



“FAST AND TOGETHER”

Ideas on 4 out 1 in Primary Fast Break



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Introduction

“Fast and Together” is a fast break concept for both senior and youth basketball teams. Idea is to bring the ball up over half court as quick as possible after a steal, defensive rebound but also after opponent scores.

I’m not a big fan of a secondary breaks because I feel that players are slowing down and settling to play secondary options when there is still a chance to be aggressive and attack to the basket. So I rather play primary break or transition pick and roll as a “secondary option” to get into our offensive flow and automatics.

Playing **Fast** is important for me for two reasons. Firstly to score easy baskets. Fast breaks and offensive rebounds are the easiest ways to score easy baskets.

Another reason is the positive psychological factor. Being an aggressive fast break team and going up fast also when opponent scores puts a lot of pressure on their defense. Maybe opponent team must adjust their style of play to slow down the breaks.

Word **Together** highlights the importance of being organized while playing fast. With my experience this is the thing that separates the great fast break teams from the others. Too many teams are losing the control when they are trying to play fast and they end up playing what I call “chaos basketball”. It is not enough that you have athletic players who can dribble the ball up fast and take it to the basket. You need to be able to combine good spacing and decision making with athleticism.

Everything starts from the defense

This article is about offense but I have to mention two key things defensively to be able to play this kind of style

1. “Active defense leading to easy baskets in offense”

- Pressuring the ball
- Deflecting the passes

2. Strong defensive rebounding game

- **Weak side hot spot** - Understanding where the rebounds are coming and especially limiting offensive rebounds from the weak side hotspot
- **First contact wins** - Having the idea of first taking the contact to the offensive player and then going for the rebound. I hate to see when the shot goes up and perimeter players are only focused on following the ball while their man gets an open lane to the basket. Most dangerous offensive rebounders for me are athletic wings who are coming from outside to take rebounds over defensive bigs who are occupied on boxing out their own player
- **Good rebounding balance** – I don’t want my big players to be helping from the weak side in dribble penetration situations because this gives a big advantage for the offensive big man to get a good position for the offensive rebound

Roles and Running lanes

Positions 1-3 are changeable.

Position 4 player is a true multi-tool player who has lots of freedom. He can play like 1-3 but also run the middle lane if he has a chance to score an easy basket from there.

Video link position 4 player

<https://youtu.be/lrYdwNHqRYM>

Position 5 player is always running in the middle either to the basket or playing transition pick and roll if trailing

