

MAINTAIN BOTH PIVOT FEET, OPEN OPTIONS

# BASKETBALL COACH WEEKLY

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November 27, 2014

Issue 62 • \$5.99

## BREAK DOWN DRILLS

FUNDAMENTALS FUEL  
DEEPER STRATEGIES

TEAM BUILDING

GET BEYOND  
THE 'CULTURE'  
CLICHE

EXECUTE BETTER  
BACKDOOR CUTS

3 WAYS TO  
OVERCOME  
2ND-HALF  
STRUGGLES

< **BILL SELF'S** TEAMS  
DOMINATE DUE TO  
MASTERY OF BASICS



USE HOLIDAY TOURNAMENTS TO GAIN EXPERIENCE

# Have Spark After Half



**Basketball Coach Weekly**  
Issue 62

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## Sideline Stories

The Dallas Mavericks have started the season looking like a playoff threat in the NBA's Western Conference, but that's not due to how the team has fared in its third quarters.

For some reason, the Mavs can't get out of their own ways after the halftime intermission. In its first five games, Dallas had been outscored in the third by margins of 31-20, 29-24, 37-20, 38-24 and 35-18.

Without being in the locker room, it's hard to pinpoint why Dallas struggles to start the second half. Bert DeSalvo, head women's coach at Southern Connecticut University, says he has a few things he does to ensure early second-half success.

### "I rather have a dialogue than a monologue from the coaching staff ..."

• **Keep It Brief.** Your players just gave it their all for 16 to 20 minutes of game time, and they possibly are physically and mentally drained. Don't overload them with information. "I ask players questions and keep them thinking at all times. I rather have a dialogue than a monologue from the coaching staff."

DeSalvo does make adjustments where he sees fit but typically spends the time, "preaching our system and staying focused on our game plan."

• **Keep It Loose.** "Humor is very

important," says DeSalvo. "Keeping the players loose, especially in big games, is tremendously important."

He adds that coaches need to be loose as well because players pick up their cues from staff. "Coaches must practice relaxing technique to portray a cool, calm and collected sense, and build confidence in their players."

Along those same lines, DeSalvo says he has used music and video clips during halftime to lighten the mood. Just like anything, don't overdo it and use your knowledge of your squad to develop the best halftime plan. "A lot depends on our opponent and how we need to motivate our players," DeSalvo adds.

• **Find A Spark.** While not a proponent of making drastic halftime changes, DeSalvo indicates he makes energy moves if his team needs a spark.

"One change could be to insert a player in the lineup who is better at applying full-court pressure. This hopefully excites our team and lets them know the coaching staff is staying aggressive, and has confidence in them," DeSalvo says.

It's early in the season. You're still learning what makes your team tick and what motivates them. But, if you find them struggling coming out of halftime, don't let a small blip become a negative pattern — now is the time to experiment with how you use those precious locker-room minutes between halves.



*Michael Austin*  
Michael Austin  
Editor-in-chief



The Mavs had been outscored by at least double digits in 4 of its first 5 third quarters of the season

## In this issue...

### 3 FORGET BASICS? FORGET WINNING

Fundamentals fuel the intricate early-season strategies you want to install

### 4 CUT, CATCH & SCORE AT THE RIM

Make a proper cut, be in a position to receive a pass on the move and attack the rim to score the layup

### 5 ADD IN JUMPER, CORNER PASSES

The final 3 breakdown drills add a top-of-key jumper and movements when a player is in the corner

### 6 GET BEYOND THE 'CULTURE' CLICHE

Building a substantive, lasting culture begins with team leaders and creating common experiences

## QUICK HITTER REST STARS, GAIN EXPERIENCE

It's Thanksgiving week, which means many high school teams are participating in tournaments featuring several games during the course of the break. And, next month, it seems most programs are part of a holiday tournament coinciding with the winter break.

These early-season tournaments serve as great measuring sticks to see where your program stands. They also,

however, can wear down players who are giving game effort several days in a row.

While the goal always is to win, use these tournaments as a way to provide some of your newer players game experience early in the year. Sure, you want to see your starters perform and how they mesh together, but give them an extra few minutes on the bench here and there to find what you have from your second unit.

