The Princeton Continuity Offense

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- Dribble Entry
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Basic Continuity and Alignment
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As you can see in the diagram, we have a 2-guard front with #1 and #4. You can place any of your perimeter players in either of these four spots, as they are all interchangeable.

The ball will be brought down either side of the floor in the point guard’s hands or your off guard if you have confidence in either guard bringing the ball up. If you have all good ball handlers, then this offense becomes even more difficult to guard as you will have different players in different positions each time down the floor, depending on who brings the ball up on the break.

If you had a chance to look at our transition section, you can see how easily and quickly we got into this basic alignment right from our early break and on ball reversal through the pass or dribble drive.

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Perimeter player responsibilities and alignment:

As you can see, all four players are placed high and wide even with and above the FT line extended and the lane line up to the top.

Each perimeter player will eventually occupy each wing spot and top spot as you run through the continuity.

It is VERY IMPORTANT that you drill your players to understand and appreciate the spacing on this offense. Keeping the basket clear will provide constant backdoor opportunities for your wing players and give your post man the opportunity to be isolated on the blocks from the pick and rolls.
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The 5 man’s responsibilities and alignment:

After your early offense, your 5 man will occupy the HIGH POST ELBOWS for post catches, the WING for ball screen opportunities and ON TOP of the lane line extended for back screens.

Here are TWO important rules for the 5 man to remember:

1) If you back screen, you then follow the pass to set a ball screen.
2) When you roll to the basket after ball screening, you then flash to the ball side elbow as quickly as possible.

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Ok, let's start the continuity.

We will use our dribble entry to begin the offense the majority of the time, but as you will see in our other sections, we also use our POST ENTRY or our WING PASS ENTRY to begin the offense.

Here we see #1 and #2 executing a dribble hand-off on the wing to begin. Anytime the opposite wing players see a DRIBBLE HAND-OFF on the wing, their rule is to EXCHANGE if possible.

#3 and #4 will want to time their exchange so that #3 is cutting up to the top (again, even with the lane line extended up) as #2 is driving the ball up on the opposite side (lane line extended up). This timing is critical to setup your back door options discussed in our backdoor section.
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We will assume for now that #3 is open (but don't panic, if he is denied we will backdoor this man and stay in our continuity - no problem). We explain this backdoor option in our BACKDOOR OPTIONS section.

As soon as #2 passes to #3, #5 will set a back screen for #2. #2 cuts to the rim while #3 looks to pass inside to #2 if he is open.

#1 fills the open spot on top once #2 cuts off the back screen from #5.

#2, if he does not get the pass, quickly cuts back out to the open wing spot on the right side of the floor.

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#3, after seeing #2 was not open on the back screen cut, will now drive the ball at #4 on the left wing (again, another backdoor opportunity we will discuss in our BACKDOOR OPTIONS section).

Since #1 and #2 recognize the dribble hand-off entry, they know there rule is to exchange on the backside of the floor. #2 will be making his cut up to the wing, then plant his outside foot and make a hard cut to the top of the floor, lane line extended.

#5's rule, as you will remember from his responsibilities, is to BALL SCREEN immediately after any time he sets a BACK SCREEN.

As #4 takes the ball from #3, #5 is setting a ball screen for #4.
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#4 and #5 now execute a screen and roll. The basket is always clear so #5 will have no help defenders to worry about after rolling to the basket.

#4 takes the ball off the screen looking to score, drive and kick out to #2 or #3, or dump the ball to #5 rolling.

#3 is always ready on the wing for the open jump shot just in case his man helps on #5 rolling to the basket. Same goes for #2’s defender helping on #4’s drive or #1’s defender helping on #5 rolling. All three (#1, #2 and #3) are spotting up and looking for open 3 point shots.

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If #4 cannot pass to #5 inside for the shot, he quickly reverses the ball to #2 on top.

#2 and #1 now execute a dribble hand-off on the right wing. #5, following his rules, knows he does not have to ball screen this time (since he rolled to the basket), and flashes to the ball side elbow as quickly as possible, looking for a potential entry pass (which we cover in our POST ENTRY section).
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As #1 takes the ball off the dribble hand-off, #3 and #4 remember their rule (anytime there is a dribble hand-off on the wing, we must exchange on the weakside of the floor).

Also, please keep in mind, we are only showing the dribble hand-off entry, so I know it looks like the wings will get worn out exchanging all day - but I promise - once you work in the other entries, it will all flow together.

Again, it is important to really drill this option so that #3 is cutting to the top as #1 is getting the ball even with the lane line extended out on top. This will provide the best angle for back door options and create an opportunity for the defense to feel they can sneak out and steal this reverse pass.