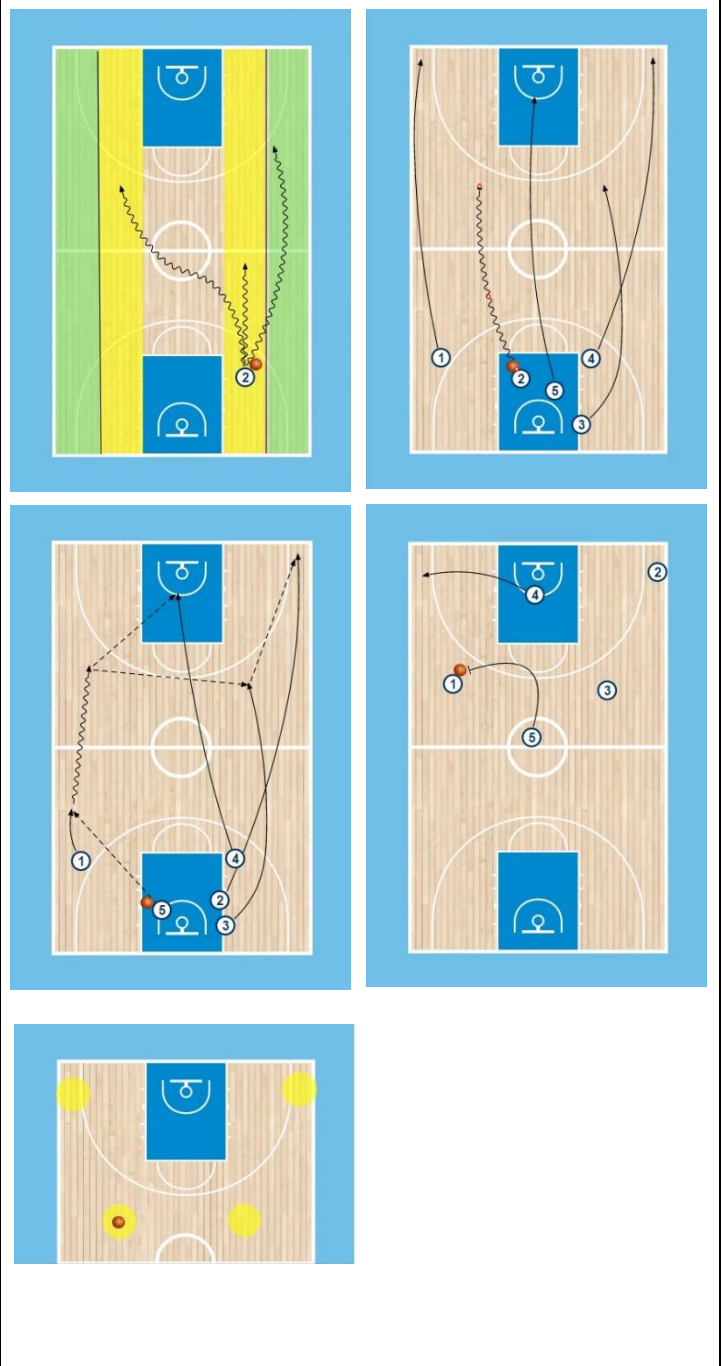
Any of 1-4 are allowed to push the ball after steal or defensive rebound. This means that players must be very quick recognizing what role they are playing when we get the ball.

Besides 4 man another player who has freedom is the player with the ball. If there is no quick outlet pass he will push the ball up in the “elbow lane” (yellow in the picture). He can dribble across to the other elbow lane or even dribble out to the wing lane (green area) if he is leading the break. These scenarios are explained later...

Players who must stay on one lane are 5 man (middle lane) and perimeter players without the ball. Their job is to get to the wing lane before half court and continue all the way to the corner.

When we have arrived to the offensive end this is the basic spacing we should always aim to have.

Instead of putting the perimeter players to the spots I just highlighted the spots. With this I want to emphasize that the players 1-4 can be in any of these four spots.



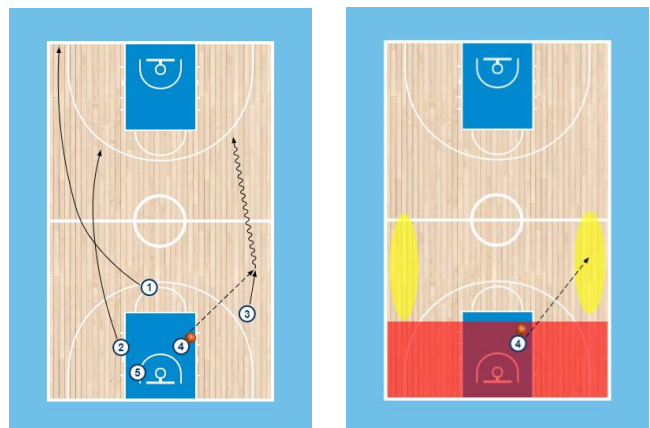
First option passing the ball ahead

First option is always to pass the ball ahead towards the half court (yellow areas). If player gets “a clear defensive rebound” he should try to turn himself to the direction we are attacking and bring the ball up (ready for the overhead pass) while he is still in the air.

I want to avoid all lateral passes (red area).

Video link

<https://youtu.be/DHWNLaMm1V4>



“Touch the Baseline”

Our first option is to pass the ball ahead but if we can't make it early then we don't make a pass anymore when the ball is crossing half court.

