

WINNING BASKETBALL FUNDAMENTALS

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System

LEE ROSE
Foreword by **Tubby Smith**



Winning Basketball Fundamentals

Lee Rose



Human Kinetics

Rose, Lee H.

Winning basketball fundamentals / Lee Rose.

p. cm.

Rev. ed. of: *The basketball handbook*, c2004.

Includes index.

1. Basketball--Coaching--Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. Basketball--Training.

I. Rose, Lee H. Basketball handbook. II. Title.

GV885.3.R68 2012

796.323077--dc23

2012018519

ISBN-10: 1-4504-3162-3 (print)

ISBN-13: 978-1-4504-3162-0 (print)

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This book is a revised edition of *The Basketball Handbook*, published in 2004 by Human Kinetics.

The web addresses cited in this text were current as of July 2012 unless otherwise noted.

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Printer: United Graphics

We thank Urbana High School in Urbana, Illinois, for assistance in providing the location for the photo shoot for this book.

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Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The paper in this book is certified under a sustainable forestry program.

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To my family: As always, thanks for your support and for hanging in with me. _____

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Foreword

I have to hand it to whoever titled this book. It not only fits the subject matter, and what will result (winning!) if you apply the information effectively, but it also captures what comes to mind regarding Lee Rose's coaching forte.

Well over 30 years ago as an assistant coach at Virginia Commonwealth University, I faced the University of South Florida and its highly celebrated new coach. I almost expected an air of arrogance from the opposing bench, occupied by the coach famous for earning a National Coach of the Year Award and leading his two previous schools, UNC-Charlotte and Purdue University, to Final Fours. After all, those were big-time credentials for a coach in the Sun Belt Conference.

But what I observed in that first game and saw in all subsequent contests against USF was a coach who was about his players and team, not about himself. And when you played a Lee Rose-coached squad, you knew you had to play well; the opponent was never going to beat itself.

Lee's teams were so fundamentally sound that they always seemed to play better than the individual talents would suggest. Lee was a master of matchups, frustratingly so for the opposing coach. Every time you thought you had an edge, he'd counter it with the right defense and personnel. You watch it happen time and again and ask, "How does he do that?"

Winning Basketball Fundamentals is the answer. From the first page to the last it's as solid a book as you'll find on the proper execution of techniques and tactics. But what really makes it so valuable are Coach Rose's keen insights and beneficial tools. Whether using the three-point shot, free throws, or screen and roll, you'll pick up new ideas on maximizing production and consistency. And the coach's player performance rating system is an outstanding evaluation tool for games and practice. From the big-picture guiding principles to the situation-specific inbound plays, the content is loaded with wisdom and ready-to-use applications.

The book is easy to navigate, too. The precision with which Lee Rose communicates his knowledge reflects the same type of discipline his teams demonstrated on the court. That composure and control manifest itself into a succinct and straightforward style of presentation that I especially appreciate.

But in addition to all the great things the book has to offer, even more impressive is what Coach Rose does with it. As was the case with *The Basketball Handbook*, Coach Rose will buy a large supply of the books and distribute at no cost to schools in some of the poorest areas of Appalachia. Along with the book comes a positive message about education as the key to a better future. And that's a winning point for all of us in the basketball community to remember.

Tubby Smith

Head coach, University of Minnesota

Preface

Winning Basketball Fundamentals is for coaches at all levels who are seeking ways to improve instructional skills and for players who are interested in developing an all-around game. In all my years of coaching, I've never met a player who didn't need to improve in some area. I've been around good players, excellent players, and great players, but never a perfect player. Whether it's free-throw shooting, dribbling, passing, rebounding, setting screens, using proper shooting technique, or some intuitive trait such as selflessness or good decision making, even a great player can improve parts of his game. This book addresses those areas and more.

If you're a middle school or high school player who wants to know what's expected of you when trying out for a team, you can go to the offensive skills section or learn about defense by checking the defensive tactics segment. If you want to know how to improve your vertical jump or increase your speed, it's here. If you're college bound, you will find drills covering the fundamentals as well as vital information on what to look for and what you can expect when selecting a school.

The further you advance in organized ball, the more you are expected to contribute. If you have good habits, you understand that the more effort you give, the greater the benefits. This axiom is true in sports, but more important, it's true in life. Players and coaches alike need to understand that the disappointment in losing relates directly to the amount of energy expended in trying to win. Ask yourself why young players excel in high school but fall behind as they progress to college. Too often it's because they focus only on the skills that are easy for them and disregard the importance of being well rounded. Whether as a coach or a player, you need to bring to the game a firm understanding of what it takes to be successful and then devise a plan that helps you accomplish your goals.