As I mentioned earlier, be patient, we will show you the backdoor options in the BACKDOOR section and how easy it is to get back into continuity if you cannot make the backdoor pass.
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The continuity continues now with #5 back screening for the passer, #1. #4 looks inside to #1 coming off the back screen.

#2 fills the open spot on top after #1 makes his cut. Once #1 sees that he is not open on the back screen from #5, he immediately cuts to the right side open wing area.

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#5's rule applies again (after back screening always follow the pass and ball screen).

#3 and #4 execute a dribble hand-off on the wing while #5 moves over to set the ball screen for #3 coming off the hand-off.

#1 has cleared out and up to the top while #2 cuts away to the wing, completing the exchange because of the hand-off action on the opposite side of the floor. This action not only occupies defenders on the weakside, opening up the basket for #5 rolling to the lane and #3 driving to the basket, BUT since the backside lane area is always open, it also sets up a great backdoor option for #1 if his defender tries to overplay on ball reversal.

Great action and hard to defend when executed correctly.
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You may want to add this option LATER, but anytime after #1 cuts off the back screen from #5, #4 COULD elect to take the ball back to the middle using a ball screen from #5. #5 is already moving over to ball screen since he just back screened.

Here we see #4 taking the ball off the ball screen while #5 rolls to the rim. #2 is filling up top while #1 begins his cut back out to the wing once he did not get the ball off the back cut and back screen from #5.

#3 also fills up to take his help away from the rolling #5 man. #4 can look to pass the ball back to #3 if he is open or kick the ball out to #1 or #2.

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Once again it is very easy to stay in continuity as #3 passes out from his penetration. #5 flashes to the ball side elbow while #3 fills the vacated wing spot.

You are now in your 4 out, 1 in alignment that began the offense.
Basic Continuity and Alignment
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The rules and options for this offense will always ensure that each perimeter defender will be getting different action to defend each time down the floor BECAUSE:

1) The ball will not always come up the same side of the floor.

2) If you have more than one good ballhandler, you may elect to have multiple players pushing the ball up the sideline.

3) You have three entry options each time you have the ball on top lane line extended (POST ENTRY, WING PASS ENTRY AND WING DRIBBLE ENTRY).
*WING PASS ENTRY*

Wing Pass Entry
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Although our basic continuity only shows you our DRIBBLE ENTRY WING option, you may certainly pass the ball to the wing or into the post at anytime in the offense. Let's look at the wing pass entry.

Here we see #1 passing to #2 to initiate the WING PASS ENTRY option.

#5 immediately back screens for #1 who cuts to the basket.

Wing Pass Entry
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#5's rules remains the same. AFTER BACKSCREENING, YOU MUST FOLLOW THE PASS AND BALL SCREEN.

#5 now sets a ball screen for #2 on the right wing. Since there was not a dribble hand-off on the wing, #3 and #4 DO NOT exchange.

#2 comes off the ball screen looking to score while #1 cuts up to the wing. #4 or #3 may be open if their defenders help on the drive from #2 or from #5 rolling to the rim.
Wing Pass Entry
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#4 then takes the ball and the offense keeps the continuity by #3, #4 or #5 executing either a wing entry, post entry or dribble hand-off on the left side of the floor. #5 flashes to the ball side elbow after rolling.

Since #4 opted to use a dribble hand-off wing entry on the left side, #2 and #1 must exchange on the weakside. #4 could just as easily make another WING ENTRY pass to #3, and the action would be duplicated on the left side of the floor.

Here we see #2 cutting to the opposite wing with #1 cutting to the top lane line area of the floor because #4 elected to use the Dribble Hand-Off WING ENTRY option.

Wing Pass Entry
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If #4 was to use the wing pass entry option again with #3, his role would be the same. Instead of using a backscreen from #5 (since #5 is not available for the backscreen after rolling to the basket), #4 would simply make a solid give and go cut to the basket.

As soon as #4 passed to #3, #5 clears out of the lane and to the ball side wing ready to duplicate his ball screen action on the left side of the floor (as if he just backscreened for #4).
Wing Pass Entry
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#3 now drives the ball off the screen from #5. #4 cuts up to the left side wing area as #5 rolls to the open basket area.

#3 looks to score, dump the ball off to #5 rolling or kick the ball out to #2 on top.

#2 and #1 did not exchange because there was NOT a dribble hand-off entry used.

Wing Pass Entry
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You may also initiate a quick wing pass entry anytime the defense tries to stop the ball from going across the top (for example when #2 takes the dribble hand-off from #1 and x2 jumps out and tries to force the offense back).