Touch the baseline rule means that wing players should never slow down or stop when they are getting close to the level of the free throw line extend.

Always spread all the way to the corner to maximize the space for the player who is attacking with the ball.

Yes the ball is always faster than a player but I think it is also important to think what the receiving player can do when he gets the ball.

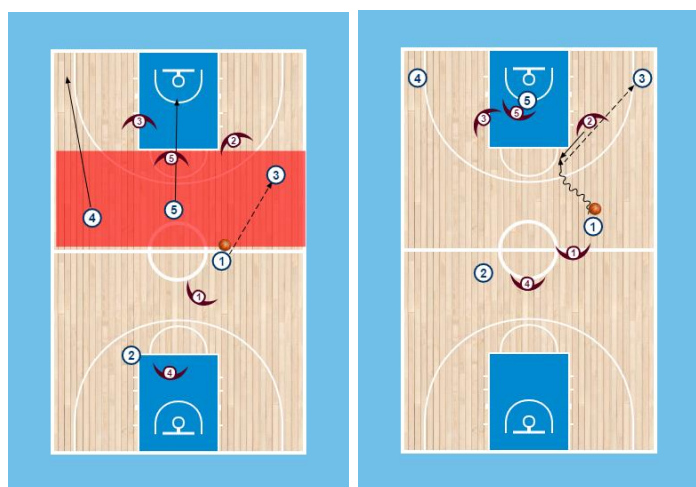
Many times when receiving the ball to the wing, player already has a defender between him and the basket. This pass from the half court to the wing doesn't really create anything dangerous.

Another reason why I prefer not to make this pass is that when the wings realize they didn't get the early pass they can continue their sprint all the way to the corner without any hesitation because they don't need to be ready to receive the ball while they are sprinting.

Player with the ball will freeze the defender (#2 in the picture) and then kick the ball out to the corner. He should try to bring the ball little bit more to the middle if possible to stretch the defense even more.

Video link

<https://youtu.be/XcVKGiZO8ZQ>



“Weak side 2-1”

If two perimeter players without the ball are on the same side I want them to stay there!

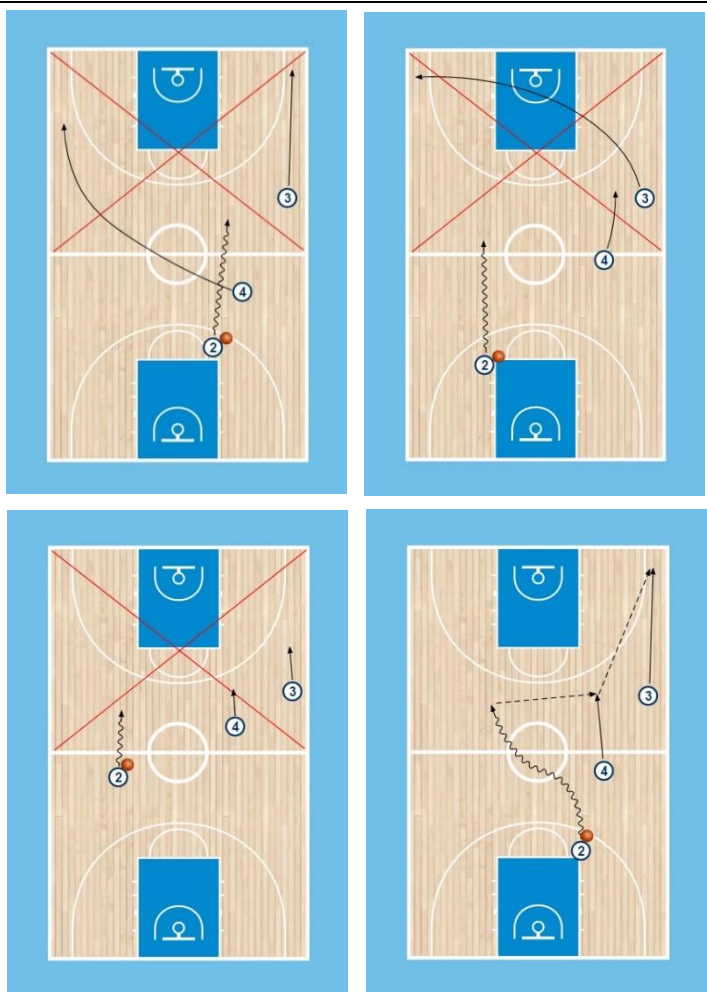
Important is that they are not running in the same level. First one of them must be clearly ahead and sprint all the way to the corner.

