


**FIBA**

We Are Basketball



by Nikos Stavropoulos

# THE GREEK YOUTH PROGRAM: OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

**Nikos Stavropoulos is the Head Coach of the Greek National Junior Men's Team. His team won the bronze medal at the FIBA European Junior Men's Championships in 2000 and 2002, and at the FIBA World Junior Men's Championships. His team won a silver medal at the Mediterranean Games in 2001.**

Basketball in Greece has always been thought of as an activity laden with intrinsic educational value. As a youngster grows, a sports activity can positively impact his physical, social, moral, and emotional value system. Hence, a basketball coach has an opportunity to influence and determine the worth of athletic participation. The pressure to win in youth basketball directly affects athletes and coaches. Too often, the social pressures to win become too great for coaches to ignore. In our society, winning has become synonymous with success and losing has been linked with failure.

Although coaches are expected to produce winning programs, our youth basketball programs are actually part of the educational curriculum. Basketball is a simple game but sometimes we coaches make it more complex than it has to be. The philosophy of our Greek Basketball Youth Program determines how the young athlete will view the athletic experience. We build credibility for our program when people actually see the team doing what the coach is suggesting they do. The team is an extension of the personality of the coach.

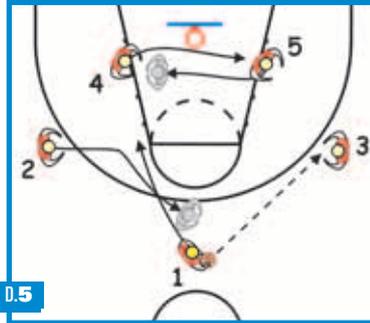
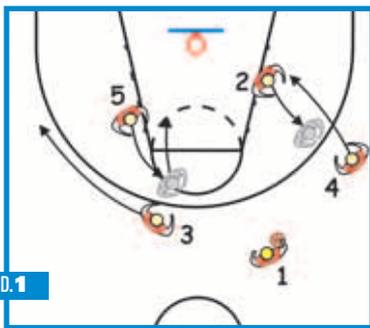
I am a fundamentals coach and I teach basketball basics at all times.

It is not what we do, but how well our players are able to execute what we want them to do. It's how well we teach them the fundamentals of the game that will yield these results.

Team play from the offensive point of view is a result of well conditioned players who have mastered the fundamentals and now play as a smooth working unit.

Despite the size, conditioning, and talent of today's basketball players, who succeeds and who fails in the sport is still determined by who possesses and executes fundamental





basketball skills. I always feel that I am a teacher of basketball. The floor is an extension of the classroom, which means we need discipline, methods, and other pertinent elements in order to achieve the desired goals.

In summing up my feelings on basketball fundamentals: the success of a team is in direct proportion to the coach's ability to devise and continually emphasize fundamental drills. Thus, the importance of teaching fundamentals in practice is stressed so players can respond automatically and naturally in a game, free to concentrate on game strategy.

Drills used in practice cover as many fundamentals as possible and are the forerunners of what we are trying to teach. In general, no system will be successful unless the players are well grounded in the fundamentals and execute them properly and quickly so that they seem to be instinctive. A researcher once conducted a study to determine the influence of selected playing variables in maximizing the suc-

cess of the Greek National Junior basketball teams.

To determine a success rate, the researcher focused on the effects of fundamentals, such as the utilization of passes, the variety of passes used, the utilization of dribbling, and all the different kinds of dribbling used while on offense.

The study reported that Greek National Basketball Junior teams demonstrated a greater percentage of success during offense when the final shot was attempted after taking four to five passes and less than ten dribbles.

Furthermore, the percentage of "success" from the perimeter and inside areas was significantly higher after over-head passes were made versus those attempted after a bounce pass. The number of bounce passes used was significantly less compared to chest and over-head passes. Thus, the results of the present study helped validate what we were already doing and were critically important in the planning of our future programs.

#### THINGS THAT NEED TO BE TAUGHT OFFENSIVELY

1. The utilization of the pass:
  - a. We always try to make four passes before attempting a shot unless one of our shooters is wide open. Pass away from the defense.
  - b. We always try to make chest passes before attempting a shot.
  - c. We always try to eliminate all bounce passes before attempting a shot.
2. We always try to use the overhead pass instead of the bounce pass when feeding the low post position.
3. We always try to use from four to five passes before attempting a shot from the perimeter and from one to two passes when inside.
4. The utilization of the dribble:
  - a. We try to take no more than ten dribbles before attempting a shot. We have a need to handle the ball in

order to get in position where we can attempt a good shot at the basket.

