12 Best Basketball Plays of 2018

GUARANTEED TO GET YOUR TEAM OPEN SHOTS!

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Overview of the Play:

This play is designed to open up the court and then put your point guard in a horns pick-and-roll with shooters in both corners. The goal is to get to the rim or draw the defense and pass out.

Key Personnel:

- This is a great play if you have a creative and dominant point guard (1).

- 2 and 3 should be able to knock down perimeter shots.

Instructions:

Setup: This sideline play begins with the four on-court players lined up along the free-throw line. The two post players on the outside, point guard second, and small forward third.

1. The play starts with 3 cutting over the top and then veering off to the ball-side corner.

2. Next, 1 pops out to the top of the key and receives the ball from 2.

3. After passing, 2 makes an Iverson cut above the two post defenders and then clears out to the corner. If the key is open and 2 can curl to the rim, this is a lob pass option.

4. Finally, the 4 and 5 set a horns screen for the point guard at the top of the key. 1 must read the defenders and can choose to go either left or right to attack the paint.

5. 1 then has the option to attack and finish or dish out to 2 and 3 on the wings or in the corners.

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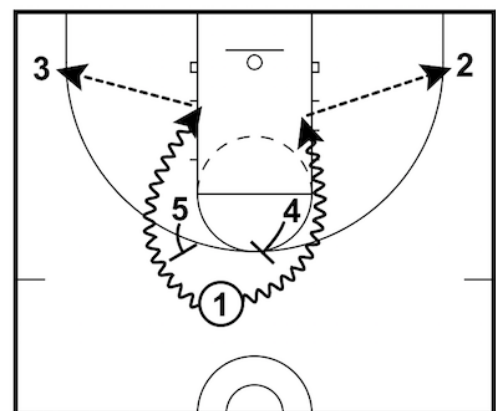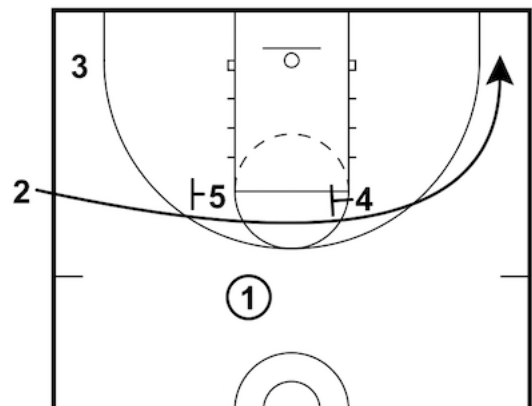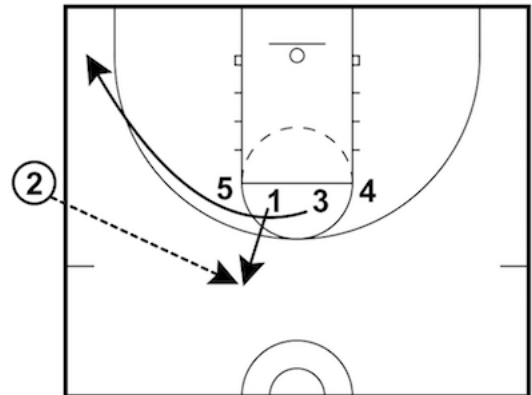
Coaching Points:

- It's important that 4 and 5 set the screens on an angle that will allow the point guard to attack the hoop. Young players will often set the screen too high which will allow 1's defender to slip under.

- 2 and 3 need to read their defenders as 1 attacks the hoop. If their defender goes to help, they need to know whether to stay in the corner or slide to the wing.

- 2 shouldn't make the pass to 3's initial cut unless they're wide open and will be able to shoot or turn the corner and attack the rim.

Bullseye

Overview of the Play:

This is a play with multiple options for either a drive, an outside shot, or to get the basketball inside to a strong post player. Your best post player will set multiple screens for shooters before establishing deep post position and looking for the basketball inside the key.


Key Personnel:

• 5 is the team's best post player.

• Preferably, 2 and 3 are great shooters.

Instructions:

Setup: The play starts in a 1-5 high formation.

1. On the point guard calling out the play, 2 and 3 swing through and cut to the opposite low blocks.

2. At the same time, 4 pops out to the slow and receives the pass from 1.

3. After the pass, 1 cuts high to the wing on the same side as the ball.

4. 5 then sets a down screen for 3 who pops out to the opposite slot and receives the ball. If they're open, this can be a great shot opportunity.

5. 5 will then immediately set another screen for 2 who pops out to the wing and receives the ball from 3 looking for the shot if it's open.

