

The Figure 8 Man-to-Man Offense

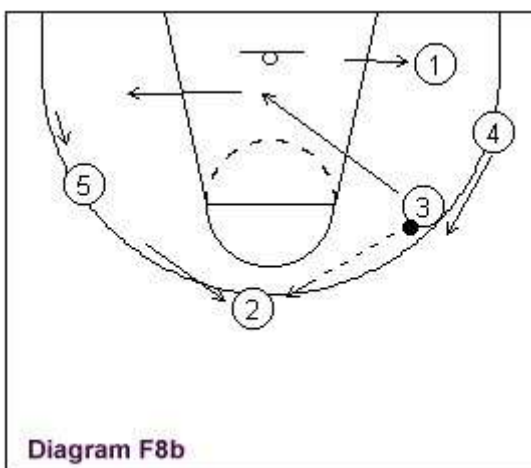
I have no idea who first used this offense, but I do know it was being used by many Indiana high school teams in 1920 or before. Furthermore, variations thereof are still effective in this modern era. True, the game has changed, but not a lot. Coaches simply took up where others left off and added basic plays most coaches have known for ages.

This offense was based on two fundamental offensive skills: the old give-and-go and the backdoor cut. In the old days, we called it play number 2 and its counter move. Under certain circumstances this "figure eight" can be, and is as effective today, as it was years ago. I might be a good second offense to have when your regular offense might not be doing so good. It is easily learned and a very good offense to use in practice. You can use it to teach your players proper footwork in defending cutters toward the basket. Put defensive players in the following diagrams and you have a fantastic drill for teaching defensive play.

The first five diagrams illustrate one cycle of play without a shot being taken. In the sixth diagram, you will see how simple it is to turn the Figure 8 into the 1st and 2nd Cutter Offense used so successfully by Coach Dean Smith. The original had no pivot and players were spread wide. Coach Smith used a pivot on his "Figure 8."

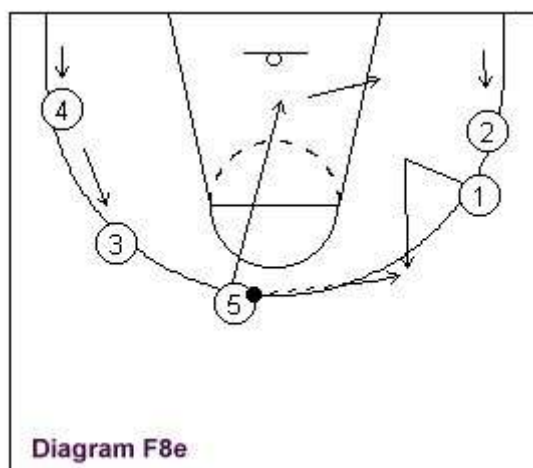
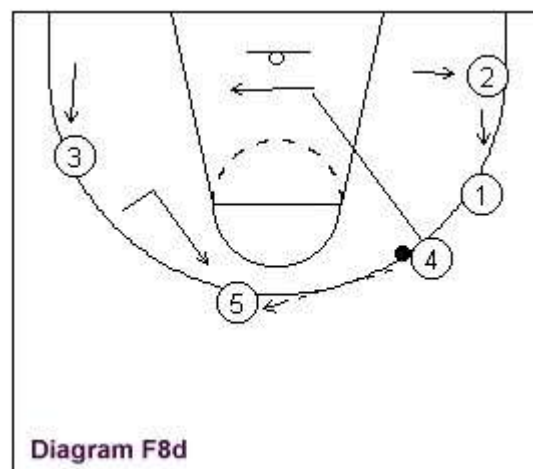
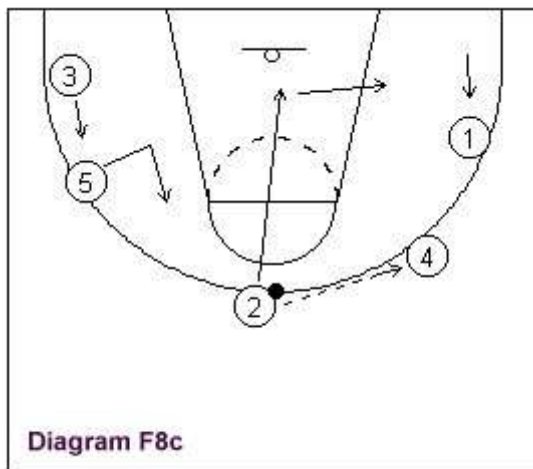


In this diagram, player 1 has the ball. Player 3 frees himself for a pass, or could take his defender back door. Player 1 passes and executes a give and go. In case 3 shoots, 1's first duty is to rebound. If neither, he clears to the side.



Here, rotation and play continues. Player 3 becomes the passer and cutter. As before, his first duty is a rebounder should 3 shoot the ball. (Keep in mind those old time players took a lot of shots from downtown. It didn't count 3, either.)

The next three diagrams simply illustrate player movements to the completion of the cycle. In the old days, we simply ran the offense toward the opposite side of the court.



Turning the Figure 8 Continuity into a 1st and 2nd Cutter Offense

Diagram F8f shows the Figure 8 Offense evolving into an offense similar that used by Coach Dean Smith as illustrated on page 119 of his *"BASKETBALL: Multiple Offense and Defense"*, as coordinated and edited by Bob Savad and published in 1999 by Allyn and Bacon. Accordingly, this was a revision of Bob Spear's Shuffle Cut Offense.

Anyways, Coach Smith sure got a lot of mileage out of this, however, as you shall see, it really isn't much different than the Figure 8 Continuity that was used by Indiana high school teams nearly 85 years ago. The plays are the same. Only the terminology changed. Here is the way you coach this modern Figure 8, using the basic fundamentals that have been around for ages.

This diagram could be a continuation of Diagram F8f; however, instead of cutting to the basket after his pass to teammate 1, player 5 screens 3's defender at the high post position.



After passing the ball to 2, instead of cutting all the way to the basket, 1 could set a double screen with 5, or he could continue on with the figure 8 to replace 4 in the pattern. Player 3, who is the first cutter, delays his cut long enough for teammate 2 to shoot or take his man one on one.

Many years ago, we farm boys were taught to always catch the ball in a triple-threat position. That is, ready to shoot, drive or pass. The same should be taught, today. Without either a good shot or drive available to 2, player 3 using, and reading, his defender, cuts off 5's screen. This is the first

blade of the old fashioned scissors cut. He cuts on to the basket and is quickly followed by the second blade, player 4 who cuts to the opposite post looking a pass from 2. Player 5 rolls to the safety's spot as the outlet for 2.

You can design a motion offense to fit any specific need by utilizing the very basic plays used for nearly 85 years and a Figure 8 continuation. Try it and you will understand the more basketball changes, the more things remain the same.