

Notes on the Dribble-Drive Motion Offense - the Basics

From the Coach's Clipboard [Basketball Playbook](http://www.coachesclipboard.net), @ <http://www.coachesclipboard.net>

The "dribble-drive motion offense" is one of the latest, popular offenses seen at the college, pro, and high school levels. The original innovator is Vance Walberg of Fresno City College and Pepperdine, and now assistant coach at UMass, and he called it his "AASAA" offense... meaning "attack, attack, skip, attack, attack". At the college level, coach John Calipari has popularized it, modified it, and renamed it the "dribble-drive motion offense". Guard dribble-penetration is the key, and dribble-penetration is one of the most difficult things for a defense to stop... plus it exposes the defenders to picking up fouls, and gets us to the free-throw line. Keys are:

- spacing
- creating gaps
- attacking with the dribble-drive.



Vance Walberg

This is a guard-oriented offense that features spreading the floor and dribble-penetration to the rim for lay-ups or kick-out three-point shots. Coach Walberg uses the term "key or 3" meaning either a layup, or a 3-point shot. This offense uses a 4-out set.

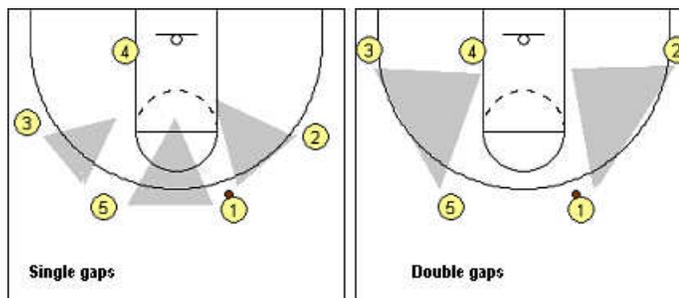


O1 and O5 are like double point guards, and their mentality is to attack with the dribble first, and are outside shooters secondly. O2 and O3 are set deep in the corners (and must be patient) and they are shooters first and dribble-attackers secondly. The post player does not look to post-up, but rather plays on the opposite block, elbow or short corner... as this creates more open lanes for dribble-penetration. The post player looks for lobs, or dump passes from penetrating perimeter players, and looks to "clean up" inside with offensive rebounding.

Spacing and Creating Gaps

Let's discuss these together as they are related. In order to be able to drive to the hoop, we must have good spacing and gaps to penetrate. Important rules for spacing for perimeter players are to rotate to their correct positions as the ball moves (discussed below), and to keep outside the 3-point arc. If a perimeter player dribble-penetrates and then passes back outside, he/she must clear out and get back to the 3-point arc. The same is true if he/she should cut inside... get back out to the arc if you don't get the pass. The post player O4 must be constantly moving as the ball moves, always to the weakside, so that he/she is not in the way of the dribble-penetrator. At other times, O4 must "T-up" (slide up into the middle of the lane), as on baseline dribble-penetration (discussed below).

Look at the diagram. On the left, we see "single gaps". These are difficult to dribble-penetrate because help defenders are in good position.

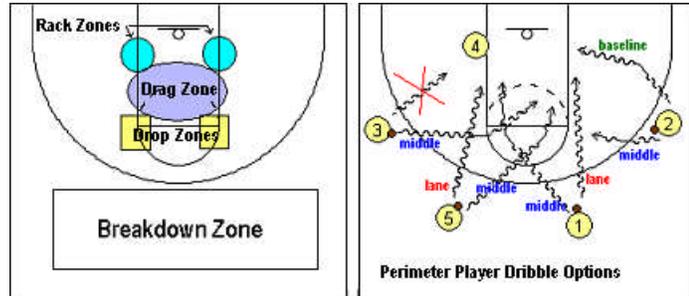


By moving O2 and O3 deep into the corners, as seen in the right diagram, we create "double gaps", which are much easier to attack. Further below, we will even discuss how to create a "triple gap".

Definitions, Zones

First, we need to define some important terms, our various "zones".

- **Break-down Zone**... where perimeter players will try to break-down the defender 1-on-1.
- **Rack Zones**... where the attacker finishes with the layup.
- **Drop Zones**... certain options if the dribble-penetrator stops here.
- **Drag Zone**... certain options if the dribble-penetrator is stopped here, without shooting.