6. After the second screen, 5 will open up to the ball and establish low post position. 2 and 3 must work together quickly to find the best angle and get the ball inside where 5 can go to work.
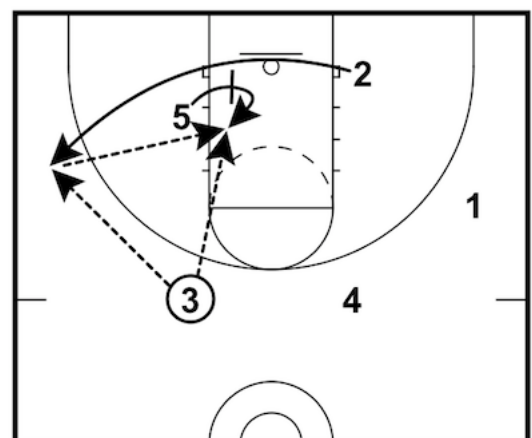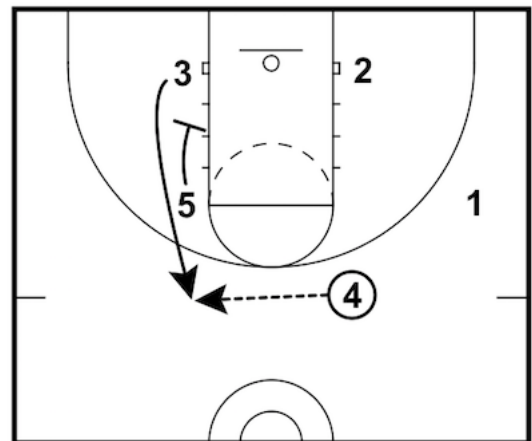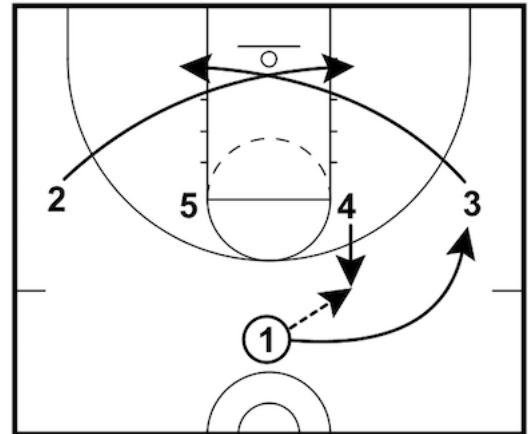
Coaching Points:

- If the defenders double the post, 5 must be able to make a quick read and pass out for the open three-point shot.

- Passes must be made to the inside shoulder of the player cutting to the perimeter. This gives them a chance to curl into the shot and get it off quickly.

- 5 needs to be smart and strong with their low post positioning. Use your body and get your arms up to prevent the defense from tapping the pass away.

Corkscrew

Overview of the Play:

This play involves multiple cutting and scoring options. It relies on putting the ball in a skilled post players hands and then allowing them to make the right passing decision depending on the holes created in the defense.

Key Personnel:

- 4 needs to have a high IQ and be able to pass well.

- Your guards need to be able to finish with contact at the rim.

Instructions:

Setup: The play begins in a 1-2-2 horns formation with the guards in the corners and post players on the elbows.

1. The point guard initiates the play by passing to either player on the high post. Preferably the pass should be made to the most skilled player.

2. After receiving the ball, 4 turns and dribbles towards 2 in the corner.

3. 2 takes a step towards the basketball and then cuts backdoor looking to receive the pass for an open layup. If they don't get the ball, they continue to the corner.

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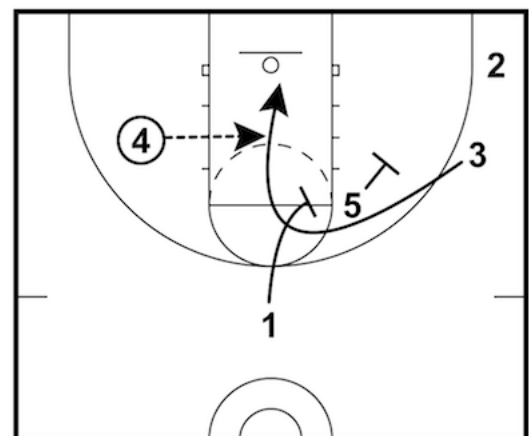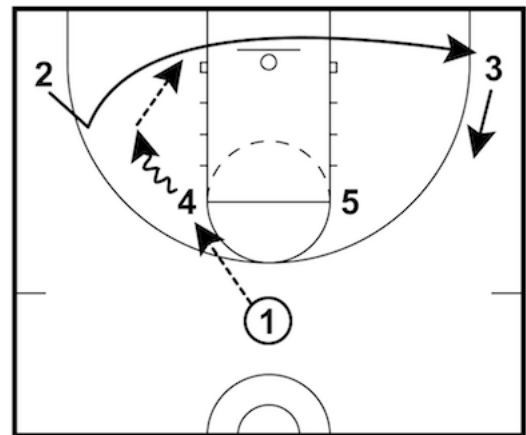
4. As this is happening, 1 and 5 screen for 3 who curls towards the basket. Once again, we're looking to make the pass inside for a layup.

5. If 3 doesn't receive the ball, they continue to the corner pushing 2 towards the top of the key.

6. Finally, 1 turns and receives a hand-off from 5. If possible, 1 should be looking to immediately curl and attack the hoop.

