



— **COMPLETE** —

BASKETBALL

PLAYBOOK

Full Court Pressure



INTRODUCTION

Since we don't see it at the NBA level very often, it can be easy to forget about what a big part of the game the press is at every other level of basketball.

The strategy has been around since about the 1950s, when a coach by the name of Gene Johnson brought the first iterations into popularity. Teams have been seeing success with them ever since, with such big names as Rick Pitino, Billy Donovan, and Shaka Smart having used the press to build basketball powerhouses at the college level.

They can be used either as a defensive philosophy, from beginning to end of every game, or simply in specific situations, when you need to speed up the game or you're down by a couple possessions late. Either way, they always carry the same pros and cons - they offer the opportunity for create extra possessions with high percentage shots, but also are prone to tiring players out, and if a team with a good press break of their own can break it, they can create some high percentage baskets of their own.

In this section, we'll review three time-tested full court pressure strategies - one man to man and two zones - that can be used with any age or competitive level.

1.

Man Press



Setup:

For this iteration of the man press, the defense will come out matched up man to man, with the exception of the man defending the inbounder – the center in Figure 1 – who will stay back as a safety.

The rest of the defenders will line up in front of their matchups, looking to deny the inbound pass.

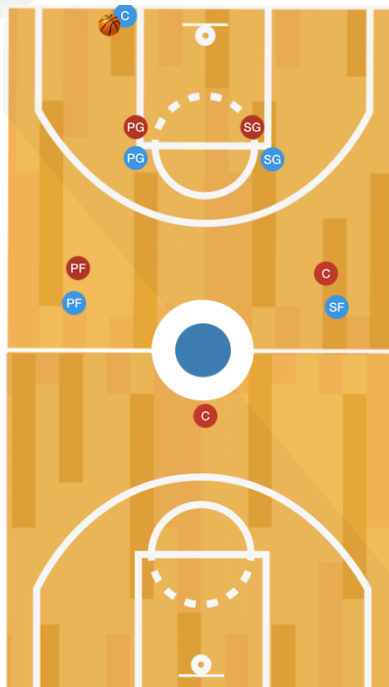


Figure 1: Inbounds Denial

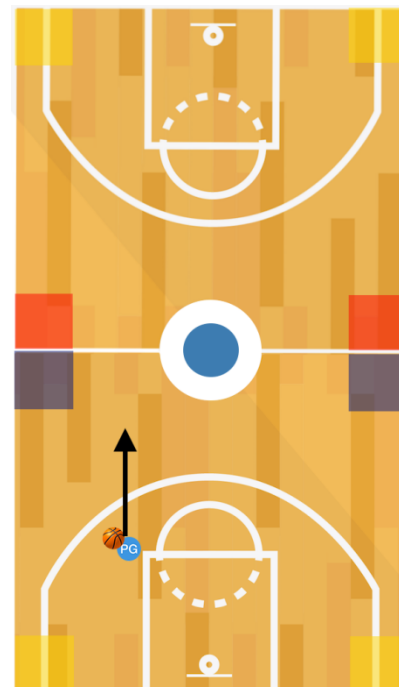


Figure 2: Ideal Trap Areas

Execution:

1. The man press can be exhausting, for both the offense and defense.
2. The execution is simple – matchup in the full court, deny the inbounds, and play tight pressure defense for the entire length of the court.
3. The goal isn't necessarily to trap, however if the offense finds itself in a dead ball situation in any of the ideal trapping areas, you should do your best to get a trap and deny any passes out of it.

Coaching Tips

- It's up to you whether you want to go full denial or not off the inbounds – you can also allow the inbounds and go full court pressure from there.
- You can also bring the safety up and have him harass the inbounder – this will make it much more difficult for them to inbound the ball, but will leave you more vulnerable to passes deep over the top.

2.

Zone Press – 2-2-1 Press



Setup:

There are three levels to the 2-2-1 – the front, middle, and back.

The front will usually be your two most agile defenders, generally your point guard and shooting guard.

They will start on the elbows.

The back line is reserved for your slowest defender, who will play safety at the back.

The middle line will likely be for your power forward and small forward line up, with the length to disrupt passes while still possessing the footspeed to recover back if need be.