You'd much rather know where the bench players need improvement now than in a critical conference game when you suddenly are staring down foul trouble with a couple starters.

Plus, while high school players are resilient, you don't want to wear them out too early in the year. Give them a break, see what you have and reap the rewards later in the season.

*Michael Austin*



# Forget Basics? Forget Winning

There is so much you want to cover with your team and so little time to accomplish it all ... but remember the fundamentals fuel your intricate strategies

In all our haste to put in or tweak an offensive system, to break down detailed individual components of defense and draw up more out-of-bounds plays than we'll ever need, it's easy to forget about the fundamentals.

This time of year especially is hard on you. You've only had official access to your players for a couple weeks now. Your first games are inching closer (if you haven't had them already) and time seems to be slipping away.

Maybe you've heard a couple conference teams are switching to full-court pressure. Maybe another has a player who grew six inches this summer and now is destined to dominant the middle — unless you find a way to stop him.

There are endless possibilities of things you need to cover in practice. And, you

spent the first couple days going over some basics and fundamentals, shouldn't that suffice?

Deep down, you know the answer. Today's breakdown drills serve as a reminder about the the tiny details only the best teams execute on a daily basis.

It's the hard fake one way, then a basket cut. It's reading the defense and running a backdoor cut when the opposition overplays the perimeter. It's catching the ball on a jump stop so both feet are available for pivoting, then bursting forward with a hard dribble at the hoop. It's why I love watching Bill Self-led teams — they perfectly execute the fundamentals — and they win doing it.

Another great part about these drills — they don't take a lot of time, yet they are critically important to your success,

provided they are done correctly. If a player decides he knows how to backdoor cut, so he's not putting his heart into the third run-through, then make an example of him and punish the entire team.

Your players are in this together and must understand how mastering the basics leads to more success come game time.

Dedicate those first five to 10 minutes of practice to the basics. What you do first generally resonates with players. Sticking five minutes of fundamentals at the end of a three-hour session isn't helping anyone.

So, yes, you must game plan for the upcoming opponents, but if your players can't execute a simple jump stop (or catch) and pivot, then all the best Xs and Os do you no good.

**Words by:**  
Michael Austin

**Activities by:**  
Troy Culley, Kent Crusaders U14 head coach, South West & South East England regional coach

# Cut, Catch & Score At The Rim

The first 3 daily breakdown drills focus on making a proper cut, being in a position to receive a pass on the move and attacking the rim to score the layup

## WHY USE IT

Breakdown drills are important for players of all ages as they keep athletes sharp when it comes to fundamentals.

## SET UP

Players work in a tandem with one serving as the passer and the other as the scorer. Place a cone near the top of the key for the first drill and move it back to the free-throw line for the second one.

## HOW TO PLAY

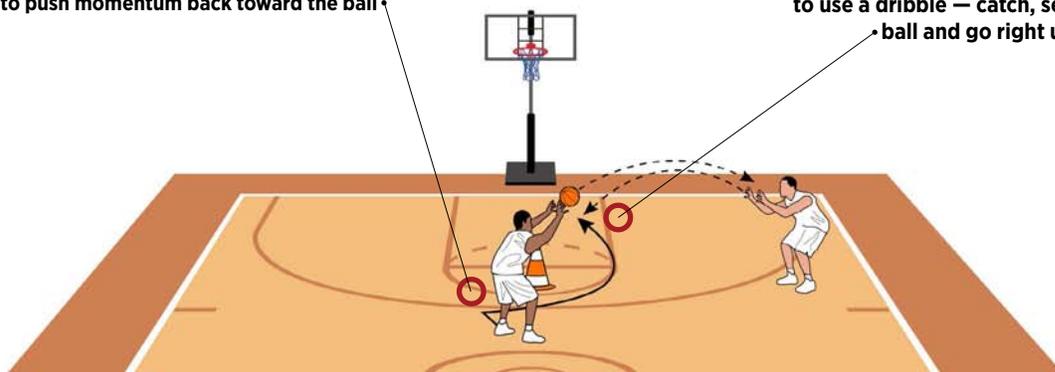
Pass to the partner, sell the opposite fake, use a swim-arm move, make a basket cut, receive the return pass and finish at the rim [1]. For the next drill, the shooter is on the left wing and toward the cone and cuts backdoor just prior to reaching the cone. The partner fires the backdoor pass leading the shooter into an easy layup [2]. This time, the shooter cuts to the middle of the floor, pops to the 3-point line, catches a pass on a jump stop, squares up, takes a jab step opposite then cross-steps into a dribble and finishes at the rim [3].