7. If the defense defends well and attacking isn't an option, 1 can step back to the three-point line and receive an on-ball screen from 4.
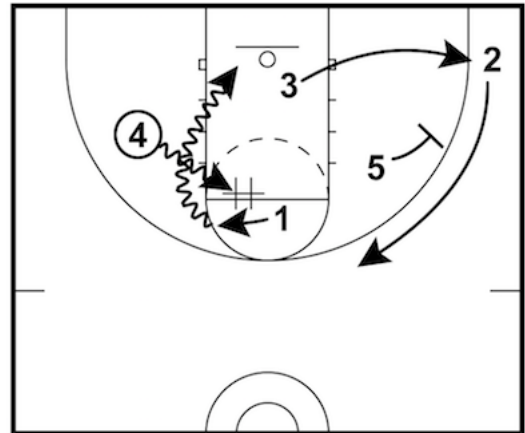
Coaching Points:

• It's crucial that 2 and 3 time their cuts correctly so they don't get in each other's way.

• Always to fill 4's role with a high-IQ player who can pass the ball. This position doesn't necessarily need to be filled by a post player.

• 5 must keep their defender active by screening around the perimeter. If 5's defender drops into the key and stays there, it will be hard to get any layups inside.

• This is a great play if you're looking to get the opponent in foul trouble since there are so many attacking opportunities.

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Cremona 2

Overview of the Play:

This is a great play to get a quick three-point shot when there are only a few seconds left on the clock. It involves an inbound pass to the post and then a screen and re-screen at the top to get a shooter open on the wing.

Key Personnel:

- 2 should be the team's best three-point shooter.

- 4 should have a high IQ and be able to set a strong screen.

- 3 should be a smart passer.
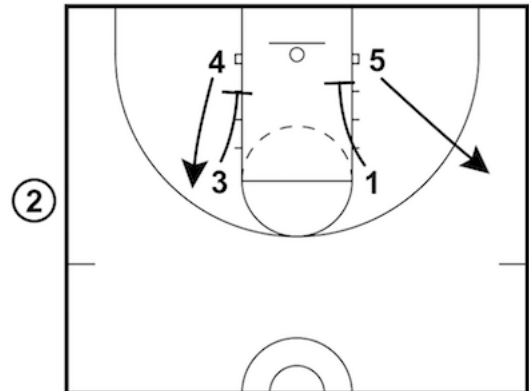
Instructions:

Setup: The team begins in a box set with the team's best shooter inbounding the basketball.

1. As 2 receives the basketball, the two players at the top (3 and 1) down screen for the two players on the low blocks (4 and 5) who cut towards the top of the key.

2. After setting the screen, 3 gets position in the low post and then receives the pass from 2.

3. On making the pass, 4 screens for 2 who cuts towards the middle of the court appearing as if they're going to receive the ball.

4. 4 will then immediately set another strong screen for 2 as they cut towards the wing.

5. 3 passes to 2 for the open three-point shot.
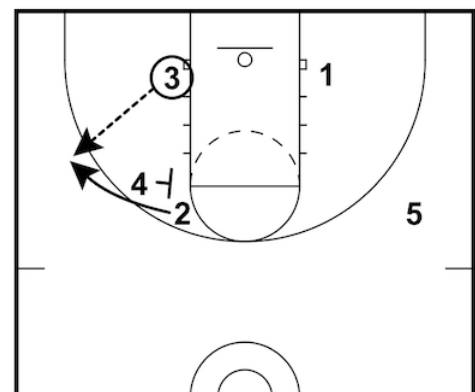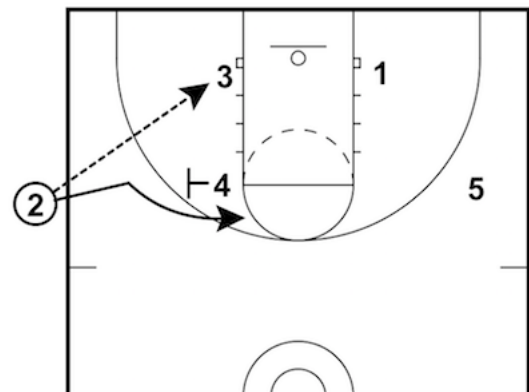
Coaching Points:

- On the off chance that 2 is open at the top of the key after the initial screen, 3 can make the decision to pass the basketball to them for the shot.

- After receiving the first screen, 2 should hesitate for half a second at the top of the key to make their defender relax before exploding to the wing for the shot.

- 4 must understand that as soon as 2's defender has got past the first screen, they have to immediately turn around and set another screen.

- 3 must be ready to make the pass into the path of 2's cut as they won't be open for long.

Dribble Thorn

Overview of the Play:

This play is designed to get the basketball into the low post or to get an open shot on the perimeter (or midrange) off a down screen on the free-throw line.

Key Personnel:

• 5 should be the player you want to get the ball to in the low post.

• Preferably, 3 can knock down a perimeter shot and sets strong screens.

Instructions:

Setup: The play begins in 1-4 high set, though the same play can be ran from a 1-2-2 formation with your post players starting on the low posts.