The first three chapters of *Winning Basketball Fundamentals* discuss the importance of establishing principles that help both coach and player stay focused; identify roles for players, coaches, and teams; and present a fair and consistent evaluation process. The book moves from the philosophical to the technical in chapters 4 to 9 by defining the offensive and defensive fundamentals and concluding with tactics for special situations. The corresponding drills and diagrams promote development at all levels. If you're a coach, the drills and diagrams serve as excellent teaching aids for practice.

When applicable, I have included personal coaching stories to illustrate a point, but this book is not about my coaching career or the college institutions or pro teams where I have worked. This book is about helping you understand the fundamentals of the game and how to apply that knowledge to your situation. I was the coaching supervisor for the NBA's Development League (NBA D-League) for six years. In that role, I critiqued professional coaches, offering concrete suggestions that helped them develop expertise in their trade. At the present time, I actively mentor basketball coaches at the high school, college, and professional levels. This book addresses many of the issues that I cover with the coaches. I hope that by reading this book, you will come across new ideas that will enhance and improve your game.

Talent alone does not guarantee winning, but talent sharpened by fundamentals certainly offers a better opportunity. Players and coaches who excel in basketball understand that energy unleashed randomly is rarely constructive, so they come to the game seeking ways to improve—ways to get the edge that provides success. Successful coaches have a plan for the team and for each team member.

Players need the same kind of road map for their game as they seek improvement. Each drill worked on in practice and every offensive and defensive strategy employed should have a specific purpose. *Winning Basketball Fundamentals* presents proven drills that enhance development for both player and coach.

The information presented in *Winning Basketball Fundamentals* is the culmination of almost a half century of active involvement in basketball. The drills, taken from college and the NBA, are the ones that endured the test of time and proved most effective. I hope they will for you, too.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank the players I have coached. To win, coaches must have talented players, and I was indeed blessed with talented players. But more than that, I coached men of strong character. To each of you, I say thank you for being part of my journey and this book.

My deepest appreciation goes to the unheralded assistant coaches who contributed so much to our success. Following, in chronological order, are the four institutions where I coached and the assistant coaches in alphabetical order.

Transylvania Don Lane, Bob Pace, Ron Whitson, Roland Wierwille

UNC Charlotte Everett Bass, Mike Pratt

Purdue Everett Bass, Roger Blalock, George Faerber, Billy Kelly, Jeff Meyer

South Florida Everett Bass, Jan Bennett, Lewis Card, Gordon Gibbons, Mike Lederman, Mike Lewis, Jeff Meyer, Mike Shirley, Mark Wise

I owe a great deal of gratitude and appreciation to two special people who kept me on track with their continuous encouragement and support throughout the writing process. The original manuscript took just over three years to complete, and this revision has taken two years. Yet the experience, knowledge, and theories were collected over a lifetime of coaching. The concept and stories are mine but without many people giving freely of their time and energy, the original book, let alone this new and improved revision, would never have made it to print. I want to recognize and thank the following:

John Kilgo: John and I forged a lasting friendship when he was the announcer for the UNC Charlotte 49ers during our run to the Final Four in 1976–77. I am indebted to him for the invaluable suggestions, perceptive insights, and basketball knowledge that he shared as an author and radio and TV commentator. He read and reread most of this revision; his support has been invaluable. He has my thanks and deep respect.

Jordan Cohn: Jordan has always encouraged the writing process and has been a source for facts and stats. I am grateful.

I am profoundly grateful to Human Kinetics, principally Ted Miller, for his patience, direction, enthusiasm, and belief in the original publication, as well as this extensive revision. Special thanks to Laura Podeschi, the developmental editor for this revision. Her attention to detail, constant positive input, and encouragement were invaluable in this process. Thanks also to others at HK who contributed to the project, including Justin Klug, Tyler Wolpert, Neil Bernstein, Joyce Brumfield, Joe Buck, Jason Allen, Laura Fitch, Al Wilborn, and Julie Denzer. And finally, thanks to Urbana High School in Urbana, Illinois, for providing the location for the book's photo shoot.

