

The Pick & Roll

The Pick & Roll, normally a screen set by a big-man on the ball, is nowadays present in any modern offence.

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European Champion with Italy in 99, Silver in 97

European League, Italian Cup and Premier League winner in 2001

Quoted from: Ettore Messina, Basket. Zanichelli 1999, p114

Since defenses evolved to a certain degree of perfection, the importance of the screens and how our team makes good use of them has become a crucial part of the coaching job. Screens put our players in an advantageous situation that they must know how to exploit.

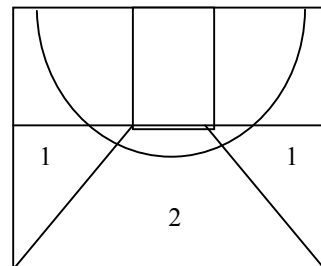
The P&R is a peculiar screen because the pick takes place on the ball. What else can you ask for than your man on the ball being freed in such an easy manner? Well, in fact we will have to ask for a lot more due to the opposition's work to counteract our P&R set, but that will come on later.

Right until a decade ago, the P&R was widely use as last minute solution for an offence that had broken down. At that stage, the PG would grab the ball, call the big-man up and play the P&R looking out for his own penetration or the big-man's follow up. 99% of the times the other 3 players on court would be chatting about Lineker and Keegan or the latest Tory idea on unemployment. That is no longer the case. As our Italian Coach stated above, in many European professional squads we see the P&R as a main weapon used at any stage of the offensive sequence. And above all it has developed both, offensive and defensively, into a 5x5 situation where any offensive player can end up benefiting from the advantage created by the P&R initiated on the PG. Today, all 5 defenders must help each other to stop the offence getting an easy basket during a pick and roll sequence. Of course it will demand a lot of skill and practice time to be performed successfully, but that is what we are here for, isn't it?

The area of the basketball court where we choose to set the P&R will be of capital importance in the way we proceed. Two are the main areas:

- Area 1: the classic 3pt elbow towards the middle
- Area 2: center court

We will only play the P&R towards the sideline in very special occasions as it limits the number of passing lines.



Area 1: the 3 point line elbow

We have already said that only in very special situations, like when we want to enlarge the space covered by the help side, we will play the P&R from area 1 towards side-line as this leaves the PG a very narrow corridor to dribble and also restricts the passing line.

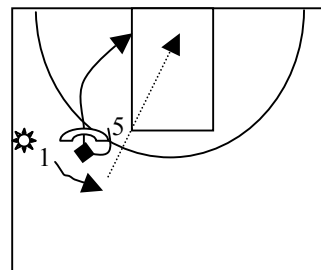
Now, it is vital that we teach each and everyone on the team to read the defense. The way the opposition faces the P&R situation is the key to our offensive approach.

From area 1 we will look at a starting set with 2 shooters in the weak-side (WS) and 2 big-men, one of them setting the screen on the ball and the other one in WS low post.

Depending on the way X1 gets passed the screen we will make a different decision:

A) X1 passes behind 5 or even behind X5

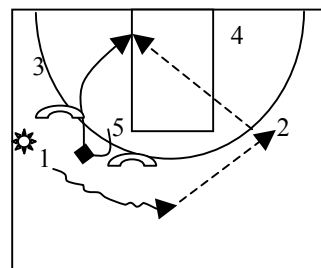
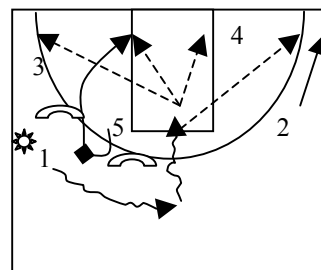
We will teach 1 to pull up for the J. If our PG cannot do that, we will practice this shot regularly. At a younger age we will teach the BM how to re-set the screen towards the other side when the PG's defender goes behind. That will allow our PG a new driving lane or a closer shot



B) X5 switches man with X1/flashes parallel to BL

We will ask 1 to take a couple of dribbles diagonally towards the half-way line to enlarge the space he will use to:

1. create a better passing angle with 5
2. play 1x1 against 5 as it will be a mismatch
This 1x1 will be played towards the middle asking 2 and 3 to spot up for the shot F-T line extended (these are called offensive helps)
3. use 2 as a middle pass to put the ball in 5 who cuts to the hoop. We will have to teach 2 to recognize where the advantage is when he gets the ball as defensive helps may stop the straight pass to 5. Sometimes the advantage will appear in the far corner where 3 is waiting armed and dangerous



A passing/shooting fake not picking up the dribble might be a good option as the BM will normally react standing back or trying to block the shot enabling our PG to break 1on1.