- b. We always try to make speed-control dribbles in our offense.
- c. We always try to use crossover dribbles when necessary.
- d. We always try to eliminate all reverse dribbles.
- e. Don't over-use the dribble.  
Use the dribble to improve a passing angle, achieve dribble penetration, and take the ball to the basket.

#### WHY RUN A MOTION OFFENSE?

- ▼ It's unpredictable. It's hard to have any secrets on offense due to detailed scouting and televised games.
- ▼ It teaches players how to play so they become better players. They must be able to "read" how they are being defended. They can run motion when they are in pick up games.
- ▼ It is an offense based upon intelligent passing, cutting and screening.
- ▼ The passer, the cutter, and the screener are all of equal importance.
- ▼ It is an offense where player movement dictates where the ball is taken.
- ▼ It makes better defenders. In practice, they are guarding against unpredictable situations.
- ▼ Players feel better when they make the decisions.
- ▼ To be "shot specific." You have certain players shoot because they all understand who are the best shooters.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING MOTION

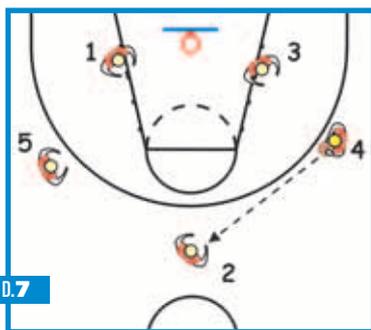
There are different types of motion:

- ▼ 5 players out;
- ▼ 3 out, 2 in;
- ▼ 4 out, 1 in.

#### THE PART-WHOLE METHOD OF TEACHING

1. **Read the defense:** We want our players to recognize and anticipate situations, to see the game, and take what the defense gives them.
2. **Spacing:** We teach our players to spread out the floor, to use of all the possible space. The ideal spacing on the floor is for players to be five to six meters apart.





3. **Timing:** We like to use a guard interchange to help with the flow and timing of these sets.
4. **Roles:** We teach our players the importance of being interchangeable in their roles.
5. **Shot:** We develop shooting abilities under pressure. Execution is critical.
6. **Without the ball:** We teach our players how to cut, screen, and move without the ball. Players have to use the "V" cut and learn how to get open, so the offense can flow smoothly.
7. **With the ball:** The man with the ball must be reading the defender playing him.
8. **Count of two:** We want any player receiving the ball at any position on the court to immediately face the basket for a two-count.
9. **Concentrate:** We want our players concentrating on making cuts that don't take two of them into the same position. Make hard, sharp cuts.
10. **Teamwork:** Help each other get open by screening and unselfish play.
11. **Conditioning:** We devise drills that are conditioning the players, while teaching fundamentals at the same time.
12. **Goals:** We teach our players to set realistic and attainable goals.

#### GENERAL MOTION RULES

1. All players, screeners, cutters, and the ball handler must read the defense and react.
2. Players must be unpredictable and never make the same cut twice in succession. They should always be in motion, thus making them difficult to guard.
3. The players closest to the middle of the floor are the primary screeners.
4. The players farthest from the center of the floor initially cut to the basket.
5. Players set-up all screens and cuts with a "V" cut away from the ball.
6. All screeners should set screens with their back completely to the ball so that they are wide and do not allow the defense to play through on the line of the ball.
7. No player should ever cut into an occupied post area.
8. No two cutters should move in the same direction at the same time.
9. A player, particularly a big man, should always flash to the top of the circle. This creates floor balance and is the best area of the floor for an entry pass to the low post.
10. No pass should be made to the baseline unless someone is open for a shot.

11. Recognize potential areas or seams for passing angles or possible penetration.
12. Anytime a passer feeds the low post, he must move away from his position and relocate.
13. If the defense looks to switch when screened, the offense must react so the screener will become the cutter.

### DEFINING VARIOUS SCREENS AND CUTS

#### DOWN SCREEN

The screener screens toward the basket, allowing the cutter to move directly up toward the ball. Our screener takes his man into the lane one or two steps and then moves over to screen. The cutter, first and foremost, faces the basket and takes his man two or three steps beyond the screen then cuts to come off the screen.

#### BACK SCREEN

The screener starts near the basket and screens in the direction of the ball. This usually results in two different directions off a back screen.

#### CROSS SCREEN

The screener starts on one side of the lane and screens a teammate on the opposite side. In setting up a cross-screen with our posts, the first thing we tell the player is that at no time are they to set up below the box. Teaching the cutter to set his man up and come off

the screen shoulder-to-shoulder will be the hardest thing we will have to teach on this screen.

### FLARE SCREEN

The cutter moves to an open area on the floor from which the screener comes from. We use this screen to set up a guard who is a good shooter for an opportunity to get the shot on an open side of the floor.