Attack with the Dribble

You need four perimeter players who can handle the ball and attack the seams 1-on-1 with dribble-penetration and then finish, and who can also catch-and-shoot the 3-point shot effectively. On dribble-penetration, the ball-handler has several options including... (1) finishing the lay-up, (2) dumping it to the post player on the opposite block, (3) passing to a back-cutter inside, or (4) passing it back out to the three point arc for the outside shot. The main thought process however, should always be "get to the rack"... the other options are there if the player with the ball is stopped by the defense.

The diagram to the right above shows the dribble lane options for each perimeter spot. O1 and O5 have two dribble-lane options... lane penetration (up the lane line) and middle penetration. O2 has two dribble options... middle and baseline. O3 has one dribble option... just middle penetration. We don't want O3 to dribble baseline, as the options are not good here with O4 often on that side.

Next, we'll discuss these dribble-options.

O1 Dribble-Penetration

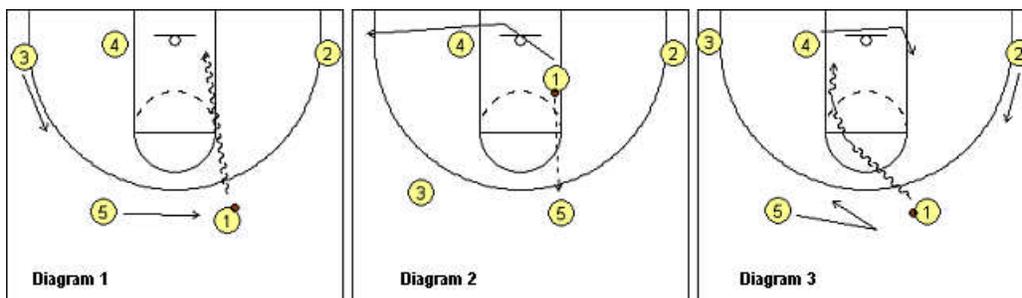
O1 has two dribble-penetration options... (1) up the lane and (2) to the middle.

O1 lane-penetration

Diagram 1 shows O1 lane-penetration. His/her thought is "get to the rack" and score. O5 slides behind O1, and might get the return pass from O1 (diagram 2), if O1 stops in the "drag zone"... here O1 makes a reverse pivot and passes back to O5. Notice that O3 rotates up to the high wing area. O3 must find the "open window" here, open for a pass from the dribbler. O4 stays on the weakside and looks to rebound and "clean-up" a miss. O1 could also pass to O4 if the X4 defender moves over to stop O1. Also in diagram 2, once O1 passes, he/she clears out quickly to the opposite corner.

O1 middle-penetration

Diagram 3 shows O1 middle-penetration. Often the X1 defender will try to deny lane penetration, and overplay O1's right side. So O1 simply makes the cross-over and dribble-penetrates the middle. O4 relocates to the right side of the lane. O5 initially moves right (to accept a possible kick-back from O1), and then moves back to the lane line once O1 attacks. O2 rotates up and O3 stays deep in the corner.



O5 Dribble-Penetration

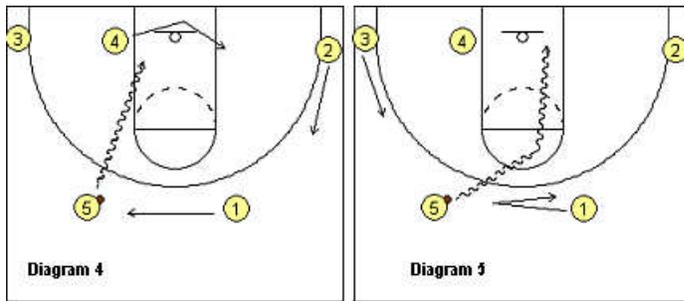
O5 has two dribble-penetration options... (1) up the lane and (2) to the middle.

O5 lane-penetration

Diagram 4 shows O5 lane-penetration. His/her thought is "get to the rack" and score. O1 slides behind O5, and might get the return pass from O5. O4 re-locates to the right block. O2 slides up to the high wing spot. It's very important for O2 (and O3 above) to find and move to the "open window" for an open pass from the dribbler.