1. 1 initiates the set by dribbling towards either wing.

2. This triggers the ball-side player on the elbow (4) to cut to the opposite slot, the player on the ball-side wing (3) to cut to the low post, and the player on the weak-side elbow (5) to cut to the weak-side low post.

3. From here, 2 cuts all the way along the baseline off two screen from 5 and 3. If they're wide open, 1 can pass to 2 for the open three-point shot from the corner.

4. Once 2 has cut past 3's screen, 3 immediately sets a cross screen for 5.

5. 5 uses the screen and cuts towards the ball-side low post looking to receive the pass for a quick layup or a post up opportunity.

6. 4 will then down screen for 3 at the free-throw line and 3 pops out to the perimeter looking for the open three-point shot or midrange shot.

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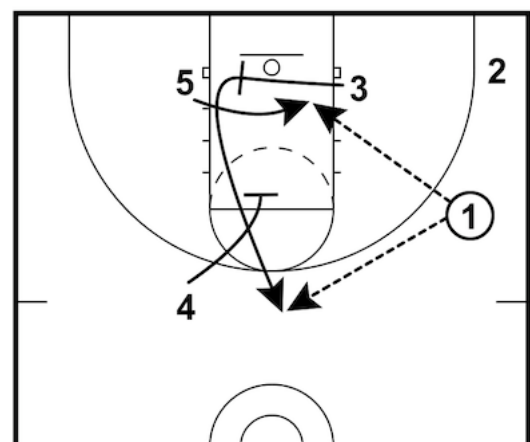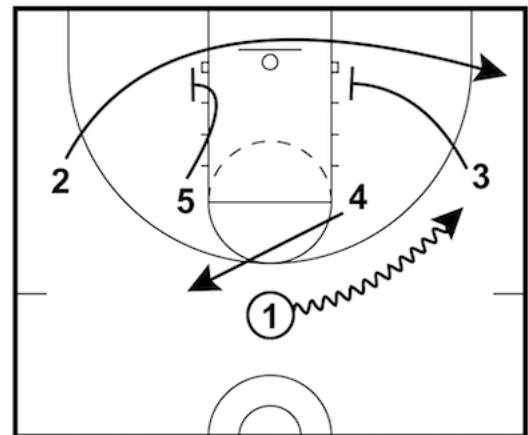
Coaching Points:

- 5 needs to wait for the screen to be set by 3 before cutting towards the opposite low block looking to receive the basketball.

- If the pass is made to 5 for a post up, 2 should immediately cut along the baseline to either receive the pass for a layup or simply to clear out.

- It's super important that 3 sets two strong screens.

- Since this will always be a perimeter player cross screening for a post player, look to exploit that mismatch if the opposition decides to switch the screen.

Horns Apex

Overview of the Play:

This play is perfect to exploit a creative shooting guard or small forward in your team. It involves a series of screens to confuse the defense before a pick-and-roll at the top of the key with shooters spread out around the three-point line.

Key Personnel:

- 2 should be a good creator out of the pick-and-roll.

- 5 should be high-IQ and able to set a strong screen.

- This play works best if 1 and 3 are able to knock down the three-point shot.

Instructions:

Setup: The play begins in a 1-2-2 horns set with the wings close to the corner.

1. The play begins with 4 or 5 stepping out and receiving the basketball in the slot. For this example, 4 steps out and receives the pass from 1.

2. 1 then cuts towards the weak-side corner.

3. The wing player on the ball-side (2) will then set a cross screen for 3 who cuts out towards the wing possibly looking for an open shot.

4. 5 then sets a down screen for 2 who cuts to the top of the key and receives the pass from 4.

5. If the three-point shot isn't open, 5 will then re-screen for 2 who attacks out of the pick-and-roll looking to get to the rim and score or set up one of the team's shooters on the perimeter.
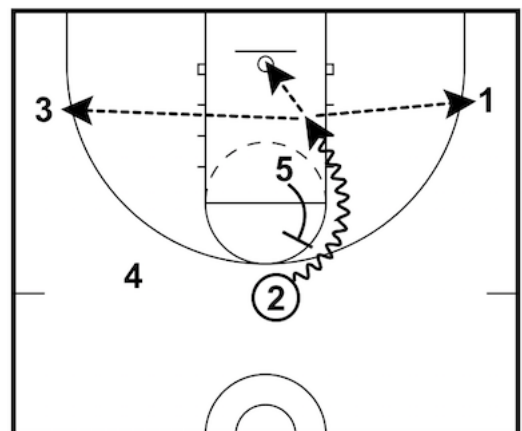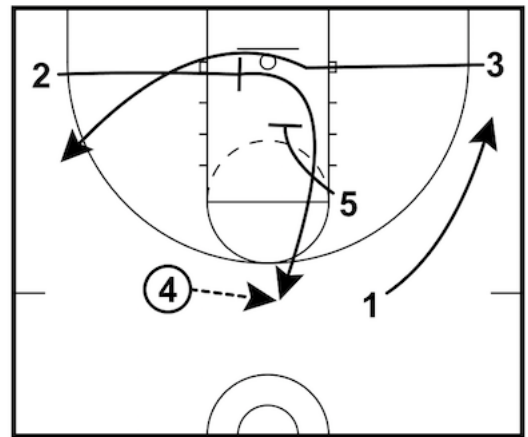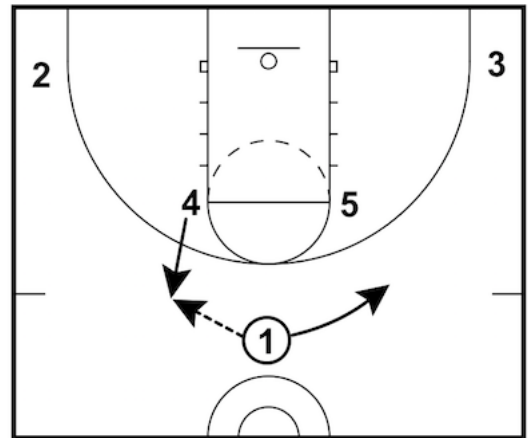
Coaching Points:

- Even though 3 will be open enough to receive the pass after the first screen, unless they'll be able to catch and shoot immediately, encourage 4 to hold the basketball and wait for 2 to get open at the top of the key because that's where the main action occurs.

- It's important that 5 sets the pick-and-roll screen on the correct angle that will allow 2 to attack the basket. Don't set it too high which allows 2's defender to slip under.

- 1 and 3 must be ready to catch and shoot immediately if they receive the pass from 2.

Middle Iso

Overview of the Play:

A simple (yet incredibly effective) play when you've got a star player with a mismatch. The goal is to set a simple down screen with the opposite post player to allow the catch at the free-throw line, and then to isolate and let them attack the basket.

Key Personnel:

- A dominant player with a mismatch should be in 4's position.

Instructions:

Setup: The play begins in a 1-4 high set with your dominant player on one of the elbows. Though with a little thought, this play can be run from nearly any starting formation.

1. The play starts with 4 sinking towards the middle of the key to set up the screen.

2. 5 then sets a down screen for 4 who cuts towards the free-throw line and receives the pass from the point guard.

3. After 5 sets the screen, they sink to the baseline and will move to the opposite side that 4 attacks to create a passing option.

4. 4 immediately faces up the hoop and should looks to attack their opponent and get to the rim where they can score, draw a foul, or set up a teammate.
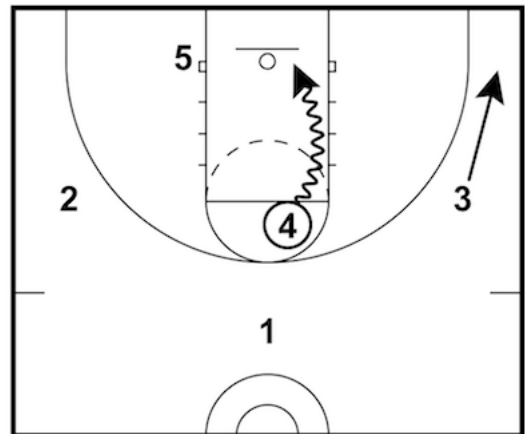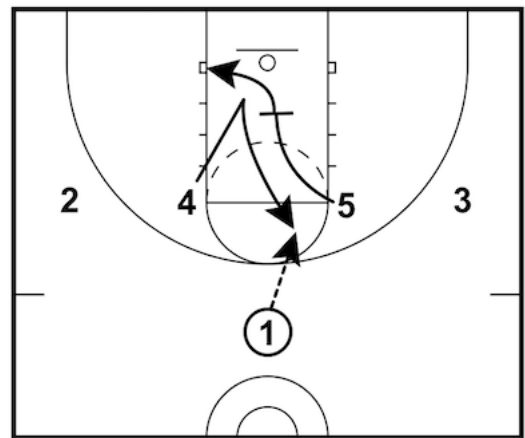
Coaching Points:

- While it's very simple, don't overlook how effective this play can be when you've got the right mismatch. It's incredibly hard to defend an isolation so close to the hoop.

- Don't allow 4 to settle for a jump shot unless they're a highly efficient shooter. It's better to attack the rim and score or draw a foul on the opponent.

- 2 and 3 must read their defender and can slide up and down the wings. Be ready to shoot if 4 makes the pass out to the perimeter.

- 5 should always move to the opposite side that 4 attacks.

Middle Split

Overview of the Play:

This BLOB play is designed to quickly get the team's strongest post player (or a player with a significant mismatch) close to the basket for an inbound pass and finish.

Key Personnel:

• 5 should be the team's strongest post player.

• 3 should be the player capable of setting a strong screen.

• 1 should be the team's best passer.

Instructions:

Setup: The play starts with three players across the free-throw line and one player under the rim with the team's best passer throwing the ball in.

1. The play starts with 2 and 4 cutting opposite directions to behind the three-point line to drag their defenders away from the middle of the key.

2. As this is happening, 3 sets a screen for 5.

3. 5 must read the two defenders and cut towards the hoop looking to receive the pass from 1.