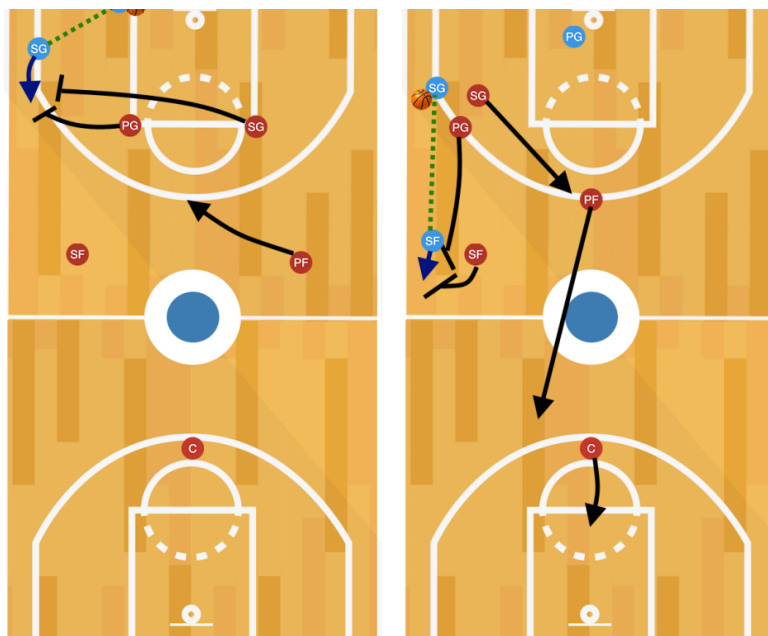


Figure 1: 2-2-1 Press Pt.1

Figure 2: 2-2-1 Press Pt. 2

Execution:

1. The defense will force the pass out to either sideline, and try to set a trap with the front line of the press.
2. The far side player in the second line – the power forward in Figure 1 – will come to the middle of the paint to discourage any passes or penetration to that area.
3. The strong side second line player will look to intercept any passes up the sideline or slow down the ball handler if he is able to break the trap, giving the ball side front line player a chance to come reset.
4. If the first trap is broken, the weak side front line player will drop to the middle of the press, freeing up the weak side second line player to play the role of interceptor, trying to steal any lofty passes made into the front court.

Coaching Tips

- The goal with the 2-2-1 press at it's core is to force the ball to the sidelines and keep it there.
- Ideally, this will give players a chance to trap in one of our three hot zones : the baseline-sideline corner and the halfcourt sideline corner, whether before or after they cross halfcourt.

3.

Zone Press – 1-2-1-1 Press



Setup:

To setup for the 1-2-1-1, you're going to have to assign your players to one of five different roles.

The interceptor is the most critical of this press, as he needs to be adept at anticipating passes and have the athleticism to match.

He will be positioned as the 1-2-1-1 of the press.

Next, you'll want to figure out where each of your bigs will go.

The disruptor – the front of the press – needs to be the more athletic and versatile of the two.

The other big will fill the position of safety, at the back of the press. The last two players will fill out the wings.

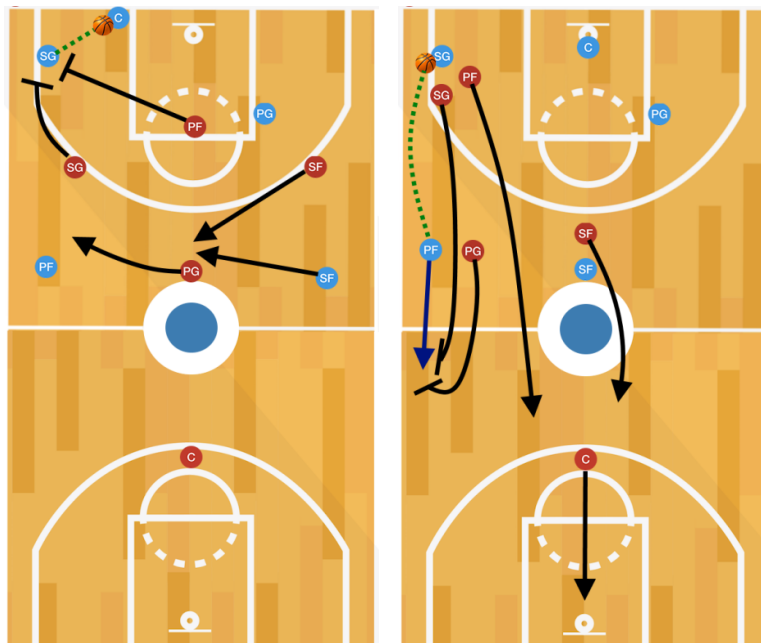


Figure 1: 1-2-1-1 Press Pt. 1

Figure 2: 1-2-1-1 Press Pt. 2

Execution:

1. Ideally, we want to force the ball to be inbounded to the ball side corner, at which point the disruptor and closest wing player can bring the trap.
2. The far wing player will come over to the middle, freeing the interceptor to read the ballhandler's eyes and try to make a play.
3. If the pass is made up the sideline, the interceptor will defend, allowing the wing player time to sprint upcourt and form a second trap just over the halfcourt line.

Coaching Tips

- The success of this press lies in your ability to force the ball to the sideline.
- Traps won't work in the middle because the offense can make a pass in any direction, and a pass into the middle of the press will leave the defender in a 3-1 on situation.
- You should also do your best to keep the ball in front of the first line for as long as possible.
- Even if you're unable to secure a trap, that 10 seconds to get the ball over halfcourt is ticking, and time is on your side.