During my formative years I received wonderful training and encouragement from my coaches: Briscoe Evans at Morton Junior High; Elmer "Baldy" Gilb, John Heber, Walter Hill, and Dr. C.T. Sharpton, the principal, at Henry Clay High School; and Harry Stephenson, C.M. Newton, and Jack

Shared values and mutual respect were the basis for the relationships I had with those for whom I worked. It is my pleasure to recognize Dr. Irvin Lunger, Dr. James Broadus, Dr. Dean Colvard, Dr. Frank Dickey, Dr. Doug Orr, Wayne Duke, Bill Wall, Vic Bubas, Tay Baker, Fred Schaus, and Dr. Dick Bowers. NBA colleagues Bob Weiss, Willis Reed, Del Harris, Frank Hamblen, Mike Dunleavy, Sam Vincent, Lenny Wilkins, Marty Blake, Mat Winick, Larry Riley, Michael Goldberg, and Senator Herb Kohl, owner of the Milwaukee Bucks, were always encouraging and supportive.

Eleanor Rose: I want to thank Elo for her steadfast confidence and her unselfish commitment of time, energy, and wise counsel. She read and reread every word and every drill, and she is one tough critic. As partners for these past 53 years, we found that few things in our lives equaled the emotional roller coaster we rode while writing and revising this book.

Key to Diagrams

Offensive player	○ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
Offensive player with ball	● ● ₁ ● ₂ ● ₃ ● ₄ ● ₅
Guard	ⓐ
Guard with ball	● _G
Forward	ⓕ
Post	Ⓟ
Coach	ⓒ
Coach with ball	● _C
Defensive player	x x ¹ x ² x ³ x ⁴ x ⁵
Pass	----->
Dribble	~~~~~>
Screen (offense), trap or cut off (defense)	————
Player movement	————>
Pivot	d

Chapter 1

Six Guiding Principles



AP Photo/Chris Carlson

Growing up watching the University of Kentucky's glorious championship basketball teams, from the Fabulous Five of 1948 to Rupp's Runts of the mid-1960s, I learned lessons about the game that would last a lifetime. Foremost among them was that each player and coach had to commit to playing with a set of fundamental beliefs to succeed as a team.

As those Kentucky squads demonstrated, not every club has to subscribe to the same formula to be successful, and players don't have to be similar. Coaches and athletes must take into account many factors, such as experience and individual skills. Historically, NBA and NCAA champions have differed markedly, even from one year to the next.

Still, over the course of a half century as a player and coach, I've found that these six principles characterize consistent, winning teams:

1. Be in good physical condition
2. Play hard
3. Play smart
4. Execute the plan
5. Be unselfish

6. Maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses

Think of your own experience. Did not each of these factors come into play on your best teams? Conversely, weren't the poorer teams lacking in one or more of these dimensions?

Ultimately, winning comes down to talent, but players' abilities are compromised when the squad is deficient in any of these six principles. So, as a player and as a coach, commit to achieving and maintaining them, starting with physical conditioning as the bedrock that must be addressed first.

Principle 1: Be in Good Physical Condition

Elite basketball players are fascinating to watch. They not only adeptly execute skills and tactics but also give maximum effort throughout each game. Even more amazing is that they make it all look so effortless.

Obviously, not every player will perform with the apparent ease of the game's superstars, but with proper physical conditioning, players can improve their output dramatically. Optimal basketball-specific fitness will allow athletes to increase both their minutes played and the quality of those minutes.

The preseason program I recommend is composed of three distinct elements: base building, agility and power training, and performance training. The regimen is demanding, yet realistic and effective. Competitive players love the daily challenges, and they benefit greatly by completing the sport-specific activities featured in this approach.

Players must have an adequate supply of drinking water on hand during all workouts, practices, and games. Proper hydration is essential for good health, efficient body functions, and high-level athletic performance.

The following points explain the three distinct elements of this program.

Build a Base

Previously, conditioning for basketball involved slow and long-duration strenuous activity. Aerobic exercises perhaps included long-distance running, cycling, swimming, or other activities that demanded endurance. Such activities, when well planned and performed at the proper intensity over time, will improve respiration efficiency and heart rate, and such workouts are fine in the off-season for maintaining overall fitness.

But to improve cardiovascular fitness for basketball, the distances that players run should be reduced and the speed of their activity should be increased. For years, the emphasis in training basketball players was on elongated muscles—muscles that are slender, stretched out, and used for running long distances. But the fast-twitch muscle fibers, those that contract more quickly during the shorter periods of high-intensity physical activity, are more important here.