O5 middle-penetration

Diagram 5 shows O5 middle-penetration. O1 initially moves left (to accept a possible kick-back from O5), and then moves back to the lane line once O5 attacks. O3 rotates up and O2 stays deep in the corner.



O2 Dribble-Penetration - from Transition

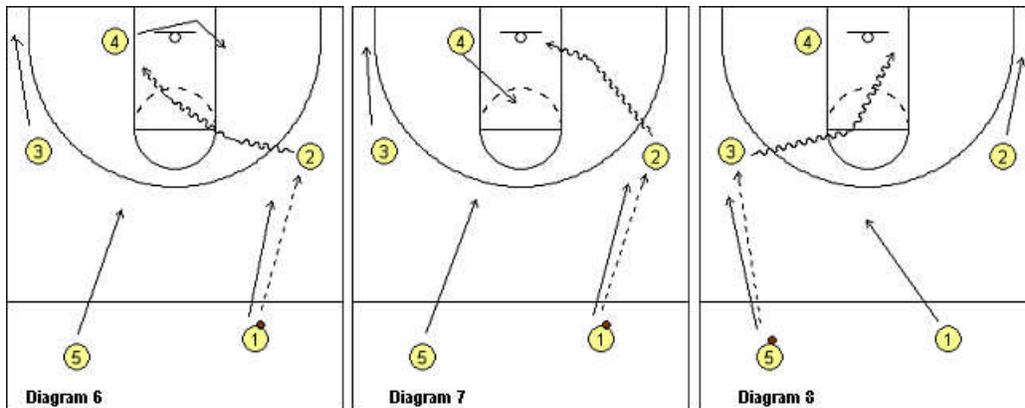
O2 has two dribble-penetration options... (1) middle and (2) baseline. Diagram 6 below shows transition. Notice that O2 and O3 are high on the wing when the ball is still in the back-court, as we always want O1 (and O5) to try to pass quickly up the court to either O2 or O3. If the ball is not passed up the floor, once it crosses half-court O2 and O3 move down to the corners.

O2 middle-penetration

In diagram 6, we see O2 middle penetration. O2 gets the pass and immediately attacks the middle. O4 re-locates to the right block. O1 fills in the spot vacated by O2. If O2 gets stopped inside, he/she could always reverse pivot and pass back to O1 or O5. O5 fills in his/her usual top left spot.

O2 baseline-penetration

Diagram 7 shows O2 baseline dribble-penetration. O4 "T's-up"... i.e. slides up into the middle of the paint for a possible dump or lob pass from O2. O3 goes to the corner for a possible pass there from O2. If O2 gets stopped inside, he/she could always reverse pivot and pass back to O1. O1 fills O2's spot and O5 goes to his/her usual spot on top.



O3 Dribble-Penetration - from Transition

O3 has only one dribble-penetration option... to the middle. We don't want O3 to dribble baseline, as the options usually are not good here.

O3 middle-penetration

In diagram 8 above, we see O3 middle penetration. O3 gets the pass and immediately attacks the middle. O2 slides to the corner for a possible pass from O3. O5 fills O3's spot and O1 goes to his/her usual spot on top.

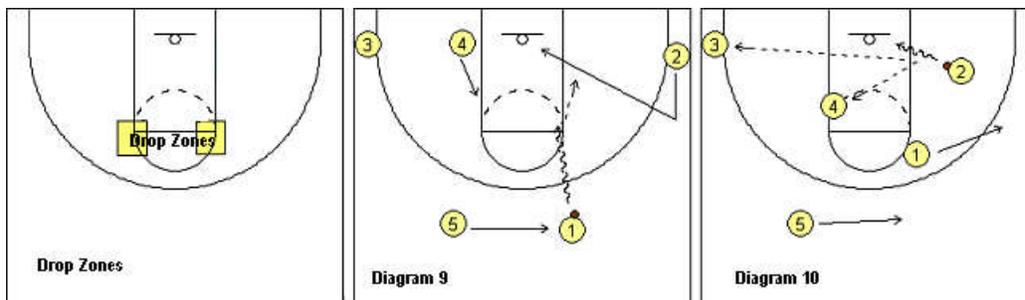
The diagram also points out another important rule: anytime a wing player has the ball, the opposite wing should be on a diagonal... so here, O2 goes to the corner diagonally opposite from O3 on the wing.