## TECHNIQUE

Only allow a dribble in the third drill, not the first two. Cuts must be sharp, fast and with purpose. No half-efforts here — make them do it again if not at full speed.

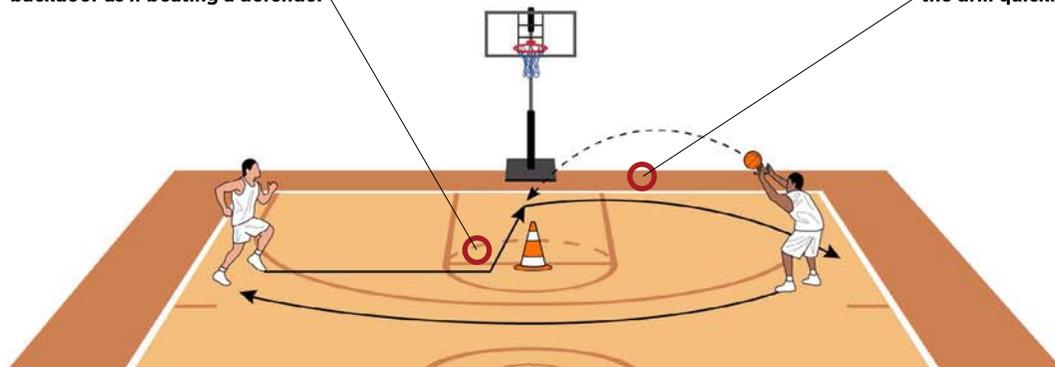
**1** Sell this cut to the opposite side, then plant and swim through with the outside arm to push momentum back toward the ball.

This pass leads the shooter into the layup — the shooter is not allowed to use a dribble — catch, secure the ball and go right up with it



**2** Flash toward the ball with hands up, then plant with the outside foot and sprint backdoor as if beating a defender.

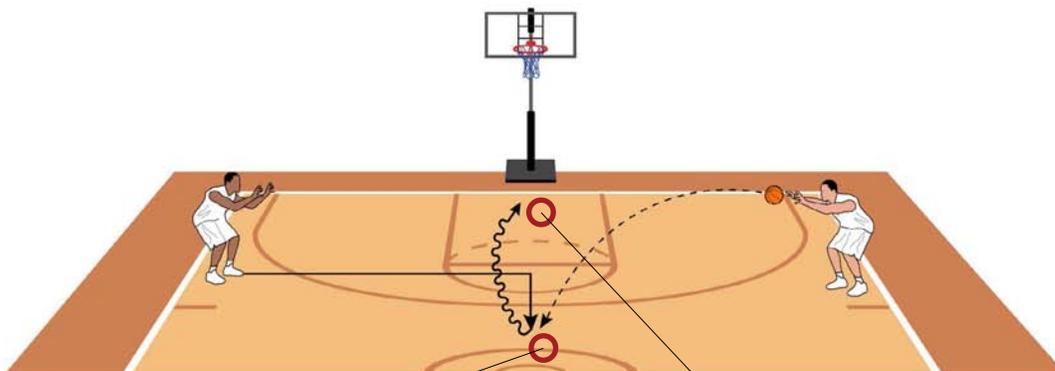
Grab the ball out of the net and switch sides to keep the drill quickly moving



**3**

Catch the pass on a jump stop so either foot can serve as the pivot foot

This is the only drill of the three where a dribble is allowed — but no over-dribbling, take one or two hard bounces and get to the rim



Player movement → Ball movement - - - → Dribble ~~~~~ → Shot →

# Add In Jumper, Corner Passes

The final 3 daily breakdown drills add a top-of-key jumper and movements when a player is positioned in the corner

## WHY USE IT

Breakdown drills are important for players of all ages as they keep athletes sharp when it comes to fundamentals.

