



— COMPLETE —

BASKETBALL

PLAYBOOK

Zone Defense

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INTRODUCTION

The zone defense has been around more than a 100 years now. The legend goes that it was invented by Cam Henderson at halftime of a game when he realized that because the roof in the gym was leaking, his players would find it much easier to defend an area than to chase players all around the court.

100 years later, the zone is still a popular defense at all levels of basketball. It has evolved – now we’ve developed the 2-3, 3-2, and 1-3-1 zones – and they’re all effective in their own right. They allow defenses to pack the paint and prevent penetration, encouraging the offense to settle for long range shots. Also, if there’s a player who is dominating in a one-on-one matchup, whether in the post or on the wing, it takes the pressure off that individual defender and allows you to defend that player as a team.

The biggest key to playing an effective zone defense is communication – teaching all five defenders to work as one unit, hands up and in constant communication with each other is absolutely essential. It can also be a bit more difficult to rebound in a zone defense – since players aren’t directly assigned to a man, it can be a bit more difficult for them to find a body and box out once a shot goes up in the air.

We’ve assembled a few drills to instill the proper fundamentals to make your zone all it can be, after which we will break down the three most common zone defenses.

1.

2-3 Zone

Setup:

The point guard and shooting guard will start out just above the elbows, with the center in the middle of the paint, with the forwards on either side of the paint, just outside the block.

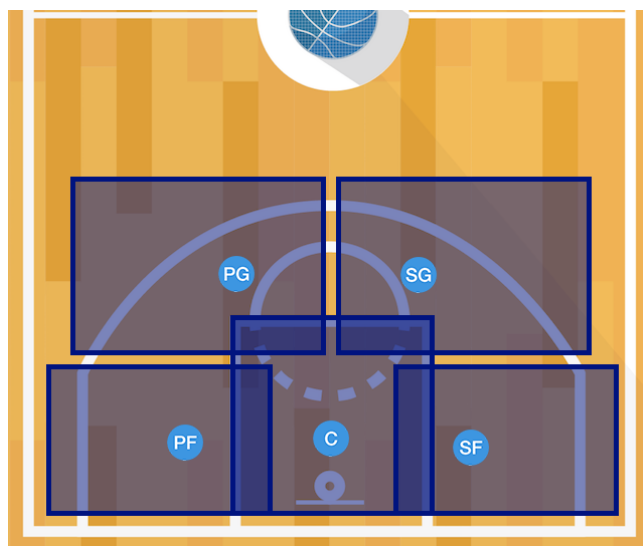


Figure 1: 2-3 Zone Initial Setup

Execution:

1. Each player has a designated zone, as illustrated in figure 1. In practice, whenever the ball moves into one of their zones, that player is responsible for covering the man.
2. It's also important that players shift within their zone based on ball movement, anticipating passes and defending the players moving around without the ball as well.
3. Above all costs, in the 2-3 zone your first priority is defending the paint, so any player in the key should always have at least one of the five defenders on him.

Coaching Tips

- The 2-3 is designed to force the opposing team into settling for outside jumpshots, discouraging penetration and post play.
- For it to work well, it's important that all five players work as one unit.
- As such, it's important to give lots of practice time running the zone. It's a bit more difficult than simply following one player all around the floor, but giving it the time it needs in practice will yield fantastic results.

2.

3-2 Zone

Setup:

The point guard will position himself at the top of the key, with the shooting guard and small forward on the wings and the power forward and center each occupying a block.

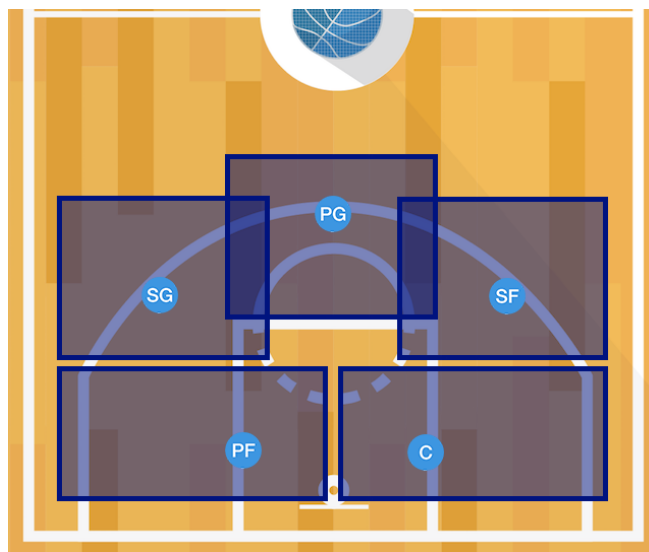


Figure 1: 3-2 Zone Initial Setup

Execution:

1. The 3-2 is a more active zone, especially on the perimeter.
2. The point guard up top should be funneling the ball to either side, while the wings can actively deny the wing entry if they so choose.
3. If you want to run a trap out of the 3-2, the best place is in the corner, as it allows you to send your corresponding wing and post players to attack while the other three are in great position to intercept any wild passes.

Coaching Tips

- Where the 2-3 is designed to give easy wing entries and discourage post play, the 3-2 is the opposite.
- If you're playing a team with wing players that are too difficult to cover man to man, but you aren't too worried about the other team's post play, it can be very effective.
- It can also be very confusing for offense's, as it is easy to disguise it as a man to man defense, at least initially.

3.

1-3-1 Zone

Setup:

Here, we'll have the center line up at the heart of the zone, in the middle of the free throw line, with the other four players spread around him – the point guard up top, the shooting guard and small forward on either wing, and the power forward behind him, in the middle of the key.

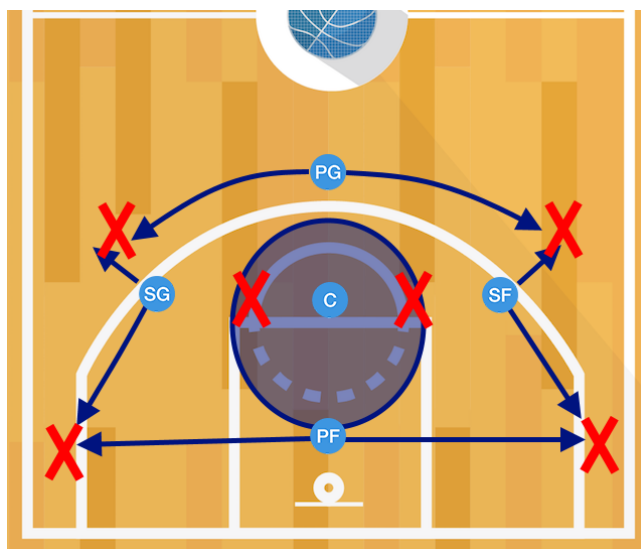


Figure 1: 1-3-1 Zone initial

Execution:

1. The 1-3-1 is different than other zones in that you are actively trapping and attacking the offense – there's no sitting around as they work the ball around the arc – you are looking to force turnovers and get out in transition.
2. There are 6 trap points for the zone – one on either wing, one in each corner, and then one at each elbow.
3. If the ball is in any of these places, it is the responsibility of the two closest players to trap the ball.
4. This will in turn force high errant passes or slow bounce passes that will give the other three players the chance to step in and intercept the ball.

Coaching Tips

- Like any aggressive trapping defense, every once in a while, players are going to be caught out of position, so yes, you are going to give up some easy baskets.
- But don't be discouraged, as if you drill it hard and have the players all working together in unison, you'll more than make up the difference with all the easy baskets of your own you'll get in transition after you get the steal.