C) X5 help and recover

Again, 1 dribbles to create some extra room to make the pass to 5, 4 or 2.

If 1 sees X5 is late will try to progress to the middle pushing the ball forward to stop the BM reaching in and drawing the contact and therefore the foul with his shoulder.

Again, the passing/shooting fake will help

If the pass to 5 is not on, 1 could also hold the dribble for a split second the moment X5 starts recovering on 5 and before X1 has completely recovered his defensive position on 1.

Another available option is the PG penetration through the narrow corridor left between 5 and X5, but that demands a lot of skill and a very low dribble and is most likely to end up in turnover.

As always, 2 and 3 follow the clock rule spotting up for the shot. Although if 1 gets stuck we will ask 2 to take a couple of steps towards the ball for a relief pass.

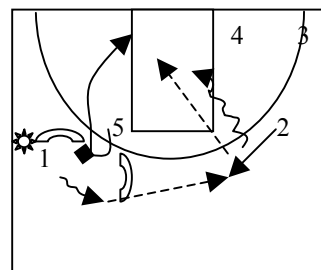
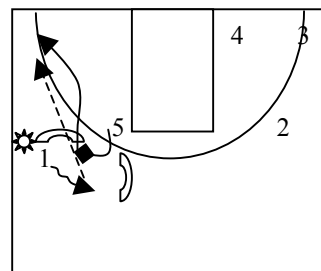
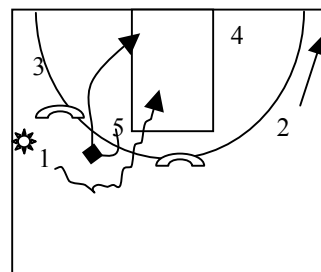
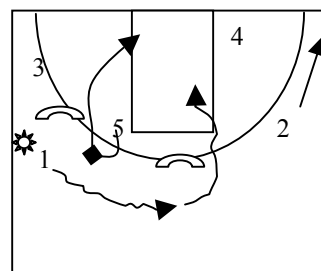
D) Double Team

There are 4 main options:

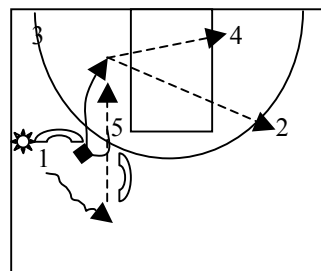
1. 5's open up for the J: when our big man is a decent shooter and SS corner not occupied.

We will ask him to spot up in the corner to make it harder for X5 to recover or X4 to help out. This time 2 and 3 will step in towards the ball for a relief pass going back to normal rules when the pass to 5 has being made

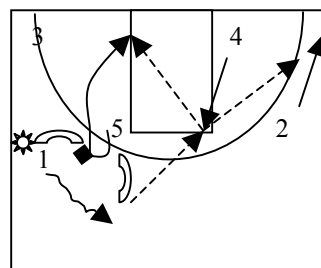
2. Triangulation: 1 finds 2 who has stepped towards the ball and will make the pass to 5. 2 may as well try to penetrate a very engaged defense (4on3)



3. Straight to 5 because he is a good ball-handler and also a good passer who will look for 4, 3 and 2. Again, 3 and 2 do the clock

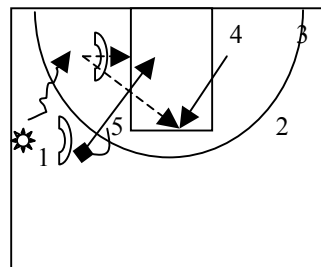


4. Last but not least, we might want to ask 4 to come up to the FT line for his own shot or to play HL with 5. This turns out to be a very good option when your 4 is a good shooter and a fantastic choice when he can also drive and pass (2 and 3 doing the clock)



E) Forced Base-Line

In this case, our PG will take a few dribbles to the BL in an attempt to draw the big-man towards him. Then, 5 will cut to the basket and 4 will make a sharp cut to the strong-side elbow for his shot, the HL or the quick reversal to 2 or 3 (doing the clock). 2 and 3 will look out for the shot or the inside pass to 5 who has sealed X4.

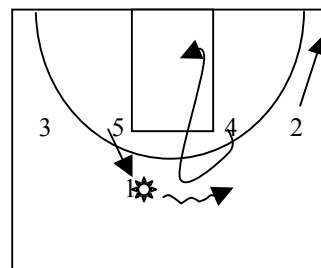


It is up to you, considering the personnel you have, to choose any of this options. You may as well want to practice them all to put some more baggage in your players' life, to use them in different games according to the opposition you are taking on that night, or even to alternate them during the course of a particular game depending on your own or the opposition situation (players on foul trouble, a hot hand, shot-clock running out, need a 3, need a 2, need to play longer, play the P&R towards a player who is being denied to either take advantage of the lack of help side or give him the ball when his man helps).