## SET UP

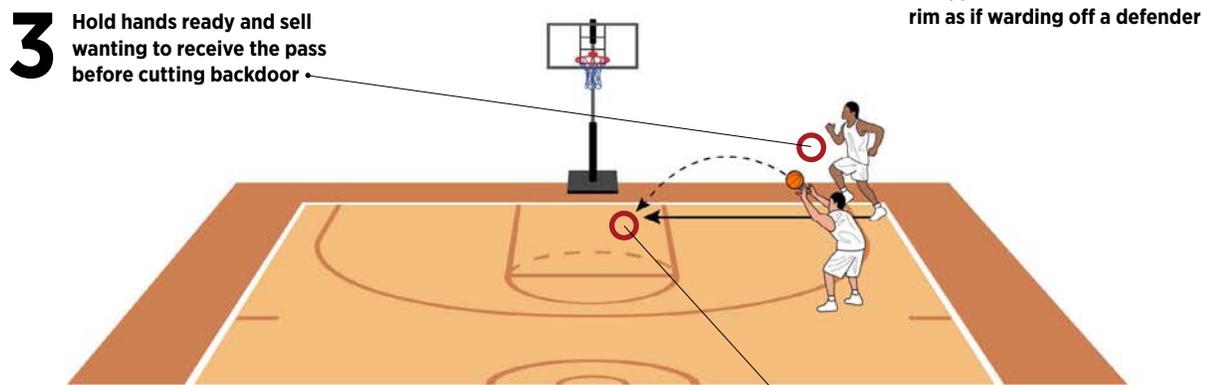
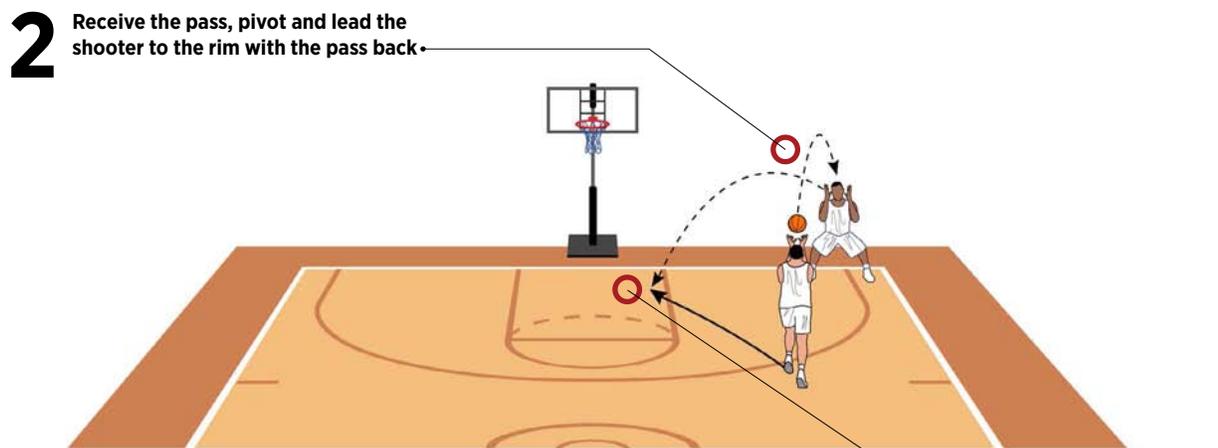
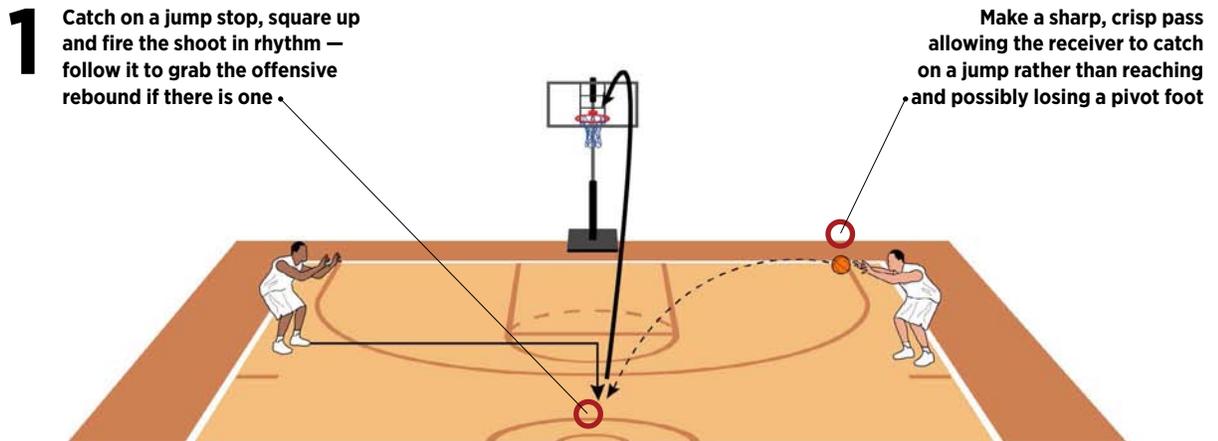
Players work in a tandem with one serving as the passer and the other as the scorer.