It all starts with athletes developing an adequate anaerobic base to withstand the performance

demands that will tax the functioning of this system of the body. Think of it as building the foundation for a house. Although we will add stylistic features specific to the structure as construction progresses, those elements are unlikely to hold up without a solid base from which to build and sustain them. The foundational movements will be anaerobic conditioning, and we will tailor the stylistic features to the sport-specific movements essential for basketball.

According to the American Sports Medicine Institute (ASMI) in Birmingham, Alabama, anaerobic training is “activity that lasts from 30 seconds to 2 minutes.” This definition includes interval training, which emphasizes fast-twitch muscle response. Interval training involves working out in intense, limited segments, performed in an exercise-to-rest ratio of 1:2 (for example, 1 minute of exercise for every 2 minutes of rest). Interval training is the preferred method for training basketball players and should make up the major part of anaerobic conditioning.

Interval training activities create an oxygen debt without making athletes feel exhausted or making them more susceptible to injury because of fatigue. Oxygen debt is more commonly called “being winded,” and recovery from it requires a period of rest. The more fit a player is, the quicker the recovery occurs. Interval training increases lung capacity and oxygen intake, which enhance recovery and endurance. Players must have endurance to maintain performance throughout games and finish strong.

An interval training program should be conducted in an indoor facility such as a gym or indoor track where administrative props—a clock and a stopwatch—are constant. The clock serves two major functions—it’s visible, reflecting the running time for each interval, and it spurs the players to work harder. The incentive for players is to beat the clock, not teammates, although friendly competition occurs. This motivational aspect of the clock is powerful. With players directing their focus to an inanimate object, the coach does not have to play the role of the bad guy. When using a track, a 94-foot (28.7 m) distance must be marked off on one side of the straightaway to replicate a gym floor.

Here’s how to structure the interval training. Every team member runs 1 mile (1,600 m), which is divided into intervals of eighths of a mile (200 m). This means that each player runs one-eighth of a mile (220 yards, or 200 m) eight times. Required, predetermined times are assigned to the three positions—guards, forwards, and centers. Five years of personal statistical data on individual players by time and position compiled during preseason conditioning provides predetermined times for each position. (Note that all these times were compiled with college athletes; obviously, times may vary with either less mature high school players or more highly skilled professional players.)

Each player is responsible for running the sprints within that specific period. The goal of all players is to reduce their time daily, thereby increasing their speed. For example, guards begin the first day by running the eighths (200 m) in an allowable time of 44 seconds. On the second day the time drops to 43 seconds, on the third day to 42 seconds, and so on. The time for forwards begins at 44 seconds and then drops to 43. Centers begin the first day at 45 seconds and reduce their time to 44 seconds.

This intense interval training lasts 10 days. It should be supervised, and results need to be recorded. The training is divided into two distinct segments—eighths ($1/8$) are run on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and quarters ($1/4$) are run on Tuesday and Thursday. The sample workout schedule ([table 1.1](#)) reflects both days of the week and required times.

Table 1.1 Sample Workout Schedule

WEEK 1					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Distance	1/8 mi (200 m)	1/4 mi (400 m)	1/8 mi (200 m)	1/4 mi (400 m)	1/8 mi (200 m)
Guards (point and shooting)	:44	1:38	:43	1:35	:42
Forwards (small and power)	:44	1:38	:43	1:35	:43
Centers	:45	1:42	:44	1:41	:44
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Times and makeups for the big men should be established in consultation with the players. They are often modified depending on age, weight, and speed. • Guards and forwards should have no problem making the times for the first week. • Everyone struggles with breathing in the quarters. 					
WEEK 2					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Distance	1/8 mi (200 m)	1/4 mi (400 m)	1/8 mi (200 m)	1/4 mi (400 m)	1/8 mi (200 m)
Guards (point and shooting)	:41	1:33	:40	1:33	:39
Forwards (small and power)	:42	1:33	:41	1:33	:40
Centers	:44	1:40	:43	1:40	:42
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal is to get the big men down to 1:40. • Excellent runners make all their times. • Good runners improve their speed considerably. • Fair runners noticeably increase their speed. 					