4. 3 will then pop out to the top of the key as an outlet pass in case 5 isn't open or can turn to face the basketball and finish inside too.

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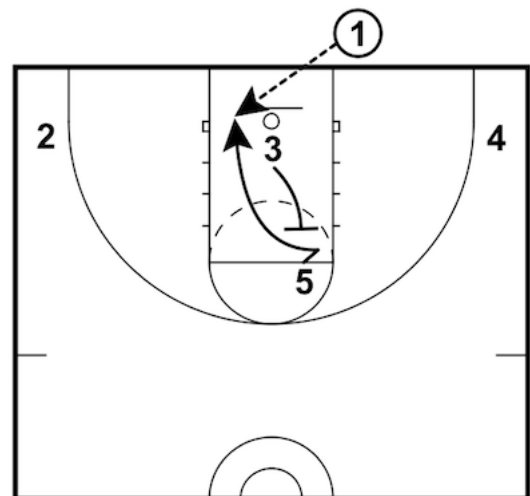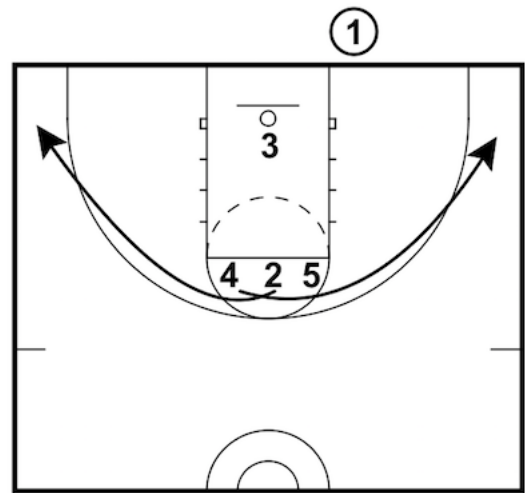
Coaching Points:

• It's very important that none of the player give away where they're going to cut too early. Get players to face different directions to throw the defense off.

- As long as everyone knows which player will receive the screen at the free-throw line, encourage some movement to keep the defense on their toes.

- 3 must set a strong screen and hold it until 5's defender has evaded it.

Simple Double

Overview of the Play:

This simple play is designed to get a quick three-point shot at the top of the key. This is achieved by the team's two post players setting a staggered in the key.

Key Personnel:

- 2 (the in-bounder) should be the team's best outside shooter.

- 4 and 5 must be able to set strong screens.

- 1 must be able to make an on-time, on-target pass.

Instructions:

Setup: The play starts in a box set with the shooter inbounding the ball, the two post players on the elbows, and the two guards on the low blocks.

1. The play starts with 4 taking a few steps towards 1 acting like they're about to set a screen.

2. But instead, 1 pops out to the perimeter and receives the basketball from 2.

3. As soon as the pass is made, 4 screens for 2 who immediately cuts towards the top of the key.

4. 5 must hunt for 2's defender at the free-throw line and set a strong, stationary screen.

5. 1 takes a few dribbles towards the top of the key to improve the passing angle and then passes the basketball to 2 who takes the open shot.
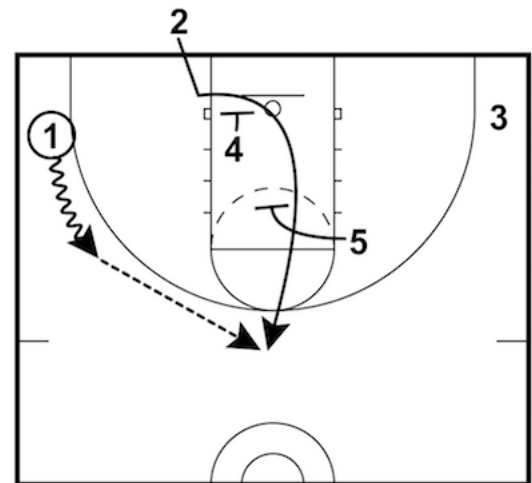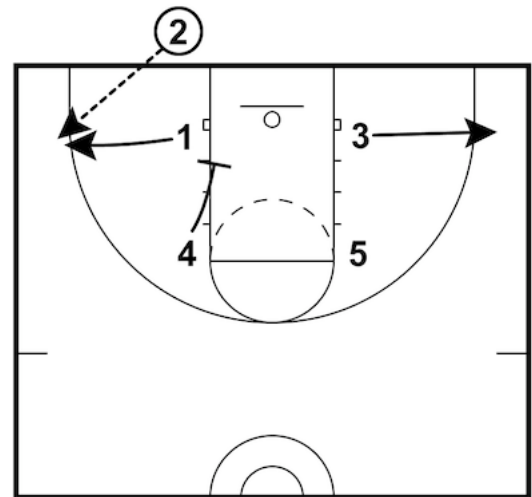
Coaching Points:

- 4 should raise their arm signalling a screen at the start of the play to hopefully confuse the defenders into thinking 1 will cut to the top of the key.