Using the "Drop Zones"

There are times when the dribbler will not get to the rack, but will stop in one of the two "drop zones" (see diagram below). These are the options from the drop zones.

"Drop 2"

Diagram 9 below. O1 attacks the lane and stops in the drop zone. Now we play a "1-2 game" with O1 and O2. O2 takes a step up high, calls for the ball, and suddenly back-cuts to the rack for the pass from O1. O4 T's-up. Diagram 10 shows that O2 can look to (1) score on a layup, (2) dump it to O4, or (3) pass out to O3 in the left corner. If O2 passes, he/she must quickly cut out to the opposite corner, as O3 would rotate up. After passing from the drop zone, O1 also gets out to fill O2's spot and O5 has rotated over on O1's initial dribble inside.

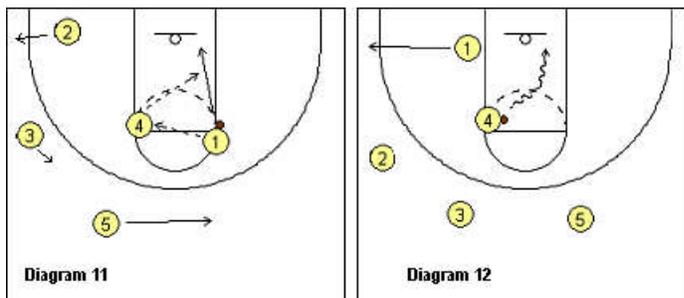


"Drop 2, 1-4 Give and Go"

Diagram 11. If the pass to O2 back-cutting is not there, O2 moves all the way through to the opposite corner. O1 could have faked a pass to O2 and passes instead to O4. O1 then cuts through hard for a "give and go" pass from O4 for the layup.

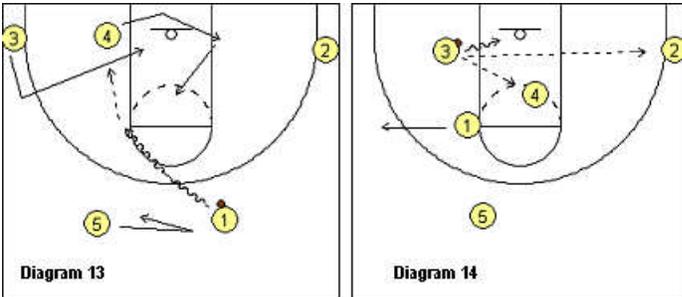
Drop 2, O4 Clear-Out

Diagram 12. If the pass from O4 to O1 is not open, this leaves a "clear-out" situation for O4 with the right side of the lane wide-open for the dribble-drive to the hoop.



"Drop 3"

Diagram 13. O1 attacks with the middle drive and stops in the left drop zone. O4 re-locates to the right block. O3 back-cuts to the hoop for the pass from O1. O4 T's-up when O3 cuts. O3 can (1) score with a layup, (2) pass to O4, or (3) pass to O2 in the right corner (diagram 14).

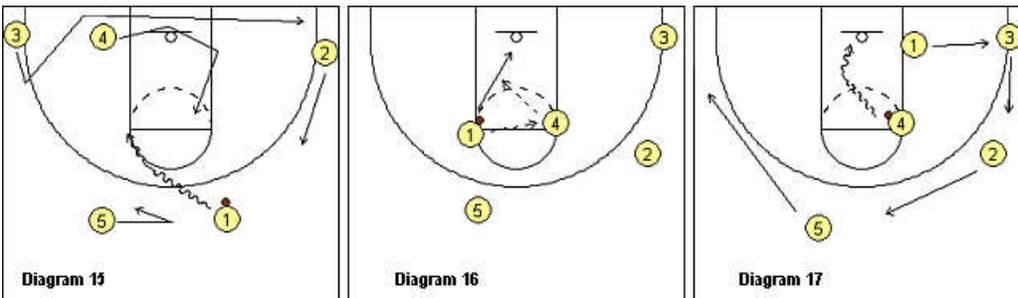


"Drop 3, 1-4 Give and Go"

Diagram 15. As we have just seen, O1 stops in the left drop zone, O3 back-cuts but is not open for the pass. O4 initially moves to the right block and the T's-up. O1 now passes to O4 (diagram 16), and cuts through for a "give and go" pass from O4.

