has a web site hoopstactics.com.

1. PASS DENIAL

Guarding player on ball side without the ball
Off ball defenders primary responsibility is to constantly attack and disrupt the passing lanes. This requires a commitment of hard work and determination. Defenders must maintain a low bent knee stance, "Ear on Chest" position using split vision to see both their opponent and the ball. The arm closest to the ball should be extended straight out in passing lane with palm toward the passer ("Stop Sign") to deflect or discourage any pass. The rear foot should be placed 12" behind the receiver. When assuming a pass denial stance, defenders should move with quick, short shuffle steps staying low.

OFF BALL PASS DENIAL POSITION ATTACKING THE PASSING LANE

Rule: Off ball defenders should never allow any pass over 15 feet. Successful passes over 15' compromises the defense and gives the offense a distinct advantage. It is important to see the ball and the opponent at all times. This is especially true when in defensive transition where the defenders should never run down the court with their backs to the ball.

BALL-YOU-MAN PRINCIPLE

In order to effectively attack and deny passing lanes, the defender must play in an UP position between his opponent and the ball (diagr. 1).

When the ball is in the backcourt, the off ball defenders should stay above the free throw line extended until the ball crosses the midcourt line.

Incorrect: Ball - You - Man

When the defender plays in a DOWN position below their opponent, they have to close out and lunge at the pass. This usually resulting in a near miss interception or deflection and easy shot off dribble penetration (diagr. 2). Do NOT leave a shooter to help.

