



Wyndham Basketball Association Inc.

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No Zone Policy

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Using this document

This document is designed to assist with the implementation of Basketball Australia's "no zone defence" rule in the WBAU10 to U16 competitions. It provides:

- Explanation of why the rule is important
- Practical examples to determine whether or not a team is playing a "zone";

This is an adaptation of Basketball Australia's guide developed by:

- Mr Chris Riches, Development Manager, Basketball Queensland
- Mr Marty Handson, Country Development Manager, Basketball Victoria Country Council
- Mr Peter Lonergan, NITP Head Coach, Basketball New South Wales
- Brad Dalton

This document will help parents, coaches and players understand how the rule is implemented and this document may be freely reproduced, copied and distributed.

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Part 1 – What is the “No Zone” rule?

Basketball Australia has implemented a “no zone” rule at the Australian Under 14 Club Championships. Basketball Australia recommends this rule be implemented in all U14 (and younger) competitions.

WBA Definition – Zone Defence

Any defence played inside the 3 point line which does not incorporate normal man to man defensive principles shall be considered to be a zone.

The exception to this rule is if a team has 4 players on the court, they may play a zone. If a team has only 5 players suited up, they can play a zone in the first half and must play man to man in the second half

Violations of the “no zone” rule will generally fall within one of the following categories

1. One or more players were not in acceptable man to man defensive position in relation to the player they are guarding and the player with the ball
2. A cutter moved all the way through the key and was not defended using acceptable man to man defensive techniques (for example, bumping the cutter, following the cutter or switching)
3. Following a trapping or help and recovers situation, the team made no attempt to re-establish man to man defensive positioning
4. The team zone pressed and did not assume man to man defensive positioning once the ball had been advanced into the quarter court

WBA approach and penalties

- If you believe the opposition is playing a zone defence, a Team/Club Official may approach the Venue Supervisor
- The Venue Supervisor will speak to the offending coach and depending on the game situation, the severity of the infringement or if previous infringements have been detected may:
 - a) Ask them to adjust their defence
 - b) Give the coach an official warning
 - c) Instruct the referee to issue a technical foul on the coach
 - d) Any further breaches will result in technical fouls being issued

Benefit of the doubt with Defensive team

This rule has been introduced for the development of individual and team skills. It has not been introduced to penalise:

- Lazy defence
- Poor coaching
- Tired players
- Poorly executed man to man defence

Accordingly, if there is any doubt as to whether or not a team is playing acceptable man to man defensive principles, the benefit of the doubt will be given to the defensive team.

Part 2 – Why has this policy been introduced?

The “no zone” rule was introduced to the Australian U14 Club Championships in 1996, after considerable discussion by both Basketball Australia’s Coaches Commission and Junior Commission.

Prior to the rule being introduced, the views of coaches from around Australia were canvassed, with the majority of those coaches supporting the exclusive use of man defence at U14 and younger age groups. Coaching resources produced by FIBA also support this view.

Prior to the rule being introduced, a number of teams at the U14 Championships played zone defence and research indicated that proportionately few players from these teams (even when those teams had been successful) went onto national development programs such as the Australian Junior Camp.

The defensive principles of rotation, help and recover, containment, vision of the entire court and positioning relative to both you player and the ball are important fundamentals that underpin most, if not all, defensive principles.

The basis for the introduction of the “no zone” policy is that zone defences at those age groups can limit the development of individual and team skills. For example, driving opportunities are limited and players often do not have the muscular strength and coordination to shoot, with good technique, from the perimeter of throw skip passes. This reduces the need for defensive skills such as closing out and positioning.

Whilst the “no zone” rule focusses on defence, it was introduced to enhance the development of both offensive and defensive skills. Indeed, as you will see later in this manual – it is up to the offence, through ball and player movement, to prove that it is a zone defence.

It is important to remember that the “no zone” rule applies only inside the three point line and zone presses and trapping defences are allowed, if they fall back to man to man principles inside the three point line.

Part 3 – How is the rule implemented?

Not a decision for the Referees

Basketball Australia does not recommend placing the responsibility for determining whether the defence is acceptable upon the referees. They have enough to do!

It is not the role of the referees to adjudicate whether or not a zone defence is being played.