Drop 3, O4 Clear-Out

Diagram 17. If the pass from O4 to O1 is not open, this again leaves a "clear-out" situation for O4 with the left side of the lane wide-open for the dribble-drive to the hoop.

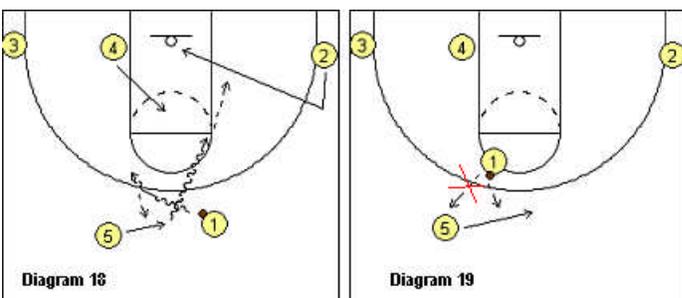


Kick-Backs

A kick-back occurs when a perimeter player attacks with the dribble, and tosses back to the adjacent perimeter player cutting above and around him/her... this player can then attack with the dribble. A kick-back is not the same as a weave-screen or a hand-off, as we want about 6-8 feet of spacing between the two players. Diagram 18 shows O1 starting a middle penetration. He instead makes a kick-back pass to O5. O5 then attacks. Here we see a kick-back followed by a drop-2. O5 stops in the drop zone and passes to the back-cutting O2 for the layup, as O4 T's-up.

"Positive" and "Negative" Kick-backs

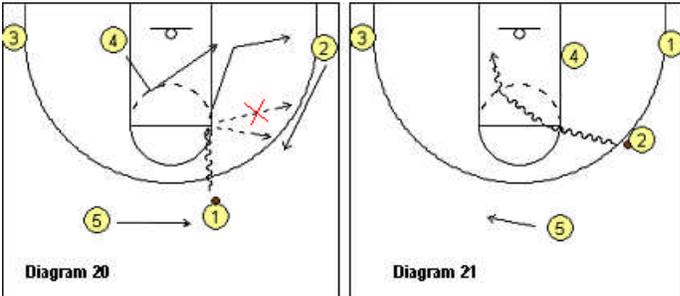
Don't make the kick-back pass too soon (a "negative" kick-back)... the receiver should be even or just past the ball so that he/she can immediately turn and attack the gap (a "positive" kick-back). If O5 gets the kick-back too soon (see diagram 19 - the red X), we haven't gained anything and the gap will not be open.



Kick-Ups

Kick-Up to O2

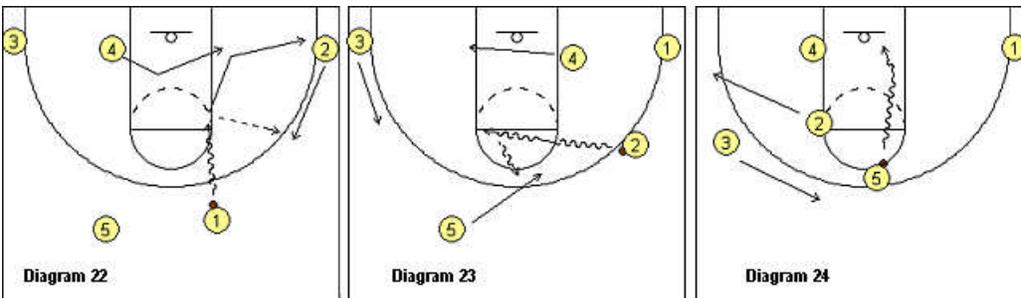
See diagram 20. O1 attacks the lane and stops in the drop zone. Ordinarily, we look for a "drop-2" here with O2 back-cutting. But if the X2 defender is sagging inside, O2 comes up to the wing and gets a "kick-up" pass from O1, and O1 goes to the corner. Like the kick-back pass, the kick-up pass should not be made too early (red X in diagram 20) when O2 is still coming up... we want O2 to get it right at the apex of the cut (a "positive" kick-up) so he/she can immediately turn and attack, as seen in diagram 21. O4 re-locates to the right block. On O2's middle drive, O5 slides across toward the left lane line.