Having two shooters in the same side often leads to weak side 2-1 situation and open corner 3P shot in numbered Fast Break situations.

Player with the ball must recognize this situation and make sure that he is on the opposite side

Video link

<https://youtu.be/Qv-eciJ8vWo>



Ball handler ahead of the wing player

After a steal or a long rebound there might be a situation where ball handler doesn't have any player running on the wing ahead of him.

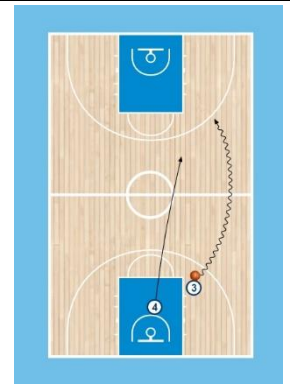
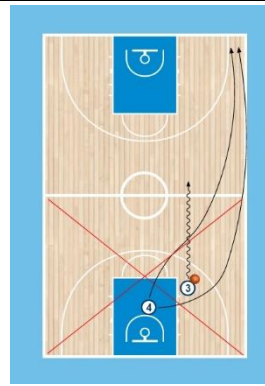
If it is not a clear 1-0 or 2-1 where player would obviously go straight to the basket he can spread to the wing lane with the ball.

What I don't like is the scenario of the left picture where the wing player is desperately trying to get ahead of the ball. There is three reasons:

1. Ball handler can't push the ball with 100% speed
2. Wing player creates unnecessary traffic near the ball which is always increasing the risk of turnover
3. Chance for one defender to guard both offensive players because they are so close to each other

Video link

<https://youtu.be/Tn0pqb4yRII>



Inside player

After defensive rebound

First two seconds after big man gets the defensive rebound are crucial for the fast break.

If there is a defensive player who is taking away the first pass ahead I don't want that the guard moves to the direction of our own baseline to get the ball or even worse running a loop below the big to get a hand-off.

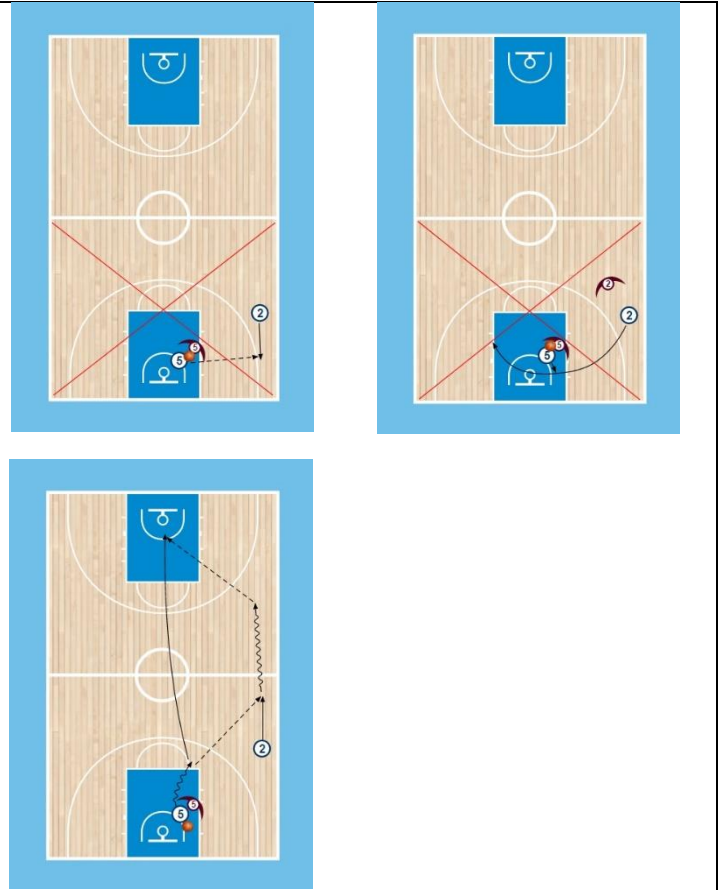
After this kind of an action fast break is killed for sure. Of course there are some moments when it is smart to do this. In the end of the quarter to have the last possession or in the end of the game to play more controlled and protect the lead.