At the beginning of the interval drill, the clock should be set to 24 minutes to avoid having to reset a stopwatch constantly. The clock runs continually until all three groups (guards, forwards, and centers) finish the mile (1,600 m). Typically, the guards go first. Assistant coaches call and record their times as they cross the finish line. On an eighth-mile (200 m) day, the forwards follow the guards, beginning at the 23:00 mark. Then the centers move to the starting line and begin their run at 22:00. When the centers finish, the guards start again. The players repeat the process for seven more cycles until everyone completes the mile.

The timing process is the same for the quarters except that two-minute intervals separate the running of the groups. The guards begin at 24:00, the forwards at 22:00, and the centers at 20:00. Each group continues in turn until time expires, and each group runs four quarters.

If a player misses a time (that is, does not meet the goal), he runs an additional eighth. When making up eighths, 5 seconds is added to the time requirement: A player running the regular eighths in 42 seconds would be allowed 47 seconds for makeups. A player who fails the makeup is allowed an extra 10 seconds for the third attempt. For a missed turn when using a court, the penalty is two additional eighths. For the quarters, penalty makeups are 15 seconds on the first miss and individually set thereafter. Following a short rest period, players complete all makeups before beginning the exercise in phase II. Players must touch the end lines with both hands on all turns; failure to do so costs an extra interval. The interval begins at the whistle or on the command of "Go." The penalty for a false start is an extra eighth.

The objective of this conditioning is to get players in sufficient condition so that they can complete a two-hour practice without pulling a muscle or injuring themselves; it is not a boot-camp mentality. To prevent injury or illness, the coach should use discretion about when players have pushed themselves

as hard as they can.

Train for Agility and Power

After the base is established, the preseason conditioning program must focus on muscular endurance, mobility, flexibility, balance, strength, and power. This work begins directly after the running phase ends.

On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday following the interval work, six basketball-related exercise stations are used. Three exercises—defensive slides, sit-ups, and burpees—emphasize agility, flexibility, and strength. Three exercises focus on plyometrics jump training, emphasizing speed jumping, rope jumping, and rebound jumping. On Tuesday and Thursday following the running, the entire workout consists of plyometrics depth jumping.

Plyometrics is a technique that originated in Russia and Eastern Europe in the mid-1960s. The Soviets achieved great success with plyometrics in their training regimen, especially in track and field. Yuri Verhoshansky, a Russian coach whose success with jumpers is legendary, could be called the father of plyometrics. He succeeded in increasing his athletes' reactive abilities by adding exercise that involved jumping and leaping and that took advantage of the natural elasticity of the muscle tissues.

The six Monday, Wednesday, and Friday drill stations suggested here are supervised by coaches, trainers, and statisticians, who record each player's results. Each exercise lasts 45 seconds, and a 2-minute rest occurs after each activity. The team splits into groups according to position. All groups are supervised, and all begin on the same whistle. Each group is assigned a starting drill. Players rotate in an organized manner until they have completed all six drills. With five groups, one station will be free (open) during each rotation. The goal each day is determined by the average repetitions of the previous day.

On Tuesday and Thursday, the players focus on plyometrics depth jump training. The instant uplift of one leg provides increased tolerance, development, and efficiency in the stretch-shortening cycle of muscle action. During the stretching, a greater amount of elastic energy is stored in the muscle. The muscle then reuses this elastic energy in the following concentric action to become stronger. Make sure that players work with a qualified instructor and become familiar with correct jumping technique.

Sit-Up

Sit-ups strengthen the abdominal muscles. Establishing a strong core of abdominal muscles helps prevent strains, tears, and injuries that often take a season to heal.

1. The exercise begins with the player lying on his back with knees bent, feet flat on the floor, and hands on each side of the head ([figure 1.1a](#)).
2. A teammate holds the feet in place, and the player curls himself up. A repetition is complete when the elbows touch the knees ([figure 1.1b](#)).

Figure 1.1 Sit-up: (a) lie on back; (b) elbows to knees.



Burpee

A burpee, also called a squat thrust, combines multiple exercises and increases strength, mobility, and flexibility. This drill is especially difficult for large players.

1. The player begins standing with his feet close together ([figure 1.2a](#)).
2. He squats down and places his palms on the floor ([figure 1.2b](#)). The hands should be shoulder-width apart and outside the knees.
3. The player thrusts his legs backward into a push-up position ([figure 1.2c](#)) and touches his chest to the floor ([figure 1.2d](#)).
4. He returns to the push-up position followed by the squat position, stands erect with the shoulders high, and then repeats the drill.