Not a problem when this happens, in fact, you can really take advantage of this overplay by quickly passing back to #1 and using the back screen from #5 OR you could hit #5, execute the POST ENTRY option and cut to the basket, leaving the overplaying defender behind you (which we will cover in the POST ENTRY section).
Wing Pass Entry
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If you did not hit the post and execute the scissors option (covered in the POST ENTRY section), the pass back to the wing would then initiate the wing entry option and allow #5 to backscreen for #2 and then ball screen for #1, as described earlier.
I absolutely love the POST ENTRY option and the scoring possibilities from it.

At ANYTIME in the offense, the top perimeter player or the wing player can hit the #5 man in the high post elbow area with a pass. That is why it is critical that your post player always be in the "post-up" position on the elbow, ready to seal and step to catch the entry pass (treating it just like he would posting up on the low block). HE MUST ALWAYS BE THERE AS AN ENTRY OPTION.

Here we see #2 driving the ball up on top just after taking the hand-off from #1. #3 and #4 have exchanged but now #2 decides to hit #5 in the high post. If #1 is denied, he can look to cut back door for a lay-up. In any event, #1 will want to set his man up with a few steps toward the basket.

The rule on the pass to the post is pretty simple for both perimeter players on the ball side.

The passer, #2 in this diagram, always cuts FIRST with the other wing player, #1, cutting right off the back of #2 into the lane. GREAT ACTION! This scissors cut off the post can often result in a wide-open lay-up or jump shot for either player.

As #2 cuts to the lane, #4 fills on to to replace #2. #5 dumps the ball off to whomever is open.

If #1 did cut all the way back door this is not a problem. #1 would then split his foot, cut back up and around the cutting #2 player, still maintaining this scissors action and subsequent "blur" screen for each other.
Post Entry Option
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If #2 or #1 does not receive the ball from #5, #5 has an easy decision.

1) He either turns and scores.
2) Or he drives the ball at either #1 or #2.

Post Entry Option
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If #5 elects to drive at #2 on the low block area, #1 does what he should always do and screen for #3 on the opposite wing area. #3 has the option to cut either way off the screen. The screener, #1, will cut in the opposite direction #3 chooses and look for the ball. We will cover this option in more detail when #5 elects to drive the ball at #1.

You will remember that #4 cut over to the ball side when the pass entered the post and #2 cut through to the low block.

#5 attacking #2's defender is a great option here as the defensive player's momentum is moving toward the basket while #5 executes a dribble hand-off with #2. #5 hands the ball off and screens #2's defender while #2 looks for the pull up jumper from 8 to 10 feet.
Post Entry Option
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If #2 does not have a shot from the hand-off, #5 could roll momentarily to the basket. This is especially effective if the defenders try to switch the dribble hand-off / screen action.

If #2 does not get a shot or pass inside, he throws the ball out to either of the top spots and fills the open wing spot.

You are now back in your original alignment. #3 starts to make the dribble hand-off entry with #5 flashing to the elbow area, always looking in case #3 decides to pick up his dribble and hit the high post or use the WING PASS entry option by passing to #1 on the left wing.

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Post Entry Option
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If #5 decided to drive the ball towards #1 (which is the option he should choose most often), #2 now cuts out to the open spot on the wing while #1 continues his screening action on the wing with #3.

#3 has the option to cut high or low off the screening action from #1. If #3 cuts high, #1 immediately cuts to the basket and looks for the back door pass from #5.

Another great scoring option and hard to guard.
Post Entry Option
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If #3 decides to cut to the basket off the screen from #1, #1 would then quickly pop out and shape up for the perimeter catch and shot.

Post Entry Option
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If #4's defender looks to help on #5's dribble across the top, #4 makes a basket cut. When that happens, #2 will fill up on top, with #4 cutting out to the open wing after the back cut.
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Same as before, if #5 did not deliver the ball for a back door lay-up, he would pass out to either of the perimeter spots. The players who cut back door will now cut back to the open wing area and we are now in our basic alignment to continue the offense.

Post Entry Option
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There is another way to enter the ball to the high post, and I have to admit, I like this one too!

Whenever the dribble hand-off is executed on the wing, the ballhandler, #1 in this diagram, can FAKE the hand-off and keep the ball. He could first look to drive to the open baseline if it is open. If not, a quick pass to #5 is a great option.
Post Entry Option
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#5 receives the pass from #1. The player who makes the post entry pass cuts first. Here #1 will now cut over the top of #5 while #2 cuts off the back of #1.

The reason I like this entry is because #2's defender's momentum is moving up to the top with #2. If #2 makes a quick back door move off the back of #1, I think you will find he will be open often.

If neither player receives the ball back from #5, then #5 has the same options as described before:

Score himself or drive the ball at either #1 or #2 and the offense continues as previously described.