## HOW TO PLAY

The fourth breakdown drill is similar to the third in that the shooter flashes toward the ball with hands ready, then pops to the top. The shooter catches the ball on a jump stop, squares and shoots the ball (rather than driving to the hoop) [1]. Now, move one player to the corner with the ball in the wing's hands. The wing passes to the corner, then basket cuts, receives a pass back and scores at the rim [2]. The final move is for the corner to pretend he or she is being overplayed, so makes a backdoor cut. Wing passes and corner scores at the rim [3].

## TECHNIQUE

There is no dribbling in any of the final three breakdown drills. Teach players to make quick decisions and score on the move without the aid of the dribble. Be sure players are instructed to pretend to read the defense before cutting. Have them imagine the defenders on the court.



Players naturally gravitate into smaller groups within your program — your job is to make them want to spend time as one unit



# Get Beyond The 'Culture' Cliche

Building a substantive, lasting culture in your program begins with team leaders and creating common experiences

"Culture" is a buzzword in basketball circles today. As coaches, we need to go beyond buzzwords though and dig deeper at how to forge a winning identity.

Put simply, your team lives and dies by the culture it creates. The benefits of culture are obvious: togetherness, selflessness, chemistry and continuity are the intangibles you want to foster.

It's not easy at the high-school level due to yearly turnover and players spread across three teams (freshman, junior varsity and varsity), but you can do it by following these three steps.

## 1 CREATE COLLECTIVE 'BUY-IN'

When embarking on a team-culture mission, begin with a list of core-identity values, which remain consistent from year to year (i.e. hard work, toughness, excellence). Then, you need 100 percent "buy-in" from your team leaders so they take an ownership of these values and pass them along to their teammates.

To create "buy-in," sit down with your

leaders before or early in the season and have them develop a list of standards reflecting the core values. An example is if a value is "toughness," then a corresponding standard is "do not allow offensive rebounds." Encourage the team leaders to come up with a visual reminder of the standards, such as a poster to hang in the locker room — and have all team members sign it so they take some ownership as well.

At this point, the leaders enforce this standard. If a player at practice misses a box-out and allows an offensive board, the player completes 10 pushups. While you are the team's rule maker, it's the team leaders who are most effective in upholding standards.

## 2 CREATE MENTOR RELATIONSHIPS

Culture only grows when the team comes together as one. Sure, it's natural for players to segment into their own groups (age, ability) but work hard to encourage cross-pollination among all team members.

Start with the older players. Assign your more experienced players a "little buddy"

within the program. While mentoring is important, make this relationship competitive as well as the younger player attempts to earn respect. Have a shooting competition pitting veterans against their little buddies.

Have older players show they care about the next generation by forming a tunnel and banging fists with JV players as they exit the locker room just before a game.

## 3 CREATE MEMORIES

Shared experiences bring teams closer and begin to build a tradition in your program as stories are passed from one generation to the next.

Take a camping trip. Plan an "amazing race" around campus. Go bowling. Have a pie-eating contest after practice. Study your team's personality and go with experiences not seen as corny or forced.

Creating memories (particularly ones off the court) allow for nuanced relationships to develop, which makes for a stronger team and more dynamic culture.

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