- 1 must aim to pass the basketball to 2's inside shoulder as they turn into the shot. This will speed up their release and ensures the defense won't have time to recover.

- 5 can't plant themselves on the free-throw line and hope. They need to seek out 2's defender and set a solid (but stationary) screen on them.

Slice Elevator

Overview of the Play:

This quick-hitter play is designed to get an shooter open on the wing for a three-point shot off an elevator screen. You must have players who understand the importance of timing for this play to be effective.

Key Personnel:

- 2 should be the team's best shooter.

- 1 and 5 must be able to set a solid screen.

- Preferably, 4 can play out of the pick-and-roll.

Instructions:

Setup: The play starts in a box set with your guards at the top and post players down low.

1. The play starts one of the players at the top stepping out to the slot and receiving the basketball. This is preferably not the team's best shooter as it's the opposite elbow who will get the open shot.

2. On the pass to the slot, the post player on ball-side (4) cross screens for the opposite post who cuts across the key. If this pass is open, make it and finish with a layup.

3. As soon as 1 makes the pass to the slot, they must cut around the outside of them and head towards the low block in preparation to set a screen.
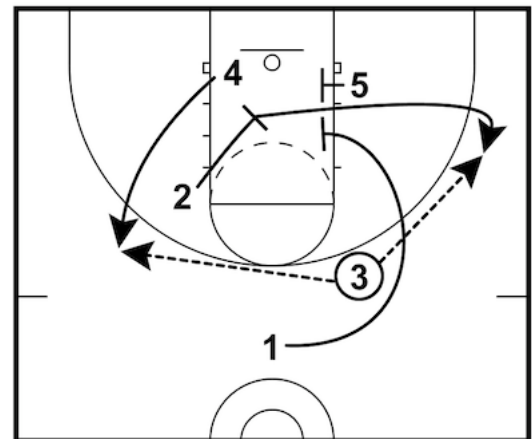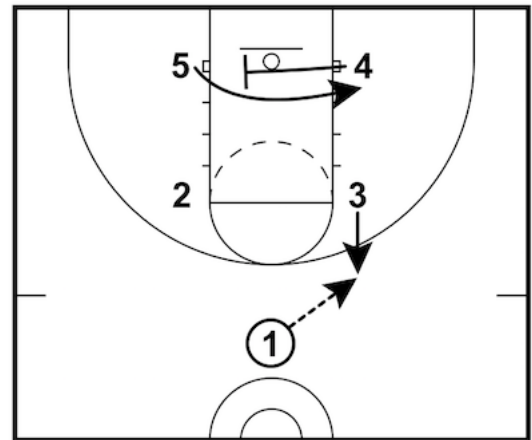
4. From here, 2 sets a down screen for 4 in the key. 4 pops out to the perimeter.

5. Immediately after setting the screen, 2 sprints through the elevator screen being set by 1 and 5 and cuts out to the perimeter looking for the shot.

6. 3 passes to 2 who should be open.

7. If they're not, 3 can pass to the opposite wing and then follow the basketball to set an on-ball screen for 4.

8. If this pass is made, 1 quickly cuts to the opposite corner to ensure good spacing for the pick-and-roll being set.
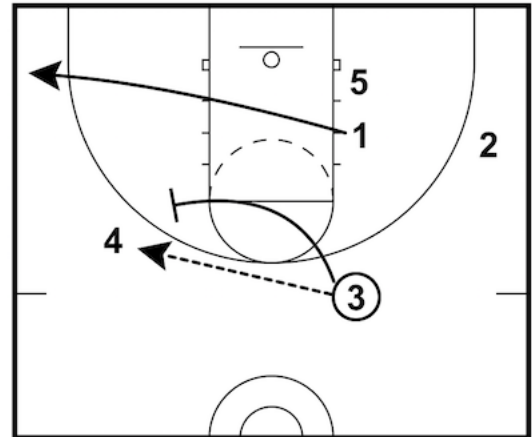
Coaching Points:

- As with most elevator screen plays, timing is everything. 2 should be starting the cut through the screen as soon as 1 arrives near the low block.

- During your team practices, make sure you're running shooting drills that involve players cutting out to the perimeter and turning to shoot off the catch.

- 1 and 5 must 'close the gate' by stepping together as soon as 2 has cut through. This will prevent 2's defender from being able to follow them to the perimeter in a straight line.

Storm

Overview of the Play:

A savvy play using multiple screens to pop a shooter out to the three-point line for an open shot. I first seen this play used by the WNBA's Seattle Storm during the 2018 finals.

Key Personnel:

- 2 is the team's best three-point shooter.

- 4 and 5 must be able to set smart, solid screens.

Instructions:

Setup: The play starts with a 3-man stack and 1 player on the weak-side low block. The team's best shooter should be the player on the block.

1. The play starts with 3 cutting from the top of the stack along the baseline and out to the weak-side corner behind the three-point line.

2. At the same time, 2 sets a screen for 5 to cut towards the hoop.

3. But instead of cutting to the rim, 5 curls around 2 and then screens 2's defender.

4. 2 then pops out to the three-point line as 4 sets another screen.