### DOUBLE SCREEN

The cutter is screened simultaneously by two screeners.

### BALL SCREEN

A screener steps up to screen for the ball handler. This will only occur when there is a breakdown in spacing.

## MOTION OFFENSE

### FIVE-MAN MOTION SIDE

The ball remains stationary and the other four people have worked together. And that's exactly what we want.

The idea here is that the ball remains with one person, while the other four players are working to get in position to receive it. 5 sets a flare screen for 3, and 4 gets a back screen from 2. 5 goes down to the weak side in the medium post area (diagr. 1).

1 passes to 4, 3 gets a back screen from 5 and cuts to the basket. 1 gets a flare screen from 5 (diagr. 2).

4 passes to 5, 2 gets a back screen from 3 and cuts to the basket. 4 gets a flare screen from 3 (diagr. 3).

5 passes to 3, 1 gets a back screen from 2 and cuts to the basket. 5 gets a flare screen from 2. The continuity continues with the basic set (diagr. 4).

### FIVE-MAN MOTION CIRCLE

As before, the idea is that the ball is in one person's hands and the other four people are working to get it.

1 passes to 3 and gets a back screen from 2. 5 screens away for 4.

The ball remains stationary and the other four people have worked together (diagr. 5).

3 passes to 2 and 4 sets back screen for 3. 1 sets a down screen for 5 (diagr. 6).

4 can pass back to the top of the key and we have the continuity with the basic set (diagr. 7).

5 can pass back to the top of the key, gets

a back screen from 1, while 2 down screens for 3. We have the continuity with the basic set (diagr. 8).

### THREE-MAN MOTION AND TWO-MAN POST

In this alignment, we have three perimeter players and two post players. The three perimeter players will be making cuts and they are working as feeders for the post (diagr. 9, 10, 11, and 12). The post players are constantly screening for each other. The man on the ballside is the screener and the man away from the ball is the cutter.

### FOUR-MAN MOTION AND A POST

In this alignment, we isolate the post man in the area outlined by the box (diagr. 13). We run four-man motion around him with those four players doing all of the things that are part of our offense. The first reason to isolate the post man is because he is so good and moves so well in the post that we want to keep everybody else out of his way.

The second reason to isolate him is that he is an inexperienced post player, who has problems working as a cutter coming off the screens, as well as setting the screens himself. In our offense, the man on the high post is our primary back screener. He can screen for the ballside forward (diagr. 14). A back screen can also be set on the guard making the pass (diagr. 15).

He can also screen to the opposite side of the floor where the cutter can either come over the top (diagr. 16) or set up the flare cut (diagr. 17).

The Greek Basketball Federation Youth Program is one of the least complicated systems and it relies on player fundamentals and player teamwork.

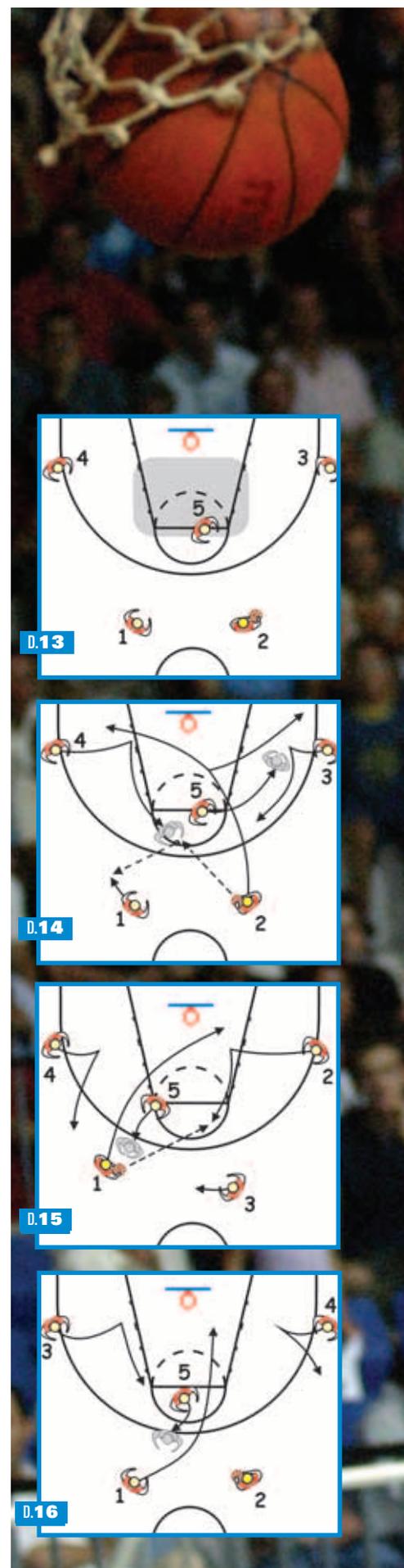
The key to the entire offense is for the players to read the defense and react quickly.