The squat, backward thrust, push-up, and stand-up-straight position make this a physically demanding exercise. From a basketball standpoint, the drill teaches players that they are capable of going on the floor after loose balls and are expected to do so.

Figure 1.2 Burpee: (a) stand; (b) squat; (c) push-up start; (d) push-up finish.





Defensive Slide

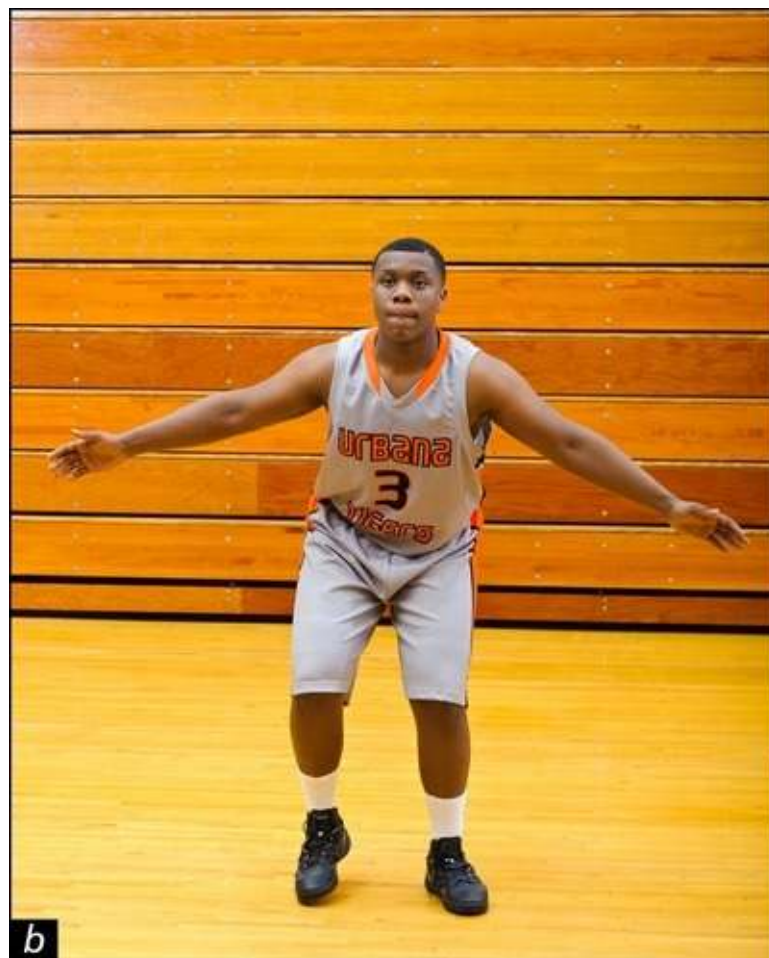
Defensive slides initiate the learning process for proper defensive position with correct footwork.

Slides are great for strengthening the groin, abdominal, and back muscles. Useful props for this exercise are four chairs or orange cones to designate the space needed for sliding.

1. The player begins with his feet spaced apart and arms out ([figure 1.3a](#)).
2. He pushes off the right foot, bringing the feet closer together ([figure 1.3b](#)), and steps with the left foot ([figure 1.3c](#)). He uses short steps without crossing his feet.
3. After four or five slides, the player changes directions to return to his starting position. Repeat.

After performing the drill side to side, players can also perform it moving up and back. The emphasis is on technique—maintaining low body position and proper balance with the knees bent, the back straight, and the head up during the slides. This defensive slide technique helps prevent groin injury. The drill involves constant movement.

Figure 1.3 Defensive slide: (a) feet apart; (b) push off right foot, bringing feet closer together; (c) step with left foot.





Speed Jumping

A prop 6 inches (15 cm) in height is needed for this exercise. The exercise improves speed, quickness, endurance, and strength.

1. Speed jumping starts from a standing position with knees bent ([figure 1.4a](#)).
2. The player jumps over a 6-inch (15 cm) prop ([figure 1.4b](#)), lands on both feet ([figure 1.4c](#)), and immediately jumps back to his starting position. Repeat.

Players jump over and back in a continuous motion. The emphasis is on speed and quickness, but safety is also a concern because players often tire at the end of the drill. Because of fatigue, players may have to stop momentarily to gather themselves before finishing the drill.

Figure 1.4 Speed jumping: (a) load with knees bent; (b) jump; (c) land on both feet.



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