A decision for the Venue Supervisors

It is the role of the Venue Supervisor to adjudicate whether or not a zone defence is being played

Part 4 – What is a “Zone Defence”

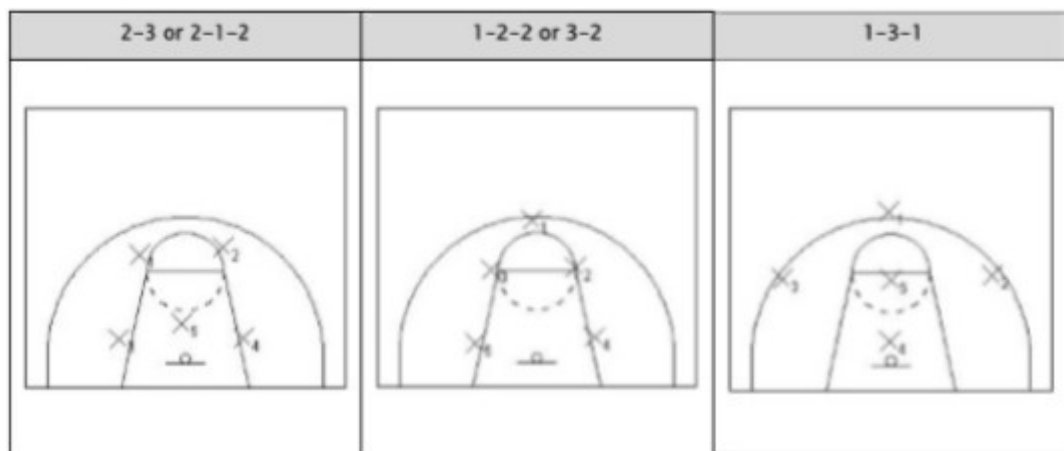
Guarding an Area

Zone defence is a form of team defence where each player becomes responsible for defending both an area of the court, and any opponent who may be in that area. When five players work together in a zone, it can become a very formidable defence.

Zone defences are primarily designed to protect the area near the basket. This essentially means that the offensive team will be forced to take lower percentage, perimeter shots.

Common examples

There are a number of common zone defence alignments, such as:



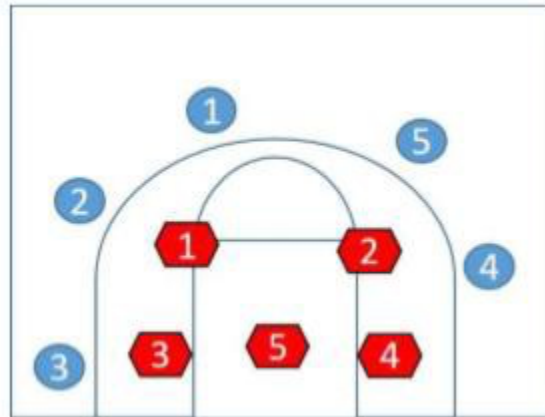
These defences when played within the boundary of the three point line primarily clog the key area. This often forces the offensive team to shoot from the perimeter (and indeed are designed to have this effect), which can be detrimental to the technique of younger athletes. It also reduces the driving opportunities which hampers the development of close out and rotation skills.

Guarding many or guarding no one

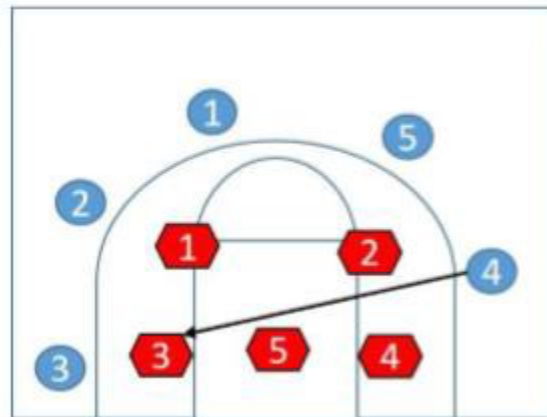
The result of the zone defence is that one player may be responsible for guarding a number of players, or may not have anyone in their area at all.

For example in the diagram below, the following defensive assignments would probably apply, if the defence were in a zone:

- Red 1 would guard Blue 1 or 2 if they receive the ball
- Red 3 would guard Blue 3 if they receive the ball
- Red 2 would guard Blue 4 or 5 if they receive the ball
- Red 4 or 5 have no particular defensive responsibility



It would be particularly obvious that Red 4 is not guarding a specific player if Blue 4 were to cut



Commonly Red 4 and 5 will “ball watch” rather than maintaining vision of their area (as there are no players in this area). This is poor defensive technique, which is accentuated by playing a zone defence. In man to man defence, whilst some players will undoubtedly “ball watch”, there is always a clear responsibility for who they should be seeing.