Kick-Up followed by a Kick-back

Diagram 22 shows the O2 kick-up as previously seen. O1 attacks the lane and stops in the drop zone. After the kick-up to O2, O1 moves out to the corner. O4 re-locates to the right block. On O2's middle drive, O5 slides across in line with the right lane line.

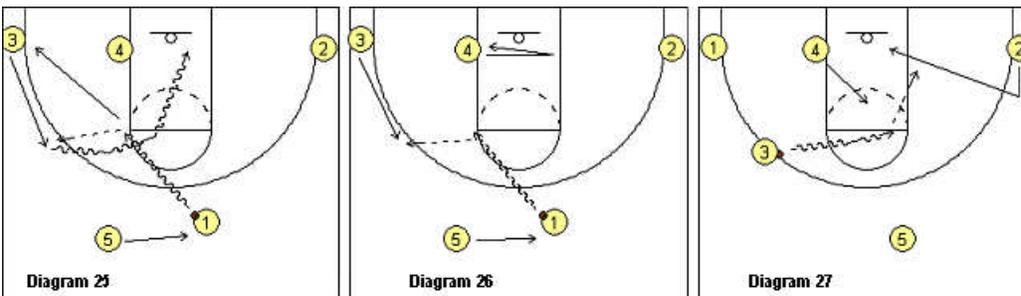
Diagram 23 now shows O2 making a kick-back to O5. O5 then attacks up the right lane line (diagram 24). O4 has re-located to the left block and O2 cuts out to the left corner as O3 rotates up top. Oftentimes in a game, it's not the first dribble attack that results in a basket, but the second, third or fourth attack.



Kick-Up to O3

In diagram 25, O1 makes a middle dribble-penetration and stops in the drop zone. O3, instead of back-cutting, comes up for the kick-up from O1. O3 attacks the middle as O1 moves to the left corner.

Diagrams 26 and 27 show a kick-back to O3 followed by a drop-2. O1 attacks middle and stops in the drop zone. O4 initially moves to the right block on O1's dribble, but will move back to the left block on the kick-up to O3. O3 gets the kick-up pass and dribbles middle. O3 stops in the right drop zone as O4 T's-up and O2 back-cuts for the pass and lay-up. O2 could pass to O4 or O1 deep in the right corner.

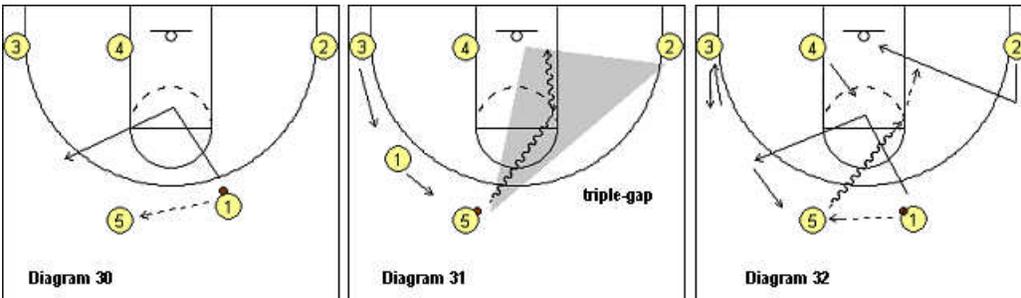


Playing in the Gaps

"415" play

The "415" stands for our 4-set, with a pass from 1 to 5. We saw at the top of this article, [a diagram showing single and double gaps](#). We like to attack double-gaps, but here we will also show how to create a "triple-gap".

In diagram 30, O1 passes to O5. O1 cuts inside ("T's-up") and cuts back out to the left wing. Now O5 has a triple-gap to attack (diagram 31). O1 circles behind O5. O3 moves up to the wing. Diagram 32 shows the "415" play, triple-gap with a drop-2. O1 passes to O5, cuts inside, out to the left wing and circles around to O5's spot. O5 attacks the triple-gap. O3 rotates up. O5 stops in the drop zone, and O2 back-cuts for the pass from O5. O4 T's-up, and O3 moves back down to the corner for a possible pass from O2.