Area 2 : Center Court

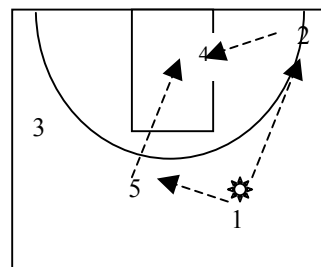
Probably the most widely used P&R set in the last decade.

We can either start with one or the two BM on the FT line. Our PG chooses one side to play P&R. Then basic rules apply (diagonally to better the angle, 2&3 doing the clock, etc).



Again we react to whatever the defender does:

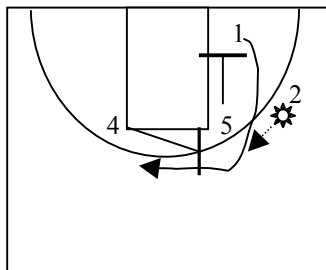
- a) goes behind: pull up J, BM resets the screen the other way, etc
- b) BM does nothing: PG's penetration
- c) BM flashes out (help&recover):
 1. pass to 5 from 1
 2. pass to 5 from 2
 3. pass to 5 from 4 who goes FT line
 4. skip to 3 (who goes to the corner) from 1, 2, 4 or 5
 5. 4's shot from FT line (from 1 or 2)
 6. pass to 2 who goes corner
- d) BM comes out parallel to baseline
 1. hold the dribble until they undo the switch and then break through the gap
 2. take 5 on 1x1 with 2 going to the corner for an open shot
- e) BM double team: very suicidal option having so many passing angles. Straight pass to 5 or using 2 as middle pass
- f) Forced to the middle: full suicide. Kick out to 2 and then inside pass to 5 who should have sealed his man.



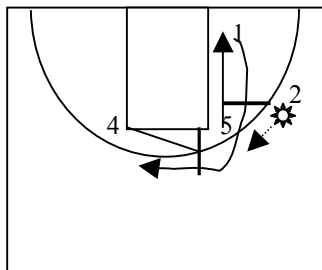
This kind of set can always function as an entry to a set play or as a full offence itself. Just think that with the 24" shot clock there is no time to loose. We need to create advantages from the very first move of our offence so we can capitalize on it afterwards. The P&R set forces the opposition to cover a big deal of court-floor, oblige the defenders to commit a lot and therefore pick up fouls and also, and most important, provides and all-round ,balanced game where the BM play a big part and shooters get to exploit whatever advantages the BM produce. It is an inside-outside game with constant ball reversal and opportunities for every member of the team.

As defensive rotations might as well be very elaborated we must find ways to stop either the big man or the PG's defenders from getting into a proper defensive position where the rotation can be carried out easily. We find that the best way to delay this players is to have them involved in a previous screen:

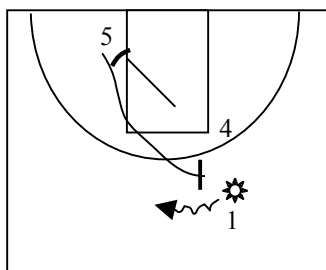
a) against the PG



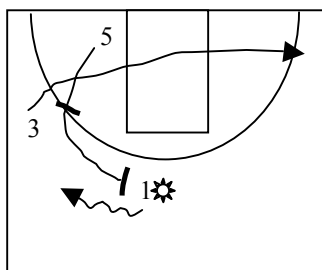
b) from the PG



c) against the BM



d) from the BM



If no previous screen is set, another way of making it harder for the BM is to have our BM come to set the P&R very quickly and from far away so chances are the BM will be delayed in his help.

Appendix: Necessary Fundamentals to Run a correct Pick and Roll

Guards:

1. lateral/hop dribble with head up
2. lead step off hop
3. head/pass fake
4. pull up J if defender goes behind pick
5. drive and kick/dish to open man
6. drive and pull up J/bomb shot

Off-Guards:

1. follow clock rules + exceptions
2. catch and shoot from long range
3. vision to triangulate with big guys
4. catch and drive when necessary

Big Men:

1. set good screens (head hunt, T screen)
2. slip screen when necessary
3. catch and finish near basket under control
4. catch and shoot from 10 feet
5. catch and make next pass when defensive rotation
6. pick and pop
7. catch and shoot/play high low from free throw line
8. pick and seal/double seal rolling to basket