Part 5 – How to identify a Zone

Onus of proof

- The onus of proof lies with the offensive team, which means they must pass the ball and move so that you can determine whether or not the defence is playing man to man principles.
- If the offensive big stays on the weak side, their defender can legitimately stay in a split line position

Watch a number of play phases

- Often the ball is shot or turned over before you can properly determine if a team is playing a zone
- You cannot judge a zone from one offensive or defensive phase. You will need to watch a number of game phases before determining if the defence is playing appropriate man to man

Don't worry about the full court

- The rule is only concerned with playing man to man principles within the three point line. Teams can play any defence they want in the full court
- Just because a player or a number of players run back to their defensive key does not make it a zone defence

Don't penalise bad man to man defence

- The intention of the rule is to teach good defensive principles and avoid passive, stagnant defences where a big player gets hidden. The rule is not intended to penalise:
 - a) Lazy or poor defence
 - b) Poor coaching
 - c) Tired players
 - d) Players lost in defensive rotations

It does not have to be aggressive defence

- The rule does not require teams to be playing denial defence, where every pass is contested

What is the team trying to do?

- Do take into account the intention of the defensive team – what is the coach telling their players to do?

Teams can trap

- Teams may trap in the quarter court and may stay in a “zone” alignment for one pass, after which all players must resume man to man positions. For example, on the trap, 2 players are on the ball and the remaining 3 players may rotate to protect the basket

Part 6 – Proving it's a zone

Moving a split line defender

A basic principle of man to man defence is that the closer the player you are guarding is to the ball, the closer to them you need to be. Conversely, the further away they are from the ball, the further away from them you can be.

When players are on the weak side (opposite to the ball) a man to man defender will adopt a split line position – in the middle of the court.

To prove a defender is playing zone defence requires specific movement from the offence. Here are some ways to do it:

- **Cut to the ball side**
 - a) Once you have identified a defender that you think might be playing a zone, have a player cut to the ball side. This will require movement by the defender and they cannot stay on the split line
- **Move to the perimeter – ball side**
 - a) If the offensive player cuts to a post position, it may still be difficult to determine what defence is being played as many teams guard a post player from behind
 - b) By moving to the perimeter, the defender must leave the key – they do not have to be in a denial position, but they must be outside the key
- **Cutting from low to high**
 - a) Having a player cut above the foul line forces the defender to step away from in front of the basket
 - b) Although the defender may stay on split line, if the offensive player cuts as high as the top of the circle, the defender must clearly react to the cut
- **Have a player trail high in transition**
 - a) Quite commonly, a team's centre will run back to the basket once their team has lost possession. If the player he is guarding also runs straight down the court into a post position, then the defender can stay in the key
 - b) However, if the centre trails the break and stays high, then once the ball reaches the wing, the defender must move away from the basket
- **Reverse the ball**
 - a) Simply reversing the ball from one side of the court to the other requires the defence to move. This movement can help to identify who each defender is guarding (or whether they are playing a zone defence)
- **Pass and cut to the basket**
 - a) If the person passing the ball then makes a strong cut to the basket, it will quickly be obvious if their defender does not follow them
- **Overload the ball side**

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- a) By having players cut to the ball side, the defence needs to adjust. If the low weak side defender was to stay where they are, it would not be apparent who they were guarding

Part 7 – Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why is this rule in place?

A. It is commonly regarded by coaches worldwide that Zone Defence is detrimental to a younger player's fundamental development. Basketball Australia adopts this rule for any competition up to and including Under14

Q. What's the difference between a Zone Defence and Man to Man defence?

A. The basic difference is a Zone Defence is where a player is primarily responsible for an area on the court. Man to man defence is where each player is primarily responsible for an offensive player

Q. Does that mean I have to play full court defence?

A. No – man to man defence may be played in the full court, half court or in the quarter court

Q. But we play a full court press!

A. Any full court defence is allowed, whether it is full court man or full court zone/trap. However you MUST be back into man to man defence once the ball has been reversed back to the point position in the quarter court.

Q. What about transition defence?

A. Any organised defensive transition is allowed, but the team must be in man to man once the ball is reversed back to the point position in the quarter court

Q. We have two players chase the ball full court and the others go back to guard the basket!

A. Again – you may play what you like in the full court; however in this instance your team must be in man to man defence once the ball is in the quarter court and the play is 5v5.

Q. What happens if a zone is detected?

A: A supervisor will speak to you about the infringement. Depending on the game situation, the severity of the infringement or if previous infringements have been detected you may be:

- a) asked to adjust your defence**
- b) be given an official warning**
- c) be given a technical foul**

Q. Who will be watching the game?

A. Venue Supervisors will be allocated to watch Junior Domestic games

Q. Can I ask someone to come and look at our game if I think the opposition is playing a zone?

A. Only a Team/Club Official may approach a Venue Supervisor in a suitable manner for assistance. This request MUST not come from a parent/spectator.