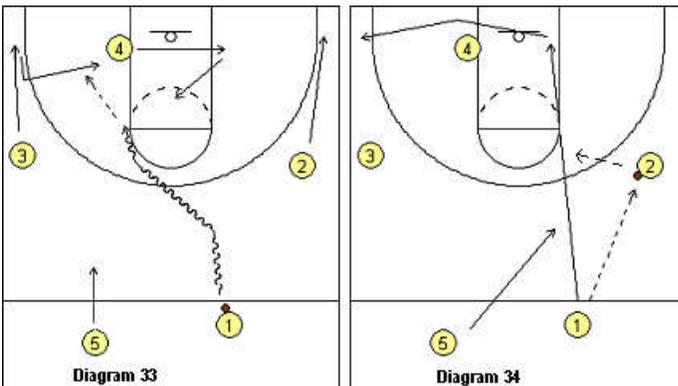


Transition

We have [already learned above](#) that in transition, when the ball is in the back-court, O2 and O3 are at the high wing areas and don't go to the corners until after the ball advances across half-court. We have also seen how O2 and O3 can attack in transition from the pass up the court.

O1 can also bring the ball up the court and attack either the lane slot (gap/seam) or the middle seam right from the start as additional options in transition. Diagram 33 below shows O1 attacking the middle seam followed by a drop-3. O1 stops in the left drop zone, while O3 back-cuts for the pass from O1. O4, already on the right block because of O1 middle drive, now T's-up and O2 goes to the corner for a possible pass.

Diagram 34 shows another option. O1 passes up to O2. If O2 hesitates and does not attack with the dribble, O1 cuts through for a possible give and go pass from O2. O5 then fills O1's usual spot, as O1 cuts out to the opposite corner and O3 rotates up.



Drag-Zone Options

If O1 (or another perimeter attacker) stops in the drag-zone, he/she looks to pass the ball back out to the perimeter, usually with a reverse pivot for a pass right back to where he/she started from.

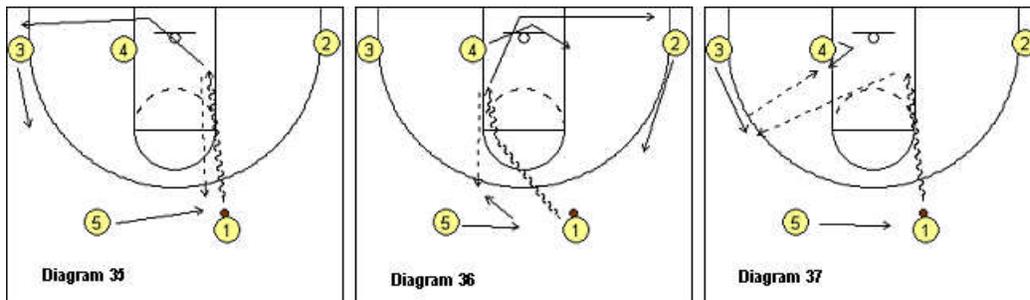
"Drag-5"

Diagram 35 shows O1 lane-penetration to a drag-5. O1 gets stopped in the drag-zone, reverse pivots and passes back to O5. O1 clears out to the opposite corner, as O3 rotates up. O5 can now attack either the lane or the middle seam.

Diagram 36 shows O1 middle-penetration to a drag-5. O1 attacks the middle and stops in the drag-zone. O4 has re-located to the right block. O5 initially goes right (for a possible kick-back) and then moves left directly in line with the left lane line. O1 reverse pivots and passes back out to O5. O1 moves out to the right corner, as O2 rotates up.

"Drag-3"

Diagram 37 shows O1 lane-penetration to a drag-3. O1 gets stopped in the drag-zone, and this time finds O3 open on the wing for the pass. This is what we were talking about earlier when we said that O3 has to find the "open window" for this pass. This is also a great opportunity for O4 to post up, as often the X4 defender has moved over in the lane to stop O1.



Additional Rules

- Pass and cut... whenever a perimeter player passes, he makes a basket cut and re-locates out to the perimeter.
- Dribble at, back-cut... on the perimeter, if someone is sideways dribbling toward you (not attacking the rim), then you must back-cut through to the rim and re-locate opposite on the 3-point arc.
- Fake pass at me, I back-cut... if the player fakes a pass to me, I then back-cut through to the opposite side.
- Wing-to-point pass, the wing slides down to the corner.