5. 1 passes to 2 for the open three-point shot.
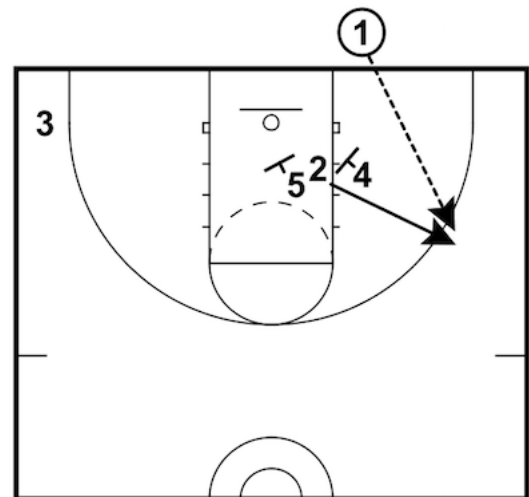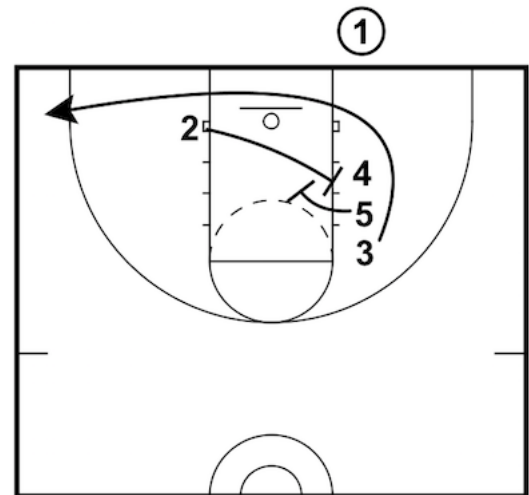
Coaching Points:

- This is a play that requires deception and can only be used once or twice each game. 5 needs to make it appear they're going to cut to the rim before stopping to set the screen.

- 2 must explode out towards the three-point line when they cut. If the defense is smart, 2 won't have long before another player closes out to them.

- 4 can't just hold their screen in their current position. They need to hunt for 2's defender and then make sure they're stationary when contact is made.

Winner

Overview of the Play:

This is a quick hitter play for your team's best shooter. It involves an irregular cross screen to lob the basketball to a post player on the opposite side of the floor and then a deceptive set of cross screens at the top of the key to get your shooter open for a catch and shoot 3-point shot.

Key Personnel:

- 3 must be capable of making a long, accurate pass over the defense.

- 2 should be the team's best shooter.

- 4 must be high-IQ and capable of setting a strong screen.

Instructions:

Setup: The team sets up in a box formation with the team's best shooter (2) on the weak side elbow.

1. To start the play, 1 and 2 set cross screens for the players opposite them.

2. 4 and 5 then cut to the opposite side of the key, with 3 making the irregular lob pass over the defense to 5 on the weak-side of the key.

3. On the catch, 4 will immediately screen 2's defender who will usually be caught off guard and 2 will cut towards the top of the key behind the three-point line.

4. 5 then makes the pass to 2 for the shot.
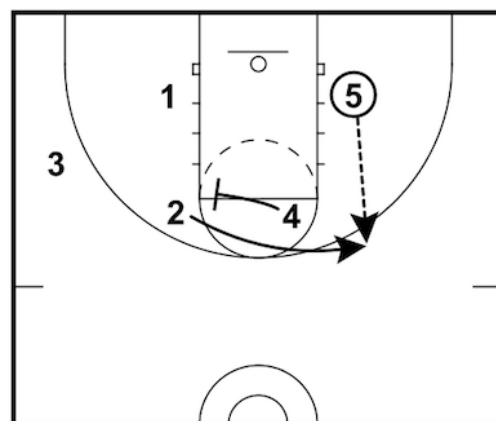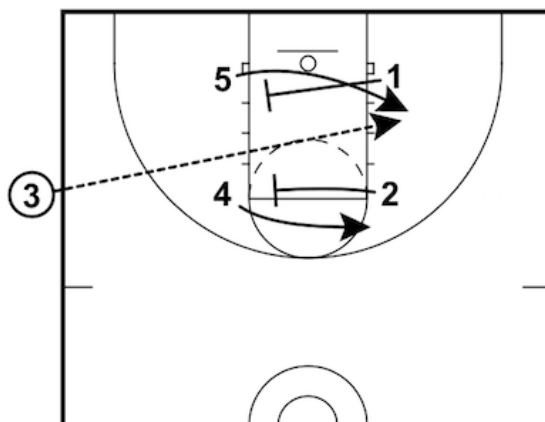
Coaching Points:

- It's important for 2 and 4 to make it appear that their involvement in the play is over after the initial cross screen occurs. This will get their defenders to relax.

- 3 must understand that it's better for them to throw the basketball too far than too short where the basketball might get tipped by a defender.

- This play relies on tricking the defense. You must have high-IQ players for it to be successful.

- 2 must be ready to catch and shoot immediately when they receive the pass from 5.