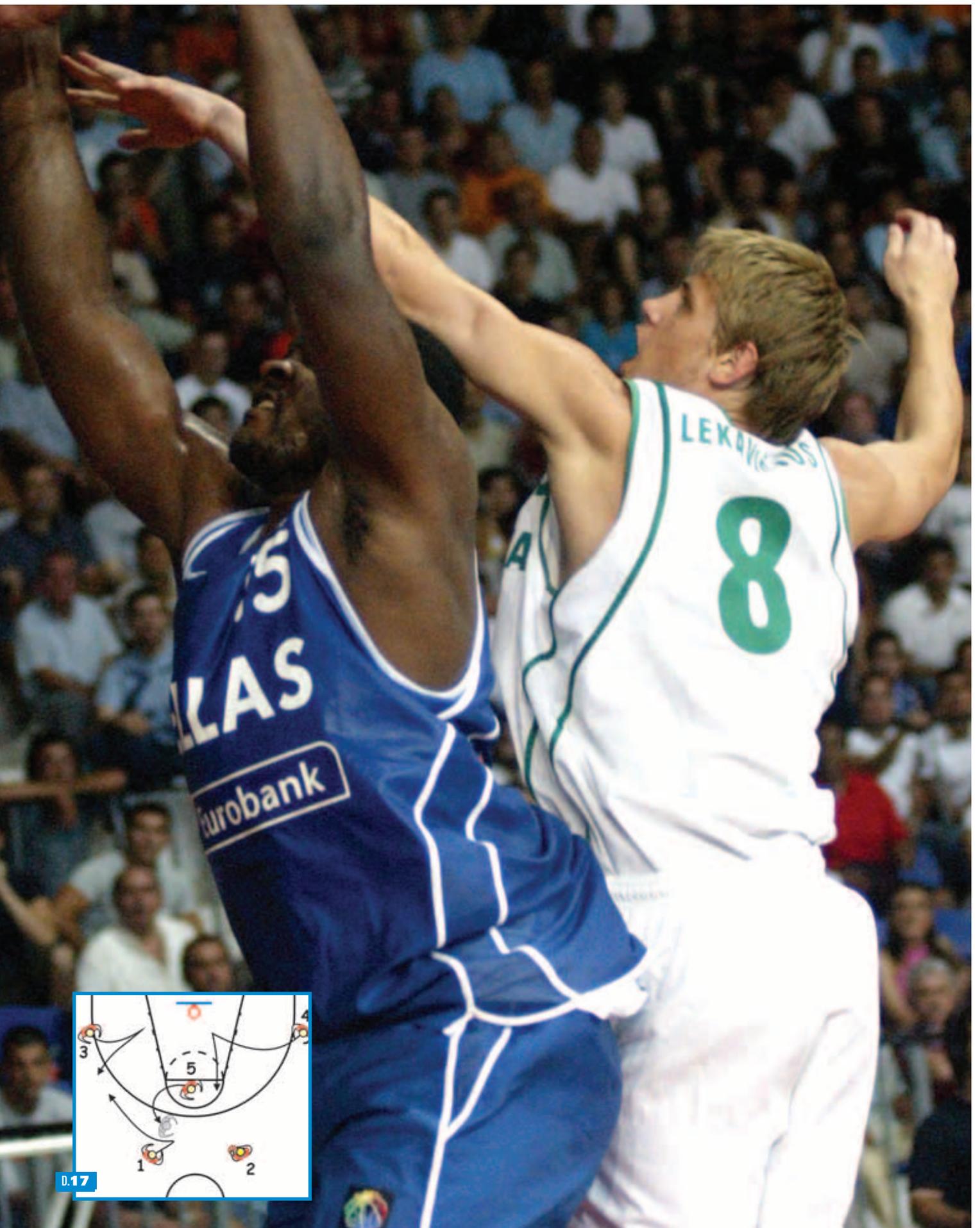
Coaches have to be interested in more than the final score.

As coaches and teachers, we have a responsibility to be role models and teach the values that can be transferable to everyday life away from the basketball arena.

We know that our players are continually being influenced by the many factors at work in competitive sport. Instead of teaching young athletes to be focused solely on winning, our attention should be focused on how to make the practice and game situations a truly enjoyable athletic experience.

We need to utilize every opportunity to reinforce desirable traits, traits that enable the individual to become a positive contributing factor in our culture.





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