Here are a few examples.

Pass and cut

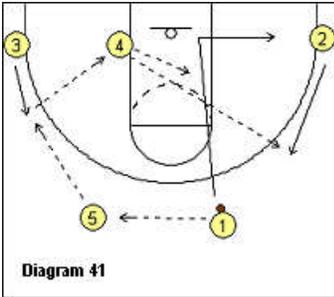
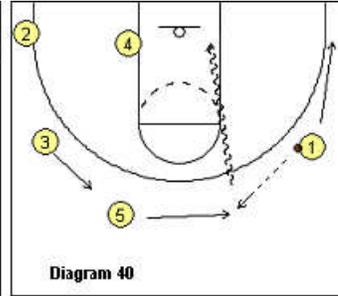
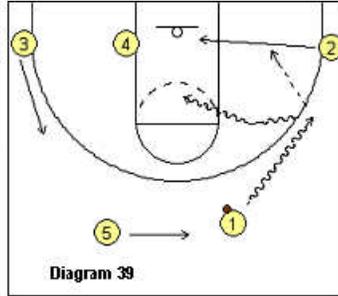
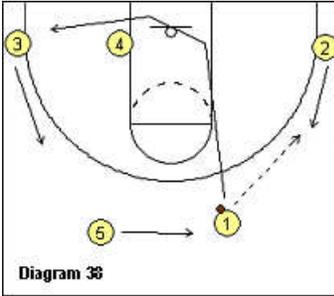
Diagram 38. Sometimes the X1 defender is tough to beat. Here, O1 passes to O2 on the wing, and in accordance with our "pass and cut" rule, O1 cuts through for a possible give and go pass back from O2. O1 re-locates to the opposite corner, as O3 rotates up, and O5 rotates over to O1's vacated spot.

Dribble at, back-cut

Diagram 39. This time O1 dribbles to the right wing. In accordance with our "dribble at, back-cut" rule, O2 back-cuts and could get the pass from O1. O2 would cut through to the opposite corner as O3 rotates up and O5 rotates over to O1's spot. Before rotating, O5 actually waits a "2-count", giving O1 a chance to dribble-attack the middle. Notice that O1 could back-dribble and then attack the middle seam here.

Wing-to-point pass, wing goes to the corner

Diagram 40. In continuation from diagram 39, instead of attacking, O1 passes back to O5. In accordance with our "wing-to-point pass" rule, O1 moves to the corner. This creates a double-gap for O5 to attack the lane.



Getting the ball inside to O4 posting up

Some years O4 may be one of your best players and you want to get the ball into him/her from time-to-time. In diagram 41, O1 passes to O5, and O5 passes to O3. O4 posts up and O3 passes in to O4.

O1 times this post entry pass so that as the pass goes inside, O1 basket cuts for a possible pass from O4. O4 also looks to make a post move and score, or can skip pass out to O2 in the open-window.

Point Guard Options

In summary... after crossing the half-court line, our point-guard O1 can:

- "Rack it" -- drive either the lane or middle seam and score.
- Dribble middle and kick back to O5.
- Dribble to either drop-zone, with drop-2 and drop-3 options, and kick-up 2 and kick-up 3 options.
- Pass O1 to O5 and create the triple-gap ("415" play).
- Pass to O2 and cut through for a give and go.
- Dribble at O2, as O2 goes back-door.
- Get it inside to O4... passes O1 to O5, O5 to O3, O3 to O4.

You can see how players must keep moving with this offense, maintain their spacing, create double and triple gaps, and think "attack" at all times. To counteract this offense, defenses may use a sagging man-to-man, or "pack-line" defense, or may use a zone defense to clog things up inside. So you will also need to practice your zone offense as well!

You will notice that there is no screening in this offense. So you avoid moving screens and having to spend time teaching players how to screen correctly. You can of course work in some screening, some simple pick-and-roll and pick-and-pop plays.

See: [Dribble-Drive Motion Offense - More!](#) and [Dribble-Drive Motion Offense Drills...](#) breakdown drills for teaching the dribble-drive motion offense.
