

toward the hoop. Making a long first step cannot be overemphasized. Two characteristics that separate the “special” offensive players from the good ones are a long first step and ambidexterity. The long first step makes a player of average quickness seem much quicker. That quick first step (if it doesn't lead to a direct score) drives the defender back and provides opportunities for a pull-back move (described later)—in other words, it creates that all-important thing we call space.

Reason 4—Step Left and Pass Left or Step Right and Pass Right After receiving the ball at the right wing (on a pass from the point) and executing a front pivot on the right foot, if the player chooses to pass the ball back to the point, the player simply needs to step with the left foot and pass with the left hand. If a reverse pivot on the left foot had been used, the player could not step with the left foot to pass because a traveling violation would occur. Crossing over with the right foot to pass is ill-advised; not only is it awkward, but the defense will jump right in front of the ball, knowing that the offensive player will not likely be able to cross back over for a drive. Therefore, players should pivot on the inside foot so that they can step toward the passer with the outside foot and pass with the outside hand. From the right wing, that means step left and pass left. From the left wing, it means step with the right foot and pass with the right hand.

Reading the Defense for Perimeter Moves

Beginning at the low-post block on the right side of the floor, the player steps in front of the defender with the right foot, pushes off with that foot, and accelerates toward the intersection of the free throw line extended and the three-point circle, creating space. The player receives the basketball from the point. Because the defender has left space, the player uses a front pivot and faces the defender.

Basketball is a game of counters. A team's offensive and defensive reactions are counters to what the opponent has presented. If a team offense is not designed to use counterstrategy against defensive tactics, that offense will be stopped. On the contrary, the team that is trained to read and react quickly will be unstoppable.

Reading and reacting in the one-on-one situation is no different. Players must learn to recognize what the defense is taking away—and thereby read what the defense is giving away so that the offensive player can take quick advantage. The following moves are all based on read-and-react strategy.

Move 1—Front Pivot and Drive Baseline With the offensive player facing the basket, the defender moves in and leaves room on the baseline side for the drive. The player crosses over with the left foot, swings the



Figure 7.1 After making a front pivot, the offensive player takes a long step past the defender and toward the basket.

basketball to the right hip for protection, and takes a long step past the defender and toward the basket (see figure 7.1). In most cases, in order to take the straight path to the basket, slight contact between the players occurs. That is good. The offensive player should brush the opponent, though not too much. The offensive driver must be aggressive. Contact favors the offense.

Move 2—Front Pivot and Drive Over the Top

This move is made in the same situation as the previous one, but the defender is shading toward the baseline side, leaving just enough room for the offensive player to drive toward the middle (see figure 7.2). Footwork is a little tricky here because when initiating the drive, some players are tempted to pick up the right foot, or pivot foot, and cross over with it, using it for the first step of the drive. This should be avoided because it welcomes a traveling violation. The first step of the drive



Figure 7.2 The offensive player has just enough room to drive to the middle.

should be made with the nonpivot foot—the left foot in this case—and the dribble should occur just before the right foot hits the floor.

The move should end with a layup on the opposite side of the basket (a left-handed layup, jumping with the right foot). In games, a player may seldom be able to drive that far without encountering defenders along the way, but for training, ending with a layup is good footwork practice.

Move 3—Drop Step for a Layup If the defender is playing tight and high when the offensive player squares up to the basket, the player pivots on



Figure 7.3 Drop step for a layup.



Figure 7.4 The player reacts to the defense by pulling back to the original position.

the right foot, turns toward the baseline, takes a long step with the left foot, and drives to the basket (see figure 7.3). To help expedite the execution of this move, the player must be sure to keep the back as vertical as possible when turning. This will aid in a quick pivot around a vertical axis. Another important tip is that when the player is pivoting, the pivot foot should be turned to face the corner of the court. This releases the hip so the left leg can be free to point in the direction of the basket.

Move 4—Drop Step, Pull Back, Shot

The player is overplayed on reception and makes the reverse step toward the basket. However, the defender reacts and moves over and back to block the path to the basket. The player reads the defense and reacts by pulling the left foot back and regaining the original position (see figure 7.4). If the first step with the left foot was a long step, the distance between the offensive and defensive players should be great enough to get off a quick three-point shot. Once again, the coach should make the point about the importance of the long first step.

Move 5—Drop Step, Pull Back, Rocker Step Drive

The offensive player makes the drop step, and the defender reacts by moving to block the path to the basket. However, the defensive player is moving back and has not completely blocked the path. The offensive player must now make another maneuver to create space. By rocking back toward the original position—and not moving either foot (still in driving position with the left foot stepping toward the basket)—the player makes the defender lean toward the rock. The player then reacts by pushing off the right foot and driving toward the basket (see figure 7.5).

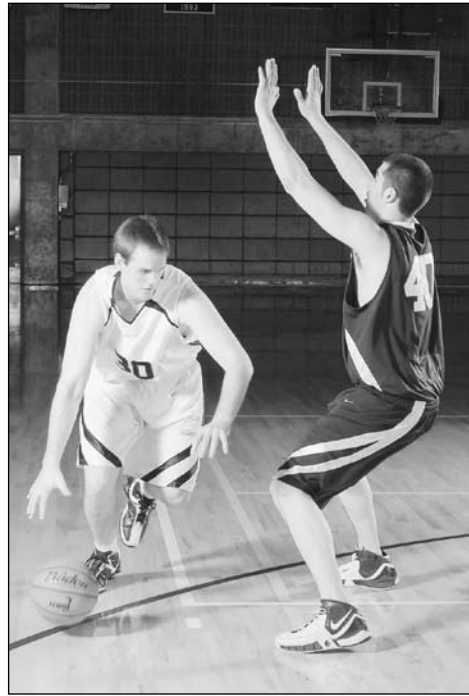


Figure 7.5 The offensive player rocks backward, pulling the defender in the direction of the rock, then drives toward the basket.

Move 6—Drop Step, Pull Back, Explosion Step

The offensive player has attempted to make the reverse drive, dropping the left foot toward the basket. However, the player reads that the defender has reacted quickly and has dropped back to prevent the drive. The offensive player reacts by pulling back to create space for the jump shot. Again, the defender reacts quickly and is closing in on the player. The offensive player—with knees flexed, ready to shoot, pass, or drive—counters by faking a crossover drive to see if the defender will retreat once more. The defender doesn't retreat (see figure 7.6), and the player takes a second, longer step toward the basket and beats the defender on the drive. We call the second step (the first step of the drive) the “explosion step.”



Figure 7.6 After faking the crossover drive, the offensive player prepares to take an explosion step.