I want instead that big man dribbles out and passes the ball ahead after 1 or 2 dribbles.

Many coaches don't want their bigs to put the ball on the floor but I encourage them to do this because after passing the ball ahead it is easy for them to continue sprinting to the basket.

Video link

<https://youtu.be/L8FwuthI-Z0>



After opponent scores

If opponent scores we are still looking to go over half court very quickly.

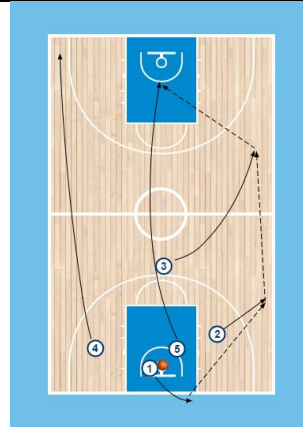
Our position 5 player never takes the ball out. His job is to sprint to the basket immediately.

Position 1-4 player who is closest to the ball takes it out (#1 here) and we are looking to get the ball to the front rim area for our big player with two quick passes.

I believe if the team can be organized very quickly in this situation it gives a chance to score 2-3 easy baskets in a game even against good opponents.

Video link

<https://youtu.be/pr7dseGBhDI>



Summary – Key things

1. All five players are running full speed is the most important thing – Ball can be passed or dribbled up the court
2. Wings sprint all the way to the corner – “Touch the Baseline”
3. Two wings on the same side – no problem, create 2-1 to the weak side
4. Position 4 player can play both inside / outside player roles
5. After opponent scores – Quick outlet pass from closest perimeter player and 5 man running to the front rim to score easy basket

Concept for senior teams

- If you have a skilled position 4 player who can play as a point forward and several good three point shooting guards this system can be very effective when your 4 man is pushing the ball up and guards sprinting without the ball
- If you don't have very big physical players in your league you should look for a tall but skilled small forward to play position 4 in this concept
- If you have a point guard who is used to dominate the ball he must adjust on running up court also without the ball and many times this is not so easy especially for more experienced players. You must sell the idea for this kind of a player and remind him that the game is not only running. After dead ball situations or sometimes if the flow of the game is too fast and out of control you want your PG to bring the ball up and set up the offense.
- Position 5 player must be running the court all the time because there is no two basket runners like in most concepts where positions 4 and 5 are changeable. This means that you must have a backup big man who can play good minutes.

Concept for youth teams

- Concept where positions are changeable is good for youth teams because many times it is difficult to know what will be the primary playing position of a young player in the future. Another advance is that playing this style players are forced to react quickly to different roles.
- Position 4 role is a great development role for a young tall player (whose future is not be an inside player) because this player has a lot of freedom to do different things and he can play outside but also inside if 5 man is trailing
- If you have several tall players in the team you can switch them playing both 4 and 5 roles

About the author

Janne Koskimies is a 29 years old Finnish Basketball coach and student of the game. He is currently assistant coach of Finnish team Karhubasket.

